

Tax tactics questioned

To the editor:

In 1977 assessor John Sailer blamed his assessment increases on his "coefficient of dispersion," last year assessment changes were on a subdivision or area basis, and this year the computer.

The rationale for what Sailer has done and continues to do in assessing property in Farmington defies explanation. Perhaps he plans it that way.

Item: Why, for example, in 1977 was my property valuation raised 37 percent and the property next door to me not raised at all, or the property behind me?

Item: Why, for example, in 1980 were the old houses in the Historic District raised 20 percent, some newer subdivisions such as Farmington Oaks raised 25 percent, yet other newer subdivisions only raised eight, 10 or 12 percent?

Item: And why, for example, in 1981 was the Arthur and Nancy Leonard

place on Shawnee raised 37 percent, her nearby neighbors 8, 5 and 12 percent and my place one block away 8 percent?

If Sailer, established the correctness of each assessment (and he declared over and over again he had, in that public meeting of 1977), then how come in 1981, he suddenly arrives at widely divergent assessment increases within the same block even?

In 1977 when I asked Mr. Sailer by phone why the houses on Hillcrest (the small sub behind me and to my west) were not raised at all, he responded with this statement: "There weren't any sales in that subdivision."

It would seem to me that if Mr. Sailer and his employer, the city of Farmington, insist on yearly increases in the property valuation to comply with the state constitution, which they love to quote, then there ought to be a clear and obvious consistency in the application of increases. How can Sailer explain a \$7,000 raise for the Leonard house and a \$2,350 increase for mine in 1981, when neither of us made any improvements?

The truth of the matter is Mr. Sailer

cannot. He could not, indeed would not, explain the increase he applied to my house in 1977. In that year of a 57 percent increase he said, in writing no less, that he would not give me an explanation in writing. He even made his statement in a certified letter.

Yet he does put communications in writing. He signed, and presumably wrote, the cover letter which accompanied all the mailed assessments sent out in February of this year. Interestingly, he does not phone tax bills to me or anyone else; nor does he tell each of us in person. He puts them in writing. I do not believe it unreasonable to ask that he tell in writing how he has arrived at a figure for a given homeowner. I speak not just for myself but for all property owners.

Now we are in 1981, and Sailer has introduced a new wrinkle into his assessing shenanigans — the computer. I believe that any assessor, Sailer or whoever, must be accountable for what he/they have done, and he/they owe an explanation to the public in general and to concerned individuals in particular.

I want it on record that I believe it unconscionable that the city of Farmington permits its assessor, year in and year out, to foist upon the taxpaying homeowners valuations which are arrived at by whatever whim or whim that happens to cross Mr. Sailer's mind.

I am prepared to make a deal to the city. Here it is: If the city of Farmington will, within a reasonable time, say 60 days, send me a check for \$83,000, (better yet gold bullion) the figure that Sailer considers my "true cash value," the property is the city's. I will move elsewhere to a community which holds its property owners in just a bit more regard. I used to like Farmington very much, but the high property taxes, and especially the inequitable manner in which valuations are determined, have soured my feelings for this city.

Please do not suggest that there is nothing the city can do about the situation, and that I should take my complaints to the state. In the last several years I have not observed that the city has sent one signal to the state.

Because of this letter, I'll probably get the 27 percent increase next year and the Leonards eight percent.

Lee Peel
Farmington

What about Uncle Sam's share in that gallon, both at the pump and at the wellhead? Tell them about the windfall profits tax and see who reaps that benefit and who pays for it.

OPEC HAS this country right where they want us — addicted to a bad habit. Mr. (Charles) Shipley was correct when he said that the American consumer was spoiled by the cheap oil of previous years. Let's face it, this country thinks it has a moral right to gasoline priced under \$1 per gallon forever while the rest of the world pays \$2, \$3, \$4 per gallon — and that's wishful thinking.

Mr. Shipley was also right in his opinion that it is the dealers of the major oil companies that your boycott will hurt primarily. Dealers are independent businessmen just like your readers.

Mr. Barnaby, you and your readers are blundering along saying "Don't confuse me with the facts." You didn't do your homework before you wrote the articles. But then again, if you do have the facts that you evidently prefer to hide in your briefcase, they wouldn't make as good press, would they?

K.H. KEYES
Southfield

Give sources

To the editor:

After plowing through your cheap shot article of an oil boycott proposal, I find myself wishing that you had gotten stuck between the sergeant and the stubborn mule and caught that 2x4 just north of your moustache.

Your reliance on emotionalism, innuendo and blind accusations certainly produced the response you needed to impress your editors.

You claim to have just as much documentation from credible sources and can cite as many experts as the next guy. Yet you don't present the facts to your readers. You'd make a hell of a lawyer telling the judge that you've got as good a case as the other guy but you're going to keep the facts in your briefcase.

Tell it like it is, Mr. Barnaby. Quote your sources and let your readers make an intelligent evaluation. How much did the oil companies earn compared to what they spent for exploration and production? How much does an oil company earn on a gallon of gasoline?

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