

Opinionated lines, ominous signs, and personal whines...

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The Buffalo Control Board's tough love approach is certainly needed, and understandable. The group quickly has dismissed virtually any plan that has been brought before it, and asked that the deep thinkers come up with something that might only inflict "some pains here and there," or plans that won't "decapitate" services.

Sorry, but services are provided by people, always the most expensive line in any budget. As tough as they've been, it seems as if even the control board itself isn't fully able to assimilate and appreciate just how bad the projections are. The corner the board may be painting the city and school into is one they may regret. The pain is simply unavoidable. But if the control board isn't able or willing to understand that, who's left?

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Media bias has been as hot a topic nationally as Hillary Clinton's flirtation with a 2004 presidential run. The fact is, every media outlet, the paper you're reading right now included, has bias. It's built into the definition of being human, whether those in the media care to admit it or not.

Understanding what the bias is becomes the key issue. And, just in case you needed confirmation about Buffalo-Niagara's daily newspaper bias, they undertook an interesting survey this summer of their writing and editing staff. Of the 195 that responded, 74 either had no affiliation, were unregistered or didn't know. Nine were linked with minor parties. Of the 112 associated with either Republicans or Democrats, 88 were on the left. Just thought you'd like to know.

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George Carlin has made a living on the paradoxes of life. His famous routine points out the rather unbalanced nature of expressions like "jumbo shrimp", "army intelligence" and "wireless cable." May I suggest on his next Buffalo-Niagara visit, "convenience store" be added to the list?

Pumping gas the other day, I counted 27 different cards that could be used to pay for the petrol. Pay inside or outside, or with some hideous advertising-driven key chain attachment? Cash is a different payment button than credit. What happened to just lifting the handle and squeezing?

I wanted a couple of lottery tickets, too. Was that for Megaball, Lotto, Numbers, Pick Four, Pick Ten? What if I felt like picking, say, 25? Mid-day or late day? Cash or payments? Separate tickets or all games on one slip? Cripes! All I wanted to do was win \$20 million. Frankly, I could care less if they wired it to a Swiss bank account or wrote the check on the back of an old Mario Cuomo for President placard.

And milk, in case you hadn't noticed, now comes in varying degrees of flavor intensity. People, we're talking about vanilla here, not chicken wing sauce.

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I don't know, it might just be a reflection of the way negativity surges through Western New York like electricity in a prison chair, but I need a lot more convincing to be on board with this whole "E Zone" waterfront project.

I have trouble seeing, no pun intended, how some 400,000 square foot monolithic building on the shoreline helps enhance the natural beauty of a Great Lake. Maybe \$137 million doesn't buy you as much as it used to – that's the project's latest proposed cost – but something that is less obtrusive in the summer, yet convertible to being able to withstand a Buffalo winter ought to be a reasonable slice of the price tag.

*(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](http://www.wnynewspapers.com). Opinions expressed here are those of the author.)*