

Why Americans force out the good leaders

SOME WISE fellow once said power politics is the diplomatic name for the law of the jungle.

And like the jungle, it has casualties — those who refuse to allow the undergrowth to cover them over, and those who do and are ruined because of it.

The second breed is the group with which we are the most familiar. These are the stereotypical drunks and dreges with "a horrible voice, bad breeding and vulgar manner," as Aristophanes so portrayed them.

Pitiful as they are, we mourn little for those who are investigated, indicted, banished or jailed. We even take a bit of delight in their fate.

Our American primer on humor would have many valuable pages missing if we were without the antics of those we see caught stuffing their pockets with ill-gotten gains.

But it's important for the public to look beyond the "popular politician" as outlined by the Greek

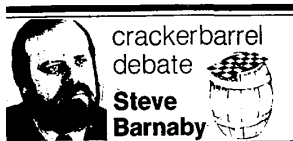
playwright. We, too, should remember the legions of politicians who have become worn by the struggle and choose to surrender the reins of power rather than be destroyed.

Every journalist who covers the American political scene witnesses these stories. Unfortunately, the chroniclers and their readers forget all too easily the lessons left behind by these people.

MOST WHO QUIT do it in disgust. They are fed up with a public dominated by special interest groups and those who possess a knowledge of the American political system which is something akin to a baboon.

U.S. Rep. William Brodhead was the latest such casualty. But he was just that — the latest. Many have come before him, and many will follow.

In each case, it is the public which suffers. It is the price we pay for the abuse we heap upon our public servants. We drive out the good along with the bad.



You may have disagreed with Brodhead. I certainly did at times. You may have belonged to a different political party or held a differing political philosophy.

But those who know him realize that he was honest, worked very hard and really cared. He represented more than the 17th Congressional District. He represented Michigan and its varied interests.

He could have been governor. The political rumor mill said it was Brodhead who was first approached by the Democratic party and labor to be this year's standard-bearer.

But by the time it was time to make a decision, Brodhead had lost the fire in his gut, that ingredient which requires a candidate to reach way down in his innards to make the sacrifices necessary to run for statewide office.

BRODHEAD HAD REACHED down enough times. He made more than the average amount of sacrifice.

He won't leave Washington a rich man, either in monetary terms or in gratitude from his constituents. In truth, he will leave poorer on both counts.

In the future, we should remember to treat our good politicians better so they stick around longer. After all, Brodhead was just like many. He wanted to spend a little more time with his family.

Such people we need in Washington.



Tim Richard

Redistricting makes voter feel small

RIGHT ABOUT NOW, a writer would be pretty foolish to bat out an editorial about the importance of one vote.

There's talk the Michigan Senate, now 24-14 Democratic, may turn Republican after the 1982 election. The reason has nothing to do with voter sentiment or GOP State Chairman Mel Larsen's consummate skill as a target shooter.

It has to do rather with apportionment — how the state's 18 congressional districts, 38 State Senate districts and 110 State House districts are carved to divide 10 million inhabitants in 83 counties.

The machinations must make an individual voter feel pretty small.

THE 1980 CENSUS numbers have been in hand for more than a year. And yet it took so long to perform the decennial task of reapportionment that our partisan primary election has been pushed back a week to Aug. 10.

First, the Michigan Legislature took its sweet time reshaping the state into 19 congressional districts instead of 18 (the loss of one due to the decline in the state's population). It should have been easy because U.S. Rep. Jim Blanchard, D-Pleasant Ridge, chose to vacate his congressional seat to run for governor.

It wasn't easy. Legislative Democrats attempted to capture three outstate congressional districts by juggling Grand Rapids, Lansing and Pontiac. Gov. William G. Milliken, a Republican despite what Welborn, Headlee and Patterson say about him, vetoed the plan.

A federal district court had to pick up the pieces, modifying the Democratic plan slightly.

AS USUAL, the State Apportionment Commission, split evenly between Republicans and Democrats, went through the motions of holding meetings and deadlocked.

This time, rather than picking one plan submitted by Apportionment Commission members, the State Supreme Court hired former state elections director Bernard Apol to draft a plan from scratch. Apol seemed to enjoy the confidence of both parties as well as the court.

To understand what follows, you have to recall that for 10 years Michigan has had a Democratic-oriented plan of state legislative apportionment. And you also must realize that the process of keeping election statistics is so sophisticated that it's almost impossible to draft a plan that can't be labeled "Democratic" or "Republican."

Well, Republicans and the State Supreme Court say Apol's plan is fair. Democrats say it's slanted toward Republicans.

One thing is certain: Apol's districts conform to community lines much more than the previous plan. Many candidates will be able to advertise with a single map instead of three in order to cover their districts. Voters should have an easier time understanding what districts they live in.

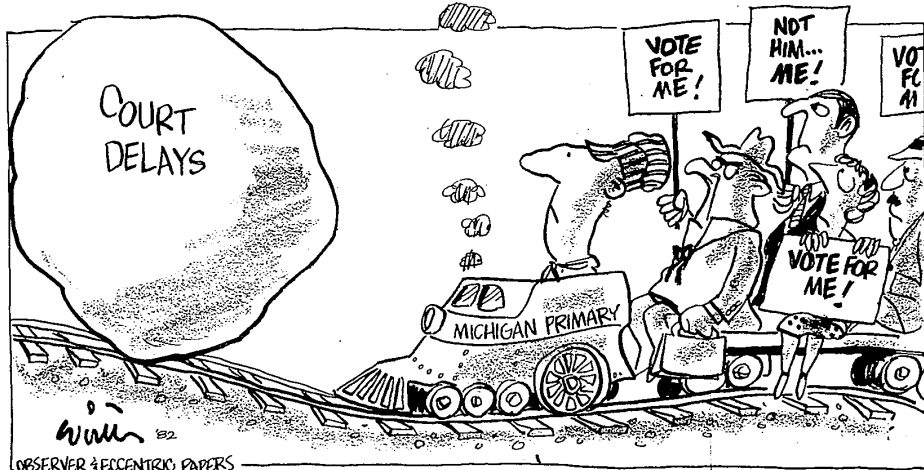
NEVERTHELESS, many legislators of both parties are upset because they have been thrown into new districts with the incumbent legislators.

They think it's horrible that their constituents lose "continuity of service." With a perfectly straight face, House Speaker Bobby D. Crim asked the high court to consider a plan which wouldn't make incumbents run against one another.

The elemental fairness of a plan to the poor voter, trying to figure out which district he or she is in, no longer seems to be important.

Every plan is judged by how it affects Democrats, Republicans, blacks, whites, incumbents, women, Chicanos, farmers, urban residents and what-have-you.

The individual voter must wonder, what's the use?



If nukes are dropped, we're a target

LIKE DEATH, it's something we don't like to think about. Better to put it out of our minds. Sometimes we are successful, sometimes not.

I'm talking about the big peanut — a nuclear bomb. As a child of the 1950s, I vividly remember air raid sirens, bomb shelters and school drills where children hid under their desks.

Concern for "the bomb" was put on the back burner for a few years, only to be revived during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. After that, we put it in the back of our minds again.

In the early 1970s, I learned more about nuclear radiation in classes in the military. I chuckled about the feeble precautions we were urged to take in the 1950s. No wooden desk or corner of the basement would ever provide adequate protection after a nuclear attack. If the bomb falls anywhere near us, it's all over.

DISCUSSIONS OF policy on nuclear warfare do not normally belong in community newspapers. But these are unusual times.

The threat of a nuclear war hangs heavily over us in southeast Michigan. We are told that, because Detroit is an industrial center and nuclear research is done at nearby Ann Arbor, this area is a primary target for a nuclear bomb.

Churches in Livonia, Farmington and Birmingham (among other places) are now aggressively circulating petitions calling for a freeze in nuclear armaments. Some businesses, such as Bendix Corp. in



Nick Sharkey

Southfield, have been picketed for their involvement in the production of nuclear arms. Local groups have been organized to resist further nuclear buildup.

Also, our local governmental bodies are required to have specific plans for dealing with a nuclear disaster. They are required to have a plan in order to be eligible for state and federal disaster funds.

SPECIAL "ESCAPE" routes have been designed for those communities close to Detroit.

For example, in case of a nuclear attack, people living in Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Berkeley, Huntington Woods, Oak Park and Ferndale will drive north on Woodward to Square Lake and proceed east to the entrance of I-75. Those living in Southfield, Lathrup Village, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Novi, Wolverine Lake, Walled Lake and Wixom will head west on I-696 to M 66 or 20.

Each city's residents in a designated "risk area" will proceed along a specific route until they end up in a "host area," where presumably they will be away from the devastating effects of the radiation.

This plan is based on the assumption that there

will be 72 hours prior notice before an atom bomb will be dropped. The theory is that by monitoring what goes on in the Soviet Union, U.S. officials will know when they are moving masses of people out of their cities. When they strike us, they know we will return the strike.

Thus, when they move their people we will know a strike is pending. Get all that?

Obviously, it's all conjecture on how a nuclear evacuation plan will work. It's not something that lends itself to a mock drill. The problems appear to be almost insurmountable. Think about trying to move persons in jails, hospitals and nursing homes.

MEANWHILE, AS EVERY crisis comes, we cringe or, if we are so inclined, pray.

Could this be the conflict that will touch off the nuclear war? Consider the current crisis in the Falkland Islands. What is the likelihood of the U.S. coming in on the side of Great Britain and the Soviet Union joining Argentina? Will this touch off a nuclear war between the two superpowers?

Meanwhile, international leaders parry over resuming nuclear disarmament talks. The U.S. wants "parity" while the Soviets want to "freeze" at the present levels.

When considering a nuclear war, global problems come home quickly. That's why local churches and organizations are no longer confining their campaigns to fighting City Hall. A nuclear weapons policy may seem far removed from our home towns, but is it really?

Recollections of great old editors

OFTEN IN HIS leisure hours, The Stroller enjoys leaving back in his chair and reliving moments he spent with some colorful editors he has met on his journey along the journalistic trail.

On these occasions, he always goes back to days when he took his first steps on the home town paper under the guiding eyes of Charlie Weiser, the last of the brown derby clan, who was one of the smartest newsmen he ever has encountered.

Old Charlie loved nothing better than to chide public officials. One day he wrote a caustic editorial that carried the headline "Half the City Council Is Crazy."

You can imagine the reaction that caused. Many city officials stormed the office and demanded an apology. Old Charlie listened, then advised the protesters he would look over his notes, and if he thought an apology were necessary, he would gladly oblige. It was the first time we ever had heard of his taking back seat. So we waited eagerly for the next edition.

Sure enough, there was another editorial, this time carrying the headline "Half the City Council Isn't Crazy."

The comeback drew attention across the country, and the story has been repeated many times. But old Charlie Weiser originated it.

ART DUNCAN, one-time city editor of the De-



the stroller
W.W. Edgar

troit Free Press, is another The Stroller likes to recall, especially for one great moment.

It was when William Jennings Bryan, the great Democrat, was dying. On this particular afternoon, the opposition paper carried a late afternoon headline saying "Bryan Dying." It was only a half-hour to the Free Press deadline, and Duncan was wringing his hands for he needed a new approach.

Just then the word came from the Associated Press: "Bryan Dead."

When the news spread throughout the room, Duncan rose from his chair and yelled, "That's the first thing Bryan ever did for the Republicans. He died for our first edition."

HARRY BULLION was sports editor of the Free Press when The Stroller reported for duty.

He had been told that Bullion was a nervous type who was given to losing his temper. So The Stroller didn't know what to expect. But he didn't have long to wait.

That first night on the job, he saw Bullion, irked because of getting a wrong telephone number, throw the phone out the window from the fifth floor.

Another The Stroller never will forget, and often visits in memory, was Malcolm Bingay, editor of the Free Press.

A **HARD TASKMASTER** but a brilliant editor, Bingay decided one day the Free Press should win the Pulitzer prize.

He selected the day we would print a special paper. He kept the staff on the job for 32 hours, eating up only a few moments for a bite to eat. There was no sleep.

Finally, he said, "Well, I guess that is as good as we can make it," and let us go home.

About a month later came the news: The Free Press had won a Pulitzer prize. We were all joyful and couldn't wait to get Bingay's reaction.

Finally, he came down from his office with a note in hand. He carefully placed it on the bulletin board and walked away. That bulletin, which has become famous, said:

"To the staff:
"Remember — you can't score any runs today on the hits you made yesterday."
What a great collection they were.