

# editorial opinion

## Debate is fair concept to equalize candidates

Candidate debates are healthy for the political system.

That's why we endorse Republican candidate James Burdick's proposal to debate 17th District Democratic Congressman William Brodhead.

Too often candidates scurry about during a campaign, thrusting out accusations, without giving the opponent a chance to clarify his stand.

It's an easy and tempting habit for any candidate to walk around with a list of pat answers stuck in his pocket. Such uniform answers lead to triteness in a campaign which in turn causes frustration among the voters.

**MORE THAN EVER**, the electorate needs strong and competent leadership in Washington. Candidates should be put directly over the grill and be made to answer some tough questions.

Debates give a chance for the electorate to weigh how each candidate stands on the issues.

Some of the more pragmatic armchair politicians may accuse Burdick of using the debate challenge as a way of drawing attention to his candidacy. Clearly, if an election were held today, Brodhead would be elected.

### Bottles aren't paper

## Litter Lobby's outrage

We expected the litter lobby would conduct a campaign against the Nov. 2 ballot proposal to ban throwaway containers that would be an outrage to common sense. Regrettably, we were correct.

The litter lobby—the people who make money on throwaway cans and bottles—has issued a pamphlet declaring litter would be reduced only 10 or 12 per cent by banning throwaways. What the litter lobby does is equate all kinds of litter, which is blatant nonsense. You've heard of a child or dog cutting itself on a broken bottle someone threw onto the roadside, but have you ever heard of a gum wrapper cutting someone?

You've heard of discarded cans jamming a farmer's machinery, but have you ever heard of a discarded Kleenex doing the same?

But whatever Burdick's motives, the issues need to be aired so that each voter can make a clear decision on who is the better candidate.

Throughout the country, U.S. representatives have fallen into the easy life by building a strong constituency and holding office for 20 or 30 years. After two or three terms, the incumbent becomes entrenched.

Challengers, no matter how qualified, have little chance of being elected.

**ALTHOUGH THE 17TH** Congressional District was blessed for many years with better than average representation from Martha Griffiths, that may not be the case in coming years.

We don't challenge the Brodhead's credentials, but we believe that each of the candidates from the major parties should have a chance for equal exposure before the electorate.

The Observer & Eccentric anxiously waits to hear from Brodhead to see how he responds to Burdick's challenge.

Every 17th Congressional resident who possibly can should turn out for the debate, if it happens, to see just where the candidates stand.

### HARD WORK



## School boards, teachers frustrated at bargaining

It's easy to understand the frustration of both local teachers and school boards as they try to negotiate labor contracts this fall. Both sides are caught in identical binds.

School boards, seeing inflation driving up costs of running school districts, find themselves unable to give the kinds of salary increases teachers want. Teachers, finding their living standards eroded by inflation, demand salary increases they may realize the school system cannot afford.

Both sides realize that if they cannot bargain to a contract and a strike results, the public will be very, very unlikely to vote future property tax increases.

### TAKE THREE LOCAL examples.

In Garden City, where a long teacher strike two years ago has left a seething residue of suspicion, teachers this week voted to go back to work without a contract and little prospect of agreement in the near future.

The reason? Both the teachers and the school board realize very well that the bulk of the district's operating millage is up for renewal next June.

There's a similar situation at Schoolcraft Community College, where 150 teachers got up and walked out on a speech by President Nelson Grote during an orientation meeting a week ago. The teachers went back to work this week, again without a new contract, in large part because they realize that the college's board intends to ask the voters for increased tax support this coming January.

In Plymouth, where voters passed the second time around a 4.75 mill tax increase last week, the teachers have agreed to go back to work without a contract. Why? Because everybody involved feels that to have a strike just now would be a slap in the face of the community which just voted to increase its support for the schools.

**TEACHERS**—and, to some degree, school boards—also face another frustration. The state law prohibiting strikes by public employees is still on the books, and last year in the Crestwood School District everybody discovered that courts were willing to let a school board fire a lot of teachers under that law.

The teachers have a legitimate beef, in my view. They say that state law allows them to be represented by a union and to bargain collectively with school boards. But how, the teachers ask, can they bargain collectively when the weapon of the strike is not available to them?

The teachers then conclude that the solution to this dilemma is to change the state law that forbids them to strike.

The practical difficulty is that the legislature huffed and puffed last fall for what seemed like endless hours of debate in trying to pass legislation giving teachers a limited right to strike. Paradoxically, the teachers' effort, together with ferocious opposition from the public.

With an election coming up in November, you don't hear many state legislators talking about trying to get back into that can of worms again.

## \$en\$e on the freeways

When state police began patrolling freeways in Detroit late last month, it not only made the concrete ditches safe again, it restored a little fiscal sanity to Detroit and Michigan.

Almost everywhere in Michigan, state police patrol freeways. The notable major exception was Detroit, which patrolled its own freeways (a state job) with no state reimbursement.

As Detroit was facing its umpteenth and worst financial crisis last spring, city officials again asked for state aid because city police were patrolling freeways. The state approved \$28 million for cultural services and the city hospital, but none for freeway patrols.

It has now been revealed in the public prints that from July 1 to Aug. 27, Detroit was virtually without any freeway patrols except for routine traffic checks. The reason was that the Detroit police force was reduced by layoffs.

### Observation Point

By PHILIP H. POWER



### SO WHERE are we?

It might be that all the intense aggravation of teacher negotiations is a sign something is basically defective with our present system.

Currently, state law provides that teachers (and other public employees) have the right to join unions and that they shall bargain collectively with their public employers regarding wages and other working conditions. The theory is that collective bargaining between public employees such as teachers and public employers such as school boards is analogous to the classical negotiating situation between unions and management in a private company.

This theory, I believe, is defective. Why? Because in the usual case of collective bargaining between management and unions, no other party is needed to sit at the bargaining table in order to participate in a settlement. If the settlement results in an increase in the price of the goods the company makes, the marketplace will reduce demand and the company will have to lay off employees.

These factors simply do not apply in the case of collective bargaining for public employees.

First, many of the services provided by public employees are essential; sure, you can lay off teachers, but only up to a certain point.

Second, and most important, the notion that school boards or city councils represent the public at the bargaining table is simply not so. The history of labor relations for public employees over the past 10 years is filled with examples of school boards or city mayors making clearly absurd settlements with public employee unions just to get a settlement and get on with the real issues of running for re-election.

**IN SCHOOL BOARD-TEACHER** negotiations, do the kids attending school sit at the bargaining table? Do the parents of the kids whose education will be impaired by teacher layoffs or delays in school openings? Where at the bargaining table is the seat for the taxpayers who are expected to pay up?

Maybe the system demands a more complete examination than has now been produced. Maybe all the troubles teachers and school boards are having in getting contracts settled and millages passed are symptoms of a more basic problem than passing laws to allow strikes by public employees.

Maybe, in fact, we need to completely rethink the way we handle those employees who provide essential services to the public, who deserve a decent salary and working conditions, and who are now frustrated and angry.

We hope the state police freeway patrols will be permanent. Detroit shouldn't have to—or be allowed to—perform state services, and the legislature shouldn't have to be bombarded with requests to aid the central city because it's performing state services. Those are state freeways, and the state police should patrol them.

Moreover, it's probably cheaper, car for car, to have state police there. Any legislator can tell you Detroit is notorious for high costs in city government, and we are probably getting a better bargain having the state police do state work than paying Detroit to do it.

## Greed and the government fracture fable of red hen

Once upon a time, there was a little red hen who scratched about the barnyard until she uncovered some grains of wheat. She called her neighbors and said, "If we plant this wheat, we shall have bread to eat. Who will help me plant it?"

"Not I," said the cow.  
"Not I," said the duck.  
"Not I," said the pig.  
"Not I," said the goose.  
"Then I will do it myself," said the little red hen, and she did.

**THE WHEAT GREW** tall and ripened into golden grain. "Who will help me reap my wheat?" asked the little red hen.

"Not I," said the duck.  
"Out of my classification," said the cow.  
"I'd lose my seniority," said the pig.  
"I'd lose my unemployment compensation," said the goose.  
"Then I will," said the little red hen, and she did.

**AT LAST**, it came time to bake the bread. "Who will help me bake the bread?" asked the little red hen.

"That would be overtime for me," said the cow.  
"I'd lose my welfare benefits," said the duck.  
"I'm a dropout and never learned how," said the pig.  
"If I'm to be the only helper, that's discrimination," said the goose.  
"Then I will," said the little red hen. She baked five loaves and held them up for her neighbors to see.



By HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

They all wanted some—in fact, demanded a share. But the little red hen said, "No, I can eat the five loaves myself."

"Excess profits!" yelled the cow.  
"Capitalist leech!" cried the duck.  
"I demand equal rights!" shouted the goose.  
The pig just grunted. Then they hurriedly painted "Unfair" picket signs and marched around, shouting obscenities.

**THE GOVERNMENT AGENT** came and said to the little red hen, "You must not be greedy."

"But I earned the bread," said the little red hen.

"Exactly," said the agent. "That is the wonderful free enterprise system. Anyone in the barnyard can earn as much as he wants. But under government regulations, the productive workers must divide their product with the idle."

And they lived happily ever after. But the little red hen's neighbors wondered why she never again baked bread.

It's an old fable borrowed from many different places.

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