

Tax limitation was a siren song, the rocks are near

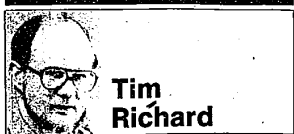
I have this nightmare in which I walk up to a group of theologians who are arguing. They are disputing how many angels can stand on the head of a pin holding X number of cherubs. I begin to read to them from Genesis. They get angry and shout me down.

The theologians, in this case, are the local politicians who are angry at the way the Michigan Legislature implemented the Headlee tax limitation amendment.

They had been lured into supporting Headlee with the promise that if the state required any new expenditures by local governments, the state would pick up the cost.

The theologians, and St. Richard Headlee himself, say Senate Bill 460 allows the state to pass onto local government many new costs. They will and strike. The Saint hires his equivalent of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John — McMaster Associates Public Relations — to send out news releases asking the governor to veto the bill. The governor signs it. More shrieks.

THEY HAVE REASON for their anger. In 1972, the state adopted a presidential primary law — an extra election in May. Local units of government,



Tim Richard

namely cities and townships and to some extent counties, had to pick up the tab.

That was when talk started about requiring the state to pick up the cost of local services the state required.

The slimmed down version of the Headlee amendment, as placed on the ballot by the secretary of state, said it would "prohibit the state from adopting new or expanding present local programs without full state funding."

My colleagues and I tried to tell the public last fall the Headlee amendment was full of fishhooks, that there were many costs which passage of Headlee couldn't hold down.

Between early 1978 and election day in Novem-

ber, voter support for the Headlee amendment slipped from about 80 percent in the polls to 50.1 percent at the ballot box. Some folks were thinking — but not enough.

STATE SEN. R. Robert Geake, R-Northville, a Headlee supporter, does a fine job of outlining what's wrong with SB 460:

"The definitions of 'service' and 'activities' in SB 460 are worded so as to exclude many major personnel costs. These often are a large part of the cost of new programs.

"Another section of the bill exempts those costs which apply to a 'larger class of persons or corporations and do not apply exclusively to a local unit of government.

"If, for instance, the state were to mandate an expansion of unemployment compensation benefits to new classes of citizens, local units of government would have to pick up the increased costs for their employees. This would be a significant increase in their budget and would require either cutbacks in other services or increases in local property taxes."

I NOW INSERT some Genesis-type thoughts into the discussion.

There are three levels of government — right? No. Wrong. The U.S. Constitution recognizes two levels of government — federal and state.

Local governments are creatures of the state. They depend on the state for their existence. They depend on the state for their powers. They must perform the duties required by the state. That's Genesis.

Look at any list of legislative bills and half or so will pertain to local government. Something like 41 percent of the state budget is appropriations for local government — schools, community colleges, cities, villages, townships, counties, special authorities, intermediate school districts, regional planning agencies.

"We want state government out of local government's business," thunders Headlee, thereby revealing that he literally doesn't know the first thing about government.

OUR LOCAL politicians have a case, emotionally, anyway, when they cuss the legislature.

But the more important fact is they were bamboozled when they followed the siren song of "tax limitation."

To paraphrase Genesis: "In the beginning, the state created the counties and the cities."

Blood aids in struggle for survival

Almost six million times last year, Americans walked through doorways of community centers, offices, factories, churches and schools. Once inside, they rolled up their sleeves and engaged in a fight.

The fight was a fight for life.

The recruits — either confident or timid but always generous — were the volunteer donors who shared their blood through the Red Cross in the continuing effort to save and sustain the lives of the seriously sick and injured.

We're strong believers that most of the million-plus fighters for life who gave blood for the first time last year did not do so just to get free coffee and doughnuts.

We're also strong believers that those thousands of people who regularly donated blood every eight weeks did not do so to gain any pins or badges, to which they are entitled.

We doubt that a president's, governor's or mayor's proclamation could have induced all those people to give blood voluntarily.

AND, ALTHOUGH we admire the many employers who give their employees time off to give blood, we doubt that the work break is sufficient motivation for most people to give blood.

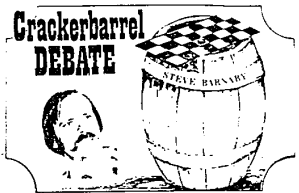
Why, then, did these people show up six million times to donate blood?

It is our belief that those people gave blood then, and people are giving blood voluntarily today, because they know there are patients who need it.

It's that simple.

It's also a continuation of the American tradition of free citizens helping each other and serving the community — not for what they can get, but for what they can give.

To those volunteers who give blood in this community, and for those donors who share their blood in other locations across the United States through the Red Cross, we say "thanks" — six million times.



Ah yes, take me up north to be reborn

Paging through my book of quotes one evening, I noticed an oddity, of sorts.

Quotes on that great American pastime, the vacation, were missing. Imagine, 200 million persons in this country work the year through to make it to vacation. Yet not a quote has been preserved on that great subject.

Now since I'm on vacation presently, it occurs to me that something of great historical import must have happened on someone's vacation to be recorded in time's annals.

I sit at night, watching the camp fire burn and hearing the sounds of nature in the distance. It's peaceful out here in the north woods. City folks tend to forget that such peace exists.

A glance at the night sky reveals a panorama of stars and constellations which not even the greatest of artists could come close to copying.

The lake gently ripples as the cool night air lightly sweeps across its surface. The stillness is broken by the faint sound of a fisherman's small outboard motor nudging him to a flickering light in the distance.

The mind becomes so relaxed in the northern woods. A person's senses are brought back to life after only a few hours in the back country. Food tastes better, the pipe tobacco is sweeter and the wonder of nature's aroma consume the nostrils.

A quick glance in the mirror reveals that the wrinkles disappear or, at least, become less obvious. Those dark circles under the eyes diminish into nothingness. The skin becomes tan.

Leisure opens the body and mind to new adventures. A person is compelled to briskly walk through the woods to nowhere in particular.

Long-neglected books are dusted off and their knowledge revives the thinking man.

Nature's colors dart out vividly as a vacationer awakens from the long year of toil. No matter how civilized the world in which we live becomes, vacation still renews us and provides a time to renew our souls.

For a time the bomb, the boat people, a stagnating economy and Jimmy Carter seem like problems far adrift from the vacationer's world.

Our jaded view on life becomes properly readjusted to reality and sensibility. What a wise and wonderful feeling it is.

A trip to the north woods reassures us that, indeed, we are the individual who survives on his own. We realize that life really isn't a mad rat race of senseless rules and regulations.

It is a life of struggle but one which we are sure can be embraced and tamed.

Vacation brings such wonderful thoughts to a person's mind.

Somehow the great thinkers made a mistake along the line. They forgot about the importance of a vacation. They forgot that while man's life is to improve the world, the reward is hesitating to refresh our minds and bodies.

Great thing, these vacations. I think I'll go bait a hook, light up my pipe and think for awhile — about nothing much.

Waxing eloquent on signatures

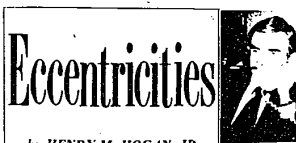
Do you cherish your seal?

In ancient days a man's mark was his seal. Kings and the more prosperous merchants had rings bearing their family crests, which they pressed into sealing wax that was applied to the bottom of proclamations and contracts instead of signing them.

The seal itself has kind of passed from favor today, although you still see the initials L.S. (locus sigilli) on some legal documents. It has been replaced by a man's written signature.

I suppose the main reason is that man is a little more mobile today and it is pretty hard to carry a hunk of sealing wax around. In many cases the written signature is no more recognizable than the old seal pressed in inferior sealing wax.

I know some people who pride themselves in the fact that no one can read their signatures. I suppose this is all right on letters if one has a capable secretary who types his name underneath, but it sure raises the dickens when they send a friend a postcard from a place he doesn't even know they



by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

are visiting. I have one friend whom I can always tell whether he signed his letters personally or not. If I can read his signature, he had nothing to do with it.

Other people signing one's name raises another point, which I saw in the paper the other day. Autograph collectors have a real problem finding original signatures of John F. Kennedy, since so much of his correspondence was signed by his secretaries or with signature machines.

Experts say the more unreadable a signature, the easier it is to forge, but on the other hand it is hard to tie a man down to a contract if you can't prove it is his name on the dotted line.

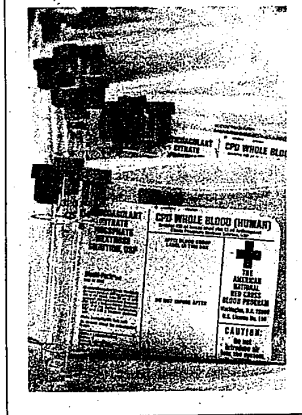
It is such a waste to see grammar school teachers striving long and hard with various methods to make their students write legibly because the signs of the times would indicate that a well educated man has forgotten a lot since grammar school.

A doctor's prescription is a case in point. Not only does a pharmacist have to be able to translate Latin, but he also has to be an expert in hiroglyphics.

The reason it takes so long to prepare a prescription is that the poor druggist must decipher the message before he can mix it together.

If your signature is your mark, it should be one of your most cherished possessions and you should take pride in it.

Maybe, however, illegible signers are really art lovers, but prefer abstract art.



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