

OPINION

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Page 4

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EDITORIAL

Smoke screen

Tobacco industry wins free and clear

The tobacco industry is wheezing a big post-election sigh of relief.

The industry won big Nov. 8. Since then one Republican has announced an end to the scrutinization of the safety of tobacco products.

Rep. Thomas Bliley, R-Va., who most likely will head the House Health and Environment subcommittee, said he saw no reason for the committee's high-profile tobacco hearings to continue.

"I don't think we need any more legislation regulating tobacco," Bliley said in a television interview last week.

The reality comes as a great disappointment to Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Calif., the committee's outgoing chairman.

Waxman has said the only clear loser in the turnover will be America's general health. The winner is another multimillion dollar special interest and strong lobby in Washington.

Waxman is correct in saying Bliley doesn't have America's best interest in mind in announcing an end to any further scrutiny of the tobacco industry.

Could this have something to do with the fact that Bliley comes from the Virginia district in which Philip Morris is the largest private employer?

Or maybe the fact that Bliley, according to Newsday, received more than \$90,000 in campaign contributions from the tobacco industry?

So far in the hearings, Waxman has worked to show the industry concealed its knowledge that smoking is a health risk.

Chief executives of the top tobacco companies have continued to deny that nicotine is addictive. The U.S. surgeon general believes it is.

Questions still linger as to whether companies have known otherwise. Some have even gone so far as to question whether tobacco companies have altered the level of nicotine in their products in order to get customers hooked.

In short, it seems the sellout by Bliley is not exactly the kind of "mandate for change" voters reportedly voiced last week. It is a return to special interests controlling Washington, disregarding the public welfare.

The only thing that is clear is that more answers are needed about the health implications associated with using tobacco products.

And this new smoke screen only shows the industry has yet to prove it has nothing to hide.

Hundreds of thousands of Americans are diagnosed with lung cancer each year, and the number of women dying from lung cancer has surpassed the number of women who die of breast cancer.

It is a growing problem.

People have a right to be warned about the safety of tobacco products so they can make an informed decision about using them.

EDITORIAL POLICY

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Massey

The current debate concerning the removal of assistant professor Raymond Massey from a search committee raises difficult questions of equal opportunity, religious liberty and freedom of expression. In accord with a recent Daily Nebraskan editorial, we suggest the following guiding principles for cases of this sort:

First, UNL is correct to forbid discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. All individuals have a right to be considered and evaluated in academic and employment contexts without regard to the nature of their sexual desires and inclinations.

Second, UNL faculty, staff and students have a right to disagree with UNL about the inclusion of sexual orientation in its equal opportunity policies. They also have a right to express that disagreement and to lobby for changes in UNL policy with respect to sexual orientation.

Third, as long as UNL's sexual orientation policy remains in effect, all faculty and staff, when acting in their official capacities as employees of UNL, have an obligation to refrain from discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation. UNL has the authority and obligation to ensure that its employees, when acting in their official capacities, do not engage in such discrimination.

Finally, some employees may consider themselves obligated to discriminate against lesbians, gays and women, blacks, Jews, Mormons, atheists or others whom they consider intrinsically unfit for certain jobs or programs. Employees do not have a general right to disregard those UNL policies that they deem themselves unable to follow.

Whenever possible, however, UNL should attempt to accommodate the beliefs of its employees by not assigning them responsibilities that are likely to pit their religious or philosophical convictions against their obligation as UNL employees to act in accord with principles of equal opportunity.

David Moshman, president
Nebraska Civil Liberties Union

Marlayn Cragun, executive
director
Nebraska Civil Liberties Union



Election

This is in response to the post-election editorial (DN, Nov. 9, 1994). To begin, there are several dubious statements in the editorial and if left unanswered might be mistaken for the truth. The readers of this paper are entitled to objective facts and a different perspective.

First, in the noble quest for objectivity, the article states that the "traditionally conservative" Nebraska electorate "turned toward the Democrats."

To the contrary, I would argue that voters turned toward more conservative political ideas. Yes, Bob Kerrey and Ben Nelson, both Democrats, won their respective re-election campaigns. But the editorial fails to take into account Jon Christensen's defeat of Peter Hoagland, the re-election of Republican Doug Bereuter, or that Republicans won the offices of secretary of state, attorney general and treasurer. The facts clearly contradict the opinion of the editorial board.

The editors also feel Republican control "spells not only gridlock, but deadlock in Washington." They also allude to the return of "good ol' boy" politics. Perhaps a history lesson is in order.

For the last 40 years Democrats have controlled the House of Representatives and have become the authority on obstruction and corruption. The records of Dan Rostenkowski and former Speaker of the House Jim Wright should say plenty about Democratic ethics.

I admit the Republicans are not blameless and now we must hold them accountable. But the potential now for spending abuses is less probable for one reason. Republican hypocrisy on spending restraints would put them back in the minor-

ity for another 40 years after the next election cycle.

The editorial also incorrectly misrepresents the Contract With America.

The contract promises nothing but an up-or-down vote in the House on ten issues important to Americans, including a balanced budget amendment. These are hardly revolutionary ideas and the time for such legislation is long overdue.

We should not expect miracles in the next two years. On this count the editorial is correct. The transformation of American civilization will not take place overnight.

What I disagree with is the prediction of "political stagnation." Last Tuesday's elections made a loud statement to our elected officials. Reform government or leave. This means shifting more responsibility to state and local governments and an end to dinosaur federal programs.

In their sour-grapes lament, one particular phrase is an example of the political philosophy behind the article. The editors speak of "social programming" such as federal education and environmental and health care mandates. It seems the editors are longing for a "more egalitarian nation."

Perhaps the Soviet Union circa 1970, with its top-down programming was more egalitarian. Everyone was equally poor, save a handful of party officials. Equality is a noble goal, if approached in the proper context of equality of opportunity, not government regulations to reach equal results.

The board also complains that Republicans will halt progress toward a more just and fair society. Again, they are wrong.

The first matter of business the Republican House will bring to the floor requires elected officials in Washington to adhere to the same laws that every other citizen must obey, a piece of legislation the aristocracy the Democratic leadership refused to pass.

This year's election did end historically on Nov. 8. In one of the last contests to be called, Speaker of the House Tom Foley, became a victim of the angry voters of Washington state. This closed the the history book on two generations of Democratic rule. It also signaled the beginning of a Congress that reflects more accurately the mood and sentiment of the country.

Joseph B. Franz
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finance