Newspapers by ancestry
https://www.newspapers.com/image/294859698

Downloaded on Jan 11, 2024



OPINIONS

The Leaf-Chronicle
www.theleafchronicle.com
Wednesday, November 16, 2005

THE LEAF-CHRONICLE
GANNETT
200 Commerce St., Clarksville, TN
(931) 552-1848

Gene Washer
President and Publisher

Richard V. Stevens
Executive Editor

Alane S. Magna
Opinion Page Editor

OUR OPINIONS

Hospital vote is needed

■ Commissioners took the right action by petitioning for meeting.

The 13 Montgomery County commissioners who signed a petition for a special meeting on the local hospital deal acted in the best interests of the community.

The 13 presented the petition on Monday to County Mayor Doug Weiland to vote on the project. By law, the special session must be held within 15 days as of Monday.

The people of Clarksville-Montgomery County have become increasingly frustrated over the fact their voices have not been heard in the process. This commission vote will allow the citizens to speak through their elected representatives.

The sticking point in closing the hospital deal — which would bring a new, $200 million private hospital to Clarksville — is money. The District Board wants Triad Hospitals Inc. and Gateway Health Systems, which would be in an 80-20 partnership, to buy all of the hospital property for $65 million.

TO GET INVOLVED

■ Contact information for Montgomery County commissioners: www.montgomerycountytn.org/government/elected_officials.htm

By contrast, the deal that Triad and Gateway have worked out has ownership of the old hospital on Madison Street reverting back to the District Board once the new hospital in St. Bethlehem is built. Triad would pay around $25 million in cash toward the $42 million in bonded debt.

The District Board, however, wants an additional $39 million to settle the sale of the old hospital property.

Gateway President and CEO Randy Kelley says that only Triad offered the kind of deal that would retire the debt on the hospital and not cost the taxpayers anything.

Moreover, Triad agreed to continue to provide charity care at the new hospital, which also would be Clarksville-Montgomery County's largest taxpayer.

Two deadlines for closing the deal — Oct. 1 and Nov. 1 — already have passed. The next — Dec. 1 — is little more than two weeks away.

The deal obviously needs to be struck soon before it slips away. Our elected officials must now send a strong and clear message to the District Board to quit haggling and start approving a deal. This process has dragged on far too long.

ANOTHER EDITORIAL OPINION

Beer was helpful in diplomacy

For choice diplomatic postings, the Wari tribe in the remote Andes in the four centuries leading up to 1000 A.D. doesn't immediately spring to mind. But researchers in Peru have found cause to rethink that assumption.

They have concluded that the remains of a settlement atop a crag overlooking the Atacama Desert were those of a diplomatic outpost where statecraft involved the consumption of copious amounts of beer.

The Wari and envoys from the rival Tiwanaku tribe would convene on the mountaintop and there be served, in ceremonial tankards holding a half gallon, chicha, special brews made from corn mash or pepper berry pulp. The chicha came from a 475-gallon capacity brewery tended by brewmistresses drawn from the nobility.

It all sounds very festive and seems to have been effective at keeping the peace. The two cultures suddenly died out about 1,000 years ago, and while the reasons aren't known precisely, failed diplomacy does not seem to have been a cause.

The site itself, called Cerro Baul, came to an abrupt and surprising end. After a night of revelry, the partygoers deliberately burned the place down.

After a lavish dinner of several different kinds of meat and eight different kinds of fish, the diplomats set fire to the banquet hall and then moved on to the brewery. After torching it, they threw their tankards into the ruins and called it a night.

Somewhere in there is a lesson for modern-day diplomacy. A microbrewery and a few high-level brewmistresses on the roof of the State Department might break a lot of impasses, although burning the place down at the conclusion of negotiations might be a little extreme. Condolenzza Rice, take note.

— Scripps Howard News Service

LETTERS

Clarksville needs hospital Triad has been offering

I am an emergency physician at Gateway. I have a firsthand view of the workings at the current hospital. I also work closely with our very fine paramedics. I want the people of Clarksville to know that when they come to our hospital, they will get the best care possible. Our emergency department is excellent having gone through many needed changes since the summer of 2004. This being said, and as many letter writers have mentioned, many in Clarksville drive past our hospital to get their health care in Nashville. Often this is because Gateway does not provide the service they need whether it be neurology, pediatric surgery, or endocrinology (and there are others). We simply do not have these specialists in Clarksville.

Now that the deal with Triad has been put in jeopardy by a last minute money-grab, I am angry and concerned. If the deal blows apart, I do not see why any needed specialist would choose to relocate to Clarksville. I do not see why any other potential suitor would even look at us when they see what happened to Triad at the last minute of a "done deal". I see the flow of patients bypassing our doors increasing. Also, I see our paramedics and their rigs spending more time transferring patients to Nashville as they scramble to have enough personnel to cover the city of Clarksville.

I wonder where the members of the District Board get their health care? I doubt they get it at Gateway because if they did, they would not be taking the position that they are. If they do not, then how dare they!

JOHN SHIELDS
Clarksville 37043

People are disrespectful when it comes to our flag

Why are people so disrespectful to the American flag? Why is it that people don't stand up/take their hats off/put their hands over their heart when the flag is being presented and when they're playing the national anthem?

Why don't people stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance? Shouldn't we show pride in being able to do all of these?

I don't know the answer to any of these questions. But I do know that saying you're "proud to be an American" and actually showing it are two completely different things. I'm not saying you have to paint your house red, white, and blue or even get a tattoo that says, "I'm an American."

All I'm asking is that everyone shows the utmost respect for the American flag because it is a symbol of all our privileges and freedoms that we get to experience in this great country.

So when it's being presented — whether it's being raised on a flagpole or presented by a JROTC color guard — stand there, take off your hat and put your hand over your heart. If it's the Pledge of Allegiance being said, then stand up, put your hand over your heart and recite the Pledge like everyone else.

If you're not the one being disrespectful and you see people sitting down or talking during any if not all of this, then say something to them; they should all show respect. They do get the honor of living in this great country, don't they?

So please, when the flag is being presented, the national anthem being played, or the Pledge of Allegiance is being recited, show some respect and stand up. If you truly believe in this country shouldn't you stand up for what you believe in?

CASEY SINK
Clarksville 37042

TO CONTRIBUTE

The Leaf-Chronicle welcomes original letters on local matters of public interest that avoid personal attacks. Our guidelines.

■ **LENGTH:** Shorter letters are considered first and edited least. Up to 300 words for letters, 650 words for guest opinions. All are subject to editing.

■ **LIMITS:** One letter every 15 days, as a general rule. No poetry, please.

■ **INCLUDE:** Your first and last name, home address and daytime telephone number. Authorship will be verified before publication.

■ **MAIL:** Opinion page, P.O. Box 31029, Clarksville, TN 37043-0918.

■ **FAX:** 552-5859

■ **E-MAIL:** letters@theleafchronicle.com
No e-mail attachments, please.

Letters to the editor, opinion and editorial columns and articles submitted to The Leaf-Chronicle may be published or distributed in print, electronic or other forms.

Triad deal would be in best interests of community

I attended the public meeting that presented the Gateway/Triad hospital deal. It was clear to me in the presentations from both sides that accepting the current offer from the Gateway/Triad team would be a sound financial decision, as well as a benefit to our community in its ability to offer state-of-the-art medical care.

The only contentious point that stands in the way of moving forward is that our current leaders want to take the $39 million difference (assessed value of hospital minus the $42 million bond indebtedness that is being absorbed by the deal) in cash, instead of in 20 percent ownership of the new hospital.

Equity in the new hospital through Gateway affords some control of the new hospital's operations.

Without that 20 percent interest, we lose all control. The joint venture concept was the reason Triad was chosen. They were the only one of 12 suitors who agreed to allow us to stay in the mix. Consequently, our nurses and doctors will continue to have jobs here. Our community will still have a representative voice on the Hospital Board. But the District Board wants the cash. They think they can have both, control and cash.

In my opinion, it is better to have the $39 million as equity in a hospital that is earning money and paying taxes and dividends. In essence, we keep the feeling of a non-profit hospital without having to pay for it — and get state-of-the-art services to boot.

So why the prolonged debate? Hurry up and accept this unbelievable deal that Gateway has put together before Triad decides it has given away too much.

By all means, let us push to encourage our county commissioners and City Council members to accept this offer.

SHARON PATTERSON
Clarksville 37043

Which one is a case of actual racism?

■ Three statements from three people with very different intentions.

Politics
Jay Ambrose

Which of the following strike you as people venturing into racism?

A) A football coach who says blacks run faster than whites?

B) A newspaper editorial writer who suggests that Clarence Thomas should perhaps not count as a black member of the Supreme Court because he thinks differently from most blacks?

C) A college lecturer who says all whites should be killed?

The coach, Fisher DeBerry of the Air Force Academy, received a verbal whipping in the press and a reprimand from the academy superintendent for saying, "It was very obvious to me the other day (in a game his team lost) that the other team had a lot more Afro-American players than we did, and they ran a lot faster than we did. It just seems to be that way, that Afro-American kids can run very, very well."

Bad way of putting it. Some blacks are fast and some are slow and some whites are fast and some are slow, and any suggestion that all members of a racial group are one thing or the other is a prejudice.

In this case, the attribute was something sports fans applaud, and what's more, DeBerry could not conceivably have meant that all blacks run fast. He meant that blacks participating in the top levels of amateur sports are usually faster than whites in those sports, and they are.

Next we come to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel editorial regretting that President Bush nominated a man, Samuel Alito, to replace a woman, Sandra Day O'Connor, on the Supreme Court. "In losing a woman, the court with Alito would feature seven white men, one white woman and a black man, who deserves an asterisk because he arguably does not represent the views of mainstream black America," the editorial said.

If you don't think like a black, you maybe aren't a black, in other words, and here is how you automatically know what is wrong with that view.

The writer of the editorial on behalf of the paper's editorial board, Gregory Stanford, has composed a self-exonerating column in which he says the people who find this view objectionable are mainly those who believe the country is color-blind or should become color-blind. He believes in race consciousness as a means of solving racial problems.

Well, the country is far from color-blind, but should aim to be. It should because color-blindness would mean that we look at individuals as individuals, granting them all the rights that individuals should have and insisting that their skin color tells us nothing about them as a certainty, not even whether they come from unfortunate circumstances.

Stanford, I am sure, is a decent human being trying to do right, even if I think he harbors an opinion not so right. Kansas Kamben is not a decent human being by my reckoning. The holder of a Ph.D. who used to teach at North Carolina State University, he said in a talk at Howard University Law School that "we have to exterminate white people off this planet."

There is just no other solution, he figures, to the problem of "every white person on earth" being "a plantation master."

Here we have racism in full Hitlerian bloom, and the encounter with the real thing should make us understand that we are simply trivializing the real thing when we confuse it with something like a football coach's verbal stumbling.

Yes, it is always a good idea to remind ourselves that the members of any particular racial group are uniform in just one respect — their humanity — but it is also a good idea to distinguish between instances when people are asserting strict uniformity and when they obviously are not.

It is important, too, to understand that claims of racial depravity can be directed at majority groups as easily as at minority groups — that the sin is in the demonizing, not in the choice of who to demonize.

The answer to racism is not more racism.

Jay Ambrose, formerly the Washington director of editorial policy for Scripps Howard Newspapers, can be reached at JAmbrose@aol.com.

Politics
William Raspberry

Oil companies didn't sacrifice anything at all

■ They profited during national emergencies and have no apologies for it.

WASHINGTON — Oil profits "go up and down," Exxon Mobil chairman Lee Raymond told the Senate the other day, explaining why the oil giants' huge post-Katrina profits were not profiteering.

That the $32.8 billion profits that America's five biggest petroleum corporations reported for the July-September quarter were more like a natural occurrence — that darned "invisible hand"! — than a calculated effort to take advantage of a national emergency. Profits just "go up and down."

But even the facile Raymond couldn't explain why record profits and record gasoline prices just happened to occur at the same time. You know the sequence: Hurricane Katrina ravages the Gulf Coast, and a week later two other things hit: Gasoline prices reach an all-time-high average of $3.06 a gallon and Exxon Mobil became the first U.S company to rack up more than $100 billion in quarterly sales. (It wasn't all Exxon, of course. BP, Royal Dutch Shell, Chevron and ConocoPhillips also did very well.)

Here's how Raymond explains it: (and I pick on Raymond only because he says things so clearly.) Katrina damaged important refineries, reducing their capacity. That naturally made it more expensive to meet demand, and so they had to raise prices. Chevron chairman David O'Reilly put it more simply: "We had to respond to the market."

But if prices were raised to cover additional costs, whence the record profits?

Well, Raymond had a secondary explanation: Three-dollar-a-gallon gasoline reduced demand and helped to regulate the market. That's why you didn't see those long lines at gas stations. Reducing consumption also reduces reliance on oil imports, and, though he didn't say it, probably reduces hydrocarbon emissions and slows global warming — all good stuff.

In other words, what you thought was profiteering was only Big Oil doing the world a favor.

There is another way of looking at what happened last quarter. Katrina and the flooding that followed amounted to a national tragedy and a national emergency. Companies sometimes benefit from such situations. A bakery that somehow managed to stay open would certainly sell out of bread, and if the owner could bake more bread, he could sell that, too. If the ingredients became more expensive, he would take that into account in setting the price of bread. But if he started charging $8 a loaf *just because he could*, you wouldn't be in the mood for cheery songs about the beauty of the free market.

There is also another way to respond to national disaster, and lots of individuals, organizations — even entire towns — found it. I mean the response of sacrifice. Americans opened their hearts, their wallets and their homes to Katrina's victims. Where is the record of Big Oil's selfless largesse?

Maybe the notion of corporate sacrifice — the very idea of the corporate citizen — is dying, giving way to the bottom line as the only thing worthy of serious attention.

The only thing in Raymond's testimony that sounded even remotely like sacrifice was his reference to reinvested profits. But the profits are reinvested into more exploration and more refining — which is to say, more sales and more profits for the stockholders.

Meanwhile, the executives were full of dire warnings against legislating anything smacking of price controls, mandatory givebacks or excess-profits taxes. They probably shouldn't worry. There doesn't appear to be much taste for real action in the Senate. It's a lot easier to believe the American people have been ripped off than to figure out how to make them whole now.

I just wish the Big Oilers Would-it's stop trying to convince me that the noxious liquid splashing in my face is autumn rain. Listen once again to Raymond:

"Prices for products did increase, of course, but there was no panic and no widespread shortages. Retailers responded to the short-term supply disruption, consumption decreased and imports increased to make up for the shortfall. In a word, markets worked."

For a few of us, anyway.

William Raspberry is a columnist for the Washington Post Writers Group and can be reached at 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, DC 20071 or e-mail at WilliamRaspberry@washpost.com.

Copyright © 2024 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.

POWERED BY Newspapers.com