

By BRIAN ACKLEY
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No one really knows who said it first, but how true the thought about New Year's resolutions going in one year and out the other.

It's appropriate, too, because that's what happens when virtually anyone of stature or importance in these parts decides to speak on whatever the topic du jour may be. Usually, it evolves around who's responsible for something not happening, why yet another tax can be good for our area or why someone or something deserves more money, even though there isn't any.

So, as a service to faithful subscribers everywhere, a look back at some of the more memorable musings of 2003, and an interpretation of what they we're really saying..

The quote: "We can't afford to be the white guys in suits who make decisions behind close doors and then come out and announce those decisions like we're coming down from the mountain with stone tablets." – David Adkisson.

The comment: David Adkisson, who's he? Oh, you don't think he's talking about Buffalo, do you? Adkisson is head of the Birmingham, Alabama, Regional Chamber of Commerce, and he was speaking to a group from the Buffalo Niagara Partnership back in June. The key words being Birmingham, and regional, in case you didn't catch them first time.

The quote: "I'm not happy with the state of negotiations. Things appear to be just drifting. I want answers for everybody involved here about where we are." – Anthony Masiello, last May, in regards to Pro Bass coming to Buffalo.

The comment: Is there any wonder we worry about his leadership capabilities.

The quote: "We thoroughly expected the tax to last just a year or two." – Mary Lou Rath back in September on Erie county's "extra" penny in sales tax.

The comment: And we wonder about just how gullible and compliant politicians view their "constituents", who are more popularly known in Democratic and Republican circles as "revenue generators."

The quote: "Bottom line is, I'm not afraid to run. I'm afraid to win." -- James Keane, back in April, in declining to run against Erie County Executive Joel Giambra.

The comment: We knew there was at least one smart person in Erie County.

The quote: "If you look at the numbers, they're very low, and that's no way to attract people to public service," -- Peter Zaleski, uttered just last week, who is part of Erie County's Citizens Salary Review Commission.

The comment: By all means, yes, here's someone who understands the hardships of getting by on six figures a year, as Giambra must. A very representative choice for the commission, don't you think? Many of us have served as president of Key Bank. Pete, let's save you and the other members a lot of time and effort: the answer about governmental pay raises this year is no.

The quote: "This thing is like living in Russia. If the elected people don't agree with closing firehouses, (the control board) has the power to unseat Council members or even charge them with misdemeanors? What is this, Nazi Germany?" -- Joseph Foley, head of Buffalo's fire department union, back in June, reacting to Buffalo's financial control board legislation.

The comment: Dang. The party's over.

The quote: "Certainly a freeze on salaries and benefits would be a formula for disaster." – Phillip Rumore, head of the Buffalo Teachers Federation, about impending contract negotiations.

The comment: Obviously, the old formula has been working so well. Buffalo apparently doesn't have a financial disaster on its hands, in the union's eyes, more like a minor financial anomaly.

Surely, they'll keep talking in 2004. The real question might be, who'll be left to listen?

(Brian Ackley is a columnist for the Weekly Independent Newspapers (WIN) of Western New York. WIN is a consortium of 19 community weekly newspapers in Erie and Niagara counties with a combined paid circulation of 75,000 homes, providing collaborative advertising and editorial support for member publications. For more information on WIN, or to provide feedback on this column, visit our website at www.wnynewspapers.com. Opinions expressed here are those of the author.)