

## editorial opinion

# Congress must decide on women's proposals

After all the shouting and tumult, the recent International Women's Conference in Houston left a respectable measure of accomplishment and an agenda for future action.

The Plan of Action put forward there contained 26 planks encompassing a comprehensive plan for social reform. In a brief weekend conference that brought many thousands to the gathering, 25 of those planks were passed.

No legislature in any state, no Congress in the history of this nation can boast a better record with more substantive action accomplished.

The plank that was not passed was the last item on the agenda, a move to ask for the establishment

of a cabinet level agency for women. Wisely, the women saw a move like this would isolate them and take them out of the mainstream.

A resolution on the rights of minority women was made stronger and more specific with a substitute motion. It was overwhelmingly approved in action seen as the most comprehensive of the entire meeting. It was put forward by a coalition of minority women and speaks individually to the problems of American Indians, blacks, Hispanic women, Asian-Americans and Alaskan native women, as well as deploring the "double discrimination" experienced by women from all these groups.

Coretta Scott King, one of the IWVY commissioners, delivered the substitute motion. Its passage evoked enthusiastic singing of "We Shall Overcome." Mrs. King added: "We've come a long way. We still have a long way to go."

Shortly before midnight on Saturday of the conference, the Equal Rights Amendment was resoundingly passed, despite minority objection by about 19 per cent of the delegates. Both of the above, if enacted into law, will entitle women to an equal shot at education, employment and treatment in their personal lives which have been sadly lacking to this time.

Most controversial of the planks were the ones on reproductive freedom (a euphemism for abortion) and sexual preference, rights for lesbian women. Both passed but may prove to be obstacles in the battle for ratification of the ERA which still requires passage by three states.

Other action by the conference addressed the problems of battered women, women in business, child abuse, equality in credit, disabled women, health, displaced homemakers, the arts and humanities, the media, rape, women in prisons and the problems of farm women and older women.

Michigan sent a diverse delegation to Houston. Women from Southfield, Birmingham, Detroit, Farmington Hills, Rochester, Livonia and Redford spoke for all ages and shades of opinion.

Now the ball is in the hands of the Congress. The way for progress for women has been paved.

## Keep doors open!

For several years, there has been a see-saw battle in the Oakland County Board of Commissioners because one party or another has had a majority of only a couple of votes.

Because there are no votes to spare, each party must take its position carefully. This work is done in party caucuses which, under the 1977 state Open Meetings Act, are open to the public.

These open caucuses are invaluable in judging where individual commissioners really stand, for they say things in caucus they wouldn't say in bipartisan floor debate. The Republican caucus is particularly interesting because County Executive Daniel Murphy sometimes comes in to lay down the word to the GOP troops.

Unfortunately, the advocates of secrecy around the state have been at work, and recently they succeeded in squeaking through HB 4707 that would exempt county commissioner caucuses.

A concerned public's only recourse is to urge Gov. Milliken to veto HB 4707. Then urge your local legislator to uphold the veto.

Once the lovers of secrecy begin picking apart the Open Meetings Act (which is already weak enough), there will be no end to it. Oakland County commissioners haven't suffered under open caucuses, and the public can only benefit by continued open doors.

## Mayor ducks out

# Young's one-way streets

Metropolitan Fund, the southeast Michigan research and education foundation, has a fascinating annual meeting. The business end—approval of minutes, budget and officers—is handled with a swish of the gavel and prompt "ayes."

It's the main speech and the get-togethers afterwards of merchant princes, industrialists, union chieftains, and politicians from several counties that makes the MF gathering fascinating.

MF is the outfit that spawned, bankrolled and provided early staffing for the Transportation and Land Use Study, the council of governments, New Detroit and the regional transportation authority, as well as provocative discussions of "new towns" and regional governance.

If you equate MF with regionalism, you've got it.

THIS YEAR'S speaker was a man who admittedly "regards Metro Fund with a certain amount of well-justified suspicion," Mayor Coleman A. Young of provincial Detroit.

It was good that Young finally got around to speak to such a body with so many persons who have such impact on Detroit and the rest of the region, and it was good that Young could quip, "Now that I'm on the subject, I'm to much laughter. It was bad that it took him four years to get around to it."

What he said showed little statesmanship.

In the same way he saw decentralization of industry "as a union-busting plot." Young viewed urban freeways as an invitation to people to decentralize—a bad thing to him.

He saw no need for a regional government system to sell water because Detroit could do it. As far as governing the Detroit Water Board is concerned, "I say one gallon, one vote, and how many gallons you guys got?"

Young thought that was pretty funny, ignoring the fact that Detroit is getting its water from Port Huron these days, and further ignoring the fact that suburbanites let their factory smoke blow into Detroit and let their sewage drain down hill to Detroit, if they choose.

The present system of one city of 1.3 million con-



Tim Richard

trolling the water supply of a region of three million is plainly crazy, and Young intends to keep it that way.

YOUNG REWROTE history, professing to see a "traditional American" value in very local government. One could have referred him to the Federalist Papers Nos. 34 (Hamilton) and 38 (Madison) to show that unity is the name of the game when it comes to finding strength to solve big problems.

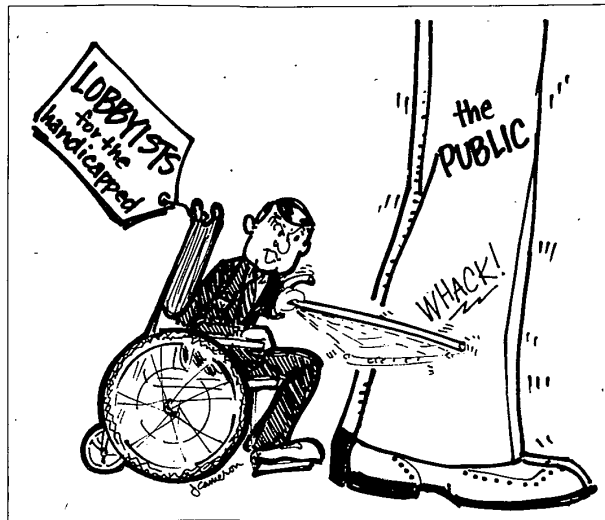
Young plainly has contempt for SEMTA, the transportation authority. Of the \$600 million the federal government promised SEMTA, he said:

"The City of Detroit was the impetus for that \$600 million. It was for the city, not to be spread all over the region." In other words, it's OK to collect taxes "all over the region" to build a rapid transit system, but all the money and all the private investment associated with it are to go inside Detroit, in Young's view. His raging selfishness boggles the mind.

After Young spoke, Kent Mathewson, MF president, made a brief report in which he referred to "the real city." By this he meant the entire, interrelated, urbanized area of southeast Michigan. Only when one thinks of this "real city" can one begin to wrestle with the problems.

But Young didn't hear Mathewson. Young didn't hear what the rest of us had to say about his narrow views of water and sewers and transportation.

For as soon as he was done speaking, Young and his entourage walked out of the room. Communication to him is a one-way street, with the words flowing outward. Cooperation to him is another one-way street, with the money coming inward.



## One worthy but small lobby costs everyone a lot

When we talk about special interest groups, we usually visualize Big Labor trying to convince Congress that special labor laws should be passed, or Big Business trying to get special tax concessions, or oil barons trying to protect their depletion allowance.

In reality, most special interest groups are organizations we equate with motherhood, so whether special interest groups are good or bad depends on whose ox is being goaded.

For example, the biggest special interest group in Michigan is education. They are always looking for more dollars from the legislature, and their lobbyists are school teachers and local school board members.

We are supposed to be a democracy where the majority rules. Special interest groups rally their forces to see that the minority is not forgotten and, in most cases, try to get special privileges not given to the majority.

Because of the nature of these groups, every time you say something that isn't supportive, you are accused of attacking something precious by honorable local people who are working hard for a worthwhile project. This ability to cut down their opponents is probably their greatest strength in getting special recognition.

TAKE THE HANDICAPPED, for example. They amount to less than 10 per cent of the population, and within this category you have all kinds of people with everything from hearing problems to being confined to bed.

A very few are confined to wheelchairs.

Because of intense lobbying, parking spaces are now required to be reserved in prime spots in every public area. Most of the time, these spots are empty because there aren't enough handicapped people driving around to use them. Municipalities are spending billions of dollars—for curb cuts so that the handicapped can cross the street, for elevators instead of stairs in buildings the handicapped never use, and so forth.

Public transportation companies are being



forced to spend an extra \$10,000 per bus for wheelchair lifts, yet few handicapped persons who need these lifts use buses. This is about 10 per cent of the cost of a large bus and means, on a limited budget, fewer buses will be purchased.

It is not that we shouldn't be sympathetic to those less fortunate than the general populace.

Campaigns to lure the handicapped are good because they encourage making productive people who might otherwise be a financial burden on society if they didn't have a job.

BUT THE NEW requirements smack of overkill. Because the lobbyists for the handicapped have achieved a certain momentum, anything they ask for seems to be given without consideration of priorities.

Instead of being reactive to every demand, a much more reasonable approach should be taken to satisfy the needs of the handicapped.

If government were to spend the same amount of money it is spending for this special interest group on every worthwhile group that has needs, it would be bankrupt very quickly.

Special concessions should be meted out in relationship to real need, not on how loud the voice is espousing the cause.

The handicapped as a group may be large in number, but they are small in percentage, and only a small percentage of their groups are getting the benefits of all the spending.

If we keep up on these programs, there will not be enough for other worthwhile programs.



By W. W. EDGAR

## The Stroller

### Old dream comes true

Years ago when the Stroller was a kid in short pants and experiencing his first exposure to what the Pennsylvania Dutch called "book learning," he was handed a book which was designed to aid him in writing.

It was what the teachers called a "copy book." It was about the size of a letter-head. At the top of each page was a famous statement, and the remainder of the sheet was just a series of lines.

We were told to copy these sayings in as nice a Spencerian hand as we could. And we would be graded on how close we came to matching them.

Among these model sayings that come to mind are:

"He who runs may read."

"The wheels of the gods grind slowly."

"Make haste slowly."

TWO OF THESE came to mind the other morning when the State Highway Commission officially opened the Jeffries Freeway through Detroit, Redford Township and Livonia. It will connect with the coming M-14 Freeway at Haggerty Road and continue to Ann Arbor and points west.

The one that caused the Stroller to smile said, "The wheels of the gods grind slowly." He smiled because back in the days when he was copying that line in his school book, nobody in Pennsylvania ever had heard of the Michigan Highway Commission.

During the ribbon-cutting ceremonies that opened the new road, it was stated that an apology was due because the opening was two years over due.

Two years???

Would you believe the road was in the minds of the commission 25 years ago?

The memory of an evening in the spring of 1952 came though the mist of years.

AT THE TIME the new City of Livonia was celebrating its second birthday. The chamber of com-

merce, eager to make a name for itself, decided to show off a bit. It decided to invite all the utility companies, highway groups and business moguls to a meeting with the idea of letting them know that the new city provided great opportunities for them. It so happened that the Stroller was secretary of the chamber and, with the other officers, looked forward with enthusiasm to the meeting.

With an opportunity to give their view of the city, these representatives almost put us to shame. They knew more about Livonia and what lay beneath the surface than we had ever dreamed. They told us how the utilities would be installed, where other things would be placed—in fact, they had the entire 35 square miles of the city laid out.

When the meeting ended, the Stroller sought out the representative of the State Highway Commission and asked: "When are you fellows going to do something to Plymouth Road between here and Ann Arbor, just as you did on the other side toward Jackson?"

"Never," came the reply. "There are too many hills and curves in it. It would be too costly, especially when you have another road."

BY NO STRETCH of the imagination, the Stroller replied, could you be thinking of Schoolcraft Road. Then he added, very firmly, "It doesn't start anywhere and it doesn't go anywhere."

To which the highway commission representative smiled and said, "It could."

The Stroller replied, "I should live so long."

It was ironic that the highway opened during the week of the Stroller's 80th birthday, for it was a victory on both sides—the highway commission had given some prestige to Schoolcraft, and the Stroller had lived to see it.

Then, as the traffic went speeding by, he remembered the other line in the copy book: "Make haste slowly."

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## Farmington Observer

Steve Bafnaby

Editor

22170 West Nine Mile

Southfield, MI 48075

(313) 952-5400

John Reddy, General Mgr.

Arthur Langer, Advertising Director Fred J. Wright, Circulation Mgr.