

## BENHAM MAKES "REVERSE ECONOMICS" VIDEO TO FIGHT SCHOOL MUSIC BUDGET CUTS

**D**r. John Benham, the Mound's View, MN, music educator and school music budget cut fighter, has just finished making a 15-minute video funded by MENC, the Music Achievement Council, NAMM, and NABIM.

According to Benham, the video is "aimed at all constituencies: the public, school administrations, school boards, music teachers, and especially parents and music advocates."

Burton Nygrin, superintendent of the Mound's View public schools, introduces the video and the concept of reverse economics. Reverse economics says, in sum, that cutting music doesn't save money. It costs money. Music teachers handle bigger classes than academic teachers, and students from wiped out music classes don't disappear. More teachers have to be hired to handle them. That argument has helped Benham and his advocates save school music budget dollars now approaching \$2 million.

Benham himself then "introduces various things that are causing cuts in school music: reform movements, increased graduation requirements (such as foreign language and computer literacy), and how oftentimes these are not really funded. Then you have other things, too, such as a shifting to a middle school concept. None of these things need to interfere with music. The problem is that we focus on adult needs, which are cutting the budget, rather than on the children's needs for an excellent and effective education."

These movements, taken all together, seriously threaten school music. Benham points out that in California, since Proposition 13 cut property tax revenues, school instrumental music enrollment has dropped from 124,000 to 64,000.

Another threat to music education comes from a shift in funding strategies for schools, according to Benham. In this shift, rural and urban taxation and schools are consolidated. "The head of education for the state of Minnesota," Benham says, "has already recommended that smaller districts be merged, because they're too expensive to be run. That's going to affect everybody."

"Now this is not going to be a complete expose," Benham says of the video. "This just shows people that there are answers."

The video challenges "everybody to change from a reactive to a proactive mode. One of its main thrusts is to recommend the establishment of state music booster organizations to act as proponents for local and legislative action. I'm trying specifically to avoid the word lobbyist. We have to make sure that the whole child is educated—which means the arts."

The video should be available this summer for about \$10, distributed through MENC and NAMM—as well as from Benham himself.

Benham will be speaking at Vancouver, B.C., at the Canadian Music Educators Association conference on May 11; and will participate in an all-day conference on administration and music education at Vandercook College in Chicago on June 26.