

POINTS OF VIEW

Taxpayers will pay for education funding cuts

QUESTION: I am a central office administrator. I understand citizens' concern about taxes. But cuts are devastating to our school district. And when I take that position with citizens I get the, "We heard that song before." Please write some of your observations from your many years of experience in education.

Answer: Doc Doyle's Observations:

1. Money taken away by government agencies (whether by a reduced tax base or whatever) will never be reimbursed to the local school district by the government. Basis for Observation:

■ In the '50s it was decided young people must have a driver education course. It was fully funded by the government and car dealers donated cars. Today local districts pay the tab and, in most cases, cars are leased. Local districts ended up with the tab (at taxpayers expense).

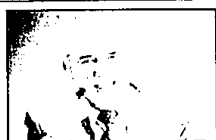
■ In the '60s, after Sputnik, the NDEA (National Education Defense Act) was

passed to upgrade science and math teaching (and to fully fund state of the art (expensive) science equipment for all schools. Some teacher training took place, but local districts ended up paying the tab for equipment (at tax payers expense).

■ In the '60s, the Vocational Education Act was passed to fully fund a national state of the art vocational and industrial arts program, including major equipment purchases for school districts. The act soon dissipated to the point that local districts ended up paying the tab (at taxpayers expense).

■ In the '60s President John F. Kennedy pushed through the long needed Special Education Act and government paid much of the tab. Today, local school districts, in consortium with Intermediate School Districts, pay the tab (at taxpayers expense).

2. The reduction of property tax to



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(hopefully) spur new business will decimate public education as it has been known in Michigan. Basis for Observation:

■ Trenton (where I grew up as a boy) will lose \$19 million over five years. Trenton's budget today is about \$19 million. Trenton, a financially solvent district, has about 3,200 students. Now imagine what poor districts are faced with. Disaster!

■ School districts will be faced with: (1) Pay for play for all activities (drama, band, etc.). (2) More laid off teachers (which translates into huge class sizes). (3) A shut down of all enriching services such as the media center (the library), gifted and talented programs, field trips, etc. (4) Parents will be furnishing their own transportation to get their kids to school in some districts. I know these are the same arguments you heard at the last millage election, but citizens this is reality... the real world.

3. If one of Engler's motives is to break

the teacher's union (MEA), he should consider legislation rather than destroying the education of our children.

■ If union busting is one of his goals, he should promote legislation to address teacher strikes, blue flu, slow-downs. Today there are no financial penalties to teachers who strike... just make up the days. Many states are moving in the "dock pay for days missed... right or wrong!"

4. The MEA has performed masterfully for teachers and children over the years but times have changed.

I believe Engler wants to restore the state's economy. However, with no clear plan to re-fund school districts, the millions of dollars that would be taken away will never be re-couped from local taxpayers.

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

Columnists say the darndest things, and it's their right

What are we going to do about Jeff Counts?

It was more an expression of disgust than a question, but boy did I get chewed out for it.

Steve Barnaby, our managing editor, demanded to know what right I had to put the chill on Jeff's freedom of expression. Worse, he accused me of being a minion of political correctness.

Well, Barnaby had a point. When the boss tells opinion writers what's acceptable, opinion writers cease expressing themselves. Staff columnists, as much as anyone else, need plenty of elbow room to carve out their idea of the truth. Besides, one of the things I like about these newspapers is how much, both good and bad, we get away with.

But then, I never said Jeff shouldn't

be allowed to express his honest opinions. I merely meant to point out that the man is a stark raving jerk.

In case you missed it, his latest struggle with reason had him blabbering about drunken white men. His point wasn't clear, but it seemed to be that drunken white men are getting picked on when, in fact, they really aren't such bad people. (I've heard a few overly sensitive white guys fret about being blamed for the world's ills, but until now I didn't know it was drunken white men who are being persecuted.)

Anyway, Jeff wasn't smart enough to stop there. He went on idiotically to say that the dreaded liberals think women and blacks should govern because white guys screwed everything up. Then he tiptoed right up to the



James Radebaugh

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edge by almost suggesting that enfranchising women and blacks was a mistake since the country hasn't been run better as a result.

Jeff, of course, doesn't really believe that. He just wants to get a rise out of us so he can sit back with his hands folded behind his head and wonder aloud why certain people get so excited about these things. What's his problem? If you've ever watched an attention-starved child provoke his mother, you can understand what Jeff is up to.

It's the same game he plays when he takes his occasional snide shot at homosexual men. It's all fun and games for Jeff, but it helps perpetuate prejudices that cause real people real grief.

So, what's the source of Jeff's jovial, aw-shucks, that's-not-what-I-really-

meant malice? Damned if I know. Maybe he had a crummy childhood, maybe he never felt loved by his father, maybe he's confused about what it is to be a man and he's lashing out to everyone he blames for complicating the matter.

I don't know, Jeff, but something's bothering you. Maybe you should hike out into the wilderness and beat on a tom-tom until you figure out what it is.

Here's my advice: Before you write your next column, sit down and do a little soul searching. Maybe you'll find that, under the baloney, you really do have something worthwhile to say. And if not, you might at least start to grow up.

James Radebaugh is a copy editor for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

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