

# editorial opinion

## Public business in public

The Michigan House of Representatives and State Senate appear to be seriously considering passage of a law declaring mandatory open meetings of public governing bodies.

The House Bill 4938, or an amended version, is on its way to the House floor. Generally, both the House and Senate laws are designed to ensure public access to all actions and deliberations of a legislative body on any governmental level.

Exceptions to the law have been introduced into some versions. Some believe situations involving personnel or land purchase should be excluded. Others go so far as to include any threat to the "general health, safety and welfare" as exceptions.

SO-CALLED HEALTH, safety and welfare clauses have led to high abuse in the past in similar situations. It can be aggressively argued by well-intentioned lawmakers in most any situation that the health, safety or welfare of a community or school district are threatened. We oppose such restrictions on the access of the public to meetings.

Newspapers are not the great gainers when public bodies are required to open

all meetings to public access. Although, historically, newspapers have been thought of as the most vocal supporters of free access to information.

The winners in the continual battle for free access to information and open public meetings are individual members of the public, the citizens themselves.

The best possible bar to secret meetings or "executive sessions" is the strength, character and honesty of those persons elected to serve as lawmakers.

THROUGHOUT THE last two centuries one single guideline has been restated by the great leaders of our communities and our country: The public's business must be done in public view.

When individual residents of a community support and demand all meetings be open to public scrutiny, those meetings will, in fact, be open. When residents do not maintain a careful vigilance, the public's business is generally carried out in a smoke-filled room in private.

We see it as our responsibility to inform you, as members of the community, when your lawmakers are holding secret meetings or "executive sessions." It is your responsibility to demand that no such meetings are tolerated.

Dan McCosh writes

## School experience lost

"In loco parentis" is a dying philosophy of higher education.

The Latin phrase was coined to describe the relationship between the university and the student, where the school acted in place of a parent.

In practice, the idea was the school kept track of the hours the kids kept, told them what to wear, and generally nosed around in their private lives.

The practice died several years ago, along with the demands for freedom which were ceded to the students.

THE THICK BOOK of rules is no more, replaced at most state supported schools with the novel notion a student knows when to go to bed at night, and it's nobody's business but his own.

Looking one way it freed the student from a whole round of petty aggravations, such as checking in at a fixed time, wearing a tie at dinner, etc.

But now I wonder whether a significant educational experience was lost.

"In loco parentis" was the first contact with the bureaucratic way of life for most students.

Coping with absurd rules set down by people who did not have to live within them was an introduction to society at large — the first brush with adult life.

AT THE TIME, getting a girl back late to her dormitory put her in the position of being grounded in the dormitory for a week.

A late return called for drastic measures.

First a diversionary tactic at the end of a hallway, created by a friendly roommate.

Then the quickly lifted sash, and your date slipped into an open window.

It called for skill, timing and a feel for politics, since the favor would

have to be returned some time.

How could you get the experience in a class?

Later on, getting World Series tickets, or slipping into a sold-out concert, would be a snap.

I HAVE A THEORY, halfbaked, which is that students need some confrontation with authority. It's part of growing up.

If the confrontation doesn't come with silly rules, it comes later with more serious ones.

The battle for "students rights" has been fought and won.

About 10 years from now, I expect to be wheeled into some hospital for major surgery. Just as the mask comes down on my face, I will remember this kid with the knife was one of those who went through an ungraded biology class.

I figure I'll just have to cross my fingers before consciousness slips away.

Nancy Stein writes

## 'Opinion maker' testing

A few days ago I took a test and I've been angry ever since.

The test was given by an independent marketing research company to some members of the press and other "opinion makers." Its subject was oil and the energy crisis.

I'm convinced that either Standard Oil or King Feistel paid for the test, but it's only a matter of opinion since the one thing I wasn't told, was who sponsored it.

When I began the test I was feeling flattered, to think, I was an opinion maker. By the time I finished 40 minutes later, I was a lot more humble.

First, I was shocked at how many conflicting ideas I had held on the subject, without ever noticing that they were opposites.

Beyond that I was angered because I fear that the results of the test will be used to defame the media, the "opinion makers." "My vague, conflicting impressions that came through on this test, have nothing to do with good reporting, but they will be used to show how little the media knows.

I told the interviewer that my knowledge of the subject was limited to waiting in line at gas stations, what I'd heard on the radio and TV, what I'd read in newspapers and magazines and seen and heard in oil company ads.

In other words, I didn't know any more than the general public.

She assured me that "it doesn't matter."

Every question on the test had to be answered and in most cases it was with a possibility of six answers ranging from "I agree totally with the statement" to "I disagree totally." In the middle range was "I agree slightly" or "I disagree slightly." No where could one answer "I don't know."

I did a lot of guessing and I didn't like it. After a while I noticed that some of my later answers were in direct conflict with my earlier ones.

First I felt stupid. Gradually added to that was anger. I was being asked to work against everything my profession requires.

Guessing and acting on a hunch aren't the same thing, because when I have a news "hunch" I check it out. I

go to the sources and find out what the real answers are. I never depend on memory and feelings. If I see conflict in my answers, I look even harder. But this test was demanding answers based only on hunches, feelings and vague memories.

I FOUND myself testing everything I was asked against the statements of my sixth grade science teacher. She convinced me more than 25 years earlier that basic commodities, like oil and coal are only available in a finite amount and if not properly conserved, would run out.

This was a truth I could understand. I really don't know if it's true, but since it came from my childhood, just a step beyond early myth time, it has to be true, doesn't it?

The end of the test was blatant propaganda for the oil companies. It reminded me of the fact that the vast majority of my information had come through advertisements and commercials put on by the oil companies.

The whole thing scared me, because I'm supposed to be an "opinion maker."

## Dress your bedroom in the French manner by Bloomcraft

Soft blues in delicate patterns strike the keynote for Bloomcraft's bedroom ensembles. Draperies (#46).

Top: "French Stripe" in a quilted coverlet with rose ruching, coordinated dust ruffle and matching curtains.

Coverlet, twin size, \$45; full size, \$60.

Dust ruffle, twin size, \$22; full size, \$25.

36" long cafe curtains, \$14 pair.

Valance, \$7 each. Tiebacks, \$3 pair.

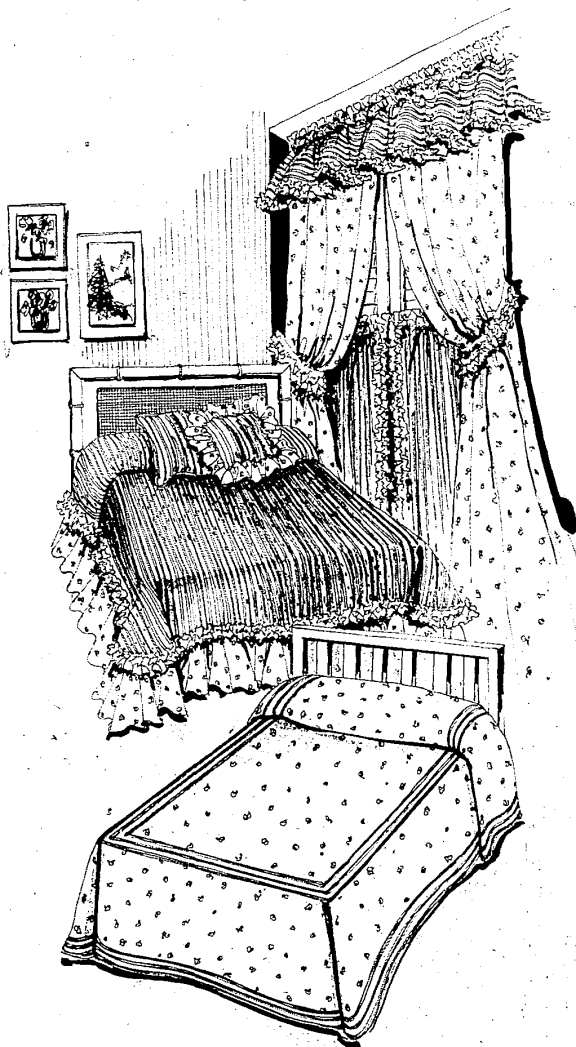
Bottom: "French Rose" includes a fitted bedspread and either unlined draperies or cafe curtains.

Fitted bedspread, twin size, \$60; full size, \$70;

queen size, \$75; king size, \$85\*.

48 x 84" long unlined draperies, \$25 pair.

\*Special order only — allow 3 weeks for delivery.



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