

## **PERPETUAL MOTION ?**

by Ralph Liebing, RA, CSI  
Cincinnati, OH

We all know about perpetual motion, even if we don't know exactly how it works. The general impression is that the thing in perpetual motion keeps working on and on and on, somehow creating its own source of impetus to continuation of the motion.

Enough "scientific" explanation-- does it truly exist, or are there things that come close to being perpetual motion, Some children seem in perpetual motion for each of their waking hours--non-stop, unstoppable, and often of curiously low productivity; just motion for the sake of motion!

Well-designed machinery of various kinds comes close, too, to the more perpetual motion, creating in themselves the energy to maintain or reinforce the motion currently available.

Well, you know there are other "things" that are perpetuated, perhaps not eternally, but just moving (forward?) in some direction. Government is a good example of this as groups and agencies within every government spin-off ancillary "motions" for one reason or another, and seem to create for the sake of continuing existence.

Within this is hard-core activity encompassing things that "need to be done" (really may not be true in every case) and in face of that, someone to do those things. Where these things are done, new things arise, are caused to arise, or are created to require continued effort. Here we speak of the basic, entrenched staff of the government or organization that functions in spite of changes, scandals, continual changes in or lack of effective leadership, appropriate reinforcement, definitive direction, and meager goal setting--perhaps best said as a lot work and movement to maintain status quo!

Often when queried about this, the answers come much like those from the youngsters caught "in the act"--"because....." Unexplainable, but just "because".

Too often an autonomous operation is created and eventually the elected officers cannot re-direct or change the course of the staff--the movement involved is so engrained and so instilled in the minds of the workers that things move in "perpetual motion"! Left alone and to itself it will continue and will call upon the very leaders who lose control in the first place, for added substantiation and resources, to keep "the ball rolling".

A good analogy is fork-lift operators in some plants. They become so robotic and so entrenched that they often forestall any meaningful or necessary change in operations, and stymie new procedures, changed configuration, re-location of products, changes in scope, re-routings, etc. An operation intended to provide more rapid service operations turns out to be the very one that stops further innovation in the plants operation.

But, yes, the operators do expect increase in wages and benefits, and more control over their own operations--an innuendo of reprisal exists if they do not get their way.

While perpetual motion may have advantages and a certain "charm", in that it doesn't seem to need any motivation or maintenance; no upkeep or upgrading--it, like the battery bunny, just "keeps going". However, truth be known, it still really requires appropriate oversight, review, adjustment--perhaps insight and input--particularly where the human is involved. This is not just "stirring the pot" for the sake of doing something. This needs to be an objective process to ensure propriety, truth to mission, meeting of requirements, true responsive service, refreshment, updating, quality control and adjustment to changed circumstances.

Perpetual motion serving no good end is rather useless.

Perpetual motion is one thing; hard-core entrenchment and lack of productivity are quite different stories!