Beverlee McClure: Worst Person in the World

clearlyjd on March 16th, 2010

Keith Olbermann probably doesn’t know Beverlee McClure.

But if he did, she surely would qualify for his daily Countdown feature, “Worst Person in the World,” based on comments she made at a meeting of local business leaders recently.

First, who is McClure?

She is President and CEO of the Association of Commerce and Industry (ACI), an organization that describes itself as a statewide Chamber of Commerce. According to its website, ACI’s sponsoring corporate “investors” include Bank of America, PNM, SunCal New Mexico, Chevron, Altria Client Services, (Phillip Morris), AT&T, Xcel Energy, Lovelace Health Systems, and PayDay Inc.

McClure has a very impressive background. Her bio tells us that she started her career with RJR Nabisco, went on to earn her doctorate in education at the University of Texas, served seven years as President of Clovis Community College, and then was appointed by Governor Bill Richardson to be the first Secretary of the new state Department of Higher Education in 2005.

Less than two years later, Dr. McClure bailed on Richardson’s cabinet to snag the post as head of ACI.

So what’s the problem?

According to a story last week in the Albuquerque Journal (“Businesses ‘Slept’ in Last Election”), McClure issued a call to arms to the business community at a meeting of the Economic Forum, challenging it to wake up and back conservative candidates in the upcoming state election.

The trouble is that most of what McClure was without basis in fact – she simply made the stuff up.

This is what the Journal reported:

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Election 2009, corporate lobbying, tax policy No comments »
ACORN, Better Choices New Mexico And The Importance Of Newspaper Corrections

March 24th, 2010 · No Comments · Uncategorized

By Tracy Dingmann

Two stories about the community activist group ACORN dominated the news cycle yesterday. They are linked journalistically in a way I hope most news consumers will understand…but probably won’t.

The eclipsing story is about how the Association for Community Organizations for Reform Now will close its doors on April 1 after 40 years of helping low and moderate income people register to vote, own homes, earn livable wages and attend quality public schools.

The organization was felled after allegations of voter fraud and other widely publicized irregularities in some chapters.

The other breaking ACORN news is that the New York Times has finally gotten around to running a correction about the most salacious and inaccurate detail of the running ACORN scandal. The correction, reproduced below, runs a full six months after widely discussed error was first reported by the Times.

Several articles since September about the troubles of the community organizing group Acorn referred incorrectly or imprecisely to one aspect of videotaped encounters between Acorn workers and two conservative activists that contributed to the group’s problems.

In the encounters, the activists posed as a prostitute and a pimp and discussed prostitution with the workers. But while footage shot away from the offices shows one activist, James O’Keefe, in a flamboyant pimp costume, there is no indication that he was wearing the costume while talking to the Acorn workers.

The errors occurred in articles on Sept. 16 and Sept. 19, 2009, and on Jan. 31 of this year. Because of an editing error, the mistake was repeated in an article in some copies on Saturday.

The pimp suit footage– easily the most inflammatory part of the right-wing attacks against ACORN – was a fabrication. Is this shocking? Not really. The inaccuracy was discussed at length in the media for months.

So I have to wonder what led to the NYT, arguably the nation’s most influential paper, to finally run the correction now.

It’s especially interesting to me in the wake of the Journal’s stunning and as yet uncorrected errors in a story that ran on March 10.
The Journal allowed incorrect and damaging statements from Association of Commerce and Industry president Beverlee McClure to go unchallenged, including that Better Choices “helped several progressive candidates oust more conservative incumbent legislators in the 2008 elections.”

The Better Choices coalition was not formed until the fall of 2009 and did not exist during the 2008 election. In addition, McClure’s claim that Better Choices influenced electoral politics misrepresents the group’s tax status and what it was formed to do in advance of the 2009 legislative session.

Katherine Campbell of the League of Women Voters made short work of McClure’s falsehoods in a guest column that the paper published over a week later, on March 19.

From Campbell’s piece:

First, Better Choices was not even formed until August of 2009. Its first press release, which announced its formation, can be found on its Web site, betterchoicesnewmexico.com. It is dated Sept. 8, 2009.

Second, many of its member organizations are 501(c)(3) nonprofits and are prohibited by federal tax law from helping to elect or oust any candidate in any election. Others, such as the League of Women Voters of New Mexico, are nonpartisan organizations that never support or oppose either candidates or political parties.

Better Choices has not and will not engage in any electoral work. We will stick to doing what 501(c)(3)s are allowed to do under federal guidelines — educating voters, candidates and state officials about the issues and urging citizens to exercise their voting rights by going to the polls.

You can see what my colleague Clearlyjd wrote about Campbell’s “smackdown” [here](http://www.clearlynewmexico.com) on our sister site, ClearlyNewMexico.com.

But the real question is: Why should Better Choices essentially have to write their own correction? Isn’t the Journal obligated to correct its own errors?

Here’s the statement the paper runs every day on Page 2 regarding its corrections policy: “The Journal’s policy is to correct errors of fact in a timely manner.”

The story about the Better Choices coalition was just plain wrong, and the Journal knows it. So why was there never a correction? It really shouldn’t have to be that way.

I hate to harp on it, but this kind of top-down, unresponsive information delivery model is one of the reasons people tell me they HATE the Journal and dislike newspaper generally.

With the Better Choices story, the Journal is saying to readers: “We’ll tell you what’s right and what’s wrong. “

Such arrogance! No wonder people are dropping their subscriptions in droves.

Tags: ABQJournalWatch.com · Albuquerque Journal · Association of Commerce and Industry · Better Choices New Mexico · Beverlee McClure · League of Women Voters