

Opinion

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Raise the curtain on free speech; show 'Sister Mary'

YOU GOTTA feel sorry for Harry Nederlander. Seems Harry wants to put on a play, entertain some folks and make a few bucks in the offing.

Well, by all civilized standards, the Birmingham Theater owner should be able to put on his play and anyone who chooses to should be able to go and see it.

But life seldom is that simple. A group calling itself the Catholic League for Religious Rights wants to sit down and have a chat with Nederlander about this yet to be scheduled production. Entitled "Sister Mary Ignatius Explains it All for You," the play focuses on a Roman Catholic nun and four of her students.

THE LEAGUE has labeled the play "anti-Catholic," whatever that means. A spokesman for the area's Roman Catholic archdiocese waxes even more harshly, saying the play is "virulently anti-Catholic."

You get the idea these folks aren't interested in seeing the play. And that's fine with me. But wait. They don't want me, you or anybody else to see it, either.

That's not so fine. Nederlander has agreed to view the play beforehand, sit down and talk with the group and see what other public outcry is forthcoming.

But cancelling the play would be a sad day for all of us.

AFTER ALL, we've got something in this country that makes it stand apart from the rest — the chance for new and diverse ideas to be discussed and displayed.

It's the intellectual equivalent of the openable thumb — the evolutionary step which broke the barrier between us and the rest of the animal world.

Unlike sheep, we are able to think, make our own decisions, develop likes and dislikes and to have a faith in whatever it



crackerbarrel
Steve Barnaby

is we believe. And the only way we can maintain and nurture this shred of civilized conduct is by continually encouraging different ideas.

True, we sometimes may be displeased with what we hear or see. But that never hurt a soul.

The way to oppose something is to show a different side — your enlightened view. But then, you do have to have an alternative with which to enlighten.

BUT NEVER censorship. Nederlander should take the example of the Rochester school board which faced a similar problem. A group of culture-bashing ideologues recently attempted to stop the school district from teaching humanism and globalism.

The board, to its credit, held its ground and voted to adopt the social studies curriculum in spite of the opposition's claim the curriculum undermined the "traditional Judeo-Christian ethics."

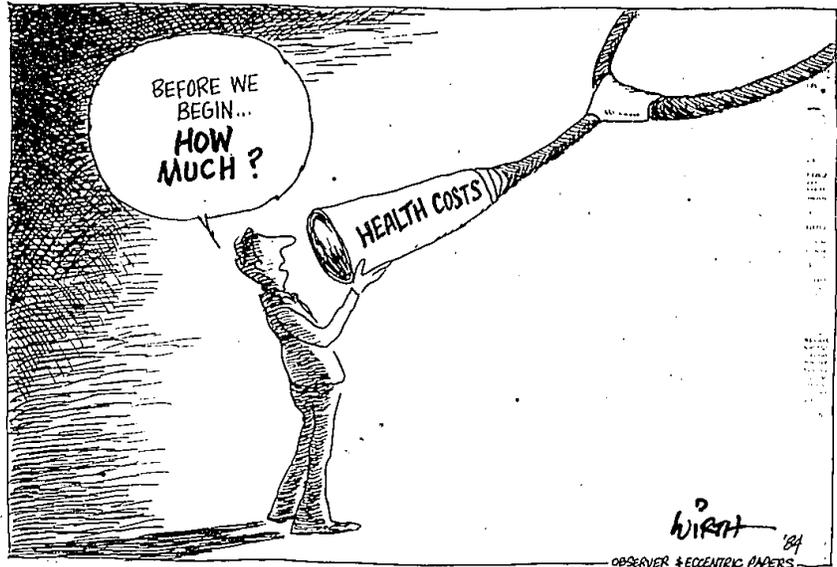
But Harry is in a real bind. When you've got an entire church organization, the largest Christian sect in the western world banging at your door, you've got troubles.

That's why he needs the support of those who believe in a free and open intellectual society. He needs to hear from you.

Oh, for all I know the play may be junk. But that's for the theater-goers to decide after they get a chance to see the play.

For those who don't wish to see the play, stay home. You're free in this country to do that.

Go ahead Harry, raise the curtain on that baby.



Wright '84
OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC PAPERS

Hospital's role is changing

SIX HOSPITALS are likely to have bids to build new hospitals in western Oakland County rejected next week. William Beaumont, Harper-Grace, Huron Valley, Sinai-Ford and Sisters of Mercy have proposed five hospitals in this area. The Comprehensive Health Planning Council of Southeastern Michigan (CHPC-SEM) has recommended that the hospitals be turned down. The Michigan Department of Public Health is expected to follow the CHPC-SEM advice next week.

"Clearly, expanded hospital capacity is not needed (in western Oakland County)," said Terence Carroll, CHPC-SEM executive director.



Nick Sharkey

THE STATE action demonstrates what is happening in health care. No longer are old practices — such as routine approval for new hospitals — acceptable. According to a recent study by the American College of Hospital Administrators (ACHA), "The operation of the nation's health care delivery system will change dramatically in the next 10 years and the impact on health care providers, payers and patients, will be enormous."

Why the changes in health care? Because it is the fastest growing expense in the U.S. economy. While the nation's inflation rate is 4.1 percent, health care costs are going up 6.3 percent. The ACHA

study predicts that in the next few years the health care portion of the Gross National Product will increase from the present 10.5 percent to 12 percent.

So we're talking megabucks when it comes to health care.

Many agencies are trying to do something about those costs. By turning down requests like the new Oakland County hospitals, the state health department is looking at the supply side. Doctors are required to treat patients more efficiently when there are fewer hospital beds. At an approximate cost of \$1,000 per day at a hospital, keeping patients out of hospitals significantly reduces costs.

Others are looking at the demand side. In the 1970s Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) were started. By paying a flat fee for services provided, doctors are rewarded for keeping patients healthy (and out of hospitals).

A relatively new concept called Preferred Provider Organizations (PPOs) has

been started in the past few years. In this system health care purchasers contract with low-cost providers. PPO patients can choose from a variety of health care providers, something not available in HMOs. That selection is usually influenced by variations in the patient's out-of-pocket expenses.

WHAT DOES the future hold in health care? Only a fool would say for sure. But more than 1,000 professionals surveyed by the American College of Hospital Administrators predicted the following:

"Hospitals' traditional share of total health expenditures will decrease, as will hospital admissions and patient length of stay."

"Health Maintenance Organizations and Preferred Provider Organizations will increase fivefold during the next 10 years."

"Because of financial problems many small hospitals will affiliate with larger hospitals to become multiservice centers. More than 40 percent of nongovernmental hospitals will be owned, leased or controlled by multihospital systems by 1995."

"Patients will increase their level of financial participation and lower their expectations regarding health care."

Yes, times are a changing when it comes to health care.

C'ville should link smoking penalties with an anti-smoking program

THE CLARENCEVILLE School District last week decided it's about time the ban on student smoking be enforced.

The reasons are many and varied:

- Under state law, cigarette smoking is illegal for those under age 18 and nearly all high school students are under 18.

- The district's code of conduct outlaw smoking by high school students and provides for a fairly stiff penalty if caught. In recent years, however, schools officials have looked the other way. Smoking — even among teenagers — is accepted. To most people it isn't really breaking the law.

- Clarenceville, Superintendent Mi-

chael Shibler appears to be sticking to the philosophy on discipline he outlined to trustees in his employment interview last spring.

- A recent school survey found that parents supported increased discipline.

It won't be easy to enforce the rule but school officials are aware of that and prepared for what needs to be done — more and careful monitoring of halls, lavatories and school grounds. They are, however, to be commended for recognizing the need to be consistent and start enforcing the student code of conduct.

However, in addition to enforcing the existing rules, Clarenceville school officials would do well to copy the anti-smoking education program of the neighboring Livonia Public Schools. In the program, high school students visit elementary schools in an effort to cut off an interest in smoking before it starts. Older students are used as role models and offer information about the hazards of smoking that younger kids can relate to.

Discipline is a state of order based upon submission to rules and authority. It's an essential ingredient in the educational process and to personal development. But in addition to expecting students to follow a prescribed set of rules, it's incumbent upon educators to give them some explanation about why certain standards are necessary.

The documented hazards of smoking provide educators with some powerful facts to explain their position.

The penalties outlined in the student code certainly will deter many students but penalties often are not enough. Compulsions in some anti-smoking education programs, we believe, Clarenceville's renewed efforts to stop smoking in schools will pay long-term dividends for students.

Dems in dilemma over Lucas

AT THE state Democratic convention in Cobo Hall last weekend, the Dem honchos paraded their leading office-holders to the platform and introduced them to cheering delegates.

Once again Wayne County Executive William Lucas stood at the rear of the crowd, an almost anonymous figure shunned by those who run the Democratic party in Michigan.

Lucas has been elected seven times as a Democrat to Wayne County offices, six times as sheriff and once as county executive — by huge margins — yet he is treated like a pariah by the leading party figures.

At one point in the state convention there was an attempt by delegates of the 15th District (which includes part of Livonia, Westland and Garden City) to censure Lucas for real and imagined sins against Democratic principles.

Eventually the measure was given proper burial.

THE MANUEVERING that goes on concerning Lucas is interesting. Democratic leaders, including the most powerful labor leaders in the state, have been wringing their hands about Lucas since he took office in January 1983. Generally, they don't like Lucas' tactics for paring the county budget — forcing concessions on employees, eliminating jobs, turning over Wayne County Hospital to a private hospital system and refusing to play ball with their power structure.

Labor leaders at one point sat down with Lucas to tell him what they wanted



Bob Wisler

in Wayne county government. This is not unusual since labor leaders have had a lock on running Wayne County government as far back as most can remember.

LUCAS politely ignored the labor leaders. His chief of staff, Dennis Nystrom, who is No. 1 on every Democratic hit list — is less polite. He tells just about everyone who tries to put pressure on him or Lucas to take a leap. Nystrom, according to his critics, is arrogant and obnoxious. Even worse, he is also an Oakland county resident and a longtime Republican who advised Republican Richard Headlee in the last election. He also controls most of the switches in the new Wayne County government.

There is some suspicion among the Dem bigwigs that Nystrom will lead Lucas into the Republican party, even though Lucas has steadfastly denied that he has even contemplated switching parties.

There is a Democratic dilemma. How far can the power brokers go in pressuring Lucas? The polls would like Lucas to change. He has the ace in the form of public approval and newspaper approval of the way he has conducted his office. They would like to turn the populace

against him. Little chance of that. One attempt to start a recall campaign against him got exactly nowhere.

THE POBAHS see Lucas' history of being elected to Wayne County offices with relative ease and they wonder if he can pull votes outside of the county. They suspect he has tremendous potential for drawing votes and they tiptoe around trying to squelch him by snubbing him.

In less than two years, he has done a remarkable job of starting to turn Wayne County government around. In the process he has captured a ton of publicity. A recent poll shows that if Lucas were a Republican candidate for governor he would do well, according to one of Lucas' aides.

Republican Party leaders are at the point where they are starting to think seriously about running against Gov. Blanchard in 1986. Who's available? Well, there's Dick Headlee who could have won last time but talked the voters out of electing him. Former state Supreme Court Justice Tom Brennan would like to be the candidate as would Senate majority leader John Engler. Dan Murphy, the Oakland County executive, looks like a possibility.

But who among them has the image of a winner among the public and proven vote-getting ability? After his disastrous first year in office, Blanchard is gaining strength and would do very well against any likely GOP candidate. You can see why there is speculation about Lucas as a Republican candidate.

Discover Michigan by Bill Stockwell

DID YOU KNOW that among Michigan's innumerable lakes many have been given the names of animals, birds and fish? Among these are Bald Eagle, Bass, Big Bass, Bear, Big Bear, Beaver, Big Wolf, Great Bear, Hawk, Peck, Pickerel, Pigeon, Turtle, Wolf, Big Wolf, Whitefish, Deer and Duck.

DID YOU KNOW that the purchase of an automobile was a comparatively painless transaction back in the early part of the century? Henry Ford, for example, produced a quarter of a million Model T Fords and sold them at a retail price of \$495. He considered this too high a price, so by 1916 he produced a half million Fords and sold them for \$360 apiece.