

Kid reporter learns truth of county government

"Your assignment for the next week is to cover a meeting of the Wayne County Commission and write a story," said the graying journalism instructor.

Little did the student know that within hours, before his very eyes, a tale of incredible incompetence would unravel.

Even the most novice of observers, as was he, couldn't help but notice the reckless abandon with which this antiquated form of government was legislated.

Tucked away on the 13th floor of the City-County Building was the auditorium in which this small group hacked away at spending county tax dollars.

Those were the days of a guy named Paul Silver, who waxed eloquent about nothing in particular to the glee and/or consternation of his colleagues.

The student reporter came away without a story and a sick feeling in his stomach.

NEXT ASSIGNMENT: "I want you to cover the Oakland County Commission in Pontiac this week," said the balding editor to the kid reporter.

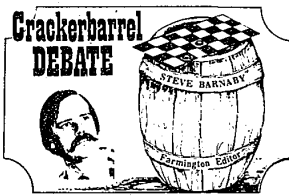
Sprawling across the expanse of a once farmer's fertile field was the Oakland County government complex, resplendent with circular auditorium in which the county legislators not so eloquently debated and debated and debated.

The young reporter wrote his first column, indignantly protesting the insane way in which a group of legislators hacked away at spending millions of tax dollars and wondered why no one really cared.

Today that reporter, now an editor, watches a county government struggle.

Threatened strikes, uncertain paydays and political chicanery continue to hamper the process.

Lawyers, doctors, insurance men and housewives vie for the honor of election to county government



and spend a minimal amount of time at the endeavor.

County fights with county over paving borderline roads, and they rarely get paved. County fights with

state over reorganization, and services go neglected. The sheriff fights with the county executive who, in turn, fights with the commissioners. One part of a county wants to secede from the other part and form its own county. The list goes on and on.

AND NOW WE learn that tomorrow Wayne County employees may be paid in scrip, near worthless promissory notes, because a state governor and county politicians are unable to agree on how best to make county government work.

It's sick. Worse yet, it's futile.

In truth, county government has outlived its usefulness in large metropolitan areas. The borders of jurisdiction make little sense. Community needs are overlapping and integrated.

Yet the antiquated power structure hangs on in a battle to perpetuate itself. Voters criticize, but are reluctant to support any other alternative.

A few years back, the concept of regional government came on hard. But quickly it found much opposition. Everybody was trying to hang on to his turf, her piece of the pie.

Regionalism advocates were forced to back off. Parochialism won and regional government was emasculated.

But tomorrow, when hundreds of Wayne County employees are waiting and wondering if they will get paid, the battle will continue, fruitlessly.

Torch Drive: Help at home

"I took the CPR class as an elective in school because I wanted to learn something that could help other people," explained Bill McCombs, 13, of Southfield.

CPR is cardiopulmonary resuscitation, a method of reviving persons who have suffered heart attacks. The class was sponsored by the Southeastern Michigan chapter of the American Red Cross.

Last spring Bill McCombs saved the life of a man who had suffered a heart attack and stroke, restoring the man's breathing until the emergency medical service could arrive. Bill's action meant the difference between life and death.

So did the Red Cross.

And so did the United Foundation, which helps support the Red Cross.

THE UNITED Foundation is a 30-year-old federation of givers from our towns, Oakland County and all across southeast Michigan. We the givers raised a record \$46 million last year for 137 health and community service agencies, according to Louis R. Ross of Birmingham, general chairman of this year's United Foundation Torch Drive.

If one talks about "137 agencies," it sounds kind of abstract. But when you get down to cases, they are services close to home.

Big Brothers - Big Sisters gets \$311,000 for four centers, including one in Pontiac.

The Boy Scouts Clinton Valley council gets \$158,000 for its leadership training work. Girl Scouts' Northern Oakland council is marked for \$47,000. Camp Fire Girls North Oakland council and Camp Oakland Young Programs, Inc., are down for a total of \$11,500.

Boys Club of Auburn Heights (\$57,000) and Boys Republic of Farmington Hills (\$49,500) are close to all of us.

Such major organizations as Children's Leukemia Foundation of Michigan (\$114,000) are headquartered in Southfield.

Catholic Social Services of Oakland County (\$303,000) has four offices, including Royal Oak, Pontiac, Farmington and Highland. Its work is in mental health, family and marriage counseling, diagnostic and referral services.

Fresh Air Society (\$1,000) of West Bloomfield operates a summer camp for Jewish children. The Jewish Community Center (\$621,000) of West Bloomfield and Jewish Family Service (\$375,000) of Southfield and Jewish Vocational Service and Community Workshop (\$249,000) are well known to all of us.

LEADER DOGS for the Blind, Rochester, is nationally famous, as any Lions Club member will tell you, and receives \$62,000 from the Torch Drive.

Oakland County Legal Aid Society (\$38,000) offers legal assistance to those who can't afford it and to eligible senior citizens.

Marillac Hall (\$125,000) in Farmington Hills helps young women with pregnancies.

Recording for the Blind, Inc. (\$45,000) in Bloomfield Hills recruits volunteers to read and record textbooks requested by the blind and learning disabled.

Mental Health Association in Michigan (\$203,000), headquartered in Southfield, the Michigan Cancer Foundation (\$1.3 million), with unit offices in Rochester and Pontiac, and the Michigan Heart Association (\$832,000) of Southfield need no introduction but deserve one.

And we can't forget the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center (\$45,000) in Farmington Hills, a resident treatment center for dependent, neglected, abused and emotionally disturbed boys and girls.

In Rochester, don't take the YMCA of Northern Oakland County (\$22,000) for granted.

These services, and another 100 we didn't mention, are all close to home. Chances are that a half-dozen persons you know have used them. You may need one yourself.

That's what united giving is all about.

PUMPING IRON



Government 'helps'

How inflation hits the young

Is inflation really eating into our standard of living?

A couple of months ago, I wrote that my wife and I celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary and our oldest daughter's engagement the same weekend.

In preparing for the wedding, my wife dusted off her old file on our wedding, and we went over the bills to see what is in store for us next spring.

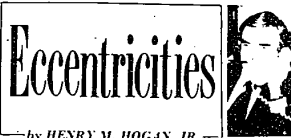
Our daughter is planning to be married in the same church and have her reception in the same club as we did.

The main difference will be that we were married at noon, so a lunch was served at our reception, and our daughter will be married in the evening, so a dinner will be served.

BELIEVE IT or not, my father-in-law was charged \$2 a person for the lunch, 75 cents apiece for "highballs" and \$3.50 for a bottle of champagne.

As near as we can tell, the wedding meal will cost us 1,150 percent, the drinks more than 150 percent, and the champagne 328 percent of what it cost to celebrate our wedding in 1954.

My wife and I were both in school when we were married. Her tuition was \$150 a year, and mine in law school was \$250. We paid rent of \$35 a month and were able to feed ourselves well for \$50 a



by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

month — so well, in fact, that I gained 30 pounds our first year of married life.

To send our oldest child to college at Michigan State, we pay \$200 a month for room and board and about \$1,000 for tuition.

To send our middle child to an Eastern college, it costs us \$6,000 a year just for room, board and tuition.

IT IS NO WONDER that the kids today are marrying later, not having children or having them later in life, and both working in order to earn enough just for a decent standard of living.

Over the last 10 years, the cost of living has just about doubled, so you have to earn twice as many dollars just to stay even. Even at that rate, you don't stay even because your taxes take a higher proportion of your income because you have graduated to higher tax brackets.

People on fixed incomes, such as retirees, are being eaten alive.

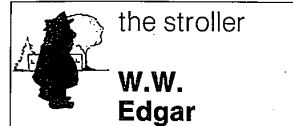
What is the answer?

IT IS NOT what the federal or state government can do for us. Inflation is with us because of what the federal government has been doing for us.

As long as the federal government runs deficit, it must borrow money. Every time it borrows money, it creates new money because financial institutions can loan money based on the reserves they have in federal notes.

The more money that exists in the marketplace without a comparable increase in goods, the more prices rise.

Washington should not be talking about new programs or tax reductions. The most significant thing anyone can do to reduce inflation is to balance our federal budget, and we must let our elected officials know that this is our desire.



Poor too rich?

During one of his infrequent visits to this area Sam Levinson, the noted humorist and school teacher, stopped in the midst of his hilarious remarks to tell a Town Hall audience of his greatest thrill.

"I will never forget the feeling I had the morning I bought my first automobile," he said, "and the thrill of knowing that I had earned it by myself."

He stood motionless for a moment, then added:

"And do you know what? I didn't buy my son an automobile when he graduated. Do you know why? I didn't want to deny him the thrill of earning his own money to purchase it himself."

For the next few moments the humorist remained serious and extolled his listeners with the thought that we are spoiling our children and raising a spoiled generation.

"Too many fathers pride themselves with the thought that they don't want their sons to be forced to work as hard as they did," he went on. "They want to spare them the trials and tribulations of facing the world after their school days."

"As a result the young folks today expect everything to be done for them and they always are looking for something for which they didn't have to work. And the fathers and mothers of today are glad to give it to them."

THE HUMORIST'S WORDS came back to The Stroller the other day and helped to prove the point that this generation is spoiled.

As he looked down the short dead end street where he has lived for the past 41 years, he counted 21 cars owned by the seven families who are his neighbors.

That's an average of three cars a family and I brought to light the fact that almost every young person in the small wooded area had a car.

Well, he recalled that he was past 30 years of age before he was able to boast of owning an automobile — and then at a cost of a mere \$750 for one of the first Model A Fords. Now, the young folks want an automobile if they live just a mile away from school.

He recalled that only a few months ago one of the youngsters dropped by to tell The Stroller that she was buying a horse and that it was one that she learned to like.

It sounded to him as though the youngster, who is a lover of horses, was having one of those childish dreams. But a few nights later she came back, sitting proudly on the back of a nice gray animal.

The Stroller was reminded, too, of the evening last summer when one of the neighbors sons was graduating from high school and he dropped by to tell us his plans for the senior prom.

It entailed the rental of a tuxedo, the use of a car to drive his date to the scene, and the cost of the dinner and the party afterward.

All told, he said, it will cost about \$50 for the night. Imagine that!

When the young lad finished, The Stroller's helpmate spoke up and said, "Times sure have changed. When I graduated, we went back to my grandmother's house and we all had ice cream, cake and coffee. There were no such things as junior and senior proms."

On a recent visit to her home town of Marine City, The Stroller got to talking with Ralph Baker, one of the relatives who came up the hard way and now owns his own electronics firm.

"There are now too many automobiles on the road," The Stroller said, "and all the joy is taken out of driving."

Do you know what's wrong?" he asked, then answered his own question.

"The poor folks have too much money." Maybe that's the reason for the "spoiled" generation.

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