

Thanking secretaries deserves more than roses

Last Sunday was International Women's Day, and National Secretaries Week is coming up next month.

If you're asking what the two have in common, you haven't been talking to very many secretaries recently.

Remember when Jack Jones threated his way through "Wives and Lovers," advising men to "Bring her nice things, sugar and spice things, roses and lollipops..." and all that jazz?

That advice went the way of miniskirts and rattled hair, but there are still a few men around who missed the message. And most of them are bosses.

One of my colleagues at the Observer & Eccentric is a double for the male chauvinist who was hog-tied by his secretaries in "9 to 5." Unfortunately, he doesn't recognize himself as such, although he's still wondering why the females in the office talk about getting an automatic garage door opener.

Secretaries don't want roses, nor do they want a new Mr. Coffee. They want respect and a chance to grow in their careers.

And that's what International Women's Day is all about.

DESPITE THE increasing number of women in the work force, the feminist movement has had little effect on the pink collar trade. That's not because the female secretaries are happy with their lot as the Pollyannas of the working world.

It's simply that the vast majority of male supervisors are stuck in the management mindset of the 1950s. Their idea of a nice way to celebrate Secretaries Week, if they remember it at all, is to order a dozen roses in thanks for a year's worth of slave labor.

The average secretary earns less than starting wage for most males. And her chance of progress is even slimmer, because most supervisors don't want to lose a valuable employee. Even the most chauvinist boss realizes that a good secretary is invaluable, all the more reason for keeping her behind her Electric.

Today, the modern boss unconsciously relies on economics to keep his secretaries in place. Unlike other employees, they usually are denied tuition



Lynn Orr

reimbursement to further their education. Because secretaries are few in number, it's nearly impossible for them to organize as a union, and most supervisors rate secretarial equipment last on the list for replacement.

THE SAME GUY who's paranoid about garage door openers might try to improve his image by taking a new look at his invaluable employee with an eye toward getting on her good side. National Secretaries Week is April 20-24, so even the most recalcitrant bosses have a chance to redeem themselves. Here are just a few ideas:

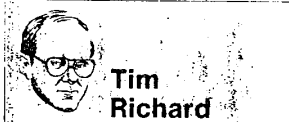
● Don't buy her roses; get her a word processor. With a storage memory for stock letters, she'll be able to get out personalized perfect letters in less than half the time, and she can forget about Skat.

● Start divvying up the scut work in the office. Secretaries will take their turn making coffee, but expecting the secretary to watch the pot is about as silly as expecting her to buy presents for your spouse.

● Instead of taking her out to lunch, spring for the \$25 fee and set aside March 21 to send her to a workshop for secretaries, titled "Maximize your Potential." The workshop is scheduled for 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in Room 2043 of Cobo Hall. Registration deadline is tomorrow, but supervisors could redeem themselves by calling Julia Blumberg at 371-7140 for a reservation.

● Give her a chance to learn something new. If you get the word processor, you'll have the time. If you're too cheap, at least lay off on the dictation and typing and give her some time to try her hand at a new skill.

One word of caution: Making life more pleasant for an employee doesn't guarantee that she won't jump ship. If your fears about desertion are overwhelming, coax her into a promise to train the new secretary.



Tim Richard

If committees could cure our economy

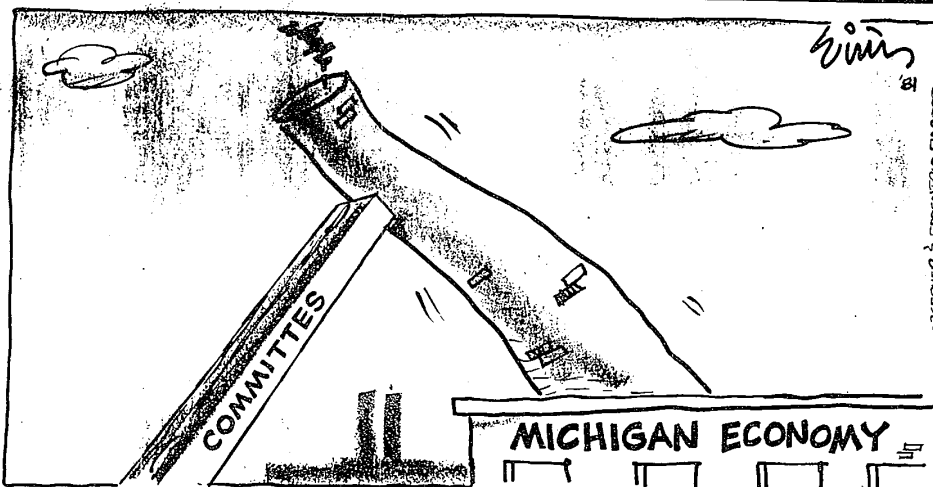
Back in the gala Eisenhower days of the 1950s, I kept hearing that "when the rest of the nation gets an economic cold, Michigan gets pneumonia." The moral of the story was that Michigan was too dependent on the highly cyclical auto industry.

In 1975, a 24-member Michigan Economic Action Council headed by then-Bendix Chairman W. Michael Blumenthal, opened its recommendations for long-term action by noting:

"However, over time, two undesirable characteristics have come to plague the Michigan economy: 1) an unemployment rate that has remained well above the national average even in boom times during recent years; and 2) a concentration of employment in the durable goods manufacturing industries that contributes to the extreme cyclical fluctuations in the state's economy."

In other words, when the rest of the nation was well, Michigan had a cold, and when the rest of the nation had a cold, Michigan had double pneumonia.

During his final week in office this year, then-Transportation Secretary Neil Goldschmidt sounded a warning that the American auto industry might be reduced to one company, General Motors. Clearly, for Michigan such a prospect would mean permanent triple pneumonia, if there can be such a thing.



IF STARTING new organizations were the answer, the Great Lakes State and Water-Winter Wonderland would be booming like Arizona or California.

I mentioned the Michigan Economic Action Council (MEAC). It recommended creation of a Business Development Authority, which has been done.

It recommended creation of a permanent Michigan Economic Advisory Council and an Institute for Economic Development. The legislature so acted, but the governor vetoed them during the crunch of things.

MEAC recommended formation of local economic development corporations. That process is going like Gang Busters:

Wayne County has an economic development corporation.

Oakland County has an economic development corporation.

Many suburban cities have economic development corporations or authorities.

Detroit has a downtown development authority and I don't know how many other such agencies.

THERE IS more.

In SEMSCOPE, the publication of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, I read that SEMCOG itself, the Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce, Detroit Edison Co. and Michigan Department of Commerce have formed a Greater Detroit/Southeast Michigan Economic Development Council.

It sees its first tasks as forming "a policy advisory committee of local elected officials and a technical advisory committee of local economic development specialists."

All of this gives you the impression we're in the process of curing our unemployment problems by putting everyone to work on economic action groups.

But it's not my purpose to be derogatory about economic action groups. Nor is it my purpose to call for still another economic action group to coordinate all the other economic action groups.

A lot is going on. It will be a long time before much of it pays off in big numbers of jobs.

Meanwhile, some attitudes within Michigan will have to be changed.

You've made the oil giant sit up and take notice

Cynics and naysayers, repent. The people are speaking, and the world is listening.

Recall, for a moment, the story of the sergeant and the stubborn mule.

After others fruitlessly tried to get the mule to do their bidding through pulling, tugging and persuasion, the wise old soldier got up off his stoop, picked up a two-by-four and smacked that ornery critter up side the head.

Well, you've smacked the oil interests up side the head with an overwhelming response of nearly 600 letters in favor of a selective oil boycott. And they're listening with more than a little consternation.

Let me tell you a little about what has happened since the last time we were together.

First, the Shell answer man — you remember him — has volunteered to give his side of the story. You'll read that on these pages in next week's edition. Fair is fair.

Secondly, your effort has gained national attention — from the halls of Congress to the oil capital of America, Houston, Tex.

That's right. The word has spread that citizens in America's heartland are sick and tired of the great American oil ripoff.

THIS SMALL TOWN weekly columnist has spent endless hours on the phone responding to the likes of legislators, oil lobbyists, gas station operator representatives, daily newspapers and oil trade journalists.

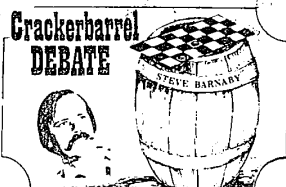
Last weekend, I presented more than 200 of your letters to U.S. Sen. Carl Levin.

They all want to know if it's true you're going to fight back.

Like I said, numbers count in this game. Politicians listen when their constituents are unhappy. Oil barons respond when they fear their profits are threatened.

Sure, there is a lot of bravado being bandied about — the I-dare-you-to-boycott-it-won't-do-any-good kind of rhetoric.

But one can only ask: If a boycott won't do any good, why does anyone from the oil community take



time away from making money to respond?

Oh, we do have detractors. Out of the nearly 600 responses submitted, I received one, under mysterious circumstances, whose author thinks this whole matter is "quite silly."

Personally, whenever so many persons have spoken in unison, I tend to think it is quite unsilly.

Our detractor, who wishes to remain anonymous (again the only one of nearly 600), believes that you and I are talking off the tops of our heads.

WELL, WHOEVER put this guy up to this letter doesn't know me very well — or understands the needs of the American people. He tries to punch holes in arguments of those who object to the present world oil operation.

Suffice it to say I can cite as many experts as the next guy and have just as much documentation from credible sources. Next week I'll do a little hole punching myself.

Besides, it is important that everyone understand just exactly what is going on in the oil industry.

But the real question at hand today is what is going to happen with this oil boycott idea?

After all, this situation is tantamount to a battle between David and Goliath.

The truth is that nothing will happen unless you who have expressed an interest do something about

it. As a newspaper columnist, I can make appeals, share ideas and pass on the sentiments of the people to their political and industrial leaders.

But it is the people, en masse, who must take action. And I see real potential of that happening — if you want to do it.

Organization is the key. And from the many letters it is obvious that organization is possible.

Many persons responding are senior citizens, a group whose plight is growing everyday because of the economic hardship thrust upon them.

COUNTLESS senior citizen organizations exist which could back such an effort.

I also received letters from trucking companies which have been wounded by the oil price increases. Remember we're all affected when truckers, who get about three miles to the gallon with their vehicles, have to pass that increased cost of diesel fuel on to us in shipping costs and delivered products.

Union members also responded in great numbers. Well, how about it, UAW, AFL-CIO and Teamsters? These are your members who feel they are getting the economic screws put to them.

So you see many organizations exist which could take up the cause. But you're going to have to get on their about it. Any organization, no matter how much it purports to work for the benefit of its members, must be prodded into action.

Even more important are your neighbors, friends and relatives. Through your letter writing efforts, you have shown that support is deep.

Now the real work begins.

The life of a boycotter can be frustrating and a lot of hard work. But when you think about it, paying \$2 or \$3 a gallon for gasoline can be even more painful.

Those who want to see this boycott idea succeed, go out at knock on your neighbor's door. Organize meetings. Plan a strategy. Set a timetable.

IF ORGANIZATION work is done correctly, the necessary funds will evolve to fight the oil interests. The price of a tank of gas from each member, or even half a tank, would do the job to print bumper

stickers, buttons and the necessary literature to spread the word.

Encourage your legislators to take action. Perhaps the government controls were too much for oil companies to bear and did have a negative impact on oil prices.

Some very reputable persons believe that if the U.S. government did the negotiating with the OPEC nations, instead of each company cutting its own deal, the price could be brought down.

One big problem in this oil crisis is that it flies in the face of our free enterprise, free market system. The OPEC cartel has us on the ropes and it knows it.

Of course, the domestic oil companies aren't exactly squeaky clean either. In their vertically structured industry, competition is nearly impossible.

Vertical structure means that oil companies, mostly the majors, control the product from the well head to the gasoline pump through subsidiaries.

It sort of keeps the money all in the family.

Tell your legislators you're tired of that kind of nonsense and want a change.

BUT, MOST IMPORTANTLY, if you believe in this effort, don't give it up. Keep the letters rolling in and tell the world the good old-fashioned American spirit is alive and well and willing to do the job at hand.

Remember, if you don't do anything about it, nobody else will.



discover
Michigan

Bill Stockwell

Did you know that Michigan has 400 major bedding plant producers, located mostly in metropolitan Detroit, Kalamazoo and Ottawa counties?