

Opinion

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Keep politics out of manager's office

"You've gotta give the guy a chance. I'm talking about the new Farmington Hills City Manager Bill Costick.

"Taking the helm from the retiring and soon to be retired Larry Savage on July 1, Costick already is finding out what it's like to be in the council hot seat. Not that he already doesn't know what the action is like when you have to do business with the gang up at the corner of Orchard Lake and Eleven Mile. Costick has been assistant manager since January of 1981.

"But you know how it is. A body really never knows what a job is like until he/she actually sits in the chair. Sort of like the difference between living with somebody and being married. Just isn't the same.

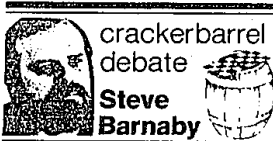
"Well, now that Costick and the motley crew are about to be officially wed, the heat is starting to be put on by the crew. Too bad. Costick is the kind of administrator this city has needed for a long time.

"But city council for a couple of years now has a real bad tendency to belabor the city manager's office with petty politics. Actually, the council's politics are permeating every office at city hall. One city hall employee was heard to lament that the constant council lobbying of city employees was getting to the breaking point.

"You're afraid to be seen talking to one councilman in fear that another will want to know what's going on," said these employees.

"But Savage, now that he is free to speak, let the council know just what he thought of the way they have been acting — or I should say misbehaving of late. His opportunity came the other night at the council session as the council debated the merits of the administration's budget versus one presented by hizzoner Charlie Williams.

"The political decisions are the prerog-



ative of the council. . . The ultimate decision is the council's. When you come into the area of the best posture of presenting something to the voters, that isn't up to the administration, that's up to the council," said Savage.

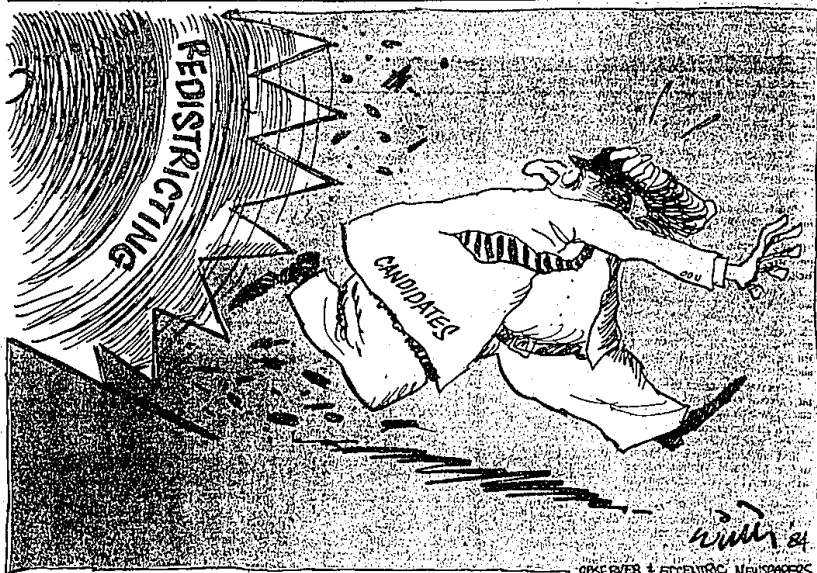
Seems Savage had had about enough when, for the second week in a row, Williams turned to one of the city administrators to lend support to his proposal. The first week the victim was Finance Director Chuck Rosch. This week, Costick was Williams' victim.

"C'mon Charlie, what do you expect the guy to say when you ask him about your budget proposal? I mean, you're the boss — for now, anyway.

For some reason I have a real hard time imagining a city manager telling the elected mayor, "actually Chuck, this whole debate is rather stupid and a waste of time. There isn't a flea's width difference fiscally between your proposal and mine. So why don't you take your political act on the road and leave me to do the job I'm paid to do."

Costick won't say it. So I will. Actually, in far more polite and legalistic terms the city charter says the same thing. Leave the administrators out of the political fray. That goes for you Charlie, Bob, Donn, Jan, Jody, Joan and Joe.

As for you Bill Costick, good luck and give 'em hell.



Redistricting: 1 more buzzsaw

THE SQUEEZE is on Michigan Democrats in what looks like a long battle over control of state government.

Less than two years after Gov. James Blanchard took office as leader of the state party, the Democrats' longtime domination of both houses of the Legislature suffered a wrenching setback.

The recall elections saw two Democratic senators who supported Blanchard's temporary tax increase dumped and replaced by two Republicans.

The Republicans assumed numerical superiority in the Senate and that body hasn't been the same since.

THE DEBATE over tax-cutting measures promoted by the Senate Republicans has dominated the Lansing scene.

Republican majority leader John Engler of Mt. Pleasant has led a GOP demand for a dramatic tax cut, even though he and the other Republicans know that the Dem-controlled House wouldn't think of passing the Engler-proposed cut and the governor would veto it. Blanchard, under pressure to evade the tax-hiker image, offered a more modest tax cut.

The newest measure of controversy has been the proposal of Sen. R. Robert Geake, R-Northville, to cut funding of the program that provides welfare assistance to single able-bodied adults. The measure has inspired rhetoric from Republicans, Democrats, Detroiters and out-staters



with cries of racism being injected once again by Detroit Mayor Coleman Young.

THE CHANCES of Geake's measure being passed by the Legislature and accepted by the governor are about the same as that of the Engler tax-cut proposal. One suspects that Geake's proposal is either 1) a measure designed to put the spotlight of publicity on the bill's sponsor, or 2) an effort to focus budget-trimming attention on the Department of Social Services spending programs.

Lately the Legislature has grown more fractious as members debate the amount of special aid that the city of Detroit should receive from state government.

So now there are demands on Blanchard to restore some sense of order and harmony in the Legislature.

While all this is going on a new assault has opened on Democratic dominance in the form of a law suit which claims that the 1983 reapportionment plan approved by the Democratic-dominated Legislature is unconstitutional. Oakland County Circuit Judge George LaPlata ruled that it is

unconstitutional because it was tacked on to legislation dealing with another matter and thus deprived the public of an opportunity to scrutinize the plan.

THE STATE Supreme Court has agreed to review it in order to avoid chaos in the August primary and November general election. State Senate members are not up for re-election but House members are and their districts would be affected by a decision which would render the '83 reapportionment invalid.

Political experts feel that the '83 reapportionment helps Democrats more than Republicans and Republicans are anxious to see LaPlata's ruling stand.

Of course, the high court is theoretically non-partisan but human nature being what it is, it might be expected that the supreme — with Democrats of good standing in the majority — will overturn LaPlata's ruling and give the Democrats a little breathing room this fall.

The Supreme Court should at the least decline to rearrange district lines until after this election in the interest of electoral orderliness.

That means all the Democratic house members have to worry about this fall is running as members of a party which approved a state income tax increase and as a party in opposition to Ronald Reagan. Those problems might make the prospect of rearranged districts look welcome by comparison.

Games for Disabled: our chance to shine

PERSISTENCE, SKILL AND determination — she had it all. Unfortunately, her high school coach didn't see it that way. For four years, she made every practice and never missed a game. But at the end of those four years, her playing time totaled zero.

The problem was her field hockey coach had a handicap. The coach couldn't accept the young woman, a minimally involved victim of cerebral palsy, as an athlete.

Today she is one of the best athletes on a team representing the U.S. at the 1984 International Games for the Disabled in New York, according to Jeff Jones, sports and recreation supervisor for United Cerebral Palsy of Detroit.

THAT'S WHAT the International Games are all about. They give good athletes, who happen to be handicapped, a chance to compete in a sporting event with a structure and rules that parallel the Olympics. In fact, the International Games are being used as a test for everything from meals to security for the Los Angeles games.

Like that coach, however, people in the metropolitan area seem unable to accept an athlete with a handicap. Therapeutic recreation officials in Wayne and Oakland counties report that not one member of the media is covering the games on the sports pages.

"If there were 11 athletes going to Los Angeles, you can bet every paper would be keeping on our every play and night," Jones said.

MICHIGAN is sending to New York 11 athletes as part of the 80-member U.S. team. There are five from the Tri-City Therapeutic Recreation Program operated by the cities of Wayne, Westland and Garden City, two from the team sponsored by the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission, one from a Sterling Heights team and two from Lansing.

"They're just as competitive as the Olympic games," said Pat Fields-Anderson, therapeutic recreation supervisor for the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission. And athletes must qualify to compete.

"They train, sweat, injure and bleed," said one of the able-bodied athletes Jones said. "But there's one major thing they have to appreciate the chance to compete a lot more."

Sandra Armbruster

for athletes who are handicapped is "parallel to women in sports."

"In the Olympic movement, women have had the same problem," he explained. "It will be a long time before the disabled receive public acceptance."

THAT'S BEGINNING to change. For the first time, there will be two wheelchair distance races in the L.A. games. Athletes will be competing for gold medals in a 1,500-meter men's race and in a 800-meter women's race. Competitors will be chosen during the New York International Games closing ceremonies.

Meanwhile, athletes still face hurdles from employers and from lack of public financial support.

Employers don't offer the same consideration to handicapped athletes, Jones said.

"If they were going to L.A., their company would pack their bags with the company logo on the suitcase," he said. "But some athletes declined to attend the International Games because they couldn't get the time off work, and work is very important for a disabled individual."

(Sports for the handicapped) isn't seen to be a necessary thing."

The athletes last last weekend for the games, which begin on Sunday. But programs in Wayne and Oakland counties are still looking for financial support to cover the costs. Tri-City Therapeutic is still \$2,500 short, and Oakland County is \$700 short.

THOSE CONCERNS haven't dampened the enthusiasm of the athletes.

"This is my first International Games after five years of training," said John Gacco. "I'd like to think it was all worth it."

The Michigan 11 went asking for space to compete and to be recognized for their achievements. Besides, maybe the rest of us will overcome our handicapped attitudes to give these athletes that much.

Public should see more of us

It's disturbing to regularly read and hear of the low esteem in which the press is held. Here are some recent examples:

● Newsmen were prevented from accompanying the U.S. troops during the invasion of Grenada last year. The general public seemed unaffected by the ensuing debate between government and press officials.

● Between 1980 and 1983 journalist defendants lost 93 percent of 130 libel trials judged by juries (although 70 percent of the verdicts ended up being reversed in the appeals process). Damages in 24 of those cases exceeded \$1 million as compared to only one \$1 million verdict prior to 1980.

● Public opinion surveys rate journalists as among the lowest regarded professions.

I WAS THINKING about this last week as the Observer & Eccentric prepared to make candidate endorsements before Monday's local school board elections.

Part of the low esteem comes because many people believe newsmen are careerless, glory-hungry and don't worry about their reputations. What I observed was

I watched as editors and reporters uniformly evaluated candidates for local school boards. They spent hours conducting interviews, attending candidates' nights, observing incumbents and conferring with community leaders.



After they made their decisions, editors agonized over every word in the endorsement editorial. Was it fair? Did it accurately represent the candidate? Did all candidates have an equal chance to win the endorsement?

When the editorials were completed, they were carefully read by senior editors. Once again, many questions were asked. Was the reasoning sound? Were concrete examples given for backing a candidate?

Finally, a careful check was made to ensure that no endorsement appeared in the paper before the Observer & Eccentric staffers checked and double-checked pages with the editorials.

WELL, THERE is a divergence between what journalists do and the public perception of what they do.

Those of us in this business don't talk about what we do and how we do it. We're too busy trying to describe the picture, the baker, and the customer. But we rarely discuss how newspapers are written and edited.

difference between our society and that of a totalitarian regime such as Russia. Freedom to know what is going on in our world is what living in a democratic society is about.

Some like to take advantage of the public's misconceptions about the press to serve their own purposes. They would prefer to operate in the shadows away from public scrutiny. Several proposals were recently considered by the Michigan Legislature which would limit the public's right to information. One would allow public meetings to be held in private homes and the second would keep the public out of meetings when a law suit is threatened.

Justice Patricia Boyle of the Michigan Supreme Court made an interesting comment in a recent letter, published in several Observer & Eccentric newspapers, dated 5/27/84.

"The first and most remarkable aspect of our legal system is the U.S. Constitution, and unfortunately, surveys show many Americans don't understand the protection it guarantees us."

Amos