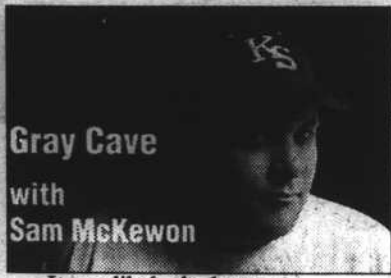


World reacts to WTO

Seattle protests reminds America of its rights



Gray Cave with Sam McKewon

It was likely the last great American protest of the 20th century.

The tortoise shells, tear gas and looting that filled the streets of Seattle last week was a beautiful thing, in some regards. Your take on the World Trade Organization makes little difference.

It's the U.S. freedom of protest, picketing and the ability to be arrested, carted off to jail in the paddy wagon and then be released — not tortured or forced to sign a confession — that makes America what it is.

There was a moment in time, when, swear to God, the big boys of the WTO, which would include director Mike Moore and his more than 500 secretaries, must have lost their minds. America? Trade summit? Crazy.

Why not a smaller, more militant land, one that kills those who dare protest? Or, at the very least, pending member China, whose numerous human rights violations against Tibet make it a worthy champion for trade.

But no. It seems the WTO, which is based in, of all places, Geneva and was founded a little less than five years ago, couldn't find credence until it dropped by the United States. Until it passes over our eyes, the world must think, it can't be real.

Well, the WTO does exist. Now most everyone knows that. Kids will, too. Capital of West Virginia? No way. But cops in riot gear? You betcha.

From the looks of it, the protest will have some positive effects. Trade talks were ground to a halt as a result.

And a larger number of people noticed first hand the detrimental effects of pepper gas, which means it will be tested on fewer animals.

But most importantly, America rediscovered the power of protest and within it, the power of the First Amendment. Sure, there were some

bad seeds out there in the rainy day sunshine land. In protests, there always will be. But the real message of Seattle is buried in the impact normal citizens can have through the right to free speech.

Often, people forget it. There isn't formal learning of the Constitution until high school (at least there wasn't for me).

Even when we do know it, freedom of speech takes on this abstract form without context, except when baby does a bad, bad thing and yells "fire" in a crowded theater.

Seattle reminds us of that. Look at the power of a few thousand people. The WTO, a powerful organization, bigger than America, will not change all its stripes. But it will change some, which is secondary to the notion that we, as citizens, finally know its power.

And whether trade people like it or not, they will start being held accountable for their acts. If they weren't self-aware of their own consequential actions before, they are now.

Seattle was the home to a classic sit-down strike early in our 20th century. It helped shaped modern unions for rail-car, factory and driving workers all over America. Since that time, and somewhat before then, protest has been one of the everyday man's most powerful vehicles for change.

The image of a burning draft card is indelible in our minds. So is a picture of an aborted fetus.

The greatness of freedom of speech is the spectrum it spans.

For some reason, every image of protest or movement strikes a chord in me and many others.

Unquestionably, President Clinton and many powerful senators, including those of Nebraska, most likely looked out the windows of their hotels and shook their heads at the crowds below, unknowingly.

Cynicism has been part of the American tradition for the last 40

years or so, specifically in the post-modern era. It is so easy for them, and us, to lose sight.

Some of the more beautiful things I see every year at UNL are the Bible beaters. You know the ones — the ones that damn us all to hell, the ones I have spoken of before in disdain.

I do not like them. I do not like what they do. I hate what they preach and hate even more their judgment of others. But I would not trade them for silence. I cannot, unless I, too, want to be silenced some day.

I'll keep them here in Lincoln, along with David Hibler, Ernie Chambers and every other rabble-rouser I never agreed with that ever came along. I want to. I have to. Their spirit is part of the spirit that lived in Seattle last week and part of the spirit that has changed our nation, for good and bad, over the years.

Freedom of speech is the sword we live and die by in America. As the century closes, it's that value above all else that we should remember.

¿Libre comercio o libre expresión?

Todos tenemos derecho a protestar, sobre todo cuando suponemos que vivimos en un país democrático en donde cada quien puede expresar sus ideas libremente. Sin embargo, los hechos registrados en Seattle durante la cumbre de la Organización Mundial del Comercio (OMC, en inglés World Trade Organization o WTO), dan cuenta de la hipocresía de aquellos abanderados de la democracia.

Paul Schell, alcalde de Seattle, desplegó todo un operativo policial (al estilo película) para detener a miles de manifestantes que protestaban en contra de la globalización y el libre comercio. Y como si fuera poco, Schell decretó el toque de queda.

Es ilógico que el país que promueve la democracia en todo el mundo permita situaciones tan bochornosas como éstas. Quienes protestaban en las calles de Seattle, sólo buscaban que sus voces fueran escuchadas por los dirigentes de 135 miembro países en la OMC.

Se preguntaban dichos manifestantes si es con el libre comercio o con la esclavitud laboral como se enriquecen las corporaciones; además, iban en contra de un progreso tecnológico y económico que se quiere implantar a costa de la destrucción del medio ambiente y, por último, pedían solidaridad económica con los países más pobres del mundo.

La portesta civil debe ser entendida como uno de los aspectos que caracteriza a las sociedades democráticas. Es un recurso que los ciudadanos utilizamos para exigir y defender nuestros derechos, cuando se restringe este recurso la democracia se debilita y la sociedad retrocede.

Así, pues, mientras en Seattle la OMC hablaba del libre comercio, en las calles la policía violaba la libertad de expresión de manifestantes que defendían su derecho a tener un medio ambiente limpio, a no ser esclavizados en sus sitios de trabajo y a tener mejor calidad de vida.

Si lo que más importa a los líderes

del mundo es buscar mecanismos (como el libre comercio) para enriquecer a los propietarios de las corporaciones multinacionales, entonces vamos a tener que protestar hasta ser escuchados por estos pseudo-demócratas, que solo oyen cuando están buscando votos.

Con la protesta se estaba exigiendo una sociedad más justa y equitativa, y no que se violaran los derechos civiles consagrados en la constitución.



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Corn and football

Letter lists top eight reasons to go to UNL



Dear Younger Sister Amy, I realize that you are going to graduate in May, and although this makes me feel extremely old, it also makes me wickedly proud. After all, you and I both know that in our part of the state, a high school diploma may not be hanging on everyone's wall. So, congrats to you.

There is one little detail about your graduation that has been bothering me, though. It just doesn't sit well with me, you know? It's the fact that you might not go to college next fall.

Now, I realize that not everyone goes right into higher education immediately after graduating, and that's fine for them. They can go and get a real job like the world-ready and established people they are.

But people like you and me, peo-

ple who laugh obnoxiously when we hear the word "work," must find something else to do. Some other way to delay the onset of the inevitable.

I've got the answer, honey. It's called college.

Yes, indeed, the world of over-priced textbooks, freshmen keggers and filibustering professors is the only one for you. (Except for the freshmen keggers part. You're too young.) It's been the only one for me for the last, uh, "few" years, and I wouldn't have wanted it any other way.

And here's the real kicker — I wouldn't have wanted it anywhere but dear ol' Nebraska U. Sure I wanted nothing more in high school than to go to CU, but back then, I was young and stupid. So here I am in Lincoln, old and wise, and I want you to join me.

I figured you'd need some convincing as to why you should even bother applying to our second-tier (yeah, baby, movin' on up) institution, so now I'm going to sway you. The following are the...

TOP EIGHT (I couldn't quite think of ten) REASONS WHY YOU,

AMY "SPUD" REITZ, SHOULD GO TO SCHOOL AT NU:

8. We've got "corn" in our mascot title.

I know you appreciate this. Can you think of any other school that has a vegetable in its title? I didn't think so.

7. Your RA may just turn out to be an arsonist.

Isn't that exciting? Who better to teach you how to land in jail than your Resident Assistant?

Unfortunately, not everyone who assumes this position is as freakishly entertaining as that (i.e. me), but the majority of them are thoroughly nuts, so I know you'd have some fun as a dormie.

6. We destroy our landscaping on a regular basis only to make our campus more beautiful.

Hmm. Maybe that doesn't sound so inviting. But where else are you going to find a huge asphalt rectangle smack-dab in the middle of one of the most beautiful gardens on campus? Right here, baby.

5. We've got a tractor-testing track.

I've got three words for you: East Campus rocks. It has cows. It has

“The point is, my dear, that you should go to college.”

corn. It has wildlife. And it's got "the track," the only one of its kind. (You don't have to tell me you're excited. I know.)

4. Football.

Once you get here you'll either love it or hate it. Chances are you'll love it, and why not? You can wear corn on your head and look normal here because of football.

3. There are as many students here as there are citizens of North Platte.

Yes, this may sound daunting at first, but it just means that you'll immediately feel at home here, even though your house most likely won't be next to a cornfield, which is indeed a minor disappointment. But with 25,000 people your age around, you're bound to meet a few that ya like.

2. We've got two mascots out there representin'.

How many schools are important

enough to need two abnormally large foam/vinyl characters dancing and crowd-rousing out on the field? Just one, baby, just one.

1. I'm here.

Reason enough for anyone.

Are you convinced yet? Are you just itching to fill out that application? I should hope so. You've got the inside goods now. Privileged information.

The point is, my dear, that you should go to college.

Please don't miss out on the best four (or maybe five or six) years of your life. Life at college is an opportunity that's just too fun to pass up.

So put on your cornhead, grab the typewriter, fill out an application and send that puppy in. You'll thank your old and wise big sister in the end.

(But don't worry. I won't say, "I told you so." I'll just cheer extra-loudly at your next graduation.)

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