

Political showdown puts us in crossfire

THIS BUDGET-CUTTING orgy has gone about far enough. Like the man said, "Moderation in all we do and say."

Now we see that for eight days next month, some 1,500 prison inmates will be running amok through city and suburb. This little sideshow is brought to you by two opposing political factions out to show us the true meaning of "bad dudes."

On the one side of the street, we've got Billy "the Kid" Milliken, known far and wide as the good guy Republican, white Stetson and all.

On the other side, we've got the Michigan State Employees Association (MSEA), which, in the eyes of many folks in these parts, must be bad hombres because its members are living off the public dole.

At issue are 800 Michigan Department of Corrections employees who will be laid off next month because Milliken and the MSEA are unable to reach agreement on budget cuts.

With much bravado, the governor puffs out his

chest and bluntly tells state workers, "No concessions, no jobs." With equally as much macho, MSEA officials reply, "There just isn't enough room in this town for us and budget cuts."

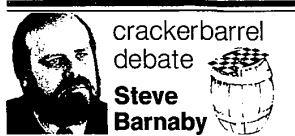
Hence, parole and probation officers will be laid off, and prisoners living in halfway houses will be left to fend for themselves.

MAKES A BODY feel real good knowing that supposedly responsible leaders in this state would allow this to happen.

Meanwhile, Corrections Director Perry Johnson is caught in the middle of this cross-fire, admitting that "there are going to be some problems."

No kidding, fella.

Now, there isn't much sense in being an alarmist about this whole thing. The world will survive for those eight days in August (sounds like a great name for a bestseller), but "some problems" indeed.



Johnson goes on to tell us we'll just have to "wait and see."

Well, I don't know about you, but I'd rather sit on a bed of nails and I'm no guru, baby.

Besides the 1,500 halfway house inmates, another 6,500 parolees also will go unsupervised. Now these guys aren't your average Joe Citizen. They are con-

victed felons — prone to repeat their crimes, especially if nobody is watching.

Certainly, we've become a society fed up with crime. Many are disillusioned with the concept of "rehabilitation" and want to see it replaced by punitive measures.

BUT ALLOWING these eight days to happen is pure and simple irresponsibility.

We've got to stop doing things on the cheap. Many of us want harsher sentences, but we refuse to allocate the money to build more prisons to house these criminals.

Now we have leadership in the state which would rather make a political point than protect residents. Certainly the governor has nothing to fear. He's got a bodyguard or two. But you and I don't.

Sit down, Bill. You, too, MSEA negotiators, and let's get this mess straightened out — for the good of us all.



Eliot firing good lesson in marketing

MARKETING is sophisticated business. Ask Sonny Eliot.

After 35 years as a local TV weather-caster, Eliot last week got the ax from the second station in three years. The reasons he was fired will give you a short, college-level course in marketing.

Were Sonny's jokes too corny? Were his forecasts inaccurate? Did he show up for work impaired? Was there a private scandal that made his TV presence intolerable? Was he taking payola? Was it age?

None of the above.

Bill Flynn, WJBK-TV general manager, was concise and forthright when he explained:

"I told him that research had shown us that he was not right. . . His appeal was to the (over age) 50 audience, and advertisers are interested in the 18-to-49-year-olds."

UNLIKE NEWSPAPERS and other printed media, television doesn't charge you to watch, at least on standard commercial TV.

The advertiser pays the freight. The advertiser is getting increasingly sophisticated. The advertiser wants his message delivered to the people who are most likely to buy his product. And the advertiser wants that message delivered on a program those buyers will watch.

TV sells by imagery. There is precious little information in TV advertising. Rarely, for example, is there a price. And except for the touting of miracle ingredients you can't understand the hexachlorophene, there is no explanation of contents.

Older buyers become price-conscious. They read labels. They are less influenced by television commercials.

That 18-49 group is the name of the game. Sonny Eliot no longer appealed to it.

THIS KIND of thing has been going on for a long time.

Those of us over age 40 remember when television had live, serious drama. It went by-the-by because the drama failed to put viewers in the mood to buy. "Playhouse 90" had the viewers and the quality, but it didn't sell products.

Commercial TV used to have cultural programs — Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic, Bishop Sheen, an historical series called "You Are There," in which modern newsmen like Cronkite interviewed the likes of Duke William and Harold the Saxon before the Battle of Hastings. They're gone and won't come back. They didn't sell products to that 18-49 group.

George Pierrot's "World Adventure Series" still had numerical audiences in its last days, even if ol' George dozed off occasionally. There was no lack of numbers. There was no lack of quality. There was a lack of viewer-buyers susceptible to TV advertising.

It's a tyranny where the minority under 18 and over 50 have zero rights.

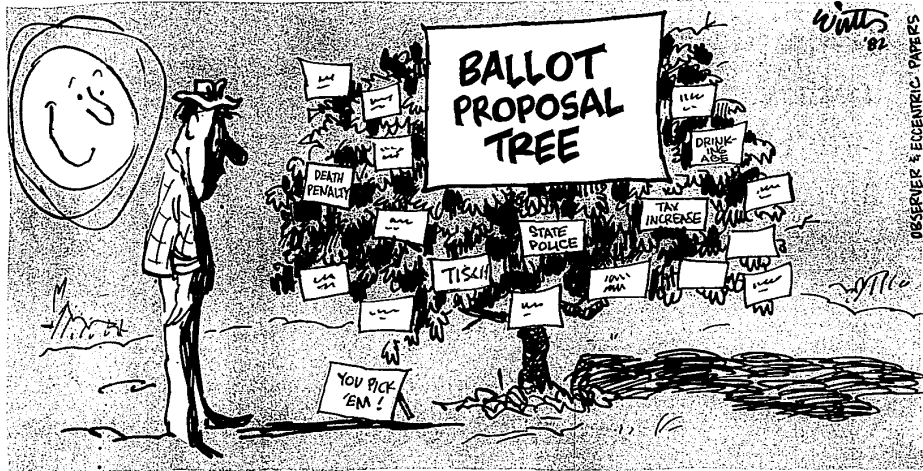
Periodicals such as Look, Saturday Evening Post, Collier's and the old Life magazine perished not because they reduced quality or lacked readers. Their appeal was too broad to suit advertisers.

A company selling shotguns doesn't want a magazine with five million readers of both sexes ranging from 16 to 80. Neither does a company selling wrinkle-removing skin creams. The first wants a male market living in smaller communities away from the East Coast. The other, wants an over-40 female market.

And so the general circulation magazines are replaced by the likes of Field & Stream, Ms., Road & Track, Good Housekeeping. Get the picture?

The sad part is that a democratic society is losing its mass media. Instead, we are getting highly sophisticated market segmentation.

Ask Sonny Eliot how it works.



Hudson's downtown problems spread

I AM NOT a native Detroit. In my nine years in this area, I've lived in the suburbs.

I have never met anyone under the clock of the Kern Building. My grandmother never took me downtown at Christmastime to look at the decorations in Hudson's windows. I've never eaten at Lafayette Coney Island.

But yet I've heard of all these Detroit traditions from friends who have lived here all their lives. It's fun to learn about old Detroit. It's a Detroit that will remain in the memories of people living throughout the area.

Because of this, I was saddened last week by the announcement of the planned closing of downtown Hudson's. Downtown Hudson's is much more than a retail shopping store. It is a symbol of what is good about living in the Detroit area.

I have lived here long enough to take my children to several Hudson's Thanksgiving Day parades. I also know that Hudson's sponsors the spectacular Fourth of July fireworks display on the Detroit River. It's obvious Hudson's is a company that puts money back into the community it serves.

HUDSON'S DEMISE parallels the city of Detroit's.

Hudson's downtown store reached its peak sales year of \$153 million three years after Detroit hit its population peak. By comparison, last year's sales had plummeted to \$45 million. During the period 1950 to 1980, the population of the city of Detroit dropped from 1.8 million to 1.2 million.



As Joseph Hudson, grand-nephew of the company's founder said last week, "The closing of the store . . . marks the end of a rare era in retailing and Detroit. I do not believe that any further alternative or option was possible."

Hudson's was perhaps the last great hope in rebuilding a healthy downtown retail environment. It was to become a prime tenant in a major retail center in the Cadillac Square area. But Hudson's had insisted that developers and city officials find two other major stores before they would commit. Apparently no other major retailers would get involved.

As Hudson Chairman P. Gerald Mills said last week, "We have been by ourselves for a long time in the downtown area. But we have not gotten support from other retailers on the mall project."

SO WHAT DIFFERENCE does this make to the suburbs?

It appears that as sales in the downtown store began declining, Hudson's quickly opened stores in the suburbs. It now has stores in Northland, East-

land, Westland, Southland, Fairlane and Pontiac. Thriving suburban sales more than made up for downtown's demise.

Thus, it appears that downtown's loss is the suburbs' gain. And if you live in the suburbs, no big deal.

But it's not that simple. Healthy suburbs will not exist indefinitely if the core — or, in this case, downtown Detroit — is not healthy. The problems of Detroit quickly spread.

If you don't believe that, check with the owners of stores in Southfield's Northland Center, the first major suburban shopping center. Hudson's opened its first suburban store in Northland in 1954.

Last year Northland's Stouffer's Inn was abruptly closed because of a decline in business. Rumors of a high rate of crime have plagued the center in recent years. Northland has aggressively responded by enclosing the entire shopping area. It has also made major improvements in the stores.

THE POINT is that the same kinds of problems that are first evident in downtown shopping areas spread to the suburbs. Moving away from problems is really no solution.

Constructing artificial barriers also does not help. Suburbanites cannot decide to stop worrying about anything that happens south of Eight Mile Road or east of Telegraph.

As trite as it may sound, suburbanites and city dwellers are in this thing together. That's why I'm saddened by the closing of downtown Hudson's.

The fun memory of 'One-Eye' Connelly

A FEW HOURS before The Stroller's recent trip to the operating room for the removal of a cataract from his right eye, the doctor informed him he would have to wear a shield or patch over his eye for protection.

"We have to give the eye a chance to heal, and the shield or patch will give the medication a chance to work," the medical man said.

The Stroller's eyesight is one of his most prized possessions. But strangely, the advice did not cause him to think about the discomfort a patch would cause.

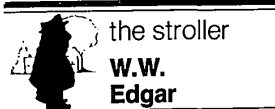
Instead, he had to smile because the mere mention of an eye shield brought back memories of one of the most fabulous characters he ever had met during his long journey along the sports trail.

This character never handled a baseball bat or a football, and probably could not tell one golf club from another.

But he got his name into the record books with this listing:

"ONE-EYE CONNELLY, the world champion gate crasher."

There never was a sports event of any prominence, any place in the country, where he wasn't



seen. And he boasted he never paid an admission fee. In fact, he was insulted if you offered him a ticket gratis. He was too proud of his reputation to accept a free ticket.

Connelly was a short, stout fellow who wore a cap with the peak pulled down over his right ear — the side on which he wore the eye patch.

While he particularly enjoyed outfoxing Tex Rickard, the nation's top fight promoter, he was a thorn in the side of all promoters of any sport.

Connelly first came to the public's attention back in 1919 when Jack Dempsey won the heavyweight championship from Jess Willard on a beastly hot afternoon in Toledo.

Arriving on the scene, he challenged promoter Rickard in the paper. He told the world he would see the fight for nothing.

His challenge made news on most of the country's sports pages, and Rickard took steps to keep him out of the stadium without a ticket.

BUT JUST BEFORE the fighters entered the ring, "One-Eye" appeared at ringside, his clothes soaking wet.

How did he do it?

It was later learned that he spotted a half-full lemonade barrel. He jumped in, pulled on the lid and was taken into the arena with the goods for the concession stands.

Two years later, Rickard staged the Dempsey-Carpentier fight in Jersey City, N.J., "One-Eye" was on the scene again — with a challenge. Rickard took every possible step to prevent him.

The Stroller got acquainted with "One-Eye" prior to the fight. And just as Carpentier entered the ring, there came "One-Eye." He danced over to The Stroller's seat in the press row and shouted for all to hear, "Here I am."

Stunned by the sight, Rickard shook his head, finally stuck out his hand and said, "You win."

Fortunately, The Stroller had to wear his own eye patch only a few days, but it was long enough to bring back a few memorable laughs in the hospital room, where he needed them.