

THE FREE PRESS OPINION

Page A8

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"The theory of a free press is that the truth will emerge from free reporting and free discussion." Walter Lippman

Pine Valley deal hits mark

While the frustration of the McDermid family is quite understandable, the city's decision to change the way it operates the Pine Valley golf course is reasonable. The major problem with the decision, though, is the delay in making it – it should have happened years ago.

The city owns the land but the McDermids have been leasing for many years, paying on average about \$30,000 per year to run the course. Over that time, the family has made many capital improvements to the land and have the expectation of recovering those costs. That's only fair.

But when the city's Official Community Plan was passed it designated the land as comprehensive development, putting the fate of the land in continuous doubt.

What the city will do now is contract out the operation of the course, on a year to year basis. "I think this approach will allow us to continue operating the facility in a better or similar fashion," says Tom Madden, the director of leisure services.

Mr. Madden says the city is planning on entering into an agreement with someone to run the golf course and probably the driving range as well. "We're not looking for any capital investments," he explains.

There has been a small outcry, some from supporters of the McDermids who must decide whether to make a bid to operate the course, and more from developers who want the land – right now.

This type of arrangement is quite common throughout the province and gives the city time to decide what to do with the land. Most importantly, though, it gives the city the flexibility to quickly terminate its relationship with who ever happens to be running the course when they decide the time is, finally, right for development.

It makes sense, it just should have been done earlier and then there wouldn't be any discussion of the matter. City staff should be congratulated for acting, albeit a little tardily, in offering some stability to Pine Valley.

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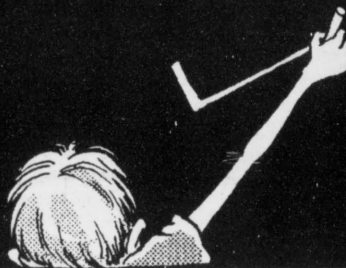
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On the rebuilding road

For Gordon Wilson, there is an element of *deja vu* in his campaign to build a party from scratch – with one subtle difference, this time he has the name and the party is obscure. Back when the geography teacher was leader of the provincial Liberal Party, constant trips through B.C. did little to raise his profile. It took six seconds in a television debate to capture the public's imagination. Now, Gordon Wilson remains one of the most popular and quixotic in the province, with approval ratings matching Liberal leader Gordon Campbell.

The only fly in the ointment is the low support for the party founded by Wilson and wife Judy Tyabji; the Progressive Democratic Alliance wallows in the wasteland of B.C. politics.

"We had an excellent meeting last night, with about 60 people out," he says. "Now we're working on putting the riding association's together. The people coming on board are all very excellent people and very committed to what we're trying to do – which is a reform of government."

For Wilson, the challenge is

plished that by being one of the best MLAs, always putting constituents ahead of politics.

By forming the PDA, he is taking that approach into party politics. Arguing we lack a true centrist party in British Columbia, Wilson works to position the PDA as the party that can't be targeted on the political spectrum, that moves around as the issues require.

But Wilson might suffer the same fate as Preston Manning – his ideas and vision will disappear when he leaves the political stage. Wilson knows that and works towards building a party that be a lasting legacy of middle-of-the-road beliefs.

"Where you overcome it is by building a party with a strong constitution, with rules and regulations that strengthen the grassroots levels. Then you start to have a level of local autonomy and the party isn't driven from the leader down."

Wilson is almost an anomaly in Canadian politics, a man with seemingly no other ambition than to be a policy wonk. Clark might be the most fun, Weisgerber the most honest and Campbell the most ambitious but Wilson is the most intelligent. That must count for something.



RUMOUR MILLS

Shane Mills

convincing people that ideas do matter, that rhetoric isn't everything, that substance is better than style.

In the Legislature, he's accom-