

# Hope abounds despite 'hick' OCC politics

"I'll tell you things about Oakland Community College, but I don't want my name used. I'm afraid for my job."

—OCC faculty members talking to our staff

"Of course, the most despicable tactic is to air complaints and allegations to outside bodies such as the news media. They can't solve any issue; we must talk directly with each other, not via them. . . . The only conceivable result is the creation of a poor image regarding the college. Those who resort to outsiders certainly don't have the college interest in mind, or even their own, and it becomes obvious the incentive is spite rather than dedication."

—OCC President Robert F. Roelofs in college newsletter, Nov. 9, 1979

"At this point, it's too technical for the press." OCC Controller Anthony Janson on the state auditor general's 58-page report on OCC financial practices

"It's not necessary for you to attend every board meeting. At this college, the news comes from the president's office." —OCC administrator speaking to this editor

OAKLAND COMMUNITY College is a pretty good school. No doubt you're surprised to read that, given the foregoing remarks from people inside it. In the three years I've been assigning reporters there and covering a few stories myself, I have seen mostly good things. You hear tales about incompetents on the faculty,



**Tim Richard**

but every school has its share of those. What I've seen is the sizable proportion of genuinely excellent scholars and educators. You hear tales about waste in the buildings. Watching the planning process and the awarding of contracts, however, I conclude OCC's leadership knows what it's doing.

**PRESIDENT Roelofs** is a competent administrator.

He has developed a list of goals after listening to the elected trustees. He gets committees moving on them. He puts dollar amounts on the programs. He works the programs into the budget.

Roelofs does, unfortunately, have foot-in-mouth disease. His use of the word "despicable" in a country where folks have freedom of speech, and his reference to community newspapers as "outsiders," are evidence of that. He phrases some good ideas crudely and gets himself in trouble fairly often.

And yet on balance, Roelofs deserves more attention and respect than he's getting. We can all cite persons with the title of "president" who are glib but incompetent. Roelofs is OK.

OCC HAS HAD little public attention over the years.

When Joe Hill (who died in 1977) was president, OCC belonged to no professional associations. It sought no public attention.

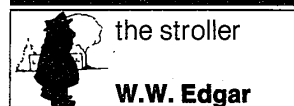
Even today, its agendas are so cryptic that you can't figure out what's going to happen. Its board is still innocent of what's in the Open Meetings Act. Its academic atmosphere is exhilarating, but its political atmosphere is more like that of a hick township.

OCC has an election coming up June 9, the same time as your local kindergarten-through-12th school district's. OCC voters will elect three trustees and decide on a tax shift.

If you are a voter, study this newspaper and vote. If you are a faculty member or faculty union leader, talk to the board in those "public comments" sections on the agenda.

"It is saddening to observe the bickering, the jealousies, the suspicions among campuses, groups and individuals. We all know that every organization has an element of this, but OCC must have more than its share."

Bob Roelofs spoke eloquently that time.



## Long career satisfying

It's that time of year when the students start their quest for summer jobs, and The Stroller likes to recall the morning he started on his first assignment for wages.

It seems like only yesterday that he was forced to leave school for economic reasons and seek employment. It was a heartbreaking move, for he had always been at the head of his class and he had his eyes on a college education.

His search for a job was spurred on by his widowed mother when she looked across the table and said, "Just because you have to quit school doesn't mean that you have to quit learning. You can learn a good deal about life on a job, too."

By a stroke of what he thought was good fortune, The Stroller succeeded on his first try for a job. He was hired by the manager of the grocery store to help behind the counter and told to report for duty the next morning.

THAT EVENING he didn't tell his mother of his success. He wanted to surprise her. So he asked that he be awakened in the morning "because that was the best time to look for a job, not in the afternoon." Awakened at the hour he suggested, The Stroller merrily went down to the grocery store, which was only a city block from home. With a whole new world in front of him, he eagerly went behind the counter to await the customers.

And who do you suppose walked through the door as the first customer? His mother.

That evening at the table she asked, "Why didn't you tell me you had a job at the grocery store instead of surprising me?"

WITHOUT WAITING for an answer she continued, "Well, you sure did surprise me. But now I want you to go down to the store in the morning and quit."

"But, Mom," the young Stroller countered, "I am going to be paid \$9 a week, and I can work my way up to \$15. And we need the money."

"Never mind that," she countered. "Money isn't everything at this stage. I want you to learn a trade, and being a grocery clerk isn't a trade."

Then she added, "Remember, what you have in your head no one can steal from you." It was a remark that The Stroller has carried through life.

So, the next morning he sorrowfully quit the job in the grocery store. Heeding his mother's advice, he obtained employment in a big cement plant as an apprentice in the machine shop. It wasn't exactly what he liked.

But it was the start of learning a trade. After the apprenticeship of four years, he became a full-fledged mechanic. But it never took. He hated it.

IN THE NEXT few years, he made the rounds of all the machine shops in the area. But still he dreaded the thought of following that path for the rest of his life.

Then, one morning Dame Fortune smiled on him. He dropped in for a visit to the town's weekly newspaper office. It was to be just a visit. But what he saw fascinated him, and it wasn't long until The Stroller was seated at a typewriter hunting and pecking at the keys to put his thoughts on paper.



## Tax labyrinth mystifies public

Upon examining the fuss over Michigan property tax reform, a taxpayer easily could agree with 18th century English economist David Ricardo.

"Taxation under every form presents a choice of evils," he told us in his "Principals of Political Economy and Taxation."

And tax reform in this state is, indeed, a political shell game. Officially, there are more than 20 proposals floating around for consideration. But realistically, only four or five have enough political backing to get off the ground.

This messianic plethora of tax relief proposals has left the electorate profoundly confused.

In 1978, we had to suffer through the protestations of insurance executive Richard Headlee, whose proposal was supported narrowly by Michigan's electorate.

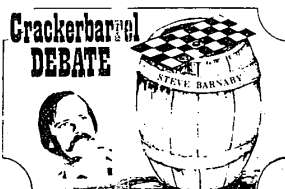
But Headlee's amendment fell far short of its billing. Disgruntled taxpayers found themselves back at square one.

Now they are reluctant to support any of the proposals.

Taxpayer mentality has gotten down to "whom do you trust?" Many are answering "none of the bums."

But that is irresponsible.

On the other hand, some voters are signing just about any petition thrust in their faces which promises tax reform for the middle class.



CLEAR THINKING taxpayers should resist such temptation. Truthfully, tax relief for the middle class is highly unlikely. After all, it is the middle class which has the bucks to pay the bills in this country.

Equity, not relief, should be the goal sought by concerned taxpayers.

But the mood of the electorate dictates a vengeance against any and all government taxation. And that's bad for everyone.

Governments exist to serve residents — especially local governments.

The taxation plan with the potential for harming government services the most is being proposed by

tax-slash militant Robert Tisch.

The Shiawassee County drain commissioner dreams of draining state and local governmental coffers to the point of dehydration.

Tisch's plan would lop \$2 billion out of the state budget in one fell swoop. From bottom to top, services would be cut substantially. Items such as state police, corrections, education and social services would be cut.

Worse yet, local governments would lose as much as 30 percent of their budgets. No matter how much taxpayers believe there is waste in government, only the foolhardy believe spending should be cut by that much.

ON THE OTHER HAND, proposals such as those put together by state Rep. Mark Siljander, R-Three Rivers, and Perry Bullard, D-Ann Arbor, offer sound alternatives.

Siljander's proposal would cut property taxes which would be made up through an increased sales tax. Bullard's plan would shift state funding to the income tax.

These two proposals deal with equity, unlike Tisch's proposal which deals in unmitigated revenge.

Think before signing a petition. It's our state's future which is at stake.

## Spring hatches wardrobe butterflies

As the weather warms up, we in the Midwest are exposed to a whole new life — something like when a caterpillar becomes a butterfly.

The ritual of bringing the summer clothes down from the attic and putting away winter garb marks a change in lifestyle.

Those who live in a climate that rarely changes — like Florida or San Francisco — are denied this change of lifestyle. Spring and fall are meaningless to them.

For a man, the seasonal change is subtle. According to the clothes psychologist in one of the metropolitan papers, a man can put on a blue suit and attend practically every function imaginable, except the most formal ones, and for those he can wear the same tux year after year.

Dark suits imply power, so he may also want a grey suit to use when visiting his banker because that combination implies honesty.

IF A WOMAN wants to be stylish, however, it is a whole, nother story.

To be really stylish, a woman has to be either very creative, marry well or have several different groups of friends which don't overlap.

If she has non-overlapping friends, she can wear the same dress to several functions without anyone's being the wiser.



eccentricities

**Henry Hogan**

A stylish woman is one who never has a thing to wear, but always needs more closet space.

She needs day clothes, evening clothes and formal clothes, all with shoes and belts to match.

She is always being bucked by the fashion designers who make their living by changing styles so they can sell more clothes.

Our lady of fashion must subscribe to all the leading periodicals so she knows what's in.

When she attends a party, she must look around to see if anyone else is wearing the same dress. If that disaster happens, she must only talk to people on the other side of the room so no one notices.

If she is a career woman, she has to have a professional wardrobe to boot.

UNFORTUNATELY, even if she does all the right things, there are some people whose bodies are made for wearing clothes, and there are others

who look dumpty, even in the latest, most expensive fashions.

The alternative of going without clothes usually doesn't solve this problem and leads to difficulties with the law.

The spring ritual of bringing out summer clothes is only the start of another spring ritual called shopping. Maybe people in non-changing climates figured this out long ago.



discover  
**Michigan**  
**Bill Stockwell**

Did you know that the new Philip A. Hart Plaza on the Detroit riverfront extends 680 feet along Jefferson Avenue and 700 feet from Jefferson to the river? Few persons know that in addition to its approximately 10 acres above ground, there are an additional 3.2 acres of development underground. An entire 250,000 square feet of pinkish-grey granite covers the plaza floor.