

OPINION



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Sunday letters from readers

No relief in Martin County

Oh for the smell of apple blossoms and the lilacs of spring, the warm odors of a summer day, the smell of fall harvesting or the crisp, cold smell of a lovely winter day.

What do we get in Martin County, population of 22,000 people and 1 million hogs in an area of 30 miles by 30 miles? Hog odor, continuous blasts of it, morning, noon and night. We in Ceylon have no relief from it.

Yes, Agriculture Commissioner Gene Hugoson, a resident of Martin County, is located far far away from all of this at our state capital in St. Paul, making the rules and regulations turning our lovely garden spot of America into a hot sty.

What is this doing to our water? What is happening to our fresh air? What are these odors doing to our health? I thought our tax dollars went to protect us. I find out that our tax dollars are going to protect the hogs against pseudo rabies.

Minnesota Board of Health, where are you?

— *Dorothy Petersen, Ceylon, Minn.*

A useful stalemate

Robert White, assumes with most of us, that the United States would like to be rid of Saddam Hussein (Commentary, Feb. 27). There are reasons why that may not be our objective.

Before Saddam became our enemy, he was our client. He was a convenient resource during the Iranian crises and in the Iran-Iraq war we supplied him with weapons to carry out his aggression, so long as it suited our purposes.

Today Saddam also has a useful purpose. He provides the government of Saudi Arabia with an excuse to allow American forces to be deployed in their country, which is also the home of Islam's two most important religious sites. It is justification enough to prevent the extremist Muslims from actively pursuing the elimination of this abomination to their faith. Iraq under Saddam is a pariah, not only to us, but to the Arab world as well.

If we want the Saudi government to allow U.S. forces on their soil so that "our oil" is safely available, we need a Saddam for our cover. In addition, the no-fly zones provide a practice arena for our air force pilots to hone their combat skills.

The next time you read a reporter or pundit agonizing over the problem of Saddam, remember that if nothing else, he is a "beard" for the Saudis to allow us to protect what is still half the known oil reserves on earth. This useful stalemate also explains the frustrations leading to the recent resignations of U.N. officials over the failure of the economic sanctions and their enormous costs for innocent civilians.

– D.L. Strand, Holte, Denmark.

DNR is hurting

It's inappropriate for the state to give out tax rebates when its work force is lacking certain key positions and when it is cutting necessary funds to fundamental departments.

Minnesota relies heavily on its natural resources and the tourism dollars they generate, yet many positions within the Department of Natural Resources are unfilled and many employees cannot perform their duties to their best ability because of budget cuts. For example, about 20 DNR conservation officer positions are not being filled and within the next three years 40 positions could open due to retirement.

Current conservation officers are being rationed how many miles they can drive in a week because the department is unable to pay for gasoline. They are not able to attain proper equipment for their jobs.

If Minnesota and its citizens so revere their natural resources, then why do we let them be unprotected from further abuse and exploitation?

– Shane Osborne, Alexandria, Minn.

Lindner's free speech

I am not a Christian, but neither do I have a chip on my shoulder about people who are. If Rep. Arlon Lindner, R-Corcoran, wants to express his personal religious views on the floor of the Minnesota House, he is constitutionally entitled to do so. To drag him before the House Ethics Committee is improper and a violation of the First Amendment.

– William McGaughey, Minneapolis.

Slow aid to flood victims

If Mozambique had wanted guns or bombs, they would have been there last month.

– Tom R. Dooley, Minneapolis.

By their books

While we didn't expect Pop Stand columnist Kristin Tillotson to agree with all the 2000 Minnesota Book Award nominees, we were dismayed by her Feb. 20 conclusion that "there should be more great books on the list."


The Minnesota Book Awards exist to recognize and celebrate those who have made important contributions to Minnesota's literary landscape during the past year. Now in its 12th year, award nominees have included great authors with literary prominence: Eugene McCarthy, Judith Guest, Robert Bly, Louise Erdrich and Jon Hassler, to name a few. While their talents certainly created their fame, their name recognition did not precipitate their awards.

Unlike some awards, the Minnesota Book Awards are not based on a single criterion such as sales, critical acclaim or scholarship. Do those benchmarks figure into the judges' decisions? Definitely, but they are not the only factors that count.

The Minnesota Book Awards are perhaps more inclusive than other literary awards. The process -- from accepting books by any Minnesota author (even those self-published) to recruiting volunteer judges from the Twin Cities and greater Minnesota -- is designed to reflect a wide-ranging Minnesota audience.

Like the books entered, the judges and selectors represent a sampling from Minnesota's own broad book community: reviewers, authors, booksellers, librarians, teachers, scholars, avid readers. Because judging panels represent such a uniquely diverse group (with quite different literary experiences, values and motivations), final decisions concerning nominees and winners do not always reflect the "predictable."

— Lisa Brienzo, St. Paul; director, Minnesota Center for the Book; and Patrick Coleman, Roseville; chair, Steering Committee, Minnesota Book Awards.

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