

Cowering under the umbrella of suburbophilism

Suburbanite, suburbanite, who is the biggest and baddest suburbanite?
A lot has flowed down the Rouge River since the last time we were treated to such an effluence of suburban patriotism.

But last week, not even John Wayne could have put on such a macho performance as did the overwhelming majority of suburban Detroit state legislators.

They stood in line to pound their chests and robustly declare they had been elected to protect the pocketbooks of their constituents against the encroachment of Coleman Young.

Detroit's mayor would like to get his city out of debt. Raising the income tax for both residents and suburban commuters is about the only way. It's pretty harmless medicine considering the alternative.

The mayor's problem was a recalcitrant state Legislature. It just had been rebuffed by state voters on its state property tax relief plan. To conduct

a city of Detroit election on June 23, Young needed legislative approval by last Friday.

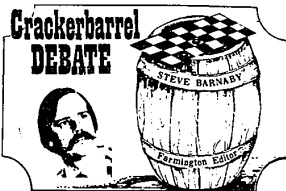
He got it.
But it wasn't an easy battle. Even the usual bevy of "liberal" legislators cowered under the umbrella of suburbophilism. But once again that strange alliance of Democrat Young and Republican Gov. Milliken carried the day.

GUBERNATORIAL hopeful James Brickley did the deed in his role as siding officer of the senate. He cast the tie-breaking vote.

Republicans are miffed at that sleight of hand. Some figure it was a set up job by the Democrats. Rumor has it the Dems were working harder for a tie than defeating the tax election just to embarrass Brickley.

So much for State Sen. William Faust's voting button going on the fritz.

But even after all of last week's legislative dramas, some folks just don't know when to quit. It's called being a sore loser.



Republican state representatives Jack Kirksey of Livonia and Doug Cruce of Troy are examples.

These two stalwarts are organizing a minicrusade to thwart Young's efforts. The group's intent is allegedly one to sway the votes of Detroiters likely to support the income tax increase.

But many suspect the group's real intent is to tell

us all what a slob Young is and what a mess he has made of Detroit.

Even some of the suburban legislators who voted against the income tax increase concept are repulsed by the idea of meddling in somebody else's election with such tactics.

These two guys haven't exactly taken a chapter out of "Profiles in Courage."

EITHER WAY the vote goes, these guys are winners in the jaded suburban eyes.

On the other hand, you've got to take a look at Democrat State Rep. Joe Forbes of Oak Park who was one of only two suburban legislators who had the courage to vote for the enabling legislation.

Politically, he had nothing to win by voting that way. But in this instance, Forbes looked beyond his own immediate self-interest.

He opted for giving Detroiters (those who live and work in Motown) a chance to survive.

Now that's a big, bad suburbanite.



Tim Richard

An American tradition of taxation

When the morning news came on the radio, someone was talking about "taxation without representation." "Grogg," I figured I must have had the radio tuned to CBE, the Canadian station.

Two hundred years ago or more, "taxation without representation" was a Revolutionary War cry. The colonists had no representation in Parliament and disliked the idea of being taxed to pay for Indian wars on their frontiers.

Today the United States levies the income tax on all who work or do business here; aliens pay whether they vote or not.

Michigan levies its income tax on all who work here. There is some reciprocity with other states levying income taxes, but no one gets off free.

IF A CANADIAN travels to Michigan, he is nicked by both the federal and state taxes when he buys gasoline. He gets no 11-cent break by flashing an Ontario driver's license and saying he has no representation in the U.S. Congress or the Michigan Legislature.

All of Michigan, even the Motor City, is a tourist area. Everyone using a hotel or motel pays the use tax, Michigan resident or not. In fact, more non-residents probably pay that tax than residents.

Look at the downtown hotels like the Plaza or the Ponchartrain. Look at all the hotels and motels around Metropolitan Airport. Look at their prices. Multiply by 4 percent.

Yessirree, we nick those business travelers good and hard.

Listen to the legislators, especially from around these suburbs, who supported Proposal A. What was one of their chief arguments for shifting from the property tax to the sales tax? "Catch those tourists," they said.

BRING IT DOWN to the local level.

Let's say you live in the metropolitan area and have a cottage around Grayling. When your property tax bill comes from the north county township, county, school district and community college, do you rush to the township board of review, whip out your driver's license and voter registration from suburbia and holler at the Grayling solons, "Hey, you can't tax me, that's taxation without representation?" Do you?

Only if you are stark, raving mad. If your property is in their district, they're going to tax you. In fact, they might even use a heavy pencil when figuring your assessment because there's no chance you can vote the local supervisor out of office.

Pick any college you want: Michigan, Wayne State, Michigan State, Oakland U, UM-Dearborn, Oakland Community College, Scholcraft College — any one you want. Without exception, they will charge about double tuition to non-residents of the state or of the college district.

Check the price of resident and non-resident fishing licenses, trout-salmon stamps, small game licenses, deer licenses, trapping licenses... the non-resident is charged a higher price.

And so it was a shock to awake to the radio news and hear suburban representatives in the Michigan Legislature fighting the Detroit commuter income tax and crying "taxation without representation." It wasn't a Canadian broadcast.

The American Way, much honored in Michigan, is to charge non-residents just as much as residents and, wherever possible, more.

Taxation without representation is as American as baseball, fatty hot dogs, apple pie and Chrysler aid.



Of chores and shingles

A fellow need not go to one of our institutions of higher learning or pore over richly bound books to get a good education. He can get it right at home.

The Stroller found this out during the past few months while the lady of the house has been fighting off a rare case of shingles, and he has been forced into a state of bachelorhood.

In happier days, he often scoffed at the remark that a woman's work is never done. But he is a convert now and never again will make light of the tasks that confront one who is trying to keep house. Of course keeping the household clean is a prime task, but the work goes much further than that.

THE FIRST thing a fellow learns is the need to keep the food shelves properly filled. This job is akin to the fellow who is in charge of the storeroom in any of our major industries. Knowing how much to get and what brands are the best suited to our appetites is no easy matter.

Then comes the job of storing them properly. Sure, some of the food must be kept in a freezing area of the refrigerator. Other foodstuffs are stored in the regular places in the "ice box," and still others are placed in the compartment for vegetables needed to prepare salads.

And that is just the starter. Next comes the actual preparation of the food, and never does The Stroller light the burners on the stove or heat the oven that he doesn't think of his mother (God rest her soul) and the morning she called him into the kitchen while she was teaching his sisters and said, "This won't hurt you. You never know when it will come in handy." How grateful he is to her these days of this enforced bachelorhood.

THEN THERE is the task of shopping for the items that are needed in the everyday scheme of things. This task is akin to the job of the industrial purchasing agent, who must keep a sufficient supply of materials on hand to keep things moving.



This is no easy matter. It entails comparing prices and brands and watching for bargains. When a man goes on such tours for the lady, he pays little attention to price. He just reaches for the product.

Mind you, we now have only gone as far as the kitchen and the dining table. There are other tasks just as important. There is the ever-present task of keeping the place clean, "making of the beds" to keep them fresh, to see that the house is properly aired through the day and that everything is kept in its place.

Keeping house, as they call it, is no easy task. The Stroller has found that there is little time for a respite from the many things that must be done and too often are taken for granted by the man of the house.

MIND YOU, we have only gone to one or two rooms of the place we call home. There are other items, such as scrubbing the floors, vacuuming the rugs, seeing that the dirty linens are cleaned, ironed and placed in the proper part of the various closets.

What an education a fellow can get when he is pressed in to a period of bachelorhood. He can learn more in a few months of the everyday life at home than he can in a full course at a major institution of higher learning.

And The Stroller will be one of the happiest men in the world when Leona comes home again and tells him that he certainly has earned his diploma with a degree in bachelorhood.



Nick Sharkey

Sex ed talk isn't that easy

A few weeks ago, Michigan Attorney General Frank Kelley altered the rules for teaching sex education in public schools. Essentially, parents now must ask that their children be permitted to attend classes. Before, parents had to specifically request that their children not take sex ed classes — if they were offered.

As a result, fewer children will probably attend sex ed classes. Suburban school officials say it's too early to tell how Kelley's ruling will affect their programs.

But it may mean that parents will have to get more involved and not routinely shuffle their responsibility for sex education to the schools. That may set back sex instruction 20 years. Dear old mom and dad don't have good records when it comes to this area.

The age-old clumsiness about sex instruction continues today. Most adults first learned about sex from their poorly informed friends. That led to much confusion and false ideas about sex.

I remember one night when my father herded me and my two older brothers into the bathroom to tell us about "the facts of life." It was obvious that he was as embarrassed as we were about the session. After a few minutes, he asked if we had any questions. We looked at each other and no one said anything.

The class was over and that was the end of my formal sex education from my parents.

Most adults had similar experiences with their parents.

WE ALL vowed that in our modern sophistication we would handle it better than our parents. But now as a parent, I wonder if the process is really being improved.

About four years ago, friends gave me a book called "How Babies Are Made." It presents a simple explanation of sex, beginning with flowers and working up to humans. The book is supposed to be shared reading by children and parents. For one reason or another, my wife and I have stalled and not even discussed the book with our children.

A couple of years ago I felt guilty about avoiding sex discussions with my oldest child, then an 8-year-old. So during a car ride home from the grocery I briefly began a sex discussion. When the car stopped in the driveway, I asked him if he had any questions. He had a disinterested look on his face and asked, "Dad, can I go inside?"

Later during nature walks with my two sons, I had brief discussions about the fertilization of flowers. I related that to how humans have babies. The only responses have been blank stares with no questions.

A few months ago, I attended an evening class in my children's school about sex education. The instructor said that discussion of sex was especially important for father and son. She said that ignoring the subject would build up a wall between father and son that may never come down.

Obviously, I felt guilty and a little scared. So a few days later I sat down with my son, now 10. I talked about the sexual feelings the instructor said he was experiencing.

After patiently listening to me for about 20 minutes, he said he wasn't having those feelings yet. But he promised that if he had any questions in the future, he'd ask me.

My own clumsy efforts have left me uneasy. But the experts say that sex education must be tried many different times using different methods. So I'll keep trying.

I fear that someday, when my children are adults, they will recall how ineffectual I was in telling them about sex. They'll be saying the same things I say about my parents. Maybe the generations are not really making any improvements in this area.

Sex education has never been easy.