

New Orleans should not be rebuilt at its current location

Those of us who have been involved in disaster planning have known for decades that one day New Orleans would drown. Everyone at the exercise, which included the Federal Emergency Management Agency, knew it was just a matter of time until it occurred. Thus, there is no reason for the lack of preparation we have seen.

The premise of this article is that nothing should be done to rebuild New Orleans at its current site. Specifically:

1) They knew the hurricane was coming and prepared poorly. The Corps of Engineers' representative on National Public Radio said that the levees failed because they were designed only to hold against a Level 3 hurricane. Risk analysis, properly done, starts with the worst what-ifs. If a Level 5 hurricane hits, what will happen? Since the main defense of the city was the levees, they should have been designed and built to handle the greatest threat.

2) As the hurricane approached, city leaders failed to get the people out. It is not enough to declare a mandatory evacuation. It must be enforced. An example of what should have been done is the way our sheriff made sure everyone left the path of our recent flood. The notion of putting people in the stadium must have been an afterthought as they did not have water or food or power backup.

3) The city is a giant septic tank. All the basics of life, save air, are missing. Even after the debris is removed, the contamination remains. There is not enough disinfectant in Louisiana to sanitize the cesspool.

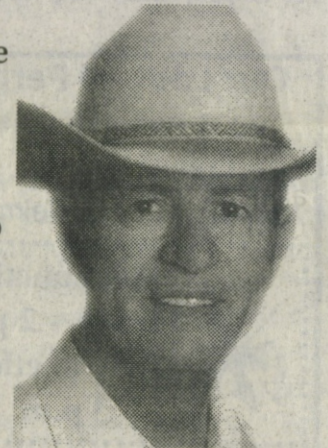
4) People smart enough to live where they do not intentionally expose themselves to calamity

should not have to pay for those who do. Every federal dollar that goes to the Crescent is a bailout of a mistake. Americans who are wise enough not to live below sea level will end up sending money to those who are missing that wisdom. That is wrong.

If we could be sure it would not happen again or if we could be sure the city would learn a lesson, then salvage makes sense. But what we know of nature denies the former. And the lack of leadership we are seeing on our television sets denies the latter.

Those poor unfortunate people who have lost everything need jobs and new housing. They do deserve federal assistance because they have been victimized by the failure of their elected officials. However, the reconstruction should not be in the same place. It should be where they will be safer next time. It is possible to build a new city from scratch. Brasilia did it. So did Canberra.

Then what should be done with the remnants of the bowl? We could fence the former New Orleans off and give the area back to the people who had the original idea to put the city there — the French.



**J. RONALD
CARY**

J. Ronald Cary is a retired military policy officer and now a marketing professor at Our Lady of the Lake University. These are not the views of the university.