

## Double standard costs the electorate doubly

**A** SHORT BUT serious bit before we dive into our holiday ecstasy. Now that the election season has passed and the republic has survived, it seems the ultimate decision-makers, the electorate, could stand to do a little reflecting.

We did a good enough job — filled all the vacant seats, re-elected some, threw some others out and refused altogether to let some in the doors of the power politics. With the exception of a few questionable boxes of ballots in Chicago, election '82 will go down in the books as pretty ordinary.

But let's look a little closer.

**SOME VERY** important folks were missing from the field of political battle. Potentially good officeholders — merchants, lawyers, physicians, union activists and probably a few journalists to boot — refused to enter the political arena.

All of these folks chose to back off, to withhold their services, for the same reason — privacy.

Everyone enjoys privacy. Unfortunately, many enjoy reading, hearing or talking about the other person's life — especially if that person is rich or powerful.

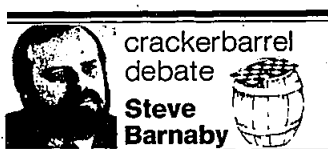
And while First Amendment rights are paramount in maintaining a healthy political system, so is the ability to discriminate between what is private and what is public, what is or isn't relevant, in judging political or civic leadership.

In short, a double standard has been established. It allows society to pass judgment on every sneeze, sniffle and groan erupting from persons who have chosen the public life.

**THIS DOUBLE** standard often backfires in two ways.

As public standards become harsher toward its political leaders, fewer persons are willing to stand up against the rigors. And while it is most evident at the national level, it is even more devastating at the local government level — the one that affects you and me the most.

Washington is like a Walt Disney movie compared to local politics' Peyton Place atmosphere.



crackerbarrel debate

Steve Barnaby

More times than the public realizes, decisions are made at the legislative table or at the polls on the basis of personal and neighborhood squabbles that have mixed into the public agenda.

Issues be damned, some unwisely say. On the other hand, this same kind of reckless disregard for a person's privacy, combined with the low esteem in which many hold politics, protects against legitimate criticism those who have blatantly broken their contract of trust with the public. It's not the rules of the game, it's how you play the game, the oh-so-smug like to say.

**MARKING THE** line between private and public conduct as it relates to competence in office certainly takes unusual intellectual effort, an effort society is becoming more loath to take.

A typical example: A difference exists between a public official who is an alcoholic and one who drinks on the job. While both have a personal drinking problem, the first should be left alone to deal with the problem as he or she sees fit. The second should be thrown out of office for making public judgments while drunk. Warnings help, but repeated violations of the public trust should be dealt with at the polls.

The same difference exists for any case that involves any supposed moral judgments. One person's sin might be another's road to eternal salvation. But one thing is sure: If we continue confusing private mores with public conduct, only society as a whole stands to lose.



## Thanks to these pastors for a decade of guidance

**T** HIS IS a season to give thanks. As a newspaper editor, I am thankful for columnists who deliver their copy on time and write in an interesting manner.

Today I will give thanks to the five clergymen who contribute to the "Moral Perspectives" column published in this newspaper every Thursday. That column recently celebrated its 10th anniversary.

It is now being co-authored by the Rev. David Strong, pastor of St. Matthew United Methodist Church of Livonia; the Rev. Charles Erickson, pastor of the Congregational Church of Birmingham; the Rev. Lloyd Buss, pastor of Abiding Presence Lutheran Church of Rochester; Rabbi Irwin Groner of Congregation Shaarey Zedek of Southfield; and the Rev. Robert Schaden, campus advisor for Newman House at Schoolcraft College in Livonia.

These clergymen comment on relevant social issues for a suburban audience. That's no easy task.

The column began in 1972 at a time of violent protests over the Vietnam War. "Moral Perspective" columnists joined the fray and spoke out



Nick Sharkey

against the war.

**IN THE INTERVENING** years, the clergymen have addressed other emerging issues facing suburbanites including busing, integrated housing and the rights of the handicapped.

Although they would never admit it, it has not been always easy for them to work for this newspaper during the past 10 years. They have received only a modest payment for their efforts. They use this money to pay for a monthly lunch at which they exchange ideas and coordinate columns.

During one newspaper budget crunch, the clergy-

men cheerfully agreed to go without pay for an extended period of time.

The clergymen have also worked with a variety of editors during their 10 years. At times, it must have seemed to them that we were shuffling them around. More than once their copy was misplaced as it traveled from one office to another. Still they didn't get discouraged.

**DURING THIS** Thanksgiving period, it is appropriate to recall a few of their thoughts over the years. Ponder these during the holiday.

The Rev. David Strong on peace: "There must be ways in which we can take risks in peacemaking that are no greater in the long run than if we were to rely upon military power."

"Our thought patterns need to change if we are to entertain this belief that peacemaking can be less risky than arm-making."

The Rev. Charles Erickson, during the low-income housing controversy in Birmingham: "Birmingham owes children ordinary daily broadening

contacts. As adults, they will work and negotiate in cities and countries requiring ability to be comfortable with differences of all kinds."

Rabbi Irwin Groner on the relationship between blacks and Jews: "Are the old alliances of Jews and blacks about to crumble? I hope not. I appeal to blacks not to seek the easy way out of their disappointment and despair by turning against the people who have shared so much of their suffering and pain. I urge them to recognize their enemies are not Jews, but injustice, poverty and callousness wherever they persist."

"Simultaneously, I appeal to Jews not to allow unscrupulous demagogues to turn them away from the anguish and deprivation of blacks and other minority groups."

**FINALLY, I'M** grateful because the clergymen kept a promise made 10 years ago.

They pledged to never use old sermons for their columns.

Now that's something to be thankful about.

## A sun belt paradise has its problems

**M**ISERY LOVES company. Things don't seem so bad that way.

Not that I wish anything bad for the warm and hospitable state of Florida. But last week's trip convinced me that despite our 16 percent unemployment, it's premature to say "the last one out of Michigan, turn off the lights."

All the while I was catching sea trout and picking grapefruit, mentally I kept hearing my West Bloomfield builder friend, Herman Frankel, battering away that Michigan's ace is fresh water, and that a great future still can be ours.

**IN FORT MYERS,** News-Press columnist Bob Morris, a curmudgeon in those parts, recalled last week the 1972 predictions of an Orange County Extension agent named Henry Swanson.

Swanson predicted — correctly — that withdrawal of ground water could weaken the soil and trigger sinkholes north of Orlando.

"Lo and behold, precisely nine years, three months and 13 days later, the bottom fell out exactly where Henry Swanson said it would. The Winter Park Sinkhole was born," wrote Morris, to the acute discomfort of chambers of commerce.

Florida has undergone tremendous expansion with no Great Lakes to provide its water. It doesn't even have the safe supply of underground water that Michigan has.

Adds Morris: "There is good news and bad news about Florida's water supply. By the year 2000 we will recycle sewage for household use. The bad news is that there won't be enough to go around."

Then he drops the other shoe — the suggestion that Florida think about restricting growth.



Tim Richard

**A BIG CONFERENCE** is going on about a fish called the snook, according to the Sarasota paper.

The snook is a battling gamefish that was once common in the waters I fished, but now it is rare. One guide was quoted as saying he won't let his parties even keep the few snook they catch.

The culprit, according to the Florida natural resources folks, seems to be development and destruction of the snook's breeding habitat.

The Great Lakes had a problem with the loss of the lake trout in the 1950s, but that was due to the parasitic lamprey eel. The problem was corrected. But I'm not certain how you go about correcting the snook problem once the breeding habitat is destroyed.

**IN TALLAHASSEE,** they're having a big rhabarb over women.

According to UPI, the Tallahassee Bass Association had planned a males-only bass fishing tournament on Lake Talquin. Women anglers raised a fuss. The TBA directors met behind closed doors one evening and came up with a "compromise."

The contest registration form in 1983 will include an extra question: "Will you fish with a member of the opposite sex?" An angler who answers "no" and draws the name of a female will be able to reject that partner and draw again.

Women anglers — they're not even radical feminists are sore at that kind of treatment. It's no way to treat a human being.

I can't imagine my Michigan friends in the family-oriented Four Seasons Fishing Club treating people that way.

Let us not knock Florida, but let's not be so hasty about turning off the lights in Michigan.

## from our readers

### 'Good' people must persevere

To the editor:

I wanted to thank you for Cracker-Barrel debate titled Dad and daughter prove jerks can't stop Halloween.

Your review of what happened that evening completely parallels my own experience. I too found people friendlier, more willing to talk but certainly there was a pervasive, vague air of gloom over the evening.

It seems popular for local politicians, police chiefs, etc., to try to call off Halloween on a fairly regular basis. I certainly agree that the "good people" cannot let the "bad people" take over and spoil the world for us.

I think you expressed the sentiments in an excellent manner. I hope when the next such scare comes along our leaders will be rallying us to fight back rather than to give in.

Louis E. Rents, D.O.  
Farmington

### Reaganomics best for nation

To the editor:

It's being said that Reaganomics is a slogan; that Mr. Reagan does not have a detailed plan for rebuilding the American economy. So far, it appears that controlled federal spending is all there is to it, with the exception of a few tax abatements.

Of course, these measures are necessary to put the brakes on careening federal expenditures. There is a limit

to the American pocketbook and the boundary had already been crossed before Mr. Reagan took office. It seems downright ignorant to take political sides when we are in such dire need of stability. The Democratic plan for "make work" jobs is not the answer either. Their plan calls for increased federal spending for a temporary program footed by the already overburdened taxpayer. What's really going on? Which plan is best? The Democrats' plan is a spending plan. It can only prolong the agony. Mr. Reagan's plan will work but it will be long and painful.

If we "stay the course," and we must, the events which are likely to happen are these: First, with the discount rate now at 9 percent and falling, lower consumer bank interest loans will somewhat spur purchases of homes and automobiles. We will see increased spending between now and Christmas for holiday shopping, but it will drop off sharply after December 25th, having no effect on real consumer trends.

The winter months will hold down housing starts in northern states simply because of the weather. Unemployment will increase during the winter months. Unions will increasingly become chaotic as some members refuse to believe their wage rates cause their company's products to be uncompetitively priced. Jobs will be lost and many union plants will close; some permanently.

Those companies which remain in business will have to regain control over wages and pricing policies. This will happen only after long and arduous company-employee-union battles and negotiations. The lopsided wage structure which now exists will begin to equalize. Much attention has been given to

union strikes and negotiations with little or nothing mentioned of the silent millions of Americans who earn \$3 to \$7 per hour. These persons are potential purchasers of homes, automobiles and other union made goods and services which are totally out of their reach.

Auto and construction workers, as well as other comparably compensated workers, will no doubt see their earnings decrease. However, because they too are purchasers of these same goods and services, their purchasing power will increase rather than decrease as the economy mends itself.

As this happens, and if our political leaders act responsibly, taxes will dramatically decrease. The burden of school taxes has to be taken off the back of the homeowner. There should be an equal distribution of the school tax to all working persons and businesses in Michigan. This would make home-owning more affordable, spurring immediate growth in the home building industry. Government employee wages should be brought into alignment with comparable jobs in industry. To cut government expenses, plans should be instituted to guarantee government workers are actually productive, and earn their keep. A record of their daily activities should be mandatory and checked . . . at all levels. Public employees should be as productive and accountable as any other worker.

All of these things can happen, and must, if the American economy is to improve as it should. It will take cooperative efforts of government, workers, companies, and union leaders to make it work, and it will take time.

Kenneth Kemp  
Farmington Hills