

from our viewpoint...

Society must deal with extremism

There seems to be an increase in large scale, high profile shooting crimes.

Since 1980, there have been 60 mass shootings carried out in the United States that weren't gang or other crime related.

On Friday there was a shooting outside the Empire State Building in New York. The shooter and one other person were killed and many more injured.

Last month 12 people died in Aurora, Colo., when a masked gunman opened fire in a crowded theater. Earlier this month, another gunman killed seven people at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin.

Also last week Norwegian shooter Anders Breivik was found guilty and sentenced to 21 years in prison. Norway does not allow the death penalty, nor a life in prison sentence, however if Breivik is still deemed a threat to society in the future, he can be held indefinitely.

In a reversal of the usual courtroom tactics, it was the prosecution who asked that Breivik be acquitted, which would result in him being held in a secure mental health unit. The defense was pushing for a guilty verdict.

The upshot of all of this is that the Norwegian court has effectively found Breivik to be sane. How can he be sane when he killed more than 70 people?

The politically extreme are often not insane, they just hold different views from the majority of society. To be sure, there are those that have mental disorders, but most are simply possessed of a determination to carry whatever they believe in to its extreme conclusion.

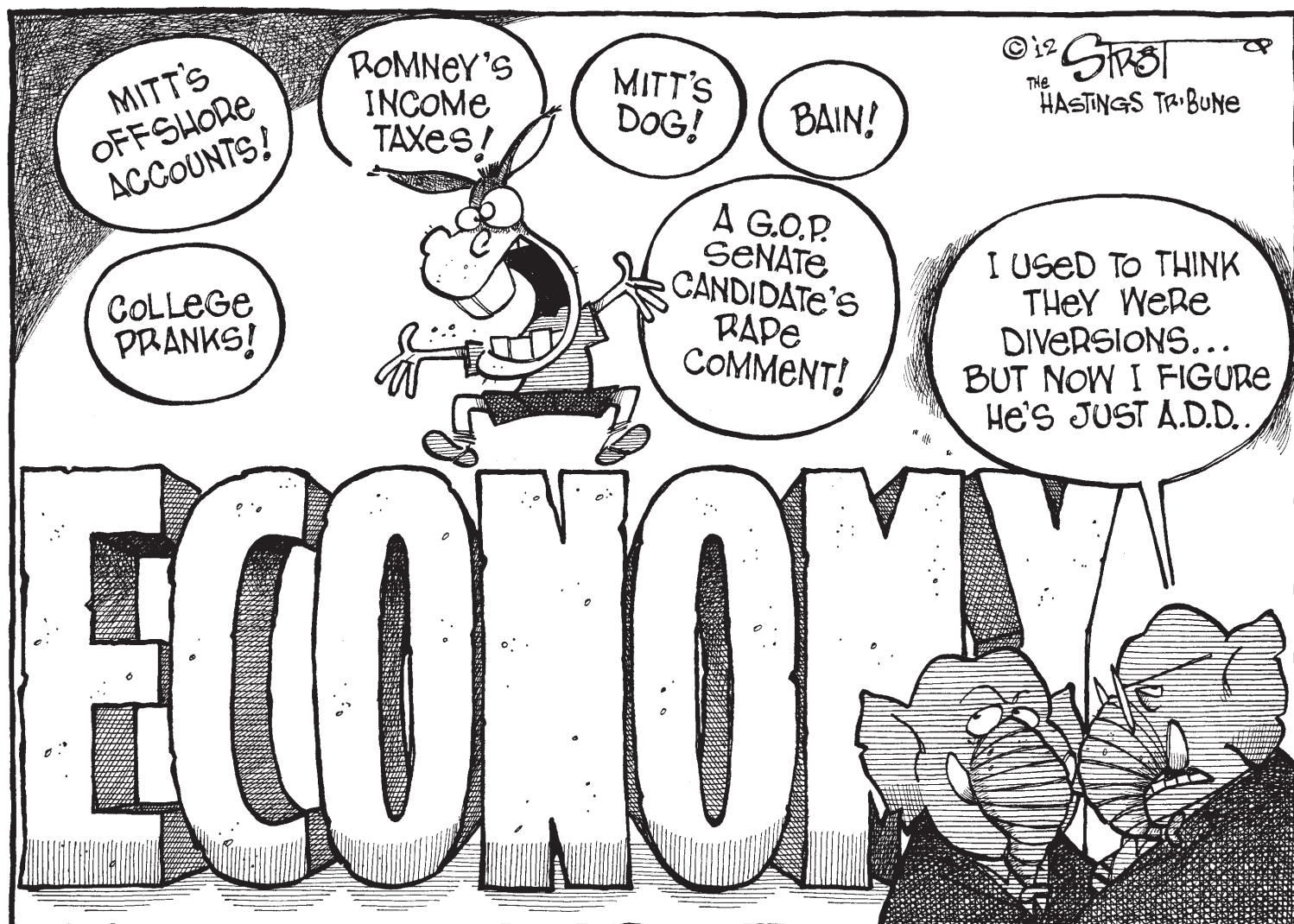
It is important that we separate political extremism from genuine medical insanity. It forces society to deal with their beliefs and take steps to strengthen our culture against such things. If a tragedy is regarded as simply the work of a "madman" it is all too easy to dismiss it and go on with our lives without making any changes. With this verdict, Norway and possibly all of Europe will have to take a hard look at the right-wing extremism that has been on the rise since the formation of the European Union.

The case is not so different from some here in America. In the 1990s, Ted Kaczynski and Timothy McVeigh carried out bombings in support of their political beliefs. For Kaczynski, it was a belief that human freedom was being eroded by technological advancement. For McVeigh, it was revenge for perceived FBI injustices at Waco, Texas. Though a general consensus from the public is that they were "crazy," neither was found medically insane.

The lessons we learn from those cases and from Norway will be vital in our treatment of suspected Aurora shooter James Holmes.

The cases are radically different. No one shooting incident is ever completely the same. The information that has been released in the Aurora case points to someone with a medical problem, rather than a political agenda. Compare this with the Wisconsin shooting, which was more politically motivated, but in which the suspect died.

In every case of these mass shootings, we must separate the truly insane from the political extremists, so that we may get the former the help they need, and deal with the latter for the betterment of society. You can't deal with them the same way. In either case, the courts must act to keep society safe from both types of killers. —Kevin Bottrell



Fighting with phones and growing old

All the articles on aging that I read say you should try to keep learning.

Keep your mind and body active so that neither realizes it's getting old and they won't stagnate.

I remember that after my mother retired, she spent hours and hours every day doing crossword puzzles and fancy work like crocheting and cross stitch. It was only after her strokes that she gave up trying to do these things and refused to go to physical therapy.

She never walked again and, although her mind was clear, I could see her slipping a little more each time I visited.

I'm sure it's the old "use it or lose it" adage at work.

So far, I've been able to keep my mind busy, and I'm trying to learn new things. But, like learning to walk again after a stroke, it's not always easy.

My latest foray into the unknown is the purchase of an iPhone.

I've had an Android "smart" phone for a couple of years, but we've never gotten along. Frankly, I've had a hard time just dialing phone numbers. The tiny virtual keypad and I didn't get along. I would try to hit the 7 and



cynthia haynes

• open season

the phone would come up with a 4. I'd try to hit a S and a W would appear. It was not a happy relationship.

My daughters said I needed an iPhone. It would be a better fit. We were made for each other.

However, my contract with the cell company was for two years. And after my last relationship with a "smart phone," I wasn't sure it wouldn't be just another two-year long blind date.

But when the time came, I got the iPhone, and I have been learning how to use it ever since. I've even gotten some apps for it after oldest daughter helped me set up an account with iTunes. I'm still not texting, but when I dial someone, the right numbers show up on the screen, and I'm learning how to put in "Favorites" and "Contacts."

I've got several games on my new phone, but haven't learned to play any of them yet. I'm not a big game player, but do want to learn how to run Angry Birds and maybe some sort of Scrabble game. I like to throw things, and I've got a pretty good vocabulary.

I was feeling pretty good about my newfound expertise with a telephone when a friend, who is about five years younger than I, burst my bubble.

I hadn't seen her in several years and asked if she was still running marathons.

She said that she had decided that she needed a new challenge, so she had decided to enter a triathlon.

Her husband thought it was a great idea, but reminded her that that meant running, biking and swimming. She was born and reared in a town without a pool. She was almost 60 and couldn't swim a stroke.

So, she said, she's taking lessons. It's kinda tough, since all the other students are about 50 years younger, but she is determined to learn.

There, I thought, goes a woman who will never grow old.

Shiny safety markings

With every passing year, farm machinery becomes larger and larger. Some of this new equipment is so large it extends into the oncoming traffic lane and far beyond the tractor pulling it.

Farms are also larger today than in the past and farm operators are forced to travel longer distances on the highways between fields. Fewer people have farm backgrounds. Many do not recognize that caution must be exercised when approaching farm equipment on the roadway.

There is also more and more traffic on today's roadways. Farm equipment without side markings may not be seen, especially in low-light conditions. That's why colored, fluorescent film is the latest innovation to help make rural life safer. Properly placed on farm equipment these vibrant-colored, acrylic safety devices immediately attract the attention of approaching motorists.

Sometimes referred to as "perimeter marking materials," the micro prism used with fluorescent films use up to 75 percent of its surface to reflect incoming light. Some of the glass bead reflective elements use only about 25 percent of the surface to return light.

"These new, long-lasting safety strips were not designed to replace slow-moving-vehicle emblems," says Holly Higgins, Kansas Farm Bureau safety and health programs director. "Our farmers, ranchers and rural people could use them for their own protection and for those who may be traveling near them."

Higgins notes approximately 50 percent of all accidents with farm equipment are side-swipes. The longer lasting reflective tape can provide greater safety by increasing visibility when approaching slow moving farm equipment from behind.

"The ideal scenario is to use yellow reflectors on the side and front of the equipment while red and orange strips should be placed on both sides of the back with the slow-moving-vehicle emblem in the middle," Higgins says.

Until recently, most fluorescent materials used outdoors faded quickly — in a matter of months. Some of the new products on the market today will last a minimum of two years and as long as three to five years, depending on weather conditions.

The most critical time to provide high visibility for slow-moving farm machinery is in poor lighting conditions, including twilight, and in inclement weather such as snow, rain



Insight this week

• john schlageck

or fog, Higgins says. During such conditions, headlights are not always turned on promptly because they do not help to improve visibility.

Bright colors depend on direct sunlight and lose their attracting attention in marginal lighting conditions, the Farm Bureau safety coordinator says. The new fluorescent films continue to provide a high level of visibility during all lighting conditions.

The sooner you recognize a slow moving vehicle on the roadways, the better your chances are for avoiding an equipment collision, Higgins says. In Kansas during the last two years there have been 11 reports of crashes involving farm machinery on roadways.

For example, a motorist traveling 65 miles per hour will need 4.5 seconds to perceive, react and slow down when approaching a tractor traveling 15 miles per hour.

That's why this new technology is important to adapt and use, Higgins says.

"When your life and that of your loved ones is concerned, it's important to utilize every edge you can," the Farm Bureau safety specialist says. "Using fluorescent films can give you one advantage that will help protect you and those traveling around you."

While law in Kansas does not require these reflective strips, it makes good sense to use them. Install these fluorescent strips and drive more safely today.

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