

editorial opinion

American Way flops; Big Brother to save us

Early each summer, our mail is jammed with advice from safety organizations telling us to remind you to drive safely, don't drink and drive, wear your seat belt, etc., etc., ad nauseum.

Not this year. Platitudes don't work, says the National Committee for Automobile Crash Protection, composed mostly of insurance companies.

They remind us, "By the 1985 model year, all new cars will be able to automatically protect front seat passengers (86 percent of which refuse to wear safety belts) in the types of crashes that produce the largest number of deaths and serious injuries."

The 1985 model year. That starts in 1984.

THE POINT is that American self-reliance and enlightened self-interest aren't doing the job, in the

collective opinion of the U.S. Congress. Big Brother is telling us we must have some kind of "automatic" safety equipment, be it an air cushion or an automatic safety belt.

This news coming so close to the Fourth of July, it arouses our patriotic dander, but only for a moment.

Setting aside oratory about the American Way, the facts are: 86 percent of us won't use seat belts voluntarily; highway fatalities last year topped the 50,000 mark for the first time in five years; and about 9,000 of those 50,000 lives and \$5 billion in the \$43 billion costs could be saved if we all had automatic crash protection.

We blew it. We didn't look after ourselves by using our seat belts, in the American Way. And now there's going to be a law.

IT'S JUST as well.

The careless slob can say, "It's my neck. If I want to risk it, that's my business."

Not so. If the slob is killed, the rest of us will have to pay the life insurance benefits, the social security benefits and the welfare benefits his survivors will receive.

We'll have to support Big Brothers and Big Sisters, so his kids will have some kind of adult guidance. The alumni association will have to work harder to raise money for college scholarships for his kids.

We have a stake in keeping alive the slob who refuses to wear a seat belt.

Air bags will cost \$115 per car. Automatic seat belts will cost \$60 to \$100 per car, depending on

comfort and convenience features, according to the National Committee for Automobile Crash Protection. That's a price we all will pay extra for new cars because 86 percent of us chose not to wear seat belts.

MORE LAWS are coming, the National Safety Council tells us.

Those automatic devices protect only the persons in the front seat of the car. Other devices will be developed and perhaps required by law for persons in the back seat. There may be special devices required for children.

The devices will cost money. It will be the price we must pay because so many of us refuse to take care of ourselves voluntarily.



Hard hearts among rabbis

The metropolitan Detroit Rabbinical Commission has scorched a shameful brand on the Jewish community.

In one of the more blatant attempts at stifling free speech, the commission recently censured Farmington Hills' Birmingham Temple for sponsoring a speech by noted journalist I.F. Stone.

Stone, who for years has campaigned in behalf of human rights for all peoples, recently has taken up the Palestinian quest for a homeland. Stone is a Jew.

But according to the Rabbinical Commission's standards, what is good for the goose isn't so for the gander.

It labels Stone's speech as a "shameful event" in which a "Jewish forum was provided for untruth and misrepresentation."

THE REBUKE CAME to Birmingham Temple's door in a letter signed by Commission President Israel Halpern.

Halpern is badly misled and misleading to the Jewish community by saying Stone's views are an affront to Jewish dignity and injurious to the welfare of the people of Israel.

The 71-year-old Stone is a world-famous advocate of Israel's right to exist as a nation. He believes that same right should be accorded the Palestinians.

Stone's record in support of Israel makes it all the more disgusting when Halpern calls Stone a voice of "hatred and defamation."

Such poppycock would be laughable coming from persons other than a commission comprised of the Jewish community's caretakers of wisdom and tradition.

Instead, it's simply tragic to see rabbinical leaders stoop to emotional seduction.

BIRMINGHAM TEMPLE'S Rabbi Sherwin Wine, a controversial, yet refreshing, figure in the Jewish community, has every right to feel "indignant" over the censure.

Wine defends Stone's appearance by saying, "We are willing to listen to ideas we may ultimately disagree with, because we firmly believe in the value of open inquiry and free speech."

"Forbidding dissent is a dangerous precedent which does you little honor," Wine replies to the commission's censure.

Wine is justified in demanding an apology from the commission to Stone and the Birmingham Temple.

More importantly, the Rabbinical Commission owes an apology to all people who put free speech before visions of narrow ethnic interests.

THE ISSUE AT HAND is peace and justice for the world, not just the survival of one country. It takes more than the ideas of one person or group of persons to solve this very complex problem.

Open debate is the way to seek out a wealth of ideas.

People really interested in peace will heed Stone's words.

"When I had compassion for Jews, I was a hero. When I had compassion for Arabs, I am an enemy. If we harden our hearts, we betray our heritage."



Showerin' in the rain

Pioneer's well goes dry

Maybe some of you have noticed me the last couple of days walking around in a business suit with a towel draped over my shoulder, a bar of soap in one hand and a Dopp kit filled with toilet articles in the other.

In this day and age, we take for granted the wonderful things modern living provides us. But for those of us who still live in the country, pioneer living still occurs every once in a while.

The pump on our well gave out. This probably doesn't seem very important to those of you who are connected to a municipal water system, but life without water is very inconvenient.

THE FIRST DAY wasn't so bad.

I turned on the tap and heard a funny hissing noise when water was supposed to be spewing forth. I ran around the house and tried the other faucets with the same result.

I gave up on coffee because even those new wonderful coffee makers need that clear liquid to produce anything drinkable. I headed for the office and stopped at a gas station on the way even though I didn't need gas. I got funny stares as I shaved in the men's room,

Eccentricities

by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

but since this is not a centennial year, it didn't seem appropriate to go unshaven.

When I got home that night, I tried to fix dinner, but even canned soup needs a cupful of water.

I started calling my friends suggesting I was really hungry. After the third call, my daughter invited me over for dinner. She was very surprised to see me arrive with my towel and soap.

THE NEXT DAY I played tennis, but instead of playing out in the beautiful sunlight, I convinced everyone we should play in an indoor tennis house. They have showers, of course.

The well man finally came and replaced the pump. My wife arrived home from up north, and we thought we were back to living normally. Unfortunately, for the first 24 hours, only black, bad-smelling liquid poured forth from our taps.

We went out to dinner with our toothbrushes in our pockets.

THE HIGH POINT came when I was awakened early Friday morning by a tremendous thunderstorm.

I hopped out of bed, grabbed my bar of soap and towel, and ran outside. I stood in the driveway and soaped up. A police car drove by, very slowly, but fortunately didn't stop.

It was the coldest rain I've ever felt — but invigorating.

After five days of no water, I decided I didn't want to be a pioneer. Those people who dream about giving up our modern ways and returning to a rustic lifestyle in the woods probably never had a well pump go out.



The White Man sheds a tear

TV commercial of the future: A White Man has anchored his boat on a lake, pulls up his fishing line and sees it is empty. The camera follows his gaze to a nearby Indian village. The camera swings back to the White Man's face as a tear rolls down his cheek.

This parody of the Red Man in a canoe observing the White Man's litter isn't so far-fetched, if you have been following the machinations of the U.S. District Court in Grand Rapids.

Indians, whom we have depicted for the last decade as the preservers of the environment, as being in union with nature, are coming to be seen as its wreckers, at least as far as the Great Lakes fishery is concerned.

Federal Judge Noel Fox, as narrow-gauge a legalist as ever sat on the bench, ruled the State of Michigan has "always lacked authority to arrest and prosecute Indians for violation of its statutes governing fishing."

The case revolves around 1836 and 1855 treaties which the United States made with the Chippewa Indians.

It also revolves around the lake trout and salmon the state has stocked in the affected waters — roughly the eastern half of Lake Superior and the northern halves of Lakes Michigan and Huron.

OUR GOVERNMENT, as the lawyers are fond of saying, is a government of laws, not of men.

It would be better described as a government of laws, not of common sense, environmental sensitivity, truth or logic. I arise the ire of the legal industry with such a description, but it happens to be so.

Yes, the U.S. did sign treaties in the mid-19th century, as the autocratic judge noted.

No, the Indians didn't have boats of strong wood, metal or fiberglass in those days. No, the Indians didn't have gasoline engines on those boats. No, the Indians didn't have gill nets capable of depleting a stock of fish, and incapable of allowing the excess or illegal fish to be returned unharmed to the water. No, there were no such things as fishing seasons in those days.

Too bad the judge didn't put those facts in his peace pipe and smoke them.

THOMAS L. WASHINGTON, as executive director of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, had much to say about the situation. MUCC members, along with all fishermen, pay high and rising fees for fishing licenses to support the state DNR's fish stocking program.

"Indians no longer know the meaning of conservation," Washington said. "They are guilty today of violating agreements, raping the environment — almost everything they accuse the white man of doing a hundred years ago."

"They will not and cannot control their own fishermen. They have fished out Whitefish Bay, ruined Little Traverse Bay and wrecked the Straits of Mackinac."

"The problem will get bigger now because the Indians will get more brazen."

WHAT CAN WHITE Americans do to conserve the fishery?

"Buy them out," suggested Washington, meaning Congress should pay off the Chippewas to buy away their fishing rights.

"Grin and bear it," another might say, hoping the Indians will regulate themselves despite contrary evidence.

When, in 1763, the Chippewas wanted the White Man out, they staged a lacrosse game and attacked Old Fort Michilimackinac, slaughtering the inhabitants, scalping living victims, drinking the blood of those they had hacked open.

But solving the rape of the Great Lakes fishery is not my purpose here. I point out only that law is not the same as justice; that it takes more than law to resolve society's problems; that one may be a good lawyer and jurist but a pretty nasty human being.

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