

Dems sharpen knives to slit their own throats

When it comes to capturing the state's executive office, this decade will be another disaster for the Michigan Democratic Party.

Already various Democratic factions are at one another's throats. The latest skirmish is between former Democratic State Chairman Morley Winograd and Detroit Mayor Coleman Young.

In a battle over representation on the Democratic National Committee, Winograd recently accused the state's black power structure of disloyalty in the last gubernatorial campaign.

In that forgettable affair, his eternal highness, Gov. William Milliken, was pitted against upstart state Sen. William Fitzgerald, D-Detroit.

The always controversial Winograd intimidated the Young forces were, in fact, Milliken allies who sat on their hands while Fitzgerald went down the tube and became just another asterisk in Michigan history.

Some blacks have countered that somehow Winograd is a racist.

Such nonsense.



THROUGH THE YEARS Democrats have been proud to boast that while they scrap like a bunch of alley cats in primary battles, they unite in general elections to defeat the foe.

But this scrapping has aided in keeping them out of the governor's chair for the past 18 years. You

can bet when votes are counted for the upcoming gubernatorial election, the Democrats once again will be out in the cold.

Consistently, the Democrats beat themselves. Over the years, when the primary fur stops flying, a weak, compromise Democratic candidate is fielded. Certainly Milliken, and George Romney before him, have proven to be formidable candidates in their own right. But Democrats have done little in the way of candidates to counter the Republican grip on the state chief executive office.

Certainly, blacks weren't the only ones to be turned off by Fitzgerald's candidacy. Hordes of Democrats flocked to the Milliken bandwagon.

THE UNFORTUNATE beneficiaries of this Democratic squabbling are Michigan voters. Over the last two decades they have been offered lackluster Democratic gubernatorial candidates.

Recall the fallen: 1962, John Swainson; 1964, Neil Stabler; 1966, Zolton Ferency; 1970 and 1974, Sander Levin; 1978, William Fitzgerald.

Not exactly a roll call of charisma.

With Michigan's economy in near ruin, now — more than ever — it's the Democratic Party's obligation to field a candidate who offers some clear alternatives, who will be listened to by the Michigan electorate, and who has a chance to win.

But the future looks grim. Party regulars are looking to State Rep. Bobby Crim, D-Davidson, house speaker. Crim is understandably reluctant to commit such political suicide.

Fitzgerald has been heard to mutter he may try again and U.S. Rep. William Brodhead, D-Detroit, has toyed with the thought.

BUT THE REAL race will be in the Republican primary, when insurance executive Richard Headlee will take on Milliken. The Farmington Hills resident is an eloquent spokesman for conservative causes.

He has a better chance, if there is such a thing, to knock off Milliken than any Democrat.

Can America withstand another Valley Forge?

Two hundred years later, Gen. George Washington and his troops in their tri-corner hats, huddled in their miserable camp huts at Valley Forge, Pa., seem like remote figures in history.

Yet consider what Washington put up with in addition to the cold.

He had difficulty getting enlistments.

American troops resented authority and mocked their officers.

The pacifist Quakers of Pennsylvania wouldn't take up arms.

In North Carolina, lowlanders and hill people were at odds.

Paper currency flooded the country. Barbershops literally papered the walls with nearly worthless bank notes.

The former colonies, now boasting of being "free and independent States," were jealous of the central government and vowed to resist giving it any power.

The Confederation and the 13 states ran up big debts to finance the war, then were unable to pay.

Philadelphia, the capital of the nation and seat of the Continental Congress, fell to the British, and the new nation's affairs had to be conducted for awhile in the bunkers of Lancaster, Pa.

The states would permit the national government no taxation powers. There was, in effect, a tax revolt even before there were any taxes to revolt against.

IN MANY WAYS, America today is in a similar position.

Inflation — that is, the amount of money chasing goods — has doubled in less than a decade.

The federal government is running up debts, while states and cities fight off the economic wolf at the door.

The industrial and urban Northeast and Midwest, the agribusinesses of the Plains, the oil and coal interests of the West, retires pinched by inflation, the young people trying to get a start, the races —

all seem indifferent to, or even brutally unconcerned, about each other's plight. National unity is weak.

Washington, D.C., is safe from enemy attack, but our embassy in Iran fell a year ago, and more than four dozen personnel are still held hostage.

There is a tax revolt.

The economy is in shambles.

There is an anti-Washington feeling in the land.

WE HAVE NO miracle cures, no quick-fixes to offer President-elect Ronald Reagan. But we do suggest a look at Washington and Valley Forge for some principles.

The new little nation sent a wise statesman named Ben Franklin as envoy to Paris, and won a major ally. France provided sea power to end the war's final siege at Yorktown. We need to cultivate allies.

Washington once put his entire military strategy into one sentence:

"Our hopes are not placed in any particular city or spot of ground, but in preserving a good army, furnished with proper necessities, to take advantage of favorable opportunities, and waste and defeat the enemy by piecemeal."

And so the Americans did, at relatively small engagements at Trenton, Princeton, Saratoga, Kings Mountain.

Quiet courage. Unwavering moral principle. Firm, fair discipline. Loyalty to the vision of a large nation. Vigorous administration. Sound finance. Orderly enforcement of laws, human rights, property rights. Bold decisions. The element of surprise. And faith in the Creator.

Washington didn't see the fruits of those applied principles overnight. For the young American nation, Valley Forge actually lasted some years.

May the spirit that brought the new nation out of the depths of Valley Forge two centuries ago rescue the mature nation again today.



The Silverdome: pick, pick, pick

To hear some of the more vocal and ignorant sportscasters tell it, you'd think the \$800,000 state subsidy for the Silverdome went into the pockets of William Clay Ford or the Detroit Lions.

No issue, not even the SEMTA rapid transit plan, is so badly misunderstood in Michigan.

One is driven to the almost paranoid conclusion that if the Silverdome Stadium had been built in Detroit, the subsidy voted again by the Michigan Legislature last week would have passed with only the barest fluttering of an eyelash.

THE SILVERDOME subsidy was approved in the so-called "Christmas tree" bill — a long list of state grants.

Aid to the Detroit Institute of Arts was part of the package. DIA is a department of the city of Detroit, but its existence is deemed to be of benefit to the entire state, so the entire state kicks into its operation.

Ditto with the Detroit Main Library.

All kinds of outside money was pumped into the Joe Louis Arena without any of the fuss attendant upon the Silverdome subsidy.

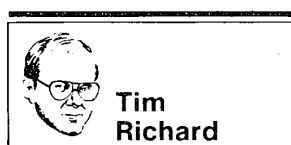
The state school aid bill is full of little gems — bilingual education comes to mind — that benefit only a few school districts, and one of them is always Detroit. Yet you never hear about those ornaments.

THE SILVERDOME subsidy goes to the city of Pontiac, which, if you haven't looked lately, is an aging, inner city — the county seat of Oakland — not an affluent suburb of manure and laws.

Pontiac turns this money over to its stadium authority, which uses the grant to pay interest and principal to bondholders.

If the state subsidy were withdrawn, Pontiac would either have to hike its property tax rate three mills or default on the bonds.

A default would have to have to Pontiac's credit rat-



Tim Richard

ing and reflect badly on the state of Michigan's reputation, since local governments are creatures of the state.

THE SILVERDOME subsidy is not a welfare measure to subsidize some bums. It's an economic stimulus, because the stadium has been a boon to the hotel, restaurant and convention business of southeast Michigan.

When Wayne County was talking about building a football stadium in Detroit, the state aid figure people were talking about was \$3.2 million, which is 400 percent of what the Silverdome gets.

When the state legislature votes \$800,000 to Pontiac, it is not taking bread from the mouths of schoolteachers and game wardens. The revenue comes from a racetrack tax — 16 cents on every \$2 bet. The same revenue aids Hazel Park, Livonia, Northville and Jackson — sites of race tracks and crime problems.

USING GOVERNMENT money for economic stimulation is as traditional as apple pie as Alexander Hamilton's 1791 "Report on the Manufactures."

Yet none of these other stimuli is subject to such nitpicking, sportscaster sneering and legislative demagoguery.

Only the Silverdome becomes the subject of political controversy every time the Christmas tree bill is lit up in Lansing.

Yes, it would be nice if Silverdome could pick up enough convention business to do without the state subsidy. In the meantime, however, if our friendly legislators in Lansing are going to pick on one subsidy, they should study all the other ornaments with equal diligence.

How we caught the true spirit

Every year along about this time, The Stroller's thoughts carry him back to the little white church on top of the hill back in Pennsylvania where he was introduced to the real spirit of Christmas — that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

He was just a young lad in knee breeches and had left the children's large class in Sunday school to join with a group a bit older in the main auditorium.

When Capt. Joseph Matchette, the kindly old superintendent, took him to his new location he introduced The Stroller to his new teacher, a young woman named Mary Evans.

It was just a few weeks before Christmas, and one of the first things she did to was to gather us about her and suggest that we show the real Christmas spirit by adopting a poor family and making up a nice basket we could present on Christmas morning.

UP TO THAT time The Stroller and his sisters looked forward to Christmas morning with great enthusiasm, solely to find out what Santa had left in our stockings. There wasn't much thought of going out to give presents to anyone.

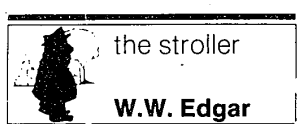
But after listening to our new Sunday School teacher, we agreed that we would help to prepare a basket of food and maybe some clothing for a needy family.

There was no trouble finding a poor family in our little town.

Miss Evans found a family of mother, dad and four children and the head of the house was too sickly to work.

At first it was suggested that we give our box of candy and the orange that was the traditional gift from the church. Fine, but we kids were imbued with the spirit and asked if we couldn't do better than that.

There were all sorts of suggestions, and we final-



ly prevailed upon our mothers to provide cookies and other goodies that were popular for the season. All the Dutch women were good bakers, and in no time we had several large baskets.

WE MET on Christmas Eve after the regular church service to prepare the baskets. Some of the members even brought items of clothing.

You can imagine our thrill the next morning when Miss Evans joined us to play Santa Claus in the poorest district of our town.

When we reached the house and family we had selected, Miss Evans lead the way to the front door. When the mother opened the door, Miss Evans handed her the basket and said, "Merry Christmas from our Sunday School class."

The mother was taken aback, and soon tears came from her eyes. She invited us in for a cup of coffee and tried to thank us for "making" her Christmas. She told us there was not enough money for gifts so she just tied a bit of ribbon on a cake she had baked and that was going to be their Christmas gift.

When the children came in with their father, it was a scene that was heart rendering. The father choked back the tears, the mother lifted her apron to wipe her eyes and the children just stood dead.

EVERY YEAR after that, we selected a family. The Stroller's mother, always a sentimentalist, went one further. She selected a few families not far from us and baked a batch of cookies for each of them. And as she would send us on our way she would say, "We haven't got much, but what we have we can share to help make someone else happy."

The Stroller never forgot that manifestation of The Christmas Spirit — that it is more blessed to give than receive.