

Hey, parents: Please raise those kids

Some sound advice was rendered by community leaders in the wake of the disclosure that sports gambling was taking place among students at North Farmington High School.

A lot of that counsel — detailed in a Page 1 story in last Monday's Observer — is directed at parents, not students, and we hope the mothers and fathers are reading (and heeding) it.

First of all, it should shock no one that a dollar or two is booked by high school students on the outcome of college or professional games. And anyone who thinks that such gaming is limited to North Farmington students alone is probably one of those unfortunate souls who beat a bundle on the Lions against the Redskins last season.

It should also be no great revelation that an occasional Marlboro is fired up or that once in a while a top is popped (or cork pulled) on a container of *spiritus fermenti* by the "adults of tomorrow."

Gambling, after all, is a vice just like smoking and drinking and dope. Students, like adults, become enamored through advertising and peer pressure. They can also get involved in another way: by trying to emulate their parents.

Ah, back to the parents. Those who make the

baby should remember that it's their responsibility to raise the baby — and that includes guiding him/her through those perilous teen years.

Betty Nicolay, founder of Farmington Families in Action and a former Citizen of the Year, puts it best when she says that parents must keep in touch with their offspring.

Know what your youngsters are doing and how much money they have and how they're spending it, she said. And please, parents, none of this "Do-as-I-say-and-not-as-I-do" parenting technique in bringing up junior.

Said Nicolay, "Our attitudes as adults have a great deal to do with how a child performs."

William Dwyer, Farmington Hills police chief, has more good advice for teens and adults: Don't be afraid to come to the authorities — school or police — with information about this problem.

After all, that's how this North Farmington gambling thing came to light. One person got fed up with the supposed threats and intimidation and blew the whistle. So far, no other whistles have been heard.

People should remember that the first steps in solving problems are exposing and identifying them.



ARKIE HUDKINS

LETTERS

Wants contract details

I am anxious to have all the letters signed so that details of the teacher contract settlement can be printed in the paper.

Obviously, programming and even safety for our students have suffered in the past couple of years. The official line is that the evil bogeyman "recapture" is to blame.

But all the savings forced by recapture may not add up to the raises granted our teachers in the one-year contract last year and the new three-year contract.

The argument that the schools must "remain competitive" isn't very persuasive in the light of recent press reports that show Farmington teachers the fourth-highest paid in Michigan.

I respect the very important work that teachers do and am happy with my children's education in Farmington. But the fact remains that teachers' annual pay equals and exceeds that of other professionals who often do not have the

fine medical benefits and retirement that educators do.

I often hear that doctors and lawyers are better paid; the fact remains that research scientists, architects, nurses, librarians, accountants and many other degreed professionals are not.

To those fine teachers who care about children, my respect and thanks. But the atmosphere created by buttons and pickets at the beginning of our school year gave my child nightmares.

Mary A. Power, Farmington

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number. Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

Property tax plan unequitable



Neighbors could be at each other's throats some day and banging Town Hall's doors, if voters approve Proposal C, the "cut & cap" property tax plan on the Nov. 3 ballot. There's a fishhook in the plan that gets bigger and sharper over the years.

Let's start with two houses that are identical — easy, in suburban subdivisions — and worth \$100,000 each in today's market. They are assessed for half of true value, or \$50,000.

Under "cut & cap," assessment increases could be limited by law to 3 percent a year. So the assessments could be \$51,500 the first year, \$53,045 the second, and so on until the 10th year when they are \$67,196.

Meanwhile, let's be conservative and assume values rise 8 percent annually, compounded, over 10 years.

Without "cut & cap," the assessment would rise to nearly \$108,000, or 61 percent more than with a 3-percent cap.

The fishhook is that if one neighbor sells, his case is immediately reassessed at half the true market value, or \$108,000.

So the newcomer to the neighborhood finds his family paying 61 percent more than the family living there 10 years.

That's patently unfair.

A similar proposal did pass constitutional

muster in California. That case should not obscure the basic unfairness of sending wildly different tax bills to neighbors in nearly identical houses a few years down the road.

Indeed, it may not pass muster under the Michigan Constitution, whose first section says, "Government is instituted for their equal benefit, security and protection."

As social policy, a cap is inherently discriminatory against young couples buying an existing house.

A job-seeker would be less inclined to move to a new opportunity if one were punished by the property tax system.

Indeed, it's astounding that the Michigan Realtors Association would support a proposal so inimical to its own hopes for high property turnover.

You will not, of course, hear the bad effect of "cut and cap" advertised by the anti-government people like chambers of commerce. You may not hear that point mentioned by pro-government groups like the teachers unions.

But if you think you or your kids might be alive 10 years from now, you owe it to everyone to think hard before swallowing the "cut & cap" fishhook.

This is the first in a periodic series of editorials on the "cut and cap" proposal. Future editorials review the effect on schools, where the money would come from to replace that lost from property taxes and a look at Michigan's financial future.

Hard right rejects modernization

Anbody who didn't catch Tim Richard's piece on "Conservative groups may force a state Con-Con" in last week's paper missed a significant and original work of political analysis.

Richard, who writes on the local implications of state and regional news, covered last month's state Republican convention in Grand Rapids. There he picked up word that the same fundamentalist wing of the Michigan GOP that gave Gov. John Engler such fits at the convention is thinking of pushing for a state constitutional convention when the issue comes on the ballot in 1994.

What would they like to do?

According to Richard, they are backing something called "full choice," i.e. a state voucher that parents could take to any school — public, private, proprietary or parochial. "They praised McGuffey's Readers, Latin and parochial schools. Away from the microphones, I heard mutterings about creationism," he said.

Richard concluded that, "They are on a holy crusade to 'take back our culture.'"

This is pretty rough stuff.

But don't underestimate the moral fervor or political power that's coming together here.

My Republican friends confirm Richard's guess that the hard right, including Michigan Right to Life, had something like 45 percent of the delegates at the GOP convention. This is the same group that nearly put the party into the Pat Robertson camp in 1986-88 and which put together the grass roots organization that nominated half the Republican candidates for the U.S. Congress in last month's primaries.

It's the Michigan version of the same people who took over the platform committee and rammed the most conservative manifesto in modern times through the Republican national convention in Houston.

What's really going on here?

As I read this group, they really do believe that important elements of today's world are fundamentally odious to enduring American cultural values.

The moral breakdown of America has encour-



PHILIP POWER

aged homosexuality, provoked AIDS, tolerated abortion and destroyed the traditional family. The public schools have failed to educate, displaced religious and ethical standards, indoctrinated children with left-leaning ideas and enforced a coercive liberal intellectual orthodoxy. The media are run by cultural elitists who propagate the same orthodoxy.

The political system does nothing but pander to special interest groups and must be cleansed by people of strong convictions and true values.

Upon reflection, I am persuaded that the same dynamics that created the Islamic fundamentalist movement now shaking the Arab world are driving the hard Republican right.

Both groups reject the consequences of modernization as blaspheming traditional values. Both look with anger and sadness at the deterioration of old-fashioned virtue and social institutions such as the family. Both feel that the intellectual advances of the 20th century, far from bringing clarity and hope, have led to confusion, error and lockstep orthodoxy enforced by the repressive apparatus of the government.

It's a view of the world that says the results of the passage of modern history are not "progress" but, in fact, regression.

Many may disagree with this interpretation, but it's hard to argue with the emotional power that it expresses.

Philip Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What are your feelings about high school students who bot on sports?

We asked this question at the A&W restaurant in the Crossroads Shopping Center.



Young people should not gamble. It can be habitual.
 Alex Dembecki
 Farmington Hills



I think the kids should be able to do what they want with their own money.
 Dan Heath
 South Lyon



They (bookmakers) are exploiting the children. It's no different than dope.
 Frank Tata
 Livonia



It's wrong. It's teaching kids bad habits at an early age.
 Dennis Crilley
 Farmington Hills

The Farmington Observer

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