

PAT HAMBRECHT

TV perfect government model

"I like to watch things on TV." — "Satellite of Love" by Lou Reed.

Politics are nice, but television makes more sense. Television has outdated even the idea of a single government system.

To witness the triumph of informational aesthetics over government, one need look no further than "Tyger, Tyger Burning Bright," a television show on channel 14.

"Tyger, Tyger Burning Bright" features the god of Nebraska Marxism: A huge floating head named Ron Kurtenbach. This head provides stirring philosophical commentary, reads poetry and tries to convince phone callers to join the Communist front. Like a Leninist Max Headroom, Kurtenbach is a pre-Yeltsin thrill ride of public access fun.

But a little socialism goes a long way, and soon the Kurten-head begins to bore me. So when I grow weary of political dialogue, I just flip the channel and zap! Ron is replaced by Pat Robertson, Simplemente Maria or Beavis and Butt-head. Communism is eliminated simply by flipping channels.

A new channel is another dimension with its own rules. Try an experiment in cultural relativity sometime, and flip channels between personality icons like Kurtenbach, Robertson, Howard Stern or Gloria Steinem and decide which one is better. It's impossible.

Each television personality has a cyclical, functional ideology perfect unto itself. None of the television icons has anything to do with anyone else; they are ideological phantoms to each other. And maybe that's the way it should be.

Television proves that belief in anything is outdated. Watch one chan-



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nel, and you'll see a bunch of happy democracy-loving Christians frolicking with each other. Watch another, and you'll see a group of communist lesbians apparently just as gleeful. Who's better? Who cares when you can change channels? Viva the Remote Control!

Those who believe television should be federally regulated have it backward. Government needs to be mainstreamed into a world of television principles.

Take Hillary Rodham Clinton's health plan, for instance. Personally, I don't think it's going to work. I think it will be savagely abused and will cost far more than it's worth. And frankly, I don't want to pay for it.

On the other hand, I might be willing to sample the Rodham Health Plan through a trial subscription similar to the ones offered by HBO or the Disney Channel. How about this: I try the plan on a trial basis for six months and if I like it, I'll resubscribe and the government can add it to my taxes.

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Under the laws of television government, you could opt for the equivalent of cable programming and pay a higher fraction of taxes to the equiv-

alent of cable programming: police protection, a postal service, public hospitals, etc. And if you really enjoy government, you could choose a premium channel service like fascism or communism. Imagine the luxury of being able to choose your own political shackles instead of having them forced on you.

Wouldn't it be nice to call your chosen government system and say:

"The secret police just beat up my brother, my tax bill keeps going up and I'm sick of having my phone tapped. Cancel my subscription to Fascist Fun — I'm switching my tax dollars to the Libertarian Super-Saver!"

Everyone's vote would finally count, with the heavy sway of individual tax dollars.

The applications of television are not limited to government. Television is the crux of everything. It is sex, violence, knowledge, religion and power. It is the finest creation of the 20th century, unrivaled by the computer or the Slurpee. And I am proud to call it my friend.

"The next revolution will be televised." — MTV

Hambrecht is a sophomore news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

JEREMY FITZPATRICK

Life on UNL streets hits home

I had my first encounter with the homeless men who inhabit the Nebraska Union when one of them walked past me a couple of weeks ago and shouted, "Rip their heads off!"

His screams were apparently not aimed at me. He walked right past, concentrating intently on whatever world he was in. I saw no one else around in danger of having their heads ripped off.

I do not know if the man is really homeless. I can only guess that he is from the amount of time he spends in the warmth of the union.

But I do not know. I have not asked.

There are a couple of other men who have been spending a lot of time in the union since the weather has turned cold. They wear the same clothes every day.

I see one of them often. He sits very calmly in the Crib, wearing a brown jumpsuit and a stocking cap. He smokes cigarettes and just stares into space.

I have never seen any expression on his face. He wears only a calm stare into nowhere.

The "rip their heads off!" man is much more animated. He paces the halls and hangs around the candy machine. He does not stare into space, but he seems entirely disconnected from reality as he mutters to himself.

Working in the union every day brings me in frequent contact with these men. But our lives do not really cross. We are in two completely different worlds.

I see them every day but I know nothing about them.

Does anyone?

Shouldn't someone?

I suppose this is the point where someone would step forward and say that the homeless men — if they are homeless — could work if they wanted. There are plenty of jobs out there if they wanted to work, they would



But I wonder how easy it is to get a job when you have to write on the application that you have no permanent residence and can be reached on most days somewhere in the Nebraska Union.

tell me.

I suppose that is true. But I wonder how easy it is to get a job when you have to write on the application that you have no permanent residence and can be reached on most days somewhere in the Nebraska Union.

And more than that, I wonder what has happened to these men to put them in their current position. What happens to make someone homeless? If I didn't have a place to live, I could count on my family and friends for help. Where were the people to help these men when they took to the streets?

Maybe they don't want the help. But maybe they do. It is hard to imagine that they wouldn't want some refuge from the bitter cold weather we have been having lately.

And that raises another point. If these men really are homeless, where do they go when the union is closed? Is there somewhere else they can go to keep warm against the bitter winter cold?

It is possible that these men aren't homeless. Maybe they just like spending time with college students. But even if they aren't, there are plenty of people in the United States who don't have a place to live. Plenty of people who need to spend time in warm buildings to keep from freezing.

They are real, and they are out there. They are people who can't come in from the cold like the rest of us.

We might be seeing them every day, even if we do not know it.

I suppose now someone will have to ask the troublesome question of what can be done to help these men. I don't have the answer.

A good start might be for someone to give a damn about them. More shelters where they could at least get in from the cold would probably be helpful as well.

If we really want to help, it will cost money. Federal programs mean taxes. Shelters, soup lines and job training programs aren't free. In tight economic times, that might be a price people aren't willing to pay.

Maybe the first thing we could do is just notice the homeless. I have walked past the men in the union countless times this year, oblivious to what I was seeing. Are these really people in Lincoln who do not have a place to live? Where do they go when we go home to safety and warmth?

What kind of country do we live in that lets some of its people live on the streets?

Maybe there is nothing we can do about homelessness. There are plenty of people who are willing to believe that nothing that can be done about the problem. Some think it would be a waste of time to try.

And if we continue to walk past the homeless, refusing to acknowledge they are here, then maybe they are right.

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

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