

editorial opinion

Nichols deserves praise for rebuilding morale

A few years back, the Farmington Hills Police Department was in less than stable condition. Morale was bad, the public safety director literally was under siege by his own men and residents were frustrated.

Since that time law enforcement veteran John Nichols was brought in to straighten out what seemed like an irreparable situation. He took the helm from former Michigan State Police Director George Halverson who, after only a few months, resigned in complete frustration.

Nichols deserves a large round of applause for the commendable job he has done in putting back together the city's police force. The fruits of his labors were demonstrated this past weekend when the Hills police made the raid at the Farmington Holiday Inn where more than 70 persons were arrested for allegedly being in a place where illegal gambling was taking place.

Frankly, a few years back, the Hills department probably couldn't have handled the raid.

Throughout the morale crisis within the department, there were a lot of good officers in the department. But they were unable to demonstrate their abilities because of poor leadership.

Nichols has been able to restore confidence in these men. He has shown them what it's like to be on a good police force.

A distinct air of pride now sweeps through the department's ranks. Sure, there is a grumble here

Crackerbarrel DEBATE



and a grumble there, but it's natural to have a few unsatisfied souls.

What is heartening is that these men, under Nichols' leadership, have been able to turn around the department. At this week's council meeting some of the department's command officers were present.

Even the casual observer could detect the justified pride they felt in their work.

Residents who, in previous years, felt frustration with the behavior of their police department can now relax. While the officers' faces may be the same, they have a new attitude.

Congratulations, chief, for a job well done. And congratulations to the officers of the Farmington Hills Police Department. The public appreciates it.

Overly partisan

Republican commissioners made several big, fat mistakes when their caucus voted last week to send a one-party delegation of three men to represent Oakland County in the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments.

First, they dumped Commissioner Larry Pernick (D-Southfield), who had been a delegate most of this decade. Pernick has been a vice-chairman of SEMCOG and commanded great respect in the region. He rose to that position not through mere seniority but by knowing his business and having a wise, cool head.

Second, Republicans are inviting Democrats to retaliate next time the Dems win a majority on the Oakland County board. Heretofore, both parties

had observed a 2-1 split in the SEMCOG delegation. If and when Democrats take control, if and when they retaliate, all three Oakland delegates could be inexperienced. A 2-1 split between the majority and minority parties assured Oakland County would have an experienced person in its SEMCOG delegation.

Third, the dumping of Pernick means no one will be available to represent the populous southeast corner of Oakland County. Instead the delegation will include Commissioners Robert Page (R-Birmingham), whose district includes part of Troy; Henry W. Hoot (R-Bloomfield Township), whose district includes the rest of Troy; and County Executive Daniel T. Murphy, a northerner.

Judges win and you lose

A judge—now there's a fellow who has it made. They used to say a judge is a law student who corrects his own examination papers, but that's only part of the story.

Judges stick together like an ethnic group. If you catch a judge misbehaving, the other judges stick with him and burn the accuser.

And even if you win against a judge, you lose. Three cases come to mind.

IN THE MICHIGAN Supreme Court last week, Detroit Free Press attorney Brownson Murray argued eloquently and forcefully that a defendant has no inherent right to a private trial.

It seems that a year ago, Detroit Recorder's Judge George W. Crockett Jr. closed the doors on the trial of a Cody High English male teacher accused of criminal sexual conduct with a male student.

While the Free Press raced its engine on an appeal Judge Crockett went ahead with the trial. The defendant was acquitted. The trial was over, many months before Crockett's decision for a secret trial could be argued.

And so if Crockett turns out to be 10,000 per cent wrong, the public still loses the right to monitor a trial and the right to make its own decision on whether the teacher is fit to be in a classroom.

Judges stick together, and delay is their glue. One's only comfort is that the supreme court decision—whenever the court gets around to deciding it—will set a precedent. But it cannot correct a past injustice.

ON LABOR DAY weekend of 1977, I was sweating it out with Farmington Observer Editor Steve Barnaby about whether to publish the name of a local priest accused in a morals case.

District Judge Michael Hand has relied on a law which allowed him to issue a gag order. We were pretty sure the law would be declared unconstitutional—some day. And we were dead certain Hand had exceeded the authority granted by even that law.

WXYZ-TV challenged Hand's gag order in U.S. District Court. Judge James Churchill tossed us a crumb: Hand's gag order could apply to the court personnel, the attorneys and cops but not to the media.



Tim Richard

Big deal. We could print the stuff, but the principals of the case couldn't tell us anything.

Now watch the timing: The case broke Labor Day 1977; six months later, almost to the day, the priest pleaded guilty and avoided a trial. He got six months in the county jail. He would have been out by Labor Day of 1978 or earlier, with good behavior.

And WXYZ-TV's case still hasn't come to trial in federal court. So even if the station wins, it has lost.

THE LATEST gag order comes from Livonia District Court.

A fellow in a wheelchair was arrested on an old warrant. The police say he resisted arrest, got abusive and had to be subdued, or something like that. The guy says the police beat the daylight out of him, and so on. There's an investigation going on.

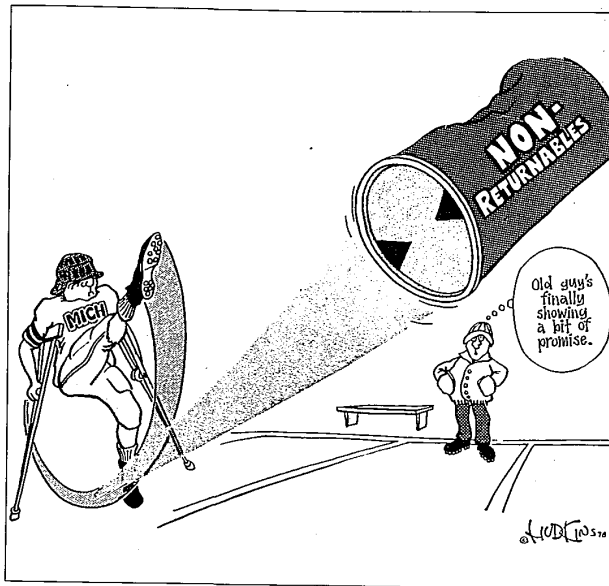
This is not the first story of that kind to be published about Livonia police. Over the years, we've heard a lot of other stories circulated by word of mouth, too.

But Judge James Mies played into the police's hands by issuing a gag order until the case comes to trial.

Now, a conventional lawyer will tell you that all you have to do is wait for the trial for the testimony to become public. If you're dumb, you'll believe that. The statistical truth is that 80 or 95 per cent of all cases are settled by attorneys' negotiations, not by a trial.

Mies' order could be challenged, but what's the use? By the time a brother judge rules, the whole affair will have been settled and buried.

Judges stick together, and delay is their glue.



\$570,000 tax investment helps 3 persons per day

This fall, the Michigan Legislature passed a transportation package which, among other things, increased the gasoline tax by two cents a gallon.

The purpose of the "transportation package" was to generate more money for practically everyone in the transportation industry, from cities for their local roads to the State Highway Department for major arteries and public transportation, such as the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) which serves the metropolitan Detroit suburbs.

Most experts agreed the taxes were necessary to take care of everything from potholes in your street, maintaining expressways and replacing aging buses.

AT ABOUT the same time the legislature enacted the trans-pack, it also mandated that all new buses be lift-equipped to take care of the handicapped.

This was unrelated to the new taxes and transportation program, but it has had its effect on both.

The normal, new SEMTA bus you see on the street should cost around \$92,000. With the mandated lifts, the cost is increased to \$102,000 or \$104,000 a bus. A bus with a lift also has only 41 seats compared to the usual 44.

SEMTA has purchased 57 new buses with lifts at an additional cost of about \$570,000.

The Detroit Department of Transportation got 43 of these buses, and 14 were put on SEMTA suburban routes.

As an experiment, all of the lift-equipped buses were put on the Gratiot route so statistics could be developed as to use and need.

AFTER THE FIRST couple of months of use,

Money says 'good-bye'

Now that you've received your Christmas bonus, watch out for the con artists.

Unlike the Grinch who stole Christmas, their aim is not only to remove the joy from your heart, but also the cash from your pocket.

Supposedly, it's better to give than receive. But the film flam artists consider this one of their best seasons for taking. Fat purses and wallets, bulging from the year's results of your own personal achievements, blare the holiday message: "Money talks; it says goodbye."

Two Detroit-based Corp. executives, David J. Westhoff of Livonia and William J. Kalmar of Grosse Pointe, recently drew up a list of schemes and con games to be aware of as you fight the crowds to buy gifts in what is the most joyous of all seasons.

I now borrow liberally from their film flam specialist's guide for swindling the naive.

BEWARE OF THE unsolicited C.O.D. package that is addressed to a neighbor who isn't home. If you don't accept the package and pay for it, that neighbor—so you're told—will have to endure long lines of people at a pickup point. So you shell out the cash to the official-looking delivery man.

Later you tell the neighbor of the favor you performed, but hear in reply that no package was expected. You rip open whatever box it was that the delivery man left, and maybe all you find are the remains of a cooked goose.

With typical bankers' wit, our friends Westhoff and Kalmar add: "It is obvious whose goose was cooked on this caper. Don't accept for any packages, either yours or your neighbor's, unless you know the contents in advance."

"WHEN YOU PLACE Christmas purchases in your car, lock them in your trunk. In a station wagon, conceal gifts with a car robe or blanket. In any event, keep those gifts out of sight," is their understandable advice.

What they call a "jewel of an experience" involves the unwary shopper who listens to the spiel of a con artist trying to make that person believe he has a "hot" diamond ring or other jewelry for sale at bargain basement prices.

With the consummate skill of a veteran stage

Eccentricities

by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.



the first statistics are in:

There are no handicapped persons using the 43 D-DOT buses because it requires the driver to leave his seat and operate the lift at the rear door.

Under union rules, the bus drivers have asserted that they cannot be assigned a task requiring them to leave their drivers' seats.

Until this is worked out, the lifts will not be used. This sounds ridiculous, but the state law only required that buses be equipped with lifts—not that they have to be operated.

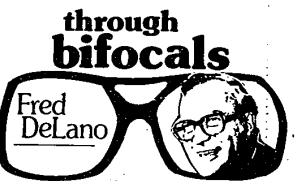
Of the remaining 14 SEMTA buses, there are now an average of three persons using the lifts each day.

To this point, the taxpayers of Michigan have paid \$570,000 so that three persons can use the buses each day.

SEMTA is now taking bids for 167 new buses. By law, the buses must be lift-equipped. The state will pay an additional \$1.67 million for these buses.

The question is: How many people will actually use these lifts to make this investment worthwhile?

(The columnist is also a SEMTA board member.)



actor, the con artist often goes through a complex routine, all to be suckered into the glamorous sounding holiday project of raising chinchillas at home, do-it-yourself style.

The last act takes place when the pigeon discovers (after the pay-off) that the "hot" buy actually is a "cool" piece of worthless glass.

ANOTHER HAIR-RAISING experience for the gullible is to be suckered into the glamorous sounding holiday project of raising chinchillas at home, do-it-yourself style.

The Federal Trade Commission estimates that more than \$50 million is swindled out of the hides of Americans every year by investing in fake fur farms.

Of the host of things that could go wrong, perhaps the worst would be that you couldn't distinguish the male of the species from the female. Reproduction can be extremely difficult when you find a fast talker has sold you two of the same sex. Can you imagine a con man dressing up like Santa Claus, standing on a street corner, ringing a bell and soliciting money from passing persons? Yes, it has happened.

Westhoff and Kalmar recite many more schemes and emphasize: "Of prime importance to millions of Americans at this time of year is the need to get 'what you paid for.' Investigate before you invest."

"Remember, the bitterness of poor quality lingers above all the sweetness of low price is forgotten. Above all, be careful, use common sense, and you won't get your goose cooked."

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