



Life in the other

LANE

Now before you get all crazy and think I've lost a couple deuces, I want you to understand that I've given this a lot of thought. Matter of fact, I truly believe that we have reached the point of diminishing returns. Anyone that knows me understands that I'm normally not this emphatic but I think you'll agree with me on this one. The only thing that remains is who/how/what we are going to do about it.

Think about it, can you go anywhere these days without feeling compelled to comment on it? NO! Is it happening everywhere? YES! Do you feel just a little bit ticked off when you get caught doing it yourself? DEFINITELY! And conversely, isn't there some smug satisfaction after you've gotten away with it? ABSOLUTELY!

When you stop to consider all the other things that one must contend with in the course of a day, this one really puts the icing on the cake of discontent. The commuter has to deal with all those other commuters twice a day. (He also has to deal with lane closures due to road construction but we won't go into that one again.) The shopper has to deal with a 20% increase in his food bill because of the drought or because the grocery store man has decided, like gas station owners of yore did, to take advantage of the teeniest crisis to line their pockets. Golfers have to contend with a 2 hour wait at the first tee. Long Islanders have to pay a utility company that spent billions of dollars constructing a nuclear power plant that will never go on line, the second highest electric rates in the nation. Everyone, everywhere is attempting to cope with the reasonable disposal of heaps of garage. The voting age public is attempting to define the issues in this presidential campaign and then fervently praying they don't include a re-run of a nominee's aberrant social behavior. Good grief, when you stop to think about it, the peregrine falcon is better off than we are and he's almost extinct!

Developing a strategy to turn this thing around is not as easy as it may appear. After all, we have been brain-washed all these fifteen odd years into believing that it really was a good idea. Madison Avenue has had a field day coming up with soft sell after hard sell. But you know what? I've never been a believer and I bet I'm not alone out there. In effect those that make the rules have told all the players if they don't like it they can go scratch, which is a little like, "It's my ball and if you don't play my way I'll take my ball and go home."

There have been a few brave ones out there

so far, a few that have turned their back on the game and opted to retire from the competition. I give them a lot of credit, it was a gutsy thing to do. The trick now is to convince the others, still in the game, that the rules stink and there is probably better sport in their own backyard. Unfortunately, only a handful of those pioneers are here on the East Coast so it's become downright treacherous keeping track of the rules as we skip from backyard to backyard. The Umpires, well versed in the rules, are also humorless these days. They usually position themselves right on the boundary line, knowing full well that more than a few over enthusiastic players will be unable to adjust to the rule change quick enough. The penalties are severe. In football, unsportsmanlike conduct levies a fifteen yard penalty. In this game the minimum fine for the same infraction is triple that!

Well I'm tired of attempting to make all those adjustments every time I need to pass through someone's backyard. I'm tired of having to employ the services of a stupid little black box that does nothing more than emit an irritating little beep whenever I approach foreign soil. I'm tired of my foot employing a conditioned response, even when I'm playing by the rules. I'm tired of always feeling guilty. So, I'm gonna write Mario a letter and it's going to say:

Dear Mario,

About this 55mph speed limit...