

Plain Talk

Let's Call It What It Is

COLUMN BY ROB BUKSAR

I recently read Mark Hoogterp's article "Change or Else" in the April DuBois *Starternator* News (see the reprint on page 5 of this issue). If he

continues to contribute in this manner, it won't be long before he shares my nickname of Mr. Doom-and-Gloom.

We all have to do what we can to stay afloat in rough water. America is a very expensive place to operate a business—the cost of living in the U.S. is actually the real problem and the straw that will eventually break our backs. Our global competitors know that.

Is change possible? Can we salvage our infrastructure? Most recently President Bush was put under so much pressure from the Republican National Committee that he actually changed his tune on the Mexican border issue and illegal immigration actions are going to take place soon. Some already contend it's not enough but it sure looks a lot better than it did last week. At least now there is some kind of direction.

Do you know how that happened? A whole bunch of concerned Americans got motivated and raised seven levels of hell with their elected representatives and made it quite clear: If you ever want to see another Republican hold high office again you will do something about this crazy illegal immigration problem.

Peaceful protest, contacting representatives and elected officials, encouraging trade organizations to get off their backsides and become proactive is what it's going to take to save our industry, economy, and maybe the whole country. We are in desperate need of firm national economic policy that concerns itself with the best interest of America as a whole and not a handful of special interests, or the rest of the world.

Mark, I think you're a fine gentleman and a good businessman, but a little flip-pant concerning your solution to globalization. You stated: "No job is secure anymore. Instead of ignoring globaliza-



tion, try to make it work to your advantage. The prospect of offshoring may unsettle you a bit, but better that we adapt to change than be blindsided by a future we chose to ignore."

Mark, do you really think rebuilders and rebuilding have a future by yielding to globalization? Are you not saying, "If you can't beat them, join them." Joining them only accelerates our demise. It is crystal clear they want what we have in America and I don't think helping them get it is all that great of an idea.

I know you understand what's happening by virtue of the language used in your article: "their threat is not going away...do not underestimate them...a refusal to acknowledge, much less confront, an extreme threat does not chase the threat away." Your last paragraph is particularly descriptive: "It is a bit like cleaning up after the circus. Nobody likes to do it. However, everyone has to realize that there is no alternative."

If we don't join the enemy shall we just throw in the towel? Are you saying America as we knew it is over and no longer worth fighting for? Isn't that how the French capitulated when confronted by Nazi Germany? How about the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto—just cave in and get along, then get destroyed anyway.

I have a problem with that thinking. I believe there's still a few of us around that subscribe to the "Give me liberty or give me death" concept. I for one don't like the idea of Chinese or Indian masters over my destiny and that of my children.

There is no doubt that the world has changed. Thomas Friedman wrote what's now a best seller titled "The World is Flat." Friedman, being very much on top of his game, states early in the book, "No matter what your profession—doctor, lawyer, accountant, architect—if you are an American, you better be good at the touchy-feely stuff because anything that can be digitized can be outsourced to either the smartest or the cheapest producer, or both."

Friedman quotes the mayor of Dalian, China, Xia Deren: "Chinese people first were the employees and working for the big foreign manufacturers, and after several years, after we learned all the processes and steps, we can start our own firms...Today the U.S. you are the designers, the architects, and the developing countries are the bricklayers for the building. But one day I

hope we will be the architects."

There isn't a sane one of us out there willing to underwrite a firm or company whose intention is to take our customers and put us out of business. So in the name of short term profits we continue to leave our back door open with an invitation so we can watch ourselves bleed to death. Such a deal.

The real war is not being fought in Iraq. Our Third World "trading partners" are cutting us up and eating us alive without firing a shot. A war by any other name is still a war and in this generation it's called globalization.

May God please save America from its foolishness and clear up our deluded perceptions.

Rob Buksar is owner of Hoosier Electric Co., Gary, Ind.