

Brickbats

Steamy Georgia afternoons apparently have taken their toll on Southern gentility. Lawmaker Dorothy Pelote has introduced a bill in the state House of Representatives to ban people from answering the door in the nude. Currently, "the law allows [a person] to come to the door naked. It just doesn't let him go outside," Pelote says. "I don't even want him coming to the door naked." ■

A Chinese court has charged Hong Kong trader Li Guang-qiang with using "an evil cult to damage a law-based society." He will spend two years in prison for his crime: bringing Bibles into mainland China. ■

Lab tests show that almost half of all purported cocaine seized in drug raids by Dallas police in 2001 was actually finely crushed Sheetrock. The same goes for almost one-fourth of all methamphetamine seized. Unfortunately, some of the immigrant defendants have already been deported. Defense lawyers say their clients were framed, either by police or by the force's secret informant, who reportedly earned more than \$200,000 during two years of service. ■

Here's a zen riddle: How lumpy must a sauce be before it can be called a vegetable? That's the stumper facing the European Union's Customs Code Committee. The E.U.'s current "lump limit" is 20 percent, designed to nab importers who avoid higher tariffs on vegetables by disguising them as sauces. The tariff on sauces is 20 percent, while the duties on vegetables can reach 288 percent. ■

Want to golf in Germany? Start studying now. Germany is the only country in the world that

licenses golfers. To qualify, potential golfers must pass a written test on the rules and etiquette of the game. And they must be able to play 18 holes in no more than 108 strokes. The cost of the license is about \$1,000. ■

Since the British passed tougher gun-control laws in 1997, the murder rate for victims killed with guns has soared, and police officials say the number of illegal handguns grows daily. How have the nation's conservatives reacted? Oliver Letwin, the shadow home secretary, didn't have any kind words for self-defense: "One doesn't want to create a society in which people are liable to be mown down if they enter a property." ■

Residents who qualified for concealed weapons permits in Genesee County, Michigan, got a little something extra. Along with the notice to pick up their permits, many applicants also received fliers from the Michigan Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence. The fliers included information about gun safety and dunned recipients for donations to the partnership, which helped lead efforts to ban concealed carry permits. ■

A Swedish anti-E.U. activist hanging posters in Belgium was surprised when police told him the act was a crime in the kingdom—"disturbing the peace." But he was shocked when the authorities banned him for two weeks from Belgium and 13 other European nations, all parties to the border-opening Schengen Treaty. ■

Charles Oliver

charged 8,000 dissidents 100 percent of dues and then proceeded to spend some of the money on politics. "WEA intentionally chose not to comply with the law," ruled Judge Gary R. Tabor, who fined the union \$400,000 and ordered it to hand the state \$190,375 for attorney fees. It also had to refund \$180,000 to the teachers who didn't want their money spent on politics.

Tabor's decision marks the second time in three years the WEA has been fined for playing politics with ill-gotten money. In 1998 the union was fined \$430,000 for illegal activity in its campaign against charter schools and voucher initiatives two years earlier.

"It shows the unions care more about political power than the rights of their members," says Evergreen Freedom Foundation President Bob Williams, who has been dogging the union for years. "They need remedial learning." ■

No face time

Fake IDs

Jeremy Lott

FACIAL RECOGNITION technology is often billed as a tradeoff between privacy and security. A recent American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) report suggests that it's closer to a no-win deal, resulting in less privacy and precious little added security.

The ACLU report focuses on Ybor City, Florida, where police began installing surveillance cameras with facial recognition technology last July. Faces caught on camera were compared by a computer to a database of 30,000 wanted criminals, a scheme that resulted in a loud outcry from privacy advocates. One dismayed resident told the local alternative paper *The Weekly Planet* that



"citizens of [Ybor] are now subjected to a police lineup for the crime of walking down the street."

In mid-August, the police department stopped using the technology, saying that because of redistricting, too many new officers would have to be trained to use the system. But Jay Stanley and Barry Steinhardt, authors of the ACLU report, suggest a more likely cause: The technology was a complete failure. It not only resulted in no arrests but made many false matches. In several cases it misdiagnosed a potential suspect's sex, and it was easily fooled by less than perfect lighting.

"Right now," Stanley explains, "discussion of a reliable face-recognition package is science fiction, which is not our line of work." ■

British drug reform

Pot Stops

Jacob Sullum

ACCORDING TO FBI figures released last fall, American police arrested more than 734,000 people for marijuana violations in



2000—a new record. About nine out of 10 arrests were for possession, and the other category, sale/manufacture, included cultivation for personal use.

In the United States, then, it's clearly not true that no one gets arrested for smoking pot anymore. But it looks like that will soon be the case in Britain, home of Europe's harshest drug laws.

Last fall British Home Secretary David Blunkett announced a proposal, expected to take effect this spring, to make marijuana a "Class C" drug. This status,

Balance Sheet

Jeff A. Taylor



The Pentagon reverses a policy that forced women on duty in Saudi Arabia to don native dress. Still in place: restrictions on leaving the base without a male escort, driving a vehicle, or even riding in the front seat.



The city of Charlotte refuses to spend tax money to keep the NBA's Hornets from moving to New Orleans. The Big Easy promised the team's owners several million dollars a year in subsidies to guarantee a profit. "Stop-gapping the Hornets' financial losses...is not a taxpayers' expense," a Charlotte official explains.



Markets punish any whiff of corporate accounting wackiness. Firms with questionable numbers see their stock prices fall by double-digit percentages.



Virtual charter schools spring up in 12 states, melding home schooling with technology to bring outside lesson plans and experts into homes. A KPMG Consulting audit finds the schools help students "in need of a non-traditional setting due to medical conditions or other mental or physical health related circumstances."



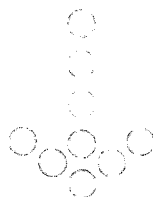
The amorphous Americans with Disabilities Act gets a little structure from a Supreme Court decision. Simple inability to do a specific job doesn't automatically trigger ADA protection, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor writes. A protected disability is one that "severely restricts the individual from doing activities that are of central importance to most people's daily lives."



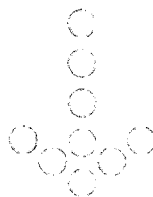
AOL Time Warner files its own antitrust suit against Microsoft, alleging that the company set out to ruin rival browser Netscape in 1995. Yet AOL paid \$10 billion for Netscape in 1999, meaning somebody still thought it was worth something four years into the alleged plot.



The Office of National Drug Control Policy spends \$3.2 million on Super Bowl ads to inform sports fans that buying drugs helps fund terrorism. Of course, it is the War on Drugs that makes drugs so profitable.



National Football League player Terry Glenn sues the league under the Americans with Disabilities Act. He claims that his depression makes it impossible to comply with his contract's substance abuse clause. He wants reimbursement for salary lost during a four-game suspension.



Tony and Angelica Flores spend a few hours in jail for failing to remove their Christmas lights in a timely manner. A Peoria, Arizona, law requires residents to remove decorations within 19 days after the holiday. The couple ignored a court date and got a letter saying the case had been dismissed. Then police officers showed up at their door.



Several states lobby for federal money to give moviemakers tax breaks. Canadian subsidies must be matched in the U.S., they say, or shows set in Chicago or Pittsburgh will continue to be shot in Toronto. But even with subsidies, the cheap Canadian dollar will pull productions north.

