

Liberty Medal protest

by Ron Goldwyn

Daily News Staff Writer

A newly formed group of clergy and anti-apartheid activists say it's wrong to award the prestigious Philadelphia Liberty Medal to South African President F.W. de Klerk at Independence Hall on the Fourth of July.

The group's leaders said yesterday they are organizing protests to get the award rescinded or to demonstrate their objections in the streets.

President Clinton plans to present the \$100,000 award jointly to de Klerk and Nelson Mandela, president of the African National Congress. The two men have been negotiating terms of power sharing and transfer between South Africa's white minority govern-

Group opposed to de Klerk

ment and its black majority.

"It's not just a farce, it's honestly an outrage that a person with the kind of history de Klerk has would be honored with a Liberty Medal," declared the Rev. Isaac Miller, of the Episcopal Church of the Advocate in North Philadelphia and co-chair of the still-forming Philadelphia Freedom Committee.

"We are honored that Nelson Mandela is honored in this city, but we are really dishonored when you honor somebody like F.W. de Klerk, who has been responsible for an incredible amount of death," he said.

Miller and the Rev. David Weeks Jr., of Shalom Baptist Church in

Logan, are co-chairs. Other organizers include the Rev. Paul Washington, of Church of the Advocate, Jerry Herman and the Rev. David Gracie, of the American Friends Service Committee.

The group plans a news conference near Independence Hall today. Miller said many of the leaders are black clergymen but the group is broadening its scope.

The Rev. Jesse W. Brown Jr., president of the Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity, said his organization also opposes the award to de Klerk, whose policies "even to this day are still killing South Africans." But the organization hadn't decided how, or if, to

join the protest.

The protest won't include the city's best-known apartheid fighter — the Rev. Leon Sullivan, retired pastor of Zion Baptist Church and author of the Sullivan Principles, designed to guide companies doing business in South Africa. He'll be taking part in the ceremony itself.

"Frankly, I would prefer if it just went to Mr. Mandela, period," Sullivan said, but added, "If the awarding of the dual medals is satisfactory to Nelson Mandela, it's satisfactory to me. He's the person who is involved more deeply in the struggle."

Mayor Rendell, who played a key role in bringing the three dignitaries together for the award, echoed that view in a brief See **MEDAL** Page 29

PENNSYLVANIA
CONVENTION
CENTER

9

DAYS UNTIL OPENING

The center, to be formally dedicated June 26, will be one of the 20 largest in the United States and second largest on the East Coast behind New York City's Jacob K. Javitz Center

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Interview last night.

"Nelson Mandela thinks it's appropriate, Rev. Leon Sullivan, for many years America's conscience on South Africa, believes the award is so appropriate he's flying in from Arizona to be with us that day," Rendell said. "Who are we to disagree with these two who have spent so many years fighting for majority rule?"

Responding to that argument, Herman, of the Friends Committee, said Mandela is under great pressure to keep negotiating and is in no position to object to de Klerk's award.

"People are giving medals in our name, and de Klerk is not worthy of getting a medal," he said.

The Liberty Medal was first awarded in 1989 to Poland's Lech Walesa. Its dual purpose has been to reward champions of liberty and to focus world attention on Philadelphia on the day that local leaders believe it deserves the spotlight.

Mary Gregg, executive director of We the People 2000, the non-profit group that established the award, said controversy in such awards is not unusual, and she had already heard some complaints about de Klerk.

"Obviously people will disagree," she said. "We are pleased that people are looking at the idea of liberty and what the medal symbolizes."

Martin Meyerson, former University of Pennsylvania president, who heads the 13-member International Selection Commission, told the Associated Press Tuesday that progress in South Africa has depended on both men.

"There was a very strong feeling on the part of the selection commission that in a world in which news on these kinds of matters is not very favorable, here was a remarkable effort from two people starting from very diverse settings, each learning greatly from the other, working together to provide some hope in a situation where there was very little before," he said.

Staff writer Dave Davies and the Associated Press contributed to this report.