

The very nerve!

Forum, reaction were great

Apparently we touched a nerve... with a sledgehammer. And, oh, it felt so-o-o-o good.

Yes, quite a few conservative burghers of the Farmington area are still steaming over our coverage of that great gathering of the liberal minds a few weeks ago at (where else?) Adat Shalom Synagogue in Farmington Hills.

The forum was called "Exposing the New Right Agenda," and the flower (wilted though it may be in conservative Oakland County) of left-wing thinking was certainly in bloom.

Some of our local lefties — Howard Simon of the ACLU; Oakland University professor Sharon Howell; Patricia Godchaux, Birmingham school trustee; and state Representative Maxine Berman, a Democrat (no kidding!) from Southfield — addressed the assembled multitude of about 400.

The earth must have moved for them that night. The entire north end of Farmington Hills tilted a bit to the left. You probably could have measured it on a seismograph.

For example, Howell, whose educational speciality is rhetoric, whipped the crowd into a lather with her stand-up routine on right-wing politics.

"The 1950s were sometimes called what?" she asked the faithful, who shouted in unison, "The McCarthy Era!" Howell: "And people who didn't like the McCarthy Era were called what?" Faithful: "Communists!"

On and on it went. They did it up right and

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left few sacred cows unslaughtered.

We were pleased to cover this event (reporter Bill Coutant's stories on May 17 and 24 were gems) and we're happy to know that at least a few still wear their hearts on their (left) sleeves around here.

But, as we said, the righties (and there are a lot of them here in this rock-ribbed Republican land) took umbrage. The complaining phone calls came and then the letters to the editor, which fairly jam our allotted space to the gunwales.

How could we, they asked, link the Religious Right to the KKK? We didn't, although Sharon Howell did, sort of, and we reported it.

Anyway, to the right-meisters we say the same thing we said to the left-leaders: Thanks a lot. Y'all helped us brighten up the top of a couple of front pages, and now our letters page is lively, too.

This human comedy, as it was played out on either end of the political spectrum, gave us (and we hope the readers, too) a needed break from the seemingly endless printed diet of sewers, drains, city councils, cop news and school elections.

Let's do it again real soon.

High tech phones prove pricey

In the good old days of telephoning, back when high-tech meant a phone without a crank, a friendly voice would come over the line. You'd hear "number please" as soon as the receiver would be lifted off the hook.

Well, now it's the '90s, and the telephone companies are talking real high-tech stuff, especially in their slick advertising. But despite all the fiber optics, microchips, satellites and computers, people are still saying "number please" into a telephone receiver.

These days it's the customer asking the phone company for a telephone number through something called directory assistance — that old faithful 1-555-1212. You call the number and hear, "Information. What city please?"

And Ma Bell will even connect you immediately — for a fee, of course.

Considering the immensity of the Detroit area and the complexity of the Michigan Bell setup, directory assistance is the only way to go for a lot of the people a lot of the time. It seems like Ma is getting older, not wiser for those of us looking for low cost, user-friendly service.

Say you're in Plymouth and you need to call someone in Rochester, and you don't know the number. Unless you're a phone book freak, you don't have the local Rochester directory. Never fear, though, your number is just eight finger strokes away.

So, as important as directory assistance has become to phone users, we were disappointed to learn through recent published reports that Michigan Bell soon will double the cost of calling directory assistance. Michigan Bell got approval for the rate increase from the Michigan Public Service Commission.

Customers now get 20 free directory assist-

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ance calls each month. After that, additional calls cost 22 cents each. Under the new deal approved by the PSC, Michigan Bell can cut the free calls to eight, with a 35-cent charge for every call over that.

Six months after the initial increase, the number of free calls can be cut again to five and the cost of additional calls raised to 45 cents.

Of course, the phone company defends the hike, saying it'll cover the cost of providing directory assistance, not boosting company revenues. "Eighty percent of our customers won't see any increase," said Bell spokesman Jon Peterson.

Still, we're unhappy with any increase. In this era of high-tech everything, we think there's a better way. Maybe Bell could make the directories available to personal computer owners through some sort of "on-line" setup. You'd simply call up the phone books on your PC.

According to Bell's Peterson, France has such a computer-based telephone directory. It serves 5 million homes.

ARKIE HUDKINS



LETTERS

Yes to 'no TV'

Your "No TV for a Week" sounds interesting. I hope you have enjoyed the freedom from the noise and the guarded privilege of not having garbage heaped on you.

Turning off the TV can be a muscle. Flex it again and again.

Many years ago I got angry and turned off Phil Donahue with his many female impersonators. It felt good. I began to take charge of my life on the airwaves.

I greatly enjoy all kinds of planned entertainment. I buy books and books on tapes. A bookstore at 14 and Haggerty, Pages and Pages, is a good one for it has the best sellers offered both ways, choosing the best for my time.

The Sun Coast in Twelve Oaks Mall is good for videos, after you pay the price you'll enjoy it a lot and you swap with friends. The old movie channel is only a sometimes.

I believe it spurred my dyslexic daughter in reading. She does well in school and I believe she will do well in college because she reads and researches at the libraries.

I now enjoy TV that I chose to see, no longer intimidated to watch what is popular and time consuming.

I will continue to be thankful to Phil for that show. It really helped my muscle to turn off the TV. The media, TV, Hollywood and ads have been talked to enough. They are offensive.

Turn it off and don't buy those offending products, be it feminine products or a car. I don't yell, scream or argue. I buy, vote, and enjoy good entertainment. This is my way and I'm enjoying it. Is there anything in you with no TV that you can relate to this?

Walter Huard, Farmington Hills

school districts." Revenues will build for local school districts for one year and then what? Our property will receive a 3-percent increase for one year and then what?

With Proposal A, current total millage safeguards, (constitutional limit and the Headlee Amendment) will be eliminated to allow total increases to be extracted from southeastern Michigan and exported to out-of-state constituencies.

It will be neither a panacea nor a tax relief without being tied to reorganization and reduction of the total number of school districts.

Under Proposal A the unnecessary luxury to continue a large number of outstate school districts is an overburden to be paid even more by Metro Detroit property owners.

Ken Cooper, Farmington Hills

Another 'no' on A

Many thanks to the Farmington Observer for its May 20 editorial regarding that Trojan Horse introduced into our midst by the Michigan Legislature, Proposal A.

When its many flaws leap out to assail us years down the road, we will have only ourselves to blame if we accept it.

Shame on those organizations which, for temporary gain, have acquiesced in Lansing's "Take it, or else!" mandate, and kudos to Sen. Jack Faxon for his solitary, but persistent, opposition to this deceptive, pieced-together proposal.

Virginia Nicoll, Farmington Hills

Thanks a lot

Our sincere thanks to all members of the United States Postal Service for the tremendous effort displayed by all during the food drive on May 16.

We were surprised, and very delighted, at the response of the general public when your people delivered more than 11 tons of food you had received during your food drive.

This tremendous outpouring has completely stocked our pantry, making it possible for us to meet all requests from the many families in this area.

All members of the Post Office who put forth this extra effort — not only delivering the mail on schedule, but also picking up all the donations; those in the building who helped with the carrying, stacking, etc., and each and every one who gave extra time and effort to this very successful drive, our sincere thanks.

May God bless each and every one of you. Capt. Homer F. Smith Jr., Salvation Army

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.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What's your favorite TV show?

We asked this question at the A&W restaurant in the Crossroads shopping center in Farmington.



"The Simpsons." I would say "90210" but I wouldn't look good in the paper."
Jayson Childress
Farmington Hills

"Seinfeld." I want to grow up to be just like Kramer."
Dan MacDougall
Farmington

"I don't know. I don't watch a lot of TV. Sometimes I watch '90210'."
Michelle Hamada
Livonia

"Cheers." It's funny and it takes a load off your mind."
Sheryl Jarrett
Raford Township

The Farmington Observer

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