

Opinion

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Someone must be planning a tax cut

THE TAX increase designed last year by Gov. James Blanchard's administration to solve the state's fiscal problems may soon be in trouble.

Nobody in state government has said so aloud yet, but state officials must be wondering how long it will take for someone to come up with a legislative measure to relieve taxpayers of paying the full amount of the increase.

Once someone proposes a tax relief measure, legislators will be scrambling to get their names on it. In this day, who would want to be known as the lawmaker who voted against a tax cut?

DO WE KNOW any intrepid souls willing to face a recall election that may follow a no vote? If it happened to Phil Mastin, it could happen to anyone.

The forces dedicated to recalling Phil Mastin from the state Senate are celebrating not only in his northern Oakland County district but across the state.

People in grocery stores and restaurants talk about the recall as if it were a personal victory.

"It was something like the Boston Tea Party," explained an acquaintance over coffee. "The government went against the wishes of the people, and the people protested. Only in this case, there were more people protesting than there were at the Boston Tea Party."

MASTIN, THE FIRST state legislator ever recalled in Michigan, wasn't kicked out of office because of any misfeasance, malfeasance, or, improperly, irresponsibility or outrageous behavior. Despite one newspaper's repeated assertion that he is one of the tax-and-spend crowd, he was no more profligate than any of several dozen legislators and may have been more cautious than many more.

Mastin was singled out because his district had the most dedicated, best organized group of protesters and because of the nature of his district. It is a Republican area containing the Democratic-vot-



Bob Wisler

ing city of Pontiac and part of Democratic-voting Waterford Township. Republicans outvote Democrats in special elections, and that is what happened in Mastin's district.

But Mastin was not the real target. He was only a stand-in for Gov. Blanchard and a symbol of all that the public feels is wrong with government — aloofness, indifference to public concern about taxes and a willingness to use government money to support people who could work.

THE MASTIN recall was a way to whack Gov. Blanchard and get the entire legislature to pay attention. The sad thing is that neither Blanchard nor the Legislature was indifferent or callous.

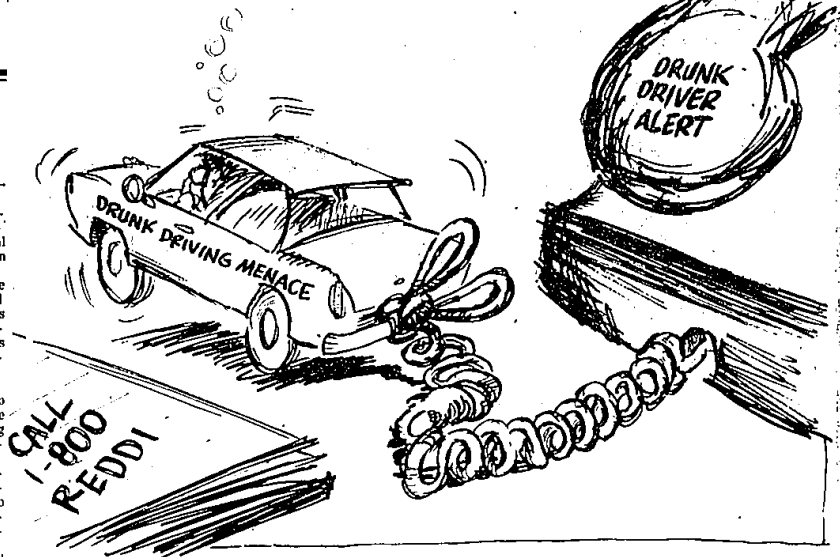
They felt they acted in the face of declining revenues brought about by unemployment and recession. They acted to save services that provided help for people in need, at a time when need was perhaps greater than ever before.

But most Michiganders have a hard time envisioning what they get from state government. They see some state parks and state police on the highways. They know, perhaps, that much of the state budget goes to social services — translated "welfare" and "ADC" — and feel that enough is enough.

The taxpayers' ire has been focused for better than a year on state government and especially the Blanchard administration. The recall campaigns continue the focus, and it will be some time before the public begins to think about Lansing in more benign terms.

It may take a tax cut for that to happen.

WISLER '83 — OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC NEWSPAPERS



Spot a drunk? Call cops

1-800-MI-REDDI.

Impaired drivers seen anywhere in Oakland County can be reported by calling this toll-free telephone number. It's part of an aggressive program to combat drunk driving sponsored by the Traffic Improvement Association (TIA) of Oakland County.

"The goal of REDDI is to identify persons driving so erratically that they could be described as an accident just waiting to happen," said Bruce Madsen, TIA managing director.

"More than likely, erratic driving is the result of too much alcohol, but it could be drugs or even a physical disability."

The county sheriff's department will handle REDDI's dispatch. It will require the location and direction of travel of an erratically driven vehicle and its make, color and license number. Callers will not be asked to identify themselves.

This information will then be called to a deputy, state trooper or local police officer, depending on the jurisdiction in which the offense occurs.

IF YOU THINK the battle against drunk driving has accelerated in the past year, you're right. It's about time.

The statistics are appalling. It has been estimated that drunk driving accounts for 26,300 deaths every year, or about half of all auto fatalities. More persons die because of accidents caused by drunks than



Nick Sharkey

die in any other accident including falls, drownings, fires and poisonings.

Safety experts predict that 50 percent of us will be victimized by drunk drivers during our lifetimes. That's enough for us to get mad.

SOME PEOPLE are doing something about it.

Police chiefs in Wayne County recently obtained a \$400,000 federal grant to put more patrol cars on the road and arrest more drunk drivers where drinking accidents most frequently occur. It is similar to a program Oakland has had in place for two years.

MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) has active chapters in Oakland and Wayne County communities. Many persons active in MADD have had family members victimized by drunk drivers.

Oakland MADD members will hold a candlelight vigil at 8 p.m. Dec. 12 in memory of persons killed or crippled by drunk drivers. They will meet at the county courthouse complex, 1200 N. Telegraph, Pontiac.

As a result of pressure from MADD and other groups, in March of this year Michigan began enforcing a series of tough drunk driving laws. Among other provisions of the law, a driver's license will now be suspended for six months for a first conviction for drunk driving. On-site preliminary breath tests are now allowed so a police officer can determine if there is "reasonable cause" to arrest a driver.

THIS AREA is among the most active in the nation in combating drunk driving. For example, Michigan is one of only 13 states that has a REDDI program. Michigan is among 28 states that has passed tougher drunk driving legislation in the past few years.

The Oakland TIA program received a special award from the National Safety Council. It was selected from among 75 national drinking and driving projects nominated.

A "get tough" anti-drunk driving program can save lives of innocent motorists and pedestrians.

It also helps the drunk driver. For one, it gets him off the road and may save his life. It also may help to get him help to solve his drinking problem.

So don't feel guilty about helping to get drunks off the road. Your action may save lives.

Covering sports is not always fun

THOUSANDS OF people look with envy on members of the journalistic fraternity — especially sports writers — who put their thoughts on paper and then see them in print. They think it is the most interesting and fascinating position in the world.

Sure, the writers are given front-row seats at the opera and all special events, and private seating at sports activities. But the job isn't all peaches and cream.

Writing for daily and weekly journals has many unusual facets. First, you never write the same thing twice. Once the opera or the sports event is over, it is considered old stuff.

What's more, you can often see the lady of the house wrap up your day's work and place it in the garbage can, or it is often just tossed to the winds. How would you like to see your day's work tossed aside before it is a day old? Yet that happens to a news writer "most" every day of his life.

THEN THERE is another side that is even more unusual than seeing your work tossed to the winds. There are times when you wish you could recall a story — even those on which you worked so diligently and never have the public see it.

The Stroller will remember many such times in his long trek on the journalistic trail. The one he best remembers is his story of a fight between Max Baer, the heavyweight champion, and Frankie Campbell in a Chicago ring.

For several rounds the fight was rather dreary. Then Campbell suddenly fell to the floor and was counted out.

The Stroller didn't see the punch land. Neither did many of the nation's leading sports writers.

As edition time drew near, he wrote that Campbell seemingly went down without being hit and that he set the pugilistic game back about 20 years.

After the fiasco, most of the writers gathered around Damon Runyan, the famous writer, in the lounge of his Chicago hotel for a storytelling session.



the stroller
W.W. Edgar

AFTER SEVERAL hours of chatting, with the sun beginning to rise, the newspapers arrived with the early edition of the Chicago newspapers. Across the front page was a story in bold type: Frankie Campbell had died from the effect of Max Baer's punch.

Imagine the position The Stroller was in. His paper carried the story of what he termed a fiasco, and it was on the streets of Detroit. Then the afternoon paper came out with the story of Campbell's death.

His thoughts immediately turned to what would happen to him when he returned to his office. Sure enough, he was questioned. But he had the presence of mind to gather several Chicago papers that featured the "unseen" punch. It was the only thing that saved him.

Would you have envied the sports writers in that position?

THEN THERE was the time in 1936 on the night before the first Max Schmeling-Joe Louis fight in New York.

He wrote that the length of the fight would depend on Mrs. Louis. If she wanted to go to a movie, Joe would make it a quick knockout. If she wanted to go night clubbing after the fight, Joe might let the German stay around for awhile.

Well, you know what happened. Schmeling knocked Louis out in one of the fight game's major upsets.

Would you envy The Stroller in that position when he returned to the office?

So you see, the sports writing assignment isn't all fun and games.

No, no, no, no to Michigan



Tim Richard

work. One wonders how potential manufacturers, thinking of investing in Michigan, will react when they see those film clips.

The disruption plan was announced even as the Great Lakes group was pointing a finger at the U.S. Defense Department as the biggest reason our states aren't getting federal dollars.

Two weeks ago, work began on project ELF, the radio communications system for the Navy in the Upper Peninsula. After a decade, Congress had ended debate, scaling down the project.

But picketers were out protesting it, even as construction started.

SINCE 1976 the federal government has been hanging onto hundreds of millions of federal aid for southeastern Michigan while we argue about what kind of rapid transit system we (don't) want to build. Here, suburban politicians chortle as they turn the screws on the mayor of Detroit.

In southeastern Oakland County, still another flap is arising over I-696, the suburban crosstown freeway. Tiny cities,

hardly larger than subdivisions, held up the project for 20 years while the rest of us crept along Eight Mile Road.

M-275, the last link in a western freeway bypassing Detroit, has been on the drawing boards nearly as long. Despite the optimism of its champions, M-275 is unlikely to be built as long as Detroit officials have breath enough to oppose it. "Super sewer," the giant interceptor and sewage treatment plant envisioned by the western suburbs, is being redesigned and scaled down drastically after 15 years of resistance by Detroit and Ann Arbor. Like I-696, M-275 and the rapid transit system, it, too, was to have been financed largely by federal aid.

THE POINT here is not to argue the merits of any one project.

Rather, it is to show that any major federal funding or federal spending for Michigan is stoutly resisted by other Michiganders.

The enemy is not the Gurns and the Bakers of the sunbelt. We are our own worst enemies. Our state is bleeding economically from the effects of three recessions and an oil crisis in a decade, and our own people are saying, "no" to a transfusion.

Michigan needs to decide what federal money it wants and stop the hassle. Otherwise, all we will get from Uncle Sam is welfare — and darn little of that.