

Anti-drug campaigns should not advocate cruelty to animals

"Shoot pigeons, not drugs" was part of the theme of the Hegins, Pa., annual Labor Day pigeon shoot this year.

The slogan is more than an effort to steer the area youth away from drug use — it is an attempt to legitimize a cruel, silly tradition that has been drawing more and more protest from animal-rights activists every year.

According to an article in this week's U.S. News & World Report, the pigeon shoot operates something like this:

Around 8,000 pigeons are trapped or bred for the event and brought to Hegins for the shoot. They are put into small traps and released when the gunners yell "pull." Occasionally a few escape, but most are shot.

The birds are then collected from the field and put into 55-gallon drums that are placed behind wooden screens so that they are hidden from the audience.

Some of the birds are dead; some merely injured. Sometimes the necks crippled birds are wrung; sometimes they die of their injuries after they are left in the drums.

Live-bird target shoots are not more challenging than shooting trap or skeet.

While live birds may be more "unpredictable," as one gunman told U.S. News, clay pigeons are quite a bit harder to hit, since they always come out flying — live birds are often disoriented and can barely flutter six feet off the ground.

Some never actually fly before they are shot.

Animal rights activists aren't just a vocal minority trying to end a tradition, either. Pennsylvania is one of only four states that hasn't banned live target shoots.

The shoots are little more than well-publicized animal abuse. The kill isn't eaten or used in any way. It isn't even used for trophies, though hunting for merely trophies is hardly

a legitimate excuse to kill animals. The pigeons are just left to rot, and everybody eats some barbecue and drinks some beer and goes home.

And now shoot organizers are asking us to trade one social ill for another — instead of doing drugs, they would prefer that we kill these pigeons for no reason.

Certainly, live target shooting is less of a social problem than drug abuse. But why should we be asked to trade one social ill for another?

The Hegins shoot organizers were not the first to pick up on the "Shoot (insert the animal of your choice), not drugs" slogan — other states have already implemented a pro-hunting, anti-drug campaign.

But the Hegins shoot reminds us that not just anything is an acceptable substitute for drug use.

Like live target shooting, trophy hunting is not the sport that it is touted to be. Hunting animals just for trophies is senseless, and nothing more than an endeavor taken on to elevate the hunter's ego.

It has gotten out of hand. Even if some trophy hunters are truly proud of their hunting prowess, they can hardly be proud of the recent scandal that has plagued their sport.

Several months ago in Texas, game wardens confiscated the bodies of rare and endangered big cats that had been imported and sold to people for tens of thousands of dollars to shoot for trophies.

The animals were let out of cages and immediately shot at point-blank range by the "hunters."

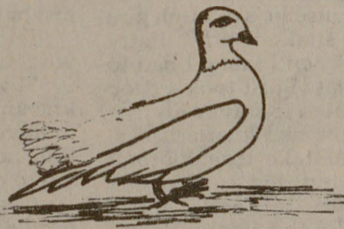
Sure it was easy, but won't that pelt look great in the study? This isn't a sport. The word "sport" implies a challenge.

If we're going to suggest alternatives to drug use, let's suggest reading books or taking up photography or learning judo, not animal cruelty.

Drug abuse is definitely a problem. But so is killing animals for the fun of watching them die.



Ellen Hobbs
Hobbs is a senior journalism major.



Cons of nuclear power

Dangers outnumber benefits

As a biologist, ecologist and science educator, I feel compelled to respond to a column that appeared in The Battalion on September 6. Matt McBurnett proposed nuclear power is the best solution to future shortages of electricity and some current environmental problems; a solution without any problems.

In advocating more nuclear power plants, McBurnett seems to forget one of our major concerns during the Persian Gulf War and since its end: does Iraq have a nuclear capability? Why did the Israelis bomb a nuclear power plant in Iraq in 1981? Does he feel comfortable knowing countries like Iran, Iraq, Libya or North Korea may divert fissionable material from domestic power plants to weapons? India has done just this. His statements about the radioactivity of spent fuel show either incredible naivete or incredible ignorance.

While he does say spent fuel "does remain radioactive for quite a while," he gives the impression the remaining 5 percent radioactivity ("95 percent of the radioactivity dissipates as heat within six months") is but a minor problem. His flippant comments about mutations further documents his lack of knowledge or understanding of the serious damage radiation can cause.

If spent fuel is so harmless (like "a drought in the Brazos Valley"), why is there so much concern about finding a stable, impervious geologic formation where it can be buried safely for tens of thousands of years? Why has no country with nuclear power found a permanent solution to this problem? His attempt to minimize the size of the spent fuel accumulation is deceptive.

If there is such a small amount of this waste, why are most of the cooling ponds where it is currently being stored filled to capacity? Surely, a cooling pond the size of a football field is not very big. He states "all commercial nuclear power plants" to date have produced only 17,000 tons of waste. This is incorrect on two counts.

First, the amount quoted is a low value; I have seen a value of 22,500 tons.

Second, the amount, either the 17,000 or the 22,500 tons, is just for the United States, accounting for about one-fourth of the nuclear generating facilities worldwide (110 of 426).

McBurnett repeats one of the most common deceptions of the nuclear power industry: It is the "cleanest form of power production." While it is true no greenhouse gases are generated, the steps involved in producing nuclear fuels (called the fuel cycle)—its mining, milling, enriching, fabrication into fuel elements and reprocessing to recover reusable elements—produce toxic wastes. A few facts were not mentioned in McBurnett's column:

- Underground mining of uranium results in exposure to radon gas and its decay products. This major health hazard significantly increases the mortality rate of uranium miners due to lung cancer.

- It takes one ton of uranium ore to produce four or less pounds of uranium oxide, the fuel for nuclear power plants. Huge piles of these mine tailings, containing radium, are deposited on the earth's surface and can leach into ground water. (Radium, discovered by Marie Curie, was responsible for her death.) Currently there are more than 200 million tons of this material in the United States, mainly in the western states — Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. The amount of radium in these wastes is about 100 times their concentration in ordinary surface rock.

- The workers face dangers in all parts of the fuel cycle and in the nuclear facilities themselves.
- A huge volume of low level radioactive waste is produced during various stages of nuclear fuel cycle.

At one time, much of this was dumped into oceans in metal drums. The corrosive sea water has rusted them and has released their contents. Preliminary data indicates plutonium is now widely distributed in the oceans and may be entering the food chain.

It is estimated by the year 2000, in the United States alone, there will be one billion cubic feet of these wastes. If this waste was placed on the playing area of Kyle Field, it would be 55,555 feet, or 10.52 miles, deep.

- One nuclear reprocessing plant in New York state was shut down due to excessive radioactive emissions.

One of the early advantages of nuclear generated electricity was it would be an inexpensive source of energy, "too cheap to meter!"

With increasing knowledge about the properties of radioactive materials, it became critical to design nuclear facilities much more carefully than previously thought

necessary. The inherently dangerous properties of nuclear fuels make power plant construction of prime importance, with redundant systems to anticipate all conceivable scenarios. This adds significantly to the cost of the power plant. It also, invariably, leads to rate increases for subscribers of the utility.

The partial meltdown of Unit 2 at Three Mile Island in 1979 is used by both pro- and anti-nuclear groups.

The pro-side insists it demonstrated how safe nuclear power plants are because even though it was the most serious accident in U.S. history, no one was hurt. The anti-side points out this near disaster, about a minute away from a total meltdown and a release of radiation approaching that of Chernobyl, indicates how dangerous nuclear energy is.

Over 2000 lawsuits have been filed against GPU Nuclear, the owners of the Three Mile Island plant. Some have been settled out of court — GPU Nuclear, however, not admitting any guilt. Since the accident, GPU Nuclear has spent over \$1 billion to clean up Unit 2, and they are not finished. Another \$200 million was spent for storage of radioactive rubble in Idaho, this expense being covered by federal tax dollars.

A problem facing all nuclear power plants is what to do with them when they have worn out. You simply cannot lock them up and walk away from them. They have to be decommissioned.

To date, only one commercial nuclear reactor has been decommissioned. The 72 megawatt reactor from Shippingport, Pa. was transported to the Hanford Military Reservation, via the Panama Canal, and buried. The demolition of the containment building and the moving of the 1000 ton reactor cost \$98 million.

Within the next 40 years, all the existing nuclear reactors in the United States must go through this procedure. How much will it cost to decommission a full-sized 1000 megawatt plant and how will the public utilities finance it? As it turns out, nuclear energy is not cheap.

McBurnett implies a shift from petroleum based electrical generation to nuclear will prevent future energy crises. However, uranium ore resources are not plentiful and the United States would run out of its known reserves before the middle of the next century. Even with breeder reactor technology, fissionable material is still a finite resource.

McBurnett dismisses alternative energy sources (solar and wind) as being unreliable. Promising advances have been made in these areas, despite the lack of support for research during the 1980s.

The use of solar energy (photovoltaic cells and various solar collectors) to generate electricity is becoming increasingly common, since the price per kilowatt-hour is getting competitive with conventional generation methods.

Wind generation is also becoming more practical. In the future, power generation will become more decentralized, with more than one method being used. Solar, wind and geo-thermal are all methods of generating electricity without adding greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. These technologies are less capital intensive and are particularly applicable to remote regions of the United States and developing countries.

Even processes that require combustion have new technologies. A clean coal can be achieved through new pressurized-fluidized-bed combustion (PFBC) process. This coal has 90 percent of the sulfur removed and has lower emissions of nitrogen oxide (more than 50 percent reduction) and even carbon dioxide.

McBurnett describes those who oppose nuclear energy as having a "basic misunderstanding of nuclear power," and people who are "mishappen radicals." While people fitting these descriptions exist in all movements, including pro-nuclear, it does not describe the majority of the anti-nuclear movement's proponents.

The Union of Concerned Scientists has addressed problems with nuclear power. It is doubtful they fit McBurnett's description. The truth is McBurnett is misinformed.

There are at least two sides to every argument and he has looked at only one of them. It is our duty to educate ourselves on all aspects of a controversy and then decide which view we support.

Determining the accuracy of information is often difficult. Pro-nuclear sources contend radioactivity from fuel rods or emissions from nuclear power plants are nothing to be concerned about. Anti-nuclear sources contend they are extremely dangerous.

Who is to be believed?

Reader's Opinion

Steven P. Lewis is a Ph.D. and lecturer in the biology department.

HOMER'S ODYSSEY **PLATO'S REPUBLIC** **DANTE'S INFERNO**

NEWS ★★

FIRE KILLS 25 TRAPPED IN N. CAROLINA FACTORY

MARGULIES

Mail Call

Move bus stop away from MSC

Whoever chose the location for the new bus stops made a bad choice. There is always a lot of pedestrian traffic going and coming from the MSC. The bus stops being where they are make it 10 times worse. Consider the MSC grass. It's bad enough with all the construction. What about all of the cars entering and leaving the loop by the MSC? What a pain. Instead of just complaining, I have a suggestion. Move the whole thing over to Houston street between Bizzell Hall and the Coke Building. There aren't as many people there all the time and the sidewalks are much wider. People will have a place to sit and there are plenty of trees for shade. The traffic can't be any worse. Bus Operations

has nothing to lose and everyone benefits. How about it?

Frank Stephens '93

Sex education should remain private choice

In his call for mandatory sex education classes on campus, David Nash bemoans ignorance about sex. Nash implies prior sexual experience would benefit the young couple. Compare the cases of two couples, one in which neither partner is sexually experienced and one in which both partners are sexually experienced. • They won't know how to please their partner. That's what the honeymoon is for. Performing as a novice for a few days causes no shame if one's partner is equally naive. The experienced couple cannot be equally experienced and will inevitably make comparisons to previ-

ous partners. As the number of previous partners increases, the probability that the current partner is the most sexually satisfying diminishes, as do the chance both partners will remain contented for a lifetime.

• They won't know how to prevent conception. Pre-marital sex can only increase the expected number of unplanned pregnancies. Accidental pregnancies may occur most frequently during a person's earliest sexual encounters but could be minimized by sharing those relations with one's spouse (with whom contraception has been discussed). If a chance pregnancy does occur, it is best to occur within a marriage, where parents are better prepared to support a child.

• They won't know how to prevent infection. They won't need to. Mutual monogamy accomplishes absolute protection against sexually transmitted diseases.

Mr. Nash fails to understand the differences between denying the reality of extramarital sex, and opposing its glorification through required sex education classes.

Russ Miller is a graduate student in statistics.

Have an opinion? Express it!

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