

Compromise vanishing from state politics

COMPROMISE has become a dirty word in Michigan politics. And that attitude is making it more difficult for us to solve our stinging economic problems.

Those who attempt to compromise pay the ultimate political price — defeat at the polls. Just ask Ed McNamara, William Fitzgerald, Doug Ross or Dana Wilson. All, in one way or another, were penalized by voters last Tuesday for skillfully playing their trade.

Certainly, political pundits will examine and cross examine last week's results and come up with several shades of gray. But the true color of this year's political painting shows that Michigan's political scene is becoming more and more polarized — conservative right vs. entrenched left.

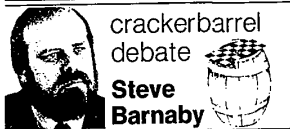
IT'S IDEOLOGICAL warfare at its most traditional.

McNamara has guided Livonia through an incredible period of growth. Recreational facilities have been built, senior citizen housing constructed, transportation developed under his leadership. All was done through compromise.

Fitzgerald, a gubernatorial hopeful, and Wilson, a state Senate candidate, were verbally pilloried by Democratic party ideologues for being pro-business — the ultimate sin within the labor-dominated party.

INSTEAD, LABOR got its way. It demanded that Jim Blanchard and Jack Faxon be nominated, and that's just what happened. So much for the fallacy that the labor unions in this state don't have any political clout left.

Ross suffered the same fate. One of the most adroit Lansing legislators, he quickly learned that effective legislation could be passed if compromise



was utilized. He became suspect among the Democratic Party faithful.

Sander Levin, like Blanchard and Faxon, unquestioning "labor supporter at any cost," was hand-picked for the 17th Congressional job. He got it.

The political right is just as fixed in its resolve. No compromise allowed — not even a hint of compromise or you're out.

Just ask Lt. Gov. Jim Brickley, who is soon to be

unemployed. Political sages who insisted he had the gubernatorial nomination in the bag missed the point.

BRICKLEY was Bill Milliken's handpicked boy. Milliken is a master at political progress through compromise. The conservative Republican militants were having none of that.

Richard Headlee, messenger of the conservative gospel, is the GOP gubernatorial standard bearer.

Our political system only is effective if we elect those to office who know how to compromise. The last thing Michigan needs is unquestioning, non-thinking, led-by-the-nose political leadership.

How ridiculous to throw such talented persons out on the street. It's a wasteful impulse for which we shall pay for many years to come.

Eliminate the \$100 candidates

WHILE THE primary election was still being mulled, the discussion began about changing the state election laws governing the use of public funds by gubernatorial candidates.

At least one candidate thinks the present spending limit for a gubernatorial candidate — \$1.2 million for the primary and the same for the general — is too low. Others think that the gubernatorial candidates should have to raise more money than the present \$50,000 from private contributions before becoming eligible for matching public funds.

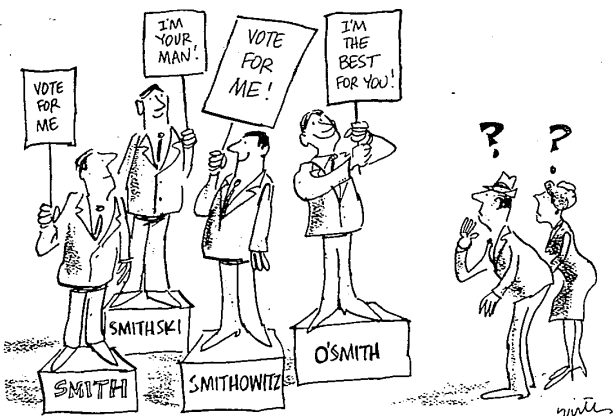
Whatever the merits of these changes, the state Legislature would do well to also consider changing the present election laws which allow candidates for state, county and local offices to become candidates by merely filing a \$100 fee. This easy standard allows for the most insane of candidacies and contributes to public disrespect for elections.

Candidates for the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives become candidates by securing a certain number of signatures on nominating petitions — 1 percent of the total that the secretary of state candidate of the same party received in the last state election. Candidates for township office must also file nominating petitions — 1 percent of the number of votes the secretary of state candidate received in their township.

YET THE Republican and Democratic candidates for state, county and many local offices need only file a \$100 filing fee to become a candidate whose name must be placed on the primary ballot.

The law also allows candidacy by filing nominating petitions with signatures — again 1 percent of the secretary of state's vote, etc. Some candidates wishing to have a mailing list of supporters and to get a public campaign going do actually collect signatures.

Most, however, take the far easier route of paying the \$100 fee. This absurdly low fee often leads to election-time gambits which cheapen and make



tawdry the democratic process. It is particularly evident in county elections, and this primary election provided another example. In the race for the Wayne County Executive nomination, there were 10 candidates on the ballot for the Democratic nomination and six for the Republican nomination.

AN OPINION was expressed by one camp that several of the Democratic candidates were persuaded to enter the race. The theory is that the addition of their names would make the ballot confusing and that voters would be apt to vote for the most familiar name. The theory sounds plausible if you look at the ballot. Of the 10 Democrats, only three had even the slightest hope of winning. Six of the candidates conducted what amounted to no campaign at all.

Who, for example, was Buck Rogers, one of the candidates who paid the \$100 filing fee? Others who paid \$100 were Anthony Jaworski, Casimir Senkowski, Arthur Sumeracki and Charles Youngblood. Were they in the race because they thought they were serious candidates, or did they become "name" candidates to draw votes from other candidates?

The idea of putting a host of "names" on a particular ballot is not new. It is almost axiomatic among some political practitioners. If Smith is the favorite, find a candidate or candidates whose name sounds like Smith, pay the filing charges and hope

that the voters will get confused. If you want to drain Polish votes from a candidate who might get them, find some Polish candidates. If you want to split the black vote, get two or three blacks to become candidates. If you want to drain the Irish vote, round up some Kelleys, O'Haras or O'Neills. Find anyone with a name which sounds like the name of the candidate you want to draw votes from.

WHILE IT may be smart politics, it certainly is a demeaning of the electoral system. It would be far better to require candidates to show that they have some kind of support by securing a certain number of signatures.

Some will argue that the filing fee is more democratic. It affords everyone the opportunity to run for and be elected to public office. Nonsense. Anyone who wishes to be elected to office must prove to the public that he/she is, or appears, worthy of that office. The would-be candidate can begin that process by proving to a small number of voters that he/she is worthy enough to have someone sign a nominating petition on his/her behalf.

Perhaps in some instances the amount of petitions needed is too high. But that is another matter which the legislature should look at as it deliberates how soon it can eliminate \$100 filing-fee candidates.

thinking out loud

Trade secrets of newsroom reveal foibles

HAVE YOU EVER noticed how many reporters start their stories with a quote, set off in italics, hoping to catch the essence of their story with someone else's words? It's a thrifty way of beginning a piece; the writer doesn't have to grope with his own prose because he's borrowing someone else's.

Just one of the many tricks in the reporter's bag. In addition to the shortcuts of the trade, journalists have their own jargon. Listening to a couple of reporters talking over lunch may give the uninitiated the idea that this business of ours is a violent one.

After all: **REPORTERS COVER BEATS.** They use slugs, a short description, to identify a story. To display a list of facts, they use large dots called bullets. For emphasis, they'll add a short, small-size headline on top of a large one. It's called a kicker.

When a story is not used by a newspaper, it's killed or spiked. Part of a story that is not needed is cut. A newspaper's version of a library is called a morgue.

Journalistic jargon is as confusing as municipalese (the language of public servants — those people who say "utilize" instead of "use") or educationese (a library is now a media resource center).

AND IT'S just as cyclical. One week five newspapers had front-page stories starting with same lead (opening): "It's official."

That's another journalistic trick. Start a story with a statement followed by a paragraph with the appropriate attribution (also known as a source). For example:

"The wobble of the earth will some day cause the planet to tip on its axis, initiating the second ice age."

That's the conclusion of a leading geophysicist, who has just concluded a 99-volume report on the wobble theory."

Newspaper aficionados also will recognize the pushy-person lead.

"If Archibald Rosebud has his way . . ." A variation is the "If everything goes according to plan . . ."

EVERY REPORTER has used these opening paragraphs, although they may admit it only under torture.

Once the lead is down, the writer can open his or her book of other handy pat phrases. These definitions might help you decode them.

Controversial — an adjective added in an attempt to spark interest in a story the reporter's mother wouldn't read.

Approximately — a word taught in journalism school to go before all numbers. This covers the reporter who writes "approximately 25" when he or she means 14.

Earlier — the reporter can't remember exactly when and is too lazy to check files of previous stories on the same subject.

RECENTLY — the story didn't get into the paper the week it happened, and there is no guarantee when it will get in. To keep it from looking three weeks old, "recently" is inserted where the date should be.

Apparently — the reporter can't get anyone to go on record as saying it's true.

Citizen input — Polite way of saying complaints.

Implement — start.

Finalize — pompous way of saying end.

Confided, noted, explained, added — the reporter is tiring of the word said.

Impact — affect.

Then there are the redundancies. The reporter doesn't want the reader to dismiss the seriousness of the high-speed chase (vs. the low-speed chase). Or have the reader think there were more people involved in the robbery than the lone gunman.

And so it goes until it's time to put the issue to bed.

Sister Mary Columbine

St. Mary's mighty force has stepped down

JUST AS quietly as she came on the scene more than a quarter of a century ago to supervise the building and operation of St. Mary Hospital, Sister Mary Columbine went into semi-retirement a few days ago.

And as she walked into the autumn of her career, she left behind many fond memories of the days when the hospital was little more than a dream.

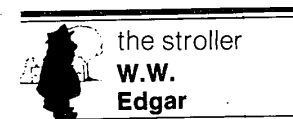
One of the little moments came on an evening when the Stroller's phone rang at home shortly after the dinner hour. A tender, pleasing voice came over the wire: "This is Sister Columbine of the Felician Sisters, and we would like to see you at your earliest convenience."

In a few minutes, The Stroller was on his way up the long driveway to the motherhouse and shyly found himself seated with Sister Columbine and Sister Mary Calasanta, her assistant.

After the usual pleasantries, Sister Columbine took The Stroller by surprise when she said, "We would like to have you serve as chairman of the hospital board."

STUNNED FOR an instant, The Stroller countered, "Sister, someone must have given you a bum steer. I am a Protestant and a Mason, and I intend to die that way. So I don't think you would want me chairman of a Catholic institution."

Both sisters just smiled. Then Sister Columbine added, "We know who you are, and that's why we invited you to meet with us."



She went on to explain that she had studied the situation and felt her biggest problem was to prove to the residents of the area that this hospital would be for everyone.

"So if a Protestant and a Mason who intends to die that way would take me by the arm and, together, we would face the world and say, 'Come, all who suffer,' it would prove that everybody would be welcome."

"Sister, you just got yourself a chairman," said The Stroller, a slight tear running down his cheek. Though stunned, he recognized it as one of the greatest compliments of his life.

IN HIS NEW ROLE, The Stroller was to represent the Felician Sisters occasionally at various meetings. This, too, was a surprise, but it resulted in many fond memories the likes of which seldom come into a person's life.

One such occasion came the day Sister Columbine called and informed him that Henry Ford II would like to see them later in the afternoon. She asked The Stroller to be on hand.

This was quite an experience, but a golden memory. When called upon by the Ford Motor Co. directors, Sister Columbine rose, unfurled the blueprints of the proposed hospital and explained every room, nut and bolt of the project.

When she finished, Ford, with a broad smile, said, "Sister, if I ever need a plant superintendent, I know where to get one."

It was a high compliment, and it brought the desired results in the building of the hospital.

ON ANOTHER occasion, after the hospital was opened, The Stroller was walking through the halls one afternoon when a patient beckoned him. When he entered the room, the patient pointed out the window.

Sister Columbine was walking across the lawn to chat with the man mowing the lawn.

"Does she fix lawnmowers, too?" the patient asked.

This, too, was a compliment, for no one was better equipped to supervise the hospital.

And now that she is going into a sort of semi-retirement as administrative consultant, The Stroller can't resist wishing her well and thanking her for giving him one of the grandest compliments of his life.