

# editorial opinion

## On senior housing

### Farmington gives lesson

What a difference a few miles make. Take the cities of Farmington, Farmington Hills, Southfield and Birmingham, for instance. While the latter three cities' residents and politicians are ripping each other apart over senior citizen and low-income housing, Farmington goes about its quiet way and soon will have a senior housing complex.

City of Farmington residents should be proud of their legislators and administrators. The recall fever and fear and hate epithets are absent from Farmington's movement to take care of its senior citizens.

Many times persons joke over the "quiet" little city, which seemingly lets the world pass by. But let's compare records.

- Farmington Hills politicians and residents have become bitterly divided over the issue—the worst division since the early 1970s busing flap. Court battles and expensive elections loom before the issue is decided, in a city which is so divided that it elected two new councilmen on the basis of opposition to high-rise construction and another, the second top vote getter, on the basis of his support for senior citizen housing.
- IN SOUTHFIELD, two councilmen were defeated for their support of senior housing.
- In Birmingham, voters threw out three councilmen who favored senior citizen housing and, in the same breath, defeated two proposals which

would have provided senior citizen housing. Then we come to little, old Farmington. City Mgr. Bob Deadman, with the blessing of the council, went out and studied the workable options of senior housing which avoid the complexities of low-income housing and won't cost the city a red cent.

Result: A very important need will be met—housing for senior citizens.

The lesson to be learned from all this is competent leadership.

While the "sophisticated" cities cheat their senior citizens by petty political infighting, the City of Farmington leadership has stepped ahead of the pack and reaped significant results.

It's a shame that the senior housing proposals lost in Birmingham. It only means that the elderly of Birmingham will be cheated by a community which they helped to build.

It also means that other senior housing complexes, like Farmington's, will be swamped by long waiting lists of those who truly need a place to live.

Housing for the elderly is one of the most important issues of our times. Every governmental agency is to be held responsible for providing for this ever-growing need. But this can only be done through leadership—the kind that exists in the City of Farmington.

STEVE BARNABY

## Why one generation pays off another

Ask any 10 persons at or near Social Security age whether they really earned the benefits they are about to receive. Ten out of 10 will probably say "yes," emphatically.

That was the whole idea of Social Security back in the New Deal. Folks could retire in dignity. They wouldn't have to rely on welfare or charity.

A benevolent authority in Washington would extract a bit from the first \$3,000 of your wages and put it in a fund; the fund would be used to finance the federal debt; the interest earned on that fund plus new contributions would provide honest and deserving workingfolks a basic pension-type benefit to retire on.



Tim Richard

most retirees are getting more than their contributions would justify."

How, then, did we get into such an undignified mess?

One culprit is inflation — politicians who bought public office by raising benefits but not raising Social Security taxes sufficiently. Remember that fund that was supposed to earn interest and help pay benefits? It isn't there. It was never accumulated.

WHAT SOCIAL Security really is, according to MacNaughton, is neither welfare nor an insurance-type annuity.

"It is an inter-generational transfer program. Taxes levied on present employees and employers are used to provide benefits to a previous generation of workers," he says.

Not many persons would have the courage to say it out loud, but it's the truth.

What should be done about it? U.S. Rep. Bill Ford (D-Westland), from the 15th District, is co-sponsor of a bill to pay some benefits out of the general fund, which in effect means out of income taxes.

Others want to raise the tax on the employer, which is a joke on the worker because his labor still has to justify that cost.

Others say raise the wage base... or don't pay benefits until folks are 68 or 70... or don't tie benefits to inflation...

The proposals are endless. I won't explore them here. The point is that it's time to recognize honestly that most retirees will get more benefits than they paid for.

It takes magnificent courage to tell those 10 persons they haven't really earned the benefits they're collecting. Nevertheless, a few magnificently courageous souls are beginning to say it.

DONALD S. MacNAUGHTON, president of Prudential Insurance Co. of America, recently gave the Detroit Economic Club some sharp-pencil calculations about earnings, taxes and benefits:

"Consider a man who first became covered under Social Security on Jan. 1, 1937, at age 26, who always earned the maximum wage covered by Social Security, who retired on Jan. 1, 1976, at age 65.

"He paid into OASDI taxes totaling \$6,217 over 39 years. His monthly benefit is \$364, so he gets his

## Voice of spring

There are no leaves on the trees. Robins are few, warm and balmy. The grass is brown. Trout season is a few weeks away.

What time is it? Baseball time, of course.

Or perhaps we should say Commercial Baseball. Even children, who are reputed to lack judgment and experience, aren't playing full-fledged games of baseball in the fields. Their activity so far is confined to games of catch on the sidewalks and streets. It's too cold and muddy for a baseball game.

Except in the Commercial Baseball industry, that is. The season that used to begin past mid-April has been pushed further and further forward on the calendar. How anything except an intrusion. The professional basketball playoffs are still forthcoming, and the Stanley Cup hockey playoffs are coming soon. Granted, the hockey season may be a little over-extended, but they have the excuse that they're indoors.

Sportswriters, an uncritical, believing crowd where commercial sports are concerned, dutifully record the goings-on of Commercial Baseball at this early date as if it were the most natural thing in the world. Well, speaking with the judgment and experience of kids in the streets, we say it's too cold for Commercial Baseball. Come back in a few weeks, gents.

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## Government studiosly fuels inflation

The No. 1 concern on American minds, according to a Harris poll, is inflation, and it should be.

The cost of living has increased close to 75 per cent over the last 10 years, which means that if your income hasn't increased accordingly, you've lost ground in trying to maintain your standard of living.

If your income has kept pace, then you are in a higher tax bracket and may still have less buying power in your pocket.

THE MAJOR CAUSE of inflation in the United States is federal government deficit spending. When the government overspends, it borrows money, which allows the financial community to create money by loaning against governmental securities.

When there is more money produced, it becomes worth less.

Prices also go up if manufacturers are forced, because of governmental regulation, to add things to their products or factories that don't, in fact, increase productivity.

We have seen the prices of automobiles increase dramatically the last several years because of meeting safety and emissions standards and more recently fuel efficiency standards. Yet the users don't find the operating of these cars more productive or efficient because fuel costs have increased.

We have seen steel and paper prices go up because of pollution controls that are mandated for factories.

ECONOMISTS TELL us that the cost of living will continue to rise at a rapid rate this year because of the cost of food.

The price of food goes up and down according to supply and demand. The better the harvest, the lower the prices.

Farmers claim they have been hurt the last couple of years because their prices per unit have decreased. They have had record-breaking harvests.

Because farmers are a strong voting bloc, President Carter has proposed that the government pay farmers for not growing crops. The proposal is a subsidy of so much per acre for not growing anything.

Not even considering the number of people starving around the world, the soil bank proposal — which isn't new — will reduce the amount of food available, increasing the price per unit the farmer receives.

WHAT DOES THAT mean to us? It means food prices will go up, and the cost of living will go up — artificially, by government action increasing inflation.

It will have a double-barrelled effect because the government payment will increase the federal deficit.

Of course, subsidies to farmers are nothing new. The federal government is paying more than \$80 million for price supports to tobacco farmers, while the Federal Communications Commission has banned cigarette advertising on radio and TV because smoking tobacco could be hazardous to your health.

It gets so frustrating that we are paying people in Washington to play games to appease special interests which just hurts the people paying the bills.

If inflation is the No. 1 concern to the people of this nation, why isn't it the No. 1 concern to our elected representatives?

## Boot camp over, she enjoys spring

### through bifocals



Nor do I know how large a place in his heart Dave Craig reserves for McClellan when he was first sergeant of B Company, 11th Battalion, 4th Regiment. I do know that 32 years later, serving as maitre'd of Nicky's Idyl Wyld restaurant in Livonia, he recalls easiest that he was voted most valuable player on the fort's football team of '46.

But listen to Pvt. Mulholland, whose family has lived for 10 years on the West Bloomfield side of Fourteen Mile near Farmington Road. In doing so, remember Capt. Spranger's use of such phrases as "a five-eight bivouac in rain with temperatures in the 20s" and "live ammunition."

"I loved it," said our soldier. "It was very challenging and a lot of fun."

Next she will go to Fort Benjamin Harrison near Indianapolis for advanced individual training, and one can only wish her well. With enthusiasm like that, she belongs.

A COMPUTER WAS responsible for Mother Goose, daughter Betty and my being there.

It was the computer which two years ago spit out the name of a saxophonist from Plymouth, then on duty at the Armed Forces Music School at Little Creek, Va., as its choice to be the first male ever assigned to what until then had been the all-WAC 14th Army Band at Fort McClellan.

That was son Bob, but now men outnumber women in the 14th.

Anyway, there we were on Easter morning, shivering but proud as the band provided the music while a cloud cover held a dreary, cold mask over the outdoor sunrise services on the lawn in front of Centurion Chapel.

Three days later, when the band led the parade ground review, sunburn replaced the shivers.

Maybe there was a tear in the eye, too. There often is when the flag goes by.

But where have the years gone since that little boy at Farmington's Fairview Elementary School played his first public solo the night our friends and neighbors of Old Franklin Town held a combined Hanukkah and Christmas party? No parent ever seems to know.

Approximately 500,000 men were trained there during World War II, 30,000 more for duty in Vietnam. Its average military population now numbers about 8,000. From 1952 until 1977 it also served as the home of the U.S. Women's Army Corps, whose colors were retired last May 13.

Thousands of enlisted women and WAC officers passed through its Baltzell, Galloway, Baker and Summerral gates, and even today McClellan still has two female basic training battalions.

They were inherited when the WAC Training Center merged with the USA Military Police School to form one organization.

Just down the pike a piece, residents of Anniston are fighting municipal battles that are familiar everywhere. For instance, a lead editorial in the Anniston Star last week complained of the "commercial clutter" that has taken over "once-proud" Quintard Avenue. It asked for beautification instead of more fast-food restaurants and used car lots.

AFTER GRADUATION, I caught up with Pvt. Mulholland with the help of her company commander, Capt. Donna Spranger, who just happens to be a product of Lamphere High School in Madison Heights. The captain also holds a degree from Olivet College and soon will transfer into advanced MP training.

With what joy Tom Riordan, O&E executive editor who now calls Farmington Hills his home, remembers the rigors of his own basic training days at Fort McClellan I know not.