The cause of death

Media Meditations

by R. L. Taylor

When Steed Rollins retired in the mid-1980s, the Board of Directors of the Herald-Sun newspapers replaced him with a young executive from a Knight-Ridder paper in Georgia. At that time the Durham newspaper was more than halfway through a renovation project to modernize their entire system.

The most important improvement was going to be a new printing press to replace the out of date units in the press room in the basement. Well aware that a new offset press would cost at least $10 million Rollins had cautiously put away 55,000 shares of Cap Cities stock to pay for the replacement. The stock came from a legal settlement the newspaper had made in attempting to establish a television station.

The new man had permission to establish his own staff and brought in five young businessmen as his inner circle. The new man and all of his friends had MBAs – Masters in Business Administration degrees. None of them had ever worked for a newspaper before. That included paper routes. Only the new boss had actually worked at any newspaper.

He had an immediate fear that thousands of newspapers were being stolen by route drivers and truck drivers. He imported his own man to find the culprits and save thousands of dollars a year. Alas, the newspaper Sherlock Holmes could not find a single misplaced issue of any newspaper. He slinked off to Atlanta.

The paper had morning and afternoon delivery with separate editors and staffs. For some reason the new boss hired another editor to oversee the two editors he already had. The super editor also adds a small staff. I never figured out what he was supposed to do.

Then the new boss thought he had found the new location for the newspaper right down the street. Wasting no time he canceled the renovation project and brought in carload of Atlanta experts and spent about $50,000 only to learn he had no claim on the property.

Instead of returning to the old property he examined as many as 50 new building sites before he decided he would build a new facility on a four-lane speedway on the outskirts of town. He said the new building would be a beautiful sight that 60,000 automobiles could admire as they drove past every day. Unfortunately when the building was finished no one from the highway could see the building. Drat those trees.

The building itself only had a couple of flaws. Downtown there was a neat little restaurant downstairs at the newspaper building. It was full every day by customers from nearby businesses. Those people had no intention of driving anywhere for lunch. They merely walked across the street to eat.

The very expensive lunchroom in the new building was empty most of the time. There was also a massive meeting room for neighborhood gatherings. It was rarely used.

The boss tried to give the downtown property to North Carolina Central University for tax write-off but Central turned them down. The old press is still in the pressroom downtown. With a little grease and oil we could crank it up today if we need it.

The new business manager had more than he could handle, so he hired 22 clerks. Under Steed Rollins the business office had a business manager and four ladies.

But all those MBAs could not generate enough cash to stay in business. The paper started losing money, went broke and was sold. A new company came in and fired everybody.

What we have here is somebody who destroyed a newspaper by building a new building they did not need in a place no one could see for a staff that never worked at a newspaper because somebody needed 22 clerks to do the work of four people. Since MBAs were the only people in charge of this newspaper I suspect the MBAs might have had a hand in this disaster.

R.L. Taylor is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. He has been a newspaperman for more than 60 years, including serving as Vice President of the Durham Herald Company from 1981 to 1990.

Some political planks I'd be happy to vote for

by Julian Sereno

The primaries are in May and after that the candidates will be cranking it up for the November election. I am an unaffiliated voter, and I offer some suggestions to my Democrat and Republican friends. If you want this Independent's vote, put these planks on your political platform right here in North Carolina:

Adopt a homestead exemption law. No one should lose their house because they get sick. Health problems are by far the most common cause of bankruptcy in the United States. That means hospitals can't put liens on houses to squeeze money out of sick and dying patients. And no one should lose their house because their spouse died.

You can still lose your house if you don't pay the mortgage, or if you use it for collateral for a home equity loan, and don't pay it off. But citizens in states with homestead exemption laws have it a whole lot better than we do. There are seven such states and include California, which has a narrow law, and Texas, Oklahoma, Iowa, South Dakota, Iowa, Kansas and Florida, which have broad ones.

Why not check out some of their laws and then enact one here.

Reform drug laws. That means quit throwing people in jail for pot and let everybody who is in out.

Nationally, it is the most shameful human rights atrocity extant — 750,000 mostly brown or black people jailed for marijuana offenses which rarely involve jail time for the wealthy. Those numbers push our prison population into the same ball park as North Korea, China, and Iraq under Saddam Hussein.

Here in North Carolina, let's start by making pot legally available for medical reasons. Stop criminalizing cancer patients. Make it available to anyone with chronic pain, or suffering from seizures.

There is plenty of empirical evidence that various kinds of marijuana can help with all of those conditions with minimal side effects. But due to the power of the drug warriors, no formal research has ever been permitted that might find results that could contradict their arguments and threaten their budgets.

The other folks who do not want medical marijuana studied or legalized is Big Pharma, who worry that the hideously addictive Oxy-poisons that they push might start losing market share.

Let's see how other states that have legalized medical marijuana are sorting things out and design our laws accordingly. There are 20 such states plus the District of Columbia.

Be sure to keep an open eye and try to keep an open mind about Colorado and Washington State, where pot is legal for adults to possess and consume. At the very least, those states are saving tax dollars, $20,000–$30,000 a year for each stoner they don't lock up. In Colorado, the only place you can buy it in a store, revenue from sales tax on marijuana has far exceeded expectations. Tourism is up 30 percent, all attributed to marijuana tourists.

And consider. While Duke, NC State and North Carolina all made early exits from the NCAA tournament this year, teams from the two states with legal weed both made the Superbowl. Maybe it was something in the air.

Julian Sereno is editor and publisher of Chatham County Line.

Global Warming, R.I.P.

by Don Lein

Amidst the constant hearings about the calamitous outcomes of the White House policies, there was a breath of fresh air in the testimony of Patrick Moore, Ph.D., Chairman Emeritus of Greenspirit Strategies in Vancouver, Canada, before the Senate Environmental and Public Works Committee on February 25. Moore was the co-founder of the environmental activist group, Greenpeace, which he left in 1986 due to what he characterized as their "sharp turn to the political left."

After first stating "There is no scientific proof that human emissions of carbon dioxide are the dominant cause of the minor warming of the Earth's atmosphere over the last 100 years", he addressed the contention of the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that it is "extremely likely" that human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed warming. He characterized the term "extremely likely" as a non-scientific term because, in fact, established science refutes that assertion. He also questions their assertion that carbon emissions have any correlation, let alone causation for climate change. There may indeed be factors that influence warming/cooling in the atmosphere but we are not sophisticated enough to understand them, as yet.

According to Moore, science has established that when life evolved 500 million years ago, CO_2 was 10 times higher than today and life flourished, and 450 million years ago we had an ice age and CO_2 was again 10 times what it is today. He contends that the Earth had both higher temperatures and an ice age when CO_2 was 10 times what it is today. This contradicts the certainty that human caused CO_2 emissions are the main cause of global warming. He goes on to say that IPCC alleges that the warming from 1970 and 2000 was caused by human influence, whereas an identical warming trend from 1910-1940 goes uncommented upon. Irrespective of the cause, Moore hopes for more warming, since we live in a unusually cold period in the history of the earth and firmly believes that a warmer climate would prove beneficial for all the species that live on the Earth. He believes emphatically that any global cooling would be disastrous for human civilization.

While the right hand was hearing Dr Moore, the left hand was finding out in a Senate Armed Services Committee that President Obama has wasted $120 billion on global warming related projects over the last five years – remember Solyndra, etc. Undaunted, the White House promises 2014 will be a "year of action" on carbon emissions. However, instead of having a public debate on the issue and hearing the Dr. Moores, we have assertions that the opponents of these wasteful policies are "Flat Earthers" or similar to Holocaust deniers. We could learn from countries that have employed these questionable policies, i. e., cap-and-trade, renewable energy subsidies/mandates, such as the 27 nations that comprise the European Union. They pay on average twice as much as we do in the U. S. per residential kilowatt-hour of electricity, except in Germany where they pay three times as much.

The environmental alarmists have yet to tell us how much such a rise in energy costs will affect our economy. There are clearly negative economic impacts and the alarmists owe it to the public to explain what they are and explain why they are worth taking. It is not "flat-Earth" to demand to know the consequences of these proposed policies, economic and otherwise. As a case in point, the push for ethanol in our autos resulted, not surprisingly, in a steep rise in the global cost of corn and less supply to feed the world's hungry. People died to feed the environmental conceits of those who profit from environmentalism and more will surely follow unless we have an open debate of the issues.

It comes as a pleasant surprise, and indicates the fight for truth should not be abandoned, when Al Gore steps forward and confesses that his support of ethanol was "misguided." Let's hope that the truth will out, despite the obfuscatory efforts of the remaining "misguided" alarmists. We seem to have ample time since we are in a cool cycle and in January "global warming/climate change" was ranked 19th out of 20 issues in import in a Pew Research poll. However, if we knew the true costs of these "misguided" policies and the truth about the baseless "science" upon which it rests, it would surely merit a more prominent place in our deliberations. It should rank higher in our concerns simply because of the millions of victims who have perished unnecessarily, starting with Rachel Carson's mythology to today's policies, about which, at least Al Gore had an epiphany. Do progressives/leftists EVER think about the consequences of their policies or does form always take precedence over substance?

Don Lein is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. A Chatham resident, he is involved in a variety of civil activities.

Chatham Park — boom or doom?

Pittsboro's Mayor Terry asked, "Help us understand" the plan for Chatham Park. Chatham Park could be a boom to our area, but serious concerns exist about how fracking may doom Chatham Park by undermining its safety and quality of life.

Fracking pits are more dangerous than coal ash pits because:

• Fracking fluids flow easier into rivers, reservoirs and tributaries than coal ash sludge,

• Nondisclosure of toxic chemicals hinder first responders

• The quantity of fracking pits planned is significantly more than the 32 coal ash pits

• Pits are slated for only a 200´ setback from bodies of water sources including Jordan Lake Reservoir and its tributaries, much less distance than other states. Fracking is not planned in Chatham Park, but in areas surrounding it. Flooding or other incidents (such as the Dan River disaster) will easily allow toxic fracking chemicals to flow into Jordan Lake Reservoir and wells and contaminate Chatham Park drinking water.

In many states drinking water contamination has resulted in:

• Livestock safety issues: dying, born dead, quit producing milk, and tails have been falling off

• This water reaches our food chain and endangers our agricultural industry in Chatham County

• Homeowners' insurance is denied or will not cover fracking damage

• Title insurance and mortgages are denied or recalled

• Local roads have been destroyed by thousands of heavy fracking trucks.

• Water shortages

The EPA will not rule until 2016; permits in NC are scheduled to begin spring of 2015.

Out-of-state workers will flood our schools, and hospitals (with many uninsured) in Chatham. We will be stuck with the bill after they leave.

Knowing this, who would want to move into Chatham Park or put a business there? Would you?

Boom or Doom?

— Charles Ritter, Chatham

HAVE AN OPINION? AN ARTICLE?

Send your letters or columns to editor@chathamcountyline.org