

People's Forum

Can't trust Thompson

GREEN BAY — Local leaders claim they want local control of Fox River cleanup, so they're trying to block Superfund and allow decisions to be made by one man in Madison who controls the Department of Natural Resources.

This one man and his partner have received more than \$150,000 in donations from the pulp and paper industry for re-election campaigns between 1990 and 1997. He's also gotten \$645,000 from lawyers and lobbyists, and \$325,000 from insurance representatives who are eager to avoid environmental liabilities. Does this man represent the people of the Fox River Valley, or the polluters? Examine his record. He's had 12 years to clean up the river, and hasn't even started. Prior to this year, he hasn't seemed interested.

Local officials have rushed to pass anti-Superfund resolutions, claiming they support a "local solution." But what's local about it? The resolutions call for a "negotiated settlement" between this Madison man and industry, but the settlement is completely undefined. The resolutions set no boundaries for cost, cleanup methods, disposal sites, health standards, schedules, etc.

Even worse no public input is required, so local citizens are shut out of the debate. The resolutions are a "blank check" for the man from Madison to do what he wants, regardless of local citizen concerns. Even local elected officials are shut out of the negotiations.

Last year, the man from Madison approved a surprise deal and binding contracts with the paper industry, settling for less than 1 percent of river cleanup costs and giving corporations unusual control over so-called "cleanup demonstrations." He made this sneaky deal without consulting local government, local citizens, legislators, Congress members, the tribes, or any agencies of the federal government. Is this who we want making all the decisions?

Now the man from Madison claims he can do the job cheaper and quicker than the federal government. Alarm bells should be ringing in every city hall and county board in the Valley. The last thing we need is a slap-dash, half-baked cleanup job designed to save the corporations money.

We need the federal Superfund, which guarantees true local involvement in the planning and decision-making. Gov. Tommy Thompson can't be trusted.

Rebecca L. Katers, Green Bay

Heat is on Thompson

ALGOMA — Tommy Thompson has had 12 years to start cleanup of the Fox River; to restore a beautiful river for safe use by Wisconsin people. He has yet to begin.

Rather than bite the corporate hands that feed him campaign funds, he stalled the EPA (and Wisconsin people) for a decade, saying he would work out a plan with the paper mills.

Finally the EPA has had enough and threatens to invoke the Superfund and make the mills who poisoned the river pay for its cleanup. Now Tommy finds himself in a bind.

A little conflict of interest here? Which has priority? A clean river for Wisconsin? Or the interests of the corporations who feed him money? Now the heat is on.

After 12 years of inaction, within 72 hours of EPA's threat, Tommy's politically appointed chiefs of the DNR announce they have found places where the poisonous wastes can be dumped. Amazing! And Tommy suddenly has time to talk about it.

Call off the Feds? Not quite yet. Let's see some action... some contract proposals from the mills. Will Tommy stall until after elections, then reverse direction?

This kind of bad faith on Tommy's part brings discredit to him and lowers respect for the office of governor. Wisconsin people deserve honest leadership that puts Wisconsin interests first, not Tommy's "pay for privilege" policy at our expense.

Tommy's been in office too long. Vote him out in November.

James M. Smith, Algona

Still waiting on cleanup

GREEN BAY — In the '40s, my parents said we could no longer swim in the bay because it was polluted. In the '70s, Earth Day organizers zeroed in on the pollution in the Fox, pinpointing the paper mills as the main polluters and the message came back to us students at Green Bay University campus as "What do you want,

jobs or swimming?" The problem has been studied now for over 50 years while the water continues to get more polluted.

If a Superfund designation scares the paper mills enough to take some real action, it's a good thing. However, we have yet to hear from any official of any paper mill on any kind of step they could take to alleviate the problem. Is this just another smoke-blowing attempt to procrastinate yet another 50 years?

PCBs were not the problem in 1971 but now are the most serious problem and we have adequate warning of the problems it causes. Public utility companies were mandated in the early '80s to eliminate PCBs in their transformers because of the danger to the public. PCBs, in addition to the published danger to children, are cancer-causing agents and cause a real threat to all of us. Let's wake up and smell the coffee and insist that the industries on the Fox take this problem seriously and that they do more than designate "holding or deposit sites" so they can keep polluting. We're waiting!

Betty Fierros, Green Bay

Do political homework

GREEN BAY — Concerning abortion; I am a father of a 15-month-old little boy and, for the most part, I am against abortion. I have values and I have morals, but who am I to say? I can't control what other people think is right or wrong. We live in the United States of America, a country that strives on the freedom of choice.

Regarding the pro-lifers who base their beliefs on moral and religious values (which there is absolutely nothing wrong with), they need to stop making this a black-and-white political issue. Our politicians can't make this decision and won't. What we need is more education on prevention. Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but when they start to impose their political beliefs on all of us who read the Forum, telling us who we should vote for, I start seeing contradictions.

For example, a Green Bay woman tells me to consider Mark Green, Mark Neumann and other candidates who truly believe that life is sacred. What? Is she saying the political foes of these people do not truly believe that life is sacred? Come on, this is one issue. Take a look at the voting record of the above politicians on the issues that have to do with the importance of life. Education, environment, taxes, health care, all of these issues are important to life. I can guarantee you will find many discrepancies and contradictions.

As a people we need to think for ourselves and become educated on the issues and the politicians. So, please do not consider Green, Neumann or any other politician until you have done your homework.

Thomas J. Coon, Green Bay

Tobacco bill needed

GREEN BAY — Our children need protection! They need to be protected by parents, local communities and, when indicated, the national community. In the case of children using tobacco, parents and the local communities need assistance from the national community.

Fighting the drug nicotine, which has the powerful financial support of the tobacco industry, is a national challenge.

A comprehensive bipartisan national tobacco control bill, The No Tobacco for Kids Act (HR 3988 — the Hansen, Meehan, Waxman bill) is being considered by Congress. It must be passed.

- The bill includes five basic points:
    - Increases tax on tobacco products, a proven means of reducing tobacco by children.
    - Provides that the revenue produced by the bill be used for prevention of tobacco use and of tobacco cessation.
    - Holds tobacco companies accountable for reducing youth smoking with meaningful penalties for non-compliance.
    - Allows state and local governments the ability to enact tobacco control laws as they see appropriate. This is not currently permitted.
    - Allows the Food and Drug Administration the authority to regulate tobacco products as they regulate other drugs.
- Protecting the health of our children is in our hands. Please do your share. Contact your congressman and ask his/her help in protecting the health of our youth, not the financial interests of the tobacco industry.

Don Pagel, Green Bay