

editorial opinion

Enjoy it now; teachers' target is '79

This week, nearly all kids here are back in school. Remember this week in 1978. Next year may be vastly different.

The goal of Michigan Education Association-affiliated teachers' unions—is to write all collective bargaining contracts so that they expire Aug. 31, 1979.

Meanwhile, the MEA locals are setting up regional bargaining structures. These structures have officers and set bargaining goals, so that all MEA locals are at least trying to get the same things.

If the situation in one school district becomes desperate, then thousands of teachers in neighboring districts can be mobilized. Next year may be The Year.

LOOK AT IT from the teachers' point of view.

The law says they have the power to bargain collectively. The law also says they can't strike, and if they do strike, they may be replaced.

That set of circumstances was brought about by the Crestwood case in Dearborn Heights in 1974. Some 180 striking Crestwood teachers were fired and replaced.

In a small district like Crestwood, it's fairly easy to find 180 teachers who have been laid off from other districts, who are recent college graduates who can't find jobs, who would like to return to work after raising children.

It doesn't automatically follow, the MEA tells us, that if one union strikes, the others will hit the bricks, too. Rather, if a Crestwood-like situation develops, the potential is there. Next year may be The Year.

SCHOOL BOARDS are less than enthusiastic about regional bargaining.

Why, they ask, should kids be without teachers in School District A when the fault lies with four heel-dragging board members in School District B?

The prospect of board members in District A putting the heat on board members in District B is highly possible. Teachers would like that.

An MEA spokesman said, "It's unreasonable to have a \$4,000 difference in a master's degree maximum (pay) from one district to another." She's wrong, of course, though her simplistic logic will have a strong appeal to some teachers. Different school districts have different abilities to pay, just as General Motors pays its professionals far more than American Motors, and AMC pays better than Checker or Econo Tool.

The union will deny it, but a logical outcome of regional bargaining goals and regional unionism could be regional school districts.

Meanwhile, we all remember the built-in advantage the teachers have: The state requires 180 days of schooling a year, and that means pay for 180 days.

When the auto worker hits the bricks, he loses a paycheck. The striking teacher, however, may lose some work temporarily, may have next summer's vacation disrupted, may lose a chance at summer school—but still gets paid for 180 days work a year.

EVEN IF tax limitation is rejected by voters Nov. 7, we have de facto tax limitation: Voters simply are saying "no" to most new taxes and studying others in fine detail before approving them.

Voters will approve new taxes if they think they're getting something they need for the money. If future school tax proposals ask more money for quality paychecks, there will be trouble.

Nationally, the economy looks as if it will be taking a dip late this year or early next year. That will hurt tax collections in Michigan.

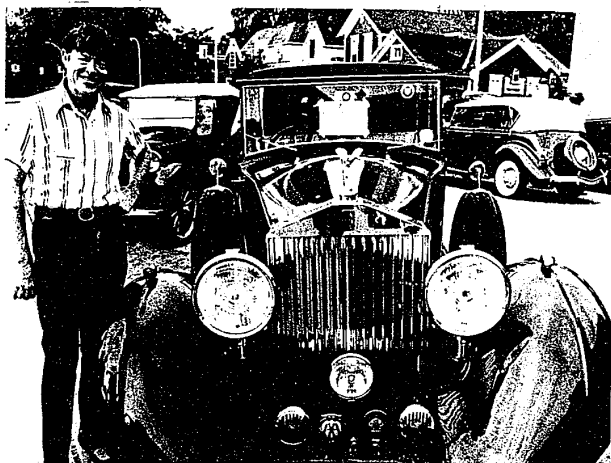
So, 1979 may be the year when militant teachers unions and militant taxpayers square off, with school boards in the middle. Good luck, school boards!

New road hazard

Sleepy-eyed working folks, heading in the morning for office or plant, have a new hazard to watch out for these days. The kids are up and about earlier now because they are on their ways back to school.

In summer the kids got up a little later, and most of their chasing-around activity was in the middle of the day. Conditions are different now. Their high spirits are still up, but their hours of peak activity are when drivers and going to or coming from work.

Very shortly, still another road hazard will be apparent. It will be getting light later, and sunset will be coming earlier. Those dawn and dusk hours can be some of the most dangerous for youngsters on foot, on skateboards, on bikes.



Bill Maybury and his 1935 Rolls Royce. (Staff photo by Bob Woodring)

Rolls owners' syndrome: Love of man and machine

Among the many private, ultra-exclusive organizations of which I'm not a member is the international Rolls Royce Owners Club. Until just a few nights ago, this social oversight hadn't bothered me a whit. No more, for instance, than not being married to the Queen of England.

Now that I've viewed one up close—a Rolls that is—I'm wondering where I went wrong and when.

To my friend Bill Maybury of Plymouth, that gleaming 1935 Rolls of his, and all the attendant privileges that seem to be offshoots, are like "Walden" to Thoreau. Heads turn when he and Dottie take it on the road—for, yes, it is a thing of beauty.

When he told me of driving that grand old dame—the Rolls—not Dottie—to Tennessee and back without a single troublesome incident, I couldn't help but ask about those Tennessee troopers whom I find lurk so furtively in the 1-75 weeds with their radar guns.

If I didn't know Bill, a Ford engineer, so well, I'd say his answer was contained in a looking-down-the-nose-at-a-Buick-owner sneer. Words weren't necessary. The look alone let me know that when one is driving a vintage Rolls and police show up, it's only as an escort.

A SECOND FORD engineer, Tony Stica by name, indirectly was responsible for turning my attention to the ways of life of Rolls owners.

Until Tony, who serves in Ford's tractor plant at Troy and lives in Lathrup Village, brought wife Angie to dinner last week, Bill's Rolls and his '35 Bentley and his '48 and '49 Triumphs and his '49 MG were defined in my mind only as an eccentric collector's trinkets.

The succulent ears of Canton Township sweet corn and the barbecued chicken which Mother Goose was nursing so tenderly at the backyard grill were almost ready for serving.

Then, in a pregnant conversational pause which resulted in a culinary abortion, I simply mentioned between drinks that a friend two blocks away had a '35 Rolls polished and ready to roar in his driveway.

Good Lord Almighty!

Off we went. There was naught else to do, wives to the contrary. This was the exaltation of a love affair between a man and a machine, between a devotee of a form of art few understand and the symphonic mechanism which makes it purr as though Eugene Ormandy were on the podium.

After I myself had climbed through, daring only to look—not touch, I stood in envy as these two talked knowingly in their own language, the Rolls Royce language, and caressed this object of affection. But you know what? Thanks to artistry of another sort by the ladies, dinner still turned out great.

MY ORIGINAL reference to ultra-exclusive organizations which are beyond the ken and wallet of such peasants as I and me stirs a memory. As that memory percolates, it brings back a chuckle. Let me share it.

On the evening of Friday, March 23, 1982, then governor of Kentucky: Bert Coombe, knighted 17 Michigan invaders en masse at Kentucky Colonnades during a poolside banquet at Lexington House Hotel. Upon each was bestowed all the rights and privileges as an official member of the Governor's Staff of Kentucky (GSK).

The historic reference is dull, but it sets the stage. Those so knighted included names still

through bifocals



familiar to you, most of them residents of O&E's affluent Oakland County precincts:

Broadcasters J. P. McCarthy, Dave Diles, Bruce Martyn, Ben Johnson, the late Don Watrick, Joe Gentile, John Carroll and Milt Hopwood; newspapermen Al Coffman, Mark Beltraire and two who since have died, Lloyd Northard and Dave Tefft; plus an assortment of chaff that included Attorney Fred Bussier, travel expert George Brooks, advertising account executive Bob Rhein, lobbyist Don Gardner and, yes, the writer.

A semantics vengy enthusiast could have done worse than label this group "a strap of jocks."

IT WAS HOPWOOD, who then lived at Walnut Lake in West Bloomfield, who proved a colonelcy carried more value than just an annual invitation to attend the Kentucky Derby banquet and the day-after-Colonels' barbecue (at a substantial fee).

Maybe a year or two after the Lexington fete, when Milt had left his job as sports director at CKLW, he accepted a PR promotional assignment that took him to England.

His client arranged booking into one of London's finest clubs where, upon registering, this gleeful product of the University of Illinois appended after his name the initials "GSK."

From then on, no Englishman could do enough. Wherever Hopwood trod, it was upon the proverbial red carpet. Milt's tongue-in-cheek reference to a Kentucky tradition had been interpreted backwards, he reasoned, as "Knight of the Scarlet Garter."

He never learned whether there even is such a noble title, and most of us around Detroit don't know what's happened since last hearing from Milt in Texas. Maybe he adopted "JP" as his symbol. That will get a guy clubbed in any sand trap, any where.

Back to basics

Readin', writin'—lost arts

There is a hue and cry across the nation that education should go "back to basics." Back to basics means readin', writin' and 'rithmetic.

There has been a steady decline over the past several years in the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores in the English portion for students who wish to enter college.

Mich has been written about why Johnnie can't read, yet the greatest thing education can do for a student is to teach not only how to read but instill in him or her a desire to read.

FEW SUCCESSFUL people in the world can't read because it is the entranceway to learning other things.

The ability to express yourself in writing is slowly becoming a lost art. The only way to learn to write is by writing. But the modern school is going more to multiple guess exams that can easily be corrected by computers, robbing again the student of the opportunity to express himself with a pen.

Obviously television has impacted on people's reading and writing experiences. Much of the time, people—especially children—spend before the boob tube would, in the old days, be spent reading and writing.

In some respects, the child is smarter sooner because television is a window to the world and expresses things visibly to people that they might never experience for themselves in real life. The kids get to the tube before they get to school. That is a period in which, experts say, we learn more than half of everything we will learn in our lifetimes.



Tim Richard

Road boys in own world

This is Michigan and Oakland County. I think.

One must have doubts when reading the fulminations of the hired guns at the Oakland County Road Commission. It's difficult to believe they are in the same state and county as the rest of us.

Two recent examples are at hand.

THE NEW, high-powered assistant managing director of the road commission, a bright young fellow named James Briney, made a recent speech to the Rochester Kiwanis on a whole raft of issues. One was public transportation, which he erroneously referred to as "mass transit." Dial-a-ride buses aren't mass transit. Line-haul buses aren't mass transit. A rapid rail system—which we don't have yet—could be called mass transit, but it's only one part of public transportation.

"The Milliken-Ryan proposal and the SEMTA (Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority) could take money away from the state motor vehicle highway fund that is counted on for future road needs. In fact, SEMTA drains that fund now," said Briney's text.

It's not quite so. What happened was that about five years ago, the Michigan Legislature raised the gasoline tax two cents. It all went into the motor vehicle highway fund, to be sure. The first 1.5 cents went for roads. The other half-cent went for buses.

But SEMTA didn't take anything away from roads. It was all new money, and one-fourth was earmarked for SEMTA and other public transportation systems in the state. Briney's speech gives a far different impression—"take money away from roads." It's a false impression.

It didn't happen Briney's way. Not in this Oakland County. Not in this Michigan.

JOHN GRUBBA, head man at the road commission, couldn't have had the same western Oakland County referendum in mind that the rest of us knew about when he issued a statement after the Aug. 7 primary.

Grubba professed that "of over 10,000 votes cast by the people, 7,000-plus favor M-275 as planned."

Eight communities voted. Seven of the ballot proposals didn't mention M-275 at all. Those seven asked only whether folks favored construction of a north-south trunkline road along the approximate route of the M-275 plan, now abandoned by the state highway commission.

Was Grubba talking about another Oakland County, perhaps in the Land of Oz? How could he think M-275 was the ballot issue? Well, except for one township, M-275 wasn't on the ballot—not in this Oakland County, in this Michigan.

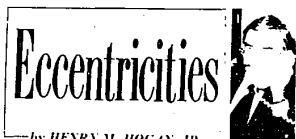
M-275 is dead. Gov. Milliken's highway commissioners saw to that. If a Detroitier named Fitzgerald beats Milliken Nov. 7, one would be unwise to wager hard-earned cash that Fitz's highway commissioners would change things.

The best that western Oakland economic interests can hope for is something like the "McConnell plan"—a parkway from the I-275 and I-696 intersection to M-39 and beyond.

The western Oakland referendum was, if anything, a boost to the McConnell plan. Grubba and the defeated promoters of M-275 can do western Oakland nothing but harm with the conviction that voters favored M-275.

Grubba and Briney may wish it had happened that way. They may dream it happened that way. They may have daytime fantasies it happened that way.

But it didn't. There was no SEMTA "drain" of the highway fund. There was no referendum in favor of M-275.



—by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.—

THE TREND is unfortunate because lack of reading affects creativity. They say a picture is worth 1,000 words, but a picture takes away the imagination factor.

So often you hear people say that the movie wasn't as good as the book. In many cases, they are saying that while reading the book, they had conjured up mental descriptions of the characters and places that may have been very romantic. When they saw a movie version which was very specific about characters and locations, it didn't live up to the expectations arising out of their mental euphoria.

Kids who don't seem to read today are missing the opportunity not only to learn more things about life, but a tremendous hobby that can add relaxation to the hectic pace of today.

We have seen educators develop the new math and take higher math to new heights.

We must force them to direct more time and energy to the other basics of readin' and writin'.

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