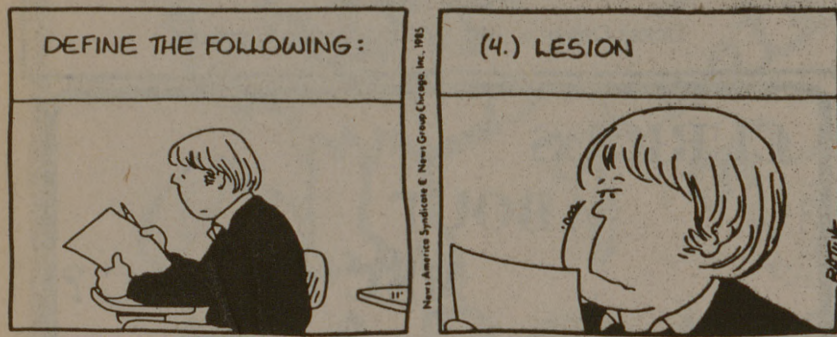


WORLD AND NATION

Funky Winkerbean



by Tom Batiuk

Supreme Court ruling permits EPA variances

Associated Press
 WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court ruled Wednesday federal environmental officials may ease regulations for some companies that discharge toxic water pollutants.

In a 5-4 decision that amounted to a victory for the chemical industry and the Reagan administration, rejected environmentalists' arguments that relaxing restrictions for discharges into sewage treatment plants could cause serious harm to the nation's streams and public health. The court said the Environmental Protection Agency is authorized by federal law to exempt "fundamentally different" individual companies from industry-wide pollution control standards.

Permitting such variances "is, essentially, not an exception to the standard-setting process, but rather a more fine-tuned application of it," Justice Byron R. White wrote for the court's narrow majority.

"It is important that EPA's nationally binding ... standards ... be tempered with the flexibility that the variance mechanism offers," he said.

The impact of the ruling is not immediately clear.

By 1984, only four companies that discharge toxic waste directly into streams and waterways were granted variances. The government had granted no variances to companies that discharge into sewage treatment plants. About 40 applications by those who discharge into sewage systems are pending.

But Wednesday's ruling could encourage additional companies to apply for variances, environmentalists said.

Federal regulators contend the ruling will have limited application but that giving them such discretion is an important cost-saving and time-saving principle.

The ruling overturned a 1983 decision by the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in favor of the Natural Resources Defense Council. The environmental group contended that 1977 amendments to the Clean Water Act prohibited such variances for any industries discharging toxic waste.

The environmentalists said Congress intended that the EPA allow

exceptions from pollution control standards only for "non-toxic, conventional pollutants."

At issue was the degree to which toxic industrial waste must be treated before its discharge. The EPA adopted a rule that would require "atypical" companies from meeting industry-wide standards.

At least 60,000 companies are subject to industry-wide water pollution control standards, the government said.

In other rulings Wednesday, the court:

- Boosted federal budget-cutting by adopting the Reagan administration's understanding of calculating the income of some welfare recipients. The 9-0 ruling in a California case could save taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars in welfare payments.

- Threw out some changes made in 1982 in the way school officials are elected in Hampton County, S.C. The court ruled unanimously that changes in the candidate-filing deadline and election date violated the federal Voting Rights Act.

U.S. will negotiate 'Star Wars' in Geneva, arms adviser says

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Less than three weeks before U.S.-Soviet arms talks open in Geneva, the Reagan administration is shifting from the rhetoric to the political realities of "Star Wars," acknowledging that its plan for a space-based nuclear missile defense system could be negotiated with Moscow.

"It would be on the table," chief arms control adviser Paul H. Nitze told a congressional panel. "It would not be excluded."

After months of public statements by President Reagan and other U.S. officials that Star Wars — the Strategic Defense Initiative — could not be negotiated away, there have been nudges in their position suggesting the possibility that this might happen after all.

Although most attention has been focused on Star Wars research, supporters and critics of the plan agree that testing and deployment are the issues, rather than research.

With the first significant Star Wars tests not planned before 1989, there is plenty of time to deal with the testing and deployment issues in the Geneva talks, which open March 12. Reagan would no longer be president by the time a full Star Wars system is ready.

Reagan was quoted as telling The New York Times in an interview on Feb. 11 that he would want to develop a workable missile defense system regardless of whether the Geneva negotiators agreed to curb nuclear weapons.

Reagan seemed to take a step back

from that position at his Feb. 21 news conference, when he voiced readiness "to come forth before any deployment and negotiate and discuss the deployment and the use of that weapon in such a way that it would be used to rid the world of the nuclear threat, not to give us any particular advantage over anyone else."

Reagan's carefully worded statement pointed the Star Wars program in two possible directions. One, it could be deployed if that was the only way to make the world safer. Or two, there would be no need to deploy a Star Wars system if the Soviets and the Americans agreed to curb their offensive missiles, as another step toward eliminating "the nuclear threat."

Egypt, Israel renew negotiations

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Prime Minister Shimon Peres and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt exchanged special envoys Wednesday to explore the prospects for renewing Middle East peace talks.

Peres met twice with an envoy sent by Mubarak, and the prime minister's spokesman told reporters that Israel and Egypt "recognize the need and urgency to further the peace process" and "will intensify their contacts."

The new contacts are the first significant movement toward a Middle

East peace initiative since the U.S.-mediated talks on autonomy for Palestinians living under Israeli occupation broke down in 1982.

Peres' spokesman, Uri Savir, repeated the prime minister's position that he is ready to participate in new Middle East peace talks with Jordan or with a mixed Jordanian-Palestinian delegation provided the delegation did not include members of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

In Cairo, Mubarak met with Israel's energy minister, Moshe Sha-

hal, in what Israeli sources said were "complementary" talks. A second Israeli was expected to head for Cairo later. Israeli sources indicated he would be Avraham Tamir, director-general of Peres' office.

Peres was joined by two Cabinet ministers, Moshe Arens of the right-wing Likud bloc and Ezer Weizman of the left-leaning Labor alignment, when he received Abdel Halim Bedawy, a senior Egyptian Foreign Ministry official, and Mohammed Bassiouny, the charge d'affaires at the Egyptian Embassy in Israel.

Farm measure passed

Congress ignores Reagan

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House and Senate, ignoring the wishes of President Reagan, endorsed separate legislation Wednesday to provide credit-poor farmers with federal loan money in time for spring planting.

By 54-45, the Republican-controlled Senate approved a measure that would provide \$100 million to "buy down" interest rates for farmers who have exhausted their loan sources. It later also approved, 50-48, legislation to give farmers immediate advances on crop loans that normally would not come until harvest.

At the same time, the Democrat-dominated House voted 318-103 for a bill, similar to one of the Senate amendments, offering advances of up to 50 percent of next fall's price-support loans to farmers unable to get loans to plant this spring. That measure was sponsored by Rep. Tom Daschle, D-S.D.

The Senate amendments were tacked onto a bill offering \$175 million in non-food aid for drought-ravaged African countries, similar to one passed by the House. The House credit bill still must go to the Senate for a vote.

Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole, R-Kan., predicted the amendments passed over his opposition "never going to become law" and administration officials said Reagan might veto the bill.

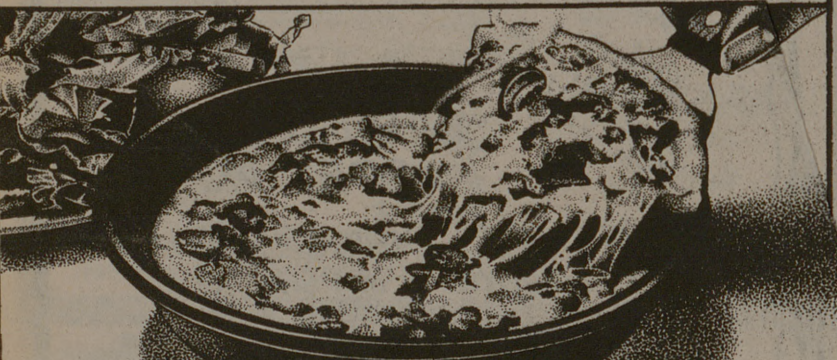
In act, after the action on the first amendment, deputy White House press secretary Marlin Fitzwater, expressing disappointment at the outcome of the Senate vote, said: "In all likelihood, we'll veto" the bill if it reaches Reagan with the amendment still attached.

The spokesman said the administration remains "steadfast in the belief there is a program out there that should be utilized."

The White House had lobbied against any changes in federal credit help for farmers. The administration is rushing to put in place its own much-modified loan guarantee program, which President Reagan contends is adequate to save those farmers with the best chance of long-term survival.

The vote had been seen as so close that Vice President George Bush had delayed a scheduled trip to Texas to be present in the Senate in case his vote were needed to break a tie.

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Off Campus Connection

The Off Campus Connection is sponsored each month by Loupot's Bookstore at Northgate as a service to Texas A&M students. Stories and artwork are provided by the staff of the Off Campus Center.

Student Mediation Service

Cases Now Being Accepted

The Texas A&M Student Mediation Service is now accepting cases for student-to student conflict mediation. Mediation is a voluntary process of resolving conflicts and is especially attractive for students who wish to avoid costly, traumatic legal battles. Mediation is not a court or judicial hearing but it can be an effective alternative for many conflicts. For Texas A&M students the service can provide mediation in roommate conflicts, lease conflicts involving another student, automobile accidents, disputes in the use or damage of personal property, and most other conflicts between groups or individuals.

Mediation is based on the idea that people often have difficulty resolving a conflict on their own and need the help of an impartial third party, the mediator. The mediator has a primary role to listen to each person's concern in the conflict and facilitate the negotiation process between them. The Texas A&M student mediators have been carefully selected and have completed an intensive training program. They are obligated to maintain an objective and neutral position throughout the mediation process. This means that mediators do not take sides, judge, or allow their value systems to enter into the process. Mediators are also obligated to maintain confidentiality in all matters pertaining to a mediation case. Most important, mediators do not offer suggestions or advice to any of the parties during the mediation process. When one or more students discover they are

involved in a dispute, they should contact the **Student Mediation Service**. After a request for mediation has been filed, separate interviews will be conducted for each party in the dispute. At this time, the complete mediation process will be explained and any questions or concerns will be addressed. If both parties agree to mediation (neither party can be forced into mediation), two mediators will be assigned and the mediation session will be scheduled. During the session the mediators meet with all disputants simultaneously and then with each disputant individually. Throughout the session the mediators work to bring the disputants to their own solution. When a resolution is reached, a written agreement is signed by all disputants.

The **Student Mediation Service** is available to on campus and off campus students involved in a student-to-student conflict. The service is free of charge. If you need assistance in resolving a dispute or if you have questions regarding the **Student Mediation Service** contact:

Student Mediation Service
 108 YMCA Building
 Texas A&M University
 (409) 845-1228

Looking for Roommates

...for the upcoming summer sessions or fall semester or both? The Off Campus Center operates the Roommate Referral Service which can help students find compatible roommates. The service is helpful if you have housing and need a roommate, or if you need both housing and roommates. The Off Campus Center will begin taking listings on Monday, 4 March. For more information or to list yourself in the service, contact the Off Campus Center in Puryear Hall or call 845-1741.

