

# OPINION PACKAGES

## Our VIEW

### 1984, err, '97 ASUN has chance to bring luster back

We're watching you. You promised to gather our input. You promised to represent our interests. You promised not another show of ASUN apathy from last year.

You promised to try to boost involvement starting with a student's very first year. You promised to be seen and heard.

And we promise to watch and listen. ASUN president-elect Curt Ruwe's inauguration tonight marks his and his senate's responsibility to make ASUN a respected acronym on campus again.

And for Ruwe's first official day as ASUN president, we offer him a present: benefit of the doubt.

Ruwe and his senators made a lot of promises, which, if carried out, will benefit students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; however, we've heard these promises made before without action, and our view of optimism has been clouded by cynicism.

But we're giving ASUN a chance to prove itself one more time.

After all the pomp and celebration wears off from tonight, Ruwe and his senators will face the not-so-pretty job of tackling student apathy.

No organization on this campus can expect students to flock to it without someone reaching out to pull them in, and ASUN is no exception. The strides taken by Ruwe to listen to students' interests, offer suggestions and promise only what he can deliver should continue.

And ASUN really needs to listen to those interests, because otherwise students will continue to be disenfranchised with their student government — an apathetic trend that may carry on after graduation into local, state and national politics.

If Ruwe or his senators believe student interests are based on faulty or incomplete information, then ASUN should take it upon itself to provide that information and make it reach the students. It should not make decisions against those interests with the nonchalant attitude of, "we just know this is better for you, so trust us."

And when ASUN and students are aligned with their interests, ASUN should do everything possible to support them no matter how unfavorable it may be to the administration or others.

It is in this way that ASUN will generate the respect of more than the less-than-10-percent of the students who voted them in to such an influential position.

That influence, combined with dedication, will empower ASUN and the students to make a difference.

To make that happen, here's a challenge to both ASUN and those students it represents: Give each other a chance, work together and reap the benefits and notoriety of that work.

Otherwise, don't bother at all.

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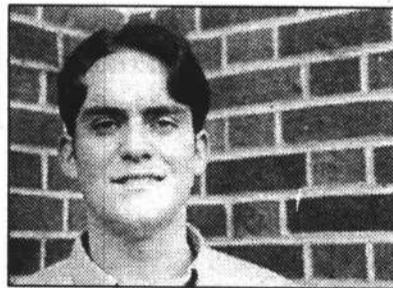
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## Mehsling's VIEW



## Michael DONLEY

### Not-so-strange bedfellows America is prostrate on the altar of money



"How little you know about the age you live in if you think honey is sweeter than cash in hand."

Ovid said that about 2,000 years ago, and nothing has changed. Should we change something? Does money have too much power in the world we live in? We should try to take money out of politics at least.

If you have walked through downtown Lincoln, you have probably seen the fliers screaming for the redistribution of the wealth of the United States. I am not Robin Hood, so I am not advocating taking money from the rich. They earned it, they should keep it! But, on the other side of the coin, no one should be able to use their wealth to buy political influence.

It is easy to dismiss people who tack fliers to telephone poles as paranoid wackos — and usually I do. But in this instance these people have a point.

Money has a profound effect on all things political. You can see a vivid illustration every time you watch the news.

Republicans in Congress are now calling for a special prosecutor to look into presidential campaign finance. You will notice they don't want to look at all campaign finance, just presidential.

If we are going to open the president's wallet to the world, let's open all of the political wallets of the country. I want to see what putrid slime crawls out.

Republicans and Democrats alike would be very embarrassed — and more importantly, out of jobs — if the American people were faced with the reality of what our system has degenerated to.

America has taken the best Constitution and the most equitable

political structure on the planet and allowed it to evolve into a shameful, greed-driven oligarchy.

An oligarchy — for those of us who have not yet taken Poli Sci 100 — occurs when a government is controlled by a group that acts in its own interest to the exclusion of the welfare of the people it governs.

Major corporations, the extremely wealthy and possibly foreign governments buy influence at will. I may be paranoid, but why would companies donate such large amounts of money to political parties? Businesses are not in the habit of simply giving anything away. They are getting something in return.

It is not difficult to figure out what big business is going for. In 1994 alone business received \$100 billion — yes billion — in subsidies and tax breaks. We only spent \$15 billion on aiding families with dependent children.

Another example of business influence is a Toronto based company that has mined \$9 billion worth of ore off U.S. government land. The founder of this company's salary for one year — \$32 million.

Is this the best use of our tax dollars? I don't think so. People complain that children are starving in America, yet \$32 million goes to a millionaire in Canada?

So what solution DO I advocate? Take as much money out of politics as possible. No more "fact-finding" trips to the Bahamas. Congress needs to pass laws that make trips paid for by special interest groups illegal. If a true fact-finding trip is necessary, go for it, but politicians should not be able to bring their entire families. Make it a special duty of the ethics committees to look into such things.

Congress should make contributions by corporations to political parties illegal. Many will say that it is the constitutional right of these corporations to give to the political parties they support.

In any political system, money is power. Corporations are using this power to affect legislation. This is unconstitutional if this legislation

infringes on the rights of others.

In the same way we cannot shout fire in a theater because it affects, negatively, the rights of others, companies should not be able to give money to political action committees. This abuse of the power of money can only serve to harm our country.

We also need to keep tight restrictions on the amount of money individuals can donate to campaigns, political action committees and candidates.

In a representative democracy this is the only way to ensure fair and equal representation — and until we adopt a system with a much smaller emphasis on money, America will continue to be ruled by those with the money to buy the influence. This needs to be the next evolution of America!

If we take an objective look at the current American political system we will be able to find at least a little truth in the words of Thomas Jefferson who said, "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just."

Donley is a sophomore philosophy major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.



MATT HANEY/DN