

editorial opinion

Hills poverty pocket needs federal help

A malnourished infant died in a motel. A man was killed in front of his home. A small house a few blocks away was gutted by fire, robbing the tenant family of its possessions and a place to live.

These incidents happened over the past two weeks in the southeast corner of Farmington Hills, where poverty is as common as a plastic wading pool. Poverty, however, didn't create the problems.

Infants die in the northern part of the city as well. Homes burn, and money doesn't restrict murder. But symptoms of trouble are prevalent in the southeast sections, where the economic escalator goes one way.

And yet opposition mounts to City Hall's plan to pump federal insulation into the structurally weakest part of town. Why?

Residents fear public housing slums, black occupancy, and deflated property values in the wake of Washington dollars. In the harsh light exposing federal failures, the fears are reasonable—but distorted.

Without some assistance, it's easy to envision the southeast section of town in the near future as a mutilated outpost of the affluent suburbs. Deteriorating housing is a major indicator of trouble ahead.

"We don't want the money with the strings attached," said former Mayor Joan Dudley, coping the popular Birmingham stance, and drawing a standing ovation to boot, from a crowd last week in city hall.

No one, however, denies that upgrading the southeast section of town requires dough—lots of it. And when it comes to money, the feds are the only game in town.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT funds via the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) reverse the current one-way channel from local taxpayers to Washington. Yet mention HUD and slums is the immediate vision.

Does it have to be that way? The Hills has problems. Washington has the money, and the hangup is strings. In this case the strings are federal regulations which require public housing as an adjunct to rehabilitation funds.

Public housing, of course, means open housing to many who forget that open housing is the law of the land, as well as common decency. The vision of Washington bureaucrats stampeding Farmington Hills with an open housing mandate set off the HUD alarms to begin with. But fear lacks reason and promotes racial bias when homeowners are threatened by public housing.

It's obvious that without some assistance, sections of the southeast end of town will continue to deteriorate. Ms. Dudley suggests that Hills taxpayers may be willing to dig into their own pocketbooks rather than go to Washington.

THAT'S a nice thought, but it won't wash in Peoria, and we doubt that Hills taxpayers will dig any deeper into already tight wallets to help the impoverished. From an economic stand, why should they?

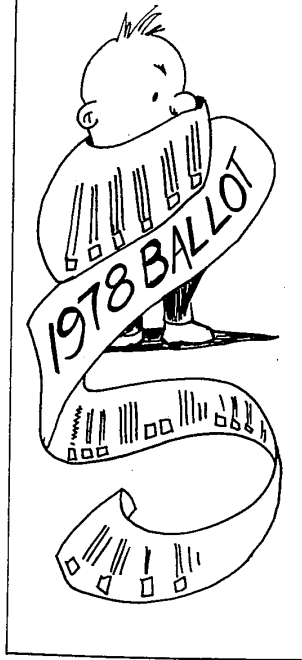
Michigan residents are paying their fair share to the IRS and the state is down on the bottom of the list when it comes to federal dollar return. Community development funds could alter that situation a tad, as well as help some families who need a hand, not a handout.

We urge residents to examine the question of low- and moderate-income housing carefully, to examine the motives of politicians on both sides of the issue.

If fear of inner city problems is real, it's time to prevent slums to prevent problems. Let cities like Birmingham, Livonia and Dearborn Heights attempt to solve problems without Uncle Sam. Let's support Farmington Hills in its attempt to get a Washington handout for itself.

LYNN ORR

TIME TO PUT THE "BEDSHEET" TO BED?



A vinery for a badling of words

Twenty-five years too late, I realize that I reacted as a typical churl the afternoon I merely laughed when the pretty girl who had the window seat beside me on a Union Pacific train going south from Sun Valley, Idaho, suddenly exclaimed, "Oh, look. What a beautiful school of deer!"

A nye of pheasants, a gaggle of geese, a badling of ducks, a fall of woodcock, or a wisp of snipe, yes. But a school of deer? What kind of talk is that?

I should have said calmly, "Mary, you need more training in venerable matters." But that was long before I discovered James Lipton from whose "An Exaltation of Larks" I am stealing liberally and admittedly this day in the hope of stimulating your interest in semantics, particularly the venerable groupings.

As Lipton puts it, "As I played the venerable game, like Tom Sawyer whitewashing his fence, I found that spectators didn't stay spectators long. If you should feel the urge, there are more brushes in the pail."

A WORD IS IN ORDER about such open use of "venerable" before you blush. I am not using it the way you had hoped.

Calling upon the published research of Lipton, author and producer of some of America's most splendid entertainments in the last decade or two, you and I will accept "venerable" as the adjective of "venery," which in Middle English signified the hunt, the chase.

Thus, the quest for a label to apply to group terms—the inaccurate "school" of deer being our starting point—means we are looking for terms of venery, or venerable terms.

A murmuration of starlings, a leap of leopards, a skulk of foxes, a knot of toads, a shoal of bass, a nest of rabbits, a richness of martens, a cowardice of cures and a pride of lions are among the examples.

LIPTON, WHO LAST year published an updated version through Penguin Books Ltd. of "An Exaltation of Larks" which first appeared in '68, has a sentence which hits home. He chooses exalted words to identify what the workaday word calls a lack of communication, the most oft-heard excuse for office goafs of our times.

Lipton says of "the encumbering toils of language" that the "most difficult feat on earth" is that of "transferring one thought from one mind to another" and quotes Proverbs 25:11. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

His is not at all a dull tome. The words flow as music, and there is room for light but caustic comment on new uses for old words, pungent new definitions for such as cool, dig, rip off. Nowhere did I find "gay" in his 138 delightful pages, but the charm of language history back into the 15th Cen-

Filling a long, long ballot: Do voters really care?

This weekend those lovable public servants, the yeopersons of the Republican and Democratic parties, will gather in nominating conventions to fill out the rest of their state tickets for the Nov. 7 election.

Their affairs—in Detroit and Lansing, respectively—will get considerably less media and public attention than the political conclave going on in Rome to elect a new pope.

The Catholic Church has approximately 17 centuries more experience at this type of thing than do Michigan's political parties, so we should expect a more interesting performance at the Vatican.

The church works through one principal head and a group called the College of Cardinals. All are highly visible. We know what they do.

THE SAME CANNOT be said, unfortunately, for what the political parties do.

They will nominate very long tickets to fill up a very long ballot. Most delegates will hardly know the persons they nominate. Fewer voters will know or care either.

In the course of an eight-year election cycle, you, the voter, will cast ballots for no less than 45 persons for statewide office: Two U.S. senators, the governor and three other administrative board members, seven supreme court justices, and eight persons for each of four education boards.

If you wish, toes in the six persons you elect to the state court of appeals (you live in one of three districts in the state), and you're up to 51 persons.

(Those are just statewide posts. I haven't mentioned your friendly local U.S. rep, state senator, state rep, city, township, village, school board, community college board, and county officers.)

THE TWO PARTIES will go at the nominating job quite differently.

Republicans will concentrate on balancing their ticket geographically. Someone from the Upper Peninsula will get something. The southwest portion of the state will cry the blues until its favorite son gets something.



Tim Richard

Democrats balance their ticket sociologically. There must be a job or two for blacks. There must be something for big labor. The Hispanic bloc must come up with a plume.

Between that balancing act, Democrats also will have to split their pie between men and women.

Folks laugh at television's Archie Bunker, whose theory was that you nominated a Jew for treasurer, because Jews are good with money, and an Irishman as auditor to keep the Jewish treasurer honest. Stop laughing. In Michigan that's almost the way they do it.

DEMOCRATS ARE crassly ethnic, in my view. In how they nominate. But I have to give them credit for often developing real issues.

Several state officeholders have been denied renomination because of their decisions on the bench or on an education board. Good ol' Joe—or Josephine—doesn't automatically win a Democratic renomination just because he or she has been around a long time and hasn't been known to steal.

Yet the plain truth is that the ballot is much, much too long. Michigan's first constitution, in 1835, made more sense. We elected a governor, lieutenant governor, state senator and state rep and appointed the rest. In the 1850 constitution, we botched it up by allowing elective offices to proliferate, and the 1908 and 1964 constitutions never made adequate repairs.

In Rome the doors are closed, but we at least know who's in charge.

In our state political conventions, it's considerably tougher to get an accounting.

through bifocals



tury makes that flight into modernism unnecessary.

IT WAS A THETA whom I knew in student days at Ann Arbor. Betty Ronal by her maiden name, who opened the Lipton door to me, semantics always having been a bond.

This occurred only recently after I had told the "school of deer" yarn while our families, being firm friends to this day, were enjoying a weekend together.

"Our language, one of the most precious natural resources in the English-speaking countries, is also a dwindling one that deserves at least as much protection as our woodlands, streams and whooping cranes," writes Lipton.

"We don't write letters, we make long-distance calls; we don't read we are talked to, in the resolute 12-year-old vocabulary of radio and television. Under the banner of Timesaving we are offered only the abbreviated, the abridged, the aborted."

Reasonableness out

Support our bill — or else!

Last December, I wrote a column about special interest groups raiding our federal and state coffers. I should have known better, but I singled out one very active group as an example.

It was not big labor or big business. It was the handicapped.

It was like attacking motherhood. I indicated in the column that we have a social responsibility to prepare the handicapped for productive jobs so that they would not be a financial burden on society.

But I felt their militancy in seeking legislation for barrier-free design in public buildings without an element of reasonableness; reserved prime parking spaces in public parking facilities far in excess of apparent actual need; and wheelchair lifts on every line haul (large) bus at a cost of \$10,000 a bus when few wheelchair users use buses and when alternate small bus programs are available—these smacked of over-kill.

THE MAIL was unbelievable. Every letter had statistics proving something. Every letter was angry. I didn't get one letter that agreed with me.

This told me I was really way off base in my views, or that those who shared my views were intimidated out of sympathy for the handicapped, and this type of legislation would continue because no one dared speak up.

I was invited to appear on a panel on Channel 7 this coming Saturday night to discuss this subject. Since it already has been taped, I can share with you my reactions from that session.

THE OTHER panelist was an articulate spokes-



by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

man for handicapped causes. He had been confined to a wheelchair since age 22 after a motorcycle accident.

He was not an agry young man, nor was he specific. It was like boxing with a shadow. He felt that everyone should support his program because someday you might find yourself handicapped.

He said handicapped people were not looking for sympathy, but equality. That, of course, is the rub. Equality can never be achieved by legislation. Legislation is a process of trying to make some more equal than others.

There are two problems with militant special interest groups:

First, by the time they reach the frustration level leading to militancy, they often lose reasonableness. They no longer seek compromise. Hence if they are successful in their efforts, they get more than they need at the expense of the taxpayer.

Second, power is like the pendulum on a clock. When a group gains too much power at the expense of others, a backlash usually follows.

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