

Farmington Observer OPINION

21898 FARMINGTON RD., FARMINGTON, MI 48336

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1992

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On the road Patience best way to handle traffic

Even though the holidays will mean a breather from the rush-hour grind of driving to work every day, the roads will be crowded and motorist attitudes will still be the key to safe driving.

That increase on our roadways, whether from holiday traveling, shopping trips or the many holiday events in the area, adds up to longer lines of traffic and shorter tempers along our roads. And the best way to avoid accidents and further delays is for drivers to exercise patience.

As one traffic expert put it, "driver attitude" is the key factor in making our roads safe and getting to any destination within a reasonable time.

Despite an increase in traffic volume in our area, especially in northern Farmington Hills over the past decade, accidents have decreased, in part, due to better traffic management, enforcement and engineering improvements. But police are powerless to prevent accidents along busy roads and highways, especially I-696, if drivers don't exercise caution.

The high accident rates at some of our intersections — including Orchard Lake and 12 Mile, Orchard Lake and 14 Mile, and Grand River and Halsted — could help bring state and federal dollars this way for road improvements. The state uses accident rates to set priorities for road improvements. Farmington Hills officials also think the Haggerty connector will help ease traffic.

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But with growth comes traffic. Although help is on the way, it won't keep up, especially with the fiscal philosophy and budget limitations in Lansing and Washington.

The motorists who can't wait for a crowded intersection to clear, who try to cut in or who drink and then drive will likely always be with us. But allowing those drivers to become the norm just makes traffic worse and increases the likelihood of serious accidents.

We should make sure our legislators don't drop the ball when it comes to road improvements. But with the holidays upon us, the best thing motorists can do is take a little time and exercise some patience.

Intolerance hurts community

Unifying our metropolitan community should be the first order of business for the new year.

Our metropolitan area has suffered for decades from intolerance. Despite the many laws and ordinances passed in decades past, we still have yet to wean ourselves from the fears of different lifestyles and cultures.

Higher income and education have little impact on fear and prejudice.

While the residents of the Birmingham school district wrestle with teaching about the gay lifestyle, blacks and other minorities in various suburban communities like Livonia and Westland are still battling with the private sector for the right to open housing.

In our central city, the community tensely watches as two white police officers stand trial in the beating death of a black resident.

The problem is not just one of perception. One report after another is released, labeling metropolitan Detroit as one of the most segregated areas in the United States.

Something is very wrong when, in a metropolitan community like Detroit, we are so focused on separation rather than unification.

If nothing else will satisfy the minds of the pragmatists that discrimination and prejudice are problems for our area, think of the economics, think of the cost in fines and labor to deal with these issues. All that time and money could be better spent building rather than destroying.

Reflecting these problems, the head of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights quietly resigned recently, protesting the Engler administration's cut in staff from 1970 levels despite the fact that complaints have more than doubled in that same period.

Appointed in 1986, John Castillo has seen his department investigate and process more than 42,000 claims, resulting in \$34.5 million in monetary awards for discrimination.

Each time a glaring example of discrimination comes to the forefront to scar our collective reputations, the healing process takes even longer. The recent \$450,000 jury award to Anthony and Deeva Darby for suffering racial discrimination when attempting to rent an apartment in Westland, even though the highest award of its kind in Michigan history, is minuscule compared to the damage done.

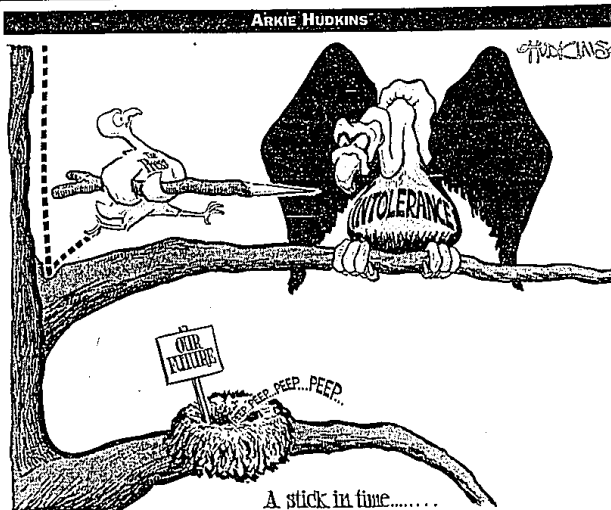
Not only have the Darbys suffered, but so has the community for years to come.

In Birmingham, the argument over inclusion of the gay lifestyle in the curriculum has taken on the atmosphere of the Scopes' Monkey Trial. In that time, the community was divided on the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution.

For all of its importance, the significance of the Scopes' trial pales in comparison to the impact of the Birmingham district's struggle. Today's debate not only surrounds a concept but real, living humans as well who deserve a chance to be heard.

In truth, more information is always better than less. We must teach our children how to make decisions based on all the information available, not just on the information we wish them to have.

If we guide our society any other way, we will only leave a legacy of ignorance and poverty.



LETTERS

Poverty

Tim Richard blames rising poverty among children on the increase in single-parent families (12-10-92). Without citing any statistics, he sees the divorced or separated mothers on welfare as the deserving poor who get off quickly, but the never-married as the "permanent clients of the welfare system having child after child as if they didn't know what caused it." He also mistakenly claims the recently issued KIDS COUNT report in Michigan refuses to recognize the relationship between single parent families and child poverty.

Mr. Richard is apparently unaware that Michigan's welfare families average less children (1.84) than other families in the state (1.99). If he actually read the excellent KIDS COUNT report, he would know that it clearly acknowledges children in single parent families are more likely to be poor, in fact, three times more likely to be poor if they live only with their father, and seven times more likely if they live with their mother.

Mr. Richard offers no solutions to single-parent poverty rates, although admitting the "just say no" advice hasn't worked. Facing that reality, perhaps we should look at factors that could

contribute to a solution, such as more incentives for parents on welfare to work rather than drastically reducing or cancelling any government help if they get a job, helping them get training, assuring ongoing medical benefits for low-wage workers who rarely have insurance in their jobs, providing good affordable child care so parents can work — also a problem for two-parent families when both work.

There are no easy answers to poverty. But laying blame and guilt on single parents who by and large are struggling with courage against formidable odds does nothing to solve their problems.

Marguerite Kowaleski, Farmington

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number. Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

State needs economic summit

Look past all the trashing Bill Clinton's economic conference took last week. At heart it is an innovative and useful device which should be copied here in Michigan by the Engler Administration.

It's a great way to get lots of expert and knowledgeable people together, far away from the smoke-filled rooms of Washington or Lansing, where they can discuss in depth the problems of the nation or state in full public view. And in the process, they can educate both the president/governor and the people.

No lobbyists at work behind closed doors. No cozy little deals cut between legislators. No capital city mindset, at once so parasitic and so arrogant. No media demands for TV sound bites, the ultimate triumph of form over substance.

If an innovation should be judged by the enemies it makes, Clinton's economic conference was a terrific success.

Certainly, the establishment media have had a great time bashing it. "Pointless." "Inconclusive." "Revenge of the nerds." "Divided." These are a representative sample of comment from mainstream media biggies eased out of their customary role of omniscient gatekeepers for the truth.

The last time the media were as united was in attacking presidential candidates for appearing on talk shows. After all, large reportorial egos can take only so much.

The folks inside the Washington beltway weren't any too happy either. Here was a president-elect listening in public to the analyses and advice of a bunch of people who had actually met payrolls and had a stake in getting the economy rolling again.

I think the case is overwhelming for Gov. John Engler to hold his own economic conference.

Michigan is in trouble. And no one seems able to offer a clear policy vision of the way out. Our economy is struggling today with the



PHILIP POWER

consequences of General Motors' downsizing in a context of gradual conversion from a durable manufacturing base to service centered. No long-term economic strategy has emerged from either the governor or Legislature to deal with these long-term problems.

In the short run, Michigan faces something like a \$400 million general fund budget shortfall for the coming fiscal year. Beyond proposing bookkeeping gimmicks, neither the governor nor Legislature has any clear idea of what to do about it.

Both causing and compounding the policy gridlock in Lansing is a virtual infestation of lobbyists who provide most of the cash a careerist politician needs to remain in office and who shamelessly use their power behind closed doors to block any initiatives disliked by their clients.

All this leaves the public anxious, confused and ill-informed.

Come on, governor! Call an economic summit.

Michigan has plenty of experts; listen to them. Educate the public about why we are in the fix we are in.

And get on with the business of governing. Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. His voice mail telephone number is (313) 953-2047 ext. 1880.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

Is Santa Claus real?

We asked this question at Farm Hills Donuts in Farmington Hills.



'When Christmas comes, I do.' Ray McDonald Southfield



'He can't be. He didn't grant my wish. I asked for a billionaire.' Mario Clark Westland



'My grandson says he's real. He wouldn't lie to me.' Dominic Roti Farmington



'The spirit of giving and love he represents is real.' Frances McDonald Southfield

The Farmington Observer

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