

Tim Richard

Black cry of 'racism' gets tiring

If you oppose Mayor Coleman Young's Detroit tax plan, you're a bigot.
If you want to metropolitanize the water department which serves the metropolitan area, you're about as bad.

If you want a smaller Wayne County Board of Commissioners, you can put on the white sheet of the Ku Klux Klan and perform the *osculum infame* on the lower anatomy of Charter Commissioner Alonzo Bates.

If you're for an elected county executive, you're a racist.
"Wolf, wolf, wolf."

IT'S GETTING impossible to debate complex governmental relations on their merits without a black politician raising the spectre of racism.

Some white folks frankly hate black folks, but a bunch of us who want good racial relations and try to be decent Americans are tired of being branded with derogatory adjectives for advocating governmental reform.

The late U.S. Sen Joe McCarthy had an "ism" attached to his name for allegedly calling his enemies "commies" and "pinks." Today we have a form of black McCarthyism running rampant in southeastern Michigan. It's time to tune it out.

LET US TAKE, for example, a pair of the Charter Commission issues facing Wayne County, issues which Oakland, too, has wrestled with.

The Charter Commission voted to reduce the size of the county board from 27 to 15. For one like the idea and wouldn't mind cutting the number even further. Many in Oakland would agree.

Wayne County's budget is only one-third the size of the city of Detroit's, which has a nine-member council, and I can't see why we need 27 legislators struggling with it.

If the charter is approved, the County Board of Commissioners, which now has many administrative duties, will turn over those duties to some sort of chief executive. With fewer duties, the county board could get along with fewer members.

Back in the sane '50s, a British political scientist wrote a hilarious but insightful book called "Parkinson's Law." One chapter deals with legislative bodies and how, when their number grows larger than nine, a small, inner circle develops which really runs the organization.

That, I think, is a logical line of argument, whether you agree or not. I don't see that it deserves the epithet "racist."

TAKE THE EXECUTIVE issue. At present, county board members appoint themselves to administrative jobs. With an appointive county manager, it would be more of the same, dreary, political incest.

An independent, elected executive would have a freer hand to appoint department heads.

Yet blacks fear such an efficiency move. Well, one can make an argument for an appointive manager, but not on racial grounds.

I'd like anyone to tell us how blacks gain from an unwieldy, undisciplined, 27-member county board. I'd like anyone to tell us how blacks gain from our inefficient, debt-ridden, 12th century form of county government.

You may use all the arguments and all the street talk you wish. Just lay off the "racist" nonsense.



What tribute to Joe Louis?

Arena still lacks distinction

During his life, except for a comparatively few minutes in the prize ring, there was no kinder, more gentle or generous soul than Joe Louis, the Brown Bomber.

The young man, who grew up in the cotton fields of Alabama to become the heavyweight champion of the world, loved to help people.

At Christmas he would make the rounds in what was then known as Paradise Valley to see that every youngster had a small bank. Joe would put a shiny half-dollar in each as a gift from him.

After collecting his first big purse from the Primo Carnera bout in New York in 1935, he came back to Detroit and made it a point to visit City Hall and asked for the man who gave money to the poor people. He asked to pay back all the money the city ever had given his mother.

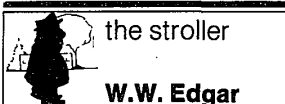
LOUIS DEFENDED his title three times in benefits for the armed services during World War II and further expressed his disregard for selfishness when his friends talked him in to opening the Joe Louis Chicken Shack on East Vernor. He told them he did not want any of the profits but would pay all the losses.

Now that he is dead and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery, his many fine deeds are being forgotten, even by those who should be the first to sing his praises in some memorial way.

Mayor Coleman Young had the Joe Louis Arena built on the Detroit River although many said Cobo Hall would suffice. Young has yet to dedicate it or put Joe's name on it.

When it was being constructed, all sorts of plans were announced to honor Louis, who put Detroit on the map at a time when the city needed recognition.

Just recently, the arena was supposed to have been dedicated to Louis in some cheap way between bouts on the Larry Holmes-Leon Spinks heavyweight title program. But someone forgot to take



the floor and commence the ceremony. So, it was forgotten.

NOW ALONG comes an anonymous donor with a gift of \$50,000 to erect a bronze statue of Louis at entrance to the arena, referred to by many as "the warehouse." But it may be a long time in being built.

The politicians have taken a hand and now have suggested that the \$50,000 be used as "seed" money to establish a fund for a much larger monument.

Meanwhile, the building just stands there beside the river, waiting to be linked with the name of the young man who helped put Detroit on the map.

The fact that Mayor Young and those who shouted to the high heavens of what they planned to do have been sitting on their hands is a direct insult. But it is not surprising.

WHEN JOE was brought here several months ago for what he thought was to be a dedication night, he was used to ballyhoo a fight card.

Even on the night of the fight, Mayor Young sat at Joe's side but never spoke to him. He was shown on television turning his back on the great man, the guest of honor.

The world has paid its respects to Louis. So has the nation by honoring him with a hallowed piece of ground in Arlington Cemetery.

But his home town has done nothing. Joe Louis — who, back in 1963, personally prevented a riot on the streets of Detroit, talking to the leaders — deserves better.



Darlene Stinson

What would life be minus our system of freeways?

We sped beneath viaducts and other roadways at what seemed supersonic speeds. I can remember, holding my breath as the landscape whirled past the car window.

Today, people take for granted the Interstate freeway system, which will reach its 25th birthday this July.

Vacation-goers spend day and night on I-75 to reach the sunny skies of Florida in 24 hours or less. It's an easy two-day drive with plenty time out for food and rest.

Thoughts of future ease in long-distance travel didn't enter my childhood mind, as my father's car sped along Detroit's first freeway.

The trip was more exciting than an amusement park ride. The speed seemed phenomenal. The road was sunken. And there were no traffic lights. Cars mysteriously entered and left down funny little side roads that twisted and curved.

I SUSPECT that President Eisenhower felt an other kind of excitement in 1956, when he signed legislation creating the "National System of Interstate and Defense Highways."

Eisenhower personally had experienced the turtle-like speed of interstate travel before signing the bill.

While serving as a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army in 1919, Eisenhower led a military convoy from Washington to San Francisco in a test of mobility for the nation's armed forces.

The cross-country trek took 62 days, according to the The Road Information Program (TRIP), a non-profit highway research agency.

The federal government laid the foundation of the interstate freeway system in the 1920s, when it mapped out 56,000 miles of strategic highway. The bill signed by Eisenhower in 1956 provided for 42,500 miles of freeway.

TRIP reports that 40,000 miles of the Interstate system have been built since 1956. The latest government projections predict completion of the system in 1990, despite an initial completion target for the late '60s.

According to TRIP's figures, Interstate freeways comprise only 1 percent of the nation's total highway mileage, but carry 20 percent of the nation's traffic. Americans reportedly drive 300 billion miles a year on the Interstate freeway system.

Eisenhower's 62-day cross-country trip now can be completed in about 65 hours.

I DOUBT if many travelers think of the days before freeways when they hop on an Interstate en route to work or a distant vacation spot.

But the construction of a national network of highways undoubtedly has changed our lives.

Just think of a trip without I-75, for example.

It would take hours just to reach the Ohio state line. Ahead would lie a multitude of big cities and small towns with their traffic lights and pedestrians on the street. I can imagine the pace through the mountains of southeastern Kentucky and Tennessee.

If it were me, I'd probably never attempt the trip — at least not by car. I suspect many would-be travelers opted for staying close to home before the Interstate freeway system was built.

Oh, the trials and tribulations of looking for a job

My stomach's still in a knot.
Today, I made my first feeble attempt at joining the ranks of that ever-increasing phenomena known as the "working-at-home-wife." (Somehow, those three words together have always seemed redundant to me — they all imply "heavy labor.")

This morning, when I got up, instead of throwing on my usual outfit of raggedy, faded blue jeans and a T-shirt, I got my one and only dress out of the closet. My kids asked me what it was called.

"I haven't had a dress on in the morning since — well, I can't remember since when."

I recently disposed of a closet full of mini dresses — even if they do come back into style, my verities won't.

"I found a pair of panty hose without runs or holes. (Actually, there were a couple, but they didn't show.)"

I washed my hair, and used my husband's Hot Comb to style it. I painted my fingernails. I wasn't messing around.



Nancy Walls Smith

My 5-year-old son was having trouble understanding my curious behavior. "Mom, why are you looking so beautiful this morning?" (He's such a dear.) I explained to him that mother was going to look for a job. That was fine with him.

I was the one who was having trouble with the idea.

It's a very scary thing to contemplate re-entering the job market after being at home for almost seven years. I usually steer away from scary things.

But this ad sounded so good — only three days a week, for four hours a day — that I just couldn't pass it by.

I got lost three times on the way. (Did you know that if you accidentally get on Edward Hines Drive, it's almost impossible to get off.)

My stomach really went into a dither when I drove past the entrance to the correct parking lot and had to go another mile and a half out of my way to get back to where I was supposed to be. How could I possibly work for an organization that I can't find the entrance to?

I kept telling myself to relax, but myself never listens to me.

Eventually I was sitting in a plush lobby filling out a job application. I could remember my name and address, but I'll be darned if I could remember my starting salary at Wayne State University in 1965. I don't even remember my finishing salary in 1974 — although I do recall it was a rather paltry sum.

And they even wanted to know what jobs I held

before that. I have a very vague memory of working in a bank, a real estate office and for the Red Cross, but I have no idea of the dates. That was B.C. (Before Children). It's difficult to remember having a life before this one. I feel like I've been a mother since the day I was born.

I left that part blank.
So, after much pondering, writing, and pondering some more, I turned in my application.

The lady at the desk smiled and said, "Thank you."

I wanted to shriek "Is that all there is? Where is my typing test? I demand an interview! Do you think I stuffed my chubby body into a pair of too-tight panty hose just to fill out an application?"

I was a little on edge.
Instead, I smiled weakly, and quickly retreated to the parking lot to spend another 20 minutes searching for my car.

I wonder if I got the job?
I wonder if my nerves are up to it.
I doubt it.