editorial opinion

Let's NOT boycott the Moscow Olympics

Crackerbarrel DEBATE

STEVE BARNABY Farmington Editor

All this talk about boycotting the Olympics is downright silly.

Sports aren't, I repeat, aren't above politics. As a matter of fact, sports really shouldn't be important to many with the exception of those who participate in them.

Let the kids go play their games in Moscow. They've trained hard and shouldn't have to sacrifice because of a blundering foreign policy. Their chance to sacrifice will come with their draft notices.

A chance to win a gold medal is important to them right now.

What should be important to the rest of America is what we're going to do about 50 hostages in Iran, Soviet troops in Afghanistan and Cuba, Cuban troops in Africa, millions of starving Cambodians, Vietnamese aggression and a president who really doesn't know what to do about any of these problems.

The religious fervor to boycott the summer Olympics is a sign of how out-of-whack America's priorities have become.

To many Americans, sports holds an undeserved-ly revered place in our culture. And Jimmy Carter is using it for all the re-election mileage he can get.

Now reams of other politicians are jumping on the bandwagon to support this nonsense.

The latest comes from State Sen. Doug Ross, D-Oak Park. The freshman legislator has introduced a resolution that would put the State Senate on record in support of a U.S. boycott of the games.

THE KREMLIN walls must be echoing with laughter.

As Soviet, Vietnamese and Cuban troops hop, skip and jump around the globe, we "retaliate" with a threat to prohibit American athletes from hopping, skipping and jumping around some track in Moscow.

How pathetic.

Sports are to be enjoyed. But it really doesn't matter who won last year's Super Bowl, or what team won the World Series five years ago or for that matter who won the Olympic high jump in 1972.

When you get the feeling that sports really are important, just ask yourself how large the Cambodian delegation to the Olympics will be this year.

Americans enjoy sneering at their politicians and worshipping their athletes. In the past month, hours of television and thousands of newspaper inches have been dedicated to the Super Bowl and Olympics.

But when former Supreme Court Justice William Douglas died recently, he received a few feeble editorial accolades and a three-minute spot on the nightly news.

Even those who may disagree with the Douglas' liberal philosophy can't help but admit that he contributed far more to society than Pittsburgh Steeler quarterback Terry Bradshaw has or ever will.

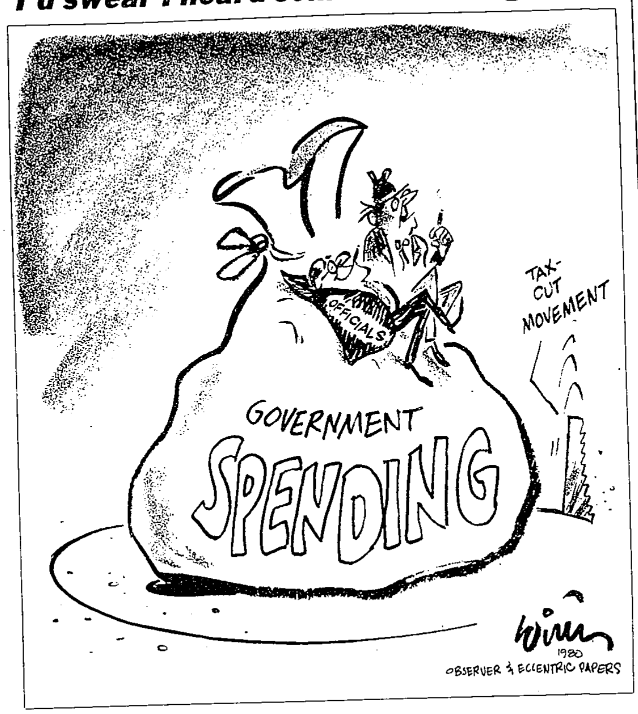
AND THE ARGUMENT that we should have boycotted the 1936 Berlin Olympics just doesn't hold water.

Adolf Hitler still would have exterminated Jews. Europe still would have been overrun by the Nazis. The isolationists still would have turned their backs on those being persecuted and begged Hitler for "peace in our time."

The only thing that would have been different is that Jessie Owens wouldn't have won four gold medals.

Boycott, hell. Bring home the gold.

'I'd swear I heard someone sawing!'



Eccentricities

—by HENRY M. HOGAN JR.—

Big tax cut brought jobs

In June 1978, California voters approved Proposition 13, which reduced their property taxes by a stunning 13 percent.

We were told at the time that this would lead to the demise of the state because it would drastically reduce public services and force new kinds of taxes on business to replace lost revenue.

We were told it would slow economic growth because business would have less money to invest in plant and equipment, which in turn would create new jobs.

More than a year has passed, and the first signs are coming in loud and clear.

SINCE THE ADOPTION of Proposition 13, some 100,000 workers have left local government employment, reducing the rolls by 8 percent. Actually, only 17,000 were laid off. The rest quit or retired and were never replaced.

Yet school systems, police departments and other public agencies are still functioning, although on moderately tighter budgets.

On the other hand, California has added 552,000 new jobs in the private sector — enough to absorb laid-off government workers plus an immigration of job seekers from other states — and still reduce unemployment faster than the national average.

California's unemployment rate has historically been running two points higher than the national average, but today it is running a half-point lower than the national average.

The $6.4 billion tax cut from Proposition 13, followed by a $1 billion cut in the state income tax which was pushed through the legislature, added a healthy stimulus to California's economy.

DURING THE FIRST year after Proposition 13 was passed, personal incomes rose 14 percent. Few states did better. The U.S. Commerce Department attributes a full 2 percent to the effects of the tax cuts.

The property tax helped break a downward trend in housing, and the increased personal income helped to increase consumer spending.

The state's inhabitants have unquestionably been inconvenienced by a variety of modest cutbacks in local services. But their increased income has also increased revenue from the state income tax, which has been used to lessen the blow on municipalities.

The state treasury surplus today is higher than it was at the time Proposition 13 was passed.

SHORTLY AFTER California passed this controversial amendment, Michigan passed the Headlee tax limitation amendment. It didn't reduce taxes but put a lid on increased taxes in the future.

Today Michigan has seen little benefit from the Headlee amendment.

Michigan voters rejected an amendment similar to Proposition 13 because they were convinced it was too drastic a cure for burgeoning governmental costs.

History is now proving that it takes something dramatic like Proposition 13 to bring to public officials' attention the idea that higher taxes and the higher government spending which follows are not the way to improve the economic well-being of the nation.

Maybe Michigan will be smarter next time around.

Conversation with Sparky

the stroller

W.W. Edgar

It's too bad that the so-called dyed-in-the-wool baseball fans didn't hear Sparky Anderson when he spoke to the baseball writers at their annual meeting.

When the prematurely white-haired manager of the Tigers took to the podium, he broke every rule and precedent of the association of managers when he dropped this bomb:

"I am an egotist. And I want to see my name in the paper."

Then, with a broad smile on his tanned face, he told the writers that his door was always open, that they were welcome to drop in any time.

There was nothing new in this remark, as all managers tell you that at the beginning of their term on a new job. But Sparky stunned even the oldtimers when he added:

"I don't want you fellows criticizing my players. Instead blame me, for whatever they do on the playing field I have told them to do. It's my fault when things go wrong. So don't hesitate to blame me."

WELL, THE STROLLER has been around for quite a while. He has listened to managers from the days of Ty Cobb, and they all have their own way of doing things. But never before had he heard a manager ask for criticism.

It usually is the other way around. The manager damns the players for their mistakes.

While most writers were recovering from Sparky's remarks, he regaled them with an interesting story about himself.

"When I was a young lad growing up on the farm," he said, "I spent a lot of time reading the newspapers. I'd read all about things in the sports world and often wished that, someday, my name would appear on the sports pages.

"I thought what a great treat it would be for a fellow like me, growing up far away from the big-time scene, to see my name in print. Finally I was lucky enough to see it happen. And you can imagine how I felt the first time I saw it."

Then, casting his eye around the room, he continued:

"You know, I never lost the thrill of seeing my name in print. That's why I am inviting you fellows to criticize me all you want. Just keep putting my name in the paper."

IN ALL THE YEARS The Stroller covered the major league baseball scene, he never encountered a manager who begged to have his name in print. Most have evaded answering critical questions, and they didn't hesitate to tell you off when you leveled a bit of criticism their way.

The Stroller can recall only one manager who was sincerely honest in his dealings with the press. He was the late Bucky Harris who managed the Tigers in the early '30s.

Bucky never took the easy way out of a situation by saying that he was misquoted. One incident is recalled when Bucky called another manager an SOB.

When confronted with the criticism and the wrath of some folks, Bucky answered, "I thought that is what he was yesterday, and I still think the same today."

Tim Richard

New resort: your home

An old drinking buddy of mine used to say that the best place in Michigan to buy property was a 2 1/2-hour drive from metropolitan Detroit.

"That's just about how long people are willing to drive on a Friday night to get to a cottage Up North," he said. "And they can do it on about one tank of gasoline."

My old drinking buddy today has a new job, a new wife and a new life in another town. Meanwhile, the price of gasoline has risen from 35 cents to $1.20 since our conversation, and the price of housing has doubled.

The idea of supporting one's existing house, acquiring a cottage Up North and blowing $30 on a tank of gas (when its price hits $1.50 a gallon) somehow isn't very charming.

THAT CONVERSATION came to mind recently when a bunch of us reporters and editors were chatting with officers of the Builders Association of Southeastern Michigan.

"We've been a mobile society," said Herman Frankel, who does business out of Orchard Lake. "We're used to getting in the car and driving to Florida or northern Michigan.

"But there's much pessimism now in the travel industry."

Frankel is the closest thing to a social philosopher I have met in the construction industry, and I hope I do justice to his thoughts as I reproduce them here.

Frankel figures people will make housing their first priority. Sure, there will be more condos and planned unit developments, but housing will still be No. 1. And he predicted:

"People's resorts will be their home."

IT WOULD BE an immense change in our thinking, particularly here in Michigan, the Great Lake State, the Water/Winter Wonderland.

Going Up North would be possible on our vacations. But barrelling out there on a Friday night and drifting back home on Sunday night may become a thing of the 1960s and early '70s.

Instead, our weekend trips will be to places like the metro parks and the zoo.

Not everyone would quit going to Florida for a week in early spring. But many folks will drop out of that market or perhaps go every other year.

IN THE GROWTH economics I learned in the 1950s, as people's incomes rose, they would spend a smaller proportion of their incomes on the necessities of life — food, clothing and housing — and have more "discretionary" income.

But both locally and nationally, we hear that buyers of new houses today must spend 36 percent of their (higher) incomes on housing compared to half that percentage a decade ago.

And this in an economy where 62 percent of married women are now working.

It used to be that a married woman went to work to help buy some of the "good things in life" or to help put the kids through college.

It's getting so that she will have to work to keep the family's standard of living from declining too drastically. Breaking even will be almost out of the question.

At our little luncheon, one of the builders, Frank J. Winton of Southfield, complained that the news media hurt things by reporting so much negative news. So we media types challenged the builders to give us some good news.

We kicked the subject around for a long time, and finally the builders themselves agreed: "There's not going to be any good news."

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