

U.S. should repay subjects of testing

From a worldwide perspective the United States is almost universally considered to be a stalwart protector of basic human rights. U.S. citizens are not completely immune to rights violations by their government, but compared with the people of many other nations, Americans can feel relatively safe.

That being the case, it's extremely disconcerting to learn that hundreds of Americans were subjected to secret, government-sponsored radiation experiments during the first two decades of the Cold War.

In all, at least 800 people were part of these experiments, and a considerable number of them did not know of their participation, much less give their consent. Pregnant women were among the sometimes unwitting subjects. Also included were such easily coerced people as prison convicts, who may or may not have been free enough or informed enough to refuse.

Of course, not many people could have been "informed." After all, the whole point of conducting the experiments was so that we could *become* informed about the effects of radiation, especially on human beings. Such knowledge was — and has continued to be — essential to understanding the risks of nuclear weapons, nuclear power and nuclear waste.

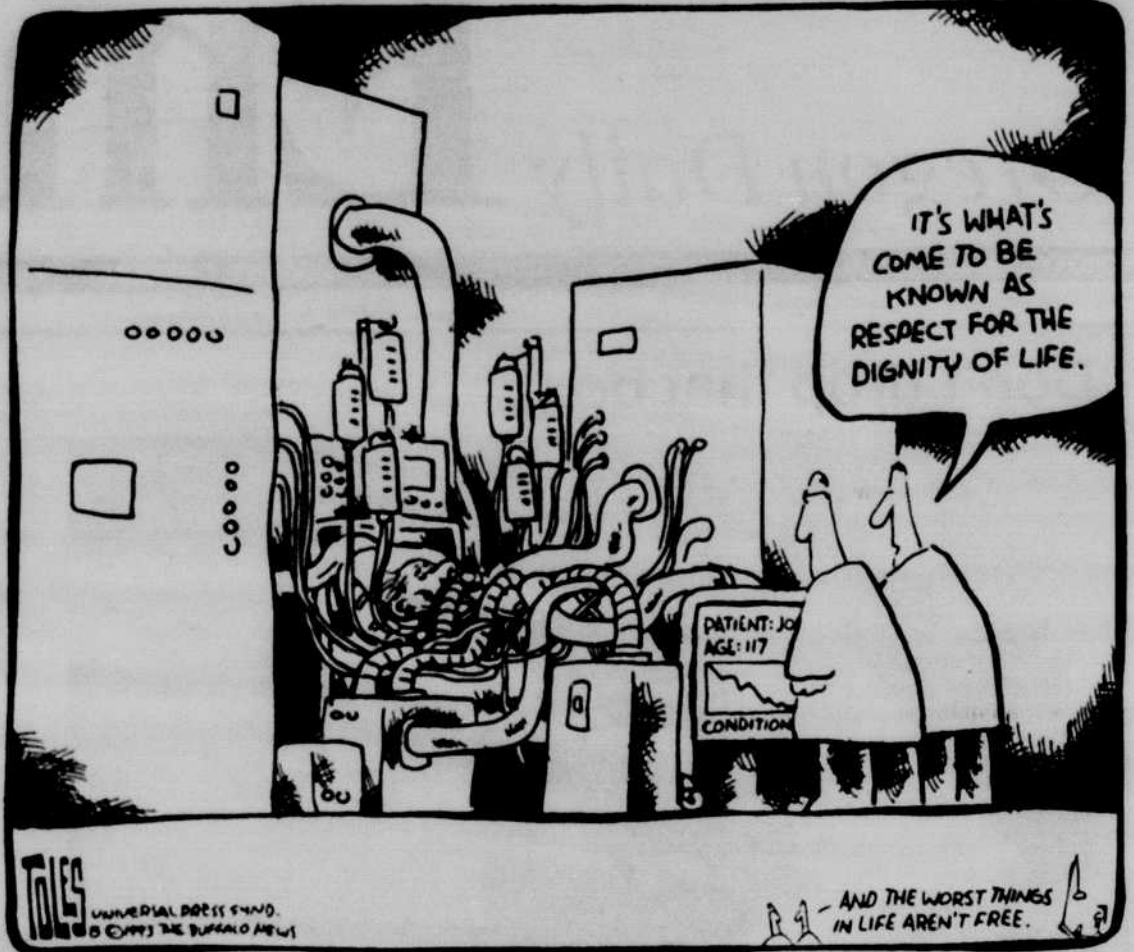
As in so many other cases, however, the end cannot justify the means. The government has behaved shamefully, and Congress should be open to the suggestion made last week by Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary: We should begin a program of compensation for the victims of these tests.

There are numerous precedents for compensating those whose rights were violated by the U.S. government. One of the most publicized examples of the government owning up to its mistakes was the decision made in 1988 to compensate the thousands of Japanese-Americans who were unfairly interned in concentration camps during World War II.

Paying back those victims cost millions of dollars, but the government was obligated to do so. So it is with the victims of radiation testing. Although they are smaller in numbers than those sent to internment camps, their individual financial claims may be much greater. Their lives may have been shortened, and the quality of those lives may have been diminished. And because the radiation may affect successive generations (scientists are divided on this point), the government may be paying for a long time, and to a lot more than 800 people.

None of this really makes any difference, however. The United States has already compensated veterans who were exposed to radiation after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings of World War II; civilians accidentally exposed to atomic testings in Nevada and the Pacific islands have also received payment for the government's mistakes. With this in mind the government really has no choice but to add this 800 to the roster of those who have already been repaid.

All this begs the question of whether any amount of money can really take the place of good health. But these people deserve some form of compensation, and simply saying "sorry" just won't be enough.



LETTERS

Tasking

As a group of students, faculty and staff concerned about racism on our campus, we have come together to form the Race Task Force. We have gathered information and want to share some of the initial responses from our pilot survey of five of the student unions. We were very pleased with the excellent feedback; however, we were distressed about the experiences these students reported.

In addition, we received concerns regarding the *Emerald's* reporting. We look to you as a resource for helping us to identify and report harassment, as well as to provide responsive and sensitive reporting. Instead, we hear of unions' having historical files of insensitive reporting, numerous misquotes and, even in one case, a union that will no longer grant interviews with any *Emerald* reporter.

Our concern grows deeper regarding your handling of the story of the University of Washington students and your response to the criticism. Rather than defend and attack those who questioned the use of the pictures, would it not make more sense to try to understand the concerns of the students of color and others concerned about institutional racism?

We expect responsible and sensitive reporting from our campus newspaper. We hope you will address these concerns. We encourage a member of your staff to attend our meetings.

**Race Task Force
Nine Co-Signers**

True, the wording of the 1994 measure is less offending. But the intent remains the same. If approved by Oregon voters in 1994, this measure, like Ballot Measure 9 in 1992, would amend the Oregon Constitution to legitimize discrimination against a group of Oregonians. People with a homosexual orientation, or people perceived that way, would be denied government protection in areas such as employment, housing and access to public accommodations. That is discrimination and therefore unconstitutional and mean-spirited.

Tell World War II-era European Jews that kinder words would have made a difference when they were led to slaughter. Don't get me wrong. OCA leaders are not Nazis. However, they do use Nazi tactics. First you delegitimize a group of decent, productive citizens. Then you can decide on more drastic measures.

For OCA leaders, compromise is not possible. They base their opinions about homosexuality upon misinterpreted passages of the Bible. It is, of course, their constitutional right to interpret scripture as they please. However, to codify their prejudices in the Oregon Constitution is entirely another matter. Obviously, OCA leaders are ignorant about the original purpose of a written constitution. Rights of people cannot be amended by a popular vote. On that issue there is no compromise.

**Jacob Veldhuisen
Eugene**

'Biphobia'

We are thoroughly peeved by Rachel Dueker's comments as quoted in Daniel West's Dec. 6

article on the LGBA. Dueker is sadly misinformed if she thinks that bisexuality is nothing more than a state of "not being able to decide between homosexuality and heterosexuality."

Bisexuality is not a reflection of confusion, but Dueker's quote clearly is.

Bisexuality is a complete and legitimate sexual orientation that in no way requires a decision between two forms of monosexuality. Bisexuals may (or may not) have a definite preference for one gender, but acknowledge the potential for attractions to both.

Bisexuality encompasses both heterosexuality and homosexuality; it is not a state of uncertainty as Dueker's comments seem to imply. Bisexuals are not fence-sitters or people who haven't come all the way out of the closet. On the contrary, to declare oneself bisexual is to make a clear decision. Pardon us if that decision did not place us into a neat little box on one extreme end of the Kinsey scale.

As the co-director of the LGBA Dueker is a prominent and visible figure in the University lesbian/gay/bisexual community. We expect someone in such a position to do more to create a welcoming and safe environment for bisexuals, as well as for lesbians and gay men. We expect the LGBA to function to "increase the visibility of gays and lesbians" and bisexuals on campus and not to foster ignorance.

We expect the "B" in LGBA to stand for something more than "biphobia."

**Kristin Strommer
Anthropology
Pam Clark
Alumna, Psychology**

Discrimination

Stephanie Sisson's front-page news article, "OCA begins... etc" (*ODE*, Dec. 6, 1993), opens with an editorial statement that cannot be supported by facts. She proclaims that the Oregon Citizens Alliance leaders compromised on their newly initiated anti-gay Civil Rights Measure for the 1994 Oregon elections. There is no compromise. That concept is incompatible with OCA thinking.

LETTERS POLICY

The *Oregon Daily Emerald* will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

The *Emerald* reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.

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