Should District Courts Handle, \$10,000 Cases?

By W. W. EDGAR

With a hope of reducing crowded dockets in the Wayne County Circuit. Courts, a bill is now being prepared for presentation to the State Legislature that would upgrade the present District Courts what came into being several years ago. Under the plan, the civil jurisdiction of the District Courts would be raised from \$3,000 to \$10,000, and district judges could appoint legal counsel for indigent defendants. Aside from this, it would make a probation department mandatory.

The plan is due to meet some stiff barriers along the way, according to danger signs now appearing. Circuit judges, in many cases, are opposed to granting that much power to the lower courts. And even some

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is behind about nine months on its docket, and in Wayne County it is about 36 months behind.

of the District judges are against the move — or at least "lukewarm" toward the idea.

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BOB, BEAUTY AND THE BEARD — Michigan's two U.S. Senators, Robert P. Griffin and Philip A. Hart, pose at a Washington gathering honoring Michigan Cherry Blossom Princess Christine Chamberlain. Miss Cham-berlain. 19, is the daughter of Michigan Con-gressman Charles Chamberlain of the 6th District. Christine will represent her state in the

Census Lists Houses, Prices

Population figures or dites with outer to with outer to with outer to whether the proport of the promoter of t

small number of minority group people.

In Garden City the population includes to blacks and 157 other minorities (Mexican-American, Chinese and others). Livonia has 41 blacks and 409 from other shocks and 700 blacks. Westland has 2,234 blacks and 416 other minority group people.

416 other minority group people.
The census reports also gives the number of housing units and the estimate value of each one.
In Garden City, the housing units aumber 10,571 with a median figure of 5.1 rooms. The rooms were counted if they were used for living purposes such as the living room, kitchens and bedrooms but not including bathrooms, halls or utility rooms.
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have a median figure of 3.9 persons each. The owners estimated their homes value

Population of Wayne county remained nearly the same in the years since 1950 while the state's population increased 13.4 per cent, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
Wayne County's population in 1970 was 2,667,511 slightly above the 1950 count of 2,666,297 Michigan's population in 1970 is 3,873,063 while it was 7,823,194 in 1950.
Population figures for cities with over 10,000 residents.

rent median at \$129 per month.

Westland residents occupy 23,654 housing units with medians at 5.0 rooms per household and 3.5 occupants. Median house values were at \$21,500 and rents at \$162 per month.

JUDGE JAMES MIES, who shares the bench with Judge James McCann in Li-tonia, sees little change in his court that would be brought about by the new plan. "It will make some difference in Wayne County." he explained, "but I don't expect our civil docket to be increased substantially. "Most of the lawyers and legal experts are located by the county of the lawyers and legal experts are located by the lawyers and legal experts are located be handled for the lawyers and legal experts are located by the lawyers and legal experts are located by the lawyers and legal experts and lawyers are located by the lawyers and legal experts and lawyers and lawyers are located by the lawyers and lawyers and lawyers are located by the lawyers and lawyers are lawyers and lawyers and

"ELIMINATING the case-load in the Circuit Court would be a better distribution of justice," Judge Michael Bradley, of Westland, sug-

gested.
"For that reason, I favor the proposed plan. Our case-load is bound to be increased.

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but the upgrading of the court would not be entirely to blame.

"We are getting a lot of new officers," he went on "and when that happens, our case load always shows an increase."

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"It is just a matter of economics in the court, too."

Judge Hammer believes and summer handled wine that 13,000 cases. This caseload was broken down in this fash-on 21,525 gmisdemeasors, 326 felonies, 95 small claims and 250 civil cases.

"If an right up to date with workload too much."

workload too much."

"THERE IS no doubt that the new plan would increase the District Court caseload," Judge Dunbar Davis, of the Programment District court. The court in the county — handling Plymouth Township the City of Plymouth, Northville city and township and Canton Township.
"It may mean that we will have to have more district judges," he pointed out. "Bat I see no disadvantage.
"The one thing it will do is "The one thing it will do is a contract that the county of the coun

"The one thing it will do is make things more convenient for the defendants and their attorneys who no longer would be required to go in to Detroit to try their cases."

Judge Davis already has a probation plan. It can be increased with ease to meet the new plan if, and when, it is adopted. . . .

"THIS CHANGE is bound to come." Judge Richard Hammer, in Garden City, said. "Let's face it. We are in a period of inflation and \$10,000 today is much differ-ent from the \$10,000 limit of several years ago.

"First and foremost." he stated, "we are a people's court, and we want to serve them as best we can. We can't do it by over-rowding our own courts now."

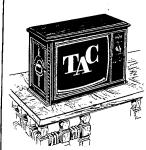
"I am right up to date with my docket," he concluded, "and most of my cases are handled within a two-week period."

So, the proposal, in its pre-sent form, is going to the State Legisalture with mixed feelings among the judges.



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