

"The Buck Stops Here"

The US Mint is again trying to persuade us that we, the American money spending public, really do want a one dollar coin.

Most of us still prefer paper, though it has three disadvantages. First. Counterfeiting. Today, you can produce a passable dollar with a cheap inkjet printer and a copy of Microsoft's Money Counterfeiting Software, which I believe is called Gates' Bills. Photocopying too has forced the Treasury to redesign paper money, deciding it could foil counterfeiting by producing bills that already look counterfeit.

Disadvantage 2, paper money isn't durable, a fact known to anyone who has found a worthless wad of tissue thin gray paper, with a faint image of Lincoln, in the pocket of a recently washed pair of Levi's.

Third, bills don't work in soft drink machines claiming to take dollars. Usually, the bill slides in, pauses for a moment as if the machine is thinking about whether to accept it, then slides back out, to the whirring sound of the machine taunting you. This will occur repeatedly until you convince yourself that you are no longer that thirsty.

Some years ago, the Mint gave us the now maligned Susan B. Anthony dollar. Because they were the same size as a 25 cent piece, the coins were often spent as if they were Susan B. Anthony quarters. I once mistakenly paid \$14 for a cup of coffee at a Starbuck's. Though I have adjusted to the steep cost of a mochaccino there, I still believe I seriously overpaid.

What an injustice to Susan B. by forever linking her with such a badly engineered coin. Had we known, we should have imprinted the dollar instead with a picture of, say, Claus von Bulow, and maybe on the back, with a picture of very uncomfortable pointy shoes.

This year, the mint gives us the new Golden Dollar, bearing the image of Sacagewea, who served as guide to Lewis and Clark. But have we learned nothing? The coin is almost identical in size to the Susan B. Anthony. The Treasury, though, is telling us not to worry, since they've made THIS coin yellowish gold instead. I don't know about you, but I'll still be reaching blindly in my pockets for change, and I'm afraid, I have no way to tell what yellow feels like.

I see only one benefit to the new coin. I pay \$105 a month to work out at my health club. I bet I could achieve the same cardiovascular benefits by just carrying around \$105 in coins for the 30 days. And at the end of the month, I'd still have my \$105.