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opinion
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Economic revival

High tech isn't the answer

This guest column is by Jack Bologna, president of Computer Protection Systems, Inc. in Plymouth.

THE ECONOMIC growth of Michigan is said to be tied to high technology ventures. Economic development authorities here all seem to claim that unless we can attract such firms to this area, our economic future is bleak. The auto industry won't be creating new jobs and, in fact, the industry will be permanently displacing several hundred thousand workers even if car sales go up substantially. So government authorities are madly searching for high-tech manufacturers who might relocate here and are preparing to offer tax concessions and other inducements to attract them. BUT HIGH tech firms are attracted to areas with low tax rates, cheap labor, few regulatory constraints and free and abundant access to institutions of higher learning with research capabilities in the "hard" sciences: i.e., physics, chemistry, math, engineering, etc. Assuming high tech firms could be attracted, the jobs they are most likely to create will, in the main, consist of clerical and assembly functions and a few more technicians such as machinery maintenance and repairmen. This certainly will be no boon to the disposable income of Michigan's workers because the pay rates for these jobs won't be anywhere close to the auto factory jobs permanently lost. Furthermore, we may not have the type of academic support these high tech firms will most desire. Not that our colleges are slouches or devoid of talent in these fields but other states are years ahead of us in this regard. The cost of gearing up and tooling up would be considerable.

ONE THING we do have in Michigan, howev-

er, is the opposite side of the high tech coin — High Touch, as John Naisbitt calls it in "Megatrends." According to Naisbitt, high tech must be coupled with "high touch" to be effective. High touch is defined by Naisbitt as "the human side of technology," called Ergonomics by some authorities, or "human factors engineering."

No state in the union has more going for it in the realm of high touch than does Michigan. The UAW, particularly through the efforts of Irving Bluestone and Douglas Fraser, have been supportive — indeed, in Bluestone's case, spearheaded such advances in labor-management relations.

General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler are committed to such programs. Early successes indicate these programs will lead to better relationships between workers and management, more job satisfaction, improvement in the quality of worklife and the quality of products and reduction in defects and costs.

MICHIGAN can take the lead in such applications. In fact, it already may be in the lead. When it comes to academic support for such movements, the main theoretical support for better management of human resources has come largely from the University of Michigan and from Michigan State University.

The Institute for Social Research (ISR) in Ann Arbor has been in the forefront of such developments for more than 30 years.

My suggestion is that we stop making apologies for our shortcomings in Michigan and focus on our strengths.

We may not attract high tech firms, but we can attract "high touch" firms.

High touch really is the wave of the future. If people can't be managed effectively, all the machines in the world won't help much.

—Jack Bologna

oral quarrel

This week's Oral Quarrel ask our readers how best to finance the purchase of the Spicer project if state funding falls through. Following are the responses:

Finance the purchase of the park, that is, if it were used as a wooded park, such as Southfield and Royal Oak.

My idea to purchase the Spicer property is not to purchase it. Common council should be aware of the financial pinch everybody is in. We don't need the park and we should not buy it.

I would like to see a non-profit cor-

poration established to collect tax deductible funds to be used for purchasing and building the park. This would permit us to regain some of our tax money from the state to tax deductions on personal income tax returns. I would be happy to help organize and direct such an organization if it is legally possible to do so.

I would suggest that the city go back to Oakland County and see if there are county funds to purchase the park so the county can assume the burden of paying and running the new proposed park.

I say pursue the state because they are not using all of that fund for the youth program. Pursue it wholeheart-

edly and get after Faxon and Brotherhood. Use the funds from the state.

I don't think we have the funds to carry with the Spicer property. It's time to spend our money on needs more urgent to the community. I say, don't spend any money, let it go.

I would support a tax increase necessary to purchase the land and leave as is.

I have questions rather than answers. Is the money needed able to be raised by municipal bonds and also if they donate for the purchase of the park would they be eligible for tax credit, either state or federal?

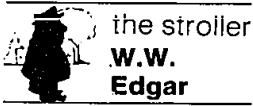
The hex: a valuable protector

YOU WON'T find it listed on the maps, but if you are driving east when you come to the land between the Susquehanna and Delaware rivers, you are in the Pennsylvania Dutch Country — one of the most colorful regions in the land.

There you will be fed scrapple for breakfast and shoo-fly pie for dinner. You will meet the offspring of the people who fled the banks of the Rhine River in Germany generations ago in search of religious freedom.

In the group will be all segments of religion — the Reformed, Lutherans, Mennonites, Amish, Quakers and the like. And many use "hex" signs on the doors and in the windows of their homes and barns.

THEY ARE deeply superstitious people and believe that the witches could get them. The signs, commonly known as family etchings, were believed to let the witches know they were a religious sect of God-fearing people, and so witches had better beware.



the stroller
W.W. Edgar

Most Pennsylvania hex signs were homemade. The Amish and Mennonites shunned the hex sign. The Amish stuck as a closely-knit family, seldom leaving the section they settled. Mennonites had their own way of showing their belief in God, but the Pennsylvania Dutch proudly portrayed their hex signs.

THE SIGNS not only showed the religious nature of the people using them but showed visitors that there were friendly people inside. A place with no hex sign was a good place to shy away from.

Hex signs were only part of the beliefs of these folks who sought religious freedom. They were superstitious to

the last corpuscle of their blood.

It was the Pennsylvania Dutch who carried good luck charms with them at all times and put the curse on the 13th day of the month. They ignored the 13th even in business. If they had occasion to write, they would date letters or checks the 12th. And when the 13th fell on a Friday, business places might as well shut down.

THESE DUTCH believed that the witches were out in full force on this day, and they never ventured far from home. Hence, there was little business. There was another side to the hex belief. If people were taken sick, it was believed they were hexed.

The thought that a hex sign was protective even carried over into sports.

The Stroller remembers in his early days of sports writing in the Dutch country when "Punch" Christmas, manager of the Macungie team, put up a hex sign at his team's dugout. When he reported the victory to the newspapers, he announced, "We hexed them."

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