

# Opinion

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## Take your pick of state tax cuts

I SPENT a recent dreary evening poring over a state Senate Fiscal Agency report on the rival tax cut plans of Gov. James J. Blanchard and the Senate. This will save you the trouble of reading it.

If your chief concern is reducing taxes, there will be little difference, at least in 1986. SFA analyzed the two plans for incomes from \$15,000 to \$65,000 and found the Senate has an advantage of about 0.1 percent of income. Big deal.

The Senate passed its tax cut plan Feb. 27 with bipartisan support. A separate bill to raise personal exemptions to \$1,750 from \$1,500 was shoved through mainly by Republicans.

This week the House Taxation Committee takes up the plans.

**THE DIFFERENCE** is largely philosophical. The Senate plan focuses on cutting personal income taxes, period. Blanchard's target is lowering local property taxes through rebates.

Blanchard and the Legislature, with only one Republican vote, in 1983 raised the income rate from 4.6 percent to 6.35 percent, with provisions to scale it down as debts were retired and the economy improved.

Currently the rate is 5.35 percent. It will drop to 5.1 percent near the end of this year. Then on Oct. 1, 1987, it will drop to the pre-recession rate of 4.6 percent.

The Senate plan is to drop the rate to 4.6 percent the first day of 1986, a full 21 months ahead of schedule. In fiscal 1986 the revenue loss would be \$550 million.

**BLANCHARD'S PLAN**, considerably more complex, is based on the unpopularity of local governments' extremely high property taxes. The basics:

- The income tax rate would come down to 4.6 percent in mid-1986, six months later than the Senate plan and 15 months earlier than the current schedule. There is no provision for raising the \$1,500 exemption.
- Property tax rebates would be increased from about \$500 million to almost



Tim Richard

\$750 million. Instead of 1.5 million of us getting a state check when homesteaded property taxes are more than 3.5 percent of income, two million of us would get rebates when property taxes passed 3 percent of income.

Those two items would reduce state revenue \$650 million in fiscal '86.

• A number of business-type taxes would be adjusted for various reasons, raising revenue \$200 million, so the net cost of Blanchard's plan would be \$450 million. Biggest items: tax long-term capital gains (\$72 million), tax "domestic" (Michigan) insurance companies at the same rate as "foreign" (out-of-state) companies (\$47 million) and tax military pay (\$27 million).

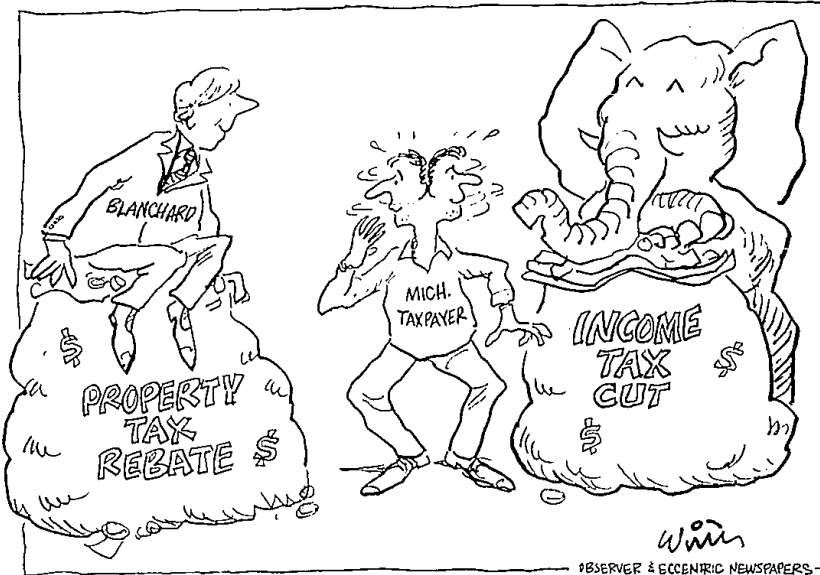
**BLANCHARD'S PLAN** has the big advantage of addressing the property tax problem that we all griped so loudly about in the inflationary years of 1964-80.

The governor tells us the big beneficiaries would be suburbs in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties, where property values have been strong and state aid to schools low. He's right. Comparable housing is much higher here than in outstate cities.

Unlike his predecessor, Bill Milliken, Blanchard will not push for a sales tax increase as a replacement for property taxes, even though Michigan's 4 percent sales tax rate is low and property taxes "way off the charts."

"Some day," he predicted, "they're going to want a sales tax increase and property tax cut, dollar for dollar. I don't see it happening in the near future."

Well, Jim Blanchard is known for having a pretty good sense of political timing.



18SERV & ECCENTRIC NEWSPAPERS

## In politics, star is everything

IT IS ALMOST amazing how the possible Republican opposition to Bill Lucas' gubernatorial candidacy seems to be melting away. One after another of the possible challengers says he does not wish to vie with Lucas for the GOP nomination.

Only Oakland County Executive Dan Murphy appears to be left to oppose the new Republican star.

Former Gov. George Romney is the latest to support Lucas, who is only in his third year as Wayne County executive and second week as a Republican. He has yet to announce his candidacy. Romney raised a few eyebrows by insisting that Lucas should be the "consensus" GOP candidate in 1986.

Perhaps George is mindful of the intra-party primary rows which sapped the possible GOP will to fight a winning election campaign in the fall. The two Republicans who sought the U.S. Senate nomination in '84 — Jack Loumsa and Jim Dunn — provide a case in point. Once he defeated Dunn in the primary, Loumsa had trouble lifting off.

It will could be that Lucas will become the Republican gubernatorial standard bearer without being nicked for a drop of blood by a GOP challenger.

How can one candidate appear to spring up so strongly? The answer may be that this is the era of the star. Call it what you will, there are some people to whom the



Bob Wisler

spotlight gravitates. They have some combination of character, personality and style that draws attention.

IT MAY have nothing to do with intelligence, perseverance or effectiveness. It has more to do with such things as self-confidence, flamboyance, charisma, panache, pizzazz. The person who discovered Bill Lucas in a sense may be compared to the agent who discovered Lana Turner sipping a soda in Shwab's drug store in Hollywood.

At least one newspaper has noted that Lucas displays a significant lack of knowledge about some governmental subjects. The newspapers and the candidates themselves like to call them the "issues." The principals argue about issues and accuse each other of ducking the issues. But voters traditionally pay little attention to issues.

Oh, there are a few that make a difference — Americans held hostage, for example, made everything that Jimmy

Carter did seem suspect. And Richard Headlee, the GOP candidate for governor in '82, buried himself by addressing supposed women's issues. But for the most part, issues are things that voters get tired of. They really want to vote on the basis of a candidate's perceived personality.

**DENNIS NYSTROM**, a longtime Republican political operative instrumental in Lucas' conversion to Republicanism, knows full well the value of a candidacy based on personality and style as opposed to one based on issues.

He is quoted as saying that voters are not unduly concerned with a candidate's stand on specific issues. "It's your approach to problem-solving that counts, not how you answer narrow questions."

It would probably be more correct to say that it is how the public perceives your approach that counts.

This is why the political kingmakers search for stars rather than depending on their party ranks to turn out charismatic candidates.

The time will come when all political leaders will search for the right candidate, no matter what his ideology, political leanings or background. Winning the election is the most important thing. If candidates have to be chosen and courted like football and basketball stars, so be it.

### from our readers

#### Reader suggests an elected board

To the editor:

I am a longtime friend of Jill Locke and therefore, for her sake and admitting my own bias, I have refrained from writing the angry letter I wanted to write last February when Jill resigned from the Farmington Library.

But I am also a tax-paying citizen concerned for "MY" — OUR library. We taxpayers seem to be a group of people of little or no interest to the current library board, at least those most vocal to the newspaper. I am concerned with the library board's apparent "over-defensiveness" and lack of objectivity in this current matter concerning the management practices of Director Gordon Lewis. I am concerned that the public is not getting the whole and complete picture of Mr. Lewis' "management," and it is our library, not Mr. Lewis' or the boards.

I am concerned that the wonderfully talented and gifted personnel in the children's area has been wiped out. We had a clearly outstanding program which was envied and emulated throughout the area — I fear for its future.

In general, I am deeply concerned about the spirit and direction of the library's future — about current and future employees — will they, do they feel free to speak out or are they inhibited and intimidated due to the lack of responsiveness by the board — until the problem hit the Observer. When a 13-year employee, gifted, nationally recognized librarian like Jill Locke can write the board of her concerns and get no response — why would an employee of two or three years feel courageous enough to speak out?

It is time for action on several fronts. I am thankful for the increase in board members. I am thankful for the Farmington Observer's persistence in keeping us informed on the front page. Perhaps it is time to move toward an elected board rather than the current appointment system.

Nancy L.C. Thomas  
Farmington Hills

#### Patron defends Gordon Lewis

To the editor:

Library Director Gordon Lewis, whom I know only through the fine facilities and services that he led during the past ten years, should finally feel relieved to leave this town where he has been treated shabbily during the past six weeks or so.

What little the public knows about his departure derives from the following:

1. Complaints, vaguely stated, from former employees about Mr. Lewis' management policies and work assignments.

2. Silence, or unwillingness to comment, from the trustees charged with the responsibility of overseeing the library system and who, by their conduct, contributed to the suspicion and doubt about Mr. Lewis' performance.

3. An audit report that cites discrepancies according to rule that make Mr. Lewis, as an administrator in terms of ethics and morality, a man hard to believe in public life today. Has the learning in those bookshelves rubbed off? Why did he never learn to cheat, really cheat, the American Way, like so many other figures in both the public and private sector?

4. Observer stories that promise information and give virtually none. The May 13 story claiming in the headline that the former librarian finally tells all is appalling. She merely alluded to her unsuccessful efforts to gain a review of her complaints. By featuring that fact as a revelation of significance the Observer unfortunately confused ill-defined issues further.

Whatever and wherever Gordon Lewis works in the future, I would hope for him that his performance receives a fairer appraisal than conducted in Farmington at the hands of colleagues, trustees and media. The libraries he leaves behind are vibrant and popular, a certification of his leadership and that of his staff.

Lawrence Niblett  
Farmington Hills

## Should McLain be in sports hall

OVER FOUR years, he won 92 games and two American League Cy Young awards as pitcher of the year, leading the 1968 Detroit Tigers to the world championship. He's the last major league pitcher to top the 30 mark in wins (31).

On the field — and off, too — he was a legend in Tiger history and could be mentioned in the same breath with pitching greats George Mullin, Tommy Bridges, Schoolboy Rowe, Bobo Newsom, Hal Newhouse and Dizzy Trout.

With credentials like that, wouldn't anyone qualify for the Michigan Sports Hall of Fame — on the basis of performance alone?

BY NOW, you know we're talking about the brash pitcher with the hopping fast ball, the man who believed he could do no wrong, former Livonia and Beverly Hills resident Dennis McLain.

But instead of walking into town at some future time to take his place alongside the Hank Greenbergs and the Bobby Laynes, Denny the Great can look forward to spending the next 23 years dressed in prison grey for racketeering, extortion and cocaine dealing in Florida.

As the boy once said to Shoeless Joe Jackson of the famous Chicago "Black Sox" scandal stemming from throwing games in the 1919 World Series, "Say it isn't so, Joe."

No problem for Denny. He's denying it all and still insists the case against him was fabricated.



Jim Ritz

Many loyalists and sports fans wish they could believe him, but the situation looks bad.

**THE BOARD** of directors of the Michigan Sports Hall of Fame left the door ajar for Denny's entry into the hall by voting to keep his name on the election ballot. He could be elected any time a vote is taken, but the board reserved veto power over any choice and could refuse to certify an election. That means it could reverse McLain's election to the hall if he bags the necessary votes.

Hall of Fame Commissioner Nick Kerbaw, the former Detroit Lions and Detroit Pistons general manager, promises to convene the board to vote on certifying McLain's election if that should ever happen. McLain's name would stay on the ballot for the entire 10-year eligibility period, after which it could be removed.

McLain's name has been on the Hall of Fame ballot the last two years. His conviction has sparked debate on his name continuing to appear on the ballot. "Criteria for a candidate's election is contained

in the Hall of Fame's constitution as 'having brought lasting fame and honor to the state of Michigan,' " Kerbaw said.

IT'S PAINFUL to contemplate the fate of Denny McLain. He had the world in his arms, and he let it slip away. He could have been financially comfortable for life, and he's broke.

Should a man's sins wipe out his accomplishments?

**REGARDLESS** of your viewpoint, Denny McLain will go down as one of the most famous persons in the history of Michigan sports. He did something that hadn't been done since Dizzy Dean in the 1930s: win over 30 games. And yet a person of his deeds blew it all and ran afoul of the law.

The best reason to keep Denny out of the hall would be to eliminate him as an inspirational example for kids.

Looking at it from another angle, maybe that's just the reason for putting Denny into the hall — to show an example of what can happen to greatness if it becomes contaminated, to show that good things must be channeled, and that regardless of how good you are, no one is above the law.

In case you're interested, Kerbaw can be reached at 988-2440, and responses to the Observer & Eccentric letterbox are welcome.