

Opinion

An honest gesture

The makers of Tylenol announced Monday they would discontinue production of all capsule products because they can't guarantee protection from tampering. Johnson & Johnson's concern for customers ahead of capital gain is a welcome sentiment.

The cancellation is the result of potassium cyanide-laced Extra-Strength Tylenol capsules, which killed a 23-year-old woman in the New York City area. Another bottle of the contaminated medicine was found in a store less than two blocks from where the first fatal dose was purchased.

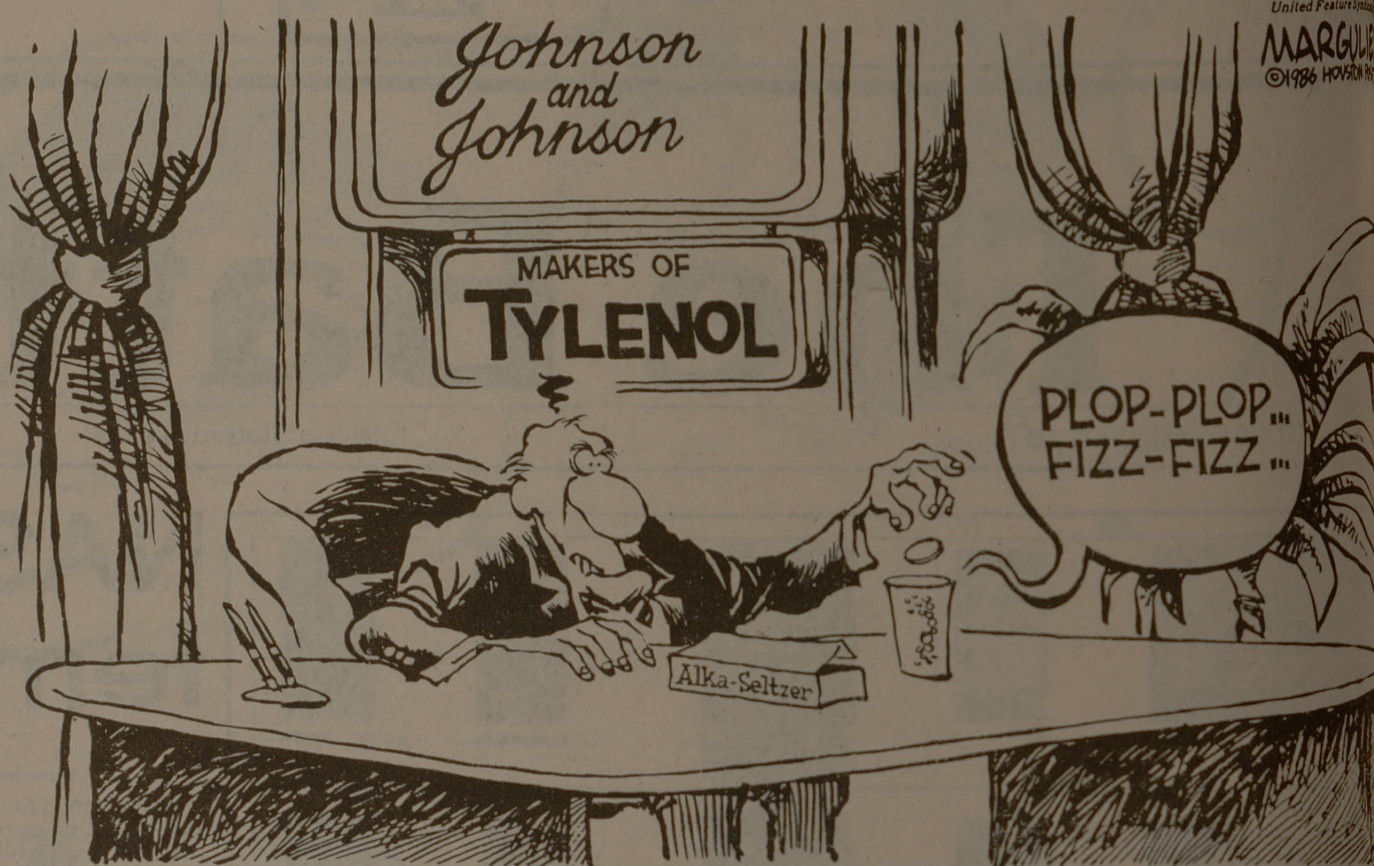
In 1982, seven people were killed in a similar poisoning incident in Chicago. The company introduced "tamper-proof" containers for its products after the Chicago tragedy, but, if the will is twisted enough, a way can be found around any precaution. In this case, it has.

The pain killer's removal will cost Johnson & Johnson about \$200 million in sales.

Despite its misfortune, Johnson & Johnson has accepted responsibility for the disaster. Although it may not be to blame, the company is taking action to ensure customers are protected from harm.

In this day of dog-eat-dog commercialism, it's comforting to see one company swallow its pride and put people before profits.

The Battalion Editorial Board



Fundamentalist view breeds religious intolerance

I am not a religious person. I accept few things on faith — why do you think they call it religious "faith" and not religious "proof?" I am not ignorant of the subject. I have taken various courses dealing with the Bible and religion in general and have made personal conclusions based upon knowledge. Religion is fine when used properly in a nonjudgmental fashion. When taken to the extremes of fundamentalism, however, religion moves into the realm of harmful and dangerous.



Glenn Murtha

A new organization, Fundamentalist Anonymous, was recently formed in New York to help people stop fundamentalism from ruining their lives or the lives of others.

Fundamentalism is a strict, literal interpretation of religious scripture, pri-

marily Biblical scripture. Inevitably, conflict between science and fundamentalism, fact and faith, will occur. Battle lines are drawn and those who adhere to the fundamentalist line often will reject scientific evidence in favor of their faith. If they choose to do this, that's fine. But when they try to erase evidence from others' sight, they've gone too far.

For example, the religious right wants to remove evolution from biology textbooks and replace it with "scientific" creationism. They have been successful in watering down evolution in many of the newer texts. California took a stand last year and voted to accept no textbook for use in the public schools which does not adequately cover evolution.

A few years ago I did a research paper dealing with the subject of scientific creationism. I tried to argue the creationist side. I am not, nor ever was, a creationist. The point of the paper was to argue for a particular viewpoint.

I found masses of support for evolution — vehement and comprehensive

support from knowledgeable people from the scientific community, experts in their field. I searched and searched for any support for scientific creationism. About all I could find was one book written from a Christian perspective which distorted and overlooked evidence in a desperate attempt to give credence to scientific creationism.

Most fundamentalist Christians realize that in our empirical world little is accepted from a non-scientific basis. Moving creationism into the scientific realm could give more validity to the Biblical story of creation.

A few weeks ago, the *Houston Chronicle* did a "Saturday Forum" devoted to the nature of human existence — specifically creation versus evolution. "Saturday Forum" invites readers to express their views on a particular topic. I was amazed at the number of pro-creation and anti-evolution responses.

These people are blinded by their religious faith. They refuse to accept any evidence which places doubt on their

beliefs (it's called cognitive dissonance in psychology). They believe that the Bible is the source of absolute truth and that anything which contradicts their interpretation of the Bible is false.

Evolution and Biblical creationism can co-exist. One letter printed in "Saturday Forum" effectively eliminated the problem by making the point that God created evolution.

If fundamentalists continue to take such a hard line on this and other issues, they will only succeed in damaging their cause.

Maintaining a faith is one thing, ignoring the evidence is quite another. Sadly enough, it is this hard line that tends to attract followers. Fundamentalism is not limited to evolution versus creation. For many people, fundamentalism offers absolute standards of right and wrong for virtually all issues — abortion is wrong, premarital sex is wrong, birth control is wrong, homosexuality is wrong, gambling is wrong, etc., etc. For people who have trouble think-

ing for themselves, analyzing problems with the help of available evidence to reach a conclusion, fundamentalism provide answers.

In a rapidly changing and chaotic world where wrong can be right, right can be wrong depending upon individual or a particular time, fundamentalism offers stability and security.

Little room exists for tolerating native views when a particular belief offers a doctrine of absolute right and wrong — religious intolerance result.

"Believe what I believe or spend eternity burning in HELL!"

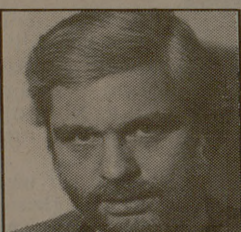
Fear can also attract followers.

If you know anyone close to you who has fallen into the fundamentalist or you yourself are caught in the and want to escape, contact Fundamentalist Anonymous. It may help.

Glenn Murtha is a senior political science major and a columnist for *The Battalion*.

U.S. kicked by Reagan's knee-jerk conservatism

Picture Ronald Reagan. Okay, now picture him as a giant knee. Now here comes a doctor's rubber-tipped hammer shaped like the Philippines. The hammer hits, the knee jerks and the president immediately comes down on the side of authority. The president is the genuine article. He really is a knee-jerk conservative.



Richard Cohen

Since Reagan's initial statements about the Philippine elections, there has been some backing and filling, some hemming and hawing and the required dispatch of Philip Habib, the winged messenger of futility, on yet another dumb mission. But at the critical, almost Rorschach moment, the president looked at the ink blot of the Philippine archipelago and saw the Berkeley cam-

pus of yore — protest and pandemonium. As the kids say, he freaked.

Of course, Reagan could hardly mention Berkeley. After all, he was not articulating a thought, but an emotion — what in Washington passes for ideology. That strongly felt emotion prompted the nonsense that leaped from Reagan's lips when the issue of the Philippines was raised at his recent press conference: There was no proof of vote fraud and, besides, both sides had used violence.

The average American, lacking a Habib but having a television set, knew the president was wrong. The bodies bled on camera and the fraud was palpable. Richard Lugar, a conservative senator from Indiana and once a favorite of Richard Nixon's, had certified it. Ferdinand Marcos was a cheat.

Notice that Reagan's statements regarding the Philippine elections were not all that different from those he

made regarding South Africa. There, too, he said that there was violence on both sides. It seemed not to matter to him that one side was the government, with all its guns, and the other side, while numerous, was powerless. It also seemed not to matter that the government was protecting privilege, racism and the raw abuse of power. What mattered was that it was the government — authority. It had to be right.

For Reagan, this is a theme. At the same press conference at which he inarticulately articulated his position on the Philippines' election, he defended his record on civil rights: "I was doing things about civil rights before there was (a government) program." Maybe he was. But when the individual efforts of countless individual blacks converged into an often rambunctious civil-rights movement, Reagan recoiled and opposed civil-rights legislation. It was as if the leper of Bolshevism was about to touch him. The rabble was at the gates.

Beginning with the classic study,

"The Authoritarian Personality" by Theodore Adorno, social scientists have tried to determine what makes one person liberal and another conservative. In the case of President Reagan, the cause is less important than the consequence. The results have been damaging and mar what some already are claiming to be a great presidency.

Reagan's civil-rights posture, his statements on South Africa and, now, the reflexive kick he gave the vast Marcos opposition, are more than personal utterances. They are official pronouncements, the face the United States turns to the world. Black South Africans and anti-Marcos Filipinos, engaged as they are in the often-messy struggle for freedom, must think they have seen the man's heart and found it cold. Reagan's instincts, so acclaimed in Washington, are precisely where the underprivileged find him wanting. It is why, totally without evidence and to his evident dismay, so many American blacks say Reagan's a racist.

In the end, facts and reality sometimes overpower Reagan's conservative instincts and, almost imperceptibly, things change. U.S. policy toward South Africa is not what it once was although to many blacks there it matters. When it comes to the Philippines, something similar will happen. In due course, Reagan will inch away from his initial rhetoric and policies dutifully follow. Trouble is, it's a hardy matter.

The irony is that at the age of 73, everyone seems to know this part of Ronald Reagan but Reagan himself. He allows his reflexive conservatism to do the better of him. In following his instincts rather than his head, he does his country a disservice. It may be his knee-jerk reaction. But it's us who get kicked.

Richard Cohen is a columnist for *The Washington Post Writers Group*.

Mail Call

Sorry for the switch

EDITOR:

This letter is written in response to last week's dissatisfied Lee Greenwood concert goer.

On behalf of MSC Town Hall, I would like to apologize for any inconvenience due to a last minute change of location for the concert.

The concert was moved to Rudder Auditorium because this facility was better suited to the size of the audience in addition to having better staging, acoustics and environment.

Town Hall works hard to promote its productions through various media such as radio, newspapers, fliers, banners, posters and buttons. In regard to the location change, radios and newspapers were notified as soon as the change was made.

Seating was closely monitored to ensure that G. Rollie White patrons received equivalent or better seating in Rudder. General admission patrons were seated in the balcony.

Wendy Cochran '86
MSC Town Hall Chairman

Lack of creativity

EDITOR:

Though I personally don't wear an earring, I felt compelled to respond to Chuck Gill and Russell Fishbeck's letter about males who wear earrings.

I realize no sarcasm was intended, but they could have been a little more creative with their question.

For instance, if I were wondering why some people wear cowboy boots and blue jeans, I might have asked:

1) What possesses you to wear them; an incredible sense of conformity?

2) What would your parents think if you decided to wear surf shorts and an O.P. shirt? Would they tell your grandparents or keep it a secret?

3) Do you think girls find your clothes sexy? Please answer openly and honestly.

It seems like you went to a lot of effort for some simple answers. Wouldn't it have been easier and quicker to just ask some guy why he wears an earring — that is, if no sarcasm was intended?

Mike Sullivan '87

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the address and telephone number of the writer.

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