

editorial opinion

Headlee keeps an eye on his tax reform 'baby'

Hardly had the State Senate voted a bill to implement the Headlee tax limitation amendment than Dick Headlee himself issued a statement deploring part of the action.

The statement came out on blue paper from McMaster and Associates, the political public relations firm which Headlee's Taxpayers United, or Tax Limitation had employed in 1978 to sell voters their brand of wisdom.

It means, for one thing, that the proponents are monitoring legislative performance in implementing their political baby. For another, it means that either Headlee himself, or Taxpayers United, or both are to be construed as a going concern, to be heard from in a future election.

Very interesting — though not surprising, since Headlee's name had been bouncing around Republi-

can political circles for a long time. As president of an insurance company in Farmington Hills and a trustee of Oakland University, Headlee has twice as much going for him as George Romney, once president of American Motors, had when he entered the political arena.

WHAT HEADLEE was complaining about was how the senate had implemented the constitutional amendment that bears his name.

The senate bill had to do with rolling back local property taxes when the tax base (assessments) rises faster than the general rate of inflation.

The problem was which tax rate do you roll back — the rate authorized in home rule city's charter, which may be as high as 20 mills, or the actual rate levied last year, which may be somewhat less?

The senate said we'll roll back from the author-



Tim Richard

ized (higher) rate. Headlee said no, we should roll back from the most recently levied rate.

There's no question in my mind Headlee was right — legally. Politically and morally, it's another matter. If city home rule is to mean anything, the state has no business gumming up city charters by rolling back from the most recently levied rate.

Voters in Mancelona or Pokagon Township have no business telling city commissions in Plymouth or

Birmingham to roll back their local tax rates with a state constitutional amendment.

ANOTHER PORTION of the Headlee legacy is being enacted in Lansing, where the Department of Natural Resources is recommending new hunting and fishing license fees. Such fees are non-tax revenues. State government, local government and colleges are relying on them more and more now that "tax limitation" is with us.

The principle at work is "divide and conquer." Trappers, not a particularly large or popular group, would find their license fee hiked 200 percent. The small game hunter would pay about 37 percent more.

The non-resident hunter small game hunter would find his small game license up nearly 50 percent and his archery deer license up 167 percent.

The resident angler's fee would rise 30 percent; the non-resident, 50 percent.

What's happening is that hunters and fishermen, though numerous, are a minority. They are going to get stuck and they know it. So DNR is sticking it to the least powerful groups.

The same kind of thing just happened with college tuitions. Statewide, tuitions and fees are going up 15-20 percent. Though numerous, college students are a minority of the population.

It's precisely what we predicted would happen if voters were conned into adopting the Headlee amendment. Government can't take on the majority with a tax increase, but it can put the screws to one minority after another with fees increases.

FOOTNOTE: "Parking Fees to Soar To Pay for New Arena," said the headline in Monday's Free Press, and the story added: "Parking rates at city lots, garages and meters will increase by 40 percent to 400 percent over the next six years."

Eccentricities

by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.



Airlines make flight exciting

This is the last week of the great airline coupon giveaway.

After a lengthy strike, United Airlines decided it had to do something clever to get airline passengers back in the habit of using its flights. Its competitors had been moving in during the strike.

United came up with this gimmick: Anyone who flew on one of its flights up to Sunday, June 17, would get a half-off coupon on any United flight from July to Dec. 15.

The program was not half off on the next flight to the same destination but half off on any United flight in the continental United States.

United's closest competitor, American Airlines, felt it couldn't stand by and lose a substantial amount of business in early June, so it matched the offer.

IT DIDN'T TAKE the public long to realize that one could take a very short, cheap flight now and save a lot of money on a longer flight this summer or fall.

It is said that travel agents on the West Coast were buying up all the flights between San Francisco and Los Angeles and not even taking the flights just to get the coupons.

The coupons are transferable so the travel people could use them for their best clients.

The airlines got smarter and started giving out the coupons on board the actual flights, but it still didn't stop the craze.

Last week a group of senior citizens from Michigan hired a bus and went to Tri-City Airport in Saginaw. They all boarded a United flight to Flint and had the bus pick them up there, all getting coupons for one of United's shortest flights.

I CAN JUST IMAGINE the poor reservations people at United and American when the short flights are filled up and they try to transfer the passenger to a flight on another airline.

The passenger probably says something like, "North Central gives only beer nuts, not coupons, so I'll stay home."

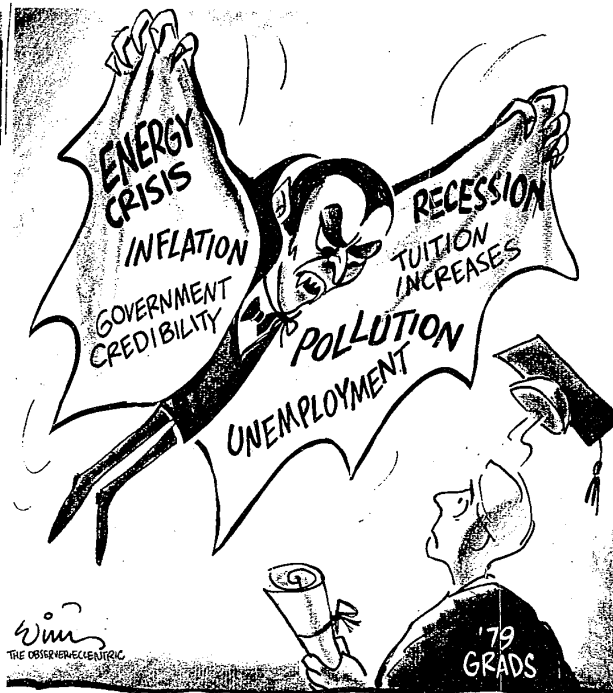
The couponing has caused some problems for business flyers. It is crowding planes and raises the question: If the company pays the fare, does the company get the coupon? Most companies say yes.

Couponing has done the job of filling up seats on airlines.

MY WIFE AND I are headed east this weekend for a couple reunion. We thought we might drive and spend some time in New England.

After figuring it out, we found it would be cheaper to fly and rent a car than to drive the entire distance, considering the value of the four coupons we would pick up.

The airlines involved in couponing will pay the price this summer and fall when their planes are filled up with half-farers, but it certainly helped United get back in business and has brought an excitement to air travel.



Staebler warns

Weak parties — loss for all

With the political election season quickly rounding the corner, the prospect looks bleak that voters will have much choice when pulling down the lever for local candidates.

Full-time mayors will go unchallenged; too many qualified incumbents will call it quits, and those fighting over the scraps will become fewer and less qualified.

It's difficult to figure why in this country with its open electoral system fewer qualified persons prefer to participate.

An interview with veteran Michigan politico Neil Staebler in the American Enterprise Institute's Regulation magazine sheds some valuable light on the problem.

The Ann Arbor Democrat is a former congressman and recently deposed member of the Federal Election Commission (FEC). Most importantly for our purposes, he is a former chairman of the Michigan State Democratic central committee.

In short, Staebler understands party politics.

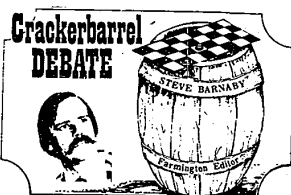
HE WARNS of the danger this country's political system faces.

"A political system without parties would be chaos," he cautions.

"Parties serve the purpose of bringing people together, of working out compromises on those issues the people have a tendency to get wrought up about, of educating voters to a broader appreciation of political problems."

In the wake of a weakened party system, there is very little candidate recruitment, candidate training and the development of experience, he says.

A quick glance around the suburban Detroit area shows that to be exactly what is happening. Party politics have fallen on hard times. Neither of the two major parties does much in the way of recruit-



ing or training candidates.

What has evolved are numerous maverick candidates, one-issue oriented, who hold little if any allegiance to political parties. Parties tend to concede certain areas which predominately are oriented toward the opposition.

GARDEN CITY and Southfield are Democratic. Farmington and Birmingham are Republican.

The predominant party is so strong that neither opposition party makes much effort to groom candidates. Everyone knows who is going to win anyway.

Compounding the situation, points out Staebler, are U.S. congressmen's disaffection with political parties.

"Congressmen have not wanted to trust any organization other than their own," he says.

"I believe the congressman's mistrust for parties is one of our great political shortcomings in the recent past and one of the greatest hazards for the future."

These local political strongmen wield immense power in their districts. More often than not, what they say goes in their area of influence. In this area, U.S. representatives have far more power than U.S. senators.

To preserve a valuable and stable political system, voters must shift their thinking and turn back to political parties. Otherwise, the quality of candidates will continue to deteriorate and decisions made on a local level will be made with less expertise.

This, indeed, will cause chaos.



NEIL STAEBLER

The Stroller

Lessons from Dad

By W. W. EDGAR

Some of the best lessons a fellow learns as he travels along life's highway were not taught in the classrooms of public schools. The Stroller becomes more and more convinced of this each year as Father's Day rolls around, for it was his dad who instilled in him the lessons that have helped him in the business world and even in his everyday life.

Dad was not a great scholar so far as book learning is concerned. He was a sickly, fragile man who had to use his native intelligence to get along. And he had a most peculiar way of passing some of his knowledge on to others.

TOO SICKLY to work in a factory, he set up a small lunch room and it was there that he taught The Stroller some of the best lessons he ever has learned.

There was the evening when The Stroller was taught his first lesson in business. He was left alone — or so he thought — to take care of the lunchroom while his father went home for dinner.

In walked a customer who asked for a package of cigarettes. He wanted the small package of Piedmonts that sold for a nickel. Once he had the cigarettes, he attempted to put them in his pocket only to learn that he already had a package.

"Will you take the cigarettes back and give me a piece of pie instead?" he asked.

His wish was granted. But when he finished eating the pie, he started for the door. Quickly The Stroller called to him that he hadn't paid for the pie.

"I gave you the cigarettes for the pie," he shot back.

"But you haven't paid for the cigarettes." To which the customer retorted, "Why should I? You have them back on the shelf."

What a quandary. The young Stroller didn't know what to do until at that precise moment his father walked in the door with a broad grin. The entire scheme had been worked out just to see what the Stroller would do in a case such as that.

ANOTHER TIME they set up another scheme. A chap walked in for a bowl of soup. After taking a few spoonfuls he asked, "Could I have some more crackers?" I have too much broth.

He was obliged and a few moments later he asked for more broth because he had used too many crackers. He was obliged again and repeated the trick three times before The Stroller's father walked in with a smile and asked, "What are you doing? Giving all that soup and crackers away for the price of the first one?" Then the so-called "customers" admitted it was all a joke.

In those days — before radio and television — we used to get the major league baseball scores over the phone and then post them on the bulletin board inside as a lure to get customers who walked downtown for an evening to get results — and then eat a piece of pie.

One evening, after getting the scores, The Stroller placed the bulletin board out on the sidewalk. Quick as a flash, his father raced out, grabbed the sign, and said, "We pay good money to get these scores. We shouldn't give away. Put them inside so they'll order a piece of pie or a glass of milk. At least they'll buy something."

This was a lesson he never forgot.

THE BIG LESSON, though, came the year The Stroller's father allowed him to go to the County Fair alone. Of course, he had a friend to watch that he didn't get lost or into trouble.

After a fine day, The Stroller arrived home, tired but happy.

As he emotionally told of the great time he had all day, The Stroller's Father asked, "What did you bring home for your sisters?"

What a shock. He hadn't thought of them. Then his father very seriously said, "I didn't think we were raising a boy as selfish as you."

From that day on The Stroller never made a trip that he didn't bring something home for his sisters — and later his wife.

So many of the great lessons a fellow learns were not taught in school.

A Division of
Suburban Communications
Corporation

Farmington Observer

"Successor of the Farmington Enterprise"

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