

Clinton's economic plans good, but more cuts needed

President Clinton made the economy the centerpiece of his fall campaign and is now turning it into a national crusade for "sacrifice." Objections from Republicans are greeted with Clinton's challenge to "be specific about cuts, don't give us any smoke and mirrors."

Say what you will, but Clinton's salesmanship has the GOP momentarily in a quandary, fretting over whether to go along with the program or oppose it every step of the way. Some call for letting it pass, seeing the economy break down, and then coming to the rescue in 1996 the way they did in 1980. This is a dangerous and irresponsible strategy.

It is not the GOP's duty to propose a budget of their own — the Democrats won. It's their job now and their fault if it goes sour. Nonetheless, the GOP has an obligation as the loyal opposition to do more

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than carp about "tax and spend" economics.

There are any number of proposals to cut the deficit and the national debt, from the Grace Commission Report of the mid-1980s to plans from the Heritage Foundation. Any combination of them would wipe out the deficit and begin making real debt reduction.

President Bush floated one idea in the campaign last year and it was virtually lost amidst all the media gloom. It's simple — freeze federal

spending at current levels for five years, allowing an adjustment only for inflation and maybe one percent for population growth. Economist Thomas Sowell has stated that if Congress had acceded to President Reagan's request to do this in 1980, the federal budget would have been balanced by 1984. If it had happened in 1984, the budget would have been balanced by 1989.

No tax increases, no spending cuts, nothing except forgoing the automatic seven to 10 percent funding that Congress automatically votes for every program for every year.

Clinton does have some ideas for spending cuts, such as the now-infamous honey subsidy, or cutting subsidies to the Rural Electrification Administration. But Clinton doesn't go far enough.

For starters, eliminate all agricultural subsidies by phasing them out over a four-year period. Let tobacco farmers in Virginia and dairy farmers in Wisconsin ride the free market.

Big federal projects, like the REA and the Tennessee Valley Authority, have outlived their usefulness and exist only to issue paychecks for their bureaucratic constituencies. Get rid of them. Farmers have electricity today. Some things, like the post office, could be turned over to private concerns and run much more efficiently.

To be fair, end all government subsidized research for business and let them pay their own R & D bills.

This is all on the margins though. More than half of the federal budget is entitlement programs like

Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Paul Tsongas suggested means-testing them last year, and Ross Perot followed up on it in the fall campaign. The truly needy should receive the aid, but those drawing one or more pensions making \$50,000 a year in retirement can pay most or all of their own way. Social Security was intended as a stopgap measure, not as a cradle-to-grave social welfare program.

The answer, as has been voiced before, is not to demand the American people "sacrifice" or "contribute." The answer is to make government sacrifice and have people rely on it less and make their own way.

Sam Kepfield is the Daily Nebraskan's token conservative and a Diversions contributor.

Prayer is private

State may tolerate, not promote, religion and invocations, benedictions promote it

Many students I know hope students will vote for prayer at UNL graduation ceremonies at the next ASUN election.

I was asked to sign the petition that put the issue on the ballot. Upon refusing, I was asked why I was against prayer.

I am not against prayer. I do, however, think that whether or not the issue is passed is irrelevant. Prayer at UNL graduation ceremonies is unconstitutional.

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution reads, in part: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion. . . . Because all state constitutions must agree with the federal constitution, no state can officially respect a religion either. And the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is part of the state of Nebraska.

This does not, of course, mean that no religious exercise can take place here. On the contrary, practicing religion must be allowed. The First Amendment, after the part already mentioned, reads: ". . . or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. . . ."

But allowing religion and sanctioning it are two different things. Having Bible study groups like Campus Crusade and Christian Challenge work on campus is allowing religion, or "the free exercise thereof." The groups have to use their own funds and time to do their work.

On the other hand, having a prayer at graduation is sanctioning it. In a case like this, the state asks the person saying the prayer to come to the university for the said purpose of saying a prayer. In this way, it promotes the religion of the person saying the prayer.

Because the state can't recognize any religious belief over another, it must recognize all religions as equal. Nothing it does can imply that one religion is better than another

in the eyes of the government.

Having a prayer mentioning Jesus alienates all non-Christians. Having a prayer mentioning God alienates all pagans. Having a prayer mentioning divine beings alienates atheists. And a prayer not mentioning divine beings is not really a prayer.

A moment of silence is the best compromise idea that has been brought up. No one needs to think about God during that moment. Persons are free to think about whatever they wish. No religion is promoted or demoted here.

The pro-prayer cry I have most often heard is that America and Americans need God and cannot survive without God as part of their national identity.

As a Christian, I say God is part of my identity; and I hope he can be part of other people's identity. I just feel my fellow Christians and I should work on our own time without government help.

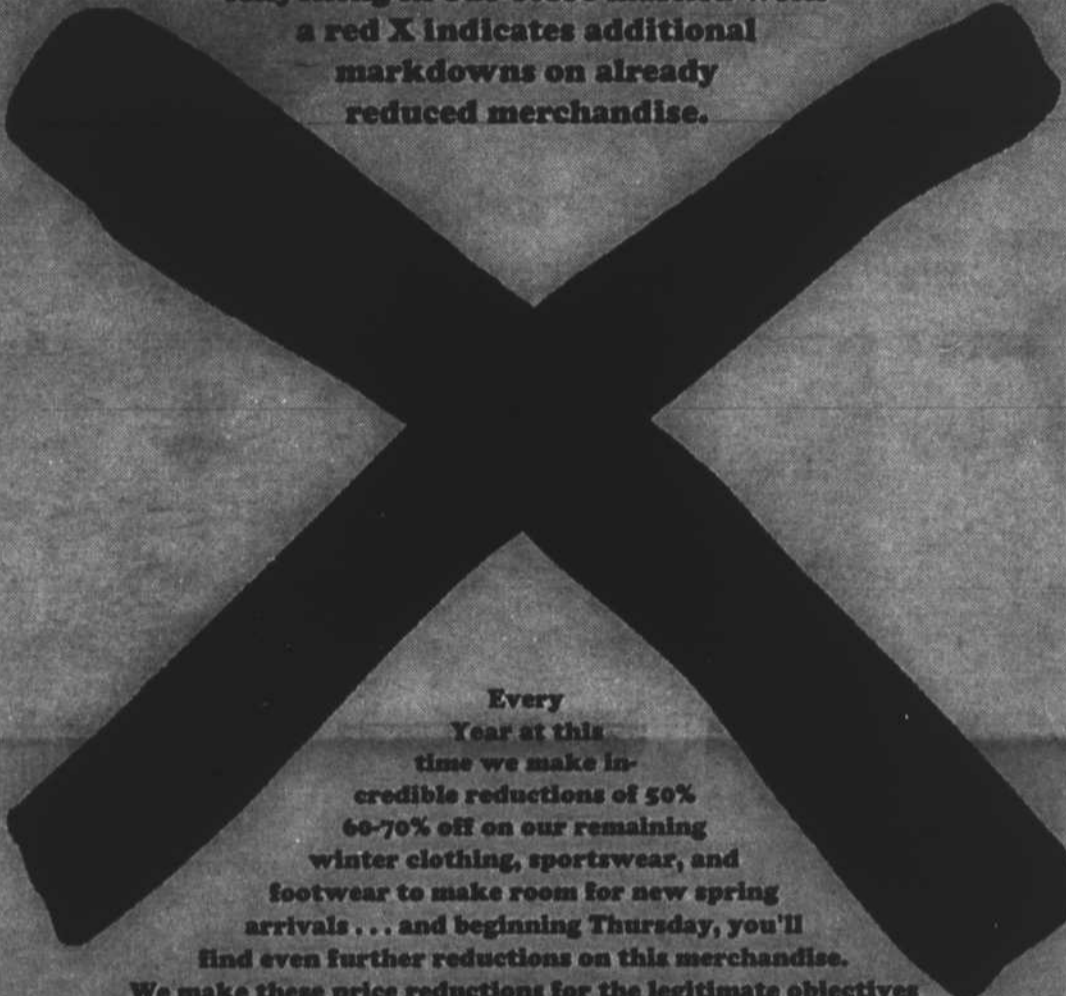
I acknowledge that God is the most powerful method of bringing people together, and of bringing people in line. I also grant that the founding fathers all believed in God, and that they probably didn't expect the diversity of religions that exists in their brainchild today.

But the Constitution, fortunately, can be defined and redefined. Part of the definition means examining what is wrong with the present way of doing things, and eliminating those wrongs.

When this country was founded, the First Amendment meant, in part, that Congress could not respect any particular sect of Christianity. Things have changed; now it means the government, federal and state, can't respect any religion. That means universities, too.

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