

# Exxon beats the rap, Alaska foots the bill

Exxonated, Exxhausting, Exxasperating.

Call it what you will, but the mighty oil conglomerate got off the hook easy. Way too easy.

On Tuesday, a federal judge approved a plan in which Exxon will pay \$1 billion in settlements for the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill. The plan will end all federal and state litigation against the oil giant.

At first glance, the settlement appears Exxpansive. The \$1 billion includes \$900 million, which Exxon will pay over the next 11 years, as well as \$100 million, which will go to state and federal agencies for their roles in rehabilitating Prince William Sound. In addition, Exxon was hit with a \$125 million fine by pleading guilty to four misdemeanor counts.

Now let's take this settlement step by step.

The \$125 million fine is a sham. In return for accepting the fine, Exxon was permitted to drop two felony charges. Four *misdemeanor* counts for the biggest environmental catastrophe ever. When the Exxon Valdez ran aground, nearly 11 million gallons of crude oil spilled into the sound. The amount of damage to fishing grounds, bird nesting areas and the shorelines is incomprehensible. To give only four misdemeanor counts is akin — legally speaking — to letting a serial killer walk away with probation and 100 hours of community service.

For a company that stated profits of \$2.2 billion in the first quarter alone of 1991, a \$1 billion settlement is a crude joke.

On top of that, Exxon only has to pay \$25 million of the fine. Because of earlier "restoration efforts" to Prince William Sound, the court suspended the other \$100 million. In all fairness, Exxon did try and contain the spill, but only after the damage was already done. Rewarding the company for "controlling" something that shouldn't have happened in the first place is completely ludicrous.

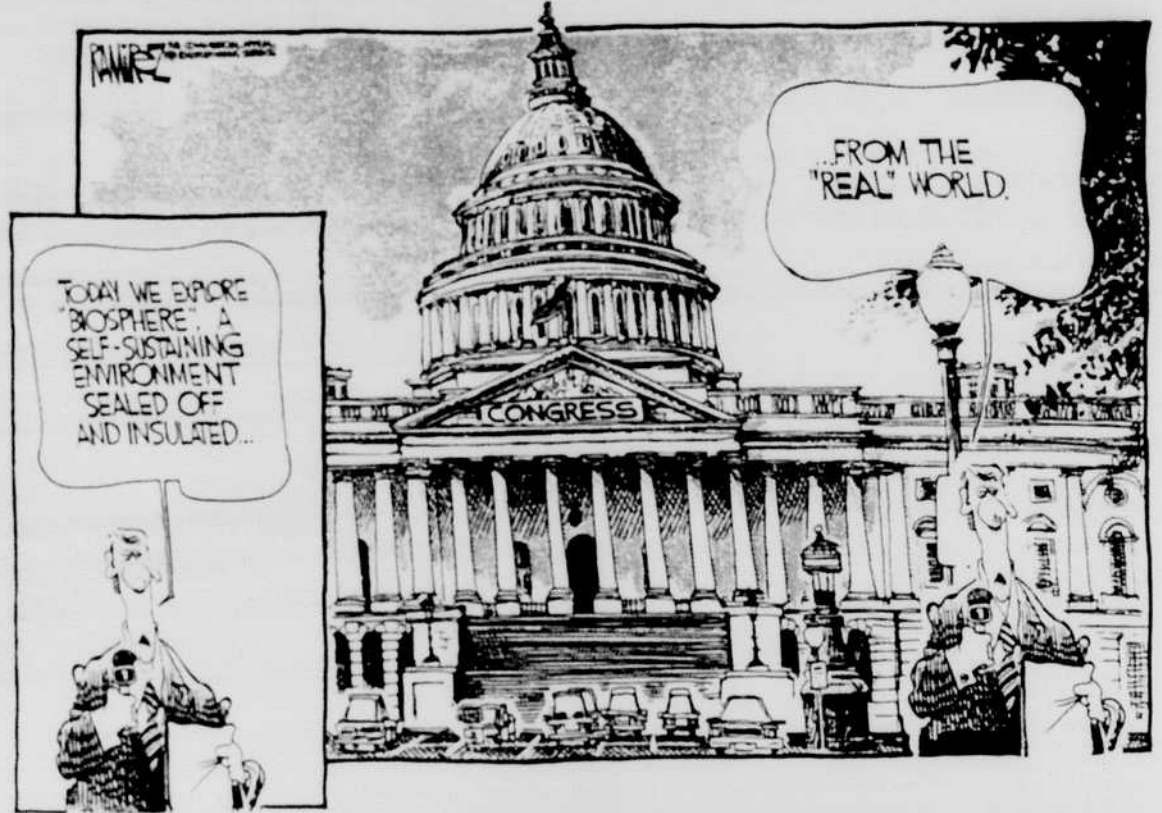
Five months ago, the court rejected a similar settlement proposed by Exxon. This time, the difference was an additional \$50 million for restoration of the sound. But \$50 million isn't even going to make a dent in the environmental damage.

The Exxon proposal was accepted in the face of new reports that the damage to the sound could expand to as much as \$15 billion. Who's going to pay for the restoration? Certainly not Exxon, and the state of Alaska simply can't afford it. So a once pristine, beautiful bay will forever remain shrouded in oil residue.

Thankfully, there are still hundreds of civil suits pending against Exxon. But any hope of raking the conglomerate over the coals is gone. One-on-one against private citizens, Exxon will triumph. They have the crushing financial means, a bevy of lawyers, and a slew of slick legal maneuvers that would make even the most despicable ambulance-chaser cringe.

Corporate Exxtortion, nothing less.

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## LETTERS

### Genetics

Although I cannot state with certainty that there is a genetic predisposition to homosexuality, I must say that Jon Wollander's (*ODE*, Oct 9) knowledge of genetics is fatally flawed.

If, as he says, "... a non-reproducing gene pool would quickly eliminate itself," how would conditions such as Tay-Sachs disease and Cystic Fibrosis be accounted for? These are genetically inherited conditions that are fatal in childhood, before the individual can reproduce. The answer to this is that for most genetically inherited traits (all except for those on the 23 pair of chromosomes), every normal human being has two genes. For each trait there are at least two variations of the gene that can be inherited, one dominant, and one recessive.

If all genetically inherited traits were dominant, then Wollander's theory would be correct and all persons having at least one dominant gene would express the given trait. However, the fact is that all traits are not dominant. There are conditions such as Tay-Sachs and Cystic Fibrosis — as well as many other non-fatal ones — that are recessive traits. In order for the conditions to be expressed, an individual must possess two copies of the recessive gene.

There are many more individuals who carry only one recessive gene than have the condition. When two people who each, unknowingly, carry a recessive gene for the same trait have a child, there is a one in four chance that the child will inherit both copies of the recessive gene and therefore have the condition. Thus, it is quite possible, according to "the theory of evolution" (as well as

the basic laws of biological science), for a trait that does not allow reproduction to survive.

I hope this has cleared up any confusion about the concept of genetics caused by Wollander's letter.

Sarah McKrola  
Biology

### Superiority?

Your Oct. 7 editorial on the rise in hate crimes said that racial prejudice stems from "the unfathomable human condition, of which fear, ignorance, and intolerance are a part."

True, yet those three elements omit this potent fourth: the insecurity of many. People who are insecure socially ... financially ... mentally ... emotionally ... often invent a feeling of superiority over others who appear to be merely different.

So, to be "superior" provides a sense of security.

James Heermance  
Eugene

### Leftovers

I have heard that athletics are an integral part of the university experience. A lot of people seem to think so, especially judging by the tens of thousands of people who attend football games. Of course, I wouldn't know, since I can't afford a decent seat at a University football game, were I inclined to go in the first place.

I know, students get free tickets to home games. But these are not really free since our incidental fee money buys these tickets from the athletic department. Not only that, but they are arguably the worst seats available, and the number of them is limited.

If the athletic department wants to push the idea that athletics — especially sports like football and basketball — are worth the effort the University puts into them, then they should make these sports acces-

sible to all students. Free tickets should be available for all students, not just the leftover seats. Give the best seats to the students of the University, and let everyone else take our leftovers.

I don't want my education dollars to fund minor league teams which benefit the NBA and NFL more than the University. I say give sports back to the students! Access to the games for all students, or the athletic department can hit the bricks.

And by the way, I liked those silly statues in front of the Casanova Complex. But no one thought to ask the students about that one, either.

Ron Harper  
Sociology

### Coming out

Friday, Oct. 11, is National Gay and Lesbian Coming Out Day. We would like to ask faculty members to take a few moments in classes this week to mention the contributions of gay men and lesbians in your respective academic disciplines. (Give us a call if you need some name suggestions; we will try to help.)

This simple idea is a way of countering the current atmosphere of hate, harassment and crime. It's a time to let students know that the University respects the diversity of lesbians and gay men.

Dominick Vetri, Law  
Deltra Ferguson, Women's  
Studies

