

Signal from Bhopal: Indian life is cheap

Survivors of the worst industrial accident in history have little left.

Union Carbide has settled out of court with the Indian government for the 1984 Bhopal pesticide gas leak disaster that left 2,000 dead instantly and carried agonizing death to 1,300 more. The angry relatives — numbering in the hundreds of thousands — and the lingering victims — thousands still hospitalized, dying at the rate of one a day — no longer even have hope.

The \$470 million settlement is ridiculously low, an infuriating signal to the Indian people and the rest of the world from a United States chemical manufacturer that life, in India at least, literally is cheap.

The Indian government, by suspiciously accepting such a low settlement for approximately half a million claimants, stands firm in an apparent position that its citizens are expendable. Charges of collusion between Union Carbide and the Indian high court in Bhopal are understandable.

Regardless of Western ethnocentric assertions that the relatively low standard of living of the victims and their families justifies such an inadequate settlement, signals of this sort can only incite increased resentment from nations whose citizens do not enjoy the perceived luxuries of American life.

After the underprivileged world witnesses the extravagant awards issued by American courts — such as the multimillion settlement for Rock Hudson's ex-lover — and the extreme sentences routinely meted out to the citizenry of India for much less severe infractions than causing the deaths of thousands, justification for outrage at the Bhopal settlement logically seems to follow.

We probably will never know what caused the disaster. A court investigation would have made a coverup less plausible. Now, we do not know if the disaster was caused by employee sabotage, as Union Carbide asserted, or by company incompetence, as the Indian government claimed.

Likely, the settlement indicates a Union Carbide ploy to silence further investigative efforts. This is a shame, considering future standards of safety, not to mention good public relations, would be best served by opening the door to the truth.

As the settlement now stands, little is left for the survivors. While the victims and the families continue to grieve, their legal champions appeared to have betrayed them.

Ozone layer disappearing faster than ever expected

Warnings from scientists rarely awaken the average coffee drinker from an early morning routine of newspaper reading. More often than not, such warnings can be found on back pages and typically refer to laboratory rats. Generally, people scoff at them as self-serving and paranoid.

Nevertheless, ozone depletion has heated into an issue of active discussion for scientists and beauticians alike, with good reason.

Scientists have stunned us with news of a concentration of chemicals in the Arctic's atmosphere that could destroy the ozone, the atmospheric layer that shields the Earth from the tyranny of the sun, at the possible rate of 1 percent for each day of sunlight.

Further, we are told 1 percent of ozone depletion equals a 2 percent increase in ultraviolet penetration or to put it into more relevant terms: a 4 or 5 percent increase in the risk of skin cancer.

Scientists alarmed the world in 1985 with evidence of a hole in the ozone layer above the Antarctic. They called for the banning of synthetic chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), which are seen as the cause of the destruction of the ozone layer.

But so far, the ban is incomplete.

At the time of the Montreal Protocol, an agreement between 46 nations that called for a 50 percent reduction in the production of CFCs by the turn of the century, scientists had no idea that ozone depletion was growing at such an alarming rate.

Given the frightening new evidence, CFCs should be banned quickly and completely, by countries from every corner of the globe. With clear recognition of the consequences of the new evidence, the participants in the Montreal Protocol have planned a reassessment of the treaty to be staged in Helsinki, Finland in April.

If President George Bush truly wishes to prove himself an environmentally informed and sensitive leader, he must send an immediate message to the governments and manufacturers of the world by taking more extensive action here at home. President Bush can lead the way toward a total ban of CFCs by joining hands with environmentalists before the meeting in Helsinki.

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Letters

Carl's Jr.

As a matter of clarification, regarding the use of our names in support of the proposal for a Carl's Jr. fast food restaurant in the Erb Memorial Union, Dennis Carr, EMU Food Service Director, and I supported the acceptance of their bid at the EMU Board meeting on Jan. 31. As far as we are concerned, when the board rejected that bid, the matter was decided.

David Thomason's "open letter to students" advertisement, carried in this paper, may imply that Dennis and I support the statements in the letter, which is not the case. Our names were used without our permission.

Adell McMillan
Director, EMU

Star Wars

The overwhelming rally against the congressional pay raises prompted me to ask why this issue got such response from people.

It could be that people can just picture money leaving their wallets and going straight into Congress members' wallets.

Other issues should be viewed this way.

The Strategic Defense Initiative, SDI, is taking even more money from your wallet and giving it to corporations, defense contractors and university laboratories. The billions appropriated by Congress for this "Star Wars" plan have created a vested interest from these and other groups to continue pouring money into a pipe dream that, even if it could be created, would be vulnerable to simple and relatively cheap counter-measures.

Do you know how much this is costing you?

- Since 1984 the U.S. has pumped \$14 billion into SDI despite the fact that scientific opinion has rejected Ronald Reagan's Star Wars vision as illusory and dangerous.

- The Pentagon plans to spend \$70 billion between 1984 and 1993 on massive research for SDI. One system being explored would cost over \$250 billion just to lift into space!

Any amount of money spent on SDI is too much — the project is useless and violates the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. We know that public opinion will stop Congress. Why do we continue to let Congress pour our money into this nuclear garbage can?

Dondi Ford
Student Campaign
for Disarmament

Varied

Recent letters about MBA Association (MBAA) funding warrant publication of facts. Accusing the MBAA of practicing racism by "deliberate omission" (not actively recruiting from specific racially oriented student unions on campus), NASU and MEChA oppose MBAA funding. Their opinions reflect inadequate information.

As a student association, the MBAA has no responsibility for recruiting MBA candidates. The MBA program, an administrative body of the College of Business, actively seeks all qualified applicants on this campus, without consideration of race, sex, major, student group or ideology. Recruitment notices inviting all interested students to attend informative sessions are posted at various campus locations including the EMU. Seriously interested students generally shoulder the responsibility of responding to these recruitment efforts!

NASU and MEChA are "not impressed" by the MBAA's service to the minority population on campus. In recent years 25 to 45 percent of MBAA members were students of varied color, creed and culture from 21 countries: Canada, France, Hong Kong, Iceland, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Norway, People's Republic of China, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, West Germany and Zimbabwe.

Although not all major and minor races have been represented, this list seems impressive to me. In my opinion the MBAA offers excellent opportunities for students of different races and cultures to interact with each other and to discover through this interaction that we

are all alike. If the student body wishes to support groups that promote interracial and cross-cultural affiliation, then the IFC would do well to increase MBAA funding.

Bruce Cooley
Ph.D. student
Management

Martyr

We call upon all Moslems, of whatever faction, to condemn the actions of Ayatollah Khomeini as uncivilized. As Christians we can sympathize with your feelings when someone spreads blasphemy through the media or otherwise. We may protest, call for retraction even, but we have no right to "send him to hell" — that is God's prerogative.

You often shout in your rallies, "God is great!" If you truly believe that, then let him exact his own sentence, "Vengeance is mine saith the Lord." Khomeini is not God. No one gets into heaven by killing somebody, and nobody has the power to condemn someone to hell but God himself on judgment day.

This is perhaps the fundamental difference between your religion and ours. Yes, our past has been stained by Crusader excesses, as you well know, but Khomeini proves he does not know God because God is a God of forgiveness (John 3:16). We hold Christ to be more than just God's prophet but actually God come in the flesh to redeem mankind. Although we condemned the blasphemy of the film "The Last Temptation of Christ," we also pray for the film makers to repent and we do not seek their lives in the meantime.

We do not hold the West up as the perfect model of a Godly society (witness only our abortion rates), but we do condemn Khomeini's stand as uncivilized and un-Godly, as should everyone. We welcome free, open debate, and we will not kill you for your views!

Paul Arblaster
Senior

Wednesday, February 22, 1989