

editorial opinion

Integration aided by new call for busing

How about that for a Sunday morning eye-opener? The feds and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) are checking out cross-district busing for 'metro-Detroit.'

Most suburban residents thought that whole mess was behind them. But the week of May 20, 1979, the week that cross-district busing once again became news, may be remembered for years to come.

Such talk certainly does conjure up loads of memories: Irene McCabe walking to Washington, a young lawyer named Brooks Patterson, Federal District Judge Stephen Roth; and burning buses.

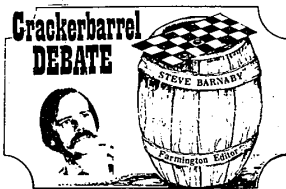
ACTUALLY, THE cross-district busing issue revival in metro Detroit was a foregone conclusion. Reading the U.S. Supreme Court decision on the Detroit case in 1974 should have shown us that.

It warned that interdistrict busing might "be in order where racially discriminatory acts of one or more school districts caused racial segregation in an adjacent district, or where district lines have been deliberately drawn on the basis of race."

Obviously little has changed in the way of integrating school populations since 1974. Certainly, the federal investigators could see that when they came to town earlier this year.

What they also saw were myriads of near lily white school districts resting around Detroit's predominantly black district. They also saw that white residents have moved farther and farther out, leaving the closer in suburbs with rapidly declining enrollments.

Remember the name of the game is integration. Whether it improves, worsens or does nothing for education is another matter.



IT WOULD be wise for those who oppose integrating their school districts to readjust their thinking. It is long past the time for suburban communities to hold out their hands to the area's black

population so that each community is integrated in a peaceful and orderly manner. But it is unlikely.

I recall one school board president echoing the alleged sentiments of many suburbanites during the stormy times when the busing controversy was at its height.

"We believe in neighborhood schools. Anyone who wishes to live in our neighborhood is welcome to do so. They also would be welcome to send their children to our schools."

Today, five years later, that community's black population hasn't risen by even one percentage point.

And because many suburban school district residents have chosen to bury their heads in the sand, social unrest and upheaval faces us all once again.

THREE ALTERNATIVES are being examined: busing; boundary changes; and consolidation of school districts.

The spectre of actually busing children long distances is just about nil. The rising cost of gasoline has taken care of that.

This area is ripe for both boundary changes and consolidation. The declining enrollment situation is reason enough. Many school district student populations have dwindled to half the size in the last five or six years.

It nearly is financial suicide for these districts to continue as separate governing entities. With ever-increasing inflation, it makes economic sense to either consolidate districts or redraw district lines to better utilize facilities and tax dollars.

Also changed is the option of moving to escape from such integration moves. The days of driving 120 miles round trip to work quickly are coming to a halt.

Serious thought should be given to peaceful integration. In that way, neighborhood schools will be preserved, community resources will be better utilized and sanity will prevail in metropolitan Detroit.

Eccentricities

by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

A state which holds first rank

In what state will the sports spectacular, the Super Bowl, be played for the first time in a northern climate?

In what state will the Republican Party hold its next national convention to select its presidential nominee?

What state has the tallest hotel in the country?

What state has the headquarters of all the major automobile companies in the United States and produces more motor vehicles than any other state by far?

What state ranks first in prepared cereals, office furniture, machine tools, non-ferrous castings (such as magnesium, zinc and lead), hardware for motor vehicles, furniture and conveyors, plus 14 other manufacturing and processing categories?

In what state do three of America's top five industrial corporations and 21 of its top 500 businesses have their headquarters?

WHAT STATE IS the leading exporter among the 50 states?

What state leads the nation in the number of state parks and prepared campsites?

What state in 1929 established the first state police radio system in the world?

What state has more than 11,000 inland lakes and more than 36,000 miles of streams?

What state ranks No. 1 in the nation in the production of these six crops: red tart cherries, sweet cherries, dry edible beans, cucumbers for pickling, fine eastern white soft winter wheat and rhubarb?

What state has the largest limestone quarry?

What state is the nation's top salt producer?

What state has the world's largest cement plant?

What state has a greater variety of minerals — metallic and non-metallic — than any comparable area in the world?

WHAT STATE WAS first to establish roadside picnic tables?

What state has a larger variety of commercial tree species than any other state?

What state is the largest grower of Christmas trees in the nation?

What state was the first to provide in its constitution for the establishment of public libraries?

What state started the first land grant college?

What state has the first state university established by vote of the people through their constitution?

What state was the first to guarantee every child the right to tax-paid high school education?

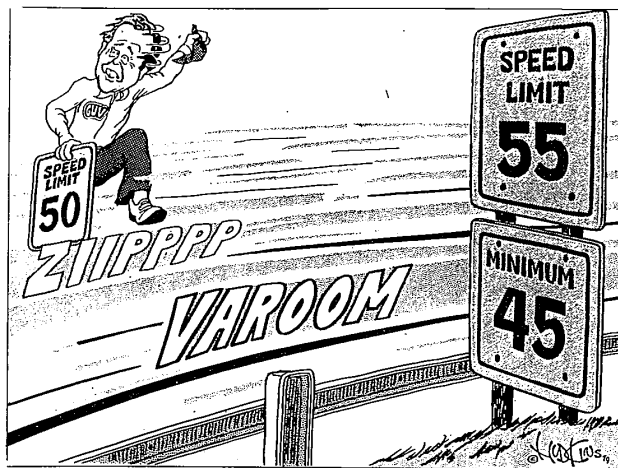
What state has more fresh water coastline than any other state?

In what state are there more locks through which more tonnage passes in an eight-month navigation season than through the Panama Canal in an entire normal year?

What state has the largest commercial deposit of native copper in the world?

THE ANSWER to each of these questions and many similar ones is: Our own Michigan.

This is Michigan Week. Hold your head up high. "Si quisquis peninsula amicum, circumspice." If you seek a pleasant peninsula, look about you.



Details, disillusionment

The mess over 'Headlee'

A year ago about this time, I had my first argument with someone over the Headlee amendment. The other guy was for it.

I argued the principle that a constitution should be a broad framework for government; that Headlee's tax limitation was too detailed for a referendum; and that the proposal was not a proper subject for the state constitution.

The voters decided otherwise last November. Collectively, voters don't make many mistakes, but they did with Headlee. Michigan is now paying the price of their mistake in both public disillusionment and governmental frustration.

THE LEGISLATURE is tied up in knots over how to implement the tax limitation amendment.

One argument was over whether tax rate limitation applied to actual property tax rates of home rule cities or to the limits in their city charters. You could argue it either way, in fairness.

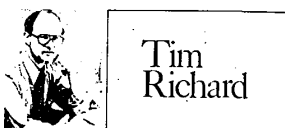
Another argument was over the exact formula for rolling back tax rates when the tax base (the total assessments of property) increased faster than consumer prices. It's incredibly messy. You have not only these factors but the amount of new construction, the amount of the tax rate needed for debt retirement and other factors to consider.

Still another has to do with state aid to local governments. The tax limitation amendment says such aid can't be reduced to local units "taken as a group." The hornets' nest is punctured when you start carving the pie between growing and shrinking school districts, different kinds of cities, various forms of counties and diverse sorts of townships. Casting a shadow over these machinations is the immense political power of Detroit, with its dwindling population.

There will be future arguments. One will come when the state or a court orders local governments to provide a service such as bilingual education, or something of that sort, that must be fully paid for by the state.

MANY PROPERTY owners are disillusioned because, despite newspaper explanations, they erroneously believed their individual tax bills would be limited.

The Headlee amendment applies to taxing juris-



dictions — entire cities and entire townships. There is a lot of room for assessments to rise and fall within a city or township, and thus a lot of room for the individual's tax bill to rise or fall.

People, unfortunately, believe what they want to believe. They wanted to believe their individual tax bills would be stabilized or cut, even though Headlee himself didn't promise that. And so they are disillusioned.

One state senator, Jack Welborn, R-Kalamazoo, has introduced a bill to guarantee that taxes on individual property would not exceed increases in the consumer price index. Welborn is a very emotional man. I have seen him in a senate committee and on the senate floor. Frankly, his passion exceeds his effectiveness.

DICK HEADLEE seems like such a nice, sincere fellow to many folks that you wonder: How could the tax limitation amendment have put us in such a mess in Lansing and in local government?

Headlee, the Farmington Hills insurance wizard, pointed out that he didn't write the amendment himself. It was the work of a committee.

Looking over its roster, you can see insurance types, Jaycees types, the board chairman of Amway, chamber of commerce types, a distinguished professor — but no one with any legislative experience. There were no public hearings.

A piece of tax legislation — for that is what the Headlee tax limitation amendment is — should have been worked out in a legislative committee. There should have been public hearings so that common taxpayers could have had a shot at it.

There should have been an opportunity for persons with county, school district, city and township experience to work it over.

Headlee's reply was that government was out of control, neither party could be trusted, and lobbyists were too powerful.

Well, that's life. It's how democracy works. The mere fact that the legislature doesn't produce a bill that satisfies Dick Headlee or me doesn't mean we should abandon the legislative process. But we did abandon it.

THE HEADLEE TAX limitation amendment was hatched like Topsy, full-grown. Once the petitions were signed, no one could change a comma or clarify a thing.

That's a poor way to write tax legislation, people. It's an even poorer way to dicker with a constitution.

That's what I tried to tell my friend a year ago when we had that argument.

The Stroller



Growing watermelon

Years ago, when The Stroller was just a lad in knee britches, his mother took him aside one day and, very seriously, said, "As you go through life never look a gift horse in the mouth."

Well, he's traveled quite a while on life's highway and he still doesn't know what she meant. But he did accept what he thought was a gift watermelon one time, and it helped bring about one of the most amusing incidents in his desire to become a gentleman gardener.

When The Stroller and his bride decided to leave the hot sidewalks of the city and take up residence in the wide open spaces of what city folks called "the country," he had visions of a fine vegetable garden and all the things that went with it.

To that end he had planted 100 trees for a fruit orchard and reserved a nice plot for such things as yellow string beans, onions, radishes, cucumbers, carrots and the like. But it was too late in the fall for the vegetables, so he became a customer of one of the neighboring vegetable gardeners.

WHILE SELECTING the vegetables he needed, The Stroller noticed an adjoining plot that was filled with large green leaves and he wondered just what kind of a crop it was.

"That's my watermelon patch," the owner said, "and we've got some dandies."

This was a surprise. The Stroller always thought that watermelons grew only in the south.

As we walked through the patch, the owner stooped over and flicked his fingers on each of the melons to determine whether they were ripe. Finally he said, "Here's one. Take it with you."

It was a dandy. And when The Stroller attempted to pay for the vegetables, the owner said he could pay the wife, who was in charge of the cash, the next time he came over. The Stroller left with the impression that the melon was a gift.

A week later, when he called again and paid for his vegetables, the owner's wife asked, "How about the melon you took last week?" So, The Stroller had to pay for what he thought was a gift.

When he arrived home, The Stroller told the lady of the house to save the seeds. "We'll get our 65 cents back next year."

Very carefully, the seeds were saved and planted the next spring. But what a shock. The plants didn't grow very well and the only melon that showed up was one about the size of a green pepper.

WHEN HE TOLD this sad tale to Ray Grimm, a real gentleman farmer who was his partner at the Livonia City Council table, Ray just laughed and offered him a tip that would more than make up for the small melon.

Very carefully, Ray drew a circle on a bit of paper at the table and suggested that it be about three feet in diameter. Then he warned that the ground should be well cultivated. With this done he said the next step would be to plant a piece of sewer crock right in the middle.

"When you have that done, you plant the seeds in a circle around the crock — about an inch or two away — and then fill the crock with chicken manure. When you water the plants be sure you water through the chicken manure. Then watch the difference."

The Stroller did just that. And would you believe it? The next year the plants grew at great length and the melons grew like miniature replicas of the famed Goodyear blimp.

The Stroller got even for the 65 cents he paid for what he thought was a "gift" melon. But it took a lot of chicken manure to do it.

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