

Opinion

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Council is spot for Vagnozzi

WELL, HERE it is -- the gang's chance to show it has some class, to enhance its credibility and to do right by the residents.

Sure, wagering on the gang up at the corner of Orchard Lake and Eleven Mile is risky business -- especially when it comes to electing one of its own.

But the Farmington Hills City Council will have that rare opportunity come next Monday. That's when a group of hopefuls will step forward and declare why they should replace Fred Hughes.

"Silent" Fred, the Hills' answer to Gary Cooper, has been swept up in the big telephone switch and is riding out of town with nary a "nope" or a "yup."

Yawn. When it comes to local politics, few will notice he's gone. But the city charter does require a seven-member legislative body, and seven members it will have.

HOPEFULLY, this fledgling council will resist the urge to play factional politics on this most important decision. The last thing this council needs is a mouthpiece to fulfill the wishes of one or another of the factions involved.

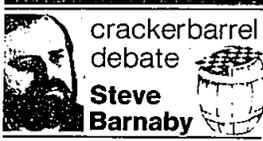
Yes, yes, all those who have applied do have their good points.

But it would be the wise thing to do if council would choose a member who would add to the debate, bring up issues otherwise ignored or forgotten and have a good working knowledge of government on a number of levels.

Well, folks, we know that person to be Aldo Vagnozzi. Out of all those who have applied, Vagnozzi certainly has the best combination of sound political experience, knowledge of government, capabilities to debate the issues and willingness to bring up new ones.

It's time this city availed itself of his skills and put him to work where he would do the most good -- at the council table.

THERE ARE those who will clutch their chests and lament the idea of a Democrat -- a labor Democrat at that -- being appointed to city council here in



crackerbarrel debate Steve Barnaby

Aldo Vagnozzi deserves the chance to demonstrate further that he can be a legislative leader who will reflect the needs of the city's electorate.

Richard Headlee Hills.

But Vagnozzi has served this community well in a number of capacities. For a term he served on the school board. He also has served on city commissions and has been a constant watchdog of council activities over the years.

Vagnozzi has been active politically on the state and national level, showing laudable fairness and amazing grace under pressure in presiding at district conventions. It never hurts to have someone like that on council.

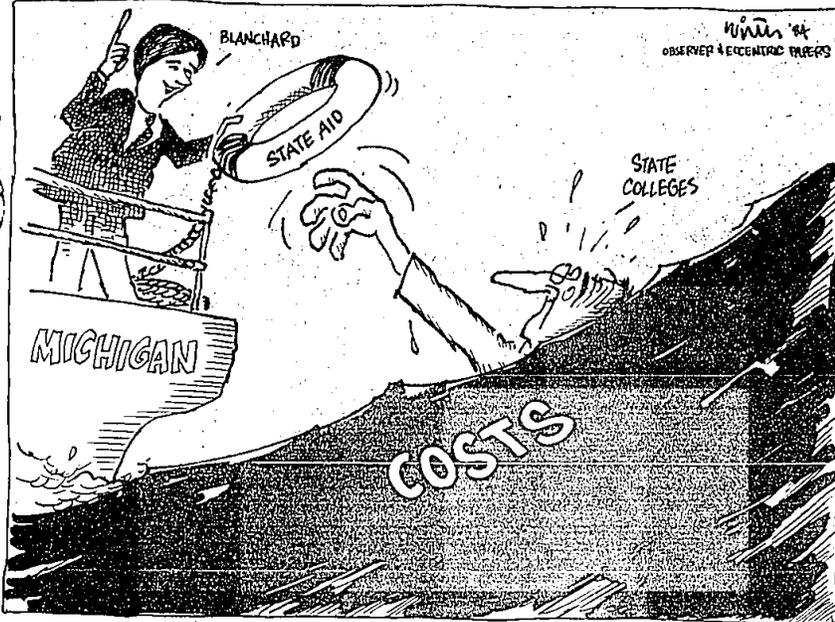
Despite this city's proclivity for Republicans, it's time to stop pushing Vagnozzi into the corner.

Sure, other council members may disagree with him at times. But our society suffers too much in both business and politics from persons who go along to get along.

Aldo Vagnozzi deserves the chance to demonstrate further that he can be a legislative leader who will reflect the needs of the city's electorate. And if he proves to be too much for this city's political nature, voters can always throw him out in the upcoming election this fall.

Certainly hope council has the courage to elect someone who will force them to face alternative issues, rather than appoint a mouthpiece.

'First -- promise not to raise tuitions!'



Medicaid affects tuitions

GOV. BLANCHARD'S 1985 budget is like a triangle. As veterans of high school geometry recall, the triangle is the most rigid structure in nature. You don't tamper with one angle without throwing other angles and sides out of kilter.

One angle of Blanchard's budget -- the most important -- is Medicaid costs. In recent years, the costs have been rising at 12 or 15 or 20 percent a year. Blanchard is telling the providers (doctors, hospitals, nursing homes, etc.) he wants to level out payments. Getting that potent lobby to accept a zero increase will be difficult, the governor knows.

The second angle is welfare benefits. Agnes Mary Mansour, director of the Department of Social Services, points out to her boss what her "clients" point out to her: They haven't had an increase since October of 1979. The boss isn't proposing one this year.

If Medicaid providers succeed in getting their angle expanded, against the governor's wishes, then Mansour will pass the word to her troops to go after a benefit level increase. The former nun from the Farmington Hills-based Sisters of Mercy contends that what is fair, percentage-wise, for Medicaid providers should be fair for welfare clients.

THE THIRD angle in the triangle is the education budget. If the other two angles grow by the same percentage, then the



education angle will be squeezed. That is why Blanchard is warning the Michigan Legislature against doing too much tinkering with the budget, especially upward tinkering.

If the Medicaid and welfare angles are left alone, two good things will happen: 1. Those of us paying the state personal income tax will have our scheduled deduction moved forward for three months from Jan. 1, 1985 to this Oct. 1.

2. College tuitions might remain level. And I mean "might," as in "maybe" and "perhaps." Blanchard is promising four-year colleges a 10 percent increase in state aid if they hold the line on tuitions, 6 percent if they don't.

COLLEGE OFFICIALS around here were unanimous in responding that Blanchard is moving in the right direction, but even a 10 percent state aid increase may be too little.

Students at Oakland University and University of Michigan Dearborn, for example, are jumping to the conclusion that a 10 percent increase in state aid is a 10

percent increase in college revenue. Not so.

For the four-year schools, state aid is only about 60 percent of the budget. A 10 percent state aid increase translates into something less than a 6 percent revenue increase.

Colleges, too, face rising health insurance costs, faculty pay increases and utility rate hikes. They're uncertain whether they can do it all on a revenue increase of less than 6 percent. And that 6 percent is probably an absolute maximum.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES face a different set of problems. Schools like Oakland Community College and Schoolcraft College get state aid in the ballpark of 25 or 30 percent. A 10 percent state aid increase to the two-year schools is only a fractional increase in total revenue.

Another twist is that college fiscal years begin July 1 while Blanchard's budget goes into effect Oct. 1. So any state aid increase to the community colleges is in effect only nine months of the fiscal year and is only three-fourths as large as it appears.

All of which brings us back to the first angle of our rigid triangle. Whether we taxpayers get our break three months early, and whether Kevin and Debby's college tuitions remain level, appears to be up to the Medicaid providers and the mood of the state Legislature.

Press depends on public trust

A WELL-LIKED relative jokingly made the comment over the weekend, "Uh, oh, here comes a reporter. Everyone had better be quiet."

Unfortunately, the relative had seen last week's Tuesday night television movie called "The Lost Honor of Kathryn Beck." The movie depicted how an innocent woman was disgraced by an unethical newspaper reporter.

Among other despicable acts, the reporter harassed the comatose mother of Ms. Beck. He apparently caused her death. In the movie's climax, Ms. Beck fired four bullets into the reporter while standing a few feet away. The audience could only cheer her action.

This movie is among several current films that give an unflattering view of the press. Another is "The Right Stuff." In that movie, a pack of reporters and photographers continually tries to invade the private life of the wife of astronaut John Glenn. She wants to avoid the press because of a speech impediment. Again, the audience has to be sympathetic to the victim.

FORGIVE ME for letting my sensitivities show, but I'm getting angry about the inaccurate portrayals of journalists. If no one believed the stereotyped image of the press, it wouldn't matter. But I know that's not true.

For example, a recent survey taken at the University of Chicago showed that of 11 institutions listed, the press was ranked in the bottom third in public esteem.

Many persons believe reporters operate like the one in "The Lost Honor of Kathryn Beck."

That makes it especially difficult for those who work on community newspapers. As you look through the newspaper you hold, notice there are no wire service stories, no syndicated features. From the front page to the last, all the material was produced locally.

We depend on the public's good will.



Nick Sharkey

You must believe what you say at the city council meeting will be quoted accurately. You must be confident we will factually report on the school board's actions. You must expect that the many items you bring to us -- calendar notices, engagements, obituaries, sports results, letters-to-the-editor -- will be correctly recorded on our pages.

I CAN CATEGORICALLY say I have never met a reporter like the one in "The Lost Honor."

That doesn't mean the press doesn't have its problems. Unfortunately, some reporters do suffer from the rat-pack mentality, where everyone is running after the same story. Some newspapers, such as the National Enquirer and New York Post, are too sensational.

For our mistakes we will take criticism. But it's important to remember that without the press a democratic society cannot function. For there is no other independent source of information. We have no vested interest except to tell you about your world.

In community newspapers such as this, that world is the school board, city council, community college, clubs and local businesses.

This nation has the freest and best press in the world. In some countries major wars can be going on 25 miles away and the people will not be told. Governments can be secretly changed overnight.

Yet, if public opinion surveys are accurate, few people value or understand a free press. Movies like "The Lost Honor of Kathryn Beck" don't help.

Searching for political stars

THE 1984 campaign for the U.S. Senate seat now occupied by Democrat Carl Levin is promised to be a yawner -- that is, until Republican movers and shakers uncovered ex-astronaut Jack Loumsa enjoying the Texas sun.

Some state GOP bigwigs were in a quandry about the Republican Senate campaign. Lorett Ruppe was being romanced to take on the job of trying to knock Levin out of the Senate, but she had reservations. She wanted guarantees of national GOP campaign support. Ruppe decided against it.

That might have left ex-U.S. Rep. James Dunn as the only candidate willing to do battle against Levin. But out of a hat GOP national committeeman Peter Secchia pulled Jack Loumsa, who grew up and went to school in Michigan before he enrolled in the U.S. Marines and became involved with outer space.

The GOP leader fretted out a bona fide American folk hero. What could be better? Loumsa's emergence has already sparked a party battle with Dunn's forces charging that Loumsa is merely a carpet-bagger trying to cash in on his astronaut reputation.

ACTUALLY LOUSMA is continuing a trend started many years ago of people



Bob Wisler

who have some celebrity status -- usually in sports or entertainment -- using their reputation or skills at keeping people entertained to embark on careers in politics, which may be the most sophisticated form of entertainment around.

It probably started with movie star Helen Gahagan Douglas, a Democratic U.S. representative from California in the 1940s, followed by dancer George Murphy, who went on to become a Republican U.S. senator, also from California.

The tradition continued in the golden state with old Death Valley Days Ronald Reagan, who became governor and now has earned a reputation as the greatest teleprompter-reader president the U.S. has ever had.

Quite a few ex-athletes of star status now are toiling on various government payrolls. Most noted are former football quarterback Jack Kemp, a Republican

U.S. representative in New York, and basketball great Bill Bradley, the ex-Knicks now throwing hookshots in the U.S. Senate as a Democrat from New Jersey.

People who gain enough status on TV often are envied by others as political material. How many times have we heard that Bill Bonds would be great in government?

Then there's Lee Iacocca, the Chrysler Corp. chairman often touted as a political prospect. It's funny that his potential was only realized after he started into show business by being the spokesman and chief television pitchman for the New Chrysler Corporation.

THE DAYS of depending on candidates from the traditional field of politics is over.

More and more party bigwigs are looking for people who can read teleprompters adroitly while saying such lines as, "I promise you I will never send American boys to a foreign county to save someone else's pork and beans."

If Loumsa can keep us entertained through the Republican primary and even overtake Carl Levin in the November election, we will surely have celebrity figures popping up all over the national political landscape.