

# editorial opinion

## Shopping spree sparks annual spring torture

Gentlemen, there is hope for those of us who for centuries have been dragged along on the annual spring shopping spree.

You know what I'm talking about. Those days when your mate grabs your arm and says, "Let's go shopping for an hour or two, honey." Sounds great at first—a walk in spring air, arm in arm, just doing a little window shopping.

Window shopping, my eye. As we all know, the "two hour" shopping jaunt inevitably turns into a marathon of pure pain.

I've always hated standing in a women's clothing store waiting for someone who has decided to try on a half-dozen new fashions in the back room. There you stand, marooned in the middle of a sea of clothes racks, waiting for what seems like hours for your wife or girl friend to surface.

It makes a guy feel like a real weirdo, standing alone, swiftly shifting his eyes so as not to seem as if he's staring at any one woman.

Before long you notice the clerks are circling about like a bunch of vultures waiting for you either to steal a dress, or to put the make on an unsuspecting customer.

OF COURSE, what we're really waiting for is to get the heck out. Many times I've thought of just crawling in amongst a rack. But with my luck, the clerk with the bejeweled, horn-rimmed spectacles, ruby red lipstick and button that says "supervisor" would find me.

## Sirens: A slow job, well done

It didn't happen as fast as everyone wanted, but Oakland County is making progress on establishing a countywide system of sirens for tornado alerts.

Once again, Oakland has shown leadership in getting a job done on a broad basis, enlisting the cooperation of federal, state and local agencies to set up 120 sirens by the next tornado season.

For many centuries, church bells have relayed news or warnings across miles of villages and countryside, and individual communities have set up siren systems, but it took Oakland to come up with a system that will instantly and simultaneously warn 95 per cent of the one million people living in a 900 square mile area of impending danger.

Sue Kuhn, the Beverly Hills housewife who started the crusade, gets the lioness' share of credit, but she is quite willing to share it with County Executive Daniel T. Murphy; William Spinelli, his executive officer for operations; and

## Student drinking

### A 2d way to skin a cat

Those who would raise Michigan's drinking age from 18 to either 19 or 21 usually rely on two types of arguments.

First, they contend the accident rate for drivers aged 18-20 has soared since the age of majority was lowered in 1972. In past columns, I've tried to demonstrate that many police statistics on this subject are hoksey and unconvincing, but my mind is still open.

Second, school superintendents say they have discipline problems with 18 year olds who come to class half-looped or buy beer for younger kids.

AS THE PERSON who in 1969 sold Gov. William Milliken the idea of setting an Age of Majority requirement, I have to challenge the superintendents on their remedy.

Is the answer to take away from 18 year olds the right to drink? Or is the answer to speed up the curriculum so that kids get out of school a year or two earlier?

In selling the revised age of majority change in the early '70s, I can recall being specific on that point: Kids are maturing physically a lot faster than a century ago; brain development and mental maturity are related to physical maturity; and not only would we have to lose the legal ages of contracts, voting, jury duty, drinking, work rules and legal responsibilities, but we would also have to lower the age at which kids get out of high school.

I'm convinced we are forcing many young people to stay in school more years than they want to. I'm convinced that one reason is to keep 'em out of the labor force and reduce competition for jobs. I'm convinced another reason is to make work for teachers, a very powerful lobby.

JOHN HOLT, author of "How Children Learn" and "How Children Fail," brushed across this general topic in an article he once wrote called "School Is Bad for Children." Holt didn't specifically say the curriculum should be speeded up, but he did say this:

"To keep kids in school who would rather not

## Observation Point

by PHILIP H. POWER

### Will friendly persuasion halt TV violence?

Many parents and PTA organizations are talking these days about violence on television and its effects on children.

Although debate on the subject is very confusing and very likely to be affected by notions of self-interest, there are by now enough facts established to disturb any thinking person.

• Kids watch a lot of television. One University of Pennsylvania study reported that parents said their children watched TV an average of 2.55 hours per day, while the children watching themselves said they watched 5.88 hours daily. If the kids are right, that's more time in a seven-day week than they spend in school.

• A three-year study of television violence completed in 1972 by the Office of the Surgeon-General of the United States reported two basic findings: first, that TV violence instigates more violence among the children who watch it; second, that watching TV violence was cathartic for children.

For example, Billy Paddison, who is a fourth-grader at Livonia's Lincoln Elementary School, thinks police stories are the best kind of TV show.

"You just get used to seeing people get killed," he says.

• There is a lot of violence on TV, as if anybody didn't know that. Two MSU professors, Bradley R. Greenberg and Charles Atkin, analyzed the violence in prime time shows as well as Saturday morning cartoon shows for kids. They concluded that there were an average of 45 prosocial acts per hour in the 8-9 p.m. family hour, against an average of 42 antisocial acts per hour.

But television shows on Saturday morning, when the kids are likely to be watching TV while their parents run errands or clean out the attic, chalked up an average of 50 antisocial acts per hour against only 20 prosocial acts per hour.

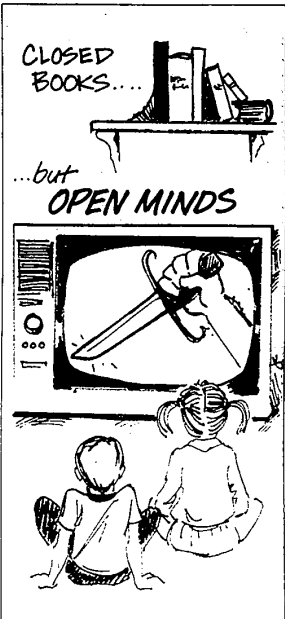
ANOTHER problem concerning parents and teachers is the degree to which watching TV dulls a child's imagination and reduces interest in reading. Teachers are reporting students who cannot understand simple stories without seeing visual illustrations of the action, and they ascribe this to watching television.

"I'd rather watch TV than read a book," says Ed Lutz, a fifth grader at Lincoln. "They show you the pictures."

Gerald Lessing and Edward Palmer of the Children's Workshop, which created "Sesame Street" and "The Electric Company," disagree. They argue their shows have successfully combined education with entertainment.

"Children expect television to be interesting," says Lessing. "and if it isn't, they don't watch."

This may be true, parents and teachers reply, but there's a big difference between "Sesame Street" and the Saturday morning cartoons or "Starsky and Hutch."



SOONER OR later, the argument is bound to come to a head.

The national Parent-Teacher Association has started a nationwide campaign to bring the problems of violence on TV to public attention. Grass roots hearings have been held in various places around the country, and the subject may well be discussed at the Michigan state PTA convention next month, according to district director Phyllis Lyons.

The PTA organization is hoping to visit officials at the three television networks to convince them to tone down violence. Hearings on the subject are under way in Washington, and although nearly everybody who testified agreed that TV violence was bad for children, nobody really knew what to do.

The PTA hopes friendly persuasion will work, but if it does not, they're prepared to think about organizing boycotts of those products which sponsor especially violent shows.

I THINK the attention directed toward TV violence makes a lot of sense. It's the first time there has been organized direct public attention toward the subtle but undeniable effect TV has on all of us.

When former vice-president Spiro Agnew attacked the news media in general and TV in particular as controlled by a small elite, he may have been wrong about the news, but he surely put his finger on a wide-spread subject of public concern.

The day when TV networks and sponsors can control the content of programs directed toward us or our children ought to be over—the sooner, the better.

Keep it up, PTA'ers!

## 'Ability to pay' taxes punishes the middle class

I spent the weekend going through the annual battle of pulling my income tax information together in preparation for filing my tax return.

Figuring out your income tax in the United States is a complicated procedure. You spend a lot less time figuring out what your income is and then applying your tax. You spend most of your time figuring out what can be used to offset income to reduce your tax.

Reformers like to call this "looking for loopholes" among the very wealthy. In reality, these deductions and exemptions have more effect on what the poor pay or don't pay than the wealthy on a percentage basis.

The biggest single "loophole" in terms of cost to the government is the exemption of \$750 per dependent of which everyone takes advantage.

What disturbs me is that the American people have accepted the philosophy that taxes should be based on "ability to pay." I have said many times in this column that the problem with ability to pay is those who have no ability to pay demand more services to be paid by those with the ability to pay, and there is no justice. Eventually you eliminate those with the ability to pay.

We end up getting more and more government for more and more taxes, but not necessarily better government.

TO SHOW YOU that the ability to pay theory has no justification for taxes, just ask the politicians who advocate it if it should be applied in the marketplace. Of course they would be against it because, with consumers rights, everyone must be treated fairly.

Ability to pay is more insidious. It takes away earned capital which could be used to create or enlarge businesses which would create new jobs, certainly a high priority in this day and age.

"America is the greatest country in the world, and it didn't get that way because of socialist concepts. It was built on the principle of government of the people, by the people, for the people."

## Eccentricities

by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

And it was built on the principle that capitalists produce jobs. It was built on the principle that the person who worked hardest got the biggest rewards.

America is not a country of the very rich and the very poor. It is a country of predominantly middle class people. Because of our inheritance tax laws, it is a country of very little inherited wealth.

It is also a land of opportunity where everybody has the chance to gain an education and to use his skills to become a success.

THE ABILITY to pay philosophy attacks the middle class because the small percentage of the very wealthy shield their income through tax loopholes. Inflation has pushed the middle class taxpayer into higher tax brackets without any increased spending power.

We have seen countries like England go in the socialist direction. We have also seen what has happened to the economy of England and the life style of its people. Under the English tax system, all income over \$15,000 is taxed at the rate of 83 per cent. It is easy to see why businessmen have no great desire to expand. It says the incentive to perform, and the results are obvious.

Why is it every time we get tax "reform" from Washington it ends up hurting the procedures of the country?

If Congress keeps this up, eventually there will be no one left to pay their increased salaries.

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