

Business Briefs

Transportation

Skinner opposes smaller autos which cost lives

U.S. Transportation Secretary Samuel Skinner has adopted a policy against down-sizing cars to increase fuel efficiency because it costs lives. "It would be a tragic mistake to enact legislation that would undermine this country's progress in highway safety," he said.

A study released by the Department of Transportation showed that the move to smaller cars in the 1970s helped improve fuel economy "but resulted in more traffic deaths and injuries in those vehicles," he said.

The report was prepared in response to legislation proposed by Sen. Richard Bryan (D-Nev.) which calls for an increase in auto fuel economy levels to 40 miles per gallon. The auto industry insists that making cars smaller and lighter is the only way even to try to meet this goal. From 1970 to 1982, car weights dropped by 1,000 pounds on average, resulting in an additional 1,300 highway deaths and 6,300 moderate or serious injuries per year.

Finance

Sony president attacks Anglo-American policy

Michael P. Schulhof, president of Sony, U.S.A., indicted the U.S. financial system and American corporate management for a short-sighted pursuit of paper assets, in an article in the Sept. 23 *New York Times*.

Schulhof argued that scientists have three advantages over corporate managers trained only in finance or banking: "First, at a time when even traditional industries are technology driven and technology dependent, the scientist can understand technology from inside out. Second, scientists understand the process of critical thinking. But perhaps most important, a mind trained in science knows that worthwhile results take time and investment to achieve.

"Unfortunately, most American corporations in the last few decades were run by people

... more interested in rearranging assets than in building them. They could not look beyond the next quarter's earnings to the next decade's technology."

Education

Geometry class crucial for college entrance

"Black and Hispanic students who take at least one year of high school geometry vastly improve their chances of getting into college and receiving a bachelor's degree," according to a study prepared for the College Board, the Sept. 24 *Washington Post* reported.

The study of almost 16,000 students found that the gaps between college-going rates of whites and minorities virtually disappeared among those who had taken a year or more of geometry.

The study also looked at whether students had taken courses in laboratory sciences or foreign languages, and did not find as strong a relation to college enrollment and completion as in the case of geometry. "I think we're looking at something that is more basic than those other courses," said Sol H. Pelavin, one of the authors of the report.

Development

Kohl and Mitterrand look to Maghreb

West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and French President François Mitterrand called for joint European efforts to develop the Maghreb region of northern Africa and the also eastern Mediterranean nations, in a joint declaration issued after talks in Munich on Sept. 18.

"In view of their political, economic, social, and cultural ties that they have historically developed to the Mediterranean region and the countries directly bordering on it, France and Germany share a special interest in the security and stability of that region," Article 5 of the declaration read.

"Both governments are committed, therefore, to enhance their cooperation with the states of North Africa and of the eastern Mediterranean region in the framework of European policy, in order to coordinate closely efficient contributions to peace and economic and social progress and the protection of the natural environment in that region."

German and French Foreign Ministers Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Roland Dumas declared in separate statements that the first meeting of the European and Arab foreign ministers will take place in Asolo, Italy on Oct. 7.

Italian Foreign Minister Gianni de Michelis and Spanish Foreign Minister Francisco Fernández Ordóñez also plan to jointly propose an initiative for a Council for Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM), which would extend from Portugal to Iran. It would attempt to address such problems as economic underdevelopment. The two are committed to bringing Israel into the CSCM.

Health

Shigellosis incidence doubles in two years

The Atlanta Centers for Disease Control reported in its *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly* of Aug. 3 that laboratory-confirmed cases of shigellosis, a sometimes severe form of food poisoning, that were reported to the center nearly doubled from 1986 to 1988. The CDC added that the actual number is easily many times that level, since most cases go unreported.

Although not lethal, the bacteria is much more contagious than salmonella. The symptoms include diarrhea (including bleeding from the intestine), abdominal pain, high fever, vomiting, and headache. Infected people can transmit the disease even longer than one month after they recover, regardless of how long their symptoms lasted, or how severe they were. Among the elderly and the very young, severe cases are treated with antibiotics, but one doctor at the CDC cautions against using antibiotics in mild cases, because the organism can easily develop a resistance to drugs.

Briefly

Before 1945, the main cause of infection was consumption of food or water that had been contaminated with fecal matter. It was brought under control due to increased sanitation of water supplies and other improvements.

Now, it is becoming common in day care centers, nursing homes, institutions, and among male homosexuals. One reason for the disease's spread is lack of simple hygiene—washing one's hands after using the toilet and before eating.

Free Enterprise

Tulips are passé: Holland sells hashish

The Netherlands is no longer the land of tulips, fresh produce, and windmills. It's hashish that is taking over more than just the coffee houses of Amsterdam, where the menu for the ingredients of a hashish pipe is often longer than that for food and drink. Today, hashish is big business, for export to the United States and the Soviet Union.

With falling prices for fresh produce—which last year amounted to a 40% decline—a growing number of greenhouses are looking for more lucrative business. Where once tomatoes and cucumbers flourished, now hemp is grown. In one case, a "gardener" from Milsbeek turned an empty factory into an ultramodern hothouse for the exclusive growing of hemp. When the police looked into the hothouse and its business records, they found out that the dope gardener was listed in the trade register as a "seed cultivator," and had sales totaling 3 million guildens last year.

But in general, the police are not very interested in the drug traffic. For many years, the sale of so-called soft drugs has been tolerated in the Netherlands. Furthermore, the highest Dutch court has ruled that growing hemp plants of the cannabis type for "seed extraction" is allowable.

The media report regularly about the "successful businessmen" and how they ply their trade. One newspaper reported that Ben Dronkers, the chief of Sensi Seeds BV in Amsterdam and a specialist in growing hemp

seeds, recently confided that he had sold seeds worth 10,000 guildens to "a Russian." Drug cultivation is also evidently finding a niche within the agricultural program of the European Community.

Agriculture

Colombian growers unite against 'free trade'

Under the banner of "Food for Peace," Colombia's Second Congress of Peasants, Cattlemen and Farmers was held Sept. 20-22 to denounce the César Gaviria government's policy of opening up the agricultural sector to the ravages of the free market.

In response to government plans to eliminate all import controls, end agricultural subsidies, raise interest rates, and dismantle the state marketing agency IDEMA, Carlos Gustavo Cano Sanz, president of the Colombian Society of Farmers (SAC), charged that the international banks were behind the "modernization" scheme. Such measures, he said, would only benefit "the monopolies of certain families who only act to satisfy the appetites of certain dynasties. . . . Don't tell me that import controls by the state will be replaced by a complete freeing of customs and exchange rates to allegedly give greater transparency to market price mechanisms. . . . Rather, the name of the game is under- and over-invoicing, buying and selling to oneself, bribery and free zones for contraband smuggling."

Cano was seconded by Adriano Quintana, head of the National Grain Growers Federation (FENALCE), who protested that the countryside was being turned into "a guinea pig by academics who want to test their assertions, theories, and foreign models upon the most vulnerable sector of the community, ignoring reality." Quintana defended the role of the state's agricultural marketing agency, which has been charged with "paternalism" and marked for elimination. Said Quintana, "Is it paternalism when the peasants of Guaviare [province] agreed to change the coca crops for corn, only to have to sell the corn at absurd prices because IDEMA is no longer around to buy their crop?"

● BULGARIAN PRESIDENT

Zhelyu Zhelyev ordered a total, immediate ban on food exports on Sept. 24. Food shortages in the cities exceed conditions during World War II and the immediate postwar years. The government officially estimates that 70% of food produced for the cities disappears into the black market.

● R. DAN BRUMBAUGH, who warned on the July 31 ABC News "Nightline" that the FDIC bank insurance fund was insolvent and on Sept. 21 on CNN's "Money Line" that the six biggest U.S. banks are insolvent, was notified by Stanford University that his research project on banking had been terminated, the Sept. 24 *Wall Street Journal* reported.

● THE SOVIET UNION officially attended a meeting of the International Monetary Fund in September for the first time. Viktor Rakov, chief currency expert at the Soviet central bank, told *Izvestia* that IMF membership could bring needed discipline as the Soviet system moves to a market economy.

● TUBERCULOSIS cases in the U.S. rose 4.7% higher in 1989 than in 1988 after a steady decline of about 6% a year, the Sept. 23 *Washington Post* reported. While the rise is correlated with the rise in AIDS cases, the *Post* admits the rise could be the result of increasing poverty and malnutrition.

● FORD CANADA'S 12,800 workers must be given a one-year notice of plant closings and a six-month notice for reasons of technological change, in a new contract settlement. The union estimates average increases in income of 7.5%, 6.7%, and 4.8% over the next three years.

● ONTARIO STOCK YARDS will cut their operations in half. General Manager Doug McDonell said, "If the next five years are like the last five, who the hell knows if there will even be a beef industry in Ontario?"