

EDITORIAL

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

With this issue EPL introduces a new cover design, as announced earlier. The colors remain the same but we now carry a photo highlighting a current environmental issue. Our first image shows the breakup of the oil tanker Argo Merchant. Built in 1953, this vessel has been involved in 18 accidents and ran aground twice before the December 1976 incident. Since then there were at least 14 major oil tanker spills and the places and sizes of the oceans' oil carpets change daily. While we do not now report on this subject, we anticipate covering preventative measures as soon as they are articulated. Questions are being raised in national parliaments but little has been achieved. One of the more recent negative developments involves the crew of a polluting tanker who has been permitted to evade all responsibility, leaving their environmental degradation behind in France to return to the DDR.

EPL's next issue will report on the US Senate Hearings held on oil tankers. Also we will inform our readers about the new World Wildlife Fund (WWF) campaign christened "The Seas Must Live" and about civil liability for offshore drilling activities.

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The environmental aspects of the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (see 1 EPL 2 at 108) which had received no attention yet, were discussed at length at the meeting of the UN Economic Commission for Europe. EPL was pleased to learn of the bilateral agreement between the USA and the USSR and trusts that one day it can report on a similar success for the Final Act policy issues.

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A desperate energy problem has arisen in developing countries where people are compelled to destroy their forests for firewood to cook and to heat their homes as well as to export for foreign exchange. The IUCN General Assembly meeting in Zaire discussed the need for a treaty to protect tropical forests. No resolution was taken at the IUCN General Assembly meeting and the matter was referred to the Board for further consideration and recommendations. The result of experts consultations revealed that the majority agreed on the necessity of an international accord. The drafting of an enforceable agreement will not be an easy task since it will involve making a compromise between supplying wood and food and maintaining the forests' ecological balance.

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A short but sincere mention to our 1976 Editor, D. S. Zalob, whose fond attention to this enterprise has enhanced its growth. Zalob returns to lawyerly pursuits and its challenges "stateside". We wish him the very best. Heather Mitchell, former counsel to the Canadian Environmental Law Association, has now joined EPL staff.

Environmental Policy and Law, 3 (1977)

Prix Elizabeth Haub

(Extrait d'une Lettre au Rédacteur, réf. "Remise du Prix Elizabeth Haub", EPL 2:2, p. 78)

J'ai lu avec le plus vif intérêt le compte-rendu qu'a publié la revue *Environmental Policy and Law* de la séance de remise du Prix Elizabeth Haub.

Je tiens à vous féliciter très vivement et à vous remercier pour la bonne grâce avec laquelle vous avez donné la publicité à cet événement qui, je crois, le mérite d'autant plus que les choix qui ont été faits et notamment le vôtre indiquent l'esprit de l'initiative dont l'importance sur le plan de la diffusion des idées me paraît considérable.

Paul Foriers
Recteur
Université Libre de Bruxelles

Shoulders to the Wheel

(Re: E. Blair & F. Hoerger, "Toxic Substances Legislation — Regulators vs. Science", EPL 2:2 at 84, 2:3 at 138)

In their critique of current efforts to regulate chemical substances for the sake of environmental protection, the authors make several valuable observations, but proceed to apply these points in a misleading fashion to the then-proposed and recently adopted US Toxic Substances Control Act. They note that the marginal benefit of increasingly stringent environmental controls becomes increasingly expensive, particularly when approaching a requirement of absolute prevention of pollution or risk. It is reasonable to object to a comprehensive demand for "absolute safety," but the Toxic Substances Control Act does not insist on such complete protection. Blair & Hoerger criticize the Act's frequent reference to a standard of "unreasonable risk" as ignoring consideration of economic and other benefits, but the very use of a standard of reasonableness as well as several more explicit references in the Act make clear that a

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