

## editorial opinion

# Auto inspections: A brown cloud over us

The Michigan Legislature will be in a kind of "no win" position in 1980 as it takes up a dull sounding, but potentially divisive, issue called I/M.

I/M stands for auto inspection and maintenance programs. It seems that at least part of the state fails to meet standards of the federal Clean Air Act. Portions of Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties are failing to meet ozone and carbon monoxide standards, and the rest of southeast Michigan is failing to meet ozone standards.

By 1982 the state must come up with an inspection and maintenance program. In other words, besides getting checkups for the kids and shots for the dog, we will next have to line up to get our cars inspected.

To those who are bothered by impure air, it will be welcome news. A car driven 12,000 miles a year emits about 1,000 pounds of hydrocarbon and car-

bon monoxide pollution. Multiply that by 2.4 million cars and we have 1.2 million tons of the stuff floating around in our air.

If you doubt it, stand on a high hill in western Oakland County and look to the southeast. On a clear day, you will see a brown cloud to the east and south close to the horizon. And it's not a very pretty brown, either.

BUT WHY? It says the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments. There is more to this than meets the eye and nose.

SEMOG, in general assembly, argues that to pass a law to apply only to the seven southeast counties is discriminatory.

"Such discrimination could drive population and business out of the region as they seek to register cars or business vehicles elsewhere — at a time

when we need to attract new business and jobs into this area.

"Unless I/M is adopted statewide, about 48 percent of the cars in Michigan would go untested."

Richard Grow of the East Michigan Environmental Action Council reports that "typically two-thirds to three-fourths of the cars pass on first test (in other parts of the country which have I/M), and repairs to the failures run \$25 to \$50."

AND SO OUR friendly state legislators, those nice people who like to do good things for their constituents, are faced with doing something that is going to hurt.

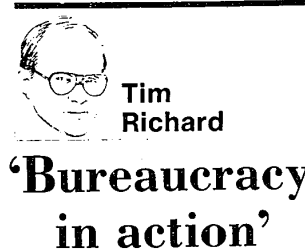
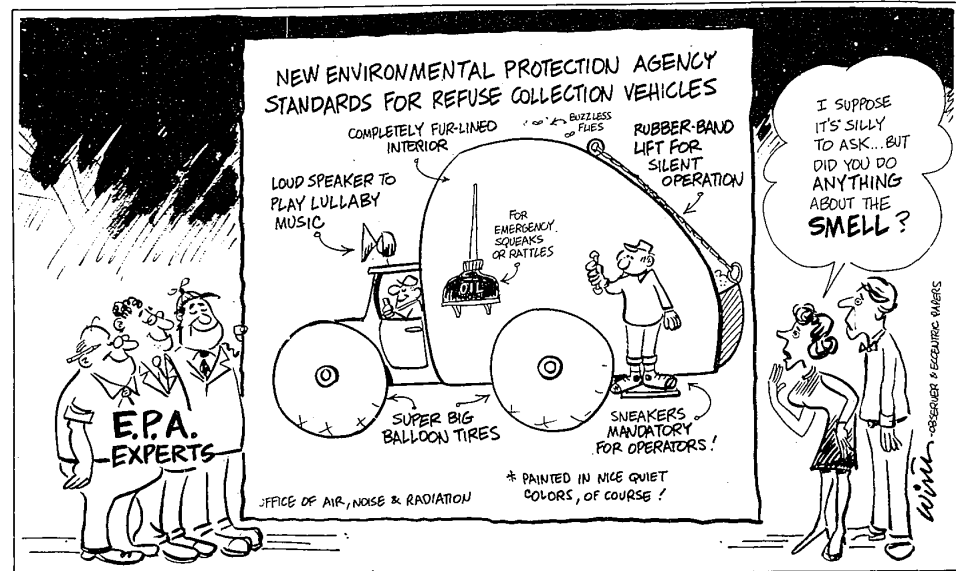
About half the population of the state is going to get hit by an I/M program, and its leaders are saying, "If we have to do it, make the rest of the state do it, too."

The western and northern half of the population will respond. "Hey, that brown cloud is over metropolitan Detroit. If they go down, why do we have to be dragged with them?"

Comes the reply from SEMCOG: "The air is also dirty in Grand Rapids, Lansing, Flint and other Michigan cities."

The last statement is a little misleading. The average person, plopped down blindfolded in a series of Michigan cities, would pick metropolitan Detroit as having the worst air. He wouldn't need federal emissions standards to tell him that.

Those of us who have travelled the Great Lake State know that southeast Michigan dwellers pay more for insurance, far more for housing and infinitely more for parking than do our fellow Michiganders. If we alone must put up with I/M, it will be nothing new.



## 'Bureaucracy in action'

We in the community newspaper business have a tendency to become "hometowners," taking the side of the local folks almost automatically in any conflict with Lansing or Washington.

Well, today we have reason to be "towners" and to think Washington is a bit daft. An area mayor forwards us this letter from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency with the comment: "Bureaucracy in action."

We'll share it with you.

"THE U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has issued standards limiting the noise levels emitted by new truck-mounted solid waste compactors, commonly referred to as refuse collection vehicles or garbage trucks, manufactured after Oct. 1, 1980.

"This regulatory action has been taken by the administrator under the authorities granted and the responsibilities imposed by the Noise Control Act of 1972, as amended by the Quiet Communities Act of 1978. The purpose of this letter is to bring to your attention the highlights and important implications of these rules.

"We believe that the following points may be of particular interest to you:

- This regulation complements the existing federal regulation, which became effective Jan. 1, 1978, requiring quieter medium and heavy truck chassis. A key reason for issuance of noise regulation for refuse collection vehicles is to extend the benefits of the reduced truck noise, by also reducing the noise of the related compaction components, to the persons adversely affected by the noise of these special-purpose vehicles.

- This regulation *does not* affect refuse collection vehicles currently in use. Trash haulers do not have to replace their fleets. The shift to quieter vehicles will begin taking place in October 1980, when newly manufactured vehicles offered for sale will have to comply with the EPA rules.

- This regulation applies after the effective dates of this rule only to new compactor bodies mounted on newly manufactured chassis.

- "People living in the cities are more likely to be disturbed by garbage truck noise than those living in suburbs or rural areas. This is because of the higher densities of population in urban areas, the longer amount of time that garbage trucks spend in front of each urban residence, and the 'canyon effect' of noise in urban streets. This regulation will provide a significant reduction in exposure to noise from garbage trucks for most urban Americans. We estimate that more than 19 million Americans are affected by noise from garbage compaction operations. We believe this regulation will result in a 74 percent decrease in the extent and severity of the noise impact by 1991.

"We have enclosed a Press Release announcing the issuance of the regulation, a copy of the Notice of Rulemaking, a Fact Sheet summarizing the major provisions of the regulation, a 'Background' that provides background information on the development of the regulation, and a list of Questions and Answers that address the major issues surrounding the regulation.

"Additional copies of the regulation, or related documents, may be obtained from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Public Information Center (PM-215), 401 M Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20460.

"Sincerely, Henry E. Thomas, Director, Standards and Regulations Division."

To this, our informant, Livonia Mayor Ed McNamara, quips:

"I understand the EPA is now considering requiring fur-lined garbage cans."

## A decade of tweeters and woofers

This time of year, columnists seem compelled to wax philosophically about the ghosts of a decade past. Worse yet, they are unable to resist the urge to throw in a couple of allegedly profound gems about the future.

Although an avid column reader, even I get nauseated by all the self-anointed soothsayers.

Looking back (always dangerous), I feel there is little over which to be philosophical. And at the risk of waxing, if learning nothing else this decade, I realize that looking forward can be just as foolish.

I GAVE UP those kind of ideas years ago after Jeanne Dixon predicted the base camp in which I was stationed in Vietnam would suddenly disappear from the face of the earth, occupants included.

We sat up all night, marinating our brains in alcohol, waiting for that singularly important event to transpire. But by dawn's early light, we were disappointed to find that we still were in Vietnam, base camp intact.

At any rate the following comments attempt to be neither philosophical nor profound. That way nobody will be able to drag this bit of yellowed newsprint from the drawer a decade from now and say, "Barnaby, you were dead wrong."

WRITER TOM WOLFE labeled the '70s as the "Me Decade." I think of it as the "Woofers and Tweeters" generation.

For the uninformed, woofers and tweeters are devices in a stereo speaker. For further explanation, ask a stereo freak.

Much of a person's status in the '70s had to do with the quality and price of his or her woofers and tweeters.

But woofers and tweeters were the bane of my existence through most of the '70s. They were of such importance to so many and meant so little to me.

Although it is unwritten in our Constitution, the minority must give polite lip service to the majority's obsession. Oh, how many parties I attended where the virtues or deficits of a certain brand of woofers and tweeters were debated.

With that I could live. It was the obligatory demonstration that got me. Recordings would drone on for endless hours, drowning out any semblance of sane conversation.

Once I tried to explain to a friend why I found this whole ritual lacking in the elements of good taste. It would be like asking someone over and then forcing him to listen to me read favorite passages from a book, I explained.

I drew only a stare of disbelief. That friendship fizzled about '75, after my mind's woofers and tweeters had had enough.

AT ONE TIME during the '70s, I contemplated purchasing some woofers and tweeters for myself. Being an utter novice, I was astounded to find that a person of sane mind and moderate means is unable to purchase a stereo in one package.

Everything comes separately — the turntable, speakers, the receiver, ad nauseum. I call it *stereo, ala carte*.



stop there. Recently I learned I have committed yet another faux pas.

In the middle of a completely polite and genial conversation, someone asked how I could stand life without an FM radio in my car. Honest, the person was dead serious.

I didn't have the guts to tell the inquisitor that not only didn't I have FM on my car radio, the AM radio which I do have hasn't worked for years.

I've learned since that not only is it considered chic to have AM-FM, but it must be stereo and have capability to play tapes.

At any rate, that's about all I prefer to remember about the '70s — my internal listening system outlived the woofer and tweeter generation.

Bring on the '80s.

## Queen of the credit cards

Doctors have discovered a disease that has been sweeping the nation. It is called "Credit Carditis." The most common symptom is the desire to acquire things without thought of whether the item is needed or how it will be paid for.

The disease clouds the victims' minds so that they don't worry about whether they can afford something until a month later when they are confronted with bills.

The disease reaches epidemic proportions during the Christmas holidays, and the side effects hang around through January. Some patients allow the side effects to linger for months.

I MET THE all-time victim the other night. She is young, beautiful and the possessor of 13 credit cards. All happen to be used at their maximum limits.

Her symptoms seem to be slightly different from most other victims. Her condition is not a result of failing to realize that eventually one has to pay the piper. She attacks the chore of using her credit cards with a fixation.

No credit card is to go unused. She claims that every time she goes into a store, she blacks out and doesn't remember anything until she finds herself out on the street with arms full of goodies.

Any time she pays down one of the cards, she has a compulsion to return to the store issuing the card and push her purchase back to the limit.

SHE REACHED the point of reality last week when the 13 monthly payments exceeded her monthly paycheck. She sought help from a credit counselor, who helped her arrange a loan and pay off all the credit cards.

Then he made her cut up all the cards. She cheated slightly by not telling him about her Visa card, because she wanted to keep it for emergencies.

The night I met her, she had taken care of two



emergencies that day. She had a little room on her Visa card so she purchased some perfume and a record album, so she obviously is not going to use her last card for anything frivolous.

She seemed unfazed by her whole experience. Her main disappointment in life was that her boyfriend lived 50 miles away, and Michigan Bell wouldn't accept her Visa card.

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