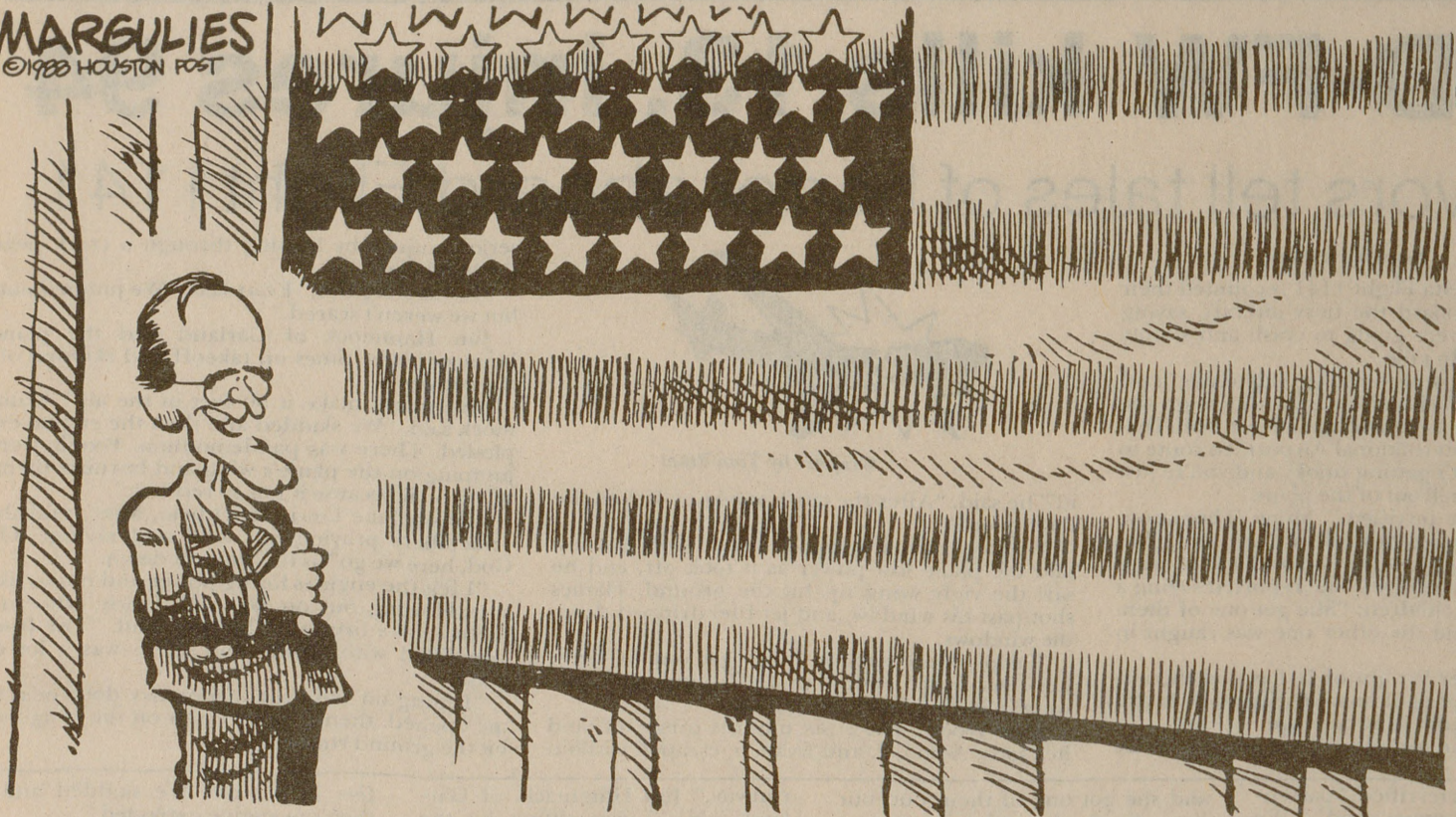


Opinion

MARGULIES
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"...and to the Republicans for which it stands..."

Nuking nuclear energy smart solution to deadly problem

Can you name an energy source that currently supplies only a small amount of the energy needs of the United States, is not terribly efficient, and produces hazardous by-products that remain potentially lethal for thousands of years?



Dean Sueltenfuss

Yes, you guessed it! It's nuclear energy.

I know, I know. All of you pro-nuclear people are already getting upset, aren't you?

"What?!" you're all saying. "Nuclear energy is wonderful!"

Admittedly, nuclear energy does have some advantages over other energy sources. However, these good points are strongly outweighed by its numerous negative aspects.

First of all, extremely dangerous consequences would occur in the event of a mishap at a nuclear reactor. If you don't believe that, I suggest you think back to the Chernobyl tragedy in 1986. And for those of you who want some evidence a little closer to home there's always Three Mile Island. Oh, sure, nobody got killed then, but I wonder how many cases of cancer that accident caused.

Secondly, the overall cost of producing electricity at nuclear plants is often higher than the cost of producing electricity at traditional, coal-powered plants. One of the main claims made by supporters of nuclear energy in the 1960's and 1970's was that it would be an economically viable energy source. With construction costs running into billions of dollars for individual nuclear power plants, the economics of nuclear energy indeed seems questionable.

Then there is the problem of waste disposal. The current situation is some-

thing like this: The United States currently has millions upon millions of gallons of high-level nuclear waste and no place to dispose of any of it. As one observer put it, it's like building a commode and not building a septic tank to go along with it — after a while you're going to run into a problem.

Right now, all of our high-level nuclear waste is being stored in above-ground, temporary storage facilities around the country. The federal government is currently trying to force Nevada into accepting a permanent underground storage facility, but there's a small problem — Nevada doesn't want it. And it's doing everything it can to keep from getting the nuclear waste. So it could be many, many years before we actually have a permanent storage facility.

But guess what? Even if we do manage to create a permanent storage facility, the fun's not over. You see, nobody is really certain how safe it is to store nuclear waste underground. Many scientists are concerned that the waste could leak into aquifers and contaminate water supplies, thus endangering humans, plants, and animals.

If you're still not convinced of the evils of nuclear energy, don't worry — I saved the best for last. By the time all this nuclear garbage that we're polluting the world with has much of an impact on the environment, our generation will be dead and gone. The people that will really be affected will be our children and grandchildren. In fact, it is possible that by using nuclear energy now we could be affecting people who won't be born until thousands of years from now.

For example, plutonium, which is a by-product of nuclear power plants, has a half-life of 24,000 years, and is considered to present a hazard for at least 250,000 years.

Nuclear energy proponents would no doubt try to refute the aforementioned drawbacks of nuclear energy, stating

that it is a safe and economical means of producing electricity. Many of the people who strongly support the use of nuclear energy do so because they have some sort of dependence upon nuclear energy as their livelihood. It is therefore not surprising that many of these supporters are directly involved in the nuclear energy industry.

In addressing the issue of waste disposal many of these proponents seem to show a callous disregard for the environment. Physics Professor Bernard L. Cohen of the University of Pittsburgh, in a paper titled "Myths about High-Level Radioactive Waste," states that leakage from an underground storage facility is nothing to worry about because "it would be easy to warn people not to drink water that is excessively contaminated and not to use it for irrigation of food crops."

What a brilliant idea.

When we contaminate certain aspects of our environment to such an extent that we can no longer use them, we'll just abandon them.

Forests contaminated? No problem. We just won't take vacations there anymore.

Cities full of radioactive waste? Don't worry. Just evacuate the citizens.

I'm still not sure how we're going to tell all of the animals to leave the contaminated areas. Maybe we can put up signs or something.

In the final analysis, no matter what type of smokescreens or arguments nuclear proponents try to put out, one basic truth still exists: Using nuclear energy today will certainly have negative effects on the world tomorrow — effects that are dire enough to justify seeking out a new energy source and abolishing nuclear energy as soon as we possibly can.

Dean Sueltenfuss is a senior journalism major and columnist for The Battalion.

Mail Call

Don't say the 'L' word

EDITOR:

I would like to say something concerning the Opinion Page.

Only two days into the school year, and *The Battalion* has already made its liberal biases obvious. First off, there's the column slamming Republican vice presidential nominee Dan Quayle, written by the liberal hero, Mike Royko. We have had two of Margulies' anti-Quayle cartoons appear.

And now, our latest "all-knowing" editorial columnist, Suna Purser joins in.

These people maintain that Republicans are no good for our country. Funny — I thought Jimmy Carter won the award for "most blunders in a four-year term."

Please, please get some conservatives on the Opinion Page. I'm sick of reading only liberal ideology.

Jeff Frank '91

Evans Library anything but sterling

EDITOR:

Aggie's heart really in little city

Driving down the backroads of good old College Station, Texas, I longed for the bright lights and sky-scraping buildings of big-city life. After four years of watching bluebonnets grow by day and the stars twinkle at night, I wished for noise pollution, smog and traffic. I wanted to see one person who didn't look the same. Someone who traded in his faded Wranglers for pleated pants and a tie. Maybe someone with purple hair who dared to be different. (Purple-haired people were not a common sight in College Station.)

The ever-so familiar Texas twang (as in "Hooowdy!") began to grate on my nerves and the small-town friendliness that I once found comforting, I now found sappy.

So, with a force of friction built up behind me, I made one impulsive move. Within one week, I graduated from college, got a job, and moved to Houston.

Driving into the city, I felt a great rush. A new beginning! A place where absolutely no one knew my name! And most impressive — BUILDINGS OVER FOUR STORIES TALL!

It wasn't good enough for me to live NEAR the city, either. I found an apartment complex smack dab in the middle of the "inner loop". Never mind the fact that the apartment I am leasing costs about half of my monthly salary.

It is an apartment complex full of city life. Six swimming pools, racquetball courts and puppies — all fenced in with security gates. It wasn't until later that I made the connection — high security means high crime. (This area in which I chose to live happens to have the second highest homicide rate in the city and a half-way house prison down the street.)

Never mind. Life was wonderful. I didn't think I would miss the hum-drum monotonous life in which I previously had lived. I didn't know that homesickness ever struck "soon-to-be 23-year olds on their own in the big city."

Until yesterday.

Thoughts and feelings, experiences

I didn't know the Sterling C. Evans Library was in such sorry shape! Obviously the exterior is in need of repair, but I wasn't aware of the situation inside.

When did Greeks start taking attendance in group study? That's not interesting if true, especially since it sounds more like something the Greeks would do. Just call me proud to be "only" an Aggie and not a Greek no cadet.

Surprisingly enough, neither the guest-writer nor the admittedly humorous editorialist mentioned the reoccurring problem of "a man exposing himself" or "a man masturbating" on 3rd floor. Isn't that where the Greeks are now reported to be gathering?

I won't even comment on the noise level — that's a whole letter unto itself.

Steve Rikli '89

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

and memories of the ease of small-town life came back to me in flashes.

The reasons that I chose to go to school in College Station in the first place were forefront in my mind:

- Having a fenced-in backyard and my dog instead of having to call a sitting service and taking him for marathon walks after work.

- Being able to walk in the park at night.

- Feeling safe and secure in your house with all the windows open at night.

- Laying on the driveway and watching stars fall.

- Bargains on beer, pizza and hamburgers--the staffs of life.

- Dollar movies and 6 percent sales tax.

- Friendly people who don't bother you but help, when your car stalls.

- Familiarity.

- Peace.

- And quiet.

I traded in a sense of belonging for a sense of adventure — and got lost. I never before known the swirling, ascending feeling of being displaced.

It's exciting, but scary. You can laugh or you can cry.

But it's not all bad.

It leaves time for re-adjusting on the inside. When your life has been thrown up in the air and is coming down in pieces all around you, they can pick up one at a time and examined. Then you can discard the rubbish.

Change is the essence of growth. And if we're not growing, we're decaying.

And I'm sure that soon enough I will find backroads and stars and all things familiar right here in Houston.

Janet Goode is a journalism graduate, former Battalion staff member, assistant editor of The Village Life and guest columnist for The Battalion.

The Battalion

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