

THE DEAN'S CORNER

On September 11, terrorists intentionally caused our country terrible destruction but unintentionally rejuvenated our national pride.

Dear *Tennessee's Business* readers:

In many respects, this edition of *Tennessee's Business* is about change, specifically in the electric utility industry. This change, which has been discussed and debated for a long time and to which we have had time to acclimate ourselves, still comes with great difficulty.

On September 11, all of us in this country and around the world came to a new understanding of the concept of change. In a matter of a few moments, our lifestyles, world-view, and sense of peace and security were drastically altered. We found ourselves in the midst of traumatic change without any ability to halt or even slow it. Can any good come from such hideous events?

While I by no means suggest that any outcomes resulting from the terrorist acts are worth even a fraction of the pain and suffering inflicted upon the thousands of victims and their families, sometimes it is good to search the rubble left by such catastrophes for something positive. The aftermath of September 11 has been a mind-numbing experience. Like the courageous, dedicated rescue teams at ground zero, I have searched for something good resulting from these events. It has not been easy, but consider the following:

- *The sense of patriotism and unity of spirit that have welled up are beyond anything in my "baby boomer" lifetime.* Nothing in my memory compares to the outpouring of caring and concern that exploded from the American people almost simultaneously with the crashing of the planes and imploding of the World Trade Center buildings. Flags were unfurled on porches, in windows, and on cars; signs that once advertised car washes and diaper sales proudly saluted America and her greatness; people lined up to give not only money but also blood for those in need. Representatives of both political parties proclaimed on national television their solidarity with the President. Pessimists say this sense of togetherness will be short-lived; I hope it is not, but even if so, it is still a wonderful thing to behold.
- *People have turned to a higher power for strength and resolve.* Virtually every person who spoke on national television in the days following the attacks concluded with some variation of "God bless America!" Signs in shop windows and on billboards proclaimed the need for prayer and the blessings of God. The state may have been separate from any specific church but not from the American people's understanding of God. Prayer vigils in cities around the country included clerics of many religious backgrounds. When they called upon the name of God, they did so with a focus of invoking the power of that Being to the aid and comfort of America and her people, taking us back to an earlier time when our leaders openly and regularly sought the blessings of God for themselves as leaders and for the country they served. In my book, this is a good thing.
- *In our hurt and anger, we did not lose that which sets us apart from many nations and peoples.* We did not immediately lash

out against presumed enemies, indiscriminately turn our significant military force against the strongholds of the suspected, or kill women and children without warning. We gathered evidence, built consensus, and formulated plans to focus on the perpetrators. Our hearts ached for revenge; our minds pleaded for justice. We resolved to take action, but we did not react blindly. We will seek justice and, even as we extract it, pray for those who would not only kill us but also condemn us to the darkest hell in doing so. We lost perhaps 7,000 people, a sense of peace and security, and our innocence, but not our principles, which make our country different and make it great.

Change is difficult. Those who perpetrated the crimes against civilization on September 11 relieved us of the turmoil that goes with the process of changing. In one destructive day of terror, they moved us to a whole new place—one we are still trying to understand. They did not ask if we wanted to change or subject the idea to a vote. They thrust this change upon us, took us from the safe and serene garden we believed our homeland to be to the vile streets where most of the rest of the world lives, and then closed and locked the gate, intending that we never go back to our garden again. That was what the Japanese intended on December 7, 1941.

In our memories we will still be haunted by how lovely that garden used to be. We can't go back; that is the nature of change, but we can and will do what Americans have always done—build a new, even bigger and more beautiful garden—just as we did after World War II.

Those of us living on September 11 won't need to mark a calendar; the date will be forever etched into our consciousness.

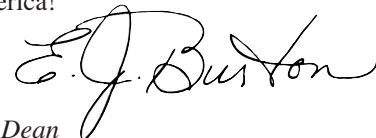
On September 11, a group of terrorists created unfathomable atrocities designed to make us change—which we did and we shall. However, as Americans, we are still free to choose how we implement that change, and the terrorists cannot understand or abide that freedom.

The terrorists intentionally destroyed landmarks, symbols, and lives; altered the New York skyline and damaged the symbol of military might in Washington; and killed thousands of innocent people going about their daily routines. They unintentionally steeled our resolve, solidified our purpose, and reminded us of the religious heritage on which the country was founded.

Every American and every civilized person regrets the changes the terrorists intended. The terrorists and their supporters shall come to regret the changes they did not intend—the resurgence of patriotism, solidarity, and faith.

God bless America!

Sincerely,



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