

Dear *We The People*

IT LOOKS LIKE WE HAVE ANOTHER ISSUE

We had planned that today's message would begin our discussion of some important regional issues. However, another urgent, closely-related matter has arisen that has caused us to change today's subject.

The wall between the free press and the government has been lowered in our area.

After reading the Post-Star's editorial "Tyranny Team Should Be Educators" (Sunday, Sept. 5th), the Foundation's Chairman met with the Publisher and, later, the Managing Editor of The Post-Star to request an opportunity to respond to the editorial on

Sunday, September 17th in the form of a guest essay. They agreed. The Managing Editor asked only that it not be a line-by-line critique of their editorial.

On Thursday the Foundation delivered their response. The Managing Editor rejected it, and then failed to respond to a request for reconsideration. The publisher was unavailable.

In furtherance of this important debate aimed at the public good we present below both the text of our proposed essay, the rejection note from the editor, and the text of our letter seeking a reconsideration.

“TYRANNY” RESPONDERS RESPOND (Our Proposed Essay)

The editorial in last Sunday's Post-Star was essentially a critique of the full-page message placed in the paper on September 5th by the We The People Foundation for Constitutional Education, of which I am the Chairman. The purpose was to introduce the Tyranny Response Team (TRT) and begin a series to present the issues with which it is involved. The editorial also made remarks about the group itself in general and myself in particular – remarks that were evaluative with a discernably negative tilt.

For example, the group was called either (positively) “the new American heroes,” or (negatively) “a bunch of do-gooders interested only in throwing a wrench into every government action, regardless of the value or cost to their fellow taxpayers.” This shows editorial bias.

The editorial suggested the group should define its mission and try to educate others. Those points were pretty well expressed in our first message, and we wonder whether the author of the editorial was blind to those passages that did just that. We also wonder whether the editorial wasn't a bit premature, and whether an unnecessary warning wasn't being voiced. After all, the TRT members are well known, responsible, civic-minded persons, not cranks, and the Foundation has not yet published the detailed discussions the constitute TRT's mission statement – to bring to light the specific issues in question and how mischief is being worked by public authorities. Those discussions start with next Tuesday's message. They will be factual and not just matters of opinion.

Those who have read our two full-page messages to date know we believe that the press and the people comprise two additional branches of our system of governance, beyond the “official” executive, legislative, and judicial branches. We believe it is a primary duty of the press, as the “fourth estate,” to act as a watchdog of behavior by government and governmental officials. The Founding Fathers thought so, too – hence, the 1st Amendment. We believe that the sovereign citizens in a republic have the duty to continuously evaluate the behavior of their government in comparison to what it should be, and this includes evaluating the performance of the press as a component of our system of governance, as if it were an official branch. The people must be able to depend on the press to report information to them about government actions – thoroughly and without bias favoring officialdom. Although the press necessarily relies on government as a source of information it should be a watchdog rather than a lapdog.

It is unusual for a newspaper to critique the content of a paid ad. It would never happen. However, in this case, it is to be noted that The Post Star's advertising director is a county supervisor. This may make him sensitive to what he reads in the TRT message which appears to threaten public officials. It is generally known that a number of management personnel at The Post Star contribute to its editorial content. This may explain the apparent bias of the editorial. MR. CAIMANO, PLEASE DENY THAT YOU CONTRIBUTED TO THE SUBSTANCE OF THE SUBJECT EDITORIAL. The record shows that Bob Schulz is neither an “obstructionist” nor an enemy of the public good.

Let's all remember the two public hearings early last spring, one before the Washington County Board and one before the Warren County Board, in which dozens of citizens (many of them members of the TRT) spoke out strenuously against the counties'

sales tax intercept plan to fund the trash plant debt. Each hearing lasted for hours, Bob Schulz made a major presentation at each, and The Post-Star had a reporter at each, yet not one word was printed about either hearing. Were the people's voices purposely silenced by The Post-Star? It is interesting to note that The Post Star's influential advertising manager, a Warren County Supervisor, was present at the Washington County hearing as an “observer,” even though Warren County's hearing was to be the very next day. This points to the possibility that the performance of The Post Star could be an issue at the proposed public discussion on the roles of the people and the press in our system of governance.

We can't help but note that The Post-Star's editorial and the long article about us last week have inadvertently proven a major point – that the “fancy new jackets” have piqued the interest of The Post-Star to pay more attention to what the people are saying. Could it be that The Post-Star's derisive comment about our “fancy new jackets” actually meant that officialdom was stung by this appearance of acute interest? In any event, there seems to be more attention being paid to the substance of what the Foundation is driving at. It may lead us in the direction of a government of laws. Imagine that!

The editorial says the Team should “monitor government activity and report back to the citizens.” That is precisely what we are doing. However, we are reduced to having to purchase advertising space in order to report to the people, which is, after all, the role of the press. And it isn't as though ordinary citizens, like the TRT, had not provided the paper with adequate, accurate, newsworthy information. The role of a free press in a constitutional republic is integral and important to the preservation of our system. Jefferson said it best when he said: “If I had to choose between a government without newspapers or newspapers without government, I would choose the latter.”

The editorial says, in effect, “Don't sue; don't obstruct!” However, what should a free people do when those in power do not pay attention – do not want to be educated about constitutional and other legal limits on their power to do what they want to? It would seem most fitting that the role of the commentator and educator should be shared by the people and the press.

It's so important to understand that some of the issues we will be discussing do, in fact, demonstrate what can only be called “tyranny,” where officials behave as if they had absolute, arbitrary power and authority, without regard to the constitutional limitations placed upon them by the people's constitution. When this happens, we enter a realm of lawlessness that portends the breakdown of social order, led by those at the top. Why should anyone else respect the constitution and the law when they see public officials doing as they please?

The editorial says, “Being in government is tough.” Perhaps, but making those tough decisions can be a lot easier if officials eliminate courses of action that are in clear violation of the constitution and the law. Officials take an oath of office to uphold the state and federal constitutions. They don't need any more reason than that.

Bob Schulz, Chairman
We The People Foundation For Constitutional Education

EDITOR'S REJECTION NOTE:

Bob:

I got to your essay, but I think we must have mixed signals here. I tried to be very clear that any guest essay we would run had to be something that furthered the debate on a topic. Anything that just picked apart an editorial did not serve much of a purpose for the public good as far as I can see. That's a letter to the editor.

If you want to make this under 500 words, we certainly can run it as a letter to the editor. I see the purpose of guest essays to allow people in the community to expound upon their views in the long form. This certainly did not meet that standard.

Ken Tingley, Managing Editor
The Post-Star

OUR LETTER SEEKING RECONSIDERATION

Ken,

With respect, I am greatly disappointed with your attitude toward the publication of my piece in response to the editorial which I found degrading and insensitive to the real truth of the debate that is now going on regarding the role of an enlightened citizenry with respect to acts of government in our constitutional-republic.

As I recall, my agreement with Jim Marshall and yourself was that I could, indeed, respond in a “Guest Essay” to last Sunday's editorial which ridiculed citizen activism in a very real way, as long as I did not do a “line-by-line” critique of the editorial.

I have done that. You have seen my response. You obviously were stung by what you read, as we were stung by what you wrote.

It goes without saying that you have control of the printing press which affects what is printed in The Post-Star. It also goes without saying that in our constitutional-republic the press has a responsibility to be part of the educational process – which means that if a debate exists, the press is axiomatically a part of it.

I don't believe that the Post-Star wishes to be held captive to a socio-political situation which is unresponsive to well-intentioned, intelligent, literate people, motivated by a sense of civic righteousness -- civic morality if you wish.

Additionally, it is inconceivable that the paper would wish to be connected with the appearance of frustrating and stonewalling, legitimate, recognized public opinion such as that represented by the TRT. It would seem appropriate that the paper would express a curiosity about the motives and philosophy of any group of responsible citizens willing to stand up and

be counted in an a-political challenge to questionable governmental behavior. Such phenomena have been entitled activism and public protest but what we have, here, is a duly authorized, professional educational process carried out with the public good in view.

I think we should recognize that our purposes are not obstructionist but educational and as part of our educational process we seek to mobilize public opinion.

It would seem to me to be incumbent upon The Post-Star, as the custodian of organized truth, to allow open debate because willy nilly the paper is going to be involved in this public debate, one of the purposes of which is to define the proper role of the press as well as the role of the people in our system of governance.

My piece is obviously educational in the way that it responds to your editorial. We all desire that the debate be kept factual and that personalities be avoided (which was not the case with your editorial). I am obviously expressing some real discomfort with what the editorial said and if I reacted too strongly to what I view as a personal criticism you will have to forgive me. Needless to say, the debate is in process. It is being furthered by our advertisements in The Post-Star and will go on speaking to the proper roles of citizens and the press.

I hope that an accommodation can be made and that we will have the wholehearted participation of the Post-Star in the Foundation's educational program.

Can we discuss a compromise? Can the piece be published as “Commentary?”

Bob Schulz

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PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN NEW YORK'S TYRANNY RESPONSE TEAM

I, _____, in view of my interest in constitutional government carried out in decency and good order, and in protecting, preserving and enhancing my individual liberty, rights and freedoms, especially as expressed in the New York State Constitution, declare and make my personal commitment as follows:

I am at least 18 years of age.
It is my understanding that the Foundation intends to establish an Institute headquartered in Albany with field offices located in counties throughout the state, and with staff attorneys and support personnel, for the purpose of educating government officials and the general public about the meaning, effect and significance of each provision of the New York and U.S. Constitutions and the Declaration of Independence.
It is my understanding that the Foundation is in the process of developing a statewide “Tyranny Response Team,” to be comprised of ordinary, non-aligned citizen taxpayers by the thousands to fund the Institute and its programs.
I desire and intend to be counted as a member of that “Tyranny Response Team.”
I hereby pledge to send the Foundation \$ _____ on the 1st of every month, for three years.
If, for any reason, I am unable to fulfill this obligation, I will simply notify the Foundation as soon as possible and my membership will not be affected.
It is my understanding that any contribution I make to the Foundation will be deductible from federal and state income taxes.

Signature: _____ Address: _____
Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ E-Mail: _____

Clip and Mail