

Ozone alarm

Humans must solve man-made problem

The United Nations issued alarming news this week about depletion of the ozone layer. A group of U.N. scientists said the earth's atmospheric protective level could drop by 3 percent within the next decade.

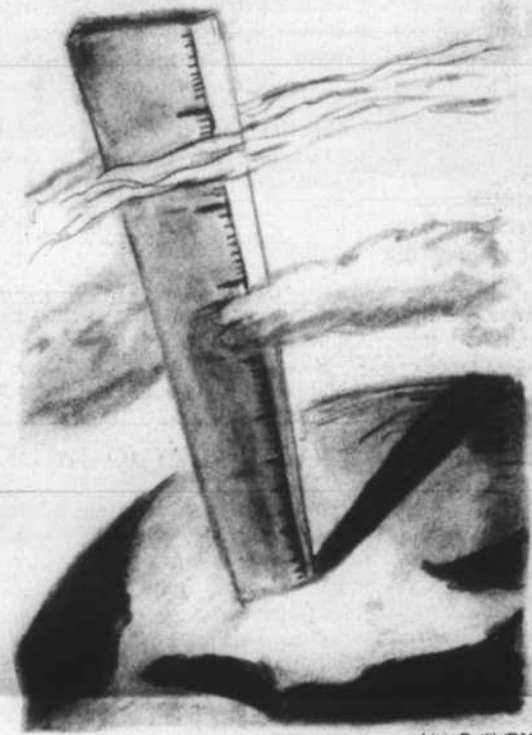
Even more dire was a finding that the ozone layer is being depleted all along the northern and southern hemispheres in the spring and summer. Previously, most scientists had thought the depletion was more limited.

Ozone depletion is particularly dangerous in the months when throngs of people strive to achieve that savage tan. The scientists said the expected depletion over the next 10 years could cause a 10 percent increase in the number of skin cancer cases.

In addition, the summertime ozone drain could cause increased damage to crops from ultraviolet light, thereby reducing yields, said Robert Watson, co-chairman of the U.N. group.

The report shows that efforts to protect the fragile layer that filters some of the sun's damaging rays have not been enough.

Ozone depletion is caused primarily by chlorofluorocarbons, or CFCs, which are used



Lisa Pytlík/DN

in cooling devices and in the production of foam plastics. Tuesday's report underscores the need for further reductions — both mandated and voluntary — in the use of CFCs.

DuPont, the world's largest producer of CFCs, said it would do just that, announcing a planned phase-out of CFCs and substitute chemicals that are less destructive but still damage the ozone layer, The Washington Post reported.

Watson said the U.N. scientists believe that "human actions" are the reason for the ozone loss. If so, human actions must also be used to find and enact solutions to the problem.

—E.F.P.

Greek, Latin add quality, not costs, to university

There must be some word said regarding Paul Domeier's column ("Students ignoring budget buzz," DN, Oct. 24, 1991) regarding the propriety of cutting the Department of Classics being, perhaps, similar to the removal of alchemy or astrology.

True, should Greek and Latin be self-centered programs that only look upon themselves and possess no intrinsic worth, I would wholeheartedly support the proposed budget cuts.

Yet such is not the case of Greek and Latin. For, without Greek and Latin, serious study of ancient history, medieval history and literature, philosophy is frankly impossible. A university without Greek and Latin cannot, in any sense of the word, be called a university. For without serious study of these fields (thanks to the support of Greek and Latin), we would be only a community college — a very expensive community college.

But, apart from lofty goals, the destruction of the Department of Classics would not save money — it would cost money. To the tune of \$650,000 a year. For the students taught by the Department of Classics

must be taught these courses elsewhere. Every other department in the College of Arts and Sciences costs more per credit hour to teach the same number of students than does the Department of Classics. Therefore, this cut will not shore up the university's financial house, but will author a self-created financial crisis that will result in either the pumping in of millions of dollars to the university, or the cutting of yet more departments.

Finally, some word must be said regarding Domeier's statement that this cut will not affect him. I beg to differ. For the name of this university is going to be upon every diploma. With the removal of classics, the watering down of the curriculum, and the subsequent removal of accreditation from this university, a UNL degree would be comparable, in the eyes of future employers, to a degree from Chadron State College. You might just as well have saved the money and the time.

Bruce Gregg
graduate teaching assistant
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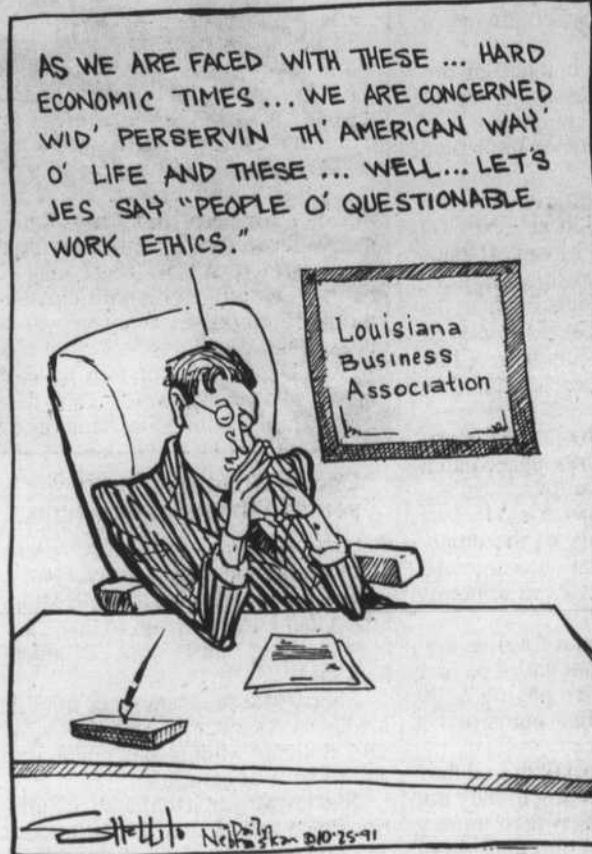
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CHRIS POTTER

New nuclear threats brewing

After four decades of pathological nuclear brinksmanship, the world rests easier. The two principal nuclear powers no longer menace each other and the world with these awful weapons.

New York Times/CBS News polls reveal that the American fear of nuclear war has declined dramatically over the last five years. In 1985, nearly 20 percent of those polled considered it to be the most important problem facing the country. Well under 3 percent do today.

But the collective sigh of nuclear relief is premature. People erroneously believe that nuclear war would come only as a violent conclusion to the Cold War. That assumption is patently wrong and extremely dangerous.

The threat of deliberate and protracted war between the United States and the Soviet Union is today much diminished. U.S. presidents no longer deem the Soviet Union an "evil empire," and Soviet premiers have stopped their shoe-tapping denunciations of the United States at the United Nations. Beyond the end of such rhetoric, both sides have taken more concrete measures.

The number of strategic warheads on both sides will be reduced dramatically under the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks. President Bush's bold proposal to scrap unilaterally nearly all tactical warheads and stand down from nuclear alert is likely to be met with a similar commitment from President Gorbachev.

But while neither country poses a serious deliberate threat, both pose a serious threat of accidental nuclear exchange.

The movie "War Games" struck a nerve with the American public when it depicted this eventuality. In the movie, a computer assumed control of the nuclear control structure and convinced military officials that the Soviets had launched a salvo of missiles aimed at the United States.

Military officials discount the scenario.

Bruce Blair, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, and Henry Kendall, a physicist and chairman of the Union of Concerned Scientists, do not.

In a "Scientific American" article last year, they claimed that in 1980 "a computer chip generated indications



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of a massive Soviet attack . . . in the ensuing confusion, a nuclear alert was declared."

In another scenario, the nuclear exchange is deliberate but unauthorized. An overzealous military official, for example, might initiate a first strike unauthorized by the legitimate political authority.

Blair and Kendall also lend credence to this "Dr. Strangelove" scenario: "Numerous military installations possess all the codes needed to authorize launch."

As nuclear technology becomes widely available outside the United States and Soviet Union, more nations will join the nuclear club. Third World countries need only send their brightest students to physics and chemistry departments in the West to obtain the knowledge necessary to build fission and fusion weapons.

Even now many countries in the Third World probably have fully advanced nuclear programs. Iraq is not an isolated case.

A research analyst for the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control told The Associated Press last week that the list of these countries is quite long: North Korea, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, Pakistan, India,

Libya, Taiwan, South Korea, Algeria, Israel and Iran. The list will grow.

The incentive for these countries to develop their own stockpile is obvious. A superpower nuclear monopoly has long been seen by the Third World as a tool for exerting control over other nations. An independent capability would render that tool less effective.

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Iraq's example suggests to these nations that they should keep their research programs secret, not that they should abandon them. The United States would not have been so eager to counter the invasion of Kuwait if Iraq had been a genuine nuclear power.

As frightening as the likelihood of a country such as Libya having nuclear weapons capability is, a far more frightening likelihood presents itself. Many of the countries listed above as having advanced nuclear programs also have strong ties to terrorist organizations.

Terrorists do not need to build sophisticated intercontinental rockets to deliver nuclear warheads. A zealot with a briefcase will do.

Now more than ever, the world must address the proliferation of nuclear arms. The United States should take the lead in spreading the taboo against the use of these weapons. It should take concrete measures to dismantle nuclear arsenals worldwide.

Beyond this, the United States should strive to eliminate the root cause of any deliberate nuclear exchange. This means a sincere dedication to the peaceful resolution of international disputes.

Despite global changes in the last few years, humanity still has the power to eradicate itself. If we are to realize our full potential as a species, we must make an explicit moral renunciation of the capability.

The lessons learned by the United States and the Soviet Union during the arms race should not be lost on the rest of the world.

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