

Drunk driving laws even aids drunk drivers

WERE YOUR parents abstainers, rare, light, moderate, heavy or very heavy drinkers?

Pause a moment and give it some thought. That question was posed to adults in Tecumseh recently by public health researchers at the University of Michigan. The results were surprising.

People questioned tended to follow their parents' drinking habits — except for those at the extremes. Researchers determined that children broke away from parents' drinking styles at the extremes because of the stress caused.

"Children of abstainers were at odds with the community norm. Children of very heavy drinkers appear to have been responding to the stress of alcohol-caused problems within the family," said researcher Ernest Hamburg of U-M.

MY RESPONSE to the question at the beginning of this column, at least in the case of one parent, would be "very heavy." I don't pretend to be an expert, but my personal experience upholds the findings in Tecumseh. I remember well the stress involved in growing up in a family where one adult

was a heavy drinker.

Conventional wisdom at that time was that the children in my family would become problem drinkers as adults. I remember many discussions about the "x" factor — a believed hereditary ingredient that heavy drinking parents passed on to their children.

At least in my family, the "x" factor proved a myth. Of the five children, none of us turned out to be a heavy drinker. As adults, all drink more soft than hard drinks. All would be classified as light drinkers.

THIS DISCUSSION of alcoholism is relevant because on Wednesday, police in Michigan will begin enforcing tougher drunk driving laws. Basically, these new laws will make it much harder on those who choose to drink and drive.

For example, police officers will now have a right to administer roadside breath tests to suspected drunk drivers who are stopped for any offense. Previously, all offenders had to be taken to head-



Nick Sharkey

quarters for blood-alcohol tests.

Also, a person with a 0.1 per cent or greater of blood alcohol content is guilty of drunkenness. Until now, a blood alcohol content of 0.1 per cent was not taken as absolute proof of drunkenness.

Those who refuse to take a blood test will have six points added to their driver's license record, and their licenses will be suspended for six months.

Several other similar laws will take effect Wednesday. Obviously, there are benefits in the new law to potential victims. In a nation where an estimated 26,000 persons are killed every year because of drunk driving, tougher laws can only help.

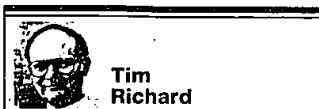
MANY NEWSPAPER COLUMNS have already been devoted to the advantages of the new laws to the victim. May I suggest another benefit?

As someone who lived with a heavy drinker, I know the critical element in change is for the drinker to recognize the problem. That person often must hit bottom before he can deal with his drinking.

Unfortunately, well-meaning family, friends and even law enforcement officials protect the drinker. Sometimes the drinker will not admit to a problem until it is too late, and someone has been killed.

Because of the new laws, more problem drinkers will have their licenses suspended and maybe will end up in jail. As hard as it may be for loved ones to accept, that's good for the drinker. Only through such a dramatic event will a cure begin.

Take it from someone who would have given a "very heavy" answer to the question about parents' drinking habits in the Tecumseh study. The new tougher drunk-driving laws have many benefits for the driver.



Tim Richard

Super sewer, Detroit water issues linked

NOW IS the time to regionalize the Water and Sewerage Department, which serves 100 southeastern Michigan communities but is politically controlled only by the city of Detroit.

One set of reasons is very clear: The vast trouble Detroit has had operating the sewage treatment plant, the funny ways the plant improvements are financed and the legal clouds over former department chief Charles Beckham, Mayor Coleman Young and sludge-hauling contractor Darrylyn Bowers.

But another important set of reasons emerges from the obscurity of state and regional bureaucracy. The Detroit-controlled Water and Sewerage Department is trying its damndest to mutilate a project near and dear to suburban politicians' hearts. That project is known as "super sewer."

LET'S PUT THIS into a legislative context.

For years, suburban legislators and politicians have been advocating regionalizing the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department. Those names are familiar: state Rep. John Bennett, D-Redford; Livonia Mayor Edward H. McNamara; Oakland County Drain Commissioner George Kuhn; state Sen. Rick Fessler, R-Union Lake; and now state Sen. R. Robert Geake, R-Northville.

If a regional system of governance is to be achieved, many more important Democratic politics will have to get into the act.

The group that could tilt the balance of power seems to be the downriver Democratic legislators and Wayne County Executive William Lucas, a Democrat.

LUCAS HAS THROWN his support behind super sewer, the nickname of the Huron Valley Wastewater project.

In its grandest outline, it would consist of a wastewater treatment plant in Brownstown Township on Lake Erie and a long sewer interceptor (line) parallel to I-275 and reaching to the lakes and hills of western Oakland County.

The state Department of Natural Resources is recommending construction of the treatment plant and interceptors to such downriver towns as Flat Rock and Trenton. But DNR isn't at all sure that places like Canton, Plymouth Township, Northville, Novi and Commerce ought to tie into that treatment plant.

I quote from a recent letter from William D. Marks, acting chief of the surface water quality division of DNR, to Duane Egeland, acting director of the Wayne County public works department:

"In recognition of the complex social and institutional issues which are still being addressed, we propose to defer formal certification of the plan at this time."

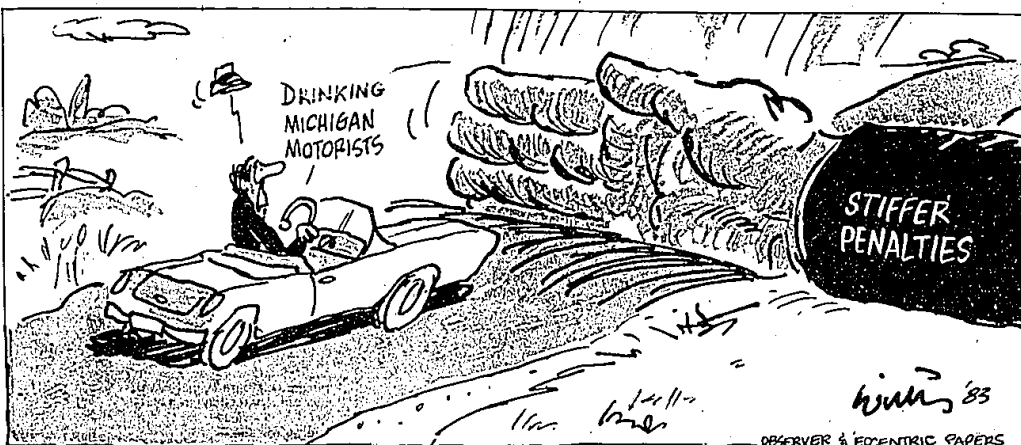
IN PLAIN ENGLISH, the bureaucratic jargon about "complex social and institutional issues" means Mayor Young and the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department.

DWSD is represented on such sexless sounding but important bodies as the Regional Clearinghouse Review Committee (RC2) and the Area-wide Water Quality Board (AWQB). Through those committees, the Detroit forces have been fighting super sewer tooth and nail. They want that wastewater to flow to the Detroit treatment plant, where it will pay Detroit rates and provide jobs for Detroiters only.

County Executive Lucas, a black Detroit, has played the game of appearing not to threaten black Detroit Young. Sorry, but game time is over. On the super sewer issue, Young is Lucas' sworn enemy.

From a point of view of sound public policy, there is no reason why Detroit alone should rule and run a water and sewerage system that serves 100 communities and which 100 communities more than pay for.

That system should be under regional governance. It will take state legislation to accomplish such a reform. Lucas and the downriver Democrats



Detroit's loss is hardly suburbs' gain

THE CONTINUING controversy involving the grand jury investigation of the Vista sludge hauling contract and the series of charges about Magnum Oil's profiteering have damaged Detroit's government and reputation, according to Mayor Coleman Young.

It would be hard to fault his logic. For more than a year, we have been treated to allegations, charges and innuendos concerning Detroit officials and Young's friends.

On the other hand, Young and his supporters claim his appointees and friends are the victims of politically opportunistic federal prosecutors, sensation-seeking media and racist white government personnel.

A COMMON PERCEPTION in the suburbs could well be that Detroit's government is cursed with rampant corruption, and that Young himself is either covering up or refusing to accept blame for wrongdoing in his administration.

Conditioned by the drama of Watergate and a surflet of landforges involving corrupt congressmen, we wonder: Is there corruption? How high does it go? Is Young involved? What did he know and when did he know it?

Many suburbanites, long mistrustful of Young and his administration, now feel they have more reason than ever to rail against special state and federal aid to Detroit. The stage is also set for possibly wresting control of the water and sewerage department from Detroit.

IN FACT, MOST of what has been reported about



Bob Wisler

wrongdoing and the Vista contract has been revealed by a number of confidential sources who are said to be close to the grand jury investigation.

Few would expect that the press will refrain from publishing such information. The nature of the business is that newspapers will report information that it considers to be in the public's interest and truthful. If the information comes from someone whom the newspapers believe to be authoritative and reliable.

But there is no way for the reader to make the same decision — to determine that a leaker is reliable, or to decide that the leaker is a self-

serving law enforcement officer who, having convinced himself of someone's guilt, is not above using the media to try to establish that guilt.

WE CAN SUSPECT, from the length of this investigation, the time between its onset and the indictments and the wiretapping of the mayor's town house that investigators were at someone higher up than director of the water department Charles Beckham and Darrylyn Bowers. But that is also conjecture.

As things now stand, the government could in its best case prove that 1) a city official took a bribe to overlook the fact that 2) a bunch of whites got together with one of Mayor Young's black friends to set up a dummy corporation to take advantage of the city policy of favoring black firms.

This would mean that there is indeed an element of corruption in a city government with a billion-dollar-plus budget and 19,000 employees. But that is not tantamount corruption nor reason to discredit the mayor and his administration's entire record in office.

UNTIL SUCH a time as guilt is proven, we do ourselves a disservice by focusing too intently on this aspect of Detroit's governmental problems. These problems are part of a larger mosaic which includes unemployment, aging housing, an aging and dwindling population, loss of businesses, loss of industries, an empty downtown, poor public transportation and, especially of late, a division between the city and the suburbs.

Detroit is the central city and the most important city in a fading state. Its vitality may not be as important as it was once to the state and to the suburbs, but it should be the one of cornerstones of our efforts to revitalize Michigan.

Convincing the city administration on the basis of leaks will not help us deal with our own problems. In fact, not giving it reasonable opportunity to come out from under a cloud of suspicion will, in the long run, be costly and detrimental to the entire metropolitan area.

Carving the fat from beef, government

ON A RECENT tour of the Hygrade Co., producer of the popular Ball Park Franks, our group was standing in the rear of the Livonia building as big portions of meat were being delivered. As they came in, one worker, with a large knife in his hand, lifted the portion high and carved large strips of fat from the carcass.

It was an unusual sight, but more unusual was the remark of one tourist who said, "That's the fellow we should hire to cut the fat out of our government budgets."

There was a smile for an instant. Then Perry Richwine, the Plymouth attorney, spoke up: "He would have an easy job, for there sure is a lot of fat that could be cut out."

"Where would you start?" someone asked, and The Stroller waited patiently for Perry's answer.

"IS THERE ANY good reason why we have two U.S. senators?" he answered. "And each of them with a large office staff?"

"And is there any reason why we have 18 Michigan men in the U.S. Congress; and each of them with staffs of up to more than 20?"

These figures were a bit shocking, to some of the



the stroller
W.W. Edgar

leaders, and it started a discussion of the entire governmental picture as the new franks went up a ceiling-high contraption to be packed.

By the time we had finished the tour, the visitors had dug a lot deeper into the fat in the federal government. They started right at home to list the number of lawmakers who are paid nifty salaries to govern the populace.

Here is a partial list of the findings:

There are usually seven members of city councils, township boards, school boards and community college boards.

Then there are 15 members on the Wayne County Commission. This is a reduction from the 27 we had before the charter, but the survivors trying to expand their staffs.

THE NEXT STEP was the Michigan Legislature, where more laws are written. And they listed a group of House and Senate members, each representing a small portion of the state.

When the legislature was mentioned, our legal friend, Perry Richwine, interrupted to advise the group there was a time when that body of 12 dozen met only three weeks out of a year and were paid \$3 a day.

"Michigan got along quite well on that set-up," he said, "and there is no reason why it couldn't get along on the same plan today."

"Looking for fat in the budget, you don't have to go very far. I understand that more than 4,000 bills were offered in the legislature last year. Those people up there just seem to race each other to see who can offer the most to make a showing when election time comes."

He smiled as the group broke up. But he brought out the point that, from the city and township boards to the U.S. Congress, we are over-governed.

And as he said, "If you are looking for fat in the budget, you don't have to hire a butcher to find it. There is plenty out there."