

editorial opinion

A far-reaching reform

It depends on whose ox is gored.

A candidate for the local city council distributes a brochure with a picture of his wife and brood of kids, the purpose being to depict him as a solid family man.

In 1974 the favorite campaign gimmick, when you were broke, jobless and had no contributions was to make a big show of revealing your finances and challenging your opponent to do the same. Laxmans are already tired of that one.

On the other hand, there's the Southfield City Planning Commission, whose members threaten to resign en masse if they are forced under a new state law, to reveal their and their immediate families' sources of income, property holdings, creditors and gifts.

The Southfield planners are the latest in a list of serious persons who fear that rich but honest folks (there are such people, you know) will be hounded out of public service by having to reveal so much of what they consider private matters.

They're not alone. A judicial figure from the Birmingham area fears being the target of robbers if his finances become public information.

BE CALM, advises State Rep. Joe Forbes (D-Oak Park), himself a liberal, a businessman, a long-time politician and a level-headed guy in general.

Forbes speaks with some experience. He was a prime sponsor of HB 350, the so-called Campaign Reform Act that embodies many of ideas of Common Cause.

Forbes has two answers: "No dollar amounts are required to be reported." And "The fear that good people will leave public service because of the financial disclosure provision hasn't proven to be the case in other states."

To the argument that school trustees (among others) serve for token salaries or none at all, Forbes replies: "They are involved in major decisions on property purchases and awarding contracts."

Why must family members' financial sources be disclosed—especially when (say) a father actually disapproves of his son's principles? We all know the answer to that one: it's too easy to disguise membership by putting something in a spouse's name.

THE LAW would apply, locally, to judges, county board members, county executives, mayors,

city managers, councilmen, planning and zoning board members, township board members, village council members, sheriffs, elected constables and appointed members of college governing boards.

They would be required to reveal:

- Business interests where one is a partner, director, officer, stockholder of more than \$1,000 or five per cent equity, or employee
- The identity and nature of a business from which they received \$1,000 or more income (except for confidential relationships—e.g., attorneys, psychiatrists)
- Real estate holdings worth \$1,000 or more (including nature, location and size)
- Creditors to whom they owe \$1,000 or more (except for retail installment credit, loans from financial institutions or loans from relatives)
- Security given for debts and terms of repayment (this would be kept confidential)
- Names and addresses of persons from whom one received a gift of \$100 or more and the circumstances of the gift

Again, the bill req. uses only sources, not dollar amounts.

FOR CENTURIES civilized governments had laws restricting the holding of public office to the nobility or property owners.

Today the pendulum may be swinging in the opposite direction: profit and property are such dirty words politically that we run the risk of government by the poor and inept, for the poor and inept.

Whatever discomfort the disclosure law causes, however, it must be remembered that the public is entitled to confidence in government officials, that many abuses have been uncovered, and that many other abuses are known but can't be reported because what is known can't be formally proven.

Perhaps State Rep. John Markes (D-Westland), a former city councilman before going to the Legislature, summed it up best:

"Although the bill is a compromise between what Common Cause originally had wanted and what elected officials would prefer, it still has great merit and, as approved, probably will be the most far-reaching reform measure in the country. The measure not only can benefit the residents of this state, but can serve as a model of reform for the rest of the nation."

"Between the lines"

by Carl Stoddard

Last week I promised to report on my experiences as a reluctant hunter. I felt if I was to criticize the "sport" I should at least speak from experience.

My license to kill small animals cost \$5. The man at the sporting goods store asked to see my money and my driver's license. He gave me a license and a small pamphlet on the rules of hunting in Michigan.

I read the pamphlet while riding out to the hunting site south of Houghton Lake where my brother-in-law John and I would search for the elusive quail. By the time we arrived at the starting point I knew the regulations. John, a seasoned hunter, explained where to look for quail (not in pear trees) and how to identify the birds in the air.

I was given a double-barrel 16 gauge shotgun and a belt with a dozen shotgun shells. I knew how to handle the gun. Many years ago I had taken a safe hunters' course. In later years, I bagged my share of clay pigeons. The U.S. Army, too, provided me with a great deal of training in the use of firearms.

So I was ready to kill, although I hoped I couldn't be given the opportunity.

WE TRAMPED AROUND through the underbrush for several hours. I hate to ruin the suspense for you, but we didn't even see a partridge. Not even a pear tree.

We found a dead rabbit with its stomach blown away. He heard other hunters blasting away in the distance. And we had a pleasant afternoon-walking through the woods and looking at the changing leaves.

Just to keep in practice, I shot a dead tree stump. Hit it dead center. Maybe I should have taken out a stump, license.

In the course of the afternoon, we sat down and talked about the positive and negative aspects of hunting. John, the avid hunter, supplied the positive viewpoint.

Agreement was reached on the following points: (1) hunting provides a great opportunity to get out in the open air and brush with nature; (2) hunting should not be denied to those who need to hunt for meat to support themselves and their families; (3) an awful lot of lunatics are apt to be rummaging through the woods during hunting season.

The conclusions we reached are that hunting will probably always be with us as long as animals inhabit the woods and man has the urge to

hunt, track and kill. We also concluded that tighter controls are needed as to who and who cannot hunt.

Last week, I had seriously suggested giving aspiring hunters IQ tests. A more realistic approach, I think, would be to demand that hunters first pass a hunting test, similar to the test given potential drivers. Only the questions would be different.

QUESTIONS MIGHT include: "Describe the difference between a deer and a cow." Or: "True or false—deer bring bright red hunting caps."

Another question might be: "True or false—it is legal to shoot mailboxes if no pheasant are available." Or: "True or false—bluejays are the same color as partridge."

Until such tests are required (and probably even if they are), I elect to stay out of the woods during hunting season.

Hunting, in my book anyway, is a primitive method of weeding out flocks and herds. And it panders to instincts we might better have left behind with our stone axes and spears.

In other words, I'd rather have a deer to lunch than for lunch.

READERS' FORUM

LWV supports park planning

The League of Women Voters of the West Bloomfield-Farmington area has studied Farmington area parks and wishes to express its support for the concept of preparing a comprehensive plan for future development of our park system.

This concept is presently being debated by the Farmington Hills City Council.

The council has placed an advisory question regarding park development on the Nov. 4th ballot. Advisory ques-

tions merely seek citizen opinion and have no legal effect.

The city council is expected to take into consideration the results of this poll in determining the development of parks in our community.

A carefully planned system of public parks is an important ingredient of a well balanced community. We feel that the proposal to engage professionals to study the feasibility of developing new parks in Farmington Hills is a very good one.

Consideration should be given not only to the physical suitability of the land, but also to allocation to which the greatest number of citizens have easy access, whether by car, bike or foot.

If new parks are found to be fea-

sible, all possible financial help should be sought and coordinated from federal, state and county sources to assist in the purchase of the necessary land. We feel that there is some urgency in acquiring land before it is sold for other uses. Development of the land can be done over a number of years, as money becomes available.

Now is the time for citizens who are concerned about providing recreation and protecting a portion of our natural environment from urban development to express their opinion. An expression of support for development of parks could encourage our elected officials to take action in this area.

PAULA TOROCCIAN
President,
W. Bloomfield-Farmington
League of Women Voters

Eccentricities

by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.



Will gambling solve woes?

The financial plight of New York City should cause grave concern to anyone who lives in a large metropolitan area.

New York City's problem is simply that costs of services have continually gone up while their revenue base has gone down.

As people desert the core city and flee to the suburbs, Detroit will face the same problem in the near future.

As we have said many times, if the core city goes, can suburbia be far behind? Most people who live in suburbia work in the core city.

New York's problem was heightened by the unwillingness of the mayor to cut expenses when revenues didn't materialize. Detroit isn't in the same situation because, as unpopular as they are, there have been service cuts in Detroit and people have been laid off to keep the losses down. But this is only a short-term solution.

SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN lives and dies in proportion to the health of the automobile industry. The automobile industry and its suppliers are the major source of employment and the sales tax generated from the sale of automobiles is a major source of revenue for all municipalities.

To help save Detroit, it has been suggested that the non-resident income tax be doubled. At present a person who works in Detroit but lives outside the city pays a 0.5 per cent flat rate income tax. The proposal in Lansing is to increase this to one per cent.

Historically, the imposition of the city income tax was one of the major causes of Detroit's downfall.

SERVICE INDUSTRIES found that it didn't matter where their headquarters were. They moved out of the city, north of Eight Mile Road and west of Telegraph, and continued to serve their Detroit city accounts without paying the income tax. To increase the non-resident income tax will mean only that more service companies will abandon the core city and head for the suburbs.

One merely has to drive along Eight Mile Road in Southfield to realize the tremendous growth of that city in office buildings and shopping center.

Observation Point

by PHILIP H. POWER



Law favors incumbents

Zoltan Ferency, chairman of the radical Human Rights Party, Mary Rave, chairperson of the Michigan Chapter of the ACLU, Eldon Andrews, of the Michigan Conservative Party, Richard Durand, former chairman of the Republican Party's 14th district and conservative activist throughout the GOP statewide, Josephine Chapman, political action chairperson of the George Wallace-leaning American Independent Party, Henry Dodge, legislative director of the Civic, Consumer and Homeowner Association.

A remarkable list, and what's even more remarkable is that there they were yesterday, on the same platform, united in their views.

United on what? you ask.

United in opposition to the recently passed political reform legislation, which their collective press release labeled the "Political Spending Act" or the "Common Cause Rip-Off."

In part, they are sore because the law requires everybody and his uncle to report all political contributions and mandates all officeholders to spread their financial affairs before the public. This they deem an invasion of privacy.

I'M NOT sure that I agree with all their arguments, but I do feel that careful and quietly embedded in the new political reform law are a series of provisions that will, on balance, substantially change for the worse the kinds of people able and willing to get into politics.

The law establishes campaign expenditure ceilings: \$1 million for governor, \$300,000 for secretary of state and attorney general; \$30,000 for state senator; \$15,000 for state representative. These ceilings are, to say the least, adequate; in fact, they are much higher than candidates usually spend in campaigns, even at today's inflated costs.

OK, So how do the candidates get all this money?

Certainly not from citizens who feel concerned about politics and are willing to blow a grand or two on a new, fresh face. The law sets up a maximum limit to contributions for individuals of no more than \$1,700 for all candidates in any year, and restricts an individual's contribution to a given race to \$1,700 for governor, \$450 for state senator and \$250 for state representative.

Something called "independent committees," evidently meaning unions or other associations and lobbies, may contribute up to 10 times the amount for individuals.

WHAT DOES all that mean?

It means that a gubernatorial campaign, to reach its limit, would need 588 individuals each contributing the \$1,700 maximum, or 588 lobbies, or a combination of the two. An aspiring state senator would need 66 individuals of 66 unions, and

complexes which started within months after Detroit passed its initial city income tax.

Without new revenue, Detroit cannot provide the services necessary to keep a large city going.

THERE ARE solutions.

First, because the metropolitan area is really one unit, although it is broken down into many municipalities and at least three counties, perhaps Detroit should enter into metropolitan government.

There are many petty potentates holding public office who will fight this idea because their spheres of influence would be lessened, but a metropolitan government, with taxing authority throughout the metropolitan area, would not create artificial reasons for people moving out of the core city.

SECONDLY, Detroit, to survive, must seek a new type of industry because the automobile industry is too cyclical and it is impossible to finance consistent service on inconsistent income.

The new industry must have different cyclical variations from those of the automotive industry. A wild idea would be to legalize gambling in the State of Michigan.

I have just returned from Las Vegas, which is an inland city created out of desert sand. It has thousands of hotel rooms and thousands of tourists flocking in every day, and it hasn't suffered from the recession.

The casino industry hires thousands of unskilled people as bellhops, hotel maintenance people, security guards and hotel domestics.

GAMBLING IS NOT a moral question, since we have already legalized the state lotteries, bingo and betting at race tracks.

To survive, Detroit has to solve some major internal problems which cause people to move out of the core city. But other cities have solved these problems, and Detroit can if it has the desire.

Suburbia can't live without a healthy core city. The core city can be saved if people are willing to work at it. Its problem, like New York's, has to be a concern of all who live in the metropolitan Detroit area.

a fund-raising state rep would need to hit 60 individuals or 6 unions or lobbies.

So, where are you going to find 60 people to pony up the \$250 limit for a state representative race, unless the candidate is already an incumbent? Ditto state senate races. Ditto governor.

The point is that by allowing a very high campaign expenditure ceiling and enforcing a very low individual contribution limit, the political reform law makes it nearly impossible for fresh, independent, non-incumbent candidates to raise enough money to make a race against an incumbent.

That's not political reform. That's a law designed to perpetuate incumbents in office.

Which, one suspects, is why it ultimately got passed.

ADD ONE further provision—the political machine dominance mechanism. This provision allows a state central party committee to contribute to a candidate's war chest up to 25 per cent of the limit and allows a county or district party committee to contribute that much more.

That means the official apparatus of the political parties can contribute up to 50 per cent of a candidate's expenditure limit.

And that further insures that the only people who run are those approved by the party hierarchy.

THE ULTIMATE effect of this legislation, unless amended, will be to change quite profoundly the nature of the political process in this state.

It will make entry into the process of fresh, new candidates, unbacked by lobbies or unions or the party hierarchy, nearly impossible. It will so favor incumbents as to reduce political challenges by outsiders to a minimum.

It will do nothing to reduce campaign spending, but simultaneously make it difficult for a fresh face to get enough money to overcome the high visibility of an incumbent or a hack politician who rises from one office to the other, trading on nothing more than his name identification and his ability to trade his office for campaign contributions from favor seekers.

In sum, it will promote exactly the kind of political sociology which gradually, step by step, elevated former suburban politician Spiro T. Agnew to the vice presidency of this country.

The ethics of Agnew were the ethics of a hack politician, and I believe the present bad law will on balance encourage the hacks and their ethics.

I hope the unlikely combination of people protesting the law yesterday, together with the hundreds of thoughtful Republicans and Democrats who are deeply concerned about opening up the process of politics, can get the misnamed political reform act substantially changed.

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