

Opinion

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Michigan Our state deserves credit

STATE government in Michigan has been getting a terrible rap the last couple of years. Its enemies write it off as building a bridge that won't stand and a barge that won't float. In supporting Proposal C, they openly hoped to cripple it.

The facts won't support them. Far from being inept, state government in Michigan has performed some great works and a few near-miracles in the last generation. We ought to be thankful for them.

Just a little over 25 years ago, the state cut the ribbon for the Mackinac Straits Bridge, once considered an impossible engineering feat. The bridge generated so much tourist traffic between the two peninsulas that a few years later the tolls were cut by half.

Michigan put in place more miles of freeway faster than any other state. Because of delays with a couple of Oakland County freeways, it's possible to forget what was built, how well and how promptly.

As public tastes in recreation changed, the state laced its forest with snowmobile trails and then with bicycle paths and hiking trails. Roads and parks in western Wayne and Oakland counties, in particular, boast a wealth of bicycle trails.

ENVIRONMENTALLY, Michigan is a leader among the 50 states.

In their collective wisdom, voters in 1984 not only rejected the savagery of Proposal C but adopted Proposal B, making Michigan the first state in the Union to give constitutional protection to a land trust fund. It will enable us to replace lands lost to oil and gas drilling with other recreational lands.

The Detroit River, a brown sewer in the 1950s, has been turned literally into a trout stream.

By 1960, lamprey invaders had almost wiped out the lake trout. In cooperation with other states, Michigan led the way in virtually exterminating the lamprey, restoring the lake trout and introducing salmon to the Great Lakes.

The deer herd is larger than it has been in decades. An elk herd has been introduced to the Pigeon River Country in the northeastern lower peninsula and has been so well managed that it is now almost huntable. The latest news is an am-

bitious plan to introduce moose to the mainland.

THE 1963 STATE constitution is nearing the quarter-century mark, and its benefits have been immense.

Take the justice system. The old, sometimes amateurish justice of the peace system has been replaced by a system of professionally run district courts. The Supreme Court is still a thorn, but a lot of its work has been absorbed by a Court of Appeals whose decisions are frequently models of clarity, promptness and unanimity.

EDUCATIONALLY, we have seen much progress.

College tuitions are, frankly, higher than they ought to be, but the state college system is still a joy to behold. The University of Michigan and Michigan State University have been preserved. Detroit's Wayne University was adopted by the state and in the 1960s given almost a new campus.

Regional teachers colleges such as Eastern and Western gained university status and size. Civic dreams such as University of Michigan-Dearborn and Oakland University are now admirable realities as they celebrate their 25th anniversaries.

A generation ago there were five scattered junior colleges, often mere scholastic havens for admitted draft dodgers. Today we have a border-to-border system of 29 community colleges doing immense things for traditional students, women seeking to enter the workforce and the redeveloping economy.

Counties, remnants of medieval England a generation back, now may adopt county executive systems and home-rule charters. Oakland and Wayne have done so respectively. Counties also have been given the responsibility for dealing with solid waste — and have responded.

UNSOLVED PROBLEMS? Sure. Public transit is starved. Townships have contributed to an urban sprawl. Local school districts have been left to pick the pockets of homeowners.

But let us be thankful for what has been done, and done so well.

—Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

Opportunity fades; hunger survives

THE AMERICAN DREAM holds the illusion of living in a land of opportunity. That vision — the hope of a better tomorrow — is still bringing pilgrims to our shores.

However, thousands of Michigan residents find themselves living a nightmare.

Some lack the job skills, work habits and resources to hunt for work. They are the chronically unemployed. Others are caught in an economic time warp between the industrial era and the age of technology.

"A lot aren't well trained, and there aren't the opportunities for jobs that pay well-enough to sustain themselves and their families," said Tom Frommeyer, director of Southfield's human resources department.

Whatever the reason, when people don't work, they don't eat much.

DESPITE AN apparent drop in unemployment, many people in the metropolitan area are barely able to subsist. Toss and turn as they do through government regulations, they seldom wake up to a better tomorrow.

The problem is well-documented. In Redford, for example, the demand for surplus and emergency food distributions still exceeds the level set in 1982 when a state of emergency was declared.

Farmington Goodfellow served 400 families and senior citizens last year. This year they need \$16,000 to meet the need.

Southfield's Frommeyer said the "numbers show us the situation isn't de-escalating." Instead, requests to Goodfellow are above past years.

And one of the hardest hit communities in western Wayne County is Westland, where about 1,400 families receive surplus food each month.

WHILE THOSE distributions of food help ease consciences, the system just isn't working.

"Lots of people are eligible who we've never gotten to," said Al Hatch, director of the Wayne Metro Community Services



Sandra Armbruster

which funnels food allotments to units outside Detroit.

The problem, according to Hatch, is logistics: There never is enough food, and people without transportation are unable to reach the 60-some community sites where it is distributed.

Besides, such distributions aren't cost-effective, according to Sid Blitz, director of Redford's community development department. He estimates that it costs \$2 to distribute every pound of surplus cheese.

"That's why food stamps exist," he said.

THOSE COSTS have deterred some local government units from getting involved in surplus food distributions.

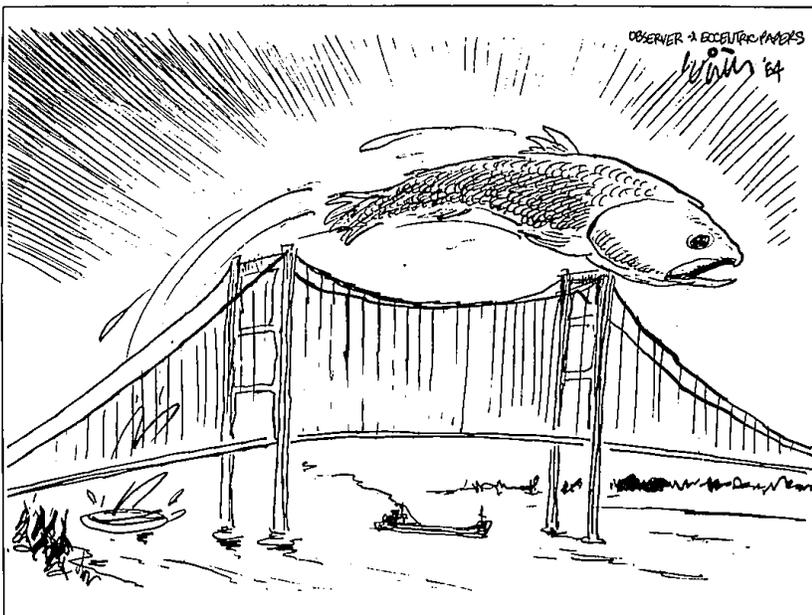
Yet food stamps and welfare programs have been cut as the Reagan administration fantasizes about slashing domestic spending to reduce the federal deficit.

"That may be a reflection of the American psyche. Headlines about the hungry in Africa catch our eyes, but we don't care off when talk turns to those hurting at home.

If we don't find better ways of dealing with poverty, however, we all may be in for a long night. Those who work do have it better, says Frommeyer, but those who are "down and out" find costs escalating as economic supports drop off.

Despite the efforts of charitable groups around the holidays, Ross notes those people are "just as hungry in June as they are at Christmas time."

Cutting off welfare benefits or day-dreaming that all's well with America won't change the problem. But providing economic support for families while the breadwinner learns new job skills could break the cycle of chronic unemployment and restore hope in a dream.



The parade is saved again

AT PRECISELY 9:20 a.m. Thursday near the Detroit Art Institute, a marching band will begin to play. The 56th Thanksgiving Day parade will be under way. Ah, the parade has been saved for another year.

Uncertainty has surrounded the parade since 1980 when the J.L. Hudson Co. withdrew as sponsor. Without the support of many suburbanites, there would be no parade this year.

Birmingham's Walter McCarthy will be among 50 persons who will walk down Woodward Avenue dressed as a clown. McCarthy organized the distinguished clown corps, each of whom paid \$1,000 to wear grease paint and costume.

Tom Adams of Bloomfield Hills is chairman of the Michigan Thanksgiving Parade Foundation, the fund-raising agency of the parade.

IT'S APPROPRIATE that suburbanites take the lead in saving the parade. It's impossible to know for sure, but parade organizers estimate that 400,000 of the 600,000 persons attending will come from the suburbs.

In addition, many of the marching groups — one thinks with pleasure of the Redford Township Unicycle Club, Franklin Village Band, Oakland County 4-H clowns and Oakland County mounted police division — come from the suburbs.

Wow! International agents!

I DID NOT realize what an insidious group those picketers at Williams International Corp. were until I read the remarks of Oakland Circuit Judge James Thorburn on the subject of protest at the Commerce Township plant where parts for cruise missiles are manufactured.

In a rather sobering interview, Thorburn suggests that the majority of those who took part in the protests at the plant may have been protesting at the direction of a communist conspiracy.

Thorburn suggested that most of those who picketed at the plant gates were "agents of somebody" and really "not interested in the moral issue of nuclear war."

The Oakland judge noted that picketers seemed to protest at Williams International on the same days that anti-nuclear weapon demonstrations were held in Germany, England and Scotland.

IT IS extremely helpful to our understanding of the situation.

Previously we thought that the group which picketed several times at the Williams plant consisted only of a few misguided clerics, nuns, do-gooders and crackpots who fail to understand that readiness, willingness and ability to wage thermonuclear war is the same thing as peace.

Now it is apparent that those who picketed Williams were picketing on the same days that protesters in other parts of the world chose to picket. Proof beyond a rea-



Nick Sharkey

Like it or not, running a parade is a business. In the case of the Thanksgiving Day parade, the bottom line is \$650,000.

Although most of the 3,500 participants are volunteers, expenses are still high. For example, the average float costs \$35,000 for materials and labor. Approximately 390 giant papier-mache heads will be seen in the parade. Each costs between \$500 and \$2,000.

THESE COSTS forced Hudson's to stop being the major sponsor in 1980. For a few months, it appeared there would be any more parades.

Then Detroit Renaissance stepped in as sponsor in 1981 and 1982. After incurring a \$100,000 deficit in contributions as compared to expenses in 1982, Detroit Renaissance ended the parade.

Into the gap stepped Michigan's first lady-elect, Paula Blanchard. In early 1983 she led a drive to keep the parade. She loaned her executive assistant, Carlene Bonner, to work on it full time. She

organized an independent tax-exempt agency to run the parade.

"That's how the parade has operated for the past two years. Bonner is now its director and is no longer on the first lady's staff.

THE THANKSGIVING parade has many sources of income. As already mentioned, the distinguished clowns contribute \$1,000 each. Business sponsors include firms like General Motors, Michigan Bell, Detroit Edison, Hudson's, The Stroh Brewery and K mart.

Last year a 6.2-mile race called the Turkey Trot was added. This year up to 1,000 runners are expected to race the length of the parade. At \$8 per entrant, the Turkey Trot has become an excellent fund-raiser.

And there's even a role you can play this year. Those who attend the parade are being asked to contribute.

"How much would you pay to see a two-hour sports event or concert?" asks Carlene Bonner. "If every one of the 600,000 persons expected to line the parade route would give \$1, the parade's future would be assured."

Contributions should be mailed to: Michigan Thanksgiving Parade Foundation, Drawer 64644, Detroit 48216.

If there's no free lunch, there's also no free parade.



Bob Wisler

terfered with plant traffic at Williams with conspiracy. Conspiracy carries a penalty of up to one year in jail rather than simple trespassing charges.

At the time it seemed strange to many attorneys, the protesters themselves and observers that Patterson chose the harsher conspiracy charges. But if Patterson chose to believe, as Thorburn apparently does, that these people are "agents" rather than citizens engaged in assembly and protest, the situation becomes more understandable.

There has been a suspicion in these parts that the conspiracy charges were brought about at the suggestion of federal "agents" fearful the protesting would get out of hand unless tough steps were taken. Patterson has denied any suggestion that the federal government or its agents had any influence on his decision. He said he wanted to make an example of these protesters to discourage future protests.

If anyone has been used, it is Patterson, Thorburn and those who chose to pursue as harsh a punishment as possible for what is hardly more than overzealous picketing.

They assured that the protesters got what they wanted in the first place — publicity. Without the publicity, they would be merely a group of civilians who like to walk back and forth in front of a manufacturing plant on the slim possibility that someone would pay attention to their futile effort to stop the production of nuclear weapons.