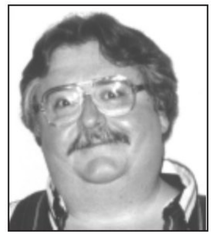
Plain talk
Get your finger on the pulse

COLUMN BY ROB BUKSAR



I know that a great number of us small guys have to expend every calorie of energy we can muster to keep our heads above water. In too many cases, the environment for many small businesses has become so severe, it doesn't leave time or horsepower for anything else. This has become an American abomination! Yet, this is the playing field our political leaders in collusion with corporate America have left us with. It is no accident!

Again, since many of us have neither the time nor inclination to follow American politics, we simply don't. Yet today, I must take issue with this. Whether you make a good decision concerning your business and personal affairs is now going to be tied to the quality of our political leadership and the fundamental direction of our country and economy.

Prior to globalization and being in bed with the new "world order," economic circumstances stayed pretty stable in the good old USA. Now, in terms of basic materials, what you get, when you get it, how good it is and what it's going to cost depends on people in other countries who still have nuclear weapons aimed at us!

I have been on the supply end of the rebuilding industry for almost 35 years now. I have seen all my domestic competitors disappear because they depended on a market we were circumvented right out of. You all know who they were. They were all sizeable and could not survive on scraps.

Furthermore, they were all too busy trying to beat each other up and never really understood who the enemy really was.

Having kept my finger on the pulse of the industry and staying cognizant with current affairs, I pleaded my case to a few of my former domestic competitors. I couldn't convince them that the rules and definition of terms in the "Great Game of Business in America" had changed. I could not convince them that even though it still may appear so, none of us were competitors any longer. The real enemy was whoever was dissipating our markets, and that certainly wasn't one of us.

I wanted to unify and cooperate with one another. I knew as long as we all were divided, we would be easy prey for big-time corporate America with their Asian allies. Guess what? Most everyone was picked off one at a time. All that's left is a fading memory and me. By the way, there has been no magic. It's only because of the grace of God and a lot of dumb luck that I'm still around. Knock on wood!

The general public doesn't understand and our esteemed professional political leadership is clueless. There are daily occurrences of this. Let me mention two of my favorites; one from the Bush days and the other as recent as last month.

Donald Rumsfeld, former secretary of defense, was having a question and answer news conference with a group of reservists who had just returned from Iraq. Secretary Rumsfeld was asked by one of the solders why they could not get armor plate for their vehicles. They had to resort to picking through scrap for attempts to protect themselves against bullets and other nasty stuff flying right through their vehicles and injuring or killing everyone. I remember hearing Rumsfeld's reply. It really sucked! He said we had to fight with what we had available to work with but he would look into the lack of armor plate. Later, we would discover that the armor plate was on order from a steel mill in Mexico and was presently on back order. Bottom line was no remaining American steel makers produced armor plate any longer. It had to be brought in from another country. Go figure.

Most recently, the distinguished senator Harry Reid, Democrat and leader of the U.S. Senate, took exception to the way our Olympic athletes are dressed. He discovered our Olympic athletes are dressed in Armani suits made in China. Senator Reid was outraged! He said with all of the Americans needing jobs and our textile industry needing orders, it was an insult buying this clothing from the Chinese. Furthermore, all these Chinese-made Armani suits should be gathered up in a pile and burned!

Senator Reid gets a blue ribbon for his righteous indignation. Yet, someone needs to tell him the U.S. has not had a viable textile industry for the last thirteen or so years. I wonder if he bothers to look at the labels on his own clothes. Senator, your Fruit of the Loom guys speak Chinese just like mine. You are going to be hard-pressed finding any domestically produced clothes, even military uniforms and our beloved flag.

As I mentioned last month, these knuckleheads we continue to put in office are clueless. For crying out loud, Obamacare, a bill that could very well ruin what's left of our economy, was voted in and signed without anyone knowing what was in it!

Would you sign the biggest, most expensive deal in your life without reading it? Of course not. You probably would take it to experts to look at it so you would be sure you understood what you were getting into. I wouldn't ignorantly sign something like that and neither would you. We're not that dumb. Furthermore, I doubt if any of us know or associate with anyone that stupid. Yet, our Congress and current president did it and that's a fact regardless of your political persuasion.

Pay attention, friends. All of the candidates are on soapboxes promising jobs, prosperity and renewed opportunity for American small business. Yet, their behavior, votes and continued public policy are to the contrary. Do you think that since it's being discussed in the media, that outsourcing and the exodus of American industry has even slowed down? It's accelerated!

Regardless of media spin doctors and fabricated statistics, generally, employers small and large alike are afraid to hire. The upcoming tax burden, unemployment consequence and an unstable economic environment have most scared witless.

Especially for us small guys, we're at a tipping point. More so than ever before, you will have to keep your eyes and ears open and in tune with all that's occurring around you.

For most of us, time is not on our side. Should we stay or should we go, should we merge or continue to go it alone? Bottom line is simply this: You no longer can afford not to take a regular paycheck. You cannot continue to reduce your own wages, hoping to make them up in the near future. If you're paying attention, you may have a near future where you're at but you won't know that unless you look!

Stay awake, stay vigilant and stay in tune. The only way you will be surprised is if you're not paying attention. Hope for the best but prepare for the worst, and by all

means do not procrastinate. Remember, if you're just going to hang around watching the paint dry, you will end up being part of the woodwork. Good luck and Godspeed to all of us.

God Bless America.

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