

# It's an Erie sort of feeling

Occasionally someone will tell me how surprised he or she is that I'd written a column on what we had been talking about just a few days prior. But of course that just makes sense. What I think and talk about is often -- at least when I get the chance -- what I write about.

Well, just a few days ago I ran into the middle of a conversation/debate which showed me that while undergrads come and go things at Behrend pretty much remain the same. Several people were accosting a friend of mine, an Erie native, demanding to know why Erie wasn't given over to the military for B-2 target practice. Erie, according to the group, was a lifeless, boring, poorly-run, dirty, out-dated, fundamentally irrelevant little city from hell.

I joined in and it should be noted that I fought admirably to defend the honor of this city, the city I was born in, the city I have lived in, and the city I know best. And while I don't think the group of people ran screaming from our encounter to slap "ERIEsistible" bumper stickers on cars, they did listen to my argument and did occasionally grant me a point or two.

But the subject would have

died right there if it hadn't been for a bit of kismet. Friday afternoon I ventured downtown to snap some photos for this paper. Erie has few tall buildings and I had never seen it from a vantage point high enough to see all the pieces that make up the city.

So there I was on the top floor of the Baldwin Building hanging out windows on a blustery fall day. And I'll tell you what I saw.

First I noticed a jigsaw puzzle of neighborhoods; each different, but each adding to the whole. Each was the result of some ethnic bonding and each showed unmistakably that Erie is no "bedroom" community. Erie, unlike many medium size cities, doesn't resemble an extended suburb with globs of ticky tacky look-alike boxes. The neighborhoods were built of hardware houses, each straining in its uniqueness. Erie is not prefab.

Next, from another window, I noticed the bay and Presque Isle. I have driven, jogged, biked, and even skated around the peninsula many times, but seeing it whole really made me appreciate it. What I saw was almost unlimited bay access on one edge, a forest full of lagoons and trails in the

middle, and seven miles of free beach on the other side. An impressive piece of real estate, and its all public. That is something that certainly cannot be said of anything on the famous New England coast. In fact there is precious little publicly held water access anywhere.

## YEAH RIGHT

I also saw a city that can be navigated. There is no grid lock to survive, no greenish-blue-almost-yellow belt to try to figure out before the next exit, no horn blowing, no mass hysteria, and when you get to where you are going there is always a place to park. Erie had no big city problems.

Most would say that not being a big city is a problem in itself, and for some isolated places that would be true, but Erie is unique. It is neatly centered between Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Toronto. A few hours on the highway and you

can get anything you want. World class theatre, big league ball clubs, the best food, all within driving distance. It is true a few hours cannot be taken lightly. But when you consider that the average workday commute in Toronto is almost two hours I think that a two hour trip once in a while starts to sound a bit better than living and working in the large city.

I have been to Los Angeles, Miami, and all of the large cities in this part of the country and have always had the same reaction: Nice place to visit but has anyone seen a tree lately? No trees, no parking, inflated prices, people sleeping in doorways, foul smelling air, and a crowbar murder almost every day. No, it is no insult to say that Erie is not a big city.

No, Erie isn't a metropolis, it is a small city, and a good one. Olean, New York and Youngstown, Ohio are both the approximate size of Erie, but neither compares to Erie very favorably. Olean is twice as boring. Its main tourist attraction is a place called Rock City and the city's attitude can be best summed up by the phrase "yep."

Youngstown, on the other hand, is twice as exciting. The

only problem is the excitement comes from organized crime. Beyond that there isn't much to see. Except I did notice that they seem to favor concrete buildings. Huh.

The Erie area has a ton of minor league, college and high school sports, six dramatic theatres, two universities, a large civic center including the grand Warner Theater, a Great Lakes port, a zoo, a handful of museums, over two hundred restaurants and taverns, ample shopping, twenty cinema screens, an amusement park, skiing, four wineries, a very low cost of living and, oh-by-the-way, lots of trees. And that isn't too bad especially in an area containing just a little over a hundred thousand people.

So stop whining.

- Rob Prindle

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# Nailing it down, White House style

by Mike Royko

We interrupt our regular programming to go to the White House for a live broadcast of a presidential press conference. It is now in progress.

Mr. President, have you decided how high a tax increase for the rich you will accept?

"I will not increase the tax rate for the rich."

You say will not?

"Not what?"

Increase the tax rate for the rich.

"Yes, I will accept an increase in that rate."

But you just said you wouldn't.

"When?"

Just now.

"Oh, back then. Well, that was quite a while ago. Situations are fluid. Got to keep up with change."

So you definitely will accept a higher rate for the rich.

"Of course I won't."

But you said you would.

"No, I said I won't"

But I have it right here in my notes. You said you won't. Then you said you would. And now you say you won't.

"That's right. You see, two won'ts is more than one will. So my two won'ts outnumber my one will. Therefore, the won'ts win, 2-1."

But how do you think the

nation's hard-pressed middle-class will react to your refusal to increase the tax rate for the rich.

"Who says I've refused?"

You did.

"When?"

A moment ago.

"Conditions have changed since then."

Since only a moment ago?

"Fast-paced world. Got to stay flexible."

Then you are not going to refuse?

"I didn't say that. I asked you says I've refused? You're the one who said I refused. I didn't. Words in my mouth. Don't put them there."

Then you are not going to refuse?

"Refuse what?"

To raise the tax rates for the rich.

"I thought we settled that."

No, Mr. President, your position isn't clear.

"Not clear to who?"

It's not clear to me.

"Are you rich?"

No.

"Then what are you worried about?"

I'm not worried, Mr. President, but a great many taxpayers would like to know where you stand.

"How many?"

How many what?

"You said a great many taxpayers want to know where I

stand. How many is a great many?"

I don't know, sir, but I would assume that it would be a considerable number.



MIKE ROYKO

"You just said a great many. Now you are saying a considerable number. How can I make a decision based on such vague data?"

Well, the polls show that more than 75 percent of those polled want the rich to pay higher taxes. So I would assume that this represents millions of people.

"In that case, the answer is that I will."

So we can say that you will support a tax increase for the

rich.

"No, I might."

But you just said you would.

"Yes, but remember, I had said I wouldn't twice, so now I've said I will twice. That's two I wills and two I won'ts. We have a 2-2 tie. So that means it's a maybe."

Is that a definite maybe?

"Words in my mouth again. You're putting them there. A maybe is a maybe."

But won't people think you are vacillating?

"No reason to think that when I've taken a firm stand with a maybe."

Doesn't a maybe mean that you don't know if you will or you won't?

"Will or won't what?"

Raise the taxes on the rich. "Back to that again?. Read my lips: m-a-y-b-e I w-i-l-l, m-a-y-b-e I w-o-n-t."

I'm sorry to press you on this, Mr. President, but do you know if you will or you won't?

"Maybe I do and maybe I don't."

Is that a firm maybe?

"Maybe it is and maybe it isn't."

You can't say if it is a firm maybe?

"Maybe I can and maybe I can't."

Mr. President, aren't you waffling on this issue?

"Maybe I am and maybe I'm

not."

Some people might get the impression that you are indecisive.

"Maybe they will and maybe they won't."

Doesn't the possible political fallout from this worry you?

"Maybe it does and maybe it doesn't."

Aren't some of the leaders of your party disgruntled?

"Maybe they are and maybe they aren't."

But many of them have said they are.

"Maybe they have and maybe they haven't."

Mr. President, can't you be more precise than that?

"About what?"

Just about anything. Isn't there something?

"Something? Yes, I'm definitely in favor of something."

Could you tell us what that is?

"Maybe."

Could you elaborate on that?

"Yes, I'm definitely in favor of strong leadership."

Thank you, Mr. President.

"You're welcome. Maybe."

*Mike Royko is a Chicago based syndicated columnist. His column appears every week in The Collegian.*