

Editorial

Protect arctic area against oil drilling

In these days of uncertainty about the oil supply from the Persian Gulf, the U.S. Department of Interior has been considering alternatives to the current over-reliance on foreign oil.

And, alas, one of these alternatives, according to Donald Hodel, U.S. Secretary of the Interior, is to exploit wilderness regions, particularly Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), an undisturbed strip of land along Alaska's northern coast that is home to rare mammals and countless species of birds.

In an attempt to solve "dependence on unstable sources of foreign oil," drilling for oil at the 1.5 million-acre coastal plain is "vital to our national security," argues Hodel, who is attempting to persuade Congress to open up the wildlife refuge.

Drilling at the refuge, however, would incur long-run costs that outweigh any short-run benefits from the extracted oil.

Although about \$15 billion dollars of oil potentially could be received from the proposed area, about 180,000 caribou would be displaced — a result that could have negative effects, such as stopping the caribou from reproducing. Other fragile wildlife, such as two million shorebirds, also would be displaced.

Furthermore, the drilling would violate the sensitive environment and ecosystem of the region. Roads would be constructed, noise and air pollution would be discharged, and the wilderness would be exposed to all the adverse affects resulting from the presence of people.

The Interior Department conducted a study of the environmental impact that could be expected from drilling in the area, but according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency it was tainted with inaccurate and inadequate information. Moreover, the report neglected to consider in full the environmental costs of drilling.

If the Interior Department is determined to drill at ANWR, the least it would do is provide an objective study of the environmental effects along with recommendations.

Aside from the potential environmental impact, other costs exist. Drilling at the refuge, where there's only a 19-percent chance that any oil will be discovered, would decrease the incentive to look elsewhere for a less environmentally sensitive location with a higher probability of oil extraction. If the Interior Department adamantly believes that it must increase domestic oil production for the sake of national security, then alternative oil-drilling sights that would not displace a large amount of wildlife or damage a sensitive environment should be considered.

The incentive to develop other energy means as a substitute for oil consumption also becomes a low priority. If special interest groups, such as oil corporations, are allowed to exploit the environment at will, the environment with suffer and technological progress aimed at overcoming dependence on increasingly scarce resources is less likely to occur.

The short-run gains of consuming domestically extracted oil will be offset by unrepairable long-run costs to the environment. People with big-business interests, such as Hodel, myopically pursue environmental policies oriented toward short-run benefits, and hence fail to perceive the long-run implications of their actions.

Or if they do perceive the implications, they do not care.



Letters

Misguided

In reading Jeff Mornarich's letter, it seems that his comments are colored by homophobia and misinformation regarding the transmission of AIDS (ODE, Oct. 19).

He claims that the recent Supreme Court Hardwick decision is the U.S. government's attempt "to do away with one of the major causes of AIDS." His linking of the court ruling allowing states to uphold or create anti-sodomy laws to AIDS prevention seems misguided at the least.

The Hardwick decision allows each state to pass laws barring two people (in many states the law indicates two people of the same gender) from engaging in anal intercourse.

Tim Hughes, co-director of the University Gay and Lesbian Alliance, was correct in suggesting that the court decision is an attempt to restrict the right to "love whom we choose in the way we choose."

Mornarich dismisses Hughes' comment by stating, "Unfortunately you are entitled to your own opinion." He further displays his homophobic bias later in his letter by adding,

"Why don't you start attaching your flyers to cast iron trousers?"

AIDS is hardly a subject of which to be making light. If Mornarich were to educate himself more thoroughly on AIDS and its transmission, he would learn that anal intercourse is not the only activity that has the potential of spreading the HIV. Vaginal intercourse and oral sex can also spread the disease just as effectively. Why doesn't he push for laws barring these sexual acts? Even "wet kissing" is considered only "possibly safe."

Perhaps Mornarich should be evaluating his own practices rather than condemning those of others. AIDS is much too serious for anyone to be pointing fingers.

The fact is that anyone who practices unsafely any activity is placing himself or herself at risk of infection. Insensitivity and ignorance, as demonstrated by Mornarich, are inappropriate and ineffective methods by which to debate the management and prevention of AIDS.

Mark Langlie
Sophomore, theatre arts

Cross cultural

At 7:15 p.m. Friday, Oct. 16, my roommate and some dormmates are ready to purchase some alcoholic beverages from the cashier of a local store. My roommate, 23, shows his driver's license. Then another. The cashier calls another clerk over who says he's in charge.

He looks at the two, then another, before saying he can't accept out-of-state I.D.s. He

needs three I.D.s to make this statement.

My roommate's neighbor offers his I.D. It will be understandable if this particular I.D. were from Oregon, but it isn't. It is just another out-of-state driver's license.

My roommate files a written complaint on the spot while a manager comes by. The clerk tells him that this guy is acting like a jerk, and we are eventually asked to go elsewhere. The manager explicitly rips up the complaint.

What is so uncommon about this? The fact is that this kind of thing is too common. My roommate who got his I.D.s rejected is black. His neighbor, whose I.D. was accepted, isn't. Just plain sad.

In today's business and social worlds, it's becoming increasingly important to be able to get along with, understand and become friends with people of different cultures. This is the theme of one such dorm on campus, Adams Cross Cultural.

Through relationships with people of different color, nationality or religion, one can gain invaluable knowledge and much improved attitudes. Just by knowing different kinds of people (this means by giving them a chance and actually getting to know them), one can automatically learn important, new physical, social and communication skills and ultimately gain some fresh attitudes on being able to enjoy life even more.

There's an entire world out there, so don't live on an island. You won't get anywhere.

Neil Takemoto
Architecture

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.

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