

TWINS from B1**Several opponents protest outside park**

About a dozen demonstrators, part of a group called "Citizens Against Sports Welfare," carried handmade signs opposing the proposed 1 percent restaurant tax to help pay for the stadium. Polls show they have many comrades.

"Our Tax \$, Don't Leave It To Beaver" read one sign.

"I'd love to have a baseball team," said protester Phillip Mullis, 31, of Winston-Salem. "But I think the people who are going to profit from it should pay for it, not average taxpayers."

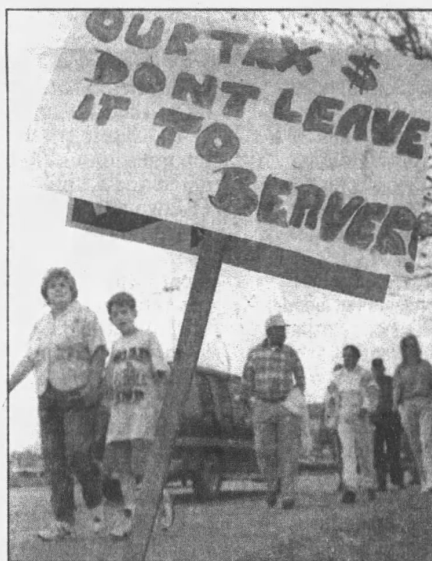
Minutes before the game, the Twins' possible sale seemed as unsettled as ever.

Beaver said his Oct. 3 letter of intent to buy the Twins from Carl Pohlad expired Tuesday.

The sale remains "95 percent" complete, Beaver said, and he expects negotiations to continue, although he wasn't sure a final agreement would be completed by the May vote.

The letter's expiration means that Pohlad's restriction from negotiating with other potential buyers has lifted.

Twins president Jerry Bell, who spoke with Pohlad on Tuesday, said he had no details on the letter of intent's status. But the letter says that "through March 31, unless extended by



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Baseball fans walked through a crowd protesting public funding of a proposed stadium Tuesday outside Ernie Shore Field in Winston-Salem, N.C.

mutual agreement," Pohlad couldn't "directly or indirectly negotiate" a sale with other potential bidders. Beaver acknowledged Pohlad has that right today.

Minneapolis lawyer Clark Griffith, the only Minnesota suitor who has made a public offer to buy the Twins, said he would try to contact

Pohlad, who has rejected him previously. Griffith, speaking from Minneapolis, said the letter of intent's expiration was "very good news to me and very good news for all baseball fans in our state. We in Minnesota can now be more productive."

But Beaver was sanguine about the passing of yet another unkept deadline. "Oh, today's the 31st?" the former nursing home magnate asked in mock surprise. "We still have a buyer and seller that are trying to put together a contract," he said. He acknowledged that he and Pohlad haven't spoken for two weeks.

Such details weren't on the minds of the fans, who all seemed to be saying the same things: A big-league team would give Triad residents something to do and something to be proud of. "This area needs something else to do other than go out to eat," said Kenny Edwards, 37, a soft-drink distributor from Greensboro.

"This is the home of civil rights," said Tia Murphy, 44, a phone company sales director from Winston-Salem. "This is where people went to lunch counters and said, 'We're as good as anybody else.' Well, we're all as good as anybody else. We deserve a major league franchise as much as anyone else."

One man in the stadium wasn't smiling. The Twins' Paul Molitor, born and raised a Twins fan in St. Paul, said: "If this area is worthy, I'd love to see them have the opportunity to get a team. But I'm not sure if the Twins coming here is the best way to do that."

"I don't want to see the Twins come here."

Twins in NC

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