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opinion

Thursday, May 1, 1980

16A(F)

Mix boredom, gossip and laughs for caucus recipe

All the ingredients were there — balloons, badges, boisterous behavior and boisterous politics. This past weekend, 16,000 Michigan residents gathered to call themselves Democrats for a day. Party faithful called it the party's presidential primary caucus.

In a state where voters pride themselves on being independent, it wasn't surprising that some 30,000 other registered Democrats stayed home.

After all, this is the state where voters cast ballots with equal ardor for a Republican governor and two Democratic U.S. senators.

But the caucus had all the earmarks of a typical Democratic Party function. And in many respects, it was just that — a party.

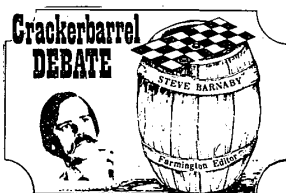
Long-haired, jean-attired party members handed out a newspaper published by the Americans for Democratic Action which rated state politicians.

It made for humorous reading among the less liberal, pipe-smoking, establishment members who spent endless hours waiting for something of significance to happen.

Nothing much did. Oh, there was the usual gossip sessions. You know, celebrity X walked into the room and everyone craned their necks to see which candidate the celebrity was supporting.

THE SECRET ballot was just a memory. After registering, bleary-eyed voters were handed ballots on which they inserted their candidate's name. They then stood in either the Kennedy, Carter, LaRouche or none-of-the-above line.

Some guy inadvertently got into the wrong line. Upon turning down a campaign button for that candidate, he was unceremoniously booed out of line. Kennedy supporters wondered out loud how any-



one could vote for a president who was unable to decide whether to negotiate with Iran or invade it. Carter supporters just frowned. While waiting for votes to be tabulated, caucus members were treated to a debate on whether the

rules should be amended to include the copyright date of Robert's Rules of Order.

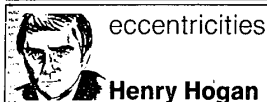
It was the highlight of the day. The auditorium was regaled with helium-filled balloons, imprinted with the name of the local congressman. He was asked a few nebulous questions and gave a few equally nebulous answers.

After making a plea for unity, the congressman waved and the crowd cheered. He left early with almost everyone wondering how he had voted that day.

SO THE DAY drew to a close. Votes were tallied, delegates chosen by a tabulating method that even the party regulars didn't quite understand.

All in one stroke of a day it was boring, exciting, laughable and very political. But most importantly, it worked. By summer's end, we will have two presidential candidates — maybe three.

That's enough for anybody's political system.



eccentricities

Henry Hogan

A faster way to elect our chief exec

Every four years, the American people go through an exercise called "electing the president." It is a complicated and expensive process that is both wasteful and time-consuming.

The U.S. Constitution provides for the election of the chief executive by the Electoral College, not by the people.

The framers of the Constitution had no intention of putting this grave responsibility in the hands of an "uninformed" electorate. One delegate to the Constitutional Convention said an election by the people would be like referring a "trial of colours to a blind man."

THE ELECTORAL College was envisioned by the framers as a kind of elite gathering in which the most distinguished and talented persons in the various states would participate. These electors would deliberate and cast an informed and independent vote for the president.

Where originally the members of the Electoral College were selected by the state legislatures, today we have a hodge-podge system that can easily thwart the will of the people.

In Michigan, the Democrats select most of their delegates to the national convention at congressional district caucuses. A small number are also selected by the state party organization. These delegates then vote to nominate the party's presidential candidate.

The state convention delegates select the slate of electors for November under the name of the presidential candidate.

THE REPUBLICANS select their precinct delegates, who elect state convention delegates, who elect national convention delegates based on the results of the state primary election. There is some question whether such a primary will be held this year.

These national convention delegates vote for a party nominee. Like the Democrats, the Republican state convention delegates pick a slate of electors to run for the Electoral College under the name of the party's presidential nominee.

When people go to the polls in November, they are not voting for a presidential candidate but for the party's slate of electors.

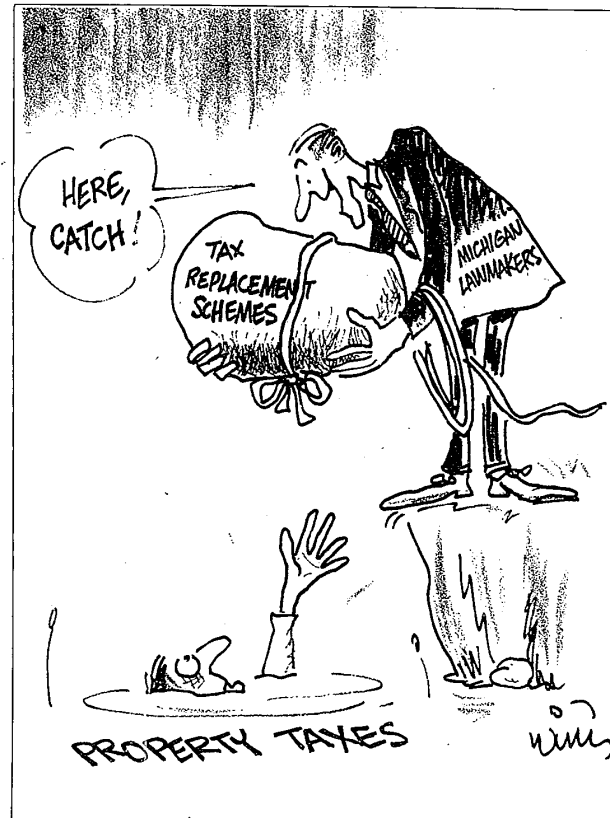
It is a winner-take-all situation. Whatever slate polls the highest number of votes gets to vote the state's entire number of votes for its presidential candidate.

Consequently, a person running for president may receive the majority of the popular vote in the nation and still fail to be elected president.

THE SIMPLER, CHEAPER system would be to have one national primary election, held on the same day throughout the country. This primary would select each party's nominee.

Then a general election would be held in November, and the people themselves would elect their president. The expense of many primaries would be eliminated, the election period would be shortened, the middlemen would be eliminated, and we would have true democracy in the country.

There have been many constitutional amendments floating around providing for this. Because it takes power away from party politicians, they never seem to get passed in Congress.



Frosty had no defense

One of the most appreciated rewards a fellow gets for writing a column in a newspaper is to hear from those who have taken the time to read it.

Over the years, The Stroller has received more than his share of letters from readers. They were not all flattering. In fact many have been the times when the critics tore him apart for some of the views he has taken.

Then, occasionally, comes a letter from someone he never has met that becomes one of his prized possessions.

Such was the case during the past few days when the mail carrier dropped off a letter from Edgar Logan, a resident of Canton Township and a retired professor who specialized in teaching English.

So much did The Stroller enjoy the letter that he decided to share it with the readers. Here is Mr. Logan's letter, which he titled "How a pedant killed a puppy with words."

"I AM A RETIRED English teacher who has chosen to spend the rest of my life in the Plymouth-Canton area. But I have a sad note to relate. I feel that I am directly responsible for the death of my Plymouth sister's (Mrs. Don Stacey) dog.

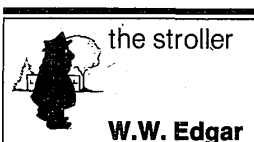
"This paragon of a puppy was named Frosty. He was the apple of the eye of both my niece and nephew. Frosty would bring the paper, fetch the stick, and generally exude love and obedience all over the place.

"No social occasion at my sister's home was complete until Frosty had rolled over a couple of times, deposited a slipper in someone's lap and stuck out a paw to be shaken hands with."

"Unfortunately, my sister, her husband and the niece and nephew had also taught Frosty to 'lay down.' This was more than I, the retired grammarian, could abide.

"The pedagogic instincts of 40 years of classroom English teaching rose in hot rebellion. One evening I treated my sister and her family to a comprehensive lecture on the difference between 'lie' and 'lay.'"

"The lecture, I thought, was witty, lucid and would clear up their uncertainty between the use of 'lie' and 'lay' and 'sit' and 'set' for all time.



the stroller

W.W. Edgar

"FLUSHED WITH new knowledge, the family started instructing Frosty to 'lie down.' When Frosty became confused and didn't seem to know whether to 'sit' or 'set,' the family tried very hard to explain the grammatical problem to him.

"Now high school students have built-in defense mechanisms which dogs lack. When a pupil becomes confused; he ignores the teacher, writes him off as a prissy pedant, and thereby survives.

"Frosty couldn't do this. He loved all humans. All he could do was try to make sense out of the new commands he was now being given.

"Matters were made worse by the fact that every now and then Frosty's master and mistress would backslide and tell Frosty to 'lay down.'"

"Poor Frosty's confusion increased daily. He knew there was something wrong with 'laying,' but early training dies hard. He never did get 'lie' and 'lay' sorted out in his canine mind. Frosty became neurotic. He refused to face reality as represented by the word 'lie.' He became — dog lovers should excuse the expression — catatonic and died.

"Mr. Edgar, I never will forgive myself. My niece English and over concern for grammatical corrections killed that dog just as surely as if I had shot him.

Sincerely,

Edgar Logan,
Detroit Public School
and Wayne State English teacher
and school administrator for 40 years."Tim
Richard

Some issues for 10 OCC candidates

Memo to Theodore Dziurman of Troy, Robert Filiatrault of Bloomfield Hills, Mariellen Greenburg of Farmington, David Hackett of Rochester, Margaret MacTavish of Birmingham, Richard Pappas of Troy, Veronica Sexton of Pontiac, Nancy Vangilder of West Bloomfield, Barbara J. Willing of Madison Heights and John Yezman of Rochester:

Thank you for offering yourselves as a civic duty as candidates for the Oakland Community College Board of Trustees.

You must already know OCC doesn't get the public attention it deserves — partly because folks tend to limit their scrutiny to their community kindergarten-through-12 districts, partly because OCC itself keeps a low public profile.

Three of you will be elected June 9 to jobs that pay nothing, to attending meetings that often run to 1 a.m., with little chance for the kind of fame that comes to (say) congressmen, although the college district is as big as two congressional districts.

Two of you — Hackett and Ms. Willing — are incumbent trustees, but the rest are virtual political unknowns. You have less than six weeks to make an impression.

YOU SHOULD PLAN to wrestle with the OCC board's policy of holding meetings with the dubious title of "workshops" in members' homes.

The board held one such session on a Sunday morning in December in Trustee Suzanne Reynolds' home, another on a Sunday afternoon in August in Chairwoman Lila Johnson's home.

Honestly, are those really within the spirit of the state Open Meetings Act? Do board meetings in members' homes help or hinder public participation in the workings of government?

Should such "workshops" be continued in private homes on Sundays? Or should the board, if necessary, schedule more meetings at 8 p.m. Thursdays in the regular meeting room?

THE MOST important single task a board faces is selecting a president. The president sets the direction of the college, and the board's role tends to be "supportive" rather than "adversary," as with the president and Congress.

Well, after two years, what do you think of President Robert F. Roelofs? I am aware that at least one of you would like to see him replaced.

Personally, I get along with him — but that's from a newsman's point of view.

What do the rest of you think of him as a goal-setter? As a goal achiever? His ability to organize resources and pick subordinates? His character as the head of an institution serving 20,000 students?

THE BOARD has put on the ballot a proposal whose effect would be to shift some property tax money going from capital into operations.

The board's vote was 7-0. So far, I have heard no contrary point of view. Is there any?

What about tuition? Even before the Headlee tax limitation amendment was passed, government had a tendency to raise more and more of its revenue from user fees. Tuition isn't affected by Headlee.

So what is your attitude toward the mix of State taxes, local property taxes and tuition at OCC? We realize you new candidates can't be experts on all the details, but you should be able to tell us your general philosophies with some precision.

Ten candidates! That's a big field. This newspaper will try to do the election justice. And we hope, the winners will be able to do justice to a college which is better than most realize.

discover
Michigan
Bill
Stockwell

Did you know that when the Birmingham Public Library opened in December 1895, it shared quarters with not only the police and fire departments but also with a public hall, a gallery and a feed store? A strict rule, however, was that no space in this community building was ever to be rented out to a pool hall.