

Farmington Observer

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23352 Farmington Road
Farmington, MI 48024
(313) 477-5450

Steve Barnaby editor
Nick Sharkey managing editor

comment

Senate should OK new tax

ASK ANY group of voters whether it likes the notion of paying more state taxes, and you'll hear a chorus of protests.

Some state senators — who face a crucial vote this week on an income tax increase — have been asking voters that question in unscientific polls of their constituents.

The results of asking simplistic questions is easily predictable and a poll asking only how voters feel about a tax increase is almost patently unnecessary.

The legislators should have been asking other questions, such as:

- Do you want to see Michigan's credit rating fall because of a poor cash flow?
- Do you want to see colleges and school districts forced into the money market for loans because the state can't make its aid payments?
- Do you want to see those institutions pay higher interest rates because the state's credit rating has diminished?
- Do you want to see state universities close down more departments when — as experience in North Carolina and California has shown — they can be major attractions to industry?
- Do you want to see community colleges crippled when they clearly have a vital role in training and retraining workers for Michigan's economic re-development?

SENATORS Donald Bishop of Rochester, William Faust of Westland, R. Robert Geake of Northville, Douglas Ross of Oak Park and Dana Wilson of Madison Heights have been getting a lot of mail and phone calls. The pressure on them is intense.

The state budget was expected to be more than \$800 million out of line by Sept. 30, the end of this fiscal year. But half of that has already been made up by spending and program cuts.

The state Senate could put the budget back in line by following the House's lead and approving a temporary one percent increase in the state personal income tax. The tax would be increased from 4.6 percent to 5.6. The increase would be for six months.

The temptation is enormous to play the demagogue

and say, "No more taxes." The temptation is great to take a walk and not vote, which is the same as voting "no."

On top of it all, the senators know they face an election this fall.

LET US THINK back to the last election — November, 1978 for Bishop, Faust, Geake and Ross; March, 1982 for Wilson.

Did these candidates promise to be docile followers who would do as they were told? Or did they tell us about their leadership abilities and their university degrees in law, psychology, economics and other fields?

Did they promise to duck when the going got tough? Or did they impress us with tales of their ability to solve problems?

When they addressed our civic clubs, did they bow and scrape and say, "Yessir." Or did they talk about their successes in the professions, business and politics?

Did they offer to run a polling service and then base their votes on these unscientific polls? Or did they boast of their wisdom, courage and independence?

THE NEED to shore up the state treasury is so overwhelmingly apparent that it should be unnecessary to argue it.

What we need to do now is remind our senators they were sent to Lansing to solve problems, to form the upper house of a representative assembly, to apply wisdom and to show courage.

Theoretically, every household in the state could be wired with a polling device and surveyed daily. No one, however, has seriously suggested such a mechanistic way of conducting the state Legislature.

Instead, we look at the candidates, listen to them, evaluate them and elect 38 to the Senate and 110 to the House to do a job they tell us they can handle.

A job needs to be done. This week. Not an easy or glamorous job. But a job our senators asked for.

And now we ask them to do it — to vote the income tax temporary surcharge and get it over with.

The saga of Charles Colson: success to failure to rebirth

The man who supposedly said he would run over his grandmother to get Richard Nixon re-elected president came to my church last Sunday.

The turnout was impressive. The parking lot filled up earlier than usual, the sanctuary seats were all taken 15 minutes before the service was to begin. Folding chairs were set up in the foyer and the balcony overflowed. It seemed that there were more persons in attendance than on Easter Sunday, which also draws larger-than-usual crowds.

The featured speaker at the morning service was Charles Colson, former special counsel to President Nixon who, along with a dozen other presidential assistants, was convicted of one of the crimes which have come to be known as the Watergate crimes.



Bob Wisler

BUT MORE than that, Colson, at the time called Richard Nixon's hatchet man, is the author of the book "Born Again," the story of his religious conversion during the Watergate era.

Colson's conversion, now more than seven years old, is still looked on with skepticism by some. The doubters think it was merely a contrivance to win a more sympathetic sentence for the crime of obstruction of justice.

When his conversion was first reported in the press, it was with a savor. The magazines and newspapers openly questioned his motives and truthfulness. How, the cynics reasoned, could this tough ex-Marine who was a co-conspirator with Richard Nixon and the Watergate gang in the assault against the Republic really change his ways to become a Christian in thought, word and deed? Wasn't this the man who had a hand in the Ellsberg break-in, the man who hired Hunt and Liddy, the man who wanted to fire-bomb the Brookings Institution and rifle its files? Wasn't this the man who said

he would run over his grandmother to get Nixon re-elected?

COLSON LATER said he never made the grandmother statement, but he admitted he might as well have. At his sentencing — he received a one to three-year sentence and served seven months — he said that as a Nixon myrmidon he had "only one rule — to get done that which the President wanted done."

The disgrace of Watergate certainly had a profound effect on Colson. Surely the roller coaster series of events which took him to the top of the mountain in terms of power, prestige and status and then dropped him down into a slough of ignominy were the kinds of experiences which would force a person to question every value he has ever held.

In fact, there is something to be said for reaching the point where one faces utter disillusionment and despair. For many, it is the only time in their lives that they reach deep inside themselves to rescue a tiny spark of spiritual being and nurture it into a regeneration.

I HAVE met many recovering and recovered alcoholics who maintain that they are glad that they became alcoholics, lost wives, jobs, families, businesses, careers, everything, be-

cause only the jolt of losing everything forced them to look for some way to mend their twisted and battered souls and that search led to psychological and spiritual rebirth.

Because of what they were and what they lost, they became beings with a spiritual nature, a sense of self-worth, destiny and purpose and a belief in the value of life, as well, in many instances, as a belief in God.

So it seems to be also with Charles Colson, now 59. As Colson explained Sunday, he was always an ambitious man who strove diligently for success. He made high marks in college, he became the youngest company commander in the Marine Corps, the youngest administrative assistant in the U. S. Senate (at 29), he earned a law degree at night, he started a law firm which became one of Washington, D.C.'s top firms and he had a six-figure income.

AT 39 he became a special counsel to the president of the United States. He argued cases in the highest court, won a case before the U.S. Supreme Court — "every lawyer's dream" — and sat in on meetings every morning at which Secretary of State Henry Kissinger intoned, "Mr. President, today we will make decisions which will change the whole course of history."

And what did all this success, power and achievement really mean? According to Colson, nothing.

It was only after his conversion and his jail sentence, he said, that he realized the purpose of his life — to serve God by working in prisons.

The paradox of his life, he said, was that the things that he thought were important for most of his life, were really unimportant. "The legacy of my life," he said, "was that I was an ex-convict who went to prison."

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