

Destroying middle-America one more time

By RICK JANSON

Ever since the Irwin Allan disaster films of the '70s, filmmakers have made constant forays into mass destruction and carnage movies to the strange delight of North American audiences.

This year small towns have been the target of Hollywood. In *Gremlins* Steven Spielberg destroys middle America with his rampaging little creatures. In *Red Dawn* it's the Russians' turn to blow apart the stereotypical small American midwest town.

The latest episode comes in

Impulse—a film by director Graham Baker.

In *Impulse* a middle American farming community comes off its hinges after an unidentified chemical substance accidentally poisons their diet. The mystery chemical is supposed to break down their rational judgement and make them act totally by impulse.

By implication, the film is an indictment of the American psyche. Just beneath the surface of these ordinary people lurks a heavy dose of insecurity, hatred, intolerance and violence.

After being exposed to this chemical for a few days, the town goes haywire—the Sheriff is shooting up mischievous little kids, people are stealing money at the bank and the streets turn into a virtual demolition derby.

Despite good production values and flawless performances by Meg Tilly and Tim Matheson, the film lacks the tension necessary to make it succeed as the environmental-horror flick it intends to be.

Baker leaves so many clues to the source of the poisoning that it is no surprise at all when the moment of revelation comes. The carnage itself is so predictable that it leaves little to the imagination. We feel little empathy for the victims as they are systematically destroyed. The



film has a very far away, unreal nature to it that prevents us from becoming wrapped up in the plot.

In the end we never do find out who exactly was responsible for the disaster—either government or the company involved.

Although an environmental-disaster film, the social-political

treatment is practically nonexistent, the focus of the film riding on the blood and guts end of the spectrum.

Produced by the American Broadcasting Company, no doubt this film is destined for a quick trip to the television screen—where it belongs.

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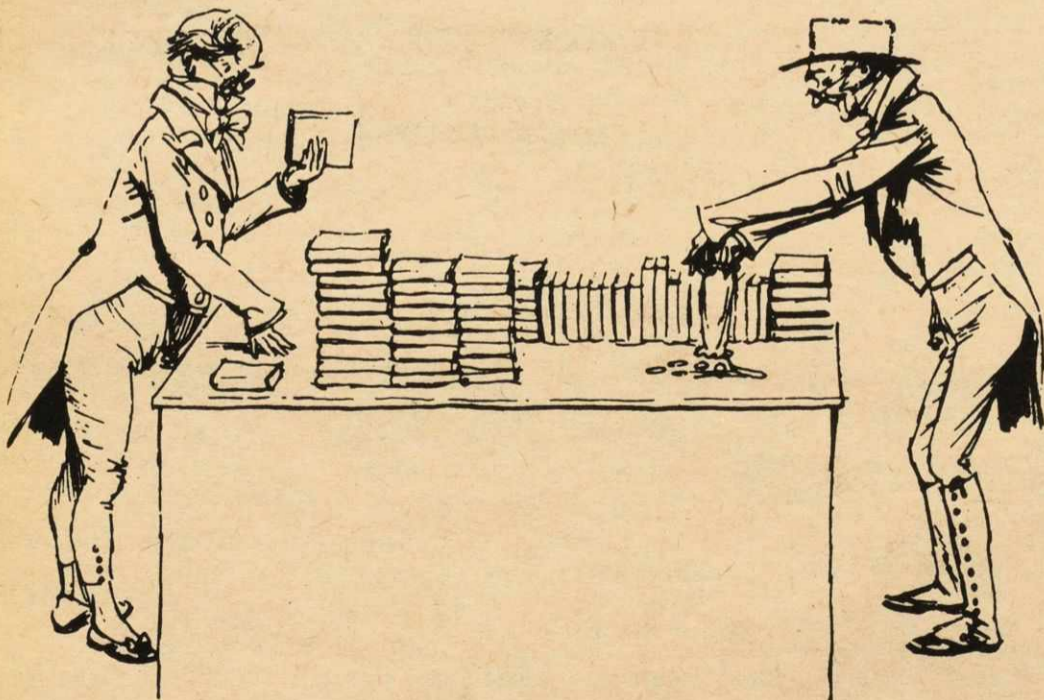
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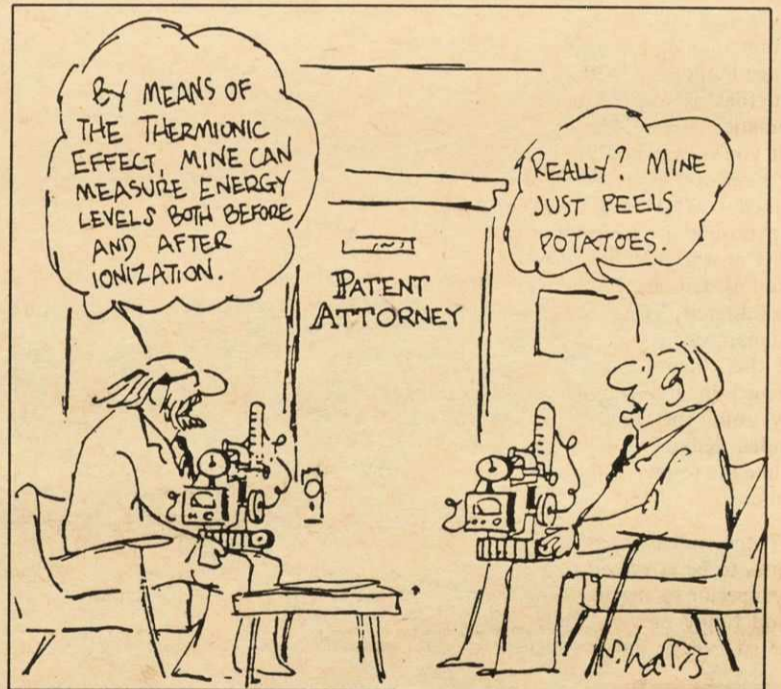
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