

## points of view

# Protect the visionary or lose our freedoms

SOMETIMES IT'S tough being a visionary. Galileo found that out. So did Martin Luther King Jr. Nelson Mandela spent half his adult life in jail for being one. Martin Luther King Jr. and Leon Trotsky died for their visions.

Many folks are frightened by vision and the change it threatens, so frightened that they sometimes endanger the linchpin of our democratic society — free thought.

John Telford knows the feeling of accomplishment in being a visionary. In recent days he also is finding out the consequences. An assistant superintendent in the Rochester School district, the 54-year-old Telford is rather unusual for a central office bureaucrat.

Frankly, most school administrators are something less than courageous when it comes to speaking out on social issues. To survive, they play it safe, seek out the middle ground, try to keep everyone a little bit satisfied.

Telford is an educator in the traditional sense. He wants individuals to think, to explore, question, not just accept what the predominant wave in society deems as the truth.

To aid his fellow educators to think about the future of their pro-

fession, he has, for the last three years, written what has become known as Telford's Telescope.

And, as Telford describes his document, "it was meant to provoke thought." But in some quarters, instead of thought, it has produced hysteria.

**TELFORD DOES GORE** some sacred cows of the '80s — most notably the chief kahuna of that decade, Ronald Reagan. He also takes a poke at Vice President Dan Quayle.

In a more serious vein, he talks about the importance of cultural diversity. In that spirit Telford designed a program, Operation Equity, which seeks to bring more black teachers and administrators into a district whose student body is 99 percent white.

He also designed a program which encourages educators to teach more about world religions. This has been an especially bitter pill for some parents to swallow since Telford was the same person who designed the holiday policy which some believe limits religious celebrations.

Unable to get at Telford, some unhappy parents have launched a recall campaign against school board members who have supported Telford's initiatives. So far they have been stymied.



Steve Barnaby

But, in truth, the phrases spit out by Telford's critics contain the echoes of a dangerous time in our history, when professors were blackballed and actors banished from the screen and stage, when publishers turned their backs on writers and government officials were accused of treason.

We can't afford to go through that again. Innovators like John Telford need to be nurtured, protected from the fearmongers.

And you really don't have to agree with Telford to support him. That's the whole point, protecting his right to make us all think a little more about our society.

Steve Barnaby is managing editor of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

# We report on recycling now in good conscience

THANK GOODNESS We can now write about April 22, the 20th anniversary of Earth Day, in good conscience.

That's because we have certain new equipment in our Livonia and Birmingham offices.

You guessed it. On Jan. 1, we joined the recycling effort we've devoted so much space to covering.

In fact, going through the mail — a task I openly despise — has taken on a whole new dimension. It has a higher purpose than just tossing three-quarters of it in the so-called circular file.

Now, the mail that is inappropriate for our newspaper — from a public relations firm that apparently doesn't realize we don't cover Madison Heights from a hospital not in our circulation area, or just the general run of junk mail — at least will have a chance at a second life.

**WE'RE ALSO** making every effort to recycle as many leftover newspapers as possible.

In our Birmingham office, a local veterinarian picks up part of our leftover papers for you know what.

Now, we're trying to get a local Scout troop to collect the rest to take over to the Birmingham Recycling Center.



Judith Doner Berne

**We're also making every effort to recycle as many leftover newspapers as possible.**

But of course that's only part of our battle. So far only 25 percent of the newsprint we use is made with recycled fiber.

According to our general manager, Dick Isham, in the coming year that will go up to more than 50 percent.

**BUT BACK** to Earth Day, 1990. A central theme in Michigan is that individual citizens have an important role to play in combatting global environmental problems and in con-

tributing to the health of Michigan's environment.

That sounds rather highfaluting. A high school journalist, Erin Einhorn, brought it home in a recent column she directed to "Dear Governor Blanchard . . ." after hearing him urge increased recycling.

She writes in a humorous vein in a recent issue of the West Bloomfield High School Spectrum of her effort to introduce recycling in her own home, against the odds.

The cardboard box in the kitchen had a sign that read, "RECYCLABLES ONLY." DO NOT THROW AWAY ANYTHING THAT CAN BE USED AGAIN. THERE IS NO SUCH PLACE AS AWAY.

**HOWEVER,** when she called up West Bloomfield Township, she found they didn't recycle, though they planned on it sometime in the fuzzy future.

And the nearest place they could think of to take it was "there's a place in Royal Oak."

Well, of course there are much closer places — like Birmingham, which has had a recycling center for 13 years, and Southfield and Farmington Hills, which recently activated centers — and Commerce Township.

If West Bloomfield and other communities don't do it (and why not?), then the least they can do is have ready, accurate recycling information for people like Erin Einhorn.

Because, as Erin beseeched the governor in her column, "In order to truly alleviate the trashy situation everyone must recycle and if that's going to happen, it really has got to be more convenient."

Erin's right, of course. Let's use the 20th anniversary of Earth Day to press all our "units" — family, business and governmental — to get down to recycling, conveniently and now.

Judith Doner Berne is assistant managing editor for the Oakland County editions of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

# Study debunks myths about tenure of school chiefs

Q: I heard that school superintendents, nationwide, don't last more than three or four years in a district. They move on for many reasons, sometimes not pleasant ones. Our superintendent has been around for more than 10 years. What makes a board of education want to get rid of the superintendent? What do boards look for in hiring a new superintendent?

indicated that six to 10 years was perceived the most ideal by board members while only 4.5 percent opted for a superintendent tenure of 16-20 years. I know several boards who are pleased with their superintendent, many who have been in their position for more than 10 years.

Most interesting is that regardless of the superintendent's length of tenure in a community, it is usually longer than most board members. Fewer than 25 percent of board members last longer than the superintendent. And those board members who indicate less satisfaction with their superintendent were not involved in the original hiring.



Doc Doyle

Keep in mind a superintendent, unlike a teacher, does not have the long-range protection of tenure that teachers do and are in a relationship similar to a marriage.

After the initial honeymoon, the inevitable last battle with the teachers' union, the board or certain board members will take place. Af-

ter a meeting of the minds, a "happy marriage" with the usual periodic disagreements that eventually become resolved, a superintendent can survive and find a home.

Why do boards get rid of superintendents? The major reason, according to 87.6 percent of the nation's school board members, was a lack of confidence in the his/her integrity. Next was a loss of faith in the superintendent's leadership ability and third was evidence of mismanagement of the district's finances.

The major priority board members had for hiring a new superintendent was instruction and curriculum improvement followed by an

ability to solve personnel problems (including negotiations).

The Virginia Tech study negates many myths. Superintendents do last longer than three or four years in most districts and board members generally are looking for an educator, for an instructional leader with integrity as opposed to the sometimes heavy-handed bureaucrat.

Dr. James Doyle is a former assistant superintendent in the Troy School District. Questions for this column should be sent to Doc Doyle, c/o Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, 48150.

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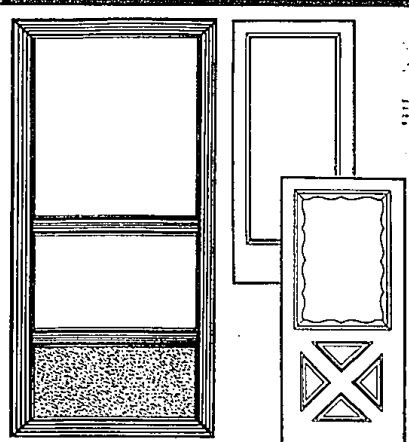
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