

Eugene Lorton
1869-1949

Opinion

"Publish and set up a standard; publish and conceal not." Jeremiah 50:2

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EDITORIALS

Not so

Vision foes trot out typical tactics

One tried and true tactic of foes of any public initiative is to simply make up claims that suit their ends. Public debate being the messy, imprecise process that it is, these unsubstantiated claims often get by unchallenged, and sometimes they affect voter decisions.

Former Tulsa County Assessor Jack Gordon is leading the pack of opponents to the Vision 2025 package in coming up with half-baked and sometimes downright untrue assertions. It's probably a good thing that he didn't get re-elected, given his problems with accuracy.

At a recent Democratic forum on the Vision 2025 initiative, to go before voters on Sept. 9, Gordon made a number of claims that should not go unchallenged.

For example, he criticized the size of the \$885 million package, claiming it will "cost us \$200 million in interest alone." In fact, officials estimate that a likely interest cost for advance-funding projects is about 5 percent — or something in the neighborhood of \$50 million. What's more, there's a good chance of earning investment income in that same neighborhood, which means debt service and in-

terest earnings might be a wash.

Gordon also claimed that "it's already been shown that there will be at least \$150 million left over" for a public trust to spend. In fact, city and county officials have said the option exists for elected officials to call a halt to the new penny sales tax when funding for all projects and costs has been obtained. No one can say at this point if any surplus will ever be generated.

The former assessor declares that there is no guarantee that construction jobs will be given to local or state companies. In fact, resolutions call for local vendor preference when possible in accordance with state law. But as Gordon should know, state and local laws require competitive bidding and contractor selection based on the lowest and best bid.

Opponents of the Vision package no doubt will keep with this strategy right up until the election. Let's hope voters, who have shown remarkable common sense over the years, can distinguish the public figures spouting the half-truths from those trying to tell voters what they really want to know and should know. Our bet is they can tell the difference.

Buggy-whip politics

Sheriff's appraisers holdovers from past

By all accounts, Sheriff Stanley Glanz is a highly regarded lawyer. His deputies do a great job of policing. At the same time, the sheriff is a political powerhouse, unlikely to be seriously challenged so long as he wants the job.

Question: Why does the sheriff allow himself to be entangled in petty politics when it comes to appointing appraisers?

The matter first arose when it came to light that one of the sheriff's appraisers was appraising properties headed for bankruptcy sale and then buying them himself.

Now it develops that the sheriff has appointed a number of new appraisers and they will get raises under a new state law.

There is some question whether the bankruptcy appraisal procedure would be cheaper if certified appraisers were hired.

The sheriff understandably has appointed his friends and campaign supporters to his appraisal force. Has anyone ever heard of a public official appointing his enemies?

A cursorial examination of the names suggests they are all reputable people, albeit Glanz's friends and relatives.

The point is that the sheriff could easily avoid the accusations of favoritism by simply asking a professional group of appraisers to either do the work pro bono or appoint the appraisers on a rotating basis.

The appointment of appraisers (who don't even have to be registered appraisers) is a holdover from Oklahoma's 1907 horse-and-buggy days.

It is politics, pure and simple. It is a burden the sheriff doesn't need and he ought to be moving to get rid of it.

Libya pays up

Settlement might ease relations

Libya's Moammar Gadhafi has been trying for the last few years to mend relations with the United States. He has a long way to go.

He, or at least his government, was directly responsible for the bombing of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, that killed 270 people, mostly Americans, at Christmastime 1988.

Since then, Gadhafi has been bombed by the United States and his people have suffered under strict international sanctions. The culprits in the Pan Am bombing eventually were traced to Libya. After years of wrangling, Gadhafi in 1999 gave up the two suspects for trial in Scotland.

That led to an easing, but not total lifting, of the sanctions that were imposed in 1992.

Gadhafi, seeing his oil-rich kingdom languish under the tight restrictions, has in the past few years tried to repair his relations with the United States. He has, in addition to handing over the bombing suspects, arrested Islamic militants and he condemned the Sept. 11 attacks.

Now he has agreed to a financial settlement with the families of

the 270 Pan Am victims. This week, Libya will transfer \$2.7 billion to an international bank to be paid to the families. Each family will get between \$5 million and \$10 million.

Gadhafi, however, put some restrictions on the deal. The full \$2.7 billion will be paid only if the United States agrees to lift the sanctions and remove Libya's name from the State Department's list of states that support terrorism.

Gadhafi shouldn't hold his breath. Although the United States and Great Britain said they were willing to lift U.N. sanctions, the United States is not likely to lift its sanctions.

Libya's rich oil fields desperately need U.S. business and its technology. Libya also needs the United States to legitimize its place in international politics.

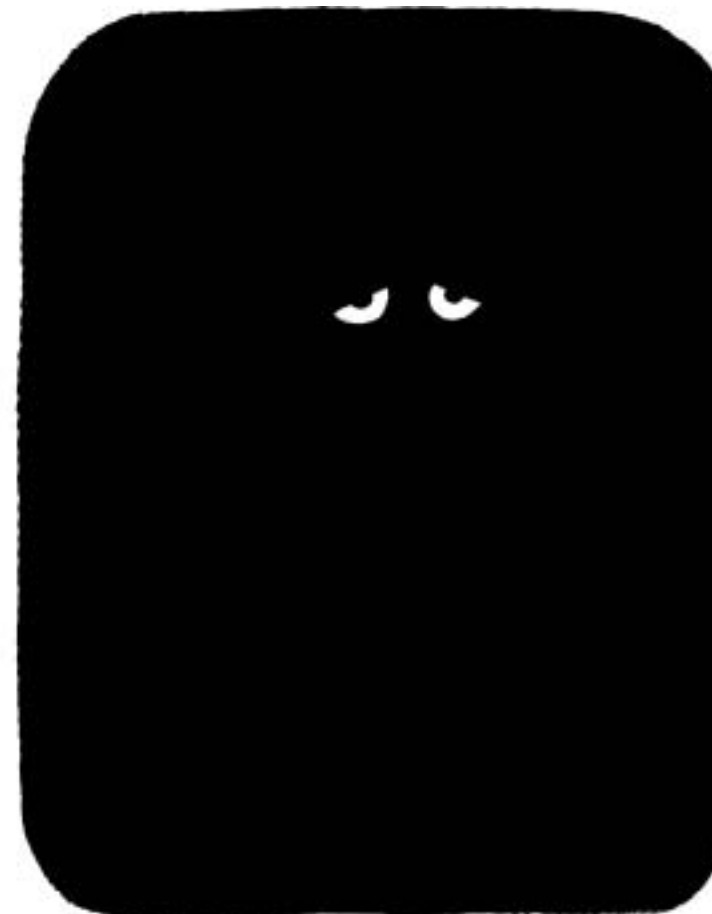
Gadhafi is making some of the right moves. But Libya's record on human rights and any number of other problems still leaves it far short of rehabilitation.

It's too soon to forgive and forget the murders over Scotland that Gadhafi endorsed.

He hasn't paid enough yet.



"WATCH OUT, TERRORISTS, WE ARE THE MOST POWERFUL NATION ON EARTH..."



"...UNTIL OUR OUTDATED ELECTRIC GRID GOES OUT, THAT IS..."

LETTERS

Bush is hard to understand

I don't understand why some people don't like some of George W.'s doings.

He delayed an aircraft carrier's return port for a day so he could make a grandstand landing and a mostly political speech.

Perhaps more interesting was withholding information from the Senate when it was debating authorization for the war against Iraq. The State Department had discovered that North Korea was restarting its nuclear effort and George W. made them sit on the information for 12 days until the Senate approved the Iraq effort. Bush didn't want to muddle up their minds.

But he is consistent. While he was governor of Texas, he allowed the biggest polluters to set their own standards for emissions and soon after becoming president he allowed the power producers to do the same thing. This action cost him the resignation of cabinet member Christie Todd Whitman, who had been at least visibly supportive of his other environmental actions.

But his biggest accomplishment was pushing for a second tax cut when we were looking at a \$455 billion deficit. Bush has said that he admired former president Ronald Reagan and now he has outdone Reagan. We never had a deficit that big under Reagan.

Robert A. Weaver, Muskogee

It may be too much to ask

Several times a year my wife and I take a trip into Texas. I always dread the stretch of U.S. 75 to the Red River where several areas are extremely rough. My Durango's tires and suspension strive mightily to absorb the

holes, bumps, crevices and undulations, mostly without success.

After crossing the river we always stop at the Texas Visitor Center. It is always spotlessly clean and has a wide variety of maps and brochures. While looking at the maps a nice lady asked if she could be of any assistance. I said, yes, I need a map of Austin. She gave me a nice map of Austin and I asked if there was a charge. She said, "Oh, no charge. Have a nice trip."

On the return we stopped at the Oklahoma Visitor Center. In the men's restroom one of the lavatories was out of order and needed cleaning. On the way out I told one of the ladies behind the counter the restroom needed attention. She gave me a stoic stare and asked, "what can I do?"

I relayed this story to my 70-plus-year-old friend, a native Oklahoman, and he said, "But we have beaten Texas three straight years in football." I thought he was joking but he wasn't. So I'm wondering if we could petition Bob Stoops to maybe lose one out of 10 games to those pesky old 'horns. If this would help the situations on U.S. 75 and the Oklahoma Visitor Center, I think it's worth a try.

But it's always good to get back to Tulsa. Tulsa is like a gleaming gem in the state of Oklahoma and a great place to live. I wonder if we could secede and become an independent state?

Jack Causey, Tulsa

Editor's note: We're trying!

Commercial zoning questioned

Enough time has passed from the last commercial zoning attempt at 71st Street and

Harvard Avenue that a majority of the city councilors have not seen this request before. F&M Bank is requesting a zoning change to commercial/office use (PUD).

This request should be denied because the longterm master plan contemplates no such zoning change and all four corners are zoned residential. This zoning, if passed, would be adverse on the city of Tulsa because it would open every single residential corner at the intersection of any arterial street to commercial zoning. It could lead to a zoning request free-for-all that could easily spread to 31st Street and Lewis Avenue, 41st Street and Lewis Avenue as well as any undeveloped corner in the city. Spot commercial zoning should be the exception, not the norm.

Once the corner is zoned for commercial, I think a strong argument could be made that the property next door could qualify for commercial zoning, which could eventually take us to the point where Harvard Avenue looks like 11th Street.

However, this should not be a referendum on F&M Bank. F&M is a well run, locally owned, medium-sized bank trying to put a branch in the middle of a residential neighborhood. My challenge is with the zoning. F&M is acting in the best interests of its shareholders; we are acting in the best interest of our neighborhood.

How this zoning request turns out will set the stage of residential zoning for years to come. The importance of this action will speak volumes for our city and its elected officials. Let us also remember that the term "highest and best use" (an argument used at the last zoning request) is a term of condemnation, not a zoning term.

Jon R. Stuart, Tulsa

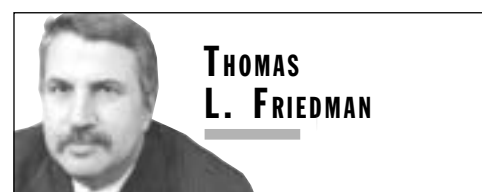
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Arabs now able to tell the truth

BAGHDAD, Iraq — I got a tour the other day of Baghdad's rebuilt airport, which is now quite beautiful, but still hasn't opened out of security concerns. Our tour guides even took us through passport control to show off their new computers that will check for incoming terrorists. As they showed us around, a question occurred to me that I posed to them: "What happens if someone gets off a plane with an Israeli passport?" After all, Iraq under Saddam Hussein not only didn't have diplomatic relations with Israel, it considered itself at war with Israel.

All of the officials present shrugged their shoulders and agreed that they hadn't thought about it — and that's one of the most interesting things about Iraq today. It is the only Arab country where the Arab-Israeli conflict is not the first topic of conversation with intellectuals and media elites. Make no mistake, the average Iraqi dislikes Israel and sympathizes with the Palestinian cause as much as any Saudi or Egyptian. This is an Arab country — never forget that.

But here's what is new and will have a big impact on inter-Arab politics, if Iraq can be rebuilt: Many Iraqis today express real resentment for the other Arab regimes, and even toward the Palestinians, for how they let themselves be bought off by Saddam. They feel that Saddam used the Iraqi people's oil wealth to buy popularity for himself in the Arab street — by giving Palestinians and other Arab students scholarships and nice apartments in Baghdad, and by paying off all sorts of Arab nationalist writers and newspapers. And then these same Arab intellectuals and media gave Saddam a free pass to torture, repress and starve his own people. In other words,



"Arabism," in the minds of many Iraqis, is the cloak that Saddam hid behind to imprison them for 35 years, and now that they can say that out loud, they are saying it.

You'd never know this from watching Arab satellite television like Al Jazeera. Because although these stations have 21st-century graphics, they're still dominated by 1950's Nasserite political correctness — which insists that dignity comes from how you resist the foreigner, even if he's come as a liberator, not by what you build yourself.

But the truth will come out. "Iraq is going to be the Arab libido," a Lebanese aid worker in Baghdad said to me. "You know, when you have those naughty dreams that you can't tell anyone about and then suddenly you're on the couch talking about them — that's going to be Iraq." It's going to be where all the taboos that are not supposed to be spoken, get spoken. Indeed, they already are.

Hassan Fattah is a young Iraqi-American journalist who has returned to Baghdad to start a terrific newspaper called Iraq Today (www.iraq-today.com). Before the fall of Baghdad, though, he worked as a reporter in the West Bank. "I sympathize with the Palestinian cause," he said, "but after the fall of Baghdad, when I told Palestinians that I was an Iraqi, they would say to me, 'You sold us out. You sold Iraq for nothing.' I was called a traitor. The average Palestinian wanted to see us fight — to resist America, and the American 'occupation,' because that is what they understood."

Of course, Iraqis want to run their own government as soon as possible, said Fattah — but not in order to join the old Arab nationalist parade, but rather to focus on themselves. "Iraqis know Saddam was a fake," he explained. "His Arabism came at their expense. For Iraqis it was not Arabism, it was torture and subjugation. (Now) there is this feeling that the Arab world has lashed out at us because we did not 'resist' the Americans. It was because Iraqis have learned the lessons of phony Arabism — that Saddam could send \$35,000 to the families of (Palestinian) suicide bombers, while leaving his own people starving and living on two dollars a day.

"That's why there is a dramatic gulf now between Iraqis and a lot of other Arabs. Young people here want to move on. In 10 years, this will be a very different place. If I can be a part of it, it will be like Hong Kong or Korea — but with an Iraqi face."

Talking to young Iraqis such as Hassan, you sense how much they want to break the old mold — how much they want to be Arabs, with an Arab identity, but to build a modern state that actually focuses on tapping its people's talents and energies, rather than diverting them, and one that seeks to base their dignity on what they build, not on whom they fight. Root for them to succeed, for having such a state in the heart of the Arab world would be a very, very good thing.

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