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Nebraskan
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EDITORIAL

Going to waste

Relief funds poured into secret program

As southern Florida slowly rebuilds in the wake of Hurricane Andrew and while the West Coast tries to dry out from its wettest winter in years, it is reassuring for Americans to find out that their federal disaster-relief dollars have been spent wisely during the Reagan-Bush years.



David Badders/DN

According to a story from the Cox News Service, the Federal Emergency Management Agency — the federal agency responsible for responding to natural disasters — has poured \$1.3 billion into a secret program to protect America's leaders in case of nuclear war instead of helping out in actual disasters.

The Mobile Emergency Response Support program was started early in Ronald Reagan's first term to replace the even further outdated plan of presidential bomb shelters. The plan, which sounds like the plot for a 1950s "B" movie, was to keep high-level

officials moving around the country in a self-supporting caravan to make them a tough target for Soviet missiles. Strangely enough, the whole thing was hatched with the help of America's most trusted servant, Lt. Col. Oliver North.

The five mobile units include, among other antiquated ideas:

- a variety of classified communications gear, including a 24-ton truck with a pop-up satellite dish;
- a semi filled with enough military meals, water and other supplies to sustain 50 people for 10 days;
- a fuel tanker that can siphon diesel fuel from the gas stations that make it through the nuclear blast.

The personnel required to maintain the program is more depressing. One-third of FEMA's staff is dedicated to working on the secret project. That is three times as many people designated to work on actual disasters. And not even the FEMA employees sent to help after Hurricane Andrew knew what the agency was capable of because of the high level of secrecy surrounding the project.

But the worst detail of all is the budget. For every dollar spent on an actual disaster over the last 10 years, \$12 have been sucked into the program to keep the government running after a nuclear holocaust. The budget request has slipped through every year on one line labeled "submitted under a separate package." What the package is, apparently, remains to be seen.

The effects of this type of spending became clear after Hurricane Andrew. When city officials in Florida asked for hand-held radios to take the place of their downed phone system, they received "high-tech vans capable of sending encrypted multi-frequency messages to military aircraft halfway around the world."

Government waste is nothing new, but it has become painfully obvious in recent months that this is exactly the kind of bureaucratic nonsense that Americans are tired of. If President Clinton expects everyone to stomach a tax increase, he would do well to hunt down this kind of government waste and kill it.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Staff editorials represent the official policy of the Fall 1992 Daily Nebraskan. Policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. Editorials do not necessarily reflect the views of the university, its employees, the students or the NU Board of Regents. Editorial columns represent the opinion of the author. The regents publish the Daily Nebraskan. They establish the UNL Publications Board to supervise the daily production of the paper. According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its students.

LETTER POLICY

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor from all readers and interested others. Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit or reject all material submitted. Readers also are welcome to submit material as guest opinions. The editor decides whether material should run as a guest opinion. Letters and guest opinions sent to the newspaper become the property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned. Anonymous submissions will not be published. Letters should include the author's name, year in school, major and group affiliation, if any. Requests to withhold names will not be granted. Submit material to the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Science

I wish to respond to Gary Young's article, "Church, Science need to Unite" (DN, Feb. 22, 1993).

First Young needs to learn a basic fact about writing: Defining what it is you are writing about is essential. What exactly is this "lawlessness" he writes about? Lack of laws in a secular, ecclesiastical, or scientific sense? The term lawlessness is vague and without a clear definition of it his "argument" that church and science should join forces is worthless.

And aside from the fact that Young can't write his way out of a wet paper bag, his article is flawed anyway. For science never claims to say what is true; just what can be reproduced under controlled conditions. So the difference between the system of belief afforded by science and the system afforded by the church is this: science believes something to be true after careful testing the thing and with the proviso that should tests show a contradiction with other "known" things then the theory will be modified so no contradictions exist under all tests, whereas the churches system of belief is simply that some holy text tells us all we need to know and all that is true and we don't need to ask any questions.

It took the Catholic Church almost 50 years to admit it wrongly persecuted Galileo for his question about church doctrine. Science needs the church like I need lung cancer.

Young should write about things about which he knows more.

Bob Moyer
graduate student
mathematics

'Ignorant letter'

I would like to say a few words to Dallas Beshaler about his letter (DN, Feb. 22, 1993) regarding homosexuality. Once again, I have

read an ignorant letter from someone who fails to realize that homosexuality is not a choice. A homosexual person cannot one day decide to become heterosexual. One's sexual preferences are not chosen like a political party.

Could you someday decide to be homosexual? I imagine this would be unthinkable for you. As far as the military, you say you want "the best military we can have." Do heterosexuals necessarily make the best soldiers? You seem to have this notion that all heterosexuals are these weak, timid men and women. I bet if you lined up 20 people you couldn't tell their sexual preferences.

You are right about our country having a powerful military, due in part to many homosexual men and women serving right now. Maybe none of these soldiers have announced their preferences for fear of being persecuted.

Your comments on the Amendment Two controversy in Colorado are 100 percent incorrect. I am from Colorado so maybe I should clarify the issue for you. The cities of Denver, Boulder and Aspen voted a law into their books making it illegal to discriminate against a person because of their sexual preference. This is the same law that protects a person from discrimination because of race, sex, etc. All of these categories are similar in that they are not chosen by anyone. The reason these three cities enacted this law was because homosexuals who served companies faithfully for many years were being fired because someone found out they were homosexual. Amendment Two came after this and is a state law saying that no city can enact laws which give special rights to homosexuals.

The amendment was worded on the ballot as saying homosexuals would receive "special rights" which scared many voters who thought homosexuals would get away with murder if the bill passed. I do not

believe that any group should have special privileges. However, everyone should be allowed the basic rights described in our Constitution. That is what Denver, Boulder and Aspen were trying to accomplish.

Finally, you say that you do not want homosexuality to be "introduced as a natural and normal part of society." Who are you to say what is normal?

Russell R. Worth
junior
arts and sciences

Praise

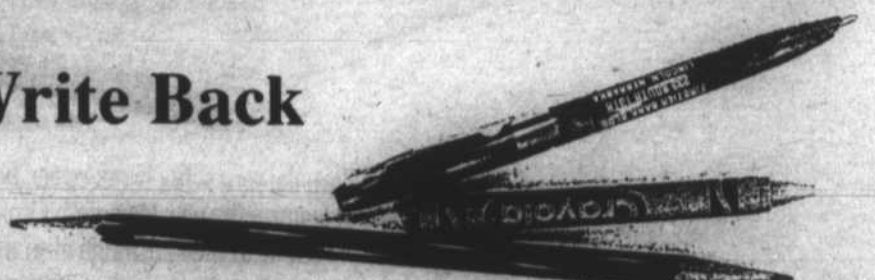
I praise President Clinton for lifting the ban on gays in the military. His deed is commendable and his words most praiseworthy. Aside from banishing discrimination against gays in the military, the disease of homophobia will be made equal to racism and all other forms of injustice.

American gays, irrespective of their sexual orientation, are entitled and deserving of the same right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," as guaranteed under the Constitution. Or is this phrase applicable only to heterosexual Americans? Further, the axiom "taxation without representation" is a plausible argument on behalf of the gay citizenry. We hold strongly to these rights. Their violation is against democracy and outright un-American.

And what of the military chain-of-command? Is it not obligated to defend the ideals inherent in our great Constitution? Are "all men are created equal," or is the principle intended only for heterosexual members of our democracy? I implore the Congress to legislate for full rights for the gay population, and to get with the times of progressive change. I demand the country to expedite equal rights for gay Americans in this decade of the gay nineties of the 20th century.

Alexis Wolf
Lincoln resident

P.S. Write Back



The Daily Nebraskan wants to hear from you. If you want to voice your opinion about an article that appears in the newspaper, let us know. Just write a brief letter to the editor and sign it (don't forget your student ID number) and mail it to the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R' Street, Lincoln, NE 68588-0488, or stop by the office in the basement of the Nebraska Union and visit with us. We're all ears.