

editorial opinion

Silverdome syndrome rouses sleeping ire

Silverdome season has arrived.

Football, you say. Well, that's true if you call the Lions' brand of football professional gridiron action.

The real battle is the annual Lansing confrontation. Legislator against legislator fighting over the \$800,000 Silverdome welfare payment to subsidize William Clay Ford's profit-making organization.

Doubtless the results will be the same. Silverdome supporters will find a bill on which hinges the fate of some major state program and attach an amendment for the taxpayers' \$800,000 giveaway.

MY BEEF AGAINST this subsidy had started to wane a bit. After all, a body can't wish away a 77,000 seat stadium.

But I recently did something I vowed never to do. I went to a Lions' game. It was a pre-season affair against Cincinnati. The Lions lost, of course.

What was really frustrating — what really demonstrated why the \$800,000 is like throwing money to the wind — was the revelation of the stadium rip-off.

Bear with this tale which turned a cooling Silverdome opponent into a boiling militant.

FOUR MILES FROM the stadium, our car lined up to get off the freeway. Precariously we sat waiting our turn to enter the great domed coliseum. But alas, a constable pulled in front of us and announced the exit was closed.

A race ensued to the next exit — which was closed. We beat the cop to the third exit.

But to entertain waiting fans, the Silverdome has

invented a new game — parking lot musical chairs.

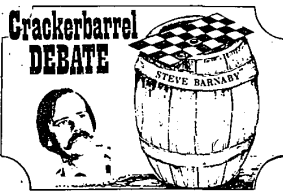
It goes like this:

Only persons with parking passes can park in the spacious Silverdome parking lot. Others must park in neighboring lots. Fair, but few persons realize this little quirk.

Thus is created a giant logjam. Those with passes can't get in, and those without passes can't get out. Because of this traffic jam the entire game is ruined.

IN NORMAL STADIUMS, the crowd is mostly settled by the time the game starts. Not at the Silverdome.

The Silverdome litany is as follows: First quarter — a continual flow of bodies wander around looking for the proper seat; second quarter — fans go in and



out seeking refreshments; third quarter — fans watch the game; fourth quarter — a mad scramble starts for the parking lot to avoid the traffic jam.

In the middle — again



'Tin Goose' passed a test

During the half-century that The Stroller has been wending his way along the journalistic trail, he's taken many twists and turns and enjoyed many unusual experiences.

Some episodes in his life came on the spur of the moment and left an indelible mark on his memory.

For instance, while seeking advice on the Indianapolis 500 Mile Race, William Shaw, a three-time winner, took him for a ride to prove a point. Just imagine going around that track at 130 miles an hour. Or can you imagine sitting with Gar Wood in the famous Miss America X and setting a world record of 124.85 miles an hour on water?

BUT NEVER DID he dream he would be a party to an experiment proving the stability of the Ford Tri-Motor Airplane, now affectionately referred to as the "Tin Goose" on its golden anniversary.

This rare moment in The Stroller's life came in the most unusual way. In his youth, his father taught him shoot pool — now socially called pocket billiards. In the process, he improved to the point where he played for the house.

At the time another child prodigy was on the scene in Monmouth, Ill. It was only natural the time should come when they would meet. Well, they did, and a child prodigy out of Illinois named Ralph Greenleaf beat The Stroller by a single point.

Years went by. In the meantime, Greenleaf went on to win the world championship and came to Detroit to defend the title in 1930. At the sports The Stroller had moved west to join the staff of



the Detroit Free Press. In that capacity, he renewed his friendship with the child prodigy who had beaten him.

ONE EVENING — it was the night before the championship final — Greenleaf called on him and asked, "Will you do a favor for me? I have been invited to play pocket billiards in this new Ford Tri-Motor plane to prove its stability," he said, "and no one wants to play with me. How about you?"

The invitation was accepted. The next day we met at the old Ford Airport where the Dearborn Inn now stands, and The Stroller had one of the most unusual thrills of his life.

The plane had been equipped with a miniature pool table. The Fox Movie Tone people had arranged cameras at every vantage point.

Finally, the word came. We took off. And for the next 90 minutes Greenleaf and The Stroller engaged in the rarest game of pool in the history of the game.

When the plane landed we were greeted on all sides, especially by Bill Stout, designer of the plane. We had helped to prove the plane stable enough to carry both humans and freight. It was a great chapter in aviation history.

INCIDENTALLY, that night Greenleaf engaged Frank Taberski for the championship and set the then world record run of 126 points.

Now they are celebrating the golden anniversary of the plane as they should.

But the morning that he played pool with the man who was to become the world champion is the one that The Stroller never will forget.

LEAVING SILVERDOME is as miserable as coming.

Some exit gates are closed. Like sheep, fans are herded to a gate — any gate — by a flashlight in the dark. Traffic is one way — never the way you want to go.

The poor residents living adjacent to the stadium are really victimized. Their streets are closed off. Fans can't get in, but neither can residents get out. I wouldn't want to be in need of emergency medical assistance in one of those subdivisions.

Meanwhile, inside, Lions' officials count the suckers' loot while the city of Pontiac tries to figure out how its going to pay for pickup of the garbage the next day.

A \$800,000 subsidy with my tax dollars? — forget it. The Lions should pay the fans for coming to the stadium.



Dirty words, dirty words!

My contact at the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments almost had a hemorrhage over the telephone when I told her about the dirty words I had used in last week's column: *Regional government*.

Say those dirty words around SEMCOG persons and they run for cover. SEMCOG has sold itself to nervous, gun-shy suburban governments as a voluntary, seven-county planning agency, with policy made by local elected officials.

About four years ago, Kent Mathewson, then president of Metropolitan Fund, took the rhinoceros by the horns and started advocating a regional governance system, with a 20-member council elected from State Senate districts and a single chief executive. Metro Fund, in case you didn't recall, is the research and education foundation which spawned, staffed and bankrolled the early days of such agencies as TALUS, SEMCOG, New Detroit and SEMTA.

Well, SEMCOG couldn't run away from lovable, cherubic Kent Mathewson fast enough. Several former SEMCOG chairmen denounced the proposal in the most vehement terms. Metro Fund has been licking its wounds ever since.

BEING DOOMED already, I have little to lose by writing freely and forthrightly about regional government.

A regional system is worth discussing now that Oakland County Drain Commissioner George Kuhn and a wide host of associates are talking about reforming the Detroit Water and Sewer Department (DWSD).

The DWSD is politically controlled by the city of Detroit. We of the outer cities have nothing to say about its governing board, no control over its rates and no chance to get jobs there. Detroit has no real investment, in the classical capitalistic sense, in the DWSD, so we wouldn't be expropriating anything by regionalizing the system that provides us water and sewer services.

Just what form this regionalizing would take even Kuhn doesn't know.

Yet clearly and emphatically there is crying, screaming, roaring need to regionalize control and operation of the water and sewer system that serves some four million persons.

We already have something resembling regional governments with the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan system (1940) and SEMTA (1968).

REGIONAL PLANNING, as toothlessly practiced in these parts, leaves an enormous amount to be desired.

Great Britain in the last decade has moved into regional councils with teeth. Whatever things Great Britain may have wrong with it, regionalism isn't one of them. It's a real culture shock to:

• Drive the A-30 into historic Salisbury, England. One minute you are in the uncluttered countryside, the next minute in the city. You park in a lot and are within walking distance of every store, financial institution, public service and office your heart could desire.

• Drive north on Milford Road out of the bustling village in western Oakland County. A supermarket. A root beer stand. A gasoline station with garish banners. A fruit stand. The high school campus. A group of small shops. All are separated by acres or blocks of land, all have separate driveways, all require separate driving movements to reach. That isn't planning, that isn't efficient for water and sewer service, that isn't conserving fuel and that isn't picturesque.

It's urban sprawl. It's weak-kneed township government letting any developer who says the magic words "tax base" do what he wants. In most of our townships and even some of our cities, "local control" means no control.

LOCAL CONTROL also means one city which is downstream from all the rest of us providing water and sewer services and raising the price at will to cover the cost of its ungoverned mistakes.

Going to regional government doesn't mean wiping out local government. The principle should be this: All services which can be performed locally should be performed locally; the others should be performed by regional government, not by elaborate voluntary concoctions and one-sided contractual arrangements.

Regionalism is needed for public transportation, for certain large parks, for wholesale water service, for sewer service, for hospital planning and for land use planning. Dirty words? Yes, but it's the truth.

Eccentricities

by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.



Wages rise, help is gone

Not many years ago, you could get live-in domestic help for \$30 a week.

Today a domestic — if you can find one — costs about \$28 a day for 6½ hours work. And you probably have to pick her (or him) up and drop her off at the bus.

The interesting part is that wages have increased some 500 percent over a 15-year period to more than \$4 an hour, yet there are fewer and fewer persons willing to do this kind of work.

To fill the void, services have come into being which send out teams of two workers for 3½ hours of work and charge around \$38. They provide transportation and other benefits to the workers. But the homemaker doesn't always get the same team, so she must stay around and supervise them.

This type of service, however, is said to have upgraded the business because the help are trained and don't look upon themselves as maids.

Why has the domestic help market dried up, even when there is high unemployment elsewhere?

THE ANSWER is probably twofold.

First, more women have entered the defined business world. With affirmative action programs, minorities have found more opportunity and have chosen this path over a field that has always been looked down upon.

Government statistics will show some minority women working now, for example, while their mothers did not, because their mothers worked in a field where unreported income was the rule and their work never appeared on official rolls.

The second reason is our social welfare system. Wages in the private domestic-sector were lower than welfare or unemployment benefits, so even in bad times a low-income family was better off not working than working. Once this happened, wages rose significantly and these people could not be lured back into the domestic help market.

INCREASED SURVEILLANCE by the Internal Revenue Service has also lessened one of the advantages of working in the domestic field.

It had always been a cash-and-carry business, and many persons working in it were untaxed and unregulated. It was part of the unreported working community.

As the IRS reached more and more of the employer-housewives and forced them to file social security forms, more potential employees dropped out.

The result is that the change hurts the Women's Movement. As greater numbers of women work, they need more babysitters and housecleaners at a time when there are fewer and fewer.

Still, it is ironic that an industry showing such great gains in compensation is drying up at the same time.

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