

When Green Was Just a Lovely Color

☒ There was a time when I heard the word “green” and I’d think immediately of grass, trees, St. Patrick’s Day and candies I usually didn’t like. Now, when I hear the word “green,” I immediately cringe.

I cringe because I’m sure that the reference to “green” is going to refer to some new-fangled idea which is intended to save hissing cockroaches or giant earthworms somewhere in the world but will not improve my life one iota.

Don’t get me wrong. I’m all for saving the environment. Before I bought a used SUV which gets pretty good mileage, I drove a used 1990 Honda Accord for 15 years and my husband is very proud to tool around the island in his 1995 Geo Metro. I defy anyone to get better mileage than he does in what he endearingly calls his “chick magnet.” It is red after all.

We actually recycle more than throw out and we feed the wildlife with scraps from the table and use biodegradable garbage bags. I schlep my reusable cloth shopping bags to the supermarket and donate lots of stuff to Goodwill instead of throwing things away.

Overall, I think we do our part. I’m sure to some, we don’t do enough. But, hey, what can I say.

Of course, we should have cleaner air to breathe; who doesn’t want that? But I have to say that some “green” products make you stop and wonder, “is this really worth it?”

For example, last year I read an article about some synthetic reusable shopping bags. After a “local environmental group” found potentially unsafe levels of lead in them, Rochester-based Wegman’s chain of 77 stores in several Eastern states

stopped selling two styles of these bags but said that the 750,000 bags already sold did not pose a health threat. That's reassuring. The problem comes when the bags wear out and their eventual disposal will cause the toxins in them to accumulate in landfills and create an environmental hazard.

I guess Sen. Charles Schumer, a New York democrat, doesn't have enough to do because he called on the FDA to open an investigation into the shopping bags. (This is the same Senator who urged the FDA to force the makers of Four Loko to remove caffeine from its alcoholic drink.)

Did you know that there was a 1992 law that regulates our showerheads? I didn't but apparently the law says that a showerhead can deliver no more than 2.5 gallons per minute at a flowing water pressure of 80 pounds per square inch. But now the Department of Energy is saying that a showerhead may incorporate "one or more sprays, nozzles or openings" which are interpreted to mean that all nozzles count as a single showerhead and could be deemed noncompliant.

The DOE, not surprisingly, says "when you waste water, you waste energy." Barbara Higgins, Executive Director of the Plumbing Manufacturers Institute says "one person's waste is another person's therapeutic use of water."

By 2014, the way we light our homes will change forever. The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, thanks to GOP Rep. Fred Upton and Dem. Rep. Jane Harman, imposes restrictions on energy use and greenhouse gas emissions and will phase out incandescent light bulbs in favor of lower-wattage, energy-saving bulbs. One of the replacements will be a CFL (compact fluorescent light bulb) which works when electric current energizes argon and mercury vapor, which, in turn, causes a phosphor coating inside the bulb to emit light. Yikes, mercury? Even though the amount is not hazardous to the inhabitants of a home, if a bulb breaks it has to be disposed of in a very specific way. An

accumulation of broken bulbs in a landfill definitely would cause a problem. So we solve a non-lethal problem with a lethal problem. What I find interesting is if Rep. Upton is so proud of this legislation, why doesn't it appear as part of his achievements on his website?

So now, after I stop cringing when I hear the word "green," I think, "Ok, how's the government going to intrude on me today? What's next? I'm already restricted to the type of light bulbs, refrigerators, toilets and showerheads I can purchase, what's next?"

I think Sen. Rand Paul summed it beautifully during his questioning at an Energy & Natural Resources Committee meeting about the notion of "pro-choice." He believed that most officials would probably be pro-choice when it came to abortion but not pro-choice when it came to the consumer's right to choose what's best for his household.

When I think of Al Gore's "green" money-making machine, and President Obama's pledge to spend \$150 billion over ten years to promote "green technologies," "green" still means one thing – "MONEY" and a lot of people will make a lot of it under the guise of saving the planet.

I don't get it, but I probably should.