

Will men's clubs join the 20th century?

It won't get as much ink or TV news time as the Republican Party withdrawing its support for the Equal Rights Amendment at its national convention in Detroit.

But recent actions in two suburbs will still continue to carry positive messages for those concerned with how we treat other human beings.

The first came when the Boys Club, based in Redford Township, agreed in an out-of-court settlement to admit a girl, Corina Maxam, now 17.

The case started three years ago when the girl, then 14, wanted to play ping-pong and do others of age want to do in a wholesome and supervised setting.

The Boys Club refused her membership, saying it won't admit girls because of its boys-only policy. The club's policy, ridiculously out of date with the times, was challenged by the girl's parents in Wayne County Circuit Court.

She eventually won her point in the settlement. The girl's victory in the court case means that about half of the persons in her age group can now play bumper pool and ping-pong with boys—hardly a serious threat to the macho leaders of the club.

ON AN ADULT level, the Garden City Business and Professional Women's Club disclosed that it will soon have its first man.

The man invited to join is Mayor Vincent Fordell who knows a little about the problems facing women in the world of work. He is a staff supervisor in Michigan Bell Telephone Co.'s personnel office.

Fordell noted that he might bring his own boss—a woman—to one of the BPW dinner membership meetings.

The women's group changed its membership policy to allow men this summer at its national convention.

NOW IT IS time for other male service clubs to join the 20th century (which will end in less than 20 years) and seriously consider letting women join their groups.

Women now make up just over half of the nation's workers and they fill many professional and business positions—not the traditional clerical jobs.

Service clubs are always looking for new members and opening the doors for women would be a positive step in improving human relations in the community.

Admittedly, most men's service clubs are bound by international membership rules. When the New York Times hires a woman as sports editor (as it did several years ago) it's time for organizations to drop the artificial barriers and open its membership rolls to qualified persons regardless of sex.

—LEONARD POGER



Sherry Kahan

Why is quality still an alien in auto plants?

Here is one car owner who was upset to read that General Motors was charged by the government with withholding information from buyers between 1975-80 about defective camshafts, transmissions and diesel fuel pumps.

Like most Americans, I had hoped that by 1979, or at the very least by 1980, those high in corporate headquarters would have seen the handwriting on the wall. And if life were an Horatio Alger story they would by now have mended their ways and decided to give the customers their best shot.

I see three big problems—engineering in the blueprint stage, life on the assembly line and an adversarial relationship between employer and worker that has little to do with pay.

ENGINEERING has to top the list. I judge that from the fact that millions and millions of cars have been recalled. In 1979, 4.8 million vehicles were recalled. GM had 1.3 million recalls, and Ford had 1.2 million. About 225,000 Chryslers needed recalls, and 29,000 cars built by American Motors Corp.

Faulty engineering is the reason behind recalls. I once heard an auto mechanic say he wished the engineers would work in a repair shop for a while. They would find out how difficult it is to reach certain areas in need of fixing.

But various aspects of auto plant work must contribute, too.

Meet a couple of men who work on the assembly line.

One has the relatively simple task of wiping excess sealing material off the car body so paint can go on smoothly. He has about half a minute to do it. But to reach one spot he must stretch upward and backward. To reach the other it's downward and inward.

He can't always do it in the time allotted. Sometimes he must run after the vehicle. But that puts him behind with the next one, coming down the line with terrifying regularity. There is hardly time to rinse out his cloth.

Once in a while he skips a car.

The other man puts batteries into place and fastens two cables to them. However, the space for the battery is cluttered with wires when it comes to him. The only way he can complete his operation in the allotted time is to rip out the other wires to make a place for the battery.

The line is too fast, I decided. To test this theory, I asked a question of two UAW women, who work in different plants.

"Would the consumer profit from slowing down the line, so that cars could be assembled more carefully?"

One said "yes," because, at the present speed, inspectors in her plant do not always catch errors and fix them. The other replied "no," because she has confidence in her factory's inspection system.

BUT NOT ENOUGH attention has been given to the anger created by the frustrations of the line. The man cleaning off the sealant hated the line. It never stopped. He couldn't even blow his nose. He couldn't do his job right.

The adversarial relationship in factories is not always only between the company and union. It arises in situations like this when workers feel helpless about their inability to control their work life, to count for something.

The Wall Street Journal recently reported that an employee at Ford's plant in Mahwah, N.J., was fired for smashing his fist into a succession of car doors and denting them.

The article also said Ford was closing that plant and one of the reasons given was the poor quality of work.

I've heard a number of suggestions about improving the quality of life in factories in the hope of getting better workmanship.

Besides slowing the line, it has been recommended that car and worker be showered with more attention. Or maybe workers could switch around jobs within a small unit to get more variety.

LATELY I'VE SEEN some indications that the problem of a quality auto is getting some attention. I've read about innovative plans between the UAW and Ford and Chrysler. A pilot project at Ford gives a worker representative the right to stop the line if a defect is found on a vehicle. If the idea is successful it will become more widespread.

At about the same time a Ford vice president implied there had been too great an emphasis on production at the sacrifice of quality. He indicated his company would not return to seven-day-a-week production that included three shifts.

Another important straw in the wind is at Chrysler. It is forming joint union-management inspection teams with the UAW in two of its plants. Workers will be allowed to point out engineering faults and defects in workmanship.

Perhaps at long last we're getting real commitment to quality on the part of both management and labor in the auto industry.

Until recently American car manufacturers had it all their way. Like the long, sleek gas guzzlers or lump them.

Now, faced by serious competition from abroad, they may not have to completely redesign the automobile. But they certainly will have to redesign their thinking about how to produce a good car.

Hooked on the electronic opiate?

"Television is a triumph of equipment over people. The minds that control it are so small you could put them in the navel of a flea and still have enough room beside them for a network of vice presidents' hearts." —Fred Allen

While glued to the boob tube for at least 20 hours watching Jerry Lewis's Labor Day Telethon and waiting for him to cry while he croaked "You'll Never Walk Alone," I thought of television as an electronic opiate.

Between listening to Frank Sinatra and everyone else singing "New York, New York" and watching various Detroit celebrities get doused in dunk tanks for MD, I happened to come across a 1974 issue of the then Southfield Observer.

A letter to the editor from Lou LaRiche of Plymouth caught my eye. It was titled, "TV insults, bring back good ol' radio." LaRiche said he wanted a radio revival.

He was brought up on imagination, he wrote, and he's sorry most people today can't exercise their mental muscles because of the boob tube.

The golden age of radio and all its characters have gone by the wayside, he lamented. And he said he was glad nostalgia is trying to make a comeback.

"AS A KID, I hurried to finish my paper route to listen to 'Superman,' 'Jack Armstrong' and 'Captain Midnight,'" LaRiche wrote. "I wish I had all the decoder rings, pedometers and badges I sent away for. It was no rip off. Those pieces of nostalgia are worth hundreds of dollars today."

Winston Churchill once said there are three things he would never forget about America. They are the Rocky Mountains, the Statue of Liberty and "Amos n' Andy."

How about "Little Orphan Annie," "Fibber McGee and Molly," "Hermie's Cave," "Grand Central Station," "Flash Gordon," "Buck Rogers," "Tarzan," "Dick Tracy" and other radio greats?

"Our Gal Sunday" was on Monday through Fridays. Before each show, the announcer asked the same question: "Can this girl from a little mining town in the West find happiness as the wife of a wealthy and titled Englishman?" I hope so, but I'll never know for sure.

Then came television, the electronic opiate. Grown men fantasized they were the Lone Ranger mounted on a horse and commanding "Heigh-ho Silver." These viewers shot imaginary holes in the sofa with their restless guns. And when they were headin' for the last roundup, they probably wanted to be buried on the lone prairie with their television antennae.

"IT WAS TUESDAY, Jan. 11. It was cool in Los Angeles. We were working the day watch out of forgerly division. My partner is Frank Smith. The boss is Captain Welsh. My name's Friday. Just the facts, ma'am."

Do you remember Joe Friday, alias Jack Webb, another electronic fantasy? Do you recall when everybody loved Lucy, who displaced Milton Berle and Arthur Godfrey from top ratings? The Honey-mooners. "Our Miss Brooks." "I Remember



Jackie Klein

Mama," "Ozzie and Harriet," "Burns and Allen" were all television legends.

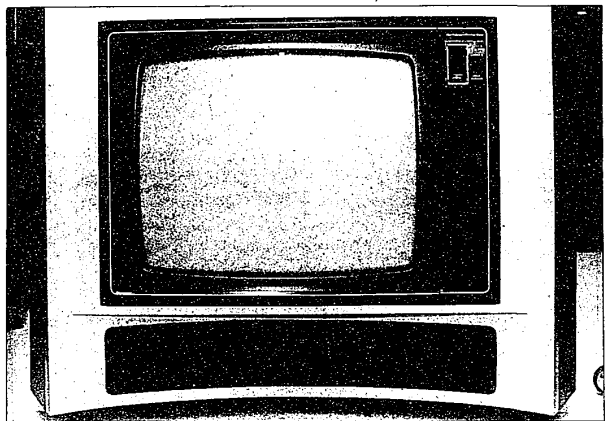
LaRiche and I agree radio commercials were never like those on TV. LaRiche claims television hypes insult our intelligence.

"You have to ride a white horse to use Ajax," he wrote. "You don't dare squeeze the toilet paper. Did you ever see an arm pop out of a washing machine? Or how about your dog chasing a miniature horse and covered wagon through the kitchen and then disappearing into the cupboard."

"Peanut butter is sold by a gay Peter Pan who falls out of the window. One channel has its lead newscaster shooting up the wild west dressed in white and riding a white horse."

I'll go a step further. If you take them seriously, TV commercials can ruin your life.

Use "Soft and Dry" anti-perspirant, Gillette hair spray for the dry look and Pamper's for your baby's dry custom-fitted bottoms. The wet head may be out along with damp armpits and soggy bottoms. But it's better than having all your skin scuff off.



Is our future bound to this electronic viewer? (Staff photo by Bill Bresler)

Poking at bubbles that cross in the mail

I don't ordinarily much mind the mail, but nowadays it seems each day's delivery brings stuff I don't want to see.

I get, for instance, a lot of deodorant samples. This makes me think the powers that be at Procter and Gamble may be giving me a message. But they're out of luck—ever since almost a generation ago, when I first heard about American GIs getting blown away in Southeast Asia because they were tracked down by the clean smell of Brut, I've made a habit of avoiding the scent of anything but lighter fluid and Jim Beam.

But deodorant isn't all I get in the mail. Last week I got a shampoo sample guaranteed to leave my dry ends OK while my oily roots got clean as cucumbers. Since my hair won't grow longer than a dollar bill, it hardly seems important.

But I'll tell you the truth. I tried that shampoo and I liked it.

In my cheapest inner heart of my cheap soul, this only makes a bad situation worse. This is because I know that if I go to the store and buy a bottle of this shampoo, I'll be paying for it twice. Once for the bottle I buy, and once again for the bottle my next door neighbors got for free.

I'm not pleased at the thought.

You understand—there's no happiness to be found in the daily mail any more.

Worse, it's still summer and I can't expect my mail at the usual time. In January I can tell them at work that my car wouldn't start because my grandmother died, an excuse that gives me an extra 20 minutes so I can stick around and have a uniformed representative of the United States government drop the check I'm expecting in my mailbox. Those uniformed representatives tend to hustle right along when it's 10 degrees outside.

But last week I saw a guy with surfer-blond hair, cut-off jeans and a striped red-and-yellow shirt dropping off the shampoo samples. He looked like an exile from the Beach Boys, and he was delivering the mail six hours late.

THERE'S NO PERCENTAGE at all any more to the mail. I mean, I haven't even begun to talk about bill collector letters, although if you ever see the wallpaper in my bathroom you'll know all about them.

None of this was true when I was a kid. In those days, I looked forward to the mail for weeks at a time.

On the postage stamp-size comics that come with



Mike Scanlon

Bazooka bubble gum there are nearly always offers of cheap toys. I was a habitual orderer of these toys. I especially remember a toy ship, at which you fired toy torpedoes from a toy submarine. Hit the right part of the toy ship and the toy submarines' toy torpedoes would produce a pile of toy junk—easily assembled again into a toy ship.

Creative destruction—every boy's dream.

Later, I subscribed to magazines and looked forward to them. Now and then I'd order a fishing rod or a book or something and, just like the old days, the letter carrier would once again be my friend.

It's all different now. I pass my idle hours waiting for the guy in the red-and-yellow striped shirt and praying for labor disputes in the Postal Service.