

Dwane Powell

The Art of Politics

40 Years of Editorial Cartoons
& Then Some



Power Plant Gallery
September 13–October 8, 2016

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Introduction

When Dwane Powell arrived in Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1975 as staff cartoonist for *The News and Observer* Gerald Ford was in the White House and his fellow Republican, James Holshouser, occupied the gubernatorial mansion on Blount Street—the first member of the party to do so since the beginning of the twentieth century. Today, as Powell continues to distinguish the editorial pages of the Sunday edition of the N&O after temporarily retiring in 2009, national and state politics have entered a period of sustained hysteria that almost defies satire. Yet Dwane Powell continues to keep a clear head and to wield a devastatingly effective pen that tries to make sense of what the Chinese euphemistically described as “interesting times”.

In his cartoons, Powell achieves exactly what visual satire does best: taking messily complex debates and distilling them into memorably sharp, insightful visual arguments. More than just superficial gags or supercilious put-downs, his drawings convey a point of view. They are intended not only to make viewers smile, but—just as important—to make them think. Powell’s work is not neutral: no one could ever take him to be an admirer of North Carolina’s current governor, Pat McCrory, any more than he was of George W. Bush. Yet his work is not lazily polemical. Rather, he uses the resources of caricature to grapple with our preconceptions, in the same way that a good op-ed piece does. To achieve this using only graphic forms presents a real challenge: the immediacy of visual satire leaves little room for nuance, the image has fewer resources than text for expressing a point of

view. The cartoonist's opinion must be expressed firmly, but not stridently. It must leave viewers room to think, rather than bludgeoning them into submission, or alienating them outright. Powell has consistently achieved this during a career of more than forty years. In this, he has made a significant contribution to the political culture of North Carolina.

And, of course, he has made us laugh. As the selection of work in the present show attests, Dwane Powell has never been at a loss to imagine our esteemed leaders in ways that bring them down to earth with a bump. Jesse Helms's giant specs, musket, and dungarees, Ronald Reagan as an explorer plunging headlong into the jungle, W. as a missile being disarmed by Colin Powell, or Pat McCrory as a squawking parrot are particularly memorable images. Powell has also made a particular specialty of transforming the GOP elephant into a woolly mammoth, whose tusks grow longer the more the State General Assembly seems to look back to the Neanderthal period for inspiration.

Dwane Powell doesn't mince his words, to use a non-pictorial metaphor. You may not always agree with his point of view, but this is as it should be. In an age when social media and the Internet encourage us to seek out opinions that merely confirm our prejudices, cartoonists like Powell—whether liberal or conservative—perform an invaluable service. They rouse us from our complacency and make us think again. Without such disruptive voices to wake us from our torpor, who knows what we might sleepwalk into?

Neil McWilliam
Duke University

Artist Statement

After forty years of drawing political cartoons at a pace of five per week, they probably total about 12,000. Each represented a day that started out reading or watching several news sources, followed by jotting down topics for an over-view before settling on one to draw about. Usually, the topic that made me maddest won.

Unfortunately, the little green man who slides inspiration under the door doesn't come often enough, so the ideas may not flow until preceded by hours of doodling, head scratching, and pacing. A solid factual grip on an issue, combined with confidence in my take on it, is essential at this point in the process.

Eventually, a metaphor or image does come to mind and it is usually instant and fully formed. A quick sketch is then taped to a light table topped by a sheet of 2-ply Strathmore and the inking process is done with a combination of sable brushes and crow quill nibs. Maybe there really is a little green idea man. I just wish he'd come around earlier.

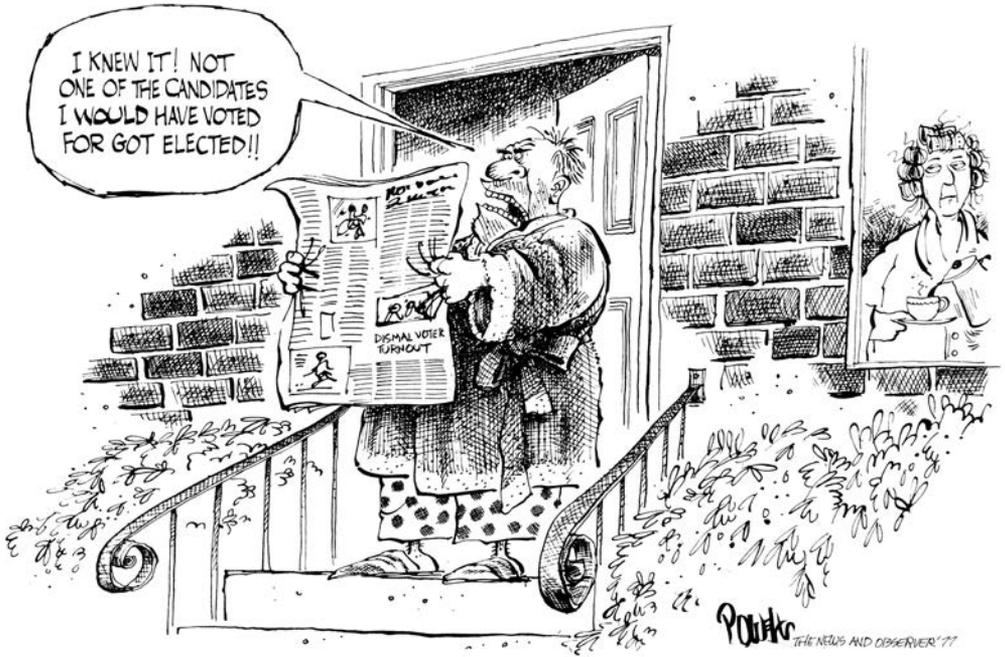
While Photoshop or other digital media have become popular tools for coloring cartoons on the web and modern editorial pages, I've recently gravitated to the more satisfying approach of using water colors and pastel pencils.

Picking limited numbers of framed cartoons covering a broad time span presented a challenge. Eventually, some old and new favorites, along with some forgotten ones, were picked with a focus on whether it was prescient and held up over time, generated a degree of reader reaction, represented changes in my style over time, or just stood out artistically.

While on this trip back in cartoon time I found an amazing number of them that, with slight caption changes, would fit right in with today's news cycle.

Hearty thanks to the sponsors, The News and Observer, The Association of American Editorial Cartoonists, Power Plant Gallery Director Caitlin Margaret Kelly, and Cat Herder in Chief J.P. Trostle.

Dwane Powell



1.
Would Have Voted, 1976
(Digital Print)

Surprisingly few voters turn out to select those who will be cooking up legislation affecting their lives.



2.

Billy Graham Safe Behind Jesus Portrait, 1977

(India ink on Ohio Graphic Arts paper)

In June 1977, the Charlotte Observer breaks a story that reveals the existence of a Billy Graham organization called the World Evangelism and Christian Education Fund, or WECEF. Incorporated in Dallas, and worth \$22.9 million, most of the holdings of the seven-year-old fund, carefully shielded from public view, are in blue-chip stocks and bonds, but assets also include a 2600-acre tract of prime land in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina.



3.
Women Priests, 1977
(Ink on Strathmore paper)

The Catholic Church finds a reason women should not be ordained as priests.



4.
Idi Amin, 1977
(Digital Print)

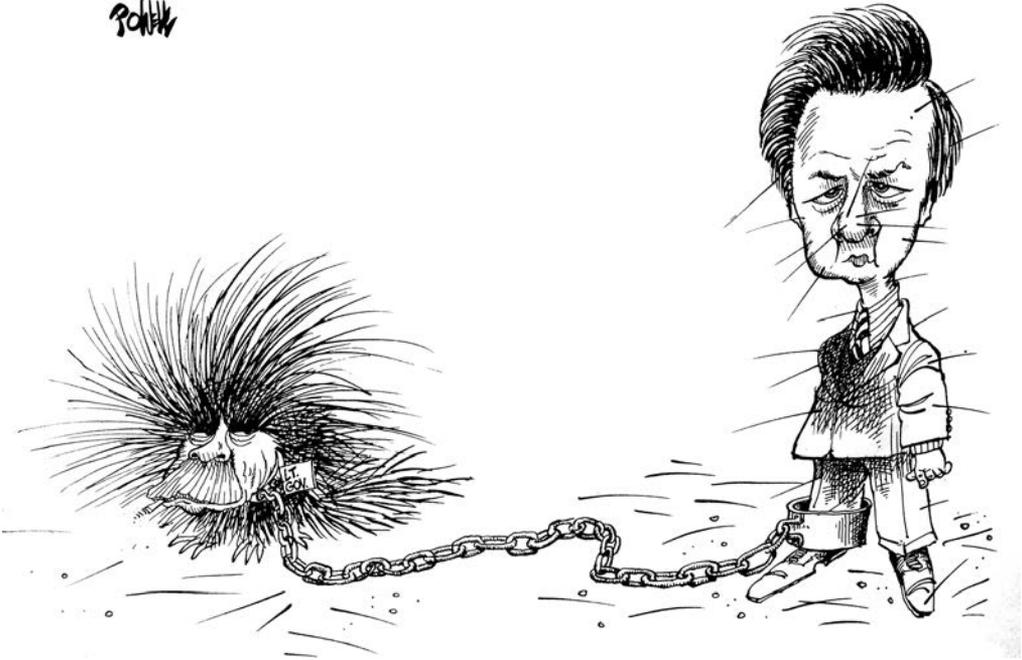
General Idi Amin overthrew the elected government of Milton Obote and declared himself president of Uganda. An estimated 300,000 civilians were massacred during his tenure.



5.
Arab Bloc, 1977
 (Ink on Ohio Graphic Arts paper)

After intense negotiation Egyptian President Anwar Sadat breaks with the rest of the Arab World and signs the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty, leading to a Nobel Peace Prize for him and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. A furious Arab League suspended Egypt and Sadat was assassinated on October 6, 1981 by members of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. The current government has pledged to continue peace with Israel.

POHLY



6.

***Hunt Chained to Porcupine*, 1977**
(India ink on Graphic Arts paper)

North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt has a turbulent relationship with Lt. Governor Jimmy Green dating to their time in the legislature. Hunt's first term in 1977 soon finds the two at odds when Green joins forces with the anti-ERA factions, who ultimately prevail. Other defections from Hunt's policies follow.



7.
Jimmy Green Kudzu Plant, 1977
(India ink on Ohio Graphic Arts paper)

North Carolina Lt. Governor Jimmy Green shows an aggressive streak towards expanding his powers.



8.

Brezhnev's Castro Safari, 1977

(India ink, felt tip marker on Strathmore paper)

The Soviets under Leonid Brezhnev boldly set up camp in Cuba, enlisting Fidel Castro and his regime as an important Cold War ally. Billions in economic and military aid is offered to Cuba between 1976 and 1980.



9.

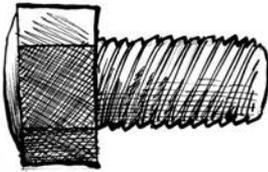
Penheads, 1981

(India ink on Strathmore paper)

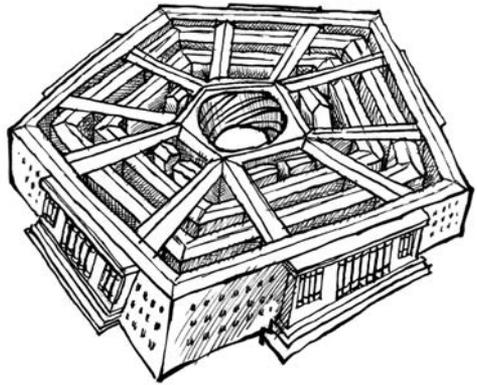
This is impulsive doodle evolved into a finished drawing, incorporating all of the various pens, brushes, and nibs that I have used over the years.

MILITARY SPARE PARTS CATALOGUE

BOLT - \$689.99



NUT - \$240 BILLION



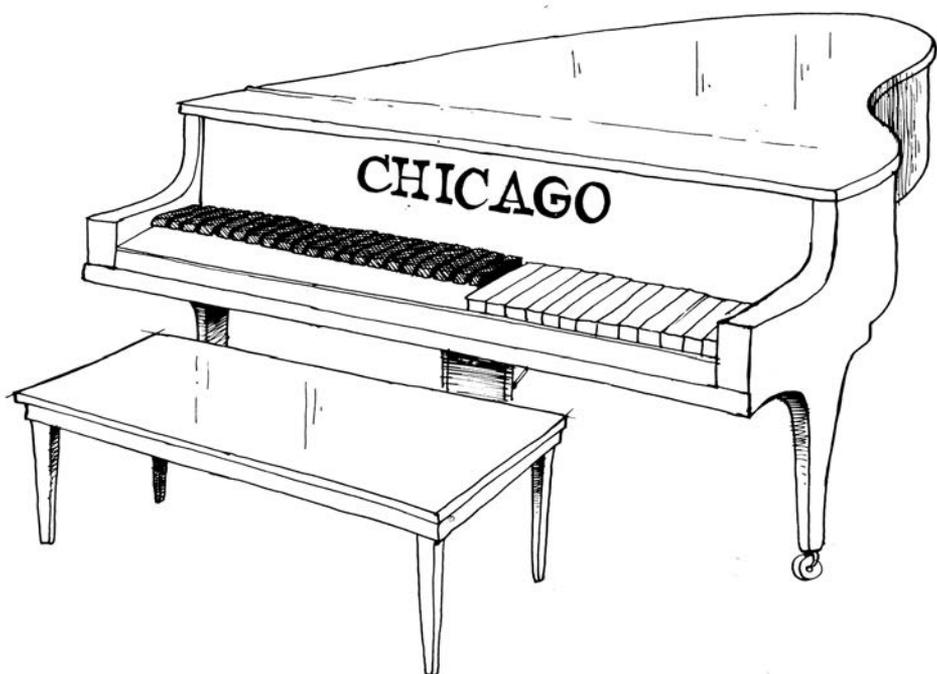
POW!LL LOS ANGELES TIMES SYDNEY MORNING HERALD
©1993 - THE NEWS AND OBSERVER

10.

Bolt Meet Nut, 1983

(India ink on Strathmore paper)

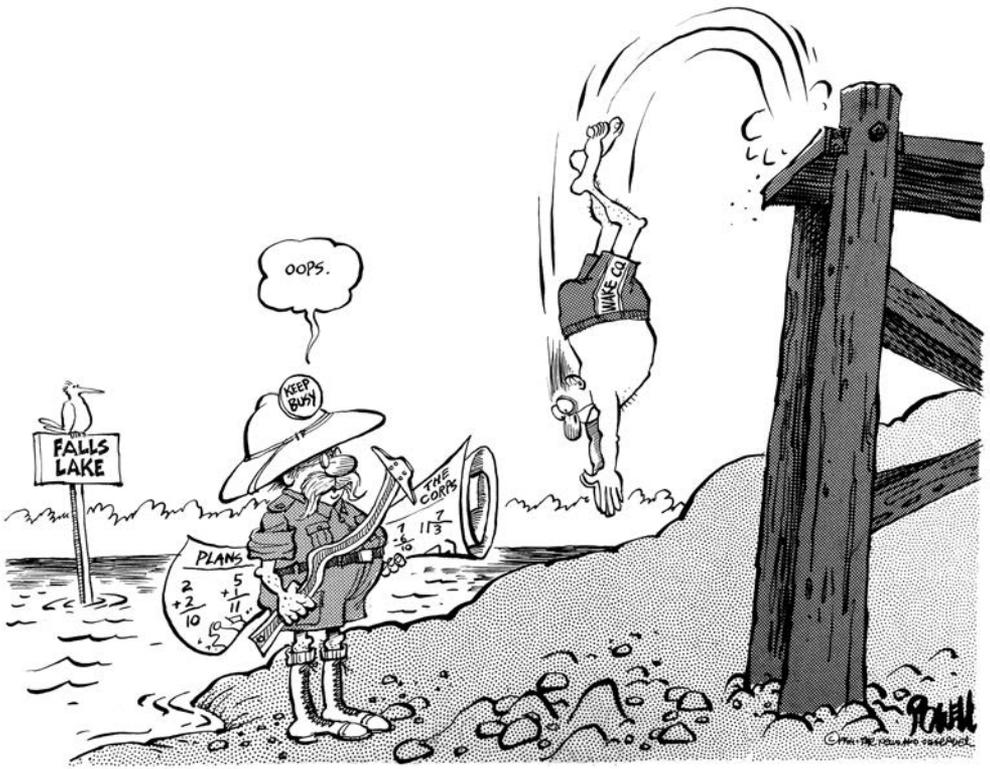
Military costs overruns on weapons systems come into clearer focus with news of a toilet seat costing \$640.



11.

Chicago, 4/14/1983
(Digital print)

Harold Washington is elected mayor of Chicago after a nasty campaign against Bernard Epton split the city along racial lines. A majority bloc of anti-Washington Alderman oppose most of Washington's agenda until a court-ordered special election results in a city council favorable to Washington for the first time.



12.

***Falls Lake and the Corps*, 1984**

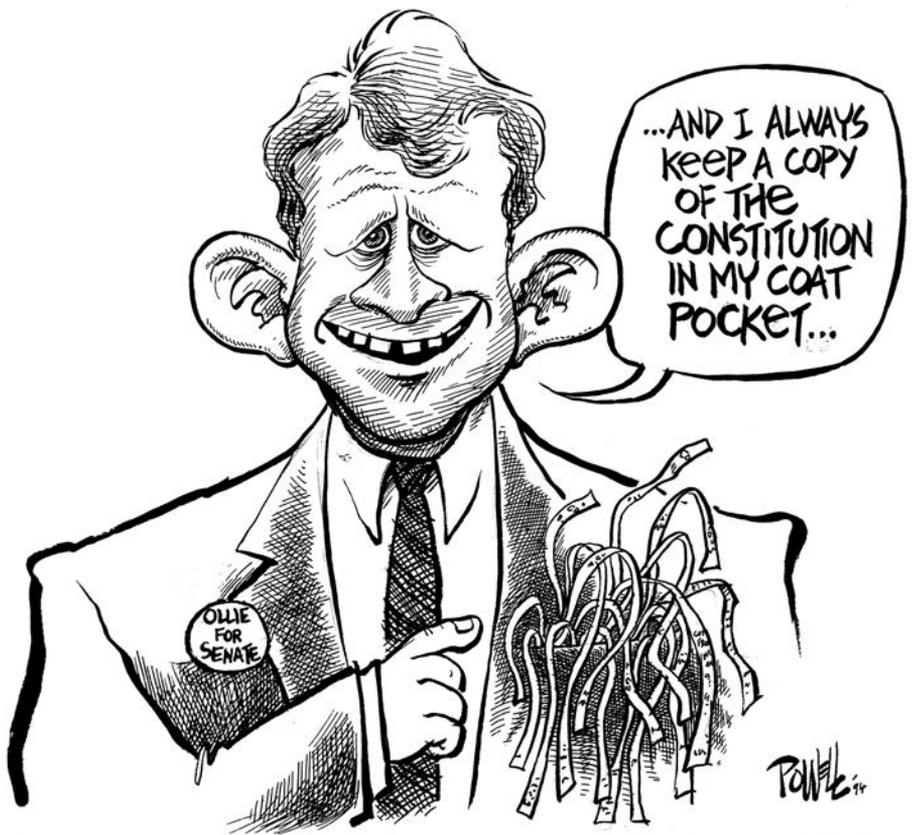
(Ink and zipatone on Strathmore paper)

Completed in 1981, the Corps of Engineers later discovers that they miscalculated the shoreline after the lake was filled.



13.
Look, Ma... Not Guilty!, 4/16/1984
(Digital print)

Six Ku Klux Klan members and three American Nazi Party members are acquitted of civil rights violations after the death of five members of the Communist Workers Party.



14.

Ollie's Copy, 1994

(India ink on Strathmore paper)

Former Marine Lt. Colonel Oliver North runs for the Senate and his biggest challenge is to win over the people who do not believe that someone convicted of three felony counts -- obstruction of Congress, destroying documents and accepting an illegal gift following the Iran-Contra Hearings -- should sit in the Senate, even though the convictions were thrown out on appeal. His campaign spiel hints that he continues to confuse the real Constitution with his version. He loses.

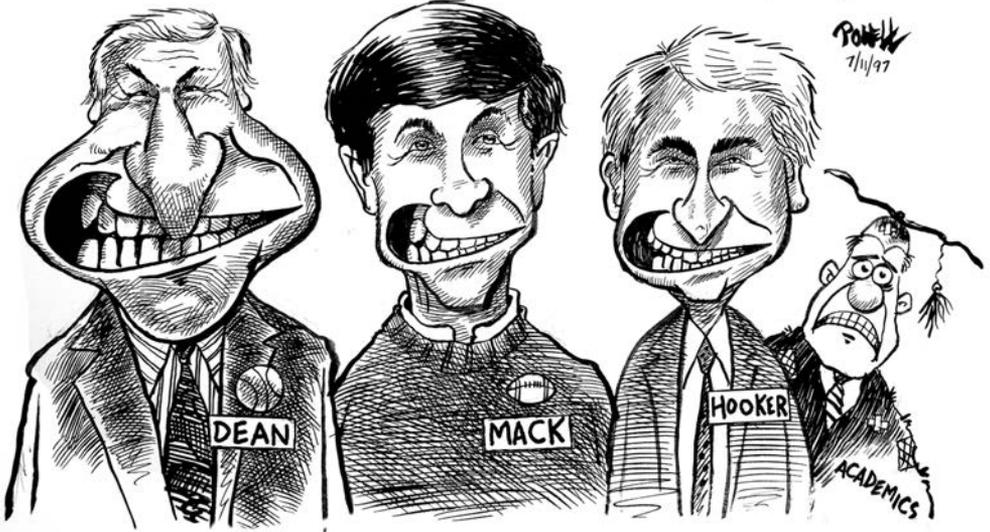


15.

Butz Goes One Joke Too Far, 1996
(India ink on Ohio Graphic Arts paper)

Earl Butz, the Secretary of Agriculture under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, proves what a bigot he is when one of his racist jokes goes public. He is soon forced to resign.

UNDER NIKE'S CONTROL

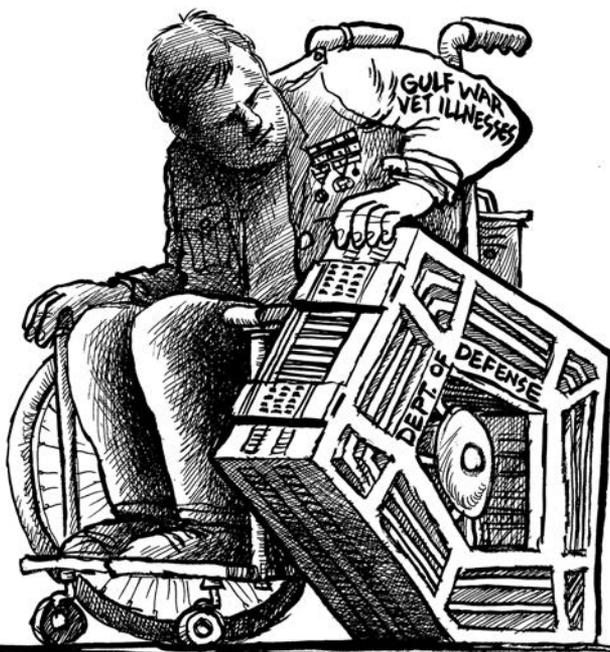


16. (Front Window)

Under Nike's Control, 7/11/1997

(India ink on Strathmore paper)

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill signs what may be the richest deal ever between an apparel company and a college athletic program.



Bowell
11/2/97

17.

Gulf War, Pentagon Wheelchair, 11/2/1997

(Digital Print)

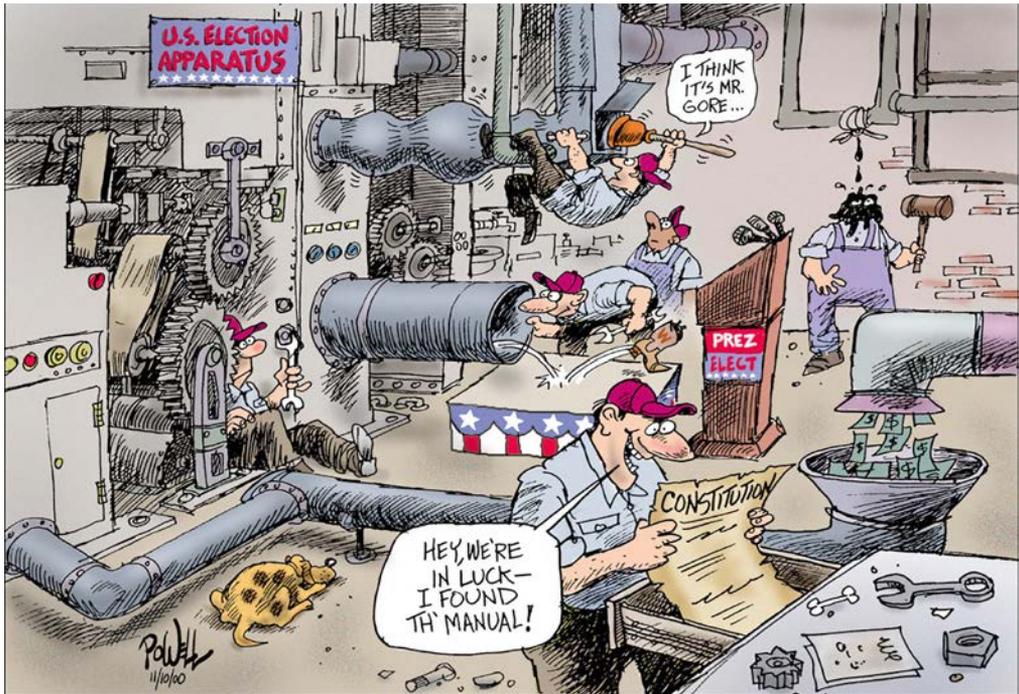
A Veterans Affairs Committee report criticized the Pentagon and the Veterans Affairs Department, saying they continued to neglect Gulf War illness victims. It also said the victims have encountered bureaucratic delays when seeking treatment supposedly guaranteed them.



18.

Missile Shield, 7/8/2000
(India ink on tracing vellum)

Missile Shield tests are plagued with problems but the Bush Administration plans to go ahead with the program. Meantime, some are worried that a dirty 'suitcase' bomb might be a bigger threat than ballistic missiles.



19.
Election Apparatus, 11/2000
(Digital Print)

A photo finish in Florida sets off a partisan scramble to determine the winner of the presidential election amid debate over glitches like hanging chads. In a highly controversial effort to avert a constitutional crisis the U.S. Supreme Court stops a Florida Supreme Court recount and declares George W. Bush the winner



20.

Mom Begged Aunt Myrtle, 11/23/2000
(Digital Print)

Thanksgiving family gatherings can be tough in election years.

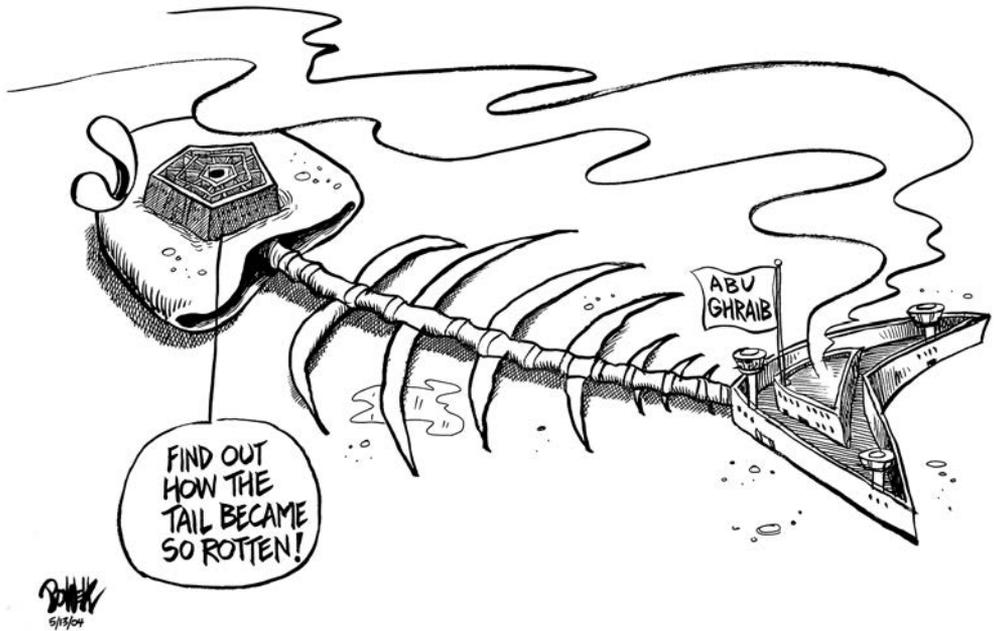


21.

Osprey – Military Industrial Complex, 2001

(India ink on Strathmore paper)

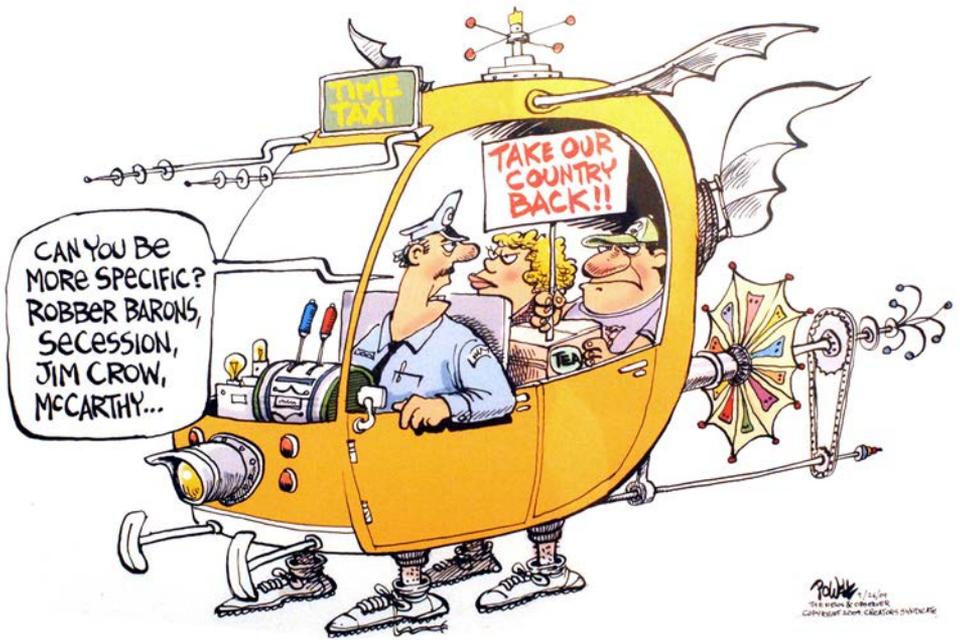
Despite a disastrous crash, continued safety problems, and huge costs over-runs, a blue-ribbon panel consisting of a retired marine general and two defense industry insiders is convened to insure the continuation of the program.



22.

A Rotten Prison, 6/13/2004
(India ink on tracing vellum)

The Bush Administration and military officials try to paint the allegations of rape, sodomy, and murder at the Abu Ghraib prison as an isolated incident. Low level soldiers are charged but later investigations point much further up the food chain. Those of higher rank are never prosecuted.



23.

Take Our Country Back, 2009

(Digital print)

The Tea Party becomes a force in the Republican Party and a predominant theme is 'Take Our Country Back.'



24. (Front Window)

Rush Says..., 1/30/2009

(Digital print)

Rush Limbaugh declares his wish for Obama to fail. Congressional Republicans are only too eager to comply with their master.

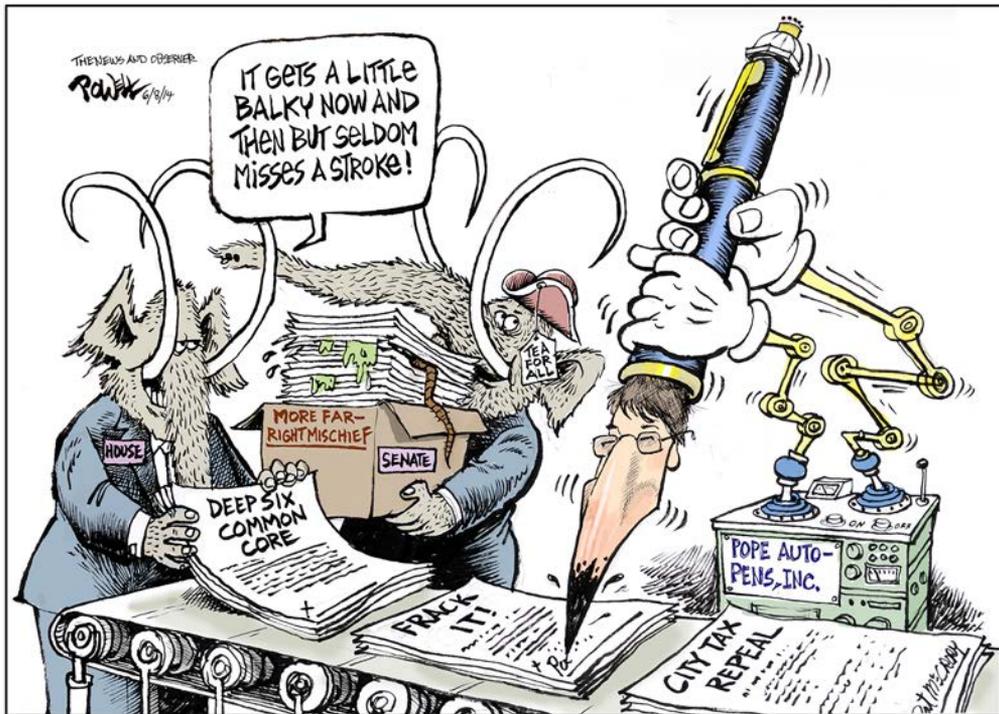


26.

Mastapus, 5/19/2013

(India ink on Strathmore paper)

The Republican Super Majority sets about to mold the state in the image of their ideology. Weeks run into years of protests on the Legislative grounds, sometimes with thousands of people expressing outrage at the abrupt changes to the state.



27.

McCrory Autopen, 5/8/2014
(India ink on Strathmore paper)

After running for governor as a moderate, Pat McCrory seems too eager to sign every controversial bill the Legislature sends to his desk.



28.
Solarbee Eggbeaters, 7/27/2014
(Digital print)

In a move to coddle home builders and developers, the state Legislature pushes back implementation of Jordan Lake water rules upstream, preferring to rely on a theory that mixers called SolarBees could stir the water and fight back algae and pollution from upstream run off. Two years and over \$1,000,000 later, critics are vindicated when state environmental officials end the ineffective project.



29.

Duke Ash Excavation, 8/10/2014
(India ink on Strathmore paper)

The North Carolina House and Senate under President Pro Tempore Phil Berger and Speaker Thom Tillis are at odds on how to best handle the Duke ash mess.

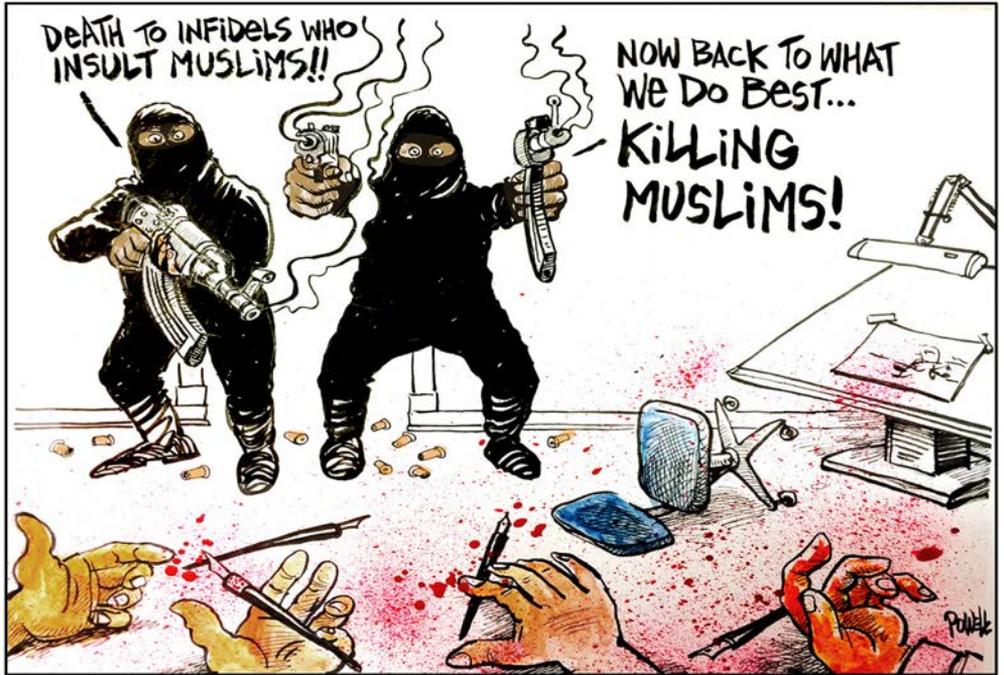


30. (Front Window)

Anything Obama, 11/16/2014

(Digital print)

Freshman North Carolina Senator Thom Tillis is only too eager to join Senate Leader McConnell's obsession with opposing the Obama Administration on all fronts.



31.

***Charlie Hebdo Killings*, 1/7/2015**

(India ink on Strathmore paper)

Brothers Saïd, and Chérif Kouachi enter the offices of French satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris. Armed with assault rifles they kill 11 people.



32.

Burr Rug, 1/25/2015

(Digital print)

North Carolina Senator Richard Burr assumes leadership of the Senate Intelligence Committee and has no desire to pursue the results of a six-year investigation by the committee that reveal grim details of lawlessness and barbarism in the CIA's enhanced interrogation program.



33.

Chez Trustees, 2/17/2016

(India ink, pastels on Strathmore paper)

In a closed door vote, the UNC Board of Governor's approves huge increases for nine top administrators amid faculty complaints of shortages in other areas.

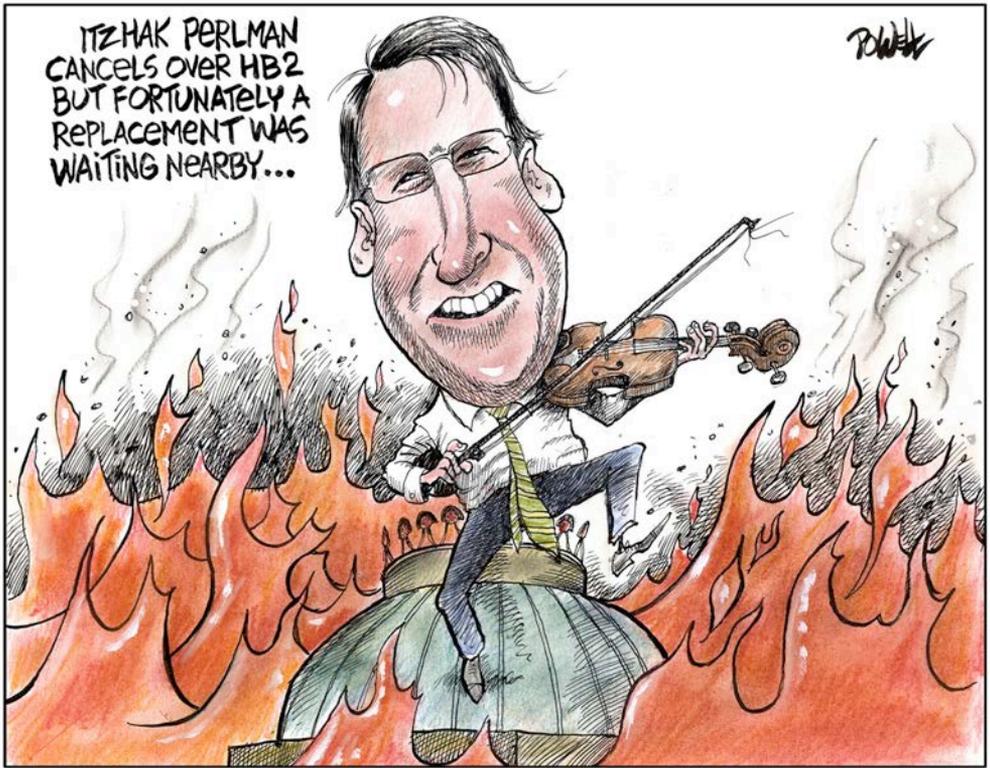


34.

Leaving Carolina In My Mind, 3/27/2016

(Ink, watercolor on paper)

North Carolina Legislative leaders foist the notoriously discriminatory HB2 bathroom bill on the state and Governor Pat McCrory signs it, leaving North Carolina's forward-thinking reputation in the dirt. Condemnation of the bill comes swiftly from all quarters, including major corporations and leading entertainers who boycott the state. N.C. leaders only dig their heels in deeper.



35.

Governor McCrory Fiddles While N.C. Burns, 5/22/2016
(India ink, pastels on Strathmore paper)

Itzhak Pearlman cancels a Raleigh performance to protest the North Carolina GOP Legislature's recent passing of HB2, a law targeting the trans-sexual community. This follows a flurry of other cancellations including Bruce Springsteen, and petitions against the law are signed by many top companies and business executives. McCrory remains a staunch defender while the state continues to lose millions and the constitutionality of the law is under question.

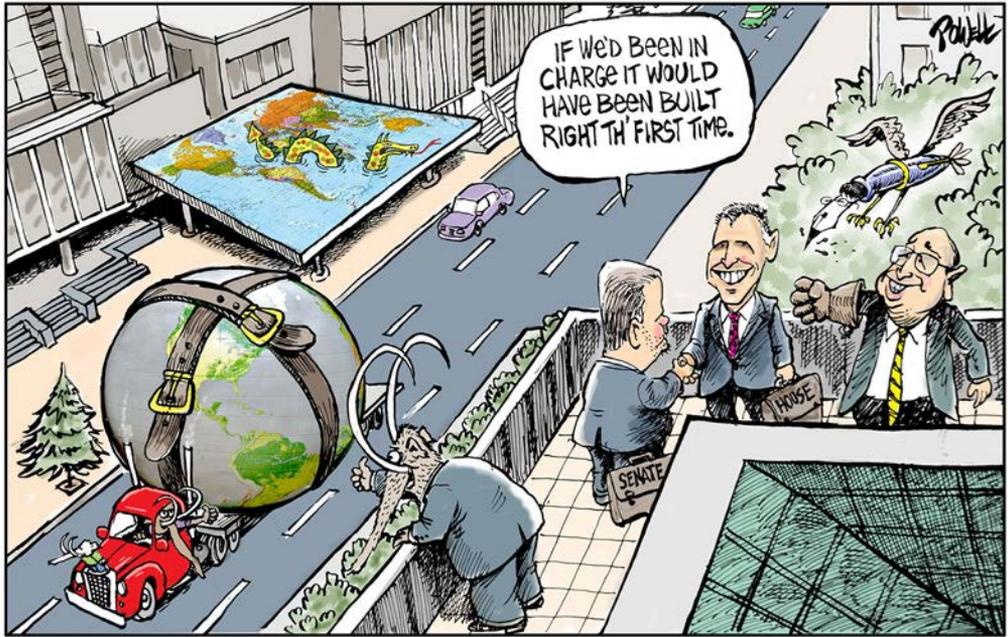


36.

Cop Video Access, 6/17/2016

(India ink and watercolor)

Governor Pat McCrory signs legislation making it difficult for public access to police video camera footage.

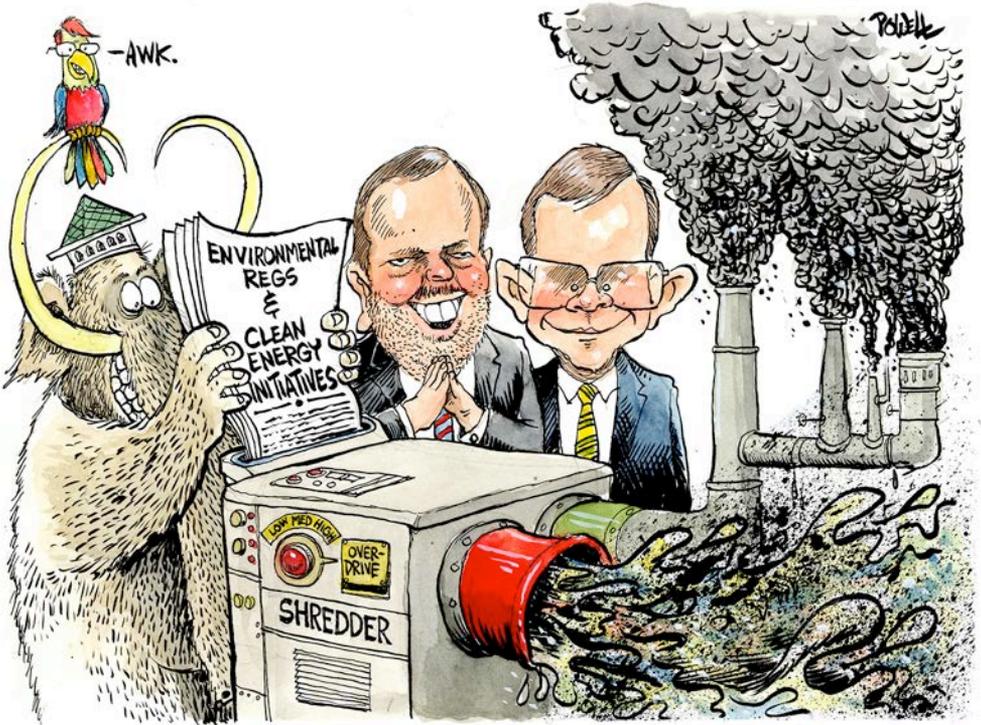


37. (Front Window)

A New Globe, 6/22/2014

(Digital Print)

Regressive social and science legislation from the N.C. General Assembly led me to speculate on what the globe on the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences across the street might have looked like if they'd been in charge during the planning process.



38.

Environmental Regs Shredder, 6/26/2016
(India ink, water color on water color paper)

The North Carolina GOP Legislature under President Pro Tempore Phil Berger and Speaker of the House Tim Moore passes legislation gutting environmental regulations and also tosses a few wrenches in the gears of the fledgling renewable energy industry.

Support for the exhibition was generously provided by:

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