

POINTS OF VIEW

Teachers can't work under school's shadow of fear

QUESTION: I am a teacher in a school where the building principal manages by intimidation. We are written up for everything. The morale is low, many teachers are frightened, most want to transfer, some are physically sick. What percent of teachers that go before the tenure commission are fired? I am a tenured teacher but worry about my job security all the time.

ANSWER: Public school teachers in Michigan today probably have the greatest job security (called tenure) of all jobs in the U.S.

You are fortunate because that was not always the case. Prior to 1937, there was no teacher tenure, and there were no teacher contracts.

Some boards and administrators, in those early days, functioned in an extremely arbitrary, conspicuous and paternalistic

manner. Teachers rarely challenged the system.

Today, the arsenal of weapons teachers have for exceeds what most professions in this country have available.

In 1964, Michigan residents voted for statewide teacher tenure. In '65, collective bargaining passed the Legislature. Today a teacher can appeal state tenure results through the court system. If that doesn't work, they can try the civil rights commission (I'm being released because I am too tall, too short, Irish).

Tenured teachers (and I consider myself a former teacher) literally have to be caught in some gross act to be dismissed, and generally it is not their teaching nor teaching style.

Indeed, many teachers see themselves given a bad rap because of the total lack of commitment of a few. I taught next to a guy



DOC DOYLE

in high school who came to class 10 minutes late and left 10 minutes early. He assigned busy seat work so he could read the newspaper. At the end of the year, he got the same raise I received. Quality teachers know what I'm talking about, and those reading this column probably have someone in mind.

Justin King, executive director of the Michigan Association of School Boards, said: "Good teachers don't need tenure and the bad ones shouldn't have it."

The average cost of a tenure case to a school district is about \$100,000 for legal and other fees. One clear-cut case I know of cost the district more than \$250,000, and the district still lost in an appeals court. Many potential tenure cases never get to Lansing because some districts don't have or don't want to gamble that kind of money.

You ask what percent of teachers who go before the state tenure commission get fired. About 55 percent, according to Ed Sarkisian, Grrosse Ile superintendent and member of the state teacher tenure board.

I don't know the details of your own personal situation, but when you say (assuming it is true) that most of the teachers want a transfer out of the building, the major problem in the building may be the

principal.

As a former assistant superintendent of schools, if I received transfer requests from 10 teachers in a building, let alone most of the staff, where building morale is at the bottom, where teachers are frightened and some physically sick, I would set up a major staff development program for the principal and give that person one year to pull the building together.

Teachers can't work effectively under a constant shadow of fear some people with positions of authority use as a cover up for their own low self esteem. Those with enough degrees and a fat resume can come a school administrator, but not all become competent and respected leaders.

James "Doc" Doyle, a former teacher/school administrator, university instructor, is president of Doyle and Associates, an educational consulting firm.

Don't believe everything you hear about those Wisians

Dr. Wayne Dyer has been my friend ever since he was my assistant track coach at Detroit's Pershing High School and later a charismatic counselor at Farmington's Mercy High. An author clever with word play, he reversed two words in an old saying to devise the famous phrase, "You'll see it when you believe it."

To that I add the cautionary caveat, "But don't simply believe it: First, take care to distinguish it from your past experiences with things to which it merely bears some similarity." As a caveat to my own caveat, I further add, "Never deceive yourself into 'seeing' with your imperfect memory of previous similar experiences or to uncritically accept what others recall of theirs."

"Similar" isn't "same." And even a fairly accurate recollection can be distorted by the passing of time and by having "re-

viewed" the recollection through what I call the "prism of cultural orientation." We must take care lest that prism of our own culture distort our view of other cultures in the same way that peering through a crystal prism distorts how we see the physical world.

The late Senator Sam Hayakawa of California wrote about a hypothetical "Mr. Miller" who was immediately seen as a miserly, clannish, untrustworthy radical by people who had just been introduced to him. They saw him this way because they had been given just one piece of information about him — that he was Jewish.

Practically, they saw the rest based on that isolated piece, even though it bears ancient stereotypical baggage distorted by the blurring prisms of diverse cultures and by the attitude that different unequivocally



JOHN TELFORD

means undesirable.

Stereotyping a person is behavior we need to constantly guard against in ourselves, particularly if we happen to have been victimized by some other member of that person's group. No individual is guilty for what another individual does or is.

There is no such thing as "collective guilt."

However, let me hasten to note that ethnic Wisian people do constitute the single exception to this rule. Every loyal American is well-advised to distrust any ethnic Wisian. It pains me to say it, but this same concern needs to be borne in mind in dealing with most Wisian-Americans as well. Wisians are undeniably clannish, shrewd, vulgar, flashy, secretive, unsanitary, lazy, loud, lecherous and quite often drunken. Give any male Wisian half a chance and he'll steal your wife in a Minnesota minute. Just yesterday I spied your own wife amooching with this sexy young Wisian. He was an extraordinarily big, furry one, too. In fact, he had a tail.

OK, admit it — didn't my sneaky incursion against those Wisian rascals have you going for maybe just a second or two? Actu-

ally, Wisians are a creation of the National Science Foundation, which asked a sampling of Americans what they thought about a list of ethnic groups that include this imaginary one.

In the survey, "Wisian-Americans" got rated "undesirable" by a full four out of five respondents! Such a disturbing statistic should cause all of us to think seriously about Wayne Dyer's phrase. Too many of us are too ready to "believe it" when "it" doesn't even exist.

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

LETTERS

Voters should know facts

Before Oakland County Commissioners make important decisions on the Oakland County Solid Waste Plan, events occurring in the last six months must be considered. Westinghouse had the foresight to cancel their contract to build an incinerator in March. Communities had already rejected the county's plan once and were not responding by signing the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for the second time. Also, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources required many more months of study to complete a mercury strategy for the state before granting any more permits

for incinerators. Other significant events followed Westinghouse's pull-out.

1. March 16, 1992 — Attorney General Frank Kelley announced he was opposing the power purchase agreements between five operating or proposed waste-to-energy incinerators (including Oakland County's) and Detroit Edison. Kelley contends customers have to pay more for this energy than they would if Edison furnished the power by other available means. Customers may have to pay more than \$25 million in hidden tax subsidies.

2. March 31, 1992 — The International Joint Commission, a U.S.-Canadian government agency which monitors pollution in the Great Lakes, sub-

mitted a report to the state departments of each country. The report called for a phase-out of trash incinerators or preventing them from releasing harmful chemicals that build up in the Great Lakes. The chemicals included are dioxins, furans, PCBs, mercury and hydrochloric acid. The DNR already delayed permitting of the proposed incinerator because of the mercury problem.

3. April 21, 1992 — Attorney General Frank Kelley's office received a request for an investigation and hearing into the "Vote Yes" campaign for the Oakland County Solid Waste Bond Proposition election held on Nov. 5, 1991, filed by Oakland County residents. His office is reviewing this request.

4. May 3, 1992 — The Michigan

Medical Society called for zero discharge of toxic pollutants such as dioxins and PCBs into the Great Lakes. Incinerators emit these chemicals.

5. May 15, 1992 — Communities rejected the county plan for the third time.

6. June 1992 — The Supreme Court ruled that states could not ban the importation of trash from other states. How does this affect the power of Public Act 641 in requiring counties to take care of their own trash? This may open the door to handling trash regionally. If an incinerator is built, will trash from out of state be burned in it?

Ogden-Martin, the company now proposing to build the incinerator, may not be aware of all these events, but county commissioners should be aware

and should act on this knowledge. The movement away from incineration as a means of solid waste disposal continues with each new call made internationally and locally for a cleaner environment and financial responsibility. The implications for the county plan are clear — No Incinerator.

If the facts are ignored again by commissioners, the county will continue spending millions of taxpayers' dollars on a project that is not feasible. Commissioners' actions on this important issue will indicate to voters their ability to make sound decisions based on pertinent facts and their commitment to making Oakland County a better place to live.

Diane Pederson, Rochester Hills

FAMILY READING CHALLENGE 1992

Calling All Reading Challengers!

Pretend to spend \$500.

Imagine you have found \$500, along with a note that says: "The finder may keep this money, but only if they spend it on items or services they can find in their hometown newspaper."

Look at all the ads (don't forget the classified section) and decide what you will buy. Make a list of items you want and the cost of each until you have "spent" the entire \$500.

(Note to adults: This is the fourth in a series of activities in the Family Reading Challenge 1992 Contest. Use this page to share some educational summer fun with your child.)

FAMILY READING CHALLENGE 1992 ENTRY FORM

Yes! I have read at least:

3 newspaper articles and 3 books and discussed them with my parent(s) or guardian or another adult.

SIGNATURE OF YOUNG READER _____

SIGNATURE OF ADULT _____

1992 FAMILY READING CHALLENGE

RULES:

1. You must be in grades 1 through 8 to enter.
2. Print clearly or type the information on the entry form.
3. Entries must be signed by you and an adult and postmarked by August 28th. The drawing will be held September 2, 1992. Winners will be notified by mail.
4. Void where prohibited by law or where restricted. All federal, state and local rules and regulations apply. No purchase necessary.

Questions? Call (313)953-2155

Please send me a "Readers Are Leaders" bumper sticker and register me in the September 2nd drawing for one \$50 gift certificate or one of the twenty-five \$10 gift certificates from Borders Book Shops in Birmingham and Novi.

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