

editorial opinion



While sweeping the last of the Christmas tree needles out the door I always catch a few dust balls and cobwebs lurking in the corners.

This ritual has a special significance as the New Year opens.

It's time to begin again with a fresh, clean slate, unmarked, and unblemished by time or mistakes.

What do you write at the top of a fresh slate? Surely not 'I'm too tired' or 'I can't, it's no use.' At some time all of us feel like scratching these on the personal walls we have around us, but not now, not at the beginning.

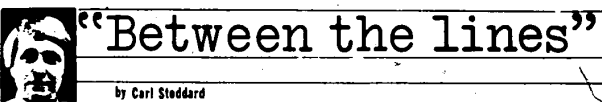
LOOK AROUND. The excitement of a new year is everywhere, especially since this is the American bicentennial. Start with the community newspaper; this one, for instance. There are ideas on practically every page. Volunteers are needed. Courses are starting in the adult education programs. The community colleges have a provocative listing of credit and non-credit courses.

The metropolitan area museums have new shows and special programs starting. If you happen to be a compulsive shopper, this month is a bargain hunter's paradise.

Cross country skiing (and there's no age limit on this non-hazardous sport) is growing in popularity every week.

Most certainly as some future Anthony Trollope documents this period of American life, he will note that one of the major forms of recreation was evening classes.

Hundreds attend, strolling through the halls, making new friends in class and at the coffee break, and the age range is from early 20s to the end of the line.



You may believe this if you like. Admittedly, it's a little far-fetched.

An earnest little man with round, wire-rimmed glasses came to our office with a very unusual document. The document was about our bicentennial year, 1976. As it was written, it appeared to be a history of the year.

"You see," he began, "this was written after 1976. Now I know that seems impossible. But let me tell you my story. I'll keep it brief because I know you'll find it hard to believe."

"I've long insisted that time is just another dimension. Other dimensions—height, width and length—may be changed quite easily. If you have a rubber band six inches long, you can stretch it, change its dimensions. So why can't time be changed?"

"Well, I thought about it for a long time and did a few calculations and before you know it I figured it out—how to stretch time; that is. And so I created a little machine and just sort of reached into the future."

"I tried to stretch time to our quadricentennial, the year 2176, and when I reached that year, I managed to grab this document. It talks about our bicentennial year. I thought you might like to see it."

HE HANDED ME the document. As I was reading it, I looked up to ask him a question and he was gone.

This is what the document said: "Anthropologists tell us the year 1976 was time of great celebration among the primitive cultures in America. Artifacts unearthed from that period show its people highly valued red, white and blue household items. Eagles and pictures of ancestors were emblazoned on eating utensils, floor coverings and even a hand-held tool believed used for snow removal."

"Although the exact purpose of these symbols and colors has not been exactly determined, we theorize the people of that time believed the symbols could drive away evil forces."

"Research has further shown that these people believed that the greatest menace of the time was something called 'inflation.' Translation of pagan

At break time, when all head for the lounge, it's a rerun of college days except the average age which is about three decades beyond the 20s.

Just recently, there was a group at one of the lounge tables.

"I'm in gourmet cooking right now and I think cake decorating will be next," said one older gentleman.

"You'll love it," said a woman, who commented she was taking rug hooking and hoped there would be a wood carving course next term.

"My husband took wood working and now he's in a course on the stock market. At least he's finding out what he could do with his money if he had any."

The idea that we are becoming a nation of perpetual students (dilettantes to be sure), is a pleasant one.

The signers of the Declaration of Independence may not have specifically had cake decorating in mind as they approved the phrase "pursuit of happiness" but neither would they look askance at it.

The acquisition of skills—practical, intellectual and those which give pleasure and add richness—is something these planners of the American way of life understood and believed in.

So, this year, in honor of the bicentennial, why not write pursuit of happiness at the top of the unmarked slate? Of course, the fact that some of us still don't know how to go about it, is a stumbling block.

The answer may be in the phrase itself. Pursuit, from the verb pursue, is an action word meaning to go after something.

There's a great year waiting, but you'll have to head out after it.

terminology used at that time has not uncovered the exactly meaning of the word inflation, but it apparently had something to do with a type of trading device known as money.

"Quite obviously, the Americans of that time felt money was the root problem of inflation and attempted to drive away the evil influence not only through red, white and blue symbols but also by locking money in vaults and other protected places."

"By 1976, they were apparently quite successful in forcing most of the money out of circulation and hence the period of celebration, which by happenstance coincided with the 200th birthday of the country."

"**ARCHEOLOGICAL DIGGINGS** have also unearthed a large number of primitive stripes used by the people of that day. These stripes dotted the land and may have had something to do with warding off the supposed evils of inflation. Just what people did in these stripes has not been determined, although apparently some type of service was performed. Signs erected outside these stripes bore the legend 'over 17 billion sold.' Large golden arches, which apparently had some meaning, were built over the signs."

"Government at that time, we have learned, was conducted by public opinion polls. Through these polls it was determined what legislation would be introduced and what television programs would be cancelled. More people are recorded to have voiced stronger opinions regarding television than government, in fact."

"This may have been due to the speed at which the two institutions operated. On television, programs deemed unworthy suffered a swift, merciless death. Bad legislation and dishonest politicians, however, flourished despite adverse opinion."

"Neither institution was apparently influenced greatly by the bicentennial celebration. In fact, little seemed to change during 1976, except for the national anthem. Based on the extensive number of recordings we have salvaged from that distant year, we now are fairly certain the national anthem was changed to begin: 'It's the real thing.'"

Your ecology calendar

Ecology-minded persons who wish to save cans, bottles or newspapers for recycling may use these facilities:

- **PORTLAND**—County Recycling Center, 550 S. Telegraph, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. every Saturday. Groups bringing in more than 500 lbs. of glass will receive \$10 per ton for glass.
- **BIRMINGHAM**—Daily newspaper pickup with regular trash. Newspapers must be bundled separately.

Ecology-minded persons who wish to save cans, bottles or newspapers for recycling may use these facilities:

- **LATHRUP VILLAGE**—At the Public Services Building, 19101 Twelve Mile Road, adjacent to the high school. Newspapers are collected 10 a.m.-2 p.m. by volunteers the first Saturday of each month.
- **SOUTHFIELD**—In the old city offices, 20800 Berg Road at Ten and One-half Mile, block east of Telegraph.

CASE NO. U-4985

NOTICE OF MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION INQUIRY AND PUBLIC HEARINGS INTO CENTRAL METERING AND RESELLING OF GAS AND ELECTRIC SERVICE

TO

CENTRALLY METERED GAS OR ELECTRIC CUSTOMERS AND RESELLING CUSTOMERS OF CONSUMERS POWER COMPANY AND THE DETROIT EDISON COMPANY

AND TO

ULTIMATE CONSUMERS; TENANTS; MOBILE HOME OWNERS; CONDOMINIUM OWNERS; ASSOCIATIONS OF MOBILE HOME OWNERS; MOBILE HOME PARK OWNERS; CONDOMINIUM OWNERS, LANDLORDS AND TENANTS; GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES AND OTHERS WHO MAY BE INTERESTED OR THINK THEY WOULD BE AFFECTED

On December 8, 1975, in Case No. U-4985, the Michigan Public Service Commission initiated a general inquiry into the regulations and procedures of gas and electric utilities pertaining to centrally metered customers, including reselling customers, and to provide for appropriate service standards and rate classifications for centrally metered gas and electric utility service.

The Commission desires to fully explore problems and complaints associated with centrally metered and resale service to apartments, condominiums, cooperatives or mobile home parks, including problems with rates, from the standpoint of the reselling or centrally metered customer of the utility, the ultimate consumer of the gas or electric service, and utilities. The Commission is interested in developing equitable and workable standards, rules and regulatory policies related to these matters.

Phase I of the inquiry is for soliciting comments and submissions about these problems from the public. Phase II will consider data which the Commission has required utilities to file, submissions by parties intervening in the proceedings pursuant to Commission rules, and recommendations by the Commission's Staff. Phase III will cover proposed remedies for problems considered in Phases I and II as applicable to individual utilities.

PHASE I PUBLIC HEARINGS WILL BE HELD:

- (1) On the Orchard Ridge Campus, Oakland County Community College, "C" Building, Room 203, 27055 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills, on January 22, 1976 commencing at 1:30 PM and 7:30 PM.
- (2) In the 1st floor auditorium of the Law Building at 525 W. Ottawa Street in Lansing on January 28, 1976 commencing at 1:30 PM and 7:30 PM.
- (3) In the City Council Chambers, City Hall, 1101 South Saginaw, Flint, on January 27, 1976 commencing at 1:30 PM and 7:30 PM.
- (4) In the City Commission Chambers, 5th Floor, City Hall, 320 Monroe Street, NW, Grand Rapids, on January 29, 1976 commencing at 1:30 PM and 7:30 PM.

At Phase I public hearings the Commission is interested in receiving submissions or comments limited solely to the following subjects:

1. The appropriate rate under which service should be rendered to centrally metered customers where the ultimate consumption is for residential use.

Note: This would concern the rate charged by the utility for service to apartments, condominiums, cooperatives, or mobile home parks where gas or electricity is either included in the rent as an incident of tenancy or is resold by the landlord, association or park owner to the tenants.

2. Problems related to requirements that reselling customers sell utility service to ultimate consumers at the same rate applicable to customers of the same class who are direct customers of the utilities.

Note: Reselling customers who sell to residential users are generally required to resell at the utility's residential rates and reselling customers who resell to commercial users at the utility's commercial rates.

3. The revenue impacts on utilities of any revision of current rate patterns for centrally metered or resale service.

Note: A utility's rates to all of its customers generally assume the continuation of established rate patterns. Changing one rate may require changes to others.

4. Problems related to enforcement by utilities of standards of service requirements on reselling customers which are conditions of service to such customers.

Note: Primarily, enforcement of service standards is presently limited to discontinuance of service to landlords which would result in loss of service to tenants.

5. Means of providing for continuity of service to tenants of reselling customers where a reselling customer may be in violation of Commission rules, Commission-approved utility rules or the Michigan Gas Safety Code.

6. Tenant service continuity problems and possible financial consequences to utilities in case of discontinuance of utility service distribution systems by centrally metered or reselling customers.

Note: It has been suggested by the Commission Staff that all resale service be prohibited in

the future and that all existing resale customers (landlords, associations, park owners, etc.) be required to agree to uniform service, billing, customer relations, meter testing and auditing standards as a condition to continuing as a resale customer. Further, some landlords or park owners may, for financial reasons or due to enforcement action, seek to abandon service to their tenants, jeopardizing the tenants' gas or electric service, or expect the utilities to bear the cost of making repairs, replacements or improvements necessary to serve tenants directly.

7. Rights and obligations of reselling customers and their tenants and extent of Commission jurisdiction, if any, related thereto.

Note: Primarily concerned here is the question of extending the Commission's Consumer Standards and Billing Practices, which are available to a utility's residential customers, to the reselling customer's tenants.

PHASE II PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Commission has determined that the utilities shall file certain information with it to aid in its general inquiry. This information is scheduled to be filed on January 30, 1976, and a public hearing to receive and cross-examine this evidence and testimony is scheduled in Lansing at the Commission's offices in the Law Building at 525 W. Ottawa for 9:30 AM on February 17, 1976. Further hearing dates will be scheduled by the presiding Administrative Law Judge as necessary.

Persons, other than the utilities and the Commission Staff, who wish to participate in the Phase II public hearings as a formal intervenor pursuant to Rule 11 of the Rules of Practice and Procedure of the Commission should file with the Public Service Commission, Law Building, Lansing, Michigan 48913 at least five (5) days prior to February 17, 1976, an original and twelve (12) copies of a petition to intervene conforming to the requirements of Rule 11. A copy should also be mailed (First Class) to Consumers Power Company, Legal Department, 212 West Michigan Avenue, Jackson, Michigan 48201; and to The Detroit Edison Company, Legal Department, 2000 Second Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48226.

PHASE III PUBLIC HEARINGS

It may be necessary for the Commission to hold extraordinary or administrative type hearings for the purpose of adopting rules, regulations, service standards or rate changes as a result of the determinations made by the Commission in Phases I and II. These would be the subject of a separate notice and future hearings.

Copies of the order of the Michigan Public Service Commission in Case No. U-4985 can be obtained from the Public Service Commission's Executive Secretary, 5th Floor Law Building, Lansing, Michigan 48913 and are available for inspection at Consumers Power Company's Division offices in the cities of Alma, Battle Creek, Bay City, Pontiac, Flint, Grand Rapids, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Lansing, Marquette, Saginaw, Traverse City, East Detroit, Royal Oak and Livonia, and are also available at Detroit Edison's Division offices.

The Michigan Public Service Commission emphasizes that it has formed no conclusions relative to the issues raised in its order instituting this inquiry. The final outcome of the inquiry will result from the relevant evidence presented to the Commission in its full and complete record as possible.

Jurisdiction in this matter is pursuant to Act 106, P.A. 1909, as amended, MCLA 480.551 et seq.; Section 22 of Act 300, P.A. 1908, as amended, MCLA 480.22; Act 419, P.A. 1919, as amended, MCLA 480.51 et seq.; Act 3, P.A. 1939, as amended, MCLA 480.1 et seq.; Act 185, P.A. 1969, as amended, MCLA 483.151 et seq.; Act 306, P.A. 1969, as amended, MCLA 24.201 et seq.; and the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, 1964 Michigan Administrative Code, Supplement No. 54, R 480.11 et seq.

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