

Winston-Salem Chronicle

Founded 1974

ERNEST H. PITT
Publisher

MICHAEL A. PITT
Assistant to the Publisher

NDUBISI EGEMONYE
Co-Founder

ANGELA WRIGHT
Managing Editor

ELAINE L. PITT
Office Manager

JULIE PERRY
Advertising Manager

Of elephants and chlorofluorocarbons

To The Editor:

As executive director of the Nature Science Center, I would like to respond to the recent letter in the Chronicle Mailbag from Rutherford B. Williams titled "Save the elephants."

Mr. Williams' letter is not to be taken lightly, and our world population must take heed or we will continue to see more than just elephants added to the Endangered Species list. If we are not careful, man may well be on the list of mammals being threatened.

Here at the center we try to get that message across, not in a preaching fashion, but in a way that everyone, young or old, can understand. We are glad to see that the Chronicle felt that Mr. Williams' letter was worthy of printing.

Our elephant population is in serious shape, and we should do everything we can to eliminate illegal poaching.

David D. Bonney II
Executive Director
Nature Science Center



Editorial potpourri

Kudos to Wachovia

Wachovia bank officials did not have to expend their time and energy trying to find something useful to do with the Patterson Avenue building. Undoubtedly, it would have been a simple matter to just sell the building to the highest bidder.

Instead bank officials worked with city officials and came up with a plan which, once formalized, would transform the building into a facility that could be of great benefit to the neighboring community.

As a multi-purpose service center, the site will not only make dealing with local government agencies a lot more convenient for many residents, but it will also regenerate pedestrian activity in the area and that, in turn, might invite more economic development.

Wachovia bank officials are to be commended for going the extra mile.

A case for set-asides

Anyone who still questions the need for minority set-asides in government contracts need only to look closely at the local situation involving the convention catering contract.

City officials summarily issued a five-year contract on a \$1.8 million business venture, allowing no competition. Minority and women owned firms were not given the opportunity to bid on the contract.

Now eyes are focused on the new coliseum. The concession businesses at the new coliseum are already spoken for -- with no competition. The city will operate those businesses as they operate all concessions throughout the city.

The most the city seems willing to offer minority owned firms is the opportunity to bid on individual catering jobs for receptions and special events -- in other words, a job here and a job there.

Meanwhile majority firms get long-term contracts that ensure a constant flow of revenue.

It could come in handy

A county museum sounds like just what the doctor ordered for Winston-Salem. Given our stagnant economy, the rate at which we're losing industry, and our pre-occupation with nostalgia, we may one day be able to turn the entire city into a museum.

If given a choice . . .

Is anyone wondering why local government officials didn't bother to find out if local residents want to bring the Board of Aldermen meetings into their homes via cable?

Take the lives, but leave the flag

The Supreme Court issued two controversial decisions this week. It decided that juveniles and mentally retarded offenders can be executed. It also decided that burning the American flag is an accepted form of freedom of speech guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

Guess which decision has created the greatest protest and engendered the most debate. For many, it seems, the lives of the young and the mentally ill are expendable; a flag, however, is sacred.

CHRONICLE CAMERA

How can gun owners be held responsible for accidental shootings?

State law-makers in Florida are in the midst of passing legislation that would make parents responsible in shooting accidents involving their firearms.

If an adult leaves a gun where it is accessible to a person 18 or younger, the adult could be

charged with a felony if the minor is injured in a shooting incident, according to Rep. Harry Jennings' bill.

The Republican's bill evolved out of a recent rash of gun-related accidents involving children. The most tragic of which occurred

when a young boy pointed a gun, he thought was empty, at his baby sister. He pulled the trigger and killed the girl.

According to the National Safety Council, firearms are the fifth-leading cause of unintentional death among children aged

14 and under in this country. In 1983, 20,000 Americans were killed with handguns used in accidents, suicides and homicides.

"A new study suggests that a gun in the house is a bigger threat to the inhabitants than to anybody else," according to an article in the

June 23, 1986, edition of Time magazine.

In a study of 398 shooting deaths occurring between 1973 and 1983 in households in the Seattle area, only nine deaths involved an intruder or were the result of self defense. Twelve of the deaths were

accidental, 41 were criminal homicides and 333 were suicides.

A 1989 Time/CNN poll shows that the majority of Americans want the government to crack down on gun owners. The Chronicle asked local residents what measures should be taken.



The government should become stricter on selling guns and make them (owners) more responsible.

George W. Williams



"They (owners) should be held responsible and punishment should fit the crime, especially if a child is hurt."

Malcolm Calhoun



"I think they should make them (owners) be responsible and punish them as if they had shot somebody."

Lucy McDonald



"Take them (guns) away."

Tlayonna Wilson



"I think they should take the guns from people when they can't keep them away from children."

Lemekia Hicks

A rebuttal

To The Editor:

The Society of the Plastics Industry Inc. read with interest a letter to the editor in your June 1 edition ("Environment should be everybody's

concern"). In her comments, the writer stated her intent to cease the use of plastic foam cups. She's doing this, she said, because the cups contain chlorofluorocarbons, or CFCs, that "are depleting the ozone."

Not so. No ozone-depleting CFCs are used in any plastic foam foodservice packaging today, and, in fact, most foam cups never were made with CFCs.

Thus the writer -- and your readers -- can continue to enjoy the superior benefits of foam cups without worrying that they are contributing to

CHRONICLE MAILBAG

Our Readers Speak Out

the destruction of the earth's ozone.

Connie Merrill Limbach
Director, External Communications
The Society of the Plastics Industry Inc.

About letters

The Chronicle welcomes letters from its readers, as well as columns.

Letters should be as concise as possible and typed or printed legibly.

They also should include the name, address and telephone number of the writer.

Columns should follow the same guidelines and will be published if we feel they are of interest to our general readership.

We reserve the right to edit letters and columns for brevity and grammar.

Submit your letters and columns to Chronicle Mailbag, P.O. Box 3154, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27102.

Minimum wage veto is a matter of fairness

NEW YORK -- On the same day that President Bush vetoed a minimum wage bill passed by Congress, the newspapers reported that congressional and administration experts were studying a proposal to cut the capital gains tax.

That puts the spotlight on the minimum wage as a fairness issue, at least as much as it is an economic

TO BE EQUAL

By JOHN E. JACOB

issue. And if fairness is any test, Congress should override the veto.

The president was ill-advised in vetoing the bill. A higher minimum wage advances his vision of a "kinder, gentler nation," and the administra-

tion should have been pushing for a higher wage. The president did support a raise in the minimum wage and only 30 cents an hour separates his proposal from that passed by Congress -- hardly enough of a difference to go to the mat over.

The bill would have raised the current minimum of \$3.35 per hour to \$4.55 in three years. Even that would

have left the legal minimum wage below family poverty levels.

The arguments against a higher minimum are long familiar -- it would curtail job growth, it would benefit teen-agers who don't need the extra money, it would impose burdens on employers and make them less com-

Please see page A5

It's dangerous to make racism a generic term

Perhaps one of the most overused, misused and misunderstood terms today is racism.

The mere mention of the word sends ethnic group scurrying to erect some kind of mental or emotional defense against this monster, real or imagined.

We prepare to do battle but, regretfully, too many of us swing at mirages or fight as though we're in a dark room taking swipes at an opponent we know is there but cannot see.

Everybody is calling everybody racists. Even Afro-Americans are being called and are calling each other racists.

Racism, by common agreement among the scholarly, is the practice of those ideals that promote the belief that one's ethnic stock is superior, or another's ethnic stock is inferior.

A racist slur or insult is not the same as a racial slur or insult because the term racial is a reference to race with no degree of superiority or inferiority implied. Likewise, prejudice and racism are not the same. Prejudice, racial or otherwise, is a preconceived preference or idea without any factual basis. It is commonly negative, but not necessarily so.

Finally, bias, a condition or belief

that prevents impartiality, also is confused with racism.

All of us have our prejudices and biases, and certainly we make racial references, but that does not make us

racists. And we must understand that everyone else, regardless of race, who exhibits these characteristics is not necessarily racist.

Somewhere in the semantic maze we get lost and label everything unfavorable as being either an act of racism or inspired by racism or racist motives.

In many cases we are right, but too often we are wrong, and when we do not identify the enemy by name, racism, prejudice, bias, or whatever, we cannot fight it by name. Thus, our blows for freedom and equality sometimes hit the wrong target and wind up doing more harm than good.

To us Afro-Americans in particular, racism is a term impossible to

digest. It conjures up all the images of the demeaning, debasing and other horrible things we have had to endure since being brought to this country. Racism is a product of white Ameri-

ca.

I want to make it clear that when I use the term white, I am not talking about white people, rather, the system of racism and oppression that is a white system and is perpetuated by whites.

Racism is why whites can see no harm in something that would be totally offensive to Afro-Americans.

You see, those whom whites consider racists are those who openly avow supremacy and say and do things that are obviously offensive to Afro-Americans. But, believe it or not, these racists are the least of the problem. They know they are racists and are not trying to deceive themselves or others.

The dangerous racists are the ones who will openly denounce the KKK or a David Duke, yet behind the curtain vote against Jesse Jackson simply because "America is not ready for a black president."

The most dangerous racists are the ones who don't know they are racists and don't know they don't know. They are many of our "friends" who walk the picket lines with us while, in many cases without intent because of insensitivity, perpetuate racism by tolerating (and sometimes promoting) the racist system.

If we are ever to have any chance at waging an effective fight against this "monster racism," we must clearly understand it, be able to recognize it, be able to articulate it to others and develop counter strategies based on reason, not emotion.

And most of all, we must put the good of our people above any personal gains. Otherwise, the white man will dangle a few bucks and buy off our best fighters and leave our people still wanting.

Roosevelt Wilson is working with the Chronicle this summer as the T. Thomas Fortune fellow.



GUEST COLUMN

By ROOSEVELT WILSON