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Letters to the Editor

Ratner Writes On Language Usage In Literature and Newspapers

Anne Meade's dismay at your use of a term originally found in a William Burroughs novel in a recent crime report rang a familiar, though discordant, bell. I read "Naked Lunch" in high school, largely because that's (1968) when its infamous Seven Salacious Smutty Prurient Pages of Porn (SSSPPP) had their fleeting moments of fame and an English teacher touted the book as a sterling example of modern postwar literature. Frankly, I thought that the book, despite the lurid SSSPPP, amounted to a malodorous pile of literary dreck.

Although I read this tedious tome at great and boring length 35 years ago, I readily recognized the word that so upset Anne Meade. Since the offending term relates to something that is not only un-aesthetic, but also laden with e coli, I can well understand her surprise at spotting it in a wholesome family-oriented publication.

I'm fascinated, though, about three things: First, *The Leader's* Police Blotter report used *The Word That Dare Not Speak Its Name* verbatim - though only once - because it was integral to the story. In contrast, Ms. Meade actually managed to use it, not once or twice, but four times in her brief letter. This was more frequent, in fact, than poor old drug-addled Burroughs managed to achieve, surely a unique accomplishment. What I can't figure out is why, if Ms. Meade believes that the word is so horrifically obscene that it should not be used in an actual news item, she used it repeatedly in a letter intended for publication?

Second, since a reader has to plow through about a hundred pages of Burroughs' incoherent and peyote-influenced musings before getting to the Good Stuff, what, precisely, brought Ms. Meade to read "Naked Lunch" in the first place?

After all, both its reputation and very name should serve to warn Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm fans that it might well offend their delicate literary sensibilities. I suspect that the answer to this question, like proof of Fermat's last theorem, may be forever elusive.

Finally, if Ms. Meade had not raised the issue, a fleeting mention of an obscure term from a third-rate novel would certainly have passed unnoticed by all but a few folks whose literary memories are eclectic and a bit eccentric. However, just as crusaders against vice tend in their zeal to accentuate and thus popularize the very "viceness" of their target, Ms. Meade may have single-handedly revived some local interest in a little-known word and a mediocre book that were otherwise already receding into the dim murk of really bad forgotten literature. To put it another way, words only remain obscure in the long run when self-appointed guardians of public morality perpetuate them. Otherwise, wonderfully lyrical and descriptive epithets tend to gradually fall into disfavor and ultimately exit the English lexicon. That's unfortunate. Perhaps we need more folks like Ms. Meade to help preserve them for future generations.

No, the Word has nothing to do with power-washing a set of Firestone radials, but it really isn't that awful in the larger scheme of things, certainly not in comparison with other words that have acquired unpleasant and distasteful connotations, like "Ashcroft" and "Cheney" and which are avoided by most polite and educated people. C'mon Anne, let's lighten up a bit and recognize that there are far worse things on earth than an occasional and innocuous epithet.

Robert Ratner
Westfield

Board of Education, Town Council Must Resolve WHS Parking Problem

Westfield High School (WHS) students are back circling around neighborhood streets looking for a place to park. Without off street parking provided by the board of education, what else can they do? With some streets next to WHS selectively closed off to students completely, other streets with two-hour parking restrictions and some streets that are further away from WHS, unfairly burdened with parking on both sides. It is a problem for students, parents and residents alike.

The board of education and town council members should consider working together to remedy this situation. Why have some streets been granted a ban from WHS students, only to push the problem onto other neighborhoods? Those streets that are nearer WHS should be reopened on one side on an alternating day basis. A system like the one Cranford has put in place around its HS should be considered - please. On school days, alternate side parking on odd and even days with residents excluded. All streets surrounding WHS should have the same sign, same parking restrictions. No unfair special treatment for some "squeaky wheel" streets.

Also, the new Coddling Road extension should not be granted a student parking ban, as they petitioned the town council for simply because they are a dead end street. Parking regulations on the "new Coddling Rd." should be the same as the

existing Coddling Road. Dorian Place and Dorian Court are dead end streets, just like the new Coddling Road extension. Why should they be given special treatment without consideration for their neighbors? It is selective closures like this that exacerbate the problem.

Now that the Southside Redevelopment Project has been tabled, those streets that were earmarked for commuter parking during construction should be looked at again. Off street parking could also be provided to WHS students at the Watterson Street parking lot, which is half empty every morning. The board of education should be looking at adding spaces to their property next to auditorium along Rahway Avenue, dedicated for students. Also, a circular driveway in front of the school could provide additional parking and a safe drop off zone for parents dropping off students in the morning. Currently, a big concern is students getting hit by cars as car doors swing open when students exit vehicles. An indentation in the sidewalk in front of WHS, similar to what is in front of Edison School could also be considered.

I urge students, parents and residents to contact the board of education and their councilpersons to work on remedying the current unfair system.

Mike Nemeth
Westfield

Mayor Greg McDermott is Currently Obsessed With The Parking Garage

It seems that no amount of logic or business analysis can keep Mayor Greg McDermott from manipulating the facts and using his actions and inactions in an effort to sway the electorate to vote in favor of constructing a parking garage in the Prospect and Elm location.

On August 24, 2000 (1,477 days ago) then councilman and candidate for mayor McDermott said "We (the mayor and council) owe it to our taxpayers to try every alternative strategy before we make an investment that will cost them additional dollars each year in property taxes - the prudent thing to do is to let the parking principles have a chance to work, and to make an expensive parking structure our LAST (my capitals) alternative."

Let's contrast that to what the mayor said on September 3, 2004 in the presentation of his incomplete and seriously flawed Downtown Parking Strategy to the town council and the public. "FIRST (the mayor's capitals), we construct a 490 car garage between Prospect and Elm..."

When we look at some of the mayor's and council's actions and inactions to improve parking during the past four years, we find that almost nothing has been accomplished. We have spent nearly \$700,000 on surveys and studies, yet there has been practically no action taken. For example:

The number of permits sold for the South Avenue train station lot was 660 in January of 2001. This number was allowed to erode to 600 by May of 2004. This erosion has cost the town \$161,000 in revenues. After many confrontations with the citizens, the mayor embarked, in June of this year, on a new sales campaign that has raised the number of permits to 669 on the way to a goal of 700. Much of the impetus for this action was the realization that the commuter parking permit waiting list was completely unreliable. To date, an accurate number is still not available. A statistical projection will put the number at closer 450 than 500 and an astounding 278 less than the Mayor's number of 753 from April 27 of this year. It must be remembered that the 753 number was a 67 percent inflation from the actual number. The mayor used that inflated number as the single most important statistic in the decision to embark on building garages in the first place.

The town has totally failed to enforce the "no meter feeding ordinance." Even though free parking in the town's permit parking lots is offered during evenings, Saturdays and Sundays, there is rampant use of meters and meter feeding by downtown employees. The town has failed to enforce this ordinance due to "lack of manpower." This failure is the responsibility of the mayor and Raphael Betancourt, as head of the Public Safety, Traffic and Parking Committee.

The only ordinance and strategy changes

were Rafael Betancourt's plans to charge downtown residents \$360 a year to park in designated lots overnight and the initiation of a daily parking plan for the South Avenue train station lot. To date this overnight plan has been used by only 12 residents and the daily parking plan by an average of 12 commuters a day (we have no statistics to indicate how many parkers opted to use the daily plan instead of using the long term parking pay station that always has at least 12 spaces available.) These two plans have affected only 24 of our citizens and plans that would have affected hundreds of our citizens have been not enacted, either through incompetence or disinterest or, we must say, by intent.

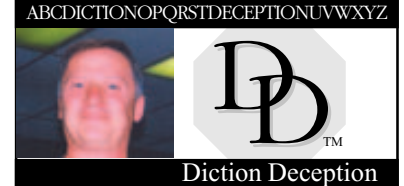
Make no mistake; no amount of policy changes, no designation of current parking lots into the newly named Central Business District parking scheme and no "Enron" style accounting can cloak the fact that future revenues that would have been used as surpluses will be going to pay for the 240 additional parking spaces in the garage. Not taking surplus revenues to offset expenses can only result in even more property taxes for each property owner in Westfield on an annual basis.

It is categorically unfair to ask the citizens of Westfield to vote in favor of funding a parking garage, based on incomplete and flawed facts, when principles and plans that have been in place for years and that would have greatly alleviated the parking challenges in our town have never been enacted. These alternative strategies could have been enacted at a very minimal expense to the town. Last minute efforts by the mayor will not give the citizens an opportunity to see the effects of these constructive changes before they vote to fund the garage. The bond for the garage is in excess of \$10 million with a payment and maintenance schedule in excess of \$23 million dollars over the 25-year period.

The mayor was absolutely on the right track on August 24, 2000. The vast majority of citizens completely support what he said at that time. Why would he have failed to live up to his campaign promises, failed to enact any of the parking principles that he so lauded, and made the garage his first priority as opposed to the last priority? These are among the numerous questions that the citizens of Westfield must ask themselves before they give the green light to the mayor and council to spend \$23 million dollars of the taxpayer's money. This mayor, Councilman Betancourt and council have managed the town's parking strategy and revenues in a completely failed manner.

We would never be in the position of discussing a \$10 million parking garage had the mayor enacted the alternative strategies he discussed four years ago!

Jim Baker
Westfield



Below are four arcane words, each with four definitions - only one is correct. The others are made up. Are you sharp enough to discern this deception of diction?

If you can guess one correctly - good guess. If you get two - well-read individual. If you get three - word expert. If you get all four - You must have a lot of free time!

All words and correct definitions come from the board game **Diction Deception**.

- Answers to last week's sarcane words.**
1. Stre - Straw
 2. Cerial - Pertaining to the bitter oak
 3. Baquet - A small tub
 4. Rese - To tremble or shake

HOAUST

1. To cough
2. A small human forest denizen; an elf
3. A scar or ulcer underneath the skin
4. To fall away or decline

POWTER

1. Concerned with petty affairs
2. The act of rubbing; massaging
3. A common domestic pigeon, with an inflated breast
4. Persecute; oppress

HOLOUR

1. A large bowl in which fat is burned by means of a wick
2. A fornicator or whoremonger
3. A confidence man; swindler
4. A surplus in supplies, materials, etc.

PRANDIAL

1. Bristled; standing erect
2. Given to creeping or crawling
3. Tapering to a point
4. Belonging to a meal, especially dinner

Local Business Owner Praises Town Official

I have been in business over 50 years and have not had many occasions to contact the Town of Westfield with issues. My business is located at 526 North Avenue, East and my new neighbor Commerce Bank is constructing a new building two doors away.

I became quite concerned with water runoff, as the new building is approximately five feet higher than the rear of my property. I made one call to the Town Engineer's office and was in contact with Assistant Town Engineer, Chris McAloon. Mr. McAloon informed me that he would look into the issue and contact the construction people.

Mr. McAloon called me back within three days. He had indeed been in contact with the construction people and explained my concerns to them. They, in turn, assured him that they would redirect the water flow to the railroad property and not towards my property.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to the Town Engineering Department and Mr. Chris McAloon, in particular, for the prompt service they provided.

Anthony DeChellis
President, Westfield Plumbing & Heating Supply Co., Inc.

Bicycle Prohibition On Sidewalks Should Be Enforced in Town

Editor's note: This letter was originally sent to Mayor Greg McDermott.

I am a senior citizen who would like to be able to safely walk each day on the sidewalks in Westfield instead of on the side of the roads. To walk on the sides of the street is very dangerous for a pedestrian.

I know that you will have to change the ordinance which states bicycles are allowed on the sidewalks of our town.

The children who ride two wheelers sometimes do not know how to control their bicycles. Here is an example: One morning, while I was walking on the sidewalk on Broad Street, a young child was riding his bike on the sidewalk on his way to the nearby junior high. I did not hear him approach since his rubber tires were very quiet and the bicycle struck me across the back. The damage was done and before I could get his name he was back on his bike and on his way.

Now, I am asking you and the Town Council to change the ordinance before another such collision between a pedestrian and a bicyclist. Incidentally, the law of the State of New Jersey reads that all wheeled vehicles should use the roads.

Your concern and cooperation would be greatly appreciated.

Margaret Forguis
Westfield

Campaign Release Brunch to Be Held For Brozak in WF

WESTFIELD - Congressman Steve Rothman (D-9) will be the special guest at a brunch honoring Westfielder Steve Brozak, Democratic challenger for Congress in the Seventh Congressional District that includes Westfield.

Mr. Brozak, a local businessman and recently retired Lt. Colonel in the US Marine Corps Reserve, will meet voters and discuss issues relating to homeland security, healthcare, the economy and the environment.

Mr. Brozak will receive the endorsement of Rep. Rothman, a four term Congressman from the 9th District that includes Bergen, Hudson and Passaic counties.

Rep. Rothman has championed environmental causes including preservation of the Meadowlands and is known for his strong record on education issues.

The event will take place on Sunday, September 19, at the home of Michelle Sternfeld in Westfield from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

For information or to RSVP, please contact Dave at (908) 518-7610.

Deadlines

- General News - Friday 4pm
- Weekend Sports - Monday 12pm
- Classifieds - Tuesday 12pm
- Ad Reservation - Friday 4pm
- Ad Submittal - Monday 12pm

Debt, Expenses, Bonds & Taxes Need 'Grand Scale Revamp'

Most politicians are calling for responsible spending in state, county and local government - especially those campaigning for election to office. They are aware that rising property taxes, public debt and expenditures are in a mode now where the spiral can't be stopped, given current circumstances and the structure.

The system, as it is currently setup, has no central accountability, nor is there a mechanism to examine options and compel the setting of priorities to judge expenditures and establish debt caps.

Each agency, whether state, county, school board or municipality blames the other for the tax increases. Yet, each continues to increase spending and take on more debt.

The taproots go very deep.

Some impugn the courts and legislature for forcing mandates without funding for the programs. Others charge the federal government for not providing its fair portion of the funding. Others say it's the raising of salaries as fixed by contract agreements or that it is a result of increased insurance costs outside of their control. Still more say that legal costs to litigate matters have been forced on them.

Everyone has an excuse. They say it's not them - it's the other guy.

In the past, there were some citizens who felt that property taxes would always rise, that it's inevitable and that considering everything else, it's the best alternative. Then too, politicians were saying that this is what the voters want and what they have approved. Even most of these voices are silent now.

This confirms to us that there's a problem recognized by most and that the current system couldn't deal with it or fix it.

Mayor Martin Marks of Scotch Plains and others have been calling for a statewide property tax convention for some time now. He has spoken about it several times in Trenton and on TV as part of the League of Municipalities. His opponent running for mayor this year, Andrew Baron has just announced the formation of a citizens budget and tax advisory group.

We commend both Mayor Marks and Mr. Baron for recognizing the problem and attempting to get

citizens involved. We urge them to continue these pursuits.

However, debt, expenditures, bonding and taxes (DEBT) need to be faced with more teeth, a lot of guts and a higher vision. In our view, it needs a "grand scale revamp."

The state constitution requires a balanced budget prepared by the governor and approved by the legislature each year by June 30. In actual matter, legislators complain the documents are provided to them with no time to even read it before a vote is required. The constitution also states that debt cannot be used to pay for operating expenses in the budget. Yet this year, the governor enacted many questionable budget measures including over \$2 billion of bonding debt to balance the operating budget. The courts agreed that this was unconstitutional, yet said to do it anyway this year, but don't do it again.

We have been further told by legislators that, once approved, the budget supersedes the constitution. From there it flows to practical action as the governor promulgates it. We're not exactly sure what that means and we're not exactly sure who the governor is.

Sweet heart no-bid contracts, conflicts of interest, "Pay-to-Play" and attorney contracts are said to be siphoning our treasury. Concessions to special interest groups are said to be given for the purpose of buying votes and assuring reelection.

We think all this is a real problem and that it will be difficult to stop. It's time to think and act outside of the current cultural and political operating box. Perhaps the only way will be for citizens to say, "this is all the tax we're going to pay." Then, the state, schools, county, municipality, authorities, special interests and all others battle each other for their slice of the pie. Is this the only alternative left to force evaluating priorities and to establish accountability?

As we review this written opinion, we question ourselves - are we being moderate and responsible in the analysis of the situation - or is it one that's too extreme? Unfortunately, the bizarre facts of today and of the last few years cannot be denied.

What do you think?

Meaningful Discussions Start Now On Parking/Development Proposal

With just under seven weeks until the Tuesday, November 2, referendum on the Prospect/Elm Street parking deck development in Westfield, information on the financial proposal for the project has been presented to the council and to the public by Westfield Mayor Gregory McDermott.

Financials were presented to the council last week - then they underwent revision and were re-presented to the council and members of the public in attendance on Tuesday night. We're not sure how this information will be disseminated to the public at large, or how long it will take. We will post it on our website, goleader.com, and print as much as practical in this newspaper.

We're sure that there will be many questions and comments over the next several weeks. We suggest

that you review the mayor's proposal so that you can cast an informed vote at the referendum. Ask your questions now of the mayor and town council.

We intend to poll each member of the town council, as well as Mayor McDermott, for their position on the proposed project - and how they recommend that you vote on the referendum on November 2, and why.

We also hope that the purpose and meaning of the non-binding referendum will be clear before votes are cast. The mayor and council have implemented the referendum to seek guidance from the public. But what does a resounding expression by the voters, one way or the other, mean?

Let us know your questions and opinions in a letter to the editor. Please e-mail to editor@goleader.com.

