

COLAB

NEWSLETTER

VOL.16 ISSUE 4

April 2007

COLAB'S 16th Annual Dinner

Rated The Best Party in the County!!!

Saturday Night, April 28

Featuring The *Hilarious* Ex-Cop Comedian

Mike Armstrong

Support COLAB and Have a Great Time with Fun Auction, Great Dinner, Entertaining Show, Special Music, plus an OPEN BAR! Our Annual Meeting generates up to 60% of COLAB's operating budget each year. Your support of our event is vital to our continued success! This event is your party! If you have never attended please come this year you will not be disappointed! Put together a table of ten @ \$110.00 for reserved seating. Individual tickets are \$15.00. Make Your Reservations Now for the Best Seats in the House!

Mail Your Payment
COLAB
PO Box 7
Santa Maria, CA 93456
OR,

Go to the COLAB Website and
PAY ONLINE!!! at <http://www.colabsbc.org/events.aspx>

Review Mike's Great Act on
Comedy Central's "The Bob
and Tom Comedy Tour".
You will love Mike!

For More Information, Call Andy at 929-3148

The Blood Sport of POLITICS in Santa Barbara County

Our current Board of Supervisors, comprised of Joe Centeno, Joni Gray, Brooks Firestone, Salud Carbajal and Janet Wolf, go out of their way each and every week to be cordial to one another. Every once in a while, tempers may flare, but for the most part, none of the Board members engage in personal attacks upon one another. The same cannot be said of some members of the public.

I have been closely monitoring the Board of Supervisors for some sixteen years. I have been to almost every board meeting during that course of time. I have seen a lot of board members come and go. I witnessed many a bare knuckle political brawl and, admittedly, got into a few scrapes myself. Yet, during all that time, I have never witnessed anything as vitriolic as has been the case over the course of these past few weeks.

Several weeks past, a resident of the Third District sought to smear the good reputation of Brooks Firestone. This man signed an affidavit testifying that "For the record, I have had personal and direct conversations, on a number of occasions, with Brooks Firestone in which he has expressed a family interest in converting the Victorian home commonly known as Crossroads into a Bed and Breakfast".

The context of this affidavit was to serve to disqualify Brooks from being able to vote on the certification of the Uniform Rules which govern ag lands conserved by the Williamson Act. To make a long story short, the affidavit was offered as proof that Brooks should have to recuse himself from the vote because of his alleged interest in converting his home into a bed and breakfast. So what is the truth of the matter?

Brooks has no intention of creating a bed and breakfast, but more to the point, the land on which the Victorian home sits is not even on Williamson Act contracted lands! So, when I publicly confronted the gentlemen who signed the attestation, he denied he ever said such a thing. **His problem is he not only said it- he put it in writing!**

Believe it or not, the incidence I just informed you about is nothing compared to the most outra-

geous and most vitriolic claim ever leveled against a board member. This outrage was revealed last week by Supervisor Centeno during the public comment period.

As a way of background, Supervisor Joe Centeno is one of the most principled men I have ever met in my life. He certainly is a man of impeccable integrity. He is a decent man who values honesty. He has a 50 year record of public service that is completely untarnished. Yet, he and at least one other supervisor, were the subject of a most outrageous and insulting charge that, in my opinion, exceeds the realm of acceptable political discourse, as it crosses the line into slander, defamation and liable.

It was yet another resident of the Third District who leveled charges of bribery against Centeno! Here is the content of the email in its entirety:

"You are an embarrassment to the County of Santa Barbara. It is so obvious that you are in the pocket of the Indians that it is laughable.

Why are you against the local community having a voice in what happens in their neighborhood? Could it be that you have taken so much in bribes that you cannot speak freely. That is not a question, but a statement.

You should surprise everyone and vote in favor of the community that you represent, and not just the anti-Americans that pay you off".

Of course, the occasion for this letter, had to do with recent hearings concerning the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, who by the way, were also defamed in this letter.

If you would like to see the original documents for yourself and discover the names of the people who are responsible for these statements, go to the COLAB website at www.colabsbc.org and look in the news section. A. Caldwell

This Land is “Our” Land— Exclusive of Who?

On March 20, I attended a repeat performance of the Santa Ynez Drama Queens, also known as The POLO POSY Theater Company. Forgive me for being sarcastic, but in case you missed it, this was yet another town hall meeting to discuss and mobilize valley residents to oppose a rumored expansion of the Chumash gaming facility in the valley. The sad fact is that several hundred people showed up to mobilize against a project that is not being formally considered and that has not been proposed to the Governor of the State of California. We will know for certain when it has been proposed because by law the Tribe must give the county 90 days notice. And then, the proposed project must go through the gamut of hearings and be approved by the State Legislature.

Unfortunately, the incessant harping of these citizen groups and the resultant pandering to them by our county government resulted in an announcement by the Tribal Chairman that the olive branch the Tribe had been extending to the county has been withdrawn. The open door that the county had been invited to walk through has been closed. Frankly, I don't blame the Tribe for being upset and fed up.

If the leadership of POLO and POSY had their wits about them, they would have encouraged the county to take up the Tribe's offer to become part of the negotiating team when the Tribe does try to extend the agreement with the State that authorizes gaming on the reservation. There was no obligation on the part of the Tribe to invite the county into these future negotiations, but nonetheless, there sat the offer on the table. But, instead of accepting the offer and declaring victory, POLO and POSY proceeded to beat up the Board of Supps and insult the Tribe in the process, and now all bets are off. A meaningful opportunity has been lost.

I don't blame, criticize or deny the fact that residents of the valley have legitimate concerns regarding the impacts to the valley from the current casino operations. Nor do I blame them for wanting to be vigilant and forewarned in their vehement opposition to further casino expansion. That is their right and prerogative and I welcome them to it. It is my opinion, however, that they are going about it in the wrong way.

What concerns me is the fact that POLO and POSY do not give the Tribe credit where credit is due. They don't speak positively about the jobs created, the local purchases made, the large donations given, and the wonderful concert entertainment venue that has been created for all of us to enjoy whether we gamble or not.

Instead, they tend to exaggerate the potential negatives by painting our local Tribe with allegations of wrongdoing based upon the experiences of folks on the East Coast.

The bottom line here is that until the residents of our community and the representatives of our county will admit and respect the fact that the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians are a legitimate Federally recognized Tribe, on a Federally recognized reservation, we are going to have nothing but trouble and hard feelings abounding. This really is the core sticking point in my opinion.

Yet, POLO and POSY are on the exact opposite path as they seek to avoid this realization. Of all the audacious claims to make, they actually presented what they consider evidence that our local Band of Chumash are not really Chumash at all, but that they are instead Soshone Indians! And, they further purported that the Reservation that was recognized by our Federal government back in the early 1900's was never a legitimate Indian village to begin with, and therefore, the reservation isn't really a bonafide reservation. POLO and POSY also maintain that the Tribe's offer of an olive branch was meaningless because the Tribe has broken similar promises to have meaningful dialogue in previous instances.

I am not sure any American, in the light of the history of our nation, wants to get into a debate about who broke promises to who when discussing the plight of Native Americans. Nor should anybody even want to bring up the fact that the Federal Government indeed did displace Native Americans from their historical communities. For crying out loud, I keep feeling I am getting caught into some type of time warp here with respect to the animosity of valley residents to the Tribe. The one thing I want to know is, when POLO and POSY speak about the Santa Ynez Valley as “our” valley, do they recognize that the Chumash have a similar, but infinitely longer standing claim, to these same lands? A. Caldwell

Fraud and Abuse in the Name of Charity?

I would like to give you a broad overview of the work of some organizations who are seeking to change the social, economic and political fabric of the entire North County.

What are the organizations I am talking about?

There are several and they are all unique to this county. Their names are PUEBLO, The Santa Barbara County Action Network (SBCAN), The Santa Ynez Valley Alliance, the Environmental Defense Center, The Central Coast Environmental Health Project, Pacific Pride, The Santa Maria Peace Coalition, Women in Black, COAST, and the Women's Environmental Watch (We Watch).

These local groups work hand in hand with some local chapters of the Democratic and Green Parties, the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA), as well as, the League of Women Voters.

What are these local organizations up to? These organizations are primarily political in nature. They describe themselves as progressive whereas a more apt description would either be liberal or socialist. They all have another thing in common and that is they all hail in origin from the South County with respect to their political bent and a primary source of their operating funds.

To clue you in on what is going on here I need to direct you to an organization in the South County called the Fund for Santa Barbara. The Fund is an organization that seeks to financially support the creation and sustenance of political organizations that seek to change society. They call what they do progressive politics. If you go to the Fund's website on the internet at www.fundforsantabarbara.org you will discover that for the past several years this organization has been funding the infiltration of the North County via their financial support of all the local groups I named above. You will discover that these organizations have been paid to come to the North County in order to organize, agitate and politic.

If you go to the Fund's website and look under the heading "Granting History", here is a sampling of

what you will find:

Santa Ynez Valley Alliance, \$4800 to "fund a staff person to support Santa Ynez Valley to have a voice in local environmental, development and housing issues." Sounds harmless enough, unless you know that the President of this organization, Doreen Farr, moved to the valley from Goleta and she is going to be challenging Brooks Firestone in the next election cycle.

PUEBLO - \$10,000 for three years to fund a field organizer to build the leadership, power and influence of low-income residents of the Santa Maria Valley. Sounds altruistic except for the fact that PUEBLO walked precincts for Hilda Zarcharias and one of the things they are working for is the issuance of driver's licenses to illegal aliens. PUEBLO also received \$3,000 to provide logistical support for the May 1st demonstrations in Santa Barbara that coincided with protests across the nation of legislation proposed to control illegal immigration.

SBCAN received \$5,000 to create a roundtable of progressive organizations advocating on local policy in Santa Maria. They also received \$5,000 to develop leadership and organizing skills among community members.

Well, it turns out the "charity" that gave all these monies, The Fund for Santa Barbara, is actually a piker when it comes to dolling out the loot to fund the invasion of the North County by South County politicians. The deep pockets belong to the McCune Foundation.

Whereas, the Fund for Santa Barbara gave PUEBLO \$10,000 for three years to fund a field organizer, the McCune Foundation doled out \$35,000 per year for two years for general support, voter mobilization, and issue campaigns. That was for 2006. In 2005, McCune gave PUEBLO another \$30,000 for community organizing.

Whereas, the Fund for Santa Barbara gave SBCAN \$5,000 to create a roundtable of progressive organi-

(Continued on page 5)

No Members? No Problem! We've Got a Sugar Mama!

(Continued from page 4)

zations and another \$5,000 to develop leadership and organizing skills, the McCune Foundation gave SBCAN \$35,121 for the same task, namely to support staff and program development of progressive networking.

The Environmental Defense Center received \$9,000 from the Fund for Santa Barbara to train trainers in order to educate farm workers about the dangers of pesticides. The McCune Foundation gave the EDC \$35,000 for the same exact task!

Another group of activists that received money from both the Fund for Santa Barbara and the McCune Foundation is an organization called COAST- The Coalition for Sustainable Transportation. COAST is the group of geniuses responsible for several things, including the project list for last year's failed ballot initiative Measure D. They were the ones pushing for the rail line to Ventura County. They also are the impetus behind the proposed taxi service to get farm workers back and forth from field to field. The Fund for Santa Barbara gave COAST \$3,000 to lead a coalition of progressive organizations to advocate for the approval of Measure D. They received another \$3600 to try and get people interested in the Ventura rail line. And, if that wasn't enough, the Fund for Santa Barbara gave COAST another \$5,750 for the farm worker unmet transit needs project. Not to be outdone, the McCune Foundation gave COAST \$12,000 for operating and project support for the Coalition for a Fair Measure D voter education project, and \$15,000 to support advocacy for transportation needs of North County Farm workers.

Does anybody else besides me see a pattern here? One would observe that the non-profits I have mentioned here have found a couple of proverbial South County cash cows that are funding nearly their entire budgets for politicking in the North County. So what is wrong with this picture you ask?

The first thing that is wrong with this picture has to do with the law governing disbursements from foundations. Whereas, a non-profit can be organized for

virtually any purpose imaginable and legally sanctioned non-profits don't have to pay income tax, the fact is, the donors to the non-profit are not allowed to fully deduct donations unless the non-profit and the donation are wholly dedicated to charitable purposes. Charitable purposes are narrowly defined by the IRS. Because the Fund for Santa Barbara and the McCune Foundation are charities, the monies that they receive cannot legally be given to organizations that engage in activities that are not considered within the bounds of charity, i.e., advocacy, campaigning, and politics in general. In other words, every CPA and tax attorney I have spoken with, all agree that neither the Fund for Santa Barbara or the McCune Foundation can legally donate money to what the IRS describes as "action" organizations.

The other problem I have with this scenario is that these organizations seek to portray themselves as grass roots organizations. I find this money trail to be incongruent with that claim. Grass roots organizations by definition spring from a broad wave of support from genuinely concerned local citizenry. Instead, what we have here is a group of organizations that are spending monies they did not raise in direct contributions, in order to politic in a community where they have no real base of support, financial or otherwise.

We did a radio show on this topic! Check out *The COLAB Report*—March 22, on the web in the radio archive section at www.colabsbc.org.

The Politics of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)

Anyone who follows the twists and turns of California's government and politics is by now very familiar with the frequent refrain that the Golden State is, literally, ungovernable.

This is not to say that it is in the kind of disorder we see around the world, but rather a kind of institutional chaos, where important decisions linger for years, major priorities are allowed to become serious crises, and political maneuvering dominates most discussion.

One such issue is energy. We needed it yesterday, require it today and depend upon it tomorrow and all the tomorrows ahead. Most Californians are acutely aware of energy's importance, having endured the strange and sudden energy crisis of 2000 and 2001. That seems like a long time ago. Very little attention has been paid to it since.

This is too bad. One of the legacies of the energy crisis is that California relies more than ever on natural gas to power the way we live and keep the lights on. And with a new debate quietly raging just below the surface about a new idea for how to get more natural gas into the state, here's the issue:

California is more dependent on natural gas than any other state in the nation, and we currently import a staggering 85 percent of what we need. This natural gas comes to California through a pipeline infrastructure stretching east and north, so California is the last state on the chain, leaving us susceptible to price volatility and shortages.

It is widely acknowledged by energy experts that California's energy demand is rising, while in-state production is falling, and that access to the remaining local supply of natural gas is hampered by a variety of environmental considerations. State residents need a new source of natural gas which is clean, safe and reliable. No one seriously debates this.

Liquefied natural gas (LNG) could be the answer. At the very least, it's a viable near term option that deserves serious consideration.

LNG is just natural gas in its liquid form. Near the

source of supply, natural gas is cooled to a liquid so that it can be transported over long distances. It is then converted back into a gas and integrated into the local gas supply, subject to meeting all of California's pipeline quality and pressure controls. LNG is non-toxic, non-corrosive and non-combustible (because there is no oxygen present when natural gas is in liquid form). No one seriously debates this either.

Although new for California, LNG has been used as a safe and clean-burning energy for almost half-a-century. In Japan, not a country known for reckless public policy, more than 97 percent of its natural gas comes from LNG. South Korea is the world's second largest importer of LNG and terminals are currently operating in Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Turkey.

As the largest diversified natural resources company in the world, BHP Billiton is proposing to construct and operate Cabrillo Port, a state-of-the-art LNG Floating Storage and Regasification Unit (FSRU) moored 14 miles offshore of Ventura County, California and 21 miles from Oxnard, California.

We believe Cabrillo Port is needed today to bring much-needed reliable supplies of clean-burning natural gas directly to the high-demand markets of California. Conservation and renewable energy sources are an important part of the solution, but alone they are not enough to meet California's energy needs. Importantly, Cabrillo Port puts California "first in line" for all of its gas and will double the gas that is currently available from sources indigenous to California.

While the process to get this all approved gives new meaning to the term "Byzantine," it may be near an end. In fact, the process is now at the stage where all the players are evaluating what is known as the Environmental Impact Report (EIR). These are dreaded words to anyone trying to build anything, but this EIR seems - so far - to provide a reasonable road map to achieve the vital balance between development direction and environmental needs.

As always, reasonable minds can disagree. Some

(Continued on page 9)

The Perils of the Non-Profit Ponzi Scheme

Those who know COLAB are well aware that we frequently talk about the financial misdeeds of certain non profit organizations that use and abuse their non-profit tax status. As mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, one of our newly discovered favorite local examples is the McCune Foundation.

The U.S. tax code essentially provides incentives to wealthy individuals who want to do good to form non-profit foundations, which are commonly required to spend a percentage of their money every year (customarily five percent) on their “primary purpose” (environmental protection, buying computers, stopping the spread of AIDS, etc.), which is usually a very worthy public benefit goal. The original donor gets a tax break and the world is a better place, right? Unfortunately, not always. What often ends up happening is a process more akin to money laundering.

The most well-known foundations – Carnegie, Ford, and Getty – often give away their money in a grant-like process where smaller organizations like the Sierra Club, Environmental Defense or Earth-justice may then apply for funding to accomplish some politically correct objective. Since there is little federal oversight of these organizations, and even less at the state level, as long as the recipients file a few mandatory forms each year, there is very little reason or incentive to audit them. Also, these organizations don’t pay any taxes because they are non-profits also.

In California, organizations that raise or spend less than \$25,000 per year are not even required to file an annual tax return. This encourages the formation of many splinter groups, often coordinated, to each apply for grants and solicit their own donations – with the potential to evade the law. Even those that fail to file this minimal paperwork are rarely caught, and even more rarely prosecuted or even fined. Although the federal and state governments can revoke the tax status of these groups, it almost never happens.

Why is all this important to Santa Barbara County?

Groups like Santa Barbara’s own Environmental Defense Center (EDC) and the California

Coastal Protection Network (CCPN) to name two, depend on grants from these larger groups in addition to donations from wealthy environmental philanthropists – tax free money transfers – to operate. So also is the case with SBCAN and PUEBLO. Once they are set up, however, they also become vehicles for moving money around without any tax consequence and very little government scrutiny. In addition, contributors to these groups can get a full or partial tax break on their donation. How interesting that these folks are constantly clamoring for “transparency” in government, but often refuse to open their books and their membership lists to full public scrutiny.

But, what is even more troubling is that groups like EDC use their money to finance lawsuits and lobbying campaigns to change the law and enact regulations more favorable to their point of view and don’t disclose who is paying them for these efforts. The watchdog group Public Interest Watch has identified the potential for serious abuse here.

While some non-profits are allowed to lobby, amounts used by the nonprofit to lobby are not tax deductible by the contributor. More importantly, 501(c)(3) organizations are completely prohibited from being involved in electioneering activities. This matters little, of course, if most of the funds for a group are coming from the larger group or foundation. The rules are very complicated but generally groups like EDC and CCPN do not seem to be worried about following them too closely.

A great example of the interlocking nature of this pyramid-scheme-turned-three-card-Monte hustle is our very own Susan Jordan, her husband Assembly Member Pedro Nava, and Malibu resident and current Coastal Commissioner Sara Wan.

Ms. Jordan began her mission in 1990 in Orange and Los Angeles Counties with her involvement in the League for Coastal Protection and Vote the Coast, both 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations she founded or co-founded with Sara Wan. Almost two decades later Ms. Jordan is now the director of California Coastal Protection Network, also a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Interestingly, Jor-

(Continued on page 8)

A Little Too Much Pillow Talk Going On?

(Continued from page 7)

dan is listed as the only officer of this corporation as reported to the California Attorney General's office.

A little research shows that the League for Coastal Protection was found to have been the plaintiff in at least 11 civil lawsuits between 1984 and 2000, most of which were filed against the California Coastal Commission. Were they doing what EDC has done so successfully – changing policy in the courts, or – to put it another way -- using taxpayer subsidized dollars to sue a state agency? During part of this time, Ms. Wan (appointed in 1996 and still serving) and Mr. Nava were both Coastal Commissioners (1997–2004).

Shouldn't Wan have been required to recuse herself, when any or all of these groups and individuals in which she had or has an interest before the Commission, with respect to any past or future discussions about these lawsuits? As a board member or officer she has a fiduciary duty to the corporation (yes, even non-profits are technically corporations) that conflicts with her role as a Coastal Commissioner. The only remedy is for her to resign her post as a Commissioner or as a board member on each entity to eliminate any potential conflict of interest.

Vote the Coast – co-founded by Wan and Jordan – is also a registered 501 (c)(3) charity, according to the California Attorney General's office, and may therefore conduct only insubstantial lobbying, and absolutely no electioneering. Vote the Coast's mission statement, however, demonstrated the activists' utter contempt for the law: "Elect coastal friendly California politicians." What could be more political than that?

Additionally, Attorney General's office records show this organization to be late or delinquent with their legally required filings.

So what about Ms. Jordan and her husband Assemblymember Pedro Nava? Well, the Ventura County Star criticized Nava for a conflict of interest because he married Jordan while director of the California Coastal Protection Net-

work and lobbying the Commission. Did he ever recuse himself on matters his wife was "lobbying" him on? Talk about politicians and lobbyists being in bed together!

Perhaps even more interesting, Assembly member Nava reported owning stock in BEI Technologies and Optic Net (which has since merged with BEI Technologies), both vendors to the California Coastal Commission. Lawrence "Larry" Wan – Sara's husband – is the vice president of (see <http://www.bei-tech.com/about/about.htm>) BEI Technologies and he was a co-founder of (see <http://www.opticnet-inc.com/>) Optic Net. Since California is a community property state, it appears that Susan Jordan also has, or had, a direct ownership interest in the stock.

In California, the state regulatory authority for these groups is housed in the Attorney General's office of Charitable Trusts. Former Attorney General Bill Lockyer and now Attorney General Jerry Brown carry the responsibility for oversight of this important function, and yet both were endorsed for election by some of these same groups!

So what can be done? One way is to take matters into our own hands and shine needed sunlight on these organizations so that their donors and activities are more "transparent" – to use their word. Since many of those same folks were instrumental in requiring campaign contributions are posted online, maybe we ought to have a local version of a website which seeks to expose these contributions? See <http://www.activistcash.com/>. There must be a legislator willing to step forward to help? Mr. Nava, perhaps?

Then, of course, there is the last resort. Used against mobsters and crooked businessmen by the Federal government, when all else fails, is the dreaded racketeering statutes known as RICO. Maybe it's time for an ambitious federal prosecutor to step up to the plate and end this non-profit, tax exempt personal enrichment scheme once and for all.

Speak Up Now or Light The Candles Later!

(Continued from page 6)

even suggest that California should employ increased coal and even nuclear power to achieve sound energy solutions. Let's have that debate.

What we don't need, however, are the tactics currently employed by many of Cabrillo Port's critics. To date, they have stated - in public - that the project could slaughter untold ocean species, permanently alter the migratory patterns of whales, ruin beaches and explode in a fireball that will kill untold numbers of people. Our personal favorite is their stated concern that terrorists could take over the floating gas plant and then ram it straight into the coastline.

Even environmental "hero" Robert F. Kennedy was publicly shouted down by this same mob for attempting to make a rational, supportive argument for Cabrillo Port.

While they have yet to say that this project would mean the end of the world, we should expect it may be their final talking point.

Here's the bottom line: Serious times call for serious people. While we support the Cabrillo Port idea, we are open to further dialogue and even authentic debate. Screaming into television cameras and employing children to hold up signs urging motorists to honk to stop LNG is neither honest nor helpful.

It's important to note that other attempts to bring LNG to the West Coast - projects planned for Baja and Long Beach - were either not feasible or destroyed by opposition. This may be the last and best hope to bring a key energy source to our growing state that will need more and more of it in the future.

But ask yourself: If this project goes down, why would another private company subject itself to this kind of punishment?

So, where do we go from here? There are three major events to come: **Hearings before the US Coast Guard and Maritime Administration on April 4 in Oxnard**, followed by the **California State Lands Commission on April 9 in Oxnard** and the

final stop could be **the California Coastal Commission meeting here in Santa Barbara on April 12.**

These are specific opportunities for informed sources to weigh in, as well as for extremists like the Environmental Defense Center and Coastal Protection Network to shout extra loud so their voices will be heard at fever pitch, and then sue if they don't get their way.

In the final analysis, Governor Schwarzenegger must approve this project to go forward. If he does not, it will not happen. If he is inclined to take this bold step - and so far he has shown he will - you can be sure he will get intense pressure from his liberal friends and even West L.A. neighbors to side with the screamers. He will need strong support.

Letters and phone calls of support to the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Controller are critical if this vital project is to move forward.

For more information on how to help, please contact Kathi Hahn of BHP Billiton.

Her numbers are (805) 604-2790 or (805) 604-2785.

Or, go the website:

<http://lngsolutions.bhpbilliton.com/>

Politics and Religion Sans Statesmen

Last month, I had the opportunity and privilege of watching a movie that has just been released titled “Amazing Grace”. The movie is a true story about the Christian Parliamentarian and statesman of Great Britain, William Wilberforce, who led the effort to eliminate the British slave trade in the 19th Century. The title of the movie springs from the fact that Wilberforce’s mentor in life, John Newton, was a former slave trader who wrote the great hymn Amazing Grace. One of the aspects of the movie that I enjoyed most was the demonstration of Wilberforce’s phenomenal debating skills. It is said he had no equal and I believe it.

Sadly, politics and religion in America are devoid of great statesmen and debates, as it takes a statesman to have a debate. A statesman in my opinion, is somebody who can explain not just what they believe, but why they believe it, and in the process convince you to believe the same as they do as a result of their convincing and cogent argument. Today, we find that great concepts, which should serve as the basis for a rivalry of values competing for the heart and mind of America, have been replaced by soundbites, hyperbole, and rhetoric. To this end, I recently saw a cartoon that depicted a library of great thoughts of the modern day Democratic party. The room consisted of nothing more than a rack of bumper stickers. I don’t mean to single out Democrats who haven’t produced a statesman since JFK, since Republicans haven’t produced a statesman either since Ronald Reagan.

Part of the problem with respect to this vacuum of statesmen in America today can be blamed on voters. Too many voters simply vote party lines without scrutinizing much of anything about the candidate on their party’s ticket. Additionally, many voters are too easily swayed by the issue or candidate that has the best commercial, read that soundbite, hitting the airwaves days before the election. The average voter seems to value image over character, and so we end up with political leaders long on charisma and short on ideas of substance.

Last month, I also had the opportunity to guest host a local morning talk show over the course of several days. I really enjoyed the experience because talk radio provides one of the best forums for

the exchange of ideas. One of the highlights of the week was the occasion of an interview with a radical environmentalist. The guest on the show was the author of a book detailing his belief that if mankind does not change course soon, Mother Nature is going to unleash a fury upon us that will destroy life as we know it. I begged to differ and for a good while, we had a spirited exchange. The sad fact is, this particular guest wanted to hang up half way through the course of the discussion because he wasn’t used to having his ideas challenged. I find this typical in today’s society. Many so-called leaders will only present their ideas in forums where they are assured a favorable reception of a monologue. If you don’t believe me, listen to the recording of the interview with the environmentalist on the COLAB website. But let’s not stop here; let’s further test this point I am making.

I host a radio show every Saturday morning at 10 a.m. on AM 1440 and AM 1410. I would like to take this opportunity to invite some folks to come on the show for a debate. For starters, let’s invite two people who are also afforded the opportunity to pen opinion pieces in the Santa Maria Times. First, let’s invite Debra Braskett, the Executive Director of the Santa Barbara County Action Network, an organization that I believe is guilty of being part of the problem rather than part of the solution with respect to land use issues in our county. The second person I would like to interview is Jim Murr, the Green Party activist who believes the only reason we are in Iraq is because we want their oil. Surely to this list we should also invite newly elected Santa Maria City Councilwoman, Hilda Zacharias! We could have her explain her relationship with the organization PUEBLO, which has called for the issuance of driver’s licenses to illegal aliens. I would also love to have the opportunity to debate the leaders of POLO and POSY, who have incessantly, and in my opinion, unfairly, been attacking the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians every chance they get.

Of course, this is a two way street. Many of these same people don’t believe I can defend the positions that I take. Well, that is all the more reason to have a public forum! Let’s see if they are up to the challenge.

Check Out the Shows We Produced:

Assemblyman **Sam Blakeslee** on the Cost of Illegal Immigration; **Public Interest Watch** on Fraud and Abuse of our local non-profits (EDC, SBCAN, PUEBLO; Fund for Santa Barbara, etc.); **Mark Schniepp**—Our local economic forecast; Cyndi Nunez and Donna Dart on **Fraud** in our local mortgage banking sector and the fallout we can expect; Joe Armendariz on the Board of Sups proposal to **insure the children of illegal immigrants**; The California Energy Crisis and the **BHP Offshore LNG Plant**;
A debate between POLO and COLAB on the Chumash Casino Resort!!!

Now you can listen from anywhere, *at anytime*, on your computer! Go to the COLAB website at www.colabsbc.org and check out this week's shows, plus our radio show archives.

Each Show Features Something New and Different!

Live Broadcasts are as follows:

Every Thursday Features:

The COLAB Report on Santa Barbara's AM 1290.

This show airs live every Thursday from 2-3 p.m.

It is rebroadcast on Thursday at 10 pm and Sunday Morning at 8 a.m.. It is also available by livestreaming over your computer by going to newspress.com and clicking on the AM 1290 link. This is a call-in show.

Please participate!

Every Friday Enjoy:

Hoot's Morning Show on AM 1440 and 1410.

Andy Caldwell is a guest on Hoot's Show Every Friday Morning at 10 am!

It is available via livestreaming on the web at www.am1440.com

Every Saturday Listen In To:

Taking Care of Business AM 1440 and 1410

This Show airs every Saturday Morning at 10 a.m.. This is now also a call-in show!!!

It is available via livestreaming on the web at www.am1440.com

Stay Connected, Stay Informed!

Vital Information Available 24/7 at www.colabsbc.org

Read and Listen at Your Convenience!

Visit
www.colabsbc.org

Poor Richards Ad here

The COLAB Newsletter is published by the Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business of Santa Barbara County.

For information pertaining to this newsletter or COLAB please call 805-929-3148.

COLAB is truly grateful for the continued generosity of POOR RICHARD'S PRESS for producing our newsletter.

YOU MAY CONTACT POOR RICHARD'S PRESS AT 805-928-7334.

Contributions to COLAB are not deductible as a charitable contribution for Federal Income Tax Purposes.

COLAB is a Federal 501 (C)(6) CORPORATION

COLAB

P.O Box 7523
Santa Maria, CA 93456

RETURN SERVICE
REQUESTED