

EDITORIAL

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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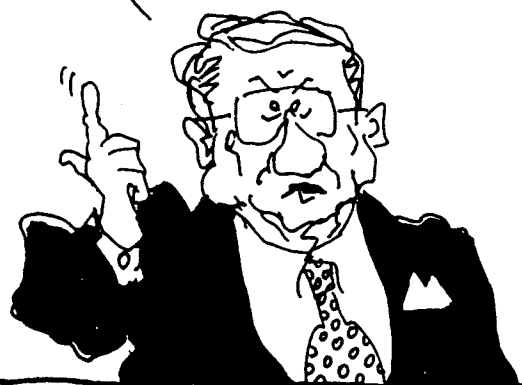
SURE, WE'VE HAD SOME FAILURES—
IN SHIP DESIGN...



... PERSONNEL, CLEANUP PLANS, AND
RESPONSE TIME



BUT LET'S NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE
SUCCESSSES—



OIL PRICES ARE
LOOKING UP!



WASSERMAN
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Today's robber barons despoil the environment

The March 24 Alaska oil spill is an ecological and human catastrophe. The largest spill ever in the United States, it is the second major oil mishap since December, when 300,000 gallons were accidentally spilled into Gray's Harbor, Washington. And because the tanker *Exxon Valdez* ran aground in a protected harbor, it may well cause more enduring damage to wildlife and human livelihood than any previous industrial accident in American history.

Some 150,000 of Prince William Sound's 250,000 square miles are now covered with crude oil that is expected to take an unprecedented toll in fish, marine mammals, birds and land animals. An unknown number of the 15,000 sea otters in the area have already frozen or drowned. Thousands of contaminated ducks, loons, cormorants and grebes have also died, and countless other birds and millions of newly hatched herring and salmon are at risk. This is an area through which millions of migrating birds of 181 species will pass in the next few weeks, and in which 5,000 bald eagles—the largest remaining group of these birds in the world—are concentrated. By feasting on the oil-soaked carcasses of shore birds, thereby coating their intestines with oil so that they can no longer absorb water or nutrients, the eagles may have doomed themselves to dehydration and starvation.

And the people of Valdez and the surrounding area are also suffering. It's not just that the natural beauty of the area has been defiled, but also that the livelihoods of herring, salmon, shrimp and king crab fishermen are severely threatened for an unknown number of years.

Exxon's safety net: But for Exxon, the country's second-largest corporation—after General Motors—the spill is nothing more than an embarrassment. Wall Street views Exxon's handling of the accident simply as an aberration, as reflected in the fact that since the oil spill its stock—in the words of the *New York Times*—has "barely fluttered." One reason for this is that under the law that established the Alaska pipeline, Exxon's liability would be limited to \$100 million, and that this would be reduced to \$14 million by an industry-wide fund set up to protect participating companies.

Wall Street, of course, is concerned only with the bottom line, and Exxon's cash flow is such that no one there expects even very high liabilities to hurt the company, which last year had a profit of \$5.3 billion. (There could be higher liabilities if the company is found to have been criminally negligent, but Exxon's profits are so high that even an award of \$500 million could easily be absorbed.)

In the light of these gigantic profits, you might think that the company would have been willing to guarantee that all possible precautions were taken to protect against an accident such as the one at Valdez. If so, you would be dead wrong. True, as far back as the '70s—and as recently as a month ago—Exxon and the other companies that own the Alaska pipeline assured environmentalists that they had a cleanup plan that could contain a major spill within five hours of a rupture. But in 1981 the industry disbanded a 20-member emergency team prepared for round-the-clock responses to oil spills in the Valdez Harbor and sound, and after that it allowed maintenance on cleanup equipment to lapse. And in 1985-86, in a move to save a few dollars, Exxon retired nine of its oil-spill experts, including the corporation's senior environmental officer. In those years, of course, administration policy followed industry in insisting that concern for the environment was an unnecessary luxury—that it was not cost-effective—so federal ship safety programs were also hampered by cutbacks in the Coast Guard budget.

These policies of neglect coalesced with the *Exxon Valdez* disaster. The Coast Guard stopped following the ship on radar, alleging at first that it was out of range. Exxon's cleanup equipment was totally inadequate, giving the leaking oil two full days to spread before anything significant was done. When the cleanup finally got under way, the situation was out of control. And now, while Exxon spends a few dollars on a public relations campaign to clean up its image, the American people will pay the high costs to clean up Valdez and the surrounding area.

Primitive accumulation revisited: In the early years of capitalism, capital was often accumulated through piracy, the forcing of peasants off their land and other methods of despoilation. Now, in our advanced stage of corporate capitalism, the environment is despoiled in order to maintain profits at a high level. This is seen by conservative economists as cost-free. But the costs are great in two ways. First, the dollar costs of cleaning up after accidents and other forms of chemical and nuclear pollution are increasingly high, and they are borne by the public, not by the polluters. Second, the cost both to the environment and to human health and well-being are enormous and, in many cases, irreversible.

There is something profoundly wrong with a society that accepts corporate values—in which the bottom line is the only one that counts—as the guiding tenets of its public policy. For the American people to continue subsidizing the destruction of our environment, and ultimately our own health and safety, merely to insure that the Exxons of this world can continue to enjoy billions of dollars in profit makes little sense. To have a government that does everything in its power to protect these corporations, while giving only lip service to environmental protection, makes even less sense.

LETTERS

No clash

SM. MILLER'S ARTICLE (ITT, MARCH 15) ATTRIBUTES the left's problems to the clash between protection of jobs and the environment, between production and consumption.

It seems to me that there is no clash. If we protected the environment there would be enough work for full employment. Millions could get jobs inspecting the workplaces, and repairing and renewing bridges and other infrastructures. One study projected the possible employment of 7 million to 10 million in the food industry if organic, non-polluting farming on slightly smaller farms were to be favored by the government. A few million more could work in supplying electricity if solar power were favored over nuclear.

Unfortunately, Environmentalists for Full Employment went out of existence a few years ago. Since then it has been very difficult to learn the numbers of workers needed to protect or clean up the environment.

To win, the left needs to show that full employment can be achieved without inflation, and that full employment is needed to protect the environment. It also must demonstrate how to ensure that every person's natural right to take part in the world's work can be exercised.

Faith Rich
Chicago

Superficial distinction

SM. MILLER ADVISES US (ITT, MARCH 15) TO ACCEPT the reality of a "mixed society," with inherent conflicts between production- and consumption-oriented reform movements.

The distinction is belabored, and superficial as well. Aren't production and consumption both products of the same income-creation system geared to profit-maximizing? At bottom there is no trade-off; what we produce and how we produce it cannot be divorced from our modes of living and the consumption alternatives we face. Miller's criticism that today's left does "not envisage the possibilities of large-scale transformation of society" can be turned against himself: only programs that deal with production and consumption as parts of a unified social whole can be non-piecemeal, consistent and long-run in character.

The shallowness of Miller's analysis is underscored by his scolding of the left for its "unwillingness to look at the Reagan record" of "remarkable economic gains in growth, employment and low inflation." What kind of time perspective can Miller be talking about? Economic growth—advances in real gross national product—averaged a shade less than 2.9 percent per year from 1980 through 1988. This is anything but robust in historical terms (even recent ones), and it would have been even lower had 1980 not been a recession year (the average for 1979-80 through 1987-88 was 2.6 percent).

Gains in employment? Seventeen million new jobs were created from 1980 through 1988, the same number created from 1972 through 1980. And under Reagan, unemployment averaged 7.5 percent, against 6.6 percent in the eight years preceding him.

Low inflation? It is extraordinary that anyone claiming to be part of today's left should fail to link the "victory" over double-digit inflation to the "despicable treatment of many"

(Miller's own cryptic—and seemingly begrudging—criticism of Reagan policies). It's no trick to beat down the inflation rate by throwing millions of people out of work, as Reagan and former Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker did in 1981-82, when unemployment reached its postwar peak of 10.8 percent. As Massachusetts Institute of Technology economist Franco Modigliani has shown, the unemployment was responsible for about 70 percent of the decline in the inflation rate. Sheer luck—the crumbling of OPEC and the drop in energy prices—accounted for the rest.

Nobody will deny that there is a widespread impression that the '80s have been "better" than the '70s. This, however, should raise serious questions about media happy talk and Democratic Party ineffectiveness. And it must be coupled with another widespread impression that shows up in all polls—that the future will bring less economic security and greater pressure on living standards.

Richard B. Du Boff
Bryn Mawr, Pa.

Tainted lunch

INOTE WITH DISGUST, IN THE INTERVIEW WITH JIM Hightower (ITT, Feb. 15) the promotion once again of Jesse Jackson as the progressives' hero of the hour. During the election I was as dismayed as anyone at Gov. Michael Dukakis' inability to combat what looked suspiciously like a CIA-engineered disinformation campaign similar to those that brought down Salvador Allende in Chile, Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala and Mohammed Mosaddegh in Iran. However, I am equally dismayed by the "kick-the-man-when-he's-down" commentary on Dukakis you so eagerly print.

Here's a reference exercise: look up the biographies of the 1988 candidates in *Who's Who*. Take a good look also at Jesse Jackson's—self-written, as are all *Who's Who* biographies. Among other things, his biography lists every honorary degree he has ever received, including one from Oral Roberts University. Would the good socialists and leftists out there care to tell me if they would list such a thing in their biographies? More to the point, would they even accept such an "honor"?

And did it not nauseate the American left even a little bit to see Jackson sit down to lunch with George Bush after the election, and smilingly accept the disingenuous statement that the Willie Horton ads were not racist? Grow up, boys and girls; Michael Dukakis failed himself more than us. He knows it, and he and his family have suffered for it. Jackson, of course, will not do the same. He's too busy allowing Bush to

treat him as titular head of the "loyal opposition" and thus make serious mischief for the Democratic Party. Or perhaps you think Bush, and Jackson, are doing that for the good of the progressive movement.

Ann C. Davidson
Philadelphia

Logic vs. usage

WHY DO YOU CONTINUE TO IMITATE YOUR MAINSTREAM counterparts by referring to riots, looting, etc., as "anarchy"? This slanderous misuse of the word "anarchy" occurred recently in Merrill Collett's article, "Debt bomb explodes in 'rich' Venezuela" (ITT, March 15).

The fact that dictionaries include "chaos" and "disorder" among their definitions of the term is no excuse for its use by intelligent writers; dictionaries sometimes reflect the popular, often malevolent usage of the language that evolves over the years. Etymologically, the word "anarchy" is a Greek derivation that simply means "no government" or "no ruler"; it cannot logically or fairly be used to describe the resulting conditions of a stateless society. In earlier times people who had known nothing but monarchy saw the same sinister connotation in "democracy" that "anarchy" has today. Realize, too, that abolitionists in a slave state must have appeared as absurd and irrational as anarchists do to the majority of the population today. To refuse even to consider the positive possibilities of an anarchistic society is to be as narrow-minded as religious fundamentalists who refuse to recognize the advantages of intellectual freedom.

So how about giving us anarchists a break? As long as you continue to equate our philosophy with terrorism, you are scarcely better than the reactionaries who synonymize communism with slavery.

Al Medwin
Farmingdale, N.J.

Editor's note: Collett's use of "anarchy" denoted chaos, not terrorism.

Non-persons

THE CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUE OF ABORTION IS PERCEIVED as a balance between women's right of sovereignty over their own persons and the duty of government to protect the life of a fetus. In *Roe vs. Wade*, the Supreme Court decision of 1973, a woman was allowed to choose abortion only during the first six months of pregnancy, because the fetus in the final three months is deemed potentially viable outside its mother—protected from the threat of abortion as a citizen in its own right.

But this balance of interests is unneces-

sary. The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution recognizes as citizens only those persons born or naturalized in the U.S. In this clear and unambiguous description a fetus—however far in its development—is a non-person. It may be able to survive if prematurely thrust into the world during the latter part of its gestation, but until it is taking oxygen into its own lungs and nourishment into its own mouth, it is not a separate being. Until it is born, a fetus is in every sense a part of the woman carrying it.

Roe vs. Wade is correct in recognizing the woman's right to decide whether or not to continue her own pregnancy. But it is mistaken to balance that right with the government's interest in the fetus as a potential citizen. Until it is born, the fetus has no legal rights apart from those of the woman carrying it. To force a woman to bear a child against her will is a barbaric form of involuntary servitude, prohibited by the 13th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Yet however faulty *Roe vs. Wade* may be, it remains the only protection of a woman's right to choose abortion during the first six months of pregnancy. To reverse the decision without providing stronger protections would be disastrous to women's rights as free citizens. To replace the *Roe vs. Wade* decision with one asserting that the fetus is a unique citizen from the moment of conception would be disastrous as well to the progress of individual liberty begun in the U.S. by the first drafting of the Constitution.

Such a decision would be based on narrow religious beliefs, as it is eagerly lobbied for by fundamentalist Christians and authoritarian Catholics. It would therefore oppose the First Amendment of the Constitution prohibiting the establishment of any religion by Congress. Such a decision or, worse yet, a "life amendment" would oppose the personal security guaranteed by the Fourth Amendment.

If the rights of pregnant women are to be protected, *Roe vs. Wade* cannot be overturned, unless by a decision more fully protecting women's rights.

Eric Rosenbloom
Micanopy, Fla.

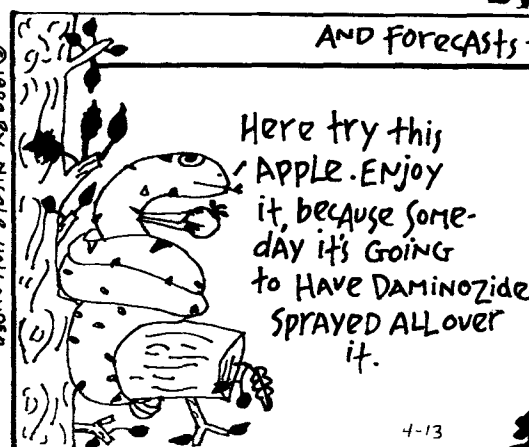
Atheist bites dog

AS A BOURGEOIS SOCIALIST AND ABORTIONISTIC Atheist I was outraged at the cardocrinum polygonums [sic] of Thomas J. Kuna-Jacob.

After reading his letter (Letters, March 22), I thrashed my children and bit my dog. You will soon be hearing from my attorney.

John Hook
Bothell, Wash.

SYLVIA



by Nicole Hollander

AND forecasts the Future.

