

# Acid rain problem cannot be ignored

There is an environmental plague spreading itself across North America. Most of us are just vaguely familiar with it. Yet, every day this plague is killing aquatic life in thousands of lakes and streams in our country. It is contaminating reservoirs and waterways, leaving death in its wake.

The plague is "acid rain," a term used to describe the natural processes through which pollutants in the atmosphere are converted into particles, among them nitric and sulfuric acids, which are then spread over the land by prevailing winds. These pollutants enter the atmosphere chiefly through industrial and power-plant smokestacks and automobile tailpipes. Acid rain is one of the most serious environmental problems of the 1980s. It destroys the life-giving qualities of one of our most important natural resources: water.

The effects of acid rain have already been well-documented. Results of a survey of more than 4,500 Massachusetts lakes, ponds and streams were released in mid-April. They showed that 225 of Massachusetts' main waterways are already "dead" from acid rain. The number is growing. In a total of 23 eastern states, 9,400 lakes have already been "seriously altered" by acid rain. More than 17,000 other waterways are on the "sensitive" list. Nor is the problem restricted to the eastern United States and Canada. A report by the World Resources Institute in Washington D.C. cited three areas of the West as "particularly vulnerable" to acid rain: the Cascades, the Rocky Mountains, and the Sierra Nevadas. Researchers are also concerned about how acid rain may be killing-off red spruce, pines and hardwood trees.

Despite the clear danger that acid rain poses to the United States and Canada, the administration of President Ronald Reagan has largely ignored the problem. Reagan has refused to renew the Clean Air Act, which expired in 1982 but remains in force pending congressional action. At an international conference on acid rain in Quebec City, James Hoyt, Massachusetts secretary of environmental affairs, announced, "We're not going to wait for Washington to take action." The result is that environmental groups are organizing across Canada and the United States to seek solutions to the acid rain crisis.

Part of the problem is that the Reagan administration has refused to enforce harsher laws regarding the emission of pollutants from industrial smokestacks. The argument behind this is that pollution control devices on smokestacks would cost industries between \$4 billion and \$7 billion a year. Industries claim that the burden of increased costs would then be put on the taxpayer. While true to a certain extent, this kind of argument tends to ignore the reality that acid rain is literally killing our country's fresh water systems by turning them into lifeless lakes and streams.

Although the Reagan administration has shown an unwillingness to deal with the acid rain problem, individual states are trying to get things done. New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Illinois, Ohio, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan and others have all initiated state-sponsored programs to monitor and deal with the threat of acid rain.

The acid rain problem will not go away unless the U.S. government is pressured by the American public into ensuring that industries responsible for acid rain follow proper pollution control guidelines. Acid rain is a crisis that can no longer be ignored. It's time for the Reagan administration to show more concern for the environment and less concern for industrial profits.



## letters

### No Moore

In his most recent letter to the editor entitled "Bombs Away," Brian Moore suggests first of all that it is morally (a term which he uses as if he, solely, is fit to judge) reprehensible to allow the U.S. to interfere with other countries. He even sites examples of unsuccessful intervention in Vietnam, Lebanon, Iran, and Central America to support this moral obligation.

Then, as if he were struck by lightning, he completely changes his argument. "Let's not mess around with divestment and trade embargoes," he says; "Bomb the crap out of them." It's clear to see that this is just another attempt at being satirically funny (I hope) which, of course, fails.

Maybe we should examine the psyche of such a mind who might, if given ability, cause the destruction of all of South Africa.

It's a shame that Brian Moore's letters of "moral justice" ever make it to the Emerald. Let's hope that we never see these dangerous views in any position of power.

Michael Laschiver  
Student

### Hard pressed

The University students' protest and the subsequent arrests will cost the City of Eugene taxpayers more than \$10,000. The cost of housing more than 80 demonstrators overnight at the County Jail, plus overtime for police, jail, Municipal Court and City Prosecutors is

expensive.

There probably aren't many people in Eugene who would disagree that South Africa's government is racist and incredibly cruel.

Instead of wasting \$10,000 in City funds, why don't these well-meaning young people stage a fundraiser and send a lobbyist to Salem or Washington D.C., where decisions influencing South African investment can be made?

I'm hard pressed to figure out how clogging the local judicial system will help one single person in South Africa.

Maybe I shouldn't complain. I was one of the public servants who made a few extra bucks in overtime.

Aaron Douglas  
Eugene

### Oil spills

Imagine. A break from school at the beach and a favorite picture-postcard stretch of coast: dead gulls and other seabirds, seals and fish, all, as well as the beach, covered with oil. A scenario never to happen in Oregon?

The U.S. Dept. of Interior recently included Oregon and the Washington waters in a proposed lease schedule which is the first step in offshore oil development on the Oregon coast.

This means oil spills covering the coastline and killing marine mammals, birds, fish, plankton and shellfish larvae; air and water pollution; toxic chemical discharges; economic losses to fishing, tourism and agriculture industries and strains on local economies.

Any benefits from development are minimal: There might be oil off the Oregon coast but tests have shown this to be highly unlikely so far. However, it is time renewable alternatives are developed instead of depending on this faltering fossil fuel.

Gov. Vic Atiyeh has scheduled a public hearing in Salem, May 15, to formulate a State position on this issue. For information on who to write and how to testify to protect the coast, contact the Survival Center at Suite 1, EMU or call 686-4356 and help us protect the Oregon coast.

Brett Fisher  
Survival Center

### Closed minds

Never in my college career have I witnessed such immaturity and short-sightedness as was demonstrated by the Incidental Fee Committee (IFC) at the 1985-86 EMU budget request. The IFC showed complete disrespect for Program Coordinator, Bruce Mason. The committee talked and laughed among themselves while Mason presented the budget. It is a shame that the student body of a fine University are represented by such an unprofessional and uninformed student government.

The IFC threatened to "take an axe to the entire budget..." and said that the Outdoor Program gives "free rides to the community." Members of the community have supplied a great deal of equipment, expertise, and energy to the development of the Outdoor Program. Participation in the program by non-students does not result in higher costs. In fact, they decrease the cost of trips and other resources offered at the Outdoor Program.

Lori Lieberman suggested that the program charge community members for activities. This would destroy the cooperative nature of the program, founded by both students and non-student members of the community.

Rather than the Outdoor Program having "the gall," as Lieberman said, to ask for a budget increase, I see the IFC as having "the gall" to cut a program that is better able to serve the students through its community outreach.

It is typical of a Reaganistic mentality to cut a program that it knows nothing about, and when justification is offered, to listen with closed minds.

Michael Kirwin  
Recreation, Business, English  
Humboldt State University

### Letters Policy

The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing fair comment on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be limited to 250 words, typed, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is turned in. The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style. Letters to the editor should be turned into the Emerald office, Suite 300 EMU.

## oregon daily emerald

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published Monday through Friday except during exam week and vacations by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, 97403.

The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices on the third floor of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

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News and Editorial: 686-5511  
Display Advertising and Business: 686-3712  
Classified Advertising: 686-4343  
Production: 686-4381  
Circulation: 686-5511