

**points of view****Officials keep it interesting**

IF YOUR LOCAL government meetings are on cable TV and you aren't watching, you might be missing the best entertainment this side of the writers' strike. For instance:

• Some Southfield school board members want to tell the superintendent where to live, to make him to tell him where to sit.

The school board members have tried to impose a residency rule on high-ranking administrators, including the school superintendent, who recently moved to Farmington Hills. The situation hasn't gone anywhere, at least partly because other board members are afraid to make it look as though they have to "bludgeon" administrators to make them live in Southfield.

One of the same board members who wants the residency rule was considering a motion that would make the superintendent sit at one end of the board table or the other, but not in the middle next to the school board president. I'm not sure of the motive for this. Maybe the ends of the table are in Southfield and the middle is in Oak Park.

In the Troy school system, officials have decided that public votes don't mean much if they don't want them to. The district thinks it can find a way to build a new high school even though previous votes have turned the proposal down. There are good arguments for a new high school, but what about the public votes?

It doesn't mean that much, said the superintendent, noting that only 15 percent of the public voted the last time the issue was defeated. That discredits the vote, he says.

He should think again. Unless, of course, he is ready to reflect all mileage increases in which fewer than a majority voted. And is he prepared to tell school board members that they are meaningless since they were elected with fewer than 15 percent of the vote, as is often the case in Troy?



**Rich Perleberg**

In Farmington Hills, a builder owed the city \$17,000 for sewer tap-in fees for a building virtually in the shadow of city hall. His check bounced. He told the city manager that the money would soon be coming. But months later the money didn't come. Finally the issue reached public light during a city council meeting. It was 17 months later but the builder paid the full amount (with a non-bouncing cashiers check) plus interest plus penalty fee.

Still, some people thought there was preferential treatment. They apparently felt that way because the builder was a city councilman and former mayor and, as such, was the boss of the city manager who was ultimately responsible for collecting the money. Some people are just suspicious, I guess.

Money is also making things sticky in West Bloomfield Township where some citizens already think that developers have too close a relationship with elected officials. There, a shopping mall developer put from \$200 to \$500 in cash in five envelopes and gave them to a township employee who in turn gave them to live candidates in the August primary race. Fortunately, the candidate realized it is illegal for cash contributions to exceed \$20 so they refused the money. The builder claimed ignorance of the law and said he didn't remember which candidate were to receive his money. The employee said he didn't know what was in the envelopes.

As a result, West Bloomfield may adopt "Old Man River" as its official song. It doesn't know nothing, it just keeps rollin' along.

**Convention changes a must**

I TOLD you so. Twice.

Eight years ago I advanced the notion, and was unanimously voted down, that national political conventions could be conducted in a day and a half, max, and that four-day conventions were a throwback to the 19th century.

The two presidential nominees were deadlocked months in advance.

The platform? The Democrats' was badly written, deliberately, and no one reads it. In New Orleans, I couldn't even find a copy of the GOP's book-length missile.

The speeches? Jane Kirkpatrick was the only orator at either convention who dealt with a single topic. Otherwise, every orator skinned over every topic, treating nothing in depth. This newspaper's Roll Call Report tells you more about national issues in one week than eight days of national conventions in prime time told you.

YOU THE PEOPLE responded accordingly.

You rented movies in record numbers.

You got bored with Republican orators chanting "family values" 11,000 times an hour, ditto with Democrats and the homeless.

You weren't impressed by the staged demonstrations.

You told pollsters it was silly for all three commercial networks to cover the same things.

The networks caught on, scaling back from gavel-to-gavel coverage in favor of two hours a night.

THE INTELLECTUAL level of news coverage hit an all-time low: a two-thirds page feature on C-Span's anchorman; features on what TV crews did for amusement; CNN's interview of a go-go dancer in New Orleans; French Quarter, the restauranteur flap between GOP national committeeman Pete Seccia and Livonia's own Elaine Donnelly.

There just wasn't four days' worth of news.

MY SECOND modest proposal, revealed in this space Aug. 4, was that Bush should select three to five acceptable finalists for vice, then let the convention choose between 'em. Ditto with Dukakis and the Democrats.



**Tim Richard**

There are 2,800 to 4,000 elected delegates. Tap their brains, get hands-on experience.

There are 13,000 news people covering a four-day TV show with a predictable climax and sinking ratings. Some of those news people are the best in the country. The rest think

they are. Give 'em something meaty to cover.

One national paper reported that Bush operative Jim Baker floated Sen. Dan Quayle's name to The New York Times a week early, hoping the trial balloon technique would elicit an negative response. It didn't work.

If Bush had followed my advice, Republican delegates would have had three weeks to scrutinize a handful of names. The Quayle thing would either have turned out to be a dud, or it would have sunk him long before he became No. 2 on the ticket.

Speaking of the eastern seaboard

networks, many Americans think they have a double standard: no complaints about granting amnesty to males who skedaddled to Canada or Sweden, but dump all over Quayle, who at least wore his country's uniform in the National Guard.

Reporters have to cover something. And if the geniuses who advise Bush don't provide an honest battle for them to cover, the media will pick up trivia and blast it to the skies.

Remember who told you so? Cut the conventions to 1½ days and let the delegates pick the ticket.

**Layoffs are never pleasant**

EMPLOYEE LAYOFFS have been in the news recently, as decisions about two Detroit daily newspapers move from government boardrooms to federal courtrooms.

Layoffs are also an issue in the auto industry as assembly plants close, never to reopen, and the state is forced to look to new types of industry to make up the loss. The problem has even prompted federal legislation forcing employers to give notice before closing a plant.

But the issue of layoffs has hit the news industry hard, and given people all sorts of jobs to think about.

Even though many lives are in limbo awaiting court action, how employers handle layoffs has generated much discussion. It was even debated on local radio talk shows.

Just how should employers handle a layoff? What should be said, and who should do it?

Should it be a manager and friend, or a stranger from a relocation firm or home office?

IN THIS job I "carry my lunch pail to work," so to speak, but I have walked the other side of the fence as a manager.

I played an integral part in giving more than 100 employees their notice, over several years. That's not said proudly, but realistically.

And I can tell you all did themselves

— it's painful for everyone involved, from the employees who get their pink slips all the way up to the managers who wield the ax.

I WOULD guess that all managers get a bad feeling in the pit of the stomach, every time.

There's no kind way to tell employees they have to hit the streets, uproot their lives and look for another source of income. No matter how much a company cushions the blow with severance packages or job training, it still hurts.

And it affects not only the pocket-

book, but a person's self-esteem.

TODAY'S JOB counselors say the days of lifelong employment are gone, and a person should expect to have several jobs in a lifetime, possibly in different careers. Although that seems apparent, it hasn't become a reality to some.

If they enjoy their jobs, they want to believe it can last forever, or at least until they retire.

The fact is, many jobs just don't last anymore. We shouldn't expect it, nor should we let a layoff or job change send us a negative message.

We also need to turn around the old, worn out "you owe me" routine. We are all owed respect, benefits and a paycheck which are linked to our jobs. But after the job's over, no debt remains except what we owe to ourselves.

We must fulfill our own lives. If we wait for someone else to accomplish that for us, it won't happen.

There is a multitude of opportunities, even here in Michigan — for anyone with the motivation to seek them out.

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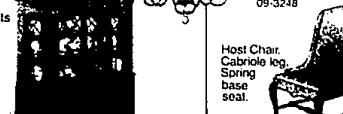
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