

## N&O slashes expenses; howls when N.C. tries to do same

This is a Tale of Two Troubles, a newspaper in Raleigh and the United States in America. Both spent more money than they had. Sound familiar? A couple of years ago the Raleigh News and Observer woke up owing the banks two billion bucks and needed to cut spending as soon as possible.

Management did not hesitate. It was not a trim job with a little off the top and trim the side burns. It was a bloody massacre of firings,

### Media

### Meditations

by R.L. Taylor



“retirements” cut backs and “adjustments.” Gender was no guide. Male and female reporters, writers, editors and correspondents were fired.

Some husbands were their family's sole support and they got the gate too. There is no record of how many pregnant wives left the office crying. The N&O tried to do the right thing and gave the victims a sizeable “buyout” payment.

For a family with two kids with a home mortgage and car payments, it was only a quick little reminder that loyal employees were fired because the company spent two billion dollars they did not have.

The N&O did not stop there. It reduced the amount of news in the paper. The final insult was they not only printed less news, they shrunk the size of the pages from 15 to about 12 inches and said — in effect — “Take it or leave it.”

Finally, its official circulation figures dwindled so much it led me to believe it simply cut off customers too from Raleigh.

It was a bit bloody but the inside word today is the N&O is now breaking even.

Trouble #2: The United States woke up not long ago and learned it had spent trillions of dollars it did not have and needed to cut spending as soon as possible.

In Raleigh, the new Republican majority in the legislature tried to do just that. Instead of offering help with the same problem it had corrected, the News and Observer attacked every hint of cost reductions by the state.

The N&O squawked like a strangled duck and unleashed its favorite cuss word — GOP. The paper thinks GOP is short for a long list of bad things: Republican, evil, mean, heavy-handed, foreign agent, Ming the Merciless, Republican again, Scrooge, race baiter, union buster, day-to-day criminal and The Devil Himself. “GOP” is used in scare headlines for everything bad except sex offenders.

The state of North Carolina is in better shape than most but still broke. We ran out of money to pay another round of unemployment checks. That is reality.

Unemployment checks are a soft cushion. Americans have not suffered painful, serious unemployment in 80 years. The government has always stepped in to send a check to tide us over. But that was when we had money and we finally ran out of money.

The bad part lies ahead. When the school lunchroom budget dries up, and free lunches and breakfasts at schools are no longer available, welfare mothers will have to get up, cook breakfast and pack a lunch.

I've got two bucks that say the N&O will wail and scream and kick about that. They are good at holding on to their money but damned free with mine. I am a tax payer.

*R.L. Taylor is a regular contributor to this paper. A newspaperman for more than 60 years, he has worked as a reporter, editor and publisher.*

## Energy independence

By Don Lein

While energy independence is certainly a laudable goal which every president since Richard Nixon has promised us, it is being recycled in the current crisis with \$4 gas. President Obama recently visited Brazil and praised them for going from a nation that imported 77 percent of its oil to today where it imports none. Its domestic oil production has increased 876 percent with most of that production occurring in off-shore wells. It sounds like an oil policy known as “drill, baby, drill” which heretofore has been eschewed by Obama.

According to the Congressional Research Service we have 155 billion gallons of oil recoverable with existing technology, with another 700 billion in oil shale and other hydrocarbons. Instead of tapping those resources we are quixotically pursuing “renewable” sources. Our first major venture into that concept has been with ethanol, which any rational judgment would have to brand as an abject failure. It has proven to be non-competitive with existing fuels except when subsidized with billions of federal dollars. In addition, the diversion of corn from food production to ethanol has increased food prices around the world dramatically, while providing no benefit for the environment or U. S. energy security. What of the other alternatives we are pursuing and propping up with billions of dollars of federal support, namely wind, solar, biofuels, etc.?

Fortunately, we are behind the curve on this and can learn from Europe who embraced these alternate sources of energy and propped them up, also with their tax dollars. Europe has been hit with the double whammy of having to pay off their spree of welfare state spending and the coldest winter since 1683. The United Kingdom is typical with their ultra green policies having driven fuel costs through the roof, British pensioners rode busses or stayed in libraries all day to keep warm. Many parents had to chose warmth or food for their children. Unfortunately many died.

The plain truth is that Europe no longer can afford its green policies. It needs affordable and reliable energy sources, which wind and solar cannot provide. Britain is trying to revive the UK economy and cannot afford to lavish tax dollars on such uneconomical projects as wind turbines, biomass and small hydroelectric plants.

Britain literally has millions of jobs on the line with many multinationals looking for the most affordable locations.

Netherlands is reducing renewable energy targets and slashing wind and solar subsidies simply because they no longer can afford to pay exorbitant fees for the minimal amount of renewable electricity produced. Poland is trying to develop shale gas using newly developed American technologies, with drilling set to begin in Germany and Britain. In Slovakia they have stopped issuing solar licenses six months after they had begun. With reduced subsidies, solar

installations in the Czech Republic fell 76 percent, while in Spain they plummeted 98 percent. France and other countries are taking similar steps, while also expanding coal-based electricity.

The London Globe reported, “Austerity-whacked Europe is rolling back subsidies for renewable energy, as economic sanity makes a tentative comeback” and added “green energy is becoming unaffordable.” Indeed a report from Scotland found that renewable energy kills 3.7 traditional jobs for every “green” job it creates. European Energy Commissioner Gunter Oettinger indicated, “If we go for 30 percent of renewable energy we will have a de-industrialization in Europe ... we need industry.”

Private investors have stayed away from investing in renewable energy companies, because of the inherent risks of any new venture and the threat of removal of government funding. Economic sanity is forcing European governments into withdrawing their funding of these endeavors. They no longer can afford this luxury — can the U. S.?

It was Einstein who defined insanity as doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. Do we have the hubris to believe that we are that much smarter than the Europeans? We are betting our economic prosperity on the outcome.

*Don Lein is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. A Chatham resident, he is involved in a variety of civic organizations.*

## Trying to keeps guns away from psychos

By Julian Sereno

This Spring's Dixie Gun and Knife Classic in Raleigh came a few days after Gabrielle Giffords, continuing her miraculous recovery from being shot in the head by a murderous psycho, traveled to Florida to see her husband Mark Kelly lead the final mission of the Space Shuttle.

Walking into the Jim Graham Building in the State Fairgrounds — where you see the livestock during the State Fair — a pretty young mom was pushing a stroller with one hand and holding an assault rifle in the other. The space was filled with tables of guns and knives, ammunition and holsters, war memorabilia and assorted posters, T-shirts, etc. More firearms than I could imagine filled the building — in one booth, civil war era pistols and a vintage lever-action Winchester, straight out of a cowboy movie, for \$16,000. Another booth featured a large automatic pistol with a huge banana clip that fired shotgun shells. Other booths were filled with anonymous boxy black 9 mm. pistols, favored by police and mass murders alike, some for as low as \$299. Among these is the Glock 19, the same gun used by both Jared Lee Loughner in Tucson and Seung-Hui Cho at Virginal Tech.

The folks transacting business there were much like the folks you would see at the State Fair. Everyone was friendly and polite. Not a gang-banger, narco-terrorist or Al Qaeda wannabe in sight, other than as images on targets.

Years ago these folks got the right to get a permit to carry concealed firearms. Many feared at the time that this would lead to more gun violence. It hasn't.

The National Rifle Association, coincidentally meeting the same weekend in

Pittsburgh for the first time since the Tucson massacre, believes that the more law abiding citizens are armed, the more likely they will stop a shooting rampage before it starts.

This also has not happened. Not in Tucson, where many are armed; not anywhere else there has been a mass shooting. It shouldn't be surprising. Shooting starts before anyone can react. Gabrielle Giffords, who also owns a Glock 19, couldn't have gotten a shot off to defend herself, presuming she was carrying it.

Regulations have not worked. Buying rifles though mail order catalogs was banned after Lee Harvey Oswald sent away for the World War II era Italian rifle he used to murder President Kennedy. The assassinations of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy led restrictions on mentally unstable people and felons acquiring firearms. The attempt on the life of Ronald Reagan led to the background checks and a do not sell registry. But somebody can be on the terrorist watch list and still not get on the do not sell registry. Anyone who has dealt with a nutty neighbor or family member knows how hard it is for the psychiatric and legal community to make any kind of declaration of impairment. It's easier to get on the no-fly list than on the do not sell registry.

This is the problem. We need to get serious about keeping guns out of the hands of psychos.

Guns are here to stay, about 300 million, one for each and every person in the United States. The good folk of Dixie Classic Gun and Knife Show have their firearms. We hope that there are also good folk at the 5,000 gun shows that take place across the United States each year.

As an estimated 70,000 N.R.A members gathered in Pittsburgh, both local

newspapers featured full page advertisements featuring Gabrielle Giffords and the murdered students of Virginia Tech, Columbine and murdered police officers in Pittsburgh.

Let's hope it shames them into helping finding ways to keep firearms out of the hands of the worst of us. Unless they think the problem was that Gabrielle Giffords just wasn't fast enough on the draw.

*Julian Sereno is editor and publisher of Chatham County Line.*

# Has Your Voice Been Heard?

Send your Letter to the Editor to  
Julian Sereno,  
chathamcoline@  
mindspring.com