

editorial opinion

Attack on senior housing is despicable



This flyer represents the approach the Council of Homeowners is taking in its anti-senior citizen housing campaign blitz.

Farmington Hills residents should disregard the nonsensical petition campaign being waged by the Council of Homeowners of Farmington Hills.

In short, the quixotic crusade fostered by the homeowners is the most shameful display of politicking I've seen in many a year.

Incidentally, distortion of facts and inflammatory literature discredit their campaign to defeat any attempt by the city government to provide senior citizen housing.

The homeowners, led by Norb Bartos and Joe Alkateeb, will deny they are opposed to senior citizen housing. Rather, they are telling homeowners that if the zoning ordinance is amended, Farmington Hills will be deluged by high-rise apartments.

That's ridiculous and untrue. The amendatory ordinances proposed by the housing and planning commissions would, indeed, allow some mid-rise apartments (maximum height 60 feet). But the fier distributed by the homeowners which pictures Farmington Hills as a city swamped with high-rise apartments and office buildings is absurd, and those distributing such junk should be ashamed.

AW, c'mon gang. That's what representative government is all about. You can't have residents

running to the polls every time somebody wants to build something.

In truth, if the homeowners' ordinance did become law, it wouldn't hold up in court anyway. So let's stop kidding around and tell why you really are so uptight.

In truth, the homeowners are opposed to senior citizen housing. They would much rather see the old folks carted off to some far away senior citizen preserve. Opposing mid- or high-rise apartments automatically excludes senior citizen housing development from the community.

Traditional single-family housing is just too expensive for seniors, especially in a community where new houses are going for \$80,000 and \$90,000.

Secondly, homeowner members are suffering from that old paranoia about the evils of high-rises (i.e., lowered property values, undesirable



residents, traffic congestion) most of which is just a lot of malarkey.

So when someone knocks on your door and thrusts the homeowner's petition in your face, do yourself a favor and shut the door.

Relations strained

Reformers should butt out

Back in 1776, our forefathers published the Declaration of Independence and seceded from Great Britain. It was not without a fight, of course, but this nation was founded because the majority of the inhabitants felt their human rights were violated.

Ever since then our country has been dedicated to promoting human rights.

What happened in 1776 was that the American people felt their rights had been violated and they rebelled. It was not that some other country, such as France, chided Great Britain that it was not treating the colonists fairly.

If the latter had happened, rather than the affected people making the move, it would clearly have been interference by one nation in another nation's business.

The American philosophy is democracy: Rule of the people, by the people and for the people. That means no kings or special privileges. They say that there are no more avid crusaders against booze than reformed drunks. So it may be with our crusade for human rights.

The Communist countries believe in government by the people. They go one step further and say the people should not only govern, they should own the resources of the country so that all people are treated fairly.

THERE IS ALSO A difference between a country's philosophy and its practices. Under majority rule, not every person always gets the human rights he thinks are due him.

When the Communists start infiltrating a country, we get up in arms. We call it the "red tide" and sometimes go to war to stop its spread as in Vietnam.

Many times we don't ask the majority of people in the affected area whether or not they want our help.



by HANK HOGAN

There are times we have backed a dictator who was frustrating the will of the majority of his countrymen because we didn't like the political philosophy of that majority. Such was the case in Cuba with Batista.

No one likes to be reformed by someone else, particularly if they don't feel they're sinners. Our new national philosophy of standing up for human rights is going to get us into trouble if we force it on others.

First, we are defining human rights with our own definitions.

Our philosophy of government of, by, and for the people means that the majority of the public of an individual nation should decide what is right and what is wrong, not some other nation. Unless we are prepared to start holy wars to convert the world, the new national philosophy is straining relationships that could eventually lead us to war. This comes, ironically, at a time when the world has been working toward peace.

I TRULY BELIEVE that the will of the people of a country should prevail.

Reformers from other countries have no business interfering with how other peoples run their governments.

Spring:

The season of rebirth

Easter Week has come to mean a few days off school, a time when the family can travel to Florida where the temperature is mid-summer. For the merchant there is a boom in sales. To the contractor and real estate agent, there is renewed interest in new housing.

Time was, however, when spring meant rebirth. To Christians the season marks the observance of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. To Jews it is the Passover, the time when the Red Sea waters divided and they passed to liberty in the promised land. In ancient France, it was the season for adventures for Robin des Bois, who we know as Robin Hood.

"This season used to be the start of the year until, for some strange reason, New Year's was shifted to the obscure month of January. Town-

ships hold their annual meetings and start their fiscal years in this season, but other levels of government have shifted their budget openings to July, October and even December.

So as time goes on, the opening weeks of spring seem to have less and less symbolic significance to mankind. The kite flier and trout fisherman are ready for action, but other outdoors lovers won't be active until May. Baseball season is starting, with or without the consent of the fans, but the crowds won't be out for a few weeks yet.

Even though there's little greenery on trees this side of Kentucky, we can notice things that make us feel better. We office-bound personnel are able to leave work while it's still daylight, and the frequent balminess in the air makes us all feel better. The season of rebirth is as enjoyable as ever.

Equal rights shouldn't be political issue in Michigan

By now, the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution should have gone away as an issue, at least in Michigan where the legislature ratified it in 1975. Both the U.S. and state attorneys general have ruled that a constitutional amendment, once ratified, can't be rescinded. But scare stories keep ERA controversial anyway.

Here in suburbia, R. Robert Geake credited his March state senate victory to anti-ERA feeling. And suburban Girl Scout leaders, protesting their national organization's and metropolitan council's endorsement of ERA, say their only quarrel is that they can't get a chance to vote, although the truth is that it's mainly anti-ERA forces raising the ruckus.

THE PROPOSED 27th amendment to the Constitution states: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." The rest of the text concerns implementation.

The key to what it all means lies in the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee report, which the courts are certain to consult before deciding ERA-related cases.

After stating that "sex should not be a factor in determining the legal rights of men or women," the judiciary report got to the heart of the need for ERA. Existing laws have failed to touch many areas of discrimination; they often have substantial exemptions; they are implemented too slowly.

Then it makes a point of interest to scouting, sororities and fraternities: "The amendment will affect only governmental action; the private actions and private relationships of men and women are unaffected."

THE JUDICIARY report also neatly disposes of many anti-ERA scare stories:

•Protective labor laws—"Many of these laws are not protective at all, but rather are restrictive. For example, laws limiting the hours a woman may work often have the effect of discrim-

inating against her. Protective laws should protect both sexes.

•Public toilets and sleeping quarters—"The right to privacy established by the U.S. Supreme Court would 'permit separation of the sexes with respect to such places as public toilets, as well as sleeping quarters of public institutions.'"

•Military draft—"Men and women would be treated equally. The same reasons for exempting men would apply to women. The fear that mothers would be drafted away from their children was branded 'totally and completely unfounded.'"

•Domestic relations—"Laws in this field would have to be based on individual circumstances and needs, not on sex stereotypes."

•Homosexual "marriages"—Congressional debate produced the opinion that if a state permitted marriages between two males, it must likewise permit the marriage of two females.

So much for the scare stories about ERA.

WHAT ERA WILL do is give women equality under the law. Underline those words "under the law."

Existing laws, though numerous, fail to take care of such things as discrimination in employment, wages and credit.

Existing laws are piecemeal. Existing laws are implemented slowly. Existing laws cover limited areas. When state laws are at issue, a state legislature may repeal them.

ERA extends to ALL women... in all states... protecting all legal rights.

The area Girl Scout leaders, had they truly understood ERA, should be supporting the stand of their national and metropolitan leaders on ERA and settling their voting rights fuss quietly.

And Sen. Geake, though he may have found an anti-ERA stand was good for votes, does his district a disservice when he pretends Michigan's ratification of ERA can be changed. Geake should be educating his anti-ERA admirers rather than exploiting them.

ERA represents legal equality—and responsibility—for women.

One suburb fights being a social dumping ground

Time was when crime and its ravages on society were taboo topics for politicians.

Instead of ideas on how to get prompt and uniform punishment of convicted criminals, we got discourses on the sociological causes of crime. And instead of thoughts on how to stop plea bargaining in the courts, we got treatises about how putting criminals in jail would stunt their rehabilitation.

In short, time was when politicians appeared more interested in the rights of criminals than in the rights of society or the victims of crime.

Today this has all changed. Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson has been making a lot of waves with his proposals to tighten up on what is plainly a sloppy parole system—it releases a lot of convicted criminals back into society before they are ready for it.

Wayne County Prosecutor William Cahalan has been getting much publicity with his proposals for mandatory minimum sentences for anyone convicted of a felony.

Michigan law now holds that if you are convicted of a crime committed while you have a gun on you, you'll get an extra flat two years in the slammer in addition to the regular sentence.

ALL OF THIS is very helpful to a public which is getting sick and tired of constantly living in fear of crime and criminals.

It poses one big problem. If we are going to have tougher laws dealing with parole and stricter sentences, we are going to have more people in prison than we had in the past. And if we are going to have more criminals in prison, we've got to have more prison space in which to house them.

Now, this is expensive, because prisons in Michigan are already jammed to the bars. Adding even more prisoners will require constructing or buying more cell space.

But we've got to do it. To argue that we ought to be giving criminals stiffer sentences and then not providing space to put them in is nothing less than irresponsible.

WHICH IS WHY the furor now raging in the suburb of Northville Township presents a tough question.

Some time ago, somebody proposed that the State of Michigan buy the former Wayne County Child Development Center, located in Northville Township, and convert it to a prison.

The idea has some merit. Wayne County would like to sell the property because it's expensive to maintain. The state evidently has the money to buy it. And the buildings there are already in existence and could be converted into prison space promptly.



by PHILIP H. POWER

There are also a number of negatives. The center was never intended for use as a prison, but rather as a campus for children with learning problems. It looks like a picturesque college campus. It certainly will not be easily converted into a medium-security prison.

Furthermore, more than one-third of the land in Northville Township is already off the tax rolls: Northville State Hospital, Plymouth Center for Human Development, Hawthorn Center for disturbed children, Maybury Urban State Park, Our Lady of Providence Home for Girls, the women's division of the Detroit House of Correction, Hines Parkway and the Michigan State Police area post-district headquarters and crime lab.

The taxpayer citizens of Northville Township argue—persuasively, in my view—that their community is already overrun with non-revenue generating land.

People in the township also point out they have enough troubles with walk-aways from the state hospital and Dehoco without having to worry now about escapees from a medium-security prison.

ON BALANCE, I think the people in the Northville area are right. Converting the child development center to a prison is overburdening a community already under enough strain.

But there is simply no doubt that the state needs more prison space—promptly.

One obvious idea is to convert Kincheloe Air Force Base, near Sault Ste. Marie, into a prison. The Air Force announced last week it will close the facility, throwing the community, which is already hard hit by unemployment, into an upsurge. Part of the base could be turned quickly into a prison, and the jobs associated with it would help ease the economic shock produced by closing the air base.

What, then, for the child development center? Some people want it thrown open for private development. If not that, a useful purpose would be served by turning it over to a consortium of Schoolcraft College and Wayne State University, which could run it as a campus for vocational education.

In any event, although it's clear more prisons are needed in the state, it's equally clear that the next one shouldn't be in Northville.

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