

Community Loses In Resignation Of Planner Katz

Westland lost its municipal planning director, Eugene M. Katz, last week and the entire community is the loser.

Although formally citing the economic advancement in private enterprise as his main reason for leaving the position he has held since October, 1966, the real reasons may well have been the actions of hundreds of citizens, and the lack of action by a few public officials, at the height of the controversy involving the city's new master plan and zoning map last March and April.

At the three public hearings on the issues, each attended by 200 to 300 persons, Katz bore the burden of outlining the master plan and zoning map and answering the questions, prompted in many cases by bitter property owners who were personally affected by the zoning changes.

With rare exceptions, the question and answer period went so well that the spilling over of private animosity was obvious to anyone in the audience.

But most of the opposition concerned the impact of new and past apartment projects in the city, which were developed under a 1963 master plan and zoning map adopted three years before Katz stepped foot in Westland.

HE PATIENTLY explained that the proposed zoning map drafted by his office would increase the land area for apartments but with new regulations would actually reduce the maximum number of apartment units in the city, which was the point opposed by private citizens.

But with the exception of support of the master plan and zoning map by the local newspapers,

not one word of support was issued publicly by the city's administration until the evening the City Council formally adopted the zoning map by a unanimous vote.

Without such support, the opposition voiced by citizens, and an organized group formed solely to oppose the new master plan and zoning map, took on added volume and meaning in the ears of those citizens who may have been undecided about the issue.

Although it was completely unjustified and unfair for Katz to assume the full burden of criticism at the public hearings, it may well have been an important factor in his looking around for new opportunities.

The fact that it was outside of municipal government made that obvious, although the financial aspect was part of the problem, too.

It was evident from the day that Katz came to Westland, he would never get the salary he obviously deserved as the most capable and, maybe, hardest working administrator in City Hall.

IT'S EASY TO cite the money issue as the main reason for the planner's departure but some people are willing to sacrifice a few dollars for the satisfaction of gaining full support in the carrying out of their duties.

But when the support, from private and/or public citizens, is not forthcoming, then "The Observer" doesn't blame Katz for getting out of city government.

We will miss him and the Westland community of 80,000 persons will be the eventual losers.

—Leonard Fogar

OBSERVATION POINT

Gun Laws: Burning Issue

By Philip Power

Three matters of fact:

- 1) Among all the carnivores, man and the rat are the only species that kill their fellows;
- 2) There are more guns privately owned in America (estimates range from 50 million up to 200 million) than in any other country in the world;
- 3) In 1967 more than 6,500 Americans were murdered with guns; and from 1900 to 1966, guns were involved in 795,000 deaths of Americans, more than have been killed in all our wars.

In a time when assassination of

politicians appears to have become nearly a national way of life, when suburban housewives are attending gun schools, and when sales of hand guns are at the highest level in history, it only seems appropriate to consider the implications of these facts.

DESPITE THE OUTRAGED screams of the National Rifle Association to the contrary, evidence keeps piling up that there is a clear relationship between unrestricted availability of guns and their use to murder or maim.

J. Edgar Hoover says so. Detroit Police Commissioner Ray Girardin says so. Most of the criminologists and sociologists who have studied the problem say so.

The U.S. with its lax gun laws has a gun murder rate of 2.7 per 100,000 population, compared to .03 in the Netherlands, .04 in Japan, .05 in England and Wales, .12 in West Germany, .26 in Belgium and .52 in Canada. All of these countries have strict but reasonable systems of controlling the sale and possession of firearms.

It only makes common sense

to reason that if someone is off his rocker and has a gun, he will tend to use that gun for violent purposes to a greater extent than if he didn't have the gun to start with.

NOW THE NRA keeps claiming that it isn't guns that kill, but rather the people who pull the trigger.

This is an impeccable argument, except that it is entirely off the point.

What the NRA has done is to confuse arguments about the responsibility for a crime with arguments about the causes of a crime.

To say that people and not guns are responsible for crime is quite correct; we put people in jail when they murder others, but we don't do anything with the gun.

But it doesn't follow to argue that because people are responsible for murders with guns, nothing should be done about the mass and uncontrolled possession of guns, which is the factor clearly involved with the causes of crime. Mass possession of guns does cause gun murders, just as mass possession of unsafe automobiles does cause auto accidents.

APATHY IS ALSO A DEADLY WEAPON.

WEAK GUN CONTROL BILL

Data Backs Control Measures

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The following set of questions and answers about gun control legislation was prepared by the Citizens Action Committee for Stronger Gun Control Laws, a bi-partisan committee working in the field.)

CITIZENS ACTION Committee for Stronger Gun Control Laws. Answers to some commonly asked questions about gun controls.

Q. Isn't the licensing and registration of guns just a means of taking our guns away from us?

A. There is nothing in either the Tydings Bill or the President's proposals that could be used to take guns away from legitimate gun owners and users. The aim of those proposals is to provide a reasonable system for monitoring the dissemination which would use them to maim or kill other human beings.

Q. Don't these proposed laws violate the second amendment to the constitution which gives American citizens the right to bear arms?

A. The Second Amendment to the Constitution does not guarantee to the individual citizen the unrestricted right to bear arms. Those who would mislead people only quote part of the Second Amendment when they talk about this right. The whole amendment reads: "A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." The Supreme Court of the United States has on several occasions ruled that this amendment was only designed to guarantee the states the right to keep an armed militia, not to guarantee to individual citizens the right to bear arms.

Q. Why not just put limits on hand guns and leave the long guns which hunters use alone?

A. From 20 to 30 per cent of the gun murders in this country

are committed with long guns. The lives that are taken with that kind of gun are as important to the loved ones of the victims as are the lives of those taken with hand guns.

Q. Won't gun control laws just take the guns out of the hands of law abiding citizens, while the criminals continue to get them on the black market or through other illegal means, thus leaving law abiding citizens defenseless against armed criminals?

A. First the statistics indicate that about 80 per cent of the gun homicides are committed by so-called law abiding citizens, that is people with no previous criminal record. These are often crimes of passion or impulse, in many cases committed by people who could not get a license because of narcotics addiction, alcoholism or mental illness. In addition, in those cases where such an individual might have the impulse but not the weapon, the screening procedure involved might well provide enough of a cooling off period to let the impulse die before the person could get a gun.

Certainly it is true that these laws will not disarm all criminals, but neither will they disarm law abiding citizens who believe they should have a gun to protect themselves. These laws will give the police an additional tool to use against potential criminals, since carrying an unregistered gun or carrying a gun without a license will be a felony.

Q. Aren't there alternatives to these proposals which would be equally or more effective, such as providing harsher penalties for crimes in which a gun is used?

A. Such alternative proposals are not as effective for one simple reason: They do not take effect until after the fact, after some innocent person is murdered. The idea behind putting reasonable controls on the dissemination of guns is to keep the crime from ever happening.

Q. Why do the advocates of such controls wish them to be enacted at the federal level? Why not leave it up to each state so that the laws can be tailored to meet local conditions?

A. The experience in this country clearly shows that the gun manufacturer's lobby is so effective in many state legislatures, that those states are highly unlikely to pass strong gun control laws. Unless every state has a tough law, the laws of all other states are weakened, and criminals will simply go into weak states to purchase their weapons. A study conducted over an eight year period in Massachusetts shows that in that state where there are strong gun control laws, 87 per cent of the guns confiscated from criminals by police had been purchased in

nearby states with weak gun laws.

Q. Isn't the reason that congress hasn't passed a gun control bill before now is that most people oppose it?

A. No. All the major public opinion polls taken in recent years indicate that more than 80 per cent of the population and more than 50 per cent of the gun owners favor stronger gun control laws. The main reason laws have not been passed previously is because of the efforts of a small but highly organized gun lobby whose main interest appears to be protecting the interests of gun manufacturers and sellers. This lobby, headed by the leadership of the National Rifle Association has misled legitimate sportsmen into believing that these laws would disarm them.

Q. Isn't the current drive for gun control laws just a hysterical reaction to the slayings of Sen. Robert Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King?

A. The campaign for strong, reasonable gun control laws has been going on for several years, long before the recent tragic assassinations. Certainly these assassinations have dramatized to the American people the deadly capabilities of guns when they are in the wrong hands. They have also brought home to the American people the feelings of senseless loss felt by the families and friends of the 6,500 people who are murdered with guns in this country each year.

No one contends that every murder, or any particular murder, would have been prevented if these proposals had been in effect. What the comparative statistics clearly show is that the total number of gun murders would be lower. One should note that neither of the two men accused in the assassinations of Senator Kennedy and Dr. King could have legally obtained the weapon he allegedly used had these proposals been in effect.

RECENTLY, THE CONGRESS passed the first piece of gun-control legislation in 30 years. The bill makes it illegal for a person to buy a handgun in a state other than his own, either by mail order or directly over the counter. In addition, the bill prohibits felons, mental incompetents and veterans who have received less than an honorable discharge from possessing any kind of firearms at all.

Judged, however, against the gun-control standards in other countries, this legislation is glaringly weak.

It does nothing about interstate mail order sales of long guns, precisely the type of gun which killed President Kennedy. It does nothing to set up a registration system for guns, which would be enormously valuable in tracing down the ownership of weapons used in crimes. It does nothing to set up sensible criteria for people to own guns.

WHAT, IN FACT, is needed is a program to provide some means of keeping guns out of the hands of those who are most likely to use them to maim or kill other people, while insuring those with a legitimate purpose the right to continue to own and use firearms.

Legislation has been proposed, by President Johnson and Senator Tydings of Maryland, which includes:

- A ban on all interstate mail order sales of all firearms, both hand guns and long guns;
- A law requiring every gun to be registered;
- A law requiring every gun owner to be licensed, with convicted felons, the mentally ill, narcotics addicts, alcoholic and aliens being ineligible for a license.

If you agree that the problem is severe, and if you believe, along with 80 per cent of the population, according to the latest polls — that more effective gun legislation is needed, write your Senators or Congressmen.

Michigan's Senators are Hon. Philip A. Har and Hon. Robert Griffin, who both have offices in the Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C.

People living in Livonia, Farmington and Redford Township should write their Congressman, Hon. Jack McDonald, c/o House Office Building, Washington, D.C. Hon. William D. Ford, at the same address, represents Westland and Garden City in Congress, and Plymouth residents should write Hon. Marvin Esch.

If it saves just one life, isn't it worth it?

(Personal Note: I used to be a member of the NRA, and I used to think quite differently on this issue than I do now. What changed my mind? Just the facts.)

THIS IS THE WEEK THAT... by DON HOENSHILL

Somebody's got to start making sense out of the court-made rules on information about crime and the privilege and right to know what the heck's going on.

Right now everybody's confused.

The United States Supreme Court and others of lesser peering have imposed rules on information to protect the rights of the accused. If rights were being trampled, it's quite proper.

Except that the rules are being made up on the spot, right off the top of some policeman's head, or by the whim of a prosecutor.

IT'S DIFFICULT these days for a reporter to ask a question concerning a crime and not having gotten the answer — it's even more frustrating to decide whether to print it.

In short, every responsible reporter wants to follow the rules in letter and in spirit, but he's got to know what they are.

Circuit Judge William J. Beer transferred the manslaughter trial of Farmington Dr. Ronald Clark to Ingham county on the plea that pre-trial publicity had prejudiced a fair trial.

The information used by the metropolitan papers involved was put together from public documents and from statements of public officials. Beer's move then admitted a public mistake.

Now comes the tragic murder of Joan Schell, an Eastern Michigan University coe from Plymouth. One Ann Arbor policeman lets loose every possible detail.

Another refuses.

INFORMATION that was broadcast last Friday night on the radio is still being held back on Monday from the Ann Arbor News and the Observer Newspapers.

How come?

"I've had too much bad public reaction," said the Ann Arbor lieutenant in charge of the case. Newspapers these days don't want to try a murder case on the front page.

Let's figure a policeman without guidelines. He's got to protect the prisoner, collect information for the prosecutor—and protect himself and his department.

But there's nobody to tell him how far he can go in letting the public have information.

TIME WAS when a reporter could stand outside the open door of an interrogation room and listen to a confession. In other cases, the text of a confession was made public. Jail cell interviews were common.

Maybe there should be some restraint to protect the suspect from harassment. And maybe there should be a clearer definition on both sides as to what newspapers and policemen are trying to do.

In any case, the people in charge of investigations should be given guidelines — and not necessarily from the bar association.

At this point, the whole business is a mess.

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