

## Mr. President, The Next Time You Call a Town Meeting, Invite the Town

The President of the United States visited Westfield this week as the first stop on a 60-city tour to promote his plan for overhauling Social Security. One might assume this would be a great opportunity to demonstrate democracy in action. Yet, in all the communication I received about the event from the various Westfield schools my children attend, the educational opportunity wasn't even mentioned. Instead we heard a lot about security concerns and logistics. This was appropriate, as this event has little to do with true democracy.

It was billed as a "town meeting." Yet the average town resident could not attend; this event was for invited guests. Since "protesters" were to be "assigned" to Mindowaskin Park (far away from any possibility of actually voicing any concerns, or even being glimpsed by the President or news cameras), we could rest assured there was no true discussion. That being the case, what is the purpose of this tour? It's a marketing campaign, pure and simple. And why can't we attend? The ubiquitous answer: security.

At a time when we are running record deficits, when our economy is so shaky that a mere rumor Korea is considering financing less of our debt sends the market into a tailspin, and when thousands of our people are being killed in a war initiated on false pretenses, our President is spending our money and most of his time on a sham campaign to drum up support

for a program which is far from our most pressing concern. Why?

Because it's easier than facing the very real and immediate economic problems we face. Because the real agenda? of this administration is to dismantle our common social safety net and shift more of the tax burden to middle- and lower-income people? Because he wants to leave a "legacy" - aside from that of the largest deficit on record? How else can one explain funding a war (to the tune of well over \$150 billion and counting) outside of the budget process, and demanding no sacrifices to pay for it? Are we really that simple-minded, or is it just easier for all of us not to think about it?

Democracy is alive at the local level. I appreciate the opportunity for real dialogue through this paper and through many other venues. Further, we together manage to address our problems. The ongoing rise in our taxes demonstrates that at least we understand the concept that there is no such thing as a free lunch. On a national scale, our concerns for security seem to have trumped our belief in civil rights, and our common economic sense. Who was it that said, "Those who would sacrifice liberty in the name of security deserve neither?"

Mr. President, the next time you call a town meeting, try to invite the town.

Travis Hudelson  
Westfield

## More Letters to the Editor

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### Mr. Ratner Gives Little Respect, And Politicizes President's Visit

Judging by Bush's failure to ever gain a majority of Westfielders' votes in a presidential election, Councilman Caruana's statement that last week's visit was a "great honor" was no more accurate than Mayor McDermott's bewildering declaration that this was not "a political event." While these unfortunate expressions diminish in magnitude when compared to the President's own embarrassing linguistic shortcomings, they still merit detailed critical analysis.

If the President's visit was not political, how, precisely, are we to characterize a meeting (1) held before a handpicked audience, (2) advocating one of the most extreme and controversial elements of the Republicans' political agenda and (3) orchestrated by one of President Bush's most ingratiating and sycophantic Congressmen?

Perhaps, before he leaves office, Mayor McDermott will reveal the basis for his belief that a rally in support of the administration's plan to "cure" a fictional crisis could even remotely be anything other than political. His explanation will, no doubt, be nothing short of riveting.

Does anyone really feel particularly honored that the Republicans chose to hold their legislative rally in our town?

Actually, we should feel particularly insulted at the Bushite presumption that Westfielders can be easily hoodwinked into shifting our retirement savings from the safety of the time-honored Social Security system to the jaws of big business.

In bringing their smarmy sideshow to Westfield, President Bush's handlers have lost sight of the fact that the real America is simply too sensible to be lured by the oily rhetoric of a political hootchy-kootchy carnival barker who failed at every business venture he ever ran.

Only two days before President Bush came to Westfield, his administration's Solicitor-General appeared before the Supreme Court to argue that public displays of the Ten Commandments do not violate the Constitution. Isn't it ironic, then, that the Republican Social Security "reform" scheme ignores and besmirches the fifth of those divine commandments, the directive to honor our parents?

This assault upon one of the fundamental bedrocks of our nation's moral character demonstrates depraved indifference to the lives and welfare of our senior citizens and does violence to the dream of a secure and comfortable retirement for all Americans, rich and poor.

In preaching his ideological claptrap in Westfield, President Bush again revealed his lack of understanding that Americans care deeply about the elderly and will never abandon them to the depredation of plundering corporate greed, governmental neglect and poverty. At the end of a very long day, the people of Westfield, except for a handful of right-wing ideologues, continued to clearly understand that Social Security "reform" is a phony and cheap little fraud.

Robert Ratner  
Westfield

## Union County Freeholders Generosity For Robert Codey Is Heartwarming

It warms my heart knowing that Union County's current Board of Chosen Freeholders are so very concerned about Robert Codey's financial security that they are paying him \$46,731 annually, over and above the \$93,268 salary that the state of New Jersey is already paying him. Additionally, I feel all warm and fuzzy inside knowing that Union County's generosity will add another \$36,000 to his pension, which will be based on his highest years earnings, he is now eligible for a pension of \$98,500 a year upon retirement.

Robert Codey, New Jersey's acting governor's brother, is a deputy state attorney general and on loan to the Union County Prosecutor's Office to contribute his talents in prosecuting organized crime cases. Certainly a welcome addition to the team, he temporarily replaces our most experienced organized-crime prosecutor who recently retired but what the

residents of Union County may not realize is that we could have gotten this guy at no cost. It has been said that Mr. Codey did not come looking for additional dollars to accept this assignment but rather Union County offered it, and get this, he will be making more than our County Prosecutor who will be his boss, and more than over 100 others who out rank him.

Does this action strike anyone else as a bit odd? Has this all Democrat Freeholder Board opened a can of worms by setting a costly precedent and will Union County be looked upon as the place to make a quick cash hit? All of this aside I can now comfortably sleep at night secure in the knowledge that because of our concerned freeholders Robert Codey will not become a drain on society when he reaches his golden years.

Patricia Quattrocchi  
Garwood

## Opposition to President Bush's Plan For Social Security Started Here

The visit to Westfield last week by George W. Bush was a significant event. I am a 20-year resident of this town, and have never before seen a sitting President visit our town. But while some on our Town Council consider his visit an "honor," let us not mistake the visit for what it was: a partisan political event, the first of 60 trips in 60 days that the President has scheduled in order to sell his plan to privatize Social Security.

The gathering at the Armory may have been described in the press (and by the White House) as a "town meeting," but the carefully hand-picked, invitation-only audience belied the openness that the term "town meeting" implies. That left other views on privatization to be expressed by those who participated in the rallies on North Avenue and later on Rahway Avenue.

The point is, since the White House

was using our town as a backdrop for the launch of an intensive campaign to radically change Social Security, it behooved the President to hear all views on such a plan, not just those in the Armory favoring it. It was important that those attending the rallies in our streets got to express their views, it was important that the press and the world got to see that there were other views being expressed in Westfield, and we can only hope that the President's handlers will realize from the extent of the protests that even an appearance in safe, suburban Westfield could not distract people from the enormous opposition to privatization of Social Security that is arising throughout the country.

And to think it started with the President's first stop here in Westfield. Now that makes it a significant event!

Charles W. Stotter  
Westfield

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### PUBLIC NOTICE

#### BOROUGH OF FANWOOD PLANNING BOARD

Please take notice that on March 23, 2005 at 7:30 PM at the Fanwood Borough Hall, located at 75 North Martine Avenue, Fanwood, New Jersey, the Planning Board will hold a hearing on the application of the undersigned. The property in question is located at: 25 Elm Avenue, Fanwood, New Jersey, also known as Block 49 Lot 6.02, as shown on the Fanwood Tax Map, owned by Martin Schmiede.

The applicant requests to construct a new single-family home, which is in violation of:

1. Section 184-0110E(5), Variance Requested: sideyard setback; Permitted: 15 feet; Present: 3.72 feet; Proposed: 8 feet.
2. Section 184-163A, Variance Requested: Driveway width; Permitted: 10 feet; Present: none; Proposed: 12 feet.
3. Section 184-163A, Variance Requested: Driveway setback; Permitted: 3 feet; Present: none; Proposed: 2 feet.
4. Section 184-110E(9), Variance Requested: Structural coverage; Permitted: 25%; Present: 16.5%; Proposed: 26.7%.

The applicant will also seek to revise an existing driveway easement.

The applicant will also seek such other relief as may be determined necessary at the public hearing based upon review of the application or amendment(s) to the application.

The file pertaining to this application is available for public inspection during normal business hours (9 AM - 2 PM) from the Secretary of the Planning Board at the Administration Office of the Borough of Fanwood at 75 North Martine Avenue, Fanwood, New Jersey.

Any interested party may appear at said hearing and participate therein in accordance with the rules of the Fanwood Planning Board.

Applicant:  
Margaret & Richard Trigo

1927 Mountain Avenue

Scotch Plains, New Jersey 07076

Attorney for Applicant:  
Robert Krause, Esq.

328 Park Avenue

Scotch Plains, New Jersey 07076

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