

Rebuttal

Let's not sacrifice education to panic mentality

The discerning reader will have noticed that nowhere in last week's editorial concerning the upcoming school levy did we advocate the blanket approval of 'all tax levies.' We didn't even go so far as to plead for the indiscriminate approval of all school levies. What we did do though, was make a plea to our readers that they not sacrifice a good education in the name of a panic mentality.

In a world as specialized and rigidly compartmentalized as ours the basics of an education just barely serve the individual well enough. To survive or to move ahead a person needs experience and the adaptive capabilities a variety of life-situations

provides.

The truly perceptive reader would have also noticed that we didn't run the editorial in question before the last levy election, but rather before this next one. Some readers might even have deduced that the last levy drew no editorial supporting it because there were serious questions about the advisability of the schools even trying to provide a program nearly as large as last year's with nowhere near the same amount of available funding.

It is too easy to say that our educational system's failures, the minority of students that manage to

sneak through school without learning anything of any real or lasting value, are solely the fault of our schools.

Unfortunately, the truth is much less easy to swallow. Often it is parents and students themselves who place such a low priority on education that they're willing to piddle away their school years in the aimless pursuit of mediocrity. While it's true that schools often share the blame it is also true that under any educational system there will be those students who will insist on failing - it is inevitable. By the same token, schools can only discipline

students to study within the limits that their own constituency, the voters and parents of those students, will allow them to.

Simply stated, we're asking all 47J voters to dig into their pockets once more to support their children and their schools. The difference between a school system that is barely able to provide basic training in Reading, Writing and Math (such as further drastic cuts might create) and a system that can offer the basics as well as some variety are far too great to allow us the luxury of finding out just how inadequate an education can be.

School levy editorial full of "glorious ideals, rhetoric"

To the Editor:

In response to the *Freedom* editorial "School Levy Failure Robs Students of Experience", I found the article to be filled with glorious ideals, double talk and pure rhetoric. First of all I am shocked that the paper would accuse the responsible citizens who defeated the tax levy of robbing our children of an education. I believe most taxpayers defeated the measure because they knew it to be an outrageous and ridiculous amount.

The editorial went on to say that "By voting No to any levy, we've dramatically cut our children's chances to experience the widest possible variety of choices." It seems to me the editorial is saying we should approve any and all tax levies. Period. This basic premise defies logic and the very education that is the topic of discussion. Being an educated person, I have learned to examine an issue, weigh the pros and cons, look at the facts and then decide. Education has not taught me to say yes to every tax levy in the name of education.

I also believe most taxpayers who defeated the measure would like to see at least an attempt to cut the budget in a meaningful manner. If the hopeless federal bureaucracy could cut waste as well as non waste from its budget, surely the district can do no less. I say that the district should sit down with care and concern in their hearts and for God's sake reevaluate the entire program. Surely there are things to drop other than forestry and small engine repair (punishment for us selfish taxpayers). How about not buying those expensive toys, for instance, \$1500 for a merry-go-round? How about children learning to add and subtract in their heads and forget about teachers wanting calculators for their

students? How about keeping desks and chairs and not wanting new ones everytime we turn around? All of these things and more were proposed in the 1981-82 budget and most were accepted.

Now how about a look at that "sacred cow" the athletic department and some of its practices. For example the proposed athletic department budget for VHS is \$42,514.00. Compare this to the proposed math department budget for VHS of \$28,908.00. Or the science department budget for \$24,271.00. Moving on to another emotional issue by the 47J district we find the lunch program. I'm all for kids getting a nutritionally balanced lunch (which is subsidized by the taxpayer). But how many taxpayers realize that the teachers as well as administrators are benefiting from this program designed for our children? Teachers and other faculty members can purchase a lunch for \$1.00 at the taxpayers expense. Where in town can you get lunch comparable to that at the school for \$1.00? (I don't know either). So don't tell me about the poor lunch program suffering. If the 47J district was serious about saving taxpayers money: 1. Teachers would either pay a realistic amount for the lunch or buy lunch in town (and help Vernonia's economy) and I guarantee you it would be more than \$1.00 or \$1.35 (the proposed increase). 2. Students who can afford a realistic price for lunch should be allowed to pay it. If you think money can't be saved here we are talking about over \$100,000.000 just for this program.

Turning to another area we find that the 47J district would like to purchase the Chevrolet garage in town at a cost of \$81,000.00 of which 1/2 of the said purchase price was

included in the do or die tax levy that was defeated in June. The budget for 1980-81 shows that \$20,000.00 was spent for improvements on the Chevrolet garage. In other words \$20,000.00 of the taxpayers money was spent on a building that the district doesn't even own. And "at a time of austere budget cuts imposed from above by both state and federal authorities" (in the words of the *Vernonia Freedom* editorial) one would think that the 47J district would table any plans to make such a purchase until we, the taxpayers, could afford it. Rather than spending \$20,000.00 to renovate a building they don't even own, I would think they would've used that money to repair the "deteriorating mortar between the brick in the exterior walls at Washington Grade School", (reported in the *Vernonia Freedom* Vol. 3 No. 39).

In closing I must refer back once again to the *Vernonia Freedom's* editorial of last week. The article insinuated that the defeat of the tax levy was synonymous with robbing our children of education. This just isn't true. I strongly believe in a basic well rounded education but I equally believe in fiscal restraint, a honest budget, and representation thereof by the district. I have listed a number of items that I believe are just the tip of the iceberg. I say that we can have quality education with a reasonable, realistic budget. I say that we don't have to rubberstamp every tax levy that the districts wants in the name of education. I do not subscribe to the belief that a well rounded education includes sports. A well rounded education is just what it says. And if there are any cuts to be made I suggest the Chevrolet building purchase, the teacher's lunch program, the bloated athletics department, the holding back of the cost of living increases for the administrators or salary cuts, (for the good of education, of course); and eliminating some of those assistant coaches and assistants to the assistants.

Finally, do not let an editorial or anything else make you feel guilty if you honestly cannot support a higher tax base. But more importantly, do not let an editorial or the school district make you feel guilty if you can see that a tax levy is not needed at all but merely common sense restraint on a budget that is clearly out of hand.

P.S. I suggest that all interested parties go to the 47J district

headquarters and get a copy of the school budget so you can see the truth for yourself.

Phillip Williams
Vernonia

Reader asks:

Don't hurt my child's education

To the Editor:

I am responding to the letter to the editor in last week's edition of the *Vernonia Freedom*.

Maybe Ms. Williams doesn't know how to do percentage math but I want my children to be able to. Don't hurt their education.

Ms. Williams figures for State Basic School Support were incorrect. Also she didn't mention anything about federal monies lost - that we are supposed to be receiving back in lower income taxes.

In past years, Vernonia schools have provided a pretty well rounded education for my children. So far this year with the \$200,000 cut we have lost some important classes (Home Economics, Forestry, Driver's Education, PCC van). We also lost some important extra-curricular activities (Drama advisor and royalties on school plays, dance team advisor, cross country, golf, girl's J.V. basketball, J.V. wrestling, printing of the student newspaper, grade school cheerleaders and dance team and track). We also lost needed supplies, repairs, student insurance, outdoor education, an aide in Special Education, etc. We also lost funding for school lunches. Lunches will now cost my four children \$2.85 a day.

If this amended budget meets defeat on September 15, we will lose much more. Other possibilities are a shortened school year, loss of home to school transportation, loss of all extra-curricular activities, etc. Please don't do this!

The government is taking away state and federal monies and putting control of our schools in the local people's hands. It is your responsibility to see that our future leaders and voters have a well rounded education.

Don't Mess It Up!

I want my children to have the best possible education for their future needs and lives.

Vote Yes

Ilene Grady
Vernonia

Vernonia Freedom

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