

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letter employed the multiple untruth

Editor:

On Monday, July 1, The Daily Chronicle printed a letter from Linda Lahey which was a fair example of the demagogue's best weapon: the multiple untruth. Sound an opinion; state it harshly; personalize the content; and obscure the issues with numbers or grandiose claims that tug at people's emotions. Ms. Lahey's statements regarding the quality of the City's water supply not only obscured the truth, they alleged a conspiracy on the part of the City's elected and appointed officials to endanger the health of local residents. Such paranoid stylists are increasingly numerous across our political spectrum and share a common denominator: a passionate and idealistic nature driven to obsessive expressions of opinion lacking in sound analysis. It is unfortunate that Ms. Lahey has ignored contrary and compelling evidence in her shrill dissent.

Here are the facts. DeKalb's drinking water is safe. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

(EPA), which monitors the quality of drinking supplies in Illinois communities, determined in 1991 that DeKalb should be granted a variance from interim standards on radium content, in anticipation of the promulgation of new standards by the United States EPA with which the City would clearly comply.

Five years later, the promised permanent standards have not been issued by the USEPA and the City has requested an extension to its variance until such time as the revised standards are issued.

As the City has awaited the new standards, it has not been idle. Our Water Division has reduced the pumping of water from wells with the highest radium levels (all within the likely new compliance levels). On each quarterly water bill, the City dutifully notifies its water consumers of the radium limits in its water supply and the City retains a consulting engineer to assure that the City complies with the conditions of the variance.

All of these steps were recommended by the ad hoc citizens' committee convened by the City Council in 1991. What else could be done? The City could install treatment

facilities at each well head to remove radium at all levels from the water supply.

The cost of doing so would be in the range of \$6.8 million to \$12 million dollars. Would this be sound public policy and a prudent use of taxpayer dollars when all indications from the permitting agencies suggest that the City's current radium levels are well within the expected permanent standards? The Council unanimously rejected this approach on May 28. Another alternative would be to stop the installation of any new water mains. Again, in light of what we know from EPA sources, the prudent policy is to follow the present course and pursue a variance extension.

Interested persons will be welcome to speak on these issues. On the day that Ms. Lahey's broadside was printed, the City was informed that the Pollution Control Board would convene a public hearing on DeKalb's variance request on Monday, Aug. 5, at 1 p.m. in the City Council Chambers of the DeKalb Municipal Building. Fact, rather than hyperbole, will hopefully reign at that hearing.

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