

POINTS OF VIEW

Suits and secrecy are new plots of government

Liberals of the 1960s and '70s had the same answer for every problem, real or imagined: Throw money at it. Since the mid-'80s, the new answer has been hide, n' sneak: Hide the public records, close the public meetings.

Sen. William Van Regenmorter, a Republican from Ottawa County, learned the hard way that eventually the public wins out.

Van Regenmorter chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee, and last week he scheduled a hearing on his S1908 bill, blandly labeled "General Amendments to the Crime Victim's Rights Act."

Some amendments, currently victims of serious crimes may ask to have their names withheld from the police records. Van Regenmorter would reverse centuries of law and custom, mandating that nearly all ID be automatically closed, letting police work

in secret.

He fled with his juggler by scheduling the hearing just as a federal jury ruled Detroit's ex-police chief William Hart for embezzling \$1 million from secret drug funds.

For years Detroit officials strove to hide those records from the public. To their shame, Detroit police picked up two Detroit News reporters trying to track down the wrongdoing. To police, the bad guys were the expositors, not the thieves.

Well, Van Regenmorter's bill ran into a storm of protest. "Grossly unconstitutional," said attorneys for the Free Press and Michigan Press Association.

A national press group noted that Oakland, Calif., police had been caught sloughing off rape complaints from the social underclass, suggesting the true reason cops want to shut the records.

Van Regenmorter canceled the hearing.



William Hart, ex-police chief, was found guilty of embezzling \$1 million from secret drug funds.

There's a familiar pattern in Michigan.

The Police Commission, appointed by the governor, is an official body which can assess and fine growers. Last month the Senate voted to exempt assessments and fines from the Freedom of Information Act.

The Senate passed a bill to "reform"

medical professionals' discipline. Two key reforms would shut down records under the Freedom of Information Act and procedures under the Open Meetings Act.

The Legislature last year updated the 87-year-old Telecommunications Act by striking many of Mr Bell's filings from the Freedom of Information Act.

In 1990 then-Sen. Doug Cruce, R-Troy, sponsored Oakland Prosecutor Richard Thompson's crime fighting bills. Their notion of fighting crime was to exempt prosecutors' appeal briefs from FOIA, not just to prisoners but to everyone.

State Rep. Burton Leland, D-Detroit, won House approval in 1991 of a bill to shut down certain motor vehicle records from FOIA. The Detroit News found Leland didn't really live in his district but in a Lansing suburb. Guess what tool was

partly responsible for tracking down Leland.

That's only at the state level.

Suburban police departments are notorious in covering up their inability to solve crime by denying information requests with a sneer and a "Sue us."

The city of Detroit is so embarrassed at being sued so often and successfully that it attempted to hide its pay ups. A Free Press reporter who lives in Oakland County used the circuit court there to pry the numbers out of the Young administration.

I'm uncertain whether this flood of legislation in Lansing is a pincer and unthinking response or a bipartisan plot to kick sand in the public's eyes. Right now I suspect it's a plot and that "privacy" is a code word for "secrecy."

Tim Richard reports regularly on the local implications of state and regional news

Resist racial gulf with confrontation, not fears

Hey, Jeffrey! The security gate attendant at Detroit Metro Airport called to me as I hustled through a metal detector on the way to an early morning flight. "What are you going to be talking about today?"

I looked up startled, located the face talking to me and focused on the speaker. A young man, approximately 25 to 28 years old, was smiling at me with an eager, expectant look in his eyes. I remembered that it was Saturday and that my show, "Transition," would be on later that morning at 8:30. My mind raced as it moved from crack of dawn travel mode to television program mode. I told him what our focus would be on the show, thanked him for watching and started on down the terminal.

He wouldn't let me go through, matching my stride for stride as I ran for the plane. He was going on duty in just a few minutes, he said, and looked forward to his break two hours later so he could watch "Transition."

He never missed it, he said, and seemed prepared to recall show after show for me, what worked and what didn't.

He was talking so fast and seemed so interested that I stopped still in the middle of the concrete, oblivious to the fact that my plate was boarding and just listened to him.

"What I like about 'Transition,'" he went on, "is that it's real. You show black people like they really are. You're not just another media-type type show, dwelling only on the negative aspects of the black community. I like the even handed way you show deals with the major issues and the way you tell it like it is in your commentaries. You make me feel proud to be black. Keep it up."

The security guard stuck out his hand, gripped his gear bag, turned and moved back the way we had come, ready to assume his post.

I took my aisle seat deep in thought on



Jeffrey Miller, a Southfield resident, is producer/host of "Transition" seen at 8:30 a.m. Saturdays on WXYZ-TV 20

the young man's comments, opened my newspaper and proceeded to read the umpteenth analysis of the Rodney King verdict and its aftermath. By the time the plane had broken through the clouds, the paper had been thrown to the floor in disgust and sadness. Disgust at the senseless, wanton death and destruction, sadness as the gratification was underscored that the gulf between the races appeared too wide to bridge.

What is the problem, I wondered for the millionth time. What is the root cause that is contributing to the sickness infecting the health of our country? To me it is clear as glass that if we don't heal or excise this particular root, the entire tree will succumb to the ravages of this particular disease. Didn't anyone see that?

Fear of the unknown, the experts say. Birds of a feather flock together. "White guilt," say black liberals. "Black crime," say white conservatives. White's fear competition from African-Americans, some folks whisper. Blacks are inferior and inferior, others say quietly.

My thoughts were in turmoil as we bumped through turbulent skies, 450 miles per hour, 33,000 feet above ground. If this feat was possible, why couldn't we fix the race problem?

We started our descent and as the landing gear locked into place, so did my

thought. It centered around the young security man. A glance at my watch indicated we had been airborne over two hours and I took comfort in the fact that he was watching "Transition," feeling proud, discovering the black experience as it really is.

The racial gulf we appear unable to close is one we fear to confront. It takes guts to pull aside prejudices and get down to know the other group. We might be rejected, misunderstood or in some way harmed. It becomes easier to do nothing. It becomes easier to believe the stereotype.

If you, like me, are tired of being sneered at, if you, like me, are sated at the waste of our collective lost potential, there is something you can do. You can watch "Transition" and you can get involved with change.

Jeffrey Miller, a Southfield resident, is producer/host of "Transition" seen at 8:30 a.m. Saturdays on WXYZ-TV 20

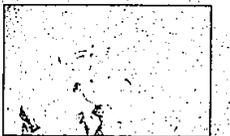
'Living for the moment' could be deadly for students

QUESTION: With AIDS such a life and death issue, are high school students becoming more cautious about pre-marital sex? If no, where are we failing?

ANSWER: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control found in a recent study that one in five high school students has had four or more sex partners by graduation, placing them at a very high risk of catching AIDS. Older students reported more partners.

Male students were more than twice as likely as females to report sexual activity. Inner city black students were the most promiscuous subset of the study with 60.4 percent saying they had at least four sex partners by graduation. Hispanic females reported the least number of partners.

Of those students into sex, many do not practice "safe sex" with the use of condoms. Only 49 percent of the boys and only 30 percent of the girls said they used a condom.



Doug Doyle, a former teacher/school administrator and university instructor, is president of Doyle and Associates, an educational consulting firm

The study also found that two-thirds of males and one-half of females had lost their virginity by age 17.

I am not a sex education expert. But if these statistics are accurate, then students are responding as we know adolescents have responded over the years -- live for the moment, with little fear of anything that doesn't directly affect them now.

Where are we failing? Look at their role models. Madonna, for one, that's a real enlightened role model for future mothers, future parents. Watch television. The violence, the continuous, unrelenting sex including violent sex, how common day fare in living rooms and homes with children five and six years old. Don't tell me to turn it off, because there is no station to go

to other than a National Geographic documentary.

Young adults emulate their role models. Our society's role models are part of a media greed mentality making millions by desensitizing a generation of youths regarding any responsibility for sexual behavior.

The end result will be an adolescent AIDS epidemic unheard of or even imagined with the sexual libertarians laughing at people like me who are "out of touch."

James "Doc" Doyle, a former teacher/school administrator and university instructor, is president of Doyle and Associates, an educational consulting firm

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