

editorial opinion

New Year—time to set good example for teens

New Year's Eve is a time for adults to begin setting a good example for Farmington area teens.

A report by the Farmington Area Advisory Council (FAAC) on teenage alcoholism, combined with a City of Farmington crime report, dramatically indicates the need for adults to clean up their act.

At a recent City of Farmington council meeting, parents gathered to complain about what they felt was insufficient law enforcement in their subdivisions. The major target was local teens who, some residents say, are causing trouble through malicious destruction of property and resident harassment.

A consensus among those residents appearing at the meeting was a fear of retribution if they reported crimes.

Director of Public Safety Daniel Byrnes hit the nail squarely on the head when he laid the onus of responsibility on the adult community.

"To eliminate this problem we need more citizen involvement. It takes cooperation and everyone must report offenses," he said.

"IF RESIDENTS are fearful of intimidation or retaliation, then they soon will be doomed to live in fear of the crimes perpetrated on them."

FAAC reports that alcoholism is becoming the drug of choice among teens. Nationally it is estimated there are 750,000 juvenile alcoholics. In-

creased amounts of vandalism and truancy are related to alcohol use, the organization says.

Youths often parrot the actions of their parents. But come New Year's Eve parents will hit the streets, down the booze and get killed in record numbers. Those who do make it home will flounder in the door, faces flushed, and sheepishly grin at the kids.

Some example! Unfortunately, such adult actions aren't reserved for New Year's Eve. Night after night adults pack bars, nightclubs and restaurants to suck up the liquor. It is in such high demand that restaurant owners are reluctant to open an establishment without having a liquor license.

It seems astounding that parents complain about teenage vandalism when they are unable to constrain themselves from ruining their bodies through excessive drink.

OBVIOUSLY, as history has shown, liquor can't be prohibited. But youths are in desperate need of competent adult leadership. Drinking in itself isn't necessarily bad, but getting snookered is the wrong way to impress youth with the importance of being responsible residents.

Respect is a two-way street. If adults want their property respected, they better learn how to earn the respect of youth.

STEVE BARNABY

Commuter tax unfair, but empires are saved

The City of Detroit, like practically all major metropolitan centers, needs more money.

Mayor Coleman Young has suggested that the legislature allow the city to raise its income tax to three per cent on residents and 1½ per cent on non-residents who work in the city. Current rates are two per cent and 0.5 per cent respectively.

The New Detroit committee has recommended to the legislature that the state pass a series of nuisance taxes, which are taxes on such things as cigarettes and liquor, and use this money to help the City of Detroit.

NO ONE CAN deny that Detroit needs more money. With people moving out of the city, its tax base is deteriorating, yet the costs of service are increasing every year.

No one can fault Detroit for not having faced up to its cash shortfall because it has been attempting to balance its budget by cutting services and employees.

The question, then, is how money should be raised so that Detroit can balance its budget.

It seems that the New Detroit recommendation of statewide nuisance taxes to solve Detroit's problem is inappropriate because it would tax all users of products in the state and earmark receipts for only one community.

MAYOR YOUNG is to be commended for espousing an increase in the Detroit income tax because the tax would be assessed against the people who need and use its services.

The point at which I disagree with the mayor is that he wants to raise the tax on non-residents by 200 per cent while raising the tax on his own residents 50 per cent.

This does not seem acceptable, particularly in view of the fact that people who would be paying the larger increased percentage have no voice in the direction in which the city government goes or how it spends their money.



by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

There is no question that people who work in a city and don't live there have some obligation to pay for the services they enjoy. However, they should not be asked to carry the major burden.

The buildings where they work downtown are paying property taxes, and those buildings don't send anyone to school, so non-residents don't receive all the services that residents do. (They don't get welfare or ADC either.)

THE LARGER ISSUE raised by Detroit's need for money is the whole taxing structure for local, state and federal governments.

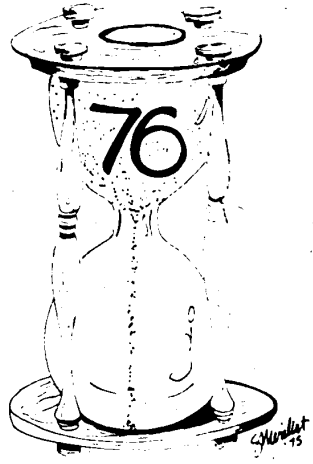
The City of Detroit is forced to provide certain services, such as libraries, museums and zoological parks, which probably should be financed on a regional or statewide basis rather than purely by the municipality in which the service happens to be located.

The concept of regional government has never been wholeheartedly endorsed by municipal officeholders because they would have to give up parts of their empires.

But now that these empires are feeling financial strain, it would be a good time to look seriously into water, sewer, transportation and cultural services that cross city lines and work for some type of improved regional government.

While the nuisance taxes may be unfair because non-users of services would be taxed, the opposite is true. That the users of the service should be asked to contribute to their support.

"CHEER UP SON, THERE MAY BE A HIGHWAY OR TWO IN THERE SOMEWHERE"



1975 was a very bad year

There is no other way to put it. This has been a lousy year, here in the suburbs and nearly everywhere else.

The economy was both the major source of gloom in 1975 and the cause of most of the bad news which seemed to spread throughout the area.

The national recession which started in 1974, coupled with sharply increased gasoline prices and higher sticker costs for cars, made 1975 for the auto industry the worst year since the great depression.

Auto workers in Westland and Garden City



by PHILIP H. POWER

were laid off and survived through supplemental unemployment benefits, previously secure white collar families in Rochester, Plymouth and Livonia worried about office furloughs, executives in Bloomfield Hills, Birmingham and Southfield never got their 1974 year-end bonuses. As car sales plummeted and inventories rose to new highs in 1975, local merchants saw retail sales collapse.

Caught in the squeeze between falling tax revenues and vastly increased costs for unemployment compensation and welfare, the State of Michigan faced a continuing budget crisis. By taking two substantial whacks out of state aid to local schools (the last one only two weeks ago), the state eroded the educational quality in suburban schools that had helped create the suburbs in the first place.

STRESSES in the economy contributed markedly to a pronounced deterioration in relations between the suburbs and the City of Detroit.

In mid-year, Livonia Mayor Edward McNamara, then serving on the Detroit Metropolitan Water Board, charged that Detroit interests were unfairly dominating the priorities of the area's water system and ripping off the suburbs with needless rate increases. The spat ended only when McNamara was fired by Detroit Mayor Coleman Young. But the anger and mistrust remain.

PREOCCUPIED with deficits and the requirements of the jobless, the State Legislature was comparatively unproductive. It passed a \$30 per week increase in unemployment compensation with little argument, but then hassled endlessly over a political reform bill that in its disclosure requirements provoked threats of mass resignation from suburban city councils and planning commissions.

Suburban parents, worried that school strikes would continue to disrupt their family schedules, watched the Legislature pass a bill that would have insured two-week strikes at each contract negotiation. Gov. Milliken vetoed the measure, leaving the situation exactly as it was—the law forbidding strikes, but school officials unable to prevent them.

TWO PHYSICAL events brightened the year's grimness.

A stretch of 1-275 opened at last, bringing a hint to local drivers that someday they might be able to get from I-94 to I-96 by a route less complex than Farmington or Canton Center roads. The new Pontiac Stadium opened, amazingly both on time and under cost estimates, producing universal acclaim for its architect, Birmingham resident Carl Luckenbach.

Looking back over the year, it seems symbolic to me that the few things which went well were construction projects, physical efforts of man to manipulate his environment. What did not go well were efforts requiring the much less tangible but much more important qualities of understanding, leadership, imagination, and pride.

These were the victims of this bad year, and their loss will probably prove to be the most damaging outcome of 1975.

Transit tax bogged down in politics

Courthouse politics has an excellent chance of delaying for a few more years any rapid transit system for southeast Michigan.

If there is a delay, then the cost will be all the higher, the relocation problems more severe, and urban sprawl all the worse whenever our seven counties do get around to building the inevitable.

The situation is roughly this: Our region must pick up a 10 per cent "local" share of a public transportation program; it is estimated in the vicinity of \$27 million annually. Gov. Milliken and others have proposed an increase of \$10 per vehicle (on the average) in the annual fee in three counties—Wayne, Oakland and Macomb; the proposal is currently before the State Senate Taxation Committee. Where it is in hot water.

SEN. HARRY DEMASO (R—Battle Creek), who has eyes like a hawk with a microscope, finds several flaws. It could smack truckers away from the trend to smaller autos could reduce revenues in future years; there are potential evasion problems.

An even more serious objection comes from the committee chairman, the Hon. John Bowman (D—Roseville). He dislikes the notion of taxing only three counties. He wants to levy the tax statewide.

Bowman apparently has been listening to Oakland County Executive Dan Murphy and friends, who have figured out a way to dip into the vehicle tax pot for their pet projects. Their idea is to levy a \$7.50 tax statewide, turn half the proceeds over to the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) for the regional rapid transit program, and send the other half to the 83 county roads commissions.

The flaw is that not all the 83 roads commissions have the kinds of serious problems Oakland has, and as a group they're far from enthusiastic about a statewide tax.

The beauty of the Murphy plan, however, is

Tim Richard writes

that it gets around the kind of Detroit-versus-the-suburbs catfight that Hank Hogan writes about elsewhere on this page.

THE PROBLEM is genuinely a nasty one. Any public transit system must have Detroit as a starting point; yet such a system must inevitably include the outer reaches of the metropolis.

And so the question is how much of the area you tax at any one time. Of the suburbs, Southfield would be among the first to tie into the rapid transit line, and Birmingham would follow. On the west, Redford and Livonia would come in about the year 2000 and Plymouth sometime afterward.

It's no solution to say the tax should be levied only when a community is ready to tie into the main line. The pattern of life will be that people will drive several miles in-town to a station, using their autos for part of the trip and the rail for part.

Thus, an outlying community can be said to benefit from a transit line, even if the line is still several miles away.

AN AUTO LICENSE fee isn't the only way to raise money for a transit system. Other regions have used sales and income taxes.

One theoretically sound idea: Inasmuch as transportation facilities can be shown directly to raise property values, a property tax would be a fair answer. The theory comes unglued, however, when you consider how high property taxes for schools already are.

And so we're back to the auto vehicle tax—either statewide or on three metropolitan counties.

The Murphy-Bowman idea of levying the tax statewide has merit. It also has the dubious dis-

inction of being one of those something-for-everybody plans that always seem to fail to get majority support.

WHEN YOU GET done picking everything apart, you still come up with the tri-county auto fee being as good as anything to get the region moving in the field of public transportation.

Whatever is going to be done, however, should be done soon. The nearly \$12 billion federal kitty for transportation aid has shrunk to just \$2 billion.

Michigan and the southeastern region must act soon if we're going to do anything. Sen. Bowman's committee might do more good by forgetting courthouse politics, by forgetting "reorganization" of the SEMTA board, and by submitting a tax plan soon to the full legislature.

Sense And Nonsense

THE FOLLOWING candid gem is from the magazine Selling Christmas Decorations and is offered here without comment.

"It is the responsibility of the Christmas Decorations Industry to launch an all-out war on this present economic and psychological depression and promote Christmas in 1975. Who else can do it? The consumer is too besieged with inflation, unemployment, gasoline taxes and recession to do it. The government is too busy trying to stay in power to do it. We must do it."

Meetings of the executive committee of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) aren't the sexiest in the world, what with all the talk about traffic monitoring contracts, aerial maps and the like.

At a recent meeting, someone at the committee table dozed off, slipped off his chair and fell to the floor with a crash. The noise was so loud that it awakened our reporter.

The matter caused even more red faces when the SEMCOG folks discovered that the man who fell wasn't even part of their organization. He was looking for another meeting in the Northland Inn and wandered into the SEMCOG session by mistake.

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