

POINTS OF VIEW

School curriculum 'movement' is 158 years old

Most callers to my voice mail are pleased we're reporting the Religious Right attack on public schools, its attempt to junk state assessments, and its forthcoming effort (no longer a mere plot) to raid the state treasury on behalf of private schools.

There are some dissenters who are welcome to their opinions but who are deficient on facts.

A father who pulled his children out of public schools deplores the "movement to a state curriculum." He adds, "If a state curriculum, why not a national? If a national, why not a world?"

Movement? Say, Rip Van Winkle, you need to catch up on the last 158 years. This movement is now in a tradition and engraved in the Michigan Constitution.

Turn off the talk radio babble, check out Willis F. Dunbar's "Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State" at your local public library, and read the chapter on "Michigan Leads the Way on Education." Gen. Isaac E. Crary and missionary preacher John D. Pierce designed the Michigan public school system to be centralized and "controlled

by a responsible official."

Movement? Territorial Judge Augustus B. Woodward in 1817 envisioned the same sort of state-controlled system extending through a university. "It was the sort of plan Thomas Jefferson advocated and sought in vain to persuade Virginia to adopt," Dunbar wrote.

Stop in the reference section, pick up the "red book," the Michigan Manual, and memorize Art. VIII sec. 3: The State Board of Education is to exercise "leadership and general supervision over all public education" except colleges and "shall serve as the general planning body for all public education." Read the whole education article.

Michigan voters have said "Yes!" four times to a state-controlled system — in 1837, 1850, 1908 and 1963. It's no "movement." I hope Rip Van Winkle's kids get a better line on Michigan educational and constitutional history than their drowsy dad did.

As for a national curriculum: It's not in the U.S. Constitution. Just the opposite. Check Art. X of the Bill of



TIM RICHARD

Rights. And forget the world curriculum.

A couple of women callers want state aid to parochial schools, arguing, "We pay taxes, too."

Carry that to its logical conclusion. If a mall hires private security guards, should it ask for part of the city police budget? If a factory has its own fire-fighting force, should it be given part of the fire department budget? If the Gottrocks live on a private road, should they demand a share of state fuel taxes

to maintain it?

If you go to a KOA campground instead of a state park, should KOA get part of the state parks budget? If you hire an attorney to sue a unit of government under the Freedom of Information Act, should your attorney get part of the prosecutor's budget? No way!

Our U.S. and state constitutions protect freedom of worship. But they also keep government's nose out of establishing a religion, providing taxes for a house of worship or paying for "any minister of the gospel or teacher of religion."

My God doesn't require a taxpayer subsidy. Sorry about yours.

One of those callers objects to my use of the word "yahoo" and says I should explain what it means. Well, in public school, they taught us to scatter dictionaries around the house and use them anytime we didn't understand a word. A yahoo is "a crude or brutish person." It comes from Jonathan Swift's "Gulliver's Travels."

Finally, one woman, who professes not to be part of the Religious Right, dislikes the "employability" talk in ed-

ucation because "I object to raising my child as a worker unit."

About half of my high school graduating class expected to marry at 18 and just raise kids. Today, however, the vast majority of married women work. Your child needs to be employable to (1) clip bond coupons or (b) go on welfare. And if the Gingrich Administration succeeds, scratch (b) off the list.

Meanwhile, heed the newspaper reports: 80 percent of future jobs won't require B.A. degrees but technical degrees, "and yet only about 20 percent of the state's high school students opt for vocational training." (Lansing State Journal, Feb. 20)

"Experts said they find the (U.S. Department of Education) survey results troubling and in contrast with those from countries like Japan, where employers and schools have common strategies and goals." (Detroit News, Feb. 21)

Tim Richard reports on the local implications of state and regional events. His Touch-Tone voice mail number is (313) 953-2047, Ext. 1881.

LETTERS

No on millage

Walsh College in Troy is private and growing rapidly without government/citizens funds, while Oakland Community College delivers a poor product and lacks the ability to manage its resources as any ongoing business must in order to stay in business.

If Walsh College can not only survive but thrive, why cannot OCC do the same? Perhaps it is time to examine OCC in order to see if we are getting our money's worth. Maybe it could be run better and at less cost and deliver a better end product without our tax dollars.

We have never examined their practices to see if they are sensible. Perhaps these educators are the real robber barons of our day. Vote no on the OCC millage on March 16.

John E. Mayer, West Bloomfield

On punishment

Phillip Power is absolutely correct in his Feb. 23 comments about crime. Minor offenders should be sent to a strict type of boot camp. People on probation should be identified as such in order to protect the public from them.

Prisoners should be put to constructive work like road repairs, etc. This kind of free labor would greatly benefit the public that has been wronged by these convicts.

It is an excellent idea to have convicted drunk drivers be identified through specially marked license plates.

All criminals convicted of assault, robbery and mugging must be punished publicly by caning, whipping, or other appropriate methods for all to see.

Finally, although I never agreed to capital punishment myself because it

causes grief to the families of the accused, I now believe it must be used for horrible crimes such as murder, rape, and torture, etc.

This would accomplish two important purposes: These atrocities could never again be repeated, and the savings of money by our taxpayers, you and I, could be put to better, more productive use for the benefit of all of our communities.

This would also eliminate the expense, and need for the building of

more prisons.

Leon I. Scholchit, Farmington Hills

'Wake-up call'

The recent editorials by Tim Richard and Phil Power issuing a wake-up call to business leaders regarding education policy are right on the mark.

The stated goal of business groups has been a statewide proficiency test which gives them a tool in evaluating potential employees. The movement by

the Religious Right to eliminate the school code and allow for considerable variations in testing contradicts the goals of business leaders.

There is room for honest debate and disagreement about standards and how we reach them. I hope that during the discussion our business leaders are aware that the basic agenda of many in the Religious Right is to divert state education dollars into the hands of religious leaders to establish private schools.

Marie Weigold, Farmington

Pure ideology takes back seat as Gov. gets down to governing

That age-old conflict between ideology and practicality has re-emerged as a dominant fact in today's political landscape, as triumphantly conservative Republicans take on the responsibilities of governing.

When in opposition and out of power, it's easy — heck, it's fun! — to be a flannelmouth, pure and savage with the true belief. But once in office and saddled with the responsibility to get something done, ideological purity often takes a back seat to practical reality.

The evolution in office of Gov. John Engler offers a wonderful case in point.

Item: Last week, the governor announced creation of the Michigan Economic Growth Authority (MEGA), a panel of state and private gubernatorial appointees that would hand out tax breaks aimed at companies that expand or locate in Michigan and create at least 75 jobs in the process.

Supporters say Michigan needs to be able to offer tax breaks to keep companies from bolting to other states and to attract new companies. Office furniture-maker Haworth Co., for example, will build its new \$30 million, 3,000-job parts plant in Indiana unless it gets an incentive from state government to stay at home.

I remember what Senate leader Engler (then in the opposition) said back in the 1980s when Gov. Jim Blanchard tried to play an activist role in job creation. Engler argued that tax incentives were a fraud, an expensive lesson why government could not — certainly should not — "pick winners and losers" in the economic marketplace.

And you should hear the snarl from Engler's free market cronies now. Talk about loss of ideological purity!

Item: Gov. Engler unveiled at last week's Society of Automotive Engineers convention a proposal for the Michigan Auto Partnership. Intended to replace the 10,000 skilled auto workers who will retire over the next seven years, the Partnership will link the state, its leading industry and educational institutions to provide skills for young people.

"What industry has been telling us is that the skill base is very, very critical to long-term location decision," said David Cole, director of the University of Michigan's Office for the Study of Automotive Transportation. "It's like the movie 'Field of Dreams': If you build it, they will come. And what we need to build is a



PHILIP POWER

manufacturing base. People will come to that."

Doug Rothwell, chief executive of the Michigan Jobs Commission, argued: "The state or region that fills this need first will have an advantage for job growth. We're told by industry that if we're successful, this would be a significant determinant as to where they make future investments."

Evidently, the Engler Administration proposes to expand the idea to other key Michigan industries facing a labor shortage, such as plastics and food processing.

Back in the 1980s, I chaired the Michigan Job Training Coordinating Council in the Blanchard Administration. We tried to do much the same sort of thing. And, of course, the ideologues attacked the program as an unwarranted governmental intrusion on the forces of the free market.

Today, I think Gov. Engler is absolutely right with MEGA and the Michigan Auto Partnership. When you're running a state, you have to do what you have to do, regardless of ideological purity.

We're at a very interesting juncture in our politics. The Republican Party just now is full of ideological passion, brimming with new and interesting ideas, while Democrats are defensive and dispirited, if not brain dead.

The thing to watch now is the way the GOP initiatives mesh with the recalcitrant inertia of actually governing. Some will thrive, some will fail. But all will be tempered in the fire of reality.

Such is life.

Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. His Touch-Tone voice mail number is (313) 953-2047, Ext. 1880.

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