

OPINION PAGES

GUEST VIEW

Congressional compromise *Bad things avoided; good things undone*

From The Sacramento Bee, Sacramento, Calif.

The 104th Congress, which came in roaring like a lion for radical change, is leaving looking rather more like a lamb. Its taming is another sign that the fear of an approaching re-election campaign trumps doctrine and ideology almost every time. The same, of course, goes for the president, who can compromise with the best of them. In the end, all concerned decided that a record of partial achievement was preferable to principled gridlock.

That's not necessarily bad. Indeed, given the gap between what happened and what might have happened in Washington in the past two years, it's reassuring. The Gingrich Republicans, who had been prepared — in some cases eager — to shut down the government, did not dismantle federal programs wholesale as they had been more or less determined to do; they did not succeed in gutting federal environmental laws; they did not succeed in enacting an immigration law that would have allowed the states to kick illegal alien children out of school or permitted expulsion of legal aliens who had availed themselves of certain federal benefits.

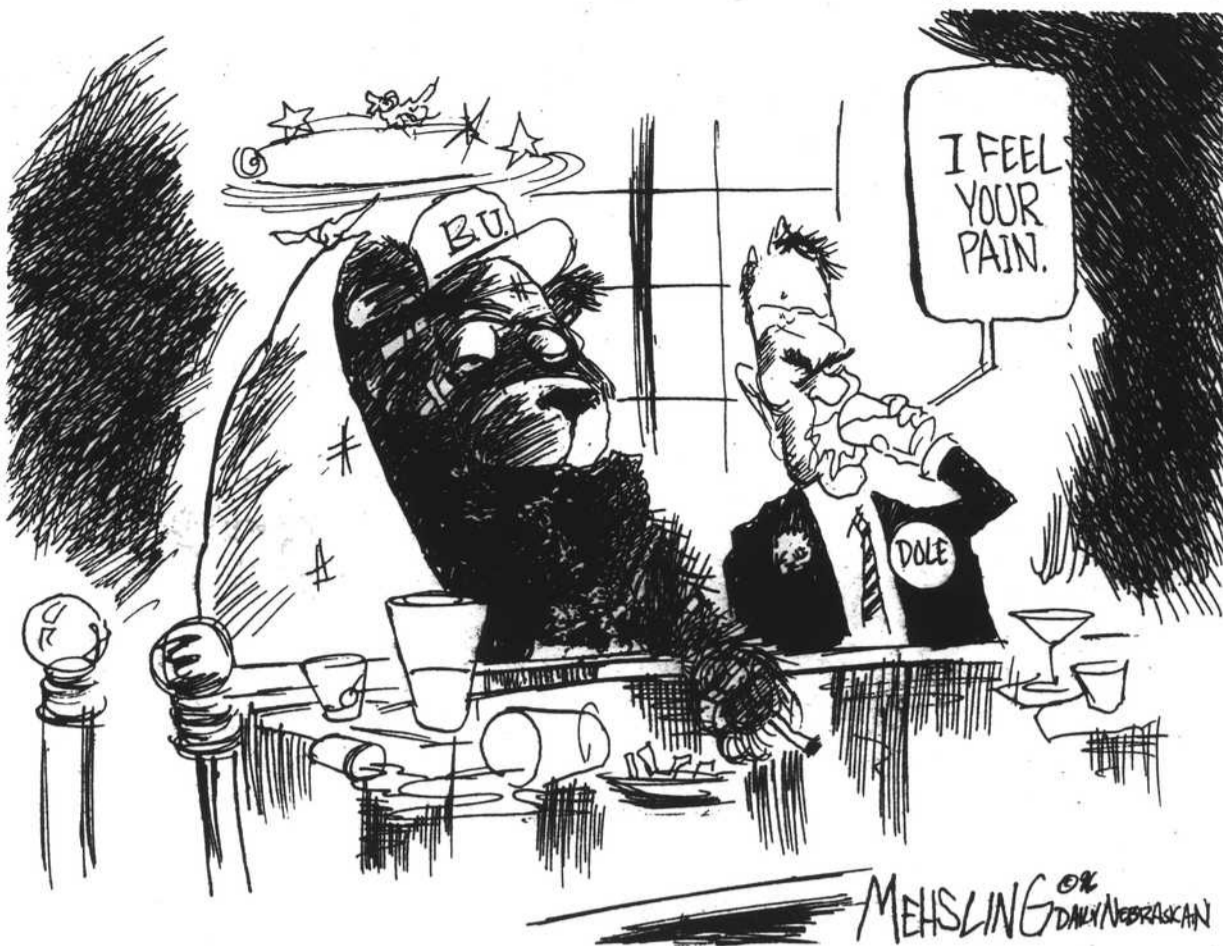
Their most sweeping legislative victory was the welfare reform bill they forced on President Clinton, which does far too little to help welfare recipients get jobs and too much to punish children if they do not. Perhaps their most fundamental impact was in setting a seven-year deadline for achieving a balanced budget and getting a reluctant Clinton to agree to it.

To what extent either of those changes will be celebrated once they become fully effective is still a very open question. What is certain is that Bob Dole, until recently one of the nation's most devoted deficit hawks and now running for president, has already changed his priorities with his promise of a 15-percent tax cut. What the nation will almost surely come to regret is the xenophobic drift of federal policy — the cuts in already shrunken foreign aid and the attempts to punish allies and trading partners that don't slavishly follow U.S. preferences with respect to Cuba and Iran.

On the margins, the tamer Congress passed bills that were both proper and popular: an increase in the federal minimum wage, restoring the purchasing power it guaranteed a decade ago; the expansion of some health insurance protections; minor internal reforms in congressional procedures. Conversely, the failures of the fire-eaters to impose their excessive remedies on matters such as reform of environmental laws left a number of urgent issues entirely unaddressed. They will need attention next year.

But if this year's lessons of moderation were really learned, and if the shrunken coalitions of moderate Democrats and pragmatic Republicans grow, chances of action on that agenda should improve as well. A lot of bad things were avoided this year; a lot of important things — including further health care reform — have been left undone.

MEHSLING'S VIEW



STRAIGHT ANSWERS

I was pleasantly surprised when I read Nick Wiltgen's column, "Seeing Straight" on Oct. 11.

First, I would like to commend Nick for having the courage to publish his column in a campus newspaper read by a good portion of students who are homophobic themselves.

Why is it that society still thinks it to be acceptable to aim jokes and harassment at issues of sexual orientation?

At least in my awareness, it has become unacceptable to tell racially demeaning jokes or make racial slurs, but yet it remains part of American culture to torture and depreciate those who are not straight.

Perhaps this attitude is merely reflective of our insecurity about our own sexual orientation. We are so afraid that "people" might think we are gay or lesbian if we do speak out and make others aware that their jokes and insults are not tolerable, that we remain silent.

Even when articles do appear that support gay/lesbian rights, the author always seems to so eloquently and subtly slip in the fact that they most definitely are straight. But, I ask, should it really matter?

Susie Kiene
freshman
English and philosophy

LETTERS



JASON GILDOW/DN

have been easy coming out to them, as well as to his friends.

It is also great to hear a successful coming out story. Consider yourself lucky, Nick. There are others out there who have been less fortunate than you.

And as for those ignorant people out there who "flaunt their homophobic lifestyles," remember: what goes around, comes around.

Stacy L. Johnson-Solomon
freshman
UNMC College of Dentistry

INTELLIGENCE AGENCY?

Along with noted author and political analyst Michael Parenti, I think a more appropriate term for the Central Intelligence Agency is Capitalism's International Army or Cocaine Import Agency.

The CIA has been very successful at keeping the poor of other countries in line with death squads, torture and proxy armies and the poor of the United States under control with drugs. The main purpose of the CIA is not intelligence but protecting and enhancing corporate power and global capitalism.

When the CIA receives adverse publicity for its crimes, it is portrayed in the media as either a rogue agency or a bumbling agency making all sorts of stupid mistakes. It is neither! It is an extremely successful agency for its mission, which is to keep the poor powerless and disorganized and as a source of very cheap labor for the multinational corporations.

Gary Sudborough
Bellflower, Calif.

'TIS A PITY

The Daily Nebraskan ran a story recently regarding an administrator at the University of Nebraska at Kearney censoring nudity in the play "Tis a Pity She's a Whore." The man was quoted as saying nudity seldom happened at UNL.

I'd like to point out that Tice Miller, head of our theatre department, directed at least two play with nudity: the thoroughly wonderful "Equis" and "Otherwise Engaged." Furthermore, "Tis a Pity She's a Whore" is one of the oldest plays in the theatre canon. It is frequently taught in theatre history.

We are lucky here in Lincoln to have freedom of artistic expression. 'Tis a pity about this small-minded administrator in Kearney.

Liz Chadwick
senior
journalism

PHOBIA FLAUNTING

In response to Nick Wiltgen's column, "Seeing Straight," I have only this to say to Nick: BRAVO, BRAVO, BRAVO!!!! I know Nick's family (being from the same hometown) and I know that it could not

EDITORIAL POLICY

Unsigned editorials are the opinions of the Fall 1996 Daily Nebraskan. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, its employees, its student body or the University of Nebraska Board of Regents. A column is solely the opinion of its author. The Board of Regents serves as publisher of the Daily Nebraskan; policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. The UNL Publications Board, established by the regents, supervises the production of the newspaper. According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its student employees.

LETTER POLICY

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor and guest columns, but does not guarantee their publication. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit or reject any material submitted. Submitted material becomes the property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned. Anonymous submissions will not be published. Those who submit letters must identify themselves by name, year in school, major and/or group affiliation, if any. Submit material to: Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St. Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448. E-mail: letters@unlinfo.unl.edu.

P.S. Write Back

Send letters to: Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 "R" St., Lincoln, NE 68588, or fax to (402) 472-1761, or e-mail <letters@unlinfo.unl.edu>. Letters must be signed and include a phone number for verification.