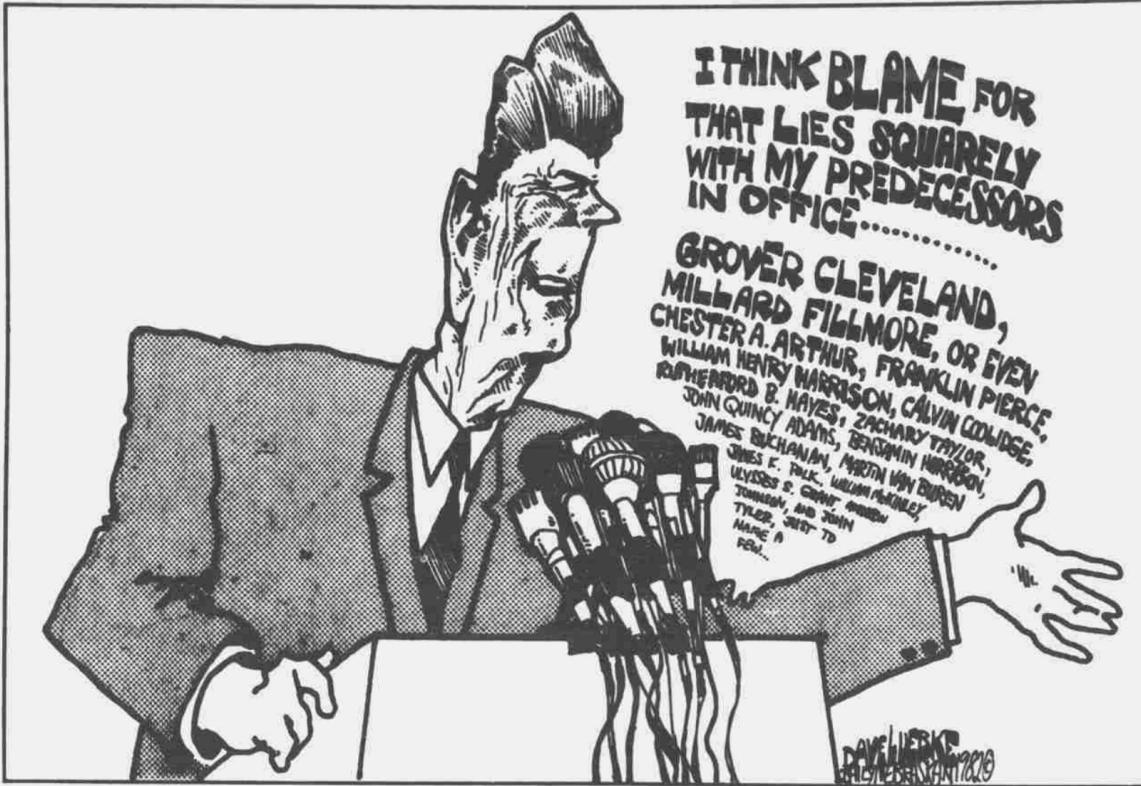


Editorial



Poisoned Tylenol incidents provoke unnecessary panic

The Tylenol terror is spreading. First, the poisoned painkillers seemed to be contained in the Chicago area. Six people died in Chicago suburbs and one in the city itself after swallowing cyanide-spiked Extra-Strength Tylenol capsules late last week.

On the same day the Chicago deaths were made public, an Oroville, Calif., man went into convulsions after swallowing a capsule laced with strychnine. Authorities say there is no link between the California poisoned pills and those in Chicago.

In Wichita, Kan., a woman was found dead Tuesday with an empty bottle of Extra-Strength Tylenol in her purse.

Also Tuesday, a Tennessee truck driver was found dead in his rig. Three regular-strength Tylenol capsules, wrapped in foil, were in the seat beside him.

And Wednesday, Philadelphia, Penn., police linked poisoned Tylenol with a death five months ago. Extra-Strength Tylenol found at the dead man's apartment contained cyanide, the police uncovered.

Although authorities have not linked the deaths in Wichita, Tennessee and Philadelphia and the incident in California with the seven Chicago-area deaths, it seems that now, any death remotely attached to Tylenol use is being reported as a "possible connection." The situation is provoking unnecessary fear and reaction.

Yes, in a potentially life-threatening situation, the public needs as much information as available. They need to know what lot numbers and varieties of the McNeil Consumer Products Co. medicine are killing unaware consumers.

The media have done a good job staying on the story. And officials of Johnson & Johnson, the parent company of McNeil, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration have been completely frank about the situation allowing media members to do their jobs.

Johnson & Johnson deserves special commendation: It stands to lose the most, in dollars and cents, from the onslaught of TV, radio and newspaper coverage.

The company is losing profits from sales (Extra-Strength Tylenol sells better than the other leading brands combined) and will continue to feel the effect of decreased purchasing until the public's confidence is restored.

And as the company loses on sales, it may lose millions more in the courtroom. The fathers of a Chicago husband and wife who died after taking capsules have filed \$10 million damage suits against McNeil, Johnson & Johnson and the Jewel Food Stores Co. (where the couple purchased Tylenol).

Additionally, early surveys show that sales of all over-the-counter painkillers are dropping.

In the coming days, as investigators track the madman they believe contaminated the capsules, other "peripheral" stories will emerge.

If these stories have no substantiated connection to the Tylenol case, they should not be presented as possible links. Publicizing interesting tidbits that are very questionable connections only spreads the terror. That hurts both producers and consumers.

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Anti-abortion bills lose backing

Twenty months ago, on a sunny January day in Washington, thousands of elated anti-abortion forces gathered for a post-inaugural celebration. The marchers, standing on the muddy Ellipse behind the White House, were quick to claim the spoils of the 1980 election victory.

One after another, I heard their leaders introduce new senators and congressmen with the proud possessive phrase, "Here's another of 'our' new men." By noon, the Human Life Amendment had been introduced

support, never made abortion a priority.

From the inaugural address to the current campaign speeches, the economy has been the main theme in Washington because it has been the main theme outside of Washington. More than one adviser reminded the president that people who are out of work don't want to hear about school prayer and abortion.

But what finally kept the anti-abortion forces at bay all these months was basic stuff — public opinion and political organizing.

Despite all the claims by anti-abortionists in 1980, every poll has shown that two-thirds of the Americans are against banning abortions. As Nanette Falkenberg, the head of the National Abortion Rights Action League says, "That was always working in our favor. But the pro-choice people had gotten lazy. What happened in the last two years is that our side really did get organized."

A coalition of groups — NARAL, Planned Parenthood, the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, the American Civil Liberties Union — developed a more sophisticated strategy in and outside the Congress. This session, for the first time, members of Congress were as likely to be lobbied by one side as the other, as likely to find campaign help from one side as the other, as likely to hear from abortion-rights voters as from anti-abortion voters.

"What hearing from these thousands of constituents did," says Falkenberg, "was reinforce the idea that maybe there is something to those public-opinion polls that tell me they don't want this issue legislated."

Gradually, some members of Congress became less skittish about supporting abortion rights, others went from quiet to public support.



Ellen Goodman

in Congress. Before the day ended, anti-abortion leaders had become the first special-interest group to have an audience with the president.

It seemed almost inevitable then that a major piece of anti-abortion legislation — a right-to-life amendment, or statute or something — would be won by people who put up such a display of momentum, such an impression of political power.

But last Friday, the 97th Congress prepared to recess for another election without passing a single major piece of anti-abortion legislation. More than a dozen bills were introduced.

Somewhere along the way, the momentum of the anti-abortion movement lost its pace and the flexed political muscle lost its tone.

Nor did the president come through as expected. On the Ellipse that day, someone held a poster declaring, "Reagan, you counted on us to win, now we're counting on you to win." But the president, for all his verbal

Reagan hurts Republican candidates

On his first big campaign trip to the Midwest, President Reagan has done much to seal the fate of a number of Republican candidates.

His pronouncements early this week in Ohio, an industrial state with one of the highest unemployment



Matthew Millea

rates, showed just how much damage he is doing to his party and to his own credibility.

A report in the Oct. 5 Wall Street Journal began with "President Reagan sharply attacked the movement for a nuclear arms freeze, saying it is being manipulated 'by some who want the weakening of America.'"

A word to the wise, Mr. President. It is now much too late to suggest that the overwhelming majority of Americans supporting the nuclear freeze are unpatriotic. Your intimidations of some sinister conspiracy to undermine the "nation's strength" (whatever that is) are a bit insulting to our collective intelligence, sir. We are not so easily manipulated, either by those nasty folks you conjure forth or by you, Oh Great Prevaricator.

The Wall Street Journal article continued: "He alleged that inflation spawned during the Carter administration caused today's high jobless rate. That's why inflation must be the main target, so that we can reduce unemployment," he said."

Perhaps you've forgotten sir, but the budgets you've proposed have called for record deficits, considerably larger than any during the Carter administration. I realize that you studied economics when Keynes was still in grammar school, but any of our Economics 211 students here at UNL would be happy to explain the inflation-unemployment trade-off to you if you'd just ask. We're eager to help.

One more thing. People worry a lot less about the high cost of living when they have a job. Even the Wall Street Journal figured that out. "With unemployment so high, Republicans can't afford to appear to be fighting inflation at the expense of jobs," the paper said.

"To drive home his concern for the working person, the President also visited Accu-Ray Corp., a maker of industrial automation systems, where he mingled with employees and got himself photographed in the company's cafeteria line," the Journal article continued. Your blatant disrespect for the public's intelligence aside, Mr. Reagan, do you think a robot factory was the best place to show your concern for the working class, sir?

"But when workers asked him about specific actions his administration is taking to promote exports and create jobs, he seemed to be unfamiliar with the details," the article said. "Instead, he assailed the public service job-creation bill proposed by congressional Democrats, and said he would vote it if it crossed his desk."

Touche! You should have mentioned the new \$22,000 machine guns the Army is buying. And about that campaign trip to Nebraska, sir, we'd just love to have you ...

Huskars dare Lions: We'll be waiting...

It arrived a little late. In fact, it arrived a full week and three days after the Nebraska Cornhuskers lost 27-24 to the Penn State Nittany Lions.

Now, normally the Daily Nebraskan ignores anonymous letters. This one, postmarked "State College, Pa.," wasn't exactly anonymous, but it wasn't exactly signed by a single author, either.

Read for yourself: "Dear Daily Farmer, West Virginia smashes Oklahoma. Penn State beats Nebraska. Big Eight Football! When you farmers finish spreading your manure, maybe, just maybe, us Easterners will teach you how football is played.

Penn State" It was sent to "Student Newspaper," and posted with a stamp picturing New Jersey's state bird (the gold finch) and state flower (the violet). No return address, of course.

Thus, our letter to "Student Newspaper, Penn State:"

"Dear Daily City Slicker: We already know about Eastern football. After all, we've been keeping track of Penn State's national championships, and we haven't lost count yet!

The Huskers will be waiting for you New Year's night in Miami. We dare you to bring your team, but not your refs.

University of Nebraska"