

points of view

Kiddie tax cheats family

OK, SO NOW they've really gone and done it. You know, our esteemed leaders in Lansing.

In all of their collective wisdom, they have enacted a law that only the likes of Ebenezer Scrooge could possibly approve.

In one of their more silent moments, the state Legislature sneaked through a law that forces children making more than \$1 a year to pay state taxes. Our boy governor, Jim Blanchard, recently signed this "tough" legislation into law.

Now I'll sure bet your state lawmaker didn't use his/her ranking privileges to brag about this ingenious little gem.

You may very well be in the dark on this baby. So let me explain.

Your little Johnny or Mary now must sock away a portion of their fortune from baby-sitting, delivering papers or washing cars to pay off Uncle Jim and his cronies in Lansing.



Steve Barnaby

THE PREMISE is almost too ridiculous to imagine. But our state leaders have gone one step beyond in creating a magic kingdom of their own. So imagine we must.

The best part for Mom and Dad, of course, is now they have to fill out another tax form — their kid's.

The sorry part is that the majority of parents in this state want to teach their kids honesty — to obey the law and to pay taxes. But let's face it, this absurd provision of the tax law

is going to make criminals of us all.

Stop and think about how much money your child made this year mowing lawns or baby sitting. Think about whether they have any of it left to pay taxes.

That's right, the same folks who brought you the Zilwaukee Bridge (the bridge that nobody really needs) have figured out a way to dig down deep in your pocket and steal some \$40 million for who-knows-what kind of government boondoggle.

You can bet your bottom dollar, if you've got one left, that the kids of Michigan don't have \$40 million. Their money goes for the little extras we want our kids to enjoy, or for room and board at college.

IN REALITY, state officials have figured out another way to get you to pay more taxes. Unless, of course, you want to steal the money from your kid's candy jar. But apparently, that's what state treasurer Bob Bowman would have

you do. No wonder the guy was reluctant to run for Congress. Nobody would ever vote for somebody who takes money from kids.

The state has introduced an entire segment of society into the underground economy. It has created a tax system that is impossible to respect or to enforce.

Imagine state troopers raiding the local play yard to round up a bunch of kids for tax evasion. "You have the right to remain silent."

Imagine the judge who would have the gall to say, "You have been charged with evading taxes in the amount of \$3.50. How do you plead?"

Imagine the jailer yelling "OK, you punks quit talking to your Barbie dolls, lights out."

This has got to be the biggest joke delivered from the biggest bunch of jokesters in the annals of American political history.

Let them know how you feel.

Readers help warm cold heart

THERE WERE at least 500 words in the "Through Bifocals" column as printed in Dec. 17 editions, and one of them was spelled incorrectly. Just one, mind you, but it resulted in a delightful letter from sharp-eyed Marion Kay Overholt, assistant city clerk for the city of Orchard Lake Village.

She snipped the column, marked the mistake plainly and included it with her letter. In speaking of a trophy display on the shelf that goes over a fireplace, I had spelled this platform mantle; it should have been mantle.

"I hope that you will excuse and understand my compulsive editing," she wrote. "I do this all the time, according to my complaining co-workers and children. My compulsion for correcting spelling stems from terms of service as a high school English teacher and other assorted jobs as an editor and reporter."

My answer to that, dear lady, is that I wish the world had more like you.

IN APPRECIATION of Mrs. Overholt's background, I am sure she knows that the workplace often is the scene of interruptions and distractions, be it classroom, newspaper office or even the seat of government. Actually, I do my writing at home, but obviously not always with total concentration.

Had I been that mentally disciplined, I would not have spelled mantle mantle, as in Mickey Charles Mantle, born in 1931 at Spavinaw, Okla., and later an outstanding home run hitter in the lineup of the New York Yankees, a baseball enterprise of some note.

Perhaps this is an admission that I know more about baseball than I do about fireplace structure. So be it. By dint of serious research, specifically by knowing where to look in a dictionary, I also have learned that mantle is more than a man's name.

THE NEXT time I feel compelled to use it will be in my description of the skinklike organ of a mollusk that is responsible for the secretion of the shell and often serves largely for respiration. Had it not been for the "voice of Orchard Lake," this gem would have escaped me.

I decline to comment on how far honesty will carry this lady in governmental circles, although it is an almost universally praised character trait. Nonetheless, she did confide, "I, too, suffer spasmodic attacks of forgetfulness and lapses of uncer-



through bifocals
Fred DeLano

tainty (no, that should be certainly) and commit frequent typos."

Despite the fact that she identifies herself as "a contemporary of yours," she politely avoided accusing me of senility. I read her letter three times to make sure.

ONCE UPON a time when our children were but goslings, I took them on a tour of a residence in Washington, D.C., in which we all share ownership, known as The White House. Velvet ropes kept us from stealing trinkets, although I sorely wanted to straighten some of the pictures on the walls. But it was in the state dining room that I truly was aghast. Good God, the candles were crooked! (I won't tell you who was president.)

Letters from people such as Mrs. Overholt are a delight to those who write more for entertainment and to share experiences than to tell you how to vote. Whether they speak well or ill of the writer isn't the key issue. What's truly important — and the basis of all newspaper circulation — is whether the carrier put your paper inside the storm door.

LETTERS OF late from Alfredo Page of Southfield, Jessie Hudson in Plymouth, Ed Schwartz of Birmingham, golfer Ben Hogan down at Fort Worth, Marie Farrell-Donaldson at the City-County Building, Bea Laible daughter of my late, lamented friend Bill Hartmann, former Livonia Bentley High School teacher Bill McQueten of Sun City West, Ariz., Lee Sales of Farmington Hills, Frank J. Fisher, whose horse was such a hero in the Bloomfield Open Hunt horse show, Cynthia Holt Cummings, Russell Kirk at Mecosta and even former Plymouth mayor David Pugh and wife Sharon in Sao Paulo, Brazil, all have served to warm this cold heart.

Jobs are outpacing work force

THE HOMELESS . . . the hungry . . . the million Michiganians on some kind of governmental assistance.

Bad news is news, in this business, and one of the most breathtaking stories of 1987 hardly got covered.

It was Michigan's record number of people with jobs.

At a time when our population is leveling off after a period of shrinkage, the number of jobs grows healthily. While our 1987 average level of 8.1 percent jobless still doesn't look exciting, you have to keep in mind that the number of jobs is growing far faster than the work force.

IT'S HARD to dig out the story from the statistics issued by the Michigan Employment Security Commission.

I've looked at MESO reports from director Richard Simmons Jr. for some years now, and my strong im-



Tim Richard

pression is that his office paints as negative a picture as possible.

Here, rearranged in a more positive light, are MESO's year-end figures combined with the U.S. Census Bureau's year-end report:

• A record 4,158,000 of us are at work, compared to 3,616,000 in the recession year of 1982. That's a 15-percent increase in employment. It means 542,000 more jobs.

• In the same five-year span, unemployment dropped from 661,000 to 366,000 — a decrease of 295,000.

Compare those two bottom lines: 542,000 more at work, 295,000 fewer

out of work. It means more people are coming seeking jobs and getting them.

OUR POPULATION, meanwhile, has been virtually stagnant. It was 9,262,000 in the recession year of 1980, then down to 9,139,000 a year ago and an even 9,200,000 for '87.

Here's a sentence buried in the MESO report: "Total employment statewide rose by 151,000 during the year, a 3.8-percent increase."

Compare that to the population increase of 61,000. Michigan employers are hiring at 2 1/2 times the rate that our population is increasing.

Recall the nuclear family of "Leave It to Beaver" days — dad worked, mom kept house, Beaver and Wally went to school. One job for four people, right?

Well, today an incredible 49 percent of Michiganians are at work. Nationwide, according to one national report I read last year, more

than half of all Americans have paying jobs. It's a proportion unheard of in the history of the industrialized world.

THE INESCAPABLE conclusion: If our jobless rate still looks bad, it's because so many of us are demanding — and getting — so many jobs.

You all know the reason. Not since the beginning of the industrial revolution in 18th-century England have so many women held paying jobs.

Whether you want to give credit to Gov. Jim Blanchard (D) or President Ron Reagan (R) is your choice. I'm inclined to credit both.

As for the trade union gibe about "McJobs," consider the source. The mere fact that the growth wasn't in union jobs doesn't disprove anything. It's too bad the positive performance of our private economy in hiring folks gets obscured by our concentration on the unemployment rate.

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