

## No sweat

### UNL can model Notre Dame's anti-sweatshop efforts

**Editor's Note:** The Association of Students of the University of Nebraska passed a bill March 1 to encourage UNL to join the Worker Rights Consortium.

The Observer  
University of Notre Dame

**SOUTH BEND, Ind. (U-WIRE)** – Notre Dame should be commended for its decision to join the Worker Rights Consortium.

Membership offers a chance to expand Notre Dame's ability to stomp out sweatshop labor in the production of college apparel.

This decision could strengthen Notre Dame's role as the leading university in the battle against sweatshops.

For years, Notre Dame has set the standard for anti-sweatshop initiatives by universities. It was the first university to adopt a code of conduct for manufacturers in 1997 and was the first university to monitor its own sweatshops. Notre Dame also banned the manufacturing of any of its products in countries like China, which do not allow workers to organize. This ban will take effect June 30.

But Notre Dame's leadership in the battle against sweatshops doesn't stop with codes of conduct and independent monitoring. The university is also one of the leaders of the university advisory council of the Fair Labor Association.

The university also works with church and human rights organizations to increase its monitoring of labor conditions in Latin America.

Clearly, Notre Dame takes solid, meaningful steps toward curtailing sweatshop labor.

After taking such a strong stance against sweatshop labor, Notre Dame must ensure that its membership in the Worker Rights Consortium only enhances its mission against sweatshops.

Notre Dame has made a significant financial commitment to the consortium by earmarking 1 percent of its licensing revenue to the anti-sweatshop group.

As one of the largest collegiate licensers in the country, Notre Dame will give thousands of dollars to the consortium.

At the same time, the university acknowledges concerns regarding the structure of the Worker Rights Consortium and its plan for monitoring factories. Now, only five universities sit on the board of directors of the consortium. If universities are going to spend significant money on the group, they should have a larger say in the direction of it.

As it's set up now, the consortium steps in to monitor factories only when a complaint has been logged. While this system is effective for resolving disputes by placing the power of major universities behind the workers, it does little to prevent these problems initially.

The consortium should randomly monitor factories before problems occur.

As the newest member of the consortium, Notre Dame should push for a swift resolution to these concerns. If Notre Dame's experience as the leading anti-sweatshop university can strengthen the anti-sweatshop group, then Notre Dame's investment is worthwhile.

#### Editorial Board

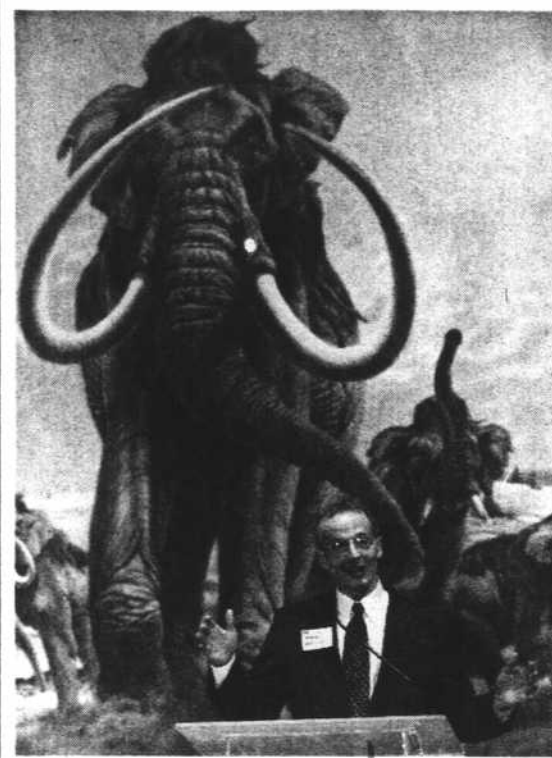
Sarah Baker, Jeff Bloom, Bradley Davis, Jake Glazeski, Matthew Hansen, Samuel McKewon, Kimberly Sweet

#### Letters Policy

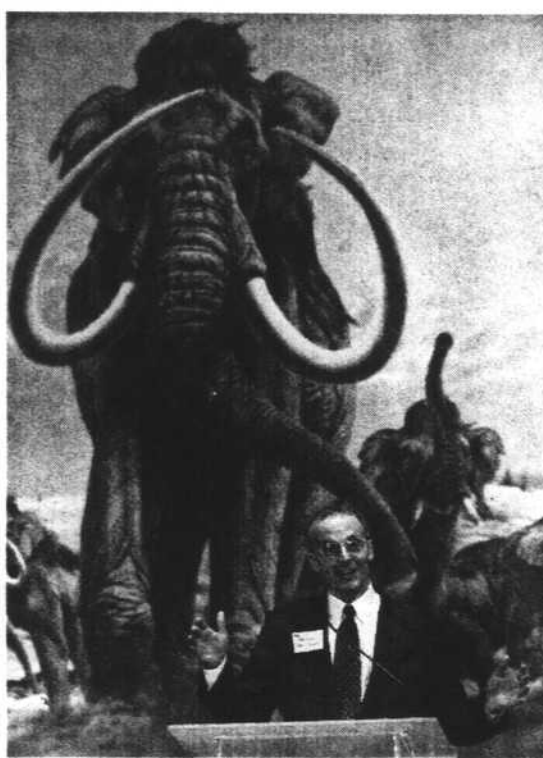
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#### Editorial Policy

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"OOH YEAH, RIGHT BEHIND THE EAR, JUST HOW I LIKE IT."



"YOU MAY HAVE ME TRAMPLED BY A HORDE OF ANGRY ELEPHANTS, BUT YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THE LAST OF HARVEY PERLMAN!"

Neal Obermeyer/DN

## The economics of sin

Ever since Adam Smith discovered that greed is good and is the solid foundation of a robust economy, one of the great tasks of government has been to arrange its laws so as to profit as much as possible from people's vices.

Chas Baylor

The real trick so far as I can tell is to legalize some sin that is legal nowhere else. For instance, one of the main arguments for gay marriage in Hawaii of a couple years ago was that legalizing it would be a huge boost to the island's tourism industry because gays would come from all over the country in order to solemnize their marriages.

Or to take a much older example, in the Middle Ages, certain cities such as Amsterdam and Venice established themselves as major trading posts by legalizing usury.

Of course, in this country, the state of Nevada has long been the true trailblazer in this area. The Silver State has shown that it really knows how to acquire silver by pioneering legalized gambling, prostitution and no-fault divorce. And today, when you can't even smoke in a bar in nearby Los Angeles, there's not even a no-smoking section in Las Vegas casinos.

As a result, cities like Las Vegas and Reno literally blossomed out of the desert sand overnight. And they remain shining models of economic growth, progress and development for the rest of the nation.

States now are finally paying homage to the genius of Nevada. Having approved of Nevada-style divorce in the 1970s, many states in the 1990s passed Nevada-style gambling laws. There's been quite a bit of talk about passing such laws in Nebraska since four surrounding states have casino gambling, and it is argued that we are missing out on the action.

What this approach ignores is that Nevada got to where it is today not by copying other states, and certainly not by copying third-tier states such as Iowa and Kansas, but by legalizing sins that were not legal in surrounding states.

In fact, selective suppression of certain vices can actually work to a state's economic advantage. No one would argue, for instance, that the massive excise taxes on cigarettes have not been a great boon to the state's coffers. At the same time, these taxes increase the forbidden pleasure-appeal of the product, with the result that the effect of such taxes on consumption is minimal at best.

This probably explains the continuing popularity of cigarettes, especially among high school students, so there is little cause for concern that this rich source of state income will dry up any time soon.

Contrary to sensationalist press reports about brain drains and economic depression, this has probably also been the effect of Initiative 416 upon homosexuality. This particular vice has been paraded for years in the newspapers and on the main streets of the nation.

In short, until 416 passed, the gay rights movement was suffering from what might be called a "Holocaust syndrome" – there was nobody around any more who remembered back when gays actually got bashed. Now any gay who tells the whole world about the first time he was "conquered" experiences a frisson of danger – that a strapping young SS officer, working for the state attorney general, may appear at any moment to subdue him.

No, gambling and sodomy are very much in – elsewhere. Nebraska needs to find a sin which Iowa, Kansas and Missouri haven't already thought of. Prostitution, for instance.

With "escort services" openly advertising that they'll satisfy your "ultimate needs," this vice is for all intents and purposes already legal. But it's one thing to be able to call up a whore. It is quite another to have a European-style red-light district at your disposal. The natural site for a new tenderloin district would be exactly where it was 91 years ago, when my granddaddy moved to town, a young bachelor fresh out of law school.

Yes sir, there were cat houses up and down Ninth Street until the Methodists and suffragettes closed them down. A little urban renewal in the Haymarket along these lines, and Iowa and Kansas won't know what hit them.

Drugs and alcohol are other vices that might be considered for deregulation. If the state started treating alcohol, or even just beer, as it does nonalcoholic beverages, UNL would have no problem attracting quality students. The vicious slander that UNL is a mediocre institution would be relegated to ancient history.

Of course, the state would lose its federal highway funds. But this would be more than offset by the revenue from all the youths who would come here to drink. In fact, until the mid-1980s, the University of Wisconsin and the University of Vermont long attracted students they never would have otherwise simply on account of their states' drinking age of 18.

The possibilities for creative pandering are probably endless. But the main thing is to be creative. There is nothing worse than a boring sin.

## Letters to the editor

### Explain diversity

I used to find it funny that so many people in this university, from UNL's leadership to ASUN President Joel Schafer to the DN editorial board, consistently laud diversity without ever explaining what makes diversity inherently great to begin with.

That's why I almost fell out of my seat when the DN finally tried, in its editorial criticizing Regent Miller, to explain why diversity is so, so important to UNL.

To no avail. According to the editorial, "minorities should be recruited because they're a valuable ... resource." Right. So am I supposed to liken all minority students to a book I can check out at Love Library? Are minority students here for my use and enjoyment?

The editorial continues with, "Seeing someone who doesn't look like me can help you learn a great deal – a fact not lost on most administrators and lawmakers." Please, lead me to the genius who wrote that, so that I may bow down and offer thanks for clearing this whole diversity thing up for me. You can't be serious.

What, exactly, am I to learn by seeing someone who doesn't look like me? That maybe I should go get a haircut so I look like them?

Diversity is a buzz word, a fad, just like the word "multicultural" was a few years ago. When UNL announced its two finalists for the chancellor position, for example, ASUN President Schafer was quoted as saying that he was glad to see diversity in the selection committee's choices.

Bill Hogan has excellent leadership credentials, but Schafer chose to comment on diversity. No reason given. Diversity was just the popular thing

to say. But it's getting old. Everybody wants diversity but nobody will say why. There's a reason, right? Enlighten me.

Still, I believe that UNL should recruit only the most qualified students and teachers. If those students and teachers happen to be from minority groups, then by all means, get them to Lincoln. But it's time to stop filling quotas.

Thompson Herman  
sophomore  
journalism

### In defense of Dave

This letter is in response to Tony Bock's column in the Tuesday opinion page about Dave Matthews' new album.

Mr. Bock, you were totally unjustified with what you wrote. How dare you criticize someone the way you did Dave Matthews. You have no idea the time, effort and emotional strain that musicians face, especially someone in Dave's shoes.

Did you read the Rolling Stone article about the new album? It said that it took him two years to work up the courage to play his songs in front of his friends, and now he's been performing 200 shows a year in sold out stadiums for a decade. Quite an accomplishment for someone as apparently shy as Dave.

Your article doesn't just suck. It really sucks.

Preston Van Amburg  
freshman  
general studies

## Love behind a hidden secret

Thick, frothy waves build steadily then sigh and roll upon the morning shore. Mild chatter from early morning continental breakfast guests flows out into the air. A young couple in their early 20s makes their way through the buffet line at this four-star hotel in Cancun, Mexico.

The girl is well-tanned, and her long legs are lean underneath a short white skirt. She wears strapless sandals and her blue halter-top shimmies as she leans over to pick a large strawberry from the fruit bowl.

Her eyes are the size of plump grapes; they are a deep blue – almost a purple blue – and she wears her long blonde wavy hair loose about her thin shoulders. The couple takes their breakfast out to the stone patio. Farther out past the shore, fat pelicans are nose-diving for fish. Some ride atop easy sloping waves like decoys in the water, while others fly into shore. They swoop down low along the beach.

The man takes the girl's hand in his. Old couples' eyes wander over to them with wistful smiles in remembrance. Cabana boys watch the girl's face hungrily. They memorize her expressions.

Later the couple will board a touring boat that will take them to Isla Mujeres, where they will go snorkeling and swimming among vibrant fish and coral that play underneath turquoise waters. There will be a nude beach where they will lie lazily in the sun, dozing like puppies on a carpet of white sand.

There will be a discussion of how to spend the evening with very little contemplation and even less disagreement as they turn their heads toward each other, their eyes gleaming like little kids on a day of playing hooky.

In the late afternoon, a siesta will be taken and the long thin curtains will billow in and out with the breeze. Their hushed, hard breathing – coming fast, coming slow, then tired. Spent, they will feel the cool spurts of the air conditioner. An early evening rain will fall and rock them gently to sleep as they dream visions that mirror the day. Life and dreams are one.

Later, they will go out. The girl wears her deep golden tan like she wears the three-karat diamond platinum ring on her hand; the man so handsome and clean cut in his khakis and white T-shirt. They



Yasmin McEwen

will dance on the tables at Senior Frog's and do the limbo in the tequila line. At 2 a.m., he will lift her out of the cab and carry her upstairs

Choppy waves build steadily then crash unflinchingly upon the trembling sand. Mild chatter from early morning continental breakfast guests wafts into the morning breeze.

A young girl makes her way through the buffet line at this four-star hotel in Cancun, Mexico. The girl is well tanned and her long legs are lean as they glisten like carved thin logs underneath her blue shorts. The young man is already sitting at the table drinking his coffee.

When she gets to the table, he looks at her as a father who has just seen his daughter in the most uncompromising of positions and says, "You should go back and get some more food." She ignores him and sits down and begins to eat a strawberry.

He leans over. "We need to discuss what happened in the bathroom last night," he says.

The girl looks away. "How long have you been doing it?" he says. "We've got to get you checked into a hospital as soon as we get back."

She ignores him and continues to eat.

"No," she says. "I won't go there."

He runs his fingers through his hair then puts his hand on her thin arm. She pulls it away like a retreating snake.

"I've married a stranger," he says. "Don't you think ... don't you think I should've known about this?"

"I'm fine," she says. "It's under control."

"The secret life is under control ...," he says. "That's why it was secret, huh?"

His eyes, she notes, sets as hard as the cold gray marble floor. She looks out at the ocean now, the waves slapping cold upon the soft shore.

She wonders about last night. The repeated loss that she so desperately wants to stop. Yet she can't give in to imperfection. He wouldn't look at her the same if she did. If she were to gain a size or two.

There will be no end. The cycle will continue only behind closed doors.

"That was the last time," she says. *But it wasn't*, she knows.

A young couple sits at a table eating continental breakfast. They are on honeymoon in Cancun, Mexico.