

A poke in the eye

July 10, 2010

I hope you enjoyed your 4th of July holiday weekend. You might be interested to know, however, that while you were celebrating this country's independence, our former colonial masters in England were busy poking us in the eye by orchestrating a colossal insult. You see, the British government picked July 4 to appoint BP's former CEO Lord John Browne as its new efficiency czar.

Tom Bower of the Daily Beast reports that "Browne is widely blamed for the drastic cuts of BP's safety and maintenance program of its oil installations in the U.S. while he was BP's CEO between 1998 and 2007. The consequence of those cuts were three major accidents in the U.S. — an explosion at the Texas City refinery in 2005, two oil spills in Alaska in 2006; and the current catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico."

To make matters worse, Browne is known for giving a speech at Stanford University where he labeled BP as "Beyond Petroleum—the world's most environmentally friendly oil company."

According to Bower, cutting costs was Browne's obsession. "His philosophy was more for less — 100 percent of a task would be completed at a cost of only 90 percent of the previous resources ... He ignored warnings about the consequences of his draconian cuts ... Instead of specializing in oil engineering — needed to minutely supervise the sub-contractors working on Deep Horizon in the Gulf — Browne pursued financial engineering to fulfill his ambition."

Touting this guy as an "efficiency czar" makes it look like the British government endorses his management

style. Given the current state of affairs in the Gulf, that's an insult to every American — particularly on the 4th of July.

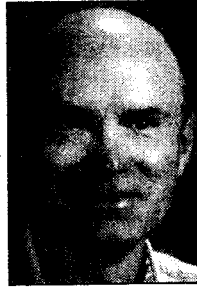
Oh well, July 4 is often celebrated as America's birthday, so perhaps some items about births might be of interest. Did you know nations in Asia are experiencing record low birthrates? Experts worry that some countries might run out of workers in the future if this trend continues, noted an article in USA Today.

This year, 2010, is setting up to be one of the lowest birthrate years on record, and you can blame it all on the tigers. No, not the Detroit variety — the zodiac variety. See, 2010 is the Year of the Tiger in the Chinese Zodiac. Children born under the sign of the tiger are believed to be "fierce and bring harm to their families." Many potential parents are opting to wait rather than deal with a fierce child.

If this theory is true, someone needs to find these fierce children and have the Detroit Lions draft them.

That situation is a bit different from the one developing in Puerto Rico. As of July 1, birth certificates for the 5.5 million island natives were invalidated. All those born on the island plus 1.35 million who live on the mainland must apply for a new birth certificate.

Why? Well, the record keeping in Puerto Rico (a U.S. territory) is such a mess that birth certificates have been multi-copied, duplicated,



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counterfeited, and black marketed. The documents are so worthless now that Nevada and Ohio won't even recognize them as valid when a person applies for a driver's license.

So, according to USA Today, the Vital Statistics and Record Office in Puerto Rico will require every citizen to obtain a fresh, new birth certificate. Remember now that this is the same agency that hasn't

been able to get a handle on all the bogus certificates in the first place. And, people will be able to apply for a new birth certificate by mail or online even though "there is nothing in the process to prevent replacement of illegally obtained birth certificates."

Gee willikers, there's no chance of this becoming a huge boondoggle, eh? I can't wait for the first report about a Spanish speaking person being stopped in Arizona and asked to produce documents and handing over one of these birth certificates. Is the person indeed Puerto Rican ... if so being born in a U.S. territory makes that person an American citizen ... but is the new document based on an original, illegally obtained one that was renewed by mail under the new law?

Finally, the world has gone bonkers and I can prove it! I'll bet most of you partook of some traditional 4th of July picnic fare over the holiday — hot dogs, potato salad, burgers, pickles, Jell-O with unidentifiable little thingies embedded inside. What I'll bet you might have missed is

one of the "50 Fattiest Foods in the States" (one from each state) from the list put together by Health.com. These are dishes with "huge portion sizes, super-high calorie counts, or sky-high fat content." My question is: "How disgusting must a thing be before Americans refuse to eat it?"

Take the Luther Burger from Georgia, for example. It's a ground-beef patty, topped with cheese and bacon between two Krispy Kreme doughnuts instead of a bun. The two glazed doughnuts are worth 24 grams of fat and the patty is another 16.

Or how about the Indiana fried-brain sandwich made from pork brains? It's a brain on a bun with pickles and onions and a fat content of 24 grams.

Not to mention Michigan's entry on the list, the BLT at Tony's Restaurant near the Birch Run outlet mall. It's the world's most artery-clogging BLT and contains over 20 strips of bacon, lettuce, tomato, and bread. It weighs in with a whopping 192 grams of fat.

You can see pictures and ingredients of all 50 monstrosities at <http://www.health.com/health/gallery/thumbnails/0,,20393387,00.html>. This is a family newspaper so I won't tell you what the delicacy from Montana is, so you'll have to look that one up by yourself. I have to tell you this, however. I've been to Montana, I've actually sampled these unique treats, and they most definitely do not taste like chicken.

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