

points of view

He broke from pack to get convention story

HE SAID it, all right.

Gov. Jim Blanchard really said Jesse Jackson was "fantastic" when he was talking about his personal experiences and the aspirations of his constituency.

And Blanchard added that when Jackson got into other issues, "it was the same old left-wing baloney. Warned over George McGovern, but not as good."

Blanchard can be candid, but these remarks generated a sensation at the end of an otherwise predictable Democratic National Convention last week in Atlanta.

The story fell into my lap.

I WAS collecting reactions from Observer & Eccentric area delegates that Wednesday afternoon in the lobby of their hotel, over lunch, on the bus and at a 3-5 p.m. reception in the

Words like that sear into your brain . . . I took pains to remember the context in which Blanchard spoke.

Ritz-Carlton Hotel.

On the bus, Tom Scott, Blanchard's news secretary, told me his boss found the speech "tremendous — inspiring" and all that.

We saw little of Blanchard because this year, as chairman of the platform committee, he was staying with the big wheels downtown.

In the corridor of the Ritz, the governor held an impromptu news conference with The Pack. I listened



Tim Richard

In for a minute or two, but they were talking about something else, and you don't look for The Pack's news in your hometown paper. Damn it, where were those Jackson delegates from Southfield?

The reception was hosted by Blanchard and that utility Democrats love to bash, Consumers Power Co.

In the reception hall, I found freelance photographer Doug Ashley, covering his seventh Democratic Na-

tional Convention for us. We planned strategy for local pictures.

THE CROWD broke, and suddenly we were face to face with the governor. "Hi, Tim," he said.

I repeated my question about the Jackson speech. He chatted about his long hours on the podium, how he had to get a second shave and fresh makeup.

Then Blanchard said what he said. It happened so fast that I didn't have time to pull out the spiral notebook protruding from my coat pocket.

Then the governor excused himself and moved on.

Within a minute I made my notes. Words like that sear into your brain. It's not like Keynesian macroeconomic theory where you have to ponder every esoteric equation for a

half-hour. I took pains to remember the context in which Blanchard spoke.

Ashley bumped into a Ford guy from Bloomfield Hills named Bill Warner, a convention visitor and Blanchard fan. We plotted getting his picture with the governor. No luck.

About 4:45 (beating deadline), I phoned Hugh Gallagher on the O&E copy desk, dictated my notes, again took pains to explain the context in which Blanchard spoke, and then went off to have a beer — my first and only.

The story got in your Thursday paper exactly right.

YES, WE had a big story, but I didn't anticipate the whopping reaction.

Jim Blanchard, racist? Baloney. Our middle-of-the-road governor stuck it to McGovern, who when I saw him in 1984, was still white.

In the delicate, thankless job of chairman of the platform committee, Blanchard was proud of his work and could not appreciate some of the Jackson people's proposed amendments.

Although the flap made front-page news downtown, I still think the big story is the extent to which Jackson's black supporters, in particular, are soaking up Arab code words on the "Palestinian homeland" question.

That — not one man's comments on a speech — is what's sending shock waves through friends of Israel in the Democratic Party.

We each pay for a piece of a shoplifter's deeds

IT'S ALMOST like an added, invisible tax.

Retailers are forced to charge each of us 5 percent to 7 percent more on our purchases because of people that shoplift. It might sound like a small percentage, but look at the numbers.

That's a higher percentage than our state sales tax. It means an extra \$1 to \$1.40 for every \$20 purchase made. It could take \$500-plus out of your pocket this year, depending on your spending habits.

That's a big bite. Large chain retailers in the Farmington area have the biggest sales volume, so obviously, a big shoplifting problem, according to police and some retail representatives. Many, including K mart Corp., have internal security forces to handle the problem and detain the culprits.

And these security people keep busy. One national company made 7,000 arrests in Michigan alone last year, the Michigan Merchants Council reports. A total of \$33.3 billion in merchandise is taken by shoplifters nationally of that, \$2.4 billion is taken in Michigan.

Smaller retailers are affected by the shoplifting, too. Business owners are sharing information and even have banded together in downtowns and other areas to form "business



Casey Hans

Retailers are forced to charge each of us 5 percent to 7 percent more on our purchases because of people that shoplift.

watch" programs, helping each other fight crime.

NEWLY ENACTED laws in Michigan are designed to aid these store owners in their quest.

Thank goodness for these new, enhanced criminal penalties and laws allowing merchants to get retribution for their losses and keep costs down for consumers. They even address juvenile shoplifting by placing financial responsibility squarely where it should be — on the parents.

Christian Kindsvatter, president

of the merchants council, said there are two types of shoplifters, professional and casual, and that these new laws will deter both types. "Word travels" among professionals, he said. "They know which stores are tough and which are not."

The casual shoplifter is most commonly a teenage girl or adult woman who will sometimes shoplift because she does not have money. Tougher laws, and certainly civil penalties, should help deter this part of the problem, he said.

But new laws aside, the whole shoplifting issue leaves us with more than a lighter pocketbook. It leaves us with a sour taste because it's a problem which has roots deeper than we can see.

IN ADDITION to passing more stringent laws and giving merchants the chance to be reimbursed, perhaps we need to look at individuals and what causes them to steal. Involved families and friends, in addition to professional help, may be needed to reach these people.

Treating the causes, in addition to the crime itself, must be the next step.

Our legislators have done their job. Now it's time for all of us to do our part, or we will continue to pay the price.

FOR PEOPLE in favor of the death penalty, capital punishment can be a black-and-white issue. Killers should die, they say. Killers should get the same mercy they showed their victims, they say. But no issue is that easy — even for tough guys who want to be prosecutors so they can lock 'em up and throw the keys so far away that no liberal can ever find them.

The four Republicans who want to wear Brooks Patterson's mantle in Oakland County all support the death penalty. To do otherwise would be to send their election hopes to the gallows. The death penalty was one of Patterson's biggest trump cards. No one can win the horse race that is the Republican primary by straying from Patterson on this issue.

And they don't. But there are circumstances that can make them a bit queasy about killing killers.

Last week at a Republican gathering at the Macbus Red Fox, the four were asked if they supported the death penalty for youngsters. And, if so, at what age. The question has two timely aspects: The U.S. Supreme Court is grappling with the issue, and in Oakland County, a teenage boy has been charged with murdering his family.



Rich Perlberg

JEFF LEIB, the former West Bloomfield Township trustee, said he was convinced that capital punishment "is not a deterrent to crime" but that it is a "just and appropriate punishment" for certain crimes. Nonetheless, it is not appropriate, he said, to sentence a 14-year-old to the death penalty.

Richard Thompson, chief deputy to Patterson and perhaps the hardest of the hard-liners, also supports the death penalty for first degree murder "in aggravated circumstances." He acknowledges that society might be reluctant to impose the death penalty on young people.

County commissioner John McDonald says the death penalty decision should be left to a jury. "I don't know if I'm in favor of executing a young child," he said. Perhaps he could support the idea in "aggravated" circumstances and if the youth sentenced to death is at least 15.

So what are these "aggravated" circumstances these men are talking about? The fourth candidate, state Sen. Richard Fessler, may have a clue.

AGGRAVATED CIRCUMSTANCES are not Oakland County children who kill their parents. They need help. They are not like members of Young Boys Inc., the notorious youthful street gang that dealt in drugs and violence.

"They are teenaged assassins," said Fessler. "I look at them as vicious animals that should be taken off the street."

It would be simplistic, coy and unfair to these men to suggest that they are sympathetic to the conditions that lead to a rural Oakland County tragedy but then turn hard at the inner-city conditions that spawn Young Boys Inc. It's also unfair to draw conclusions about race even though rural Oakland County is as white as inner-city Detroit is black.

It is, however, worthwhile to note a truism: It is easier to put yourself in the shoes of your own kind than it is to know the souls of those foreign to you. And if it's difficult to send one to the electric chair, it should be just as hard to send the other.

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