

Shouting matches, manipulation killing the news business

The news business? How bad?

Sometimes it seems as if America's free press is going down the tubes of lies and distortions. Never have the liberal and conservative news organizations have been so far apart, so damaged and perhaps even near collapse.

The biggest problem is television, because there is more of it than newspapers. There are two sides and the division is crystal clear: three television broadcast networks (ABC, CBS and NBC) with large news staffs and two cable news system (CNN and MSNBC) are up against one cable news station (Fox) and Rush Limbaugh's radio show that is heard three hours a day five days a week.

The traditional networks, with the full backing of Hollywood talent and personalities, think Fox and Rush are vile conservative demons out to enslave clean thinking Americans. Fox and Rush, with only their own talent, know the networks and the Hollywood liberals are out to enslave the same clear thinking Americans.

Somehow Sarah Palin is a key figure in the fight. Some months ago, Entertainer David Letterman of CBS said on the air, to a live audience, that Sarah Palin's daughter was "knocked up on the pitcher's mound in Yankee Stadium."

Liberals thought it was funny. Conservatives could not find the punch line.

Within hours after the Tucson nut case opened fire shooting at anything that moved, a CNN anchor woman said Sarah Palin caused the shooting because she used crosshairs in her political ads.

Liberals joined in but ignored their super liberal president said "If they (conservatives) bring a knife to a fight, you bring a gun."

It is clear that our precious freedom of speech can be misused but any attempt to restrain the blather would be disastrous. President Obama asked for more "civility" but was ignored. It was like a school shouting match and both sides claiming the other was a sissy.

An MSNBC talking head, Ed Shultz blew off his steam using his entire hour berating Rush Limbaugh as the most hated ugly conservative liar and most despicable mortal on earth.

Chris Matthews rattles off political propaganda and questions so fast the public can hardly keep up. They might not even care. The best thing about this country that the average citizen does not have to listen to liberals or conservatives. Fools and trifle merely fade away.

Networks and commentators should stuff the news landscape. A single cable network Fox, and one radio talk show host, Limbaugh, are doing more business, have more listeners than all the liberals combined.

Even a monopoly can fail. The Raleigh News and Observer has no serious competition around here. It is free to pounce on anybody or any idea contrary to its agenda. Lately it attacked a proposed superintendent of Wake County schools before he even got to town. His name is Tata and the paper is just dying to use the headline "Ta Ta to Tata."

His sin is he does not agree with how the paper wants to run the schools. The public might not agree with the paper. In the past three years, the N&O has lost 9,000 subscribers a year for the last three years. That is 27,000 papers. Counting three people to a residence that comes to at least 70,000 living, breathing customers.

That is a whole mess of unhappy readers.

Strangely, small publications such as this, the local weeklies and bi-weeklies are doing quite well.

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

Euphemisms

By Don Lein

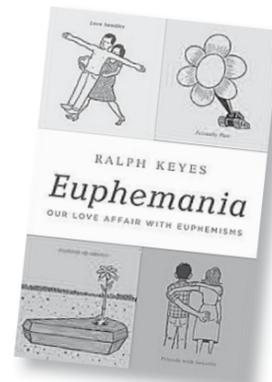
In a very readable little book, called *Euphemia*, Ralph Keyes takes us through the history and evolution of euphemisms. The term euphemism is derived from Eupheme who was the nurse of ancient Greek Muses. A form of her name means to "use an auspicious word for an inauspicious one." Keyes cites many examples and traces the evolution, such as how words that were once taboo became acceptable and vice versa.

One example he cites refers to an old English tale where an aristocratic young lady went horseback riding, accompanied by her groom, John. Along the way she fell off the horse with legs and petticoats flying, but she managed to land gracefully. She asked her groom "Did you see my agility, John?" "Yes, miss," he replied, "but I never heard it called by that name before."

Another example dealt with Winston Churchill, who while dining at a dinner party in Virginia asked for a "breast of chicken." The lady sitting next to him reprimanded him for his vulgarity. When he asked what he should have requested, the lady replied "white meat." The next day, Churchill sent the woman a corsage with the message "Pin this on your white meat."

One of the areas where euphemisms abound is in political discourse, where the two competing parties assert that "Your euphemism obfuscate, mine clarifies." The change from Global Warming to Climate Change was embodied in a White House memo, which would have the affect of softening the apocalyptic threat embodied in global warming. Of course, this was before the East Anglia hoax was discovered, discrediting the entire movement.

Monies that have been expended on politician's pet projects are not longer spent, but rather "invested." Politicians have the motto "Name it



and frame it." Indeed, who would ever support a proposition that would gentrify communities, impose growth inhibiting regulations, decrease ethnic diversity, etc., but under the guise of "Smart Growth" the approach has achieved some popularity. Probably over the years more freedoms have been sacrificed to

the altar of "Social Justice" than anything else, but who can overtly be against social justice?

Welfare, as a word, has almost disappeared, but there is still a great deal of government money being spent on "assistance for the poor." Companies no longer drill for oil, when they are allowed to do it, but rather they are exploring for energy. What the press has commonly referred to as the "stimulus plan" in officialese is referred to as an "economic recovery plan." Solon, in Athens, called the taxes imposed at the time "contributions" and ever since that time, taxing authorities have searched for euphemisms, some of the more recent being "revenue enhancement" and "fees."

Euphemisms, unfortunately, do obfuscate and inhibit communication and prevent us from dealing with the real issues we should be dealing with. Linguist Geoffrey Hughes calls this process "verbiicide." Clearly, invoking the spirit of Eupheme in dealing with names of body parts certainly makes social intercourse more understandable and less difficult, but when her spirits are used by politicians/thought leaders to divert and obfuscate, understanding is defenestrated.

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

Do Republican numbers really add up?

By Julian Sereno

Republicans have taken over in Chatham County, in North Carolina and in the U.S. House of Representatives. They promise to lower taxes, limit government and balance budgets. What it means for the economy – local, state and national — remains to be seen.

Here in Chatham, the new Board of Commissioners has already killed the bus service between Pittsboro and Chapel Hill, eliminated the position of Director of Human Relations and axed its incumbent, Esther Coleman, and decided against building a new mega-landfill in Chatham. The rationale for the two former decisions was cutting expenses. The latter involved hearing the arguments against the landfill from environmental groups and nearby farmers and deciding to not act precipitously. It also means avoiding a major outlay of money. Conservatism at its best.

But the money the County saves by no longer paying a salary to Esther Coleman has negative offsets, and not just for causing hardship to a public servant. It's money that she will no longer use to pay for goods and services. A little less money circulates throughout Chatham's economy. And the County's unemployment premiums will cost just a little bit more.

That is the dilemma facing the Republicans who control the North Carolina Legislature. The state is facing a revenue shortfall of \$3.7 billion. They've pledged not to raise taxes, so that leaves cutting spending. That means either firing state employees or cutting their salaries. In either case, there will be that much less money flowing through the state's economy. That will take a toll on all the businesses that provide the goods and services that the effected state employees customarily buy. Not a likely scenario for economic recovery.

North Carolina Republicans are running the legislature for the first time since the century before last, so there is no record to examine. If they are practical and use common sense, they might do a good job. If they are dogmatic and doctrinaire, they won't.

There is a track record for the national Republicans on the economy, and it is ugly.

When they talk about balancing the Federal budget, don't believe it. In 1980, Ronald Reagan

hammered Jimmy Carter about then unheard of \$60 billion deficits. After he was elected, he promptly started running deficits in the \$200 billion range.

Reagan cut Federal hiring, but he didn't cut the size of government. Instead of hiring more Federal workers, who tend to be Democrats, he farmed the work out to private contractors, who tend to be Republican.

George H.W. Bush raised taxes because he was a responsible steward of government. But he had pledged, "read my lips, no new taxes" during the campaign and was voted out of office after one term. He did lay the groundwork for the prosperity that followed during the Clinton administration, when the budget was last balanced.

George W. Bush and a Republican Congress inherited a balanced budget and squandered it. Tax cuts, which particularly benefited the super rich, cost \$1 trillion over 10 years. This was supposed to spur economic growth, because, of course, rich people will spend their money or invest it expanding business operations. This didn't happen. Instead they invested it with the likes of Lehman Brothers, Merrill Lynch and Bernie Madoff, who gambled it away or stole it outright during the great financial meltdown. All that money is gone for good.

Add to the Bush tab the \$500 billion prescription drug benefit. Don't forget \$1 trillion to bring democracy to Iraq. Don't forget that it was Dick Cheney who said, "Deficits don't matter."

The current crop of Congressional Republicans wants to cut discretionary spending, which accounts for a paltry 12 percent of the Federal Budget. What they are discovering is that it means more than axing government employees, it means cutting federal work going to Republican constituents.

They only way the Federal budget will ever be balanced is by increasing revenue. That means raising taxes.

So what is it going to be? A balanced budget or no new taxes? You can't have it both ways.

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