B-1

Days of Tranquility: Polio's War Foothold

Once virtually eradicated, polio again stalks the Horn of Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. The innocent victims are mostly young children. The perpetrators are insurgents and indifferent governments. The polio resurgence is preventable and it is time to pull out an old but proven technique to halt its spread: Days of Tranquility.

This 30-year-old quaintly named tactic involves a negotiated ceasefire during which insurgents and governments allow humanitarian groups to reach children trapped by fighting and immunize them against infectious diseases, such as polio. Three areas [currently in desperate need of Days of Tranquility include:] Somalia and its border regions with Kenya and Ethiopia, the conflict zones of Syria, and along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

Skeptics might call the idea quixotic, especially considering the participants and the ferocity of the fighting, but the Days of Tranquility concept has succeeded before in the midst of deadly conflicts.

Successful implementation

Conceived and championed by the United Nations Children's Fund, or UNICEF, and its NGO partners, Days of Tranquility was first declared in El Salvador in 1985. James P. Grant, the executive director of UNICEF, persuaded the government of El Salvador and the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front to cease hostilities so that children younger than 5 could be immunized for several diseases, including polio.

There was a pause in fighting for one day per month for three consecutive months. More than 250,000 children were immunized. Days of Tranquility was used in El Salvador for six years, until the civil war ended, saving countless lives.

At the end of the 1980s in southern Sudan, the tactic was successfully implemented again. The Sudanese government and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement agreed to halt their fighting and allow UNICEF and its NGO partners to move around the conflict area immunizing young children. Countless lives, again, were saved.

(by Nancy A. Aossey and William Garvelink)

B-2

The Slow Death of the Newspaper

Do you pay for the newspapers you read, or do you get them free on the Internet? There's trouble ahead for newspapers because more and more of us are going online and taking advantage of free access to news. The fall in circulations is accelerating - down by another 2.5% last year - and advertising revenues are dropping, down a massive 7.5% in the same period.

Traditionally, newspapers make their money from advertising, and charge a low price to cover the costs of printing and distribution. Despite the much lower costs of distribution on the Internet, the electronic versions are not profitable because advertising revenues are much lower. As the websites are losing money, the print editions have to pay for them. In other words, the print editions are paying for the websites which are taking away their customers. How long can this go on?

Newspapers are responding in different ways. While the New York Times offers everything in the print version free online, The Economist website offers content that can't be found in the magazine. Visitors to the online edition can only see a small part of the content unless they subscribe for an annual fee.

However, what works for a specialist magazine may not be effective with a daily newspaper. If a single newspaper starts to charge for access to its site, readers are likely to switch to another that is still free. As a result, visitor numbers will go down and advertising revenue will fall further. So unless all the newspapers are willing to act together, which is unlikely, charging for access is not a solution to the problem.

(From Active Reading)

B-3

Free Speech in the Age of the Internet

Freedom of speech is considered a human right in many countries in the world. It is a right that is protected by the United States Constitution and by the constitutions of many other countries as well. However, some countries have limits on free speech and consider the US idea of free speech to be almost criminal. In the age of the Internet, when statements and video can be spread worldwide instantaneously, what direction will freedom of speech eventually go?

The US Ambassador to Libya was killed while violent protests took place in Libya, Egypt, and Yemen. Many people initially blamed the violence on a movie trailer posted on YouTube that was deeply offensive to Muslims. Others say the video was just an excuse used by angry people looking for a fight.

Even when people agree that certain speech-like the video on YouTube-is offensive and derogatory, they don't agree on whether it ought to be banned. While the UN secretary-general recommends limits on speech that's meant to "provoke or humiliate," the US president claims that "the strongest weapon against hateful speech is not repression, it is more speech." The only common ground seems to be the prohibition of speech that can incite immediate violence.

Many people seem to agree that freedom to criticize governments and to speak out against injustice is a necessity. However, there is much less agreement when it comes to blasphemy or hate speech. The international crisis in the Middle East plainly shows how strongly people on both sides of the debate feel about protecting the ugliest forms of speech.

In response to the violence, many condemned the US president for not banning the video even though US law does not give him the power to do so. While Google decided the video didn't violate its terms, it did restrict access to the video in Egypt and Libya. In Indonesia and other countries where the content violated the law, it was removed completely.

Like it or not, in the age of YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, the limits of free speech will be determined more and more by Internet companies than by governments. If web sites that serve as public forums remove content, do they have a responsibility to inform users or to justify their decisions? Should there be any limits on content that is posted? The battle over the future of free speech rages on.

(From All+ 互動英語 2013 1 月)

B-4

Intelligent Ignorance

As children, we are told many things about ourselves and our world. We are also implored to gain a good education, to learn as much as we can. While this can be positive, it also can be a curse. Given our darker nature, we often learn too much about what we cannot do, about why things are impossible, about why we should not even try to accomplish certain tasks. “Try to eliminate cancer?!? You know that will never happen.” “You want to be president someday? Come on! You don’t even clean your room when I tell you to. How can you expect to be president someday?” We then accept these negative restrictions and live a life of comfortable frustration, of being so-so, of being mediocre.

Sometimes, not knowing our limits is better for us. Sometimes, not knowing that something is impossible is an advantage. After all, the airplane, heart surgery, democracy, and equal rights for women were all things that were considered by “intelligent people” to be “impossible.” Yet, we enjoy the blessings of them today.

We sometimes need “Intelligent Ignorance.” What is it? Intelligent Ignorance is a state of not knowing what you cannot do. Therefore, you go ahead and do things right by yourself. It is this state of mindset that helped Henry Ford motivate his men to build the V-8 Engine when these men said it couldn't be done. It is this frame of mind that led Helen Keller (who was deaf and blind) and Nicholas Vujicic (who has no arms or legs) to be outstanding in our day. It helps us overcome challenges every day.

Aerodynamically, the bumblebee cannot fly but because it didn't go to the school of limiting thoughts, it does fly. Get educated today and use the Power of “Intelligent Ignorance” to do extraordinary things. Your desire and decision impacts your destiny. Let no one, including yourself, limit you. You have great power within you. Go and use it!

Written with information from:

Onuoha, Ifeanyi Enoch. (August, 2012). *The Power of Intelligent Ignorance.* https://www.facebook.com/notes/ifeanyi-enoch-onuoha/the-power-of-intelligent-ignorance/10151112937526855

B-5

Line App Grows in Popularity Worldwide

You're waiting for the MRT or standing on a street corner and glimpse over unintentionally at someone's smartphone. They're using an app, one that you see over and over, with wacky drawings, a cloud backdrop and lime green text bubbles. What is it though? It's called LINE, which is quickly becoming one of the most popular apps in the world for people to text, call, and share photos.

LINE was born out of tragedy though: after the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami in Japan during 2011, many power lines and cell towers were down. People who had used their cellphones to get in touch were now cut off from each other. This caused people to line up to use public phones, which inspired the app's name. Employees at the Internet service provider NHN Japan developed LINE and the app debuted in June 2011.

Line continues to be popular for several reasons: first, it lets people call and text someone who also has LINE without any charge. Second, it features a cast of colorful characters in oversized emoticons called "stickers" These cute characters have even jumped off phone screens into the physical world. Case in point: An entire MRT train in Taipei was recently covered in images of LINE's many characters to drum up interest for the app. Stuffed toy versions of the characters are sold in stores and hang off many a student's backpack. Most recently. LINE added a social media timeline, photo sharing and games, further drawing users into its world of green bubbles and goofy stickers.

(by 實用空中美語 2013 4 月)

B-6

Sweeter Isn’t Always Better

We are living in a dangerous age, not so much by what we do or where we go, but by what we put into our bodies. In the 1700s, people ate about four pounds of sugar each year on average, compared to today’s average of about 77 pounds. What’s worse is that half of the sugar we eat today comes in a form that is very unhealthy.

The problem is high fructose corn syrup, or HFCS. It is an artificial sweetener made from corn and can be found in a surprising array of foods that we consume daily. HFCS is very popular with food and drink companies because it is inexpensive when compared to regular table sugar, and it comes in liquid form. As a liquid, it is easier to handle, transport, and mix with food or drink.

To understand the real danger of HFCS, we need to look at what happens to different types of sugars in our bodies. Glucose, which is one type of sugar, enters the body, travels through our blood, and supplies the whole body with energy. Fructose, another type of sugar, heads straight to the liver. There, it is processed and turned into fat.

Consuming too much fructose overworks the liver and prevents it from functioning correctly. This then leads to dangerous diseases of the liver and heart, and even cancer.

A high amount of HFCS is an indication of poor-quality food that is not very healthy. If you want to live a healthier life, read the labels every time you visit your local supermarket and try to avoid products that contain a lot of HFCS.

(by 互動英語 2014 8 月)

B-7

The Chernobyl Liquidators

A plume of fatal radioactive smoke bursts into the sky. Pieces of melted nuclear reactors lie bare in the open, putting innocent workers at risk. This could be a scene in a horrific science fiction movie, but it's not. This was a reality nearly 30 years ago in Ukraine. The Chernobyl disaster shocked the world and ended up devastating the Soviet Union both politically and economically.

On April 23, 1986, workers were performing a systems test on Chernobyl's reactor 4 when there was a sudden energy surge. Workers attempted an emergency shutdown, but power levels spiked again, which caused steam vessels to rupture. Reactor crews were unaware of their immediate situation, as radiation detecting dosimeters malfunctioned. While an exposure of 500 roentgens per five hours is deadly, workers closest to the meltdown faced 200,000 per hour.

The effects of radiation from the disaster were not only immediate and destructive, but there has been far-reaching and irreparable damage as well. Rivers and groundwater were contaminated, and plants and animals suffered negative health consequences. Genetic mutations of all life, most notably in humans, have caused future generations in Ukraine and nearby Russia and Belarus to be burdened with deformities and illnesses.

The Soviet Union, which controlled Ukraine at the time, spent billions of dollars sealing the radiation leak and dealing with clean-up duties. The disaster, including a partial cove-up, exposed the USSR politically, embarrassed it technologically, and exhausted it financially. What's worse, energy source meant to empower mankind had released levels of radiation 400 times more powerful than that of the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in World War Ⅱ.

(by Geoffrey Trager – 實用空中英語)