

Lack of class and judgment rule city hall

On paper this new federalism looks like a real deal. After all, the logic dictates, local officials have an inborn wisdom lacking in those faceless bureaucratic ogres along the Potomac.

But looking good is about as far as it goes. The rest is rubbish — a raw deal.

For proof, Farmington Hills residents have only to look as far as 11 Mile and Orchard Lake Road — city hall — center of buffoonery.

Why residents tolerate such crude and incompetent conduct from these local officials is beyond reason. Only a massive subconscious death wish can account for it.

In truth, the way this city has been legislated and administered in recent years truly is amateurish. And events in the past two weeks have finally

brought out the uncomfortable truth.

The roof has fallen in, both literally and figuratively, at city hall.

Residents should be embarrassed by a mayor who lacks the manners to treat with dignity a fellow resident who has served on a public board. A letter of thanks would have sufficed, Mr. Mayor.

It's bad enough that a competent vice chairman of the zoning board of appeals was sacrificed to political expediency. But the blatantly arrogant defense is nothing short of revolting and heaps shame on this city.

ONLY A PUBLIC apology to the community for such crass action will suffice to heal the wound. But undoubtedly Mr. Burwell lacks the leadership qualities to admit that he has blundered.

The roof cave-in at city hall reveals even more public warts which go beyond bad manners. Residents should be infuriated.

With all the experience at city hall, with all the inflated wages paid, city bureaucrats in positions of responsibility lacked the sense to ensure a routine test was made.

As a Hollywood screenplay it would have been great, worth an Academy Award nomination for best comedy. But as a reality, it is deadly serious.

Residents or city hall workers could have been killed because somebody failed to do their job. The blame is hard to pinpoint with the bureaucrats furiously pointing fingers at one another.

But one fact is clear. This city has a chief administrator who is overly preoccupied with his future in northern Michigan. Residents have a right to expect

full service for the dollars being paid.

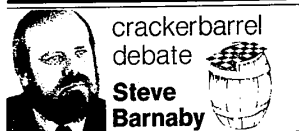
Instead, Farmington Hills' city manager has brought in persons with less experience to run the day-to-day operation of the government while he waits to retire.

THE BUCK STOPS at the city manager's desk in this form of government. Ultimately, he is the one responsible for ensuring that the roof doesn't fall in — literally or figuratively — at city hall.

Even Ronald Reagan's faith in the new federalism would be shaken if he had a chance to examine the present state of Farmington Hills government.

This city needs some fresh blood both legislatively and administratively — now.

Steve Barnaby
Farmington Editor



crackerbarrel
debate

Steve Barnaby

Declare war on highway slaughter

The tragedies are never-ending. Each year, tens of thousands needlessly die in this country because some flea brains thought they could handle their liquor.

Hardly a person exists who hasn't been touched by a drunk-driving death. Many times, drunk drivers go far beyond harming themselves. They kill innocent bystanders.

Such deaths are a crime and should be treated as such.

Frankly, out of all the grisly aspects of life I see as a journalist, drunk-driving deaths make me truly angry — outraged down deep where it stays forever.

For a writer, it's difficult to be eloquent about such an issue. I can only be blunt.

Our society is far too permissive when it comes to this issue. We make a joke of it. Time after time, pure, simple murder is rewarded in the courts with a suspended sentence.

Michigan lawmakers refuse to pass laws harsh enough to deal with the problem.

Many lawyers around the state make a financial killing from drunk drivers who kill. Pay out the bucks to some shyster and you'll go free.

Judges play along with the game just to clear the docket.

YET THE Michigan Bar Association sits back in all its pomposity and says nothing.

Finally, though, a group that is going to do something about this outrage is spreading across this nation. Calling itself Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD), the group is starting chapters around the country.

A few weeks back, its leader, Candy Lightner, made a sweep through the metropolitan area to whip up support. She made the usual round of radio and television talk shows.

But in reality she had to do little whipping. Hundreds have responded to the call. MADD has come to Michigan, and legislators, judges and lawyers better pay attention.

Livonians Sue and Lee Landes are two of the persons leading the drive in Michigan. They can be reached at 476-8344. Believe me, your call would be welcomed.

Legislators, especially, have to know how Michigan residents feel. This, an election year, is a good time to put on the pressure.

Concerned residents in California forced their legislators into passing some of the strictest laws in the country. A third drunk driving offense would bring a mandatory 120-day jail sentence, a fine and three-year license revocation.

Mandatory sentences would be waged for driving without a license. Increased cost of housing drunk drivers would be paid through increased fines.

LET ME LEAVE YOU with these facts.

In 1980 in the Wayne, Oakland and Macomb area, 287 of the 548 fatal auto crashes were alcohol-related. In those 548 fatal crashes, 126 of the drivers killed themselves; of 161 survivors, 104 weren't prosecuted at all, and 30 of the 57 drivers originally charged with manslaughter were allowed to plead to a lesser charge.

It's never too early to act. It could be your loved one's funeral if you put it off.



And no sure cure

'Worse than the Depression'

For 35 years, he has been a successful businessman. A business started in a home garage has been built into a multi-million dollar operation. He employs almost 100 people.

As he branched out into new fields, he believed he had made his business "recession-proof." During boom times, his outside construction work did well. When that slowed down, the inside residential department was busy. Two other profitable ventures were home security systems and property development.

Two months ago, he could boast that the recession had not affected him. "Things have never been better, we've been fortunate," he said then.

Today that has changed. Worry lines are prominent on his face. "We haven't gotten a new job in two months," he said this week. "I've laid off some people already. If I don't get more work, more will be going."

He fears that the business it took a lifetime to build may be in danger. He worries about the lives of those who work for him.

SHE'S NOT enjoying the large dinner served to her at a civic event. She's thinking about the many people who may not be eating dinner that night.

She's the wife of a minister, and she has heard some sad stories in the past few months.

"People say this is the worst time since the Depression. I lived through the Depression, and this is worse. If you had a few dollars then, you had a lot. It would go a long way."

"But a few dollars won't go anywhere today. How can you keep up a modest \$400-a-month house payment and \$150-a-month car payment when you don't have anything coming in? How do you pay for health insurance when you're not employed?"

"In the Depression, we weren't tied into large fixed payments just to survive. No, this is worse than the Depression."

HE IS A college student in architecture. It has



Nick Sharkey

been his dream since childhood to be an architect.

Yet he knows what's going on in the economy.

"We had a recent architecture graduate come in and talk to our class last week," he said. "The grad was lucky because he found a job. He told us to work on our portfolios and hustle now if we want any chance of a job. It looks bleak."

"After I graduate next year, I'm going to graduate school for two more years. Don't you think things are going to be better in three years?"

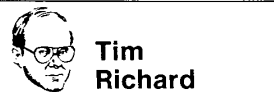
THESE THREE people are among the fortunate in 1982. They aren't among the unemployed. Yet their lives (and all of ours) will be permanently affected by the economy.

Statistics don't describe the effect on human lives. The state's unemployment rate is 16 percent, the prime interest rate is 17 percent, and the federal deficit is projected at nearly \$100 billion.

But what does that mean to people? How many have given up looking for work? How many families have been torn apart by the seeds of despair? How many people are working at dead-end jobs because there's no chance for another job?

President Reagan said last week that there's no quick cure for the economy. Federal economic forecasters may be wrong, and a recovery may be further away than originally expected, he said. No concrete programs or plans were outlined.

How long can we wait for a turnaround? Listen to the businessman, minister's wife and architect student.



Tim Richard

State roads will be rough for years

Usually when an editor gets a thick envelope from a law firm, he worries.

Opening it, however, I breathed a sigh of relief. It was from attorney Rodger D. Young, the fellow from Rochester who is a member of the Michigan Transportation Commission. What made the envelope so bulky was that it contained the new official highway . . . ops, transportation map.

Young's postscript said, "This mailing (Xerox and postage) has been paid personally by me, not the Michigan Department of Transportation."

Im-m-m-m. The last time that six-man group unveiled a new map, it was done at a luncheon in the RenCen. Things must be tough.

"THIS MAP," said Young's note, "is the first official transportation map that does not have a date of expiration assigned to it. This is an effort to utilize the map for an extended period of time and thereby save revenues."

That's right. All my old state maps have two-year dates on them.

"Our gasoline tax revenues and weight tax revenues continue to decline dramatically as a result of more fuel-efficient vehicles, energy conservation on behalf of motorists and declining weights of automobiles," Young goes on.

Two messages are implied. One is that Michigan's official transportation map may not be reissued in two years. We'll use the old ones longer, and politicians will be handing them out more sparingly.

THE OTHER message is that maybe we won't need to print a new map in 1984. There may be no more new highways to show. The old maps may do just fine.

We may never see an M-275 across western Oakland County. There may never be a Northwestern Highway extension through West Bloomfield Township.

I-69 may never be built around Lansing. US-31 may peter out forever above Pentwater.

Oh, that's not official policy, of course. In fact, Young was one of the commissioners who voted to keep alive the M-275 project. What highway builders want, however, and the facts of life are two different things.

At a sparsely attended public meeting last month at the State Fairgrounds covered by only one live-wire newspaper, I heard an M-DOT official named Bob Adams admit it was likely some of Michigan's remaining freeway projects may go unfinished.

WHETHER THAT news makes you happy or sad depends on your political point of view. I'm not getting into the (de)merits of M-275 and the Northwestern extension today.

The point is that not only will our state and county agencies be unable to build new superhighways, they are having trouble resurfacing the old ones, keeping the weeds cut in summer and the snow plowed in winter.

We are actually paying less road taxes today than a decade ago. Taxes are made up of two factors: the base (vehicle weight, gasoline consumed) and the rate (dollars per ton, cents per gallon).

If we are going to keep the roads in shape, we will have to raise the rates and perhaps lower truck weights. That will be a major issue as 1982 unfolds.

FOOTNOTE: I am sad to note the new map still doesn't have a word about one of this tourist paradise's greatest assets — our national forests and their campgrounds. Not even the regional headquarters are listed. State parks are shown, but not federal.

The alibi Lansing gives me is that the map would be too "cluttered" if national forests were shown. Bullroar. The 1982 map showed national forests, and many other states show them. We Michiganders gripe about how few federal dollars flow back here, but we fail miserably to exploit the federal facilities we have.

discover Michigan Bill Stockwell

Did you know that the Redhaven peach, developed by Michigan State University's South Haven Experiment Station, is now the most widely planted peach variety in the world? Here in Michigan today, about one-half of all peach trees are Redhaven, representing hundreds of thousands of trees.