

No Standing News

Since we have no standing, we stand with those left standing.

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SELLING "THE BIG LIE"

By Phil (People Helping Individuals Learn)

For the benefit of our younger readers, 'The Big Lie' was used to describe Hitler's WW II propaganda machine. He didn't invent it; the technique was developed shortly after humans learned to speak. In this century Hitler was the acknowledged master of the art of The Big Lie. The idea is that the bigger the lie you tell, the more believable it is. People simply can't believe anyone would say something that outrageous if it weren't true. After the war was over, Madison Avenue discovered that The Big Lie was just as handy for selling toilet paper and underarm deodorant. Hitler used it to convince people that Jews were a subhuman species and that awful smell from the crematorium was just due to a little soap making. Madison Avenue used it to convince us that if our pits smelled good we would meet beautiful blondes and drive fast cars. They were all Big Lies.

THE BIG MOMMA LIE. In our little town 'The Big Momma Lie' worked so well that it gave birth to several accessory lies. The Big Momma of all the other lies started years ago when the Chamber of Commerce decided to quit being self-supporting and started eating out of the public trough. The newspaper and radio station became their eager and willing propaganda machines. The Big Momma Lie goes like this. Anyone who has an opinion that differs from the Machine is just NEGATIVE for no good reason

and is tearing down "The Good Life Here in Rolla MO." (Remember that cornball jingle?) A difference of opinion of any kind was therefore unacceptable and freedom of speech began to be viewed as downright subversive, particularly if it interfered with the Machine's personal commercial interests. Once the big dogs that run the Machine have decided what they want, everyone else is required to be POSITIVE or risk getting the dreaded label -- "NEGATIVE." It has become the local equivalent of unpatriotic or commie-pinko.

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

FALSEHOOD. The first Big Momma Lie was so successful that it later spawned a very expensive modification called the 'Economic Development Falsehood'. While smaller communities were attracting industry with very little money but lots of hard work and creativity, Rolla found that the label Economic Development could be used to justify secret overcharging on RMU utility bills. This created a cash cow which produced a private fund which, when laundered through the city treasury, could be passed under the table to develop RCDC's private Hy-Point industrial park which belongs to some private stockholders. This worked very smoothly after the right five or six RCDC members were appointed to just the right city boards and committees. The city actually owns its own industrial park --you can't remember the name, can you? But no one ever suggests any of this laundered money be used to pave roads, build water towers or give away million dollar buildings in the industrial park city taxpayers own! If you point out that millions have been spent on the pretense of development in the last

20 years and very little has come of it they will bark "NEGATIVE! NEGATIVE!" at you and demand to know if you are against creating jobs in Rolla. If you reply that the millions have produced precious few jobs but lots of free rides, they will disclose that they are at that very moment engaged in secret negotiations with two big companies with hundreds of jobs. This line is known as the 'Factory Fiction,' the step-son of the Economic Development Falsehood. It's always two mysterious big companies with hundreds of jobs. Later they always say negotiations fell through but it wasn't their fault. Never have so many spent so much in pursuit of so little.

THE TOURISM FABRICATION. About six years ago another useful Big Lie was invented. This one was called the 'Tourism is Good for Rolla Fabrication.' The Tourism Fabrication is a corollary to the Economic Development Falsehood. It works like this: Rolla, as we all know has nothing to tour, so if we can spend millions and have no economic development then it stands to reason that we need to have a tax for Tourism since we have no tourist attractions.

The Chamber has never done a legitimate study to prove whether tourists tour anything in Rolla. If tourists do tour Rolla, does it have any significant benefit for anyone but the gas stations and motels who would have gotten the business anyway? That's the key to how Big Lies work. The people who tell them are betting that no one will have the nerve to make them produce proof. Former Councilperson Carolyn Trundle claimed that the tourist center sent two women tourists to her dress shop one time but as she went out of business shortly after this event, it didn't seem to be compelling proof of the benefits of tourism.

This lucky Tourism Fabrication now has its own tax and its own building, all of which belong to the Rolla Area Chamber of Commerce. The idea seems to be to put up billboards on the highways inviting people to stop in at the Chamber of Tourism clubhouse and get free tickets to

Branson. Buz Harvey and Don Johnson claimed at the June council meeting that the Tourist Center had 30,000 visitors last year. They didn't prove it, they just said it and everyone accepted it. That's how Big Lies work. You might wonder how that cramped intersection and their little parking lot could handle 30,000 cars per year without causing gridlock for miles out on the interstate. But if you thought it you wouldn't say it because you know you would be hammered for being NEGATIVE!

THE NO-SWIM, NO-DIVE FIB. Recently, we have heard another variant of The Big Lie. This one is the invention of Bill Moorkamp, Lou Magdits and a few insiders on the Ad Hoc Recreation Is For Everyone Committee. They used Ken Kwantes' mouth to say it, but that's what Ken is there for. This one is the 'No-One-Wants-to-Swim-and-Dive-in-Deep-Water-Any-More Fib.' Ken laid this egg at the council meeting without even cackling. Again, typical of creations in the Big Lie category, it was such a breath-taking, bald-faced Big Fib no one demanded that Kwantes prove it. This Big Fib was given to the city council to excuse filling up the leaking Olympic size outdoor swimming pool with concrete to create a 3 foot 8 inch deep Birdbath filled with water toys. Well, that IS one way to stop a leak but it's a really stupid way. This will be an irreversible mistake, which will only make Parkers Ready-Mix happy. The real (but secret) strategy here is that everyone who doesn't want to ankle wade in the Birdbath will have to pay the \$400 annual fee or buy another daily pass to go inside to dive and swim.

We can't wait to hear what excuse will be used to explain downsizing the recreation center. They will have to downsize it because too much money is being wasted just on filling the pool with concrete to make a giant Birdbath. To her credit, Councilperson Charlotte Wiggins asked all the right questions at the May and June council meetings to try to get the project stopped until the committee explained what they are spending

the money for. To the councils' credit most of them did want to see what they were paying for and whether it made any sense before they poured more money down what is beginning to look like a 11.7 million dollar rat hole. The council, as they are supposed to, simply asked their own committee to give them a progress report and reasonable answers to some logical questions. They got a sharp poke in the eye from Councilman Brown (a member of the committee) who displayed outrage that his fellow council members dared to ask for some accountability. He had the cheek to demand that the rest of the council put in writing their reasons for asking questions! He and some of the committee obviously don't feel they owe anyone an explanation. The council will never get much out of this bunch anyway. Moorkamp's answers devolve into empty motivational speeches and Morgan and Magdits fall back on the lazy "Let's just trust the experts" dodge. The experts from St. Louis are laughing all the way to the bank; after all, they don't live here and won't be stuck with it. And Kwantes - well, Ken will do or say whatever it takes to keep the big dogs happy.

Morgan, Moorkamp, Magdits and Kwantes couldn't come up with any answers for Wiggins and the council because they still don't have any answers. They still don't even have a solid recommendation on where the building will be located. This is a typical Ham and Eggs committee. If they had a site - they could have a site with a building plan - if they had a building plan. The project is in such shambles that they actually aren't capable of explaining it to the council. Instead they just demanded that the council approve..... well, what exactly did the council approve? Going ahead with The Plan? What is The Plan? Now we're back to Wiggins' original question aren't we? Instead of facts, which they should be able to give the council in detail at this late date, the general response, as expressed by the ever-helpful Butz, was that a delay would be disastrous. He didn't explain why he just said it would be. Would a delay be more

disastrous than wasting 11.7 million dollars? Yes, it would be to the real estate developers and other Chamber members who need a big flashy facility to draw in the Ft. McClellan crowd. That's really what all the disaster scenarios are about - developers' profits.

The Rolla Daily News, (and 'Me Too' KTTR) which, on occasion, used to display some healthy skepticism when special interests tried to ram-rod self-serving deals at public expense, chimed in with their tediously predictable, everything-is-rosy line topped off with some opposition bashing and demands that the "NEGATIVISM" be stopped. How do they know everything is rosy? Do they know what The Plan is? If they do, why haven't they reported it to the rest of us? We've pointed out before that it is odd that two businesses, which exist because of the First Amendment, are so opposed to others using it.

The Ad Hoc Recreation Is For Everyone (But-Only-If-You-Can-Afford-Their-Prices) Committee is finding out that 11.7 million won't buy what they led people to believe they would get. They are also reluctant to disclose that the fees necessary to maintain it are climbing out of reach of all but the upper incomes. We've heard it called 'Country Club West' and it looks like that's what it is turning into. Now they're getting panicky and at the 6 AM meetings (and in their secret discussions) are whispering about extending the recreation center sales tax to cover operating expenses. Even with the \$42,000 monthly rental they are counting on getting from the hospital they can't get the thing glued together. Remember the "Trust us, we'll work out the details later" line? This IS later and they still can't or won't explain The Plan. The fact is that there still is no Plan. As is common with poorly led groups, (yes, Mayor Morgan and Butz are part of this) as we were saying -- as is common with all leaderless groups, this bunch is getting nowhere.

It's time for the city council to face the fact that the secretive committee Mayor Morgan created has bollixed up this whole project and call in the YMCA. The YMCA is expert at building and operating recreation facilities at a price everyone, not just the favored few, can afford. The YMCA has enough genuine experience in recreation that neither Kwantes nor the experts from St. Louis can jerk them around. No one will blame the council for admitting that some on the committee are better at daydreaming (Moorkamp actually said they're "still in the dream stage") and making excuses than doing the hard nuts and bolts work of planning. The council has the legal power to override all of the committee recommendations and even disband it and appoint another. In fact, the termination date for this committee is July 20th and it richly deserves to be disbanded or at the very least, Moorkamp and Magdits should be replaced. It would be a refreshing change if the Mayor could submit for council approval some names that aren't hot off the country club membership list. There are smart and effective people all over town who do not belong to his little club. Hasn't he met any of them? Taxpayers won't mind if the council takes longer to spend their money wisely. On the other hand, everyone is going to blame them if this highly touted project becomes an 11.7 million dollar dripping-wet flop.

AND THE NEXT BIG LIE WILL BE.....

Ken Kwantes, the Parks and Recreation Director who, without explanation to, or examination by, the council, has annually lost \$20,000 managing little park concession stands, has been sent to Colorado to a workshop on how to run a recreation center. He is no doubt charging (Strouse-style), his Margarita and Snow Crab Leg expenses out of the recreation tax money. Therefore, the next 'Big Lie' we expect to hear is that Kwantes is qualified to be the director of the new recreation center. That's one even Adolph couldn't sell. But which would be the biggest Big Lie? That Ken Kwantes is qualified to be the recreation center director or would it be the city's

promise NOT to let Ken have anything to do with the recreation center?

Big Lies are just not going to cut it anymore. We're not intimidated by being called NEGATIVE by the likes of Morgan, Butz and the alleged 'licensed, recognized media.' No matter how much sunshine they blow up our noses, city water still smells bad and tastes worse. We've had two, long citywide power outages in just the last 5 months. Gangs are running loose. Over-dependence on sales taxes is waiting to bleed us in the next recession - and there will be a next recession. The inner city is deliberately being allowed to deteriorate to pander to the newer subdivisions. When it rains, basements fill up with sewage. The streets and plumbing infrastructure are a crumbling mess. The 'Royal' Municipal Utilities is still lying about the true cost of electricity so they can pass money under the table to RCDC. And that's just the short list. Yes, it could be a good life here in Rolla MO, and considering the outrageously high sales taxes we pay it should be a much better life than it is. But it won't improve until real problems are addressed honestly instead of being kept in the closet to preserve a false marketing image of the idyllic small town. Blustering community jingoism does not make the water taste better or prevent blackouts.

We all know nothing of lasting value was ever created with lies, tax swindles, cover-ups and cheap marketing slogans. They just don't sound convincing to the guy who is bailing sewage out of his house. Someday all the Big Lies are going to crumble and expose the mess they have been hiding. You just can not run a city with nothing more substantial than browbeating the opposition and parroting empty slogans to prop up Big Lies. No matter how much cheap marketing deodorant they apply, the bad smell keeps coming through.

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