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Libertarians worry about losing Register op-ed page

September 3rd, 2009, 1:46 pm · 7 Comments · posted by **Peggy Lowe**

As I'm sure many of TBuzz's readers have heard, the parent company of the Orange County Register filed for bankruptcy this week. So what does that mean for the capital-L Libertarian slant on the editorial page?

Freedom Communication's bankruptcy filing calls for the founding Hoiles family, which has owned the newspaper company since 1935, to give up control to the banks. Although the family will hold a small share, the bankruptcy opens the possibility of the lenders selling the company to another entity or entities — in whole or cut up in parts. That, depending on who buys the papers, could change the editorial direction away from the family's longstanding Libertarian views that have been heralded in all 33 daily papers in the chain.

Although a sale doesn't seem imminent, given the economy and the state of the newspaper industry, leading Libertaritans were dismayed at the news of the possible loss of a leading voice for their philosophy. Libertarians support individual freedoms over government intervention, focus on personal property rights and champion broad civil liberties.

Tom G. Palmer, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and author of a new book on Libertarian theory, grew up in Huntington Beach and read the Register and the Los Angeles Times every day. He had his first published piece appear in the Register — a letter to the editor when he was a teenager.

Freedom Communications taught me and many others one of the basics of clear thinking: politicians are not gods, they are just people like the rest of us, with no magical powers," he wrote in an email message. "I would trade the plain wisdom of **R. C. Hoiles**, their founder, for all the academic sophistry I was exposed to in my academic career."

But people who don't subscribe to the Register's views were hopeful that the bankruptcy would bring a change of editorial direction.

Nick Berardino, general manager of the Orange County Employees Association, the county's largest union, called for a more balanced editorial page, one that also allows a progressive viewpoint. He believes the Register has remained loyal to a narrow, niche viewpoint while ignoring the needs of a rapidly-changing county population.

"I think the Register has put itself out of the market by not having a more balanced editorial page," Berardino said. "It's OK to be Libertarian, but until they balance that editorial page, they will continue to lose readers."

In Colorado Springs, home to another paper in Freedom's chain, The Colorado Springs Gazette, a former editor said the community is concerned that it will lose a voice that reflects its own semi-conservative nature. **Sean Paige**, who was the Gazette's editorial page editor from 2002 to 2007 and now has his own online interest dedicated to Libertarian thought, said the paper is much more in tune with the community than it's own city government.

"I really think that at a time of mishy-mashy wishy-washy editorial voices, the Freedom papers had a distinctive and unique voice in American journalism that will be missed if it goes away," he said. "My sense is certain publishers, now that the family is not there to ride herd on them, may be tempted to stray from the reservation under pressure from certain civil leaders who want to grow government, raise taxes, etc."

So in the meantime, you will continue to get the liberal (ahem) dose of Libertarian editorials over on the op-ed page. How long that will last is anyone's guess.

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7 Comments

7 Comments



Dan Chmielewski says:

September 3, 2009 at 3:27 pm

Nice to see your byline again Peggy.

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Rocket says:

September 3, 2009 at 3:27 pm

Hopefully you guys will emerge successfully. Peggy? Are you back?

[Post Reply](#)



Steve says:

September 3, 2009 at 3:32 pm

This is proof that there is a loving God that answers prayers and wants us to be happy.

[Post Reply](#)



rex says:

September 3, 2009 at 3:47 pm

if there is a God— he/she would insure that there is NO more Register op/ed page. Those guys are a dumbed down broken record— seriously— I hope mr. greenhut can find a good position at the DMV or something so he can lay to rest his huge government employment envy— ahhhh the irony...

[Post Reply](#)



Thinkaboutit says:

September 3, 2009 at 4:16 pm

You would be amazed at how many government workers share the idea of smaller government and lower taxes. They are just tired of being demonized by your editorial staff. I have dropped the Register twice over Mr. Greenhut's writings, only to be contacted by your paper and restarted at a lower rate. The average government employee is not the enemy. Get rid of the hysterics and your subscriptions might just start going up.

[Post Reply](#)



OC Dem says:

September 4, 2009 at 8:01 am

The free market held so dear by libertarians is speaking. The bankers that hold the debt don't care about ideology. They care about returns. This is the same group that is rarely if ever criticized by the Register. Those worrying about a change in philosophy should appreciate the actions by those who practice capitalism with a capital "c." I'm amused the irony of that potential action is lost on those who are concerned by that outcome.

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Rocket says:

September 4, 2009 at 9:17 am

Yes. The Free Market does speak. Quote from the LA Times: "The list includes Tribune Co., owner of the Los Angeles Times, which filed in December."

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