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Nebraskan**  
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## EDITORIAL

## Out of touch

*GOP plan would hurt moms, children*

With the GOP firmly in control of Congress, Republicans say they are preparing to push forward with their "Contract with America" in January.

Unfortunately, some of those who will be pushed most by the contract are those who already have been shoved aside.

One of the first major tenets of the contract is to end welfare payments to unwed mothers age 17 and younger and to funnel the subsequent savings into orphanages and adoptions.

The plan is perhaps well-intentioned. Conservatives think by ending the payments, teen-age mothers will stop having children for the benefit of collecting welfare checks. Conservatives also think the plan will help solve the problem of illegitimacy.

And by funneling the savings into orphanages and other institutions, conservatives think the money will be spent more efficiently.

This notion, however, unveils just how much the GOP has lost touch with the reality of the growing social problems facing American society.



Amy Schmidt/DN

First of all, WHAT orphanages? Orphanages are all but obsolete in the United States — and for a good reason. Social services have worked for years under the ideology that except in severe cases, strengthening families is the most important avenue to improving lives of children and easing social problems.

The GOP's plan abandons its alleged dedication to family values by punishing young, unwed women who choose not to have abortions.

Furthermore, the plan would be devastating to the children whom these mothers must support without assistance.

The result would be a greater burden on society when the children, who have been deprived of a decent chance in life, end up eternally on welfare or involved in crime.

The plan also is out of touch with reality because mothers, for the most part, do not have children merely for the economic benefits of welfare.

According to the Nebraska Department of Social Services, the maximum Aid to Dependent Children payment a mother receives is \$273 per month for one child and \$71 for each additional child — not enough to live on, much less to get rich from.

Illegitimate births in Nebraska are not a main burden on welfare in the state. In fact, more than half the kids who benefit from Aid to Dependent Children have fathers that are or were married to their mother.

The bottom line is that plans like these in "Contract with America" solve nothing. They simply heighten social problems and myths about welfare and public assistance.

## EDITORIAL POLICY

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MELISLING  
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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### School prayer

Your editorial cartoon (DN, Nov. 16, 1994) had a child asking "How come we can't pray in school?" That is completely misleading. Students now have plenty of opportunity to pray silently, or even noisily, during a school day if they want to, and no one can stop them.

What they can't have is school-sponsored prayers.

Maybe someone who is in favor of school-sponsored praying will answer the following questions:

- Why is it important for prayer to be led by a public official, such as a teacher?
- Why must prayer be out loud and done in unison with a large number of other people?
- Why, for those parents who want their children to pray every morning, can't it be done before school, at home, with the rest of the FAMILY participating?
- To those school prayer advocates who are Christians: How do you respond to Jesus' clear injunctions against praying in public (Matthew 6:5-6) and the use of canned phrases (Matthew 6:7)?

Edgar Pearlstein  
UNL professor  
physics and astronomy

### 'Good' moms

I am writing in response to Cindy Lange-Kubick's column "Even 'good' moms get angry" (DN, Nov. 17, 1994). I've tried to make sense of it. I thought if I could find a hint of value in it, I might be able to tolerate what this woman had to say.

As it is, I am at a loss. What could possibly be gained from this?

I hope her children never know what she has said about them to thousands of people. I thank God she is not my mother.

Cindy, the appropriate response to "I hate you" and "I want to kill you" would be "I'm sorry you feel that way. I love you" — not, "You can't spell, kid, and I've wanted to kill you too." (my paraphrasing).

If you can't come up with a better response than that, take some time out and cool down before you say things you may regret. Not only are you the child's mother, you are supposed to be the adult in these situations.

Whether you like it or not, your children learn from watching you. If you don't like what they are doing, take a good look at yourself and the way you are choosing to raise them.

Assuming Susan Smith is guilty, the fact that her neighbors thought she was a good mother is no testimony to me. That only reinforces the fact that things are not always as they seem. Why would you choose to empathize with women who abuse, abandon or murder their children?

You say "somehow we are not real women unless we are mothers." Stop the melodrama. No one forced you to be a mother. That was your choice. Maybe someone should have stopped you.

Being a mother is a lifelong commitment to grow. Apparently, you were not ready for that. I don't know what you expected, but something has to give. It is not fair to your children for you to approach motherhood with this resentment.

God help us if a good mother is an anomaly.

Anne Hjersman  
Lincoln



James Mehling/DN

### Massey

This is one Nebraskan's perspective of Ray Massey's attempt to discriminate against gays and lesbians on behalf of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and of Jamie Karl's and Shane Tucker's ensuing messages of bigotry and hate:

Mr. Karl, as you stated, Mr. Massey claimed "Nebraskans, especially the parents of children attending the camp, don't support policies protecting homosexuals." But Mr. Massey cannot and does not speak for all Nebraskans.

While I am not aware of any kind of statewide referendum, I do know that national polls show that the majority of citizens do in fact believe that gays and lesbians should NOT be discriminated against in employment, housing

and public access. (This is despite the fact that many may not agree that the gay and lesbian "lifestyle" is "normative.")

Just as parents take their children to Czech Days in Wilbur, parents also take their children to the National Coming Out Day Fair in Omaha every October to expose them to this culturally rich segment of their community. People all over this city were running around worshipping Swayze and Snipes as they made a movie about gay drag queens stuck in a small Midwestern town — and undoubtedly that movie will be well-attended in Lincoln by both parents and their children.

If Elton John were to visit any town in this state to talk about how he came up with the music for "The Lion King," you can bet the venue would be packed with parents and their children. The fact is, high-profile or not, gays and lesbians are here to stay — and they are here to teach, guide and lead.

As someone who comes into contact with more than 3,000 children a year through my work and as a Sunday school teacher, it is my opinion — based on my experience — that children are unaffected by the sexual orientation of their adult caretakers and supervisors.

Most programs and institutions that I know of in Lincoln have either a written or unwritten policy regarding sharing information about one's sexual habits with kids: Don't do it. An environment of tolerance and acceptance can be provided without embroiling children in this debate.

In fact, kids are much more concerned about what's on the lunch menu, why a frog's skin is slimy or whether a game is played fairly than whether someone is homosexual.

A quality camp program does not draw lines as Mr. Massey, Mr. Tucker and Mr. Karl would have it. A quality camp program is about drawing a circle and then drawing everyone into the circle. Parents send their kids to a camp like Western 4-H knowing that they will interact with other children and adults of a wide variety of ethnicities, religious beliefs, socioeconomic backgrounds and creeds — all in an environment that is challenging yet safe and supportive of each child.

Karl Olson  
Lincoln