

'Old Enough To Fight, Old Enough To Vote?'

BULLETIN
The State House of Representatives Tuesday gave 73-30 approval to the "age of majority" package bill, including an 18-year-old drinking age, and sent it to the Senate.

Observant representatives split 43 in favor. Voting "yes" were John Bennett (D-Redford), Marvin Stempfen (D-Livonia), Thomas Brown (D-Westland) and Joseph Forbes (D-Oak Park).

Opposed were Richard Young (D-Dearborn Heights), James Tierney (D-Garden City) and Raymond Baker (D-Farmington).

By TIM RICHARD

Historically, pressure for the 18-year-old vote usually starts in wartime, and it's fed by the "bloody shirt" argument: "If they're old enough to die for their coun-

try, they're old enough to vote."

Does that argument really make sense? Are people too young really maturing younger? And what is "maturity?"

Some scientific answers are provided by Gov. Milliken's Special Commission on the Age of Majority (1971) and by the British Committee on the Age of Majority (1967). Both recommended that 18 be the legal age for everything—not just voting but for business contracts, free marriage, drinking and making wills.

The British adopted their committee's recommendation, and the governor of Michigan has proposed his commission's ideas to the Legislature.

HERE'S WHAT the governor's commission had to say,

'Even those who prolong their education operate with a freedom unheard of 30 years ago.'

as written by a member, Dr. John Hagen of the University of Michigan psychology department.

"It is well known that mental age continues to grow throughout childhood, but reaches its maximum in early adolescence, ages 14 to 15. Beyond that age, mental age is relatively stable."

Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget... describes stages of intellectual growth which act as boundaries on the child's capacities. The highest stage, called "logical operation," is achieved by about age 13 in normal children, and beyond that time there are no qualitative differences between the adolescent and the adult's thinking processes.

"The major breakthrough at this stage of logical operations concerns the onset of the ability to distinguish the real from the possible. The adolescent can now consider a problem in terms of the possible relations which might be true and then go about testing which are indeed true."

Other testing shows the younger of the same age of "logical operations" can also make moral judgments. The commission report goes on:

"THE DEVELOPMENT of the ability to make certain political decisions has been studied by Prof. Joseph Adelson of the U. of M. Children from ages 11 through 18 have been studied via deep interviews to determine their political understanding."

"It was found that before the age of 13, the children were unable to reason from premise to use hypothetical, deductive modes of analysis, or to consider the social consequences of political actions."

"By age 13, a marked shift has occurred. He has achieved these capacities; at least some of the time but is still not able to display them consistently."

"By age 15, a real grasp of

formal thought is displayed. The abstract can be dealt with easily, and any difficulties in judgment are due to lack of knowledge and experience rather than lack of reasoning ability."

ONE COULD argue that just because youth have developed their capacities before the age of 18, it is quite another question whether their actual behavior demonstrates maturity.

"There seems to be more variability in level of emotional growth than in intellectual capacities. Emotional stability is present in some individuals at early adolescence, and others do not seem to reach it even at ages 25-30."

Moreover, it must be recognized that life situations compel large numbers of youth to assume adult roles well before the age of 21. Thus, adult behavior is a necessity and can be quickly learned, at least in terms of the minimum requirements for carrying out responsibility. The fact that so many individuals under age 21 do so is evidence they have the

basic intellectual and emotional requisites."

IN ARGUING for 18 as the age of legal majority, the Michigan commission relies heavily on the research of the British committee, which says, under the heading of "Are They Responsible?"

"The British Medical Assn. draws attention to the progressively earlier physical maturity apparent during the past 100 years and observes that the trend towards earlier physical maturing has been shown equally in boys and girls."

The BMA says "there is good evidence, however, that

children who are physically advanced for their age score higher in mental tests than their contemporaries."

"It is our view that there are no psychological reasons for placing the age of majority at 21 nor any psychological objection to lowering the age."

AND THE British committee later adds:

"Whether we like it or not, the young are marrying earlier; whether we like it or not, they are earning more; even if we should prefer to clap them in a cloister for a further three years, the fact

remains that the vast majority are out in the world, running their own lives, fighting their own battles, choosing their own friends, and that even those who prolong their education operate with a freedom unheard of 30 years ago."

The British committee noted it had received only one piece of evidence advocating raising the age higher than 21. The entire text:

"Sir, re Age of Majority. 21 is wrong. 50 is right. Verb. sap. Yours faithfully."

It was written from a London in a cloyer for a do and the signature was indecipherable.

Phone Class Ends For Pregnant Girls

A telephone teaching system that has enabled some 80 students over the past four years to complete high school is a casualty of recent state legislation that prohibits classifying pregnant girls as special education students.

Legislation passed a year ago prohibits high schools from excluding girls because they are pregnant and permits local districts to set up separate programs for these students.

SINCE SEPTEMBER 1967, Oakland Schools has offered high school courses to students who will be absent from their schools longer than

two months for physical reasons. A total of 267 students have been declared eligible for enrollment by physicians, who certify that the student is well enough for instruction, but should not attend school.

Of these 55 have had disabilities other than pregnancy. Among the non-pregnant are victims of automobile, skiing and swimming accidents, as well as young people with muscular dystrophy, heart malfunction and other chronic disorders.

Students from 26 of the 28 Oakland County districts have been enrolled in the program.

Our Lawmakers Pass Up Cruise

While a large portion of the State Legislature ducked out for a brief trip to the Bahamas Islands, Observersland senators and representatives remained at work.

An estimated one-quarter of the legislators (or 37 lawmakers) skipped two days of work to be the guest of the Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce on a cruise to the Caribbean islands.

Though the chamber would not release the names of the legislators on the trip, Observersland's Sens. Carl Pursell (R-Plymouth), William Faust (D-Westland), and David Plawski (D-Deerborn Heights) were seen on the floor of the Senate for the Thursday session. Sen. Daniel Cooper (D-Oak Park) was reportedly in a committee meeting on Friday.

REPS. Marvin Stempfen (D-Livonia) and Thomas Brown (D-Westland) were present for a committee meeting on the Schoolcraft College appointment issue on Thursday.

Rep. Joseph Forbes (D-Oak Park) was in town for his daughter's graduation from the University of Michigan. Reps. James Tierney (D-Garden City), John Bennett (D-Redford Township) and Raymond Baker (R-Farmington) were reportedly

in their home districts on the weekend.

Bennett spent Friday discussing politics with Redford Township officials and explained: "I was invited, but I refused. I'm not sure, though, what's wrong with the trip. I might go next year."

The weekend junket drew criticism because legislators were off for two weeks already this month around Easter and because it was considered "reward" for legislators who do favors for the Chamber of Commerce.

A PRESS release sent out by the chamber mentions that 450 persons were to travel from Charleston, S.C. to Freeport in the Grand Bahamas for a one-day stop and then return.

It does not mention that state legislators were invited. Three seminars were scheduled during the free trip. A film and panel discussion on "The City: Crisis in Perspective," began the program. A panel on "Downward Stadium-Key to Detroit's Future" and a "Town Hall Meeting" were slated.

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