

Relief needed from reactionary onslaught

City legislators spewed a lot of hot air this past Monday, patting themselves on the back for the peace and harmony spawned in 1980 by the Farmington Hills council.

Unfortunately for city residents, council bartered away any semblance of progress and innovation for that lackluster unity.

Residents concerned with this city's economic future are justifiably appalled at the council's do-nothing record.

Any hope of improvement looks grim, with the worst of the do-nothings — Jack Burwell, William Lange and Donn Wolf — still having three years to serve.

THE MODERATE coalition of yesteryear is comatose, its members numbed by disorganization

wrought by the crushing do-nothing's victory in 1979.

Notably absent from the talk of who may run this year are any credible moderates.

The council's remaining moderate, Jan Dolan, will almost surely be defeated if the political atmosphere remains the same. That would leave only the political dean, Earl Oppertausser, to combat Wolf's pack.

Oppertausser, a master at forming legislative coalitions in the past, was unable to steal away any of the Wolf loyalists. Mrs. Dolan was helpless to do anything to further the moderate cause.

Certainly, former Mayor Joann Soronen should be given some credit for maintaining civility during her caretaker term.

BUT TO SAY anything of a concrete nature was

accomplished during her term would be untrue.

The days of gentility have ended. With Wolf's coronation as mayor, this distorted imitation of conservatism which holds power will continue with a vengeance to dismantle the progressive programs built over the years.

In the past, some very reputable conservatives have served this city — Oppertausser, Fred Lichtman, Bob McConnell and Joan Dudley to name a few.

They proved conservatism could be equated with progressive causes. They demonstrated conservatives could work with moderates and liberals to build a fine city.

But this new brand of conservatism fostered by Wolf and his henchmen is different — very different.

In the past four years it has scrambled to power on the shoulders of negative innuendo. Now that

these reactionaries hold complete power, they are systematically working to rid the city government of any idea or person unfaithful to their cause.

Enemies of subsidized senior citizen housing, they attempted last year to deplete the Commission on Aging of members who were "suspect." This reactionary mentality reeks of McCarthyism.

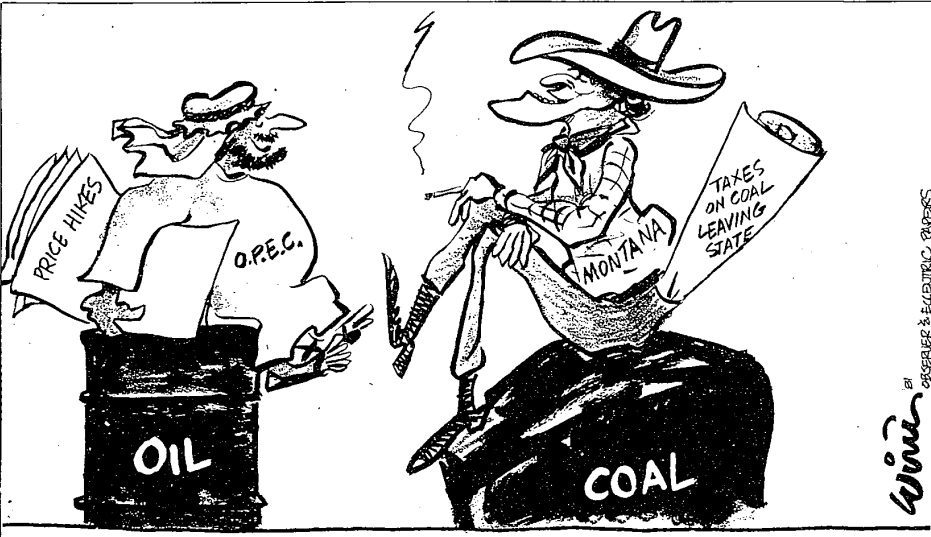
Fortunately, they failed in this attempt to purge.

BUT UNLESS this reactionary ideological gang is stopped in its tracks, it will succeed and the city will suffer.

The time is now for the moderate coalition to pull itself together, to retrench and fight for at least some modest victory in the upcoming council election later this year.

STEVE BARNABY

'Feller's got a right to gouge a little, eh, Sheik?'



Doctor's nuke neurosis is laughable

Absurdity transcends all economic, educational and social levels.

Take the case of the frantic physicians.

A week or so back, one of my reporters, in an erstwhile quest for yet another story, spotted an item detailing how a number of internationally-famed physicians have banded together to warn us of the horrors of nuclear war.

In our efforts to keep you up to date on the local angle, we attempted to query local physicians on how they felt about the subject.

We were laughed out of the operating room.

Most physicians, we found, are busy worrying about mundane issues like heart disease, cancer and other assorted maladies.

But thanks to the item from the Associated Press, we have learned about a substantial number of physicians who are going about the world making fools out of themselves, stating the obvious and neglecting their duties as healers.

They call themselves Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR). Among their ranks are the likes of polio vaccine developer Dr. Jonas Salk; Dr. Lewis Thomas, chancellor of the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Institute; and Dr. Helen Caldicott, who resigned her position at Harvard Medical School to work as the PSR president.



THEIR MESSAGE: Nuclear war is the greatest health hazard ever faced by humanity. No kidding.

The group outlines, in graphic detail, what would happen if somebody cared to drop a 20-megaton bomb on Boston. Don't ask why Boston was tapped for the honor. I guess Boston is as good as any city.

But never mind, we get the message. Almost everybody in a four-mile radius would die, they tell us.

Those who would survive, about 300,000, would have only 650 physicians to treat them. All the hospitals would be destroyed which leads one to sus-

pect that, on any given day in Boston, 650 physicians have the day off.

These 650 physicians would spend 26 days, 16 hours a day before they would see each patient for five minutes. No time for golf on that sort of schedule.

It seems the "elite" of the medical world have fallen prey to a good old-fashioned case of the cold war virus. Obviously nuclear war would be disastrous. You don't need a medical degree to know that.

Frankly, nuclear war is ridiculous to contemplate. Those who would survive a nuclear war would have a bit more to worry about than a doctor's appointment.

Dr. Caldicott, in all her despair, has summed up the group's attitude this way: "There seems to be no point in practicing good medicine when the threat of nuclear war seems so imminent."

THE GOOD DOCTOR should come back to the real world and join those physicians who deal with the health problems of today.

We can't stop living, as Dr. Caldicott would like, because of the threat of nuclear war. It is only a threat, not a reality, as is cancer, multiple sclerosis and dozens of other diseases which plague us.

Back to work, Dr. Caldicott. Nuclear holocaust be damned.

Economic pendulum swinging down

Now that Santa Claus is back home safely at the North Pole and the din of welcoming the new year has faded into the distance, we must come face to face with reality. The big question looms about the coming 12 months.

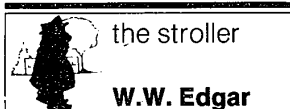
What kind of a year will it be? Will the spiral of inflation take a downward trend? Will the automobile industry survive its present troubles? Will the economy go back to the days of old when we were a happy and contented nation?

While The Stroller was pondering these questions following Michigan's victory in the Rose Bowl, the teaching of one of his old editors came to mind.

This old fellow, the last of the brown derby boys, sat with The Stroller one afternoon to help guide him on his first steps along the journalistic trail.

"Then, like a father talking to his son, he said, 'You are going to see a great change in our way of living during your lifetime. Right now, the capitalists have control of the country, but it won't always be so. And then the pendulum will swing in the other direction and we will be headed for trouble again.'"

"Sooner or later, the pendulum will start downward. When it reaches the bottom of the arc and



both labor and capital are on even terms, this country will prosper like never before."

IT WAS QUITE a sermon. But The Stroller never forgot it.

At the time, our little town back in the foothills of the Lehigh Mountains was the home of the largest horseshoe factory in the world. Yes, there was a factory devoted to nothing but the manufacturing of what some folks called "Dobbin's slippers."

Along with that, there was a large furnace where pig iron was made as the first step in the steel industry. The officials of these companies controlled the town.

Their grip on the townspeople was so great that

you had to live in a company house, deal in the company store, and both your rent and grocery bill were taken out of your pay. The working men were little more than slaves.

Then the pendulum turned. Gradually the organizations of unions gave the working man the upper hand. His demands were met, and salaries and pay envelopes went into the upper brackets.

At last, the men who did the work had control. But the hold seems to have become too tight. This is manifest with the request of the Chrysler officials that wages and salaries be frozen and that the automatic cost of living increases be abandoned.

THE PROPHECY of The Stroller's old editor is coming true. The pendulum is swinging downward. How long it will take to reach the bottom of the arc no one knows. But it is headed downward.

It may not happen this year, but it at least may get started.

But as The Stroller's friend Oscar, the furniture man, says, "We have to face it with a positive attitude. We have to work together and then it may turn out to be a great year."



Tim Richard

The West rakes coal customers

A few years ago, Detroit Edison Co. was boasting how it had "made a series of dramatic and innovative decisions to insure a reliable fuel supply."

Edison signed "a contract for 200 million tons of low-sulfur coal to be delivered over a 26-year period... with Decker Coal Co. in Montana."

Today U.S. Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., is painting a picture of Montana and its sister state of Wyoming as "OPEC-like coal producers."

The reason: Montana is levying a 30 percent and Wyoming a 17 percent "severance" tax on coal. They're raking it in.

A severance tax is imposed on the value of natural resources (coal, oil, natural gas) when they are removed, or severed, from the land. The idea, Levin says, is to "lessen the boom town tendency associated with resource development."

WHAT IT MEANS to us in southeast Michigan is \$7 to \$8 more per house in 1980, Levin says.

He quotes Walter J. McCarthy, Edison president, testifying before a congressional committee, as saying that Montana's tax has been increased 2,400 percent since that Decker contract was signed in 1973.

"By the end of the 26 years of the contract, if the present tax remains in effect, we shall pay over \$1.3 billion in coal severance tax to Montana," said the Edison chief.

In contrast, Michigan charges a 6.6 percent tax on its oil, Texas 5 percent on oil and Alaska 12.25 percent on oil.

NEW MEXICO Gov. Bruce King on Dec. 13 announced he will ask the legislature for a \$205 million tax cut.

The reason, according to the local press, is that "soaring oil and gas revenues" along with higher interest earnings on invested funds require less taxes.

Which taxes will New Mexico cut? The severance taxes on oil and gas? Not on your life.

King will propose cuts of \$85 million in the sales tax, \$30 million in the income tax, \$15 million more income tax credits and \$75 million in property taxes.

For a little state, those are big tax cuts. And the local voters will get them, not the shivering customers in the north and east.

LET'S PUT all of this into context.

Economists recognize three kinds of production: primary, secondary and tertiary.

Primary means agriculture, mining, oil drilling and commercial fishing. Secondary means manufacturing, like cars and washing machines. Tertiary means services, like banking and hamburger stands and teaching school.

Historically, primary producers have had a colonial political status. They were considered cultural backwaters. They sold cheap, while the manufacturers and bankers sold high.

In the last two decades, however, primary producers have figured out they can bring big industrial regions to their knees by choking off supplies of natural resources or charging all the traffic will bear. OPEC with its oil, Canada with its timber, Central and South America with its coffee, Montana with its coal — get the picture?

LEVIN AND SEVERAL eastern senators are co-sponsoring a senate bill to limit severance taxes to 12.5 percent. Since coal, oil and natural gas are in interstate commerce, it is Congress' business what tax rates the states charge.

My guess is that the bill's prospects are dim. To me the most significant things about the Reagan Administration and the new U.S. Senate are not their conservatism but their western orientation.

But having just paid a \$51.48 Edison bill, I must wish the easterners lots of luck.