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Letters

Environmental euphemisms?

"EPA report irks environmentalists" (SN: 1/16/88, p.41) is a somewhat understated way of putting what many feel is an outrageous report by EPA on the hazards of oilfield wastes. For starters, the term "produced waters" is a misnomer. *Oilfield brine* is what contains such poisons as "benzene, lead and arsenic." Yet the industry *et al.* prefer using playful little phrases like "produced waters" or "salt water" — the latter, especially, making one feel like running gleefully for a beach ball.

That EPA is unable to determine "whether or not there are adverse environmental impacts resulting from this practice" (of improper oilfield brine disposal) can easily blow one's mind. All the families hauling water in gallon jugs because of contaminated well water from oilfield brine must think the world has gone mad! I admit, so do I.

Gitta Racinskas
Cleveland, Ohio

"EPA report irks environmentalists" was obviously biased in favor of the irked en-

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- 204 The Muscular Machinery of Tentacles, Trunks and Tongues

Cover: Squids, elephant trunks and human tongues have something in common: They are able to move with ease though they possess none of the known skeletal structures needed to support their muscles. Now scientists have discovered the secret of their muscular machinery, and engineers are borrowing some of the ideas behind nature's handiwork to make flexible robots. (Photo: Courtesy William Kier)



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vironmentalists. The article makes the point (with interviews with environmental support agencies) that drilling mud and produced water are damaging the environment, and the only reason this material is exempt from strict federal hazardous-waste controls is due to oil-industry lobbying groups. This is just not so.

The published EPA study's No. 1 conclusion is "... exempted oil and gas wastes rarely pose significant threats to human health and the environment." The study then goes on to conclude that the regulation of the exempted wastes "... appears unnecessary and impractical." The author of your article chose to ignore the "unnecessary" aspect of this conclusion.

I personally believe that keeping your car tuned, recycling paper and turning your thermostat down at night will go a lot farther toward helping the environment.

Dante Caravaggio
Petroleum engineer
Valencia, Calif.

TB: Test, then treat

"TB Troubles" (SN:2/6/88, p.92) clearly shows that we are not using the knowledge and technology we already have to rid this

nation of tuberculosis. I disagree with the statement that "with current technology we can't completely do away with TB. . . ." We know how to diagnose and cure the disease. We know where 50 percent of it is — in the debilitated alcoholics, each one of whom infects seven more persons. It seems quite possible to eradicate TB. It just can't be done fast. There would be no TB breakout in prisons if every new inmate were tested and the positive ones treated — cured.

We don't need countless more millions of dollars spent on basic research. We need commitment and a few million dollars spent on basic services to eradicate the active disease and the likely potentially active cases.

Boone Mora
Washington, D.C.

If tuberculosis and AIDS are now a real threat to prison inmates, the debate on capital punishment becomes rather academic. A good possibility of a death sentence exists for every inmate. It will be interesting to see if the crime rate drops as more inmates die in prison.

Wayne Wyrick
Warr Acres, Okla.

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