

Short-sighted council shortchanges students

Mindless muscle-flexing may feel good to Farmington Hills City Council members, but it has cut a \$60,000 deficit into Mercy High School's budget.

In a shortsighted decision, the council recently denied a permit for the Mercy Fun Fair, in effect cheating each student out of \$60-\$70, the amount by which tuition is annually offset by the traditional May fund-raiser.

Only the council can be blamed for the now necessary tuition hike to \$2,050 from \$1,875 and the financial hardship it will wreak on already economically-burdened parents.

Following the 1981 fair, Police Chief John Nichols said he would oppose the site for future fairs due to the proximity of the intersection (Eleven Mile and Middlebelt roads) and the interference with normal traffic in and around the parking lot of adjacent businesses.

That's ridiculous. The fair committee has bent

over backwards to please city hall bureaucrats, yet Nichols' appetite for para-military authority remains insatiable.

TO FURNISH 125 additional parking places, the committee planned to reduce the number of rides by 25 percent and the size of the tent by half, to move the fair site to the south end of the parking lot, and to add telephones and sanitation equipment.

These compromises were more than equitable and should have appeased our hungry police chief's anxieties. But Nichols said the intersection would still be "the focal point."

Apparently, "focal points" are inconsequential when it comes to annual church fairs and the Farmington Founders Festival, which draws hundreds of thousands of people who disrupt traffic at major intersections throughout the city.

Someone should tell Nichols the 1967 Detroit riots

are not recreated each time Mercy has its fair. Maybe he'd like to build a Great Wall around his city and outlaw any further church, temple, school or private concern which proposes to create "a focal point."

If the police department is unable to protect the public during Mercy's fair, it's likely that your temple, church, event or child's education will be next to fall prey to governmental interference.

IT IS residents' misfortune that Nichols' word is law in council members' ears. And in the case of council members Jan Dolan and Jody Soronen, the voices of acquaintances whose home neighbors Mercy merit more consideration than does an educational institution that draws 35-40 percent of its student body from Farmington and Farmington Hills.

Mercy, which has never hesitated to allow the

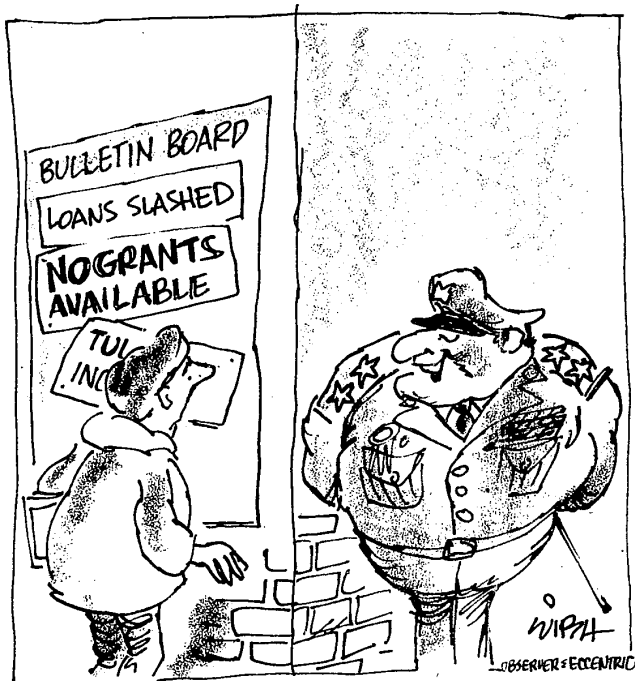
city access to its facilities, has gone out of its way to play ball. Committee members canvassed Chatham Square merchants and police during last year's fair and learned that aside from some inconvenience, things ran smoothly.

With any luck at all, Mercy could have its fair by seeking legal recourse. An appeal in Circuit Court could put the irresponsible council between a rock and a hard place via a writ of mandamus (which compels a body to act) or an order to show cause (which compels a body to defend its action).

Unfortunately, the school lacks the finances, time and vindictiveness to take that step. Its students will suffer due to the inability of the police department to do its job and the deplorable refusal of the council to support an educational institution which began enriching the community long before there was a city council.

— M.B. Dillon Ward

'Can I help, young fella?'



Tim Richard

If Reagan slashes aid to students

"If financial aid is dismantled, an economically elite group will once again populate college campuses."

— A University of Michigan-Dearborn official

"I wonder if Mr. Reagan intends that minorities should study in prisons rather than colleges or universities."

— U-M student

"Currently, 12,000 of the U-M's 45,000 students now receive some form of financial assistance through five federal loan and grant programs. . . . The U-M stands to lose 63 percent of its current federal support for these programs if Congress approves the budget submitted by President Reagan last month."

— Michigan Alumnus magazine

College students are sweating. Lower-middle-income, low-income, female and minority students know that President Ronald Reagan is proposing 25 percent of federal money to aid collegians be cut.

But the scare literature emanating from my beloved alma mater and other colleges addresses the problem as if federal aid were the only solution. It isn't.

EVEN BEFORE the Headlee amendment to the Michigan Constitution was adopted in 1978, state government was practicing tax limitation. (Those whopping tax increases were local property taxes, not state taxes.)

As a nervous legislature held tax rates down during the '70s, college boards turned to another source of revenue: tuition and fees.

Tuitions were raised faster than the general price level. Since the day I attended my first class in Ann Arbor, the price level has risen 400-500 percent. Meanwhile, undergraduate tuition has risen nearly 1,100 percent.

Reagan owes us a sound national defense, regulation of interstate commerce and judicial appointments. Those are in the U.S. Constitution. He does not owe us college education money.

State government owes us a college system. Willis F. Dunbar, in his landmark history of Michigan, wrote: "A system of public education beyond the common school and reaching to the college level was clearly envisioned in the act of 1817 establishing the Catholopistemiad or University of Michigan."

As college tuitions outstripped our earning power, the federal government stepped in with a myriad of programs: Pell grants, supplemental education opportunity grants, college work study, national direct student loans, student incentive grants.

Much of the money does not, of course, aid students. The students turn around and pay it to the colleges.

THERE ARE two other alternatives to making college education more affordable, if Reagan and Congress choose not to help.

First, we could consider whether colleges in Michigan have priced themselves out of the market by paying 't' help too much. As long as the Michigan Legislature is talking about holding welfare payments down to the levels of Ohio and Indiana, it may as well look at faculty salaries.

Frankly, I doubt much will come of that alternative.

Second, we could raise the state income tax about one-quarter of one percent and use the \$125 million in new revenue to replace the federal programs aiding college students. Such an increase would cost a family with a taxable income of \$25,000 some \$82.50 a year or \$1.20 a week.

Considering that the Reagan federal income tax cut will start yielding Michiganians \$2 billion a year beginning July 1, we can certainly afford to plow \$125 million of that back into aiding needy college students.

from our readers

Pseudo cops waste money

To the editor:

In your March 4 story on the Oakland County Executive's private security force, the impression was given that this unit saves the taxpayers money. However, this is not the case.

During my 14 years in county government, I have watched a small cadre of watchmen grow into a pseudo police department. This department is now equipped with a complete regalia of uniforms, guns, radios, cars and their own dispatching and communications center. These employees are all trained for their jobs at public expense.

The waste in this operation comes in the form of duplication of management and supervisory services, the purchase of excess vehicles and, of course, the manning of an around-the-clock communications center.

The business-like way of providing this same service would be to create a "property patrol" classification in the sheriff's department and utilize the existing supervisors, cars and communications center to carry out the present department's limited function.

I estimate a savings of nearly 20 percent of the present budget would result. This would be accomplished by consolidating the dispatch operation, with a net personnel reduction of three, or approximately \$50,000. Further, the present supervisory staff would be reduced by five, with a savings of \$130,000. And, finally, the consolidation would

reduce the number of cars required by six, for an annual operating savings of \$30,000.

If Oakland County should decide to tighten its public safety belt, then the funds saved can either be used to reduce the county millage or increase the sheriff's department support for local police departments. Most local departments in these times of budget crunch could use increased support services such as an improved crime lab, specialized crime services for narcotics, homicide, juvenile, organized crime and the restoration of the county "crime-computer".

On March 4, the county executive moved to request that the Board of Commissioners provide his office with the power to deputize his security force rather than have this done by the sheriff. The effect of this action would be to officially create another Oakland County police department. This department could not only compete with the sheriff for law enforcement responsibilities, but also compete with local community police departments.

The price for current police services is large enough. I don't believe the people of Oakland County want a county executive police department which will only duplicate present services and be a waste of taxpayers' money. I urge each of you to contact your local community officials as well as your county commissioner and express your opinion.

Lawrence Pernick
Oakland County Commissioner
District 20
Southfield

History benefit is criticized

To the editor:

Regarding the March 18 Observer article featuring the Lions Club and the forthcoming gala, I wish to comment. The Lions Club is sponsoring an admirable project, I commend their efforts, but, I seem to have lost my status. Last spring I procured the aid of the Morson estate of Farmington to clean and rake the grounds of the Warner mansion. My husband has painted within the mansion this winter, and we made a monetary donation to further this worthwhile project.

After donating to the League of Women Voters, the Farmington Library, Channel 56, etc., I seem to have run out of funds, thus keeping me from a enjoying the fruits of my labor within this opulent patronage. Fifty dollars a plate may have induced me to contribute a second time to the museum and enjoy the company of my fellow peers in the community, some of whom are not poor but un-rich. Many of these manual laboring folks have expressed the same feelings as myself.

Perhaps, if we could enforce the collection of fines of those elite who park in the handicapped spots and tow-away zones and place a higher tax on beer booths at the Silverdome, we could lower our property assessments and subsidize all of those Chapter 11s (Chapter 11 — one step before bank-

ruptcy) and home foreclosures that seem to be hitting a certain ethnic/ethnic class.

JoAnne McShane
Farmington

Lawyer objects to editorial

To the editor:

I have read your editorial of Feb. 25, concerning the mayor, City Council and manager of Farmington Hills. As a former associate of the law firm which represents the city, I worked for five years with those people you so severely maligned. Never have I seen such malicious abuse so mislabeled as was written in that editorial.

The people of Farmington Hills will benefit from the labors of this council and Larry Savage long after your editorial has oozed back into the mud from whence it came. They will benefit from the program and policies for road paving, flood control, economic development, historic preservation, land use and zoning and the like. These tasks generate no headlines, no gossip, no scandal or intrigue, but they do make Farmington Hills work. Your paper on the other hand, seems more interested in name-calling and creating ill will. As you are well aware, the Observer can be a constructive forum for rational dialogue and debate over local affairs. It should ever strive to serve that purpose. How can you reconcile this editorial with the ideals of your profes-

sion and the expectation of your readers that you will at least make an effort to attain them?

John Donohue
Farmington Hills

Ghost town?

To the editor:

I heard some disturbing news about our Farmer Jack store wanting to relocate to another area. I think it is in bad taste to move away from the downtown area because not only the residents will suffer, but other businesses will too. We also are in very bad economic times.

We moved to Farmington two years ago just because all the stores are in town.

It is very convenient to have Farmer Jack stay in the area because a lot of residents don't drive and have to walk to the store to do their shopping. The other location on Farmington Road and Nine Mile will be too far away for senior citizens that don't drive to walk there.

We don't want our downtown area to become a "ghost town."

I know I'm only one person and I can only do so much about this matter but I believe in getting involved. I don't give up easily!

I hope more people will care about his problem and will write letters to express their views.

Joanne Fellenberg
Farmington

Market move dismays reader

To the editor:

I am dismayed at the possibility of the Farmington Farmer Jack store moving to Farmington Road and Nine Mile Road.

Farmington has a central shopping area to be proud of. I think moving this major food store would be very detrimental to the entire downtown area. It would also be extremely inconvenient for the numerous shoppers from the surrounding residential areas, including those in our newly constructed senior housing.

Why not expand the current store? Mary C. Novotny
Farmington

discover Michigan

Did you know that the popular video-disc player which so many people received for Christmas as the latest television entertainment is now being put to serious and valuable use at the University of Michigan hospitals? The videodisc — holding 54,000 images on a side — is helping to train medical students, physicians and nurses.