

POINTS OF VIEW

# Presidential candidates need to answer some tough questions

Republican presidential candidates George W. Bush, John McCain and the four dwarves went at it Monday night in Grand Rapids.

The event kicked off in earnest the presidential primary season in Michigan. Republicans vote Feb. 22 in a primary election, while the Democrats gather in caucuses on March 11.

Presented with the opportunity to cover a big-time national story, the Michigan news media fell all over themselves in trying to out do their national brethren in pontificating about the big questions. Can the charismatic insurgent McCain overcome all Bush's money and institutional support from Gov. John Engler on down? Can Bush take a punch? Is Bush smart enough to know he's been hit? Is Michigan really a *Swallow for Bush* in the event he loses the primary in New Hampshire?

I'd add one. Is all we are doing merely rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic?

Look at it this way. We are plopping in the middle of the greatest surge of technological change since the Industrial Revolution hit England in the 18th Century. The Internet is a present reality, and the enormous range and scope of future innovations stemming from the application of information technology are sure to bring fundamental changes to our entire society, from business to politics, from government to personal relations.

Yet are these the questions the news media pose and the candidates debate? Perish the thought! Instead the political system contents itself with petty arguments about piddling subjects: Taxes (to cut or not to cut), subsidies to ethanol (of interest only to Iowa farmers), abortion (which is on the way down, anyway), family values (everybody, including Hillary, is running away from Clinton) and so on.

Great political leaders have always had the capacity to look over the horizon and to focus attention on the big issues that might not be so apparent at the time but which eventually shake the roots of societies. Ronald Reagan concentrated on Russia and the Cold War. Franklin Roosevelt reconstructed America in the wake of the Depression. Winston Churchill early saw the danger of Hitler.

I believe the next decade is going to be as revolutionary and creative as any period in American history.

And I think a presidential campaign that ignores these issues is a sad and wasteful exercise in futility.

Here are just a few questions Michigan voters might want to raise in town meetings with presidential candidates.

Taxes. E-commerce was the big winner this Christmas season. Most sales over the Internet are not taxed. But most states and some cities rely in some form of sales tax. What's going to happen when governors and mayors discover their tax base is being lost to untaxed Internet commerce? A national sales tax, almost certain-



PHIL POWER

ly. This, in turn, will provoke a complete resetting of the relations between cities, states and the federal government.

Safety net. Certainly, saving Social Security is important, but in the age of the Internet, access to information technology is going to be as fundamental a need as a fixed income on retirement. Should everybody be guaranteed access to the Web as a right, just like Social Security?

Education. The basic technologies of teaching and learning — lectures, note taking and reading — are all survivals of the Middle Ages. The Internet and information technology are opening the door for fundamental rethinking of the ways children and adults learn. We have yet to start talking about the consequences for our entire system of education.

Government. A persistent problem in late 20th Century advanced countries is the inefficiency of governments in delivering services to taxpayers, coupled with confusion about the proper responsibilities of our three-layered (local, state and federal) system of government.

Why stand in line for hours to get your license renewed when you can get it done in seconds on the Internet?

Why rush to file your income tax return at midnight on April 15 when you can file instantaneously on the Web?

Politics. Citizens are increasingly cynical about the political system; voter turnout is low and getting lower. Certainly, there is room for debate about the ways special interest money infests our politics. But could information technology sweep aside the secret deals and revitalized citizen involvement in the political process? Or will the Internet merely open the door for a scary sort of mobocracy?

I doubt well scripted sound bites or carefully programmed candidates will be able to handle these and other similarly far-reaching questions.

But they desperately need to be asked.

*Phil Power is chairman of HomeTown Communications Network Inc., the company that owns this newspaper. He welcomes your comments, either by voice mail at (734) 953-2047, Ext. 1880, or by e-mail at ppower@homecomm.net*

## It's unfortunate, but bird feeding ordinance is necessary

There's a warning label that carries this following warning label: "Do not use this appliance on or near the eye."

Well, don't. Check for the warning at the drive-through near where you walk through a fast food place. You'll find a sign that says "Hot coffee, hot chocolate and soups VERY HOT."

Now, you know the daily reason those warning labels are there: some dumb boney head is going to get into a wide-eyed, hot coffee, and someone in too much of a hurry to stop five minutes for a cup of coffee called it in a moving car.

Monday night's public hearing on a new Hills ordinance to restrict bird feeding falls into the same category, really. A lot of people worried it would impose Draconian penalties for what seems a harmless and reasonable hobby enjoyed by tens of thousands of local residents who live peacefully among their neighbors.

But so several council members pointed out, not everyone is a good neighbor.

Some people just love to turn up the volume, even if it's just pointing out the holes from the birds' droppings on your car's hood. Next time? Check out the neighbors' car.

Somebody complained the ordinance was too strict. In some cases, people had a fairly good idea of the rules to follow. Don't kill. Don't shoot. Don't move into your neighbor's yard. Don't commiserate his wife with the same gun.

Back in the day, people lived in small groups, very close to each other. Now, we can barely fit all the cars we drive on an eight-lane highway during rush hour.

The simple and most basic truth about the ordinance is they're designed to help at least 80,000 people with diverse backgrounds, varying degrees of sanity and levels of tolerance into 36 square miles of residential area.

If we could work out our differences amicably, we wouldn't need laws. Listening to the testimony Monday night gave me the impression that's just not going to happen any time soon.

One young woman testified that the association president in her neighborhood



JONI HUBRED

has a "vendetta" against her family. Another told officials a neighbor who received countless complaints about feeding pigeons and geese moved out of town because of the conflict.

Take a look at the police records in response to countless reports of people disturbing the peace. Jewelry, teenagers and incidents of violence.

Look at us honestly, we humans who claim to be civilized. We don't get along. No matter how much social work or bringing people to resolve their problems, they often left with no choice but to wind the clock of law.

As Mayor Nancy Bates pointed out, "All the education in the world won't help if you have uncooperative citizens."

Maybe the new bird feeding ordinance is ridiculous, Draconian, irresponsible, reactionary — all words used to describe it at Monday night's hearing. But it's also necessary, and that's truly unfortunate.

New York Governor George Pataki said it best: "When government takes responsibility for people, then people no longer take responsibility for themselves."

Joni Hubred is a Farmington Observer staff writer who covers the Farmington Hills City Council.

## If you think your life choices are limited, think again

William Tyndale College makes earning your bachelor's in business administration a viable option -- even if you're a working professional! And through our accelerated degree program, you can complete your bachelor's degree in as little as 19 months.



Choose William Tyndale College.

William Tyndale College is currently enrolling students for our next session. Classes are scheduled to begin February 26th in Detroit, and February 20th in Farmington Hills. For more information, attend our Open House Information Session on Saturday, January 22nd at 10 a.m. or on Tuesday, January 25th at 6 p.m. at our Farmington Hills Campus. Call Jan Crain at 1-800-483-0707 to reserve your seat for this information session now!

1-800-483-0707

5700 W. TWELVE MILE ROAD • FARMINGTON HILLS, MI 48331

# PLAY IT AGAIN SPORTS

## SKI SALE

### 40-70% Off

NEW	Now	USED
New Adult Skis with Bindings 175 CM Only Reg. \$250	<b>\$79<sup>99</sup></b>	Dynastar Junior Skis 100 CM - 150 CM <b>\$79<sup>99</sup></b>
Junior Ski with Binding 80 CM & 90 CM Reg. \$170 Only	<b>\$99<sup>99</sup></b>	Resignal Shaped Ski with Salomon Bindings 140 CM - 170 CM When New \$400 <b>\$149<sup>99</sup></b>
Elan Capped Skis with Marker Bindings Reg. \$450	<b>\$129<sup>99</sup></b>	K-2 Merlin Shaped Skis with Salomon Bindings 168 CM-178 CM-188 CM When New \$550 <b>\$199<sup>99</sup></b>
Head Carve 4 Junior Shaped Skis with Tyrolia Bindings 100 CM - 160 CM	<b>\$179<sup>99</sup></b>	Used Ski Boots Values \$100 - \$400 <b>\$29<sup>99</sup> - \$99<sup>99</sup></b>
Head Carve 6 Senior Shaped Skis with Tyrolia Bindings 160 CM - 190 CM	<b>\$249<sup>99</sup></b>	X-Country Skis with Bindings <b>\$29<sup>99</sup></b>
<b>Selection of New Ski Boots from Nordica - Lange - Raichle - Alpina 40% - 70% Off</b>		

**Hours: Monday - Saturday 10-8; Sunday 11-5**

ANN ARBOR 2401 W. Stadium 734-747-6277	BRIGHTON 630 E. Grand Hwy 313-627-6277	YPSILANTI 2500 Corporate 734-473-1838	WATERBURY 4330 State Hwy. 508-874-8282
DETOIT 1300 Stadium 313-963-1800	FARMINGTON HILLS 10000 Corporate 248-874-1800	ROCKSTON HILLS 1200 Valley Blvd. 248-874-1800	LANSING 10000 Corporate 313-963-1800