

OPINION PACKAGES

Our VIEW

Weathered drivers

Semi-trucks must slow down in bad weather

Nebraska has already gotten a taste of what weather is to come. Last week and into Sunday, torrential rains pounded the eastern portion of the state as the system slowly made its way across the Midwest.

Extreme weather is nothing out of the ordinary – in fact, the mentality in Nebraska seems to be one of almost complete disregard for the weather.

However, the rain storms on Sunday caused so many traffic accidents that police in Omaha stopped answering calls for fender-benders, saying they could only respond to emergency situations.

On Interstate 80 between Omaha and Lincoln, small cars crawled along the right lane while trucks roared past, spraying a blinding mist onto the windshields of those driving at more cautious speeds.

While no serious accidents occurred, the experience was a frightening one, and it isn't rare. Semi-trucks, operated by professional drivers, are sometimes the worst culprits of hazardous driving.

Their speed wasn't illegal, but it was too fast. Nebraska, as a state that suffers frequently from extreme weather, needs to enact safer speed limits for larger vehicles.

Many states require that semi-trucks travel 10 mph slower than the smaller traffic moving around them. This is an idea that speed-spoiled Nebraskans should consider.

Considering that the geography of our state shouldn't be mixed with alcohol, reasonable speeds for truckers on the long haul need to become a priority.

When trucks roar past small vehicles, which are more susceptible to dangerous weather, they impair the vision of a driver who already is struggling against the elements.

Speed limits need to be reduced to a safer speed for semi-trucks, which frequently intimidate smaller and slower vehicles. Time and again semi-trucks are seen jackknifed on interstates or lying in ditches. And frequent passing of slower traffic increases the chances of a collision every time trucks change lanes.

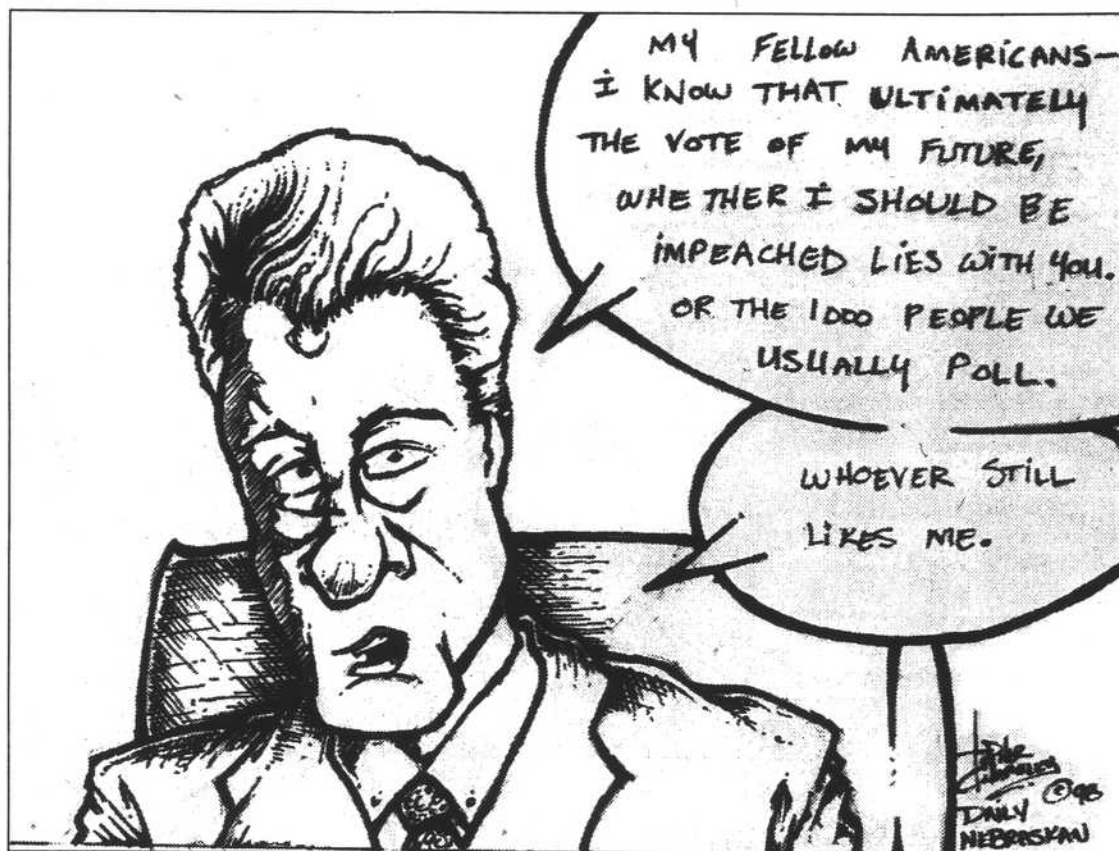
Until a safer speed limit is enacted, state troopers need to pull over vehicles moving at an unsafe speed for the driving conditions.

This is especially true for semi-trucks that take advantage of their size during rain storms and virtually drown the smaller cars they pass.

Troopers have the right to cite these drivers for reckless driving, and a concerted effort to do so will make drivers aware of their responsibilities to fellow motorists.

Weather like we experienced Sunday will only continue to worsen this season, and truckers need to remember that the road belongs to everyone.

Charnley's VIEW



Believe you me

Challenging atheism sheds light on a grand plan



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Atheists. Goddamn 'em. Webster's Dictionary says *atheism* is "the denial that God or gods exist."

So *atheists* are people who don't believe in God or any of his many splendorous counterparts – Allah, Shiva and the Force among them.

I'm all about questioning everything, including the origins of existence.

But I think atheism is incredibly stupid.

Now, lots of people attack atheists because they don't want them to spend their afterlives in hell, with Puff Daddy. But I'm not worried about anybody's immortal soul. In fact, I'm pretty sure most of your souls, not being North Dakotan like mine, are kind of wussy souls and wouldn't be much help in a final battle between Good and Evil anyway.

Nope, atheism just irritates me. And most of the arguments for atheism I've seen have been weak.

The World Wide Web – besides being a great way to find naked pictures of the girls from the "Sailor Moon" cartoon – is host to a plethora of sites designed by unbelievers.

And because I was curious – and I didn't really feel like doing homework – I surfed around some of these sites, searching for a good, intelligent reason not to believe in God.

I didn't find one.

Lemme break it down. Some of the sites didn't even argue the atheist case well. They did a great job of attacking the Bible and Christianity, and most of them knew more about the Christian faith than a lot of supposedly devout people I know.

Unfortunately, they just proved that there were a lot of messed-up things about the Christian faith.

Which doesn't say anything about whether or not the Muslims, the Hindus or the Buddhists are wrong – much less about whether there could be some entity out there who created

the universe. To their credit, though, many atheists whose Web sites I looked at posited stronger arguments. They rejected God because his existence can't be proved scientifically.

Well, that's kinda' silly. The most simplistic arguments of this variety go: You can't see God. You can't touch God. You can't measure God. So you can't prove God.

But we don't know everything about our universe.

In fact, we *can't* know everything about the universe. Most of us accept infinity as a mathematical reality; but if you ever looked up at the stars when you were little and tried to imagine outer space never ending, you probably got a headache. We believe in infinity, but we can't comprehend it.

Why's it so hard to believe in a God we can't comprehend? I mean, if anything is going to be unknowable – outside of the continuing success of the Backstreet Boys – wouldn't it probably be, y'know, *God*?

That answers another of the atheists' standby questions: But who created God?

I'd call that a non-issue. If we come up with God's creator, should we call him "God's Dad"? Or should we maybe just say, no, I guess *he's* God, then?

The point is, I'm willing to bet it's one of those unknowable things about God we just talked about.

The real issue is, so far as I can tell, none of these scientific types have been able to *disprove* God either.

Richard Dawkins, a well-known biologist and atheist, has tried, though. He's come up with some impressively creative arguments, too.

In a 1994 interview, Dawkins postulated a good one. Obviously, he said, whoever or whatever created the universe would have to be super-intelligent.

But, he continued, according to all the evidence we have, it takes millions of years for intelligence to evolve.

So it defies nature, he concluded, to suppose some dramatically more intelligent being appeared billions of years before we did, much less created us.

It's an interesting argument. But it breaks down when you remember that, if there's a God, he's responsible for bringing everything into being.

And "everything" includes the evolutionary process. If God designed that, obviously he's not bound by its rules.

Look – I don't think "God" is a simple concept. And I'm against believing blindly. I won't say a lot for atheists, but they don't bug me as much as, say, fundamentalist Christians, because atheists have usually done more thinking about God than those guys.

But again, the question is: Can any atheist disprove God's existence?

They can't, of course; and honestly, I see a lot of evidence pointing to some kind of grand plan.

I see it in biology – when I make it to biology lab – in intricate mechanisms like DNA and evolution.

I see it in math – when I make it to math class – watching freshmen figure out how to define functions.

I see it in physics – OK, I've never made it to physics class.

But you don't have to take my word for it anyway. Newsweek, U.S. News & World Report and Scientific American ran stories this summer about scientists whose research was leading them to believe the universe is the work of an intelligent force.

For example, the Newsweek article says, one astrophysicist said that "the ... size (of) the entire universe, is 10 with 29 zeros after it (in centimeters). The smallest size describes the subatomic world, and is 10 with 24 zeros (and a decimal) in front of it. Humans are right in the middle."

Other scholars point to the intricacies of mathematics. The ancient Greeks divided the circumference of a circle by its diameter and got 3.14... – the number pi.

Pi's a tricky number, though – it tends to show up in physics, in equations seemingly unrelated to circles. Things like that, the scientists told Newsweek, hint that our universe was purposefully designed.

That makes me happy. I don't want to believe in a dumb God, who "magicked" us into existence in six days, a few thousand years ago, as some people would prefer.

But I also can't believe nobody's responsible for this thing called existence. It'd mean we were an accident; I can't see the point in believing that.

Fortunately, I've got some smart people on my side.

Physicist John Polkinghorne, formerly of Cambridge University, said:

"When you realize that the laws of nature must be incredibly fine tuned ... that conspires to plant the idea that the universe did not just happen, but that there must be a purpose behind it."

Amen.

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