

What do you think?

an opinion for The People by pete edwards

Will they ever be satisfied?

I have already had my say on the subject of a sales tax increase and normally it would end there as far as a "What do you think" comment. There is little point in harping on forever about tax increases, they are a fact of life we have to endure while self-serving officials are running Cleveland. This latest attempt to relieve people of their money has been dressed up with so many misleading even fraudulent claims that it behooves me to add more to the mix.

The first misleading statement that Cleveland officials fibbed about is the need for more money for road maintenance and school capital outlay projects. It is not a shortage of money that is causing problems for the City of Cleveland, it is how what they have is being spent. Do you believe a sales tax referendum would have any chance of passing if it had been proposed for the new airport? If the money presently being spent on the airport project had been used for road repair and a new school science wing there would not be a case for increasing the sales tax. The estimated cost of the new airport is \$30-35 million. The actual cost is likely to be higher. How much local tax money is going to be used is a mystery but it is likely to be many millions.

The next misleading statement is that the tax is a

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Usually if I want to use the money from the sale of something I must know its value to know how much to spend. Maybe "if it's not really my money, who cares how much I spend" is the attitude. But really, the bottom line to this airport issue is... if the airport stays where it is nobody makes money, if the airport moves some people make money. But it won't be us average citizens, we just get to fund it and all the future extra cost.

paltry increase of 50 cents on every hundred dollars spent. The truth is that every individual tax increase isolated from the existing tax burden, seems paltry, but when it is added to the everyday taxes that we pay, it can overwhelm the family budget. Just in sales tax alone, not including the mountain of other taxes, licenses, fees and permits the average homeowner is forced to endure, the sales tax on almost everything we buy will be 9.75%. This is not a paltry amount, it is \$9.75 for every hundred spent, giving Cleveland the highest sales tax allowed by law. The extra 50 cents per hundred is only paltry because it maxed out the legal limit. The chances are it would have been higher had the law allowed.

Another fib is the need for money to pay for schools and the infrastructure needed to accommodate an influx due to large corporations locating in and around Cleveland. The addition of Volkswagen and the Wacker Chemie plant in Bradley County that is receiving massive tax breaks to locate here should decrease the tax burden. Cleveland's leaders are claiming these companies as an economic boom to the region, which they undoubtedly will be, yet say the sales tax is needed to help meet the needs of those being attracted here. Something is wrong with that story. Welcoming these companies to this area cannot at the same time bring economic prosperity and be used as an excuse to drain the family budget. Why should local people put out the welcome mat if it means higher taxes?

Another major expense none of the pro tax crowd are talking about is the hidden cost of allowing them more money to spend. Building a new science wing, new airport, or any new capital expenditure project is not the most expensive part of increasing the reach of new tax money. Staffing and maintaining the new additions become a yearly and progressively more expensive burden. Salaries always rise, heating and cooling always

rise requiring ever larger tax increases. The unpleasant truth is that once one tax base such as the sales tax is maxed out new forms of tax are invented to take up the slack. It is not about schools or children, it is about spending your money.

It is also misleading the public to say that any tax increase is legally earmarked for a particular service. In the case of the sales tax increase earmarked for school building projects, it does not mean no extra money will be required in the future for building. Nor does it mean money that would have been spent on these additions without a tax increase will remain targeted for schools. What the earmarked sales tax funds will accomplish is the freeing up of money that can be spent on not so popular capitol projects like an airport. This sales tax does not change anything in regard to the continuous search for new revenue, nor is the need for a science wing for Cleveland schools going to stop there. Remember just a few short months ago the emphasis was to build Mayfield school. Mayfield is now a relic of the past, the prospect of a science wing has the Cleveland School Board making passionate but misleading pleas. To use underhanded tactics to persuade people to support a lie is bad enough, but to do it during times of economic strife and hardship is unforgivable. Do these people know no shame?

What is so shocking about the scam being perpetrated on the people of Cleveland is the stature of Cleveland's hierarchy promoting the sales tax referendum and why their endorsement of the tax should or should not be respected. A Cleveland Daily Banner front page byline proclaims "Chamber board supports sales tax increase" as if the recommendation of the Cleveland - Bradley Chamber of Commerce was an unbiased and respected mouthpiece for the people. By the way, being registered as a not for profit, means the

chamber does not pay tax, but the businesses they claim to represent do. Most of the same people that control the chamber in large part benefit from a financially reckless government and a relatively uninformed populace. Large industries like Whirlpool-Maytag receive unfair tax breaks with help from the Chamber of Commerce with whom they have an unhealthy alliance. Past chamber chairman Cameron Fisher, is a stout supporter of the tax too, but one must also bare in mind that the organization he represents, Church of God International, pays no sales tax, in fact, as far as I am aware it pays no taxes of any kind, or for government services like police and fire protection. Tax payers, regardless of religious persuasion, pick up the tab for a tax exempt revenue producing organization that promotes higher taxes and pays people like Fisher fat salaries. Is that self serving or what? If I am wrong about this and should allow myself to be tarred and feathered by the Church of God, please let me know?

History shows that government usually gets what it wants, one way or another, but if taxpayers are going to be scammed and cheated, our elected representatives on the Cleveland City Council should have the decency and courage to come clean and say what the money is really for. Taxpayers already pay for decent schools.

That's what I think. What do you think?

Hurt feelings

The following is a signed e-mail I received from a reader who did not appreciate my opinion of George W. Bush and the tolerance I showed for our new president. I thought you would like to hear the other side of the story. If you have any comments I would like to hear them too.

"Letter in response to What Do You Think (February issue)

I have been trying to fathom your intent ever since I first read the Obama Clamor article. In any case, I had to reply:

"Know what I think? I

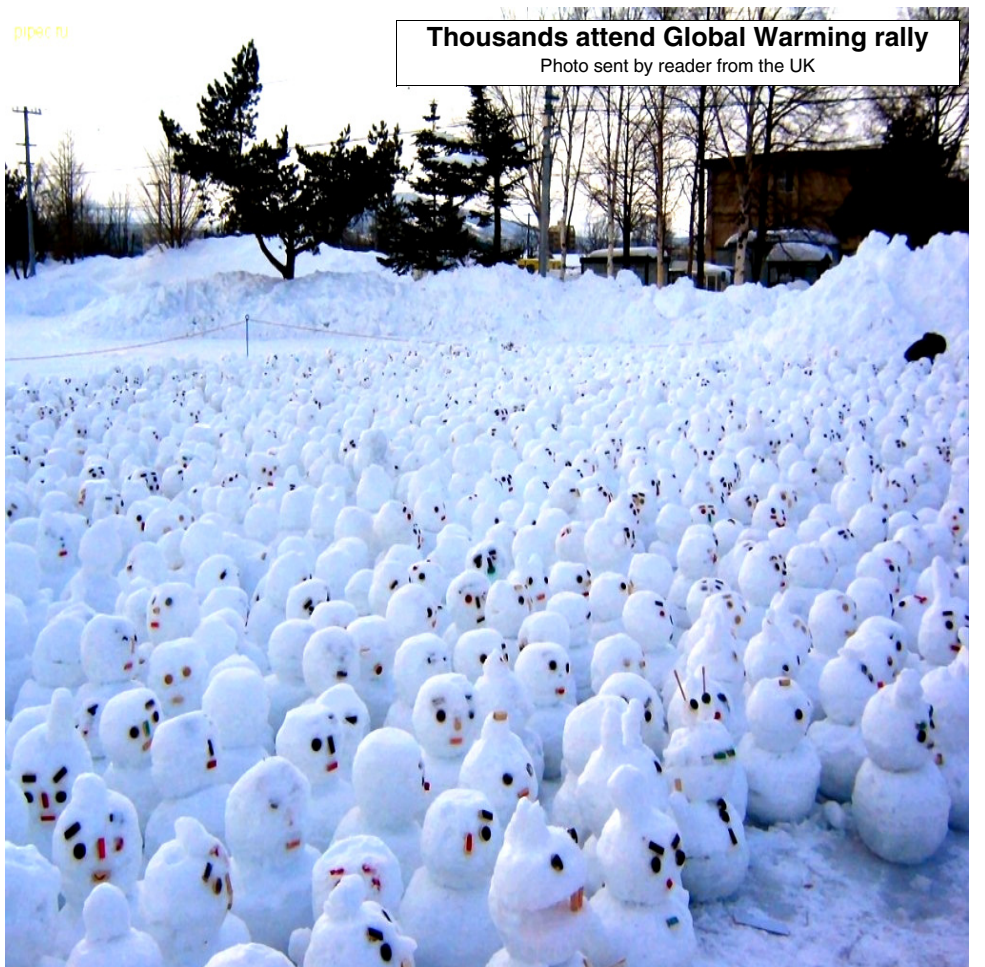
think that you are a suck-up toady democrat/socialist who is virtually frothing at the mouth with platitudes for someone who has absolutely no experience when it comes to running a clean government.

Your knee-skinning kowtow and plea for everyone to support Obama, especially in his endeavors to socialize America is a sign of the times. Support what? His nationalization of private business, his huge and obscene public works, national health care, national housing and national education programs? No thank you - I have seen what such social programs have done to people all over Europe.

You best think about what Obama is and intends to do. Think about Nationalization combined with Socialism. If you want to know what that can lead to - go read about the Nazi party and the government that resulted from it.

I won't address your petty, sniveling jabs at President Bush because he has been put out to pasture and we all need to focus our attention on what the current president is doing.

That's what I think."



Thousands attend Global Warming rally

Photo sent by reader from the UK