

POINTS OF VIEW

Question those pervasive education code words

Two themes pop up across the state when public schools get heavy duty discussion: *Concerned Parents. Excellence in education.*

You hear the same code words so often that you suspect there's a new political party in the state, in addition to Democrats, Republicans and the Perotists.

The Concerned Parents line recurred last year in hearings chaired by state Sen. Gil DiNello, R-Macomb County, on the Michigan Model for Comprehensive Health Education. Social engineers have taken over public schools. They are substituting their values on sexuality and social decisions for the parents' values. Liberal educators have an anti-family bias.

If a newspaper had said that, it would be called sensationalized yellow journalism.

A dissenter, Sen. Jim Berryman, D-Adrian, blamed "vocal and well-organized extremist organizations" for the

attack on the Michigan Model. He blamed "overactive and suspicious imaginations" for stories about anti-Christianity, satanism, occultism, New Age and Hindu rituals in the Michigan Model.

Berryman noted much testimony came from a handful of people who followed the hearings around the state. Their anecdotes were surprisingly repetitive, he said.

There's a growing body of national literature, much of it in journals the public rarely sees, about attacks on public schools.

In Costa Mesa, Calif., Robert Simonds, founder of National Association of Christian Educators/Council for Excellence in Education, has chapters in 50 states. His goals: restore "academic excellence, Godly morals, and traditional American values to the classroom." His eyes are on 15,700 school districts in America.

Sounds like good old-fashioned grassroots politics. Why, then, do his



TIM RICHARD

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adherents insist they are purely local groups of concerned parents? Simonds sees public education as

having been taken over by a pantheistic New Age religion inspired by Satan. Every institution in the United States needs to be reclaimed from Satan for Christ's second coming.

In this framework, the notion of "separation of church and state" is a figment of the imagination of infidels. America is a Christian nation, and Christian parents should take back their schools.

The Rev. Pat Robertson's delightful "700 Club" TV program is tracking what he perceives as attacks on Jesus and the Bible from public schools.

Robertson's Christian Coalition this spring held 70 programs nationwide to train evangelicals in local politics. The Detroit News reported that one was held last month in Pontiac. It was closed to the press.

Well, you know what they say about the press: pals of the abortionists, propagandists for perversion, protectors of pom.

This well-disciplined, nationally or-

ganized effort has merit when you first bump into it.

But we should all be bothered at the way the neighborhood cadres masquerade as purely local efforts.

We should be curious that they parrot a line but deny that they're getting their research from the outside.

We should wonder what they really think about dismantling the State Board of Education, ripping up curriculum legislation, substituting "creationism" for geology and genetics, removing the Michigan Constitution's ban on spending tax dollars on ministers and religious edifices, and installing a voucher system for every fly-by-night charlatan wishing to set up a school.

Concerned parents. Excellence in education. They're code words. Watch for them in the school board campaigns.

Tim Richard reports on the local implications of state and regional events. His office number is (313) 349-1700.

Life on the farm is doggone good for canines

If there really is reincarnation, I'd like to come back as a farm dog.

See, on weekends when I was a kid, I used to hop in my grandparents' station wagon and head out of the suburbs for the country.

The farm was near Fostoria, just south of Michigan's thumb.

There were small towns like Vassar, North Branch and Caro, and the big town, Lapeer, site of the county fair.

My Aunt Buela — actually a great-aunt because she was my grandmother's sister — lived with my Uncle Leo and their two sons, Stanley and Leo John, on a farm in Fostoria.

It was off a shady, dirt road. For a 5-year-old city boy, there was plenty to stimulate the senses as we drove up: the rattle of stones bounding off the undercarriage of a 1961 Mercury sta-

tion wagon, a whiff of pipe smoke and high roadside grass.

Finally, there was the driveway. It led 80 yards or so to the house.

Then again, a proper farm driveway doesn't end. They form a loop at the end, like a subdivision cul-de-sac.

Opposite the farm house was a gray, cinderblock milk house.

Muddy boots stuck with straw, cow manure and morning dew tramped heavily across its painted cement floor each day. At an open stainless steel tub, my kin emptied buckets filled with foamy cow's milk.

Just beyond that was a muddy pen ringed by a rough wooden fence. Amidst the dark earth and manure sat a pale salt lick. Its once square edges now rounded.

Cows hanging out nearby swished their dirty tails to chase flies, and lift-



KEVIN BROWN

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ed their huge heads on occasion at the barking of a dog.

Did I mention the dogs?

Canines, of course, are a superior creation when compared to other creatures. These include religious fanatics, corporate types, network news people and other overly serious breeds.

At my Uncle Leo's farm, as at scores of other farms throughout the country, there were about four resident farm dogs.

Their presence was heralded promptly. The second a car turned into the driveway, they made a bee-line for it.

As the car proceeded up the drive, the four would scuttle alongside in no special order, barking gleefully with tails wagging so hard their backside waved.

Upon exiting the car, they'd be all

over you. To kneel down in greeting would get you a face wetted with happy dog slobber and clothes dirtied by a dusty dog paw or two, but no matter.

Ah, to be a farm dog. Quiet afternoons napping in the sun, cats to chase, kids and adults to play with, a creek to jump in, no job or responsibilities, and free food.

They have no language. And in a world dominated by the news about Waco, the finger-pointing and the cries for placing blame afterward, to not understand the chatter would be a blessing.

Let people lecture each other to death. They don't know about living.

I'll take the farm and a flea collar.

Kevin Brown is an Observer and Eccentric staff writer.

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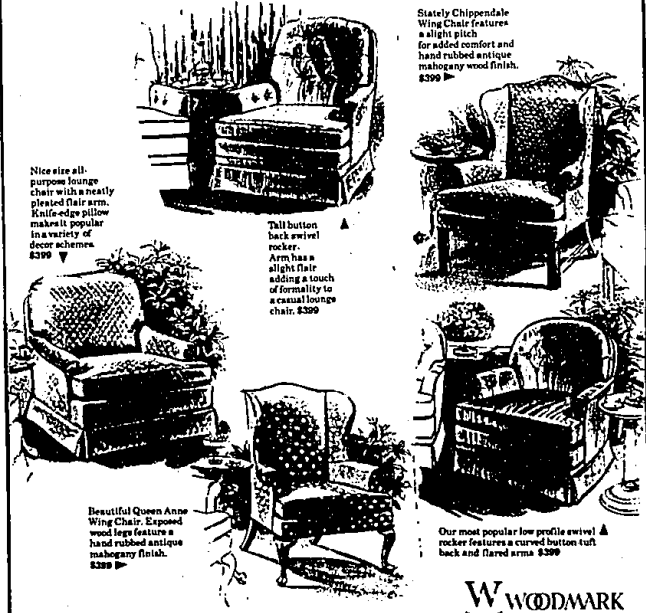
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