

"ANYTHING TWO PEOPLE KNOW IS NOT A SECRET."

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Can government win the May 6th sales tax vote by virtue of the Stockholm Syndrome?

by Dave Featherly

Just over a hundred days short of 35 years ago, a botched bank robbery in Stockholm, Sweden led to captives being held for six days before being released.

Over the course of their captivity, the hostages became supportive of the captor. That relationship coined the term, "Stockholm syndrome." It has a variety of very similar definitions. Three follow:

Stockholm syndrome *n.* "A phenomenon in which a hostage begins to identify with and grow sympathetic to his or her captor."

And, "the psychological tendency of a hostage to bond with, identify with, or sympathize with his or her captor."

Finally, "an emotional attachment to a captor formed by a hostage as a result of continuous stress, dependence, and a need to cooperate for survival."

There has been considerable debate about what causes such a bond to develop under those circumstances. Some point to a captive's dependence on their captor and fear of a rescue attempt going awry and causing them injury or death,

I believe the reason is much simpler and is similar to what is happening in Cheyenne and the rural areas of Laramie County right now.

Whether a captive or not, when a person is subjected to only one side of an argument, ad nauseam, without let-up or contradiction, the results can resemble the Stockholm syndrome.

The captives (voters) begin to bond with, identify with, and grow sympathetic to the captor (government). All they've heard and seen for weeks on end has been the constant bleating of officials and their daily newspaper. Those utterances and writings have been only positive - only supportive - for all ballot propositions.

One of recent time's most notable examples of the Stockholm syndrome effect was Patty Hearst. Wealthy, pampered and living a privileged life, she was kidnapped into a radical group and she shortly thereafter went over to the

And they call the Cheyenne Herald an advocacy journal? WT-E Our View -- April 27, Schools can't replace rec center ... April 26, Shooting range makes sense ... April 25, Greenway and Gardens are needs ... April 24, Now's the time for rec center ... April 23, Archer Complex is a necessity ... April 22, Proposition 2 is about health ... April 21, Proposition 1 improves life ... April 20, Sixth penny is an opportunity ... April 15, Poll shows Archer needs some help ... April 14, Rec center would be on fast track ... April 13, Botanic Gardens is a wise investment ... April 8, Fair supporters miss opportunity ... April 6, Lay groundwork now for Archer ... April 5, Coroner deserves new location. Where is any objectivity? Are all taxes always good?

dark side - assuming another identity, spouting her kidnapper's rhetoric, and even assisting in a bank robbery.

Some, even before the incident in Sweden, professed, when caught, that they had been taken against their will and made to participate in lawlessness. Caril Ann Fugate is an example.

Fugate couldn't use a "Stockholm defense" because the term hadn't been coined yet - the bank robbery attempt in Stockholm was August 23, 1973.

Here in Cheyenne, the captors have been unrelenting. Day after day after day - broadcast after broadcast after broadcast - 98% of what has been written or said encourages the captives to vote in favor of all four of the propositions.

Mailings have been made at public expense. Guest columns and editorials appear daily in their controlled newspaper. That newspaper even arranged for children to write supportive letters on behalf of the rec center. Like the Stockholm captor, only one side of the issue has been presented. On the daily's website, negative columns and letters have virtually been eliminated. Only those in favor are posted.

A poll was done by a group not known as having any polling experience or ability. In another city, the results would have been buried well back in the paper with disclosures that the poll results were probably unreliable. But, as in the seclusion of that Swedish bank, no

objections are allowed. None would be published, broadcast or tolerated.

In Stockholm, once released, one of the captives became romantically involved with her captor. The same thing is apt to

occur in Cheyenne. Captives may vote for those same captors in the August primary or November general elections.

An opponent might write a letter to the editor that states an opinion that the daily will turn into a "fact" and refuse to print because it is unsupported by verifiable facts. An opinion, of course, does not have to be supportable by the facts. It is, after all, only an opinion.

Yet, when a county commissioner offered weight to the Stockholm syndrome by introducing the fairgrounds into the reasons to vote in favor of Proposition No. 3, the editor dutifully allowed it to be printed without editing. Because it agreed.

The fairgrounds is not on the ballot and was not considered to be on the ballot. In spite of the land being acquired at the instigation of a fair official and the commissioners knew from that day forward that the fair board wanted some of the Archer Property for a new fairgrounds, that project was not allowed on the ballot.

Just like the Stockholm captor curried favor by soliciting water and food, and allowing the captives to use the bathroom and sleep, the county commissioners held out a new fairgrounds as a reason to vote "Yes" on May 6th - even though that fairgrounds will not receive a dime.

The daily newspaper, the area's greatest contributor to the Stockholm syndrome of conducting elections, saw no problem with allowing that subterfuge to be presented to trusting voters.

Why doesn't this group of insiders - the elected officials and their flunkies at 702 W. Lincolnway, believe they can prevail in these sales tax elections without devousness and deceptiveness?

Elected officials know they are not allowed to spend public money to campaign in any way toward passage of a sales tax proposition yet they engage in behavior that is clearly illegal. The mailings on behalf of the Greenway and the signs along the Greenway are intended to sway voters - not inform them about the upcoming election. If these were not political campaign materials, why have no similar mailings been made when we were not approaching an election?

A PAC was formed to boost Prop 1 - the shooting range. Its noble name is something like "Partners in Progress." Kind of like "Swiftboaters for the Truth," or "Integrity in Wyoming Government." The vagueness of "Partners" deliberately conceals the fact that the organizer of that PAC is the proponent of the shooting range - the same guy who promised county commissioners that his group could raise the money privately for the shooting range if they could have some of the Archer Property and a favorable lease.

Now, almost \$3 million is on this ballot for that same shooting range. The commissioners know what promises were made about the shooting range and moto cross track. But, they've become your **rural city council** and conduct themselves in unsavory ways. They put the shooting range on the ballot but left the fairgrounds off. Go figure!

Beginning with a special election (that may cost nearly a quarter million dollars) that will avoid the larger number of certain voters in August or November - and running through the dishonest use of public funds to support the sales tax propositions, this election will leave an odor for a long time. Win, lose, or draw, this election is going to stink up the joint.

Will one, two, three or all four propositions pass? I honestly can't predict.

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