

OPINION

DAILY JOURNAL

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"The Daily Journal is dedicated to community service, to defense of individual rights and to providing those checks upon government which no constitution can ensure."

SCOTT ALEXANDER
founding editor, 1963

AT ISSUE

The Indianapolis Colts will be playing in perhaps their most important game since the team moved from Baltimore.

OUR POINT

Coach Tony Dungy tells people that the game shouldn't be what defines them. He shows them what a winner in life really is.

Super Bowl win or no, Dungy is a champion

The Daily Journal

On Sunday, the Indianapolis Colts will play in their biggest game since the football team arrived in the city.

Fans in Miami and across central Indiana will cheer and scream as the team takes on the Chicago Bears.

Win and the city will erupt in an unmatched, frenzied euphoria. Lose, and ... well, lose and it's not the end of life as we know it.

After all, it's just a game. An important one, yes, but still a game.

This point has been made regularly by the man who guides the team, coach Tony Dungy.

Football doesn't define Dungy, and one game shouldn't define the team's fans.

Dungy doesn't put football first in life. He doesn't even put it second. It's third behind his faith and his family.

Last season, the coach gave the world the most poignant example of a person living his faith when his son committed suicide.

It was clear Dungy was hurting. What parent wouldn't? But he walked with pride, secure in his faith. He reached out to comfort others as often as they tried to comfort him.

This season, when star receiver Reggie Wayne's brother died in an accident, Dungy offered solace and support. He put the personal and emotional needs of the player way ahead of any professional commitments.

In an interview in Miami this week, Dungy said, "People think that because we're on TV, we're bigger than life. But football is not bigger than life. We go through the same things everyone else does. I think that helps me counsel the team because I can tell them that they're not immune to it."

During a game, Dungy remains calm. Even when the Colts were behind 21-3 in the conference championship game against New England, Dungy appeared unfazed.

This calm confidence rubbed off on his team, but it grew from his priorities and experience. When football takes its proper place in your life, then wins and losses are put in perspective.

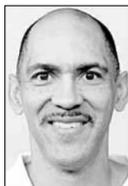
If the Colts win the Super Bowl Sunday, there is a possibility Dungy will retire.

At 51, is he burned out? Does the game lack a challenge? Not at all. It's because Dungy feels there's much more he can do with his life and because he wants to spend more time with his family.

This runs so counter to what most people think of professional football players that it seems hard to imagine. But listening to Dungy for even a short time makes it easy to understand.

Dungy will walk into Dolphin Stadium on Sunday hoping the team will win the Super Bowl.

And whether the Colts win or lose, he will walk out a champion.



DUNGY



Jot this down — pens, pencils getting harder to come by

Have you noticed that no one has a pen or pencil anymore?

I was at work the other day and used the phone at someone else's desk. The call required I write down some information, so I scanned the desktop for some kind of writing instrument.

Let's see, seven pictures of this guy's three daughters, two of his wife (or maybe that was his mother), a computer, a video monitor, a Palm Pilot and that was it. Nothing else.

I looked in one of the drawers of the desk. Surely there would be a writing instrument wedged in there between the manila folders. Alas, no pen. In fact, no folders, either. This cubicle had no thesaurus, no dictionary, no Kit Kats. Just an ugly coffee mug and an umbrella.

You call that a desk? This person doesn't deserve a desk. This human being has defiled the very notion of a desk. This is some upstart techy who has gone totally cyber. Everything he needs to know is in his computer or his Palm Pilot.

Yes, gone is the charm of the messy desk. Oh, I know you still have one. But not for long. Trust me. The cyber world will catch up to you.



Dick Wolfsie

It's an international plot. Why do you think your computer has a "trash can"? The world has gone obsessively neat. Someday we will have lost the mystique of a cluttered desk. What a mess this world will (won't?) be in.

Of course, it was more than just the missing pens. Where was the tape dispenser, the hole puncher, the phone book, spiral notepads, paper clips, Post-it notes, rubber bands? Hey, where's the pencil sharpener?

I started thinking about that, so I asked a young reporter: "Doug, do we have a pencil sharpener here?"

"A what?"

"A pencil sharpener."

"I don't think so. Maybe the fax/copier/scanner/printer has one built into it."

"Doug, I know you're just 24, but don't you ever use a pencil?"

"Of course. I use them for

nervous tapping. Hey, do people really sharpen them? Isn't that dangerous?"

"No wonder security lines are so long at the airport."

Sometimes when calling a friend or client at home, I try to leave a message with the teenager who answers the phone. "Cindy, could you tell your dad that Dick Wolfsie called? Here's my number. This is very important."

"You mean, like, I need to write this down?"

"Yes, of course, you need to write it down. Now do you have a pencil?"

"I don't think I've ever had a pencil. My dad might. He's probably your age. But he's at work. I'll text message him and ask him to bring a pencil home. Thanks, and I'll tell be sure to tell him Rick called."

"That's Dick."

Click.
You probably think I am just exaggerating the problem. But remember what I am telling you. In fact, please make a note of it.

Television personality Dick Wolfsie writes this weekly humor column for the Daily Journal. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com

Indiana's property tax boondoggle growing even more convoluted, unfair

There once was a time when everyone watched network news, and there was one newscast in the heat of presidential primary season that I'll always remember.

After watching a succession of unsuccessful candidates in post-election news conferences blaming anything and everything — except themselves — for their poor showings, correspondent Roger Mudd had seen enough. Just once, he said, he would like to see a candidate stand up and say it straight: They lost because folks liked the other candidates better.

One of these days someone in power will stand up and tell us what is really going on with property tax policy in Indiana. Judging from the rhetoric of the debate, I don't think that day is going to come soon. But if they did, it might go something like this:

The property tax has been in upheaval for several years now. First, it was assessment.

It's hard to say if the system of assessment used prior to 2002 was working well because no one could explain what it was. But it produced so many unbalanced situations, both between businesses and homeowners, as well as among different homeowners, that a tax judge threw the whole system out. In 1998, the Supreme Court agreed.

When the smoke cleared, everyone's assessments changed. The Legislative Services Agency said commercial property valuation went up 46 percent, and industrial property was valued 15 percent more. But homeowners



Patrick Barkey

saw a whopping 106 percent increase, with much of the burden hitting owners of older homes.

Of course, tax rates were adjusted downward to reflect the new assessments. Commercial and industrial properties got a tax cut, but 59 percent of residential property owners saw tax increases. And those increases would have been considerably larger — the legislative agency estimates about 46 percent higher, on average — if the legislature had not moved almost a billion dollars of spending off the property tax levy completely in 2002.

Now we have more curve balls coming. One of the devices used to balance the state budget was a capping of property tax replacement spending by the state. That means that taxpayers will be bearing much more of the burden of higher taxes from this point forward.

And why are they going up? Perhaps you've noticed in your latest assessment. Market-based assessment was not a one-time change. Valuations for real property, buildings and land, are trended to reflect market conditions.

And in areas with slow or no growth, costs of providing

services continue to grow even though the base to support them does not. Plus, we're picking up the tab for dropping inventories from the tax base.

That trend caused the legislature to throw us another curve ball, in the so-called "circuit breaker" credit that will eventually limit total tax burden statewide to 2 percent of valuation before deductions. The impact of this legislation on countless communities, including Muncie, South Bend and Gary, promises to be nothing short of catastrophic.

What's the solution? For some, it is running away from the tax altogether. But no one has come up with a way to replace the \$5 billion or \$6 billion of revenue, other than to offer a fervent hope that we can all suddenly live with a lot less government.

But if you will allow me a moment of blunt speak, I'll give you my take. First, let's get state government out of the local property tax business. Assessments and procedures should be uniform, yes. But if Muncie or Gary or any other city wants to set their rates at 2 percent or 3 percent, what is the state's skin in that game?

But at the same time, I would completely overhaul the method of setting rates. Let's have rates set by public referendum, with expirations making regular renewals necessary. Let's have predictability and transparency in a tax that no one likes to pay, but no one knows how to live without.

Patrick Barkey is director of economic and policy studies in the Miller College of Business at Ball State University. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.

YOUR VIEWS

Media ignoring youths' push to end abortions

To the editor:

There are some things in this nation that everyone talks about.

Everyone has an opinion on whether the war in Iraq is a just war, or whether the Colts will win the Super Bowl.

Every new development is displayed on television and chronicled in daily newspapers.

There are stories on national TV about thousands of people in Lebanon protesting Iraq, and the front pages of all the local papers are plastered with stories of hundreds of people who turned out to celebrate the Indianapolis Colts' victory.

I am an ardent Colts fan, and I am fascinated by international events.

But last week, there was an event of even greater importance.

An estimated 100,000 people of all walks of life turned out in the streets of Washington on the afternoon of Jan. 22 for their annual march.

If they had been advocates of gay rights, it would be all over the news. If they had been protesting the war in Iraq, it would have been all over the news.

But these thousands of people came to pack the streets of Capitol Hill to pray and sing in front of the Supreme Court building on the anniversary of the Supreme Court decision of Roe v. Wade to express their indignation at the loss of millions of human lives.

More lives have been lost through abortion than in all of the modern wars combined.

But do the majority of the citizens of the United States even know of this event? It did not appear in the daily papers.

It received scant coverage on television, mostly in the early-morning hours.

Society seems to think of the anti-abortion movement as being a small minority of old-fashioned religious extremists, modern John Browns, in a sense. But that is not true.

As I stood near the top of Capitol Hill and looked down upon the thousands of people, almost entirely youth, who were slowly moving up the hill, I realized that I had never seen anything more impressive in my life.

Here were thousands upon thousands of young men and women who knew that although each individual could accomplish almost nothing of the colossal task of ending what the late Pope John Paul II referred to as the "Culture of Death," together a mighty statement could be made.

It is time that the silent majority end their silence, and the media need to realize this.

This movement is supported not by the elders, who are assumed by many to be "behind the times," but by the youth, the future leaders of this great nation.

Patrick O'Brien,
Age 16
Whiteland

Focus: Congress

Squabbles over bills no way to run government

Scrrips Howard News Service

The federal fiscal year is one-third over, and, thanks to last year's Republican-run Congress, this year's Democratic-run Congress is just now getting around to paying for it.

In a less dysfunctional Congress, the federal budget for fiscal 2007 would have been wrapped up and paid for by last Oct. 1, but the old Congress never got around to passing nine spending bills to fund 13 federal Cabinet departments, all but Defense and Homeland Security.

Instead, before adjourning, the outgoing Republican leadership wrapped everything up into a continuing resolution allowing the government to limp along until the resolution expires on Feb. 15. There was a certain malice in dumping all their unfinished business on the incoming Democrats. For one, it would cut into the time the Democrats could devote to their own priorities.

House Democrats this week took the continuing resolution, juggled the funding a little bit, and sent it over to the Senate for approval as the final \$463.5 billion federal funding measure for the rest of the fiscal year.

Some programs, largely as a measure of their political appeal, actually got increases: veterans' health care, the National Institutes of Health, Head Start and Pell grants, prison construction, the FBI, the National Science Foundation, Department of Energy research, international AIDS relief and some housing programs. But most federal programs were frozen at last year's spending levels.

And, in back-door fashion, the Democrats made good on both parties' semi-sincere campaign promise: The bill, because it came in the form of a resolution rather than a spending measure, is largely free of lawmakers' pet personal pork projects. The White House is OK with the compromise; the newly minority Republicans are not.

They objected vehemently that the Democrats would not let them amend a bill that was fundamentally of the Republicans' own devising.

New House Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey, D-Wis., was unsympathetic, telling the Republicans, "You forfeited any right to squawk about how we cleaned up your mess. Don't blame us for your screw-ups."

This really isn't the way we should run our government.