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EDITORIALS

Justice Palmer was not the target

Lawmakers delivered a pointed message to Gov. Lowell P. Weicker Jr. last week when the House confirmed his latest nominee to the state Supreme Court: Next time, give us a nominee with more experience on the bench.

The message was ill conceived.

Critical comments during the confirmation debate were not directed at the nominee, Chief State's Attorney Richard N. Palmer. Most agreed that he was a qualified appointee, although there was grumbling about his political connections and the fact that he has not been a judge. Mr. Palmer is a friend of Mr. Weicker's former chief of staff, Stanley A. Twardy Jr., and is a frequent tennis partner of the governor's.

The target of legislators' wrath was the governor. Some were peeved that he did not consult with the patriarchs of the General Assembly about the appointment, and that he went outside the judiciary to find a nominee.

Was the pointed message justified? Only if you believe that Mr. Weicker has consistently ignored experience when making selections for vacancies on the high court. But that isn't the track record.

All three of the governor's previous appointments to the Supreme Court were judges. Joette Katz had been a trial judge for three years. Fleming L. Norcott Jr. was a Superior Court judge for

eight years and a judge on the Appellate Court for five years before being elevated. Robert I. Berdon had been a Superior Court judge for 18 years when Mr. Weicker named him to the Supreme Court.

The governor's search beyond the bench for a high-court nominee shouldn't be troubling, even though Justice Palmer is only the third member of the Supreme Court in this century without prior experience as a judge. Gov. Ella T. Grasso brought Ellen A. Peters, now chief justice, from Yale Law School. Raymond E. Baldwin, who had been governor and U.S. senator, was appointed a justice in 1949.

Justice Palmer was a good U.S. attorney and received high marks as Connecticut's top prosecutor. His name was not the only one forwarded to the governor by the Judicial Selection Commission. Mr. Weicker thought him to be the best qualified of those he had to choose from.

Perhaps Mr. Weicker is not going strictly by the book, to the discomfort of some legislators who feel they should play a more important part in the selection process, and of some sitting judges who have been passed over. But the governor's record of appointments to the bench so far has been a good one.

He has trod the middle ground between hide-bound reliance on seniority and a reckless disregard for experience.

April Fool's Day rendezvous for Colonial

Any deal that would permit co-founders Benjamin J. Sisti and Jonathan N. Googel to retain wealth accumulated from their bankrupt Colonial Realty Co. would be odious.

Mr. Sisti and Mr. Googel, once touted as geniuses in real-estate syndication, are now called reckless speculators and worse. Their playing fast and loose with mortgage lenders has been blamed for the collapse of eight Connecticut banks.

About 6,000 investors in limited partnerships created by Colonial Realty have been left empty-handed and screaming fraud. No wonder a proposal to leave Mr. Sisti and Mr. Googel with a few million dollars angers those who have a sense of fair play.

Pragmatically, some would say, there is justification for what court-appointed liquidation trustee Hal M. Hirsch is suggesting. Those who subscribe to the bankruptcy truism that getting something is always better than getting nothing may be comfortable with Mr. Hirsch's plan. It

would let Mr. Sisti and his family keep up to \$2 million, while returning about \$8 million to a pool of assets from which creditors would be paid. Mr. Googel and family would be allowed to keep \$1.65 million while returning \$5 million for distribution to creditors. Mr. Hirsch could benefit from the deal because his 3 percent trustee's fee could be drawn from the pool.

There are a lot of other details to the Hirsch proposal, none of which will make it palatable to those who invested an estimated \$350 million in Colonial Realty-sponsored partnerships.

Meanwhile, U.S. Bankruptcy Court Judge Robert L. Krechevsky has scheduled a hearing on Mr. Hirsch's proposal for April 1. A skeptic who sees irony in the coincidence of the hearing date and April Fool's Day probably has the entire Colonial Realty debacle in perspective.

Messrs. Sisti and Googel should not be able to squeeze out of this tragic debacle with millions of dollars in their pockets.

NU's gift of cleaner air

Everyone benefits from Northeast Utilities' unusual gift to the American Lung Association of 10,000 fewer tons of sulfur dioxide spewed into the air in the next century.

The utility gets a tax break for the donation. Its customers get a rate break from the company's tax break. New England gets less acid rain. Government gets compliance with clean-air goals without resorting to bullying.

Such a deal is too good not to be followed by similar donations from other power companies.

Federal law limits the amount of pollutants that companies may emit from plants fired by fossil fuels. Northeast Utilities, headquartered in Berlin, is New England's largest electric company. NU expects the government to allow it to emit 150,000 tons of sulfur dioxide between the years 2000 and 2004.

But the utility is expected to emit considerably less sulfur than allowed by law because NU's

major electricity-generating facilities now use low-sulfur fuels, nuclear power and hydroelectric power.

Under federal law, power companies may stockpile the pollution allowances they don't use, sell surplus allowances to other pollution generators, or retire them. By giving the American Lung Association 7 percent of its pollution allowance, NU has removed 10,000 tons of sulfur dioxide permanently from the atmosphere. That 7 percent could have fetched \$3 million had it been sold to a power-hungry company.

Environmentalists have argued that federal clean-air standards could have been stricter without hurting companies. But that's another story. Given the existing national compact on air pollution, Northeast Utilities used its allowance responsibly and should be commended for a pioneering initiative. This is proof that companies can profit from cleaning up.

That championship season

OUR TOWNS

Hartford & Neighbors

The coach of a recent foe of the marvelous Hartford Public High School boys' basketball team told his players after their defeat: Feel privileged to have been on the same court as the Hartford Public squad. How true.

To the surprise of no one who closely follows high school basketball, the Owls Saturday won the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference Class LL championship. They handily beat a very good Danbury team. The victory, the first state championship for Hartford Public since 1962, crowned a season in which the team also went undefeated: 27 victories, no losses. Wow!

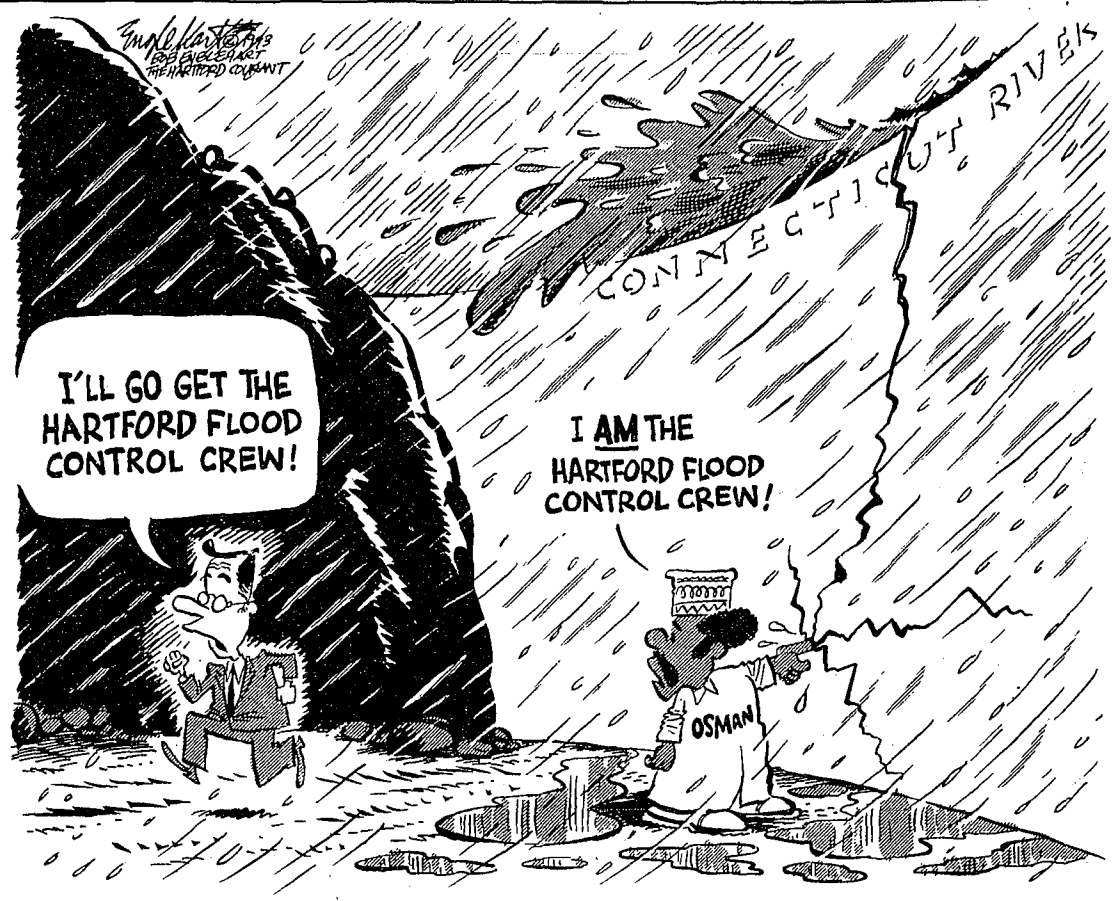
The Owls have a genuine star in Marcus Camby, the Parade Magazine All-American who lived up to his billing in the final game by scoring a game-high 32 points and being named the state

championship tournament's most valuable player. But the team is distinguished as much by the disciplined and unselfish play encouraged by coach Stan Piorowski as by the talent of Mr. Camby and other standout performers. Throughout the season, players looked for the open man and passed to him. No opponent could plan on beating Hartford Public by double-teaming one member of its team.

Hartford Public's success provided a welcome boost to pride at the school and in Hartford, a city that has had more than its share of troubles.

★ ★ ★

Also due congratulations are the St. Thomas Aquinas boys' basketball team, which won the CIAC Class M title — the New Britain school's sixth but probably last, given plans for its merger with Mary Immaculate Academy in the city. And the Thomas-ton girls' team won the Class S title, joining the Southington girls' squad — winner for the sixth time in Class LL — in the championship circle.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Prescription for quality education

■ Ted Carroll made some valid points in the March 14 Commentary article "Put the emphasis on quality to achieve integrated education in Hartford." As an educator who has taught in New York, Maryland and, now, Colchester, I have experienced life in the urban white, African-American and Hispanic communities.

I agree that Hartford should pursue quality education to achieve integration. Magnet and theme schools should be implemented and parents should be provided with choices for their children's schooling.

There are other options Hartford and suburban towns could implement to make communities more accessible.

- Sell homes for \$1 to people willing to rebuild Hartford, similar to a Baltimore project in the late 1970s.
- Make all public housing projects into cooperative housing units in which every family has an investment in its own living area and neighborhood.
- Apartment buildings, townhouses, housing for the elderly, subsidized housing and single-family homes and condominiums should be located within areas surrounded by elementary, middle and high schools and religious

meeting houses that incorporate all religions in one facility. Also, these residences should be near shopping centers and malls.

To achieve integration and quality education, politicians, real-estate agents, business leaders and bankers must work together and put self-interest aside for the good of all people.

Teachers, students, administrators, parents and community leaders must join forces to make quality education benefit our society.

Les I. Kershner
East Haddam

Editor's note: The writer teaches sixth grade at William J. Johnston School in Colchester.



Randy Mack Bishop
Texas International Features

Fairfield TV watchers favor New York

■ The March 7 editorial "Fairfield County isn't part of New York" claimed that "Arbitron, like Cablevision, has failed to recognize southern Connecticut's dissolving links to New York." Unfortunately, the editorial failed to ask Arbitron why Fairfield County is assigned to the New York market, how often we evaluate a county's assignment to a market, what our home market definition means and why we developed the definition.

While I realize the editorial page is the forum for opinion, I'm sure Courant readers count on opinions that are based on a careful evaluation of the facts.

Arbitron's rule for assigning a county to a home market is simple and straightforward. The city with the stations that are watched the most is the city that gets the county as part of its home market.

Once each year, Arbitron compiles a summary of television viewing for every county in the United States and assigns each county to a home market. In Fairfield County, our television surveys report that 57 percent of all

the hours Fairfield residents spend watching TV are spent tuned to New York stations. Twenty-two percent of the time they are tuned to Hartford-New Haven stations and 18 percent of the time to national cable networks such as ESPN or USA.

Arbitron developed the Area of Dominant Influence for one purpose only: to define for advertisers and broadcasters an exclusive geographic area in which the bulk of the audience for a city's TV stations is found. The Area of Dominant Influence is a TV marketing definition, not a political or social one.

We pride ourselves on being an objective, impartial and industry-accredited media-research company. It's our job to report what we find out about the TV audience for the benefit of the broadcast advertising business. Arbitron has no interest or authority to establish the Area of Dominant Influence as a standard for any other use.

Thomas F. Mocarisky
Vice President of Communications
Arbitron Co.
New York, N.Y.

State's colleges are proudly diverse

■ The March 18 news story "Colleges enroll more minorities" would have been even more informative if the table accompanying the story had reflected the total number of minority students attending independent colleges and universities in Connecticut.

This year, one out of every three minority students attending college in the state is enrolled in an independent institution. This represents a 3.2 percent increase over the number of minority students enrolled in the 1991-92 academic year.

Minority students account for 16.2 percent of total enrollments at independent colleges and universities. This is in line with the percentage of minority people who make up the state's population.

This year, 2,941 black students and 1,763 Hispanic students enrolled at independent institutions of higher education. Half of all black and Hispanic students enrolled in four-year colleges and universities in Connecticut attend independent institutions.

Students attending independent colleges and universities represent a diverse mix of people from all backgrounds, cultures and economic circumstances. The institutions are particularly proud of their record of recruiting, retaining and graduating minority students.

Michael A. Gerber
President
Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges
Hartford

■ I was impressed with Ted Carroll's thinking.

We should bring quality to all schools, whether they are in wealthy suburbs, rural towns or inner cities. This will require radical change.

- Eliminate local funding of education — the local property tax. Fund all schools through revenues collected by the state so that people who live in the suburbs will contribute equally to all schools. All schools would have equal funding per pupil.
- Eliminate academic tenure for teachers and administrators. Hold all school personnel to high standards of excellence. Get rid of the incompetents.
- Extend the school year. Long summer vacations bore most young people.
- Reduce class size considerably, particularly in the lower three or four grades, including kindergarten.

Richard Hutton
Southington

A new life for Groton?

■ I read "A new life for an old sub base" and I am troubled that a former planner would not recognize that the problem with the closing of the Groton submarine base is not what to do with all that land mass and all that great waterfront property [op-ed page article, March 17]. It is that people are losing wages in that closing.

People can't buy housing on great waterfront property if they don't have down payments. People can't shop in those great malls if they have no spending money.

Construction jobs have a way of disappearing when buildings are done. That leaves \$4.25-per-hour, mostly part-time, jobs.

The kind of development the article referred to has a place in the large economic framework of a region. But right now, this region needs industry that can support families through all the years it takes to form, grow and finally retire.

This state needs companies that make products. Retail enterprises cannot stand alone. They are dependent on the bedrock of industrial wealth.

If the author of the article wants to do the state a favor, he should figure out how to invent new products to sell to the world, how to convert the military industries still here to peacetime powerhouses and how to bring new, well-paying, long-term committed industry to our state.

Carol L. Panke
Bloomfield

Where to write

The Courant welcomes letters on matters of public interest. Letters, preferably typed, must be signed. They must include an address and day and evening telephone numbers for verification. We reserve the right to edit and shorten the text. Writers ordinarily will be limited to one published letter every three months. Address: Letters, The Courant, 285 Broad St., Hartford 06115. Or send by fax, 520-6941. The address for letters about town news and Our Towns editorials is on Page 2 of this section, where those letters appear.