

Exxon plan for spill tainted by price tag

The Valdez oil spill last March resulted in a disaster of historic proportions and a gasoline price increase of ridiculous size. And now, in a further affront, Exxon's plan to clean up this mess is an insult to all.

The company issued a revised spill-cleaning plan Monday just hours before a federal deadline, but it was hardly worth the wait. The new plan, if implemented, would clean up only 364 miles of the 555 miles of shoreline oiled by the spill. The effort would take five months and 3,400 workers, and require suspension of existing Alaskan environmental laws.

In looking at how to undo this mess, Exxon divided the polluted beaches into four categories, from heavily sludge-covered to "only lightly oiled." Exxon hopes to get by scrubbing the three worst categories and let the 191 miles of lightly oiled beaches be washed naturally by the environment.

Exxon will also concentrate efforts to recover usable oil that can be strained and refined. That's a good idea. But the gunk and sludge that can't be redone will have to be burned or buried, says Exxon, and to do either, it is likely that the oil company will have to ask for exemptions from local environmental laws.

It was the company's unpreparedness that led to this spill being as bad as it was, and for that reason, we expect nothing but a total effort from Exxon. Every inch of beach should be cleaned up by the company responsible for this, and every ounce of oil should be reclaimed to prevent further contamination.

It isn't unreasonable to expect this from Exxon, especially in light of the way oil prices have shot up dramatically since the spill. In the Eugene area, we've seen gas go up 30 cents a gallon.

State Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer has joined in with his counterparts in Idaho and Washington demanding a federal investigation into the sharp rise in the price of gasoline. We too want to know if Exxon is gouging the consumer to pay for the cost of clean-up; to do so is totally unacceptable.

The federal government is already accusing the company of being sluggish in moving to clean up the mess. Exxon is supposed to open a new facility in Seward, Alaska today that will aid in the cleanup of sea otters fouled by oil; this new plant is very much behind schedule.

All in all, Exxon has yet to demonstrate any real sense of remorse in its responsibility for the Valdez spill, nor has it made a good faith effort to clean it up. It's too late for little humiliations and small efforts from the company; we want a lot of both.



Bright future still exists for fusion process

It's beginning to look as if cool fusion isn't so cool after all. But the excitement generated over the hunt for it may inspire scientists to keep looking until they do find a fusion process that is reliable.

Last March, two chemists announced that they had achieved fusion at room temperature in an experiment that generated more energy than was put into it. Such a discovery held the promise of solving the world's energy needs forever — if the process works.

After weeks of controversy, a consensus is forming within the scientific community that the process does not work. Researchers at the spring meeting of the American Physical Society in Baltimore Monday asserted that the two scientists had misinterpreted their data. "At this point, there is no evidence for anything other than conventional chemistry," said chemist Nathan Lewis of the California Institute of Technology.

Considerable doubt existed from the very moment Martin Fleischmann and B. Stanley Pons made the announcement of their "discovery" in a flashy press conference. The means they said were used to achieve fusion seemed far too simple, too rudimentary to start such a complicated process.

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Without getting too technical, their process can be summarized as follows: An electrically charged lattice work is placed in a container of heavy water (water in which the hydrogen has been replaced by its cousin deuterium). A current in the container separates the water into oxygen and deuterium; the deuterium molecules are attracted to the lattice. Eventually, the lattice becomes so densely packed with the molecules that the deuterium fuses and becomes helium, with spare neutrons giving off energy.

In their initial findings, Fleischmann and Pons said that an unexplained amount of energy was created in the experiment. It now appears that this result was a fluke; their claims have not been duplicated in independent testing.

While it is easy to be disappointed that a cheap, clean energy source such as fusion doesn't yet exist, it is clear that the news of fusion excited many scientists around the world. Hopefully, this excitement will continue and inspire them to keep researching the possibility of fusion. Although we haven't found it yet, it seems likely that one day, given time, we shall.

Letters

In response

I'm sorry I'm always writing "in response to ..." letters, but it seems I never believe people actually believe some things until they have it printed for everyone in the city to read! I therefore, once again, comment on a letter so that those who believe similar stuff may gain understanding.

In the letter "Private issue," Ann Tedards says (ODE, April 25), "Anti-abortionists fail to acknowledge that ... a fetus is part of a woman's body."

You mean you have met people, Ann, who deny the flesh of the fetus is connected to the mother? Please note that the fetus serves no function for the mother. Rather, every connection exists for the purpose of bringing a living person among us. If you sever these, you have eliminated a living person from among us. If not now, then a year from now.

I do take a stand against the other wrongs mentioned. As to the "unwanted," I don't "round them up" because that would be denying their free

choice. I also don't find myself wishing someone had "done their duty" and aborted that kid, so I could have kept all the stupid stuff I've had stolen trying to help.

I once was a "pro-choicer," because I wanted to live a self-gratifying lifestyle without the inconveniences. That's a mouthful, but the meaning should be evident with a little thought.

Instead of rationalizing my wrong motives, I accepted the forgiveness God has given me through Jesus Christ, and he changed me. Anyone else tired of internal conflict?

Bob Weigel
Lab technician

Shame

As a student of the University, I am compelled to feel nothing but shame.

Shame upon the students of the University. How can we have allowed ourselves such a mockery of the electoral process? How can we as students

have allowed on our campus a repeat of the farcical national presidential election of 1988, where mud-slinging reigned supreme. Are the students unable to elevate themselves above the muck of sloppy politics?

Shame upon the Emerald for such poor journalism during the past few weeks in their election coverage. One would hope an award-winning student paper, as ours reportedly is, could remain objective and provide the student body with worthwhile information pertinent to the issues.

Instead, the Emerald became a platform for useless rhetoric and false accusations on all sides, soiling the Emerald's award-winning shine with the mud it chose to report.

Shame finally on Tim Hughes. As a member of the Greek system, I am indignant to have my vote treated as that of a mindless automaton, part of a hideous machine geared only to persecute homosexuals.

I did not vote for Hughes, because I felt he allowed himself to sink into the quagmire of

sloppy politics. His Incidental Fee Committee voting record and campaign rhetoric showed me where his interests lay. I simply did not agree with him, as did many others.

We are all guilty of allowing the truthfulness and liberality usually granted this University to err from this election.

Patrick J. McGovern
Senior, history/
political science

Endorsements

During the recent elections, various organizations (including the Emerald) endorsed people for office. What does an endorsement mean? Let me propose some possible answers:

1. The endorser infers that somebody in the organization has studied the candidate's reputation and platform and has decided that the candidate is the best for the majority or maybe just for that organization.

2. There is a strong inference

to the constituents of an organization that persons of responsibility in that organization are more knowledgeable than the members and therefore should help the members in their decision making.

3. When an organization endorses a person, there is some obligation on the person (if elected) to remember his or her endorsers. In the political world, it's called favoritism.

4. Are there other reasons?

Do we, as bright free thinking students, need someone to recommend to us how we should vote (think)? I would prefer that our media (this paper for example) report the facts, provide a forum for the contenders to present their platforms (you did, thank you), provide pros and cons on issues, and let us voters make our own decisions.

In this last election, we may have seen an anti-endorsement reaction by the voters.

Gene Heckathorn
Education

Wednesday, May 3, 1989