

editorial opinion

No case for raising state drinking age to 21

D PROPOSAL TO prohibit alcoholic beverages from being sold to, or possessed for purposes of personal consumption by, a person under the age of 21.

The proposed amendment would:

1. Define an alcoholic beverage.
2. Prohibit sale or giving of an alcoholic beverage to a person under the age of 21.
3. Prohibit the possession for personal consumption of an alcoholic beverage by a person under the age of 21.

Should this amendment be adopted?

Alcohol is the kind of topic that has been, is now and should continue to be a legislative matter. There should be no place in a constitution for a legislative matter.

THE PROPONENTS of raising the drinking age have been singularly unsuccessful in convincing us there has been a gigantic increase in traffic accidents due to the 1972 Age of Majority Act.

Actually, it's impossible to compare current driving-drinking figures with pre-1972 figures because so many changes have been made in how the figures are collected. Examples:

- In the same year the drinking age was reduced to 18, another law lowered the definition of drunk driving from 0.15 per cent blood alcohol to 0.10 per cent. It became much easier to get drunk driving convictions, less risky to make drunk driving arrests.
 - A year before the Age of Majority Act was passed, the state police changed the system of reporting on drinking in accident reports. The new form requires only whether a driver "had been drinking" or not—without determining how much alcohol constitutes "drinking," and without determining whether alcohol was really a factor. In short, the reports are next to useless in determining whether drinking was really a factor.
 - In 1974, the state police found drinking information was missing on 12 per cent of reports and since then has reduced the missing data to two per cent. Thus, the current figures look much more like pre-1972 figures because they're more complete.
 - Prior to 1972, an under-21 person had reason to lie to a cop when asked if he had been drinking. Many undoubtedly got away with it. Today the 18-21 group no longer has to lie. That's another reason the current figures appear to be higher.
 - The postwar "baby boom" has been reaching drinking age in the 1970s. That's another reason the figures are climbing.
- We can see Proposal D only as politically, legally and scientifically wrong. Vote NO on Nov. 7.

Proposal D is politically wrong, legally extremely and so far unjustified. It should be rejected Nov. 7.

The drinking age was lowered to 18 in 1972 as part of an enlightened Age of Majority Act. That law established 18 as a uniform age of majority, handing out duties as well as rights.

It gave the new adults political and drinking rights. It made them responsible for their debts and contracts, saddled them with jury duty, straightened out the tangle of ages for working licenses. It was a political two-way street in the finest American tradition.

The agreement was violated once this year when the Michigan Legislature raised the drinking age to 19. It would be politically unfair for the rest of us to gang up on the 19 and 20 year olds by taking away the drinking right but leaving them all other responsibilities.

And wouldn't Michigan look ridiculous if we were to allow those folks to serve on city councils, school boards, county commissions and the legislature but didn't allow them a glass of beer?

PROPOSAL D is politically extreme because, when you look at the fine print, it turns out to be a constitutional amendment.

Thus, the proponents are bent on using the extreme measure of a constitutional amendment to strip away a right that was granted by a simple statute. That's breaking a social contract with a vengeance!



The Stroller Speaking of upsets

By W. W. EDGAR

The golden autumn afternoon was fast drawing to a close. The sun was sinking almost as fast as the hearts of the Michigan players as they walked off the artificial turf of Michigan Stadium.

Beaten and humbled, they trudged along, heads down, while up in the stands old grads, the loyal alumni and plain fans shook their heads in disbelief that Michigan State University, winner of only one previous football game this season, could conquer the hitherto unbeaten Wolverines.

Many with choked voices were heard to mumble, "What an upset! Whoever would have thought something like this would happen?"

The Stroller was tempted to remind them that upsets are a part of life.

LONG AGO, a teacher advised him that no one stands at the curb and is enchanted as water runs by, but they are drawn to the brook as it sings. She explained that it is the obstacles in its path that cause the brook to become a thing of beauty.

To The Stroller, Michigan's downfall against State was not the most humiliating defeat it ever suffered. He recalled that back in 1924, the Wolverines—from "Old Man" Yost on down—were shocked when Red Grange scored four touchdowns against them in little more than 11 minutes to mark the dedication of the Illinois stadium.

Assessing a party?

As journalists, we frequently have bemoaned the jargon used by educators. We recently discovered, however, that journalism educators have a sense of humor—despite their use of jargon.

The following announcement was made after a dinner sponsored by Women In Communication Incorporated (WICI), a professional organization: "WICI members who also are members of AEJ (Association of Educational Journalists) are asked to meet at the wall hanging in the rear of this room after the Matrix Table adjourns for the purpose of assessing salient factors and empirically determining a consensus for removing to a more convivial location. All teachers of communication courses are welcome."

To his dying day, Yost claimed that was the most embarrassing afternoon the Wolverines ever would suffer.

Among the greatest upsets of all times was the rise of the old Boston Braves, who were in last place in the National League one July 4 only to go on and win the pennant. Then "Rabbit" Maranville and his mates went on to win the World Series four straight over one of Connie Mack's best Philadelphia Athletics teams.

ONE OF SPORTS' greatest upsets came in Yankee Stadium in 1936 when Max Schmeling knocked out Joe Louis when the entire populace thought Joe was unbeatable. The Stroller was at ringside that evening, and even after he saw Louis being counted out, he just couldn't believe it. But it happened.

IN THE LONG GONE stadium at the University of Detroit, the Titans were hosts to Georgetown University, then one of the football powers of the east, and were given only an even chance of victory.

Down 13-7 at half time, the Titans seemed beaten both mentally and physically as they slowly walked into the dressing room. Here one of the great moments in football lore occurred. Instead of criticizing them, Head Coach Gus Dorais calmly sent the team out for the second half with the calm statement that Six Mile Road would cross Livernois the next morning even if they didn't win.

"Go out and have some fun," were his final words.

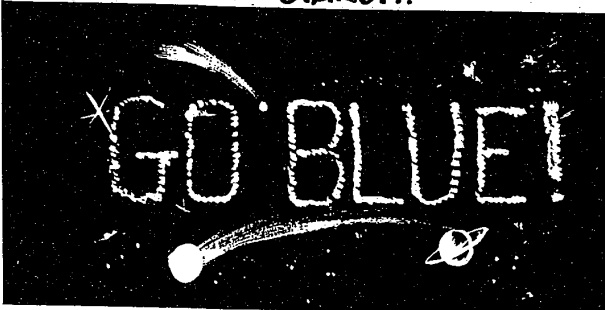
They did. They had fun running and passing their way to a 33-13 victory—one of the greatest upsets in the school's history.

SPEAKING OF upsets, one of the most memorable was Harry S. Truman's victory over Tom Dewey in the 1948 presidential race. Newspapers were on the streets proclaiming a Dewey victory when Truman rallied and kept his seat in the oval office.

So the disappointed Michigan fans need not take the upset defeat by Michigan State too much to heart. They'll find upsets are part of life.

And, as the Pennsylvania Dutch say: "A beating sometimes does a fellow good."

IT WASN'T IN THE STARS...



M's star was Doc Losh

through
bifocals



After night has fallen, and if the sky is cloudless, there are few experiences more awe-inspiring than to take a pair of strong binoculars out to the end of a dock at some northern Michigan lake and gaze for long minutes at the stars from horizon to horizon.

It has been my pleasure to do that many times at the summer home of Plymouth friends Bill and Jane Clarke on Long Lake near Interlochen.

Without fail, as I have tried to put meaning to the vastness of the universe, I have recited mentally the definition of a light-year. Always there are kind thoughts of the woman who made sure I never would forget it, Dr. Hazel M. Losh. The words are few:

"The distance light travels in a year at a speed of 186,282 miles per second."

If any readers ever were in one of her astronomy classes at Ann Arbor (and certainly many of you must have been), you know that she captured your attention and admiration with light-year swiftness.

When Doc Losh died two weeks ago at the age of 80, she had the title of professor emerita of astronomy at the University of Michigan.

She had become a campus tradition, truly a legend in her own time. She was only in her 30s when drumming astronomical facts into my poor brain.

What I interpreted as a look of age probably was only pain from student-inflicted torture.

DOC LOSH HAS BEEN the subject of many conversations across our state since her death. Some memories have centered on her dedication to U-M sports teams. Newspaper editors have recalled fondly the many news releases they have handled quoting the quiet lady of the stars.

Sure enough, Charlotte Kuzma brought Doc's name up as we chatted over tailgate luncheon goodies last Saturday in a parking area before the game against Michigan State.

Charlotte was a member of the Bloomfield Hills school board in '69, '70 and '71.

Right now she's head over heels in revival of the Collegiate Sorosis sorority chapter on the Ann Arbor campus.

She was talking about that fund raising effort when the Losh name was mentioned, but I'm not sure yet how the topics were linked.

"Dr. Losh was speaker at a meeting of the Birmingham chapter of the Michigan Alumnae Club in the Terry Barr home less than two years ago," Mrs. Kuzma remarked.

"She remembered every person there who ever had been in one of her classes. When she got up to speak she stood quietly for several moments and then brought down the house when her first two words were, 'Go Blue!'"

Charlotte added that in informal chit-chat, Dr. Losh denied that her marking theory was based on

an 'A' grade for athletes, 'B' for boys and 'C' for co-eds.

Hell, I never believed that one any more than I believed another campus adage of my day... that four of every five girls are beautiful and the fifth one goes to Michigan.

AT HIGH NOON Saturday, just the words "Go Blue" were sufficient cause to drink a whiskey sour toast to the memory of Dr. Losh.

Then Carol Rosso dug into the car trunk to heap fresh vegetable salad, chicken cordon bleu and other gourmet items on waiting plates, including those of husbands John Rosso and Tom Kuzma—liber arts steel specialists respectively.

To port and starboard, as well as fore and aft, thousands of others were enjoying the outdoor freshness of an autumn Saturday in similar fashion, gathering strength to cheer all those U-M touchdowns that were sure to come as the afternoon progressed.

Less than four hours later I wished John and Tom had whipped up another kettle of whiskey sour. We could have toasted everything from the Rocketteller kerosene trust to irrigation problems in the Nile River valley while avoiding all that nonsense inside the stadium.

Said Charlotte Kuzma later in the weekend, ever the activist: "The one shining note of the day came when we got home and in the mail was a \$500 check for the Sorosis project from a 91-year-old woman in Kansas City."

I didn't have the heart to tell her of a quote from Michigan coach Bo Schembechler that the Ann Arbor News used Sunday.

As Bo rehashed State's 25-14 victory, he was asked if he would still be a partner with MSU coach Darryl Rogers during the 1979 spate of celebrity golf tournaments around the state.

"Naah," replied Bo. "He can beat me at golf too."

And may Doc Losh rest in peace. If she had been there as her boys went down to defeat, she would have been the first to say, "Don't worry, the university will open for education as usual Monday morning."

When tax 'reform' isn't

Seldom when something is labeled "reform" is it really reform. It is usually merely shifting the burden from one group to another. This shifting of the burden may be reform to those people whose commitments are lightened, but those whose burdens become heavier are liable to use many other words to describe the action.

Before the Michigan electorate on Nov. 7 are three so-called tax reform issues: Proposal E, the Headlee tax limitation amendment; Proposal H, the voucher amendment for education; and Proposal J, the Tisch tax cut amendment.

Proposal J, the Tisch amendment, could better be called the farmer and senior citizen amendment. Its purpose is to cut in half the property tax on real estate and transfer that burden to the working class through increased income and other taxes.

The proposal does in fact cut property taxes, but allows the state to increase personal income tax by one per cent and allows school districts to enact a one per cent income tax.

It does nothing to hold down spending by the state or local governments, and it does nothing to prevent the state from passing a variety of new taxes or increasing the single business tax.

The Tisch reform, then, is for a small segment of the state's population.

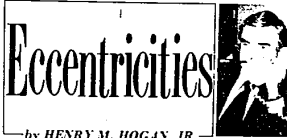
PROPOSAL H, the voucher plan amendment, will actually increase taxes and state spending.

Proposal H moves the burden of public education from the property tax, paid locally and controlled by local school boards and voters, to state funding.

Every parent would be given a voucher to pay for his child's education. They can spend it anywhere—in public or non-public institutions.

Obviously, the state will have to support non-public as well as public institutions, and add support for more than 200,000 students that will all of a sudden come onto the state's education rolls.

While it looks like a boon to those people who are presently sending their children to private schools and paying tuition for the privilege, it is these people who can afford to send their children to private schools who will actually pay more taxes because of the increase in the income tax needed to support it.



by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

PROPOSAL E, the Headlee tax limitation amendment, could be the only one called tax reform because it treats all residents of the state equally, and holds down future expenditures and taxes in the state to the level that personal income is increased. It attacks increased taxes as well as increased spending.

Its purpose is to keep spending in line with the growth of personal incomes in the state, not any faster as has happened over the last 10 years.

State spending is held down to the average growth of personal income, and obviously the pressure on new taxes will be abated because the income tax will bring in more revenue as personal income taxes increase.

People in government are not in favor of the Headlee amendment because it puts a limit on their activities as far as starting new programs or expanding old ones.

The unfortunate part is that if these public officials had used good judgment in the past, there would be no need for a Headlee tax limitation amendment.

This column may seem like an oversimplification of some very complex issues on the ballot. However, the voters are faced with 11 proposals on the ballot, and the majority of the voters will be unable to sort them into short and concise philosophies.

The voters have a very short period of time to try to figure out who will benefit and who will lose on the 11 proposals.

At least for the three most complex tax "reform" issues, the good guys and the bad guys are fairly visible.

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