

# editorial opinion

## Propaganda distorts senior housing issue

OK, now that all have vented their spleens, pro and con, over the senior citizen-low income housing project proposed for construction at the corner of Drake and Freedom, let's talk about the real story.

First, it was evident from Monday's council session that at least as many residents are in favor of the project as are against. In short, 1,600 signatures do not a majority make. Neither does a majority make those who scream and holler the loudest.

Second, the piece of literature distributed by the Freedom, Beechwood, Gill Homeowners Association was full of half-truths which catered to the fears of residents rather than their intellects.

For instance, the statement that the November

ballot question on RCE-1 zoning "will provide voters with the opportunity to decide whether mid-rise is to be acceptable in our community" is misleading.

The mid-rise RCE-1 zoning already is an ordinance. One project has been approved under it. The November ballot question is an advisory referendum which doesn't legally bind the city government to anything.

The statement that "a percentage of the units will be low-income and very low income family housing" caters to an ingrained prejudice against poor persons which many times in the metro Detroit area means blacks.

Another shot at fearmongering was the statement that if one of these projects is approved, other such developments will be placed throughout the community in "strategic" locations. That translates into "if we have one in our backyard, you will too."

In a misery-loves-company statement, the brochure says that persons in the City of Farmington also oppose a six-story structure. Well, not everyone in Farmington opposes it — not even everyone who lives around the proposed site.

Don't forget the Farmington soon will have a senior citizen mid-rise of its own.

The brochure signs off by accusing the council of "irresponsible representation." The only persons

who can be considered irresponsible on this issue are those who have neglected to find out how city government works.

The only thing the council has done is submit an application to the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). In time, public hearings will be set. It's just a simple matter of civics. That's how government works.

Low income housing already exists in Farmington Hills. Just look around. What this community needs is new well-built, well managed low-income housing. It will happen, eventually. But we must be patient and let the fearmongering, property value worshippers have their say first.

## On conventions, region speaks with one voice

One can only breathe two sighs of relief at the word of a merger between the Oakland County Tourist and Convention Bureau and the Metropolitan Detroit Convention and Visitors Bureau.

One sigh is that a years-long political battle in Oakland over funding the county tourist bureau is coming to an end. The other sigh is that Detroit and Oakland are working together for the good of the entire metropolitan area.

The announcement said the merged organization will maintain an Oakland County office, probably the present site in Pontiac, and that Oakland will be assured four board members.

THE OAKLAND County Tourist and Convention Bureau was an offshoot of the North Oakland Chamber of Commerce with the goal of promoting use of the Pontiac Silverdome and related economic development.

Despite its name, it never recruited many members from southeast Oakland County. Chambers of commerce there were oriented more toward the Metropolitan Detroit bureau.

The Oakland County bureau was able to get \$80,000 a year in funding from the county board of commissioners, but there was always a fight. Now, even though fights make lively news copy, there are some fights that are unpleasant to cover, and that fight was one of them.

There were always appeals to economic patriotism, on the one hand, and charges that the Oakland bureau was duplicative of the metropolitan bureau, on the other. One side could never convince the other. The voting alignments and the speeches never changed.

Yet the Oakland bureau did get its message across: A body calling itself the Metropolitan Detroit Convention and Visitors Bureau had to be concerned with more than downtown Detroit.

STARK NECESSITY was apparently the mother of the merger.

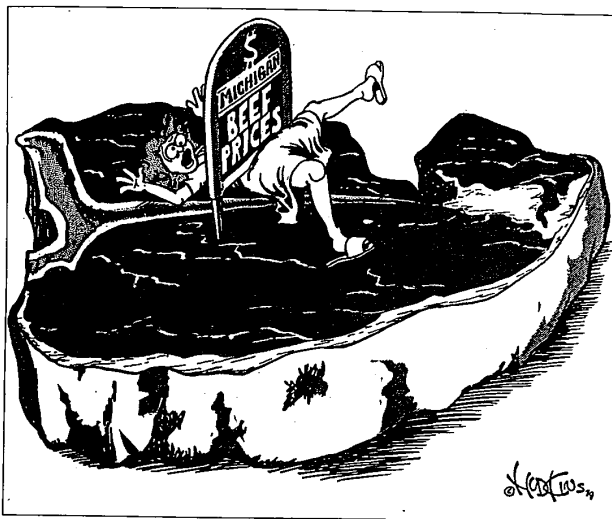
Detroit was bidding for the 1980 Republican National Convention during the last year, and it was apparent that the city's facilities were insufficient to contain such a gathering. Suburban hotels, caucus rooms and restaurants were needed. Working together, the region was successful.

Oakland's brainchild was to bring the National Football League's Super Bowl to Silverdome. Working alone, the local bureau lacked the pizzazz to put it across. Working with the Detroit folks, it had more clout. Together, the region was successful.

There is another job to be done. The cause of energy conservation would be served, and the news media's expenses reduced, if the Democrats could also be persuaded to hold their convention in metropolitan Detroit. The Democrats have considerably more delegates and therefore more spouses and hangers-on to entertain. There is some thinking that this region lacks the facilities to entertain the Democrats.

But we have a hunch that Detroit, Oakland County and the rest of the region can pull it off if they work together.

And with a merged convention bureau, the region now has the economic tool.



## Search warrant fever

### It's your legal battle, too

A man tells police he was a victim of homosexual rape. Because he is distraught, the police take him to a psychiatric clinic, where a resident psychiatrist interviews him.

Later police make an arrest. The man had given the local prosecutor a description of his rapist, but the prosecutor decides he'd like to know if the victim gave the psychiatrist the same description.

Instead of asking the psychiatrist clinic for the records, however, the prosecutor goes to a magistrate and gets a search warrant covering not only the clinic but the psychiatrist's car and home.

And police search all the files.

Now suppose you had visited the same clinic. How would you feel knowing that police had had a look at your file in the clinic. Pretty sure? Persecuted?

Well, such an event actually occurred in Palo Alto, Calif. Indeed, it happened twice. The other time, it happened to the newspaper office of the Stanford Daily.

In the Daily case, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld issuance of the search warrant, even though no one on the paper's staff was actually a suspect in a certain crime.

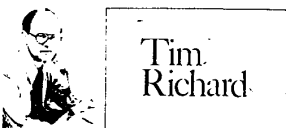
THE MORAL of the story is that it isn't just newspapers and reporters who have been endangered by the Supreme Court's unwise upholding of "third party" search warrants.

It isn't just the "one party press" that Truman raised against and the "nattering nabobs of negativism" that Agnew fulminated about who are sore at the court for letting heavy-handed cops search our files.

You should be sore, too.

"This threat applies not only to the press," said state Rep. Perry Bullard, D-Ann Arbor. "It applies to the average citizen who has stumbled across something. It applies to information which lawyers and doctors keep about their clients. It even applies to information given to a priest by a confessor."

Bullard's politics are not my politics, but on this issue he's right. In the news gathering business, we



Tim Richard

come across story after story of persons who feel they've been pushed around by the authorities. They are people who are surprised it happened to them.

And so a newspaper, whatever his other politics, soon becomes a "liberal" on civil liberties issues. You learn that if they can do it to a bunch of writers on a college paper in California, they can do it to you, too.

BULLARD is pushing his House Bill 4251 to prohibit police from searching innocent third parties (including my newspaper files and your counselor's files) for "evidence" of a crime committed by someone else.

Bullard's staff surveyed 19 county prosecutors in Michigan on their use of third party search warrants and got some mind-boggling answers. Twelve prosecutors had never used them, and five others had used them only three times or fewer.

Only two prosecutors had used them more frequently. Bullard's conclusion was that the third-party search warrant, in practice, was a rarely used tool.

Then he asked them what problems they envisioned if third party search warrants were eliminated in Michigan. Fourteen answered "major difficulties."

The results don't jibe, of course. On one hand, the overwhelming majority of prosecutors say they haven't used third party search warrants; on the other hand, they fear major difficulties if they had to do without such warrants.

COLUMNIIST Tom Wicker in the New York Times reported last year that only 12 warrants for press searches have been issued in any jurisdiction, and then he commented:

"There are two ways to look at that record. Only 12 searches in 203 years of the Republic sounds not too bad; but what about no searches for 195 years and 12 in the last eight, and three within the last year?"

His point is that this business of police searches of innocent persons' files is becoming more popular. While we in the newspaper business squawk most, it must be understood that it can happen to you, too. Well, you might ask, isn't it worth the price if such searches help to catch criminals?

At the beginning of this column, I referred to two such searches — a psychiatric clinic (and personal property) and the Stanford Daily.

In both cases, the cops failed to find what they were after.



by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

## Consumer price index outdated

Each month we seem to get the bad news that the consumer price index (CPI) has gone up again. The percentage of the index increase multiplied by 12 is used as the annual inflation rate of the country.

As the index goes up, many workers who have cost of living clauses in their contracts get raises which only lead to more inflation in succeeding months.

Most people have no idea how the consumer price index is arrived at. The government explains it this way:

"THE CPI measures average changes in prices of goods and services usually bought by urban wage earners and clerical workers.

"It is based on prices of about 400 items which were selected to represent the movement of prices of all goods and services purchased by wage earners and clerical workers. Prices for these items are obtained in urban portions of 39 major statistical areas and 17 smaller cities, which were chosen to represent all urban places in the United States.

"They are collected from about 18,000 establishments — grocery and department stores, hospitals, filling stations, and other types of stores and service establishments.

"Prices of foods, fuels and a few other items are obtained every month in all 56 locations. Prices of most other commodities and services are collected every month in the five largest areas and every three months in other areas.

"Prices of most goods and services are obtained by personal visits of the Bureau of Labor Statistics' trained representatives. Mail questionnaires are used to obtain local transit fares, public utility rates, newspaper prices, fuel prices and certain other items.

"In calculating the index, price changes for the various items in each location are averaged together with weights which represent their importance in the spending of all wage earners and clerical workers. Local data are then combined to obtain a U.S. city average. Separate indexes are also published for 23 areas.

"The index measures price changes from a designated reference date — 1967 — which equals 100. An increase of 22 percent, for example, is shown as 122.

"This change can also be expressed in dollars as follows: The price of a base period 'market basket' of goods and services bought by urban wage earners and clerical workers has risen from \$10 to 1967 to \$12.20."

THE PROBLEM is that the "market basket" used by the Department of Labor has not changed since 1967, yet the lifestyle of the country has.

Americans are eating out more, using more prepared food mixes when they cook at home, have more time for recreational pursuits and so forth, yet some of these things are not recorded in the statistics or recorded disproportionately.

In 1967, the weighting said that urban wage earners allocated 25 percent of their expenditures for food, 33 percent for shelter, 10 percent for apparel, 13 percent for transportation and 19 percent for health and recreation.

If the proportions are not appropriate today, the index is inaccurate, yet some people get raises and others panic as their buying power erodes.

The index should be brought up to date, yet change will destroy the usefulness of past statistics and interfere with labor contracts.

However, until it is changed, information about inflation will really be inaccurate.

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