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Coming Tomorrow: Columnist Chuck Reasch says big money isn't producing any winners in baseball or politics.

Opinion

Our mission: "The Press-Gazette strives, as it has since 1915, to be the primary provider of information in Northeastern Wisconsin, keeping the welfare and development of the Greater Green Bay area at heart. It is our responsibility to provide a forum for free and open expression of diverse opinions while maintaining the public trust necessary to serve our readers, advertisers, employees and stockholders."

In our view

Local Fox cleanup still best

We oppose efforts by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to designate the PCB-contaminated Fox River as a Superfund site.

But there still is an opportunity for the cleanup of 39 miles of the river to remain in the hands of the paper mills and state Department of Natural Resources.

They must seize the opportunity given them by the EPA to develop a final plan to rid the river of dangerous concentrations of polychlorinated biphenyls, a former byproduct of the papermaking process.

That, we hope, will shortcircuit the formal listing of the river on the National Priorities List.

Paper mill executives repeatedly have told the community they are committed to cleaning up the river. Now is the time for that commitment to take shape, including dredging demonstration projects planned for this fall.

That must occur because a Superfund listing would be a mistake.

We understand the concern of environmentalists and others who want the Fox River cleaned up and are frustrated by delays.

We, too, want the cleanup of pollutants to proceed as expeditiously as possible. But the best way to accomplish that is through continued cooperative efforts involving the mills and the DNR, not through the cumbersome, costly, often ineffectual Superfund process.

■ Issue: Superfund designation
■ Our view: Paper mills, DNR must develop final cleanup plan to address PCB contamination

Designating the Fox as a Superfund site is not the panacea that some think it is. If so, we'd be in favor of it. A U.S. General Accounting Office report cited by Gov. Tommy Thompson provides ample proof of the problems with Superfund.

The report showed that less than 45 percent of the $1.4 billion spent on Superfund sites in 1996 actually was spent cleaning the sites. The majority of money is spent on administration costs, legal expenses and EPA employee salaries and travel.

If there is a positive development coming out of the preliminary Superfund designation, it's the public comment period that is allowed. We think the deluge of comments sure to follow will make it clear to the EPA, the DNR, the mills and politicians that the Fox River is a natural treasure that needs our help. The river, directly or indirectly, touches the lives of nearly everyone who lives and works in the Fox River Valley.

"The EPA has offered a road map to the paper companies and the state on how to avoid a Superfund designation," said U.S. Sen. Herb Kohl.

The paper companies and state must follow that road map. And when they do, the EPA must recognize a local solution is best and halt the federal Superfund process.

National drug campaign may help, but best efforts are made locally

Readers of the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* may have noticed a full-page advertisement in Thursday's paper with a sobering message.

Beneath the picture of a middle-aged woman is this comment: "My kid doesn't smoke pot. He's either at school, soccer practice, piano lessons or at a friend's house."

Located lower on the page is a picture of a teen-ager with this comment: "I usually get stoned at school, after soccer practice, before piano lessons or at my friend's house."

Shocking? Absolutely.

Can it happen in your family? Yes, and that's what the Office of National Drug Control Policy and the Partnership for a Drug-Free America want you to think about.

The ad concludes: "Just because you know where your kids are doesn't mean you know what they're doing. So if you don't want your children smoking pot, talk to them."

It's not always that simple, but it's a start.

A nearly $1 billion, five-year campaign to combat teen drug use was kicked off Thursday in Atlanta by President Clinton and House Speaker Newt Gingrich. It was a commendable bipartisan start to battle a scourge that respects no party lines.

Beginning last week in 75 major newspapers and on the four major TV networks, anti-drug ads are targeting parents and children.

There is no doubting the problem. A 1997 national survey revealed that half of high school seniors and nearly one-third of eighth-graders reported using illegal drugs at least once.

We hope the program continues to hammer home its point, and doesn't fall victim to partisan politics, as have efforts to curb teen smoking.

However, a glitzy national campaign cannot take the place of efforts being made on the state and local scene: Strong prevention programs in the schools. Efforts by community groups like the Green Bay Area Drug Alliance. No-nonsense enforcement of drug laws. Comprehensive treatment programs. After-school activities. Most important: Parents working with their kids.

A national campaign, in a vacuum, is useless. But it can be effective if it's part of a holistic approach.

Firing justified when teacher turned preacher

June 8, 1998, was a sad day for P.S. 74, a middle school in New York's blighted South Bronx section. A student, Christopher Lee, had drowned. Speaking over the public address system, the principal asked the school to observe a moment of silence in Christopher's memory.

In Mildred Rosario's sixth-grade class, the moment of silence led to questions. Luisa Corporan, 11, asked Rosario where Lee was. "He is in heaven," the teacher explained. Other students pursued the matter, asking, "What is heaven like?" and "What does God look like?"

Rosario's response was to ask those students who did not wish to discuss God to move to the back of the room, near the computer. Reports suggest that two boys did so. With the rest of the class assembled, Rosario, a Pentecostalist, asked again whether this "was something voluntarily free will." She then proceeded to tell the children that Jesus had come into the world to save humanity and asked which of her students would like "to accept Jesus Christ as his personal savior." Most students must have agreed, because Rosario walked up and down the aisles placing her hands of each child's head and praying with them in Spanish.

When word of Rosario's altar call got around, there was a fuss. Some of the parents objected — though many, perhaps most, stood by Rosario. The Board of Education was in an uproar. There was a disciplinary hearing but only one. Rosario was a substitute teacher without tenure; accordingly, she was not equipped with the asbestos shield that is standard issue for tenured teachers. After a few questions, the board issued its decision — she was fired.

Mona Charen

Rosario's story ignited the fax lines in Washington, D.C., where conservative politicians smelled an outrage. A teacher who prays with her students gets fired, they fumed, while a member of the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) is merely transferred. With drugs and crime stalking our schools, they continued, how in the world can they justify firing a teacher for praying?

These are familiar arguments to me. I've made them myself countless times. I agree with the social conservatives that the rigid exclusion of religion from public life is neither constitutionally demanded nor politically healthy. I further agree that condom distribution, some kinds of sex education, and values-clarification curricula — all of which are blessed by school boards around the nation — amount to the imposition of a worldview that is much less benign than Christianity.

But Rosario's case is just too far over the line to serve as a cause celebre.

If she had merely told her class that Lee was in heaven, there would have been no controversy. If she had even expressed her personal religious conviction that Jesus Christ represents the world's salvation — no problem. After all, it was a moment that cried out for some spiritual expression. Where Rosario stepped over the line was in summoning the children to make their own religious commitments then and there. That is the province of the church — with parents present — not the school.

Some of the Republican politicians who declared Rosario a heroine pointed out that another New York City teacher who was discovered to be a member of NAMBLA had been merely transferred to a desk job, not fired. It is a twisted standard that seems to regard Christianity as more threatening to children than pedophilia, they argued. But the facts don't really stretch that far.

The NAMBLA teacher was moved out of the classroom and out of contact with children. And Rosario was fired only after she refused to refrain in the future from proselytizing. Clearly, the fates of the two should have been reversed, but Rosario's defiance damaged her case.

Rosario frightens not just the church/state separation fanatics but also reasonable parents who do not wish to see a teacher usurp their proper role in the religious training of their children. Moments of silence, even non-denominational prayers, in public schools seem to be well within the limits contemplated by the Constitution. But Rosario is a quite sectarian preacher. As such, she is a poor model for those who wish to restore some sanity and balance to the church/state separation debate.

Mona Charen is a syndicated columnist. Write to her at Creators Syndicate, 2777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

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People's Forum

Minority runs the country

CRIVITZ — It is not the people who write and talk about government policies who run the government. The people who run the national, state, city, county and town governments are the people who vote. The minority of eligible voters runs the country.

Less than 17 percent of those old enough to vote have voted in statewide primaries this year. They have selected the candidates for next fall's elections.

The motor voter law (National Voter Registration Act) has increased registration, but has not increased turnout at the polls. Motivation is the problem, not ease of registration.

There is continued disinterest and disengagement from politics by American voters. We can speculate on many reasons for not voting, but they won't answer why citizens don't vote.

People should not be encouraged to vote. We who vote are running the country and are doing what we want done. If too many people start voting, we may have results that will upset our agenda.

The *Press-Gazette* does its part in every election. It prints pictures of the candidates. Biographical sketches are given. People are encouraged to register and to vote, but the majority of eligible voters still don't vote.

In the fall election, are you going to vote? President Clinton was elected by less than 50 percent of the voters cast.

If it doesn't give you a headache, think about voting.

Roger Hirst, Crivitz

Help save a life

GREEN BAY — Time is a valuable commodity. Approximately 60,000 of us in the Green Bay area spend about 3 to 6 hours a week during the football season backing the Pack. About 100,000 of us enjoyed the July 4th fireworks display, allotting several hours to arrive early enough to get a good spot. Time is like money though; when we spend it, it's gone.

Blood is a valuable commodity. During the recent Red Cross Blood Drive, 529 people spent one hour of their valuable time donating blood. Does saving a life rank that much lower than backing the Pack or viewing the fireworks?

The life you save donating blood may be your own. Don't put it off. Next time you're presented the opportunity, spend some of that valuable time giving blood. Remember, "Blood — it's a gift that keeps on giving."

Thank you to those who understand the value of life and donating blood. Your time is well spent. Ask the person who it helped save.

Dale Skarzynski, Green Bay

Questions Johnson's votes

GREEN BAY — U.S. Rep. Jay Johnson said he voted for the first major tax cut in 16 years. Sixteen years ago a Republican president pushed through that cut and the recent tax came about by a Republican Congress. Maybe Johnson can enlighten us as to when the Democrats led the way. President Kennedy cut taxes in 1961. Democrats lead the way in raising taxes. Now we have the Al Gore tax for wiring the schools to the Internet.

Johnson voted against scrapping the IRS. He is for reform. I would hope he makes his views known before the election. This could end up as a big issue in November.

Johnson voted against school change. Would he send a child to a D.C. school? Many politicians send their children to private schools.

I often wonder how the 8th District went from conservative to liberal. I always compare his voting record to Tom Petri to see who I agree with.

Johnson voted against the partial-birth amendment and also against welfare reform. The next thing I expect him to say he is a new Democrat.

When I read that our leaders were suggesting workers would help the environment by walking or riding their bikes to work, I called Johnson's office to see how Chelsea was getting back to D.C. He responded in a letter that she flew commercial and the Clintons paid the fare. I find this hard to believe, considering all the security involved. He has the Air Force also at his disposal.

There must be some good schools out on the East Coast.

C.J. Klimek, Green Bay

Guns don't cause violence

ATHELSTANE — Think Jim Bergman's editorial cartoon on the July 5th Opinion page was very convincing? Think again. Let me point out that his argument is a prime example of faulty logic. The first three statements are comparable with each other, but to parallel the fourth with these is to make a bad comparison.

Drinking is the cause of alcoholism; smoking is the cause of cancer; doing drugs is the cause of crime. But owning a gun is not the cause of violence. Guns may be used in violent acts, but the cause of these acts is the moral depravity of the people committing them.

Almost everyone owns a car, a perfectly acceptable object. If law-less citizens decide to use them to run people over, that would not make the cars or your ownership of one evil. It would simply prove that there is something seriously wrong with the mentality and character of many people produced in this society.

Rebecca Ostermann, Athelstane

Protest treatment of humans

SISTER BAY — I wish to respond to the July 6 article regarding Barry Herbeck and his mistreatment of cats.

While I readily admit his actions were contemptible, my bigger concern is with the protestations of the multitude over this issue. Why aren't these righteous citizens repulsed over the slaughtering of millions of sweet, helpless babies?

Where is their rebellion over teens giving birth, then disposing of their newborns like sacks of garbage in dumpsters, toilets and restrooms, often times killing them first? Where is the outpouring of rage over defenseless children throughout the country suffering from sexual abuse, drugs, satanic beatings, deliberate starvation, burning by cigarettes, wilful drowning, physical abuse, etc.?

All innocent victims. All completely helpless. And all mistreated by supposedly trustworthy adults.

These concerned citizens who are furious about the ill treatment of animals, while mute about the ill treatment of our children, appears to be the public's attitude today.

How our society reached such a low that we think more of the animals than humans? Have we become such barbarians that cruelty against another human being is treated as mundane?

R.B. Spellman, Sister Bay

Beware of flag thief

GREEN BAY — Between June 23 and July 1, and for the second time in four months, our American flag has been stolen. We have decided to write this letter for several reasons:

We wish to alert our neighbors and residents in the surrounding area this has occurred, and that a police report has been filed. Especially, we want to request anyone who might have had an almost new 5-by-8 nylon flag suddenly appear in their household, to look for the initials WM printed in ink on the white binder. The initials are in the upper left-hand corner near the blue field. That flag is ours, and we would appreciate its return.

As Americans, we fly the flag for various reasons. We have chosen to proudly display our flag in a prominent, lighted location in our yard for all to enjoy as they pass, day or night. To us, it is a symbol representing past military service, a son currently in the military and love of our country.

It is unlikely the trespasser and petty thief who stole our flag has felt or experienced any of the emotions associated with flying the American flag. Otherwise, it would have been atop our flagpole this Fourth of July.

Bill and Jo Ann Miller, Green Bay

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