

MOVE debacle: Appalling insensitivity

From The Philadelphia Tribune.

CROSSWINDS

Other Views

The nagging question remains: Why did police drop a bomb on the MOVE rowhouse on Osage Avenue May 13? TV reporters have replayed the siege over and over; radio broadcasters have discussed it with their listeners; newspapers have

reporters, other media staff and members of national news teams, have placed the blame for the fire and the catastrophe it caused on MOVE and MOVE alone.

But many other people, here

deaths or property damage that occurs.

It has been reported before that the police planned to use their "explosive device" for some time before the siege. It is crystal clear that the Philadelphia police knew, or should have known, that gasoline and kerosene containers and lots of wood and debris were on the roof of the MOVE house. Those containers, empty or full, presented an obvious danger of explosion and fire. They were in plain view; TV and newspaper cameras photographed them before the bomb was dropped. Police helicopter teams flew over the house many times during the May 13 siege, and Lt. Frank Powell, who actually dropped the bomb, reported later that he "probably (knew) that roof better than my own back yard."

Why did he drop a bomb, then, and why did Police Commissioner Gregore Sambor authorize him to drop it? As the information comes out about what actually was known about MOVE's threats to burn the house down, and about what police knew or

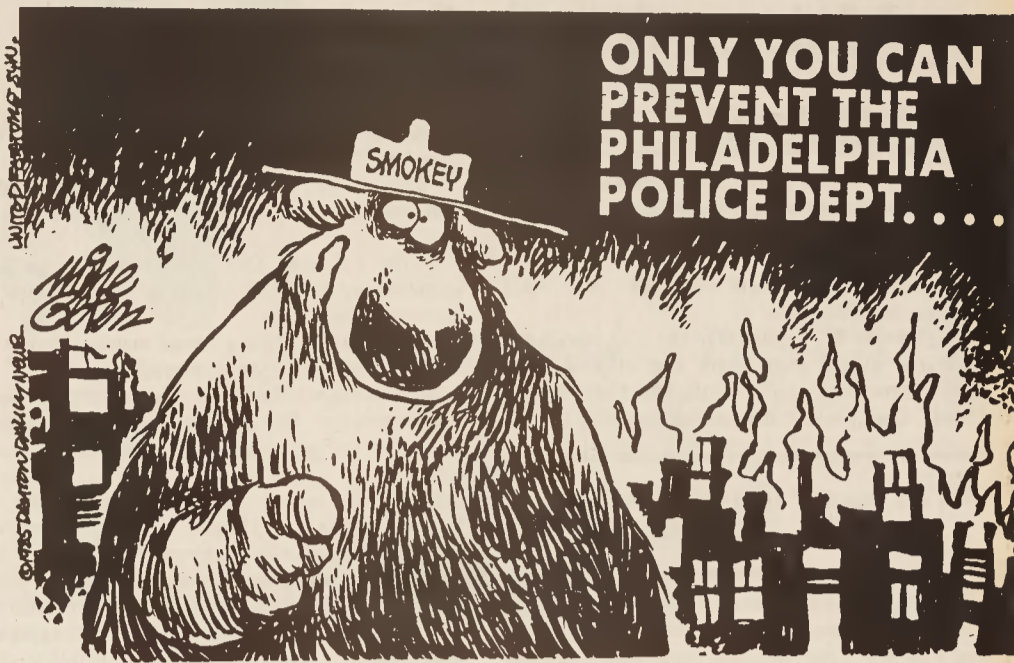
and across the country, have questioned the wisdom, even the sanity, of the decision to drop a bomb on a rowhouse. Why did they drop a bomb?

In a courtroom, when it can be shown that the person who strikes a match in a danger zone knew or should have known that flammable substances were nearby and that a catastrophic fire could result, that person is held responsible for any injuries,

"It is crystal clear that the Philadelphia police knew, or should have known, that gasoline and kerosene containers and lots of wood and debris were on the roof of the MOVE house. Those containers, empty or full, presented an obvious danger of explosion or fire. They were in plain view...."

analyzed the siege, the bombing and its fiery aftermath; and Mayor Goode and his police and fire commissioners have defended their actions over and over again. And after all that explanation, the question remains: Why do they drop a bomb on a rowhouse with people inside?

Pollsters say many people support the mayor's actions in moving against MOVE. Many individuals, interviewed by Tribune



should have known about the contents of the house and the roof, the claim that Sambor was unaware that a huge fire would result becomes less and less credible.

The decision to let the fire burn as a way of getting rid of the pillboxes on MOVE's roof and of forcing MOVE to flee the house is also increasingly suspect. The

authorities had listening devices to tell them that MOVE had retired to the basement; why couldn't the heavily armored special weapons personnel get on to the roof and break in while MOVE was otherwise occupied?

The reports of firemen being held back by sharpshooters and of police hampering firefighters' efforts because smoke obscured

their vision put the story in an even more damning light. Nowhere in those reports is there anything of concern for the human lives being consumed along with the neighborhood, for the four children among the besieged, for the idea that these children deserved to live just as much as the police and

Please see page A14

The proposed new coliseum: I'll be doggoned if I'll vote for it on June 25

They call it "Bizarro World" on "Saturday Night Live."

I call it Winston-Salem. In "Bizarro World" logic has place. Up is down. Right is left.

The same apparently applies to the Twin City's black leaders. Never mind that the city's political establishment has kicked the black community in its collective rear end more than once.

Never mind that what began as an seemingly earnest attempt to bring black contractors into the mainstream with "enabling" legislation has become a political fiasco.

Never mind that the white

community keeps wooing black support for what it wants but gives little in return.

Yet, come to think of it, I don't know if I can really blame white politicians. Every time they kick us in the pants we keep coming back, like faithful puppies who don't know any better. If I were a white politico, I wouldn't respect black folk, either. Why should I?

And why is it that black people seem inclined to be so faithful, forgiving and understanding that it hurts us?

Why is it that when we have rare opportunities to wield political leverage -- as with the



coming coliseum bond referendum -- we throw them away?

I know the city needs a new coliseum. Anyone who has wined at the tacky, undersized eyesore we have now can see that.

But I also know that this city desperately needs to lend a helping hand to its struggling black contractors and, more important-

ly, to mend its badly damaged credibility in the black community.

The city would, if its priorities were in the right place -- which they aren't -- and if black people would stop being so gullible -- which they won't.

As you have probably surmised, I am not voting for a new coliseum. I have all of the respect in the world for NAACP President Patrick Hairston, Dr. J. Ray Butler, Coach Clarence "Bighouse" Gaines and the host of other black citizens who intend to promote the coliseum bonds in the black community. But I sure as heck don't agree with them,

nor do I understand their thinking. And I'll be doggoned if I'm going to hop on their bandwagon.

Call it sour grapes or myopia, if you will, but I've had my fill of rhetoric about how economic development will benefit everybody in this community. To date, it hasn't and I'm not convinced that it will in the future.

I'm also absolutely amazed that even some of the black leadership has fallen for the line that the coliseum and the enabling legislation are not related. On the contrary.

The coliseum, say its proponents, is supposed to promote

jobs and tourism and boost the local economy.

The enabling legislation, say I, guarantees in writing that black people will get their fair share of the pie.

But some people don't see it that way. They don't mind singing the praises of economic gains for whites and blacks. They just don't like being committed by law to do it.

They neither want to put up or shut up.

I suspect my view is unpopular in most circles these days. But what is at stake is much more important than a place to play Please see page A14

Send Our City Home With a Friend.



We're lucky to live in a special place like Winston-Salem. We have more live entertainment and art exhibits than most cities three or four times our size. There's Stevens Center, North Carolina School of the Arts, Reynolda House, Southeastern Center For Contemporary Art, and more artistic and creative outlets than could ever be mentioned in one single ad.

We have the historic German Moravian town, Old Salem. We can golf, ride horseback, swim, picnic, watch polo or ride paddleboats at a place *Better Homes and Gardens* calls one of the best vacation surprises in the South, Tanglewood Park.

We have so much to offer to the people who come here.

Share Winston-Salem with your friends, relatives, groups or organizations. Whether it's your uncle from Washington, D.C., the Greater Jacksonville Glee Club, or candle-making conventioners from California -- invite them to Winston-Salem.

Once they get here, they'll realize what we've known all along. You really can take home something special from Winston-Salem.

Winston-Salem
Take Home Something Special

Send for your free "Take Home Something Special" Visitor Kit. Write the Convention and Visitors Bureau, Greater Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce, 610 Coliseum Drive, P.O. Box 1408, Winston-Salem, NC 27102-1408; or call 725-2361.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____