

Opinion

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Industry, charity make us thankful during rebound

OUR OPTIMISM as Thanksgiving 1983 approaches is a good deal more soundly based than in 1982.

That is particularly so in the area of economics. Auto sales are rebounding healthily. People who haven't drawn a paycheck in two years are being recalled to work.

In southeast Michigan, we are beginning to realize we have a burgeoning high-technology belt from Troy to Ann Arbor. These firms may not be producing jobs in the thousands, but they are hiring by the dozens, and there are a lot of them.

In recent years, we had forgotten that Michigan is a midwestern state and heavily agricultural. That asset is becoming more apparent as we realize the potential we have to become a food processing state.

We spend so much time enjoying our Great Lake State, with its rivers and lakes and shorelines, that we need to remind ourselves that those natural resources are excellent economic resources, too. Tourism ranks with agriculture and manufacturing as one of the legs of a tripod supporting this state, and its prospects are improving.

THERE IS much to be pleased with even if the economy hasn't fully recovered.

The United Fund set a higher goal for itself this year, and attained 104 percent of its goal in the Torch Drive campaign which ended a couple of weeks ago.

Those who have jobs and food haven't turned their backs on those who have not. Food distribution centers have proliferated all over the metropolitan area. They prove that even if we have unemployment compensation, aid to families with dependent children and general assistance, we still have the capacity to practice personal charity.

The Thanksgiving Day Parade, a long-standing custom that seemed doomed with the demise of the downtown J.L. Hudson

store, is alive for at least another year, thanks to the efforts of a lot of people in public and private life.

THIS YEAR marks the 38th in which the world has failed to see a nuclear bomb dropped in anger. The human race may have more civility than it has given itself credit for if it can possess so devastating a weapon and refrain from using it for 1 1/2 generations.

This is the 118th year since the Union was preserved by the end of the Civil War. Considering the internal hostilities in many Middle Eastern and Central American nations, peace within our own borders is something we shouldn't take for granted.

As unsettling as the school strikes in Plymouth-Canton and Walled Lake may have been, the fact is that labor-management relations are maturing when one considers the entire region and state. No longer do we see the rashes of school strikes that we saw in the mid-60s and '70s.

While it is sad that the suburbs are seeing recall elections over two state senators who aren't even accused of a crime, it is fortunate our political system provides even the right of recall when people are unhappy with their government. Recalls, even for the wrong reasons, are still healthier than assassinations, coup d'etats, martial law and plots.

FINALLY, WE can be thankful we have a Thanksgiving Day in which each person can express his or her gratitude by a method of choice. There are church services, but no law that anyone must attend an established church. There are parades, but nothing like a martial May Day parade. It is a holiday which has yet to suffer the kind of commercialization that has been inflicted on Christmas.

With all of our fears of war, acid rain, imports and deteriorating morality, on balance we have more to be thankful for than most of the people who have ever lived on this planet.

Look who turns up as pal of business

POLITICS WATCHERS used to say that only a president from the Republican right wing like Richard Nixon could get away politically with diplomatic recognition of mainland China. If a liberal had attempted what Nixon accomplished in 1971-72, the uproar would have put Mount St. Helens to shame. As it was, there was hardly a peep.

The same is true of Gov. James J. Blanchard, Michigan's first Democratic governor in 20 years. In many corners of this state, "corporation" is still a dirty word. The notion that Michigan could embark on a pro-business course like North Carolina in the 1950s or the Sunbelt in the '70s would have been greeted with scorn — until Blanchard came along.

As a four-term (1974-82) congressman from Pleasant Ridge, Blanchard was hardly ranked a conservative. He had the likes of Ken Morris and Sam Fishman from the UAW in the southern end of his Oakland-Macomb district. He had been rated a rising 89-95 by the AFL-CIO's Committee on Political Education and a meager 9-18 by the American Conservative Union.

From the moment in 1982 he announced for the Democratic nomination for governor, it was clear Blanchard was organized labor's choice. To hear his foes tell it, Solidarity House was going to move from 8000 E. Jefferson to the State Capitol.

NOT SINCE Earl Warren jumped from the governor's chair in California to the U.S. Supreme Court have the prognosticators guessed so incorrectly about a politician.

Several times in the last few weeks, Blanchard has been across Oakland County announcing what he intends to do for business. You would have expected it from his 1982 Republican opponent, insurance executive Richard Headlee. But few predicted Blanchard would:

- Create the office of state ombudsman for business and buy ads in business publications saying, "Meet David Haynes, your company's business advocate in Lansing. David is your Business Ombuds-

man. David acts as mediator for businesses dealing with state regulatory agencies, and he'll help you cut red tape."

- Repackage several of former Gov. Milliken's programs and call them the Michigan Strategic Fund. And not only re-name them but publicize them as sources of venture capital. Moreover, Blanchard has made a good deal of positive noise as he announced that state pension funds would be invested in state growth businesses.

- Put the Department of Natural Resources on notice it would have to give permit applicants prompt answers or explain in writing why there were delays. Any DNR bureaucrat must realize the pressure was on.

- Advocate amendments to state laws making it easier for franchise operations to do business in Michigan. Blanchard elicited written promises from national firms that they would seek outlets here if his proposals became law. Franchise operations typically are small, but they are good to have around because their success rate is 95 percent or so.

- Announce a rule change that will make it easier for Michigan firms to sell stock to the public. That can encourage firms with expansion plans to locate here.

NARY A PEEP about Blanchard has come from organized labor, although it had complained it wasn't getting its "investment" from certain state legislators.

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised. Besides being a class politician at Michigan State University, he earned a master of business administration degree. Before going to Washington, he was an attorney for the state departments of Commerce, Licensing and Regulation, and Agriculture. And the makeup of his former congressional district was actually 57 percent white collar.

The man who guided the Chrysler loan package through a hostile Congress and advocated "sunset" laws for federal programs may have been a closet conservative all along.



When TV's good, it's very good

IT'S FASHIONABLE to criticize television. About 20 years ago, a former Federal Communications Commission chairman called it "a vast wasteland." In the years since, it hasn't improved much.

But when television is good, it is very good. It can be a source of inspiration and even change in our society.

When one thinks of television at its best, two recent programs come to mind: PBS's "The Chemical People" and ABC's "The Day After."

THE PROGRAM which generated the most publicity was ABC's Sunday night showing of "The Day After." The movie depicted the devastation which took place when nuclear bombs were dropped near Kansas City. It is estimated that 75 million persons viewed "The Day After."

Throughout this suburban area, churches and schools are holding conferences and seminars this week to discuss nuclear warfare. Christ Church Cranbrook's "The Day Before — Detroit" held on Monday night was only one of many sessions scheduled this week.

Larson Middle School in Troy last week conducted a series of seminars called "Nuclear Awareness Week."

During one portion, Mary Carry of West Bloomfield presented a slide show called "The Last Slide Show," the history of human warfare and weapon development.

Before the show, she dropped a small pellet into a trash can. It made a ping.



Nick Sharkey

"Pretend that's all the bombs in World War II — all the bombs dropped on Germany, all the bombs dropped in Japan, even the two atom bombs."

"Now this is the sound of all the nuclear bombs in the world today," she said. She poured 6,000 pellets into the can. The sound was deafening. The Troy students gasped and then sat in shocked silence.

NO LESS IMPORTANT was the suburban discussion started by the airing of "The Chemical People."

Typical of those held in several communities was a town hall meeting conducted Nov. 9 at John Glenn High School in Westland. Parents from Westland and Canton Township attended the session, one of 80 held in the metropolitan area. It is part of a nationwide campaign to draw attention to the continuing problem of drug abuse.

In Westland a panel of educators, drug counselors and law enforcement officials discussed drug abuse with parents.

Sgt. Larry Squires, a narcotics expert with the Westland police department, said, "In the late '60s I remember a time

when you could buy an ounce or two of marijuana on the streets. Now within one mile of John Glenn in any direction, there isn't a drop on the street that you can't buy."

At the end of the session parents and professionals agreed to form a task force to continue to look into the problem of drug abuse.

LIKE IT OR NOT, the impact of television on public affairs is profound. It can be debated whether "The Day After" will help those who want a nuclear freeze or those who favor continuing nuclear buildup. The film could be used to make arguments for both sides.

But television was able to depict in color or pictures the results of a nuclear war — previously a vague, abstract idea for most persons. In the case of "The Chemical People," it has created at least one local task force on drug abuse.

Henry Booth of Bloomfield Hills best described the impact of "The Day After" — and perhaps of television.

"The important thing to remember . . . is that we haven't the slightest idea of what the answer to the nuclear arms race is. We're all groping in this thing, and maybe by bouncing ideas around we can come up with something which hasn't been tried before."

When it's good, television can help us in "bouncing ideas around" about the most difficult questions facing our society.

A high-cost growth industry



Tim Richard

15.2 and 5.2 percent. From 1979 to 1982, the overall increase is nearly 42 percent. Medicaid abortions are a real growth industry.

- As a percentage of all abortions, Medicaid abortions were 38.3 percent of the total in 1980, 44 percent in '81 and 46.9 percent in '82. A corporation president trying to corner the market would be delighted with progress like that.

- Last year, of the more than 34,000 pregnancies among Michigan women on welfare, 20,000 — nearly 60 percent — were terminated by abortion.

SUPPOSE THE Michigan Legislature succeeds in banning the use of Medicaid funds for abortions.

RTL cited a research project done in Ohio and Georgia by an arm of Planned Parenthood. It showed that 70-75 percent of low-income women who would have obtained publicly funded abortions manage to find the money to end their pregnancies, even when the states stopped paying for them.

Applying those ratios to Michigan, it would mean that last year 15,000 of the 20,000 women who wanted abortions still would have been able to get them.

In other words, banning use of Medicaid funds for abortions won't stop the practice — just slow it down. RTL can take little comfort in that.

Conversely, the "pro-choice" folks are 75 percent incorrect when they argue that denying Medicaid funds for abortions would deprive poor women of opportunity to exercise a right.

WHATEVER YOUR opinion of abortion, it should be abundantly clear that the practice is a very expensive and very messy form of birth control.

Abortion isn't my field of personal expertise. I got into this topic because my study of state spending showed that "social services" grew from 12 percent of the state general fund budget in the early 1950s to the current 40 percent, and the growth was steady.

Currently, Medicaid is half the social services budget. Legislators who are "pro-choice," as well as those who are "pro-life," are all worried about the way social services is steadily eating into education funds.

Our budget situation is a lot worse than most people imagine.