

Pick a big oil company—any one—and boycott it

Enough is enough. Like the man said, I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore.

I'm talking about this nifty little extortion racket — otherwise known as the price of a gallon of gasoline.

Seems every money grubber around wants to get in on the act. It's bad enough we're being blackmailed so Arab sheiks and oil barons can live the billionaire life.

Now Ron Reagan, our 19th century free enterpriser, adds to the inflationary spiral by decontrolling domestic oil prices.

(No disrespect intended by calling him Ron. I figure if Robert Stack can call him Ron in political ads, so can this down-home, small-town editor. Besides, unlike Congress, this editor isn't giving Dutch any homey moon.)

Closer to home, the Michigan Road Builders Association (MRBA) has decided it wants part of the action. The group is pushing a proposal to change the gas and weight tax formula to collect it as a



percentage of the price rather than so many cents a gallon.

In short, every time oil companies increase gas prices, consumers would fork over an increased tax levy. Right off the bat, it would mean an additional two cents a gallon.

Presently, gasoline is taxed by the state at a flat 11 cents a gallon.

A neat kicker to this plan is a flat \$28 fee for license plates to add to our misery. As of now, plates are sold based on vehicle weight.

THE PURPOSE of this scheme is to raise money to build and maintain highways. But with Americans driving smaller cars and shorter distances, it doesn't make sense to be building more highways.

Besides, this gas situation is ludicrous. Nobody in his or her right mind believes that what cost 35 cents a few years ago should cost a \$1.35 today.

Plain old-fashioned greed is the motive. Forget all this talk about letting gasoline prices rise to their "natural" levels. The only thing natural about gas prices is what the sheiks and oil barons say is natural. Just ask Exxon. It made \$6 billion last year, overtaking General Motors for the first time.

But there is a solution. We really don't have to take it if we join together and fight back. It's called a good old-fashioned boycott.

You remember. We've boycotted grapes, lettuce, coffee and sugar in the past. Now it's the oil companies' turn.

It isn't as crazy as it sounds. Sure, we all have to have the black gold to get to and from work. But we can do this selectively.

It's just a matter of planning. We pick out an oil company, preferably one of the big boys who is charging the highest price, and boycott its stations until the price comes down. Believe me, if we take our business somewhere else, they'll bring down the price.

THEN WE TURN our attention to the next greedy gas peddler and apply the same kind of pressure.

Before long, gas prices will inch down ever so slowly. But better slow than paying \$2.50 or \$3 a gallon, which is where prices are heading.

We can show Ron and his oil buddies how the free enterprise system really works. It's called supply and demand.

OK to park in fire lane

You want to see some real smart guys — and gals, too?

Go to any small shopping center and look at the vehicles parked closest to the stores in what is marked "Fire Lane — No Parking."

The dumb guys, they're the ones who park out in the designated spaces in the parking lot. They get whipped by the cold wind blowing across the lot, they have to step in slush, they have to carry their packages further.

The bad guys are the ones who park in "Handicapped" slots when they aren't handicapped. When a state law was passed requiring reserved parking slots for the handicapped, there was poor compliance at first. Then the word has got around that parking in a handicapped slot isn't a nice thing to do.

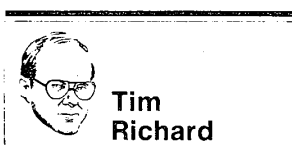
But the word hasn't got around yet that it's naughty to park in the fire lane in front of the local supermarket. So people do it.

Of five vehicles in the fire lane on a busy Saturday, one will be occupied by a driver who has the engine running. He's waiting for his wife to shop, but he has a guilty conscience about parking in the fire lane, so he keeps the engine running so we'll think he's just stopping to pick her up.

Another of the five will be occupied with the engine off. The other three vehicles will be parked and empty.

It's illegal, of course, to park in a fire lane. It's also rude because it blocks traffic.

But the plain truth of the matter is that the cops have other, more important things to do than ticket people who park in fire lanes.



Cops are smart. They set priorities. They know they can't police every ordinance in the book, so they work on burglaries and drunks.

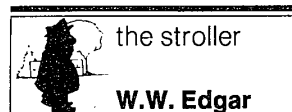
So go ahead and park in the fire lane. No one will do a thing about it.

Her translating is full-time job

Susan Hecht of San Francisco is a full-time translator. She translates lawyer's talk into plain English for finance companies, real estate firms, banks and insurance companies. The January State Bar of Michigan newsletter gives an example of her work.

Before translation: "... said account and all deposits and withdrawals made in connection therewith shall be subject to applicable state and federal banking laws and regulations, to bank's bylaws and all present and future amendments thereto and to all regulations and rules and practices now or hereafter adopted by bank with respect thereto."

Hecht's translation: "... which I will use according to all federal and state laws as well as your present or future bylaws, regulations and practices."



territory made it easier for the other team to score. So he tried to make the enemy work for it. That's why he was a stickler for the punt. He wanted the ball in enemy territory at all times.

On one occasion, The Stroller, then a young sports writer, asked him why he insisted on such tactics.

The "Old Man," as he was affectionately known, twisted the ever present cigar in his mouth, looked at The Stroller and said, "To me, it's rather silly to try to rush the ball over from Ypsilanti when the goal posts are in Ann Arbor."

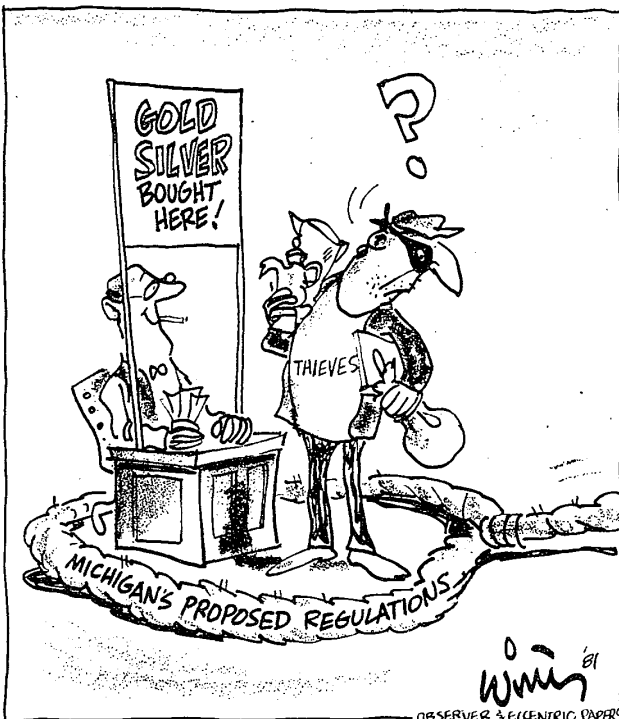
BO SCHEMBECHLER, the present Michigan coach, is another who until recently, never gambled on tactics, especially on offense. He works on the theory that if you can keep the other team from scoring you can't lose. And he, too, has a fine record.

But as he looks back over his trail, The Stroller much prefers the fellow who meets his problems head on.

That's why he was so fascinated with President Reagan and the manner in which he delivered his first speech to the nation from the Oval Office in the White House.



Did you know that Michigan's forests are full of untapped energy? Norval Morey, a former Michigan lumberjack and sawmill operator, estimates the forests of our state contain a wealth of dead, dying, diseased and deformed trees that can be turned to good use in helping solve our energy problems. He claims there are 100 million tons of it in our state alone — enough to fire the boilers of 200 small power plants which could generate up to one-third of the state's electricity.



Meet woes head-on

One of the most fascinating things The Stroller has witnessed during his long journey along the journalistic trail is the manner in which grown men meet the challenges of everyday life.

Some of them charge head-on. Others back away and always seem willing to compromise. Still others just turn their backs and ignore the problems. They are willing to take whatever comes.

These thoughts came to The Stroller the other evening when he listened to President Reagan make his first televised speech to the nation since taking office.

Whether you agree with him, one thing that must be said is he is forthright in his approach. He isn't looking for compromise. He is meeting the problems head-on and letting the chips fall where they may.

What's more, he promised to stick to them until the issues are settled for what he hopes will be the best interests of the country.

AS THE STROLLER sat there listening to every word, he was reminded of the late "Boss" Ketterling, the legendary engineer who gave the world the self-starter on automobiles.

Many times The Stroller had heard him tell of the many trials and tribulations he had before the starter was workable.

It was his "stick-to-it-iveness" which served as a base on which the automobile industry was built. Now, our president seems bent on the same dogged determination.

Along his journey, The Stroller has come across some very interesting characters, among them Fielding H. "Hurly Up" Yost, the Michigan football coach, and Knute Rockne, who served in the same capacity at Notre Dame.

Rockne was one of the most progressive football coaches in the land. He was offense-minded. Because of that, he met his problems head on. He worked on the theory that you couldn't score unless you had possession of the ball, no matter where it was on the field.

YOST WAS JUST the opposite. He never wanted the Wolverines to have the ball in their own territory. It was Yost's belief that a mistake in your own

from our readers

Forbes raps opinion

Editor:

I found your Jan. 26 editorial, "Bills' veto earns plaudits," concerning Gov. Milliken's vetoes of amendments to the Open Meetings Act, disappointing and a deviation from your usually high standards of editorial comment.

The author of the editorial obviously wasn't familiar with the content of the two bills in question and consequently did not even begin to enlighten the public on the actual issues involved.

What readers were left with was an exceptionally biting, but uninformed and uninformative personal opinion. I would like to clarify some of those issues.

THE FIRST BILL, SB 1296, was little more than a technical modification which did not deserve the governor's veto. The second measure was more controversial with good, conscientious lawmakers on both sides of the issue.

The bill would have allowed a public body to hold a private interview with an applicant to a public position if so requested by the applicant provided that all decisions to employ personnel must be held in open meeting.

While some of my respected colleagues disagree with me on this issue, I and others who supported the bill did not "cave in" to pressure from local officials.

Since the Open Meetings Act took effect some four years ago, incidents continue to occur which pit the public's right to know against an applicant's right to privacy.

In one particular example, a city manager in this state quietly applied for a city manager position in another town. Because his interview for the new position was public, word got back to the city council then employing him that he was seeking other employment. He was promptly fired.

I do not consider this type of situation to be in the best interest of the public nor of the men and women who devote themselves to public service. If the actual hiring and terms of a contract are fully public, then the essential rights of the public are adequately protected.

I felt this bill a means to balance the public's right to know against the rights of those public servants to privacy. I have always been and will remain a staunch sup-

porter of the Open Meetings laws. But every law is not perfect as first adopted.

In this particular instance, a majority of lawmakers recognize a weakness which they believe needs correction. They are not out to sabotage the Open Meetings Act.

Many of my colleagues opposed SB 1143 and I respect their stand. The governor's veto, however, is a different matter. While publicly proclaiming his desire to protect openness in government, he withholds information from the Legislature and vetoes bills like House Bill 5405 which I sponsored.

The bill would give lawmakers access to information that departments do not and will not supply. Perhaps we should have the public do our asking for us — the governor may be more "open" with the people.

I ONLY WISH that your editorial opinion had been based on a more careful understanding and examination of the issue. On a personal note, I would like to comment on the writer's term "notorious liberal" in reference to myself.

"Notorious" can have a negative implication and I am afraid that some readers might assume that being a notorious liberal is bad. The author should have made his intention clear and say so if he has some other philosophy.

At least the person who authorized the editorial should have caught the ambiguity. In my mind, it's not bad to be a liberal, depending on the issue. In this particular instance, however, the issue is not my being a liberal or a conservative. It is simply that I spent many years as a local official and understand the problems these bills were meant to correct.

I hope in the future we can expect the sort of enlightened views usually offered in your editorials. More particularly, I hope to see further examination of the governor's vetoes — including those you find so acceptable like the past vetoes of Sunset legislation and the Michigan Economic Action Council.

Contrary to the governor's claims, the public interest does not always lie at the basis of his veto decisions.

REP. JOE FORBES
Majority Floor Leader
67th District