

## POINTS OF VIEW

## Schools help teen pregnancy rates turn the corner

Representing legislation works. Check the numbers from the state Department of Health. Just before Mother's Day, DOH reported teen pregnancy at its lowest point in 10 years. The pregnancy rate covers live births, abortions and miscarriages per 1,000 females ages 15-19. Vernice Davis-Anthony, outgoing director of DOH, credited a "shift in attitudes and behavior," enhanced by abstinence programs in the school curriculum. Their purposes were to keep young women away from not only sexual activity but also from tobacco, alcohol and drugs.

For reasons never explained, DOH's report neglected a few other factors: Michigan voters' decision in 1988 against funding welfare abortions, a new parental consent law before a girl can get an abortion, and the noises Gov. John Engler's administration has made about requiring under-18 moms to stay with their parents.

It's entirely possible, since unmarried welfare mothers tend to raise more unmarried welfare mothers, that Engler's elimination of the general assistance welfare program also caused older folks to tell younger folks that the end of the free ride was in sight.

Engler was of course savagely attacked by the welfare industry, its clients and the political left. They talked recall.

But the Mother's Day evidence from DOH suggests the harsh changes in law and administrative policy have worked. Abortions per 1,000 females aged 15-19 fell from the 36-37 range in 1987-88 to 22.2 in 1993, the last year shown. Pregnancy rates topped out at 98.6 in 1989, slipping to 88.2 in 1993.

Liberals can't understand it because they don't believe market incentives work. The basic phenomenon is that pulling the plug on free abortions has had a dampening effect on pregnancies



TIM RICHARD

in general.

That was the good news. The bad news is scarier.

It comes from *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*, the weighty 1994 statistical tome by Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray — much maligned by liberals who haven't read it.

America is becoming dumber. Our intelligence quotients are dropping 1-4

points per generation. It's not the fault of schools and the National Education Association. It's the result of "dysgenics" — collective bad breeding.

Not only do higher IQ women have fewer babies, H&M report, but they bear them at older ages. The authors group women in five IQ classes. Class I, very bright, have their first babies at the mean age of 27.2. Class V, very dull, have their firstborns at 19.8. (It's all in Chapter 15.)

When the dullest women have more babies and the span between generations is shorter, they exercise a doubly depressing effect on America's average IQ.

"In pre-modern (Victorian) times, privileged young women . . . married earlier and suffered fewer marital disruptions. The net result was that, on average, they ended up with more surviving children than did unprivileged women," H&M say.

But in modern times, they add, high

IQ women (1) go to college instead of marrying in their late teens, (2) opt for jobs, careers and professions, (3) delay marriage and (4) have fewer babies (5) later in life.

There's more when we consider illegitimate births, which liberals refer to by the euphemism of "teen pregnancy."

And so it goes. Low IQs, young mothers, low birth weights, illegitimacy, welfare, poor school performance, criminal behavior of males, even injuries on the job — all are linked and even related.

Passing Engler-style social legislation is helping a little bit to turn back the tide of social disaster that has started at our toes and today is chest high. But the data suggest America is a long way from avoiding disaster.

Tim Richard reports on the local implications of state and regional events. His Touch-Tone voice mail number is (313) 953-2047, Ext. 1881.

## LETTERS

## No credibility

Self-anointed experts often make up their own "facts" . . . Hank Borman for one, Rush Limbaugh for another.

Last week Hank claimed that the average global temperature hasn't risen since 1940. That's not true; he made that up. Recent data published by Oak Ridge National Laboratory shows that temperatures leveled out during the '40s, '50s, and '60s, but have increased dramatically since then.

The period between March and December last year was the warmest on record for those months. Temperatures have risen about 1 degree Fahrenheit between 1881 and 1970, but have risen another half degree since then.

Who do we believe? He says one thing, I say something else. Back in March, he said temperatures in Antarctica "seldom" get above freezing. He just made that up too.

Now he tells us temperatures haven't risen since 1940. He estimates the increase in ocean levels will be zero. I estimate his credibility is zero.

Those interested in learning more about global warming can visit a special EDF exhibit in the Science Center

between May 26 and Oct. 15 or the Smithsonian in Washington between June 15, 1995, and Jan. 15, 1996.

The exhibit has already been seen by more than 1 million people in New York, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, San Diego and Denver. But unfortunately it won't get any closer to Michigan.

Dick Landback, Farmington Hills

## Voters beware

On Tuesday, Nov. 7, 1995, an election will be held in Farmington Hills to select a mayor for two years.

Unbeknownst to hundreds, if not thousands, of voters is the extreme danger that they will be disenfranchised.

Simply put, if any present incumbent council member captures the mayoral seat, his or her vacant position will be filled by action of the council, not by the electorate.

The only way to address this blatant violation of the electoral process is for any councilperson, running for mayor, to resign his or her seat on the council so that voters in our city can fully exercise their right to directly elect whom they wish, not to have some surrogate

chosen by the council.

Though the statutes are silent on this issue, it behooves all councilpersons concerned to adopt such a position because it is in consonance with those ethics in government which we citizens expect from our elected representatives.

To act otherwise is to send a clear message of challenge and contempt to voters that representative government in Farmington Hills is not only a farce, but clearly nonexistent.

Albert Rosen, Farmington Hills

## Asks for support

To: Members of Farmington Hills boards and commissions.

Recently, I announced that I would be a candidate for the first elected mayor of the city of Farmington Hills. As you know, this election will be held in November.

One of the issues discussed during the vote on switching from an appointed to an elected mayor was just how the change would fit in with the traditional relationship of mayor to city administration. I am enclosing my announcement statement which covers this issue.

Basically, I would carry out the duties of mayor as I did during 1991, when I served in that position by selection of the council.

At the end of that year, both my colleagues and the public offered praise at the way I handled the job of mayor, especially noting that I had taken a fructuous council and developed a working relationship that allowed the city to reach many of its goals.

That year and all the time I've been on council, I have periodically dropped in on board and commission meetings, schedule permitting. As mayor, I would continue to do that as well as hold annual meetings with the chairs of the boards and commissions as Terry Seaver did the year he was mayor.

I would also recommend reinstating the annual Boards and Commissions Picnic, which I found to be very helpful in developing a camaraderie among those who serve our city.

I would hope after reading this letter and the statement that you would support my candidacy for mayor. If you have any questions you can reach me at 474-3655.

Aldo Vagnozzi, Farmington Hills

## About those trees

There is a new complex going up behind our house on 12 Mile Road.

Recently, I had noticed that some of the trees in front of our sub, that weren't in the way of the building, were cut down. I found this act to be somewhat disturbing. To me, the cutting down of these trees that are still good and not in the way of the new complex was stupid.

These trees help to keep the air that we breathe clean. If we destroy them, the air will be harder for our lungs to breathe. Many people may think that one or two trees won't make a difference, but they will.

Those trees are a part of our environment, if we cut them down it's like telling our lungs, "You guys can't have the air you need."

Please take the time to consider this issue. Even if the old trees are cut down, maybe new, and more healthy trees could be planted in their place. We must try to do something about this.

If no one else will do something about this, I guess I will.

Jonathan Lenze, Farmington Hills

## Sadly, emotion and memory are now houses, strip malls

The Michigan Department of Agriculture, ever vigilant in keeping tabs on things agricultural, released last month a study that indicated Michigan loses about 10 acres of farmland every hour.

In the decade of the 1980s, that loss mounted up to 854,000 acres, around the size of the entire state of Rhode Island. If the trend continues, another 1.8 million acres will be lost by 2012, nearly 20 percent of the total 10.1 million acres now farmed in our state.

Where's it all going? That's easy. Take a drive through Canton Township, now one of the most rapidly growing areas in Michigan, or in what used to be farming country just outside Brighton. It's going to subdivisions and shopping centers, strip malls and chain stores.

It seems and but true. There is a certain point at which countryside, with development approaching, gradually becomes real estate. Emotion and memory turn into a commodity.

Is it what we want? Probably. After all, the whole point of the suburban revolution which brought people out of the big cities and into greener pastures was in response to what people wanted. Peace. Quiet. Good schools. A sense of country with trees, a garden to plant, a lawn to mow.

Has the promise of suburb somehow turned to the problem of sprawl? I don't know, but sometimes I worry.

One aspect is economic. A conference on "Alternatives to Sprawl" put on last year by the Brookings Institution listened in astonishment when a paper by the Bank of America argued that sprawl in California has created "enormous social, environmental and economic costs, which until now have been hidden, ignored, or quietly borne by our society."

"Businesses," the study went on, "suffer from higher costs, a loss in worker productivity and underutilized investments in older communities."

Here's an example of this point. If the bus system serving the suburbs in Southeastern Michigan (SMART) folds, a whole lot of suburban businesses are going to have to pay a lot more than they are paying now to get workers to their plant gates.

Another cost of sprawl: Downtowns. I don't mean big city downtowns like Detroit



PHILIP POWER

or Lansing. I mean the kinds of downtowns which I retain on my list of things most cherished about Michigan.

Plymouth, whose village green is surrounded by shops. St. John's, seat of Clinton County, whose downtown is punctuated by the county building at one end and the grain elevator at the other. Howell, with its magnificently restored 19th century courthouse, and Birmingham, buzzing with good places to eat and fascinating things in store windows.

All these downtowns, and many others like them, summon up a sense of place, of the roots of history that distinguish one community from another.

What hurts downtowns? Shopping centers, for one. Ask the folks in Birmingham 2000, a group devoted to sprucing up the downtown under the threat of Somerset North, a building just a few miles away.

Big chain stores, for another. Ask the Brighton city fathers what happened to the base of locally owned downtown merchants when the Wal-Mart opened up just outside of town.

The anti-suburb theorists argue (as they did in last week's issue of *Newweek*, the source for much of this meditation) that suburbs inevitably turn into sprawl.

I think they're wrong, but we'd better be vigilant.

Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. His Touch-Tone voice mail number is (313) 953-2047, Ext. 1880.



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