

## Competition

### Out of cable TV equation

**T**he confusion generated by the recent Federal Communications Commission ruling on cable TV rates made us stop and think. And some of our thoughts are downright rebellious.

If MetroVision, the outfit that holds the cable TV franchise in Farmington and Farmington Hills, doesn't suit us, why should we be forced to patronize it? Why not shop around for another, more suitable cable company?

Ah, competition... the C word... dreadful to some, delightful to others! It's one important factor that's been missing from the cable TV equation ever since the first lines were strung.

Now, in writing this missive, we're really not taking a shot at MetroVision *per se*, so Tom Bjorklund and other company officials can please put away their pens and switch off their letter-quality printers.

It's just that the FCC ruling last week pointed to a rate cut for customers. How much would that be? What are the details? We thought we'd deliver the good news to our readers in an Observer article.

But, after going round and round with two bureaus, one large and one small, from Washington, D.C. to Livonia, Mich., we have to say we don't know many details.

And neither, apparently, do officials like Bjorklund, MetroVision VP, who says cryptically that a drastic rate cut "ultimately would affect service."

Well, everytime there's a rate increase, service interruption or some other untoward or confusing happening on the cable TV front in our communities or elsewhere, we start to think.

We'd like to state emphatically that we don't need a federal agency to straighten out cable

**We'd like to state emphatically that we don't need a federal agency to straighten out cable TV.**

TV. Good, old fashioned competition — there's that C word again — in markets like Farmington would accomplish the same thing.

Why should we be saddled with X cable system just because we happen to live in Y city... especially when cable system Z seems to be offering a better deal?

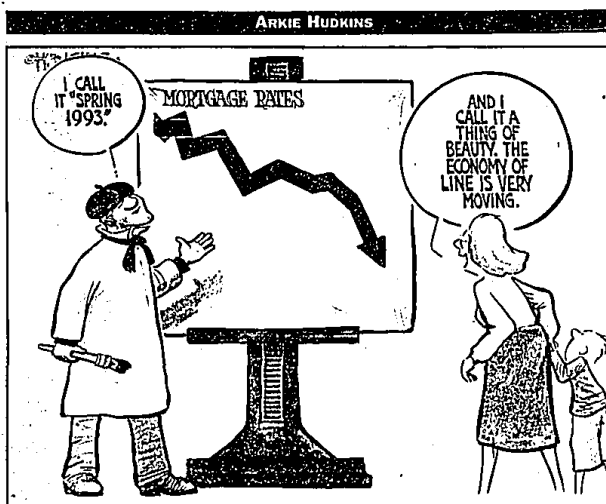
After all, if you don't like the price of oranges at the local A&P, you simply check out the nearest Mofler Thrifty Acres. You wouldn't feel obligated to shop at the A&P just because it happened to be located in your hometown.

And, of course, no one says you have to drive a Ford just because you happen to live in Dearborn, or a Pontiac because you reside in the Oakland County city of the same name. You'll drive whatever you like and can afford.

Shouldn't the same market factors apply to cable TV systems? Of course they should. Do the cable TV franchisees want them to? Of course they don't. That's why you, the rate-paying customer, are stuck with whatever the cable system dishes out.

In setting up these cable TV "franchisees" — complete with a confusing array of advisory boards and commissions — yet another layer of government has been added to an already over-governed population.

And, unfortunately, it's a layer of government over which the governed have little control.



ARKIE HUDKINS

## LETTERS

### She says thanks

**T**o a Good Samaritan: Thank you! I am placing this letter in the newspaper because I do not know your name. I do not know how to thank you personally for your kindness.

On Wednesday, March 31, I was hurt in an auto accident on 12 Mile Road and Rockwell. Though I was in full view of many people — merchants, shoppers and other motorists, including the woman who ran into me — only you responded.

You were kind enough to stop your car and come over to me. I do not remember what you said, but I remember feeling comforted by you and that you held me until the authorities arrived.

So thank you, kind sir, and God bless you.  
Masha Silver, Farmington Hills

failure in combat, lost lives, and we genuinely respect homosexuals as people. We do, however, reject the perception that their behavior is normal.

Gary Belanger, you are correct that conduct, not orientation should be a determinant; but it is not the sole determinant. That's why gays-in-the-military is being carefully studied for six months before a decision is made.

Maybe the real question isn't whether columnists have strong opinions, but whether they are tolerant enough to understand the other's point of view.

Maj. Terry Fobbs, U.S. Army Reserve, Farmington Hills

### Why stop at 'better'?

**T**he latest property tax/school finance reform proposal by Gov. Engler and legislative leaders is a plus because it is better than what we now have.

But why stop at better? I believe the governor and the legislature can solve the problem by making all the following changes:

1. Eliminate the 602 school districts and their administrative costs, forming one statewide district.
2. The one central district would negotiate a contract with each union and have an enforced no-strike clause.
3. Provide an equal education for every student in the state. Put an end to the financial discrimination.

4. Allow property taxes to maintain local government only.

5. The residents of the community vote for the local governing body, pay their wages, have a voice in the policy making and reap the benefits.

6. Allocate 100 percent of the state lottery monies to schools.

7. Increase the state sales tax to a total of eight cents.

8. All the state school costs would be paid from the lottery and increased sales tax.

9. Continue the exemption for groceries and prescriptions.

10. Everyone spending in the state would contribute to the tax, resident and visitor alike.

11. Homeowners would not have their taxes greatly increased when they spend money to improve their residence (a lose/lose situation).

I am disgusted because I have to pay so much money in taxes and see it so poorly managed at the local, state and federal level.

If the legislature is really representing the people (that's me) then they should listen and solve the problem once and for all.

Leonard Weems, Farmington Hills

### Powell's no homophobia

**G**ary Belanger's column of March 29 on gays in the military showed an incredible amount of naivete.

He perpetuated myths that military leaders' opposition was because openly homosexual behavior was a possibility.

Military leaders aren't that shallow, and most certainly not General Powell.

Having gays openly serve would be a disruptive influence in a military organization. The disruption begins with the perception of the majority of military people that homosexual behavior is something personally or morally repugnant, and that they have no right to feel or express that perception.

Duty performance isn't the issue; behavior is the issue. A military organization must be cohesive and disciplined in order to function and survive in a combat environment. Anything that would cause disruption, or destroy unit cohesiveness and discipline, is anathema to military readiness.

The sacrifices of many brave, gay service members is also not the issue. The military doesn't function solely on individual effort. It functions on teamwork, excellence, and the ability to fight and win if called upon. Given that basic function, social experimentation would be inappropriate.

As a black American, combat veteran, career Army officer, and now a member of the Army Reserve, I know from sad experience what happens to a unit when gay soldiers openly declare themselves. It nearly destroyed a unit I commanded.

Yes, gays are people too. People with guaranteed constitutional rights, such as equal protection under the law, the right to vote, freedom of religion, speech, and so forth. But to try to force others to accept a lifestyle that repulses them, and then ridicule them for their rejection of that lifestyle, is homophobia in reverse.

Yes, homophobia is wrong. Making unfounded, nonsensical generalizations about any people is wrong; but so is applying the generalizations such as racist, sexist and homophobic to those who don't want to see our military organizations critically disrupted. We worry about

## Cheer up! Baseball's back

**J**ust look at the headlines. The world's in sorry shape — as usual.

The standoff in Waco heads into its second month... they're still killing each other in Bosnia-Herzegovina... the U.S. health care crisis isn't going to be solved anytime soon... and 80,000 more U.S. jobs have been lost to Mexico. And, of course, the income tax deadline looms.

But come April, hope springs eternal with the familiar cry, "Play ball!"

Despite everything, including winter's last discontented jab, baseball is back.

That's right. In cities small and large across this land, the serious problems have to be left outside the foul lines, if only for a few hours, as fans of all ages turn their attention to opening day of the national pastime.

In Detroit and environs, where the Tigers growl, the mood is especially festive despite a lackluster exhibition season, thanks to a new owner and an old announcer.

Owner Mike Ilitch of Bloomfield Hills, who takes over the Detroit Tigers after years of neglect by another pizza baron, has promised the fans a new deal. There'll be a renovated Tiger Stadium (and perhaps a new ballpark in the future), looser purse strings and overall more of a "fan-friendly" atmosphere.

Want proof? Well, one of Ilitch's first moves was to retire Hall of Famer Ernie Harwell, a Farmington Hills resident, to broadcast the Tiger games on the radio. Political maneuvering had taken the mike from the Southern gentleman last season — and snapped a 31-year bond between team and town.

Now, there are a lot of sports. Hockey we like

**Tiger fans from Westland to West Bloomfield and from Redford to Rochester Hills will be pinning for a pennant this season.**

... basketball we like. But they're only preliminaries. Baseball is the main event.

These are truly exciting sports times in Michigan. The University of Michigan Fab Five basketball team was competing for the national championship in New Orleans at about the same time the opening pitch was being thrown at Oakland, where the Tigers opened their 1993 season. And the Red Wings, looking good, are headed into the Stanley Cup playoffs.

But melt the ice, put away the hoops, because baseball is back.

Tiger fans from Westland to West Bloomfield and from Redford to Rochester Hills will be pinning for a pennant this season.

It's always fun to start a new baseball season. For one thing, last season's disappointments have melted away like some spring snowfall, and folks are excited about the team.

For another, the home opener is an event that draws everyone closer together. Usual divisions are forgotten — for one chilly afternoon, anyway — as suburbanites and Detroiters all root together for the guys wearing the Old English "D."

So don't let the cynicism of the day (players' salaries, higher ticket prices, "designer" expansion teams in Florida and Colorado, the prospect of an expanded playoff, etc.) keep you out of the stands this season.

## COMMUNITY VOICE

### QUESTION:

Should the United States give aid to Russia?

We asked this question at the Elias Brothers Big Boy Restaurant on Farmington Road in Farmington.



Edward Olchensky  
Livonia



Willie Wilt  
Escanaba, Mich.



Robert Kalkder  
Dearborn



Kathryn Baehara  
Dearborn Heights

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Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.