

Inflation in China could be a benefit

There's a joke making the rounds these days that officials sent a shipment of lead back to China. Why? Because it had too many toys in it.

And while everybody knows the economic impact that the burgeoning Chinese economy has had on our products – and more especially our prices – the New York Times reports this week that growing inflation in China is hitting Americans in the pocket books.

No doubt it's the same story for Canadians, since we too have become considerably more dependent upon Chinese imports for our consumer goods, particularly in toys, footwear and clothing.

As the Times explains, "Soaring energy and raw material costs, a falling dollar and new business rules (in China) ... are forcing Chinese factories to increase the prices of their exports ... "a reality which contributed to the inflation hike in North America.

Everybody understands in vague terms just how big a player China has become, but few realize the magnitude of its current impact on the world, a reality brought home to your correspondent with the recent receipt of an e-mail on the subject.

For one thing, China has become the third largest producer of cars in the world, behind only Japan and the United States, and is rapidly closing in on the two traditional world leaders in that field.

It's also the world's largest consumer of coal, grain, fertilizer, cell phones, refrigerators and televisions, and is the leading importer of iron ore, steel, copper, tin, zinc, aluminum and nickel.

The list goes on, but you get the idea.

And for those who still think that exempting China (along with India and Russia, as the now-debunked Kyoto Accord did) from emissions rules would be a good idea, here's a little food for thought on that file.

It seems that China used 2.5 billion tons of coal in 2006. How much is that? Well, it's more coal than the next three highest consuming nations – Russia, India and the U.S. – combined.

China also has more than 2,000 coal-fired power plants and is adding a new one every week. In 2006, China passed the U.S. as the world's top carbon dioxide emitter and in 2005, China's sulfur-dioxide emissions were nearly twice those of the U.S.

The Times quotes Nate Herman, director of international trade at the American Apparel and Footwear Association in Arlington, Va., which represents several major clothing and footwear makers, as saying that "Companies are now ordering (from China) for the spring of 2009. Factories (in China) are coming back and asking for 20, 30, 40, 50 per cent price increases."

While those costs be passed on to consumers?" he was asked. "It's going to be hard to avoid some increases."

Which, of course, brings up another question of China's place in the world.

Given its status as a leading dictatorial nation, and its horrendous human rights records, will higher prices for Chinese goods buy a moral conscience for more consumers?

As things stand, sadly, most consumers would rather save a dollar or two and buy the cheaper Chinese-made goods that spend more and buy from a more reputable source.

To be fair, it's often difficult to find goods which aren't made in China, but it's also fair to say that most consumers don't make much of an effort seeking alternatives and likely don't even give a passing thought to what sort of country China is when they're picking up a cheap toy at their local Wal-Mart.

It was noteworthy last week to see Prince Charles' announcement that he will not attend opening ceremonies for the Beijing Olympics in August because of his close interest in and support for Tibet, a country which China simply took over and has brutally repressed for decades. Prince Charles has made no secret of his support for Tibet and the Dalai Lama.

To his credit – and unlike the previous Liberal regime in Ottawa – Prime Minister Stephen Harper drew loud criticism from Chinese officials when he recently openly greeted the Dalai Lama in Ottawa.

These are small steps, but steps nonetheless. The only real way to force China to clean up its act is through economic pressure, which is why, in a sordid sort of way, that country's growing inflation may turn out to be good news in the long run.

Why? Well, as we've said, if Chinese inflation means higher prices for Chinese goods, then consumers, even if they don't give a fig about the morality of their purchases, start looking for alternatives, then maybe, just maybe, China will change.

At more dramatic stance would be for all the western countries to boycott the Chinese Olympics. But that's not happening. Pity.



**National
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**Claire
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Good old days weren't that great

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ly not interested in J.R. either. Now if it were an issue involving Hill Street Blues, that might be a different matter. And if it was to do with Star Trek (the original series), I'd be able to hold my own with anybody.

These were some of the items on the list, but I did some looking up on my own, and found a few other things that the new batch of college kids might not remember, like the existence of a Berlin Wall, a time when there were no fax machines, the blowing up of the Pan Am flight over Lockerbie, Scotland, days when Canada did not have a free trade agreement

with the United States, Ben Johnson winning and losing an Olympic Gold medal or the days when only a very few people, if any, talked about things like global warming or the Internet.

These kids were all born after the lives of people like Elvis, John Lennon and Terry ox had ended. They have never seen the Leafs win the Stanley Cup.

Interestingly, last week's e-mail pointed to some differences between the way people talked in 1977 and 2007. I say it's interesting because 1977 was the year I graduated high school and started university. In those days, there were a lot of guys with long hair (including

myself), something that's rather hard to find these days, unless I look in a mirror (where I see too damned much grey!) There were also references in my day to screwing the system, and now people talk of upgrading the system.

But I reflect on the time when I was born, realizing that Canada had a prime minister named Diefenbaker, Americans had a president named Eisenhower and the Pope was known by the name Pius. I have never known anyone but a queen on the throne of England, so consequently I have never seen a coronation.

So there are a couple of things that I have missed, but

it's no big deal. And there are some things that I have seen that kids today likely won't. And in a lot of cases, they are lucky.

I went to school with a boy who had had polio. How many cases like that are around today. I went to school at a time when teacher were allowed to hit their students, some seeming to do it for their own amusement. And the elementary school I attended segregated boys and girls in the school yard.

I wonder what kind of traumatic shocks kids born in 1989 are going to get when they read the list compiled by Beloit College in 2039.

Pleased to meet you



**By
Anneleen
Naudts**

Please allow me to introduce myself - I am a new reporter here at the Caledon Citizen and the King Township Sentinel.

I am a Caledon resident, and after a four-year hiatus I am re-familiarizing myself with our town. As I'm becoming acquainted with you, I thought it may be nice for you to become acquainted with me.

Where to start? Perhaps at medieval Ghent, Belgium. I come from the land of chocolate, waffles, Tintin, Manneken Pis, lace and Adolf Sax, inventor of the saxophone.

I was somewhat destined to become a journalist. As a kid, I spent afternoons pretending to conduct interviews. I tediously copied existing interviews into a notebook - acting as if I were the one posing the questions.

However, those afternoons didn't necessarily mean I was headed for a life as a reporter.

For nearly two years, I collected empty pharmaceutical products so I could pretend to be a pharmacist. I acquired boxes full of empty

pill containers, cough syrup bottles, packaging from first aid supplies, you name it. No ailment anyone could've had that I couldn't have pretended to treat.

When my pharmacist career ran out of steam, I opted to pursue medicine. I lined up all my dolls in crates, and began running a hospital for sick dolls.

Then there is the time I informed my parents I wanted to become an orca trainer when I grew up, though this wasn't something I could pursue at home.

In sum, I had a lot of interests.

I think the interests you have as a kid, to some extent stick with you in life. And to my great delight, so does Grace Slick, singer of

Jefferson Airplane.

In her biography, she said young people frequently approach her with the same worry: they have no clue what to do with their lives. While recalling these instances, she smiled, and said she tells them to do what they were doing when they were five.

It's a lighthearted way of looking at things, but chances are you've harbored a soft spot for the interests you inherently gravitated toward when you were young. Winding up returning to these outside of a fantasy world, make a job seem like a natural fit.

Now, I owe this story a disclaimer: I don't consider this an excuse to bombard kids with career and goal-

setting jargon. Nor do I think kids should be asked to visualize where'd they'd like to be in 15 years. I think we should let kids draw us back into their worlds, rather than prepping them early on to join ours.

So here I am, having found my way back to my early interests.

Initially, trading in the university lifestyle (think no classes before 10 a.m., post-midnight food-runs and weekends starting on Thursdays) has taken some getting used to, but thankfully there is a vast supply of coffee in and around the office.

Despite the lifestyle, I did earn a degree. This past November, I graduated with an honours degree in political science from the University of Toronto.

But enough about me, this paper ultimately is about you - it is about your stories, your events, your debates, and your lives. I hope you will let me in on those, and that you'll approach me with what's on your mind. I'm looking forward to it.

Pleased to meet you.

Police offer five main reasons why drivers crash in winter

During Friday's snow storm, OPP officers investigated 918 collisions on Provincial highways in the Golden Horseshoe.

More than half of the crashes involved single-car drivers losing control and spinning into the guide-rails or ditch, OPP reported. While many people stayed home, or took transit, there were still too many drivers and vehicles unprepared for winter conditions. Almost all of the collisions were completely preventable.

The well-publicized storm was not a surprise, they maintain.

The heavy winter weather is continuing this week, and promises to pose a significant challenge to motorists. To help prepare motorists, police have compiled the following list of the five main reasons drivers have crashed this winter:

- Speeding too fast for conditions. This is the main reason, by far, that people crash. The speed limit is for "ideal" conditions, yet police still see drivers attempting to do 100 km/h in ice and snow, just before they crash.
- Following too close. In winter conditions, stopping distances increase two to

four times. Whether the road has dried salt/sand, is wet, icy, snow-covered, or a combination of all, police recommend that motorists leave a six-second delay between their vehicle and the one they are following.

- Harsh braking, steering or throttling. Slippery roads demand smooth, gentle application of brakes, steering and the gas pedal to prevent loss of control.

- Not knowing what to do if the car starts to slide. If your car does start to slide, look where you want to go, not at what you don't want to hit. Remember, if your vehicle

has anti-lock brakes (ABS), you can still steer with your brakes on.

- Not being prepared. In the last storm, police responded to more than 100 stranded motorists. Make sure that you have warm winter clothes with you. Your vehicle should be fitted with a set of four winter tires, in good condition. Your car should be mechanically well maintained, and thoroughly cleared of snow before you set out. On long journeys, pull over at service centers to clean ice and snow from your wipers, lights, signals, and top up windshield fluid.