

Opinion

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Tourism best for economy

MORE BUSINESS and civic leaders need to hear about the industry which is going to bring back Michigan from the hard times — tourism.

Thank God for people like Bill McLaughlin, the metro Detroit tourist chief, who spends a good deal of his time in converting the unwashed to the belief in the economic potential of this neglected industry for our state. Sure, lots of folks think automobiles when talking of southeastern Michigan's economy. Tourism, they say, is for the northern regions.

They're mistaken. When it comes to jobs — bread and butter on the table — tourism can do a lot of providing for this part of the state in the coming years.

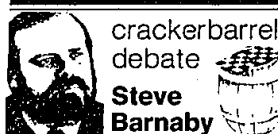
Let's face it: The auto companies have figured out how to make more money with far fewer workers. Just this last quarter, the auto industry posted a loss-to-profit swing exceeding \$2.5 billion, according to the Wall Street Journal. Yet GM is thinking of cutting its work force by more than 60,000 by 1986.

BUT TOURISM, a labor-intensive industry, has yet to reach its potential in the Great Lake State.

"Jobs, jobs, jobs," says the governor. And that's what we need — jobs for those who are being forced to sit idle and are now sapping this state's budget. Jobs to make them taxpayers rather than dependents of the state.

discover Michigan by Bill Stockwell

DID YOU know that the village of Chelsea, with a population of only 3,700, has six different educational centers in or near by? The giant University of Michigan is in Ann Arbor. Eastern Michigan University and Cleary Business College are in Ypsilanti. Washtenaw Community College, Jackson Community College and Concordia Lutheran College are close at hand.



Every hotel, restaurant and convention center built will provide more jobs.

Unfortunately, tourism serves as a stepchild in the economic thinking of far too many of the state's movers and shakers. Lots of lip service is given to it, but not nearly enough money.

At least the state has a guy around like McLaughlin who is spreading the gospel. Just last year 830,000 visitors came to the tri-county area and left behind \$135 million, McLaughlin said recently.

And this region could have far more of those tourist dollars if we urged our state business, labor and governmental leaders to pay more attention and spend more bucks on it.

FOR TOURISM to succeed, McLaughlin reminds us, we all must bury our parochialism in the back yard with the dog's bone. He warned that if Telegraph Road is a barrier between the city and the suburbs, then we can't survive.

And he's right. He reminded us that when tourists think of this area, they don't distinguish between Detroit and the suburbs.

Neither do they distinguish when they spend their money. Whether it be a hotel in Farmington Hills or a restaurant in Westland, it's all the same to tourists. They just want to have a good time.

We should concentrate our efforts on ensuring that tourists do have a good time by supporting moves to provide appropriate facilities and cash expenditures to promote this job-saving industry.

Supporting tourism through time, money or philosophical backing is an investment in our state's economic future.

from our readers

Mayor criticizes council coverage

To the editor:

As a newspaper, you have for years chided the Farmington Hills Council, or as you prefer, that "gang up at Eleven Mile." Some has been justified, some not. I would like to criticize your reporting and editorializing in a matter that wasn't controversial until you made it so.

I am referring to your "headlines" on February 9, 1984, "Williams to Dudley: Shut up" and when Dudley complained Williams shouted back "Shut up." If you were to review past recordings of that meeting, you will find the following:

Each council member in rotation had just been given their turn to speak on the candidate of their choice. As chairman, I spoke after all others had spoken. During my talk, I said something that another council member took issue to and who interrupted my talk. With no raising of voice or shouting, I replied to that person as follows:

"Whether you want me to say it or not, I'm going to say it, so you keep your mouth shut. I've certainly kept my mouth shut when you were talking. I appreciate you do the same."

IN ONLY reporting part of this, these words "shut up" are completely out of context. Perhaps I should have used different words, and I apologize if some found them excessive. However, there is a protocol that we follow at meetings that to be recognized to speak, a council member waits until the other member has completed what they have to say and then asks to be recognized before speaking.

One council member has had a hard time adjusting to this procedure and has been constantly interrupting other persons, making faces and mumbling when something is said that she does not agree with, and it is necessary for the chairman of a meeting to maintain order.

I have generally been able to work with all colleagues but admit that I am a plain talking, no-nonsense type of person. I do not dislike Joan Dudley or Steve Barnaby. I do criticize their methods, however.

Charles H. Williams, Mayor, Farmington Hills

routinely offered to businesses in Michigan cities and towns, will materialize for us.

The deal that most Farmington homeowners can look forward to with certainty is increased assessments. Mr. Sailer, Farmington city assessor, has said as much on the '84 calendar put out by City Hall.

What Mr. Sailer does not say is that there will continue to be no rationale for his assessing.

As I have pointed out so many times before, the assessor seems each year to make adjustments based on whatever whim happens to cross his mind. In that infamous public meeting at City Hall in 1977, he proclaimed that it was his "co-efficient of dispersers" which made him do what he did. A year later it was the subdivision quality which did it. And on and on. Last year he had his jollies with the owners of the old houses. He was high on old houses, down on the '80s houses, and very down on one particular sub I know about.

Hillcrest sub near me was blacktopped last fall. All the property owners had to help pay for that. That's routine. But what I find interesting is that property owners in Hillcrest had reduced property tax evaluations last year, and quite substantially, in fact. I'm talking about amounts over \$2,000 each. My property abuts one of the pieces. I'm in an old house; and my assessment was raised \$400. Further, all my neighbors in historic houses within a two- or three-block perimeter had increases. What was the rationale?

I have constantly maintained that in Michigan — and probably elsewhere — there is no consistency in what assessors do. Another example:

Leaving Farmington for a moment, and going north to Springvale Township, Emmet County, I offer another illustration confirming exactly what I have maintained for years. Six property owners sat down with the township supervisor/assessor to discuss the practices there. In going over the data on the various property owner cards, we found that land assessments per front foot within the same contiguous pieces of property where all lots are identical in width ranged from \$60-\$80. The assessor/supervisor had no immediate answer, for the sins of inequity had preceded his term of office. He implied change.

One significance of that meeting was that it ever took place at all, that an elected official willingly sat across the table from his constituents and listened to their collective concerns. This was not a Board of Review meeting, those kangaroo court-type ones which take place in Farmington and Farmington Hills, but an information meeting.

Springvale Township Board of Reviews persons last year provided me in writing the set of figures they had used to determine my assessment. This was a first, and it is more than Mr. Sailer, Farmington City assessor, will do. He has insisted to me in the past that he will tell me nothing in writing, and even sent me a registered

letter at taxpayers' expense to tell me that. There is irony here. All homeowners receive their tax bills and their Notice of Assessment Change in writing. Sailer does not call each of us into his office to tell us those tidbits of information.

I have a suggestion for all of us: along about the last of February or the first of March when we receive that familiar business envelope with Farmington City as the return address, do not open it but mark REFUSED on the envelope and send it back.

Though Mr. Sailer's inequities are legion, he is only part of the larger issue. The larger issue is the property tax system itself. It is a stupid and archaic way to raise money for public education and operation of local governments. The more reasonable way would be a graduated income tax based on gross income with no exceptions.

The recall persons who are intent on dumping elected officials could better spend their time dumping our medieval and inequitable property tax system.

Lee S. Peil
Farmington

'Biased reporting does disservice'

To the editor:

There have been other matters that have taken my time and this letter has been delayed, but I must reply to Tim Richard's slanted news story recently about Perry Drug Stores and the call for a shoppinglift crackdown.

Mr. Richard's story seemed to portray me as opposed or at least "cool" to such a shoppinglift crackdown. This I must correct. Otherwise, merchants and their customers may begin to think I am "soft" on such crime. Shoppinglift is serious and costs billions annually. Mr. Richard left out — and I believe deliberately — my opening remarks that I was 100 percent behind such a crackdown. I have supported previous anti-shoppinglift programs. His handling of this news story gives the readers quite a different impression — to my detriment.

Yes — I did point out that the Oakland County jail was overcrowded and that a crackdown with its commensurate arrests would overcrowd it more.

Mr. Richard left out that I appealed to the chamber of commerce executive director and Perry Drug officers who were present, to approach the (Oakland County) Board of Commissioners and ask them to address the overcrowding problem, as our neighboring counties have done, so that Oakland County's police departments doing their job would find a place to lodge their prisoners.

Slanted/biased reporting does a disservice not only to me — but to a fine Sheriff's Department and a disservice to your readers who are deprived of the whole truth.

Johannes F. Spreen
Sheriff
Oakland County

Scoopism in news; racism in cities

TALK OF racism is common these days.

A panel of Ohio State University journalism professors found Detroit newspapers guilty of racism when reporting the now infamous Vista sludge-hauling contract case.

Then the U.S. Court of Appeals upheld a federal district judge's finding that the city of Birmingham was guilty of racism in ducking out of a commitment to build senior citizen housing.

And each time Detroit Mayor Coleman Young thinks it is advantageous to charge someone else with racism, he does so.

It is often difficult to determine where racism starts and ends.

IT WOULD be helpful for an impartial panel of experts — if there is such a thing — to tell whether an event or decision is affected by racism.

It may be too difficult to determine which events are affected by racism and which are affected by mere stupidity, or by a refusal to admit wrong, or by political profit, or by opportunism, etc.

Take the OSU investigation of the newspaper stories on Detroit's Magnum and Vista trial cases.

I think the panel erred in its judgment. If the newspaper editors, reporters and writers involved went overboard it was because they were guilty of the occupational disease of "scoopism" rather than racism.

Those in the news business generally try to come up with a story that will capture the most attention before the competition does. At even the hint of a scoop, they tend to play the story for all it's worth, then add a few dollops.

But the sad truism is that the Big Story is remembered only until the next day. Then pressure starts building to produce another Big Story. It isn't even, "What have you done for me lately?" It is, "What have you done for me today?"

A whole series of stories unfolds. Those chasing the story could care less whether the principals are black, white, yellow or



green. They care about the dramatic impact of the story.

THERE is a difference, however, in determining the amount of racism present in decisions to reject public housing which might include blacks.

The public record of the hearings in Birmingham is full of statements which clearly indicate that some opposition was based on fear that public housing would necessarily be available for blacks.

The city of Birmingham has spent many thousands of dollars in an unsuccessful effort to have the flouting of deliberate racism overturned.

Birmingham was not the only city which ducked out of public housing projects in order to avoid any possibility of accepting poor blacks. One only has to look at the makeup of the community — and most suburban communities in this metropolitan area — to know there is a pervasive, steadfast opposition to the assimilation of blacks.

Fifteen years ago the Kerner Commission (also known as the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders) found that the deliberate effort to exclude blacks from the opportunity to live in better neighborhoods and to enjoy schooling and the other advantages of these neighborhoods, was one major cause of unrest and was indeed unjust.

The commission recommended any number of remedies, most of which were endorsed by national and state governmental, business and social leaders. Yet, as far as assimilating blacks into our cities goes, very little has actually been done.

And you won't need a panel of experts to tell you that. Take a look around.

Reader laments tax process

To the editor:

The Coke folk (Coca-Cola, that is) recently announced a \$2.9 million new plant in Detroit. The final paragraph of that story stated that the city of Detroit had granted to Coca-Cola a 12-year tax abatement.

Now that the "Notice of Assessment Change" time is close upon us, Farmington homeowners can wallow in the knowledge that no such tax abatement deals,

Here's something to make you count your blessings. It's a letter from a distant relative in a midwestern state, a woman of 40 with two teen-age children, and no matter how dismal I feel, her missive cheers me up. I'll disguise the names. Here goes:

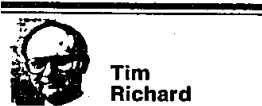
"WE HAD a strange Christmas. It all started Nov. 29 when Mom burned her right leg with scalding water. It became infected, and she was hospitalized Dec. 13. "In the meantime, my old '73 Pinto died. Couldn't be revived without major, costly surgery. Then the ungodly cold weather."

"Dec. 14 Dad fell on the ice outside my front door, cracked two bones in his right wrist, was casted from fingers to elbow."

"Then on the 17th Dad had brought my grandparents to see Mom, and when we went to get his car so they wouldn't slip on the icy parking lot, he (Dad) fell again just outside emergency room doors. This time he broke the left radius, just above the wrist, completely in two. The cast on his left arm goes from over the fingers to just below the armpit."

"I CALLED Jack (her brother), who was due to come home the 19th to see if he could come home a day earlier to take care of Dad so I could go back to work the 18th. Thank God he could."

"Now I was running errands for Mom,



who is still in the hospital; Dad, who has two casts; and my grandparents, who shouldn't be out in this extreme cold — and I have no wheels! Dad's two cars were giving us trouble with starting in this cold weather — 20-plus below, wind chill minus 40 to minus 70."

"On Monday the 19th, the car wouldn't start at a.m. after work. One of the maintenance men jumped it, and I started home after calling Jack to take the kids to school. Got half of the way home and developed a flat. Walked to a friend of my folks and called Dad to have Jack come and get me after he got back from taking kids to school."

"The afternoon Jack, Eddie (her son) and I went to fix the flat, and the car wouldn't start. We tried to jump it, and it wouldn't catch. So walked to Pfeiffers again. Dennis came and he couldn't get it to turn over either."

"So we pushed and pulled it to their garage, put the battery charger on it, and finally got it started. Jack drove it home but took my keys with him."

You think you've got it bad?

"IN THE MEANTIME, Dad calls us and tells us Gramps had some kind of spell and needs to be seen by a doctor. So Jack calls and the car won't start again."

"Dennis takes Eddie and I over to get Jack and the keys to the other car. Eddie stays with Dad, and Dennis' car stalls out at a stop sign."

"Finally get back to the other car, take Gramps to hosp. emergency room. Dr. checks him out and admits him across the hall from Mom. He has no stroke symptoms by now, but his blood pressure is 204/90."

"Friday the 23rd Gramps is discharged from hosp. He's OK. Had small stroke, no evidence of anything worse pending."

"Gramps got out of hosp. on his 87th birthday. So that evening Jack, Dan, Shirley (other relatives), Eddie, Tony, Tracy and I went to their apartment with ice cream & cake."

"We had a really nice Christmas. Everyone was home and on the mend. Dad and I are going to look at a car today. Hope it pans out."

"Now it is Michelle's (her daughter) turn to be the difficult one. She's so moody! At times she's loud & obnoxious, then she becomes introverted and very quiet. If I survive her puberty, it will be a miracle!"

"Hope this finds you well. May 1984 be a great year for you."

— Jane"