



Hors d'oeuvres by Lynn Orr

Equal rights begin at home

A feminist Farmington Hills councilwoman is attempting to bring the Equal Rights Amendment issue to what's been referred to as Sleepy Holm.

Never before has that caption seemed so apt. The headless horseman himself would fail to inspire such fear and sarcasm as the resolution scheduled for debate at tonight's meeting.

Councilwoman Joanne Smith will ask her colleagues to adopt a resolution banning the funding of conferences and conventions for city employees if the meetings are held in states that haven't ratified the ERA.

You would think Ms. Smith was asking the city to adopt the ERA itself. That might not be a bad idea, and the latest brouhaha certainly proves that the city could use its own version of equal rights.

"Inappropriate" is one of the milder pans of Ms. Smith's idea. Why should a town of 50,000 get involved in a national issue? Why should city employees be penalized for the actions of other states? Why should these employees forego educational and beneficial trips for the sake of ideals?

IF THOSE questions have to be asked, it seems highly appropriate that the council support the national issue as well as begin some education about equal rights at home.

Farmington Hills has a long way to go in that department. Although voters have elected a majority of women to the council, the city itself has shown few indications by its hiring practices that affirmative action means anything.

One female police officer in a force of more than 50; an obvious lack of female directors and the lat-

est lack of sensitivity to the whole equal rights issue proves that city employees need some direction from the policy makers.

I WOULD hope this resolution is unanimously approved by the council, even if it costs them some bucks to do it.

History proves that the ERA is necessary. Ask City Atty. Paul Bibeau or John Donahue why women needed a constitutional amendment to get the vote if the constitution guaranteed women's rights. Ask them about the Supreme Court's decisions regarding women's suffrage before the 19th amendment.

If the council wants to know about equal rights in city hall, ask these questions:

- What's the top salary a woman makes in Farmington Hills?
• Who drives city cars?
• Who makes the coffee in the various departments?

There's a lot of rationales for the kinds of answers you'll hear. Women haven't been qualified or interested; it takes time to change past practice, etc., etc., etc. Fortunately the voters didn't need as much time to change their attitudes as city officials.

The bottom line is there for anyone to read. Equal rights starts at home. What better way to get that message across than to take a stand on the national issue?

IF THE resolution fails, let's take a collection for a Hills Headless Horseman.

Editor's Notebook

Law punishes the innocent

By W. MICHAEL MILLER

At 9 a.m. on April 6, the Michigan House Judiciary Committee will begin discussion on a bill that would reduce penalties for use and possession of marijuana.

The bill (SB 1361) is similar to one that state representatives defeated last year and, according to some in the house, another close vote is expected.

It matters not whether the vote is passed or not. It does matter if the bill is passed. It should be passed.

There is a whole segment of the population, that is quite frankly surprised whenever it is reminded that smoking marijuana is a criminal offense—one that can send a person to jail, directly to jail, without passing Go, and certainly without collecting \$200.

No, it is not a game. And in more cases than not, it is a law defended by many parents that sends many children to jail for smoking something that grows out of the ground, much like cigarette tobacco.

Marijuana is purely and simply an herb that has a capability of altering one's conscious state of mind to a less destructive degree than alcohol.

Unfortunately, marijuana, like so many of the other trappings of the 1960's counterculture, has been the victim of a lot of bad press. There are still those who consider marijuana in the same category as student demonstrations, dropping out and love-ins.

CERTAINLY, it was a part of the youth culture of the last decade, but those who participated in that culture are now members of society, and a large number may have given up a life style, but they did not give up the recreational stimulant—marijuana—that was a part of that life style.

As a result, one can no longer categorize those who smoke marijuana as "nerf-do-wells." Smokers include a wide cross-section of doctors, lawyers, accountants, homemakers, wealthy people, poor people and middle class people.

It is a rare person who can say that

he has no friend or close acquaintance who smokes marijuana. Those who smoke do not advertise it, but they are legion. It is a reasonable estimate that a third of the population of Michigan has smoked marijuana at least once, while about 20 per cent smoke it on an occasional basis.

As time goes on, these numbers grow in spite of the negative publicity that has characterized "journalistic" attitudes toward marijuana over the last 15 years. These media attitudes are changing, but only because the attitudes of everyone toward marijuana are changing, in spite of the negative publicity.

The campaign against marijuana was carried on by individuals and organizations, many with connections to the liquor industry, manifesting itself in terms of "scientific reports" which indicated that marijuana did everything from shrinking one's brain to causing breasts to grow on men.

THE FINE PRINT in these studies told that for the sake of the experiments, massive doses of marijuana were used—more than 100 times the amount used by the average smoker.

Using these kind of unrealistic test conditions, it would not be difficult to prove that drinking water can cause death. There was, in fact, a woman in Florida last year who committed suicide by drinking more than 70 glasses of water in a period of less than six hours.

The current issue of Science Digest, published by the Hearst Corp., reports the results of a study of the effects of marijuana on driving.

According to the writer of the report, Dr. I.R. Rosengard of the Illinois Research Hospital in Chicago, "Marijuana is highly dangerous if used before or during the use of an automobile."

"If it were legal," he said, "and use became widespread, accident rates would triple. It never should be legalized."

But no one is calling for the legalization of marijuana—only to elimi-

nate the criminal penalties associated with its use.

And probably no one is more aware of the danger of smoking marijuana and driving a car than is the average marijuana smoker. Unlike alcohol, marijuana does not induce the sense of bravado that causes a person not in control of his faculties to tempt fate by driving.

Using Rosengard's like of reason, it would make sense for the government to assess criminal punishment for use of alcohol as well as for use of marijuana.

AFTER ALL, of the 365,000 automobile accidents in Michigan in 1976, nearly 60,000 of those accidents involved drinking drivers. In other words, approximately 16 per cent of the accidents involved drinking of alcohol.

However, it is impractical to apply the criminal code to the use of marijuana or to the use of alcohol. Prohibition in the 1920s and '30s did not seriously deter drinking, it affected only the quality of alcohol that was commonly available.

Criminal laws intended to discourage use of marijuana have been greeted only by more widespread use of the herb from one year to the next—and in the bargain, the price of marijuana has increased by 10 times from what it was in the mid-'60s.

No one is suggesting that anyone else should smoke marijuana. That is one's personal business, as much as any other choice one makes in life that does not affect or inhibit the personal freedoms of others.

But until state representatives can take a reasonable look at the quantifiable facts that indicate that marijuana does not grow breasts on men or shrink brains, then those who smoke marijuana and are not wise enough to avoid the law will be persecuted.

Until the lawmakers in Lansing can look hard at the practical facts that indicate the only harm caused by marijuana is that people are sent to jail for smoking it, then the state of personal freedoms in Michigan is less than adequate.



Hate graffiti

A garbage mentality shows itself at Hunters Ridge, Orchard Lake and Fourteen Mile, Farmington Hills. This epithet, "Hitler Are King, Kill Jews" and swastikas plus other hate slogans are strewn across this wooden fence. It's sick and something needs to be

done to educate children that Nazism isn't a viable alternative in this, or any other society. But experts agree that teenage middle class children are turning more conservative and find bigotry acceptable. (Staff photo by Harry Maute)

"Between the lines"

by Carl Stoddard

TV: did we ask for it?

Television is the most pervasive element in many of our lives. It is the one thing most of us have in common. It is the idiot relative we have invaded into our homes.

The tube entertains us. It informs us. It comforts us with its banal patter when we're lonely or depressed. It is always there, ready to fill the void between our ears morning, noon and night.

It has given us Fred Flintstone and Lee Harvey Oswald, space flights and "Star Trek," situation comedies and probing commentaries. And, of course, it has thrown in a few billion commercials hawking everything from beer to Buicks and the U.S. Marines to feminine deodorants.

That's television. You can love it or hate it, but it's hard to ignore—not that many of us try. According to the latest ratings, a typical Detroit TV station beams its way into 1.5 million homes a week.

All the stations offer their own unique blend of programs culled from network offerings, reruns, old movies and locally produced programs. All are attempts by the stations to "give the viewers what they want."

During visits to various local television stations, station staffers told me they are attempting to do just that by offering "alternative programming."

BY THEIR definition, alternative programming means shows that differ from what is shown on competing stations. They have explained to me how reruns of television shows are true alternatives, but I didn't catch the significance.

I guess years of television viewing have blurred my ability to discern the difference between a first run showing of "Quark" and a rerun of "Lost in Space." Nor can I see the difference between an old second-rate movie on one channel and a made-for-television movie on another.

In short, television is television as rare as tough questions on Dinah Shore's show, and forays into intelligence are even rarer.

To be honest, it's tough to fill every hour of every day with stimulating programs. Nor should stations be expected to do that. There is a place for silly, trivial and childish programs. But that's not supposed to be the primary purpose of television. At least I hope not.

But the networks and the stations keep pounding away at the old adage that they're giving us what we want. I don't believe that. Instead, they seem to be giving us choices between lesser evils. You can watch "Kojak," "Police

Editor: As a stockholder of the Michigan National Bank Corp., I agree with the decision of Federal Judge Ralph Guy and feel that the consumer is not forgotten.

It may be true an individual may reside in one area and work in another. However, they have many opportunities to conduct their banking needs. In most instances today, we live in a credit card and check writing society and many persons do not carry too much out of pocket cash on their person.

Therefore, most banking is done by mail and the United States Postal Service has many deposit boxes where a person can transact any business by mail. In short, a bank in this manner has as many branch offices as there are mail drop boxes.

It is quite evident Michigan National Bank is trying to capture the Michigan banking market for their own personal gain. I, as stated in my first sentence, am a stockholder, and feel any depos-

Joe will be missed

Editor: May we express a very special thanks to everyone who made our brother Joseph's life in Plymouth such a rewarding one for him, to the police who always kept a brotherly eye on him; to the shop keepers who always made sure he received what he wanted; to all the friends he loved so dearly at the Old Village Restaurant; the children who always said, "Hello Joe;" and to the Observer which gave him a send-off worthy of the greatest.

Advertisement for Farmington Observer, Successor of the Farmington Enterprise. Includes contact info for Steve Barnaby, Editor, and John Reddy, General Mgr.

tor has all kinds of opportunities to bank by mail and with the late auto tellers that have evening services to conduct business.

I feel your Hank Hogan ("Old protection law stifles banking," March 9 issue) is thinking in terms of this newspaper with your 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. hours and no Saturdays. This is not true with Michigan National Bank who is going in reverse by being open Saturdays as well when most of the nation is on a five-day work basis.

In short, with the many conveniences a consumer has, there is no necessity for Michigan Bank's type of operation. If an individual does not like to bank by mail or use the evening auto teller or Saturday banking, I am certain a bank must be located near his or her employment that they could become a depositor of.

We should be thankful we have an attorney general and a commissioner of financial institutions to watch out for the welfare of the community to see we do not end with only one bank

throughout the state and thus create a monopoly. I am under the impression that Mr. Hogan is taking his stand since they are an advertiser and not because of his knowledge of banking since this writer is also a professional banker.

GEORGE K. KIRK, Southfield

She likes sidewalks

Editor: The homeowners' halting the sidewalk issue on the south side of Grand River (between Gill and Halstead) reported in the Observer prompts this letter:

Sidewalk: (Webster Dictionary) The paved path for foot traffic beside a street.

Positive: • A marvelous direct route to local stores, Farmington council meetings, library, churches, theater, etc.

• Using non-motorized facilities (i.e. walking, jogging, biking, roller skating) will help keep one physically fit and save energy and money (gas and oil in the automobile).

• Can a new system of protective lines be initiated to protect the pedestrian from the 50-55 m.p.h. automobile?

• Are there 100 homeowners in the Chatham Hills area? If so, the cost of \$8,000 would equal \$80 per family—reasonable for the convenience of a non-motorized route.

I hope Farmington Hills gets on the sidewalk bandwagon.

MARJORIE COLURAN, Farmington Hills