

## Both car and blaze sent wrong message

Earth Week was supposed to be a peaceful celebration of the environment, designed to create awareness of the problems facing this planet by emphasizing what people can do to solve them. Instead, a beat-up, flower-filled wreck of a car in front of the EMU has been the major topic of discussion this Earth Week.

The idea of filling a car with household toxic products and putting it on display sounded pretty good when it was first advanced. It seemed a lighthearted way of showing people the ugly dangers facing the environment.

But what happened wasn't taken in a lighthearted way by some.

First off, event organizers angered and offended a substantial number of students by burning an American flag and an effigy of George Bush. The burnings turned the car into a pro-anarchy political proclamation instead of a pro-environment statement.

Earth Week was supposed to cut across political boundaries and incorporate a variety of people, emphasizing that *everyone* must share concern about the environment. Blaming environmental destruction entirely on capitalism, Republicans or America isn't entirely honest, and it's certainly not going to win over labor groups, right-wingers and fellow Americans who'll need to help out in any long-term environmental movement.

A small segment of the population can't make a difference in the fight to save the environment, especially if that segment is perceived as a collection of dangerous radicals. The greatest success of this year's Earth Day has been the public legitimacy granted to environmental issues at a time when the need has never been greater. These large coalitions of people are needed to effect substantial change. Those who burned the effigy and the flag Monday hurt their own cause by alienating people who might otherwise have been receptive to their message.

Some of those alienated people spoke out Tuesday when they decided to set the toxics-stuffed car ablaze.

That was another misguided statement. No matter how you look at it, torching the car wasn't a bright idea. Dousing anything in gasoline and setting a match to it is dangerous, even more so when the thing is filled with products that release toxic fumes when aflame. Burning the car to register disapproval was just plain dumb.

While we can't approve either side's actions last week, those who burned the car deserve a bigger share of our disappointment. The event organizers were at least trying to make a statement — a statement that should have been positive but went awry. While one can disapprove of their methods, it's hard to criticize what they were trying to say. The people who torched the car were just causing trouble.



## Planned Parenthood worthy of support

On April 6, CBS News reported American Telephone & Telegraph Co. had decided to withdraw its financial support from Planned Parenthood to avoid any association with abortion controversy. AT&T should reconsider.

Planned Parenthood is a non-profit organization that depends on private donations to provide low-cost gynecological care to women who otherwise may not be able to afford it. These services include educating men and women in the best anti-abortion strategy of all — birth control.

The political climate and budget cutbacks of the Reagan era have already taken their toll on health care options and reproductive choices available to women. AT&T is compounding the problem by refusing to support an organization that serves a need the government would rather not recognize.

By pulling its substantial contribution, AT&T may suffer more negative publicity than if it had continued to support the organization. The fact that AT&T gave financial support to Planned Parenthood was probably not widely known before the announcement, and it is doubtful AT&T lost much business over its support of the organ-

ization.

After the nationwide announcement, the broad-based pro-choice network will now inevitably mobilize its forces to boycott AT&T for the corporation's decision to deny women the opportunity to make educated decisions in their lives.

In the past, AT&T presumably considered Planned Parenthood a valuable and worthwhile organization. Planned Parenthood has not changed its mission, and the need for its services has certainly not disappeared.

The decision to pull its corporate support from Planned Parenthood makes AT&T's motives for any charitable donation suspect. If AT&T gives money to non-profit organizations as a public relations campaign to create an illusion of social responsibility, perhaps it is more deserving of criticism and an economic boycott than this one incident suggests.

However, if AT&T is genuinely interested in helping disadvantaged people and in contributing to society's general good — as all corporations should be — it should restore its financial support for Planned Parenthood immediately.

## Letters

### No puppy love

Dear Kathy Yonker (ODE, April 17): Bull! Bull! Bull! How dare you say you are "also concerned about those humans who suffer." Yeah, right.

A few months ago there was an animal rights booth in the EMU. The seemingly liberal people there informed me that no medical cure has ever truly come from animal testing. I believed them; they seemed so caring and their pamphlet supported their claim. Well, it is a sick lie.

My uncle has been a doctor for more than 50 years. He has devoted his life to helping people. I'm sorry, but when he tells me that animal testing has saved millions of lives, I refuse to believe that he is just some sadistic animal killer — he's the most compassionate man alive. I shall believe doctors before I will listen to animal rights activists.

Yonker, how dare you equate animal suffering to racism or

homelessness? Do you do so in jest?

I would rather slaughter a thousand cute puppies if it could possibly save any human life. I would hook up my Devon Rex kitten to electric shocks for ten years if it would save my girlfriend from getting severe pneumonia. In short, I'd rather see "Here lies Spot" than "Here lies Tommy."

Animal rights activists remind me of George Bush — both avoid dealing with human suffering. Animal rights has very little — if any — place on a leftist humanist agenda.

Phil Zuckerman  
Sociology

### What goes on

In Yvonne Hall's letter (ODE, April 16), she indicates that animal rights activists make accusations about animal research "when in fact they don't know what goes on."

And why don't we know what goes on? Well, mostly because the labs are closed to us, although it seems to me that if these animals are so well cared for and happy that you'd be more than willing to let the general public in to see these animals.

Indeed, why don't you let us in to see those happy kittens with rotated eyes, and if the primates do return, how about letting us get a peek at those happy macaques after brain surgery? If things are so great there should be no problem.

Oh, I'm forgetting, we did get a tour of the new University lab animal housing. But the only animals housed there at the time were some rabbits in small cages with too thick, unstable floor grating. We also saw some shoebox-sized cages that can house up to five mice apiece.

Actually, animal rights activists do know what goes on in animal research labs, often from the people who work or have worked there and were

horrified at what they witnessed.

Kathy Yonker  
Political science

### Burning Bush

After attending the first rally for Earth Week, I am discouraged. Speakers were saying Earth Day means fundamental changes in lifestyle and the way we perceive our role on the earth. I nodded in agreement.

Soon an effigy of George Bush was burned, along with an American flag and a dollar bill. The crowd cheered. At this point I shook my head and left.

The burning of Bush represents a monumental contradiction that hurts us all. The blame for staggering environmental problems in the world today falls equally on everyone's shoulders.

Earth Day is not simply a chance for politically correct people to congratulate them-

selves for living in a positive way. Earth Day is about taking responsibility for your actions and the effects they have on the planet, and making conscious, informed decisions to live in a non-destructive way.

Above all, Earth Day is an attempt to show everyone that he or she can make a difference, that it is not too late to learn and change. Pictures of a burning effigy on the evening news contradict all the principles of Earth Day.

They say "George Bush is responsible and we want him to fix it!"

They also show all the "average Americans" watching that environmentalism is extreme and unreasonable. Aren't these the people we are trying to convert to a new way of living? Now is not the time to point fingers. It is time to join hands. Environmentalism is for everyone.

Eric Todd Smith  
English