

Panel mulls rebuilding government

The system our grandfathers built to eradicate government run by "bosses" has worked so well that it's now choking us, said Philip Power, the owner of Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

"Today we regard that system as fundamentally flawed and not cost effective," Power said, calling government "the largest and clumsiest area in which money is expended for no particular purpose."

Power's comments were part of a panel discussion based on the book "Reinventing Government: How The Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector From Schoolhouse to Statehouse, City Hall to the Pentagon" by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler. The book suggests that the method of operation of government at all levels should be changed because the taxpayers are not currently well-served by their governments.

Power moderated the discussion, held recently in conjunction with the Observer & Eccentric's annual Journalist of the Year award presentation at the Bentley Center in Livonia. Other panelists included: Oakland University president Sandra Packard, Wayne County deputy executive Michael Duggan and West Bloomfield developer Robert Jones, whose company is currently building houses in Bloomfield Township, Rochester Hills and Plymouth Township.

Duggan, who is the right-hand man of Wayne County Executive Edward McNamara, said he is "a great believer in the principles of this book" and often has to fight



BILL BRESLER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Making a point: Philip Power, O&E owner, summarizes comments on the book "Reinventing Government: How The Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector." Panelists include, from left, Wayne County deputy executive Michael Duggan; Oakland University president Sandra Packard and West Bloomfield developer Robert Jones.

the bureaucracy to get good things done.

"Any time you want to change the nature of government, it's amazing to see the forces that are marshaled against you," he said.

Duggan included newspapers in that category and said they often put negative spins on essentially good stories and consequently make it harder to get the good things done.

Duggan also talked about the importance to supervisors of setting goals for other workers to as-

pire to, but Packard said it's harder to do that in a university.

"Historically, tradition has driven mission," she said. "That's no longer true."

Even figuring out who the university's "customers" are isn't easy, Packard said.

Jones, on the other hand, finds it easy to identify his customers in the house-building business. Even his sales staff is authorized

to turn potential customers down because "there are certain people that we know we just can't satisfy," Jones said.

As for setting goals, it's easy for Jones but not so easy at Oakland University, Packard said, because there are so many different factions in a university and each has its own idea of what the goals should be.

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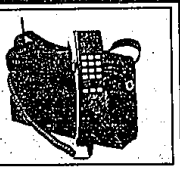


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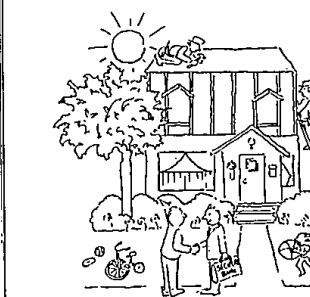


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