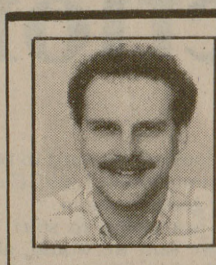


Only changing buying habits can save environment

When the Exxon Valdez oil spill occurred, thousands of people cut up their Exxon credit cards and returned them to the company. People began refusing to buy Exxon gasoline and vented a lot of anger at the corporation. Many felt that Exxon should be prosecuted and persecuted for their role in the accident.

This anger is misplaced and ineffective. Blaming large polluting corporations (be they chemical, oil, automobile, nuclear or whatever) and trying to control them by regulation will never work by itself. Those who think that way misunderstand the basic structure of a democratic capitalist-consumer society: Every time the



Jeff Farmer
Columnist

consumer buys a product, she or he casts a dollar vote for every process that goes into its production. The conglomerate of oil companies in charge of the cleanup (which included other companies besides Exxon) failed miserably to fulfill their promises; this is

a direct result of the demands of each one of us for cheap gasoline, natural gas, heating oil or electricity. It is very convenient for us to blame some far away bureaucrat in a company office, but we as customers are paying his or her salary.

If something is to be done about the incredible damage we are doing to our environment, government regulation will be a necessary part of the solution; but it is destined to fail, and fail badly, if it is not accompanied by a change in consumer spending habits. Corporate CEO's make their decisions based on profit. Changes in legislation which are not accompanied by changes in our consumption will only cause companies to attempt to get around the law (which they will do). Deprive them of their profit margins, on the other hand, and they will change the way they manufacture goods.

We buy the cosmetics that are applied directly to the bodies of rabbits until fifty percent of the sample are dead from the toxic effects. We use chemical fertilizer on our lawns (which then runs off and pollutes the water supply). We disconnect the pollution control devices on our autos so that they will run better. We all drive cars. We purchase packaged processed foods. We throw away things we could continue to use or recycle. We eat far too much meat (producing meat uses many more times more resources than producing grain or vegetables).

I'm not trying to make anyone feel guilty (although guilty is exactly what we

all are!). In my experience, guilt is an essentially useless emotion. I prefer responsibility instead. As long as we can conveniently avoid responsibility, either by denying the existence of the problem or by blaming big corporations or government, we will not take the necessary steps to save ourselves. Guilt produces denial; responsibility produces action.

We must take responsibility for

If something is to be done about the incredible damage we are doing to our environment, government regulation will be a necessary part of the solution; but it is destined to fail, and fail badly, if it is not accompanied by a change in consumer spending habits.

raping, looting and destroying our own planet. I'm tired of hearing how the naughty Brazilians are destroying the rain forest. I want to hear instead about how U.S. companies are destroying our forests. The companies that do this are happy to sponsor PBS specials on the Amazon — it deflects attention from what we are doing here. How about people who buy homes built on cleared land? How about all of us who shop at the new mall built on formerly productive farmland? The issue is not just our politics, it is our lifestyle. Responsibility means that instead of

trying to destroy Exxon, we resolve to use less and less gasoline, even if it costs us a little. Responsibility means that at the same time we vote to regulate corporations that damage the land, air and water, we also STOP casting our dollar votes for their products in the marketplace. Our consumer addiction cannot be solved by regulation any more than drug addiction can. They can only be solved by each one of us just saying no.

We must develop a new culture and a new notion of what is "cool." Wearing our old clothes as long as they are good must replace the idea of staying in fashion. Buying products made by people we know must become more acceptable than buying from a big business (which is very likely to be involved in environmentally irresponsible behavior). We must stop throwing our trash on the highway and draining our oil onto the grass. We must eat less junk food, less processed food, less meat and more locally grown vegetables and grains. We must stop trying to be rich and start trying to be well instead.

Environmental activism is useless without environmental consciousness and lifestyle. We can stop feeling helpless about the environment by taking responsibility for our own consumption and taking charge of changing our own way of living. Saving our planet is not the sole responsibility of the politicians and corporate barons. It is ours.

Jeff Farmer is a graduate student in mathematics.

Birth control education can prevent pregnancies

According to the Newsletter for Human Sexuality Instruction, 85 percent of young people have had sexual intercourse, usually with more than one sexual partner, by the age of 20. Sexual activity of 17-19 year old males has increased by 15 percent in the last 10 years. One result of this activity has been nearly one million unplanned pregnancies a year since 1979.

But could these pregnancies have been prevented? Yes! Studies show that the more young people know about birth control, the less likely they are to have unwanted pregnancies. Many factors should be considered when choosing a method of contraception: effectiveness, frequency of intercourse, proper use and convenience, motivation and beliefs.

Methods of contraception can be grouped in seven categories and can be assigned a percentage which represents its effectiveness index. The categories are:

1. Natural methods include both withdrawal — 50 percent; and awareness methods (calendar method — 79-87 percent; mucus method — 70-80 percent; and the temperature method — 70-80 percent).
2. Chemical barrier methods, like spermicidal jelly, cream, foam or suppositories — 85-90 percent.
3. Mechanical barrier methods include the diaphragm with spermicide — 86-97 percent; cervical cap — 80-95 percent; sponge — 87-90 percent; condom — 88-97 percent; and the condom with spermicide — 90-97 percent.
4. Intrauterine devices (IUD) — 96-98 percent.
5. The pill — 98-99 percent.
6. Permanent sterilization include vasectomy (males) — 99-100 percent; and tubal ligation (females) — 100 percent.
7. Abstinence — 100 percent.

Considering there is a 60 to 80 percent chance of getting pregnant without using any contraception method, withdrawal can hardly be considered effective. Semen may leak from the penis before ejaculation.

Awareness methods, or rhythm method, uses no devices or medication. It is based on avoiding intercourse during ovulation. However, many women ovulate on an irregular basis. Hence, the high risk of pregnancy.

Spermicidal jelly, creams, foams or suppositories are sold over the counter. They work in the vagina killing sperm cells. They must be used just before intercourse. Extra applications are needed if intercourse is repeated.

The diaphragm, the cervical cap and the sponge work by covering the cervix

Erika Gonzalez-Lima Health Columnist

(opening of the uterus) thus blocking the entrance of sperm, and killing sperm by spermicidal creams. The sponge is sold over the counter. A physician must measure the woman to select the proper size of diaphragm or cap, and teach her how to use it properly.

Latex condoms are sold over the counter and used on the erect penis to catch semen. Some condoms with spermicides kill sperm as well. If used properly, condoms are a reliable method for birth control and prevent sexually transmitted diseases.

Intrauterine devices (IUDs) must be inserted by a physician. Several manufacturers have withdrawn IUDs from the market due to potential health risks.

Birth control pills are the most effective of all reversible methods of contraception. Women on the pill experience less cramping and have regular and lighter menstrual periods. However, pills may cause side effects in some women such as weight gain, water retention, nausea, vomiting, bleeding between periods, headaches and nervousness. Women who smoke, or with a history of heart disease, breast or uterine cancer should not take the pill. If women forget to take the pill for a period of time, they must use backup methods such as condoms with spermicide.

Male sterilization is called vasectomy. It is a quick procedure which involves cutting the vas deferens in either side of the scrotum. Female sterilization involves ligation of the fallopian tubes. There are three methods of tubal ligation: laparotomy, minilaparotomy and laparoscopy. Tubal ligation is the most common type of birth control among older women.

Abstinence is a 100 percent effective method of birth control but it may not be what you want to do. If you decide to have sex, communicate effectively with your sexual partner and choose the best contraceptive method for you.

Although 66 percent of sexually active youth use some form of contraceptive, only 30 percent use it correctly. Consult your physician, or visit or call the A.P. Beutel Health Center (845-1511) if you have questions about the risk and effectiveness of contraceptives.

Have a question on a health issue? Write to the Health Columnist, Dr. Erika Gonzalez-Lima, Student Health Center, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77845-1264. Letters will be answered anonymously through this column in The Battalion. If an individual reply is expected, please include your name, address and telephone number.

Mail Call

Religious rantings scary

EDITOR:

I am writing in response to Ms. Loretta Cortez's letter regarding Jeff Snodgrass and his "professional preaching" on the steps of Rudder Tower. I was not only offended by his so-called religious rantings, but I was scared. His hateful words, condemning all who weren't "living for Jesus Christ" to eternal hell, coming straight from God directed at the students of this University were evil. I actually called him up later that day to ask Snodgrass why he chose to preach hate, condemnation and such, and his reply was that "God had spoken to him" — and I'm Donald Duck. So, I got a little perturbed and did some investigating of his so-called church. And this is what I found out: The Maranatha Christian Church is a CULT, and this cult targets colleges. As of 1989, according to Jim Luce, President of Fundamentalists Anonymous, it is one of the most dangerous cults in America today, forcing its members to cut themselves off from their families and sometimes even transferring young members to other cities so their parents can't track them down.

In fact, the cult has been banned from two campuses: Kansas State University and the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada. Christianity Today, a leading national religious magazine, investigated this organization and said that they "would not recommend this organization to anyone." Anyway, the point to be made is just because someone says he or she is a "preacher" — and I use the term loosely — does not give that person the right to preach hate in God's name. Personally, I feel God would be repulsed by this supposed holy man and his religion of persecution, manipulation and hate.

Jennifer Beegle '91

Don't waste time looking for proof

EDITOR:

I am writing in response to all the recent editorials dealing with whether or not God truly exists. Those of you who are looking for "proof" of his existence are wasting your time if you don't ask yourselves a more relevant question: If God truly exists, would you change your ways and follow him? Many who are confronted with this question respond with "I don't know" or "I don't want to talk about it." Others are honest and say they wouldn't. If you are either of these, I suggest you not try to look for proof of his existence, for one day you might find it and face damnation if you don't repent. Those of you who aren't sure he

exists but would change and follow him if you knew, why don't you just tell him so and ask him to show you who he is?

Many are afraid of or too lazy to face all the changes that would have to occur in their lives as a result of knowing he exists. Others do not believe in God because of all the so-called "Christians" who go around living as corruptly as everyone else (or worse). It's important that you don't confuse Christianity with "Christians," for if God is real, the Bible says it would have been better for them to have never known the truth, for they will be spat out of his mouth. Sometimes the truth isn't easy to handle, but it's still the truth.

Hector Ruiz '92

Pro-choice not pro-abortion

EDITOR:

On Thursday, April 15 Pro-Choice Aggies will sponsor a rally as part of a national day of campus pro-choice actions. There have been many questions asked about what pro-choice means. Pro-choice is not pro-abortion. Pro-choice is the desire to have all individuals consciously make their own decision on abortions based on their own beliefs. The individual has two important decisions to make:

1. Is the fertilized egg a separate entity?
2. Is the person willing to live with the consequences of their decision?

If "no" is the answer to either of these questions, then abortion is not the proper course of action. Even if you are against abortion that does not mean you are not pro-choice. If you believe that a person has the right to make their own reproductive decision such as the use of a contraceptive, than you are pro-choice. Because of the recent Webster decision, the Texas legislature can now make those personal choices for you. Please show your support for freedom at the rally or by voting.

John F. Welch '92

President of Pro-Choice Aggies

Have an opinion? Express it!

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. There is no guarantee that letters submitted will be printed. Each letter must be signed and must include the classification, address and telephone number of the writer. All letters may be brought to 216 Reed McDonald, or sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111.

The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

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The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M and Bryan-College Station.

Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the editorial board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods.

Mail subscriptions are \$21.50 per semester, \$43 per school year and \$53.75 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 230 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111.

Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843-4111.

Adventures In Cartooning

by Don Atkinson Jr.

