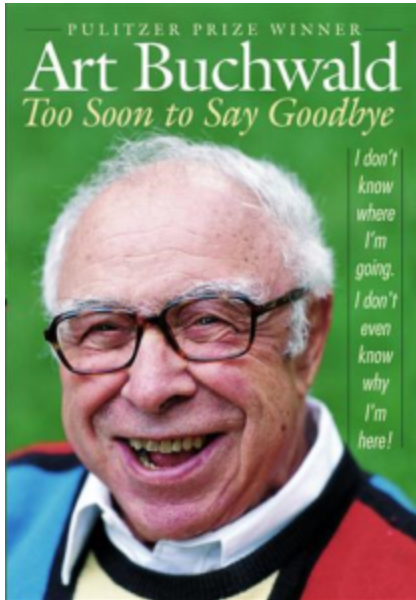


POST

# How the Clean Air Act will be Changed

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When we think of how the Clean Air Act will be changed I think we envision some powerful and influential person, who understands the Clean Air Act much better than we do, giving a rousing speech before Congress that convinces Congress that an update is needed. That's not however how the Clean Air Act will be changed. Here is a much more likely scenario:

*“Chris’s 5-year old will wet the bed at 3:34 a.m. one night. Chris won’t be able to go back to sleep and will jot a note on his nightstand about an idea for updating the Clean Air Act. When Chris gets to work he will write an email to Jed. Jed will think, “that’s a great idea, I’ll put it in a presentation.” John will be at the presentation and will be encouraged that others are thinking about the Clean Air Act. Afterwards John will call Jennifer, “Hey Jennifer, I remember you wrote a paper on the Clean Air Act a few years ago—I just heard someone with a similar idea”. Jennifer will then be encouraged to start writing again. Jennifer’s newest blog entry will be read by a Congressional staffer who at that moment in time is preparing questions for a Congressional panel. One of the Congressional panelists, Carlos, will then answer the question that a few months later convinces a Congresswoman that she should sponsor an amendment to update the Clean Air Act.”*

That’s how the Clean Air Act will be changed.

Question: In the above proximate chain of events, would the Clean Air Act have been changed but for Chris, Jed, John, Jennifer, or Carlos? The answer is no. It would not. I’m sorry this will not come with fanfare and praises for jotting a note at 3:30 am, sending an email, or encouraging someone to write about the Clean Air Act again. It’s just not how it works. Two comments on this though. First, you can’t take worldly praise with you anyway—and none of us are going to be here for very long—it’s just a fact. And second, praise can be one the biggest impediments to what I think we truly want (e.g. the peace and joy that comes in part with the removal of pride and self). Moreover, the greatest thing is this. All of the fun and reward is in the doing, not in the achieving. Anyone run or walk a 5k? Is the fun in crossing the finish-line, or in the doing? The fun is along the way. It’s in the doing!

Anyone remember Art Buchwald, the columnist from the Washington Post? Here is a short story he wrote about a taxi ride with one of his friends. As you can see his friend has figured out how the world can be changed. And what's really interesting about this story is to think about the ways in which his friend is being changed and rewarded through this experiment.

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### ***The Impossible Dream? By Art Buchwald***

*I was in New York the other day and rode with a friend in a taxi. When we got out my friend said to the driver, “Thank you for the ride. You did a superb job of driving.” The taxi driver was stunned for a second. Then he said: “Are you a wise guy or something?”*

*“No, my dear man, and I’m not putting you on. I admire the way you keep cool in heavy traffic.”*

*“Yeah,” the driver said and drove off.*

*“What was that all about?” I asked.*

*“I am trying to bring love back to New York,” he said. “I believe it’s the only thing that can save the city.”*

*“How can one man save New York?”*

*“It’s not one man. I believe I have made the taxi driver’s day. Suppose he has 20 fares. He’s going to be nice to those twenty fares because someone was nice to him. Those fares in turn will be kinder to their employees or shop-keepers or*

waiters or even their own families. Eventually the goodwill could spread to at least 1,000 people. Now that isn't bad, is it?" "But you're depending on that taxi driver to pass your goodwill to others." "I'm not depending on it," my friend said. "I'm aware that the system isn't foolproof so I might deal with 10 different people today. If, out 10, I can make three happy, then eventually I can indirectly influence the attitudes of 3,000 more." "It sounds good on paper," I admitted, "but I'm not sure it works in practice." "Nothing is lost if it doesn't. It didn't take any of my time to tell that man he was doing a good job. He neither received a larger tip nor a smaller tip. If it fell on deaf ears, so what? Tomorrow there will be another taxi driver whom I can try to make happy." "You're some kind of a nut." I said. "That shows you how cynical you have become. I have made a study of this. The thing that seems to be lacking, besides money, of course, office what a good job they're doing." "But they're not doing a good job."

"They're not doing a good job because they feel no one cares if they do or not. Why shouldn't someone say a kind word to them?"

We were walking past a structure in the process of being built and passed five workmen eating their lunch. My friend stopped. "That's a magnificent job you men have done. It must be difficult and dangerous work." The five men eyed my friend suspiciously.

"When will it be finished?"

"June," a man grunted.

"Ah. That really is impressive. You must all be very proud." We walked away. I said to him, "I haven't seen anyone like you since *The Man of LaMancha*." "When those men digest my words, they will feel better for it. Somehow the city will

*benefit from their happiness.” “But you can’t do this all alone!” I protested. “You’re just one man.” “The most important thing is not an easy job, but if I can enlist other people in my campaign...” “You just winked at a very plain looking woman.” I said. “Yes, I know,” he replied. “And if she’s a schoolteacher, her class will be in for a fantastic day.””*

For more information on the SIP transformation effort, see

<http://www.sipreform.com> (<http://www.sipreform.com>) and blog at

<http://www.sipreform.wordpress.com> (<http://www.sipreform.wordpress.com>).

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