

Today's special sections highlight difficult issues

THE ISSUE | Perspectives 2010.

OUR OPINION | Featured in today's edition is Perspectives, *The Leader's* annual look at the issues, trends, people and organizations that shape life here in the Southern Tier. It's also a look at what to expect in the coming year.

Perspectives is our annual look at the driving forces that shape life in the Southern Tier. It's divided into three special sections, included in today's paper.

The Business section examines Corning Inc. and the growth potential for its LCD glass, used in the high-definition flat-screen TVs that have become a centerpiece of living rooms around the world.

It also covers the raging debate over the anticipated natural gas drilling boom in the Southern Tier; controversial wind farm developments in Steuben County; the Chemung County retail hub; the struggles of dairy farmers; and the success of the Finger Lakes wine industry.

The Life section takes a look at issues such as how the region is weathering the recession and the impact the downturn has had on charitable organizations; how upper-floor redevelopment has been vital to Corning's Market Street; how our local school districts are dealing with budget crunches; the impact of the I-86/I-99 highway projects; and the recent struggles of local hospitals.

And finally, the Entertainment section takes a look at our area's professional sports: racing at Watkins Glen International and the Elmira Jackals hockey club. It also features interviews with officials from the region's largest performing arts center, The Clemens Center; and its biggest tourist attraction, the Corning Museum of Glass.

Not surprisingly, the economy's prolonged slump is an underlying theme in Perspectives.

But in compiling the section, we were also reminded that even in tough times – and even though we face a number of unresolved issues – there's a tremendous amount of potential for growth, and a lot of things to like about living in this area.

We hope Perspectives provides some interesting Sunday reading. Please be sure to check it out.

OTHER VIEW | LOS ANGELES TIMES

O'Keefe's latest caper

Filmmaker James O'Keefe III is 25, meaning he was born about 13 years after five men were arrested for trying to bug the offices of the Democratic National Committee at the Watergate complex in Washington. The subsequent scandal, which led to the resignation of the burglars' boss, President Richard M. Nixon, was fodder for history books by the time O'Keefe was old enough to read them. Chances are, he didn't.

O'Keefe, the Internet "journalist" who became an overnight sensation after his undercover reports revealed unethical behavior by the liberal activist group ACORN, now finds himself in the middle of his own bugging scandal. He was arrested Monday in what the FBI alleges was a plot to "interfere with a telephone system" in the office of Democratic U.S. Sen. Mary L. Landrieu in New Orleans. According to federal court records, O'Keefe admitted that he worked with three accomplices, two of whom entered Landrieu's office posing as telephone repairmen while O'Keefe recorded them with his cellphone camera. If convicted, the four face up to 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

It isn't clear what the men were after or why they targeted Landrieu, who is one of the most conservative Democrats in the Senate. But the fact that they tried to access the office's telephone closet, where the wiring for the system is located, suggests that they may have wanted to tap Landrieu's phone network.

O'Keefe was in legal trouble before now. When he and fellow conservative activist Hannah Giles posed as a pimp and a prostitute and secretly videotaped conversations with ACORN employees last summer, they may have been violating laws in several states, including California, that forbid surreptitious recordings. That didn't excuse the behavior they uncovered at ACORN, nor the organization's subsequent efforts to deflect blame and avoid taking responsibility for its internal problems. But it did mark the ascent of a new brand of online journalism employing methods that are at best unethical and at worst illegal.

In an era of citizen bloggers and media fragmentation, old-fashioned standards of ethics and objectivity are breaking down. The right and left alike – but especially conservatives – celebrate that turn of events; resentment over a perceived bias by the "mainstream media" has sent them flocking to partisan news outlets and turning the likes of O'Keefe into folk heroes. Yet his latest stunt less resembles legitimate investigative journalism than the kind of illicit political dirty-tricks campaign that brought down Nixon. O'Keefe's fellow ideologues will no doubt continue to defend him, but embracing such methods won't improve his credibility, or theirs.

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ARTIST'S VIEW



COMMENTARY | LEONARD PITTS JR.

Breeding contempt for poor Americans

If he'd said it of Jews, he would still be apologizing.

If he'd said it of blacks, he'd be on BET, begging absolution.

If he'd said it of women, the National Organization for Women would have his carcass turning slowly on a spit over an open flame.

But he said it of the poor, so he got away with it.

"He" is South Carolina Lt. Gov. Andre Bauer, running for governor on the GOP ticket. Speaking of those who receive public assistance, he recently told an audience, "My grandmother was not a highly educated woman, but she told me as a small child to quit feeding stray animals. You know why? Because they breed. You're facilitating the problem if you give an animal or a person ample food supply. They will reproduce, especially ones that don't think too much further than that. And so what you've got to do is you've got to curtail that type of behavior. They don't know any better."

You read that right. The would-be governor of one of the poorest states there is likens the poor to stray animals.

And though it drew some newspaper notice, a riposte from "The Daily Show" and rebukes from Bauer's opponents, it never quite rose to the level of national controversy, as it would've had Bauer compared, say, women or Jews to the dogs one feeds at one's back door. The relative silence stands as elo-

quent testimony to the powerlessness and invisibility of the American poor.

One is reminded how earnestly shocked news media were at the poverty they saw five years ago when New Orleans drowned. "Why didn't they get out?" observers kept asking – as if everyone has a car in the driveway and a wallet full of plastic.

The poor fare little better on television. The Evanses of "Good Times" and the Conners from "Roseanne" aside, television has been heavily weighted toward fresh-scrubbed middle- and upper-class families for 60 years. Politicians? They'll elbow one another aside to pledge allegiance to the middle class; they are conspicuously less eager to align with those still trying to reach that level.

Who, then, speaks for the poor? Who raises a voice when they are scapegoated and marginalized? Who cries out when they are abused by police and failed by schools? Who takes a stand when they are exploited by employers and turned away by hospitals?

As near as I can tell, no one does.

Unfortunately, poor people have never learned to think of and conduct themselves as a voting bloc; historically, they have proved too readily divisible, usually by race. As Martin Luther King once observed: "If it may be said of the slavery era that the white man took the world and gave the

Negro Jesus, then it may be said of the Reconstruction era that the Southern aristocracy took the world and gave the "poor" white man Jim Crow. And when his wrinkled stomach cried out for the food that his empty pockets could not provide, he ate Jim Crow, a psychological bird that told him that no matter how bad off he was, at least he was a white man, better than the black man."

It takes some helluva psychology to get two men stuck in the same leaking boat to fight one another. You'd think their priority would be to come together, if only long enough to bail water. But the moneyed interests in this country have somehow been able to con the poor into doing just that, fighting tooth and nail when they ought to be standing shoulder to shoulder.

One hopes Andre Bauer's words will provide a wakeup call – in South Carolina and elsewhere – for people who have been down too long and fooled too often, that it will encourage them to organize their votes, raise their voices, push their issues into the public discourse. In America, one is invisible and powerless only so long as one chooses to be.

And the Bauers of this world need to know: sometimes stray animals bite.

■ Leonard Pitts Jr., winner of the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for commentary, is a columnist for the *Miami Herald*.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

'No' means 'no'

TO THE EDITOR | Because the outcome is not what the school board wanted, we the majority keep voting until they get the correct response. When I was in school, no meant no, not let's ask again. When and if this passes in March people who are opposed to it should ask for another vote. It

would only be fair to vote again as the "no" voters should have the same rights. The school board doesn't want to discriminate against the "no" voters, do they?

This plan does not benefit the children's education, from what I see the plan doesn't save money either, all it does is give the district a bigger building they won't take care of. We voted the school board mem-

bers in, we can vote them out. They are supposed to listen to the people who put them in those positions. But guess not as I have not seen one school board member stand up and say the people of the community have spoken, lets get on with other business.

Douglas O'Brian
Corning

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Why the communist connotation?

The press release that I received Tuesday began like this:

"The Communist USA Party is applauding Congressman Massa's decision to become a co-sponsor of Rep. Dennis Kucinich's "Privileged Resolution to End the Afghan War." Massa's co-sponsorship was noted on the Communist Party website (sic) cpusa.org in a Jan. 21 article written by Communist Party political chair Joelle Fishman."

The press release, sent out by Tom Reed for

CITY BEAT



Joe Dunning

Congress, goes on to say that Massa's support of the resolution "shows a lack of support for our troops and

plays into the hands of our enemies, telling them to hang on because we will quit and retreat."

For the most part, what's contained in the release is typical of a challenger attacking an incumbent during a political campaign.

But to reference the Communist Party is a tactic I've not seen used and, frankly, only heard about during the Red Scare years of Sen. Joseph McCarthy.

Was Reed accusing Massa, a retired U.S. Navy commander, of being a communist, I wondered? Others in the newsroom, after expressing initial disbelief after reading the press release, did too.

On Wednesday morning, I asked Reed during his conference call if he was calling Massa a communist in his press release.

"No, no, no. Joe, Joe, Joe. Don't even go there," was Reed's response.

Don't even go there? The only reason I went there is because you took me there, Mr. Reed.

Why on earth would Reed reference the Communist Party if he wasn't trying to color Massa some shade of red?

"Because that's what the record is and that's where we heard it," Reed explained.

That's where Reed heard it? So, Reed is bypassing the congressional record, House votes and the thousands of reliable media outlets and Web sites that accurately record legislative action in a timely fashion and is getting his information from the Communist Party's Web site? And if my math is correct, the information was at least five days old.

"No one's calling anyone a communist or anything like that," Reed explained. "What I'm saying is the congressman is taking a position on Afghanistan that I'm diametrically opposed to and we need to complete that mission in that area of the world."

OK, then. Why not just say that without the communist connotation? After listening to Reed, I then contacted Massa's office for a comment.

Jared Smith, Massa's spokesman, gave a measured response saying they were aware of Reed's press release but would not comment since it was less than 48 hours before that Marine Lance Cpl. Zachary Smith, a Hornell native, had died in Afghanistan.

"There is a time for give and take and a time for throwing political punches," Smith said. "That said, this is poor taste and poor timing."

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