

# Opinion

21898 Farmington Road/Farmington, MI 48336 Tom Baer editor/477-5450

20A(F)

O&amp;E Thursday, May 30, 1991

## Rouge Rescue

### More 'industry' is needed

**O**UR LITTLE branch of the Rouge River is due for its annual spring cleaning soon. On Saturday, June 1, thousands of good-hearted folks from places like Farmington and Farmington Hills will don old clothes, waders, gloves and other protective gear to clean up stretches of the Rouge and its tributaries.

Hats off, please, to those who plan to participate — and there may be as many as 3,000 of them in southern Oakland and western Wayne counties this year, organizers say.

The spirit of volunteerism comes shining through in these river cleanups. It's a big story when ordinary people band together to tackle trash and brave toxics in an attempt to clean up what years of neglect and abuse have caused.

We're also happy to see that some local governments are supporting their efforts, as are the Boy Scouts, Jaycees, fishing clubs, etc. Also deserving praise are the local businesses which provide food and refreshments for the workers.

Rescue Saturday has become an important happening in the six years since Rouge Rescue started.

THAT SAID, we have to wonder what chance of real success these hardy volunteers have if they must rely on their own strong backs and willing hands year after year.

If the Rouge, with its clogged and poisonous waters, is a mess, then why not enlist the help of the entities that caused the problem in the first place — big industry and big development.

We're thinking how nice it would be if industry — the auto industry, specifically — would underwrite a massive effort that would truly save the stream, not just haul out a few logs.

Doesn't an automaker, whose facilities have lined the banks of this ailing stream for decades,

*We're thinking how nice it would be if industry — the auto industry, specifically — would underwrite a massive effort that would truly save the stream . . .*

have a responsibility to help bring it back to life? And what about the wealthy developers who built the subdivisions which brought the people to places like Farmington Hills, Plymouth and Livonia?

Many developers made huge profits building their strip malls and subdivisions in the Oakland and Wayne county suburbs. Isn't it time they gave something back? We think so, and Rouge Rescue is a great place to start.

YES, THEY'VE gotten a good start on cleaning up the Rouge. This is just the sixth year after decades of nothing. It took that kind of grassroots effort to get the ball rolling. Keeping it going is something else again.

If Rouge Rescue is to be a true success, it has to grow to include many more people and industries in this developing area.

And if it takes some sort of a cleanup czar to coordinate future efforts, then let's have one. Let's have someone who knows how to utilize resources from many communities and industries to get the job done — and not give a rusty drum about what town that person happens to call home.

Oh well, here's to the handful who will do their duty to the Rouge on Saturday. Thanks to them, there'll be fewer log jams in our stretch of the river.

## Big trouble

### Headlee plan lacking support

**T**HE BRUTAL truth is that the Headlee II tax cut proposal has nowhere near the support that Taxpayers United thinks it has.

Its proposed 20 percent, across-the-board property tax cut — with Lansing making up lost revenue to local government — encountered a stalemate recently in the state Board of Canvassers. There was no majority to put it before the state Legislature or the voters, nor was there a majority to reject the petitions as insufficient.

WHAT TAX FOES proposed is a voter-initiated law. TU had to collect 192,000 signatures in six months.

Politically, the rule of thumb is that you collect 30 percent more signatures than you legally need because many will be unreadable, improperly done or otherwise invalid.

Thus, TU should have had 250,000 to be safe. Instead it had only 224,000 when it filed its petitions last Sept. 11. So it was in big trouble from the start.

The plan is named for TU chair Richard Headlee, whose name graces the horrendously complicated 1978 constitutional amendment aimed at limiting taxes. But this plan is somewhat simpler: Cut property taxes by rolling back assessments 20 percent over two years.

TU's fundamental notion is that assessments are rising far faster than the consumer price in-

dex. It's a true notion — in some areas of the state, notably the suburbs north and west of Detroit, the Grand Rapids area, the Lake Michigan shoreline and some of the Lake Huron shoreline. The rest of the state, however, doesn't know there's a problem.

TU SHOULD have smelled trouble when gubernatorial candidate John Engler endorsed its plan, and then Governor Engler offered his own plan to cut only school operating taxes.

TU should have smelled more trouble when the state Senate Republican leader introduced a resolution pressuring the Board of Canvassers to approve Headlee II, put it on the May 8 agenda and then failed to bring it to a vote.

TU will ask the Court of Appeals to overrule the canvassers. Even if it succeeds, clearly there is no majority in the House to pass its tax cut.

And even if Headlee II gets on the 1992 ballot, the open question is whether voters will believe the recession-hit state treasury has a spare \$1 billion to give local government to make up lost property tax revenue. Already groups like the arts lobby, foster parents and conservationists have turned against Engler over the question of the first \$1 billion in budget cuts. Does anyone believe Engler can come up with a second \$1 billion to pay for Headlee II?

For all its understandable fervor, Taxpayers United has big, big trouble on its hands.

## Doomed

### Recall drive misuses process

**A**NOTHER FUTILE petition drive is under way. John Engler is the second governor in a row to be subjected to this firestorm of activity.

Oddly that the drive is doomed. Petitioners must gather 641,000 signatures, three times as many as it would have taken to put the Headlee II tax cut proposal on the ballot. And they must do it in only 90 days versus 180 days for the tax proposal.

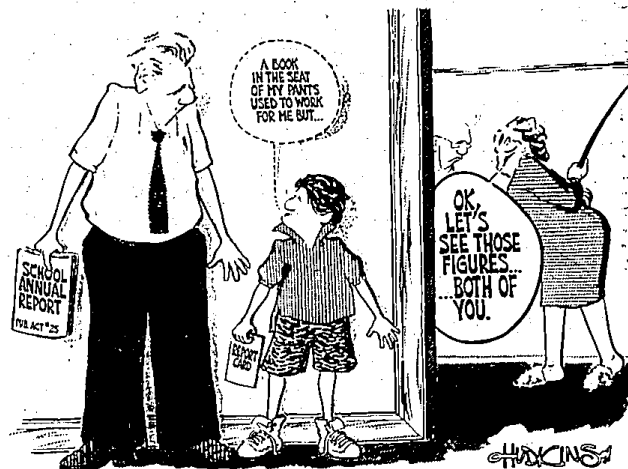
We say the same thing about the anti-Engler drive as the 1983 drive against James Blanchard. It's a misuse of the recall process. The recall should be reserved for wrongdoers or those who have become unfit to hold office. It's inappropriate to attempt to get a properly elected official because one disagrees with his political decisions.

Psychologically, a recall drive allows those on

the short end of the governor's decision to vent steam, smoke and fire. Politically, it's a waste. Researchers have found the average political activist burns out in about 3.7 years. By the time the next election rolls around in 1994, most anti-Englerites will have burned out, harming their own cause.

People with strong opinions should put them on paper and send them to their legislators. Those with very strong opinions should join the political party of their choice and do the kind of constructive work it takes to get their candidate elected: precinct organizing, mailing, phone calling, contributing, listening to candidates, cheering them on.

Michiganans can best direct the course of government through intelligence and sweat — not the steam, smoke and fire of a doomed recall campaign.



## Fund dispute delays job training progress

*It's nice to see Vice President Quayle endorsing more training for American workers. But it's sad that he copped out by criticizing the funding mechanism without offering any substitute.*



**Phillip Power**

for our white-collar and technical elites. But the kids who aren't going to college get second-rate educations with no applied learning, and they come into the world of work with minimum skills.

Our commission found that of the total of \$30 billion spent by the private sector in training, some \$27 billion was spent on management. Anthony P. Carnevale, economist of the American Society for Training and Development, put it this way: "About one in every five college graduates gets some training from an employer, but only one in 13 employees without college gets training."

The bottom line: It's nice to see Vice President Quayle endorsing more training for American workers. But it's sad that he copped out by criticizing the funding mechanism without offering any substitute.

Bill Ford, at least, knows all about the device of appealing to agree with a laudable objective but making sure nothing ever happens because no agreement can be reached on funding. I suspect that before his tenure is over, he'll do something about it.

Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. His award-winning column will appear periodically.

wherever one day, "They're hiring at Chrysler." And he'd get a job on the line at Chrysler or GM or Ford, and in two years he'd be making enough to get married and buy a house.

"That's how it worked, and it's how my district was built up. Now, to be an entry-level steelworker, you've got to pass an exam in math and general science. The simple jobs are gone," Ford concluded.

Broder then makes the sensible observation that with education matters in the Senate run by patrician Claiborne Pell and born-to-wealth Teddy Kennedy, "It is well that somebody with the blue-collar, assembly-line, blue-collar-and-beer perspective of a Billy Ford also has a large voice in these policy decisions."

OUR NATIONAL debate has finally focused on the linkage between skills and good jobs. High-value products require workers who can think as well as bend metal.

And that's where our schools fall down. We provide good college prep training for university-bound kids —

THEN THE DEAN of national political columnists, David Broder, wrote a piece on U.S. Rep. William D. Ford, D-Taylor, and why kids who aren't going to college get shorted in our schools.

Broder quoted Ford, who as the new chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, is one of the most powerful members of Congress.

"In the old days, all a kid had to do was stay out of jail until he was 18, and then he'd hear at the pool hall or

### from our readers

#### Let the kids enjoy sports

To the editor:  
When my daughter and I moved back to this area, the first thing my ten-year-old daughter accomplished was to get herself involved in organized sports.

Soon after, very unsuspecting (still trying to figure out how), this mother found herself charmed and whined (not whined) into also getting involved in Farmington's organized sports.

It has been a very enlightening and enjoyable three years. The children seem to grow up right before your eyes while learning teamwork, respect for each other and how it feels to win or lose and to accept either call.

In fact, until this season I have always felt proud when I see Farmington sports. In the past, now and in the future, I have nothing but respect for all the adult volunteers who are giving their time, effort and knowledge throughout every season to our kids.

But at the same time, I find myself very saddened by some of the

#### More letters — See Page A21

changes that seem to be taking place this season.

Maybe it is the pressure of trying to see that the millage passed, the economy struggle, whatever the reason, this season has been the worst for parents arguing with referees and coaches, coaches arguing with other coaches and our kids stuck right in the middle of what is supposed to be their time to shine.

Before we lose sight of what these games should be teaching our children and how much fun they can be, I think anyone who is involved in any type of organized sport (and if your child is playing you are surely involved) should step back and let these great kids play, allow the referees to do the job they were trained and qualified for, show the coaches the same respect you would expect him to show your child, sit down, relax and enjoy the game.

Debbie Popp-Dale,  
Farmington Hills

#### Tenure for teachers is 'a disease'

To the editor:  
Doc Doyle's recent column denouncing tenure as a protector of teachers' rights and an impediment in education would be only ludicrous if it were not tragic.

First of all, teachers' rights are protected the same as other employees' by law, not to mention by their contracts, which is another matter.

Even worse, the tenure system, based on seniority and age, is a disincentive to innovation and creativity. Without competition or accountability, too many (read that "more than zero") teachers coast for years, to the students' detriment.

The tenure system is an insidious disease that is draining our children of the ability to compete in the global marketplace.

Allen P. Warner,  
Farmington Hills

### Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

**Steve Barnaby** managing editor  
**Judith Doner Berne** assistant managing editor  
**Dick Isham** general manager  
**Mark Lewis** director of advertising  
**Fred Wright** director of circulation

Suburban Communications Corp.  
**Phillip Power** chairman of the board  
**Richard Aginian** president