

OPINION

Thursday, March 28, 1996

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Daily Nebraskan

Editorial Board
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

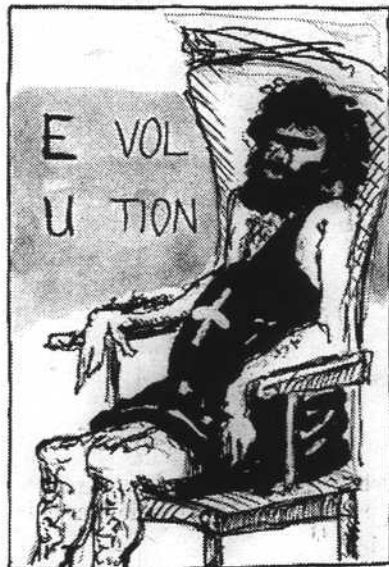
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Changing times

Evolution needs to be taught in schools

In 1925, a schoolteacher in Tennessee was tried, convicted and fined \$100 for the offense of teaching evolution.

Seventy years later, Tennessee lawmakers are making another attempt to restrict the teaching of evolution. Tennessee state senators recently passed a bill that would give local school boards the authority to fire a teacher who presented evolution as a fact, rather than a theory. While the Tennessee bill does not completely ban the discussion of evolution, its vague wording will prompt many teachers to avoid the subject of evolution altogether, rather than risk losing their jobs.



Bret Gottschall/DN

Tennessee is not alone. Biology textbooks in Alabama must carry a disclaimer labeling evolution as a "controversial theory" that "some" scientists support. And a school district in Georgia has approved the teaching of creationism as a science.

These incidents are only the latest in a series of attempts by the religious right to hijack the public education system in the United States. Radical, right-wing Christians have won seats on school boards throughout the country. Their agenda includes censoring textbooks and banning "offensive" material from school libraries. They want to eliminate or severely restrict sex education and ban discussion of abortion and homosexuality.

They also want to dictate what teachers can say about evolution. Evolution is a scientific theory. As such, it has a rightful place in science classrooms. Creationism is a religious belief. Its place is in homes and churches.

Our public education system is facing a number of very serious problems. Funding for the schools is threatened by shrinking state budgets. Teacher salaries are ridiculously low, and school buildings are crumbling because there is no money to repair them. American children are falling behind the rest of the world academically.

In many places, the religious right has turned what should be a discussion about these and other important issues into a holy war, where children are used as pawns in an increasingly ugly ideological battle. They want to tell our children what to think, not teach them how to think.

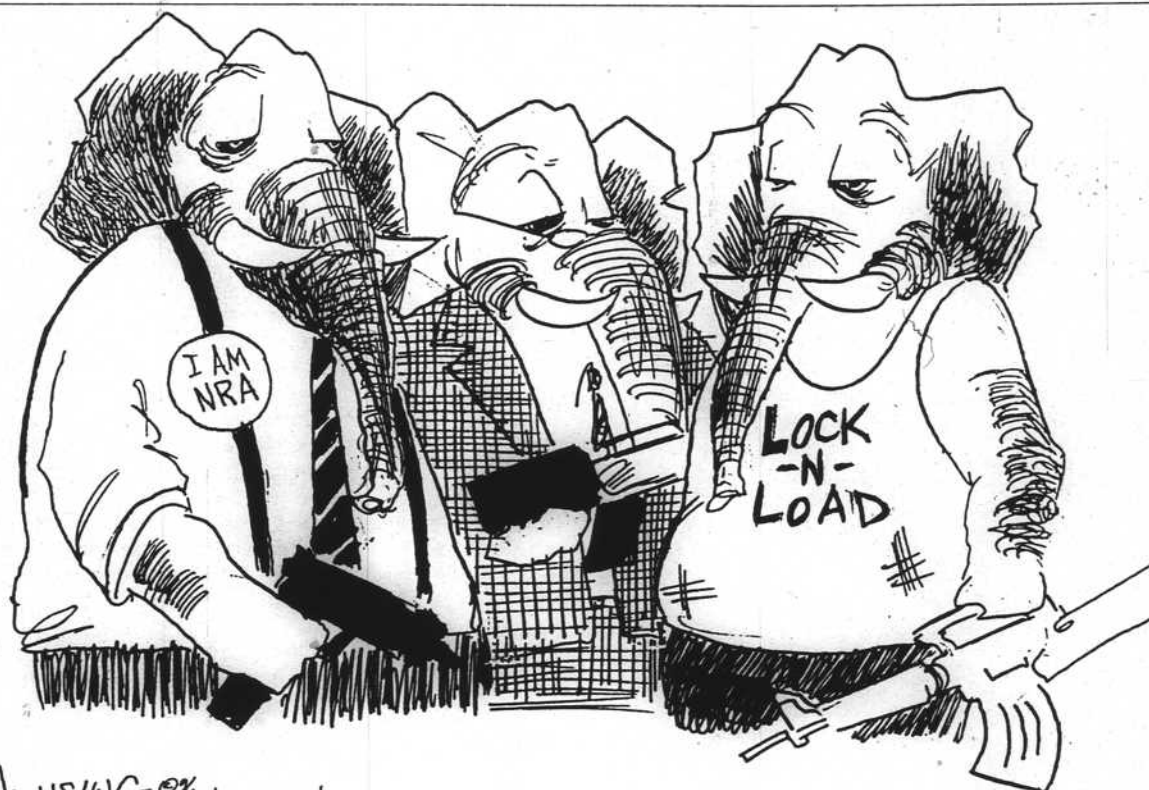
Schools should provide a positive learning environment where teachers help children acquire the tools they need to understand the world around them. The theory of evolution is one of those tools. A child who knows the biblical story of creation loses nothing if he or she also learns the theory of evolution.

Editorial policy

Staff editorials represent the official policy of the Spring 1996 Daily Nebraskan. Policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. Editorials do not necessarily reflect the views of the university, its employees, the students or the NU Board of Regents. Editorial columns represent the opinion of the author. The regents publish the Daily Nebraskan. They establish the UNL Publications Board to supervise the daily production of the paper. According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its students.

Letter policy

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor from all readers and interested others. Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit or reject all material submitted. Readers also are welcome to submit material as guest opinions. The editor decides whether material should run as a guest opinion. Letters and guest opinions sent to the newspaper become the property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned. Anonymous submissions will not be published. Letters should include the author's name, year in school, major and group affiliation, if any. Requests to withhold names will not be granted. Submit material to: Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St. Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.



MEHSING ON DAILY NEBRASKAN

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Snow Job

Blizzard, what blizzard? I managed to ice skate back to Lincoln on Sunday just fine in the gale force winds and the blinding snow, but for many of the travelers coming from the west they did not. And do you think the university would have the sense enough to cancel classes because of the lack of students able to make it to class because they are trapped in their car waiting for someone to rescue them? No. Come on. To cancel classes here once in a couple of snow storms would not cause massive stupidism to occur. Why was it that UNK got canceled?

Michael Consbruck
freshman
agronomy



Bret Gottschall/DN

Ad choice questioned

I just want to briefly express how disgusted I am at your putting the anti-abortion insert in today's paper. It demonstrates your editor's complete lack of journalistic ethics. Sure, special interest groups buy ad space in major newspapers all the time. The problem is that this is a learning institution, and you have a special audience and thus a special service to provide — primarily to provide fair representation for all sides of an issue — especially for such an important issue as reproductive rights and abortion. If the KKK could pay the price, would you distribute an advertisement for it as well? Shame on you for selling out so cheaply.

Ironically, the inserts are littered all around the newspaper stands making a big mess. I guess the students decided to abort them.

Lynda Williams
graduate student
physics

Respect memory of victims

I've read a lot of articles in the DN that have made me mad. But Kasey Kerber's article entitled "Sober Up" (March 26) not only made me mad, it hit a more personal note, and for once, I had to write in. He may have made a lot of good points about drinking and driving, and yes, the article does make you think — but he had no right using the four teens that died last week in Columbus as examples.

Tell me, did you even know them? Did you even know their names? Did you say "hi" or stop and talk when they walked by? Did you attend high school and graduate with them? Because some of us did. And we will not forget them in a week or two as you probably will. Nor will we go on with our lives as normal as you will. Time will never shut them out of our memories.

And the question you posed about whether they'd be alive today had they not been drinking — well it's my belief that they still would not have been. If you knew anything except the generalities of the

accident, you'd know that there were a lot of other freaky factors involved, like how they somehow managed to drive through the only narrow space that had no trees to stop their horrifying descent into the lake.

Jacob Behlen, Tina Dyer, Ryan Gragert and Eric Kudron were meant to die that night, though I don't think anyone will ever understand why. Their being "legally drunk" is just a scapegoat for people like you to blame the cause of the accident on. So don't you dare use our friends as an example in your article when you don't even know who or what you're talking about. They were good people. Some of us would like to remember them that way.

Julie Demuth
freshman
meteorology

Find a new name

I am writing in response to the March 25 Daily Nebraskan editorial "Ultimatum" concerning the Catholic Bishop of Lincoln. Have you ever wondered why so many people are asking for an "open and healthy dialogue" concerning Catholic teachings? Groups such as "Catholics for a Free Choice" desire only one thing — to change Catholic doctrine. It seems rather obvious to me that if you want to belong to a religion, you should believe what that religion teaches. Seriously, what would you think of a group called "Buddhists who don't believe in Buddha"?

The Bishop of Lincoln is simply telling Catholics to stand clear of groups that are contradictory to their common faith. Those who choose to belong to these groups basically excommunicate (or cut off) themselves, for they no longer hold to the same Church. I would implore the members of these groups to find a new name for your beliefs — the name "Catholic" is already taken.

Michael Dalton
junior
broadcasting



...to the

Daily Nebraskan

Send your brief letters to:
Daily Nebraskan, 34
Nebraska Union, 1400 R St.,
Lincoln, Neb. 68588, or Fax
to (402) 472-1761, or email
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Letters must be signed and
include a phone number for
verification.