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"The Gazette wants to be the friend of every man, the promulgator of all that's right, a welcome guest in the home. We want to build up, not tear down, to help, not to hinder; and to assist every worthy person in the community without reference to race, religion or politics. Our cause will be the broadening and bettering of the county's interests."

Last president of 20th century

Sometime between 2008 and today, President Barack Obama lost the future. He rose to high office on a gust of hope and change, but despite the future-oriented marketing has proved himself devoted to old pieties and existing governmental structures. At this rate, he'll be remembered as the last president of the 20th century.

His economic policy has been a reprise of the best economic thinking circa 1932. It's been all Keynesian stimulus, and the soggy results are all around us. With the economy still weak and unemployment still high, he's checkmated by his own stale orthodoxy. He's unable to advance any significant proposals that wouldn't simply be more of the same and politically unacceptable in this era of anxiety over the debt.

In his misplaced faith in the "shovel ready" project, he must have had visions of the Hoover Dam and the interstate highway system — those jewels of 20th-century American infrastructure, built relatively rapidly before the regulatory state had tied itself in knots — rising up from his stimulus. Instead, the stimulus has built little or nothing anyone will remember.

Obama's health care program is radical in its sweep, but distinctly mid-20th century in its orientation. An enormous part of it simply depends on the expansion of

Medicaid, the pride of 1965. In the first blush of the Great Society, Medicaid might have seemed a glorious innovation. Now, its results are so poor that some studies show that the health outcomes for people on Medicaid aren't any better than those without any insurance at all.

As the baby boomers retire, the 20th-century entitlement state is under increasing strain. Paul Ryan proposes transforming Medicare to harness the power of the market and rein in the program's costs over time. Obama proposes a bureaucratic board to dictate its future in command-and-control fashion out of World War II.

Tim Pawlenty a few weeks ago proposed a "Google test" for government services: Anything that's readily available on the Internet perhaps shouldn't be provided by government. Obama is attached to retrograde, pre-Google government. He can't give up what blogger Walter Russell Mead calls "the blue social model" — high taxes, spending and regulation. The public-sector unions that are such an influential Obama constituency depend for their very livelihoods on this model.

It is coming undone under the solvents of demographics (an aging population), fiscal realities (unsustainable levels of debt) and market changes (globalization and new technologies favoring the quick and nimble). It's not the 1950s anymore. For all the contempt it heaps on the era of Ward and June Cleaver, the left wants to preserve the government that arose out of that moment. As Michael Barone writes in *The Wall Street Journal*, mid-century American society had a faith in big institutions — including big government — that's impossible to imagine today.

Yet government lumbers on. How many rounds of restructuring and downsizing has corporate America gone through over the decades? For the private sector, all is flux. For the public sector, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Obama's political strategy is based on savaging the Republicans who dare challenge this status quo. He's gone from agent of change to the best friend of government as we know it. He's gone from capturing the restlessness and discontent of the American public to relying on the sheer power of inertia to resist Republican plans to tackle the debt and update the entitlement state. He's the great obstacle to adjusting to new realities.

All around Obama the cracks in the edifice are showing. The AARP is signaling openness to Social Security cuts. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, the son of liberal lion Mario Cuomo, is pursuing reformist measures unimaginable a few years ago. Yet Obama apparently still needs a weatherman to tell him which way the wind is blowing.

If Bill Clinton built the bridge to the 21st century, Barack Obama is adamantly refusing to cross it, rendered immobile by his ideology and self-interest.

comments.lowry
@nationalreview.com

Guidelines for letter writers

The Indiana Gazette welcomes letters to the editor and will endeavor to print readers' letters in a timely manner.

Letters should be signed and include the writer's full address and telephone number so the authenticity of the letter can be confirmed. No letters will be published anonymously.

Letters must be factual and discuss issues rather than personalities. Writers should avoid name-calling. Form letters and automated "canned" email will not be accepted.

Generally, letters should be limited to 350 words.

All letters are subject to editing. Letter writers are limited to one submission every 30 days.

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Looking at facts about gas drilling

By MIKE MOYER

At the first meeting of the Indiana County Natural Gas Task Force held May 26, Lt. Gov. James Cawley charged each member to seek out the facts — not opinion. As a member of the task force I feel the need to weigh in on fellow task force member Gerald Smith's article published in the *Gazette* on June 19, where his opinions simply joined the backlash negativity against the natural gas drilling industry.

Below I address the Mr. Smith's areas of concern (bulleted and listed in italics), followed by cited facts.

(Due to printing constraints, the complete text and sources are available online at www.indianagazette.com).

The Indiana County Natural Gas Task Force will not collectively move forward unbiased and be an asset to both the county commissioners and the public as a whole if members' views are grounded upon personal opinions, skepticism and a general misunderstanding of how the industry operates.

■ Elevated bromide levels
Marcellus shale wastewaters are only one of many potential sources of bromide. The leading investigator, Jeanne VanBriesen, a Carnegie Mellon University professor of civil and environmental engineering, was quoted in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* saying "It's difficult to make a definitive statement about where it's all coming from, but we do know it's going into our drinking water treatment plants and affecting the treatment of our water."

■ Water wells and waterways polluted

Accidents within every industry are plausible. However, the industry as a whole always makes amends, either environmentally, financially, or in most cases both — even when undeniable proof is not always present. The media never report on the massive cleanup efforts that are performed after spills — they only report the negativity. In the event that the rectifying actions done by the drilling company are actually reported in the news, they won't be printed on the front page like the accidents.

Also, drilling companies belonging to the Marcellus Shale Coalition have spent countless hours developing and encouraging within its membership the utilization of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to minimize future incident potential.

■ Duke University study found methane in water wells near wells.

This study was deemed as flawed shortly after it was published by numerous outlets, including *Energy In Depth*. Even DEP Secretary Michael Krancer believes the study was biased and was reported saying "the bottom line is it was biased science from biased researchers" and "they went to a place with a known issue, and with a

small sample size, then claim there's some conclusion to be drawn." The industry conducts baseline water quality surveys to protect themselves and the general public because no definitive conclusion can be drawn without it.

■ Harmful chemicals in frack water
Mike Knapp's article published above Mr. Smith's article on Sunday, June 19, contained examples of real-life concentrations. And not many — more like very few — chemicals used for MS drilling (and fracking) pose any threat to human health — but only in concentrations much higher than used by the natural gas industry.

■ State laws and regulations are outdated.

Pennsylvania natural gas drillers must comply with eight federal and 11 state acts and laws that are "among the strictest in the nation." They are also subject to frequent inspections by DEP. Pennsylvania's oil and gas program has increased its complement from 75 people in 2007 to 202 people today. About two-thirds of these personnel are in place to ensure wells are designed and operated safely — from reviewing permit applications to boots-on-the-ground inspectors who review a well's progress and operations at each stage of development.

■ Drillers exempt from Safe Drinking Water Act

The so-called "Halliburton loophole," which exempts hydraulic fracturing from Safe Drinking Water Act regulations, is a misnomer. Drilling is regulated at a number of levels, including state and local government. Hydraulic fracturing and natural gas drilling are overseen by two regional and four state agencies including the DEP, the Fish and Boat Commission and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and regional watershed commissions. If every wastewater source had to comply with SDWA, all industries would cease to exist, electricity couldn't be made, and society as a whole would have to resort back to life as it was in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Also, the natural gas industry's water use is not "enormous" when compared to other industries. In 2009, oil and gas extraction only accounted for 0.3 percent of total water usage in Pennsylvania.

■ Out-of-state drillers the main beneficiaries

Some local shallow gas drillers have benefited greatly from the MS industry by forming joint ventures to allow MS drilling on their shallow held-by-production (HBP) acreage. As for leasing — no one has forced anyone to sign a lease, and the mineral rights owners are compensated quite handsomely for leasing, including the mineral rights owner(s) of the 6,000-acre conservation zone surrounding Yellow Creek State Park.

■ DEP's budget being cut

No budget cuts are expected for the DEP's Bureau of Oil & Gas. In fact, this bureau differs from others as it is self-funded via permit fees and penalties, and they recently increased fees in 2009 to add staff. The 2009 increase was a 1,600 percent increase over the previous year and generated \$12 million in 2010. Also, DEP has vowed to conduct 40 percent more Marcellus inspections this year.

■ DEP overwhelmed by applications, meaning less review and few rejections

DEP's permitting process involves a rigorous review process and includes multiple reviews, both administrative and technical. The DEP received 7,077 permit applications in 2010, yet approved 6,592 of them — therefore denying 6.8 percent of the applications.

■ Local ordinances ignored by drillers
DEP is responsible for permitting and ensuring the proper construction/operation of a well site to ensure environmental and public safety.

DEP encourages participation and active involvement by local municipalities — however, no ordinances can supersede the Oil & Gas Act enforced by DEP.

■ Air quality concerns not addressed

DEP conducted air quality studies in their Northcentral, Northeast and Southwest regions — and found no impacts on short-term air quality. DEP is currently crafting a long-term air quality study expected to be initiated in the near future.

■ Frack water left underground in completed wells

New casing requirements were incorporated in Chapter 78 to prevent contamination of fresh water supplies — both used and unused, as well as at any depth found. All waters returned to the surface are disposed of properly or beneficially reused, but no evidence exists that water left in a completed well will travel through several thousand feet of rock to fresh water zones.

■ Cumulative environmental impact a concern

Considering that natural gas is the cleanest of the fossil fuels as its combustion emits 30 percent less carbon dioxide than oil and 45 percent less carbon dioxide than coal, natural gas environmentally makes sense. Combine that with the long-term economic benefits already being recognized and the lack-there-of known/proven/documented cumulative environmental impacts, and I am completely baffled by the public perception that natural gas development is environmentally apocalyptic.

Mike Moyer is a chemist and vice president of business development for Environmental Service Laboratories and Environmental Land Surveying & Solutions, both of Indiana. Moyer is a member of the Indiana County Natural Gas Task Force and is active in the Pennsylvania Independent Oil & Gas Association's Environmental Committee and Speaker's Bureau.

Saudis face revolution: women driving

By DALE McFEATHERS

Scripps Howard News Service

The world over a driver's license and access to a car are considered an important, even vital, personal freedom. It would not be surprising if some American teenagers believed it was enshrined somewhere in the Constitution.

All the world over, that is, except Saudi Arabia, the only nation that bans women from driving.

But change is coming, if slowly. Last Friday women were urged to drive when doing their routine errands and many did, often with their husbands beside them.

The last demonstration was 20 years ago and the 47 women who participated were labeled infidels, had their passports confiscated and if they worked for the government were fired by royal decree.

This time when the police acted, and many of them did not, the women were given tickets for driving without a license or escorted home and admonished not to drive again. However,

many well-to-do women were technically driving legally because they had valid foreign licenses.

But this is the era of social media and videos of the women driving made it to YouTube and various Facebook pages. In fact, there is a Saudi Facebook page, Women2Drive, and a website, saudiwomensdriving.blogspot.com.

The organizer of the demonstration, Manal al-Sharif, was jailed last month for nine days as a cautionary warning but nine days is a relative inconvenience compared to what the earlier batch of women drivers went through.

There is no Saudi law against women driving but the government will not issue a woman a driver's license. Women do drive, usually pickup trucks, in the country and in the desert.

But Saudi Arabia's harsh Wahabi version of Islam allows women virtually no rights, certainly not to drive. Women need the permission of their husband or male guardian to travel, study, hold a job, see the doctor, visit a government office or simply go outside. These religious strictures, like the dress code that calls for women to be

completely covered, are enforced by religious police with nightsticks.

King Abdullah, a reformer but a very cautious one, believes women will one day drive in his country but he is ailing and his successor might not be so open-minded.

The driving ban is a growing source of international embarrassment to the kingdom but the factor ultimately driving the change is likely to be economic.

Women make up 60 percent of the country's college graduates and they are an increasingly important to a skilled workforce. It does the economy no good if they can't get to work in a timely fashion. And the 800,000 to 1 million foreign workers imported to chauffeur them around drain \$4 billion a year out of the economy.

But perhaps the biggest restraint on women driving is fear of the unknown, what it would do to the kingdom's carefully calibrated social order. One protesting women driver told *The New York Times* "even a small fight would be revolutionary for Saudi Arabia." That's exactly what the religious leaders and their conservative allies are afraid of.