

Bill would require rest for workers

Legislature

BY BRIAN CARLSON
Senior Reporter

A bill that would require employers to allow employees at least 24 consecutive hours of rest each week was advanced by the Legislature's Business and Labor Committee Monday.

LB1334, which applies to employees who work more than 20 hours per week, was placed on general file for consideration by the entire Legislature later this session.

Larry Eret, an employee of Walker Manufacturing in Seward, said he had been forced to work long hours and seven-day weeks, often on short notice. The situation has made it difficult for his family to enjoy time together, he said.

"For the last few years, I haven't been able to make plans with my family and know that we'll actually be able to do them," he said.

Workers at Walker Manufacturing are attempting to unionize, Eret said, but many have simply quit out of frustration with the working hours.

Sen. John Hilgert of Omaha, who sponsored the proposal known as the One Day Rest in Seven Act, said the bill was patterned after Illinois legislation and reflected similar laws in states of the industrial Midwest.

Nebraska AFL-CIO President Gordon MacDonald, who testified in support of the bill, said in an interview that long working hours with few breaks pose a threat to employee health and workplace safety.

The Illinois legislation has been on the books for 40 years, he said, and business there has not suffered unduly.

Doug McDaniel, who represented the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the State Council for the Society for Human Resource Management, was the lone opponent who testi-

"I think it's Chicken Little syndrome to say the sky would fall if this bill would pass."

JOHN HILGERT
state senator

fied.

He said the bill would hurt those businesses, especially in the health care industry, that must provide around-the-clock services.

"This bill fails to recognize the intricacies of business needs in Nebraska today," he said. "The effects of LB1334 would be devastating to businesses who are required to provide services on a 24-hour basis."

The bill's sponsors say it would allow employees who volunteer to work seven days a week the opportunity to do so.

Workers' schedules should continue to be determined by business needs and demand for services, McDaniel said.

But Hilgert disputed McDaniel's predictions of catastrophe for the business community should the bill pass.

"I think it's Chicken Little syndrome to say the sky would fall if this bill would pass," he said.

Hilgert said it was a shame Nebraska lawmakers devote so much time to offering business incentives and corporate tax breaks without doing more to help the state's workers.

The state should perhaps seek to improve its business climate by promoting a more worker-friendly and family-friendly environment, he said.

"You would think the state of Nebraska would be a Mecca for business," he said. "Why aren't we just doing gangbusters?"

"Other states have these laws; other states care for their workers."

Hibler's not racist, some say

BY BRAD DAVIS
Senior Reporter

Despite the recent controversy surrounding UNL English Professor David Hibler, many of his former students said he was a good, motivating teacher.

Hibler, who has recently come under fire for sending an e-mail with the word "nigga" to more than 300 people, has said in a written statement that the e-mail was not racist.

Sophomore Nikki Markota, who had Hibler for English 254 in the spring of 1996, said calling Hibler a racist because of one statement was like "taking an inch out of something that is eight feet long."

"If people are truly offended by it, they should read more of his stuff—they're taking this one little article out of all the things he wrote," Markota said. "If you knew where he was coming from, you wouldn't pick out this one little thing and say that it's derogatory."

Since the early 1970s Hibler has been working with computers at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and was the first professor to conduct an entire class online.

Students in Hibler's fall 1995 English 254 classes were the first to have a completely World Wide Web-based course.

Hibler's classes still make use of the Web, with each student voluntarily posting his or her work to a Web page on Hibler's "MAMA" computer server. MAMA, whose motto is "The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But," has a code of ethics posted by Hibler, including "People are numerous and varied. I will treat everyone with courtesy, respect and humility."

Because of this advertised commitment to peoples' differences, Hibler's former students say he is anything but a racist.

Senior Kevin Ridley, who is taking Hibler's English 258 class now, said he could see how people could interpret Hibler's writing as racist.

"A lot of people don't know him," Ridley said, "so it's kind of taken out of context."

Ridley said although he'd heard the word "nigger" many times, Hibler did not use it in a derogatory way.

But, Ridley said, Hibler should better explain himself so people know he is not a racist.

Jef Sevenker, who was a sophomore last year when he had Hibler for English 258, said the professor brought out the best in students.

"He wanted you to succeed," Sevenker said. "He was sometimes critical, but he wanted you to do your absolute best."

Sevenker said although Hibler motivated his students to perform well, the professor was unhappy with the university.

"I know that he wasn't very happy with the English department or the administration," Sevenker said, "but I think aside from that his most important friends or people that he dealt with were the students."

A tenured professor since 1975, Hibler made around \$33,000 last year, according to July 1997 records.

He joined the faculty at UNL in

Ruwe: Students have chance to voice opinions

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"It doesn't have to have intent to hurt someone," an audience member said. "It did hurt someone, and now we have to make a change."

Nasim Zawadi, a UNL law student, said this issue, along with past racially-motivated incidents such as the Sigma Chi cross burning incident and the way the university has handled the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, has affected the retention and recruitment of minority students. He said people need to look at the whole picture.

"I'm sick and tired of it being limited to one issue," he said. "It's time we do something about it."

Other members of the audience agreed.

"This university is establishing a pattern in saying 'We don't care about the feelings of the minority groups,'" said Eric Crump, a sophomore sociology and political science major.

Other audience members called for the university to change how it deals with diversity and sensitivity issues. More training in those two areas was suggested for all university employees and students.

"The university has to step forward and say 'These are the people we are willing to protect,'" Crump said.

However, some in attendance were not as hopeful.

One audience member said the university seemed to give the impression this recent uprising would not change things on campus.

"Nothing will come of this," she said. "Absolutely nothing."

Hibler spoke at various times throughout the forum.

He denounced the actions of those at the press conference Thursday.

He also called for "An End to

"I'm sick and tired of it being limited to one issue. It's time we do something about it."

NASIM ZAWADI
law student

Racism," an end to "Little Boy Blue Clinton's Tricky Dick War," and to "Let America Be America Again" in his printed text of his address. The war Hibler is referring to is the conflict with Iraq.

"In my writings and in my son's raps—for those of you who are actually reading them rather than shouting mindlessly about what you're told to think—we use the rhetoric of the oppressed underclass of this nation to ask questions about the nature of contemporary American experience," he said.

The biggest concern for N. Omar Valentine, junior marketing major and forum organizer, was that students would hesitate to give their opinions on the issue.

"More people were mad when Coca-Cola lost to Pepsi," Valentine said.

Ruwe concluded the forum with a statement urging people to stay dedicated to change.

"We need to stay together and we need to accomplish this," he said.

Monday's statements will be compiled for a proposal submitted by ASUN and student organizations to UNL administrators.

Anyone interested in submitting their opinion for the proposal should contact Ruwe at the ASUN office or Valentine at 436-0503.

Law & Order

Man held at knife-point

Two men abducted a Lincoln man from a woman's apartment at knife-point 4 a.m. Sunday, the victim told police.

David Williams left Grandpa's Ribs and Secret Sauce with a woman he met there and went to her home at the 4700 block of Bancroft Avenue, Lincoln Police Sgt. Ann Heermann said.

Williams said the two men entered the apartment, held him at knife-point and asked if Williams had had any physical contact with the woman, but Williams was uncooperative.

Then the two men drove Williams to Highway 77 and West Pioneers Boulevard and dropped him off.

Police suspect that the woman may have known the two men. Police also plan to question Williams again.

Homeless man robbed

A homeless man was robbed by three men as he walked down the sidewalk near 17th and Dudley streets at about 3 a.m. Saturday.

Two of the three men grabbed the

victim, Dennis Prokopec, while the other took Prokopec's cash and watch, Heermann said.

Prokopec lost \$47 in cash and a \$75 watch.

Motorists quarrel

Road rage brewed along O Street early Sunday morning and led to a disturbance between two motorists.

Mary Green, 18, was cut off by Stephen Davis, whom she knew, in his pickup truck at 56th and O streets.

Green decided to follow Davis, 29, when he turned south on 33rd Street, and take down his license plate number, Heermann said.

When Davis realized he was being followed, he slammed on his brakes, leaving more than 100 feet of skid marks, and slid sideways to a stop across the southbound and turning lanes.

Davis got out of the truck and started yelling at her.

When Green got out to see what he wanted, Davis spit in her face and then drove off.

Davis was cited for disturbing the peace.

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