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State budget bloodletting feud suicidal

MICHIGAN, BY acclamation of the mob, is in a self-destruct mode. Before the dawn of the computer age, we called it something else — suicide. But in this case, by any other name it still carries an acrid odor. On an individual basis, suicide is an act performed by a sick person, trapped by his/her own fears.

Those who seek to destroy this state are even more sick. They insist that all of us who seek to live in a civilized society join them in their rush to disaster.

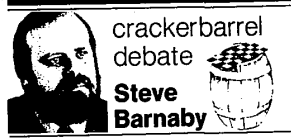
The mob has given up trying to help itself out of this statewide economic nightmare in which we find ourselves. So much for all this baloney about pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps.

The mob has become too decadent to try. Its members enjoy the slow economic death to which they are so fervently committed — like watching a fish out of water gasping for breath.

It started out with the tax rebellion. It became a badge of honor to reject things like funds for our children's educations. The mob grew in district after district as millages were rejected. Just this week, a taxpayer bragged that he was voting against a millage. "Let the whole thing close down. Then we'll see what the state does," he chortled.

THE HEADLEE AND TISCH proposals kindled the fires of self destruction. Many were disillusioned because the Headlee proposal didn't stop government dead in its tracks. The mob kept pushing for Tisch. We were spared.

Now hundreds of millions of dollars have been cut from government, even with the temporary tax increase. Still millions more will be cut and the vipers still are unsatisfied. They want to see even more blood before they are satisfied. State legislators are running scared. The mob



told them to vote against a temporary tax increase. To hell with education. To hell with the tourist industry. To hell with mental health care. To hell with everybody but ourselves, said the mob. But the mob is stupid, ludicrously ignorant. In many ways they are traitors to the rest of us in this state. Democracy is more than paying taxes. It is knowing how these taxes are spent and who is

spending our money. Democracy is participating in the system — as opposed to destroying the system.

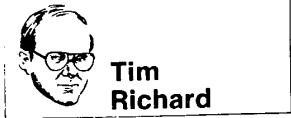
But the mob is uneducated. It cares little for the facts. Ask a member of the mob about their government. Most know very little. That also seems to be a badge of honor — stupidity.

Every member of the tax rebellion mob can tell you a story about some abuse he knows of in government. But the majority are unable to tell you the difference between a township or a city or who is their state representative.

THE DIFFERENCE between our revolution and the one in France is the difference between failure and success.

Our democracy succeeded because the transition of power was orderly. The French Revolution failed because the bloodthirsty mob, the suicidal masses, destroyed it.

Pray the same doesn't happen in Michigan.



Redistricting hits important people hard

LEGALLY, they didn't have a leg to stand on. But you had to feel some perverse force was working against the women in the Michigan House of Representatives.

Their complaint: A new redistricting plan places 10 of the 15 women into multi-incumbent districts, but only 28 of the 90-plus men are tossed into multi-incumbent districts.

"Discrimination," Rep. Debbie Stabenow, D-Lansing, said to the State Supreme Court in a public hearing last week. "Women are best at fighting women's issues. Now they will be dependent on the good will of men. The (reapportionment) plan before you will turn the clock back 17 years."

THERE WAS a certain amount of nonsense in Stabenow's presentation on behalf of the 10 women representatives.

In the first place, they offered not a shred of evidence that Bernard J. Apol, former state elections director who drew up the plan, intended to discriminate against women.

In the second place, as Justice John Fitzgerald pointed out, "Isn't your argument predicated on the assumption that women will lose in those multi-incumbent districts?"

In the third place, quoting Fitzgerald again, "How do you want us (the court) to fix it?" Rep. Stabenow and the women had no solid suggestion. While it's possible to draw districts to give blacks or Hispanics or farmers a chance to win elections, there's no way to gerrymander in favor of women.

AND YET the women's plight merits political, if not court, consideration.

In the best known case, Reps. Ruth McNamee and Jean Wiloughby are tossed into the same Birmingham-Hoam-Bloomfield district with James Defebaugh. Even if Defebaugh loses, as he has announced, one of the women is sure to be out of office.

In Livonia, Reps. Sylvia Skrei and Jack Kirksey, both Republicans, are in the same district.

In Royal Oak, Republican Shirley Johnson and Democrat Gary Yarek are neighbors and, presumably, competitors.

Out Jackson way, Rep. Mary Keith Ballantine faces two men in that new district.

Downriver, Reps. Joyce Symons, Tom Anderson and Jeff Padden are together. Padden will seek a Wayne County board seat, leaving Symons and Anderson to split the vote.

In Detroit, Reps. Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick and Daisy Elliott are matched; Juanita Watkins and Clifford Gary may have to square off.

WOMEN REALLY do have identifiable political interests.

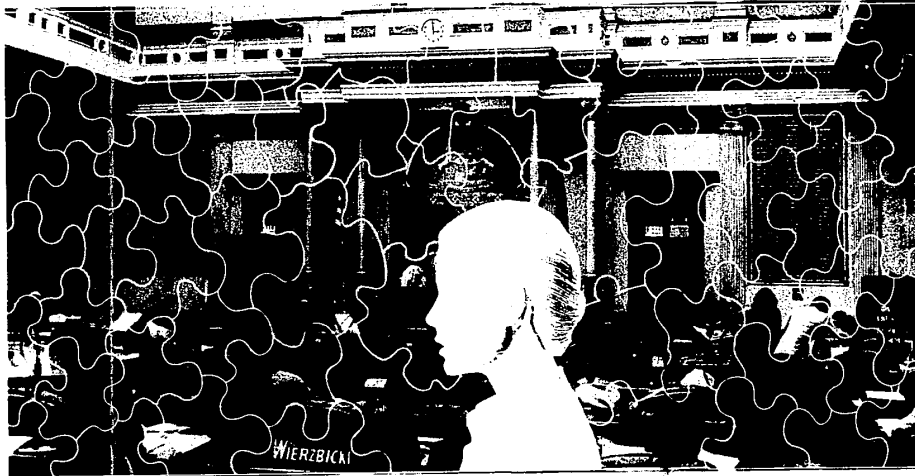
I have pointed this out at some length on the transportation issue, where women are 65 percent of SEMTA's riders and 1/15th of its board members.

I can't count the number of complacent housewives who turned into tough ERA supporters once they became single and bumped into our credit institutions.

It has dawned on nurses, who are 99 percent women, that they have been getting kicked around politically by the macho American Medical Association.

The conclusion is inescapable that women will have to double their political activities, not as raging Harpies but as intelligent, hard-working Democrats and Republicans who contribute different life experiences and perspectives than those of male Democrats and Republicans.

Michigan would be better with their front-line participation.



Suburbs contrast in senior housing

I T WAS a study in contrast in the suburbs last week.

Birmingham was reeling from the shock of a federal judge's ruling that it had discriminated against blacks in not building a senior citizen housing project. At the same time, Redford Township was rejoicing over finding a site for its proposed 53-unit senior citizen project.

Why the difference? Besides the socio-economic contrasts between these two communities, something else is different.

In 1978 when Birmingham turned down its proposed senior housing project, the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) required that for every two units of subsidized senior housing, the city was to provide one unit of low-to-moderate income housing. This led to the rejection of the Birmingham project.

Today there is no such requirement. If Redford Township obtains the necessary funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Department (HUD), construction could begin immediately.

THE ISSUE disputed in Birmingham during 1976-78 was not senior housing. Few persons opposed constructing housing for needy, older residents.

At this time, bitter battles were also being waged in Southfield and Farmington Hills over the real issue: low income housing. "Low income housing" translates into housing for blacks.

It's interesting that the three communities re-



solved the issue in different ways. Southfield complied by adding on to its already existing senior citizen complex, McDonnell Hall, and by scattering low income housing throughout the community. Two city councilmen were defeated when they ran for re-election, largely because of the controversy.

Proposed Farmington Hills senior citizen housing was put aside. Now the senior housing will be built independently by the Detroit Baptist Manor. Two city councilmen were defeated in a primary election and one in a general election because of their support for senior housing.

Birmingham still has not acted to construct senior housing. As a result of its 1978 struggle, three city commissioners were recalled from office and three more were defeated in the general election.

LAST WEEK Federal District Judge Robert DeMascio ruled that Birmingham ended its housing project in 1978 "in part because of its desire to exclude black people from the city."

Since I was reporting in Birmingham during that

time, I admit DeMascio was correct. Some persons in Birmingham did want to keep blacks out of the city.

But reasons for opposition to the Birmingham housing project were more complex. For some it was fear of living near someone with a different skin color. For others it was dislike of federal involvement in Birmingham's affairs.

For still others it was a class struggle — the "you've got to earn Birmingham" philosophy. And for others yet, it was just fear of the unknown.

For a variety of reasons, Birmingham residents strongly opposed the project. Few reasonable persons can deny that DeMascio is correct in saying that one of the reasons was racial.

WHAT SUBURBS can say it is without racial bigots? DeMascio's ruling could easily have been made about any suburb in this country.

Part of the dream in moving to the suburbs is leaving behind the ills of the big city — be they congestion, housing or crime. And, yes, for some, that means leaving the blacks.

Even today persons in the suburbs want to forget about the troubles of Detroit. DeMascio reminded us it can't be done.

Meanwhile, Birmingham waits for DeMascio to announce a remedy on May 24. The city is no further along toward building senior housing than it was when it started in 1959.

Redford, which began making its plans in 1975, hopes to have seniors living in its center within two years.

Tax breaks worse than our tax bills

I N THE MAIL the other day came a most interesting letter from Farmington. A reader had noted The Stroller's recent column on unusual taxes levied in the old days. Then, after reading it, he asked some pointed questions.

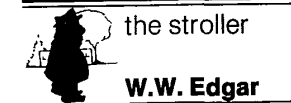
The questions were so interesting that The Stroller is willing to share them with you.

"Your recent column on outrageous taxes of the past," he began, "was interesting and entertaining. But 100 years from now, people will laugh over a column on our tax-free odities."

He gave a few examples, including one asked in recent days:

"Is it not outrageous that churches are not taxed? If every church organization in the country was levied a mere \$100 per year per building and per acre of land owned or used, our country's coffers would benefit by millions of dollars. It is ironic that we deduct from our income tax all church donations, real or imagined. The churches receive it gladly and need not make any tax accounting to the government."

OUR READER hit home with another example: "Consider the old cogder who leaves his mansion, which has become a white elephant, to a community as a 'museum' or 'activities center.' He takes a tax



write-off, and the building becomes a tax-free burden on the community."

Warned up to his subject, our reader continued:

"Consider the middle-aged tycoon who amasses a fortune so vast he decides he can avoid taxes by converting himself to a 'charitable foundation,' thereby escaping a major portion of his tax payments. If all foundations, like all churches, were taxed on a flat rate, the red ink on our unbalanced budget may turn a pale pink."

Turning his attention to another example, he writes:

"Let's talk about private schools, colleges and hospitals. These organizations are making a load of tax-free money on their noble endeavors. They laugh all the way to the bank."

"EXPENSE ACCOUNT income is another — be-

lieve it or not — tax-free item. Junkets are taken all over the world by politicians and business executives to such an extreme extent that hotels and restaurants thrive on the junketeer with the fat wallet. Talk about an outrage! The expense account business is a multi-billion dollar industry."

Then our reader closes with this thought:

"Everybody is laughing, but it is we poor slobs who must make up the tax monies which the giants are avoiding. Yes, 100 years from now, these examples of tax-free piracy will seem an historic absurdity. At least I hope so."

"Your Faithful Reader"

THE STROLLER couldn't help agreeing, but must add one of his own beefs on the tax problem. And it concerns the schools.

He is a firm believer that after a person reaches the age of 75, he/she should no longer be asked to pay a school operating tax. When he reaches that age, he/she has more than paid his share for educating the younger generations, especially if he has no children of his own.

The Stroller would be willing to help pay for the buildings, but not to educate the newcomers moving into a neighborhood and expecting the best — even before paying their first tax bill.