

editorial opinion

To the hair goes victory

I've gotta tell you about this dream I had the other night.

Now, I don't dream much, at least consciously, but this one sticks out in my mind because it involved one of my favorite persons—Adlai Stevenson.

You may think I admire him because of the great contributions he made to history, but that's only part of the story. The real reason is he was part of that select group of balding Americans.

Yes, as I look in the mirror bleary eyed, the realization is evident that I will soon be joining that select group.

It's a matter of fate.

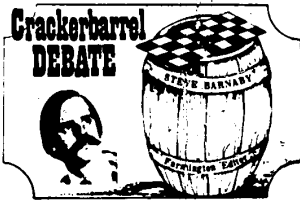
Medical research says a person inherits baldness from his mother's side of the family. That's bunk. My mother isn't bald. My dad is and so is his father and likewise his father, on down the line.

As a youth, I was always under the impression that when Adlai Stevenson said eggheads unite, he meant all the bald men. So, the other night in my dream, I asked him about that.

"Mr. Ambassador, do you think you could have been elected president if all the bald men would have voted for you?" I queried.

"Yes, I'm certain I would have been. Unfortunately, some of those of the bald persuasion drifted into Ike's camp," he reminisced.

"I had contemplated growing a beard during my second attempt to attract another special interest group. But I listened to my advisors, who ruled it out. You know, I may just have won if I would've taken that initiative."



"But what about the issues? Don't they count in presidential elections?" I asked.

"I used to think so, but after John Kennedy took the nomination away from me in 1960, I knew bald men were doomed in politics. All that hair was just too much to resist," he said.

"Why do you think Hubert Humphrey refused to enter the primaries? He didn't have a chance in hell against Carter's locks," he mused.

"That's why Ronald Reagan is giving President Ford such a run for his money. It's all that damn hair. It will get you every time," he said.

At that point the alarm clock rang, relieving me of this bleak political analysis. Dusting the loose hair off the pillow, I wandered into the bathroom.

Once again looking into the mirror, I took a hair count. I began applying shaving cream, but stopped in midstream.

So let's see. If I grow a beard...

Putting a price on litter

We need a state law requiring a deposit on beer and pop bottles, and eliminating the so-called throwaways. One reason is that tougher law enforcement simply won't work.

Consider this environmental war story told by Pamela Frucci, a member of the state resource recovery commission:

A male subject who was old enough to drive was caught littering a roadside with bottles. Mrs. Frucci wrote to the judge expressing hope that the young man would be required to clean up some litter as part of his sentence.

The judge was in probate court—juvenile division. You see, the litterer wasn't old enough to be tried as an adult in a court of record. The judge and probation officer found they would run into all kinds of problems by trying to put the young

man on probation. The result was that the young man never had the pleasure of picking up the bottles and cans that he and other slobs used to decorate the landscape.

The moral of Mrs. Frucci's story is that litter laws can't effectively be used to get rid of litter. What appears to have a chance of working is to make littering expensive by charging a deposit, and make picking up litter profitable to kids by letting 'em earn a dime a bottle.

Write your state legislator in, ask him or her to support HB 4296. Circulate it at least sign—the petition of the Michigan Urban Conservation Clubs that will either force the legislature to act or at least to put the proposal on the ballot. When it gets on the ballot, vote yes.

Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

New spirit of enterprise

William A. Paton, the venerable accounting instructor and author at the University of Michigan, used to lament on students' declining interest in business enterprise back in the '30s.

Prof. Paton said that, over the years, when graduates of the business administration school discussed their plans with him, it seemed that fewer and fewer were planning to go into business on their own.

I never quite figured out his analysis. Was it that a generation raised on New Deal, Fair Deal, New Frontiers and Great Society economics was losing its enterprising spirit? Was it that a government swollen by such theories was making life so miserable for the businessman that young folks were retreating to the giant mammary of the big corporation?

Whatever the reason, no one at the time argued with his observation.

TODAY, PATON MIGHT get an argument. And not just because May 9-15 is Small Business Week.

Small businesses are proliferating, or so it seems. What used to be a bank building in Farmington is now a series of boutiques and shops.

Engineers get tired of the strait jackets of corporate life and plunge into ventures of their own.

Chat with an antique dealer, and you find he's a high school social sciences teacher who wants to cash in on his knowledge of history with an audience more appreciative than the one in his classroom.

Women who have green thumbs, instead of taking a typing refresher course so they can become secretaries, open their own plant shops.

Young people are dissatisfied with more than the politics of the Establishment. A pair of former advertising agency artists are prospering by doing customized interior and exterior decorations on the vans in which other young folks tour the country.

And real estate! The number of new persons

pouring into that business in the last decade has been phenomenal. Despite the mergers, real estate is essentially a small, folksy kind of business, and the "sales associates" don't watch clocks or have long lists of demands for benefits. They're enterprising kinds of people and worthy of at least honorary membership in the Small Business Fraternity.

WITH ALL DUE respect to my corporate friends, I really have to marvel at the effort small businessmen put into civic clubs and chambers of commerce.

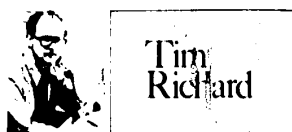
In part, their motivations are mercenary. Make contacts with friends, get customers. But in larger part, those motivations are community-building. You do a good job of making your community livable, and the accompanying prosperity rubs off on everybody.

"Enlightened self-interest," Adam Smith used to call it in his treatise on "The Wealth of Nations," which is also celebrating a bicentennial this year.

With the kinds of workers' compensation bills and zoning regulations and safety standards legislation our beloved governments are passing, you wonder why anyone is left in a small business.

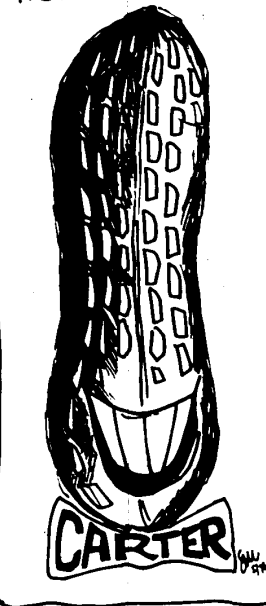
Maybe it's for the same reason: that people still have babies despite the horror stories of delinquency, vandalism and disorder you hear.

The reason small business people get in and stay in is the urge to create.



Tim Richard

NOT PART OF THE CURRENT WASHINGTON CROP AND THEREFORE HIGHLY PALATABLE



Eccentricities

by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

Vehicle tax to aid transit

Detroit is the only major metropolitan area in the United States without an adequate rapid transit system.

For years this has been blamed on the attitude of the automobile industry. Because they make cars and buses, it is alleged that they have lobbied for more highways rather than railways.

The lack of a metropolitan rapid transit system has probably hurt Detroit more than other major metropolitan areas because it has widened the gap between the core city and the suburbs. It seriously limits the amount of intermingling the people in our metropolitan area can do.

RECENTLY, THERE DID seem to be some activity toward correcting the problem. Unfortunately, voters turned down a state-wide bond issue that would have started the ball rolling, primarily because the outside people didn't think they would get their fair shares of the transportation mileage.

Gov. Milliken has proposed a state-wide property value tax on cars and trucks to finance an entire state-wide system, including rapid transit in Detroit, expressways and a railroad and bus system for outstate.

This would raise the price of license plates, based on the value of a car or truck, instead of basing the tax on weight, as is presently done.

THIS IS A FAIR tax proposal because it would be assessed against the users.

The legislature doesn't seem to be behind the governor's plan and has proposed a property transfer tax on the sale of property in the Detroit metropolitan area.

At present, there is a tax of \$1.10 per \$1,000 of value—which is usually paid by the seller—for the transfer of any real estate. Thus, when a \$35,000 home is sold, a tax of \$38.50 is assessed.

The legislature's plan is to increase this transfer tax by about 500 per cent and make the purchaser pay the tax rather than the seller. This would over a five-year period, meet the revenue needs of the SEMTA, the regional transportation agency.

THE PROBLEM with this type of tax is that it is not assessed against the people who would most benefit from a rapid transit system.

To begin with, the sale of a house has nothing to do with how people get around. The higher the value of the home, the higher the tax that would be assessed. Yet the larger the home, the less likely the people in the home would be using public transportation.

And because the action is in the suburbs, this would tend to make the suburbs bear a higher portion of the cost of a system that would benefit the core city the most.

By placing the burden on the purchaser of the home, it would raise the price of properties in the core city and therefore lower the market attractiveness of those homes.

FOR ANY TYPE of financing for transportation, the people who will benefit most from the system should be asked to contribute. People who use their cars and trucks and public transportation should carry the burden of expansion of the program.

There is only so much federal money in Washington for rapid transit programs, and every day other metropolitan areas in the country are making attempts to get their pieces of the pie.

The longer Michigan and metropolitan Detroit dance around and fail to face up to the problem, the fewer dollars will be left in Washington to help solve it.

Observation Point

by PHILIP H. POWER



Carter senses a brand new ideology

The Michigan presidential primary will take place May 18. It is as sure as things get in politics that Jimmy Carter will win the Michigan Democratic race and then go on to seize the nomination at the national convention in New York in August.

For a man whose prior elective experience in big time politics is limited to service as a state senator and then governor of Georgia, Carter's sudden national success is phenomenal.

How did it happen? Why the great appeal?

Superficial explanations abound. Carter has that big smile and clearly is an excellent campaigner. His organization started early, shaped up fast, and produced some first-class advertising. Carter has never been tangled in the Washington merry-go-round and hence has been able to capitalize on the anti-big government sentiment abroad in the country just now. His stands on issues contain something for just about everybody, to which Carter adds a deep religious belief and a strong ethical commitment.

ALL THESE, however, are technical factors, the kinds of things the political pros and national media groupies like to spin out in endless webs late at night in smoke-filled rooms.

They all miss the real point, which is that politicians become hot national properties not because they have a snappy staff or good ads but rather because somehow, amidst the endless numbing drudgery of the campaign, they come to symbolize, in a deep, non-rational way, an attitude to which the people of this land can relate.

John Kennedy symbolized youth and style. George McGovern expressed fuzzy-headed liberalism. Dwight Eisenhower suggested the kind father. The things they symbolized burned them into our hearts and thereby determined their political success or failure.

TO EXPLORE just what Gov. Carter symbolizes to our people at this point in our history, it is necessary to examine the underlying forces that have been expressing themselves in American politics for the past 10 years.

The major movement has been the gradual breakup of the liberal-conservative axis around which politics has revolved ever since the Depression.

The coalition which Franklin Roosevelt forged in 1932 included many divergent groups—blacks and other minorities, intellectuals, big city machines and their bosses, the labor movement, some farmers—linked by an ideology which advocated government action to solve the problems of people.

Facing the liberal Democrats were the conservative Republicans—the business community, the upper-middle class, much of rural America—joined in suspicion of government activity and belief in private enterprise.

FOR 30 YEARS, the drama of American politics was played out against the backdrop of these contending groups. But times and issues changed, and, beginning in the middle 1960s, the forces defining these groups began to fall apart.

In 1965 the intellectuals revolted against Lyndon Johnson and the Vietnam war. The labor movement gradually became ambivalent toward black aspirations which threatened to overturn cherished seniority rights.

Some liberal Republicans quit the party (Rep. Don Riegle, now running for the senate in Michigan, was one), while others (Ronald Reagan, for example) rallied against any diminution of free enterprise purity.

IT SEEMS CLEAR to me that political clumpings in this country are evolving away from the traditional liberal-conservative split toward something else. Exactly what else is not clear, but the fact of the breakdown of the traditional left-right arguments of the old politics is quite clear.

Our people know this, in a deep, instinctive way. And knowing it, they resent politicians' trying to cram the traditional ways of looking at politics down their throats.

In that fact lies the key to understanding just why Jimmy Carter symbolizes so much to the American people and why he has such a remarkable political success from so narrow a base.

Quite simply, he is the first major figure in our recent political history who is neither a liberal nor a conservative.

Run over in your mind how you would categorize our politicians: Nixon-right, McGovern-left; Humphrey-left; Reagan-right; Udall-left; Jackson-right (for Democrats). Each of these men symbolizes to the American people a political polarity that is no longer valid.

But Carter is not subject to such classification. He is for racial integration, but suspicious of busing. He thinks government is too big, but he wants our society to take care of those unable to help themselves. He is a southerner, but he lauds the Civil Rights Act. He has been a farmer, but he is sympathetic to the plight of the core cities.

Carter's opponents have charged him with being fuzzy on the issues, with saying something to please everyone. What they're really saying is that Carter cannot be classified in the old ways. Their criticism merely serves to point up his greatest strength.

I suspect Carter himself does not know exactly how to categorize his stance on the issues affecting our country, but I believe he senses deeply that the old politics are fading, and that new shapes and sounds are coming out of the political night.

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