

Opinion

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O&E Thursday, March 3, 1988

Emergency!

Reroutings must be reduced

IT'S EASY to knock Michigan's health-care industry for the perceived near crisis in emergency room accessibility at metro Detroit hospitals.

But amid complaints that hospital administrators and EMS professionals have done little beyond holding meetings and setting guidelines, Botsford General Hospital is taking corrective steps.

The Farmington Hills hospital is doubling the number of its telemetry beds for patients on monitors to 32, making nursing jobs more respectable in pay, benefits and hours, tightening its policy on emergency room closings, ensuring critical care and telemetry beds are used appropriately, and improving emergency room efficiency.

But no matter what Botsford does to cut rerouting to 5-10 percent, the problem demands regional solutions. Botsford still bears the brunt of excessive rerouting by other hospitals.

Kevin Arnold, vice president of Community Emergency Medical Services, a non-profit ambulance company owned by the Botsford, said his drivers constantly face emergency rooms with restricted admittance or that are closed to all new patients.

If you were sick enough to be in one of the rerouted ambulances, wouldn't you wonder, even with sophisticated training and equipment available to modern paramedics, if you were getting complete care?

Wouldn't you wonder why the neighborhood hospital, which works so hard to be noticed with its out-reach programs, was sending you elsewhere?

BOTSFORD REROUTES ambulances to the next closest hospital accepting critically ill or injured patients when critical care beds, telemetry beds or other special services are not available.

Rerouting of Botsford-bound ambulances has declined steadily since December, when nearly a third of all ambulances were rerouted.

Even after deciding to reroute an ambulance,

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paramedics and physicians never relinquish radio contact. A patient who can't be stabilized is taken to the nearest hospital, pronto. Rerouting is then no longer an option.

Dr. Ronald Lagerfeld, who chairs Botsford's emergency medicine department, says the county's rerouting system "is really in the patient's best interests" because it's based on "a hospital's ability to handle that patient's particular needs at that moment."

Still, we must ask why the state's two major planning organizations, the state Health Care Coordinating Council and the Comprehensive Health Planning Council of Southeast Michigan, didn't have the foresight to fend off the problem?

WHAT'S MORE, why doesn't Oakland County go beyond a review process and audit how many patients turn critical during rerouting?

Why is Michigan requiring all hospital improvements costing at least \$150,000 to go through a time-consuming certificate of need review? Michigan's review process is one of the most restrictive in the nation.

Why are careers in nursing in general and bedside care delivery in particular, so vital to emergency treatment, no longer as attractive as they once were?

To what extent has the fear of malpractice crippled emergency room care by causing physicians to practice defensive medicine?

Instead of trying to establish fault or rationalize intent, questions must be answered and solutions instituted with all due speed — before someone dies during rerouting, whatever the reason.

Even after deciding to reroute an ambulance,

Drug abuse

Testing won't solve the problem

INDUSTRIAL capital punishment. That's the way employee drug-testing programs have been portrayed by opponents. We agree.

All sound-thinking voters should oppose legislation advocating it.

Mass drug-testing programs would only serve to disenfranchise thousands of workers, banish them from the workplace and create yet another tier of the unemployed.

If present state legislation is enacted, every person employed by a company would forfeit any right to privacy. Their economic fate would be solely in the hands of an employer who very well could be making a decision on the basis of false information.

Most importantly, drug testing would do nothing to halt the abuse of illegal substances in this country.

BUSINESSES, which are the primary supporters of drug-testing legislation, should know this better than anyone else. After all, the engine that powers the train of drugs into this country is fueled by a familiar and alluring substance — profit.

As journalist James Mills points out in his book "Underground Empire," narcotics is the largest

Drug testing in the work place would do nothing to halt the abuse of illegal substances in this country.

growth industry in the world with annual revenues exceeding half a trillion dollars, "three times the value of all United States currency in circulation, more than the gross national product of all but a half dozen of the major industrialized nations."

Testing would soon cave in under the weight of such economic force.

But even before that happened, havoc would be rampant in the workplace.

Under legislation introduced by state Rep. Victor Krause, R-Rockford, an employer presented with evidence of a positive drug test would be the sole judge of what action to take regarding the employee.

A loyal, long-tenured employee could be fired on the spot with absolutely no recourse.

Employers could pick and choose which employees would be subject to the testing.

And worst of all, an employer alone could decide to keep one employee on the job while dismissing another for the same infraction.

Present methods of drug testing are not foolproof. Something as minor as poppy seeds can make it appear as if a person is engaged in drug abuse.

EVEN TESTING practitioners admit to the fallibility of the testing with only a 95-percent accuracy rating. With the potential of millions of employees being tested, thousands of people could be falsely labeled as drug abusers. Jobs would be lost, families and reputations ruined.

The blacklists of the McCarthy era would pale next to those developed under an employee drug-testing program.

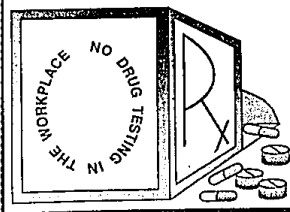
Drug profiteering is a major problem in our country. Drug abuse is the result. Business and government need to band together to fight those who profit from illegal drugs, not those who are victimized.

Government, from federal on down, needs to mobilize in this war that affects all segments of our economy.

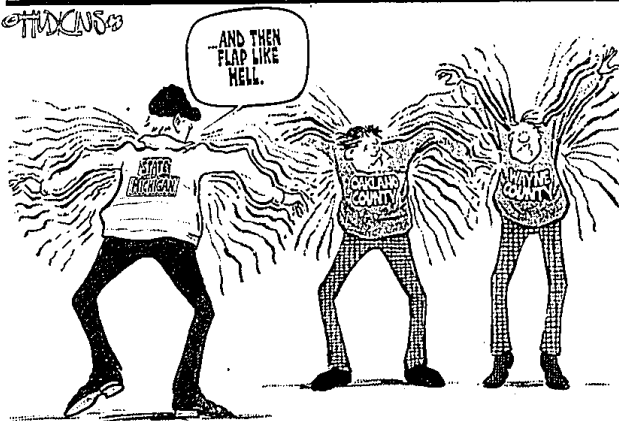
Legislators need to concentrate their efforts on the true abusers of our society's mores, the drug profiteers. A national and concerted effort is the key, not a million little skirmishes between employers and employees.

Then, and only then, will this country begin the long road back from a drug-dominated workplace.

For more on drug testing in the work place and a look at proposed legislation, see the Business section in today's Observer and Eccentric.



O'HANNA



ONE WAY TO STAY ABOVE THE SHRINKING ROAD REVENUES PREDICAMENT.

Looking toward 2000 wise community move

IT'S CALLED the Farmington Hills 2000 plan.

But it doesn't cater to Trekkies sharing dreams of a space odyssey into the 21st century.

City manager William Costick envisions a grass-roots planning team of residents and city officials formulating a plan for the 1990s to achieve the quality of life residents desire.

"I'm not trying to forecast anything," says Costick, "no wild-eyed dreamer. I'm just trying to determine how people perceive where the city is going."

Services for the elderly, Farmington Community Center programs, need for a municipal swimming pool and use of remaining vacant land will be just some of the strategic plan's focal points.

Planners will identify long- and short-range goals and objectives for the booming city during the two-year undertaking.

"LET'S FACE IT," Costick said. "If, for example, we want to have an attractive community, it's not going to happen unless we do some things to help make it happen."

No quarrel there.



Bob Sklar

Costick hopes to tap the community's expertise "to generate new ideas and new thinking."

Downtown rejuvenation in many nearby communities, including Northville, Farmington, Royal Oak and Rochester, underscore the fact that public improvements indeed help spur private investment.

Mission statements and task force appointments for the plan are still months away. Nothing is cast in stone because Costick thinks even the process should be grass-roots driven. To which I say, "Right on!"

THE STRENGTH of the conceptual idea lies in its call for involving dozens of local folks who represent "a true cross-section of the community."

Costick foresees a steering com-

mittee and six task forces. They would examine such community aspects as public facilities and services; finance and economic vitality; attractiveness and quality of life; human services and community institutions; leisure, culture and community facilities; and public safety. A bit ambitious you say? Perhaps.

As Costick says, "When you think about all these things, it's kind of mindboggling."

At the very least, he says, the plan "will tie all these things together, tell where we want to go and say how we'll get there."

LET'S BE honest. We who call the Farmington area home tend to take too much for granted. We don't live in a utopia. Good things just don't happen. They're invariably the product of good municipal planning and execution.

With the city experiencing rapid growth and all of the ensuing problems, it certainly seems time for a Farmington Hills 2000 Plan.

As Costick aptly reminded, "We can't miss our chances and our opportunities along the way."

Farmington readers' forum

Letters must be signed, original copies and include the address and telephone number of the writer. None can be returned. Names will be withheld from publication only for sufficient reason. Letters should be limited to 300 words in most cases. We reserve the right to edit them. Send letters to Readers' Forum, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River Ave., Farmington 48024.

Honesty is applauded

To the editor:

On Feb. 16, I was running numerous errands, my last stop being Kroger's. When I got home, I found to my horror that I lost my tennis bracelet.

I called every one of the establishments I had visited, hoping against hope that someone had found it and turned it in.

This morning, Ellen from Kroger's called me with just that news.

I believe that honesty such as this should be rewarded and publicly acknowledged.

So, Sheryl Sopha of Farmington, to you and all the good people out there who possess integrity, honesty and a conscience, I say "thank you" and may God bless you.

Incidentally, Sheryl wanted no reward. The value of the bracelet is of no importance it is the act which counts.

Helga Miller,
Farmington Hills

Let's support true primary

To the editor:

Your recent editorial calling for revival of the presidential primary in this state came to the right conclusion but contained some faulty reasoning as to why it was killed following the 1976 election.

You claimed that it was the political parties that scuttled the primary.

A true reading of the period will show that it was the opposition of many of the state's newspapers and then-Gov. Milliken that helped seal the fate of the presidential primary by their insistence that it allow for the mischief of cross-over voting (supporters of one party invading the primary of the opposition party for the purpose of nominating a weaker candidate).

Incidentally, the Farmington Democratic Club played a major role in adopting the presidential primary law when our delegates to the State Central Committee cast the deciding votes for the plan, but for a plan that prevented cross-over voting.

To point up how the failure to deter cross-over played into the hands of those who wanted to frustrate the wishes of regular party supporters, let's take a look at the 1972 results in our own Farmington area.

That was the year Richard Nixon was running unopposed in the Republican primary on his way to re-nomination for a second term. Without a contest in their own primary, Farmington area Republicans, as did their counterparts throughout the state, voted in the Democratic primary, mostly for Wallace.

Figures from that election show how dramatic the cross-over was. Where the usual party breakdown in the Farmington area favors Republicans by better than 2 to 1, the 1972 presidential primary vote was about 3 to 1 Democratic.

Now, the political parties seem to be ready to try the primary system

again. I would hope that the Observer would support these efforts by insisting that safeguards be put in against the flaw that killed the previous election.

Most areas of the state are dominated by one party or the other, resulting in few, if any, primary contests. This would still leave the door open for cross-over voting in all but a few so-called swing areas.

Support a true primary with party registration and provide a period prior to the election for independents to make their choice and for others to change their registration — and we will all have a winner.

Alto Vagnoni,
Farmington Hills

Roads aren't keeping pace

To the editor:

I have been a resident of Farmington Hills for the past 15 years. I have watched the city grow at a tremendous pace, and I have enjoyed the prosperity that an up-and-coming community generates.

But our roads sure haven't kept pace with the growth. For example, the bottleneck on Farmington Road between 12 and 15 Mile roads is a pistol. I work at the elementary school in the subdivision, and I wait 10 minutes to make a left turn one morning.

When will our roads catch up? Soon, I hope.

Betty J. Harpe,
Farmington Hills

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