

against each other. That the status (and practicality) of mobile communication is now overwhelming the romance of gear shifting is only a small death for "style," which after all thrives on such little deaths. But it certainly changes the idea of being on the road.

On the Road

That's a stick shift pictured left, a piece of car tech with an emotional history more intricate than the gears, clutch, and stick that constitute its physical assemblage. Transformed long ago from necessity to style, it has been living a life of road romanticism. Stick shifts have been an example of how the relationship with a "useless" object can become an important part of an owner's self-image, in this case wrapping identity in speed, control, "feel of the road," and implied auto expertise. It melded man (mostly) and car into a type unknown prior to this century.

But all that is apparently coming to an end. *The Wall Street Journal* reports that the number of cars featuring stick shifts is declining steeply. The paper cites a number of factors, but the most interesting one is also identified as "the last nail in the stick shift's coffin": the cell phone.

Drivers can't easily shift and use the phone simultaneously, pitting the identity values of the two technologies

—Charles Paul Freund

of jet skis, snowmobiles, and dirt bikes. "These motorized recreational uses," he writes, "simply are not compatible with the National Park Service's mission." Nelson doesn't spell out his view of that mission, but it seems to be incompatible with private vehicles powered by internal combustion engines.

Drug Entrepreneurs

By Jacob Sullum

"Much of what we call 'crime,' is actually work," observes University of Illinois sociologist John M. Hagedorn in a startling new report, *The Business of Drug Dealing in Milwaukee*, from the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute (WPRI).

Hagedorn, who has also performed a five-year study of drug dealing for the National Institute on Drug Abuse, applies the insights of

management guru Peter Drucker and Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto to inner-city Milwaukee. He concludes that crack dealing "is in many ways an innovative, entrepreneurial, small business venture," part of an informal economy that gives people with little education or money an opportunity to make a living.

Information from Hagedorn's detailed, anonymous surveys of 28 drug dealers in two Milwaukee neighborhoods indicates that "most drug entrepreneurs are hard working, but not super-rich," grossing \$1,000 to \$5,000 a month. He also finds that "most drug entrepreneurs aren't particularly violent," with two-thirds reporting less than one violent incident a month.

The WPRI is a conservative think tank, while Hagedorn notes his own "long history of left wing activism." In his conclusion, he calls for a dia-

logue between left and right aimed at reducing the harmful consequences of the war on drugs. "Our drug policy is held captive to politics rather than rationality," he writes, suggesting "more toleration—a 'look the other way policy'—for most non-violent, productive, informal economic activity." Hagedorn's report is available at www.wpri.org.

Watch Your Backpack

By Jason Brooks

If you've ever thought about fleeing into the wilderness to avoid the long reach of the tax man, you might want to buy your hiking gear soon.

A coalition of environmental groups is trying to get Congress to pass a 5 percent tax on outdoor recreation products—everything from sport-utility vehicles to backpacks. The money would

be used for such purposes as protecting endangered species and building wildlife trails. The groups pushing the proposal—some 2,900 of them, including environmental organizations, state fish and wildlife agencies, and municipalities—are organized under an umbrella called "Teaming with Wildlife."

"Outdoor tax" proponents call their levy a user fee. But a quick look at the items that would be covered suggests a rather tenuous relationship between the user and his impact on the wilderness. For ▶



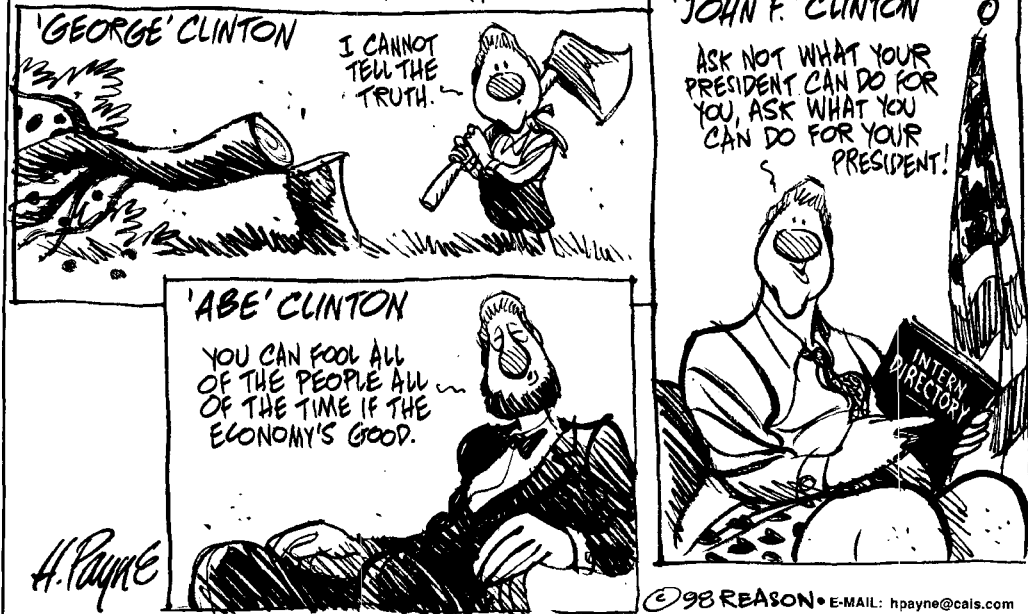
◆ Police in Miami arrested 10-year-old Andrew Perkins, handcuffed him, and put him in jail. His crime? He got into a spat with his parents at a restaurant and kicked his mother. A waitress saw this and called the police. When they got there, they made Andrew spend the night in jail. Even the judge handling the case says it makes no sense. But the police say state law on domestic violence mandates an arrest. If they hadn't arrested the boy, they would have been subject to legal action.

◆ In Bozeman, Montana, Cody Johnston is suing a local newspaper and the court system for libel. Johnston's troubles began when he got a traffic ticket for a commercial trucking weight violation. A computer glitch or clerical error turned that citation into a conviction for deviate sexual conduct, a broad charge that covers homosexual acts and bestiality. He learned of this when his parents, who read about the conviction in the paper, confronted him. He told them he had no idea what they were talking about, but they, his wife, and his sister concluded he was in denial and tried to get him to seek counseling.

◆ Former Vice President Dan Quayle thinks the GOP has a pretty good chance of regaining the White House in 2000. "Let me just be very clear that the Republican Party will select a nominee that can beat Bill Clinton," he said recently. That seems to be a safe bet: Clinton is constitutionally ineligible to run for re-election,
—Charles Oliver

Henry Payne

CLINTON'S PLACE in HISTORY



example, only 10 percent of sport-utility vehicles ever drive off-road. And more than two-thirds of the backpacks sold are used by students to lug books to and from school. Other items that could be covered by the outdoor tax are hiking boots, tents, even cameras and film.

For now, the proposal doesn't have congressional support or a legislative sponsor. "The problem is, we have a very conservative Congress right now," says Naomi Edelson, one of the group's organizers. Still, Edelson says, the tax idea, which has been pushed for the last five years, "isn't dead." Teaming with Wildlife is biding its time, lobbying members of Congress, and hoping for a "different mood" to emerge on Capitol Hill.

Voting on Preferences

By Michael W. Lynch

The campaign to end racial preferences has

moved to Washington state, where voters in November will pull the lever on an initiative that would abolish the government's system of race- and gender-based preferences.

The Washington Civil Rights Initiative (I-200) wended its way to Washington via California, where the similarly worded Proposition 209 passed in 1996, and Houston, where voters rejected an anti-preference initiative by a margin of 54 percent to 46 percent last November.

Few California exports are popular in the Evergreen State, but polls indicate that Washingtonians agree with Californians that the government should not play favorites based on race. A July *Seattle Times* poll found that when Washington voters are read the language they will confront on election day—"The state shall not discriminate against—or grant preferential treatment to—any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color,

ethnicity or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education or public contracting"—64 percent give the initiative thumbs up. But when voters are told the initiative would wipe out "affirmative action"—a claim disputed by I-200 backers—support for the initiative drops to 49 percent.

Pre-election polling on California's Prop. 209 uncovered similar semantically inspired shifts. The deceptive wording of the Houston ballot, which said the initiative would end "affirmative action" rather than "preferences," is believed to have caused its narrow defeat. (In June, a federal judge in Texas found the ballot language misleading and invalidated the election; the initiative may be put before Houston voters again in 1999.)

Not surprisingly, the Washington initiative's foes claim I-200 will doom all affirmative action. For help, they are counting on a sympathetic Seattle press and a popular and supportive gov-