

Graham Lewis proved to be a delegator and a stranger

HERE THEY go again. It's back to the drawing board in the search for a new Farmington school superintendent.

The school board did this just 3 1/2 years ago after the retirement of Lew Schulman. It took many months to search, interview and whittle a long list of candidates to 10 finalists. Included in that final list was Graham Lewis — who they eventually picked and who tendered his resignation June 20.

Individual trustees have, no doubt, already begun the task of sorting out just what sort of person should replace the most recent school chief, who lasted just three years. No one knows whether that was his choice, the board's or a mutual understanding. No one's saying.

Community reaction has been mixed to this rather abrupt change.

Some have praised Lewis for his ideas and his new way of looking at education. One person speculated that may have been his downfall — that he was a great idea man but couldn't run with the ball.

Most people said they weren't really surprised. Lewis had not made himself very accessible to the gener-



Casey Hans

al public. People always wondered about this man who earned \$109,000 in salary plus perks, but was rarely seen at community events. Even at school board meeting presentations, he rarely had anything to say except "I'll turn this over to . . ."

LEWIS WAS the ultimate delegator. He served in a community leader's position, yet was truly a stranger.

I began covering the Farmington Public Schools in 1985, shortly before Lewis took over as interim superintendent. The difference in dealing with Schulman and Lewis was like night and day.

Schulman always had a handle on issues, whether it was on a report, program or parent group, and always willing to comment. Lewis rarely commented, but always had a

competent underling to handle the questions. I attributed that to a change in management style, a different school administration — and learned to live with it.

Perhaps Lewis did not become more of a public figure because we just stopped calling him for opinions when he didn't have any comment on the issues. His assistant superintendents, administrators and teachers were simply much better informed. Or perhaps he just didn't want to comment. I can only speculate.

THE BOARD is likely to discuss its strategy Monday night, as it again begins the long process of looking for a permanent leader. A few suggestions from one outsider:

• hire someone with good ideas who will not allow other programs to fall to the wayside while those new ideas are being implemented.

• hire someone who has no fear of the public he or she must serve.

• hire someone who will run the district with the expertise of a savvy executive, yet will never forget that he or she serves a public entity.

Casey Hans is a staff writer for the Farmington Observer.

There are more pressing issues for our nation than flag burning

The writer, Steven Simmons, is a Farmington Hills resident.

PRESIDENT BUSH should get off his patriotic perch and learn what real concerns are in this country. That goes for anyone else — legislators, congressmen, governors, citizens, etc. — who condemns the Supreme Court decision upholding the person's right of expression through flag burning.

I find it disconcerting that in an era when we have millions of people without access to health care, homes, jobs or good education, people are rallying behind the protection of a piece of fabric in the name of "patriotism." Don't they know that a flag is merely a piece of cloth that represents an idea?

By itself, the flag is nothing. Protestors in Iran, Iraq, Libya and other countries have proven this by burning it in full view of the world. We knew then, as we know now, that the love we have for our country is embodied in our support for the freedoms we enjoy.

Yet, if many self-righteous people

guest column

have their way, flag desecration — as they wish to call it — will be either in violation of federal law or the U.S. Constitution. Are these people insane or are they just stupid? Maybe both. I can't decide which.

How can a country that supports human rights also support condemnation of a person who wishes to burn the "symbol" of our country in protest? This just doesn't make sense. As a political democracy, this country has always supported the necessity for our citizens to criticize governmental action without fear of reprisal.

If it takes desecration of the flag as a national symbol to get the public's attention to our individual ideas, then so be it. We are already prohibited from inciting riots or carrying out other dangerous actions.

But burning, shredding or otherwise mutilating a flag is a harmless form of protest that is, and should continue to be, allowed by the most basic of our freedoms — freedom of speech.

Personally, I have no reason to desecrate our flag. However, that doesn't mean that I wouldn't have a reason in the future. But to prohibit such an action is a ludicrous step that many people are willing to do because they are afraid of being tagged "unpatriotic."

Well, I'm not afraid. We must be willing to support unpopular positions in favor of our basic freedoms. Take public protests by the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazis, for example. As much as I deplore these groups, I have to recognize their right to express their views. The flag-burning issue is no different.

This country has too many problems for us to waste time trying to erode our ability to express political ideas. Our leaders should do something worthwhile for a change rather than be afraid of taking a correct — yet unpopular — position.

points of view

A healthy environment: more pivotal than short-term profit

LIKE MANY of you, I frequently get a little more than irritated at how the real war to save our civilization is moving along. And this hasn't exactly been a banner year for the good earth, the only home we have.

No, I'm not talking about the phony war against communism, I'm talking about the struggle to save the environment. The battle does get to be a personal matter after a while.

Recently I ate what I believed to be a healthy meal of fish. Last week I opened the paper to read the type of fish I had consumed, trout, will very well increase my chances of contracting some sort of death-threatening cancer.

Every time I go by the apples in the fruit market, I cringe to think about all those shiny red orbs that at one time contained Alan, which also heightens the risk of cancer.

And anyone who cares at all about the environment is shocked that four times in less than a year, major oil spills have polluted our waters, killed countless numbers of wildlife, poisoned the food chain and ruffled, for decades to come, some pristine wildlife areas.

ON AN even more personal note, I, along with tens of thousands of my comrade Vietnam veterans, wonder



Steve Barnaby

when the time bomb will explode and release the ravages that Agent Orange will visit upon our bodies and those of our offspring.

And closer to home for all of us in the metropolitan area, we watch as waste management becomes unmanageable.

Our garbage piles up, polluting the water we drink and the vegetables we grow in the family garden. In our attempts to get rid of the endless tons of garbage, we have resorted to building furnaces that spew the waste into the air and recycle through our lungs.

The list of the assault goes on and on. I'm sure you've got many examples.

BUT MAYBE hope does exist. Maybe the people of America really are getting sick of this mindless destruction. Recently U.S. Rep. William Ford,

D-Taylor, whose district includes Canton Township, Garden City, Westland and part of Livonia, took a survey of his constituents. The results were hopeful.

For the first time in the 25 years he has been reading the pulse of the voters, Ford found that environmental concerns outweighed our paranoic-based defense spending, the drug war, education and the federal deficit.

"I was especially impressed with the strength of this response because the question assumed that tackling this problem might require an increase in the federal budget deficit," Ford said.

Ford's constituents threw heavy support toward recycling programs that would increase the proportion of garbage that is recycled to 25 percent, encourage development of markets for degradable plastics, and provide money to promote waste reduction techniques by industry.

His district very much reflects the attitudes of middle America. Perhaps the rest of the country will follow suit and force American business to turn its back on short-term profits so we all may benefit from a healthier environmental bottom line.

Steve Barnaby is the managing editor of the 12 Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

Teacher pay: no easy decision

Q: I think teachers are overpaid. Am I right?

A: Some teachers should receive double their salary, some teachers should receive what they presently are receiving, and there are a few who should have to buy a ticket to get in the front door.

The same can be said for a few doctors, lawyers, college professors, journalists, clergy and other professionals I have dealt with in my lifetime.

Indeed, there was one doctor more interested in his tennis game than marking down on my record that I was allergic to penicillin, which almost wiped me out at one time in my life.



Doc Doyle

HOWEVER, MOST of the doctors I have dealt with are truly professional people. The same is true of most teachers with whom I have been associated.

Parents need to realize the advanced training that teachers obtain beyond the four years of college, working toward master's and educa-

tional specialist's degrees. Many teachers work long evening hours sponsoring clubs, grading research or term papers and preparing lesson plans on a daily basis.

Furthermore, when one compares the salaries of other professionals, I do not believe that, in most cases, teaching salaries are out of line.

Dr. James Doyle is an assistant superintendent in the Troy School District. The answers provided here are the opinions of Doyle and not the Troy School District. Questions for this column should be sent to Doc Doyle c/o the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 30221 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

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