

POINTS OF VIEW

# Protest against war toys is a little bit off-target

It's not often I disagree with WAND. You know, they are the newly named Women's Action for New Directions group, formerly Women's Action for Nuclear Disarmament. And they are usually right on target — or they change their name so they will be.

But I'm wondering about their annual war toys protest, set once again for this Friday at the Southfield Toys "R" Us store. There, 60-100 protesters are expected to peacefully demonstrate against war toys, to increase awareness of parents and grandparents.

Their protest is against such items as G.I. Joe, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Transformers and Nintendo video games.

And of course, any toy gun, whether it be a plastic water pistol or a gun-like

toy which is designed to teach colors, would make their don't buy list. On the surface, they are well-intentioned.

But then I think back to my brother-in-law, Phil. When I first met him, he was 8 and had the largest stock of toy guns I ever saw. He kept them in a toy chest at the foot of his bunk beds and they were his most precious possessions.

Bam, pow, rat-a-tat-tat were heard emanating from his room for years until the sounds of rock and roll took over.

His parents, my in-laws, were very much pacifists — and my mother-in-law was a social worker. They would never have considered having a real gun in their home. They were against hunting. And they certainly made their views known to their children.



JUDITH DONER BERNE

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And lo and behold, despite his childhood ways, Phil also turned out to be very much a pacifist — and a social worker. Now, his own son, Ben, is also into a "gun period." And, although Phil doesn't encourage it, he does not forbid him from having or playing with toy guns.

Meanwhile, this women's group is mostly aiming at toys which are the province of boys. If they're so dead set against giving them a playful way to act out aggression, then shouldn't they also be worried about prompting the kinds of feelings which result from giving dolls to young girls?

We emphasize that dolls are children's "babies." We allow and even prompt them to cuddle and dress them. Do we consider if that kind of "play" might eventually translate into wanting a real baby at too young an age —

or, even at an appropriate age, without a defined father?

The bottom line is if they have good parenting, from a parent or other adult whom they respect, it probably doesn't much matter whether children play with guns or dolls.

And, if they have poor parenting, it doesn't much matter if a child never has had a so-called "war toy." They will probably act on their feelings in a negative way.

WAND and other well-meaning peace groups certainly aren't doing damage. But their efforts are aiming at the symptoms and not the malaise.

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# Archer would be 'beneficial bridge-builder' for Detroit

Recently I spent a private hour with ex-Michigan Supreme Court Justice Dennis Archer discussing how sensible suburbanites like you and me can help progressive Detroiters get him elected mayor. I told him this column will reach a goodly number of reform-minded folks in the western and northern suburbs today as they sit down to eat their Thanksgiving turkey.

I also cited my old-time contacts in Detroit — which I represented as an athlete in national and international competition, and where I grew up and taught and coached and administered before I defected (some said "sold out") to the "burbs" in 1969. In those days our Civil Rights was appeared to be won, affirmative action was riding high, and Detroit no longer seemed to need me.

"swami," bemoaned my defection under the headline "Inner City Loses the Good Doctor" as I left Martin Luther King High School to accept Walled Lake Western's assistant principalship. The swami praised my winning coaching records in Detroit and also proclaimed me "Wayne State's last great track star."

Being proclaimed the last of anything is like reading your own obituary, but I was far from ready to just roll over and die in Detroit like so much excess old liberal baggage. However, taking subsequent note of the city's downward drift during the regressive Nixon, Reagan and Bush administrations, I did try four times to return — the last time in 1989 as a candidate for the Detroit schools' superintendency, wherein I offered to serve for the same salary I was earning in Rochester. Detroit's educational and political leaders



JOHN TELEFORD

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had obviously ended up needing white liberals like me far more than I'd expected they would. The problem was, they still didn't think so.

And just who comprised that "they"? Well, Coleman Young — whom I soundly lambasted for reverse racism in a quote in a 1991 Detroit Free Press Magazine article — is a prime example. I still have the letter he wrote me in 1974 when I protested his politically motivated firing of Del Russell, the highly productive director of Detroit's Police Athletic League. In that letter, he scornfully dismissed all of the support for Russell — who had been a helpful probation officer to many of my inner-city students and later a deputy to Police Commissioner John Nichols before Nichols ran for mayor against Young — as coming either from "white northwest Detroit or the white northwest suburbs." (I was a Huntington Woods resident

then, and an administrator in the Berkley schools.)

In contrast to the scandal-plagued separatist Mayor Young, Archer is poised to mend the wounds inflicted by Young's arrogant inaccountability and his divisive "I-don't-need-the-suburbs" stance. Following my meeting with Archer, whose opportunistic detractors accuse him of elitism but in fact comes from a working-class background, I began to drum up both urban and suburban supporters for him.

Clearly, he is the "beneficial bridge-builder" we all need as Detroit's next mayor. But if Coleman Young decides to run again — and despite failing health, I believe he will — Archer will face a fierce fight against Young's well-greased political machine. Its parasitic operatives bank on rich old King Coleman's perpetual reign for their porkish sustenance.

Hal Schram, the late sportswriting



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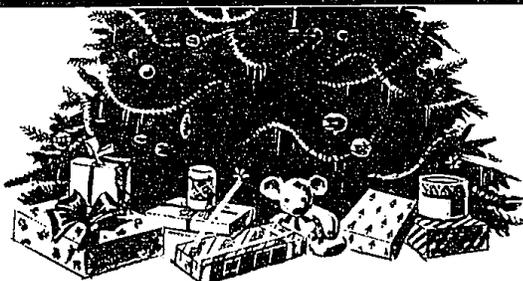
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