

The Bureaucracy Monster

In 1985, British and Scottish officials spent time considering how best to protect the Loch Ness Monster from poachers should it surface, according to newly-released files obtained through the Freedom of Information Act. An official at the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries wrote, 'Unfortunately, Nessie is not a salmon and would not appear to qualify as a freshwater fish under the Salmon and Fisheries Protection (Scotland) Act 1951'. After an exchange of memos between departments, it was decided that Nessie would be protected under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act. This made it an offence to snare, shoot or blow up Nessie.

Loch Ness Elephant

Scottish palaeontologist Neil Clark from Glasgow University believes that he has solved the mystery of the Loch Ness Monster, claiming that it is nothing more than an elephant. During the 1930s when the first sightings of 'Nessie' were made, circus fairs visiting Inverness stopped on the banks of Loch Ness to allow their animals to rest. 'When their elephants swam in the loch, only the trunk and two humps could be seen: the first hump being the top of the head and the second being the back of the animal.' This description matches early eye-witness accounts of a grey monster with a long neck and humped back.

Lukewarm Legislation

A State senator in Missouri has proposed forcing liquor stores to sell warm beer in a bid to reduce the occurrence of drink-driving. Senator Bill Alter has introduced a bill which, if passed, will give authorities the power to strip liquor licences from grocery and convenience stores who sell beer colder than 15 degrees Celsius. The theory behind the ban is that it will be less tempting for drivers to pop open a newly purchased beer if it is warm. According to Alter, 'The only reason why beer would need

to be cold is so that it can be consumed right away'. A better solution would be to ban driving. Not only would this reduce the drink-driving rate even further, but it would also encourage more exercise to help battle the current obesity epidemic.

Seeking Experienced Vandals

The municipal council in Amsterdam wants the city's best vandals to try and wreck prototypes of its new subway trains. Amsterdam traffic councillor Mark van der Horst wants to take Amsterdam hooligans from the street and have them trash the trains so that the City can make an informed choice about which trains are the least vulnerable to attacks. According to van der Horst, the trains must be carefully tested because Amsterdam hooligans are amongst the worst in the world. 'Our new Amsterdam subway must be absolutely Amsterdam-idiot-proof', he said.

Shower-hacking

The US Federal Energy Policy Act of 1992 dictates that 'all faucet fixtures manufactured in the United States restrict maximum water flow at or below 2.5 gallons'. Consequently, since 1992, Americans have been cursed with tepid, lifeless showers bereft of generous water flows and therapeutic pleasure. All showerheads sold in the United States must adhere to this regulation. But entrepreneurs have now cleverly realized that this applies on a *per-showerhead* basis. Hence the 'Nautilus II Chrome', a three-headed shower fixture that recreates the experience of showering in a regulation-free utopia. Also growing more common: shower-hacking, where consumers customize their shower to avoid pesky laws and double their waterflow.

Raven' Crazy

A group of six ravens at the Tower of London has been moved indoors in order to prevent the destruction of the English Kingdom. King Charles II de-

creed in the seventeenth century that six ravens must always remain at the fortress, and legend has it that if the ravens leave the fortress, the White Tower will crumble and the Kingdom of England will fall. The Tower's raven master, Derrick Coyle, decided to move the ravens to protect them from the threat of bird 'flu. 'Although we don't like having to bring the Tower ravens inside, we believe it is the safest thing to do for their own protection', he said.

Property Boom

A computer error that led to a house in Indiana being wrongly valued at \$400 million has led to budget shortfalls and possible layoffs. The correct value of the house is \$121,900 and appears to have been accidentally changed by an outside user of the County's computer system. In one year, the property taxes on the house rose from \$1,500 to \$8 million. Despite the mistake being identified in one department, the value ended up on documents that were used to calculate tax rates. Government taxing units had to return \$3.1 million of tax money. Worst hit was Valparaiso which returned \$2.7 million, resulting in a \$200,000 budget shortfall and city losses of \$900,000.

Now is a good time to travel

According to a British Government report, the right to travel when and where we please will be severely eroded over the next 50 years due to the shortage of cheap oil and environmental concerns. The government science think-tank *Foresight* concluded that the growing demand for greater personal mobility is unsustainable and based on false notions. 'Every journey will have to be justified, and face-to-face contact with colleagues, friends and relatives will increasingly become a luxury, with most meetings taking place via three-dimensional 'telepresencing''. The report proposes making people pay the true cost of their journeys by giving them a carbon allowance which would apply to all activities, not simply travel.