


viewpoints



Winston-Salem Chronicle
Founded 1974

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Some Questions On Arena

By 'Publius' (Name withheld at author's request)

Although much of the initial publicity in the upcoming bond referendum has been favorable there are a number of issues that have not received widespread public attention. The intent of this citizen's editorial is to raise some of those issues.

Referendum voting is one of the most democratic ways of resolving public issues. Citizens can vote for or against an issue which directly concerns them. But in order for that process to be meaningful citizens have to have as much accurate and complete information as possible. To date information about the bond referendum has been incomplete.

A major concern is cost. The proposed arena will not cost \$33 million but something closer to \$75 million. According to the feasibility study it will cost the taxpayers about \$2.5 million per year for 30 years to pay off the bonds. That comes to a total of \$75 million. But it may cost even more than that.

Most major public building projects experience significant cost overruns. One should not be surprised if the cost of constructing the proposed arena exceeded the \$33 million estimate by at least 10-20%. This would further escalate the total debt that the taxpayers would have to bear.

The cost of the arena is also based on the assumption that the arena will be self-supporting. The revenue projections of the feasibility study are very questionable particularly since Greensboro may build its own convention center and will actively compete to fill its coliseum.

Is it reasonable to expect that the Winston-Salem arena could profitably host 25 "rock shows, name performers" per year? That's one every two weeks. Or would the arena be hosting 6 ice shows, 27 college basketball games and 5 pro exhibition games a year - every year? One has to be very optimistic or an unquestioning supporter of this project to believe it would.

Yet if the arena does not host these events and consistently attract large crowds then, according to the feasibility study, it will not be able to cover operating costs. This would mean a further drain on tax revenues.

The Benton Convention Center requires an annual

operating subsidy of \$140,000. One wonders how much more than that the proposed arena would need.

Even supporters of the arena proposal concede that construction costs would have to be met from public revenues - namely taxes. Once the bonds are sold the annual debt would be about \$2.5 million. Based on our present tax structure a debt of that size would mean about a 9 cent increase in the tax rate, which is about a 12% increase.

Assuming that public spending rises as a result of growth and inflation then a tax increase would be required or \$2.5 million would have to be taken from other city programs or services.

Are most citizens aware that approving the bond referendum might result in a tax increase of 12% in the near future. With double-digit inflation and an economic slowdown is this the time to increase taxes for a project that may be more a luxury than a necessity?

A last point, which has not been clearly addressed by arena supporters, is who will benefit from the arena? In the feasibility study there is no mention of any specific jobs that will be created if the arena is approved. The feasibility study asserts that the arena will attract about \$7.5 million in new expenditures from visitors.

But some of those monies will go to the operating cost of the arena and paying for the attractions. There is no mention of how much of that will be a net gain to the community.

Most studies of major coliseums built in other cities indicate that the types of jobs they tend to generate directly are part-time and dead-end type jobs.

Should tax monies be spent on building an arena when there are still pressing social needs in the community? Will this be one more type of community development project that benefits a few at the expense of the many?

Arena supporters say they want an open and frank discussion of the issues. I applaud that idea and hope to see it happen. According to the feasibility study two long term benefits of the arena will be "establishment of an identity for Winston-Salem" and "the development and health of the center city." Is that worth \$75 million?

Fortunately the citizens of Winston-Salem have the opportunity to decide this for themselves on Nov. 6.

UNC Network

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The guilty party is the University of North Carolina network.

At the beginning of August, the network was invited by letter to advertise the television program in the Chronicle in connection with the series. Similar letters were sent to other firms in hopes that enough support would be generated to allow our paper to run the series for free without reducing the coverage our readers have come to expect.

There was no response from the network. However, upon the launching of the television show, we noticed advertising in the only two local newspapers not carrying the series.

A telephone inquiry to network officials produced the lame response that the advertising was being placed in the largest circulation newspapers to get the most impact for the least amount of money. We were also informed that the network did not know which newspapers were carrying the accompanying course.

That seemed odd to us until we found out that local coordinators have also contacted the network to seek promotional spots concerning class times and the like for local students, to no avail.

There is a little more background to this situation. The local course is one of six such programs being operated nationwide through libraries with the sponsorship of the American Library Association, through the ultimate sponsor, the National Endowment for the Humanities. Two of the six programs are based in North Carolina - in Forsyth County and Cumberland County (Fayetteville). In Cumberland, as in Forsyth, it has been a weekly newspaper, the Hope Mills Outlook, which has come forward to provide the public service of carrying the course.

As is the case in Forsyth, the Outlook has not been included in the advertising plans for the UNC television series, nor has there been any announcement that the courses are available in that newspaper.

Obviously, what we find here is, to coin a phrase, "a failure to communicate." But even more so, we find an underlying attitude which is at variance with a number of goals which our society has set.

One of the espoused purposes of public television has been to bring a new vitality, a new mode of operations to the vast wasteland which has been American television.

PTV programmers were not to be concerned so much with the Neilson ratings, as with producing quality productions. Accordingly, marketing for programming which might be tailored for specific segments in a way which would not be feasible for commercial TV should be different.

It requires no leap of the imagination to discern that the people who most need to know about a television link to the courses by newspaper are the people who read the course every week.

The state of North Carolina, through Gov. James B. Hunt Jr. and other officials, has a policy of promoting small businesses and minority businesses. Ostensibly, each unit of state government, such as the UNC network, should make efforts to further that goal.

The governor's office or the secretary of commerce's office spends very little money. Relatively low-level official undertake such tasks as placing advertising.

In Connections was a golden opportunity for a state government agency to use its resources to aid five small businesses, the newspapers who are donating space to the libraries for the course, not only through advertising, but through promoting the fact that the newspapers are providing the service.

Alas, the opportunity has been disregarded. We, and each North Carolinian, has to question exactly what role the network sees for itself, particularly after having received a substantial boost in operating funds and capital improvements from the General Assembly.

Is the network seeking to become a publicly financed version of the commercial stations or is the network going to address the communication needs facing North Carolinians.

The record of public television, in general, has been dismal.

Occasional bright moments have been obscured by the fact that public television has mostly served as a conduit for programming from the British Broadcasting Company. Apparently, the powers that be in public TV have not noticed that America has a distinct culture of its own.

The doors to new producers and writers have been just as tightly shut as they are in commercial television. In fact, we see a trend towards hiring producers from commercial television.

Probably, in the area of minority programming, the record has been most dismal.

"The bottom line is that national minority programming (that is, programming which is by and about minorities) is seriously deficient," concluded the November 1978 report of the Task Force on Minorities in Public Broadcasting.

"The scarcity of minority programs can be attributed directly to the insufficient number of minorities employed in public broadcasting, particularly in decision making positions," the report added.

Those conclusions are also valid for North Carolina. Only this year, the lone-minority oriented program, formerly Ebony Exposures, got sufficient budget and staff to do on-location work.

Yet, there are no minorities in a position to decide whether the show stays on the air or not. There is little minority input in FOUNT (Friends of University Network Television) whose members

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To Be Equal

Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.

Police

Brutality



The long-festering issue of police excesses is now getting more attention after a long period in which only minority communities in some cities displayed concern.

The single most important factor in bringing police acts under wider scrutiny is the Justice Department's lawsuit against the City of Philadelphia.

Filed in August, the Department accuses the Philadelphia Police Department of shooting nonviolent suspects, abusing prisoners, suppressing dissent within its own ranks, and engaging in systematic brutal behavior that "shocks the conscience."

The Justice Department's charges and stories in local newspapers include: routine use of unconstitutional third degree methods, abuse of pedestrians and motorists without cause or due process, whitewashing rogue cops, and harrasing critics. All are supposed to be part of the general operating procedures of the

department.

In the past eight years more than 150 civilians have been killed by Philadelphia policemen. In more than half of those cases the civilians had been unarmed. About 75 civilians are shot by city policemen every year.

While the suit charges the police with across the board brutality, it also says blacks and Hispanics are singled out as special police targets.

The courts will decide the accuracy of the Justice Department's charges, but you know that for a federal Department to brave inevitable political pressures and considerations to file a suit of this kind, naming not only the police but twenty top city officials including the mayor, the situation has to be pretty extraordinary.

The story doesn't end in Philadelphia. Other urban

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What Repairs at Winston Lake

Chronicle Camera visited a playground and parking area on the northeast side of Winston Lake to ask park users how the facilities could be improved. Here's what they said:

Carolyn Simon -- "They need to put a fence around the playground so the kids won't run out in the street and it just needs repairing; they still haven't filled in those holes in the street."

Rosa Carter -- "It needs more facilities for kids to play in. There's nothing for smaller kids."

Rico Carter -- "It needs a snack bar and they should keep it up a little better. They also need a little playhouse."

Archie Martin -- "They need to make another way out of here (pointing to dead end). This is like Sunset Strip on Sunday. You can't get out of here for all the people. It needs better lighting and

more parking space." **Bill Conrad** -- "They need to straighten it up and get it looking a little better. You can't even come here at night. It

needs some lights." **Walter Plowden** -- "They need to straighten it up so the water is clear, and fix up the picnic tables and the grills."



Simon



Carter



Carter



Martin

Letter from Lagos

Robena Egemonye

Village Woman

An African village woman could be described as a woman who lives in a smaller environment than a town. The village circumstance revolves around a somewhat autonomous life contrary to those of the city dweller.

A while ago, I felt like a village woman when our area of Lagos went for thirty days without electricity. But I saw the extreme conditions of the real Nigerian village woman awhile back when I drove through a small village, some kilometres from Badagry, called Akarakumo. Akarakumo is inhabited by about 400 people who speak Igbo and Yoruba languages.

The striking feature of this village is the several number of shabby buildings made from raffia. Others are mud houses.

The calm and happy disposition of the inhabit-

ants is noticed. They go about their jobs in a cool manner. Some of the women that I saw, mostly old ones are more zealous in their work.

The absence of transport facilities is no hindrance to them, some walk long distances to purchase food stuff. They often go in groups. The very old women who can not stand long walks remain at home and busy themselves mostly with weaving of mats. This is done with such a skill that 2 or 3 mats get finished in a day.

Their prices range from \$4 to \$5. The loose ones are left behind for personal use. The weaving trade is passed from generation to generation. Other jobs include farming, mainly cassava, yam, and corn cultivation, chopping of trees for firewood

which they also sell and cracking of palm kernels follow as part of their trades.

The complete housewife role is not generally found here nor in any other place Nigeria. A woman is expected to be a bread winner like her male counterpart.

As to what softens their lives, there is no modern amenities to aid them. Even in Lagos, we live without running water. In Akarakumo, the villagers get water from streams and bore holes. Laundry is usually done at some far out streams.

The women more often than not give birth at home with the expert care of older women. These women tend to take complete care of new born babies at the early stages while their mothers breast feed them. The typical village woman keeps an

interval of about a year after the birth of a baby before another delivery.

As the baby gets older, the mother ties it on her back while doing some job. On the other hand, if she has an elderly child, she does the baby sitting. The Akarakumo girl marries with the approval of her parents who after having been contacted and necessary ceremonies performed hand over their daughter to her suitor.

It is interesting to note that the Akarakumo woman is not often fully dressed. They pass loin clothes over their breasts. But the aged and the very young ones do not care much about covering up. They're often found with wrappers that are tied from the waistline. It appears that the Akarakumo woman is far from sophisticated, but is seemingly content with her way of life.