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opinion

Tax hikes garner protest; lowered tax met with silence

Taxpayers are a difficult breed to understand. A disgruntled one can be found just about anywhere. And when finding out you work for a newspaper, they become even more disgruntled.

A lot of taxpayers think newspapers and government are in cahoots when it comes to levying taxes.

ment are in cahoots when it comes to levying taxes.

A week or so back, I went to a party. This was going to be a real pleasure, I thought. No one knew who I was, except the hostess. I would keep a low profile, avoid controversy and simply dabble in small talk, for once.

But the hostess, in her ardor to please, introduced me around the room as Steve Barnaby, editor of the Farmington Observer.

My cover was blown. I knew that somewhere in that crowd was a disgruntled taxpayer.

"You're the guy who wrote the article about the tax proposals weren't you?"
Sometimes you can hate your own byline.

I fessed up to being the culprit. We talked taxes

ntil the Scotch ran dry — which took an awfully

Crackerbarrel DEBATE

until the Scotch factor, and the long time.

This is only one example of a newspaper editor's travail when it comes to tax talk. It also happens on the street, over the phone and in the restaurant.

The final interrogatory always gets down to the same question, "Why don't you guys get on the politicians for wasting our money."

Having taken a bundle of the flak for the high taxes. I figure it's about time to enjoy some of the benefits derived when a politically elected body lower taxes.

benetits derived manage in the format in the Farmington School District was lowered at the beginning of the month. Naively, I waited for the phone calls to come pouring in, regalling the school board with praise.

After all, it's not every day that the millage is

After all, it's not every day that the minimum after all, waited by my phone. I jumped in anticipation every time it rang — but nary a call. Finally, I decided to take a walk every day in anticipation that someone, somewhere would stop me on the street and say, "Barnaby, you did it. They lowered the millage rate."

Never did I meet anybody in the restaurants about town who even knew that the millage rate, and been lowered. I went into a cafefine reaction, from overdosing on countless cups of coffee.

In reality, of course, newspapers or their editors-deserve neither credit or criticism for the tax sys-tem anywhere.

tem anywhere.

But in these days of tax revolt, an elected body which does tackle the tax situation and does lower the millage rate, does deserve credit.

And the Farmington School Board hasn't got its just do. I think as taxpayers, we owe a round of thanks. If we can hand it out to them when they continue to raise the millage rate, we certainly can laud them when the rate is lowered.

Some governmental bodies around here spend a lot of time giving millage reduction a lot of ip service, but have never come through.

So spend a minute and give your friendly school board trustee a call.

Decoration Day: Small town's big time

From out of the far distant past comes the sound of muffled drums and the echo of the bugle being sounded from the veterans cemetery plot high atop the hill back home in Pennsylvania.

It is what was then popularly known as Decoration Day

— a day when the graves of those who had given their
lives in the Civil War were decorated. In later years, the
holiday become more formally known as Memorial Day.

But for those of us who lived back home in that little we never missed the opportunity to see that there was a small American flag and a bouquet placed on each grave in that hallowed little plot.

To The Stroller, this was one of the biggest days of the year — almost exceeding Christmas — because his grandfather, the self-styled colonel, was commander of the Grand Army post. The Stroller never felt prouder than when he walked with him to the sacred plot in the

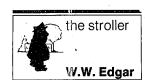
As he now sits in his easy chair, listening to these muf-fled sounds in his memory, he can again picture the set-ting for the one Decoration Day he never will forget.

The cemetery back home was on the other side of the Lehigh River and was atop a knoll that made it unique because it presented a view of the entire town. The old steel bridge that provided passage to the graves lent a bit of color to the ceremonies' setting.

To make the scene more memorable there was a tall monoment on the lawn in front of the little chapel where the memorial services were held. It was the first monument erected to the memory of the Civil War dead in in the entire country.

The Stroller had been looking forward to this particular holiday for many months. And he had good reason. When his grandfather took over as commander of the George W. Puller Post No. 375 G.A.R., one of the first hings he did was to tell his young grandson that he wanted him to recite Lincoln's Gettysburg Address at the cemetery on Decoration Day.

And finally the big day arrived. Arising bright and early, The Stroller couldn't wait for the parade to begin and



to see his grandfather leading the procession on horse-back up Front Street and across the old bridge.

When the procession got above the Lehigh River, he called upon The Stroller to drop a bouget of flowers into the river as a tribute to members of the U.S. Navy who had made the supreme sacrifice. And how proud he was when he leaned over the rail and let go of the flowers.

But the big thrill was yet to come. When the procession arrived atop the hill, hundreds of the townspeople had gathered. It was a bright and sunny day and one just made for the memorial services.

With all the aplumb of the commander of a Grand Army of the Republic Post, the Stroller's grandfather took his place at the podium and proudly announced that his young grandson would now deliver the Gettysburg Ad-

The big moment arrived. Fortunately, while his mother and sisters looked on, he delivered the famed speech with nary a slip of the tonque.

What a thrill. Decoration Days, or Memorial Days as they now are known, have come and gone. Most of the services are now held in city parks or at a rock in the center of a city.

They don't carry the prestige of the days — at least not to The Stroller — when he answered his grandfather's 'call and recited the Gettysburg Address in old cemetery high atop the hill back home.

The memory of that day he will carry to his grave.

At the whim of the guy who owns the pie

Reporters are supposed to maintain their objectivity — not inject their opinions into their news work. But sometimes it's a struggle. For instance, I recently covered a speech by a consultant to small businesses who was speaking at a Chamber of Commerce loutheon.

The following day, I spoke to a class of eighth-graders at a local school as one of a series of outsiders talking about what we do for a living.

The management consultant complained about stifling government regulations, taxes, inflation, tight money and all those other things that are making life tough for everybody from Chrysler on down to you and me.

The eighth-grade teacher was trying to expose his kids to some things that might help them figure out what they want to do with their lives. But more importantly, he wanted to get across the idea that every line of work deserves equal respect. On a list of "career education concepts" for the kids to look over, the very first item is: "All work is important."

concepts: for the kids to look over, the very lirst item is:
"All work is important."

I was delighted. That sounds like a far more useful
concept to learn than something like trigonometry, which
those kids are going to have to wade through on their way
into the rest of the world and then promptly forget about.
And I think all the management consultants of the land

And I time at the management consutants or the land might do the world a good turn by forgetting about mak-ing a profit for an hour a day and enrolling in that eighth-grade class.

ON ONE HAND, the management consultant spoke of the importance of small businesses by saying they employ half the people in the country. On the other hand, he criticized things like Social Security taxes, unemployment insurance and rules of the Occupational and Health Safety Administration. And finally he told the audience: "Make sure you make a profit this year." Now, the eighth-graders seemed like pretty smart kids to me. I wonder what they would have thought of the management consultant.

to me. I wonder what they would nave thought or unmanagement consultant.

It sounds like he thinks profits are lots more important
than employees, or at least that the only importance of
employees is to produce profits.
Should the people who retire after helping Mr. Businessman turn a profit for years be at his mercy for a
persion when he thinks they've outlived their usefulness?
Should they be left to sell apples on streetcorners if he



Dennis

has to lay them off when business goes bad? Should they have to worry about getting injured by an unsafe machine if the boss doesn't think there's anything to worry about? Don't get me wrong. I have no doubt at all that companies have to spend lots of time dealing with government paperwork, that there are some stupid government regulations floating around and that bureaucrats can sometimes drive people up a wall.

But my basis curvival instinct forces me to be offended by people who sound like they want to maintain the right to toss me into the street whenever they think I'm not worth having around.

I WAS TRYING to tell the eighth-graders how report

I WAS TRYING to tell the eighth-graders how reporters have a social responsibility to present information in a fair manner. I give the facts, and the readers can do whatever they want with them.

The kids seemed to understand. But what I didn't mention is that when I have to report about someone I think is a jerk, I have to do it without letting on that I think he's either a jerk or a saint. The teacher wants his students to understand that somebody who works on an assembly line in a blue workinform deserves the same respect as the honcho in the three-piece suit who owns the assembly line. The man-signement consultant, however, seems to think that the guy who owns a corner store has a higher position in life than the kid who sweeps floors for his consistent of the source store when the life has the kid who sweeps floors for his conflict, given everyones frame for the good life.

I suppose all this is an endiess conflict, given everyone's dream of the good life.

We all want a large slice of the le. Unfortunately,
most of us who drag ourselves out of bed each morning —
so we can make the car payments to get there — are at
the mercy of the guy who owns the pie.

I hope those eighth-graders can figure it all out.

from our readers

To pay or not to pay? Reader says income tax is only fair way

Editor:
The more I reread your May 15 articles on tax relief proposals and study the chart on Page 3A, the more incredulous I become.
Our legislators mean so well and try

have completely lost sight of the woods.

In the early days of our nation, we were primarily a nation of farmers and landholders. This land presumably yielded some income. In those days, is the only way to measure the worth of a man was to measure the worth of a man was to measure to worth of a man was to measure to worth of a man was to measure the worth of a man was to measure to worth of a man was to measure the worth of a man was to measure the worth of a man was to measure how the provided in the property tax was invented.

But to get back to basics, the only really fair way to tax a person is to tax what he has coming in, or income. The Lord started that long before we did. He called it tithing — 10 percent of "increase" (His word for income) across the haard

ie board. He figured that was fair. So do I.

the figured that was fair. So do I. Properly taxes are no longer a measure of what is coming in. They only measure what has been accumulated in the past, often by much diligence and personal sacrifice.

The fact that market valuation has increased doesn't necessarily mean that the person who has struggled to own that property also has an increased doesn't necessarily mean that the person who has struggled to own that property also has an increased income.

Most retirees have a decreased income, and because of property taxes must part with belowed family homes because they can no longer continue to pay the property taxes on the old homestead. It's a crime.

What about people that don't own property? Do they not also use the same public services the property owners use, and should they not also pay their fair share?

Sales taxes are also unfair, because they impose the greatest hardship on those least able to pay.

everybody — individuals and businesses, large and small. A tax that doesn't penalize people or business for being frugal or enterprising, or trying to get A tax that does not add to a home-

A tax that does not add to a home-owner's burden for maintaining or im-proving his home, and would thus pre-vent much neighborhood blight. For individuals, a 10 percent tax on everyone's income, regardless where it comes from, with exemptions for de-pendents and medical and burial ex-penses, period. For business, a 10 percent tax on income, with the only exemptions being for expansions that will create more jobs, period.

jobs, period.

For all alike, no hikes in the percent levied as the rate of income increases — that only stilles ambition and growth — 10 percent across the board. Why not? The total amount of tax monies col-

With individuals and businesses no longer penalized for striving and getting ahead, there would be more money floating around, more jobs and our lo-cal economy would be on the upswing again

Let's scrap the whole ridiculous jer-yr-rigged structure of taxes, and start fresh with a system that's fair to each and every citizen. If the states would sit up and take notice and the idea might thow about an income tax levied on

The possibilities boggle the imagination.

We could file one simple income tax, which the local government where we live would collect. This local government would take their cut of the pie, sent the rest on to the state.

The state would take their share and pass on the remainder to the federal government, who would then have to sharpen their pencils and balance their books.

There would be no more pork barrel haggling in Washington, because local needs would be taken care of at the local level.

Cal level.

What about roads? Take it out at the first local level who could each pay their share to the county, who would have to pass some on to the state, who would in turn have to pass some on to the national level for interstate high-

what alonal level for interstate nignway was made to really be constitutional about it, this should be done on the national level. So that each child has the same opportunity no matter where they lost on busing, which failed anyway to achieve what it attempted to, and only stirred up more hare summatton, down with all forms in property, sales and use taxes. Let's hear it for income taxes.

BEA SCAGLIONE, Farmington Hills

Editor:
Concerning the May 8 article dealing will the reconstruction of Orchard Lake Road, we compliment the reporting by Mary Goineweb. Tell a facts and schedules as that road users will understand the standard of the road users will understand the standard of the stan

ing project without delays, accidents and injuries.

The only problem which we noted is the headline indicating 'blacktop' was the construction material being used.

The fact is that the main construction material will be concreted.

The finished pavement will be five lanes of nin-inch-thick concrete or approximately 113,640 square yards.

It is interesting to note that the unit price for this concrete, according to bid tabplation, is \$12.50 per square yard.

This is less expensive than carpeting' you'r home with a good quality carpet

Firm adds concrete facts to road story

and pad and should last longer.

The design perimeter for life expectancy is 20 years. However, as you are
probably aware, there are many examples of concrete road, throughout Michigan, where many more than 20 years
of traffic and/or service life are being
carried with excellent examples of performance.

carried with execution of formance.

The first concrete streets placed in the nation were constructed in 1891 at Belletontain, Ohio, 91 years and still carrying traffic.

These streets are now a national

construction will save 119,049,264,000 BTUs of energy. Based on the typical homeowner's annual consumption, that's enough en-ergy for almost 500 homes for one year or 953,000 gallons of gasoline. The main ingredient in concrete is pretland engred.

The main ingredient in concrete is portland cement.

Michigan is an exporting state of cement. We produce almost six million tons of cement each year and use less than three million tons. That's Michigan industry, Michigan labor and Michigan industry, Michigan labor and Michigan in the million tons.

elleiontain, Ohio, 91 years anu sui rrying raffic.

These streets are now a national fixes streets are now a national fixes streets are now a national fixes and a recent study using federal Bepartment of Transportation causing coal exclusively, an abundant learned ulations, it takes 124,800 BTU's per quare yard per inch to construction supports Michigan It last alacktop road, while concrete in our lacktop road, while concrete in our of some oil producing country and of some oil producing country and fraid; Based on a recent study using feeder using coal exclusively, an abundant all Department of Transportation call culations, it takes 124,800 BTU's per construct a blacktop road, while concrete in our blacktop road, while concrete in our area requires only 50,000 BTU's per square yard per inch.

Based on a recent study using feeder using coal exclusively, an abundant in the property of the property