

# Opinion

Robert Sklar editor/477-5450  
Rich Perlberg assistant managing editor

33203 Grand River Ave./Farmington, MI 48024

Philip Power chairman of the board  
Richard Aginlan president  
Dick Laham general manager  
Steve Barnaby managing editor  
Fred Wright circulation director

10A(F)

O&E Thursday, October 9, 1986

## Downtown Project manager a must

A monthly peek into Bob Sklar's notebook—

**B**RICKS AND mortar provide a framework for buildings, not downtowns. So think project manager.

Farmington's Downtown Development Authority would do well to remember that, even in these early stages of adopting a downtown development plan and budget.

Filling the post won't come cheaply. The going pay for a top-flight project manager is about \$25,000 a year. Realistically, it may take a few years to generate enough greenbacks.

During the first year or two — when pedestrian lighting, shade trees, sidewalks, planters, increased parking and other public improvements are going in — a project manager won't be essential.

But when the time comes to bring one aboard, the investment is certain to reap big dividends. The pay becomes inconsequential.

A VIBRANT central business district undoubtedly will spill over into Farmington's historic district and the neighborhoods beyond, strengthening community spirit and property values along the way.

It's the project manager who wields leadership for a downtown caught in the fierce scramble for consumer dollars. It's the project manager who instills wide-ranging pride among property owners, shopkeepers and city leaders alike. It's the project manager who negotiates the scattershot approach.

The pivotal job of convincing absentee landlords to either fix up their properties or consider selling them to someone who will also belong to the project manager.

Unlike DDA members, who as business people and civic volunteers must use more subtle persuasion, the project manager is beholden to no one but the DDA and the city council.

Only a project manager has the wherewithal — using both gentle and



Bob Sklar

direct encouragement — to rally merchants around a common purpose and deepen their commitment to downtown.

PROJECT MANAGERS work much like cheerleaders. Their enthusiasm must be contagious. It must come across as genuine. There's no room for aloofness.

Farmington's project manager should be based on Grand River, the hub of commercial activity. Working alongside merchants and shoppers is the best way to sense gradual shifts in mood or a quieting down of cash registers.

Make no mistake about it. A project manager long on rah-rah but short on know-how won't cut it. Skills must span both.

Not only must a project manager be familiar with architectural design, but also with consumer wants, low-interest loans, marketing strategy, inventory expansion, sales promotions, government grants, even tourism. Knowing the nuances of commercial lenders and the dynamics of the local economy helps immensely.

THE CITY manager, the merchants association, the chamber of commerce, lending institutions, building owners, the media, historical groups, beautification groups — all compete for the project manager's time.

Simply put, anything or anyone influencing the prosperity of the central business district falls under the project manager's purview.

Rejuvenating downtown Farmington may be painstaking. But the tangible rewards from having a project manager should make the time, effort and expense a blue-chip investment.

## Prosperity claim: Is it PR or genuine?

ONE SCHOOL of thought calls it the Reagan prosperity. Or, if you prefer, the Reagan-Murphy prosperity, letting the Oakland County executive's name stand in excelsis for all who have contributed to the high-tech and office boom.

The other school of thought says Michigan "led" the recovery of 1983-86, and that Gov. James Blanchard led Michigan, so it's the "Blanchard prosperity."

Whoa!

It's the wrong year to append a label to the good times most of us are enjoying. Wait 'til the next recession.

FOR 30 YEARS the savants have been saying, "When the U.S. catches cold, Michigan gets pneumonia."

That phlegmatic analogy refers to the fact that Michigan is a manufacturer of durable consumer goods. When times are rough, folks put off buying autos from metro Detroit and Flint, home appliances from Benton Harbor-St. Joseph, castings from the southern foundry towns and metals from the Upper Peninsula mines.

Frequently in recessions, our unemployment rate is double the national average.

Every governor for a generation has been saying Michigan's economy needs to be diversified.

BLANCHARD HAS implemented a lot of programs aimed in that direction.

There's the strategic fund, to invest in the fledgling industries that provide most of our new job growth; there are the new franchising rules, to attract national companies and local investors toward enterprises that have a 90 percent success rate; there are the new university patent and license policies, to encourage professors to sell their research to entrepreneurs; there's the ombudsman; there's the budgetary favoritism shown to community colleges.



Tim Richard

which do much of the job training; there's the promotion of tourism . . . and so on.

(By the way, if that isn't "supply-side economics," I don't know what is.)

To be historically accurate, we must give credit to the source from which Blanchard filched virtually all his ideas — the September 1981 economic message of Gov. William G. Milliken. But Blanchard deserves high marks for passing and starting to implement the Milliken program.

THE EVIDENCE that the Milliken-Blanchard program worked won't come, however, until the next downturn.

If we get economic pneumonia, nothing has changed. But if Michigan's jobless rate is close to the national average rather than double it, we'll have an indication of success.

We may not have long to wait. Cloudy signs are everywhere.

When corporate reports show increased sales but decreased profits, it means trouble is not far off. In one August afternoon, I spotted three such reports on the PR Newswire.

A New York Stock Exchange dive usually precedes a recession by six months. It occurred in August.

Consumer credit has about peaked. The Manufacturers Bank business index has been wobbly for several months.

I look for the national downturn to start around the end of the first quarter of 1987. That's when we'll see whether the "Blanchard prosperity" is public relations hype or genuine.



## Judges: elected not made



Bob Wisler

KNOWLEDGEABLE speculators are advising that the best bet for election to the state Supreme Court this year are Dennis Archer and Robert Griffin.

I'll bet money on the first name simply because he is the only one of the 21 candidates for the state Supreme Court who is currently a Supreme Court judge and who will have the designation of "Justice of the Supreme Court" under his name. Incumbents with designations do not lose.

Griffin is likely to be right at the top because he has a name that is familiar to a lot of voters, having served many years as a U.S. senator from this state and because he also has the backing of the Republican Party.

Some thought is given to the idea that Traverse City lawyer Dean Robb will make it over Griffin because he has the support of the Democratic Party and the allegiance of organized labor. Robb's name will be on a lot of the suggested states passed out at election time.

THE ONLY PROBLEM is that when it comes to electing judges, most voters don't know a Frank Kelley from a Mike Kelly and voters tend to vote for names they have heard before in connection with judicial endeavors.

More people probably have heard Griffin's name than Robb's, therefore Griffin.

To give you one small example of how the election process works in mat-

ters judicial, here's a tale passed on about Wayne Circuit Judge Charles Kaufman — the same judge who gained a ton of adverse publicity for not sentencing the Vincent Chin killers to jail. Kaufman once ordered the Van Buren Township board of trustees to jail for not following his order to give the developer of a Van Buren trailer park a sewer permit.

The board took the people's side in the matter and Kaufman's decisions were definitely unpopular. The next election, Kaufman led the field of judicial candidates in Van Buren Township. From such stuff came the maxim: I don't care what you say about me, just make sure you spell my name right.

IN ADDITION to Archer, Robb, Griffin and the Republican-party-nominated James Kaufman, there are 17 other candidates running for the state's highest court, none of them very well-known. James Kelley, a Monroe County Circuit judge, has the advantage of having an "electable" name as well as judicial experience. Lansing attorney Zoltan Ferency was well-known a few

years ago. None of the others have as much to offer, either as a name candidate or a candidate with judicial experience.

Then why the stamped? Simply because the state does not have a good method for electing or judges to the Supreme Court. It doesn't have a good method for electing judges to other courts either, but that's another story.

Election laws say that Supreme Court candidates must be nominated by a political party. For years, the major candidates came from either the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. Even more curiously, the parties nominated candidates who run as non-partisan candidates.

EACH ELECTION, the state has tried to exclude candidates who were not nominated by parties, but lost so many lawsuits along the way that it gave up. The courts ruled the state must have a way for independents to get on the ballot.

The secretary of state's office turned the problem over to the Legislature to spell out a method for independents to get on the ballot. The Legislature, so far, has ducked the issue. As it now stands almost anyone can get on the ballot.

The only qualifications are: be a state attorney under 70 years old and have one person attest he or she supports you. That fits about 97 percent of the state's growing attorney population.

What a way to run a judicial system.

## Reaffirming our mission



crackerbarrel debate  
Steve Barnaby

No other country provides newspapers with the same rights or expects the same obligations as does America and its readers.

The "right" is really an expectation that newspapers will keep the American public informed. The obligation is that we chronicle the changing face of America without fear of retribution.

The First Amendment, a much misunderstood article, arms newspapers with the right to represent the public when the public is unable to keep an eye on those forces that could harm or corrupt our Constitution. Given that protection, we are rightfully expected to operate in a forthright manner.

Anything less would be wrong — an abdication of our responsibility to the people of this country.

As a reader, you should always expect the maximum effort from your

newspaper, whether it be the national newspaper, a metropolitan daily, a suburban publication, a country weekly or a high school newspaper.

WE'RE ALL doing the same job for the reader. We all must live up to the same standard.

America's newspaper history is a lesson in the fight for democracy. And not only is it instructional, it's colorful — full of heroes and villains.

As part of the celebration, both readers and journalists alike should take the time to read about the newspaper pioneers who helped to build this country. The list of names is diverse and nearly endless.

James Gordon Bennett, Margaret Bourke-White, Ralph McGill, Ernie Pyle, Marguerite Higgins, John Sengstacke, Nellie Bly — a good list with which to start. They all were very different types of people. Some you'd like, others you won't.

But they all contributed in one way or another in building a free press.

And behind each one of these people are hundreds of thousands of journalists who made the same kind of contribution and have gone unsung. But that's all right. They would want it that way.

The mission is, after all, to get the job done, to chronicle the change.