

What do you think?

an opinion for The People by pete edwards

Cleveland is losing it.

I was just reading a quote from Cleveland Mayor Tom Rowland, of how pleased he was that our community was attracting new industry while other cities were in decline. He said he thought it was Cleveland's small town atmosphere and low taxes that gave us the edge. Apparently he was right because low taxes, business friendly government and of course, God's blessing of natural beauty attracted this writer to relocate here from up north. That was seven-teen years ago. The problem is, and Rowland may be interested to know, it

has been a continual fight to keep it that way.

Let me explain. Rowland sees himself as a community leader. A father of Cleveland's future, champion of what is good about our community. And it would be fair to say he has worked tirelessly to promote its reputation. As mayors go, Rowland is not a bad one, but he has one overriding flaw that is counter productive to the small town atmosphere he is so proud of. He wants to transform Cleveland into a metropolitan city. He wants to swallow up Bradley County and grow Cleveland to have all the amenities and public pro-

grams associated with a large city. He reasons that when it has grown large, it will retain the small town atmosphere. Unfortunately, reality doesn't work that way. Unless a drastic adjustment in attitude takes place, at the next bump in the economy, Cleveland may not be so fortunate because it will not retain the attributes it now has.

In the clamor to expand, Cleveland wants to annex larger areas of the county, mainly to gain access to more tax dollars with which to expand government and social services. The citizens affected by the expansion visualize the dangers to their quality of life, with

increased crime, overcrowded schools and distant non-responsive government. To ignore its citizens is in itself a sign of decline in small town atmosphere.

There has been talk of installing speed cameras along Cleveland's streets and to change existing red light cameras to also check speed. Hardly conducive to the small town atmosphere.

A new airport is not wanted by the taxpayers. Again, it is mainly a quality of life issue. It increases quality for a few, decreases it for everyone else. More small town atmosphere down the slippery slope.

Additions and improvements to this community do not necessarily have to be negative. It would be fair to say the problem facing Bradley County presently is

that a few people with a financial interest in growth are calling all the shots with little or no real input coming from the people affected most. Public hearings are held according to law, but the decisions and plans are already cemented and stacked against the community. Not all our leaders are working for the

betterment of the community. Many have a vested interest reeking of conflict. At present, Bradley County is under attack by property speculators and developers. These are the people exploiting expansion to make money. These are the people ruining Cleveland and Bradley County. Do we want this to happen?



Children Labor to Fund Education... continued from page 1.

85% have seen the increased need for school wide fundraisers over the last decade. This opens the margin for 56% of elementary and secondary principals with concerns about the increase. Many principals even have concerns about the impact fundraisers have on families and academics. Some fear that the constant fundraising efforts are taking the focus away from children's learning and academic instruction.

The most prominent sales among elementary schools are usually catalog sales. The student will take home a small catalog with vari-

ous items, anything from decorative tins, to holiday candies, to gift wrap, and then try to sell as much as they possibly can. Although some of the items are over priced, many cost no more than similar products at your local Wal-Mart or Target stores.

According to "Times To Remember 2009", a catalog on fundraisingzone.com, wrapping paper exceeds the typical \$3.00 or \$4.00. Paper in the fundraising catalogs cost about \$8.00 to \$12.00 for a 32-36 square foot roll. Those prices are over double what one could find in local stores. That would be two or three rolls

from, Wal-Mart or Target, for the price of one roll bought from a fundraising catalog.

Some companies even have incentives aimed to make the kids work harder. Prize lists may be included, so a child will be more enthusiastic about selling products for the company and try to reach out to more people to buy from them. Prizes come in groups separated by how much one sells. The smallest group is one item with a small prize accompanying the small amount of products sold. For the same catalog listed above, there is a Wii game console that will be the

prize to the child who makes the most sales in there group or school.

Prizes, however, are optional. Schools can choose to receive either the prizes for the children or a 2% cash back option. This just ensures that the school will be given a 2% return on their order of the fundraising products. The 2% could pay for the school's order of brochures, order forms, and all that is needed to conduct these fundraisers.

But why should private companies benefit from fundraising efforts when children do all of the work, whether they are rewarded or not? Is this a covert form of child labor?

According to the Association of Fund-Raising Distributors and Suppliers (AFRDS), www.afrds.org, "fundraising companies provide products and services to help schools and non-profit groups. Like all other services schools may utilize, professional fundraising services do come with a price. But the rewards of a good relationship with a fundraising company are well worth the investment. The portion of the gross proceeds of the fundraiser cover the company's costs of doing business, including: the cost of

the products and other materials; the costs associated with services, such as stocking and handling inventory, packing, shipping and troubleshooting; and a fair profit so that the company can provide a service year after year."

This still leaves the children working to pitch the product, collect money for merchandise, and deliver the merchandise. So is it appropriate for these companies to use children in such fundraising activities to sell their products?

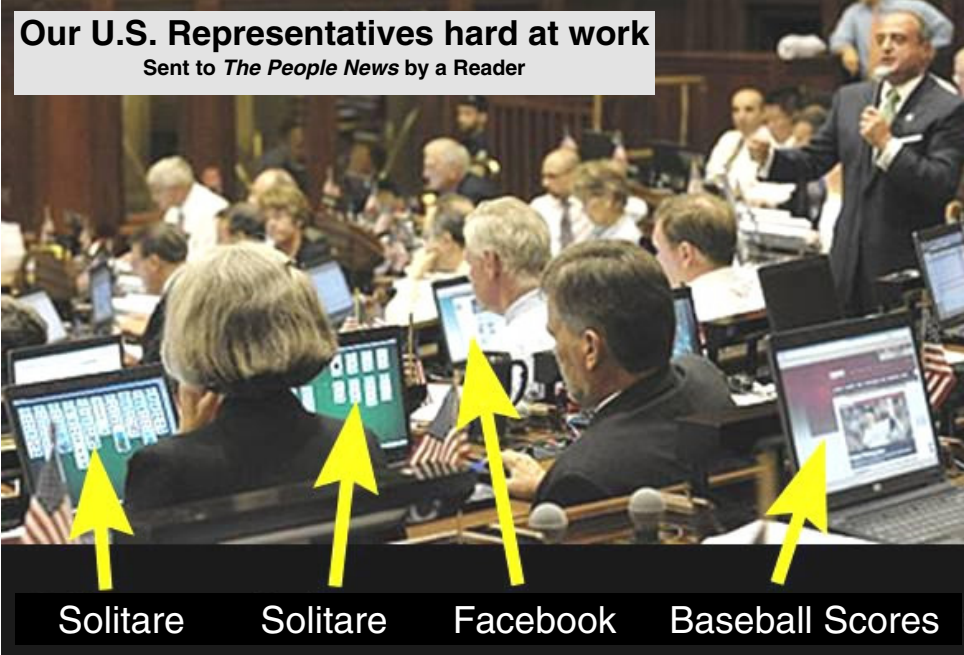
Once again, AFRDS answers with, "school fundraising drives are often a child's first taste of volunteer service. If presented and supervised properly by a parent, coach or teacher, a fundraising project to support school or extra-curricular activities can build a child's confidence, self-esteem, sense of responsibility, good manners, planning and budgeting skills, to name a few."

Many parents across the country seem to disagree with the child "volunteer" aspect of it all. Michelle Singletary is a parent and a journalist for The Washington Post washingtonpost.com. She wrote in an article titled *School Fundraising? Phooey!*, "I

donate money to my children's schools. I give to other projects at schools my children don't attend. But the keyword is 'give.' I write a check which 100 percent of my donation goes to schools in need." Singletary closes her article by saying, "If I want my children to learn the value of volunteering, it won't be by pushing products. We have better things to do with our time, such as spending it on homework."

It may seem that more and more parents are starting to think like Singletary as fundraisers continue to become more frequent. At an elementary school in New Jersey, parents actually voted to discontinue traditional fundraisers. This particular school has now opted for a "Write a Check" campaign. The school will issue a letter and send it home with the children. Parents can then send in a monetary amount that they feel is appropriate to donate.

But according to Vincent Ferrandino, NAESP's executive director, "until our schools begin receiving the appropriate funding necessary to purchase these resources, which in many cases are very basic items that all schools should have, we will continue to see an increase in the number of fundraisers."



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