editorials

Use of sprays should stop

The Lane County Board of Commissioners has been asked to ban the use of phenoxy (hormone) herbicides on lands under their jurisdiction. The board should agree to do so.

Phenoxy herbicides are "plant poisons" which operate by interfering with chemical mechanisms basic to plant life. The chemical mechanisms of plants are remarkably similar to those of animals and humans in that their cells share many of the same components. They employ similar mechanisms of growth, reproduction and respiration.

A substance which disrupts the basic life process of plants thus possesses the potential to harm animals and humans. We are not concerned with only the ability to kill that a herbicide has in and of itself. Herbicides may also be teratogenic (capable of causing birth defects), mutagenic (capacity to damage and alter genes) and carcinogenic (causing cancer).

It is also important to consider the stability of herbicides in the environment. It is not simply a matter of spraying a chemical one day and having it decompose into innocuous substances the next. Accumulations by repeated sprayings could lead to a concentration well in excess of the result of one application.

The burden of the proof concerning the safety of certified herbicides, including 2, 4, 5-T and its toxic by-product dioxin (TCDD), should fall on the Environmental Protection Agency and chemical industry. Until they can prove beyond a doubt that a chemical substance is safe, no use should be made of any parts or combinations of the chemicals. Such proof can not be provided for phenoxy herbicides.

Message ignored

In the furor surrounding the mixing of politics and the Olympics the central issue is being forgotten. Long after the 18th games have closed and the medals have been awarded, the black people of South Africa will still be living under the racist policies of that country's minority government. Through their absence from Montreal, over 20 African nations have made a statement. The forum used for that statement should not overshadow the reasons it was made.

Letters

Ad policy 'extreme'

An ad was recently submitted to the *Emerald* which sought a Christian roommate to share an apartment. The ad was changed by an *Emerald* staff person to ask for a female roommate in a Christian household, thus changing the meaning of the ad slightly and making clarification to callers necessary. We were told that the change was necessary because the ad discriminated on the basis of religion. We understand this reason, and we realize that your ad policy is well intentioned, but even the best intentions can be carried to extremes. For instance, each day about half of your roommate wanted ads discriminate on the basis of sex or level of education (grad students preferred). Perhaps this too should be eliminated.

We also feel that we should have the right to choose a roommate of specific religion since we are the ones who must live with her. The basis of our lives is our shared faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. It is very hard (if not impossible) for a non-Christian to understand this faith. We feel we would not be content living with a non-Christian and that she would not be satisfied with such a situation either. Why should our right to live with a person of the same faith be violated in this case? Is it *always* wrong to be discriminating?

In the Bible Christians are told, "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?" (II Corinthians 6:14) and " '... We must obey God rather than men.' " (Acts 5:29) When did we lose our freedom of religion?

Jayne Wood
physics, senior
and four others

Hopes for better job

I can do nothing but fully concur with Bryan Cohen's letter concerning flagrant biased coverage of U.S. Presidential candidates by the *Emerald*. The paper's writers attacked former Gov. Jimmy Carter most irresponsibly, and printed statements that were obviously less than truthful. Bryan mentioned that the *Emerald* has approached a point where the validity of the paper is severely damaged; that the student body can be on guard for further distortions of such political stories in future editions. Since the school year has concluded, however, we won't be able to judge the *Emerald's* fairness in such reporting until next year. I only hope that next year's staff will practice a more decent, unbiased style of political reporting.

Jim Stock
Business Administration major

Major for suckers

I've wasted my life.

A recent *Newsweek* magazine puts it well, "elementary education and journalism will continue to be the poorest job markets through 1985."

And as atrocious as the education market is, it was never as futile as journalism. Four years of journalism will reward you with 10 years at an unemployment office.

Journalism is the new major for suckers.

Mike Andrews

Letters policy

The Emerald will accept and try to print all letters concerning fair comment on ideas and topics of concern or interest to the University community.

opinion

Conservation preferable to nuclear expansion

The nuclear safeguards issue, Ballot Measure 9 in the November election, has important implications which go far beyond three basic provisions: adequate liability, radioactive waste storage, and the testing of safety systems. These broader implications will be considered here.

Mismanaged nuclear technology can create a biosphere contaminated with highly toxic radioactivity which would increase the incidence of cancer and genetic disease, the latter influencing countless future generations. Natural or "background" radiation, frequently cited as an example of the innocuous nature of radioactivity, is estimated to cause between 5,000 and 16,000 cancer deaths and thousands of genetic deaths in the United States each year. Existing nuclear plant technology is expected to contribute an equivalent amount of radioactivity in two to three decades under ideal operating conditions. A few serious nuclear accidents or a number of minor accidents over several decades could easily cause tens of thousands of additional cancer deaths annually over many years. Radioactivity dispersed in the environment will persist for thousands of years with continuing adverse effects on human health.

Proponents and opponents of nuclear power agree about these weaknesses in nuclear technology. Debate centers on judgment about the quantitative effects of such accidents and the technical ability to decrease the probability of such accidents. The acceptability of nuclear power depends upon the assumption that perfect technological manipulation of radioactivity, a feat unattained in any previous effort, is possible. This and other assumptions deserve careful consideration.

The problem is expressed forthrightly in a quotation of N-power advocate Dr. Alvin Weinberg: "We nuclear people have made a Faustian bargain with society . . . we offer . . . an inexhaustible source of energy. But the price that we demand of society . . . is both a vigilance and longevity of our social institutions that we are quite unaccustomed to." Weinberg assumes the achievement of technological perfection which must include all of nuclear technology, not just the nuclear plant. He also assumes that stable social institutions can be readily established, the lessons of history notwithstanding.

Given this interpretation, one may appropriately ask, "By what right does this generation risk irreversible, long term, and catastrophic environmental contamination at the expense of much future human suffering?" Considering the cost of failure, can we afford to assume unproven capabilities, particularly when use of the technology is rapidly expanding to gigantic proportions?

The $3 million Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) nuclear reactor safety analysis is usually misrepresented. The highly optimistic accident estimates rarely mention that no sabotage, terrorism, or act of war is considered. Nor does the AEC study consider accidents in the transportation of radioactive spent fuel, in reprocessing, or the problem of radioactive thorium-230 in uranium mill tailings. Thorium-230 has a half life of 80,000 years and it releases a radioactive gas. What sort of social institutions will be responsible for several hundred thousand years?

Finally, the matter of diversion of fissionable material for clandestine bomb making deserves consideration. N-plants such as Trojan produce as much as 550 pounds of plutonium-239 per year, enough to make up to 25 Hiroshima-type bombs as demonstrated by India. Argentina has the capability to do likewise. Brazil has purchased the entire technology from West Germany. Pakistan has promise of the same from France. The United States has promised reactors to Egypt, Israel and Arabia. Lybia's Kadafi has students in California and at Oregon State University studying nuclear technology. Nuclear power technology cannot be separated from nuclear weapons manufacture. Pandora's box is open and it is apparent that the export of N-power will expedite the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

One reads that nuclear power has its risks but we have no alternatives. This statement deserves strong challenge considering the serious trade-offs. An American Association of Architects study indicates that almost 90 per cent of the additional energy needed by the year 2000 can be obtained by development of alternative energy sources and through the more efficient use of existing electricity. The incremental cost of providing electricity generating capacity for a single all electric house will soon be $40,000. A small fraction of this sum invested in more efficient use (insulation and storm windows) could easily save $10,000. The development of thermoelectric power, including nuclear, is obviously the more expensive alternative. Without increased use efficiency we must produce twice as much new generating capacity as needed, half of it to be wasted. The ability to improve use efficiency is proven, the assumptions supporting N-power expansion are not.

R.G. Wolfe
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