

Editorial

The winter of our discontent

1986 has had more to be in fear of than to be thankful for

Daily
Nebraskan
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Jeff Korblik, Editor, 472,1766
James Rogers, Editorial Page Editor
Gene Gentrup, Managing Editor
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Clean the water

Industry should pay the bill

Water pollution gained fleeting popular attention in the early 1970s. This issue, along with many other environmental issues, was overshadowed by other concerns as the decade continued. Lack of popular attention, however, doesn't mean cause for concern has faded with public concern.

Unless preventative and remedial steps are soon taken, widespread groundwater contamination may soon become a significant public health threat.

Nearly half of the U.S. population relies on aquifers as the major or only source of drinking water. Yet as a result of the almost 269 million pounds of unregulated toxic chemicals dumped each day, these water supplies are increasingly threatened.

Hundreds of manmade chemicals have been found in underground water supplies. These chemicals are most often garbage from the production of other goods. Only a handful of these chemicals are regulated. Additionally, the regulation that exists is only a patchwork quilt of laws at different governmental levels. A Federal omnibus law needs to be implemented in order to coordinate information gathering as well as regulation.

In a day of federal deregulation, new federal quality initia-

tives will be difficult to implement. Yet in spite of all the advantages adhering to shared State-Federal decision-making capabilities, groundwater regulation is clearly one issue requiring Federal government intervention.

Interstate commerce is intrinsically tied to groundwater pollution. Additionally, water has been a traditional federal concern: After all, state boundaries were originally drawn to reflect natural divisions in underground water deposits.

The cost of cleanup should be carried by business — not by individual citizen/taxpayers. Free garbage disposal is not a right inherent in the free enterprise system. Today, businesses are essentially allowed to shift a costly business expense (garbage disposal) to the public. The real "free enterprise" solution is to require that businesses assume the cost of their own production. Only in that way will production truly reflect the cost of doing business.

It may already be too late to heed the adage "an ounce of prevention . . ." but measures should immediately be implemented to prevent further damage, as well as try to clean up as much as possible the damage already done.

In a paragraph . . .

Stadium a good place for Farm Aid

Farm Aid III would be something good for everybody all the way around. Willie Nelson, country music singer and the organizer of the two previous Farm Aid concerts, contacted Gov. Bob Kerrey about holding the concert in Memorial Stadium. Not only would it help the ever-needy farmers, but a concert of that magnitude would help Lincoln's economy and give exposure to UNL. Nelson hasn't contacted university officials yet. Let's hope he does.

• Two weeks ago the UNL Faculty Senate unanimously voted to support a \$4.9 million salary pool currently being considered by the Nebraska Legislature. Each campus in the NU system would receive a share of the salary pool in proportion to the disparity between salary levels. It's encouraging to see the faculty make an effort to lessen a problem that seems to be getting worse.

• Noteworthy: Frazer P. Williams, a UNL electrical engineering professor, is helping to find a missing link in the Strategic Defense Initiative technology. Williams is the only UNL researcher contracted by the federal government for SDI work. Williams is looking into finding a reliable triggering mechanism.

• The Associated Press reported that the Federal Higher Education Act will provide \$2 billion

more in student aid this fiscal year, but fewer students may be eligible to receive the additional funds. The Higher Education Act raises federal student aid from \$8 billion to \$10 billion for the fiscal year that started Oct. 1. It increases Guaranteed Student Loans, Perkins National Direct Student Loans, Pell Grants, work-study aid and other student aid.

Doug Severs, interim director of scholarships and financial aids, said this doesn't mean that the U.S. Education Department will give any one university or college enough money to make those loans — only a slight chance for optimism.

• National On Campus Report noted that the University of West Virginia handles delinquent parking tickets in a different way. People with overdue tickets pay their fines with blood donations to the campus blood bank. Violators who weigh less than 110 pounds or have colds or diseases still have to pay with cash. Not a bad idea.

• Something unusual: Associated Press reported that an eight-point buck wounded by a deer hunter's arrow attacked the same hunter one day later, pinning him to the ground with his antlers and cutting the man with one of his own arrowheads. Let's hear it for the deer.

It's two days before Thanksgiving and politics is hardly on our minds. We're all thinking about those extra days off from school, relaxing and going home to devour turkey and chat with all our boring relatives. And when we finally sit down to Thanksgiving dinner Thursday, our father or grandfather will tell us to bow our heads as he leads us through a prayer of thanks. But this year, what is there to be thankful for? Our shelter, food, clothes, career, family and loved ones, of course. But what else?

Politically and socially, 1986 has been a year of turmoil and error. Things started off in tragedy back in January when the Challenger exploded shortly after take-off. And what did we hear from the media and the government? "They died for our country," the social commentators said. "They stood for the American Dream and the New Frontier, and died pursuing those virtues."

But others died, too. Several American farmers' land was taken away by the government. Many European and Soviet citizens died as a result of the Chernobyl incident. And a new batch of Americans died from AIDS. But there were no speeches about heroism for those individuals. We just closed our eyes and remained oblivious to them because they weren't glorified products of government like the space program.

On Thanksgiving 1986, we can be thankful for being alive, but we must hold the incidents and decisions of our world in contempt and shame. Every tragedy that occurred this year was blamed either on poor science, poor decision making or faulty morale. But were political officials telling the entire story?

These are troubled, disturbing times. We already know that. So why do we insist on pointing our fingers at purportedly guilty parties instead of trying to correct matters? When the Chernobyl accident occurred, we blamed the Soviets. "Those russkies just have no idea how to use nuclear energy," some of us said to ourselves. When we hear about a farmer that's about to lose his land, we think of a simple solution: get into a new profession. When we hear about a new AIDS fatality, the religious right suddenly cries, "This is all the result of a weak moral fabric. It is God's will."

The Meese Commission tried to come up with a solution to pornography. "It exploits women and induces violence,"

they said. "So we must ban it!" They never took into consideration that if pornography were banned, it would merely become the new money-maker for organized crime magnates.

The religious right is all for censorship when it comes to pornography because they say it will strengthen morals and eradicate the exploitation of women, but what about the Equal

Rights Amendment and the low salaries of women in the work force? "We can't have equality for women," they argue. "That would mean our daughters would have to be drafted if there was a war. And you know how proficient women are with guns."

However, this is the type of reasoning that prevails in a country such as ours. The government felt that it was necessary to waste millions of dollars on a special research program that would tell us more about what happened at Cape Canaveral with the Challenger. They also felt that we needed to spend money on more missiles for ourselves and send arms to Iran . . . as a peace offering, of course. But it wasn't okay to spend millions of dollars on research for one of the world's most dangerous diseases — AIDS. Even when the Center for Disease Control told everyone that the disease will reach epidemic proportions by the end of the decade, the government just closed their eyes. "It's still basically a homosexual problem," reactionary publications like The Saturday Evening Post proclaimed. Are the umpteen infants, plasma receivers and the new risk group, heterosexual women; dying because of a "basically homosexual problem?"

The summit in Iceland failed to plow any new ground in relation to the arms race. Maybe Reagan was right about sticking to his policies, maybe he wasn't. But the problem of impending nuclear destruction and chilly American-Soviet relations is still with us. Oh, and let's not forget Libya. Terrorists bombed and slaughtered a plethora of innocent Americans and Israe-

lis, so Reagan decided to bomb and slaughter Libyans. "If necessary, we shall do it again," he told us in his televised speech. Violence begets more violence, but Reagan didn't seem to take that fact into consideration. As always, he decided to use force instead of economic isolation and working together with allied nations to solve matters.

The religious right, which is now the predominant political faction in America, always tries to use morality and good old traditions like arms and military virtues to put things in perspective. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld an archaic, ludicrous sodomy law in Georgia, insisting that certain individuals have no right to choose their own practices in the privacy of their homes. We are living in a tumultuous age where morality and old values take precedence over true problems. It seems that our government has wasted too much valuable time on paltry matters that hardly relate to the *real* predicaments we are facing. Who cares what two consenting adults do in their bedroom? Who cares about being able to blow up the world 14 times instead of only 12 times?

The U.S. government does.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving this year, we must pray for the youth because they shall be the real victims of all this idiocy. The pre-teens and adolescents who are living in these times are being introduced to a fear that their elders never had to face. Death, caused by impending plagues and wars, looms over their heads like an insidious miasma, causing them to fear their sexuality, their government and their future.

Outside, the leaves are falling from the trees and the air is tinged with a bitter, dismal blast of discomfort caused by the changing of the seasons. Soon winter will be here and we will have to sit and wait, relying on the passing of the season while we tolerate the discomfort of the cold. But hope will always be there, in winter and in the folly of these years.

So all we can do now is sit and shiver, waiting in the silence of reason and the limbo of justice and idealism that lives in the corners of this space and time, drawing us ceaselessly into chaos.

Harrah is a UNL junior English and speech communications major and the Daily Nebraskan Arts & Entertainment editor.

Critics lambasting Iran overtures discount hope of better relations

Twice in this space I have written that I thought the whole Iranian business was a lousy idea. But enough is enough. The Washington Post did a terribly bright thing the morning of the president's press conference: The editors collected questions from big names, the questions they would ask the president if they were at the press conference. The idea was to round up the toughest questions possible. Herewith a sampling, with what might have been appropriate answers by Mr. Reagan.

Q. (Walter Mondale) Do you really believe that there are moderate elements within the Iranian government? And if there are, can there be any doubt that our association with them will diminish their influence if not eliminate their presence in the political structure of Iran?

A. You never know. Everybody from Time magazine to Margaret Thatcher gave the impression that Mikhail Gorbachev was a moderate. Come to think of it, many people thought Yuri Andropov would be a moderate. The question really boils down to this: Ought the United States to have a hand in trying to influence the direction of post-Khomeini Iran? We know the Soviet Union is trying to influence the future

there. So should we?

Q. (John Steinbruner, Brookings Institution) What provision have you made in your dealings with Iran to ensure that no more hostages will be taken?

A. Iran hasn't taken any hostages since the U.S. Embassy episode. Hostages have been taken by fanatical pro-

William F. Buckley Jr.



Iranian groups in Lebanon. There isn't any way to guarantee there won't be more American hostages taken in Lebanon except to keep all Americans from going to Lebanon, and we don't have the power to do this.

Q. (John Brademas, president of New York University and former Democratic congressman) In light of the fiasco of Iran, the swap of a Soviet spy for an American journalist, the failure of Reykjavik to move toward effective arms control, the skirting of U.S. laws by sending an American arms-supply plane to Nicaragua and the clumsy dis-

information campaign against Libya, what changes do you plan to restore competence and credibility to the conduct of U.S. foreign policy?

A. Well, John, you were the Democratic majority whip when the whole mess in Iran happened. The administration you served swapped a couple of Soviet spies for appropriate favors in 1979, after an interval of a few months. On Reykjavik, our position is that when the communists meet with us and we fail to arrive at an agreement, that's the fault of the communists, not of the United States. The disinformation campaign on Libya was clumsy, I agree, and I'm going to ask Congress to go back have another look at that rash of post-Watergate post-CIA-Rockefeller hearings legislation to examine whether a commander in chief can effectively operate under restrictions whose constitutionality is in fact problematic. As to credibility, well, John, you were defeated for re-election, an experience I've never had. Any tips you want to give me about how to avoid your fate would be welcome.

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. God bless you.

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Buckley is the founder of the National Review.