

Thanksgiving, the retarded and Chief Massasoit

This year marks the 400th anniversary of the birth of Massasoit, chief of the Wampanoags. We remember him at Thanksgiving time because of his relationship with the struggling, starving Plymouth Colony in 1621.

One day Massasoit appeared with 60 painted warriors before the startled Pilgrims. His purpose was not war but to form a friendly league with his new neighbors.

Gov. John Carver was impressed by Massasoit and accepted the offer. Pilgrims and Wampanoags concluded a treaty which was kept sacredly for 50 years.

They dined together at the end of the harvest season, as we observe Thanksgiving today.

WE, TOO, in the suburbs of southeastern Michigan, have new neighbors this year. In one town after another, group homes for the retarded have been set up.

The retarded are like our Pilgrim forefathers in many ways.

As the Pilgrims had left their native England for Holland and then the shores of Cape Cod to find a congenial home, these retarded were previously in institutions — human warehouses — run by the state.

With the help of state funds (much like the English king's charter), and under guidance of nonprofit corporations, the retarded are making new homes among us.

Like the Pilgrims, they are learning many things. They are learning to hold down jobs, in sheltered workshops and other places. They are learning to do household tasks, to take care of themselves. They are serving each other the holiday meal.

THEIR OPPORTUNITIES came quickly. Only a few years earlier, the Pilgrims had been in the process of being absorbed by the Dutch.

Only 13 or 14 years ago, the notions of special education and community homes for the retarded were just gleams in the eyes of some far-sighted people.

In the same way the Pilgrims procured colonial charters from King James, the retarded have won rights under Michigan law. To the extent possible, they will be housed in normal homes in normal communities and live in something resembling a normal family setting. There is schooling for the handicapped until the age of 26 and life services (residential placement) thereafter.

In the same way the crown found it was easier to let the Pilgrims have a new home than to oppress them in the old country, the state has found it's cheaper to place the retarded in small group homes than in institutions.

EVENTUALLY, the settlers in what is now Massachusetts ran into trouble with Massasoit's son, King Philip, and there was war.

The retarded have frequently run into hostilities. Fires have been set as some of the homes were being readied for occupancy. Others have been vandalized.

Some of the hostility has been polite. Some of the native suburbanites have attempted to use the police power of the state — zoning — to keep out the newcomers. Even now, hard-hearted legislators are attempting to manipulate the laws of the Michigan tribe to effectively prohibit the newcomers.

Many good people — the legislative majority, state agencies, private support groups — have worked to make this new kind of life possible.

Last weekend, the Metropolitan Committee for Community Awareness of Developmental Disabilities chose to honor the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers for its part in telling the story of the retarded citizens' struggles for a better life.

We accepted it — but with the understanding that on Thanksgiving Day we should all drink a toast to the spirit of Chief Massasoit.



American jingoism is outdated

All this rattle about buying American is poppycock — pure poppycock.

Let's take a typical shopping safari with Mrs. Middle Class American.

She runs out to her fuel-efficient American Motors Spirit and drives off to the local A&P to do some last-minute shopping. Relatives are coming for Thanksgiving, you know.

It's a nice afternoon to get a jump on the Christmas shopping, so the next stop is the nearest shopping mall. Aunt Minnie always has liked the clothes at Saks Fifth Avenue so she makes a stop to sort through the clothes racks.

Next it's a gift for the teen-age daughter. The Ups 'n Downs clothing shop seems to fit the bill.

Oops, let's not forget toys. That new F.A.O. Schwartz toy store at the Ren Cen sounds different. On the way, she passes the now-defunct Korvettes which closed down earlier this year.

Back home, she calls Mr. Middle Class American who is on a New York business trip.

Be sure to stop at Ohrbachs and Gimbels to pick up some gifts there, she tells him.

Not bad, still some time to sit back and relax before the kids come home from school.

The typical all-American shopping spree, you say. Wrong, dead wrong.

EVERY COMPANY just mentioned is either partially or wholly owned by foreign companies. And every time we purchase a product at one of these stores, some or all of the profits are going to Europe.

Realists know we live in a world-dominated market place. And that's the way it should be.

Unfortunately, too many Americans are stuck with the jingoistic notion that it's unpatriotic to buy something from a foreign-owned company. Actually, it's just about impossible to survive without subsidizing the foreign market.

In the last eight years, at least 23 major American companies have been purchased by European firms, according to the Dec. 1 edition of Fortune Magazine.

Gimbel Brothers, parent company to Saks, was purchased by BAT Industries of Great Britain in 1973. Approximately half of A&P is owned by the Tengelmann Group of Germany. Ups 'n Downs is wholly owned by Tootal of Great Britain, while Franz Carl Weber owns 95 percent of F.A.O. Schwarz.

Korvettes, which closed all of its Detroit-based stores, was purchased in 1979 by France's Agache-Wilott.

One of the first major European acquisitions was made in 1962 when the Brenninkmeyer family of the Netherlands purchased Ohrbachs.

AS MOST KNOW American Motors has gone into partnership with French-owned Renault, which is on the verge of taking over controlling interest.

In short, it's time for America to face the harsh realities of the market place. It's time to throw away the isolationist bumper stickers urging us to buy American.

Sit back, relax, turn on the Sony television and pop open a bottle of Heineken.



Thanks for simple things

It was just a bit ironical that The Stroller met up with old Jim on his travels the other afternoon. It had been years since he had seen him. And when they met, the Stroller gave him the usual salutation at this time of year by wishing him a very happy Thanksgiving.

Old Jim had earned the reputation of being one of the world's worst cynics. So it wasn't surprising when he shot back:

"What have we got to be thankful for?"

"Can we be thankful for the spiraling economy."

"Can we be thankful for the long lines of unemployed workers?"

"Can we be thankful for the sickness of the automobile industry?"

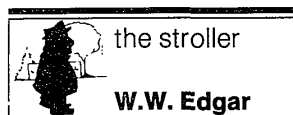
"I just paid 99 cents for a loaf of bread and \$2.50 for a pair of rubber heels on my walking shoes. Can I be thankful for anything like that?"

On and on he went dispelling any thought that he would have a happy Thanksgiving Day. And all the while The Stroller couldn't help wondering how Old Jim would have felt if he had experienced some of the unusual Thanksgiving Days The Stroller had in his life.

ONE OF THE Thanksgiving Days The Stroller well remembers came during the height of the Depression in 1930. At the time he was fighting poverty as a member of the sports staff of the Detroit Free Press.

Came the week before the day of thanks and a notice went up on the bulletin board notifying the staff of a 10 percent reduction in their wages (salary wouldn't be a proper name for what was paid). That was bad enough. We all read the notice and gulped.

Two days later another notice went up, notifying us of another 10 percent reduction. And, lo and behold, two days after that came another notice conveying the sad message that we would not only face another 10 percent cut, but that the wages would be paid half in cash and half in script, which



the company said it hoped would some day in the future be redeemed.

Talk about a joyful Thanksgiving Day. All the joy was taken out of it.

THERE WAS another time when The Stroller and his young bride had opened a savings account and planned a family dinner only to learn that the banks had been closed and our bank account was frozen. So another Thanksgiving Day had anything but joy.

Even in his younger days when The Stroller was a member of the Boy Scout football team back home he suffered a degree of agony on a cold, rainy Thanksgiving day.

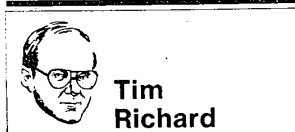
The scouts were playing the high school team in the old creek field which was carved out of a cow pasture. For more than three quarters we slithered around in the mud without a score.

Finally, The Stroller recovered a fumble and the team went on to score and win the game. But what a shock he got the next morning when he picked up the paper to read that it was too dark and murky to determine who recovered the fumble. What an ego chaser that was. And on Thanksgiving Day.

Now, as he strolls along the river of printers ink, The Stroller enjoys any day that he wakes up, puts his feet on the floor, opens his eyes and takes a breath.

If he can do that this Thanksgiving morning, it will be a great day regardless of how high the spiraling economy may go.

So have a happy and joyous Thanksgiving Day.



Public gets a good taste of Tisch

The recession did to Michigan what Bob Tisch and his unsuccessful Proposal D tried to do. Even though voters rejected the Tisch tax cut Nov. 4, we are getting a pretty good dose of budget cuts anyway.

Remember, Gov. William G. Milliken and the bipartisan Establishment in Lansing said that if Proposal D passed, the general fund budget would have to be cut more than 50 percent.

Well, because of the recession and lost tax revenues, Milliken recently made another round of state budget cuts which "represent a cut of more than 20 percent in the activities of state government since the first of the year."

"You know what the impact would be of a cut of more than 20 percent in your household budget or in your business or farm budget. This gives you an idea of the difficulty and impact of the decisions we have had to make."

THE LESSON is this: If we look at how Milliken handled a 20 percent budget cut, we can imagine what a 50 percent Tisch-inspired budget cut would have been like.

Here are the areas which got increases over 1980 despite the budget cuts:

- Corrections (prisons) 15.1 percent.
- Judiciary (courts) 12.9 percent.
- Social services (aid to dependent children, general assistance, etc.) 8.7 percent.
- State police 7.6 percent.

Before going into the cuts, I remind everyone of what our editorial board said Oct. 23 in opposing the Tisch tax cut: "The middle class of Michiganders would suffer most from the kind of state budget cuts Proposal D would inflict."

So here are the services that were cut:

- Grants (revenue sharing with local government) 50.9 percent.
- Natural resources 29 percent.
- School aid 25 percent.
- Community colleges 7.7 percent.
- Higher education 5.1 percent.

GO BACK, for a moment, to the natural resources item.

What will remain in that area will be environmental protection programs — fighting pollution, halting toxic wastes, inspecting landfills and so on.

What will go will be some of the state parks, security personnel, maintenance personnel, lifeguards and the rescue helicopter.

In the decade of the 1970s, the number of arrests by DNR officers for violation of fish and game laws tripled. These budget cuts brought on by the recession, and the further budget cuts Tisch would have caused, are no doubt good news to poachers.

On the second day of deer hunting season, a hunter told me he had seen two dead does and a dead fawn. He showed me one doe. She had been gutted, indicating her killing was deliberate and not an accident.

We can get ready for more of that.

THE MIDDLE CLASS of Michigan should learn a few lessons before flirting with any more crazy Tisch-type proposals.

The judiciary won't get cut because you can't lay off judges. Welfare won't be cut much because you can't humanely let people starve. Prisons can't be closed, although some bleeding hearts will try to get court orders to do it.

The rich folks can send their kids to private academies and fly to Canada or the Rockies for their vacations.

Budget cuts — whether caused by a recession or a Tisch tax cut — are going to hit the middle class hardest.