

The rail trail would have attracted riffraff

By Herbert L. Kahn
TOWN CRIER & TAB COLUMNIST

It was F. Scott Fitzgerald who wrote: "The rich are very different from you and me."

"They sure are," W.C. Fields agreed. "For one thing, they have more money."

The same philosophy was expressed about 40 years ago in a Peter Arno cartoon, which showed two Park Avenue club-men staring resentfully at a line of pickets parading with signs in the street below their window.

"What is all this twaddle about underprivileged minorities?" one club-man is sputtering to the other. "Aren't we a minority?"

Despite the obvious truth in these assertions, there continue to be reckless attempts to blur such distinctions. At least two such efforts are currently in the news: The Clinton-Gore campaign finance scandals and the proposed bicycle trail through Weston.

Consider the Clinton matter. The issue here goes much deeper than the need to appoint a special prosecutor to determine whether the president committed a crime by making money-raising phone calls from the White House, instead of using a pay phone across the street. It goes to the entire basis of our two-party system, in which the Republicans are the party of the rich and the Democrats are the party of the less rich.

Clearly, this leads to an equal contest, because the party of the less rich almost automatically has a larger membership, while the party of the rich can spend much more on TV ads. Clinton is obviously trying to upset this equilibrium by trying to raise excessive amounts of money. Moreover, he does not seem to be doing it for the understandable and perhaps even praiseworthy purpose of enriching himself, but in order to further his political aims and principles.

This must be stopped. Fortunately, Clinton's political principles, if they exist at all, are scarcely noticeable. The danger, however, is that some future Democratic president might use the same underhanded fund-raising methods and simultaneously have distinct and unshakable aims and principles.

ONE MAN'S OPINION

HERBERT KAHN



A similar if by some judgments less significant item is the Rail Trail, a proposed 25-mile bicycle trail connecting my town of Weston with six other towns along some discontinued railroad tracks. Because the state is picking up the entire construction cost and the expected expenditures by the towns are minimal, many unsophisticated people have been surprised by the storm of protest arising from Weston.

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Included among the protesters are some environmentalists who are disturbed by the inconvenience that such a trail might cause to the rabbits, blue jays and field mice that have taken up residence along

the tracks during the past 15 years. A more important reason, however, is the probability that a bicycle trail would attract hordes of undesirable people from outside the town.

Such people would cycle (or rollerblade, or walk) through Weston, peering into the windows of houses that are built on large, secluded acreage at least partly to escape such intrusions. Such people might trespass, litter and even steal. Even worse, such people stand a real chance of reducing the real estate values of adjacent houses, or even throughout the town.

Those who claim that the bicycle trail through Lexington has produced no such problems miss the point. The Lexington trail attracts desirable people from Weston, whose presence acts to raise real estate values. Obviously, the reverse would not be the case.

It is therefore no wonder that at Weston's Monday night Town Meeting on Dec. 8, there was heavy debate before the trail proposal was overwhelmingly defeated.

In retrospect, however, there should have been a compromise, in which the town would have set certain minimum requirements. For example, cyclists from out of town might have had to carry written evidence that their bicycles had cost more than \$1,200 and been purchased within the past two years. Alternatively, they could be required to provide notarized copies of their most recent 1040 forms, to show that their incomes fall within the nation's top 3 percent. Either of these requirements would protect the citizens of our town from problems which they have not sought and do not deserve.

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