

Editorials

The Lesson Of Chernobyl

The April 26 accident at the Chernobyl nuclear plant in the Soviet Union was, without a doubt, the worst accident of its kind. Yet, in spite of its devastating known and unknown impact upon human life, more attention has been given to the political fallout from the accident than to the concern for human life.

In the few days immediately after the accident, brief reports about it were announced on Russian television as routine news items. Subsequently, many Russian citizens dismissed the threat as a minor accident of no real consequence. This kind of thinking was undoubtedly encouraged by the government controlled news media's attempt to downplay the seriousness of the accident and its attempt to shift attention to the precaution taken by many foreigners as "provocative" acts in an anti-Soviet propaganda campaign.

Ironically, there is strong reason to believe that some high ranking Reagan administration officials were actually happy about developments surrounding the Chernobyl nuclear accident. They are more concerned with exploiting the Russian government's attempt to deceive and misinform the world about the accident than with the concern for human life and welfare.

By their lengthy overall silence on the accident, the Russian government deserves every bit of criticism it has received regardless of the motives behind such criticism because in the final analysis human life was involved. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev finally ended the silence on the broader aspect of the Chernobyl disaster on May 14, over two weeks after the accident. After pledging to provide early warnings of any future such accidents, he shifted his attention to criticisms of the United States and the West European

nations for telling lies about the accident. Mr. Gorbachev seems to have forgotten that when news is suppressed the media tends to make assumptions and draw conclusions without a means to substantiate its findings.

However, in a somber television address, Gorbachev did give some attention to the human element in this worst of a possible kind of accident. He said nine people had died from the accident and that 299 others had been hospitalized. Mr. Gorbachev then said in his 25 minute speech, "For the first time ever, we encountered in reality such a sinister force as nuclear energy that has escaped control. The accident at Chernobyl showed again what an abyss will open if nuclear war befalls mankind. For inherent in the nuclear stockpiles are thousands upon thousands of disasters far more horrible than the Chernobyl one."

This was not Russian propaganda, but simply a statement of fact for all the world to heed as a clear warning of the eminent danger that we all—the human race—may face if we don't get serious about nuclear arms control. Dr. Robert Gale, the UCLA Medical Center bone marrow transplant expert who is heading the medical team to aid some of the Chernobyl victims said the slow, intricate process of treatment illustrates "our limited ability to respond to nuclear accidents," much less a massive nuclear attack.

Thus, the real lesson of Chernobyl is to accept the realization that nuclear war is unthinkable, unless we are ready to accept the elimination of humankind as we currently know it. It is a fact too that the incident at Chernobyl has clearly demonstrated that the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes may itself be the cause of our eventual destruction be we black, white, brown or yellow.

Playing The Game Of Life

Bill Cosby, comedian, scholar and star of the number one ranked "The Cosby Show" on television, delivered a commencement address to the 3,000 graduate and 12,000 faculty members, parents and friends of the University of South Carolina last weekend.

In his characteristic humor, mixed with straight forward facts of life, Cosby who wore a Carolina sweat shirt under his ceremonial cap and gown, told the somewhat startled graduates, "You ain't learned nothin' yet. If you think your little diploma is going to take away what we worked hard to get, you're out of your mind. You can't do anything yet. You don't know anything yet. You don't know how to play the game. The real world is waiting for you," he said slyly. "We love fresh blood."

Cosby's 20-minute speech, described as a mixture of a comedy monologue and a parental lecture drew laughter and applause as he challenged and alerted the graduates to the real world that does not wait them but rather that may crush them if they are not prepared with the coping and competitive skills necessary to succeed in

the American way.

Mr. Cosby's message should be heeded by black youth in particular. It should remind them that while the doors of opportunity may be open in many fields, they must have the competitive skills, positive attitude and commitment to the work ethic if the hope to enter those doors on a solid footing is to be realized.

Cosby's message means too that the simple fact of youthfulness and a new college degree does not guarantee you anything. The new college graduate must first market him or herself, that is, you must convince someone to hire you with probably no work experience as you compete with someone, older, wiser and with job experience.

Thus, setting all humor aside, along with a college degree or whatever terminal training certificate you may have earned, the graduate of today must be dedicated, determined and disciplined in his or her pursuit of a share of the American Dream. And through it all everyone can succeed if they sincerely try.

Miller Says

Transition From Civil Rights To Equal Opportunity

By Sherman N. Miller
Special To The Post

The National Bank American civil rights organizations' persistent efforts to dismantle South Africa's apartheid system has led to an international business publication questioning their ulterior motives. Nevertheless, I believe these organizations' efforts follow sound business strategy if they are viewed from the prospectus of a company merely repositioning a mature product to maintain its vitality.

I was highly disturbed when I read the February 10 issues of "Business International" concerning the ulterior motives of the SCLC and NAACP in their struggle against South Africa's racist apartheid system. This publication reported:

"Many analysts believe that the SCLC has an undisclosed internal agenda: to fan widespread moral indignation with apartheid among middle-class blacks. Affluent blacks have been deserting the old-line civil rights groups in recent years; membership is falling, and many organizations confront financial problems. Actions



Sherman

against apartheid strikes popular appeal and thus may help reestablish the reputation of the SCLC and the NAACP (which is preparing its own boycott) as the focal points for black activism."

Let us examine how companies regularly reposition mature products or sell them in new markets with hopes of breathing new life into these aging product lines. My wife tells me that she primarily buys baking soda to use for cooking purposes but "Arm and Hammer" has convinced her to put a box of it into our refrigerator to act as a fresher. My parents led me to believe that jeans were

merely blue collar work clothes or casual dress clothes, but in recent years designer jeans have commanded very high premiums and become quite fashionable.

My civil rights business strategy theory gained even more credence when I studied an executive summary of the feasibility analysis of the new NAACP Incubator Project prepared by Pryde, Roberts and Company of Washington, DC. This report reveals that the NAACP is currently undergoing a paradigm shift from civil rights to equal opportunity.

This feasibility report states, "A small business incubator is a facility that provides space, services and financing to tenant firms. A national incubator network would promote the growth and expansion of minority businesses nationwide by facilitating the flow of financing, contracts, training, and management supports to tenants in NAACP-sponsored facilities."

The incubator feasibility study also highlighted four significant points about minority businesses:

TEAMWORK CAN STOP DIS-INTEGRATION OF THE BLACK COMMUNITIES



"While the rising incidence of crime has been a source of embarrassment to many black leaders, far too many have remained ambivalent toward the problem. Perhaps through fear of providing comfort to racists masquerading behind a mask of law and order, I recognize

these risks. But I also recognize an even greater risk that blacks themselves may confuse the right of black people to protest their unsatisfactory condition in the United States with the opportunity for criminals to prey on exposed citizens."

—Dr. Andrew E. Brimmer

Heartrending Choices For Mothers

By Sabrina Johnson
Special To The Post

Time off for baby - this is a new dilemma employers and employees are facing. Employees face heartrending choices. Should they risk their jobs in order to have a baby? Can they afford to be cut off or cut back in pay and benefits? And who will care for a sick child?

Federal law forbids the firing of pregnant women but it does not guarantee them their jobs if leave of absence is taken. Also the law does not mention time off for adoption or the flexibility to care for a sick child.

Women with small children are the fastest growing segment of today's workforce, nearly half of the women with infants work.

Some believe the answer to the problem is a federal law that would require employers to grant up to 18 weeks of unpaid leave for mothers and fathers of newborns, newly adopted or seriously ill children. Employers would have to continue their employees' health insurance also under the plan. However, a study of 384 U.S. companies showed that such a law was not needed. Of the companies studied, 63 percent already grant leaves.

Many employers argue that they cannot hold a job for a parent on leave, but have no problem holding a



Sabrina

position and coping with the loss of manpower when employees go on vacation, get sick or are victims of accidents.

The Parental and Medical Leave Act of 1993 introduced earlier this year by Rep. Patricia Schroeder (D-Colorado) moves to cover two important gaps in the fight: 1) It acknowledges that citizens can no longer separate parenting from the world of work; and 2) It recognizes the importance of giving both mothers and fathers time to bond with a newborn or adopted child.

Schroeder's bill would move to establish a parental leave for the birth, adoption or serious illness of a dependent child. Employees would

be permitted up to 18 weeks of leave over a two year time period. The leave is unpaid but secures the same or similar position of employment upon return with benefits and security continuing as though leave had not been taken.

More than 100 countries guarantee such "rights." The U.S. does not. Being forced to decide between a job or child is not an easy or comfortable choice. It puts the employer and the employee in opposing corners - destroying the concepts of loyalty and support for the company.

Such a lack in understanding is forcing potential employees to ask about such leave and have those stipulations put in the contract. Many are not accepting positions with companies if that benefit is not available. Companies that want to attract and keep the best workers are making steps toward closing the gap in the policies.

Hence many feel the federal government should lead the way, not legislate it. It is believed that federal government should give all its employees the parental leave option; then more private companies would follow.

Small businesses are least able to afford the cost of parental leave. Yet they are the fuel for economic growth and job creation, being responsible for some nine million new jobs since 1982. Small businesses should be encouraged to accept a modified version of the option but not burdened.

The weakness of the parental leave option for small businesses provides no notice to the employer to permit adequate planning. Nor does it have an eligibility requirement. Replacement workers, part-time workers and others would be immediately eligible for the leave.

Businesses must have the flexibility to provide benefits that respond to the changing needs of workers - but does Congress have the right to say what that flexibility is when each business is a unique operation with a specific set of goals? The dilemma continues.

City Closes For

Memorial Day

All offices of Charlotte City government will be closed on Memorial Day, May 26. Regular business hours will be resumed on Tuesday, May 27, at 8 a.m.

The City Sanitation Division will observe Memorial Day on Monday, May 26. During the holiday week, backyard refuse collection will be provided on a Tuesday-Thursday schedule for residents who regularly receive collection on Monday-Thursday; and on a Wednesday-Friday schedule for residents who regularly receive collection on Tuesday-Friday.

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