

Opinion

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Worthy

Task force makes sense

LET'S PREPARE for the future, not merely react to it. And let's stake our imaginations and test our creativity — not just coax another statistic-cramped report out of another layer of bureaucracy.

That's the advice of Farmington Public Schools Superintendent Lewis Schulman. And it's worth heeding.

Remember, Farmington Public Schools has grown from 1,382 students, 43 teachers and five schools in 1945 to 10,278 students, 675 teachers and 18 schools today.

Clearly, there's merit in Schulman's effort to have a task force of school and community representatives pool their talents and energies during the next year to determine precisely where the district's future lies.

THE TASK force's \$5,000 budget should prove money well spent.

Schulman's intent is to:

- Dissect educational needs from the perspective of both parents and students.
- Develop enrollment projections and determine facility needs.
- Bring preschool, K-12 and community education programs together under a communitywide educational banner.

• Analyze the effect of economic, sociological and demographic trends.

To be responsive — that's Schulman's overriding objective.

SCHULMAN POINTS to national trends, which mirror local trends that show enrollment is on the upswing at all levels — preschool, special education and regular classrooms.

He underscores that in Michigan, the emigration of the early 1980s has slowed, largely because of more jobs and an improved economy.

And he reminds that 60 percent of

mothers of school-age children hold jobs, a major reason why Farmington Public Schools and the Farmington YMCA have teamed to provide latchkey programs at seven elementaries — programs that have proven to be winners in every sense.

Unfortunately, such latchkey programs aren't also geared to younger teen-agers, who are at a highly impressionable age where trouble often lurks in the shadows of boredom.

MEANWHILE, LOCAL community education programs, reaching only 4,000 people in an area that's home to 70,000 homes, are obviously in their infancy.

The programs offer all of community education's basics — enrichment, recreation, high school equivalency, foreign languages, clerical training, social services.

By in Schulman's view, they come up short in the areas of:

- Job training and retraining.
- Cultural and artistic activities.
- Health, social, nutritional, fitness and athletic services.
- Activities for the elderly.

GIVEN PROPER support and incentive — and tuned in to what's expected of it — a task force indeed can spur dividends. Consider the task forces that paved the way for middle schools and upgraded facilities.

Unquestionably, the newest task force will require sensitivity from the school board and participation from the community.

It would behoove district trustees, administrators, teachers, taxpayers and students to gladly lend an ear and a hand to help assure top-flight halls of learning — for the entire community.

— Bob Sklar



A compromise on smoking

THE IMAGE — It's tough to change.

If you've seen it once, you've seen it a hundred times: harried reporters dangling out deadline stories, cigarettes dangling from their mouths, a blue haze of smoke swirling through the dimly lit newsroom.

You've seen it in the movies. I've seen it in the newsroom. There is a lot of truth about journalists' love for smoking on deadlines. And although the image sticks with journalists, you've probably seen the same headline-type smokers in your office.

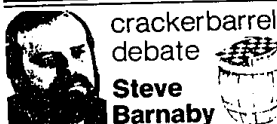
I know because I'm a smoker. Oh, sure, I quit smoking nearly five years ago, but I'm a smoker nevertheless. Most smokers are like alcoholics, you know. They just don't have an occasional cigarette. Most veer around the two pack-a-day habit.

UNFORTUNATELY FOR those of us who manage to break the habit, we never really leave it behind.

The urge to smoke is never-ending. That's because most people who smoke enjoy it. That's right, they love stoking up the smokes.

It's tough for those who have never smoked to understand that smoking can be a pleasure — just as tough as it is for smokers to understand why others deprive themselves.

And smoking in the workplace is be-



crackerbarrel debate
Steve Barnaby

coming a serious problem in today's business world.

PROBLEMS ARISE when working out a compromise between smokers and non-smokers in the workplace. They have little understanding of one another.

Instead, the debate has become one of the most divisive issues among employees. Friendships are broken and efficiency thwarted. Workers refuse to speak to one another.

Sounds silly, I know. But it's true. So it's time we came to our senses.

State Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, has been attempting to etch out a compromise for years. In the past he has received little support from his colleagues.

But this year is different. He has 20 co-sponsors — enough votes to pass the bill through the Senate.

On the House side, state Rep. Justine Barns, D-Westland, is touting the identi-

cal legislation. The bills, if passed, would be a big step toward compromising on the clean-air-in-the-workplace issue.

BOTH SMOKERS and non-smokers should feel comfortable in supporting the measure. In short, the bill would allow smoking in all places except in a public place or at a meeting of a public body, except in designated smoking areas.

Pretty liberal wording, if you ask me. Business is in a quandary over this smoking issue. More and more employees are demanding that something be done to extinguish the blue haze around their desks.

But smoking has tradition on its side. And tradition, we all know, is a potent force in American life.

AT A RECENT legislative hearing, one clean-air activist blamed companies saying they were practicing "marshmallow management," leaving it up to employees to police one another.

Maybe that's true. But everyone seems stymied by this issue. After all, the smoking issue isn't a biggie at the bargaining table. But that's because some people like to smoke, and other people would rather let them be, if only not to be bothered by their smoke.

So this is the year to get on the Faxon-Barns bandwagon and support an agreement with which we all can live.

Court rules, no; press restraint, yes

A COMMITTEE of judges of the U.S. District Court in Detroit looked into establishing guidelines for news media coverage of court proceedings and wisely decided against recommending guidelines.

That the panel, chaired by U.S. District Judge Averil Cohn, should reach this conclusion may surprise some. Judges and lawyers continually complain that the press (newspaper and broadcast reporters) lacks circumspection and, frequently, concern for achieving an impartial and fair trial.

Efforts to come up with the real, inside story often create impressions among jurors or prospective jurors that make obtaining a fair trial difficult, lawyers and judges often say.

NEVERTHELESS, COHN'S committee indicated that any steps the court might take to try to guide, censure or sanction the press probably will not be productive and may be counterproductive. The committee wrote: "Irresponsible media may be unresponsive in any event to guidelines unless methods of enforcement are included, which the committee does not advise."

The committee thus suggests that the press will pay no attention to guidelines unless there are opportunities to sanction reporters, newspapers and television stations. And, almost obviously, any attempt to inject some sort of sanctions against any of the supposed guilty parties will lead to a confrontation between the rights of the court to enforce its rules and the constitutional rights of a free press to report on matters of public record.

AS THE press often likes to remind the legal establishment, as well as all others, the first amendment proclaims that Congress shall pass no law restricting the rights of the press.

Interpretation of the founders' intent has expanded that precept so that it is concluded that the government generally (including courts) can take no action which would stop the press from reporting on matters of public interest.

While there are some instances of court proceedings in which an individual's rights outweigh the right of the press to report on the courts' proceedings and actions, they are few and far between.

Any attempt by a judge or group of judges to impose rules of order or behavior on reporters would lead eventually to confrontation on constitutional grounds. And it is unlikely that the courts would



Bob Wisler

gain anything from the attempt to make the press behave more like officers of the court than inquiring, even demanding or callous, reporters.

AND YET at times there is a need for more cautious and judicious reporting. Even now newspapers and television stations in this area seem intent on dredging up and reporting in extreme detail every aspect of the psychological problems experienced by Ronald Bailey, Bailey, if anyone needs a reminder, is the 25-year-old Livonia man accused — not convicted — of killing a 13-year-old Brighton boy.

The psychological reports on Bailey, written by a variety of psychiatrists in public institutions, somehow have fallen into the hands of reporters who now tell excruciating details of his interviews with those supposed to be helping him. They report suppositions as to how his view of sexual matters may have been warped somehow by his mother's admonishment to refrain from sexual involvement with women before marriage. Heaven help us.

NO DOUBT, there will be claims that Bailey's right to a fair trial has already been damaged beyond repair. But, as has happened often in the past, the courts will find jurors who have paid little attention to the Bailey stories, or jurors who are able to put reports of the case out of their minds and remain capable of reaching a fair, impartial verdict based on the facts presented in court.

This, after all, is what enables judges to consider for more than a year ways to try to make the press more responsible and then forget the idea — a system which almost invariably is able to find "12 good men (and women)" capable of rendering a fair and reasonable judgment about the actions of one of their peers.

Judge Cohn's committee signed off with the hope that there will be co-operation between the courts and the media over what constitutes reasonable and fair coverage.

We hope so. Without this cooperation, there will be another cry from some to make the press behave more like officers of the court, and that we don't need.

Two very different execs

THIS IS about two county executives.

Both are Republicans. Both profess to believe in "privatization" — hiring private contractors, where feasible, to do jobs for government. Both are eyeing higher office.

There the similarity ends.

THE LESS sensational story concerns Oakland's Daniel T. Murphy, who has talked in general terms about using a private contractor to run new jail facilities.

Last week a Democratic county commissioner raised some questions during a discussion of jail renovations. The commissioner wanted to know if there was any money in the 1985 budget for a study of privatization of the jail. He also requested status reports on progress toward a privately run jail.

Given the floor by board Chairman Richard Wilson, Murphy responded that there was no special study as such, that the administration was holding conversations with interested parties, and that a member of the board's planning and building committee, Richard Kuhn Jr. of Waterford, was sitting in on the conversations.

"Rich Kuhn will watch for you," the executive said. Notice three things:



Tim Richard

- 1) Murphy was at the board meeting.
- 2) He responded factually and politely to the pointed but polite inquiry from the commissioner.
- 3) He had no qualms about having a member of the legislative branch watchdog the process.

THE OTHER story concerns Wayne County Executive William Lucas and his complicated plan to sell the Old County Building to a private firm, which would hire a contractor to renovate the 83-year-old structure and then rent it back to the county, or sell it back, or something.

It turns out there are all sorts of pals of Lucas in both corporations, including his chief of staff, Dennis Nyström. There are questions of conflict of interest.

After a lengthy debate, the county commission set up a committee to hire an investigative "factfinder" who would subpoena people and documents.

That evening, our reporter found Lucas at an Oakland County GOP fundraiser. After his usual bland, calm assurances,

Lucas said it was unfortunate the commission was conducting its own investigation because he was having the prosecutor check things over, and "one individual would avoid duplication."

NOTE THREE things:

- 1) Lucas hadn't attended the county commission meeting. He never does.
- 2) Lucas has an attitude of contempt toward the legislative branch. The first time I met Lucas was in Canton Township during his 1982 campaign at one of the very few debates in which he participated. In conversation afterwards, he referred to the county commissioners as "ass—". This was not an unguarded comment in a barracks-type ball session. He knew he was talking to a newsmen.
- 3) Last year Lucas promoted a ballot petition to strip the county commission of its power to approve contracts. I wrote an editorial opposing the scheme. I received a chewing out over the telephone from chief of staff Nyström, who referred to the commissioners using the same term.

For the life of me, I cannot understand why grown men and women in the Republican Party are promoting Lucas for governor. The man has a character flaw — and it's not his language.

Lucas' flaw is that he can't deal with legislators. That flaw has hampered his progress as county executive. It would be fatal to him as governor.