

editorial opinion

Make resolves count for better community

With Christmas shopping out of the way, local folks are doing another kind of shopping—for New Year's resolutions.

It's a trifle sad to hear about them the morning after, because one knows in advance that next year the same kinds of resolutions will be made again and not so much broken as neglected.

The kind of resolution we're talking about is the one where you promise to "turn over a new leaf," quit nagging your spouse, be more attentive to sermons, take better care of the yard, be kinder to clods who irritate you... that kind of resolution.

The reason those usually aren't observed is that they call for a major change in your character, and people's characters change slowly. Few of us experience the powerful conversions St. Paul and Scrooge went through.

So we herewith offer for your mature consideration a New Year's resolution you can keep, usually very easily. What's more, your community will be the better for it.

RESOLVE TO WORK voluntarily on one community project that will change the face of the town you live in. Just one. Don't plan to reform the place overnight. Just do one thing that may require only an afternoon or a day's work.

Join a civic organization, and throw yourself into one of its projects, such as an annual civic festival. The shopping list of organizations is endless: American Association of University Women, Business and Professional Women, League of Women Voters, Rotary, Jaycees, Kiwanis, Lions, Exchange, Jayteens—if we missed one, we apologize.

The environment isn't getting the kind of enthusiastic support it received a few years ago. Is there going to be a river cleanup? Help out for a

half-day or so. How about building a nature trail through the thick woods in a local park? Maybe cutting fallen logs out of a river would make it canoeable again.

Do your household a favor in the books department. Have you some books that you have long thought valuable but, truthfully, you haven't looked at in five years? Don't scrap them. Donate them to the library or the AAUW book sale.

Are there weatherbeaten, torn political signs that a candidate didn't take down after the election? Invest an hour, and you can clean up an entire lot; another hour, two lots. Forget that they're not your signs or property. Make the old town look good just for the sake of it.

POLITICS? A noble avocation when practiced by noble citizens with noble motives. Start easy by helping out a good candidate for city council or school board, or maybe an educational millage campaign. Don't plan to save the town by running the show yourself, but invest one or two evenings collecting petition signatures, distributing literature, sending out postal cards.

You belong to a church? Your subdivision has a civic association? Get involved in one project just one, for a half-day or a day.

Go to a city council, township board, school board or community college board meeting. Just one. Just to see who's there and how they operate. Just one evening.

One warning: You may be thanked profusely, and you may be named citizen of the year, or no one may seem to notice. No matter. You will have done something, your community will be better off for it, and you will feel better, quietly and inwardly.

Who's the suburban Santa?

For Troy, a new \$2.2 million community services building. For Livonia, the biggest plum—a new \$18 million city hall. For Canton Township, a new \$2.4 million township hall. For Westland, a \$2.4 million community building and \$1.2 million to help with an industrial park. For Redford Township, \$1.6 million to help renovate township hall and the district court building.

Who was playing Santa Claus last week? The federal government, specifically the Economic Development Administration in the Department of Commerce. EDA is administering the \$2 billion Congress appropriated last summer for public works.

The political behavior in Washington was extremely strange. News of the forthcoming grants came from routine publication in the Federal Register.

Phil Hart

Senator same as the man

Should auld acquaintance be forgot
And never brought to mind?
As the last few slim days of this year 1976 spin away from us for ever, it is a time for reflection in mingled sadness and pride on the passing of an old friend.

Phil Hart, United States senator for 18 years and quite possibly the most decent, gentlemanly public servant this state ever produced, died on Sunday.

In an age when politics increasingly is the prerogative of the manipulator, the schemer and the egomaniac, this good man gave us a public career whose outstanding quality was its transcendent humanity.

PHIL HART died at home with that same measure of decency and dignity with which he had gone about his business in the Senate, becoming that body's most respected member, its conscience, and its ranking model of gentle, yet firm, courage. He refused hospitalization during his illness; he did not want his life artificially prolonged; he listened on the last day to Christmas carols of love and peace sung by his children while he held the hand of his wife. And then he died peacefully.

He had very great respect for the Senate he served so well, but Phil Hart had a greater sense of frustration at its inability to cope humanely and tenderly with the pressing problems of people.

"We can't even get something done around here when no one is against it," he said once. "Who opposes feeding the hungry? No one. So why don't we stop hunger? Who is opposed to stopping the deterioration of our waters and our air? No one. So why isn't something done?"

UNIQUELY for a politician, Phil Hart bridged the gap between the private man and the public career with a uniform fabric and concern that simultaneously revealed the greatness of the man and augmented the effectiveness of the politician.

This gap—the schizophrenia of the politician—between the real person and the public image is surely at the heart of the mistrust in the public in their political leaders. It thereby constitutes the greatest single danger to our system of democratically elected institutions.

Newspapers, TV, commentators and gossip columnists make their livings trying to probe into this gap between the real and the image, but unless a politician is willing to stand naked and re-



Observation Point

by PHILIP H. POWER

vealed before all as the kind of person he really is in public and in private, such efforts will be only of superficial use.

Phil Hart stood before us as the senator and as the man, conungled, colorminus, honest and decent and true.

Let's lift a cup of kindness yet
To days of auld lang syne.

Certain punishment can slow crime

I'm tired of hearing about Gary Gilmore's daily exploits in the death chambers in Utah.

This man murdered two people during robberies, and yet some people in the world feel sorry for him because he has been sentenced to be shot to death by a firing squad. Others feel sorry for him because he keeps trying to kill himself.

His antics have brought the question of capital punishment before the American people for all the wrong reasons. The man seems mentally off, and this raises serious questions of whether he should be sentenced to die.

In Michigan we have not had capital punishment for a long, long time.

The justification is that taking a life because the murderer took a life is uncivilized, cruel and inhumane treatment.

Sociologists feel it is better to rehabilitate than destroy.

It is pagan to call for an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

BUT MORE PEOPLE are being murdered today than ever before. How can we stop it? The majority of homicides are committed by acquaintances or relatives of the victim, and it is

THE BUCKS STOP HERE.



Road commissions' transit plan is balanced, at least

Granted, the road commissions of Wayne and Oakland counties had a lot of gall opposing the "alternative" transit plan as a direct rival of one proposed by the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA).

SEMTA, after all, is the agency that will be in the public transportation business in the seven counties of this region. SEMTA is the agency that has been working with origin and destination surveys, bus mergers, broad plans, detailed plans, federal grants, legislative funding—you name it.

What's more, the plan which the road commissions unveiled Dec. 21 was an extremely broad outline with little underlying data. Their origin and destination survey was done in so little time that SEMTA people shook their heads in quiet disbelief.

Finally, it's apparent the road folks have an ulterior motive. The trend in transportation funding is to lump road money and public transit money in the same pot. If SEMTA's \$1.12 billion plan is implemented, it will cost one-third more than the road folks' \$225 million plan, and the cause of road building would presumably lose the difference.

YET THE ROAD commissions have performed a useful service by challenging some of the thinking going on in SEMTA as well as in UMTA, the Urban Mass Transit Administration of the friendly federal government.

The "preliminary plan" which SEMTA submitted in October—and which one suspects is far from preliminary—would funnel 82 per cent or more of the billion-plus bucks into Detroit. Any improvements to public transportation in the suburbs are in low-cost programs.

Two powerful political forces were at work there.

President Gerald R. Ford, anxious to avoid a direct transition into Detroit's budget and a New York-style bailout, had his administration approve \$600 million in funding for SEMTA's Detroit-mostly plan, with the politically conservative proviso that private investment must accompany it.

Closer to home, Detroit Mayor Coleman A. Young has grasped at anything that would pump



money into Detroit and only Detroit. The SEMTA plan suits his political purposes exactly.

THE ROAD COMMISSIONS, on the other hand, offered a light rail system in contrast to SEMTA's heavy rail.

Where SEMTA would build only 20 miles in two corridors, the road folks would set up 55 miles in three corridors.

Where 100 per cent of the rapid transit money would be spent inside Detroit's city limits under the SEMTA plan, the road folks' light rail system would put 46 per cent of the track mileage in Detroit, 16 per cent in suburban Wayne County, 28 per cent in Oakland County and eight per cent in Macomb.

In other words, what the road folks have designed is a multi-county transportation plan. What SEMTA is proposing is a Detroit economic redevelopment plan with money funneled in the name of transportation.

A LOT OF US in the suburbs have been preaching the need for a regional transportation system.

We kept saying that Detroit and the suburbs are in this together; that we are an economic whole; that a transportation system serving just one city—whether it be Detroit or Farmington or Westland—wasn't going to work.

What we got from SEMTA was a "preliminary proposal" whereby one city with one-fourth of the region's population gets 19-20ths of the new money.

The road commissions, however low their motives may be, were quite correct in pointing this out.



by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

the first time these killers have been involved in a crime.

Capital punishment does nothing to dissuade this type of killing because the crime is committed during a period of passion or emotional instability, and there is no pre-thought; therefore, the seriousness of the crime or the consequence is not even taken into consideration before the act.

The only way to lessen this type of homicide is to remove dangerous weapons from the home. You can outlaw guns, but there are still knives and other instruments capable of killing.

Capital punishment has little effect on these killings.

HOWEVER, THERE ARE still a substantial number of murders that are planned or result during the perpetration of another crime.

Capital punishment can be a deterrent when people know that if they are caught, they won't spend just a couple of years in jail and then be paroled.

There is another way, however, of accomplishing the same thing without capital punishment.

Today society is plagued by the habitual criminal. He commits a crime, spends a short time in jail and is out again to commit another crime.

We have a tendency to blame judges for not locking these people up and "throwing away the key."

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