

# editorial opinion

## Library autonomy is good for community

One of the real pleasures of moving into downtown Farmington is being a stone's throw away from the Liberty Street library. To tell you the truth, for the last couple of weeks I've been quietly exiting from the office during lunch hour and spending that time rediscovering the wonders of a library.

Faithful readers may know that I'm something of a book nut, boasting a library of my own which contains some 3,000 volumes.

Not everyone may have either the time, money or inclination to build up such a collection. Frankly, I wouldn't blame anyone who thought such an endeavor was somewhat peculiar. But what the heck, it's my one real enjoyment in life.

It hasn't always been that way. There was a time when I just couldn't afford such a luxury as a book — even if it was softcover.

In those days, it was the local library which came to my aid and opened my eyes to many of this world's wonders. It served this purpose all the way through college, as a matter of fact.

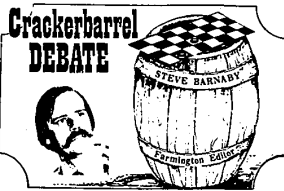
For hours I would stroll up and down the aisles, examining title after title of volumes sometimes not so neatly stacked on the shelf.

Often times I would randomly pick just any book to see what it had to offer me that day. Going to the library was akin to the most mysterious and adventurous of travels for me. Now I'm rediscovering those wonders.

Being such a big library fan, I'm glad to see that the twin-city library system is embarking on an adventure of its own — asking voters to give it autonomy to govern itself and to levy millages.

The election will be May 8.

As it now stands, the library is at the mercy of



the two municipal governments. Naturally, every-time city leaders are forced to tighten their economic belts, the library is one of the first targets.

In some ways it makes sense, but in many other ways it cheats the community in the long run. Communities need good library systems. And a good system means more than a pretty building with a fountain or statue out front.

It means a system with adequate facilities, enough books and periodicals and certainly enough staff to serve those who wish to use the library.

The library, as we know it, is a purely American invention, instituted by Benjamin Franklin. His idea opened the doors of learning to every person. Before that time, Europe kept such intellectual endeavors reserved for the wealthy and powerful.

So from now until May 8, give the library some thought. You might even drop by one of the two Farmington area facilities and enjoy a bit of the knowledge and serenity they have to offer. Then, on May 8, vote "yes" on both library propositions.



John Reddy

## Eliminate risk for developers?

Everybody should have the right to fail.

Why?

If they did, then they'd be obligated to try, to reach out.

The problem is that as time goes by, we seem obligated to try eliminating the risk of failure.

Where this seems more and more the case, unfortunately, is in the business world.

The whole insurance industry has developed on the theory that risk be minimized. Unions are so structured as to strive for protection of the marginal employee (although they advance a solid argument when they contend it's management's fault for hiring the unqualified).

Surprisingly, however, the business community, the bastion of venture capital and risk, has done as much to screw things up as anyone.

**BUSINESS SPENDS** millions trying to influence government agencies at all levels to adopt legislation, rules and regulations to favor their interests.

Then they turn around and spend millions more in efforts to influence the same government bodies not to tamper with regulations that affect their operating activities.

The worst cases, however, seem to be in the areas of land speculation.

There has been a big rush over the years to acquire property not zoned for the intended use of the developers. A treacherous play is to permit the property in question to deteriorate in the hopes that, out of desperation, zoning boards and local governments feel obligated to relent.

When this fails to happen, we usually see the speculators taking the matter to court. The key argument usually is that the property owner is being denied the highest and best use of the land.

What this means is that the speculators want to use the property for purposes which those empowered to represent residents of the community felt was consistent with the kind of community environment they desire.

**WHAT THIS DOES** is destroy the concept of representative government, particularly if the zoning laws being challenged were developed out of the concept of fairness and due process.

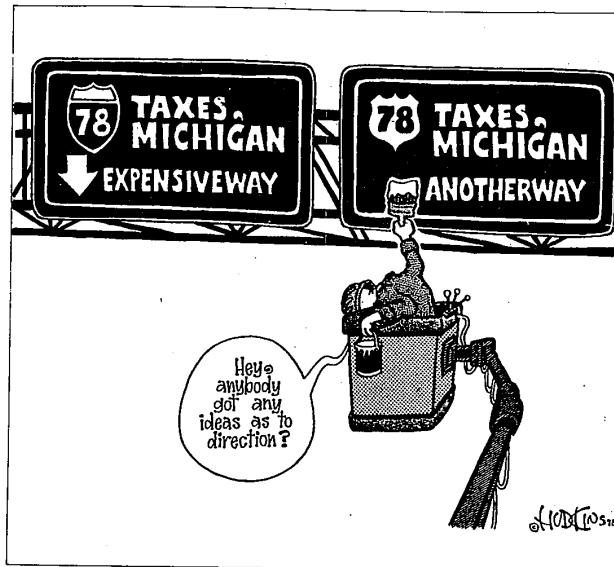
When an individual speculates on the eventual usefulness of land, he does just that — speculate. He has earned the right to lose his expected return on investment. And that's something the courts seem frequently to lose sight of.

Speculators are not guaranteed a return on profit. This seems particularly true when proposed uses of the property are inconsistent with the majority of the residents properly legislated preferences.

If the courts would maintain consistent sensitivity to this principle, business ventures of this kind would be forced to compete in manner which benefits not only their long-term interests, but those of the individual communities and neighborhoods as well.

And the strongest argument of all to these speculators is:

"Don't you believe in the free enterprise system?"



## Costs shifted

## Tuition boosts starting

For several years, Michigan and several other states have been living under Headlee amendments.

That is, even though anti-tax measures were passed by many states in 1978, state tax increases have been rare in this decade. If budgets have gone up, it is because of federal aid, not because of any massive increases in state taxes.

Even Richard Headlee's slick propaganda showed that. His con job cited increases in state spending and fooled the public by equating those with state taxes.

What brings this topic to the fore is that colleges are responding to the belt-tightening by raising tuition, fees and room and board charges.

We told you this would happen. At the beginning of this year, state and local governments responded to the anti-tax mood by raising non-tax revenues such as licenses and fees. It's spring, and now the colleges are getting into the act.

**THE COLLEGE** Press Service reports that 800 or more Tufts University students rallied to protest a tuition increase of \$904 with the words: "No way, we won't pay."

At Wright State University in Ohio, a tuition of \$80 to \$90 is expected for the fall quarter, and the word there is HALT — "higher ambitions, lower tuition."

In Massachusetts, the students' share of the cost of education is 15 percent. The legislature is considering raising that to 25 percent next year and 30 percent the following year.

With inflation at a 9-11 percent rate, the Oregon legislature is recommending a 16 percent tuition increase for next fall.

The University of North Carolina system is working on a 10 percent tuition increase for in-state students and (get this) 24 percent for out-of-state students.

**A BILL** in the North Dakota legislature would increase the students' share from 14 percent to 25 or 30 percent.



Tim Richard

The New Jersey State Board of Higher Education is advocating that undergraduate students pick up 30 percent of the total cost and graduate students 45 percent.

In Michigan, the increases ought to be coming any day. College governing boards generally vote on them in April or May. The final examination period or later are good times to vote tuition, fee and room and board increases because then the students are too preoccupied or too absent to gripe.

But the increases are coming. And even if the tuition increases appear to be within the realm of reason, watch out for those sneaky fees for making an application and registering.

**PHILOSOPHICALLY**, the theory is that persons who use the services ought to pay for them.

The notion is a shallow rationalization. It flies in the face of what government is all about.

If "user fees" are to be the name of the game, we might as well junk the entire system of public education and just charge people who go to school.

We might as well not have a public transportation system and try to revive the interurban companies and the moribund private bus companies.

We might as well close down the public libraries and trust our culture to the tender mercies of the chain book store and drug store.

**THE "USER FEE"** philosophy is just plain reactionary. Carry it to its logical conclusion, and our whole society might as well turn the clock back to where it was in the 18th century.

It's a shame Michigan is not only a part of such a reactionary movement, but a leader. Michigan in 1837 helped break ground by constitutionally telling the legislature to encourage "the promotion of intellectual, scientific, and agricultural improvement." Michigan's was the first state constitution to provide for the appointment of a superintendent of public instruction.

Hefty increases in "user fees" are just the opposite of what government is about. The real game being played is "divide and conquer."

The public rebels against taxes, with or without cause. The politicians raise fee A because it affects only 10 percent of the population. The politicians raise fee B because it affects only 8 percent of the population; fee C, 12 percent, and so on.

And no one — among either the politicians or the public — has the guts to face the cost issue squarely.

## Eccentricities

by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.



## Why SEMTA moved ahead

The Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) took another step Tuesday toward planning a regional transportation system.

The SEMTA board has been in unanimous agreement that the first step was an improved bus system throughout the region including small buses (dial-a-ride) in areas where the spread-out geography made it impractical to use large buses.

They were also in agreement that a monorail type people mover in downtown Detroit would facilitate the movement of people around the central business district and encourage large scale economic development to offset the national trend of deterioration of central cities.

With the energy crises facing us, they were in agreement that the commuter train service which runs from Pontiac to Detroit be expanded to routes from Mt. Clemens to Detroit and Ann Arbor to Detroit.

**THE ONE AREA** of disagreement over the last year was what more than large bus, small bus, a people mover and commuter rails was necessary for a comprehensive transportation plan.

Detroit Mayor Coleman A. Young wanted a subway system that connected downtown Detroit with Macomb County on the east, Oakland County on the north and western Wayne County. There was, however, no way money could be found to finance such a large system.

Toronto, Ontario probably has the best public transportation system in the northern hemisphere. It has a combination of heavy rail subway, light rail, regular bus and electric bus.

Toronto started work on its system back in 1929 so they have had 50 years to work on it. In the last 15-20 years, however, Toronto has used its public transportation system as a means of rejuvenating a deteriorated downtown and encouraging orderly growth in the suburbs because workers were able to get to their jobs.

**BECAUSE MAYOR** Young wanted a subway in Detroit, it became fashionable to be against it in the suburbs.

It's really rather short-sighted to be against improvements in Detroit if, in the long run, they are the beginning of a system that will finally connect the suburbs with the city and with each other.

If there is to be gasoline rationing, the suburbs, being spread out, will suffer much more from a lack of public transportation than the central city, which already has a large bus system.

The question of how much more was necessary to have a comprehensive transportation system became very political. A lot of people failed to see the long range benefits to the suburbs because they were concerned that the early money was being spent within the city limits of Detroit.

They failed to understand that without a healthy core city, there would not be healthy suburbs.

**THE SEMTA BOARD** decided a long range program should be started now or it would never come to pass with costs increasing at a tremendous rate.

The board decided to use light rail (a modern trolley) instead of heavy rail, used in such cities as New York and Toronto, because it will be less expensive.

But if the system were to be rapid transit at all, it must be grade separated — that is, removed from having to fight with automobiles at every intersection.

The mayor of Detroit did not get his three subway routes or even the 8½ miles he wanted out Woodward Avenue.

But the southeastern Michigan region will start to get a comprehensive transportation system which may take 50 years to complete with some underground rail, some above ground and some surface rail.

The wisdom of the SEMTA board in its action Tuesday should probably be judged years from now, as we are doing to appraising Toronto. Short term decisions must be viewed as where it will start us toward the future.

(Hogan is vice chairman of the SEMTA board.)

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Steve Barnaby

Editor

2332 Farmington Rd.  
Farmington, MI 48024  
(313) 477-5450

John Reddy, General Mgr.

Thomas A. Riordan, Executive Editor

George J. Hagan, Advertising Director, Fred J. Wright, Circulation Director