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**FLORIDA WEEKLY**  
YOUR NEWS AND ENTERTAINMENT SOURCE

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# OPINION

## Having it THEIR way

It's high time Burger King follows the competition and agrees to pay a penny a pound more for tomatoes picked from the Immokalee area. After all, McDonald's and Taco Bell (Yum! Brands, Inc.) thought it was important enough to join the Coalition of Immokalee Workers to finally get pickers a little closer to a livable wage.

That penny a pound translates into 32 cents more per bucket of tomatoes picked, nearly doubling the wage for farm workers who toil in the fields to earn 45 cents for a bucket of tomatoes that weighs 32 pounds.

Today, just to earn minimum wage (\$5.85 per hour) workers must pick 3,328 pounds of tomatoes in an 8-hour day. That's a lot of burger garnish for \$46.80. It's also an annual salary of \$12,000 per year for 52 forty-hour

weeks, which wouldn't pay for a decent health insurance policy for a middle-class family.

But Burger King has dug in its heels.

In today's Florida Weekly, officials of the King said that they're not convinced the workers will get the money, that they already require vendors to pay workers according to the law, and that growers have threatened not to sell tomatoes to the King if they agree to pay the extra penny. The King has also said it has no relationship with the growers and buys its tomatoes from repacking vendors.

Weak arguments at best for a would-be corporate and community leader.

But the King did offer the coalition one thing. They agreed to train Immokalee farm

workers to work in their restaurants. That way they could earn minimum wage in air conditioning.

And if you think this is an immigration issue, it isn't. It's a human issue.

We all need to work towards bringing outdated labor practices into the 21st century. Farm workers are not modern slaves. They deserve a livable wage. They deserve protection against predator labor bosses. And they deserve our support.

The additional cost to Burger King for a wafer-thin tomato slice on a Whopper will insure that the lives of the often abused farm workers will get a little better.

McDonald's and Yum have put their principles into action.

Apparently, Burger King has too. ■

## The Iran exception

BY RICH LOWRY

When five American soldiers were killed at an Iraqi government building in Karbala in January, Democratic Sens. Chris Dodd and John Kerry erupted in outrage. They both knew one of the soldiers killed, a talented West Point grad. According to The Washington Post, his loss "radicalized Dodd, energized Kerry and girded the ever-more confrontational stance of Democrats in the Senate."

It turned out that Iran's Quds Force helped carry out the attack, providing training to the Shiite group responsible for it. So, the Iranians had effectively killed those Americans, but Dodd and Kerry have yet to become notably energized or radicalized about countering Iran's malign influence in Iraq.

Democrats angered at American casualties in Iraq can't summon more than pro forma denunciations of one of the main forces responsible for them. It's the Iran exception: Because our intelligence on Saddam Hussein's weapons was flawed and the Iraq War devilishly hard, Iran has practically carte blanche from half the American political spectrum to develop a nuclear

weapon, kill Americans in Iraq, pledge to wipe a nearby country off the map, arm dangerous militants throughout the region and take Westerners hostage.

These Iranian depredations usually evoke a steely Democratic resolve -- to oppose whatever measures the Bush administration might be contemplating in response. Sen. Dodd, a Democratic candidate for president (if you hadn't noticed), wrote President Bush a letter recently complaining about "increasingly bellicose public statements by United States officials." What was this reckless saber rattling?

It's hard to know. Maybe they are supposed to let these acts of war pass unremarked? Meanwhile, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack has been saying that "we're working on the elements of a resolution" for further sanctions on Iran, pending "ongoing discussions."

Scary stuff, no? It's hardly the equivalent of "Death to America," which Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad shouts at rallies in Iran.

Liberals like to say of the Bush administration's allegedly militaristic foreign policy that if the only tool you have is a hammer,

every problem looks like a nail. Likewise, if the only tool you have is dialogue, everyone looks like a reasonable interlocutor.

So it is that Columbia University could invite Iranian President Ahmadinejad to come speak on campus for, as President Lee Bollinger put it, "academic purposes." As if Ahmadinejad were merely a vehement participant in the graduate seminar "Jews and Arabs: Approaches Toward a Problem."

In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, the Democratic Party's foreign-policy views curdled from the expansive vision of John F. Kennedy to an inward-looking disposition tinged with paranoia about our own government. The Iraq War has had the same effect on Democrats, many of whom seem to consider the Bush administration a greater threat to peace than the mullahs in Iran.

Out in the real world, Iran is a deadly enemy of the United States. Diplomacy might change its behavior, but only if backed by serious sanctions, and perhaps the credible threat of force. That's the hard reality. The Iran exception cannot stand. ■

— Rich Lowry is editor of the *National Review*.

## GUEST OPINION

### Be wise if you fertilize



Denham

Imagine a Florida where swimming and fishing are banned every day due to water pollution. Imagine our economy, ecology and very way of life destroyed. The villain in this all too real scenario is POOR WATER QUALITY,

which can be directly and scientifically linked to excessive levels of nutrients, fertilizer being a principle culprit.

When nitrogen and phosphorus from fertilizers wind up in a neighborhood pond, canal, river or even a drainage ditch, these nutrients pollute the water, eventually finding their way into our bays and estuaries and feeding the algae that clog our beaches.

Many people fertilize without knowing the consequences. Fertilizer sales in the region increased 62 percent between 2003 and 2006. Taking action is vital.

We on the Lower West Coast Watersheds Subcommittee of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council are providing every community with tools to fight urban water pollution.

Last year, the SFWRPC unanimously

adopted a fertilizer resolution. This resolution, carefully reviewed by scientific peers, recommends the use of low phosphorus and nitrogen fertilizers where nitrogen is in slow release form. It also calls for no fertilizing at all during July, August and September. During our rainy season, fertilizer does nothing to enhance plants, washing directly into our waters.

Every community in Southwest Florida should adopt a Fertilizer Control Ordinance using our resolution as a guide.

Opponents tell us that fertilizers can do no wrong.

These opponents fail to recognize the science that clearly proves high nitrogen and phosphorus levels damage our environment. Our opponents say that "Best Management Practices" are good enough.

BMPs are a good reference and guide, but absolutely not enforceable. To be successful, we need for every county and every city in Southwest Florida to pass a Fertilizer Control Ordinance that can be enforced.

Opponents say that buffer zones are not important. A buffer zone establishes setbacks that tell property owners where they can fertilize within a certain distance of water. This makes practical environmental sense.

If you truly want to improve our water quality, you need to take action. Please contact your local City Council and County

Commissioners. Urge them to pass a Fertilizer Ordinance. On your own lawn, use only low phosphorus and nitrogen fertilizers if you choose to fertilize. Look for slow release or slowly available nitrogen.

This effort to "clean up our own backyard" will reduce pollution. It will also better position us to work effectively in Washington and Tallahassee. We need their support as we seek long-term solutions to protect water quality. Our local way of life depends on our ability to act as a region to rescue our water quality.

Think again about that fishing trip where no fish were caught. That day at the beach where our children were not able to swim because the water was declared unhealthy.

Each of us can be advocates to control water pollution by reducing our use of fertilizer. Massive amounts of algae still linger just off shore — a symptom that we cannot afford to ignore. Help us to improve our water quality. Contact your City Council and County Commission and become part of the solution today.

— Mick Denham serves as chairman of the Lower West Coast Watersheds Subcommittee, which is charged with examining urban effects on water quality for the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council. The first issue the subcommittee has been looking at is fertilizer. ■