

Potomac Airfield Newsletter - May 2007

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And the Forces of Truth & Goodness

AN OPEN DEMOCRACY DEPENDS on 'Loyal Opposition' to keep in balance government's otherwise unbounded, enthusiastic, well-meaning inclination to incrementally meddle into people's everyday lives over every silly little thing. *Thus my role in life becomes clear.*

Because Potomac Airfield lies close to the headwaters of national policy on so many levels; whether we like it or not, Potomac ends up serving as a regulatory and policy R&D lab. Among many notorious activities, this is also where we developed SuperAWOS (aka 'More than AWOS'), that 'artificial intelligence' that speaks to pilots on unicom.

As our systems sprinkle into airports across the USA, on occasion I'm at aviation conferences where FAA is promoting its "Runway Safety Program." To sharpen the efficacy FAA's noble cause, I ask, "Where is the balance? Where is the Loyal Opposition?"

Therefore, to serve the public, to provide balance and focus, I am hereby, officially

OPPOSED TO RUNWAY SAFETY

I say, "Enough with safety!" It's those near misses that keep pilots on their toes. Take all the sport out of it and no one will pay attention anymore.

Will no one else join me and speak out?

RAISING CHILDREN...BUT WHY?

Devoted parents rarely ask, "Why?" Not "Why are we parents?" That's a biological imperative driven by the practical necessity to generate offspring to take out the trash and do the dishes.

I mean, "Why are we devoted?"

Concern for our children's' education and welfare is generally a good thing, but in our relentless attention to their ever-increasing needs, we undermine attention to our own whims, wants, and, most important, *our lavish indulgences.*

We aircraft owners face the most difficult choices: "Our childrens' medical bills, or a GPS upgrade?"

Because decent parents rarely take time for themselves, legislative action is needed. I therefore propose a new Federal program that I call,

"EVERY Child Left Behind"

Under EVERY CHILD LEFT BEHIND, as a matter of law parents would be required to go out for a pleasant evening now and again, without burden or responsibility, *or face regulatory enforcement.*

Matching childrens' regulations would *require* they be abandoned for brief periods, in locations of *reasonable* safety, teaching them to fend for

themselves. Struck by their first pangs of hunger they would find the strength to open the peanut butter by themselves. "Mommy, I'm really hungry but I can't open the peanut butter, could you help me, Mommy?"

"BOSH" I say, "Grow some muscles."

DO THE WRONG THING

Winston Churchill said "Government will always do the right thing, AFTER exhausting every other possibility."

These words offer a mandate for government to serve the public by doing all the *wrong* things *with utmost vigor*; the more foolish and more fervently the better, *just to get it over with so we can move on.* Quickly implementing the worst of all possible actions serves to hasten the eventual emergence of more rational solutions.

Historically this approach has given us certain marvels of human ingenuity, such as the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, and the guillotine.

Perhaps just one more try...

Therefore, if you find yourself momentarily despondent by some mindless bureaucracy's apparent determination to keep performing and defending the ridiculous to utter exhaustion, I say rejoice; for what may appear as nothing more than just

another belligerent, destructive, self-justifying initiative, *may in fact be the first great leap toward a better tomorrow!*

STORY TIME Once upon a time...

After the terrifying events of 911, the airspace over Washington DC was administratively closed because no one knew what else to do.

An un-named person, who happened to own an airfield near the nation's capital, and a Cessna Skymaster, a rather dashing and good looking fellow, about 6ft tall, curly black hair, size 10 ½ shoes...; about 6 lbs heavier than he would like, well, *that* fellow, and one of his many unusual acquaintances* were having lunch one day in a discrete corner of a discrete Bistro downtown...*discretely*.

(*Okay, I know there is at least ONE person reading this rolling your eyes. Relax, *not to worry*).

Over canapés, this un-named first person said to his un-named friend, at the undisclosed location, *"The fundamental problem is that under Presidential Decision Directive 62, the White House was concerned that during an emergency the bureaucracies might become deer in the headlights, so PDD 62 gave Secret Service special emergency authorities. When those special authorities kicked in on 911, FAA abdicated the statutory authority over airspace that was given to it, through Congress, by the People of the United States, to manage their resource."*

Sometimes *he actually talks like that*.

He continued, *"My Evil Plot to rectify this problem is to credibly position a real national security agency to threaten to take away the FAA's authority over NCA airspace, which FAA has been all too willing to abdicate. This challenge will force one of two inevitable outcomes: Either FAA will formally pass its authority to others more familiar with special operations, whereupon the special IFF procedures appropriate in the NCA area become child's play; or alternatively, FAA will re-affirm and then resume exercising the authority given to it by the people of the United States as originally intended."*

He gently dabbed his napkin on his chin, *"Either outcome would be acceptable."*

I think he even paid for lunch...

I've got a few more stories like that...

HERE'S ANOTHER GOOD IDEA

My belief is that the current outcry against FAA's proposed user fees may be less routine grumbling about more taxes, and more a public outcry against FAA's delivering such a poor return on its investment of the public's funds. Such mismanagement in private industry gets people fired; in some countries, a firing squad; in the USA you get *re-authorization*.

By analogy, North Korea builds empty office buildings to show 'progress;' *its citizens eat grass*.

FAA spends billions on the MLS system, and then throws it away; *airline passengers fight over peanuts*.

North Korea hostages the West with nuclear threats to pay for their own accumulated economic follies,

FAA threatens users fees....

I'm not saying FAA is North Korea, *not exactly*; merely that analogies sometimes offer useful insights.

SIMPLIFY, SIMPLIFY, SIMPLIFY

Under a 'pay as you go' system we could simplify airspace and regulations *considerably*. For example, all airspace definitions, rules, regulations, and maps could be replaced by simple prices: "Class B" airspace becomes "\$24.95," "Class D" by "\$2.95" etc.

Like a menu, the user gets to pick.

To reduce overhead yet keep everyone at FAA employed, FAA salaries and benefits could be replaced with 'Letters of Marque,' granting broad privateering rights, freely negotiable on the open market. Former FAA employees would be encouraged to sell their services, or interference, to the highest bidder, thereby eliminating all overhead to taxpayers.

Similarly, NAS system capacity could be immediately expanded by mandating all pilots get qualified for *close-formation* flying; in a reasonable period of time; *say two weeks*.

Reducing enroute and terminal separation from 5 miles and 3 miles down to the same values but in feet, would squeeze more aircraft into the same airspace at no cost to passengers.

EXCAVATIONS UNDER FAA HQ

Not widely known, there are actually archeological excavations taking place beneath FAA headquarters. FAA has begun digging in search of its original objectives, believed buried deep beneath the building's foundations.

They've broken through many layers of rare earth minerals; *Confusium*, *Bewilderium*, large shafts of *Confoundium*, and *two* nearly impenetrable layers of calcified *Luddite*, which took *repeated* demolition charges to penetrate.

Beneath the most ancient layers, archaeologists have found a mysterious, dust covered 'Common-Sense' machine. No one at FAA recalled ever seeing one before; no manuals could be found, and so no one knew what to do.

The Common-Sense system's only feature was a button marked 'ON.'

After months of review, FAA finally established a process for a decision matrix, tasked to clarify authority over ON, verses OFF, as well as oversight for verifying ON vs OFF. Pending final pre-decisional review by the Chief Counsel, *late one night a janitor simply pressed the ON button*.

Almost immediately, common-sense began to gush forth. Concerned that common-sense might fill the entire building, certain people began to frantically search for how to shut the 'darn thing down. The funny thing is, *Common-Sense machines never have an OFF button*.

David Wartofsky