

OPINION PAGES

OUR VIEW

Money talks Congress takes dollars, doesn't make change

In its October 1996 issue, Mother Jones magazine declares Rep. Jon Christensen, R-Neb., one of "the most rotten eggs now sitting in Congress," throwing him in among Newt Gingrich and the "Dirty Dozen."

He may be rotten, but he's sitting pretty.

As a freshman member of the House of Representatives, Christensen was given a seat on the most powerful money committee in the House: Ways and Means. And his re-election chances look strong.

While doling out tax breaks to the wealthy, the representative from Omaha used his power position to raise what Mother Jones calls a "staggering" \$845,232 in campaign contributions during 1995 and the first four months of this year.

The magazine says Christensen warmed to the task of fund raising even before he took office.

"At a time when most newcomers hadn't yet unpacked their bags, Christensen raised \$60,000 in soft money for the Republican Party from just nine Omaha-area businesses," the magazine reports. "Some of the contributors said that the money was meant to secure a Ways and Means seat for Christensen." That initiative paid off.

It's a story of money taken and favors returned.

It's the story of the new breed of Congress members.

Money has always mattered in Congress, but now it seems that's all that counts.

With Christensen's entrance and Sen. James Exon's impending exit, Nebraska is ushering in a new era in congressional politics.

Money talks.

If talks so loud, in fact, it is drowning out the voices of the constituents Congress is supposed to serve.

Gun ban right on target

The domestic violence gun ban, which was inserted into the spending bill that is before the Senate this week, is a good example of how election-year politicking can sometimes take a back seat to common-sense legislation. Congressional Republicans, usually strict opponents of gun bans of any sort, worked with Democrats and the White House to sort out the wording of a ban on gun ownership for anyone convicted of a misdemeanor involving domestic violence. Every senator who backed the inclusion of the gun ban — particularly the Republicans — should be congratulated for making a tough decision within a few weeks of Election Day, a time when tough decisions are at their toughest.

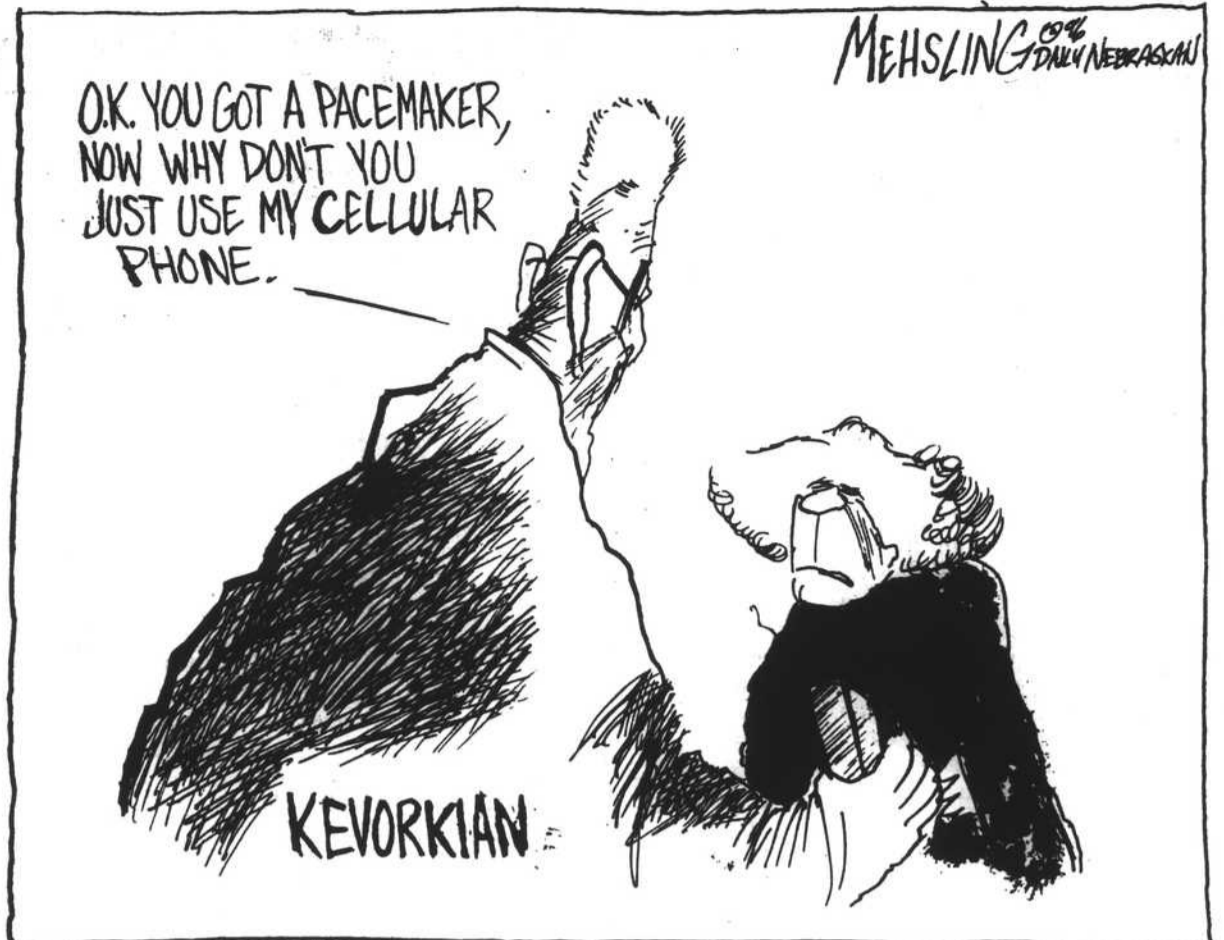
"Money has always mattered in Congress, but now it seems that's all that counts."

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MEHSLING'S VIEW



GUEST VIEW

Cliff
HICKS

No more prejudice, please

I'm about to say something that is going to live with me for the rest of my life. It is not to be taken out of context, and don't bother reading it if you don't plan on finishing the column.

I am a white male American, and I am tired of feeling ashamed of this fact.

There. Now that it is out of the way and people are fuming and ready to burn my effigy, let me explain what I mean by this.

I believe that racism is indeed still alive and kicking in America, unfortunately, as is gender discrimination. I'd also like to believe I'm not a racist.

But I can't be sure. Am I a racist because I don't have as many black friends as I do white friends? I hope not. My friends are my friends. Most people don't say "Well, he's going to be my friend." You just make friends, you know?

If I meet someone and we share similar interests and compatible personalities, then I subconsciously become friends with them. That's the way it works.

Now, that I have pointed this out, I will return to my statement and try to explain it. I watched "Malcolm X" over the weekend, and I felt ashamed to be white. We got into a discussion in one of my classes about the oppression of the Native Americans, and I felt ashamed to be white. I was reading a piece on the Internet that said one in four college men admit to having done something that could be considered "rape," and I felt ashamed to be male.

And as I've said, I'm not racist nor am I violent man. My ex-girlfriends would tell you I'm as gentle as can be, and I've got a couple black friends who would pick a fight with you if you called me racist.

But yes, I know that institutional



"I am a white male American, and I am tired of feeling ashamed of this fact."

racism does exist. It's not hard to see that equality still isn't here and has a long way to go before we'll be even close.

Yes, I know that gender discrimination, sexual harassment and date rape are still very real problems in America. These are problems that America has got to deal with too.

I agree that education is the place to start. Teach the kids about what's gone on before and teach them not to do it. Educate them about the things that are wrong with the world and how, when they grow up, they can fix them, or at least start the process.

Still, please don't make the children feel bad about being white. I hope that blacks are proud of their heritage, and I'd like whites to be able to have some pride in theirs.

Everyone's history is full of skeletons in the closet, and the Caucasian race has more than its share. But the sins of the fathers are not the sins of the sons. We all begin

pure and the world corrupts us. I entered the world as an optimist, like everyone else, but a very astute pair of eyes has turned me into a realist, or as everyone else calls me, a cynic.

While there is an occasional piece about unity between blacks and whites, the majority of what I've seen lately is about the crimes the whites have committed against the blacks. Or the men against the women.

Even though I'm partly of German descent, I don't feel a personal sting when I see the crimes of the Nazis. It does make me sick to my stomach, it makes me feel angry at the Nazis and it makes me wish the whole rise of Hitler never happened. Sympathy also arises for anyone who had to live through that ordeal. But I don't feel the urge to apologize to every Jew I meet for being part-German.

I don't want to have to go around apologizing for being white to every black person I meet. I'm white and I should be proud of that fact, just like everyone else should be proud of their heritage.

So what am I asking for, really? I'd just like people to remember when they are talking about racism in American that not all whites are racist; when talking about rape and harassment, not all men are guilty.

If I ever run a company, I will hire the person most qualified for the job, regardless of race, gender or anything else. Any time I can fight inequality, I will do so.

Please, though, let me be able to say who and what I am without expecting me to drop my head in shame. I ask you to be proud of your heritage, and I ask you to allow me to be proud of mine.

Hicks is a sophomore news-editorial and English major and a Daily Nebraskan staff reporter.

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Letters must be signed and include a phone number for verification.