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Neither the best nor the brightest

There was a time, years ago, when I enjoyed reading the editorial page of the Minneapolis Tribune for its high-quality prose. The columnists were as tedious then as they are now, but the letters to the editor were often good and sometimes brilliant.

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Letters in which normally caim and rational persons, driven to the brink by the acts of fools in high places, had taken up alt jargedest words they knew and nailed them into two or three lethal paragraphs and fired them out the starboard tubes. Letters that came in high and in side, aimed at the Adam's apple, Letters so explosive that the presses had to be run at half-speed, and paperboys laid the copies gingerly on the front porch.

One of the better writers, as I recall, was a person named P. Nelson. P. Nelson's letters took on every institution, governing body, civic leader and cherished belief in the city of Minneapolis. They boroning and editing, and achieved such a high point of contempt and derision that the Tribune was forced to print letters from other P. Nelsons disclaiming responsibility.

Writing an angry letter to the editor, though, is like punching your kitchen wall. The wind-up and delivery are enormously sat-isfying right up to the point of impact. Then you tend to feel a little foolish.

The hobby of wall-punching is one that few persons keep up as they grow older and, with all that's been said about peace and the need for cooperation and solving problems constructively, the real hard wall-punchers have pretty much tossed in the sponee

Sponge.

Oh, Watergate inspired some good letters, and a few people lit out after the international oil cartel, but for the most part, letters to the editor these days sound like editorials. Modest, polite, constructive, viable letters — urging further study of this, respecting all points of view, pointing out that much progress has been made already.

Minneapolis for its lovely parks, warm hospitality and wonderful arts. Letters commending the Tribune for its excellent series of articles recently. Letters from elderly persons thanking the anonymous teen-agers who helped them across Lyndale Av. 5.40 p.m. last Tuesday (in case anyone thinks teen-agers are all bad).

Well, I am sick of it, and I think it's time someone stood up and said so.

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I live across the street from a high school and have to put up with tenagers morning and afternoon, gunning their engines, lurking in the alley, camping on our lawn and sniggering at passers-by, and I don't care what happened last Tuesday, teenagers are creeps, and here's one adult who says it's high time the pinheads from the university who run our so-called schools take the hand cuffs off the teachers so that the kids can get what they need more than anything else, which is so me body to walk on their faces.

Article after article in the

Article after article in the Tribune extols those teen-agers who allegedly collect canned goods for needy families or hike for he handicapped. How about an occasional word for the 95 percent who are no good to themselves or anyone else?

Fat chance of that with the newspapers we have in this town, if "newspa-per" is the right word for a bunch of egg-sucking lit-tle gunsels who wouldn't know a good sentence if they wrote one, which is

unlikely considering that they're drunk before lunch.

But then who wouldn't be if you had to write about Minneapolis for the rest of your life, if you care to call it that. Minneapolis is a town where people won't give you the time of day, and not because they don't want to. Their vocabulary is pretty much limited to whatever they can remember from last Sunday's football playby-play.

As everyone must know by now, it wasn't the best and the brightest who left S can d in a via in cattle boats for the New World, and generations of inbreeding since then have left us with a population of moody masochists to drink a quart of bitter, black coffee every morning and listen to herbicide commercials on WCCO.

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Minneapolis n e e d s arts like a pig needs a silk purse, not that I'm opposed to pigs, not that the Minnesota Orchestra is any silk purse. It is a public-employment program for Ice Follies band members who will need a lot more than a new Orchestra Hall to make them sound good, assuming that Orchestra Hall has decent a coustics, which it doesn't.

No, if anyone cares to improve Minneapolis, he or she might forget about the arts and start out by bringing to justice the politicians and bureaucrats who are up to their dewlaps in the public trough. They might begin with the

paper-pushers in the city coordinator's office who tried to shove a domed stadium down the taxpay-ers' throats, who are about as well-coordinated as the Vikings themselves.

Why we should subsidize a bunch of overweight athletes who are paid upwards of \$100,000 a year to play dead in the Super Bowl is beyond me, but perhaps if I'd been hit in the head as often as they have I'd understand better.

Which brings me to the governor, who played hockey without a helmet during his formative years and now entertains the delusion that he is fit for national office. Well, the people of Minnesota are onto him and his credit-card cronies, make no miscard cronies, make no mis-take about it.

They know that, between Anderson and the Odd Fellows Lodge we call a Legislature, this government will not be happy until all of us are living in trees and eating bark so that are hard-earned dollars can support an army of welfare recipients, otherwise known as state employees, who spend the few hours between coffee breaks typing with one finger guidelines on which wastebasket to spit into.

Let this serve as notice that the taxpayers of Min-nesota will not sleep until the entire motley crowd is permanently ensconced in Stillwater making license plates, or some other task suited to their abilities.

Not that I expect this let-ter to be printed. Far from it. The Minneapolis Trib-une has its interests to protect, and one can hard-ly expect it to plunge the knife into its own heart, assuming that it has one.

If, however, through some silp-up by a copy editor four sheets to the wind and hurrying to get home in time for the cartoons, this little missive should see the light of day, I would like to point out that the G. Keillor who wrote it was, and is, not me. He and I are only distantly related, and his views do not necessarily reflect those of yours truly or any other Keillors.

Garrison Keillor is a writ-er who lives in St. Paul.



Letters from out-of-state "How do you know the country visitors complimenting you've never tried governing it?" ntry's ungovernable when