

## points of view

## Sports hurting but not teachers

BACK TO SCHOOL this year in well-to-do Rochester and Rochester Hills, has middle and high school students paying a fee to play sports and participate in some other extracurricular activities.

They are the only students in Oakland County who must pay to play. Last year, students at John Glenn High School in the Wayne-Westland District in Wayne County also paid to play. Voters eventually passed a millage there — and it's back to sports as usual.

As in other districts, Rochester's busing has been cut back. Parochial students will have less direct routes, and money must be spent to plow an overgrown field and perhaps provide a guard so kids in an Oakland Township subdivision, who were in busing before, can walk to their elementary school safely.

Yes, Rochester Community Schools and other so-called "wealthy" Oakland County districts are hurting — especially those where millage votes were defeated. Yes, the state has robbed those



Judith Doner Berne

rich school districts to help the poor — for lack of a more equitable tax plan to even out per pupil spending whether students live in a wealthy or poor area.

Yes, houses with for sale signs are standing longer and longer despite it being a buyer's market. Yes, area business from the largest corporations to the store on the corner have had to cut costs — laying off personnel, freezing salaries or giving only slight raises.

BUT, NO MATTER, Rochester district teachers will be guaranteed 6 percent more money for each of the next three years — even more for those who also move up on the seniority scale — if a current tenta-

tive agreement is ratified.

Rochester and West Bloomfield, two of the so-called "at risk" districts by the Michigan Education Association teachers' union, both settled Friday. "At risk" means their school boards could represent their constituencies and insist that teachers be paid what the economy can bear. And then the strike drums would roll.

But no way. West Bloomfield won't announce its settlement until the tentative agreement has been signed. That district has money, after going to the voters twice to narrowly win a combined renewal and replacement money for state cuts. West Bloomfield is even able to add programs this year — an applied physics lab, a social studies course on law and American citizens; and a class combining pre-calculus math, physics and computers.

In Rochester, the situation is more awkward. The board boxed itself in, by scheduling two school bond votes for construction and renovation of buildings Sept. 23. Chance of passage

certainly would be diminished if teachers are marching up and down in front of school buildings and children are on extended summer vacation, such as occurred in the Troy district way into last fall.

THESE DAYS TEACHERS are more than fairly paid for the nine months of the year they work. For example, two years ago, in 1989-90, the average teacher in Rochester earned \$37,000. That will translate to more than \$41,000 for the coming year if the tentative agreement goes through. Meanwhile, nationwide, scores even on the Scholastic Aptitude Test decline. And, there is no true accountability.

Henry Adams said: "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops."

Bernard Shaw said: "He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches."

And, in Rochester schools, we're about to pay both types of teachers at least 6 percent more for each of the next three years in an uncertain, if not failing economy.

## All bureaucrats are here to serve

HAVE YOU EVER wanted to rebel against the system?

When I was a public schools administrator, one of the things I enjoyed most about my job was the ability they gave me to subvert the entrenched bureaucracy from the top when such intervention benefited children.

While my recent multicultural initiatives as assistant principal in Rochester were undoubtedly my more famous such "subversions," another far less publicized case in point comes to mind. As executive director of secondary education in Plymouth Canton schools a decade ago, I overruled the judgment of a principal, a school psychologist, a counselor and a teacher who wanted to retain a ninth grade girl — the product of a broken home — at that grade level for a second time.

Against their vigorous opposition, I stipulated that if she enrolled and demonstrated appropriate scholarship in summer high school courses in algebra and French, she would enter the 10th grade in the fall. She got an A and a B, graduated with honors three years later and entered the University of Michigan. Now she works for a congressman in Washington, D.C. Instead of waitress — the option she had been considering if she had dropped out in the ninth grade.

AS A MERE teacher, I had experienced notably less success in bucking the educational establishment, but it was not for any lack of trying. I recall one particularly narrow edict of Detroit's central administration in 1962 which proclaimed that new teachers starting their careers in mostly white schools on the city's periphery must be referred to inner city schools after three years.

While this rule was noble and understandable because it forced all young teachers to undertake an experience in a tough school, it made no alternative provision for a rookie teacher who had been initially assigned to an inner city school and wished to stay there — where I was and which I wished. I was coaching track at Southeastern High, and I had a quarter-mile returning the next season who had been the fastest sophomore in the country.

They transferred me out anyway over the protest of my principal, and it took me two years to get myself moved back to another high school in the inner city.

The Detroit school system became somewhat less bureaucratic when I



John Telford

became an administrator. Despite a rule that said administrators weren't allowed to coach, they let me lead my Pershing High team to one last unbeaten season even though I had been promoted and was an administrator in a junior high school during that season. I understand that new Detroit makes no exceptions.

RECENTLY Winfield Henry, the Detroit Central High School athletic director who had been an outstanding basketball coach (and player), was denied permission to continue coaching because of his administrative position.

Another similar case has unfolded in Cassopolis in southwestern Michigan. That school district put its high school football coach, Scott Bojanich, in the unenviable spot of having to choose between remaining a principal in the district and returning to coach his Lakeland Conference championship team this fall. Due to his career plans and the well-being of his family, he understandably decided to stay in the principalship.

Now his team will need him but he won't be there. This is most regrettable, because if an exceptional individual case had judicious merit, the exception should invariably prove the rule in any institution run by logical, level-headed leaders.

Exceptions like the girl I promoted — and like Henry and Bojanich — must forever be fairly made if the source of energy that drives educational systems is to be channeled as a matter of course to fulfill students' needs. Those needs must unfailingly come first, and the often arbitrary rules of the bureaucratic hierarchies and contract-conscious teacher unions must come last.

It is necessary that we constantly remind all educational bureaucrats, and the bigwigs within any other public institution as well, that they are here to serve us — not vice-versa.

John Telford, a Rochester Hills resident, most recently was assistant superintendent in the Rochester School District. He previously was executive director for secondary education in the Plymouth Canton district.

## Wichita war won't halt free choice

"WILL YOU STOP being so controversial?"

A co-worker hurled the challenge at me as she joined me for a cigarette in the three-circled smokers lounge outside the building. It was more a tease than a challenge.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"That abortion stuff," she said. "You keep getting people stirred up."

"I haven't written about that in a while," I said. "You mean the letters to the editor?"

"Yes. They just keep coming."

Yeah, I guess they never mind that the Soviet Union is going through the biggest upheaval since the Bolshevik Revolution. It's the War in Wichita that has people talking.

"I don't know," my friend said. "I personally don't believe in abortion. I could never have one myself. But I don't think the government has the right to tell a woman whether she can have one or not."

"Or anybody else." That was another co-worker — a woman a bit

older than colleague No. 1 — who had joined us.

"Right. Or anybody else. Can you believe those people down in Wichita?"

"You better believe 'em," I said. "They're serious."

"I know, but I just don't see how people can tell other people how to run their own lives."

"SO," I SAID, "are you pro-life or pro-choice?"

She looked puzzled.

"Well, I don't know. I've never really thought about it. I'm against abortion, but I believe women should be allowed to make their own decisions about it."

"So, are you pro-choice or pro-life?"

"Well, . . ." She thought for a minute. "I guess I'm sort of in between."

"You're pro-choice." It was co-worker No. 2.

"That's right," I said. "If you think a woman has the right to make her own choice — whether it's to have an abortion or not to have one —



Jack Gladden

you're pro-choice. That's what it's all about. Pro-choice does not mean pro-abortion. It's perfectly possible to be against abortion and for choice at the same time."

Co-worker No. 2 nodded in agreement.

No, I thought about it a bit longer, then announced to herself as much as anyone else, "Hey, you're right. I'm pro-choice. I'm PRO-CHOICE!"

HER DILEMMA, which she summed up herself, was that she had "never really thought about it." That results in the kind of statements that drive the feminist up the wall.

"I'm pro-life," the caller tells the talk radio host, "but I think women should be allowed to make their own

decisions about abortion."

"Then you're pro-choice," the feminist yells at the caller. "You don't even understand what pro-choice means."

And that's a problem many people seem to have. If the pro-life movement wants to keep women from having abortions, then the pro-choice movement must want to force them to have abortions. Ridiculous as it sounds, some people actually seem to believe that.

That's why I'm glad my co-worker thought about it and realized that choice means just what it says: the freedom to choose.

And maybe that's why the War in Wichita should generate as much interest as the Soviet upheaval. Given a taste of freedom, the Soviets weren't about to give it back. They faced up to tanks to keep it.

While in Wichita, in the heartland of America, the demonstrators were doing their best to take some of it away.

If this is being controversial, tough.

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