

The title "Wrong Again" (SCAN, November/December) could apply to your reporting on the abandonment of the National Maximum Speed Limit in 1995. You display ignorance of how to analyze statistics when you assert that recent figures from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) showing a decline in highway fatalities mean that increased speed limits haven't resulted in more traffic deaths.

Annual fatality figures are a composite of many safety issues involving different causes of fatal crashes. Just as a change in the overall stock market does not mean that *all* stocks changed, changes in national fatality totals or in the fatality rate don't permit conclusions about specific safety issues such as higher speed limits. To determine if increased limits have caused more deaths, one must analyze *the roads on which the limits were raised*, before and after the limits changed, and not just compare the aggregate number of deaths on the nation's roads.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety performed this type of analysis and found that even on inherently safer interstates in 24 states where the speed limit was increased, deaths increased by 15 percent. Studies in other states have also shown that higher limits lead to more deaths. Minnesota safety officials reported a 66 percent increase in fatalities on roads with raised limits. Fortunately, most states have not yet raised the speed limit on the most dangerous two-lane highways. If they had, the national fatality increase would have approached the worst-case scenario forecasted in 1995 by the NHTSA.

The number of deaths on all roads from 1995-98 has fluctuated slightly and

even decreased in '98, but speed is not the only factor affecting the number of highway fatalities. Less drunk driving, more safety-belt and child safety-seat use, and vehicle improvements such as air bags have saved many lives and prevented many injuries. Unfortunately, these safety measures have been offset by the additional lives lost due to increased speeds.

Increased speeds raise the stakes if one makes a driving error. At higher speeds, drivers have less time to react to emergencies or to deal with poor driving conditions. An article inaccurately portraying safety experts as alarmists sends a message to the public that passing dangerous laws and 41,000 deaths on our roads every year are nothing to be concerned about.

Ralph Nader  
Washington, D.C.

Regarding Martin Morse Wooster's January/February book review of Gregory Schneider's history of Young Americans for Freedom (YAF): As one of the founders of YAF in 1960, I was astounded to read that YAF "leaves no legacy." I could list many former and current members of Congress, top Reagan administration officials, and current political leaders who started out as YAF members—including Mr. Wooster, who refutes his own claim.

Coincidentally, Karl Zinsmeister's BIRD'S EYE essay in the same issue chronicled the situation that prompted many of us in the late '50s and '60s to organize independently of the Republican Party.

Indeed, it saddens me that YAF fell on hard times. But few—except Wooster, who is too young to recall what things were like

before  
YAF—  
can deny that the  
group played a major role  
in the transformation of national politics.

You had to be there, Mr. Wooster.

Carol G. Dawson  
Morattico, Virginia

It was a pleasure to read George Liebmann's catalogue of initiatives conservatives should consider when contemplating Al Gore's plans for dealing with "suburban sprawl" ("Keep It Local, Stupid," November/December).

The Clinton-Gore "smart growth" initiative isn't just an appeal to soccer moms. It aims to dilute local power and weaken property rights in the guise of providing a more "livable" environment. Behind Gore's warm and fuzzy rhetoric about "open space" and "our natural heritage" is an effort to give Washington the final say in local zoning and land-use decisions.

Suburbia can be tacky, congested, and downright monotonous, but that's no reason to turn its management over to the feds. Thanks to Mr. Liebmann, we know there is an alternative.

Bonner R. Cohen  
Lexington Institute

Kudos to all of you for the engaging articles that fill the pages of TAE. To those of us in the heartland, your in-depth discussions of current topics are not merely welcome, they are vital to our sanity as we are bombarded by horrendous "stuff" coming out of Washington. Reading TAE cover to cover is a pleasure regularly awaited in our household.

Meg Molyneux Courter  
West Des Moines, Iowa



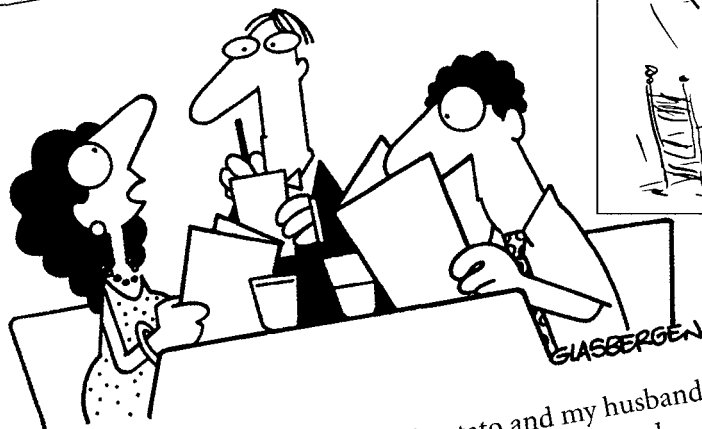
"Sir, could I handcuff this man to you?  
The policeman escorting him to Phoenix got  
bumped from this flight."



"We'd like to be seated near people with  
stimulating conversations."



What can I tell  
you? I came  
home and  
there they  
were.



"I'd like the prime rib with a baked potato and my husband  
would be happy to bite the end off some cheese and  
chug milk straight from the carton."