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EDITORIAL

## Sound bites

### NAFTA rhetoric can't replace education

With only eight days left until the House of Representatives votes on the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement, proponents and opponents of NAFTA are working quickly to persuade lawmakers to support their side of the issue.

President Clinton planned dinners and private meetings with undecided lawmakers in hopes of swinging their votes his way. Ross Perot is still touring the country to persuade his followers that NAFTA would be disastrous to American workers. Labor unions also have put pressure on Clinton; some have threatened to end financial support for lawmakers who support NAFTA.

All the politicians coming out about NAFTA are providing sound bites for the media, hoping these alone will persuade Americans and members of Congress either to support or reject NAFTA when the congressional vote comes around.

The key to making a responsible decision on the issue is education. We should not judge an issue as important as NAFTA on simple sound bites and quotations from newspapers. We need to read the facts.

A panel of local educators, economists and lawyers studied the potential effects NAFTA would have on Nebraska and determined the agreement would have a slightly negative impact on the state's economy in the short term, while the long-term impact would be positive.

More Americans and lawmakers need to look at studies and facts such as these about the proposal before making a decision on NAFTA. Even though it is easier to follow Clinton's or Perot's opinions, we should educate ourselves and make our own decisions. We should not make a decision on an issue as important as NAFTA solely on the basis of politics.

## Take aim

### Troops just sitting ducks in Mogadishu

The illusion of a truce in Somalia faded Monday as foreign troops came under fire for the fourth straight day. The United States responded by confirming its intention to put U.S. troops back in the streets of Mogadishu.

On Sunday, Somali warlord Mohammed Farrah Aidid vowed he would not negotiate with the United Nations. Aidid's Somali National Alliance boycotted two U.N. meetings Monday.

The decision to return U.S. troops to the streets of Mogadishu is a grave error. The Clinton administration has consistently made poor decisions regarding the civil strife in Somalia, and this is yet another. U.S. troops will be direct targets for Aidid's forces in the streets of Mogadishu. They will be sitting ducks.

There are good reasons for U.S. forces to participate in a U.N. mission to provide food and supplies to the people of Somalia. There are many needy people there the United States can help.

But the United States cannot force the Somalis to form a government and stop the chaos that currently rules the country. Only the Somalis can do that.

Clinton will not solve the problems in Somalia by returning U.S. troops to Mogadishu's streets. This policy will only result in more U.S. soldiers needlessly dying.

Realizing U.S. troops are not the answer to Somalia's problems does not equal an isolationist position. The United States has a role in world affairs, but it is not to waste the lives of its armed forces in a fight it cannot win.

EDITORIAL POLICY

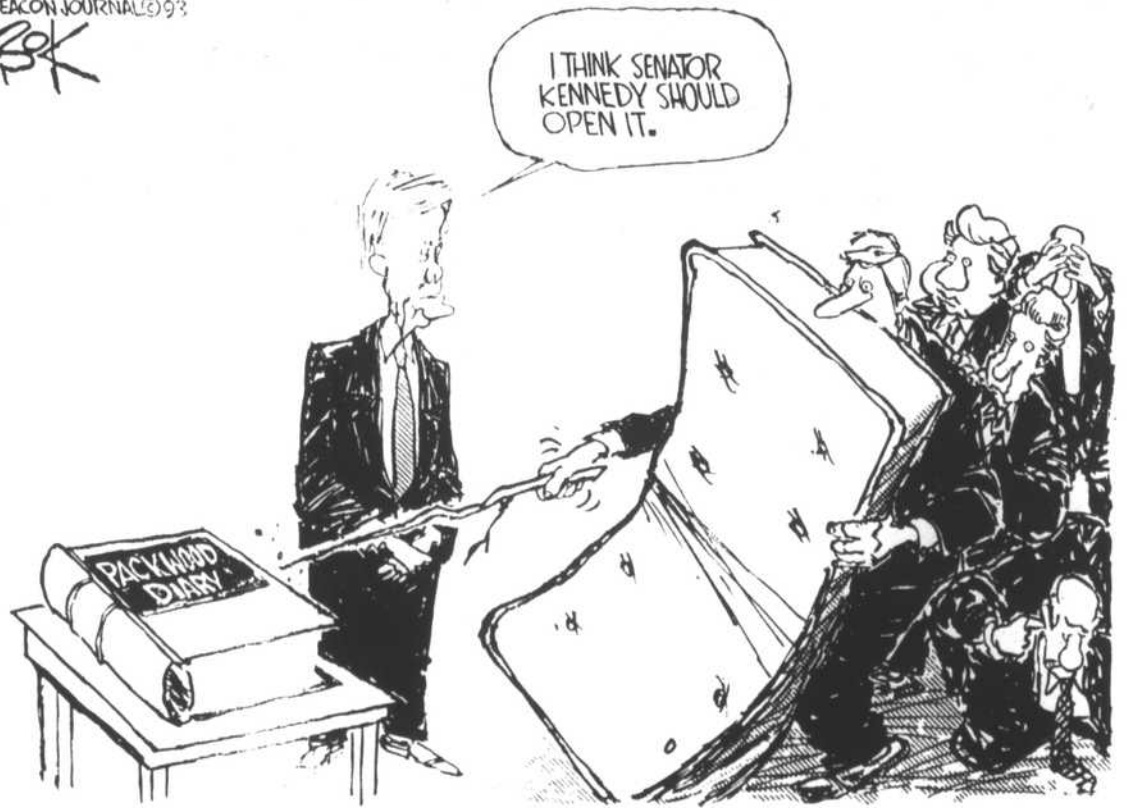
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LETTER POLICY

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.

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JEREMY FITZPATRICK

## Media violence mirrors reality

I talked to a woman the other day who said she was unhappy with the Daily Nebraskan's coverage of the Roger Bjorklund murder trial. She thought reporting the testimony in the trial was sensational.

"People in Nebraska haven't been exposed to this kind of thing," she said. "It's scaring them."

Apparently they have a reason to be scared. The testimony in the trial has sometimes been graphic, but it has also been reality. And not dealing with that reality will not make it go away.

I was watching "This Week With David Brinkley" on Sunday and heard a man talk about how he thought the media was not being responsible by leading its broadcasts with stories about murder and other violence. There is plenty of other "good" news it could be reporting, he said.

Even Janet Reno, the nation's attorney general, has jumped on the bandwagon. Reno, who is supposedly part of a Democratic administration, has pressured the television industry to regulate its programming — or else. Television is too violent and plays a part in the violence in our society, according to Reno.

There seem to be an endless number of people who are convinced that the media have the power to shape peoples' minds and behaviors.

All of this, of course, ignores the fact that the media and television are largely a reflection of our society. Television is based on popularity. If violent shows are on television, it is because they get the highest Nielsen ratings.

If the front pages of newspapers contain stories about murders, it is because they are commonplace in one of the world's most violent societies.



**It is easier to point to the media than it is to address the real problems the United States faces. Kill the messenger, as they say.**

Media do not create murders, they only report them.

But it is easier to point to the media than it is to address the real problems the United States faces. Kill the messenger, as they say.

I will never be able to understand people who want the media to present only "good" news. The United States will never be able to move forward if we all live in a fantasy world where nothing is wrong with this country. Only when we are willing to look our problems squarely in the face will we be able to solve them.

All the feel-good rhetoric and happy news reports in the world can do nothing to solve problems. Only one thing can do that: a willingness to look squarely at the truth and acknowledge it.

The truth for the caller concerned that Nebraskans would be scared by the details of the Bjorklund trial is that murder is not rare in Nebraska anymore. People are not safe, even if we want them to be.

The truth for the man angered by the focus on murder and other violent crime by the media is that violence is the reality of the United States today. People are killed everyday and everywhere.

If our society wants to do something about the problem of violence

in the news, it should do something about the problem of violence itself. If murders didn't happen everyday, they wouldn't appear in newspapers or on television.

Janet Reno should wake up to that reality as well. Undoubtedly the violence on television influences some people to act violently. But the United States is not a violent society because of fictional television stories.

As attorney general, Reno has the ability to speak out about the real problems in the United States, such as too many guns and too few jobs. She has done that, but it does not help her cause to create the diversion of television as the problem.

The purpose of the media is not to make people feel good. It is to present an accurate picture of what is going on in the world so people can make decisions about it.

If people are unsettled by what they see in the news, then they should do something about the real problems in society. Blaming the media is an easy answer, but it is not the right one.

Fitzpatrick is a senior political science major and the editor of the Daily Nebraskan.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Fall

I am happy to hear that 19-year-old Jeffrey Knoll's condition is improving. It is sad to hear when anyone gets injured, especially when it is a serious injury.

But was Knoll really a victim? Well, yes, he was a victim of the fall from the third-story window. But was he a victim of the members of the Phi Gamma Delta house? No. We have been told Jeffrey was coerced to drink. This may be true, but he still made a conscious choice to drink alcohol. In doing so, he knowingly violated state law.

At 19 years old, we consider Knoll an adult and responsible for his actions. Unfortunately the consequences of his actions have placed him in a hospital.

### 'Pay for crimes'

Mr. Carpenter (DN, Nov. 8) apparently missed the point the majority of us seem to get. I wrote in response to all those bleeding hearts who want to forgive the poor man who killed Candice Harms.

I, as a taxpayer, am tired of paying out my hard-earned dollars for some cold-blooded killer to sit on death row and soak up thousands of my dollars. I'm saying they should pay for their crimes. I am not advocating lynching, although some of them deserve it. I'm just saying it's a little ridiculous to pay the living expenses, doctor bills and legal fees of a killer.

Courtney Parker  
senior  
criminal justice

Your coverage, however, is much too graphic to serve its purpose. We don't need to read about each wound inflicted in extreme detail. In fact, it would be more informative by being less repulsive. The depictions your articles contain border on sensationalism.

For most readers, simply mentioning that Candice Harms was tortured before she was killed would suffice. Telling us the coroner said that wounds inflicted showed signs of having been incurred before death would serve the purpose of proving the statement.

I'm sure everything in your articles was true. We just don't need to know the graphic details. Please avoid the graphic details. They make the stories less real by being too real.

Tim Stevens  
freshman  
engineering

### Coverage

The coverage of the Bjorklund trial is important to many UNL students.

William Ogden  
junior  
general studies