

Opinion

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Flower flap

Locals have a bad attitude

ISN'T IT strange that certain members of our business community will sometimes attempt to stifle the same free enterprise they usually support so vigorously?

That's a question we're asking as we consider a budding controversy: This flower flap that seems to be blooming nicely on Northwestern Highway in the rich economic soil of Farmington Hills.

Although flower merchant Ray Hesano seems to have put down roots in the Farmington area (he's been peddling his petals in that big tent near the Langan's Bowling Center in season for five years), some local business people have been treating him like a noxious weed in their garden of commerce.

The locals, of course, consider Hesano to be a threat to their economic well-being. Here's a guy, they'll say, who just sticks up a tent in a vacant lot while we're stuck with all kinds of never-ending overhead.

When the flower season ends, the locals will say, he just folds that blue-and-white striped tent and steals away to his home in West Bloomfield or wherever.

RECENTLY, A drive was launched by the chamber of commerce to have the city ordinance allowing temporary businesses like Hesano's reviewed — and possibly removed.

And then someone cut the ropes and collapsed Hesano's new tent. A chamber spokesman said the business community had nothing to do with the vandalism. Hesano said he isn't so sure about that.

Well, while the city sorts out the ordinance question and Hesano puts his tent back up, we'd like to say that the attitude our kings and queens of commerce seem to be taking toward this man and his flower stand stinks like some huge, rotting compost pile.

As long as he follows the rules specified in the ordinance, he and others like him should be allowed to do business in the city. The city council (and any other officialdom involved) should not

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bend to the pressure that's being applied.

The arguments of the complaining business people, as made known through reporter Joanne Maliszewski's Observer articles, seem riddled with blight.

FOR ONE THING, as Hesano could be quick to point out, there are indeed many expenses involved in running a business out of a tent.

"I pay rent and I pay for security guards at night," he said in a recent interview. "That's an expense I don't think they (more permanent business people) have."

For another, Hesano's prices are competitive, maybe even a bit on the high side, according to a few gardeners we've talked to. If shoppers are flocking to the big tent, it's not necessarily because of any bargains within, Hesano has said.

Many people enjoy shopping in the open air... witness the huge popularity of Detroit's Eastern Market. It's going great guns with flowers right now.

Roadside stands used to be commonplace in the suburbs. In spring, flowers and plants were sold. In the summer and fall, it was produce from nearby farms.

The stands are not so numerous now that suburbs like Farmington Hills have filled up with subdivisions, strip malls and office complexes. Part of the stands' demise has to do with the growing distance between farm and market. But there's also local business which attempts to run them out for economic reasons.

Could that be the case in the Great Flower Flap of Farmington Hills?

New leaders

Principals honor achievers

THEY'RE ENERGETIC, optimistic and so very bright. They are the 1991 Observer Newspapers Academic All-Stars.

In the next few weeks, the 16 members of this year's team will complete successful high school careers looking forward to studies in medicine, engineering and the liberal arts.

Over the past few years, parents have been bombarded with bad news about education. Improvements must be made, but these young men and women represent what is positive about education today.

THESE STUDENTS are more than just bright. Very likely they will be the leaders of tomorrow. These are the students who prove that through discipline, determination and a lot of hard work, achievement is possible.

They also have many kind words for their parents who offered encouragement and support and for teachers who played a major role in shaping these young minds.

In today's Observer, you will find a special insert highlighting the achievements of these students.

Selection was based on grade point averages in academic subjects and national college test scores. Tabulation of scores and selection was done by a committee of area high school principals.

Chairing the committee was Robert Schramke, principal of Redford Union High School, and the man who seven years ago came to this newspaper with the idea for an academic all-star team.

Other high school principals joining Schramke

on this year's selection committee were Gerald Kiesel, Garden City High School; Dale Collier, Stevenson High School; Larry Boehms, Troy High School; Gary Faber, West Bloomfield High School; Clayton Graham, Harrison High School; Gerald Ostoin, Plymouth Salem High School; and Dennis Connolly, John Glenn High School.

We thank them for their time and enthusiasm for this project.

In addition to being profiled in today's Observer, the 16 all stars will receive a dictionary emblemmed with their name and a special certificate of recognition.

JOIN US in congratulating some of the best and brightest students of the Class of 1991.

The 1991 Observer All Stars in order of ranking are:

John Richards, Catholic Central High School; Anne V. Liu, Stevenson High School; Lynn Biberdorf, Plymouth Christian Academy; Joyce S. Wong, Stevenson High School; Raymond J. Adamski, Plymouth Canton High School; David Winebrener, Churchill High School; Kevin Holmes, Plymouth Canton High School; Jeffrey C. Sung, North Farmington High School; Daniel Chamberlain, Churchill High School; Kelvin L. Chou, North Farmington High School; Lana Akeroyd, Farmington High School; Lawrence M. France, Franklin High School; Maya Marian, Mercy High School; Mark E. Baker, John Glenn High School; Pranav P. Kothari, Redford Union High School; and Nicole Knapp of Ladywood High School.



JIM JAGDIE/CLD/Staff photographer

Robert Schramke, principal of Redford Union High School, discusses an academic all-star application with committee member Dennis Connolly, principal of John Glenn High School.

THE ARTS



The Arts Support

Engler flexes tactics with his new policies

I WROTE A column a month ago which tried to sort out whether Gov. John Engler was more like Ronald Reagan (passionate and committed ideologue) or Richard Nixon (hang the ideology—do what you must to get re-elected).

I concluded Engler was more like Reagan — only a flaming conservative ideologue would accept the flak he was taking and carry on with budget cutting.

Well, I was wrong. Just like Nixon and his celebrated conversions (remember the "New Nixon" or even the "Newer Nixon"?), Engler is showing signs of tactical flexibility. Nobly in the governor's office in Lansing is issuing press releases, but it's clear the new policy is: Do whatever has to be done.

MANY OF ENGLER'S friends think it's about time.

They worried as his overall conservative intent to shrink state spending got characterized as slashing welfare payments to the poor, cutting property taxes to the rich, and being generally callous about people in between. "Mean spirited" became the tag line.

They grew alarmed as Engler the ideologue seemed to develop true originality in angering nominally Republican constituencies.

Local governments — not just Detroit but solid suburban communities in Livingston, Oakland and western Wayne counties — were alarmed when the governor proposed to slash the property taxes that paid the lo-

cal bills without saying how the resulting shortfalls would be made up. Ditto for school boards.

The arts community got sore when state spending for the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Detroit Symphony were slashed. Environmentalists were alarmed at plans to break up the Department of Natural Resources and at a trial balloon about turning over management of four state parks to private business.

Talk about trouble! When the long hairs and the moose and goose folk start making common cause, it's time to get alarmed.

PART OF THE problem was Engler's staunch determination that his administration would be as unlike his predecessor's as possible.

Image mongering, ribbon cutting and PR hoopla were out. But that, in turn, made Engler vulnerable to having his image defied by his acts (slash arts funding) and his opponents ("mean spirited").

Predictably, the governor's poll ratings tumbled: 39-41 percent unfavorable was the last number I saw. People started taking out recall petitions.

And when Engler started trying to fulfill a campaign pledge to visit all 83 Michigan counties each year (his scheduler will come to hate him for that), kids started asking him why he was such a nasty fellow.

IT HAD TO CHANGE.

I rate three pieces of evidence that change came in the last two weeks:

from our readers

DIA jewel is 'cast into mothballs'

To the editor:

Recently you ran an article in which my representative, friend and colleague, Jan Dolan wondered why the Detroit Institute of Arts receives so much more public money than many major museums in other cities.

The museums named in the article, in Chicago, Toledo, Cincinnati, and Minneapolis, are all privately owned and operated with large endowments to support their operation.

The only appropriate comparison to be made with the DIA is the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., which charges no admission, but rather relies on tax support.

The Detroit Institute of Arts, because it is publicly owned and operated, has the smallest endowment for operations of any major museum in the country.

What greater security could the

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DIA's founders have had than knowing that the city would be held responsible for operations when they gave the museum to the city in 1919?

At that time the city was more than capable of supporting the museum's ongoing operations and performed admirably.

In 1974, with the city realizing that its resources were limited and the state realizing that this was indeed a treasure for Michigan, the state began to provide substantial assistance for the ongoing operation of the publicly operated museum.

This support has continued to the present day, but now we are suddenly threatened with the abrupt termination of this agreement.

Indeed the private sector has continued to maintain its commitment to the ongoing needs of the DIA but the state is now attempting to renege on its commitment.

Some people are questioning whether the state should be giving

any money at all in spite of the fact that the amount in question represents less than one-quarter of one percent of the state's budget.

HOW WOULD the people of this country react if the National Gallery announced that it would have to close because the government would no longer support its operation?

And what is the difference between that and the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial or the Space and Science Museum? Obviously, Washington, D.C., would be sadly lacking without its cultural institutions.

Is this what the proponents of abolition of state funding want for Michigan? Do people seriously want Michigan to become a cultural wasteland, and the DIA a billion-dollar warehouse for an art collection that no one can see?

For some reason, the governor chose to have his inaugural party at the DIA. How strange that this jewel was good enough for the governor's presentation, yet is now being cast into the mothballs for future generations.

Jack Faxon,
state senator,
Farmington Hills

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