

OPINION

Thursday, August 31, 1995

Page 4

Daily
Nebraskan
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Right of way

Cyclists deserve protection on streets

You are not safe in this town. The police will protect you, but only so far — strap on a helmet and hop on your bike, and they'll look the other way. That's right, cyclists are on their own. Cycling is forbidden on the sidewalks downtown — as well it should be. Grown-ups on bikes should be in the street, not flying between pedestrians like mad acrobats. But the streets downtown are not safe for cyclists, and they never have been.



The law keeping bikes off the sidewalk is strictly enforced — count the number of times you've seen a bike cop write a ticket for just that offense.

Now count the number of times you've seen any police officer in this town stop a car for cutting into a cyclist's lane.

That number would be zero. But in this state, in case you didn't know, a bicyclist owns a chunk of the road just like a car: a lane of one's own.

A whole lane, just think. Lincoln motorists don't seem to know that, or care. And why should they, with the police officers averting their eyes.

About one in 10 of the drivers who cut you off, turn in front of you or otherwise endanger

your skin will also hurl abuse at you from an open window.

About one in 50 will hurl something more substantial.

And nothing will ever happen to them — so long as they don't actually hit and kill you.

While the city planners were busy calculating the number of cars they predict will be choking the streets of our fair city in the year 2525 (or whenever) were they taking into account the explosion in cyclists this town is even now experiencing?

Were they figuring on an economy that has people working harder for less — and the effects which that might have on the number of cyclists?

No. That would be pessimism, and the keepers of the keys of the city can't afford to be pessimistic.

Still, the number of cyclists grows in proportion to the number of drivers. What will they do about it?

Here's what they should do.

—Mandate bike lanes downtown and on all major thoroughfares. (The trails are nice but don't actually get you where you want to go.)

—Emphasize bike laws in driver's education classes.

—Treat cyclists like the taxpaying commuters they are.

Until then cyclists just will have to play it safe — or walk.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Un-justice

Jamie Karl, in his column (Death penalty brings justice, Aug. 30) is simply incorrect in stating that the "death penalty brings justice."

The key concept in justice is even-handedness. Those committing equivalent crimes suffer equivalent punishment; those victimized by equivalent crimes receive equivalent redress.

The death penalty, as administered in the United States, including Nebraska, does not provide such even-handedness: Between 1973 and 1990, there were more than 200 homicide convictions in Nebraska but only 19 death sentences imposed.

And sentencing is not proportional to the heinousness of the crime.

The race of the murder victim, the poverty of the murderer, and the county where the crime took place are all better predictors of whether a murderer will even be considered for the death penalty than are the bloody horrors of a particular assault.

Given the disparities of race and class in this country, it is unlikely that the death penalty could be administered justly, but that is speculation.

Any review of murders and punishments in any death penalty state demonstrates that the death penalty as it is actually administered does not bring justice.

As strange as it seems, executions do not deter murderers — the U.S. is the only major western democracy with a death penalty, and it is also the western democracy with the highest murder rate.

Repealing the death penalty, an important and genuinely achievable first step in de-escalating the violence in our society, does make each of us a bit less likely to become a victim of rape or murder.

Frances W. Kaye
Professor of English

Modern (English) language

It is really a shame you didn't read the article in your own paper before

writing your editorial (Foreign policy, Aug. 29) about the placement policies of the Department of Modern Languages.

Of course perhaps you did read it but didn't understand it since it is evident you have problems with the English language.

I base that assertion on a previous editorial in which you wrote about how the Board of Regents "rose" the tuition.

I really resent having our program criticized by a bunch of ignoramuses who don't bother to check out the facts and then analyze them and perhaps ask some questions before going into print.

In our department we do have students' interest in mind. We think it is patently unfair to have people with significant previous experience in a course intended for beginners, i.e. students who have never had the language before or have studied it only a very short time. Let's put an end to the easy A's.

It really is time to quit griping and become serious about one's education.

Hans Gilde
Assistant professor of modern languages and literatures

Bible basher

I wish to respond to comments made by Jim Senyszyn in an letter (Christian Coalition, Aug. 29).

Mr. Senyszyn claims that the teachings of Christ "are actually quite anti-family" using several Bible verses to prove his point.

The context of these verses is quite important, however — for the message Christ wishes to portray is not a blanket condemnation of the family unit.

Each of the passages given merely warn that one's family must not become a stumbling block to the gospel.

On the other hand, the Bible does direct us to "honor thy father and mother" (Matthew 19:19).

Perhaps more distressing is the blatant anti-Catholic bias portrayed

by the letter. Contrary to what many think, the Catholic Church does not have an "anti-sex, anti-marriage ascetic bias," for this Church also believes that God has given marriage as one of the seven Sacraments.

It is true that priests are celibate, however, this is not due to any animosity toward marriage and the family.

Instead, this custom merely affords priests the time and flexibility necessary to minister to all.

Michael Dalton
Junior
Broadcasting

Sexism defined

What is sexism?

Webster's Dictionary seems to think that it is discrimination based on one's sex.

I would like to take that a step further and say it is the defamation and/or disrespect caused by a person's sex.

Therefore the generalization that the entire male population are sexist pigs because a few bad apples walk around campus with "Hooters" T-shirts (Sexist shirts have no place in society, Aug. 29) would be sexist.

I strongly agree that it is a very sexist world, both for wymyn and men.

One form of sexism that men are subject to is the generalization that men are not sensitive, and that they have to be "manly."

The gap between wymyn and men can be closed, but it has to start with the treatment of people as individuals, blaming individuals and quitting the nonsense of targeting entire groups of people.

This issue goes beyond sex.

The way I see it, let's stop whining and start acting and treating EVERYONE with fairness and respect. This includes people with different religious beliefs, ethnic background, sexual orientation, sex, race, color, social status.

You deserve it, they deserve it, people deserve it.

Hans Yunge
Lincoln

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