

editorial opinion

One small step for man as Barnaby goes to tea

Well I did it—survived my first tea, that is.

For those of you who may have caught Loraine McClish's column My Cup of Tea a few weeks back, you'll remember that she announced, much to my chagrin, that I would be attending an afternoon tea at the Nardin Park Methodist Church.

The occasion was a meeting of the Nardin Park Brailleists who conduct yearly classes in Braille transcription. The ladies, led by Dee Josaitis, are members of the Tri-County Braille Transcribers. Learning Braille always has been an intrigue to me so I signed up for the class to see what it was all about.

It only took about three minutes of the presentation and I was hooked on dedicating the next nine or 10 months to learning this skill.

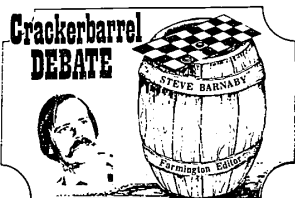
But enough of that—back to the tea.

As you might guess, teas are associated with afternoon functions with lots of women in attendance. Nothing wrong with that, of course, unless you're male and never been to one of these functions. If you'll note the picture on this column head, I'm obviously not one of the girls.

BUT NOW I know what this women's liberation is all about. Actually, I guess we've all got to be liberated if anyone is going to be liberated—so going to the Nardin Park tea was my contribution for the day.

At any rate, I've got to give the ladies a pile of credit for making me feel very comfortable. Needless to say my six-foot frame was rather conspicuous.

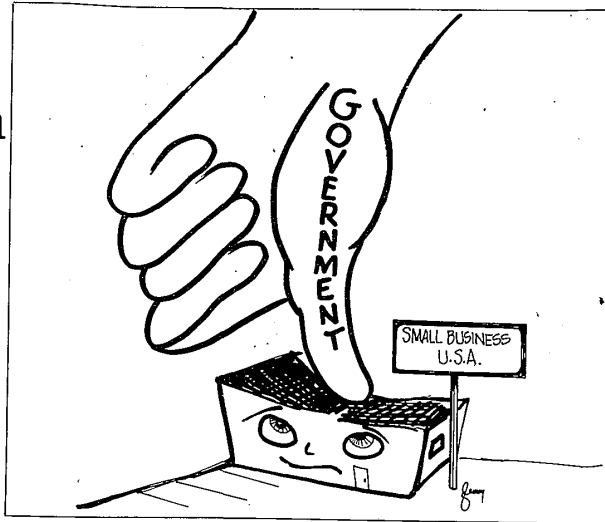
The only problem with being the only guy in this



group, though, is that I've got the distinct feeling that wagers are floating around as to whether or not I'll make it through the ordeal of learning braille. I don't know how many times I've heard women say that they have to give a superior performance in their work to be considered equal in the job market.

Well I'm sure the Nardin Park brailleists don't feel that way about me, but I'm bound and determined to master that machine better than anyone before.

In the meantime Dee, thanks for a very nice introduction to the club. And as for you readers, I'll let you know in nine months or so how I've done. Maybe I'll go out and recruit a few other guys. And then, maybe I'll just keep the ladies to myself.



Society needs small firms; government stifles them

One thing which gives suburban communities their special, distinctive flavor is the myriad of small businesses scattered through them.

They aren't the big industrial conglomerates with plush boardrooms, nor are they the chain operations with endless minor variations on the same plastic theme.

They are small operations, often run by one man and his family. They're individuals. They have character and variety.

And they're getting a raw deal.

THE STATE Legislature passed something called the Single Business Tax a while ago. Its net effect has been to pass the incidence of taxes onto low-profit, struggling small businesses and away from the highly-profitable, capital-intensive manufacturing giants and utility companies.

The Occupational Health and Safety Administration, heralded a few years ago as the first real attempt to bring state standards to the workplace, turns out to be a mixture of petty enforcement overvisions (fire extinguishers must be placed just so high on the wall) and bureaucratic bungling. Although there is no real proof, most small businessmen you talk to are convinced the OSHA people enforce the law strictly against them while largely ignoring the big corporations.

The federal law governing pensions was changed several years ago, supposedly to clean up abuses in the system and to provide secure pension benefits for workers who change jobs. It's only in the past few months that administrative rules have been issued, and the law is so complicated, and requires so much expensive paper work and legal analysis, that many small businesses are simply dropping their pension plans rather than endure the added cost.

Proposed changes of the wage base on which social security taxes are levied may make sense to help get the system back into financial health, but the cost will bear more sharply on the relatively non-capital intensive small business segment of our economy than on the big companies.

PAPER WORK. Taxes. Enforcement. Legal provisions and restrictions. Everywhere the small businessman turns, he is hemmed in by laws and rules that the big companies can afford to cope



by PHILIP H. POWER

with but which are either too complicated or too expensive for him.

The reasons why this is so are simple.

Big companies (and the big labor unions which represent their employees) can afford the lawyers, the accountants and the paper pushers who can cope with the laws. And the big companies and unions have their own lobbying operations in Lansing and Washington, so legislation affecting their interests can be spotted and muscled into shape.

Where's the lobbyist for Joe's Corner Store?

OF COURSE, all this has been the age-old complaint of small business.

But today, with unemployment and lack of jobs a national disgrace, the problem takes on added urgency.

Traditionally, small businesses are a key place for kids just coming out of school to get a job. Typically, small businesses use more labor than machines to get their work done. And very often, small businesses are the places where innovative folks with good ideas start their growth.

And yet it is exactly these very important social purposes which are in danger of being strangled by the raw deal the small businessman is getting.

There's a lot of debate taking place these days in Washington and Lansing about whether to make the government the employer of last resort as a way to cut down unemployment.

That may be the way to go, or it may not. But one of the things that should be looked at before we go charging off to a vastly expanded public payroll is just how the structure of laws and regulations can be amended to make it possible for the small businesses in this country more easily and effectively to perform their social and economic functions of hiring our youth, providing jobs for those who need them, and producing new products that the big guys haven't thought of.

Our debt to the hunter and fisherman

The new breed of environmentalist, with his sophisticated knowledge of the ecosystem, sometimes looks down his nose at the old-fashioned conservationist with his focus on hunting and fishing.

But in all the rhetoric about the forthcoming National Hunting and Fishing Day, one notable point was made by Michigan's Natural Resources Commission:

"Hunters and fishermen have almost alone borne the cost of protecting and managing both game and non-game wildlife, and fish and the cost of acquiring, protecting and developing critical land and water habitat."

Thus, the public lands and waters enjoyed by hikers, bird-watchers, mushroom collectors and the rest were, for the most part, provided by the fishing licenses, trout stamps, small game licenses, duck stamps, big game licenses and all the rest of the bureaucratic papers that hunters and fishermen put up with and pay for.

And so as the official celebration of Hunting and Fishing Day approaches this Saturday, we join in recognizing hunters and fishermen as "the backbone of the conservation movement."

And we note with pleasure that the backbone is getting some high-class support from the new breed of environmentalists.

Easy to reach

City needs local prison

One of the few good prison plans to come out of the Milliken Administration is to convert an old Hudson's warehouse in downtown Detroit into a medium-sized state facility.

The plan makes sense in every possible detail, and it's difficult to understand why Detroit Mayor Coleman Young is dragging his heels on it.

This is the same building, incidentally, that was being considered for a Wayne County jail, and there were many who thought the warehouse made more sense than building a new jail. It is a solid structure—the kind "they don't build no more"—and the detailed planning for conversion to a place of incarceration has already been done, saving the state some scare dollars.

THE WAREHOUSE site would allow families of prisoners from Detroit to make more frequent trips to see their loved ones, thus strengthening the ties of family life.

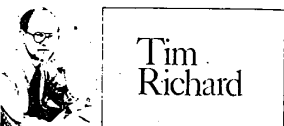
When one considers that the Motor City has about a sixth of the state's population, generates at least its share of prisoners (it has been the nation's murder capital for several years) and has no prison, well, it's pretty apparent Detroit has been getting short-changed in this department.

Young has duly noted—and this corner has agreed—that Detroit was short-changed on metropolitan parks and state police services (until last year). Why, then, should the mayor balk at getting a state prison in his backyard?

A downtown prison would be a huge convenience for visitors who have to take public transportation. All rapid transit lines will start from downtown Detroit, and most suburbs won't see rapid transit before the 21st century.

It will be 40 or 50 years before a rapid transit line comes anywhere near the Wayne County Child Development Center in Northville Township, 75 years before it comes close to the Michigan State University property in Avon Township and 80 or 100 years before it reaches the Proud Lake area in Commerce Township.

IN ONE OF THE history books, it is recorded



that, when the new state government was appropriating facilities in the 1830s, it came down to a flip of the coin between Jackson and Ann Arbor. Jackson won and chose to have a prison instead of a university because the local politicians figured a prison would provide more jobs.

Detroit, with its high unemployment rate, should not be overlooked as a prison site. Converting the warehouse would provide many jobs for electricians; guarding and staffing the prison would provide more jobs; with Detroit's school population skidding downward faster than anyone's, pink-slipped teachers should look forward to a prison there.

The warehouse is idle now, and all these jobs would be subject to Detroit's municipal income tax. That should make Young happy.

THE SUBURBS long have had the pleasure of housing such institutions as the Northville State Hospital, Detroit's TB facility, a child care center, a home for the retarded, Detroit's own prison and Detroit's Zoo. (If you want to read a tale of how Detroit crammed something down the Oakland County suburbs' throat, read Detroit's own official history of the Zoo.)

On the other hand, Detroit has insisted on having as many sports facilities as possible downtown, whether it's convenient for the customers or not. And so, while Detroit picks up several million dollars more federal aid to renovate Tiger Stadium, let the premier city also take a prison.

If Detroit is to get all the plums, it should be willing to take some of the pits, too.

A superb street fighter

But Detroit mayor hurts his neighbors

The Detroit mayoral primary election is now history and since Coleman Young received 55 per cent of the vote, he probably will continue as mayor for another four years.

Under the reign of the present mayor, Detroit has progressed. There are buildings being built and a more positive attitude in downtown.

The mayor's detractors will say that most of the things that happened were planned before he became mayor, but if things didn't happen he would be blamed, so he should be praised because they happened.

Now that Young has his election sewed up, it is time for him to become a regional statesman.

Detroit's financial problems were solved by budget cutting by the mayor and a healthy infusion of state and federal money. He didn't do it alone; his neighbors helped since much of the state money came from the suburbs.

As we've said in the past, there would not be healthy suburbs with a sick core city so the investment was wise, but there can't be a healthy state unless the southeast region is alive and well. Detroit is not an island.

To be the center of activities it must help the surrounding areas to progress. Stagnant suburbs won't help a core city to be vital. Regional transportation is important for the flow of commerce.

The main complaint against Mayor Young by suburban officials is that he has narrow vision when it comes to the big picture. He is all for Detroit even if it hurts his neighbors.

He has been so partisan, so parochial, for Detroit that he has taken positions that hurt the suburbs even when they didn't necessarily affect Detroit.



by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

He sought aid from people like Dan Murphy, the Oakland County executive, to get the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority to approve the downtown People Mover, a monorail train system that will circle the Detroit business district.

But when Murphy needed help to get expressways M-275 and I-696 expedited, the mayor worked against him behind the scenes, because he thought it would help to get suburbs and apparently in his thinking, helping the suburbs is hurting Detroit.

When it looked like the Red Wings were moving to Olympia II across from the Pontiac Silverdome, the mayor started suit to try to prevent Pontiac Township from using development bonds to help construct the new arena.

The mayor has been helped in making things happen by suburbanites like Henry Ford and others. You need only check the partners of Reg Cent to see that it's more than Detroiters helping Detroit.

If the mayor wants to go down in history or move to a more exalted position, he must demonstrate that he is more than a street fighter for Detroit.

It would be well that this be his goal for his second term.

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