

# Amusements tax rates political mistake of '82

The Michigan Legislature will be making a big fat mistake if it approves a 4-percent amusement tax next week, just as it made a big fat mistake in raising the cigarette tax 10 cents a pack last week.

Granted, the state treasury has a cash-flow problem. Granted, we don't want to dismantle our colleges and universities. Granted, the 84 percent of us who are still working are pretty well off. Granted, some kind of new state money must be raised.

Yet it seems like unpolitical foolishness for a political body in need of money during a depression period to pepper us with one tax increase after another.

- CONSIDER:**
- Local property taxes continue to rise despite the weak real estate market. There are logical reasons for it, but most folks look only at the bottom line, their tax bills.
  - The cigarette-tax increase already approved will mean Michigan has one of the highest taxes on

"coffin nails" in the nation. The Legislature's own calculations show that a quarter of the potential revenue will be lost due to interstate smuggling. And it's patently unfair to stick cigarette smokers with combined federal and state taxes equal to nearly half the price of the product.

- The income tax will have to be raised about 1 percent, at least temporarily, to see the state through hard times. Most of us accept that responsibility.
- The deterioration of our freeways, highways, roads and streets must be addressed. Gov. William Milliken had the courage and wisdom to suggest road funds be raised through the income tax — in short, do the entire job in one fell swoop. Legislative leaders said no. Now the Legislature faces the prospect of having to raise gasoline and weight taxes later in the year.

AND SO, WITH four different kinds of taxes al-

ready due to rise, why pepper the people to death with talk of a fifth tax hike, on amusements?

The dollar amount of these tax hikes — at least the four state tax hikes — won't be terrible, considering that Michiganians are due to get a \$2-billion tax cut from the federal government this year. But the psychological impact of seeing four different state taxes go up in a single year is too much.

On top of it all, the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMATA) announced many, many months ago it would have to ask legislative authorization to go to the ballot in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties in November 1982 to seek new money.

Because of declines in federal and state subsidies, SEMATA faces a two-thirds cutback without new local revenue. With so many other taxes rising, SEMATA's chances seem dim. By 1983 public transportation in the suburbs is likely to be back where it was in 1963 — practically belly-up.

THE AMUSEMENTS tax has little to recommend it, on its merits.

There is no machinery in place to administer it, either at the state level or in business. Video-game parlors will need to have their equipment changed or else plan to absorb the entire tax.

If levied, the amusements tax would be too late to capture anything from season ticket buyers to Tigers and perhaps football games. Movie ticket lines will slow down as change-making is complicated by the fact that a \$3.50 ticket will go up to \$3.69. Or else theaters will round off the price — upwards.

Local government already has its hand in the cable TV companies' pockets. The state shouldn't dip in, too.

As tough a decision as it is to raise taxes, the Legislature would be better off taking one big bite of the bullet by raising the income tax rather than picking, picking, picking on one subgroup after another.



**Tim Richard**

## 'Evita' ignores Argentina's Numero Uno

By now you would think everything about "Evita" had been written. The music, the stars, the secondary stars, the stand-ins, the long success at the Masonic Auditorium despite the recession — those have been covered exhaustively.

But something important has been left out. Juan, Eva Peron's husband.

In the musical adaptation of Eva's life, Juan Domingo Peron comes off as a nerd. He is shown as the winner of a banana republic's game of military musical chairs.

Evita, as Eva Duarte de Peron was lovingly known, is portrayed as the brains and heart and soul of Peron's regime (1946-55). When Eva dies of cancer in 1952 at the tender age of 33, you are given the impression Juan is too inept to survive as president of Argentina without her.

It isn't quite the truth.

AS HISTORY, "Evita" is otherwise fairly close to the facts. That is surprising because it is virtually an opera — everything is sung and there are almost no speaking lines.

In opera, one concentrates on the emotions as expressed in music, rather than in the hard facts. But "Evita" is even more than opera. It is multi-media, with old newsreels and photos being flashed on screen.

As a high school student, I had done a term paper on the Peron regime and its closing. Buenos Aires' largest paper, *La Prensa*, the films were almost spooky — like learning about Abe Lincoln and then seeing his blood-stained theater chair in Greenfield Village, or reading about Prince Hal and standing next to his tomb in Westminster Abbey.

A certain artistic license is taken in "Evita." Che Guevara, Castro's pal, appears as a narrator and sort of revolutionary conscience, like Jimmy Crick, though he and Eva apparently never met.

**BUT THIS** column was to be about Juan, who is portrayed as the inept spouse.

When I saw "Evita," I made an audience check. The audience was three-quarters women. That tells you something about the appeal of "Evita."

What the highly-detailed multi-media opera didn't say about Juan Peron is revealed in his entry in *Encyclopedia Americana*:

Born in 1895, Peron entered the army at 18 and "first came to prominence as the guiding spirit of the Grupo de Oficiales Unidos, a military clique organized in 1941. In 1943, as head of the labor secretary, Peron became labor's champion by granting long overdue reforms, and its leader by placing his supporters in key union positions.

"He became, additionally, minister of war and vice president in 1944, but was compelled to resign on Oct. 9, 1945. Within a month he returned to power, and demonstrated his strength by calling a 24-hour general strike which paralyzed the nation.

"HE WAS ELECTED president of Argentina on Feb. 24, 1946, and inaugurated a regime which was strongly nationalistic. Basing his strength on concessions to labor and a powerful army, he attempted to make the country self-sufficient economically, and brought the judiciary, educational institutions, press and radio under strict party control."

(At this point, let us observe that Peron met Eva in 1943 and married her secretly in 1945. She died in 1952.)

"Peron was elected to another term in 1951, but political repression, economic mismanagement and conflict with the church produced growing discontent." A series of military revolts in 1955, followed by heavy fighting in several sections of the country, forced Peron to resign Sept. 16.

In 1974, Peron returned to power and died in office in 1974. His third wife, Isabel, succeeded him but was overthrown in 1976.

Juan was hardly a nice guy, but he was more than the strutting, puta-hunting figurehead you see in "Evita."



## Everyone's complaint Burnout chic hits raw nerve

Every season, a trend is born. A few years back it was meditation. After that, the Lamaze birth inethod was the rage.

The pop psychology craze of 1982 is "burnout." It wins hands down over all other popular maladies of modern American life. Forget cellulite, allergies or the abuse of video games.

Those of you still "into" those things just aren't with it.

The mail pieces on my desk and in my wastebasket all tout seminars and workshops on "burnout," a subject that far outranks any other current social condition.

Notice conversations in which you are involved.

"Talk of breaking the smoking habit or running "for a better you" draw only yawns and blank stares.

But what really turns on a conversation over cocktails or a beer is burnout.

And, unlike other trends, burnout has a companion — coping with stress.

MANY OF THOSE attempting to move in the fast lane have been slowed by their failure to see impending burnout — whether it be on the job or in "coping with stress."

Now all this may sound a little ridiculous. And it probably is just that.

But many folks have fallen for the ploy, keeping psychologists, social workers and management consultants in the money.

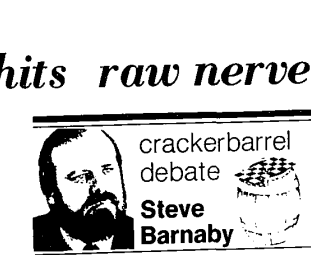
Even unions have taken to using the phrase in reference to the workers' plight.

Frankly, I think it's all a bunch of baloney, which, on its face, may be humorous, but which also has its more somber side.

BURNOUT has become an alibi for laziness and an excuse doing a lousy job. A conversation overheard in a restaurant a while back is instructive:

One teacher to another:

"I just can't see how I'm going to be able to stand



this much longer. The students are running wild, the parents don't care and we certainly don't get any support from the administration," said the first.

Replied the second:

"I know what you mean. If we're not careful the same thing is going to happen to us that happened to Bob. We're just going to burn out."

"Get burned out? I've felt that way for years," protested the first.

Now, I remember the days when teachers, cops and other assorted public servants were working for too few bucks and under rotten working conditions.

Those folks had a real beef. They fought for equity and, for the most part, won it.

But burnout?

I very seriously doubt it.

Maybe many of us have become disillusioned because the good old American dream isn't what it was cracked up to be.

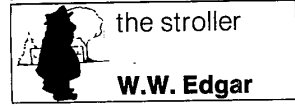
BUT BURNOUT implies resignation, a lack of willingness to fight on.

I pray to the Almighty that burnout is just another pop trend, destined for obscurity in another year.

Otherwise this country could be in bigger trouble than we realize.

Today, more than ever, we must summon up the resolve to recover economically and once again compete in the world marketplace.

Otherwise, the burnout wish will be come a reality.



## The writer puts scenery on the stage

Across the desk the other morning came a copy of an editorial in *Editor & Publisher*, the newspaperman's bible.

In it the editor expressed a cynical opinion that modern-day journalists are developing their own expressions that lead only to many superfluous words and clutter up a news story.

He paid particular attention to the use of expressions such as "Mr. Jones said with a huge smile." He argued that the phrase "with a huge smile" was not needed and added not a thing to the story. He emphasized it would be better had the writer written "Mr. Jones said," and let it go at that.

As he read the editorial, the Stroller had to smile because it appeared that the *Editor & Publisher* editor had read one of the Stroller columns or features in which he consistently uses the expression that the interviewee answered with a broad smile or a frown.

THIS ISN'T a new fad among up-and-coming journalists. It was part of the education the Stroller received more than a half-century ago from one of the wisest old editors he ever has known.

One afternoon when the Stroller was just cutting his eye teeth in the newspaper field, the old editor, Charlie Weiser, talked to him about writing styles. And he had a novel way of putting his point across.

"Would you enjoy a play in the legitimate theater if there were no scenery on stage?" he asked.

When the Stroller answered "no," the old editor, with a glint in his eyes, said, "Well, it is the same with a feature story. You have to set the stage for the reader. You can do that by writing 'Bill Jones leaned forward on his desk, pounded his fist on the top and said...'

He then pointed out that the reader now had a scene before one word was spoken. He also stressed a simple "Mr. Jones said" would be as interesting as saying a black cow has white spots, its tail wags and it gives milk. The writer must set the scene.

The old editor was a stickler for action in stories. He wanted our paper to be a live recording of the day's events and its features.

THE OTHER important lesson he gave the Stroller was in these terse terms:

"Nobody gives a damn about your opinion. You are not to make the news. You are just to record it."

Through the years, the Stroller has tried to fulfill the edicts of the old man — the last of the brown derby era — and he hasn't found it difficult. In fact, it has helped him over many a tough spot in his reporterly duties.

So no matter what an Editor & Publisher bigwig has to say, the Stroller will stick with the lessons he learned from the old editor back home.

Like the old-time religion, it was good enough for him, and it's good enough for me.



Did you know that the University of Michigan campus in Ann Arbor features a unique underground law library some 77,000 square feet in size? There are actually three levels below grade, yet it is so designed that a 150- by 26-foot sloping skylight provides natural lighting to all three underground levels. The finished area houses 180,000 volumes.