

editorial opinion

Union method goes astray when fighting stereotype

Bill Wimpinger has a problem.

The president of the International Association of Machinists (IAM), he is offended by the image portrayed on television of union members.

Television, he says, portrays union members as "shiftless, indignant louts" in the image of Archie Bunker.

To counter this, the IAM has launched a \$100,000 program to monitor television coverage of unions, both on news programs and in entertainment formats.

The monitoring could result in advertising boycotts of sponsors and requests to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to deny station license renewals.

"There ought to be a 30-minute counterbalance to Archie Bunker," says Wimpinger.

ON ONE HAND, I've got to agree with Wimpinger. Television does portray union members at times as shiftless, indignant louts. But let's face it,

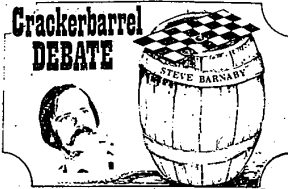
television presents just about everybody as dumb bells at one time or another — even, if not especially, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants like myself.

Nobody is exempt when it comes to the television industry's making a buck.

But viewers, union and non-union alike, should beware of Wimpinger's monitoring and threatened boycott technique.

Censorship — and that's what Wimpinger's plan would be — always is based on whose ox is being gored. And Wimpinger obviously has underestimated the intelligence of his brothers and sisters in other unions who have taken positive action in thwarting a negative union image.

TAKE THE AMERICAN Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), for instance. In recent months, it has been running a series of television commercials in prime time portraying the valuable services public employees perform in a community.



AFSCME employees are those folks in your town who perform a number of essential services such as road maintenance, garbage pickup, secretarial duties, public hospital work and snow clearance. That union's advertisements aptly tell the viewer what their union members do.

The IAM action, on the other hand, falls into bad company which would leave an equally bad taste in a lot of folks' mouths. Its interest would be better served by taking the \$100,000, adding a chunk more money and fighting fire with fire by buying up some air time and newspaper space to tell us about the IAM.

I GREW UP in a union neighborhood and my father was a union member. And while Wimpinger may be unaware of union members' sentiments, strongarming the media is the last thing such folks want done.

While the media may do things at times to portray a negative image of unions, they also have sent out to get the message about workers' needs and concerns.

Besides, Wimpinger should know that Archie was a rotten union member anyhow. He made a habit of crossing picket lines to scab.

Eccentricities

by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.



How state rules impede hiring

If you are about to hire a new employee, under Michigan Public Acts 220 and 453 of 1976, there are several questions you may not ask the persons you interview for the job.

You may ask the applicants their full names, but you may not ask them their original names or, if they're female, their maiden names.

You may ask how long they have been a resident of the state or city, but you may not ask the birthplace of the applicants or require them to submit birth certificates or other birth or citizenship records.

You may ask, "Are you 18 years or older?" but you may not ask, "How old are you?" or "What is the date of your birth?"

You may not ask applicants to submit a photograph with the application form or ask anything about their religion, even though the celebrating of religious holidays could have some effect on the prospective employee's work schedule.

YOU MAY NOT ask them their weight or height.

You may not ask them if they are married or single, if they have any children, whether their spouse is employed or anything about their ability to reproduce.

You may not inquire into an applicant's lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, parentage or nationality. However, you will need this information if your company has an affirmative action program for minorities.

You may ask them if they have been convicted of a crime, but not anything about how many times they have been arrested.

You may inquire into an applicant's military experience in the United States armed forces, but not about any other military experience.

You may not ask them to list all the clubs, societies and lodges to which they belong, but you can inquire about the organizations of which the applicants are members excluding organizations whose name or character indicates the race, religion, color or national origin or ancestry of members.

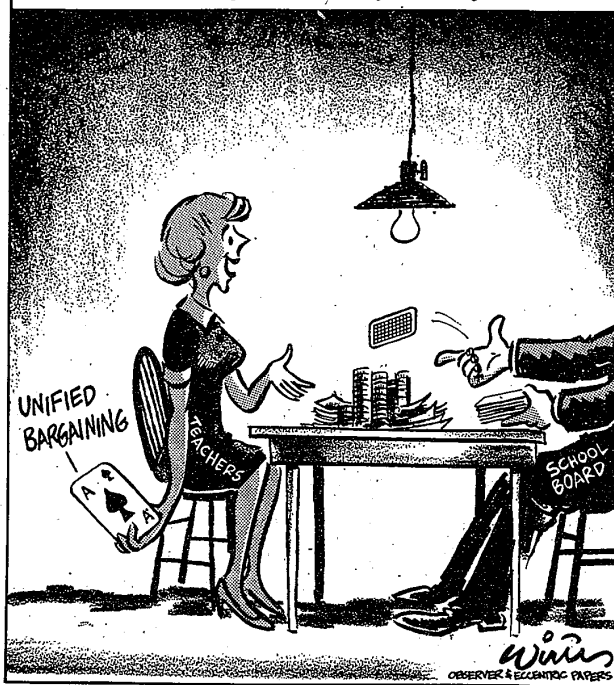
THE QUESTIONS you may ask or not ask have been promulgated by the Michigan Department of Civil Rights as their interpretation of civil rights laws.

The problem with most governmental regulation is that it goes overboard, dealing with theory and not with practical approaches to the problem.

There will be many applicants for jobs who will not get them because the employer will assume answers — incorrectly — for the forbidden questions, which could have been cleared up under the old, typical application form.

If an employer is going to discriminate, seldom will the law be able to stop him.

'Gee, I feel really lucky!'



Boxing's best are fine but few; don't boo bums, ogle the crowd

Boxing is beautiful at its best, like a tiger at rest, say, or a lake in the mountains.

But there are plenty more alley cats with mangle than tigers, and more Lake Eries than pristine pools.

And in this nation of 220 million legal people and a crowded metropolis or two of smuggled aliens, you couldn't fill a SEMTA bus with the number of boxers capable of looking beautiful consistently.

So instead the sport is heavily populated with the used-to-be, might-be, could-have-beens that fill the rest of the world — the car you can't start the morning after an \$80 tune-up was fiddled with by the mechanic's equivalent of a ham-and-egg preliminary fighter.

The big difference is that nobody pays \$25 to watch that borderline wrench jockey at work.

Anyway, if you're at a professional fight and two of these guys climb into the ring and begin to swing at one another with all the easy grace of a pair of three-toed sloths in a savage snit, you can find other things to do.

At Cobo Hall last Thursday night where promoters assembled 10 fighters to flank Thomas Hearn like pilot fish around a shark, you could have wandered up the aisle while Dave McCann and Jimmy Robertson took turns splashing one another's blood and sweat on the upturned faces of the ringside crowd.



At the top of the aisle you'd find 16-ounce containers of beer tagged at \$2.25 each. Probably you'd turn around and head back down the aisle.

YOU COULD have sat and watched Ron LeFlare when you got there, sitting in the press section five feet from the edge of the canvas with a Spanish-looking date.

Later on, you could have watched Irene Goodwin, Mickey Goodwin's mother; film his entire 10-round fight from a neutral corner using a Keystone 8-mm movie camera and another son, who passed her new film cartridges, always clutching two used cartridges in his hand and screamed sometimes contradictory advice.

ONCE GOODWIN sprawled awkwardly against the ropes, his butt sticking out between them, looking like he was going to join the blood and sweat falling in the upturned faces below him and the woman just . . . sat down. Fifteen photographers swarmed into the space she'd vacated, and the sound of their frantic motor-drive cameras was like a fast-time slide show.

She sat there and wrung her hands in frustration. After the fight, in Goodwin's training room, the press crowded him and asked him questions. The decision in his favor was an unpopular one with the crowd. Home town or not, they booed him — his jaw dropped in surprise at the sounds.

In the crowded, steamy room, Goodwin soaked a broken hand in a plastic bucket of water and ice, so cold it smoked. He drank from a water bottle he filled by lowering it in the bucket. His trainer blamed the crowd's jeers on racial prejudice.

Two seats down from Mickey sat his mother — next to him, ignored but willing to wait, was the beautiful blonde.

And you wondered why sane men turn to this sport.



You can see: Deposits work

Nearly all of us have favorite spots where we like to return year after year.

Mine is a sandy beach on Lake Michigan in the upper peninsula. US-2 runs along the lake for awhile but then turns inland. So there are a couple of hundred yards of dunes, grasses and scrub pines between the highway and the blue water.

Between 1972 and 1978, however, I had noticed that each year the beach and the dunes had accumulated more litter. Groups of people would build picnic fires in the dunes and then toss their empty beer cans and bottles into the fire beds.

In time, the ashes would disintegrate and blow away. The rusty cans and broken bottles wouldn't. I wondered for awhile whether the place was getting more littered or I was just getting older and more crochety.

THIS YEAR, either I got younger or the place is genuinely cleaner. The one-third drop in tourism in the upper peninsula cannot alone account for "my" beach being so much cleaner.

The answer, clearly, is the "bottle bill" — the law passed in 1976 by voters requiring a deposit of a nickel a bottle and a dime a can on beer and soft drinks.

During the 1976 campaign, the manufacturers — the fellows this newspaper dubbed "The Litter Lobby" — screamed bloody murder that "forced deposits" wouldn't work.

They were wrong; and the public knew it. The bottle bill passed with something like 80 percent support and went into effect in December of 1978.

I can't cite any statistics because I haven't gathered any about how much less litter there is along our roadsides, our beaches, our treelawns.

BUT I CAN SAY that my favorite beach is noticeably cleaner and more pleasant this year — not just 30 percent cleaner but probably 90 percent cleaner.

I can say that a delightful little trout stream in Mackinac County still has rusted old beer cans on its bottom but no new ones.

I can say that, except for blizzard weather, from 1973-78, I picked beer and pop cans and bottles off my tree lawn, from my sidewalk and out of my shrubs every weekend; but since the bottle bill, I have come across only one container — a wine bottle.

Other states are considering "forced deposits." One wonders what the Litter Lobby is telling them about Michigan. If the 1976 campaign here is any guide, the Litter Lobby is probably lying — long, loudly and lavishly.

Here's one man's testimonial that "forced deposits" did more to make Michigan beautiful and safer for walkers than any piece of legislation in many years.

THE TRUTH is starting to come out about another of the Litter Lobby's lies. This lie concerned the prices we would have to pay for pop and beer because of manufacturing and handling costs incurred with "forced deposits."

The beer industry used the new law as an excuse to jack up its prices practically 100 percent in about two years.

Comparison shoppers knew it was a lie all along. Prior to December of 1978, wherever you could find a store that sold both deposit and throwaway containers, the deposit beverages were always cheaper.

The theory seems to be that the brewers were jacking up prices here to use Michigan as a "horrible example" to other states considering forced deposits.

But good ol' capitalistic free enterprise competition is coming to the rescue. First, Falstaff came in well before the new law took effect with deposit bottles and lower prices. Then the Borman stores began carrying No Brand beer — actually brewed by a New York State firm — at a bargain \$6 a case (vs. \$10 to \$11 for most brands). Then Kroger began carrying Ruinlander, a potation from the muskie fishing territory of Wisconsin, at \$3.89.

In recent weeks, the big brewers have started to break down and reduce their prices. Perhaps the voters' punishment is over.

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