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Ray Frey, Rob Rhyner

OPINION

OUR OPINION

City center foes lack ammo

To paraphrase Mark Twain, reports of the demise of the Frank Lloyd Wright convention center are greatly exaggerated.

News stories that the city's Commission on the Environment is having a tough time endorsing the \$63-million showplace are premature. The commission was not even scheduled to vote on the issue until its Nov. 1 meeting.

The very fact that the environmental commission was willing to delay its vote until Wilcox could attend shows that open government is alive and well. Wilcox has never made any bones about her opposition to the project.

And the convention center opponents could use a few live rounds, since they keep reaching into their powder locker and pulling out duds. Consider the complaints they fired at the Commission on the Environment Monday night.

Not one of these accusations is new, and not one hits its mark.

Of course the center's opponents think the

EIS is biased and incomplete. Its scientific conclusions do not agree with their emotional but groundless assessment that building the convention center will cause unmitigated damage to the city's lakeshore.

It's true that Law Park and the surrounding lake bottom do rest on decades-old trash. But numerous test cores were drilled and studied during the EIS process, and the scientific conclusion reached is that while some contaminants may be stirred up during construction, they will eventually settle again with no long-range ill effects.

As for opponents' assertion that the convention center is a waste of park land, that's their opinion. But the fact is, a majority of Madison voters in the November 1992 election decided they were willing to sacrifice that lake footage in order to gain a convention center based on designs by a world-renowned architect.

The Commission on the Environment was right to delay voting until all members could attend, but should not delay its decision any further. Some have suggested waiting until next spring, when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will issue its recommendation on the project, but there is simply no reason — except for political base-covering — not to vote on Nov. 15.

The commissioners should study the data before them and then vote a go-ahead for Monona Terrace. It should be an easy decision if they pay more attention to the scientists than the hysterical, fact-free volleys of complaints fired by opponents who haven't kept their powder dry.

Facts show de Klerk deserving

Four years ago, the notion that South African President F.W. de Klerk would ever win a Nobel Peace Prize was about as believable as a prediction that Count Dracula would replace Santa Claus at the North Pole.

But when the Norwegian Nobel Committee announced earlier this month that de Klerk was the co-winner of this year's peace prize, the honor was rightly awarded to a courageous man who has steered a balky constituency into accepting the end of South Africa's heinous apartheid.

Giving de Klerk his due respect is not an easy matter, particularly because of the contrast between his background and that of the man with whom he shared the Nobel prize, Nelson Mandela. The temptation is great to subscribe to the view held by Harold Scheub, professor of African languages and culture at UW-Madison: Mandela is more deserving of the prize because he spent a lifetime fighting apartheid while de Klerk spent most of his career participating in white-run governments that endorsed and enforced apartheid.

Indeed, not until February of 1990, when de Klerk as president freed Mandela from 27 years of political imprisonment, was there an indication that de Klerk might possess the morality to change his nation.

But to deny de Klerk's more recent accomplishments is because of his past is to overlook a fundamental fact: It takes two



Mandela De Klerk

sides to make peace. Without de Klerk's efforts, there would be no victory for Mandela. And de Klerk's efforts were considerable. As Richard Ralston, UW-Madison history professor, noted, de Klerk had to push and prod a privileged white class that clung to apartheid as firmly as America's Southern ruling class clung to slavery before the Civil War.

The hope that black South Africans have today is testimony to the fact that de Klerk and Mandela are both deserving of the citation of the Nobel Committee.

"By looking ahead to South African reconciliation instead of back at the deep wounds of the past, they have shown personal integrity and great political courage."

WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL

Phil Blake, publisher Frank Denton, editor Thomas W. Still, associate editor Sunny Schubert, editorial writer Opinions above are shaped by this board, independent of news coverage decisions elsewhere in the paper.

Today's news has been in headlines many times before

By Ray Frey and Rob Rhyner

Our research suggests that readers who crave novelty would do well to avoid the daily newspaper. Specifically, we have discovered that a new "news" story occurs no more often than every 4.8 years.

To demonstrate this point, we modestly offer the following synoptic guide to the 20th century, as distilled from newspaper headlines.

- Packers search for new coach. Heat wave breaks records in Midwest. Record floods submerge Midwest. Tornadoes rake Midwest. Crisis in low income housing. Bus plunging kills (fill in the blank). President hopeful about unemployment figures. Elizabeth Taylor marries. Midwest peace talks stall. Ex-President Carter monitors first local elections in 45 years. AIDS activists picket NIH. Fighting erupts along Beirut's Green Line. Drought in the Sahel. Bus plunging in Ecuador carries 35 to their deaths. President threatens Iraq.

Frey and Rhyner live in Madison.

GUEST COLUMN

- Germany recognizes Croatia. Hindu-Muslim violence flares in Punjab. AIDS activists lambast Helms. Feminists lambast Helms. Brewers struggle to fourth place. Cubs fans hopeful. 77 killed in Philippine ferry tragedy. Elizabeth Taylor divorces. 68 perish in Thai bus plunge. Democrats denounce unemployment figures. Republicans denounce unemployment figures. Blue-ribbon commission: U.S. education in crisis. CIA implicated in drug trade. Critics love Coppola's newest; bombs at box office. British industrial production drops. Chancellor Kohl soothes French fears of resurgent Germany. Economic indicators mixed. GM market share slips. Massive Rhine fish kill reported; pharmaceutical spill blamed. Factory closing leaves West Virginia town residents uncertain. Bank failures expected to rise this year. Recession to ease third quarter, economists predict.

- Serbian violence spurs fears of wider conflict. Japan's industrial output up 5 percent last year. Surprise storm snarls traffic. San Bernardino pile-up claims 132. Surprise floods devastate northern California. President threatens Libya's Gadhafi. President leaves for (fill in the blank). Long lines in former Soviet Union. Personal physician says president's health is fine. Rain forests shrinking. Dam project threatens endangered clam. Space shuttle launch delayed. GM retrenches; massive layoffs expected. Rise of neo-Nazis feared in unified Germany. Cold snap breaks records in Midwest. Scientists fear results of global warming. Scientists disagree on global warming. President reveals drug strategy. President reveals education strategy. Bosnia cease-fire arranged by League of Nations/United Nations. Drive-by shootings kill 2 in L.A. Tourism expected to rise in D.C. Out-of-town tourist slain near Capitol. Tourism declines in D.C. for -th year in row.

The Top 10 rules for media critics

- 1. If it's not above the fold on Page 1, it's buried. 2. If it's above the fold on Page 1, it's sensationalized. 3. Everything but the entire universe is out of context. 4. If you can't criticize what's in a story, criticize what isn't in it. 5. If it's not a hatchet job, it's a puff piece. 6. And vice versa. 7. No one can ever be accurately quoted. 8. All stories that fail to mention the problems on your agenda are trivial, and therefore a disservice. 9. Facts are never reported, but "admitted," "confessed," or "allowed to creep into the story." 10. Everything newspapers do is done to sell papers, and selling papers is bad. — From the "Fog Ball," a newspaper industry newsletter

Today's mail

Pollution standards must remain strong

I am writing in support of Public Invenor Thomas Dawson's recent recommendations regarding Wisconsin's ground water and drinking water.

I live near the Badger Army Ammunition Plant near Baraboo. The plant is the source of pervasive soil and ground water contamination that threatens dozens of nearby private wells.

During the last three years I have spent thousands of hours reviewing ground water test results, environmental surveys and documents and have attended scores of public meetings addressing the health and environmental problems associated with the ground water contamination in and around this facility.

I support Dawson's objections to the proposed increases in Public Health Groundwater Quality Standards. The proposed elevations potentially compromise public health, as they are based upon cost and test methodology considerations rather than associated health threats.

As the purpose of Public Health Groundwater Quality standards is to protect human health by protecting ground water quality, the 10+ value, which is based exclusively on health consideration, should be the adopted standard. I strongly support the specific decreases, as does Dawson, in Public Health Groundwater Standards for lead and PCBs due to documented health risks to the general public.

Furthermore, the state Division of Health should be empowered to recommend values based exclusively on health, and not be undermined by the DNR.

I applaud Dawson's position as an advocate of human health and our right to clear, safe drinking water.

— Laura Olah, Merrimac

Force is justified in case of self-defense

The State Journal on Oct. 5 carried a disheartening story about a young woman who followed an attempted rape. The first sentence in the story told a terrible tale of how our laws are slanted to protect the criminals. The sentence read: "A Madison woman warned off a would-be rapist with tear gas early Sunday but had her tear gas confiscated by police because it is illegal in Wisconsin for civilians to possess the chemical."

With our looney liberal legislators passing laws against self-defense, we can see why crime is increasing. What was the woman to do? Ask the rapist to wait a minute while she called the police and dialed 911? Self-protection is an absolute right, and must not be halted by some law made for the benefit of criminals. A criminal must expect to meet resistance and in most cases should expect serious bodily harm.

Laws that protect criminals are passed by attorneys for the benefit of attorneys.

We must make laws that benefit the majority of our people and make acts of crime very dangerous to the criminals. People must have the right to defend themselves with whatever force is necessary, including deadly force.

— William J. Evans, Stoughton

YOUR OPINION

We welcome letters of 200 or fewer words on matters of public interest. Letters are subject to editing; not all can be run. Please sign and include your address and telephone number. Names and hometowns will be published. Send letters to: Editors to the Editor, Wisconsin State Journal, P.O. Box 8538, Madison, Wis. 53708

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