

THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



Summer 2014

A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Five Books You Must Read This Summer

"Whither goes thou, America, in thy shiny car in the night?"

--Jack Kerouac, 1959

1959: The Year Everything Changed by Fred Kaplan

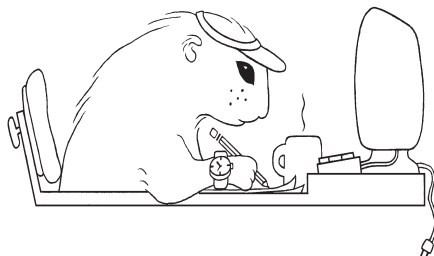
Pick a year, any year. A case could be made for almost any of them – 1914, 1963, 2001 – as the year everything changed, but born-on-the 4th-of-July journalist Kaplan is very convincing about the impact of the year preceding the vaunted Sixties.

Readers old enough to remember their first transistor radio might agree; at \$49.95, just in time for Christmas, it became the biggest-selling consumer product in history. Earlier in the year, the first two US soldiers were killed in South Vietnam. Khrushchev toured the Garst farm in Coon Rapids, Iowa, scene of the first media scrum of the modern age. Fidel Castro also visited the US, three months after ending 60 years of US dominion over Cuba, while Ike and the CIA plotted his assassination. The IBM 1401, the first practical business computer, went on sale. NASA coined the word "astronauts," much catchier than "spacemen."

The cultural ground shifted, too: Allen

Ginsberg, James Baldwin, Miles Davis, Jackson Pollock, and films by Truffaut and Godard set the stage for the explosiveness of the next decade. Buddy Holly died in Iowa as the Silver Beetles were being born in England.

The Prairie Progressive welcomes its readers' opinions. What is your choice for the year everything changed?



The Lost Clerihews of Paul Ingram

As every customer at Prairie Lights knows, Ingram's enthusiasm for books and writers and words is contagious. We now know that clerihews are contagious, too:

Paul Ingram
Has now gone big time
But at the Prairie Progressive
He's one Prairie Mouse we'll never think less of

With the publication of his own book after decades of selling others (much like an ornithologist becoming a bird), we

congratulate Paul and thank him for his many contributions over the years to Prairie Dog's Summer Reading List.

Good King Bad King by Susan Nussbaum

Can a novel about life in a residential facility for teen-agers with disabilities be funny, furious, and hard to put down, without being sentimental or despairing? Yes, as proven by Nussbaum's sharply-drawn, vividly alive characters, each giving their perspective in authentic voices usually ignored. Perhaps most compelling is the young sales rep for a nursing home franchise who, as she comes to know residents as humans rather than widgets to fill beds, gradually evolves from corporate cheerleader to clear-eyed whistle-blower.

The Noble Hustle by Colson Whitehead

One of the keenest observers of American life – commercial branding, the zombification of our society, racism overt and subtle – has hit the jackpot again, this time in Las Vegas. Who cannot love a book that begins, "I have

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Run, Bernie, Run

When I accost shoppers at the Iowa City Farmers Market with a petition encouraging Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont to run for President of the United States in the Iowa Democratic Caucuses, here are the top three responses: 1. I would like to support Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts. 2. I do not want to see a coronation for Hillary Clinton. 3. I do not want to see a repeat of the Ralph Nader fiasco, where a progressive independent candidate puts a Republican in the White House.

Once reassured that Elizabeth Warren is not running and that we are encouraging Senator Sanders to run as a Democrat, not an independent, most people sign up. Although a few people have never heard of Sen. Sanders (or confuse him with Iowa City Progressive stalwart Gary Sanders), many others have not only heard of him but know something about him and admire him.

Sen. Sanders has been a member of the House and Senate for more than two decades. He has always run, and consistently won, as an independent socialist, getting his start, like our own local socialist Karen Kubby, in municipal politics. In the Senate he has caucused with the Democrats, which has given him not only seniority but national visibility as chair of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs. During the last few weeks he has been all over the national press as an advocate for full funding of Veterans medical needs, pointing out the hypocrisy of Republicans who claim to support our troops until they come home and need medical care.

Sen. Sanders supports working class troops and their families while explaining to the country the long-term costs of having president after president send young people to fight unwinnable wars that do not have the support of the American people. Whoever is the next president, all Americans will confront the

long-term costs in domestic tragedy for the damage inflicted on those soldiers who have returned home from Iraq and the Afghan surge, often bitter at the lack of respect they receive from a largely indifferent public.

On issues of war, peace, and respect for veterans, Sen. Sanders will be well positioned to re-ignite the idealism represented by the Democratic Party at its best, the party of George McGovern's call to "Come Home America," of the Rev. Jesse Jackson's call to "Keep Hope Alive," and Barack Obama's "Yes We Can." As we look forward to the next Iowa caucuses, we should remember the crucial role Iowans played in nominating an African-American from Chicago whose middle name is Hussein, and who went on to carry three states of the former Confederacy. Electability, anyone?

If you are old enough to remember the 2008 caucuses you may recall that Hillary Clinton came in third -- not just in Johnson County but statewide -- because of her inability to stir up any positive enthusiasm among Democrats. As a Democratic nominee, she will go into a general election saddled with her close association with an administration whose record is difficult to defend except among true believers. Candidate Obama talks peace on the campaign trail, but President Obama has time after time chosen war especially if it can be fought with drones. It is no secret that Hillary Clinton, as Secretary of State, urged the President to get us bogged down in even more unwinnable, unpopular wars, notably in Syria. Americans are weary of war.

It is not only on issues of war and peace that Sen. Sanders' views strike a chord with large numbers of Americans, including some Republicans. Remember James Carville's famous

phrase, "It's the Economy, Stupid!" We appear to be stalled in an economy in which 7% unemployment is a "recovery." Inequality is becoming so scandalous that even Republicans are beginning to worry about the sustainability of low-wage capitalism. Hillary Clinton served on the board of directors of Wal-Mart, and Wal-Mart money is flooding into her PACs, which pretty much says it all. Sen. Sanders' socialism, on the other hand, bears a striking resemblance to the New Deal, which created the modern Democratic Party by putting together a nation-wide coalition of working people, wage-earners of all races and religions.

Sen. Sanders' ability to speak to those issues far beyond liberal Johnson County accounts for the extremely positive reception he received at his recent appearance in Goose Lake, Iowa, at the Clinton County Democratic Party Hall of Fame. No one has ever referred to the People's Republic of Clinton County. Sen. Sanders can put together the New Deal tradition of President Roosevelt, appealing to working class voters, male and female, with the anti-war idealism of George McGovern. Can't be done? Let's talk about it (perhaps at the Farmer's Market). In Iowa, we have a chance once again to go to our caucuses and say: "Yes We Can."

--Jeff Cox

When Species Meet: The Prairie Prospective

Sometimes I say I'm a socialist; sometimes I say I'm a progressive. I wanted to be a muckraker. Usually, I vote for Democrats, although I don't claim to be one.

Mostly I say I'm a socialist in response to my father. He tries to persuade me that all is ruthless competition while I try to persuade him that cooperative efforts work best. "What are you? A socialist?" he says. "Yes," says I. And he laughs. When I say I'm a progressive, I do it because I want to remember those world histories of progressive action that have occurred; I want to blow on that low flame and produce real heat and light still. I also claim status as a progressive so I can hang in the company of The Prairie Progressive. But lately I've been asking myself what it might really mean to be a progressive now—no slight intended, Prairie Dog.

The trouble with the adjective "progressive" is the noun "progress." As much as I might want to define my own destination toward which progress is advancing, the truth is that modernism, specifically capitalism, has won popular understanding that the destination we're pursuing is the modern condition measured by more, not less. More bathrooms, more cellphones, more acres, more shares of stock—also more vaccines, but I'll save that concession for another day. To separate progress from economic growth and Manifest Destiny (those who take more, deserve more), requires rewriting history. Some historians do rewrite history. Richard White, an historian himself, describes one such revisionist, Elizabeth Fenn, in his March 24th review in *The Nation*, of her book *Encounters at the Heart of the World: A History of the Mandan People*. (The heart of this world is

the northern plains of North America.) White writes,

She is such a good historian and storyteller. What she wants to do is use the Mandans to frame a narrative that does not turn American history into the foreordained progression of "Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way." She wants to destabilize the American narrative in terms of origins, in terms of time—it does not begin in 1492—as well as space: it does not radiate out from Jamestown, or Plymouth, or even St. Augustine. She wants to avoid a Whiggish view of history, which is ultimately a story of the inevitability of the present. She wants to restore possibilities that the past contains by returning to a time when the present seemed far from inevitable.

That's the thing: the present was not inevitable—humans (especially western humans) didn't have to create global warming, didn't have to dislocate and exploit other people situated in territories around the globe, didn't have to minimize the number of species on Earth. (That muckraker zeal persists, you see.)

Bruno LaTour, philosopher of science, sees history a little differently. He wonders if modern humans haven't been barreling toward the future while facing the past, running away from all that was fearful in that past. In 2010, LaTour wrote, "The ecological crisis is nothing but the sudden turning around of someone who had actually never before looked into the future, so busy was he extricating himself from a horrible past." He suggests that the distinction in French between "le futur" and "L'avenir" might be useful in thinking about what comes next, a distinction he explains this way: "To define the present situation, I have to translate and say that the Moderns always had

a future (the odd utopian future of someone fleeing his past in reverse!) but never a chance, until recently that is, to turn to what I could call their prospect: the shape of things to come." Future and prospect are entirely different, says LaTour. His advice is to stop fleeing backwards into the future and start exploring new prospects.

Without fully conceding the word "progress" or "future," I'd like to consider this word "prospect." "Future," meaning at its root, just "will become," begs the question what will become and how and why. "Progress," "walk forward," in its Latin origins—even if facing backwards, as LaTour would have it, might imply that we set out, decide what we want after we've attained it, and then figure out how to hang on to it and justify our having it. "Prospect," "to look forward," implies a slower approach, even a mindful one, while facing the direction one is headed. Donna Haraway, a philosopher of science, technology and human-animal relations points out that "respect," "re-spect," is "to see again." When species meet, human respect for the other critter implies really seeing that other creature again, for the first time, mosquito or garlic mustard though it be.

Re-spect within and across species, across all manner of matter, requires, I think, a pro-spective rather than progressive view of the future. The word "prospect" too has its baggage—as in "There's gold in them there hills"—but I'm willing to overlook that for the opportunity to see face to face a future with a different definition of progress. The future isn't inevitable either.

--Barbara Eckstein dwells in the progressive precincts of Iowa City.

Brother Herky

Earlier this year, the Chicago Regional Director of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled that scholarship football players at Northwestern University have the right to form a labor union and bargain with their employer pursuant to the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). A hearing developed an extensive factual record as to the realities of life at a major college football program. Applying these facts to the NLRA, the regional director found that football players are employees with labor rights under the law.

Though appeals may last for years in the Northwestern case, one of the first questions that came to my mind is “what would be the outcome if this happened at Iowa?” Northwestern is a private university and, as such, the NLRA – federal law – governs. At the University of Iowa, the controlling law would be Iowa’s Public Employment Relations Act, or Chapter 20. Though Chapter 20 is largely modeled on the NLRA, there are some key differences. So, assuming the realities of the life of a scholarship football player at Northwestern are relatively similar to a player at Iowa, what is the best guess as to how the Iowa Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) and Iowa courts would rule if Hawkeyes attempted to form a union?

The threshold question of whether football players have the right to form a union is answered in Chapter 20.4, the exclusions section. Most relevant is 20.4(4) which excludes “students working 20 hours or less.” Certainly, when making its case against labor rights, the Board or Regents would argue that the NCAA prohibits football programs from having more than twenty “countable athletic hours” during the sport season and no more than eight in the off-season. Since the average over the course of the year must be below twenty, the Regents

would argue that Iowa football players have no right to organize.

Countable athletic hours, though, excludes time spent in travel, training meetings, “voluntary” weight-lifting, medical check-ins, tape review, and training table. When the NLRB regional director took testimony witnesses attested to a far greater time commitment. During August camp, players averaged 50-60 hours a week in football activities; during the season from September through November, players averaged 40-50 hours per week; from mid-January through the end of July the average was 12-25 hours per week. If PERB or a reviewing Iowa court considers all football related activities, the twenty-hour threshold will be easily surpassed.

Would PERB have to take into account the realities of time demands the NCAA ignores in calculating countable athletic hours? Good question. Consider travel time, Iowa Code 91A.13 states that travel time is not compensable when the transportation is “provided by the employer... as a convenience for the employee, and the employee is not required by the employer to use that means of transportation to the worksite.” Unless Athletic Director Gary Barta decides to allow football players to carpool to road games, Iowa law seems to say football travel time is compensable.

With regard to weight lifting, training meetings, and the rest, would that time count towards the average of twenty hours worked? We do not know for sure. However, when in doubt as to whether a person is “working,” we often look to the body of federal law, which is binding on the University of Iowa in this instance, developed around the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) - the law that says you must get paid at least the minimum wage and time and a half after forty hours. The FLSA states that

when an employer “suffers or permits” an employee to work, they are working. As the U.S. Department of Labor says, “work not requested but suffered or permitted to be performed is work time that must be paid for... for example, an employee may voluntarily continue to work at the end of the shift... the reason is immaterial. The hours... are compensable.” If players are allowed to lift weights or participate in team meetings, this is time worked.

Using the text of Chapter 20, the facts of Northwestern football, and the principles of Iowa and federal law regarding time worked, it becomes apparent that Iowa football players probably exceed an average of twenty hours worked and do have the right to form and join a union. NCAA policies do not trump state or federal law. More likely than not, our Hawkeyes have the right to become our union brothers.

--Nate Willems is a former Iowa legislator who lives in Mount Vernon.

All We Are Saying...

The first time you met Bill, he shook your hand. Each subsequent time you met him, he gave you a hug. Even if you’re the sort of person who despises hugs, you accepted it from Bill. You see, Bill’s hugs were genuine.

Bill Basinger passed away unexpectedly on Friday, May 30, at the age of 86.

Bill was one of the original peaceniks. His love of justice and peace began as a medic during the Korean War. That experience led to his devotion as a medical missionary, serving in Japan

All We Are Saying...
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July 19, 1979

Nicaraguans overthrew US-backed dictator Somoza

July 21, 1954

Geneva Accords signed, ending French rule of Vietnam

July 23, 1864

Louisiana Constitutional Convention adopted constitution abolishing slavery

July 26, 1959

Cubans overthrew US-backed dictator Batista

July 26

Americans with Disabilities Act anniversary celebration in Iowa City

August 2

Hardacre Film Festival in Tipton, Iowa

August 4, 1964

Bodies of civil rights workers Goodman, Chaney, and Schwerner exhumed

August 7, 1904

Birth of Ralph Bunche, first Black to receive Nobel Peace Prize

August 9, 1974

President Richard Nixon resigned

August 31, 1864

Gen. George McClellan accepted Democratic Party nomination for President

September 2, 1864

Confederates evacuated Atlanta, GA, as Gen. Sherman's troops moved in

September 8, 1974

Nixon pardoned by President Gerald Ford

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a good poker face because I am half dead inside." Whitehead's cast of poker players include Helen, whose sweet housewife face hid a kung fu heart: "she was bluffing the minute she walked into a room."

Salvage the Bones by Jesmyn Ward

Loss, desire, and terror abound as the worst flood in American history inexorably bears down on the dirt-poor town of Bois Sauvage, Mississippi. Sensitive readers might want to skip the dog-fighting scenes, but Alabama-born Ward distills much tenderness and beauty as a motherless family struggles to hold together in the ten days before Katrina strikes.

--Prairie Dog

'Underclass,' an essentialist category, like underworld, became very popular in the Reagan years. 'Overclass' somehow never caught on.

-Alexander Cockburn, 1989

All We Are Saying...

Continued from Page 4

for six years and for another six years in South Korea.

The missionary work didn't end upon returning to the states. Bill, with his wife Jean, spent a considerable amount of time fighting greed, injustice, and warfare throughout the United States and the world. From Central America to the Middle East, to Offutt Air Base in Bellevue, Nebraska, to Camp Dodge in Johnston, Bill was an activist peacefully seeking nonviolence.

Bill was a four-time recipient of the Catholic Peace Ministries Maurice J. Dingman Peace Award, "given each year in memory and in honor of Maurice Dingman, the late bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Des Moines revered for his commitment to justice, peace and equality." Bill received the award with his customary humility, saying that there were hundreds of people more deserving of the award.

Often moving behind the scenes, Bill was instrumental in helping with so many projects with so many different organizations. He served as Jean's driver, photographer, go-fer, set-up man, tear-down man, and most important, after 59 years of marriage, her loyal moral supporter. Bill was a member of Veterans for Peace, and Past President of the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom.

William Petroski, reporter with the Des Moines Register, tweeted soon after hearing of Bill's death, "He was a good man." That sums it up.

The world has lost a very good man. May he rest in PEACE.

--Marty Ryan is a public policy advocate at www.iowappa.com

Who Wrote This?

(Hint: it wasn't Governor Branstad)

I. For every child spiritual and moral training to help him to stand firm under the pressure of life.

II. For every child understanding and the guarding of his personality as its most precious right.

III. For every child a home and that love and security which a home provides; and for that child who must receive foster care, the nearest substitute for his own home.

IV. For every child full preparation for his birth, his mother receiving prenatal, natal, and postnatal care; and the establishment of such protective measures as will make child-bearing safer.

V. For every child health protection from birth through adolescence, including: periodical health examinations and, where needed, care of specialists and hospital treatment; regular dental examinations and care of the teeth; protective and preventive measures against communicable diseases; the insuring of pure food, pure milk, and pure water.

VI. For every child from birth through adolescence, promotion of health, including health instruction, and a health program, wholesome physical and mental recreation, with teachers and leaders adequately trained.

VII. For every child a dwelling-place safe, sanitary, and wholesome, with reasonable provisions for privacy; free from conditions which tend to thwart his development; and a home environment harmonious and enriching.

VIII. For every child a school which is safe from hazards, sanitary, properly equipped, lighted, and ventilated. For younger children nursery schools and kindergartens to supplement home care.

IX. For every child a community which recognizes and plans for his needs, protects him against physical dangers, moral hazards, and disease; provides him with safe and wholesome places to

play and recreation; and makes provision for his cultural and social needs.

X. For every child an education which, through the discovery and development of his individual abilities, prepares him for life; and through training and vocational guidance prepares him for a living which will yield him maximum satisfaction.

XI. For every child such teaching and training as will prepare him for successful parenthood, home-making, and the rights of citizenship; and for parents, supplementary training to fit them to deal wisely with the problems of parenthood.

XII. For every child education for safety and protection against accidents to which modern conditions subject him—those to which he is directly exposed and those which, through loss or maiming of his parents, affect him directly.

XIII. For every child who is blind, deaf, crippled, or otherwise physically handicapped, and for the child who is mentally handicapped, such measures as will early discover and diagnose his handicap, provide care and treatment, and so train him that he may become an asset to society rather than a liability. Expenses of these services should be borne publicly where they cannot be privately met.

XIV. For every child who is in conflict with society the right to be dealt with intelligently as society's charge, not society's outcast; with the home, the school, the church, the court and the institution when needed, shaped to return him whenever possible to the normal stream of life.

XV. For every child the right to grow up in a family with an adequate standard of living and the security of a stable income as the surest safeguard against social handicaps.

XVI. For every child protection against

labor that stunts growth, either physical or mental, that limits education, that deprives children of the right of comradeship, of play, and of joy.

XVII. For every rural child as satisfactory schooling and health services as for the city child, and an extension to rural families of social, recreational, and cultural facilities.

XVIII. To supplement the home and the school in the training of youth, and to return to them those interests of which modern life tends to cheat children, every stimulation and encouragement should be given to the extension and development of the voluntary youth organizations.

XIX. To make everywhere available these minimum protections of the health and welfare of children, there should be a district, county, or community organization for health, education, and welfare, with full-time officials, coordinating with a state-wide program which will be responsive to a nationwide service of general information, statistics, and scientific research. This should include:

a) Trained, full-time public health officials, with public health nurses, sanitary inspection, and laboratory workers

b) Available hospital beds

c) Full-time public welfare service for the relief, aid, and guidance of children in special need due to poverty, misfortune, or behavior difficulties, and for the protection of children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, or moral hazard.

FOR EVERY CHILD THESE RIGHTS, REGARDLESS OF RACE, OR COLOR, OR SITUATION, WHEREVER HE MAY LIVE UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE AMERICAN FLAG.

--Herbert Hoover, Declaration of the Rights of Children, 1930

Shifting the Burden

The City Council of Iowa City on June 30 voted unanimously to put a local-option sales tax referendum on the ballot this fall. Johnson County voters will have to decide whether to approve a 16.6% increase (from 6% to 7%), 50% of which would go toward property tax relief. Rod Sullivan, a member of the Johnson County Board of Supervisors, submitted a few reminders as to why increasing our reliance on the sales tax is not a good idea:

Regressivity

This means that the poor pay a higher percentage of their income in taxes than do the wealthy. Sales taxes are the most regressive taxes. Income taxes are the most progressive taxes.

In 2003, a person with an income of \$90,000 paid 3.2% of her income in taxes. A person earning \$19,500 paid 11.1% of her income in taxes.

Relative to income, the poor pay twice what the middle class pay, and nearly 5 times the amount the wealthy pay. Even with exemptions, sales taxes hit the poor hardest.

Who are the poor?

31% (215,855) of the children in Iowa live in low-income families. 10% (70,857) of the children in Iowa live in poor families. Most of the people living in poverty in Iowa and elsewhere are children. There are more poor women than poor men.

Children are the poorest segment of our society. I will quote one of my favorite authors, Jonathon Kozol: "Charity is no substitute for economic justice."

You cannot raise money for human services and believe they will make up for the damage done by a local option sales tax.

Wealthy services not taxed

The services of accountants, attorneys, and stockbrokers are not subject to sales taxes. These and many other services (advertising, consulting, etc.) used primarily by the wealthy and by large corporations go untaxed. In addition, property taxes are deductible, while sales taxes are not.

Sales Taxes versus Property Taxes

Sales tax proponents frequently use the argument, "Sales taxes are better than property taxes." This argument is akin to saying, "Drinking is better than smoking, so we need more smoking." Neither tax option is good for the poor.

Sales taxes versus property taxes is a red herring. The point is that BOTH hurt the poor unfairly. People who claim these are the only options are being shortsighted. We need to challenge our legislators to allow for greater local use of income taxes.

What about renters?

Rent includes the landlord's expenses plus profit. But there is no profit if there is no renter. Most landlords raise rents when they can, regardless of taxes. This is supply and demand and will happen REGARDLESS of taxes.

Another flaw in this argument is assuming that landlords are somehow entitled to no less profit than they are currently receiving. Owning property is an investment. People are not forced to own – they can invest in CDs, gold, or the stock market. If your investments are not profitable, sell.

Programs that use relative wealth as a measure of eligibility (such as Medicaid) always include resources (property). It is not enough to have low income; you must also lack other resources, such as property. This is because the net worth of a property owner far exceeds that of a renter. Renters have less real assets.

Under a sales tax, renters pay the same as their counterparts with real assets.

What about "outsiders"? Won't they help pay?

People who live outside of Johnson County pay about 20-25% of the taxes collected. These are by and large not people from Chicago, however, but commuters who purchase goods on the way home.

I cannot, in good conscience, support a shift of the tax burden to people who have less money. What's more, I have trouble saying that a person earning \$25,000 should pay more tax just because she lives in Williamsburg, Riverside, West Branch, Tipton, etc. – especially when the local wealthy would be let off the hook at her expense. It is important that we think of our low-income neighbors who commute to this County.

There are many "outsiders" who pay property tax; they are absentee landowners. Most of the buildings in downtown Iowa City are owned by people who live outside of Johnson County. Coral Ridge Mall, Proctor and Gamble, Regency Trailer Court, numerous student apartments, and thousands of other properties are owned by entities that do NOT call Johnson County home. Substituting sales tax for property tax lets these absentee landlords off the hook. Others will pay for the roads and services that add value to their properties.

[An additional reminder from the editors: the sales tax is a notoriously unstable source of revenue. It fluctuates unpredictably, and – unlike property tax – is not a reliable tool for planning municipal budgets.]

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You did what you did at
the time, because that was
all that you knew. And
when you knew better, you
did better.

-Maya Angelou

