

editorial opinion



Hors d'oeuvres by Lynn Orr

When I made money

I love research stories, like most reporters. They're fun to read, and they often provide story angles that satisfy copy-hungry editors.

Then again, sometimes it's just fun to discover that someone has spent a lot of time, and often a lot of government money, substantiating what everybody knows anyway.

A recent study concerning job status indicates that the income-statement ratio may be on its way out. That is, trash collectors may earn more money, but typing letters is ritzier.

I could have told the researchers that a long time ago. My weekly earnings were at their best when I was waiting tables, although everyone cringed when I said I was a cocktail waitress.

"Why do you have a college degree if you're going to wait tables?" I was asked by just about everyone.

I had a one-word answer—money. I wanted to go to Europe, but I wasn't going to get there on a beginning reporter's salary. (I couldn't hit London on an experienced reporter's salary either, for that matter.)

AT ANY RATE, I got my degree, did a sixth-month stint pushing alcoholic beverages, and got to Europe. Then I began a two-year search for a journalism career.

Needless to say, friends, relatives and acquaintances were relieved when I didn't chuck journalistic aspirations for the life of the buck at the local lounge. Readers may take a different view, but the whole experience put me a few years ahead of the job status researcher.

Actually I'm glad the whole thing is out in the open now. Income and status always have been a rather insidious duo. The whole idea got a boost when upstart merchants attempted to break into the aristocracy in the 18th century. The nouveau

riche have attempted to shrug off a bourgeois stigma ever since.

The more attractive the job, the higher the pay makes sense to me. But it's economics, not attitudinal change, that's changing the status game. If the sanitary engineer market is wide open, the pay gets fatter to attract the employee.

UNFORTUNATELY for reporters, the reverse is true. The post-Watergate era propelled a throng of college graduates convinced that journalism was an exciting career into the market. We scored big on the status survey and I've a hunch we owe it all to Woodward and Bernstein.

We're a great example if you're trying to disprove that higher income provides higher status. But doctors were a fly in the researcher's ointment. They score right up there on top when it comes to status, and we all know where they stand when it comes to income.

Check out the West Bloomfield and Bloomfield Hills telephone directories if you have any doubts. Doctors pulled a fast one for that coup. A few centuries ago they lacked both status and high incomes. But they quickly learned the secret to reverse that ugly trend. They simply learned how to control the market. With doctors at a premium and the American Medical Association controlling the number of MD graduates, they managed to pull themselves out of the barbershops and into the upper crust.

If you have any doubts about that one, check out the survey about most desired professions for sons-in-law.

PERSONALLY I'd rather see the elimination of status and a more equitable income and standard of living for everyone. But I think I have to wait a while for that or emigrate to Sweden.

Shirlee's sallies

by Shirlee Iden



Voters only whispered about who'll run schools

The voice of the people came out a squeaky whisper this week.

In Southfield and Birmingham, a mere seven per cent of the electorate took the trouble to vote for members of school boards who will have an important impact on the education of their children.

If you think that's bad, just 1,103 people voted in the Farmington School District, a puny two per cent. An assistant superintendent of school there said the showing was the smallest he could recall and the lowest number of voters in 17 elections.

The Birmingham vote may produce a recount since only four votes separate two board aspirants. What a difference a few more votes could have made. And think how many dollars will be spent if the recount has to be done.

In each of these elections, the local board race was accompanied on the ballot only by the election of trustees for Oakland Community College. No millages were decided. In other words, there were no pocketbook issues. Simply the future of education in three communities.

To be sure, torrential rains fell for about three hours on election day, but the polls are open for 13 hours, and every interested voter should have had ample time to cast his vote.

THERE ARE two primary reasons every eligible voter should exercise the franchise to vote in such an election.

First, thoughtful people contend that look at their arms and gamble that if it looks okay to them, there's no need to have medical personnel see it.

Second, that precious right to vote is something not to be taken for granted.

Candidates in such elections have a large investment of time and effort.

How frustrating it must be when the apathy of voters is such you could almost say: "They gave an election and no one came."

I went to school twice in the past week or so. The first time was to observe the special TB clinics the school and health department put on in four Southfield middle schools. An employee of the schools had been diagnosed as a suspected communicable with TB.

The clinics were the Friday before the election and parents only had a few days notice to bring their youngsters and themselves in for the TB skin test.

But hundreds were lined up at each of the schools when the clinics opened. The waiting time was far longer than the lines at polling places the following Monday. But they came and they waited. More than 5,500 people got the tests because people were concerned.

Ironically, fewer than half of those who took the skin test Friday returned for it to be professionally read on Monday. Health officials said many just look at their arms and gamble that if it looks okay to them, there's no need to have medical personnel see it.

IF MORE people had returned to the four middle schools on election day to have the test results read, perhaps they would also have taken the time to vote. We'll never know.

Monday night I was back at the schools to wait for election results. Chatting with school board president Robert Tomassian, he related his concern that voter apathy is a serious problem for the community.

"It's too bad we need controversy to bring people out," he said.

In a few weeks, new school boards will begin to function in Southfield, Birmingham and Farmington, boards whose newest members were chosen by a tiny part of the electorate. Some voters may find that though these people are sincere, hard-working and concerned, they may have a different slant from some parents about education.

When that becomes apparent, we may hear a lot of shouting. It's just too bad the electorate didn't talk louder last Monday.

From our readers

Senior citizen housing is lauded

Editor:

I am a Farmington Hills homeowner in favor of senior citizen housing, RCE and RCE-1 Districts and the Farmington Hills councilmembers who support these ordinances.

I applaud the Farmington Hills council's efforts to reach a compromise on the issue of housing for senior citizens and I urge the council to continue trying to reach agreement.

From my involvement in numerous social and charitable organizations, I am convinced of the need for housing for senior citizens. To me, it's not a matter of whether there should be senior citizen housing, but how and when.

One trip to McNamara Towers (senior citizens complex) in Livonia, behind Livonia Mall, will convince the staunchest opponents of senior citizen housing that such a structure is an excellent residence for senior citizens and they really enjoy the facility.

One thing to bear in mind when reflecting on this issue is the tremendous changes that have occurred in our society in terms of the age make up of the population, the movement from rural to urban settlement and the role of the family and its members.

There are many more senior citizens today than there have been in the past and the trend will increase in the future. Medical progress is lengthening life expectancy and lower birth rates are reducing the proportion of young people.

Parents, when we were a basically rural society, could continue to lead productive lives long into their old ages and family and men are also taking on new responsibilities to help their mates spread their wings of new awareness.

This shift is sometimes traumatic for the couple and is aggravated if senior citizens reside with the family.

In my judgement, we have a moral responsibility to provide for senior citizens. Not so much as payment for all of their past efforts in our behalf, but because, if we believe in God, we are charged with caring for our fellow

human beings. "Whoever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, that you do unto me." If we allow our consciences to guide us, I'm convinced

our senior citizens will be adequately and lovingly cared for.

EDWARD BECKER
Farmington Hills

They defend Hills' dust control protest

Editor:

In regard to the May 8 "joke" of a public hearing on dust control for Farmington Hills residents, we thought that the 320 residents that attended the meeting adequately represented all areas of Farmington Hills.

They expressed their opinion adamantly that they did not feel it was their responsibility—or even legal for them to be responsible—for the oiling or chloriding of the gravel roads they live on, many of which are heavily traveled main and secondary roads. It would seem that Farmington Hills first builds subdivisions, and as an afterthought, thinks about roads to get to them and funds with which to maintain them.

Population has risen sharply in Farmington Hills and the gasoline taxes should have done the same, but our council claims, "We're broke." We're aware that the Hills did have to

purchase road equipment, but they are still responsible for chloriding or oiling.

WE FEEL the council (1) did not listen to residents; (2) are not able to initiate this "temporary tax" assessment whereby residents have to pay for summer maintenance of their gravel roads; and (3) did not vote according to the wishes of residents.

There are concerned about what our council people are doing to our city. What's next?

CONCERNED FARMINGTON HILLS CITIZENS

Editor's column was incorrect, she charges

Editor:

I read, with great upset, Steve Barnaby's article of June 5 in regard to Mr. Majors (City Mgr. George Majors) and Farmington Hills.

The article was incorrect in many instances. Mr. Majors was wrongly accused of many things. Mr. Barnaby did not check his facts. The item had a gossip tone to it. I thought we had a better grade of newspaper.

I know of Mr. Majors' honesty and integrity. He has to be the best of any public official I've dealt with. I know that he has gone out of his way to avoid any gains made available through his office. Other officials would not have passed them by, they would have used them for their own personal gain.

Mr. Majors has a fine, outstanding family, and trash such as this has wrongly hurt them all.

May I suggest a closer look at the other heads of our council. Is this a personality conflict or a vendetta?

I UNDERSTAND Mr. Majors issued a rebuttal in answer to Mr. Barnaby. Is it getting the coverage the slanderous article had?

Don't turn our fine local paper into a cheap gossip column.

PATRICIA RIXMANN,
2979 Oak Point Drive
Farmington Hills



"Around the edge

by Jackie Klein

Mix-up paves rocky way

This is a true story. Only the names are being withheld because they're unimportant.

The chain of events happened in Southfield. But the incidents might have taken place anywhere. I give you only the facts. You may judge for yourself the merits or demerits of the case.

The tale is about a man, who we'll call John Stuart, and the asphalt paving company with which he still is employed.

Stuart was hired as a laborer for the company in April 1967. His superintendent, who is also vice-president of the paving firm, showed Stuart and his fellow laborers a letter on Aug. 2, 1977 from a road builder's association announcing employees would get a \$1 an hour decrease in pay.

The men told the superintendent, who we'll name George Simon, that they would go to the offices of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) Aug. 22 instead of reporting to work at the lower pay rate.

"Fine, I don't blame you a bit," Simon responded. "Go see what you can do about it. Call me when you're ready to go back to work."

EMPLOYEES went to the NLRB and filed a charge alleging the union was in violation for agreeing to the wage decrease. The charge was later dismissed. The men agreed among themselves to call Simon that evening to get their work assignments for the next day.

All employees except Stuart contacted Simon and received work directives. Stuart called the superintendent that night and was told Simon was busy but would return the call. He didn't call back.

The next morning, Stuart tried to call Simon at home and at the company garage. There was no answer at either place. Stuart called his steward at home, but he was gone. Stuart

decided not to go to work or try again to contact Simon, the steward or fellow employees.

Stuart, the next day, applied for unemployment compensation benefits. He thought he had been discharged. Simon said when the other men returned to work, they maintained it was more practical to have one person involved in grievance proceedings.

Simon assumed Stuart hadn't come back to work because he was actively attempting to rescind the wage decrease and was unwilling to work for the lesser amount.

On Friday, Aug. 25, Stuart went to the company's secretary-treasurer's office to get his final paycheck. The matter of Stuart's supposed discharge wasn't mentioned.

THE PLOT thickens. On Aug. 30, Stuart filed a charge with the Michigan Civil Rights Commission alleging he had been fired Aug. 22 and he believed his race was a factor. He also claimed he and his fellow black employees had been denied promotions, and whites are hired to fill vacancies in higher paying jobs.

Later that day, a representative of the commission called Simon and told him of Stuart's charges. Simon said Stuart had never been discharged. But later, the superintendent called the commission to say he decided to fire Stuart.

"He went down there and he lied about me," Simon said at a commission hearing. "He knew the other black men were back to work and he was claiming he was fired because he's black. It doesn't make any sense."

The company employs six laborers, five of whom are black. Of five operating engineers (a higher paying job), one is black. When there were job openings in that classification, positions weren't offered to laborers. The

company hired white employees to fill these jobs.

Stuart went to the NLRB and filed an unfair labor practice charge against the company. In March 1978, an administrative law judge ruled that the company engaged in unfair labor practices. The company filed a complaint against the ruling but it was upheld by a three-member panel of the NLRB.

COMPANY attorneys argued that Stuart lost protection of the national labor relations act when he made statements to the civil rights commission which were "knowingly false."

"I'm persuaded by Simon's testimony that Stuart was discharged because he believed the employee had uttered deliberate falsehoods to the state commission. I'm not convinced that Stuart tried to maliciously injure the company," the judge said.

The record does establish that Stuart had not been discharged when he complained that he had. Nor can it be said when he believed he had been fired that he made diligent efforts to get the true facts. If he believed, even if somewhat unreasonably, that he had been fired when he filed a complaint.

The judge said Stuart thought, because of the company's past hiring patterns, it had denied its black employees the opportunity to work as operating engineers. The judge said he wouldn't pass upon the merits of the charges, but that Stuart was still protected by the labor relations act.

The judge ordered the paving company to stop discharging employees because they engage in activities for their mutual protection, to take affirmative action, reinstate Stuart and compensate him for any loss of pay he suffered because of discrimination against him.

As the man on TV says, "What do you think?"

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