

WENDY MOTT

DN message — 'Skip the Vote'?

It's a harsh reality to swallow, but my non-Daily Nebraskan friends constantly tell me they pick up the DN for three reasons — the crossword puzzle, Calvin and The Far Side.

One friend said Calvin and Hobbes was the glue that bound her to the Daily Nebraskan because the puzzle made her feel stupid, and she understood only about one in every three Far Sides. I worry about her, but I think she has a point.

In circles outside the DN, I don't think the paper is taken very seriously. It makes me sad to walk to class and see 12 hours of my hard work lying crumpled under a seat. "Hey!" I want to say. "That's my layout you just stepped on."

In some ways, I guess ASUN and the DN are in the same boat — very full of themselves and struggling furiously to be taken seriously. It seems odd, however, that despite the similarities, the two groups can't seem to get along.

Just as ASUN shakes its tiny fists at the all-powerful Nebraska Legislature — often to no avail — the Daily Nebraskan, a paper with the fifth-largest circulation in the state, is the last to hear from the school's own board of regents.

As a journalism student, I've tried for so long to be objective and get both sides of the story that sometimes I feel like I can't think for myself. I constantly see both sides of an issue, and my opinions tend to be swayed by whoever I'm with at the moment.

"Good point," I think. But "on the other hand" keeps popping into my head. Some might call it flip-flopping, but I prefer to think of it as seeing both sides of an issue.

This tendency to straddle the issues is especially difficult for me at this time of year, because it's ASUN election time — again.

Time for campaign promises and free candy on campus. Time to see flyers strewn across campus like so



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many Godfather's inserts. Time for the Daily Nebraskan to rip apart what it considers fluff proposals and joke candidates.

This "liberal rag" takes pride in its attitude toward the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska. And for some reasons I agree with it.

I think the attendance chart that hangs outside the ASUN office not only looks like a second-grade reading list tabulation, but it insults both the senators and the students. I think bicycle racks are the least of our worries. I think COLAGE deserves funding. I think resumes aren't as important as budget cuts.

Now for the "other hand." When members of ASUN do try to address serious issues, everyone — members of the DN staff included — laughs at their puny attempts at greatness and quickly points out that ASUN has no real power and shouldn't pretend to.

Well, if they have no power, why not let them work themselves into a frenzy over bike racks and the lack of student parking?

It's time to stop the petty back-

and-forth bantering and get down to issues. If we hope to make any headway with this budget ax looming over our head, people are going to have to work together.

I'm sure this idea has the entire south half of the Nebraska Union in an uproar. These two groups have been at odds for as long as I can remember.

But underneath the empty promises and selfish ambition, a kernel of value exists in the hearts of ASUN senators who are trying to look out for the interests of their fellow students.

On the one hand, the Daily Nebraskan's continual hounding of ASUN frivolity carries out a newspaper's responsibility — to be the watchdog of public officials. When Andrew Sigerson makes homophobic and offensive statements, he deserves to have those statements printed in the ragingly popular Quotes of the Week section.

On the other hand, people keep getting upset and blaming students for not voting in student elections. "That's a blatant display of apathy!" they cry. But, after seeing bickering and bad-mouthing for months on end, who wants to go out and vote for the candidates, anyway? Why waste everyone's time going to the polls when nothing is going to be accomplished that really matters?

What scares me is that, at some point, the DN is going to have to endorse one party or another — undoubtedly a party the editors couldn't poke enough fun at just a month or two earlier. If things go in a linear direction, one would almost anticipate an election-day editorial that reads: "Skip the vote; Non-issues no longer warrant student attention."

That's the last thing anyone at this paper wants to happen. But what if that is the message we are sending out, however inadvertently.

Mott is a senior news-editorial and English major, a Daily Nebraskan news editor and a columnist.

GARY YOUNG

Euthanasia offers easy way out

As confidence in the so-called Age of Reason wanes, the West has a lot to learn from — obscure as it may sound — Dutch history.

During the 1800s, instability threatened a Europe enraged by the spirit of the French Revolution. To their credit, the Dutch were the most resistant to the Enlightenment's more radical impulses. Their reflective posture in a continent of turmoil saved them from the bloody fate unwittingly chosen by so many of their "enlightened" neighbors.

Ironically, times have changed in the Netherlands; again the Dutch prove to be informative. But this time they have set out on the sad, lonely course of euthanasia.

As the test case the world is watching, the Dutch are once again teaching us about the destructiveness of unrestrained freedom. If we dare learn from their experience, the empirical data gathered on the Dutch use of so-called mercy-killings would put euthanasia to rest in any merciful person's mind.

In a recent article in the journal Commentary, University of Chicago biologist and doctor Leon Kass has analyzed the Dutch government's official report about euthanasia. The profile provided by the report is absolutely frightening.

For example, out of the 25,300 cases of euthanasia in Holland a year, 1,000 of the deaths are classified as "direct active involuntary" euthanasia. That is to say, a doctor actively killed a patient against his or her will. Morphine overdoses were used to kill 8,100 patients; in 61 percent of those cases, it was done without the patient's knowledge or consent.

Doctors justified their use of mortal force by assuring that the patients



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had a "low quality of life" or "had no prospects of improvement." The doctors also claimed that they were killing the patient on behalf of the family who "could not take it anymore." Strangely, however, in 45 percent of the cases in which people were terminated without their personal consent, doctors killed the patient without the family's knowledge or consent as well.

The question forced by this data is obvious: How could doctors do this?

The Dutch experiment teaches us that euthanasia is a particularly slippery slope: Assisting patients in voluntary suicides leads inevitably to involuntary termination of life. The question for policy makers is not only whether a caring relative can assent to a doctor's resuscitation efforts, or agree to stopping support for a person whose life is only a matter of machinery. Rather, the danger of euthanasia is much more profound, much more insidious.

A dispositional clinical shift oc-

curs when a doctor begins to assist in suicide. Principled defense of life at nearly all costs is transformed into a new approach to patients in which death is just one type of therapy.

Being a doctor should mean getting into the trenches with a patient, shouldering their sorrow, struggling with their grief. It also means being unwilling to accede to the weak part of each of us which occasionally and usually temporarily feels like it would be better not to live. Doctors, ideally, are priests of hope.

In the New Medicine, however, the Hippocratic Oath is replaced by a utilitarian worksheet; precious life is dehumanized into a technical commodity. As Kass writes: "What will happen when the doctor's unswerving allegiance to the patient's best interests once he is entitled to start thinking that death by injection is a possible 'treatment option'?"

The Hemlock society, a group which advocates euthanasia, argues on grounds of principled liberty that the United States should adopt the Dutch model wholesale. In the opening of the book "Final Exit," author Derek Humphrys challenges codified taboos against suicide, claiming moral high ground: "Aren't these laws (against assisting suicide) ready to be changed to situations befitting modern understanding and morality?"

For Humphrys, embracing the brave new world of putting humans to sleep like injured pets is a matter of course in enlightened people's minds. Only archaic, backward primitives would challenge this moral progress — neatly packaged in a legal fiction called "the right to die."

Young is a first-year law student and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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