

THE PLAIN DEALER

Our 149th Year

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And then there were three

Start warming up the brass bands and chilling the champagne. Cleveland's chances of becoming the host city for one of the nation's most spectacular jamblores — the next Democratic National Convention — have suddenly improved dramatically.

Cleveland clearly impressed the Democrats last month when Northeast Ohio's movers and shakers gave the red-carpet treatment to the party's site-selection committee, which will recommend a 1992 convention city to national chairman Ron Brown. Although Clevelanders think their town deserves to win purely on its merits, the lapses of its rivals won't hurt: Detroit, wracked by a budget crisis, recently withdrew from the competition. Last week, New Orleans said it would have problems raising the \$15 million each contender must pledge to offset some convention costs. (New Orleans had to struggle to raise even \$4.5 million when it hosted the 1988 Republican convention.)

That leaves only Houston, New York and

Cleveland in the running. Handicappers aren't putting much money on Houston: Since it's President Bush's adopted home town, the Democrats might not get much of a local boost from an assembly there. New York, which welcomed the Democrats as recently as 1976 and 1980, is a strong contender — especially since the Big Apple raised its offer to the Democrats to \$22.7 million in cash and services. But among Middle American voters, New York has an image problem: It is burdened by the perception of city-slicker machine politics and East Coast elitism.

Cleveland has everything going for it: a solidly Democratic voting pattern, a heartland-of-America image sure to stir the party's electoral base, and a resilient, back-from-the-brink theme that can inspire the Democrats' hopes for a revival. Moreover, its leaders and residents are eager to showcase the "comeback city" before a nationwide news audience.

Have faith, Democrats. A long shot no longer, Cleveland may be the life of the party in 1992.

Shipping in the Democrats

Remember how they laughed 14 years ago, when Mayor Ralph Perk suggested using boats and ships to house delegates for a national political convention? It was just another Cleveland joke. Imagine: Sloshed Democrats trying to negotiate their way aboard a drifting hotel without falling into the drink!

Once again, the idea is being floated. But it's a different time and a cleaner lake. Cruise ships are chic with the young and old, the wealthy and the working stiffs, the honeymooners and the recent divorcees; they are so popular that new ones are launched regularly. The convenience of coming to Cleveland on a ship will appeal to Easterners. They could cruise into the port, dine in the Flats or downtown, take the Rapid or a cab to the convention hall and return in the evenings for a late-night supper on the ship. It would be spectacular.

The delegates would not face the inconveniences of too few elevators, hauling luggage up

numerous flights of stairs, hunting for a seat at the bar at midnight, and enduring hotel room foul-ups upon their arrival (all of which can happen in the same trip). There would not be long check-in or check-out lines; and there would not be the usual nightmare at the airport. For experienced delegates, the cruise ship idea will be more than passable.

To host the Democratic convention, Cleveland needs 17,500 hotel rooms. The local convention promotion committee estimated there are more than 19,000 rooms within 30 minutes of the International Exposition Center in Brook Park. But many delegates will not be satisfied with long commuting times or hotels far from the action. In cruise ships, delegates would have excellent accommodations, a short commute to the hall and lots of action on the riverbank, downtown and in the Flats.

Actually, it's not a joke at all. Former Mayor Perk can take the bow for having a darn good idea that just happened to predate its time.

Nepal's grab at democracy

Blood spilled in Nepal when the army fired into a throng of pro-democracy demonstrators recently. Two days later, crowds were dancing in the streets to celebrate the promised return of a multiparty political system. But it is too early to tell if those streets will again be stained by the red of fatal dissent.

Nepalese King Birendra announced April 8 he would end a 30-year curtailment of political activity, which could lead to multi-party elections. His announcement came after seven weeks of pro-democracy demonstrations.

The protests — and Nepalese frustration — in part result from worsening relations between landlocked Nepal and its giant southern neighbor, India. The two have tussled over trade and transit treaties for a year. As early as 1950, Nepal allowed India to put security outposts in the country, particularly along the Himalayan border with China, in exchange for highly favorable trade and transit status.

Nepal in recent years has attempted to establish itself as neutral and tried to bow out of the security arrangement. India said it would

give no economic favors if Nepal reneged on the deal. As a result, there now are only two transit points in India — rather than the previous 18 — for Nepalese goods.

The tightening economics fueled Nepalese discontent. So too did political disenfranchisement under the monarchy. As opposition leaders move on, they must have faith the son will not repeat the father's sins: In 1960, Mahendra resorted to employing emergency powers to dissolve the elected government, suspend the constitution and end the country's short-lived flirtation with democracy. He then instituted the current mock-representative system by which the monarchy retains true power.

In talks with Birendra, opposition leaders will be looking for limits to the king's power. The opposition's first challenge comes in its demand that the king disband the current legislative assembly and put in its place a temporary coalition government. If Birendra responds affirmatively, it would be a hopeful indication that political freedom is indeed seeping into this Himalayan kingdom.

Meteorite Folio

Old diamonds and killer stones

As a school kid in Connecticut, I could hardly wait for a meteorite to fall through the roof of the family car. It had happened to another family; it could happen to mine.

The idea that meteorites were dinosaur killers or bearers of some of the chemical building blocks of life didn't enter into it. The notion there may be hundreds of killer meteorites on possible Earth-colliding orbits also didn't come up. Back then, few had been identified.

Well, a meteorite never hit the family car. And, despite a couple cosmological near misses, apocalypse also never came. But meteorite theorists are suddenly a dime a dozen.

Flash! A monster meteorite wiped out the dinosaurs.

Flash! Meteorites carry bits of Mars, pieces of the moon and chips of the oldest

diamonds. They have come from beyond our solar system, from before the sun's creation. They contain substances scientists on Earth had to create in laboratories and amino acids, a key building block of life. Before we landed on the moon, they were the lone window on what was out there in the vastness of space.

Flash! Explosions of incoming meteorites may have flattened trees in Siberia and caused a devastating earthquake in southern Germany. One especially huge one may even have created the molten layer responsible for the geysers and hot springs at Yellowstone and Lie desolate scablands of Washington state.

Flash! Huge meteors with greater potential explosive power than all mankind's atomic weapons may yet be on a collision course with Earth. And it may prove

impossible to blast them out of the sky — or even see them coming. The last near miss, a year ago, wasn't even detected until a week after it zoomed within half a million miles of Earth. One day, by the laws of physics and chance, a big meteor will again hit Earth.

Hey, wait a minute. You mean to say that shooting stars — some of the greatest nighttime displays in the heavens, those thundering stones from the sky that have frightened and intrigued and tantalized for centuries — could wind up killing a whole lot of us?

Yep, that's the long and short of it. In the cosmic lottery, it's probably a trillion-to-one shot.

Yet meteorites are still opening our eyes to the wonders and mysteries of the universe. And that seems a pretty fair tradeoff, after all.

—Elizabeth Sullivan



Letters to the editor

White didn't renege on Cabinet promises

In the [March 6] article "White's Cabinet selection has observers divided" it was stated that Miriam Ortiz Maldonado, publisher of El Nuevo Dia, a Spanish-language newspaper, faults White for not naming any Hispanics to "decision-making jobs," like she said he had promised.

I would like to clarify that Michael R. White did not, prior to or after the elections, promise to name Hispanics to his Cabinet or to decision-making jobs.

The ones who promised the above were George Forbes and Ralph Perk Jr. In addition, they promised that if they were elected, they would favor, after the 1990 Census, moving the boundaries of certain wards in such a way that Hispanics would be able to elect their own councilman.

White answered that he didn't have any objections to considering qualified Hispanics for his Cabinet or top positions in City Hall but that he opposed the idea of setting quotas. Furthermore, he stated that he had a problem with the concept of moving the boundaries to favor any particular group when he was aware that in the past these same boundary lines were deliberately moved to exclude the same people.

Being so close to an election, Forbes' and Perk's statements had all the characteristics of political opportunism. White's statements showed character. Miriam Maldonado knew this, and yet rather than denouncing Forbes and Perk she chose to attack White in her newspaper and on the Spanish radio despite his show of character. Isn't not endorsing enough?

It is true that the White administration has not made an all-out effort to identify, recruit and hire Hispanics, but this is due to the fact that White's staff in charge of recruiting and hiring has been confused as to the needs, direction and leadership of the Hispanic community and have been misled by people like Maldonado, who not only refused to endorse a Hispanic for councilman but chose to attack him, like she did White. Isn't not endorsing enough?

Maldonado's actions and those of other leaders have fed deceitful and erroneous feedback to City Hall staffers that perpetuates the idea that the Spanish-American community remains as divided and leaderless as before, when the truth is that it is thirsty for new leadership. . . . New, sincere and fearless leadership is emerging. So I tell the Hispanic Americans, the time of despair and fear is over, soon, a new sun will shine for you.

NELSON CINTRON, JR.
Cleveland

Cintron was a Council candidate in Ward 14 last year.

RTA's bumpy ride

During the past few months, I have developed a concern — a concern for my life; and every morning as I walk to the bus stop, this concern becomes fear. As I step on the bus, I look my driver over and wonder: "Is he straight? Will he get me to school on time and will he get me there alive?" It seems that more than ever there have been accidents by RTA drivers due to drugs, and it seems that only after the accident occurs and several people are injured or even killed that drug testing is administered. Testing should be a standard procedure in such positions where the lives of the public are in the hands of one driver.

I have heard arguments against drug testing claiming that it is an "invasion of privacy," but if drivers refuse to be tested, then I can't help wondering what they have to hide. Instead of a question of pri-

vacy, shouldn't it be a question of public safety?

HEATHER J. COOK
Cleveland

ON MARCH 20, I boarded the 20B bus at Public Square at 3 p.m. At W. 25th St. and Lorain Ave., two wheelchair patrons were waiting in the cold to board the bus. The driver found he did not have the proper tools in his tool box to perform the job he had to do to take aboard these wheelchair people. The driver stated that it was not his responsibility to see that these tools were in the box. Whose responsibility is it?

This is not the first time this has happened. Those in wheelchairs are passed up many times while they are waiting at a bus stop in the cold, rain or heat for a bus. They are told by drivers the lift is not operating, or that he or she is a new driver and does not know how these work.

RTA has created a job with the title "Equal Opportunity for the Disabled." What requirements and responsibilities does this job demand? Is it a position just to give someone a salary? This position should be held by one who has the empathy to have the wheelchair people's interest.

JACK P. MOWER
Cleveland
Mower is executive director of Amputees and Other Disabled Individuals of Northern Ohio, Inc.

Give CCC credit

Community-college bashing has become popular lately. Would-be education experts have been smugly proclaiming the superiority of four-year colleges and universities.

Well, I am no expert. I am just a student at Cuyahoga Community College, Western Campus, but I am sick of being told that my education here has been second-rate.

Maybe I don't understand the criteria. Is it curriculum? My business major has given me a variety of courses in management, marketing, law, accounting, economics, finance, computers, real estate and political science, to name a few.

Maybe it is the course requirements. Any easy A's? Perhaps, but mine have all demanded thought, study, and preparation. For example, this quarter my accounting course required a practice set, and each of my other four courses had case studies and/or extensive term papers to evaluate my research, reasoning and writing skills. The exams have been comprehensive, oral and written, including essay and objective challenges.

Is it class size? My largest was 21, the smallest just eight. No safety in numbers or anonymity here, just active class participation and recognition as a person with a name, not a student ID number.

Could it be the teaching staff? My instructors have been well-educated and life-experienced. Some have been better qualified than others, but that is true of every faculty. Most importantly, they have been consistently, genuinely interested in their students.

Cuyahoga Community College is a vital, dynamic, responsive learning center that makes it an educational institution in the finest sense. My only regret is that it is not a four-year school.

L. LOWRY-GREENE
Brecksville

Health-care access

I read with interest your your March 12 editorial "Fair access to

health care":

Greater Cleveland Hospital Association members and I appreciated the view of the health-care landscape in the United States. We have been concerned about the escalating indigent-care burden for years; hospitals in Greater Cleveland now provide more than one-third of the state of Ohio's uninsured-care load.

We agree with you that the current system does not work for a variety of reasons. Let me point out an additional stumbling block in providing care to everyone: the fact that health insurers are increasingly screening out high-risk individuals and increasing insurance premiums. Therefore, hospitals have to cost-shift to other payors in order to pay our bills.

In order to help create a better system, the Greater Cleveland Hospital Association has been proactive in a number of ways. In concert with the Health Care Financing Administration's philosophy of tailoring care to the community, the association, along with the Federation for Community Planning and Cuyahoga County, have embarked on a pilot program to provide health care for the working uninsured in Northeast Ohio. Information from this program will give us ideas on how to best manage this type of program.

C. WAYNE RICE
Cleveland
Rice is president and chief executive officer of the Greater Cleveland Hospital Association.

Nicaragua a priority

Clearly, the people of Nicaragua and El Salvador, through the electoral process, have demonstrated more intelligence and collective wisdom than have a considerable portion of the U.S. Congress, various editorialists and columnists, certain liberal elements of our society and, in particular, segments of the religious community. This complete and crushing repudiation of Marxist socialism is, at the same time, a resounding vindication of 10 years of U.S. policy in Central America, the efforts of Ronald Reagan, the contra movement and the free enterprise system. Is anyone so naive as to believe that Daniel Ortega could have been forced into holding free elections without the pressure of the contras and individuals like Oliver North and others who directly and indirectly supported their efforts? I would hope not. Ortega would have been as quick to encourage democracy as has been his comrade in arms in Cuba over the past 25 years.

Sadly, the economy of Nicaragua is a shambles. This is not the result of inept U.S. policy or because of the opposition. It is in this sorry state for the same reasons as are the failed economies of the Soviet Union, Poland, Romania, East Germany, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and others. The collapse and failed promises of national socialism are apparent for all to see.

With many nations now requesting foreign aid, Nicaragua must be given some priority. After all, it was through the efforts of President Carter and the Congress in 1979 that the Sandinista government was put in place and the nation was led down the path to the economic swamp in which it is now immersed. This is a far different situation from that of many of the European governments that embraced communism for so many years. Any policy that now tells Chamorro that she must go to the end of the line behind [Soviet President Mikhail] Gorbachev for aid would be morally indefensible.

HENRY W. RITTER
Broadview Heights