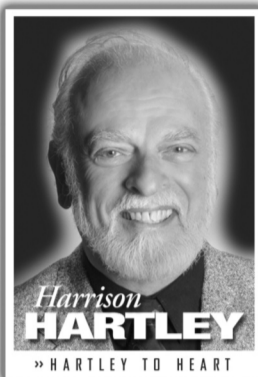


Practice Doubt...

and check things out! Of course, you don't have to doubt everything and you don't have to check out everything, but as the late Carl Sagan used to say, "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence," and following that, ordinary claims require ordinary evidence, and following that, claims require evidence.

So, what's the big deal, you ask? Have you been following the news lately? In too many cases, too much journalism seems to have gone the way of too much political speech; to wit (not to put too fine a point on it or shock the children, but in the interests of accuracy) the predominant philosophy seems to have become "To hell with the facts! We need A STORY to sell!!!"

A good case in point is the scurrilous activity of Andrew Breitbart – the blogger diplomatically identified by Keith Olbermann as "a scum." This is mildly problematic from a biological standpoint because scums are venerable planetary citizens that include the ancient and hardy family of pond algae: Lyngbia, Pithophora, Anabaena, and the famous Spirogyra. Still, in metaphorical terms, Olbermann got it right: Breitbart is a scum. Olbermann also got it right when he chewed up and spit out



everybody from the President to the Secretary of Agriculture to Fox News to Bill O'Rielly to the editors of his own network (MSNBC) for not LOOKING before YAMMERING,

and that's the point: a society that operates on emotion and prejudice and ignores reasoned, factual consideration is leaping toward self-destruction, one way or another. In this case, Breitbart accused Sherrod of being an anti-White racist by selectively editing a speech she had just given to broadcast on his scurrilous website and nobody, including the federal agency that has employed her

for two-plus decades, stopped to look at the original to see what she really said. Instead, accelerating from zero to sixty in nanoseconds after Breitbart's propaganda hit the internet, Sherrod was immediately called on a cell 'phone and had to immediately pull her car off the highway in order to resign "immediately." The only happy follow-up to this debacle is that Sherrod intends to sue Breitbart – which is exactly what needs to happen to all such lying, witch-hunting, bigoted, bullying imbeciles. But what of the rest of us?

Simply put, Americans need to abandon the stupid "shoot first and ask questions later" mentality of range war days, abandon the equally stupid tendency to "shoot from the

lip" whenever their adrenalin kicks in, and develop the useful habit of operating on evidence. But here's a problem: too many Americans don't know what "evidence" is, and for starters, "It's aliens... I SEEN 'em!" isn't it.

Basic criteria for what can count as evidence are obvious, and it's a mystery why so many people ignore them (except that it's harder to be self-serving if you don't.) Basically, you can believe anything you want to believe, but if you want others to accept your statements as reflections of reality outside your mind what you say has to be rational (in accord with the way the universe works), observable and consistent (available for examination by others anywhere, anytime), and objective (not based on fear, desire, prejudice, or tradition). The best recent political application of this is usually accredited to Daniel Patrick Moynahan (though James R. Schlesinger generated a version of it and it probably originated with Bernard M. Baruch in the mid 1940's). Senator Al Franken gave it a useful resurrection during the health care debates earlier this year: "You are entitled to your own opinions, but not to your own facts."

Exactly so... not that you'd notice in recent American "news" cycles. (How many gallons of oil did BP spill into the Gulf? Nobody seems to know. Is crime on the border with Mexico up? The statistics show it dropping quite steadily for about fif-

teen years! Does the new Health Care law include "death panels"? It does if you think a requirement to have your insurance company help pay for consultations with your doctor about being on life support is a "death panel." Will the world end in December, 2012? Not according to the Maya, who expected it to enter a new cycle on that date, as they believe it has done many times before.) Part of the problem may be that we – Americans – have lost the ability to distinguish between celebrity and competence, and part of it may be that we have been in a time of easy energy and constantly expanding personal wealth and comfort, and that time is changing. In short, we have been a bit spoiled and we are pitching a fit because things may not be quite as rosy as we expected them to be, and that brings us back to the principle of practical skepticism with which we began.

When our expectations override our good sense; when we work at finding scapegoats for our failures instead of ways to repair the damage; when we overlook the beam in our own eye while dwelling in detail on the mote in the other fellow's eye, we are not doing ourselves or anybody else any good and the prognosis is dismal. We can avoid much of this by operating on evidence rather than emotion; particularly on the big questions of politics and governance, where, it turns out, a little practical skepticism is a very good thing

A Second Look At Hike/Bike Trails

A Skeptic Comes Around

People who know me accept that I can be pretty stubborn sometimes.

Yet, I try to look at everything with an open mind, and weigh issues on their own merits.

As someone who believes in limited government, I tend to prefer solutions without government.

It was no different with our local hiking/biking trails.

With potholes, rough streets, deteriorating sidewalks and curbs I found it hard to get excited when the city started building these trails.

I should pause here for a minute and confess that I have loved St. Joe's parkway system all my life. The parkways are an attractive, useful, entertaining asset to our city.

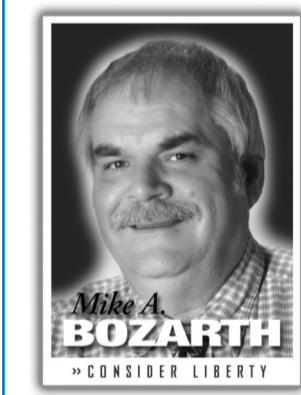
When I served on the City Council, I discovered that much of the grant money to build the trails came to the city with a 10% local match with the federal government picking up most of the tab.

The argument that if we don't go for the money some other community will --makes me sick sometimes.

Yet, it is the simple truth. Unfortunately our federal budget doesn't ever use savings from a community turning the money back to the feds. It just continues to deficit spend and gives

the money to another community with their hand out. It can be an ongoing cycle with the taxpayers being the ones who suffer.

Two weeks ago on a late Sunday afternoon I drove Southwest Parkway from Hyde Park to Bartlett. I counted



27 pedestrians and five bicyclists using that section of the trail.

Transportation is generally accepted by many libertarians as a necessary function of government. Trails are transportation, and when alongside our parkways become recreational, entertaining and help preserve our city for future generations.

Facts and city staff opened my eyes. It is with my eyes wide open I see St. Joseph making a healthy use of what we have and now I'm not just supportive, but appreciative.

Your Letters

"To 'C' More or Less"

In the July 29th issue of the "Telegraph" Harrison Hartley so elegantly gave us his opinion as to why we should vote "No" on proposition "C". With a "Yes" vote the citizens of Missouri could opt out of participating in Obama's new "Universal Healthcare Bill." Also a "yes" vote would not allow the Federal Government to fine the citizens in Missouri who refused to participate.

I would think that almost everyone would agree that our healthcare system is in need of revision so as to make it affordable to everyone. However, the issue is, should our federal Government be responsible for health care by deciding almost all health issues from the time we are born until the day we die-which of course includes the government deciding "when" we die by controlling the level of care we get as we get older?

This Healthcare Bill is just another means to increase the size of our federal government and install a bureaucratic nightmare that will be just as efficient as the U.S. Post Office and our bankrupt social security system. This isn't a new problem. When our country was founded there were those like George Washington and Alexander Hamilton (Federalists) who wanted a strong central government with the states having restricted power, and those like Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and Patrick Henry (Anti-Federalists) who wanted a weak federal government with the individual state retaining the power over their citizen's lives.

I am very proud to call myself an "Anti-Federalist" and to be on the side of Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and Patrick Henry. If you believe that our government is bound by the constitution then Obama's Universal Healthcare bill is unconstitutional and should be nullified. The Tenth Amendment states, "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people."

The procedures used to get the votes to pass the healthcare bill were deceit-

ful. Some of the congressmen who were hesitant to vote for the Healthcare Bill were bribed with huge concessions for the citizens of their particular state. In other words the remaining states will pay more. The bill is so large that most people including our own congressmen can't even understand the thousands of pages that comprise the bill. Every day something new is reported as being discovered hidden in the bill. Just recently it was reported that many more small businesses will be required to submit 1099's for any vendor purchases of over \$600.00. Also we will be required to start paying for this bill several years before we realize any benefits.

If you look at those countries that have Universal Healthcare, their income tax is extremely high. (50% or more) and they still have inferior healthcare compared to the U.S. Someone once said, "If you think healthcare is expensive now, Just wait until it is free."

Labeling people like me as a Pap Finn "wannabe" or an "idealist" who believes that all our problems are caused by the "gummint" (government) is not only unfair but inaccurate. Pap Finn was a character in "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" who cared only for himself and an "idealist" is someone who is an optimist, dreamer and crusader. I am definitely not like Hap Finn but I am proud to say that I am an idealist" and plan to note "Yes" for proposal C.

Larry Flinchpugh  
St. Joseph  
(Editor's Note: Proposition C passed in Buchanan County with 71.6 % approving and statewide with 71.1%)