

editorial opinion

It's good for community that OCC pays well

In this business, we try to keep our opinions out of the news and display them only on the editorial page.

A couple of weeks ago, I wrote a story on salaries at Oakland Community College. Fifty of the 302 regular instructors were making more than \$40,000 a year, a handful were making over \$50,000 — and some are earning more than the president.

Nearly everyone who talked to me about it had read the story with shock.

I was delighted that some faculty were making big bucks. Knowledge is important, teaching is darn hard work, and I think it's great that some of OCC's excellent instructors are getting proper economic rewards.

MOST COMPANIES, unions, governments and institutions pay on a hierarchical basis.

That means the lords on the top get the biggest salaries, the earls and barons get a bit less, the

knight less, the footsoldiers substantially less, and the camp followers get the dregs.

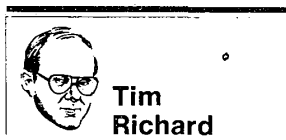
It's supposed to have something to do with responsibility, I guess.

I prefer the system I heard about in Michigan's economics department. "Marginal productivity" they called it. A particular employee is worth whatever marginal revenue his/her efforts contribute to the firm's gross.

For example, if Detroit Tiger attendance is generally 10,000, but if 50,000 show up when Mark Fidrych is to pitch, then Fidrych should be paid something resembling the prices of 40,000 tickets. That's what he drew.

BY THIS LINE of reasoning, GM could pay a particular designer or division head more than Tom Murphy or Pete Estes.

Bishop Fulton Sheen, in his prime during the 1950s, would have been worth far more than Pope Pius XII and Cardinal Spellman.



Tim Richard

Walter Cronkite should be making more than the president of CBS.

I once heard that columnists like Pete Waldmeir have contracts that pay them more than the president, publisher and executive editor of The Detroit News. I've never checked it out because I want to believe it, and I'm afraid it might turn out to be false.

Some OCC faculty members deserve more than

the top brass. Unfortunately, as I understand the system, they're getting paid mainly for the quantity of their labor, although it's possible the quality of their knowledge is responsible for the class "overloads" they get.

OCC GETS BAD marks on another card, however.

When trustees decide to hold a closed-door meeting, they do it from 8-9:15 p.m., kicking the public into the lobby and making everyone wait. That's plain rude.

The better way is to go through the agenda so people can see what they came to see, then conduct the closed door stuff at the end.

OCC worries about public relations, spends money on it, then blows it by:

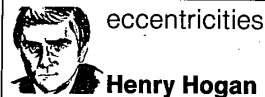
- Taking up the question of administrative salaries without putting it on the agenda.

- Not having copies of the new salaries available — not even for trustees.

- Referring to closed door meetings as "executive" meetings. "Executive" meetings haven't been legal in Michigan for three years.

- Charging a campus newspaper \$30 for a computer printout of salaries when the college could have made one computer printout and then given the kids Xerox copies for \$3.

But OCC does have good faculty, and does pay them well.



eccentricities

Henry Hogan

A \$480 bill for one ride

The evidence is now in.

About a year ago, I wrote a column about a state law that required accessibility for the handicapped for all buses purchased in the state of Michigan.

To make a bus accessible, a wheelchair lift must be added at a cost of approximately \$10,000.

In metropolitan Detroit, SEMTA and D-DOT (Detroit Department of Transportation) have about 1,150 large buses. The cost of the law will be \$11.5 million over a 12-year period.

This will be financed 80 percent by the federal government and 20 percent by the state government. In other words, the cost will come out of the taxpayers' pockets.

SEMTA ALREADY has an essential transportation system in the tri-county area which provides demand-response (dial-a-ride) lift-equipped small buses. This service will pick up the elderly and handicapped at their homes and transport them to their destinations within their own communities.

The new law requires that, on top of this system, large buses must also be lift-equipped so that the handicapped are not discriminated against.

To find out the real cost of putting the law into effect, SEMTA and D-DOT have conducted a 10-month demonstration project. On the Gratiot corridor from Mt. Clemens to Detroit, they replaced all buses with lift-equipped buses.

They then announced this in 125 newspaper releases and mailed out 60,000 free passes to inform people along the corridor that accessibility was available.

According to the 1970 census, only two-tenths of 1 percent of the people living along the corridor were classified as handicapped.

SEMTA and D-DOT spent more than \$450,000 equipping buses to make them accessible.

After 10 months of service, there was an average daily ridership of 1.4 handicapped passengers.

The cost to SEMTA and D-DOT of each passenger trip was \$480.55. This includes amortization of the equipment, maintenance of the special equipment, added schedule time, etc.

WHAT MADE the whole thing more ridiculous was that 70 percent of the trips were taken by one person who commuted to a sheltered workshop. Previously, this person had taken a SEMTA lift-equipped small bus to work at an average cost to SEMTA of less than \$6. The small bus program was — and is still — available to him.

The state of Michigan and the United States are going through budget-cutting exercises to fight inflation. No one has suggested that this program be reconsidered.

This Michigan law and the federal government's accessibility standards are one of the most glaring examples of public waste brought on by special interest lobbying. It's a waste because the people intended to be served are already served by a better program.

You ought to check to see if your legislator voted for this bonodoggle.

The columnist is also a SEMTA board member.

Maybe YOUR chair?



The Boss speaks

Six years and you're out

Now here's a fantasyland tale that even Mickey Mouse would be hard pressed to top.

Imagine that one day your boss calls you into the office and hits you with the following:

"We've decided to implement a sunset policy for our employees.

"We've found that after six years an employee comes up with too many ideas which just cost this company a lot of money.

"We want to end the careers of the professional employee whose main ambition is to keep his job," says the boss.

"BUT WHAT ABOUT my job knowledge? Don't you need my experience to run the company?" you ask, realizing that the six-year mark is right around the corner for you.

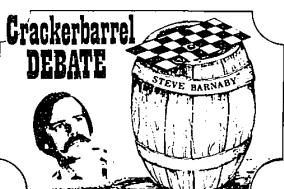
Your boss is unfappable.

"The longer men serve, the less they remember their roots, and the less open they are to new ideas. The problem is that the old-timers hold the key jobs," he says.

"We would rather have citizen businessmen who do something else besides serving this company."

Sound ridiculous? You bet it does. But that's exactly what Farmington Hills insurance executive Dick Headlee would like to do when it comes to the business of government.

FROM THE SAME man who brought you the property tax limitation which really didn't bring the homeowner any property tax relief at all, we now



have to hear how we would have a better government if we had "citizen" legislators.

Under Headlee's plan, state representatives would be limited to three two-year terms; state senators to two four-year terms; and the governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general and secretary of state to a single six-year term.

To prompt this move, Headlee is distributing petitions for yet another constitutional amendment to be placed on this November's ballot.

He needs 400,000 signatures to clutter the ballot with this utter nonsense. Do yourself a favor — don't sign.

Headlee, of all persons, should know better. He's one of those who is always yelling about how government should be run more like business.

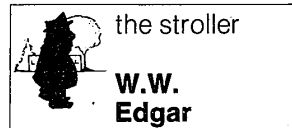
Sure would like to see his insurance business function profitably if he threw out employees just because they had been there for six or eight years.

ON THE OTHER HAND, take the argument of state Sen. Ed Pierce, D-Ann Arbor.

Pierce complains that legislators have been deluged by lobbyists (like the insurance interests). The Lansing lawmakers barely have time to keep up. To counter this, he would like to see the legislative staff beefed up with more professional persons with more expertise.

The problem in Lansing is attracting more qualified legislators. That's a problem with elective offices around the nation. Businessmen are reluctant to leave their comfortable executive suites just to put up with guys like Headlee who, in fact, make more difficult the business of government.

Experience and expertise are musts in any legislative body. Call them old-timers if it makes your cynical side feel better. But in my book they're experienced political veterans who have forsaken the good life which business offers to see the business of government continues to run.



Good fashion in old days

The visit to the old-fashioned country store with its cracker barrel and pickle tub, the saloon with its brass rail and free lunch and even an evening at an Irish wake sparked a trip down Memory Lane with a few friends the other evening.

The Stroller innocently opened up a nostalgic hour playing the game of "Do you remember?"

It all began when one of the listeners asked, "Do you remember when men wore high-buttoned shoes?"

Few did. But for The Stroller, the question brought back some of the days of his young manhood when he not only wore high-buttoned shoes but had spats along with them during the winter months.

You don't see spats any more. But there was a time when they were all the rage and a bit of high fashion. And the oxfords we wear now throughout the year were unheard of during the winter.

ANOTHER LISTENER asked, "Do you remember the old-time celluloid collar?"

What a fashion they were, and one of the most economical parts imaginable in a fellow's wardrobe.

Those now-forgotten collars came in two styles. What made them a real friend was the fact that they were washable. A fellow could wear them all day and then, before going out for an evening, he simply took soap and water and washed them.

There also were starched cuffs for shirts.

You never hear of them either. But they once were all the fashion. And what's more, they made possible the age of fancy cuff links. Some of these were just small, gold-button affairs. But the real "dude" wore cuff links that not only fastened the cuffs but ran a few inches up on the exterior of the shirtsleeve. They were show pieces when a fellow was out dining.

A third listener asked, "What about the derby hat I often hear my dad talk about?"

The old English derby? What memories.

Well, The Stroller remembers that era for it marked another step from his youth to manhood.

THE FIRST STEP came when he got his first long pants. In those days you didn't leave the stage of short pants and what they called bloomers until you were close to 18 years of age.

So, when The Stroller's mother got him his first pair of long pants, she also insisted that he get a derby to go with them.

It seems only yesterday that she took one look at him in the hat store and when the derby was fitted she said, "There goes my young boy. He's a man now."

Well, you don't see derbies much any more either. The nostalgic session brought back many other items that now are in the limbo of forgotten things.

For instance, there is the old-time shaving mug. Long before the advent of the electric razor, when men shaved with a straight razor, it was a mark of distinction to have your own shaving mug, fully initialed, on the shelf in the barber shop.

And yellow chamois gloves. You really were stylish when you flashed a pair of those.

Along with these items of style there were red and blue bottles in the window to designate an apothecary shop. And the red and white striped spinning signs that were the identification of a barber shop.

It was an interesting visit with a few friends and "Remember When" can be a good way to pass an hour or two in the evening when the TV tube is boring.

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