

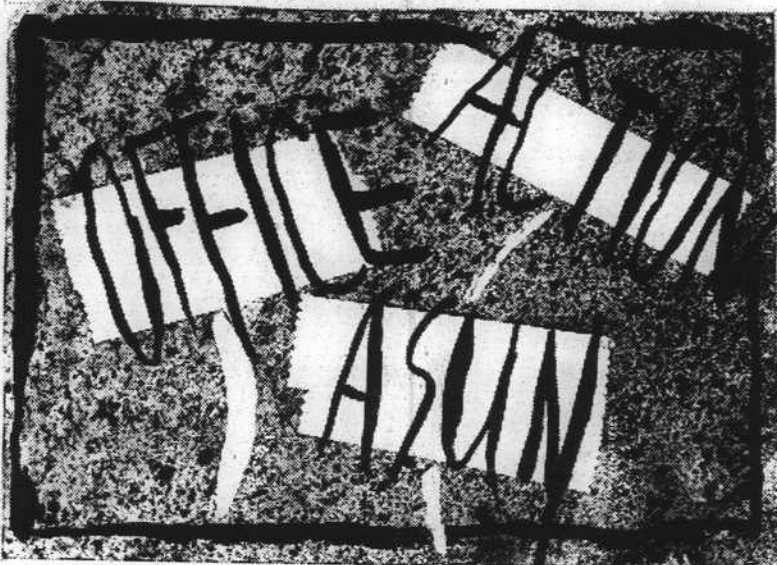
OPINION

Thursday, February 29, 1996

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Daily
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Bret Gottschall/DN

Pointing fingers

Issues being ignored in campaign

Leap year is a pain.

The miserable month of February is a day longer.

Rather than vaulting into March, the month that sees the beginning of springtime, we are forced to languish in February for yet another day.

But that's not the worst of it.

The worst thing about Leap Year is that we, the students of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, have to suffer through an extra day of ASUN campaigns.

And suffer we do.

Yesterday, students were treated to a debate during which the OFFICE party dropped a bombshell — there is a political machine functioning on this campus.

So what else is new?

Absolutely nothing.

Every year, there is an "establishment" party running in the ASUN elections. The names change, but the faces always seem vaguely familiar.

And every year, it seems, an "anti-establishment" party runs against the "machine," seeking to establish a new political order, so other people get a chance to participate in a power structure that — hmmm — has no real power.

But at least one party is using big-time power politics strategy. Following the example set by virtually everyone running for the Republican presidential nomination, the OFFICE party fired off a few salvos in the ACTION party's direction Wednesday, unveiling a chart depicting the workings of the "corrupt" political machine. In a flyer, the OFFICE party asks: "Can UNL afford to let this nepotism continue?"

Student government elections are usually not pleasant experiences. But when one party's platform centers on overturning a political machine rather than introducing fresh, constructive ideas, it's even worse than usual.

Negative campaigning generally is frowned upon, especially when it's the only campaigning.

Thankfully, the two parties had been relatively low-key until yesterday. For the next week, however, we can expect the usual deluge of stickers, candy and handouts, culminating in Wednesday's "did you vote today?" barrage.

There is an upside, though.

It'll all be over soon — till next year.

Editorial policy

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FORBES IS SIMPLY TRYING TO BUY THE NOMINATION.



MEL SLING '94 DN NEBRASKAN

Leap Year Day

1,440 bonus minutes wasted in cold month

Today isn't Thursday, or at least it shouldn't be.

It should be Leap Year Day, and only Leap Year Day. That's it, and that's that.

Before you decide I've gone mad, let me explain.

I've been thinking a lot about this crazy little extra day we get every four years, and I've decided it's a crying shame to just tack it onto the end of February and treat it like a regular day.

Because it's not.

It's an extra day. A freebie of sorts.

Think about it for a minute. What exactly is Leap Year Day, and why do we have it?

According to Webster's New World College Dictionary, in a 366-day leap year, "the additional day, Feb. 29, makes up for the time lost annually when the approximate 365 1/4-day cycle is computed as 365 days."

Incidentally, this extra day occurs in years that are exactly divisible by four — the same as presidential elections.

But what does this mean to the average person? Not a whole lot, it seems.

I called that veritable information source, the university operator, and asked her why exactly she thought we have leap years. Even she didn't know.

"Something about the earth," was all she said.

"So what university source might I contact for more information?" I asked politely.

"Your guess is as good as mine," she said. She probably thought I was weird. Go figure.

The Lincoln operator, well, she had a better idea.

"Because there are extra minutes and hours, the way our clock is," she told me. "So every four years, they have enough added up to make an extra day."

Exactly. An extra day. So why don't we get to enjoy it?

What I'm about to propose is revolutionary. It would disrupt calendars, schedules and databases around the world.

It would be a worldwide holiday, every four years, just for



Sarah Scalet

"Everyone in the world would join hands and offer a giant toast to the great calendar gods in the sky."

one day. It would bring the extra day back to the people.

It would be a celebration of an extra minute we could have had every day — or an extra six hours we could have had once a year — but didn't.

Mostly, it would be a celebration of the fact that the rotation of the planets and the mechanisms of our wristwatches are still a little askew.

Today wouldn't be Thursday. It wouldn't be a day of the week, really. Instead, it would be a day between Wednesday and Thursday. It wouldn't be a day of the month, but simply Leap Year Day.

Everyone in the world would join hands and offer a giant toast to the great calendar gods in the sky.

OK, I do realize there are problems with implementing this holiday. It would have to be everyone, everyone in the world, that decided to make the change.

But the calendar is there. It exists. Someone invented and established it, so someone should be able to change it, too.

Right?

The problem is, I'm not sure exactly who to propose this idea to. The United Nations? Bill Gates? God? And whose?

One thing's for sure — it would be a popular move, especially in an election year.

Six out of six people I've spoken with think it's a great idea.

Even the university operator thought it sounded pretty good.

"That sounds pretty good," she said.

"You should start a petition," someone else suggested.

So here's my proposal. We'll just start here. Everyone should forget their classes today. Don't go to work.

Everyone meet outside, at Antelope Park. Bring your Frisbees and beer and whatever party favors you most enjoy. (The police can come, but they won't be working.)

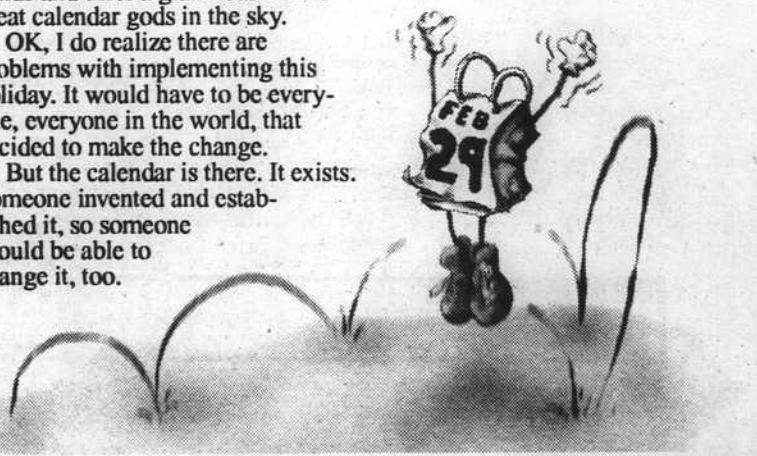
Tomorrow, we can go on with our ordinary lives, and Leap Year Day will be nothing but a fond (albeit hazy) memory.

And while we're at it, who wants an extra day in February? Who decided that? I say we move it June.

The day between June and July. Or the day after the last Friday in June. Every four years.

The time has come. We must quit squandering these extra minutes from the gods.

Scalet is a senior news-editorial and English major and a Daily Nebraskan associate news editor.



Aaron Steckelberg/DN