

editorial opinion

Round One: Government fees are going up

The timing was ironic. On Dec. 22 the so-called "Headlee Amendment" made tax limitation part of the Michigan Constitution.

On almost the same day, one of our reporters called a state park manager about a cross country skiing story and learned, by chance, that vehicle admission stickers were due to rise Jan. 1. Annual stickers are rising 40 per cent — from \$5 to \$7. Daily stickers are rising 100 per cent — from \$1 to \$2.

It happened by action of the Michigan Legislature earlier in December. No lawmaker sent out a news release on it.

The day after we received news of the state park sticker increase, we got word from the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority that its board had

voted to raise admissions to the nine metropolitan areas by exactly the same amounts as state park fees were rising. In addition, HCMA is jacking up boat launch fees by 40 per cent for the season, 100 per cent for the day.

THERE'S MORE. Tucked away in the revenue schedule of the Oakland County budget is the news that there will be a "small increase in fees" for animal control along with an increase in the number of anticipated licenses.

And in the clerk's budget was a note that motion filing fees in legal cases had been hiked 7.5 per cent last April.

In Wayne County, they're really going to town. Four days before Headlee became law, county offi-

cial revealed they were seeking legislative permission to raise a bunch of fees: 50 per cent for kennels; 50 per cent for opening a safety deposit box; 50 per cent for swimming pool inspections; 100 per cent for parking a trailer coach in a mobile home park; a doubling or even a quadrupling of the marriage license fee; a 50 per cent increase for recording real estate transfers; a 250 per cent increase for filing lien information.

WE TRIED to warn you this would happen.

We noted last October the Headlee proposal was aimed at taxes and that licenses and fees and admissions aren't taxes.

"You won't find fees mentioned on the ballot or in the Headlee literature, but you had better expect government to start hiking fees if the 'tax'

limitation amendment passes," we said.

There was something very odd about the Headlee amendment in the public opinion polls. Most proposals and candidates start small, then gain support. Headlee, however, started with three-fourths support, but by election day it had only a bare majority.

A New Detroit survey showed why. The more people knew about the Headlee amendment, the more inclined they were to oppose it.

What happened the third week of December was only Round One. Round Two will take place in about May, when universities and colleges begin hiking tuitions substantially for next year. Tuitions are not taxes.

Headlee didn't tell you about that. We did.

State courts

In contempt of sense

The life of a political writer is a barrel of fun during election years with one exception.

The State Supreme Court justices seeking reelection speak in the blandest platitudes. The challengers only rarely attack the incumbents' decisions.

Never, last fall, did I hear the Hon. G. Mennen Williams and the Hon. James L. Ryan mention their incredible opinion in 400 Mich 660. "In re 1976 PA 267."

PA 267 is the Open Meetings Act. The Michigan Legislature wrote it to apply to some (not all) judicial proceedings as well as city councils and school boards.

The Supreme Court in July of 1977 ruled that the courts "are not bound by the provisions of the act." Williams, Ryan and their five brothers and sisters of the bench said they'll make their own rules, thank you, and not be bound by what the legislature enacts.

OPEN MEETINGS legislation was quite an issue when the legislature was discussing it. Even today, local governments are still grumbling about it, and in Farmington Hills the council is going to painstaking lengths to get around the law.

You would think, then, that the incumbent justices, seeking reelection, would say something about their decision. They were silent. Challengers Gary McDonald and Alice Gilbert, both circuit judges, made no issue of it either, as far as I could tell.

Back when the late Thomas M. Kavanaugh was chief justice, the supreme court had a competent lady named Doris Jarrell sending out news releases on court opinions every week or two. Ms. Jarrell is still on staff, but her duties no longer allow her to send out news releases.

Do you begin to see a pattern?

THE WAY the supreme court's opinion came to my attention will intrigue you.

It seems that on Dec. 20 the 11 Oakland County circuit judges held a secret meeting to write an



Tim Richard

administrative order overruling a decision of the county board of commissioners and the county executive on new courtrooms for three new judges.

The judges simply ordered the executive to evict the prosecutor from the fourth floor and remodel it into courtrooms, drawing money from the county treasurer. Meanwhile, Circuit Court Administrator Fred Mester wrote a cover letter to the order saying, "Please understand that the court has no intention of going public in this matter."

Now, under the state Open Meetings Act, the circuit judges would have to hold a session like theirs in public. But since the supreme court's incredible decision that the law didn't apply to courts, the circuit judges can play hide-and-sneak when deciding how to spend our tax dollars.

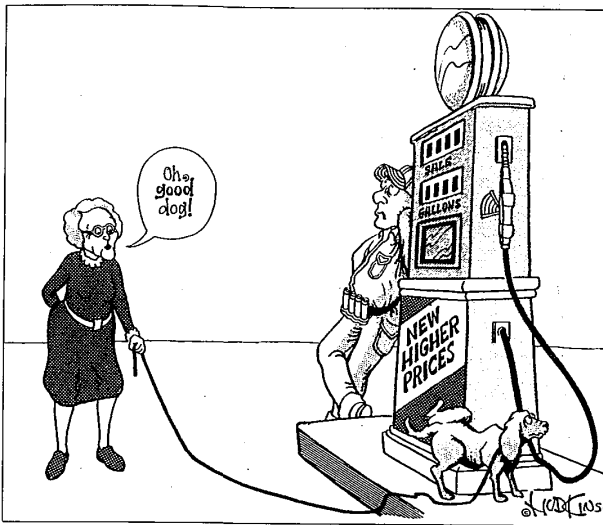
And that's how the supreme court decision came to public attention.

FOR THE UMPTYENTH time, sound public policy demands:

1. That we know not only what our policymakers decided but what arguments they made.
2. That we know what options the body considered.
3. That we know who had input into the body and what that input was.
4. That we know what government intends to do, not after it has decided, but before it decides.

A lot of legislators, administrators and interested citizens call our courts "arrogant," "calously indifferent," "haughty," and "power mad."

Personally, I find the courts in contempt of common sense.



Trojan horse didn't close academic Athens of West

through bifocals



Neither of the gentlemen with whom I wished to speak Monday evening was at home when I dialed. One's name is Allan F. Smith, the other Robben W. Fleming.

You see, I wanted to go as high as I could on the authority ladder to find out for sure whether the University of Michigan would reopen tomorrow as scheduled for its principal purpose of dispensing education.

Smith was recently named interim president of the university, an appointment which became effective Jan. 2.

He'll fill in until the Board of Regents selects a permanent successor for Fleming, who resigned after 11 years as Michigan's ninth president to become chief of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in Washington, D.C.

A fear had crossed my mind earlier Monday evening that millions of Americans might consider the university to be in shambles, its vast resources as to the sum of human knowledge totally erased from the face of the earth by monsters called Trojans.

As often happens, I found the answer in the trenches.

With neither Smith nor Fleming available (perhaps being in the faraway state of California), I called Prof. Philip Charles Davis, who teaches art design at U-M and who is one of the world's finest photographers. The conversation was brief.

"The light of another Rose Bowl defeat, will there be classes at Michigan Friday?"

"Of course. Why wouldn't there be?"

IN THOSE SECTORS of our nation where residents consider agitation of a bag of air more important than the price of beef, it was a weekend of more than usual emotion. It stems from a disease called football, and I will confess to being terminally infected.

It was given a sad but unmistakable thrust in that direction in Florida when the festive, holiday weekend opened with Woody Hayes being relieved of his duties as football coach at Ohio State University after he had slugged a member of the rival team during the Gator Bowl game.

The emotion was evident on numerous other gridirons, both collegiate and professional (if there's a difference) through three days and nights. Anyone with a television set that worked had a ride seat to it all.

The sun rose in the east right on schedule Tuesday, even though Michigan had proven conclusively only a few hours earlier that it does not have the best football team in the land.

However, among its more lasting assets are campus libraries that contain more than 3,000,000 books and documents. Not one of them must be justified for educational value by the instant replay camera.

THERE IS NO POINT in dwelling here on the Woody Hayes incident per se, other than to say it was a terrible way for a great coach to say good bye to the profession that was his life, his love.

The humor has gone from such statements of Woody's as, "Football is the best taught subject at Ohio State," or "Studying history is a waste of

time. I ought to know because I have a master's degree in it."

But there is a sense of wisdom of which we all should take note in these paragraphs from the typewriter of Wayne DeNeff, sports editor of the Ann Arbor News, as they appeared in print last Sunday:

"There is a tendency to put all the blame on Hayes' shoulders for what happened Friday night, but one wonders if just about everyone in America should share some of the shame."

"We make football bigger than life. Athletic competition among young men is as old as man himself but it is in the U.S. where college sports, and high school sports, too, have almost taken charge of our society."

"If there isn't enough pressure from game to game, we add polls and rankings and championships and bowl games. We spend millions on sports and put the games on national television so that it becomes something infinitely more than a friendly game. It becomes all-out war."

"And when a man like Hayes comes along we are inclined to blame him for college football being out of balance when perhaps in reality it is the public values that are out of joint."

Nicely put, Wayne. Go Blue (lower case)!

Football footnotes

NBC gets high marks for its handling of the half-time band shows New Year's Day in both the Rose and Orange bowls. We had fully expected the Michigan Band show, in particular, to be blotted out by commercials and inane commentary, but were pleasantly surprised we saw so much on the screen. It was a significant departure from the television industry's previous performances.

On the other hand, WUOM, the university's own FM station, botched it. During two-thirds of the Michigan Band's presentation, WUOM broadcasters interviewed a cub reporter who had "covered" the previous week or more of practice sessions. Her most profound comment was that the coaches became less accessible as Rose Bowl time grew nearer.

GATOR BOWL FOOTNOTE: Woody Hayes got a reputation for a bad temper when he kicked sideline markers and slugged a fan. He was put on a year's probation when he took a swing at a TV cameraman. But he wasn't fired until he took a swing at a football player.

Going to college in the 1970s

Things have certainly changed since I went to college.

We had classes six days a week and bed checks were at 11 p.m. during the week. A hint of liquor on your breath subjected you to disciplinary scrutiny.

A girl never got a chance to see the inside of a boy's dorm unless she was a mother or a sister and only on the opening day of the school year.

If you were smart or an athlete, you could get a scholarship, but college wasn't that expensive in the old days.

Phones were installed at the end of the hall, and everyone could hear your one-sided conversations. I remember one classmate we all looked up to because he had his own telephone credit card. The rest of us collected coins so we could have the luxury of talking more than three minutes if we wanted to.

Institutional foods were awful, and every college freshman added five to 10 pounds to his frame because of the heavy emphasis on bread and potatoes.

I WENT to college in New England, and a couple of times a year we would make our way down to the Big Apple—New York City—to spend a night on the town.

The girls would check out to their roommate's home so they wouldn't have to be in by 1 a.m. on a Saturday night.

We would pile eight or 10 people in a car, share the cost of gas, and head home after the bars had closed because we could neither afford the cost of a hotel room nor would society permit the girls to stay there unchaperoned.

WE ALL LIVE somewhat vicariously through our kids, and when they call home from college today, we ask them what they are doing so that

Eccentricities

by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.



nostalgically we can share in their adventures.

Just before Christmas, our middle child, Kathy, called from college to report that she was headed for New York City.

She was calling from the phone in her room.

She said she was going down to the big city with several kids from her floor in the dorms—boys and girls. They were all sitting around her room drinking beer that they had gotten out of a vending machine down the hall.

She asked how much hotel rooms were in New York. I told her \$60-\$80. Her reply was, "You've got to be kidding."

Remembering with fond memories our trips down in a crowded car, I asked her how she was getting there.

She said: "The Eastern Airlines shuttle. How else?"

To balance off this new freedom, both academic and financial, she informed us that she had two paying jobs at school.

And when I picked her up at the airport for Christmas vacation, she was carrying the Wall Street Journal, which she had read on the plane.

It will take us 20 years in the future to know, but this younger generation is either going to take this world by storm or the world will collapse with a smile on its face.

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