

The Tiger at a Crossroads

BY BARUN S. MITRA

The number of tigers remaining in the wild worldwide is at an estimated all-time low, perhaps between 2,000 and 3,000. Is the tiger facing a crisis? Yes, but it is clear that current approaches to conservation are yielding meager results. Clearly, a new approach is needed.

For the past three decades, commerce and conservation have been pitted against one another. The conservation strategy currently embraced by most governments focuses on prohibiting the hunting of tigers and all trading in, and consumption of, tiger parts. Blunt enforcement of such bans has been the centerpiece of tiger conservation policies for years.

Major environmental pressure groups support this strategy, animated by a vision of tigers and the forests as being so high on a pedestal that the market should not reach them. Thus, we have the paradox of high-value resources placed outside the discipline of market forces, with some of the poorest people on Earth living in close proximity to these resources without any incentive to conserve and manage them sustainably. This situation amounts to an open invitation to poachers, who threaten the tiger today.

Yet tigers are a renewable resource. They breed very easily in captivity. In fact, China has over the past decade made great strides in managing and breeding large numbers of tigers in captivity, currently estimated at 5,000 animals. Bringing some of these tigers to meet the market

demand for tiger parts, by legalizing trade, could make poaching economically unattractive.

There are plentiful examples of species thriving thanks to commerce. From cattle to crocodile, many species have largely escaped the threat of extinction. For example, just as the tiger was being removed from commerce during the 1970s, crocodile farming was taking root. Today, crocodiles are a successful commercial animal. Two million crocodiles are estimated to be harvested each year from facilities from as far apart as Australia, South Africa, and the United States—and there is scant evidence of crocodiles being poached anywhere today.

The reason is simple. If a brand-name leather goods manufacturer wants a large supply of low-cost crocodile skins at a competitive price, it has no reason to seek a poacher, when it can procure it from a legal farmer.

Take the case of the blackbuck, an attractive species of antelope indigenous to south Asia. Today, there are probably more blackbucks

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In Memoriam: Hans F. Sennholz

FEBRUARY 3, 1922 – JUNE 23, 2007

BY TERRY AND MATT KIBBE



Over a long career, Austrian School economist Dr. Hans F. Sennholz had a profound effect on generations of students and a lasting imprint on the freedom philosophy across the globe.

A former German Luftwaffe pilot during World War II, Sennholz was shot down over Egypt and taken prisoner. He spent time in captivity in several countries, including the United States, which became his adopted country, and where he continued his studies. He earned his second Ph.D. in economics under Ludwig von Mises at New York University in 1955. He began his teaching career at Iona College and continued at Grove City College, where he taught from 1956 until 1992. After retiring from Grove City at age 70, he went on to the Foundation for Economic Education, where he served as president for five years.

We were both students at Grove City in the 1980s. Matt studied economics under Dr. Sennholz, and Terry majored in industrial engineering. Both of us were fortunate to have heard many of his lectures. It is because of Dr. Sennholz that Matt went on to graduate studies in economics at George Mason University (GMU). Ultimately, we both ended up working in Washington, D.C. in the free-market public policy world. Matt is now President of FreedomWorks (the second-best free market organization) and Terry is Vice President of Development at CEI (the best, of course).

But we are just two examples of the lasting Sennholz legacy. There are many others in positions across the free market movement: Larry Reed, President of the Mackinac Center in Michigan; Peter Boettke, Deputy Director of the James M. Buchanan Center for Political Economy and economics professor at GMU; Alex Chafuen, President of the Atlas Economic Research Foundation; Scott Bullock, Senior Attorney at the Institute for Justice; and Carl Helstrom, Executive Director of the J.M. Foundation, to name a few.

We hold some special memories of Dr. Sennholz. He was the first to point out to us the all-too-common tendency of the children and grandchildren of great wealth creators to repudiate their family's legacy and the free market system. Pennsylvania oil tycoon J. Howard Pew personally recruited Dr. Sennholz to come to Grove City and build an economics department based on the uncompromising defense of market economics and individual liberty.

We both took classes, and Terry lived in, buildings named after Pew family members. But by the 1980s, the descendants of J. Howard had taken over the family foundation and reversed philosophical course. Today, the Pew Foundation, contrary to its founder's wishes, is a major funder of socialism across the globe, especially of an extreme brand of radical environmentalism that would stop the engine of human progress. Come to think of it, radical-environmentalist-du-jour Al Gore would have benefited greatly from a single Sennholz lecture on the inevitable failure of socialist planning.

It was impossible to leave Grove City without being impacted by Dr. Sennholz's passion for ideas and the energy with which he pursued them behind the podium. He was an accomplished economist. As a young man, he translated Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk's seminal three-volume treatise on capital. He wrote a number of books, including *Death and Taxes*, *Age of Inflation*, *Money and Freedom*, and *The Politics of Unemployment*. But he was most influential as a polemicist and as a teacher.

He may not have known it, but Dr. Sennholz was the most imitated man on campus, and some of our friends could do a spot-on "Hans lecture" on the scourge of inflation, replete with the trademark thick German accent. He challenged his students to think critically, and to write clearly.

In April 2005, we attended the inaugural conference at the Center for Vision & Values at Grove City College. Dr. Sennholz, who was 83 at the time, gave the closing lecture—same energy, same passion, same thick German accent. We were fortunate to join Dr. Sennholz and his wife of 52 years, Mary, at a luncheon with some other former students. Dr. Sennholz spoke with personal pride about his many students and the impact that they would have on the world. He seemed quite pleased with himself. He was right to be.

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In Memorium: John Berthoud

MAY 23, 1962 – SEPTEMBER 27, 2007

John Berthoud passed away—suddenly and unexpectedly—on September 27, 2007, at the young age of 45. Our span is always too short but John’s was far shorter than all of us had hoped. John was a blend of movement leader, creative advocate of economic liberty, and friend.

Under his leadership, the National Taxpayers Union (NTU) became a consistent and effective ally of the freedom movement, and his death weakens us all. But he was also a friend and wonderful advocate to all seeking allies in the multiple

battles which must be fought against those seeking to expand the power of the state.

John was far more than a promontory or a mountain and certainly no island—he was and still is, through the organization he led, a link to all of us. We should and do mourn his passing.

—Fred Smith



The Tiger at a Crossroads, *continued from page 1*

in Texas, where it is legal to hunt these animals, than in the blackbuck’s home range in India. In Texas, blackbucks are seen as an investment, and therefore managed in a sustainable way by range owners. According to some estimates, in the United States, the annual economic activity from a wide range of environmental activities, such as nature trekking, bird watching, fishing, and hunting, is over \$120 billion.

Other countries have the opportunity to achieve a similar outcome. In India and China, which enjoy enormous diversity in wildlife resources, big cats like tigers, lions, and leopards can help transform the lives of some of those countries’ poorest inhabitants. Wildlife conservation could become a major contributor to those nations’ economies.

Economic development carries an environmental dividend, as the experience of rich Western countries shows. Economic development opens opportunities for rural people to move away from the land and reduce their dependency on environmental resources for their survival.

China seems poised to reap the environmental dividend soon. China’s economic growth in recent decades has helped moved several hundred million people away from the countryside, where

pressure on natural habitats by poverty-stricken human populations pose a far bigger threat to biodiversity and tigers than does poaching. In some remote rural regions, people are leaving villages for the cities at a fast rate. This has helped lower the pressure on natural resources such as land, forests, and bodies of water.

China has identified a couple of areas in its territory as South China tiger habitat, and plans to use these for a bold experiment to reintroduce one of the most endangered subspecies of tiger today. A few South China tigers have been sent to South Africa to revive their hunting and survival skills. These tigers’ offspring could be as wild they get, and could be reintroduced in the areas of China designated as habitat.

In addition to recreating the habitat and reintroducing the tigers, another important objective of the project is to integrate the villagers into the ecotourism economy, so that the people enjoy the benefits of environmental restoration, and develop a stake in ensuring sustainable use of natural resources.

Efforts are already under way. The Save the Tiger Initiative, proposed by the Sustainable Development Network, seeks to build an international coalition in support of the need to explore market-oriented tiger conservation policies.

The declining human pressure on forest and wildlife thanks to increasing alternative economic opportunities, coupled with breeding facilities to meet the demand for tiger parts in the Chinese market, can dramatically alter the future of tigers in the wild, securing the future of these majestic animals.

Tiger conservation provides an opportunity for greater cooperation between China and India. India has many people who have years of experience in managing forests and tiger habitats, who could help China restore and rebuild its tiger habitats. And that’s not all.

China now seeks to reassess its conservation policies and to explore the possibility of bringing the tiger under the discipline of market forces, in the hope of saving the magnificent beast. Yet, as China, which is still ruled by the Communist Party, looks to the market to save the tiger, its critics blame the tiger crisis on market failure and seek a greatly enhanced role for the state in enforcing prohibition on the tiger’s commercial use. Ironic, isn’t it?

Barun Mitra is director of the Liberty Institute, an independent think tank in New Delhi. He is the winner of the 2005 Julian Simon Memorial Award.



Improving America's Insurance Markets

BY ELI LEHRER

Throughout the hurricane zone that follows America's Atlantic coastline from Texas to North Carolina, a populist furor has gripped politicians intent on punishing private property insurers. While the particulars vary from state to state, it is clear that ongoing political efforts—by both parties—have transferred so much hurricane risk to the government that taxpayers will end up footing an ever-larger percentage of the bill when a storm hits.

As another hurricane season begins, it appears that ending this trend towards “windstorm socialism” and protecting taxpayers may ultimately require a massive federal overhaul of the way America deals with insurance.

Florida, which bears more than half of America's total financial risk from hurricanes, has led the charge towards state control over the property insurance

market. With the support of Republican governor Charlie Crist, the state legislature has let the quasi-public Florida Citizens Property Insurance Corporation compete directly with private companies for most business while keeping its own prices below market levels. Citizens, already the state's largest property insurer, could well see its market share exceed 50 percent by year's end.

Florida has also passed legislation that requires companies to issue policies when they otherwise would not, tells them how to structure their in-state operations, and even dictates the data contained in annual mailings to customers.

The situation doesn't look much better elsewhere. Louisiana's Democratic former Governor, Kathleen Blanco, backed a post-Katrina rebuilding program (The Road Home) that, in addition to its numerous management problems, turns insurance buyers into chumps by cutting state grants for anybody wise enough to buy insurance before Katrina. More recent efforts have

offered \$100 million in corporate welfare to insurance companies and may increase the role of Louisiana's version of Citizens under the guise of “privatization.”

Mississippi, likewise, with the support of Republican Governor Haley Barbour, has passed legislation to bail out its own quasi-public wind insurance system while keeping prices beneath market rates.

While there are a few bright spots, such as a South Carolina program that helps residents self-insure against hurricanes and make their homes more storm resistant, the overall trend leans toward greater government control.

One thing can be said about all of these populist schemes: They cannot last. While post-Katrina premium hikes have produced significant short-term profits, the insurance industry lost money issuing homeowners' policies along the Gulf Coast 17 out of the 20 years before Katrina. Because they make a significant portion of their property and casualty revenues from investments, insurance companies can still stay in

business despite these year-after-year losses.

Most state-backed insurance plans, however, have fewer investment options than do private carriers, and all lack their diversification of risk. As a result, they cannot use profits from one part of the country to shore up uncertain operations in another and probably will not get the same long-term return on capital. In other words, even without government-mandated lower-than-market premiums, most simply could not survive a big storm.

Although every state has a mechanism to stick its own taxpayers with the bill for their systems' inevitable collapse, politicians are understandably reluctant. One study has shown that Florida taxpayers might owe as much as \$14,000 per household (although others have come up with lower numbers). In addition, the Florida legislature has authorized issuing nearly \$30 billion in bonds to pay for Hurricane damages. The amount is so large that it could even bankrupt the state.

Thus, all-government solutions loom. Mississippi Democratic Congressman Gene Taylor has introduced federal legislation to add windstorm coverage to the existing federal flood insurance program. In the long run, the divide between all-government-backed flood insurance and mostly private wind insurance leaves homeowners and insurers in difficult situations: When a home gets destroyed altogether, it is rarely clear what caused the damage.

As a result, courts end up with the near-impossible job of parsing thousands of complicated claims. Because the nature of insurance law requires judges to decide cases of ambiguity in the plaintiff's favor, insurers enter these proceedings at a grave disadvantage. Nonetheless, insurers have sometimes attempted to stick the taxpayers with bills for things that policies really do appear to cover. Fundamentally, the United States needs an all-private system of catastrophe insurance. Band-aid fixes like Rep. Taylor's bill, would only add to the \$28 billion liability the flood program already poses.

While Florida Citizens and its smaller cousins have no way out of this mess, federal legislation could make things better. The greatest hope lies in efforts to give insurers the choice that banks have had since the Civil War to organize themselves under federal rather than state law.

A new proposal, proffered by New Hampshire Republican John Sununu and South Dakota Democrat Tim Johnson in the Senate and Illinois Democrat Melissa Bean and California Republican Ed Royce in the House, would do just this. Without burdensome state regulations, insurance companies could reenter some markets and reduce taxpayer liability. This proposal—called Optional Federal Chartering—could provide an alternative to the failure-prone state-run systems. Although the Johnson-Sununu proposal carries the risk that the federal government could make things worse, it offers a real breath of fresh air for an industry shackled by overregulation.

Quite simply, overheated populism has made a mess of America's insurance markets. The wrong federal action could easily make things worse. But the right moves could produce a new, more vibrant market for insurance throughout the nation.

Eli Lehrer (elehrer@cei.org) is a Senior Fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute. A version of this article appeared in The Washington Times.



“Another interesting measure of global warming interest is where Internet users go when they’re looking for information on the topic of global warming. Over 19% of searches on the term resulted in visits to Globalwarming.org.”

— TIME

Bringing Debate to Millions

the all-new
globalwarming.org.



(Top Left) Left to right: Inter-American Dialogue Associate Nicole Spencer, America's Future Foundation Executive Director David Kirby, and Cato Institute Executive Vice President David Boaz

(Bottom Left) American Enterprise Institute Resident Scholar and CEI Board Chairman Michael Greve (left) and CEI President Fred Smith

(Top Right) Left to right: CEI President Fred Smith, Rebecca Dunn, and DUNN Capital Management President and CEI Board Member William Dunn

(Bottom Right) Best-selling novelist Christopher Buckley delivers the Keynote Address at the 2007 CEI Annual Dinner.

CEI's 2007 Annual Dinner

The Competitive Enterprise Institute's 2007 Annual Dinner and Reception looked to The Future, with optimism and humor.

Indur Goklany, author of *The Improving State of the World: Why We're Living Longer, Healthier, More Comfortable Lives on a Cleaner Planet*, was presented with this year's Julian L. Simon Memorial Award. The Simon award recognizes scholars and activists who have contributed to perpetuating the vision of the late Julian Simon, who saw the world not as facing perpetual peril, but as a field of possibilities, to be harnessed by "the ultimate resource"—the human mind.

CEI's video production team debuted two new video clips: on the Future History Channel—in which today's doomsday predictions are shown as so much panic decades from now—and on a dystopian Department of Pre-Regulation, which would prevent anti-social behaviors like smoking, eating of trans fats, and enjoyment of racy entertainment *before* they occur.

Master of Ceremonies John O'Sullivan, Senior Fellow at

the Hudson Institute and Editor-at-Large at *National Review*, closed out the program with a toast, which was preceded by Keynote Speaker Christopher Buckley, the bestselling author of *Boomsday*, *Little Green Men*, and *Thank you for Smoking*, bringing down the house in uproarious laughter. His speech was cited in the *Washington Post* and *Washington Times*.

Reported the *Times*: "'You are my kind of crowd,' Mr. Buckley told the crowd of more than 600. 'Pro-smoking, pro-drinking, coal-burning.'"

Meanwhile, the *Post* noted that, "Christopher Buckley was in fine form," as he "threw out zingers like 'Don't you miss the Cold War? That was so much more fun than this one,' 'In France elections take 36 days. Not a perfect system—you still end up with a French president,' and 'It would be refreshing for once to hear a candidate say, 'You know, I've lived in Washington all my life. I know how it works. I know how to cut deals. I know where the bodies are buried. You don't need to send me to Washington—I'm already here! Some of my best friends are lawyers!'" Ba-da-bing!"



(Top) Jonah Goldberg of *National Review* (left) and Matt Welch of *Reason*

(Left) Left to right: *National Review* Editor-at-Large and Hudson Institute Senior Fellow John O'Sullivan; Dr. Indur M. Goklany, Assistant Director for Science and Technology Policy in the Interior Department's Office of Policy Analysis; and CEI President Fred Smith, during the presentation of the 2007 Julian Simon Memorial Award to Dr. Goklany



Bureaucrash is the activist arm sponsored by the Competitive Enterprise Institute dedicated to fighting the increase of government control over our lives. The Bureaucrash international network of pro-freedom activists works to change the political ideology of our generation through creative activism. While most youth politics supports the growth of the already bloated government bureaucracy, Bureaucrash fights for freedom.

Our activists are of all political persuasions united by the belief that sprawling governments and the bureaucrats and politicians who control them ought to be mocked—mercilessly.

Why? Because when government grows, our freedom shrinks. Every time a new law is passed, some bureaucrat squirreled away in a cubicle somewhere gets more power to make decisions over us. And because the vast majority of people have no idea of the lives and freedoms crushed every time the government's power grows, we believe that only by spreading information about this absurd arrangement can we restrain the bureaucracy and restore our fundamental freedoms.



CRASH ACRO



(Left) Crasher-in-Chief Jason Talley is interviewed by Cable Public Affairs Channel in the aftermath of this summer's North American Summit, in Montebello, Quebec, where politicians on the inside and protesters on the outside sought to manage trade between individuals. Bureacrash was there to promote real free trade.

(Right) Bureacrash organized a "Free Kareem" rally in front of the Egyptian Embassy's Cultural Affairs Branch. The Egyptian Government locked Kareem Amer up for blog posts critical of their policies.



CRASH ACROSS AMERICA

(Left) Bureacrash video production coordinator Erin Wildermuth records anti-globalizers' rants during the North American Summit in Montebello, Quebec.

(Right) After being interviewed on Gardner Goldsmith's radio show, in Bow, New Hampshire, the Crash Across America Team poses for a photo with the show's host.





THE GOOD

Live Earth Meets Dead Air

Like a tree falling in the woods with no one around to hear it, Live Earth came and went. The seven-continent, electricity-guzzling rock extravaganza fell on mainly deaf ears as only one in five voters followed the coverage of the event. Meanwhile nearly 80 percent of voters followed the Senate's ongoing debate on immigration.

It's no wonder Live Earth garnered such little interest. With mediocre performances, nagging infomercials for green living, and televised pledges to turn off the lights, the festivities were less than awe-inspiring.

Bureaucrash, a project of CEI, partnered with DemandDebate.com to present concert attendees with an alternative point of view to match their alternative music. Two six-man teams passed out t-shirts and tossed around globe-like beach balls bearing the slogan "I'm more concerned about the intellectual climate" at the U.S. concert at Giants Stadium, in East Rutherford, New Jersey. While some of artists flew a combined 223,623 miles to the show, the humble crashers took the bus.

THE BAD

Congress Considers 20,000-Percent Tobacco Tax Increase

Congress is attempting to finance an expansion of government-funded children's health insurance partly by increasing the tax on cigars by 20,000 percent to \$9.95 per cigar. Such draconian increases are likely to result in smuggling, tax evasion, and illegal sales.

The Senate Finance Committee also approved a 156-percent tax increase on cigarette sales to finance health care for low-income families. The irony is in the numbers. While the average smoker makes \$35,000 per year, those eligible for free insurance under the proposed legislation could make as much as \$82,000. That's right, the poor would finance the health care of the upper-middle class!

Meanwhile, Congress is on the verge of subjecting tobacco products to FDA regulation. As CEI Counsel for Special Projects Hans Bader notes, "The FDA regulation bill would make it harder to market smokeless tobacco products to smokers, even though thousands of lives would be saved if smokers were to switch from cigarettes to reduced-risk tobacco products like smokeless tobacco."

THE UGLY

Is Global Warming Alarmism the New Patriotism?

Ad hominem attacks are labeled fallacies of logic in college critical thinking courses, yet in Washington they are a preferred method of debate—especially when you've failed to make the case for climate Armageddon and the need for taxes, caps, and regulations. Convincing evidence and a coherent indictment are hard to come by, while calling your opponent a polluter, corporate lackey, or "tobacco scientist" is a walk in the park.

This has been the strategy of many alarmists, culminating recently in Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. calling global warming skeptics "traitors" at this summer's Live Earth concert (see "The Good"). But shouldn't this outcome be expected from a movement that has ramped up the polemic for years?

Kennedy, according to CEI Senior Fellow Marlo Lewis, is just putting a green spin on an old theme. George Orwell's Big Brother of 1984 was a precursor to Kennedy declaring "War is Peace. Ignorance is Strength. Freedom is Slavery." Add "Dissent is Treason" and "Balance is Bias" to the list.

MediaMENTIONS

Compiled by Richard Morrison



Energy Policy Analyst **William Yeatman** on the high cost that an increased ethanol mandate would bear for the state of Arkansas:

For starters, an ethanol mandate poses a direct threat to the livestock industry, which is a significant part of Arkansas's economy, especially the western part of the state. Currently, Arkansas ranks 19th, 17th, and 2nd in pork, cattle and broiler production, respectively, in the nation.

Of course, livestock is fed with corn. Already, the 2005 ethanol mandate has increased the price of corn feed for chickens, cows, and pigs. If Congress passes an increased mandate, feed would become even more expensive. Ultimately, these costs would be passed along to consumers in the form of higher prices for livestock products.

—*Northwest Arkansas Times*, August 31

Senior Fellow **Eli Lehrer** on why taxing credit unions would be a bad idea:

When last week's credit-related market slump started reversing the stock market's 2007 gains, it seemed clear that the Bush Administration would act quickly to restore confidence in credit markets. Some actions it has taken have helped to do this. But it now appears to be considering a Treasury Department report that proposes a \$19 billion tax hike almost sure to make things worse.

Buried in an innocuous-sounding paper on "Business Taxation and Global Competitiveness," the Treasury Department proposes getting this money over a decade from credit unions. Not only would the 90 million or so Americans who belong to credit unions end up paying this tax directly, but the tax would likely ripple through the economy, restricting already tight access to credit, and making just about everything a bit more expensive.

—*National Review Online*, August 21

Technology Policy Analyst **Cord Blomquist** on the folly of municipal wireless networks:

Consider Google and Earthlink's plans to create citywide Wi-Fi for San Francisco. As the city prepares to put the issue to

a vote in a referendum, Earthlink CEO Rolla Huff is

acting as though the future of the project is a foregone conclusion, adopting a new strategy for dealing with critics: the silent treatment. But Huff isn't just miffed; his company is facing a serious financial meltdown in San Francisco and potentially many other wireless projects. But wasn't municipal Wi-Fi the wave of the future?

Whatever happened to the dream of editing Wikipedia in the car or live-blogging people watching at the neighborhood park? It turns out that few people actually share those dreams. As *Business Week* recently pointed out, initial forecasts for municipal Wi-Fi subscriptions were exceedingly high, predicting 15 to 30 percent of the population of cities signing up. Actual subscriber rates are far below this level—a mere 1 to 2 percent—making investors interested in ROI sadly SOL.

—*The American*, August 21

Center for Entrepreneurship Director **John Berlau** compares media coverage of the large salaries of CEOs with that of the large salaries of sports stars:

Take the contrast in coverage of the hiring of two well-known guys in the business and sports worlds: executive Robert Nardelli at Chrysler and soccer star David Beckham with the Los Angeles Galaxy.

Nardelli's hiring this week as Chrysler's chairman and CEO was largely panned, while coverage of the soccer team's acquiring of Beckham has been largely laudatory.

Yet if the business pages were to include a career stats box, as the sports pages routinely do, readers would discover that Nardelli and Beckham actually have common traits other than being extremely well-paid.

This would also explode the myth spread by politicians and others critical of executive pay that athletes get "paid on performance" and CEOs don't.

—*Investor's Business Daily*, August 9

Director of Risk & Environmental Policy **Angela Logomasini** exposes ecolumacy in local government:

The [Salt Lake City, Utah] city government wants workers to leave their bottled water at home. The city even plans to deny firefighters the right to bring bottled water to work—you know, to those raging fires where they risk life and limb.

Bottled water offers firefighters a quick, easy way to hydrate during intense and dangerous operations. Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson's answer to them: Each firefighter will get a refillable container. Two additional personnel will be dispatched to each fire to refill on the scene—which surely will cost taxpayers more than a few bottles of water! And are firefighters really expected to queue up for a drink? What if someone forgets his refillable container?

Don't worry—the mayor says the city will reverse the policy if it doesn't work. Bet that's a real comfort to the firefighters who get to be the guinea pigs for the crazy policy.

—*East Valley Tribune* (Mesa, AZ), August 8

Bastiat Scholar in Free Enterprise **Doug Bandow** sizes up the state of free trade negotiations:

Lest the U.S. give up on its effort to continue liberalizing the international economy, the Bush administration and Congress need to work together to renew what is formally known as trade promotion authority (TPA).

Reductions in trade barriers offer enormous economic benefits. Over the years, large-scale negotiations, such as those through the World Trade Organization, have dramatically opened the world economy.

Unfortunately, the so-called Doha round has stalled over farm subsidies, with the latest attempt to break the deadlock collapsing in late June.

Bilateral and regional agreements are the main alternative. Four free trade agreements (FTAs) currently await congressional approval. But the Democratic Congress has been critical of the accords and TPA, under which they were negotiated.

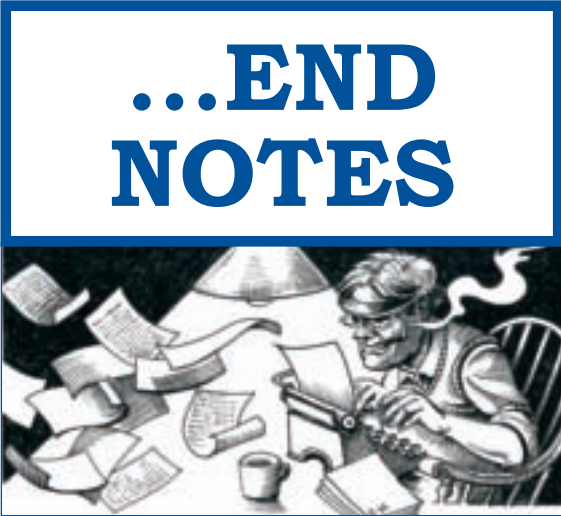
—*The Politico*, July 26

According to Al Gore, the Earth is Nowhere Near This Resilient

In England, centenarian Winnie Langley celebrated her 100th birthday by smoking her 170,000th cigarette. She smoked her first cigarette just days after the outbreak of World War I in 1914, and has smoked about five a day since. “I have smoked ever since infant school and I have never thought about quitting,” she told the *Daily Mail*. Of course, people who smoke at a more prodigious rate may not enjoy such good health.

Nothing a Return to Maoism Can’t Solve

The BBC reports that despite some government prodding—though subtle by Chinese standards—Beijing drivers largely ignored “National No Car Day,” China’s version of the “Carfree Day” global smugfest, this past September 22. The news service said that one of its correspondents, “says that cars are coming and going as normal, and most streets in Beijing are not adhering to No Car Day. This is embarrassing anywhere, but it’s an especially dismal failure in a country with an authoritarian government that gets behind the scheme, but that’s not all. This year, Carfree Day was on a *Saturday*.”



Cloud of Smug Rises from Pakistan’s Borderlands

In September, Osama bin Laden denounced the current U.S. administration in a videotaped rant for, among other sins, not ratifying the Kyoto Protocol. He decries that “all of mankind is in danger because of the global warming resulting to a large degree from the emissions of the factories of the major corporations, yet despite that, the representative of these corporations in the White House insists on not observing the Kyoto accord.” A month later, Al Gore won the Nobel Peace Prize for saying essentially the same thing.

Eschewing Bourgeois Mortality

In August, Venezuelan strongman Hugo Chavez responded to rumors that his pal Fidel Castro is on his way to meet Satan, by claiming that Fidel can defy biology—sort of. “Those who want him to die will be frustrated, because Fidel Castro will never die,” said Chavez. However, he qualified his statement, saying that Castro “will always live among the people that fight for a better destiny.” Unfortunately, there’s some truth to that—Fidel will always live on for those who want to *be* him and those who want to play sycophant to his ilk. And with his death watch going on for this long, he is beginning to seem immortal.



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