

Council members obstructing free enterprise

BUSINESS NEEDS all the help it can get these days. And homeowners need just as much help in footing the tax burden.

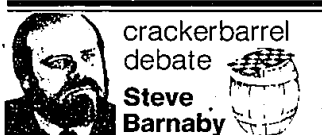
But the recent action by the Farmington Hills City Council demonstrates that a majority of that body lacks a clear understanding of either economic reality.

While we're sure the Holiday Inn isn't going to close its doors over it, the recent council decision denying the Inn's request for exemption from the video ordinance lacks sound business judgment.

THE ORDINANCE, in itself, is absurd and surprisingly obstructionist from a legislative body which prides itself on conservative economic values.

An ordinance which denies a business the opportunity to make an honest dollar fits in the face of free enterprise philosophy. This ordinance is the epitome of government obstructionism.

Residents should know who are the obstructionists in this case. Those voting to deny the request were Mayor Fred Hughes, councilmembers Jack



Burwell, William Lange and Donn Wolf. Those supporting the free-enterprise concept were council members Joann Soronen and Charles Williams. Council member Jan Dolan was absent.

FOR SOME unexplainable reason, video games have fallen into a category with old-fashioned pool halls and X-rated movie houses. While the reputation is undeserved, the reaction to video from some public officials recalls the days of Eliot Ness chasing after Al Capone.

The bureaucratic foolishness a business person must suffer to acquire a video license is nothing short of an old-style police frisk with a bit of high-way robbery added.

First both applicants and operators are fingerprinted.

Next, five references from "reputable citizens" are required. Two written recommendations respecting the applicant's moral character—whatever that means—also are needed.

Top that off with a number of monetary obligations—a \$25 annual license fee, a \$200 non-refundable initial license application for operators with four or more devices, and a \$75 annual fee for each device.

For the Holiday Inn that means an additional 5-7 percent of its video game income forked over to city coffers. Already the Inn pays more to secure the video game room than it takes in from its 10 machines.

VIDEO IS A big drawing card in today's super competitive market place. The Farmington Hills Holiday Inn has much more competition than it did

just a few years ago.

Just last year the Livonia Holiday Inn opened its doors a few miles away. The Sheraton opened a hotel next to Twelve-Oaks Mall last year, also. Now the Hilton is setting up shop on Eight Mile and Haggerty, in Novi.

A business can only eat so much of its profit and then it has to back off. More than likely, the Farmington Hills Holiday Inn will close its video room.

Unfortunately, some factions of the Farmington Hills government are building a reputation for making it hard on business to operate within its boundaries. It isn't sheer coincidence that both the Sheraton and Hilton were built on the other side of the border.

Some remember that the Twelve-Oaks Mall was destined originally to be built in Farmington Hills. But the "not welcome" sign was put out.

Now those tax dollars are going to other governments—dollars that would have helped pay the bills for this community.

Gone but not forgotten.

—STEVE BARNABY/editor



Tim Richard

Would Ike, Teddy pass Huber test?

BOB HUBER is a Catholic gentleman, but he has a lot of chutzpah. A yiddish term, chutzpah is the quality which enables a son to kill his parents and then plead to the court for mercy on the ground he is an orphan. Chutzpah is supreme nerve.

A Troy industrialist and politician, Huber currently sports the title of voluntary chairman of Michigan Citizens Supporting the Presidency, a group of Reagan-like Republican conservatives.

The group drew 130 to its Jan. 15 meeting. There are more than 4,300 Republican precinct delegates, which gives you an idea of the breadth of the group's support.

Huber, you may recall, has run three times for the U.S. Senate nomination, coming close only against Lenore Romney in 1970 when there was a big Democratic crossover. (Republicans got revenge in 1972 by crossing over to give George Wallace 51 percent of the Democratic presidential primary in Michigan.)

Other prominent figures are Richard Headlee, who won the Republican gubernatorial primary last year with 34 percent of the vote and lost the big one in November by 200,000; and Jack Welborn, the former state senator who ran an out-of-sight fourth in that primary.

Honorable gentlemen, but not what you'd call winners at the polls.

THE SUBJECT of a flurry of Huber press releases has been the Feb. 19 Republican State Convention, where the party faithful will elect a new chair and State Central Committee.

The chair is a visible spot because the GOP currently has no one in state executive office or in the U.S. Senate.

Huber's group proposes a litmus test which the next state chair must pass to earn its support.

Item one is "concern for the re-election of President Ronald Reagan." Two is "awareness of, and personal commitment to, the Republican National Platform of 1980."

That is their idea of a Republican leader.

Actually, factionalism has been a part of Michigan Republican life since the first fight at the 1908 Bay City convention and even before. A historian has pointed out that to understand Michigan politics, you have to understand there are two Republican parties.

HOW VALID is the Huber-Headlee-Welborn litmus test?

Suppose a candidate for state chair said, "I don't care for the Republicanism of Interior Secretary James Watt. I'm from the Teddy Roosevelt school of conservation and Republicanism." The litmus paper would register pink, and the candidate would be rejected.

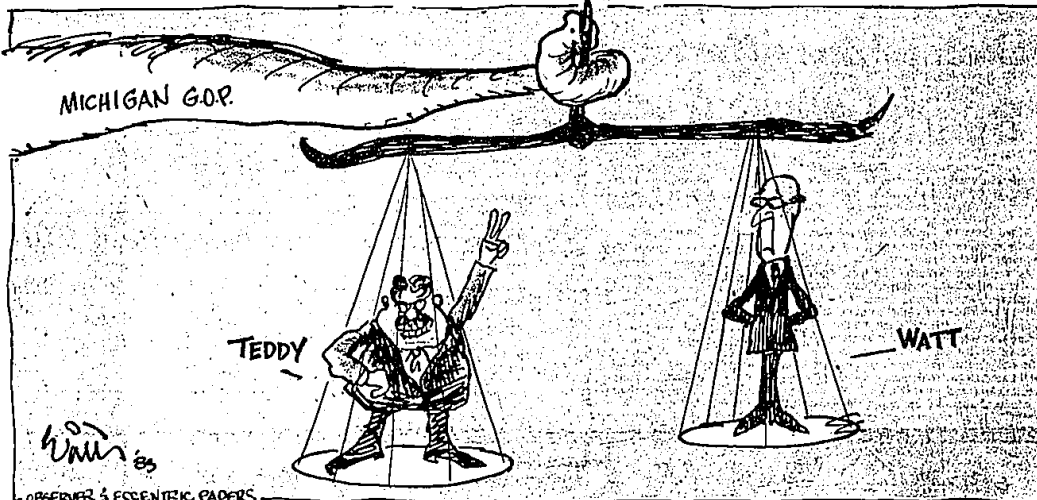
Suppose a candidate said, "The Republicanism of Casper Weinberger in Defense leaves me cold. I'm from the school of Dwight D. Eisenhower, who warned us about the military-industrial complex." Pink. Rejected.

Suppose the prospective leader said, "Reagan's pal, Sen. Jesse Helms, isn't my ideal. I care more for the likes of Abraham Lincoln and Margaret Chase Smith." Pink, pink, pink. Out.

THE POINT is that, historically, Ronald Reagan and the 1980 platform aren't in the mainstream of Republican thinking and are far from sterling examples of Michigan Republicanism. And it takes a lot of chutzpah for Huber and his 129 friends to suggest they are the supreme test.

The Huber group's list of qualifications classifies with items 7, to wit: "Experience with grass roots issue campaigns . . . ballot issues or constitutional amendments" and "Proven record for organizing and fund-raising."

Those criteria should have been first and second. The Reagan nonsense could well have been dropped.



Tough work, but state will turn around

THE TROY Chamber of Commerce recently held a dinner called "Troy Says Yes to Michigan."

As suggested by its title, the evening was upbeat. Virtues of the state and this area were extolled. Wall decorations, posters and buttons all had positive slogans.

The keynote speaker was state Rep. Ruth McNamee, R-Birmingham.

McNamee predicted the state's economy would improve during 1983 and progress would be "slow but steady."

She sounded almost like a foot-stomping preacher as she proclaimed the assets of this state.

"We have great water resources, advanced technology and excellent educational institutions," she said. "Few states can match our tourist attractions."

She pointed to the changes state government made in the past few months, including reforms in workers' and unemployment compensation. During last year, 4,000 state jobs were trimmed from the state budget.

I WAS THINKING of McNamee's speech a few days later when I read an interview in The New York Times with William Milliken, who retired only a month ago after 14 years as governor.



Nick Sharkey

Milliken was frank in discussing the serious problems of our state.

"The last two years were clearly the most difficult I ever had," he said. "You see people losing their jobs in all sectors. You see the anxiety spreading, and then its direct relationship to increases in public assistance, the prison population, alcoholism, drug addiction, wife abuse, emotional health care needs—all at the very moment the state's ability to help is declining."

"We tried to build a budget stabilization fund, a kind of rainy day fund. We had \$250 million. But under all those pressures, it was gone virtually overnight."

WHAT IS THE solution to the state's woes? Milliken and McNamee both believe Michigan must build on its strengths.

They argue that Michigan must use its water, skilled labor force and schools to greater advan-

tage. Both suggest that schools change their curriculum to emphasize computers and high-technology training to prepare young people for jobs of the future.

"The Great Lakes is the world's largest collection of fresh water, and water will be for the Midwest almost like oil is to the OPEC countries," Milliken said. "It is vital to life and attracts industry and tourism."

McNamee believes the key to turning around the state will be to improve consumer confidence.

"MICHIGAN has a pent-up demand for automobiles, housing and real estate. The people have to believe in Michigan and start spending money," she said.

McNamee and Milliken aren't removing themselves from the fray. In November, McNamee was elected to a new state house district, the 65th, which includes the southern portion of Pontiac in addition to Bloomfield Hills, Bloomfield Township and Birmingham. Milliken will head the new Center for the Great Lakes, which will promote commerce in the Great Lakes area.

Like most of us, they can't run away.

"This is where my family and life is," McNamee said. "It's going to be hard, but we're going to turn this state around."

Firefighters are battling consolidation



Bob Wisler

and state revenue sharing and aid to local governments is being slashed. More cuts are no doubt on the way.

Most governments feel they are at the limit of their taxing abilities and wouldn't dream of asking for voter approval of higher taxes for operations.

THE BUDGET for a fire department is a considerable chunk of an operating budget—as high as one-fourth.

There is something to be said for having a professionally trained firefighting force ready at all times, but most firefighters spend the majority of their time working on fire prevention and being ready to fight fires rather than fighting fires. Even in departments which provide emergency rescue service, firefighters are underutilized.

Due to their working schedules, full-time firefighters spend the majority of their working hours sleeping, relaxing, watching television and killing

time. State law now mandates a work schedule which has a firefighter roughly on duty for 24 hours, off for 24 hours, back on for 24 hours, off for three days. State law says a firefighter's work week shall be no more than 56 hours per week.

The schedule allows most firefighters to have a second job, and firefighters have fought against a regular eight-hour, five day shift. Berkley City Manager John Karacate said that when his city switched to a public safety department in 1974, many firefighters "opposed the eight-hour shifts because it would conflict with their second jobs."

UNTIL NOW, and maybe even now, suburban fire departments have been sacred cows. For one thing, there is an emotional factor involved in talking about cutting back on firefighters or fire stations. Additionally, firefighters are a potent political force locally and statewide, as evidenced by the fact that legislators have over the years mandated an ever-decreasing number of work hours.

Karacate said his city's experience with consolidation indicates that a city can save money and do an efficient job in fighting fires. Other cities with public safety departments say much the same.

Any community which makes this claim is going to get a long argument from the local firefighters association—and probably the police officers association.