

# Sludge & offshore oil heat up 5th C.D. race

By Allard K. Lowenstein

On July 20, 1976, a space craft launched by the United States landed on Mars and began transmitting photographs of a world millions of miles from Earth. Six days earlier, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, in a statement advanced as evidence of "progress," announced that for five more years we would be forced to dump human and other waste off the coast of Long Island.

The confluence of these two events tells us far more than numbers and charts of how much we have yet to learn about the uses of science and the needs and nature of man.

We reach once again into the heavens this year, but meanwhile the struggle goes on to save earth's oceans and resources. A basic part of that struggle has to do with replacing public figures who have neglected or even opposed the measures necessary to protect our environment.

John Wydler's record on the environment is one of the worst in Congress. He has shown a consistent indifference to basic national needs. He has repeatedly ignored the environmental problems of our community, and then assumed we're too stupid to notice.

Study his record and compare it with mine - I believe you will agree with the broad cross-section of environmental groups and leaders who are making a priority of helping in my campaign.

## Opposed the SST

From the beginning I opposed the SST, and for two years in Congress I worked to organize opposition to it, co-chairing an ad hoc committee on jet noise with Congressman Pete McCloskey of California. At the end of that term, however, John Wydler was still supporting a subsidy of \$290 million for the SST. His campaign manager, Mr. Glauberman, says that Mr. Wydler favored an "American" SST to help "create jobs," but opposes allowing the European SST to land in America. Where does Mr. Glauberman suppose the "American" SST would have landed if Mr. Wydler had had his way?

## Record on Sludge

His record on sludge is even worse. Seventy percent of all sludge dumping in the nation occurs off our shores, and in 1970 I joined with Congressman Ottinger and others in proposing legislation to prevent sludge dumping in the New York Bight. I also proposed several companion bills, including one providing for a comprehensive study of the entire ocean dumping question. Soon, thereafter, unfortunately, I was gerrymandered out of Congress and Mr. Wydler became the spokesman for our interests in these matters.

Mr. Wydler says that the sludge problem was first "brought to his attention" in December, 1973, whereupon he met with federal officials and described his belated discovery of the crisis as an "early warning." Eventually, he even flew over the sludge with Nelson Rockefeller.

None of this seems to have taught Mr. Wydler very much, however. In the summer of 1976, after the closing of the beaches, he opened a congressional hearing with the statement that "all the tests I've seen indicate our waters are in fine shape for swimming purposes."

## Negative Environmental Voting Record

His votes in Congress confirm that this is his understanding of the situation. On March 29, 1972, he voted against a proposal to encourage recycling and land-based water treatment systems for waste. On the same day, he opposed extending to three years the contract authority for waste water treatment plants. He also voted against preserving the right of states to prohibit the discharge of sewage by vessels in their waters. A majority of House Republicans supported each of these measures.

On September 13, 1973, Mr. Wydler voted against authorizing four proposed water resource development projects, at an estimated cost of \$1 million. On October 12, 1973, he was one of only 14 Congressmen voting against the Water Resources Development Act, authorizing \$1.2 billion for flood control, navigation, and other water resources projects. On May 19, 1975, he and only 16 other House members voted against the Marine Protection and Sanctuaries Act, to promote federal regulation of ocean dumping and establish marine sanctuaries. Such votes may help explain Mr. Wydler's reluctance to debate.

## Offshore Oil Deceptions

Mr. Wydler's most dangerous deceptions on environmental issues may turn out to be on the subject of offshore oil. "We on Long Island have opposed offshore oil drilling," he told residents of Long Beach during the last campaign. On September 28 of this year, however, John Wydler voted to kill the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Development Act, a bill which imposed minimal environmental safeguards for offshore oil regulation. This major bill was defeated in the House by a total of four votes. Wydler was responsible for half of its margin to defeat.

This particular vote seems to conform to a pattern. On May 8, 1973, Mr. Wydler was the only House member voting against the Oil Pollution Act Amendments, restricting oil discharge on the open seas, which passed by a vote of 370-1. On October 11, 1974, he voted against a measure to require double bottoms on certain ocean-going vessels, to reduce the danger of oil spills. On June 14, 1976, he voted against forcing the release of information to determine whether oil company offshore leasing was a violation of anti-trust laws. On July 21, 1976, he voted against the requirement that all offshore oil rigs be marked by the Coast Guard.

With this kind of record on local environmental questions, Mr. Wydler's record on broader issues should come as no surprise. He has voted against solar energy money, against national land use planning, against

voluntary conservation programs, and against minimal strip mine controls. The list is almost endless. According to the League of Conservation Voters, Mr. Wydler has been wrong on more than 30 of the most critical environmental votes in the last five years.

## Time For A Choice

Much more is required in the current situation than simply voting right, incapable as Mr. Wydler seems to be of doing even that. The fifth congressional district is on the front lines of pressing environmental battles, and the awareness which this involvement creates should spur us to take the lead on other ecological questions as well.

Nor is this a choice between a decent environment and jobs for people who want to work. Many of the most urgently needed environmental technologies would create jobs rather than destroy them.

"The federal government is making every effort to control pollution," Mr. Wydler proclaimed optimistically in 1970. My view at the time was different.

"What on earth will it take to make us understand what we are doing to our world and to ourselves?" I asked. "How many near misses will it take before we rouse ourselves to the perils threatening the environment on which we are all dependent for survival? It cannot be emphasized often enough that we are in the 11th hour."

Some progress has been made since that "11th hour," especially in the area of raising understanding and concern. The overall dangers, however, have increased.

Unless we get political leadership that understands there is a crisis and knows how to fight, the environment will continue to suffer. People concerned about the crisis should help in this campaign - there are few places in the country where the lines are more clearly drawn.

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