

and most equitable means of extracting a sumptuary tax on a vehicle.

Over the decades, this has had several benefits insofar as resource allocations and public funds committed to highways are concerned. First, it placed a premium on power-plant efficiency, thus reducing the use of fuels and the accompanying pollution and depletion of resources. Second, it placed a premium on lightweight vehicle components—in order to achieve acceptable performance levels—again conserving such resources as steel and aluminum. Finally the resulting small, light, and agile automobiles permitted the construction of highways less massive and costly than those encountered in this country.

Today, some of the original users of displacement-based licensing fees have abandoned the practice as an “efficiency” measure. Almost simultaneously, engine outputs per cubic centimeter have begun growing—with the advent of higher compressions, turbo charging and the like.

Annual federal and/or state licensing taxes based on engine displacement would—today in the United States—definitely have a positive impact on resource uses in a number of fields. Rather than a sin tax, this approach might best be labeled an efficiency-reward levy. If family-type autos can achieve some 35 to 40 miles per gallon in Europe and elsewhere, why not here also?

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Animal Research and Government Policy

Constance Holden, in her News and Comment article “Universities fight animal activists” (6 Jan., p. 17), points out that the National Institutes of Health have “so far kept a low profile on the research animal issue.” This applies to the Public Health Service (PHS) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as well. Over the past 3 years I have asked both Charles E. Koop, Surgeon General, and Robert E. Windom, Assistant Secretary of HHS, to consider making an executive policy statement for distribution to the general public. I have had little response.

It should be explicitly stated that animal research is necessary to accomplish the mission of the PHS, generally understood to be the betterment of the nation’s health. The fact that the PHS currently funds most of the health-related animal research in this country implies the government’s policy on

the matter. It is time that a firm and clear executive statement is made on the subject. This would be of great aid to those of us who have to deal with the antivivisectionists’ actions and arguments every day. Statements by the Surgeon General on health hazards (for example, smoking) have proved to be very effective. The goal of the antivivisectionists, abolition of animal research, if achieved, would pose a major problem to the health of future generations. The public should be so informed.

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Incentives for Energy Conservation

Mark Crawford’s article “Electricity crunch foreseen . . . maybe” (News & Comment, 18 Nov., p. 1005) is an excellent summary of the dilemma and uncertainties faced by electric utility managers. My company, Wisconsin Electric Power, is one of the leading utilities in the development and application of least-cost planning, including an aggressive program to manage both energy and peak loads. In the last 2 years, we have spent about \$70 million to help our customers reduce peak demand—residential by 47 megawatts and commercial-industrial by 62 megawatts. Because of actions that might have been taken without our program (called “free riders” in least-cost planning terminology), we estimate the net impact on our system to be about 70 to 80 megawatts, or nearly 2% of our nearly 5000-megawatts peak load. Moreover, we are continuing the program for the foreseeable future—refined, based on our experience, to be even more cost-effective.

Crawford’s article makes much of the issue of the disincentives such programs have for utilities. That need not be the case. Disincentives can be remedied easily by regulators. An example is the action of our own Wisconsin Public Service Commission providing for an incentive bonus on our return for reaching energy management targets. Were there no other benefit, this would spur us to effective use energy management expenditures. But, there is more. All utility managers I know want to hold down rates to enhance their own competitive position and to help assure a viable economic climate in their service territory. Efficiently designed energy management programs do just that.

Another comment I must make is that one needs to accept figures from the “gurus” of

conservation with a grain of salt. For example, Amory Lovins’ statement quoted in the article that conservation can bring about a potential savings equivalent to 500 plants of 1000-megawatt size is an exaggeration. But, even if the real potential is only 1/10 of that (I believe this is a more reasonable estimate), the benefit in reduced costs is well worthwhile for utilities and others to strive to achieve.

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Language Dispute

In Roger Lewin’s article on the “American Indian language dispute” (Research News, 23 Dec., p. 1632), I am quoted as saying that “sound correspondences have come to epitomize what is good about contemporary historical linguistics.” I would like to clarify that this was said in reference to *other* scholars’ views, discussed in the article, which I do not share. As is clear from the discussion of this “dispute” in my recent book on language classification (1), I am firmly on Joseph Greenberg’s side. Moreover, the lack of “regular sound correspondences” was one of the major objections to Greenberg’s classification of African languages some 40 years ago, a classification now universally accepted by Africanists. Furthermore, it is incorrect to say that Greenberg’s methodology is “not generally favored among linguists.” It is not favored by many Amerindian scholars, but within *general* linguistics it is the only method that has ever produced any substantive results, from the discovery of Indo-European to the classification of African and American languages. What is perhaps most curious about this dispute is that the Amerind family, which is almost universally rejected by experts, is better supported than any of the four African families, which are all accepted as valid.

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REFERENCES

1. M. Ruhlen, *A Guide to the World’s Languages*, vol. 1, *Classification* (Stanford Univ. Press, Stanford, CA, 1987).

Erratum: In the report “Synthetic CD4 peptide derivatives that inhibit HIV infection and cytopathicity” by Jeffrey D. Lifson *et al.* (5 Aug., p. 712), the last seven residues of the CD4 peptide (26–50) should have been SFLTKGP rather than STLTKGP.