

Activism

Protests bolster democracy

"TIS THE SEASON — to be protesting.

Not everyone spends the Thanksgiving weekend eating turkey leftovers and shopping.

Instead of seeking bargains in the downtowns of Birmingham, Rochester and Plymouth or the malls in Livonia, Troy or Westland, some very committed people were seeking to change actions they oppose.

The protesters, many of whom live in our Observer & Eccentric suburbs, spent their time and energy making a statement they want the world to hear and heed.

• Friday, twin protests against U.S. aid to El Salvador and Nicaragua were held in Birmingham and Plymouth in front of the offices of U.S. congressmen.

• Also on Friday, demonstrators from West Bloomfield, Southfield, Troy and Bloomfield Hills rallied against war toys outside a Detroit Toys R Us store.

• Saturday, animal rights activists picketed a store of Birmingham furriers.

ALL HAD specifically chosen the Thanksgiving weekend to deliver their very specific messages.

"On Thanksgiving, one of the things we give thanks for is our independence and our right to determine our own government," said Stephen Williams, who helped organize the 70 people picketing U.S. Rep. Carl Pursell's Plymouth office.

And there could be no mistaking his message: "We want Carl to stop



Judith Doner Berne

funding the military government in El Salvador."

On the streets of Birmingham, a similar message was delivered to U.S. Rep. William Broomfield. More than 20 protesters, organized by Maggie Tyson of Bloomfield Township, carried signs and urged passers-by to sign a petition pushing Broomfield in the same direction.

The demonstrations came at the end of a week that saw both Bloomfield and Pursell vote against an amendment to withhold military aid to El Salvador. The amendment was prompted by the murder there in mid-November of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter.

THANKSGIVING HAS come to mean more than giving thanks. It is also the beginning of the holiday shopping season — and other protesters took to the streets to try to influence those purchases.

Phyllis Friedman of West Bloomfield was once again at the helm of the fourth annual "Stop War Toys" campaign, launched to coincide with Friday's shopping blitz.

The local effort by a coalition of peace groups was mirrored in at least 40 other U.S. cities and 35 countries, organizers said.

"The children are the ones being

harmful by the sale of these toys," Friedman said. "The children are learning to use their fists instead of realizing there are peaceful ways to resolve conflicts."

Maggie Anderson, a Redford resident, was among the Defenders of Animal Rights gathered at Ceresine and Offen Furs, Chudik's Fine Furs and Jacobson's over a two-hour period Saturday. They handed out leaflets to passers-by explaining their cause.

Their main concern: Animals either trapped or raised on fur farms are mistreated. State or federal regulations concerning the treatment of animals used in fur coats do not exist.

"People are starting to be embarrassed to wear furs," said Margaret Shiverer, one of the organizers.

EACH PROTEST was orderly and conducted without fear for the safety of the protesters.

Police were called out by two Birmingham furriers because demonstrators were allegedly blocking driveways. No tickets were issued. Police and mall security officers said the Stop War Toys demonstrators were trespassing on private property. They moved to a public sidewalk as directed.

Our democracy never shines so bright as when it is tested by grassroots demonstrations out to change the world.

Judith Doner Berne is assistant managing editor for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

points of view

Hills should cablecast council

The writer, Juliann Hovgen, is president of Citizens For More Responsible Government in Farmington Hills.

WE WOULD like to urge Farmington Hills residents to write to the mayor regarding the matter of television coverage of regular city council meetings.

We urge them to favorably consider spending money in the budget to begin TV coverage of the meetings on cable Channel 12 as soon as possible. A city council study session will soon be held on this matter.

As president of, and in behalf of the Citizens for More Responsible Government of Farmington Hills, and as a certified television producer at Metrovision in Farmington Hills, and as a member of the Committee to Increase Voter Participation, my survey of a number of communities currently and regularly televising their council meetings over local cable stations reveals much relevant information.

Thirty-two communities are now cablecasting regular council meetings. I spoke with key persons in about a third of these communities. It is impressive to discover that not one of these communities has ever been interested in discontinuing once it began. In all cases there has been a tremendous public response. People increased their interest in their community government and have come to expect to watch.

It is especially enjoyed by those who cannot get to city hall without special arrangement for those meetings, such as seniors, parents of young children and the handicapped.

quest column

Having meetings televised gives citizens the option to be acquainted with council activities first hand.

IN MANY cities, it is the number-one program of the cable station in terms of the number of viewers. Reports indicate that cable channel watchers increase as much as 10 times during these meetings.

Live broadcasting is the norm. Some councils report that sometimes inspired watchers spontaneously leave their homes to come to the meeting to participate. Some communities air their meetings again, taped, later in the week once or twice.

Previous to launching in the venture of "televised meetings," a typical apprehension of some council members has been that participants would "play to the cameras" and cause lengthier meetings or dramatic results. Accounts reveal that, fortunately, this fear has never been realized as a serious problem. If it has occurred, it happened only in the very beginning of the venture of televising. Everyone soon becomes accustomed to the procedure, and meetings have gone as they usually do or even more expeditiously.

The cost of televising presented to the council in August indicated on \$80,000 price tag. This does seem to be a great deal of money, but in looking at the situation closely, what is particularly important is that this would be a one-time expenditure and

the fact that only one television professional is needed to perform all operations with the proposed equipment is very significant. This would save a great deal of money to the city in the long term, since normally six professionals are operating the equipment currently being used in City Hall.

COUNCIL MEETINGS often last from 7:30 p.m. to midnight. One professional instead of six makes a lot of sense. Also important to remember is that about \$30,000 of this \$80,000 is to update and upgrade our city council chamber's sound system, which has been noticeably faulty at recent meetings.

It is my understanding that the cost of equipment is moderately priced equipment and will give first-class coverage of meetings, with graphs and charts, etc. displayed well on monitors in council chambers, in the city hall lobby and on viewers at home. There will be variety in the shots of persons speaking.

Most cities and townships televising council meetings are now beginning to also televise board of education meetings and other meetings of city commissions because the public is expecting and awaiting it.

It is our organization's hope the new council, elected in November, will look more favorably upon spending money for televising.

Letters to the council (in care of the mayor) will help greatly to influence their decision. If writers wish their letter be read at the meeting to become a part of the meeting record, they should state this in their letter.

Teen mothers have proven a costly problem

THE MORE one looks into this "teen pregnancy" problem, the more shattering to society it appears.

"Teen pregnancy" is a euphemism developed by social workers to dress up the notion of out-of-wedlock births. For three straight decades, the percentage of babies born in this social condition has risen steadily. And the cost to society has risen even faster.

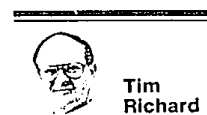
We already knew, for example, that an unmarried girl under 18 has a baby far more likely to require welfare (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) than any other group in the population.

Now we're finding out that their kids are far more likely to have expensive illnesses.

TEEN MOTHERS as a group have about 20 percent of the babies born in the United States each year. But about 50 percent of babies in hospital neonatal intensive care units (NICU) were born to teen mothers. In other words, the teen's baby is far more likely to require NICU treatment.

Intensive care for babies costs about \$1,500 a day. The average stay is 60 to 90 days. That's a staggering \$90,000 to \$150,000 per child.

The foregoing numbers were



Tim Richard

gleamed from a ton of statistics by the Adoption Option, a Huntington Woods-based informational group which promotes adoption.

Those are individual cases. Just how does it add up for society as a whole?

Kurt Gorwitz, a consultant to New

Detroit Inc., tallied it up in "A Profile of Teenage Pregnancy in Detroit" for Wayne State University's Bureau of Business Research.

"The comparable annual statewide cost for 15,319 teenage recipients exceeded \$50 million per year for AFDC and other grants, more than \$15 million for food stamps and \$45 million for Medicaid — or a total of \$110 million-plus."

For a variety of reasons, Gorwitz said, teen fathers don't accompany their women on prenatal medical visits, aren't present at the birth, and fail to "establish an early emotional and psychological bond with their infant child."

FURTHER ON, Gorwitz piles on the conclusions:

"Teen mothers are less likely to obtain timely and appropriate prenatal care, to eat and exercise properly, and as a result are more likely to have pregnancy complications and to deliver premature low-weight babies which have a higher probability of death during the first year of life. This is particularly true for teenage mothers under 17 years of age. Their infant death rate is two to three times the comparable figure for older women."

"About 450 cases of child abuse are reported each year in Detroit,

and approximately 200 of these offenders either are or were teenage parents."

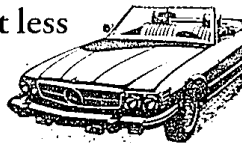
This is not "pick on Detroit" day. The same problems exist outstate, though not with the same concentration.

The problem isn't as bad as I have been saying. It's worse.

And then folks wonder why there never seems to be enough revenue in the state coffers for school aid, state colleges and toxic cleanups.

Tim Richard is director of the Suburban Communications Corp. News Service.

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