

Now that the national inquiry into the decade's unusually high incidence of real and alleged moral turpitude on the part of high-profile government and business figures has claimed two more victims (Wright and Coelho), we would do well to examine a theme touched on by Jack Beatty ("People's Party Sold to High Rollers," Op-Ed Page, June 2)—namely that our present ethical framework is too narrow, and should be expanded to include those of our collective behaviors and attitudes that are profoundly harmful, but are not, as yet, considered "unethical."

Beatty's contrast between Wright lining his pockets with relatively small change, and congressional funding of the unnecessary and brutal killing of Nicaraguan peasants is a case in point.

So is the 1981 decision of Alyeska Pipeline's managers (with the tacit assent of the oil industry) to scrap their emergency oil spill cleanup operation. If and when it happened, and regardless of its size, big oil's helmsmen clearly preferred the results of the recent spill in Alaska's Prince William sound to all other outcomes of their corporate stewardship (Exxon President W.D. Stevens' June 1 letter notwithstanding).

The same can be said for General Motors' and Ford's efforts to reduce gasoline mileage standards, even as we face suffocation under the increasing greenhouse effect.

It is time to analyze such behavior in ethical terms, as well as the usual "political" and "economic" euphemizing. As welcome and needed as the current focus on "obeying the rules" may be, our ethical maturity requires that we go beyond it, and look more deeply into our use of violence, and our relationship to future generations.

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