

## points of view

# Wise budgeting

## It's the key to fiscal restraint

• Circuit Judge James Thornburn rules the state violated the Headlee amendment to the Michigan Constitution by shoving certain mental health costs onto counties and labeling it "aid to local government." The judge said Lansing improperly classified those expenditures in pumping the required 41.6 percent of the state budget into local aid.

• Richard Headlee and friends, under one of their many committee names, file a Court of Appeals suit to prohibit the collecting of Gov. James Blanchard's \$5 surcharge on traffic tickets. They say it's a tax — that the nickname "ticket tax" is actually correct — and that it raises state taxes beyond the percentage limit specified in the Headlee amendment.

• University of Michigan-Dearborn Chancellor William Jenkins announces the addition of a "fee differential" of \$10 to \$20 per credit to all junior, senior and graduate courses offered in UM-D's engineering and management schools. Students will pay up to \$100 more per term, hiking UM-D's revenues \$400,000.

THE SAD fact is that the Headlee tax limitation amendment isn't working, at least not without a lot of court action.

First, the Headlee amendment is too intricate to work, a fact we pointed out editorially when it was on the 1978 ballot.

A constitution is supposed to be a framework for government. Leave the maze of details to the statutes, local ordinances and regulations. The Headlee amendment, with its six elaborate sections of very fine print, violates the first principle of constitutional writing.

A SECOND flaw with the Headlee amendment is that its intricacy tempts politicians to sit up late at night dreaming of ways to get around it.

That is exactly what happened in the case decided by Judge Thornburn. While it's true that a few good minds spotted this violation of the Headlee amendment right away, the political fact of life is that it took years for a



**Tim Richard**

court case to be developed and won. And it's actually not over yet, because the two appellate courts haven't had a crack at it yet.

The third flaw is that the Headlee people, in arguing their case, pounced only on taxes, taxes, taxes as a source of government revenue, not on tuition and fees.

So the spenders in Lansing and in our schools are concocting all sorts of revenue-enhancing schemes without calling them taxes. The effects of taxes and fees, however, are precisely the same: more money out of our pockets; more money into the

government's exchequer.

THE CENTRAL idea of the Headlee amendment was and is quite correct. Taxes shouldn't be allowed to rise faster than the rate of inflation, at least not without the voters knowing about it.

I was writing about this topic back in the days when Dick Headlee himself was laboring outstate for an obscure outfit called Mobark Industries.

But our mutual goal — keeping government from taking our income faster than we can produce it — can't be accomplished through a constitution. It must be accomplished through patient attention to every single line of every single budget by good elected officials with a sense of self-restraint.

As you can surmise, I'm with Dick Headlee on this wastrel spending issue. May the Lord grant him a complete recovery so he can start writing his high-spirited letters again.

# 'Bold bidder' leaves stirring legacy



**Rich Perlberg**

son to be around. He didn't dwell on adversity. Did he fumble in football? No matter, he would do better next play. Were sales down? They would pick up. Was life hard? No, life was a joy.

"Jay was a bold bidder," said his friend who sat at the same bridge table with him for many years. "He didn't always have the cards, but he always wanted the bid."

He was successful more times than not, certainly more often than had he been cautious and prudent. And he had more fun, too.

JAY'S CAREER was like his bridge game. He was in sales for a

# Suburbia forges economic peace

SOMETIME BACK when the Japanese were in the genesis of their economic invasion of this country I bought a small, yellow Toyota.

Nothing sinister in my motives. It was the best deal around for a young guy just starting to work. Like many people at that time, I never gave it much thought. It was just a car — the best deal.

My father frowned a bit. He had been a sailor in the Pacific during World War II. Generations are sometimes prisoners of their own experiences. But he took a ride, anyway, and admitted it wasn't a bad ride for the money.

The car served its purpose, lasting six years, in which time the Japanese presence became even more evident and Asian went through a decade of near panic. Would these Asian interlopers, after all, destroy our economy with their products?

WELL, THEY didn't. After squirming a bit, American industrialists got their wits about them and decided to design more competitive products — a malapropos credo of capitalism, competition that is.

And the Japanese kept coming. And along with them came the Belgians, Australians, French, Germans, British, Swiss, Swedes and Italians.



**Steve Barnaby**

After a while, many of us didn't notice the difference. We didn't notice when they came to suburban Detroit to set up their plants and offices.

Sure, more often than before, we would hear a foreign accent on main street or in the next booth at a restaurant. But few of us realized that our suburban area was becoming one of the most strategic economic fronts in the world.

A few weeks back, business editor Marilyn Fitchett assigned a reporter to find out just what was happening on the economic front in our suburbs.

The results were breathtaking.

IN SOUTHEASTERN Michigan, 274 foreign companies from 19 countries have put out their shingles to say "open for business." Southfield leads the pack with 49 businesses.

Troy is second with 35. They are followed by Livonia and Farmington Hills, with 19 each.

Suddenly, we are they. In southeastern Michigan, nearly 40,000 people are employed by foreign businesses. In Oakland County, that breaks down to 15,100 people who bring home a paycheck provided by a foreign-owned concern. And that check pays for the mortgage, the groceries, the car payment and the piano lessons.

It doesn't take much to realize that what is happening in suburban Detroit today is even more important than what is happening in Washington this week. Sure, we need to do away with nuclear weapons, no doubt.

But the true path to peace is through economic interdependence. Forty-six years ago, Japan was a faraway, exotic and mysterious land whose people we neither understood nor trusted.

Today that same country has 112 businesses in southeastern Michigan. Neither Japan or the U.S. would think of starting a war against the other. Neither could afford to.

Sounds like it's time to open up that economic path to peace for our Soviet friends. We've still got room. We can't afford not to. It's the best deal.

*He was a fun person to be around. He didn't dwell on adversity. Did he fumble in football? No matter, he would do better next play. Were sales down? They would pick up. Was life hard? No, life was a joy.*

ness to make the most money he could.

AFTER JAY'S funeral, one friend marveled at how someone could be so steadily upbeat, so positive in the face of life's never-ending struggles. "I wish I could be more like him," he said.

Jay would likely be puzzled by that remark. There's no wish to it, he would say. You just do it.

Most of us don't find it that easy, although it's hard to figure out why. Especially since copying Jay's style might make his death easier to live with.

If we acted more like Jay, then we wouldn't have to describe how he was. We could say proudly, "This is the way Jay taught us to be." And Jay would live on, the bold bidder in us all.

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