

# EDITORIAL

## 'gas country'

It is important to the citizens of Northeastern Pennsylvania that Luzerne County Dist. Atty. Blythe H. Evans Jr. has launched a criminal negligence case against Rulison Evans, whose sprawling corporation, Pennsylvania Gas & Water Co. is the largest business concern headquartered in the region.

Mr. Evans (of PG&W) has operated his utility through the years with an air that this region is his kingdom in which he can do no wrong, despite an abundance of evidence that the utility has been administered contrary to the public interest with flagrant disregard for safety precautions.

In this one case, at least, it appears that Mr. Evans' "robber-baron" philosophy will not work.

A utility sponsors a necessity for its community. It operates under the sphere of a monopoly, and is trusted to protect the public. Corporate irresponsibility in this case becomes far more important a social concern than syndicated crime. Such white-collar criminal operators must be stopped if the public interest is to be protected from the monopolistic tendencies of the \$61 million corporation, whose first responsibility appears to be only to show a good return for stockholders.

In the six months following a natural gas explosion that ripped through a nursing home in Harding, similar gas blasts in PG&W's territory destroyed three businesses, killed four people, maimed eight (including a child), left ten people homeless and without possessions, and caused property damage in excess of \$300,000. As we have said before, this seems a high price to pay for the lack of public concern on the part of Mr. Evans and his gas and water company.

Even with such flagrant abuses it appears that state regulatory agencies are not going to insist that the utility clean up its operations despite the fact that cost cutting on the part of the company promotes shoddy installation of pipeline, poor training for employes, shortages of repair equipment, delayed repairs, and inadequate safety precautions.

The utility, after all, is a public resource which must be administered by those who hold concern for the public trust. When this breaks down it's about time the district attorney acts.

## for the record

"Sewers? What do you mean we're getting sewers? I never heard anything about it." The kind old gent was quite sincere in his protestations—he truly hadn't known the Back Mountain area was getting sewers until the mammoth power shovel began chomping away at the pavement of his street one day last week.

We've been amazed to find that our perplexed friend is only one of many to discover the existence of our community's sewer project in such a dramatic way. R. Spencer Martin, chairman of the Dallas Area Municipal Authority, says his telephone hasn't had a chance to cool off since the construction began two weeks ago, what with indignant residents calling to demand why they hadn't been informed of the undertaking.

So once more—just for the record—we repeat: Sewers will be ready for use in many parts of Dallas Township, Kingston Township, and Dallas Borough by summer of 1972. Costs to property owners will include an \$8 per front foot assessment, \$150 connecting fee, and \$118 annual rental charge. Additionally, the installation of sewer pipe from home to street will also be the responsibility of the property owner.

And while we're at it, perhaps we should point out that few major changes in any community can be accomplished without some inconvenience to the community's residents. While the sewer pipes are being laid we're going to have to put up with muddy streets, re-routed traffic, and torn-up thoroughfares—there's just no other way for the contractors to do the job. As the cartoonist used to say, we'll just have to grin and bear it.

## THE DALLAS POST

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Editor emeritus: Mrs. T.M.B. Hicks  
Editor: Doris R. Mallin  
News editor: Shawn Murphy  
Advertising: Carolyn Gass

## TRB from Washington

Who will forget the celebrated "home-by-Christmas" broadcast of President Nixon over the great victory in Laos? Word of an important announcement built up immense anticipation but was delayed till the start of the monsoon rains. There was an upward jiggle in Mr. Nixon's poll ratings which had previously been faltering as Louis Harris recorded that 46 percent felt troop withdrawals were too slow and George Gallup reported a Nixon rating of 51 percent, the lowest to date, and that only 19 percent thought Laos would shorten the war.

It was the first presidential broadcast in which sound effects were used, as part of the steady experimentation by the White House with new ways to reach the American public. Observers expected encouraging news but had little idea of what was to come. The Pentagon disclosed the capture of immense quantities of arms and ammunition and although American reporters were barred at first from the war zone the Army displayed dramatically pictures of smashed tanks, three-foot sections of gasoline pipe taken from the Ho Chi Minh trail, freshly laundered uniforms from COSVN, and quantities of rice boiled and ready for consumption.

As Mr. Nixon's face flashed on the screen it was seen that he was gravely cheerful. He began with a terse review. The war, he noted, was not his, but inherited; his one goal had been peace with honor. The easy and popular course would have been immediate withdrawal but he had rejected it because it would have destroyed American credibility. What other small nation, he demanded, would have trusted US protection if we had abandoned the

Vietnamese as they suffered a million civilian casualties? To have bowed to threats abroad and critics at home (who, of course, had a perfect right to their opinions) would have ended America's record of never having lost a war, an all-time winning streak, as he smilingly observed.

The president paused. Casualties, he noted, had been cut to half what they were before Cambodia—at least American casualties. Cambodia, he said, encountered a drumfire of television criticism, night after night, just as had this new success. Now at Easter, Mr. Nixon said reverently, the country might recall the 50,000 lives which it had invested in the search for a just and lasting peace. It was time, he said, to bring the holocaust to an end. He had therefore ordered the use of small, tactical, nuclear weapons which were already being employed. These were clean bombs, he emphasized, with little if any radiation danger outside the immediate vicinity and practically no long-range ecological pollution.

There might be critics, he said. But he was confident that it was a humane act since it meant a quick, surgical termination of an eight-year nightmare. Rejoice, he said, that the step would accelerate US troop withdrawal and cut down American casualties (give or take a negligible loss by accidents in the delivery system). Hereafter American names like Jones, O'Leary and Pucinski would not figure in the battle deaths.

The president continued. It was preposterous for a nation with advanced technology to fight with one hand tied behind its back. When men explored the sea, communi-

cated by satellite and walked on the moon, what folly it was to forego modern implements of war. Think of the result: The accelerated return of the GI's would make, he hoped, a modest present for wives, sweethearts and parents. Surely by Christmas, he said, the agonizing struggle would belong to history. As Mr. Nixon paused many people believed they heard the faint notes of Handel's oratorio behind him, which, indeed, had been arranged experimentally to accentuate the mood of the moment.

Like a lawyer, the president anticipated objections: Americans were primarily interested in de-escalation and this, he said, was the ultimate "Vietnamization". The step eliminated an otherwise unacceptable threat to our reduced forces. Also, he said, the enemy had obdurately rejected peace proposals like that of Oct. 7, for mutual withdrawal, prisoner exchange and a Thieu-Ky regime left free from the armed aggression of foreigners invading its soil.

It was a virtuoso display. Instead of several war zones, he explained, it would all be simplified to one. He reviewed privileged sanctuaries, free-fire zones, incursion, interdiction and body-count; strategic hamlets, pacification and protective reaction. No longer, he said, would it be necessary to punish enemy missile sites for "locking on" to our unarmed reconnaissance planes by having the planes annihilate them. Morale was never higher in South Vietnam which, with US bombers, helicopters, artillery, missiles, war material, back-up forces and planning, had won the present victory.

Mr. Nixon approached the end of his half hour. Critics, he said (and they were perfectly entitled to their opinions), would argue that nuclear weapons would kill civilians, but they forget how it would shorten the war. The new weapon, he said, pointing to a chart, was a small model already devastating enemy territory, with a yield of 50 tons TNT-equivalent which, at 1000 feet, cleared the ground in all directions for a third of a mile from ground zero. These small, clean, tactical devices, or LYDTW (low yield discriminate tactical weapons) would kill people by blast and heat effects from 1000 feet but would mercifully not cause serious damage to urban structures. This meant that survivors would find their beloved abodes safe, yes, even though they were merely palm fringed huts in a jungle.

The president's eloquence at the end recalled his celebrated peroration of November, 1969, the "great silent majority" address. There would be opposition, he knew (and they were entitled to express their views in a free country). But not to have taken this logical step would have made America a pitiful helpless giant; lost the confidence of our allies and—far more dangerous—"we would have lost confidence in ourselves as we saw the consequences of failure; inevitable remorse and divisive recrimination would scar our spirit as a people." By contrast he offered America the lift of a driving dream.

As Mr. Nixon finished the organ pealed an eloquent *Te Deum* which was generally acknowledged to have been one of the finest effects ever put on television.

## The Right To Write

To THE POST:

I often think about life and the heartache that comes with the new born babe and what its small body must learn to bear as it grows to adulthood because of the unjust greed of people. Why must every generation be the slaves of the past, or are we all looking for the answers in what Sir Thomas Moore in his *Utopia* thought was the most perfect system of laws for life?

I wonder why we cannot find the answers. Why do we keep on running? Are we afraid to face our own guilt for the conditions of the world? There must be an answer somewhere.

We refuse to understand that in order to survive we must all have the same rights regardless of color, creed, or race, and then and only then will we find the answer.

Maybe we can all change the night of darkness into the glory of a beautiful sunny day for all with Hope, Love, and Charity.

C.R. JONES  
Trucksville

## changes

by Eric Mayer

Once upon a time the Ku Klux Klan was big in Dallas. Not big enough to stage lynchings, but big enough to burn crosses in front of College Misericordia. Seems that the Klansmen, good citizens that they were, abhorred the idea of "the Catholics" erecting a college right in the middle of the town's un sullied Protestantism. Today such erstwhile ideals seem repulsive. Everyone knows that only bigots and fools malign fellow citizens for their religious preferences.

Today good citizens malign people for more logical reasons, like hair length. And, being less boorish than their narrow-minded ancestors, they often resort to a kind of "middle class bigotry" a genteel bigotry, a choreographed dance of raised eyebrows, upturned noses and curled lips, that is fast becoming a folk dance of sorts. We've all heard the litany of insults that accompany these circuses of disdain (the kind of common knowledge slurs that were levelled at the Irish, Polish, etc. . . ho-hum) so there's no need to dwell on them. It's sufficient to say that to a certain ignorant minority anyone with hair to the bottom of their earlobes who isn't a girl is a hippie, and Bob Hope, Spiro Agnew and other purveyors of self-serving misconceptions have supplied the sophisticated bigots of this land with as much unsavory "knowledge" about hippies as they'll

ever need. Many of today's hippie haters are nigger haters who've come to the bitter realization that nigger hating isn't chic anymore.

Since bigotry is no longer fashionable in its more ugly manifestations, it rarely bubbles to the surface of local affairs. To those who are not innured to its odor, the resulting stench is pretty strong.

Consider the case of the Wilkes-Barre Police Department vs. the Youth of Wyoming Valley. It is a case that starkly illuminates the alleged repression that young people complain about and parents shrug their shoulders over—a case clearly proving that the kids have a point.

Last year the police, acting under orders from the city council, began to enforce no loitering laws in Public Square. These laws, as no one even bothered to deny, were aimed at dispersing the groups of long haired youth who tended to gather in "Public" Square to sit in the grass and talk, having no other place to go, thanks to the lack of concern the city fathers display for their sons and daughters. The effect of this law was to protect the sensibilities of Wilkes-Barre bigots by depriving the young people of a decent gathering place.

Now, still attempting to uphold the wide-

reaching and arbitrary "rights" of the ignorant, the police department has decided, in effect, to take the law into its own unqualified hands. At least that's how I interpret it when the police chief asserts that he's been trying to close down a city dance hall and apologizes that the axe job hasn't been successful so far since the aforementioned dance hall isn't violating any laws.

According to Chief Ruddick, the place is frequented by troublemakers. He fails to explain though why he hasn't tried to cancel athletic events, which are the scene of so many fights, or bars from whose portals issue so many dangerously inebriated drivers. In point of fact, the trouble makers who plague the Crab Apple aren't the loathsome "hippies" but rather the typical short haired hoods (some of whom, alas, have let their hair grow) that Wilkes-Barre has always had its fair share of. The majority of patrons, naturally, detests this element as much as the police.

Troublemakers though, aren't the real reason the city wishes to clamp down on the dance establishment. As an editorial in the Sunday Independent makes clear, bigotry, pure and simple, has been the motivating factor in this typically repressive situation.

Ranting subjectively on, the editorial

complains of how Wilkes-Barre's grimy, run down square is being marred by the presence of " . . . an unbelievable collection of unwashed types," and "unkempt slob." Not surprising epithets, coming from the quill of a man who has flatly stated that long hair results in lice. (I hyperbolize not.)

Such ravings and babblings seem to me a gross warpage of journalistic responsibility on the part of the Independent's editorial staff. Bigotry is bigotry, printed under an editorial banner or not. A newspaper which feels it necessary to appeal to the basest instincts of its most hate filled readers is in bad shape indeed. And it is only contributing to the stagnant atmosphere that is driving an increasing number of the area's most gifted and most needed young people to more mature climes.

This is what area youngsters are often up against. A government that passes arbitrary laws against them, law enforcers who wish to enact ever more prejudicial laws, and a press that encourages the sordid goings on in adolescent tones.

This area, especially the city that serves as its hub, will not progress far with this type of thinking. There will have to be changes. In the meantime, bigotry by any other name smells the same.



## footnotes

BY J.R. Freeman

"We need to get down to some grassroots democracy," a local school board candidate remarked the other day as he attempted to extol his personal ways and means of spending less money in the school district.

His counterpart is running for the sole purpose of removing sex education from the classroom.

Both men seem hell bent on getting elected to public office, not on the positions they take on important issues, such as how to better educate our kids, but on how their personalities justify their election to office. As often as not individuals such as these, once seated in office, are overwhelmed with the burden of work and decisions to the extent that they are ineffective at improving any quality of life. They remain in their position because of the prestige the job carries, or because that particular office may be used as a

stepping stone toward a political career.

These individuals tend to ignore the fact that if democracy suffered at a state or federal level as much as it does on the "grassroots" level, our whole system would probably crumble.

They tend to ignore important issues while expecting their constituents to favor them on personality alone. Their campaigns are built around these personality traits rather than issues, or worse yet, around the egos of inexperienced political hopefuls.

School board candidates may run on no more than a flimsy excuse to eliminate sex education in the schools, or how to hold the line on spending the taxpayers' dollars. Seldom does the candidate come along whose only concern is improving our children's educational opportunity, no matter what the cost.

## local politics ignore the issues

Almost as seldom do we find a candidate for borough council or township supervisor who advocates reform, from reorganization of the police department, to improving traffic congestion or pollution abatement programs. Most often it's the case that any long-range planning carried out by prior administrations is tossed aside with a more conservative attitude glorified for the future.

After election, the successful candidates often tend to ignore the press, thus their public, hoping that any decision or position that they take will raise as few ripples as possible; heaven forbid any tidal waves.

Party politics doesn't fail to wield a heavy hand on the local level, tending to make politicians out of people who are charged with setting policy for education, the courts, and law enforcement.

As often as not a minority can control, particularly when it comes to endeavors of community service, such as library improvement, roadway proficiency, police protection, and sanitary facilities.

It's just as often that a well qualified candidate is found unacceptable because he is a newcomer to a community, or because he fails to toe the line of party wishes.

Gone are the days when a candidate runs because of the respect he carries in the community, the leadership he gives to a thankless job, and the progressive planks of his platform.

This is not to say that we should return to the "good old days" because our system has always contained certain flaws. But it would be well to return to the day when candidates ran for office because of their leadership ability and their progressive ideas and ideals.