

## editorial opinion

# Residents must face duty in fighting crime

Resident cooperation is the key to fighting crime. Although the City of Farmington administration has been assigned the task of studying ways to combat crime, their efforts will be for naught if residents continue to turn their heads away from reality.

Police statistics reveal that vandalism has risen by 65 per cent in the City of Farmington. Reflecting this rise was the attendance by members of the Farmington Oaks Subdivision Association at this week's council session.

THE USUALLY SEDATE council was barraged by residents pleading for help from city fathers.

Oaks residents have been victimized lately by a rash of crimes including auto break-ins, false alarms, lawn streaking, brush fires and bottle throwing.

Residents point their fingers at law enforcement officials, saying it is their duty to stop the trouble.

But in reality it is the residents who must do the cooperating to stem the tide of vandalism.

Public Safety Director Dan Byrnes says the best way to fight back is by having residents report crimes when they happen. Residents beg off from their responsibility, claiming a fear of retribution by the vandals.

Yet at this week's meeting, none of the residents present could come up with any real concrete example of hard core recrimination for having reported a crime. Still the urge exists not to get involved.

Curfews, citizen band radios, resident patrols and use of reserve police officers were suggestions made by residents to fight vandalism. Some suggestions have merit, but most have liabilities.

Residents need to band together, all right, but not to form vigilante patrols. They just aren't trained to handle crime situations. Use of police reserves is prohibited by union problems. Curfew enforcement is questionable.

**RESIDENTS NEED** to put their faith in law enforcement officials. Byrnes says many incidents of vandalism go unreported. This makes it difficult for police to establish patterns of crimes. In other cases, crime could be cut down by residents' not setting themselves up by leaving doors unlocked or tape decks in unattended automobiles.

But most of all, residents should keep cool about the situation. As City Manager Bob Deadman says, Farmington isn't a crime-ridden community. It never has to be if residents cooperate. **STEVE BARNABY**

## Public favors handgun regulation, sees no 'protection' in firearms

State Sen. Carl Pursell from time to time polls residents of his district (Plymouth, Livonia, Redford Township) about their views on public issues.

His most recent poll results came in to the office last week, and they contained some interesting results on a subject usually treated with more heat than light: gun control.

The item on the questionnaire read: "Proponents of handgun control feel that banning handguns will help eliminate crimes of violence. Those against handgun control claim that criminals will still be able to obtain guns and that citizens would lose a method of defending themselves. Do you favor legislation that would ban the sale and possession of handguns?"

The results were that 56 per cent of the respondents agreed and 44 per cent disagreed.

**STATISTICS** on this matter of handguns are by now clear.

Of the 19,000 homicides committed in the U.S. in 1973 more than 10,000 involved handguns. While every other industrialized country prohibits private ownership of handguns, one out of every four U.S. households owns a pistol — more than own dishwashers or stereo sets.

National statistics also tend to support Sen. Pursell's poll, showing that the public at large wants some form of gun regulation by a 7 to 19 per cent margin — a figure that has increased sharply in recent years.



The major objection, of course, is that people fear that handgun regulation would take away from the "good guys" their freedom and capacity to defend themselves against the "bad guys" who would not give up their weapons.

U.S. SEN. Philip A. Hart, in a recent news release, has a good reply to this argument.

National studies, he says, show that in about eight out of 10 handgun killings, it is not the bad man who shoots the good man. Rather it is the momentarily outraged good man who, in passion, uses it instead of his fist; or mistaken good man who thinks the man at the back door is trying to rob him, when in fact it's his neighbor; or it is a home accident.

In the remaining 20 per cent of handgun killings, according to Sen. Hart, where the bad guy is doing the killing, the bad guy usually gets the gun from the good guy. "Unfortunately, those millions of 'honest' handguns provide the reservoir that

keeps the criminal arsenal full," concludes the senator.

**I HAPPEN** to think Sen. Hart and Sen. Pursell (who did not take a position on handgun regulation in his newsletter, but who I suspect favors regulation) are right.

Think of it this way: If Mr. and Mrs. Robert Stempel, whose 13-year-old son was kidnapped in Bloomfield Township last week, had owned a handgun, would its presence have helped prevent their son's abduction? No, because he was picked up at random, as he played in the neighborhood.

Would having a handgun have helped in getting Timothy Stempel back home, safe and sound? No. It was the coolness and courage of the Stempel family, coupled with good advice from the local police and the FBI, which enabled them to get their boy back.

Would having a handgun have made the arrest of the kidnappers any quicker or easier? Again, no. The arrest came as a result of thorough and excellent police work.

Our society is sick enough as it is without having to cope with literally hundreds of thousands of handguns kicking around. A much better plan would be to regulate handgun ownership, coupled with swift, long and certain jail sentences to anyone caught committing any crime with a handgun.

## Civil disobedience-- for which cause?

The question of civil disobedience when one thinks a law is unjust has always bothered me. I have always felt that a law is a law and should be obeyed, and if it is a bad law it should be changed through the democratic processes.

When Fred Buesser was president of the Michigan Bar Association, he wrote a very scholarly piece on this subject, and I will steal some of his thoughts to help put the question in a proper perspective.

"If Martin Luther King is correctly understood, civil disobedience is the exercise of the right, under principles of natural or moral law, to disobey any law which an individual's conscience tells him is unjust, provided that he performs his act of disobedience openly and non-violently, and provided that he willingly accepts the penalty for his act."

**CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE**, so defined, claims a proud lineage: from the Old Testament through the Christian martyrs; from the American Revolution through the civil rights marches in the south. But before we concede that recent acts of lawlessness and violence — and of interference with police officers in the discharge of their duties — are entitled to be equated with the great heroes of history, let us take a closer look.

Civil disobedience is heady stuff. Its successful exercise generates a sense of power — a power just as corrupting as power lawfully acquired.

The Declaration of Independence cautions against rashness in putting aside established forms of government merely to avoid evils which are "sufferable."

**IN COLONIAL** times patriots talked of being in a "state of nature." By this they meant a situation in which human beings existed in an environment where there were no laws, no rules, no order.

Today we are not in a state of nature. We live under a democratic society of self-government, based on the concept that the fundamental source of power lies in the people themselves.

But before we concede that recent acts of lawlessness and violence — and of interference with police officers in the discharge of their duties — are entitled to be equated with the great heroes of history, let us take a closer look.

And we must note that it is one thing to disobey a law because it is honestly believed to be unconstitutional (and hence no law at all) and to prove



it, and quite another to deliberately violate a law acknowledged to be entirely legal simply to attract public attention to a "cause."

Unless people make themselves heard, the order of society on which we rely — whether for police protection or Social Security payments — will crumble beneath the onslaught of worthy causes (and worse); we will trample ourselves to

death in a world where law has lost the respect of the citizens.

If our government is imperfect, it is the best yet devised by the mind of man. Under it laws can be changed and grievances remedied in court. The effectiveness of these remedies is made plain by the dramatic changes in our laws accomplished by statute, petition and court decisions in recent years.

To those who say, "This one cause is more important than the law," the answer must be: "Which cause, world peace, the conquest of space, atomic proliferation, population control, aid to underdeveloped nations, the poverty program, crime and delinquency, civil rights pollution?"

To those who say, "The wrong is too ancient to await orderly redress," the answer must be: "Anarchy is too high a price to pay."

## Judges don't print money

Judges have imposing courtrooms. Judges have gavel. Judges have law books and clerks! Most judges even have wisdom.

But judges don't have printing presses to spit out money, and lacking them, they can't help the State of Michigan, local governments and especially the school districts out of the fiscal jams they're all in.

And yet it appears judges may be asked to do just that because the budget cutting cases may be coming their way.

**FORTY SCHOOL** districts are asking Attorney General Frank Kelley to rule on whether it's proper for Gov. Milliken and the legislature to cut so-called "categorical aid." Bloomfield Hills, Birmingham, Southfield, South Redford and Troy are involved in that one.

Categorical aid is the money the state gives local districts for certain specialized programs that the state requires. On the surface, it seems incongruous and unfair to tell these districts they absolutely must do certain things and then take away the money they were getting to do it.

But the question is what can an attorney general — whose opinions have the force of law until a court rules otherwise — do about it? Or the state to pay out money it doesn't have?

**OTHER SCHOOL** districts have a different problem: They were getting general state aid on a formula that went up to 27 mills; thus, if they levied more than 27 mills, they got no extra aid.

Well, that looks fair enough, but when state budget cutting time came along, the cuts were based on total millage, not just the first 27 mills. In other words, the high tax districts got no reward for taxing themselves, but they did get punished when cutting time came.

Wayne-Westland, Redford Union, Livonia and Plymouth are in that bracket — their rates are in the mid-to upper-30s. They, too, are going to the

attorney general, and that case could also land in court.

Again, it's fair to inquire: What is an attorney general or judge supposed to do? They can issue all the orders and rulings in the world, but they can't print the money.

**MICHIGAN HAS** found itself in a bind.

The constitution of 1961 requires balanced budgets, which seemed like a nice idea at the time. The tax reforms of the mid-50s gave us an income tax which produced revenues that rose as incomes rose, and that seemed like a nice idea at the time. Unfortunately, with unemployment ranging from 8-14 per cent, those revenues are dropping.

The only reasonable way out of this crisis is through a tax increase. So says the voice of the 20,000-member Michigan State Employees Association. The Michigan Education Association says the same thing. They would — their jobs are at stake.

Gov. Milliken says "the political climate is not right for a tax increase," and even the MSEA ruefully admits he's probably right.

Sen. Carl Pursell says a new law he sponsored, which takes effect this week, will require monthly statements of revenues and expenditures, "including estimates of fiscal year-end fund balances." What he's saying is that a faster flow of information might have prevented the kind of \$300 million deficit and governmental blood-letting we're now facing.

Attorney general's opinions. Court orders. Monthly statements. Higher taxes. Illegal deficits. It will take more than the judicial wisdom of a Solomon to get us out of this one.



## Schools denied new sex ed role

An epidemic of venereal disease. A soaring illegitimacy rate, and not just among the lower orders. The Pill as a household word. The commonness of abortion.

You can read about them in the papers, hear them casually discussed on TV talk shows, learn the gory details from magazines and hear them flippantly discussed in conversation.

What you can't do is teach about them in the public schools. The State Senate saw to that last week as it defeated, 22-12, a bill to lift the prohibitions on certain subjects in sex education classes.

In a way, it's hard to blame those who voted nay. The public — or at least volatile portions of it — sometimes lobbied, sometimes bullied, legislators into voting against it. The senators saw it as a legitimate expression of the wills of their constituents.

The "antis" had a good case. We have one of the frankest, most "sophisticated" and best informed societies in the world, but instead of this knowledge eradicating the evils of VD and unwanted pregnancy, just the opposite has occurred.

It would have been good to see the public schools get a crack at educating kids about the evil side of sex, but the Senate, with the advice and consent of concerned mothers, decided that was not to be. The mothers said: "Leave that up to the parents and the churches."

So, parents and churches, get busy. VD is practically epidemic. More illegitimate babies are being born every day. Abortion is commonplace.

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