

A BILLION

How much is a billion??

A billion is a difficult number to comprehend, but one advertising agency did a good job of putting that figure into perspective in one of its recent releases:

A billion seconds ago it was 1959.

A billion minutes ago Jesus was alive.

A billion hours ago our ancestors were living in the Stone Age.

A billion dollars ago was only 8 hours and 20 minutes, at the rate Congress spends it.

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Texas Inmate's Execution Blocked

HUNTSVILLE, Texas (AP) - After a flurry of late appeals, a federal court blocked the execution of a man convicted of strangling a 3-year-old boy, agreeing that his claims of mental retardation should be reviewed.... (8/7/03)

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Please read... very important stuff about car theft!

It seems that car thieves have found another way to steal your car or truck without any effort at all. The car thieves peer through the windshield of your car or truck, write down the VIN number from the label on the dash, go to the local car dealership and request duplicate key based on the VIN number. The car dealer's parts department will make a duplicate key from the VIN number and collect payment from the thief who will return to your car. He doesn't have to break in, do any damage to the vehicle, or draw attention to himself. All he has to do is to walk up to your car, insert the key and off he goes to a local chop shop with your vehicle. You don't believe it? It IS that easy. To avoid this from happening to you, simply put some tape (electrical tape, duct tape or medical tape) across the VIN label located on the dash board. By law, you cannot remove the VIN number, but you can cover it so it can't be viewed through the windshield by a car thief. I urge you to forward this to your friends before some other car thief steals another car or truck.

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Cross Purposes: *A People Adrift: The Crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in America* by Peter Steinfelds -- <http://www.tnr.com/doc.mhtml?i=20030922&s=wolfe092203>

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Dallas/Fort-Worth

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Molly Ivins

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Lighting an idea candle vs. cursing the darkness

By Molly Ivins

Creators Syndicate

AUSTIN - It is insufficient to stand around saying, "I told you Iraq would be a disaster." Believe me, saying, "I told you so" is a satisfaction so sour that it will gag you when people, including Americans, are dying every day. I think our greatest strength is still pragmatism. OK, this isn't working -- now what? In an effort to be constructive, even in the face of a developing catastrophe, I have been combing the public prints in an effort to find something positive to suggest.

There is a general consensus on both the left and right that we need to get more people over there, take control

and fix the lights and water, for starters.

The more thoughtful advocates in the Do Something school, including Tom Friedman of *The New York Times* and David Ignatius of *The Washington Post*, favor a broader and more active coalition of international support and the legitimacy that would provide. Kofi Annan, a classy guy, had the grace to say after the bombing of U.N. headquarters in Baghdad, "The pacification and stabilization of Iraq is so important that all of us who have the capacity to help should help."

Secretary of State Colin Powell is now asking France, Germany and Britain to back a resolution in the United Nations that would bring in more international help. Some of the usual black-helicopter nuts insist, "But we must still be in control." Since the whole problem is that we're not in control now, that seems like a silly point.

Whatever -- in terms of the command structure, let's just get some U.N. troops over there. If it takes more American troops, I suggest we send more American troops, because letting Iraq degenerate into chaos isn't good for the Iraqis or us.

There seems to be general agreement on a second step as well: handing off power to the Iraqis themselves. I wince to report that this is already being called "Iraqification." Trouble is, we seem to be setting about it backward, by creating a national Iraqi council of our hand-selected choices and now giving some authority to these Cabinet-level types.

Wouldn't it make more sense to start at the local level? Why can't the Iraqis hold mayoral elections and go from there? (I know, they tried to do it in Najaf in June, but Paul Bremer stepped in and canceled the election -- another mistake.)

A mistake we can avoid is Ahmed Chalabi. Chalabi, head of the exile group called the Iraqi National Congress and also a convicted swindler, was the neo-cons' darling before the war. He is the right wing's oddest foreign enthusiasm since the time they took up that dingbat killer Jonas Savimbi in Angola.

Chalabi is widely reported to be the source of much of the massively bad intelligence that the administration relied on concerning weapons of mass destruction and other subjects. Apparently no one in the administration had ever come across the common wisdom about not trusting exile groups. One would think that Chalabi's untrustworthiness would be clear to all by now, but there are still a few true believers.

Some in the "I'm trying to be constructive" camp are advocating the reconstitution of the Iraqi army on the grounds that much of it did not fight for Saddam Hussein anyway. That seems to me a more problematic enterprise.

The army was surely the most Baathist of all of Saddam's institutions. Perhaps if one started with the privates and didn't go very far up, one could avoid the real Baathist thugs.

I found a useful idea buried in a *National Review* article by John O'Sullivan, after wading through many paragraphs of silly, tendentious left-bashing. Boy, does he not get why many of us opposed this war.

Anyway, he presented an idea that he said comes from Pamela Hess of UPI: a short-term public works program, paying young men \$5 a day to rebuild infrastructure. "Given that the devil makes work for idle hands, that would be a security program as well as an economic program."

Sounds smart to me. We're paying Halliburton \$1.7 billion to go in and fix things, but private companies obviously don't want to send their people into an active war zone. Why not pay the Iraqis, instead?

If worse comes to worst, we can always follow Sen. George Aiken's solution for Vietnam: "Declare victory and go home."

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Last November, the voters of Missouri rejected a referendum to allow concealed weapons in the state. This past session of the legislature the same law was passed by the Legislature. Governor Holden vetoed the bill. Last

month, the Legislature over rode the veto and it becomes legal to carr a concealed weapon in Missouri this month.

This morning (10/2/03) the Post Dispatch has a front page story sabove the fold saying that Anheuser Bush will no longer donate to Governor Holden because of his veto.

A-B drops support of Holden over guns Below is the link to the story:

<http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/news/stories.nsf/News/F362F9633DE17F7586256DB3001354C6>

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True or false?

Take this true or false quiz, and see just how much you really know. The answers are at the bottom, do not cheat.

Apples, not caffeine, are more efficient at waking you up in the morning.

Alfred Hitchcock didn't have a bellybutton.

A pack-a-day smoker will lose approximately 2 teeth every 10 yrs.

People do not get sick from cold weather; it's from being indoors a lot more.

When you sneeze, all bodily functions stop even your heart!

Only 7% of the population are lefties.

40 people are sent to the hospital for dog bites every minute.

Babies are born without knee caps. They don't appear until they are two to six years old.

The average person over fifty will have spent 5 years waiting in lines.

The toothbrush was invented in 1498.

The average housefly lives for one month.

40,000 Americans are injured by toilets each year.

A coat hanger is 44 inches long when straightened.

The average computer user blinks 7 times a minute.

Your feet are bigger in the afternoon than the rest of the day.

Most of us have eaten a spider in our sleep.

The REAL reason ostriches stick their head in the sand is to search for water.

The only 2 animals that can see behind itself without turning it's head are the rabbit and the parrot.

John Travolta turned down the starring roles in "An Officer and a Gentleman" and "Tootsie".

Michael Jackson owns the rights to the South Carolina State anthem + the Beatles' songs.

In most television commercials advertising milk, a mixture of white paint and a little thinner is used in place of the milk.

Prince Charles and Prince William NEVER travel on the same airplane just in case there is a crash.

The first Harley Davidson motorcycle built in 1903 used a tomato can for a carburetor.

Most hospitals make money by selling the umbilical cords cut from women who give birth. They are reused in vein transplant surgery.

Humphrey Bogart was related to Princess Diana. They were seventh cousins.

If coloring weren't added to Coca-Cola, it would be green.

ALL OF THE ABOVE ARE TRUE.....