

# Opinion

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## from our readers

### Social protest helps country

To the editor:

In his December 22 editorial "Pickets, prayers won't halt nukes," Tim Richard ignores the political importance of moral protest in American history. Those who "pray and blockade" are part of a long tradition of Americans who have non-violently challenged injustices which are upheld and perpetuated by misguided political leaders.

Throughout our history, those committing civil disobedience have called individuals and governments to accountability. In 1765 and 1768, colonists illegally boycotted British trade goods, leading the imperial government to repeal oppressive tariffs.

In 1774, American patriots boarded ships in Boston Harbor, symbolically pouring tons of tea into the sea to protest unjust British political and economic control over the colonies. Though contemporaries criticized the action as a breach of law and order, the Boston Tea Party highlighted the plight of British North Americans.

Beginning in 1830, abolitionists, most acting from religious convictions, challenged American laws and institutions by civil disobedience, despite widespread criticism of their "extreme" views. Because of their campaign, slavery became a national issue.

And in the 1950s and 1960s, civil rights activists led by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. nonviolently resisted the evil of white supremacy. By mass civil disobedience throughout the segregated South, they brought the oppression of blacks to the political forefront.

The Williams protesters stand proudly in this tradition. Through their actions, they call Americans and our government to turn from the fear, hatred and violence of the arms race to the values of justice and peace which, though forgotten by our leaders, lie at the heart of the democratic system. Their conscientious resistance to our arms buildup is a powerful moral statement and a catalyst for change.

Thomas J. Segura, Jr.  
Farmington Hills

### Contradiction pointed out

To the editor:

I was impressed with the irony in two articles in your Jan. 2. One article headlined "Faxon Attacks Toxics" told of Senator Jack Faxon's proposed legislation to require Michigan businesses to buy environmental "malpractice" insurance. In another article, Faxon was reported as saying that attracting businesses to Michigan and thus improving the state's economy was his No. 1 priority for 1984. I find it hard to reconcile these two positions.

As the "Faxon Attacks Toxics" article points out, there will be a cost to businesses to obtain this insurance. Since no other state has a requirement for such insurance, the cost can not yet be determined. But whatever the cost, it will be one more reason for a business to locate in Indiana, Ohio or some state other than Michigan.

I have no quarrel with trying to protect the citizens of Michigan (including me) from exposure to toxic materials. We have a good law to do this in Act 64, the Hazardous Waste Management Act. The proposed insurance law will do nothing more to protect us. At best, it will force all businesses to chip in to pay the cost of cleanup of a mess caused by one "malpracticing" business. At worst, it will in-practice irresponsible firms to ignore the Act 64 rules and let the insurance policy cover the resultant problem. But for sure, it will add another burden to Michigan's existing businesses and another deterrent to businesses considering Michigan for relocation or expansion.

I agree wholeheartedly with Senator Faxon's No. 1 priority of attracting new business to the state. I disagree strongly with his proposal to drive business away from the state.

Jerome C. Neyer  
Farmington Hills

### Time-out on global demolition

To the editor:

As we hasten back to the predark ages,

courtesy of our massive atomic power and our obviously uncommitted leaders, I would like to blow the whistle, call an official time-out and point out to both teams that there are quite a few sensible options other than global demolition.

Since Yuri Andropov can't talk with his incurable cold, and Ronald Reagan can't hear people like me with his new hearing aid, there is no possibility of a sane disarmament solution.

Knowing all of this, I would like to suggest a temporary solution to the machine-name-calling, pushing and shoving that is going on.

HOW ABOUT a voluntary exchange by both sides of a huge number of hostages, say 500,000 from each side? This could be easily financed by both sides just by not building one new atomic weapon each.

I'm talking small money here, for instance a few billion dollars each side. Invest the money in transportation, hotels, tour buses, interpreters and the various other enterprises in the tourist business.

Then, with the pipelines full of average people coming and going, and with the average people leaving their sons, daughters, mothers and loved ones at home, I doubt that either bunch would have the guts to push the button.

But, just in case, take a leaf from the Dark Ages and send the grandchildren of both Andropov and Reagan along on an extended tour. History tells us the kings used to exchange their sons and daughters with other kingdoms to insure peace.

IT WORKED in the Dark Ages, and it should work now.

In any event, please book me for a two weeks bed-and-breakfast tour of Gorky Park and the Gulag Peninsula. I'm dying of curiosity, which is much better than dying of radiation.

I just might have a rare old Irish cure for that uncommon cold, and maybe the Russians have a better battery for Reagan's hearing aid.

John H. Parmenter  
West Bloomfield

### Former student defends principal

To the editor:

Recently there was an article on North Farmington High School's principal, Clayton Graham, and his involvement with the Christian group, Campus Life. In regard to this issue I would like to make a few comments on behalf of Graham.

I graduated in 1981 from North with honors. At North I was a student helper in the front office during my sophomore and

senior years where I had the opportunity to see and know the administrators in a different way than my peers.

My favorite administrator was Graham because he was always kind and polite, even when I was getting in trouble. When I had a problem with a teacher, I felt very comfortable going to him for help. Never in any way did he "preach" to me or even refer to religion. (I am a Christian, but not involved at all.) The only time I can remember him even mentioning Campus Life was when he asked me to relay a message to a gentleman who might be calling from Campus Life Organization.

I am soon to be graduating with my B.A. from Grand Valley State College with hopes of being a teacher and realize the importance of good administrators. Along with my parents, I would hate to see Graham pressured to resign or fired over an issue I do not feel he has done wrong towards.

I hope this ordeal is examined more closely than just a simple survey of 15 students. Why not a survey of a thousand students and a thousand alumni?

Michelle Gibbs  
Farmington Hills

### Cigarette ads inappropriate

To the editor:

On December 30, 1983, I attended a matinee performance of Two of a Kind at the Tex-Ex Theatre. The audience was comprised mainly of preadolescents and teenagers. Before the movie began, a commercial appeared for Kool cigarettes. I feel that it was inappropriate to show such a commercial aimed at such a young audience.

It is clear that cigarettes are unhealthy, as substantiated by the surgeon general. It is illegal for children to buy cigarettes. In addition, cigarette commercials are prohibited on television where children can see them. This movie, rated PG, was directed toward children and teenagers who composed most of the audience.

You as a responsible theater owner should stop this kind of inappropriate advertising. If it continues, I, and my friends with children will have to stop attending your theatre.

Jacqueline H. Lorfel  
Farmington Hills

### Study was waste of \$150 million

To the editor:

I am a physician, certified in general practice. I would like to comment on the

recent \$150 million cholesterol study.

The effects of high blood cholesterol on the human body have been known for years. As physicians have always stressed the lowering of blood cholesterol to help prevent heart attacks.

What is so new and astounding about this recent 10-year study? I feel it is a crime to have spent such an enormous amount of money on a study that really is telling us nothing new. Could not the money have been put to better use, providing food and better hygiene to the poverty-stricken of our country?

Dr. Conrad R. Pearl  
Southfield

### Eat the words

To the editor:

I might suggest it would be appropriate for you to appear in public and demonstrably "eat" your editorial of Dec. 8 (Pros Outrank Recall Rookies).

"Recalls haven't lowered taxes," huh? Well, they certainly got the message across in no uncertain fashion! There is nothing that will strike fear into a politician like the threats to tie up his money bag and to take away votes. Governor Blanchard wisely awakened sharply to the taxpayers' challenge to his stewardship.

Let us labor under the same misconception that afflicts a large portion of our society, permit me to remind you: Government does not have money. The taxpayers have the money — and they're growing mighty sick and tired of their grants to government being squandered in waste by their elected officials. Comptroller?

Suddenly, our governor has decided that the budget can be contained — without loss of necessary services. Well, hallelujah!

Donald J. Selter  
Farmington Hills

### Resident objects to higher taxes

To the editor:

Maybe the quote attributed to Councilman Charles Williams is not accurate, or maybe it is a case of weaseling. (Observer-5 January, something to the extent that "there hasn't been a tax rate increase in many, many years"). Where have you been? Maybe the "rate hasn't gone up but the assessed valuation, and therefore taxes, have.

Farmington Hills residents don't want taxes or tax rates to rise. Whatever you perceive we "need" you should be prepared to pay for without raising taxes.

Daniel E. Davis  
Farmington Hills

## At Williams, crime doesn't fit incident

OAKLAND COUNTY Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson is a well-known hard case when it comes to prosecution of those who break the law.

So it is understandable that he would be against mollycoddling the priests, ministers, nuns and others who demonstrated to protest against nuclear weapons in November at Williams International Inc. plant in Walled Lake.

PATTERSON HAS ordered that many of the 54 people arrested in the incident be charged with a felony — conspiracy to commit a crime — rather than the misdemeanor trespassing charge that the prosecutors expected. Conviction of the conspiracy charge would allow a sentence of up to one year in jail.

This, in turn, has led to more protests — by the protesters arrested at the cruise missile facility and by the civil liberties committees of the State Bar of Michigan. The 19-member committee called it an "attempt to go back to the McCarthy days of prosecution for mere advocacy."

Patterson has shown little sympathy. "I didn't tell them to go out there and chain themselves to the gate... or to sit down and block the cars of Williams' employees arriving for work."

The prosecutor, in effect, said the protesters had committed the crime, so they should be prepared to do the time.

MAYBE SO, says Leonard Grossman, chairman of the attorneys' committee. But "This represents overkill, which should be condemned."

Grossman and the other 18 lawyers on the bar committee have good reason to be concerned. Patterson's actions in this case are another good example of how government power can be used unethically by those in power to stifle dissent, to overpunch dissenters and, in effect, to inch along the road of government control toward police-state actions.



Bob Wisler

tempting to accomplish by a charge of conspiracy when the usual charge of trespassing would more appropriately fit the crime. Does Patterson's political ideology play any role in the decision? Does Patterson think that a crushing courtroom defeat of those involved in the Williams incident will somehow convince all future transgressors that they cannot afford to stage any kind of public demonstration against the building of cruise missiles?

PATTERSON'S ACTION is less reminiscent of McCarthyism than of the attempts a few years ago of the U.S. government to punish anti-war protesters — the trial of the Chicago 7 on conspiracy charges, for example — and the fictional musings of George Orwell in "1984."

We escaped the Orwellian vision of 1984 precisely because of this country's long tradition of opposing legally and philosophically massive use of government power to coerce and intimidate people who may not agree wholeheartedly with the government officials in power at the time.

In Gilbert and Sullivan, the refrain asks that the punishment fit the crime. In this case, the crime should fit the incident.

A conspiracy charge, as Patterson well knows, doesn't even require the prosecution to prove that a crime was committed — only that the defendants met and planned a transgression. The crime — in this case, disruption to an engine factory's workday in order to put the glare of publicity on one of America's most vexing problems — is hardly worth the juggernaut that Patterson is attempting to ere-

