

The Declaration is fresh, alive and working

It's news that affects us in the suburbs even today.

That's why we made the Declaration of Independence the lead story on page 1 of today's Observer & Eccentric.

The Declaration bluntly spells out the principles of government that we cherish in our community in 1978, just as they were cherished by 56 sweating delegates to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia 200 years ago.

We're for self-government today, both for the nation and for the individual communities within it. We will govern ourselves with our own legislative bodies, courts and administrations.

We will levy no taxes without the consent of the governed. Less than three weeks ago we exercised that revolutionary principle of government as we decided school tax matters.

We believe local government is a natural thing for a community, just as a group of colonists scattered along the Atlantic seaboard 3,000 miles from the mother country believed self-government was a natural thing for them. They assumed among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and God entitled them. They did not need a sovereign's permission.

Yes, the Declaration of Independence is valuable and newsworthy information today.

IT'S MEMORABILIA, too—something you may want to save.

Every family saves some things from the paper, be it the inauguration of a favorite president, a letter to the editor, an engagement announcement.

This non-commercial bit of memorabilia may

make an excellent addition to your own family time capsule. Your descendants, opening the capsule at the tricentennial, will see how all of us felt about the Declaration and how we lived in 1978. You could include a snapshot of your family and a record of your own observance of the nation's 200th anniversary.

IT'S NEWS, the Declaration of Independence.

And like most news, it's imperfect. The Declaration doesn't report how Virginia and South Carolina delegations switched to support it at the last minute, that Delaware's third man rode through a thunderstorm to break his delegation's deadlock, and that New York abstained.

Thomas Jefferson, who wrote the first draft, glossed over the business reasons for "the separation" and concentrated on the abuses to human rights.

The Declaration repeatedly indicts King George III, never hinting that much of the colonists' dissatisfaction was with Parliament, too.

IT IS A CAUSE for celebration, this Declaration of Independence, as much today as it was when published on July 4, two days after it was approved.

Massachusetts Delegate John Adams said the anniversary should be observed with as much noise as possible.

It is recorded that crowds gathered in Easton, Pa. and greeted the reading of the Declaration with three loud huzzas.

May your reading of this extraordinary, lofty and just plain nifty statement in your homes and local celebrations this year elicit the same uproarious response.

editorial opinion

Oakland will benefit by sticking to principle

Gov. Milliken did the right thing by sticking to principle and not letting an argument over personalities gum up Oakland County's pioneering effort at a unified county government.

Milliken vetoed the overlooked House Bill 5685 that slipped through the Michigan Legislature with virtually no opposition. That bill would have taken the county veterans affairs office from under the jurisdiction of the county executive and allowed it to revert to being a more or less independent authority.

The House of Representatives upheld the veto in a vote that came uncomfortably close to looking like a partisan split.

THE PRINCIPLE at stake is that county operations ought to be administered by a single elected executive or appointed manager, for those which prefer that form, insofar as possible.

The ideal would be a home rule system, much like cities have, whereby counties could write their own charters. Since the ideal is impossible to achieve, the next best thing is a county executive system in which the executive is the responsible, visible and accountable operator of the show.

If the legislature is to follow this principle, then it should never pass bills like HB 5685 telling counties they must split off their veterans offices and continue to have 19th century, fragmented policies-as-usual administrations.

Said the governor: "A county choosing to adopt a unified form of government is acting to exert more local control over its own governmental operations. This bill would have the effect of further limiting the degree of local control available under Act 139."

THE POLITICAL FACT of life is that Daniel T. Murphy—like Milliken, a Republican—is county executive, and a lot of folks for various reasons, don't like Daniel T. Murphy.

The career of Dan Murphy is another matter entirely. It is not our purpose here to pass judgment on his nearly two years as head of a complex set of operations, laws and traditions.

We're talking about a principle, not a personality.

It's no secret that at least some of the votes for HB 5685 were prompted by a desire to trim one personality's wings rather than to improve the structure of government.

Such motivation is unworthy of the County of Oakland, which has long been a leader in seeking and achieving a high degree of delivery of services and of administrative reform.

Are bureaucrats entering or exiting?

We are indebted to U.S. Rep. Marvin Esch for the following example of fat, overblown language from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

OSHA defines "exit" as "that portion of a means of egress which is separated from all other spaces of the building or structure by construction or equipment as required in this subpart to provide a protected way of travel to the exit discharge. Exit discharge is that portion of a means of egress between the termination of an exit and a public way."

A dictionary definition of "exit" is "a way out of an enclosed place or space."

To which Esch wryly appends the observation:

"The way the regulations are being written, I don't think the bureaucrats in OSHA know whether they are coming or going."

OAKLAND HAS BEEN a pioneer in county government for one very good reason: Alone among the populous counties of Michigan, Oakland has no central city with half the county population, thus the kind of city-suburbs rivalry that contaminates the politics of Wayne, Washtenaw, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Kent, Saginaw and Bay counties has been largely absent in Oakland.

Oakland's philosophy has been to solve problems and do things on principle. Oakland is in a class by itself, and the governor's use of his veto to maintain a principle is to be applauded.

Even Dan Murphy's enemies, when they no longer have him to kick around, will ultimately agree

Wondrous experiment is still blazing

On Monday we will celebrate the 200th anniversary of the founding of our country.

For those inclined to a negative cast of thought, our ceremonies are inauspicious.

The events of the bicentennial itself are a strange, jerry-built mixture of the obviously commercial (remember the proposed red, white and blue Coke bottles?) and the conceitedly grandiose (endless hours of speeches are planned at Independence Hall, in Philadelphia).

Our country is said to be in crisis, unsure of its identity and role in the world and incapable of solving its own problems at home. The democratic form of government we espouse seems increasingly to be in a minority of the world. The promise of an open society at home is supposedly made lie by our failure to bridge the gap between the races and the rich and the poor.

Our social structure is said to be collapsing with the decline of the family, the collapse of the cities and the rootlessness of the neighborhood. Our leaders are supposedly revealed as men and women of low principle, oscillating between greed, lust and self-interest. Our political system is allegedly unable to distinguish between the shrill pleadings of special interest groups and the general needs of our people at large.

All of this—and more—is no doubt true.

BUT IT SEEMS to me that on the eve of our 200th birthday it might be worthwhile to reflect on what remains of the bright hopes of this new land after two centuries of experience. I am convinced that much, so very much, has endured—tempered by age, made rich by experience and blazingly relevant in hope—as to make America that last, best experiment for the future of man on this earth.

Liberty. The guiding proposition of the United States has been an overriding commitment to personal liberty. And although many can with justice criticize the limitations to personal liberty that a heavily populated, post-industrial society brings, any fair comparison shows Americans at an advantage. In China, for example, the local street committee decides which woman will be the next authorized to have a child.

Free speech. Required by liberty and necessary for its sustenance, free speech is at hand well in America. A visitor to my home from Czechoslovakia recently remarked on the variety of views in American newspapers and magazines. "In my country," she smiled, "we find it necessary to read only one newspaper, as there can be only one official line." Certain elected officials these days might have occasion to sympathize, but no one is seriously challenging our people's right to full and free debate.

PERSONAL MOBILITY and equality of opportunity. These are other corollaries to our stress of liberty. Men and women are free to make it in this country, unhindered by race or religion or



Observation Point

by PHILIP H. POWER

wealth to a degree simply unknown around the world.

In this connection, I like to think of a general contrast between American literature, in which the key scenes always seem to take place out in the open and under a vast blue sky and the writings generated in class-ridden Great Britain, whose key episodes most usually happen in low-ceilinged rooms with a dense fog outside.

Involved in our personal mobility is the comparative success Americans have had in breaching class barriers. True, old money and old blood still masquerade too much for energy and competence. But the Soviet Union—supposedly the model for the new, classless society—has managed to create a new, bureaucratic class which is strangling the society just as surely as the French aristocracy destroyed theirs.

Voluntary institutions. Lastly, we Americans have managed to create a dazzling set of local, voluntary institutions, free of government control and cant. The League of Women Voters and the

local school board, the Rotary Club and the church supper group, the subdivision association, and the Little League—the list goes on and on.

These are groups which were created to meet a need, not handed down by history or ordered by a central government. They are populated by a people who wish to become involved, unordered and unbound. They are what most impressed Alexis de Tocqueville nearly 200 years ago when he wrote his great work on the new America, and they are what give a special quality and texture to our life today.

PATRIOTISM has become unfashionable in the last 20 years, probably because its self-appointed keepers consistently confused it with agreement with their own particular fads. They have done us all a great disservice.

For real patriotism—love for and pride in one's country—is not something to wear on your sleeve. It is rather a quiet, individual feeling, to be savored individually, whether in the midst of the crowd at a ball game as the national anthem is sung or standing quietly on a hill as the sun sets over fields of waving grain.

It is something intangible yet deep, much akin to those things that make America such a wondrous experiment in the process of the unfolding of the individual.

And so, on the threshold of our nation's third century, let me urge each of us to pause for just a moment to let swell that feeling of pride in our land, our past and our future.

Kickbacks alive and kicking

Morality is a funny word in the world of politics.

Washington discovered that some foreign politicians were taking kickbacks on orders from American manufacturers such as Lockheed Aircraft. They criticized the American corporations for bribing foreign officials, although that seems to be the standard way of doing business in some foreign lands.

Here at home in Michigan, apparently, political kickbacks are neither illegal nor immoral. It has come to light that the Secretary of State's office franchises branch offices to sell license plates. The person who runs the branch must pick up all the expenses of operating the branch office; he is paid 40 cents for each set of automobile plates he sells and 25 cents for each boat or off-road vehicle he registers.

It has been alleged through the years that it is much cheaper for the state to operate on this mission basis than to have full-fledged, state-operated Secretary of State offices throughout the state.

IT HAS NOW come to light that these franchises do not come cheaply.

It is said to be part of the understanding of a person who receives a franchise that he will contribute around 10 per cent of his gross receipts to any political organization that Secretary of State Richard Austin chooses, whether it be his own campaign or the Democratic Party.

These branch managers pay into campaign coffers more than \$160,000 a year. Since he has been secretary of state, they have paid his political organization almost a quarter of a million dollars.

This obviously means that the people who buy license plates are helping to support one political party of the State of Michigan.

IF THESE BRANCH managers can afford to pay this \$160,000 a year, of course, it means they are making something for themselves.

Eccentricities

by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

On this basis, it becomes obvious that the people of the state are being ripped off by at least that amount of money and could pay that much less for license plates or the state could have that much more in its general fund if the system were not one of political patronage.

Austin claims he doesn't know very much about the system and that it was set up by his predecessor, James Hare.

Since one of his chief assistants, Walter Elliott, is in charge of setting the amount that each branch manager must contribute, Austin is either naive and not running his office, or he is simply not telling the truth.

IT HAS TO BE troubling to the people of Michigan to find out that we have our own Watergate here. But the difference is that in the Washington Watergate, people did not receive money for their own personal benefit or for their political benefit.

The legislature must act immediately to end this spoils system and bring some integrity back to the administration of the Secretary of State's office.

We have to let the world know that our government will not tolerate kickbacks by American industry to foreign politicians, even though it has no effect on our governmental finances or our officeholders' dignity.

To allow political kickbacks to exist in our state makes us hypocrites.

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