

One earth, one chance

By Katherine Keller
Staff Opinion Writer

A few weeks ago at a debate between the campus Democrats and Republicans one of the debaters said something along the lines of, "Who cares about the environment. Does what kind of deodorant I spray on really make that much difference? We've got bigger problems."

A response like this trivializes one of the biggest problems facing society: the impact of environmental pollution. To extend (and mangle) a metaphor, when we pollute, we're pissing in the gene pool.

We must all begin to care about what kind of deodorant we use, the car we drive, and the food we eat because all seven or eight billion of us have a major impact on the environment.

Call me an "ozone (wo)man," but the amount of damaging cosmic radiation that passes through our atmosphere has many people worried. We all know that nuclear materials cause damage to cells and genes. Some of the people who

survived Hiroshima and Nagasaki had hideously deformed children. Go out during the daytime and look up at the sky. See that bright yellow-white circle? That's an ongoing nuclear reaction. Were there not an ozone layer to shield us from that radiation, we wouldn't be here. The amount of mutation caused by that radiation would've made our evolution impossible.

At this point, some wise fool is thinking, "Well, I'll just zinc up." And where, oh where does this genius think zinc comes from? Zinc comes from mines. Though mines produce many useful metals and minerals, they wreak havoc. Current mining laws force mine owners to have some care for the environment. But it wasn't always this way. These laws also do not apply to many long abandoned mines and claims.

Many of the chemicals used to extract metals from ore are toxic. Want to get the gold out of that ore? Just leach it out with cyanide. Want to make an amalgam for later refining? Mix it with mercury. These methods have been used for

centuries and are still in use. The mercury and the cyanide don't vanish. Every time it rains, these toxins leach out of the tailings and end up in a region's water supply. Sometimes excess cyanide and mercury were dumped into rivers. No one has legally dumped cyanide or mercury into the Carson or Truckee rivers for quite some time, but levels still remain unnaturally high.

So why should an elevated level of mercury concern us? According to a recent USGS report concerning the Everglades, elevated levels of industrial mercury are poisoning animals in the swamp. In fact, most fish caught in southern Florida are unfit to eat due to high levels of mercury. Eating one fish occasionally will not kill a human nor an animal. Eating these fish on a daily or weekly basis leads to chronic illness, birth defects and death by mercury poisoning.

Just avoiding fish may not solve the problem. The fish are swimming in the same water that south Floridians are drinking. Can poor people afford a luxury like bottled

water? Hardly.

Some pollutants simply poison while others function in far more insidious ways by mimicking hormones or enzymes.

Remember DDT? Most of us probably know that it decimated bird of prey populations because birds with high DDT levels either died outright or laid eggs with very thin shells. When birds make eggs, a hormonal process controls shell thickness. DDT interferes with this process.

A recent article in *Discover* magazine shed some more light on this mimicry by reporting on the problems of river otters in Oregon's heavily farmed Willamette Valley. Male otters are having problems reproducing. Why? It seems that chemicals in the fertilizer run-off mimic a naturally occurring testosterone blocker. Since the otters have too little testosterone, their genitalia don't develop properly (or at all in some cases.) Testosterone is testosterone; be it otter, bull or human. Now, a man born and raised in that valley or around any farming community may have his

genitals, but his sperm count has suffered. Due to those chemicals he may not be able to have children.

Children. Saving the environment is not only about our today, but their tomorrow. We stand at a turning point. Actions have consequences. Do we poison ourselves and the planet? Do we clean up a huge mess 20 years from now in great desperation and at greater cost? Or do we make wise decisions today, decisions that are pound wise and penny foolish?

Use roll-on deodorant. Carpool in an efficient car. Pitch that paper or can in a recycle bin. Walk or ride a bike; it's a cheap workout. Because there are so many of us our efforts add up quickly.

Here's one more way to have a positive impact on the environment: On election day vote for candidates who don't trust big business to take care of the environment. Instead, vote for candidates who act to keep our environment as clean and healthy as possible. We are the makers and shapers of our future. Let's make it one in which we can live.

Halloween a time to indulge our fantasies

By Trevor Hayes
Opinion Editor

It's that time of year again. The Autumn classic is upon us.

Halloween, the time of year when inhibitions can be set aside and our deepest darkest fantasies can see the light of day without fear of social repercussions, is just days away.

With Halloween being among my favorite holidays and creativity my forte, I feel it is my duty to assist some of my favorite UNLV characters assemble their costumes.

I would like to begin with one of my most beloved places on campus, the seventh floor, home to the

elusive student focused administrators. Our esteemed President Carol Harter, you would be well served arriving to campus as former UNLV president Bob Maxon—maybe someone will finally recognize you, only for the day. We don't need him back.

Douglas Ferraro, provost and Dr. Harter's right hand, you should come as Mary Poppins. It may help create a more friendly image in the wake of recent incidents. Maybe a spoonful of sugar will help the faculty swallow your medicine better in the future.

On to our beloved student government. Student Body Vice Presi-

dent Joe Mills, a trench coat will be sufficient, re. your pet project: the blow-up doll. Student Senator Leia Fleishman, please come as the bashful dwarf. It would be a welcomed change to see you blend into the background for a day or two. Carl Tolbert, director of student services, it doesn't matter what costume you wear, so long as your major stays the same for an entire day.

As we move across campus to the sporting world we first encounter Head Football Coach Jeff Horton. For you, I suggest Bear Bryant. After all the hard work you and your staff have put in, you de-

serve to feel like a winner, even if only for a day. Good luck, Coach. You will be able to come as yourself before you know it. Head Basketball Coach Bill Bayno, to appease the impatient Rebel hoops fans, you will have to arrive as the miracle worker. Another helpful hint: Don't remove the costume until early April.

Aramark, provider of sustenance to all college going persons at UNLV, call the costume whatever you wish, so long as you run a lunch special that is both palatable and affordable.

And who could forget Vice President for Student Services Bob

Ackerman. I would love to see you as a member of the Hell's Angels. No particular reason, I just think it would be an amusing contrast.

Look for your favorite Rebel personality in drag, as their alter ego or just masquerading around campus.

Before I bid you all a joyous four-day weekend I am sure you all want to know what sort of crazy outfit I will be donning for this freaky holiday. I will be staying home, pretending like I have a life outside of school. It will be hard because I'm not sure I remember what a person with a life does, but I'm going to give it my best shot.

Rep. Ensign is the enemy of students

By Ben Contine
Guest Columnist

Freshman Rep. John Ensign and the Newt Gingrich Republican Congress are out to rewrite their records.

During this past session, this Republican Congress wreaked havoc on students, cutting billions of dollars in student loans and aid, all the while receiving millions of dollars in campaign contributions from large corporate banks. Yet Ensign (R-NV) now claims that none of this is true. Unfortunately for students, claims made that this extremist Congress has waged an all out war on education and student loans are entirely true.

On Oct. 26, 1995, after a delegation of UNLV students traveled to Washington D.C. to save students loans, Ensign voted to slash these loans by \$10.1 billion and to eliminate the direct student loan program, thereby forcing 2.2 million students from this program (H.R. 2491).

Ensign believes that 17 and 18-year-old high school graduates should go through private banks to get their loans. My parents, who own a house and two cars, are having difficulty getting a loan. How is a bank going to respond to a recent high school graduate with nothing for collateral but his



Ensign

Burger King name badge?

Ensign also voted to end the six month grace period on interest after graduation. I know as most college students do, that

the job market is tough and that finding a good paying job immediately after graduation is difficult, if not impossible. The elimination of this grace period would increase the cost of the loan by almost \$600 for an average student.

In response, Ensign has been running around the UNLV campus telling any student who will listen that the Republicans aren't trying to cut student loans, that this is just a misguided effort by teachers, students and the media to distort his record. However according to the Congressional Budget Office, headed by a Republican appointee, the Republican budget would have cut \$10 billion of federal funding from the student loan program. Apparently, the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office is in on the massive conspiracy to distort Ensign's record.

Under current law, the volume of student loans will go up over the

next several years, and that student loans are expected to grow from last year's \$24 billion to \$36 billion in 2002.

However, this increase is taking place for two reasons that have nothing to do with the Republican budget. First, college tuition is skyrocketing. College tuition has grown 269 percent since 1980 and is projected to continue its growth over the next six years. Secondly, college enrollment is also growing rapidly. College enrollment grew by 18 percent in the last decade. Furthermore, college enrollment is expected to grow by 11 percent to 15.7 million in 2002. Hence, more students are getting student loans. All of this means that there are more Americans than ever trying to get into college facing increasing costs with fewer federally backed loans.

On Nov. 17, 1995, Ensign and 232 House Republicans voted to cap the direct student loan program at 10 percent of student loans—thereby rolling back the program from the current 40 percent (H.R. 2491).

Ensign claims that all of these cuts are necessary. He then votes for a \$270 billion tax cut for the wealthiest Americans, including millions of dollars in savings for his own multi-millionaire family.

It is understandable how it

would be difficult for a multi-millionaire to relate to a student struggling to get through school on Top Ramen, macaroni and cheese and beer. However, it's amazing that he has the audacity to come to campus and insult our intelligence by claiming that he has the best interests of students in mind. Ensign once claimed that the Direct Stu-

dent Loan program was a bad idea. Ensign and Direct Student Loans: One of these is a bad idea, but it's not Direct Student Loans.

Ben Contine is a political science major and a member of the UNLV College Democrats. He also volunteers for Sen. Bob Coffin, Ensign's opponent in the Nov. 5 election.

It is understandable how it would be difficult for a multi-millionaire to relate to a student struggling to get through school on Top Ramen, macaroni & cheese and beer. However, it's amazing that he has the audacity to come to campus and insult our intelligence by claiming that he has the best interests of student in mind.