

The economic viewpoint



Howard Grossman

In a 558 page autobiography titled "Long Walk to Freedom", South African President Nelson Mandela describes his life and the astonishing transference of his nation from apartheid to the democratic election of the nation's leaders in the 1990s resulting in multi-racial governance. He likens in one passage the great upheavals and never ending struggle for equality to the great words of Winston Churchill in World War II.

"We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the halls; we shall never surrender."

Just as the South African campaign looked hopeless and the dark days in the early years of the World War II battlegrounds in Great Britain seemed dismal and hopeless, there could be a tendency in Northeastern Pennsylvania to believe that all is hopeless and a sound and sustainable economy will never be achieved. The truth is that no economy can be sustainable unless a long view is taken toward eventual success. The Nelson Mandela story is one of 30 years in jail plus a series of tragic and unjust events which ultimately led to political success. The current rippling up and down nature of this region's economic conditions can be a difficult and trying experience but may lead to a conclusion that long-term positive economic experience will occur.

It is true that the Northeastern Pennsylvania economy is going through swings which make it difficult to stay ahead of the curve. If the good work of local development organizations continues, it may be countered by an impact nationally which can cause a triggering of economic decisions to close, downsize or, in some other fashion, limit the number of higher-paying jobs in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

Recently, for example, almost as many jobs as are currently situated at Tobyhanna Army Depot, the region's largest employer, 3,600 have been lost to the above spiraling actions. The region, along with many other regions across the country, seems to be locked into an economic structure which causes stress and discontent.

Loss of jobs recently at Leslie Fay, Consolidated Freightways,

House decorating contest starts Dec. 8

The Kingston Township Recreation Commission is sponsoring Holiday Homes, a house decorating contest. To enter, contact the municipal office at 696-3809 by December 8. Residents must enter to qualify.

The judging will take place December 14 during the evening hours. Three winners will each receive a U.S. Savings Bond and will be featured in the local newspaper.

All residents are encouraged to participate.

Take a long view to growth

Trane Corporation and Grumman are among the examples of the economic challenges facing the region. Together with the battle to save Tobyhanna Army Depot, there is a rising tide of actual or potential economic dislocation which has the potential to adversely impact the region for years.

On the other hand, this should not take away from the often difficult work of local development organizations who must rise to the challenges of competition unlike any seen in prior decades. Support for these organizations is greatly needed across the region. In part, the new challenges are being met by an exciting and innovative program of regional marketing to which each local development organization in the region has directed financial resources along with utility companies and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The first product is an updated evaluation of back offices in Northeastern Pennsylvania to tap into a burgeoning market which is likely to lead to more decisions close to the type of positive action taken by National Westminster Bank to locate 300,000 square feet of office space in the region and 1,700 new jobs. The Pennsylvania Department of Commerce under its Community Economic Recovery Program is committing \$80,000 toward the assessment of back office opportunities in the region.

It is this type of new initiative which can be the forerunner of actions designed to overcome the current inability to stabilize the region's economy and make it fully viable for 21st century life.

Just as the South African experience demonstrates the long term view which needs to be taken, so, too, is the Northeastern Pennsylvania economic story. We must not lose sight of the determination which existed in the region to cause the most startling regional economic comeback in the history of the United States. Therefore, the problems and issues

which exist today, while difficult and critical, do not nearly reflect the economic hardships of the 1950s and 1960s.

Northeastern Pennsylvania has had a long road to economic competitiveness. That road has been strewn with adjustments and crises, unlike those seen in many other parts of the country. Floods, railroad cutbacks, recessions, and other economic dislocations have plagued this region for many decades.

On the other hand, the greatness and richness of the region and the human spirit of survival has enabled what was once a hopeless cause to truly be economically competitive.

There is another long road ahead of the region to tap into opportunities for global economics in the 21st century. The exporting of Northeastern Pennsylvania products and services overseas, while of some substance, could be expanded greatly. It is the direction of much of the nation's future as well. The overseas markets are expanding and provide plenty of potential for products and services which are often in demand. The need is to take the long view which is what other countries have taken and not the short view to immediate profits.

The long road to freedom taken by Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress leading to full electoral democracy is a solid example of the type of economic survival which should enable Northeastern Pennsylvania to be a complete economic partner in the dynamics of American and global life of the next century.

Those who would like to contribute innovative suggestions regarding the region's future, may contact the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania (EDCNP), 1151 Oak Street, Pittston, PA 18640.

Howard Grossman is Executive Director of the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania. He lives in Dallas.

J.W.J.



John W. Johnson

I saw the movie "Elmer Gantry" again recently. Remembering the first time I saw it, I would never have thought that real life Ganttrys would ever be seen on the scale they are today, much less be memorialized in the tearful faces of electronic ministers such as Jimmy Swaggart and Jim and Tammy Bakker.

Conversely, how many want to forget that the aforementioned all failed the test of their own moralizing...even while, and according to every survey on the subject, we continue to hold ourselves out as a moral people, even while church attendance drops, and situational, even cynical ethics, are taught daily by example to our children, both at home and at large?

The Breakfast Club generally finds stars of the electronic church to be "great entertainment," in the words of Roscoe Bismark.

"No one can cry with more flair than Jimmy Swaggart," says Silas McMarner.

Likewise, never before in the relatively brief history of the electronic church have so many who believed had so many doubts. That's because it has now become clear that exploitation of gullible

Is the electronic ministry only a massive con game?

Christians has become the rule in the electronic church.

There's nothing new here. Throughout history, charismatic cult and/or religious leaders have been exploiting gullible followers. What's new is that never in history have so many been able to be exploited by so few. And that's because television touches millions of lives with the flick of a switch. Imagine what would have happened had Adolph Hitler or Joseph Stalin had access to the electronic media available today.

Or what would Father Coughlin in the 1930's have been able to do in this country?

This prompts another question: is electronic ministry real ministry? Or is it salesmanship and showmanship in the name of ministry? This is a legitimate question.

Do electronic ministries really fulfill a personal need on a long-time basis? Can they, when there is no local visitation, no church nearby, no minister nearby, no group organization in the community to help in times of illness, or hunger, or family crisis of any kind?

If followers don't know the "star" personally, as they know their local minister and his family or priest, can they really know whether or not he is a swinger conning them for cash rather than a moral example to be followed?

Those are questions many of the faithful gullible are now asking.

It's a question millions have also asked about charities boosted on television. Every hour or so on the tube, especially at night, a film or other 'personality' suddenly appears with a fine-sounding charity appeal, perhaps for hungry children. Send money.

How much of this money goes to the organization making the pitch for cash and how much reaches the hungry children?

One seldom knows. Some recent revisions have shown that charity funds have been used mostly to pay salaries, travel, and expenses of the organization itself, in some metropolitan office complex, or expensive trips and trysts for fund leaders.

Which leads to one inevitable conclusion. Money spent at home can usually be accounted for. There are hungry children in this country. One need not go to, i.e., South Korea (which is doing fine economically, by the way, and taking jobs from American workers, while its markets are largely closed to U.S. goods) to find hungry children.

So, with charity and ministry, a good principle to keep in mind is that if one wants to be sure how his or her money is used, it should be donated to a cause or organization whose objectives are clearly stated, whose books are open to all, and which is located where the donor can observe what, in fact, is happening.

Heard the news?

Let us in on it. Call or write with your happenings or story ideas so we can share them with the Back Mountain. Send items to: The Dallas Post, P.O. Box 366, Dallas PA 18612.

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HEALTH AWARENESS

Healthy Holiday Eating

You are cordially invited to join our STAR dietitians as they transform a holiday dinner into a low-fat, healthy traditional meal. Bring your favorite recipe and see it redesigned into a low-fat version.

Thursday, December 7 • 7:00PM FREE
Presenters: STAR Dietitians

DIABETES EDUCATION

Healthful Holiday Meal Plans for Those with Diabetes

The most difficult time of the year to follow a meal plan is the period from Thanksgiving to the New Year! Learn an easy and accurate way to follow a healthful meal plan from one of our STAR registered dietitians.

Thursday, November 30 • 7:00PM FREE
Presenter: Arlene Feleccia, R.D., C.D.E.

STAR FITNESS

Take Time to Body Sculpt

During this busy holiday season, take time to pamper yourself and experience a non-impact strength workout called "Body Sculpt." Then learn how to enhance overall relaxation with a full-body stretch.

Tuesday, December 5 • 7:00PM FEE: \$3.00
Presenter: Joan Cebrick, M.S., Manager, Fitness & Nutrition Services

PERSONAL ENHANCEMENT

Are You Ready for the Holidays?

You will be, after this fun-filled evening of learning how to creatively wrap gifts, make fancy bows and set a festive table, all with time to spare.

Wednesday, November 29 • 7:00PM FEE \$5.00
Presenter: Diane DeNisco
Project Coordinator, Interior Design

Clutter...Be Gone!

During the holiday season we tend to hide and hoard. Spring cleaning does not have to wait! Learn the basics to eliminate clutter forever.

Tuesday, December 12 • 7:00PM FEE \$5.00
Presenters: Staff Enhancement Staff

Reduce Holiday Stress

Gift ideas to help lessen stress and tips on holiday planning are just some of the topics that will be discussed.

Thursday, December 14 • 7:00PM FEE \$5.00
Presenters: Staff Enhancement Staff

CHILDREN'S CORNER

"Who is a Stranger?"

Helps children ages 5 to 8 learn important information to help prevent child abduction.

Thursday, December 7 • 4:30PM FREE
Presenters: Health Awareness Staff

To register or for more information, please call 283-7222 or 1-800-838-WELL. All classes will be held on the 2nd floor.

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