

# PICK & AXE



WEEK OF  
DEC. 6 - 13, 1976  
VOLUME 3 - NUMBER 32

## EQUAL JUSTICE?

PROMINENT ATTORNEY ACCUSED IN MOLESTATION

by Mike Cowdery and Pat Kitzman

ONTONAGON, Mich.—A prominent Western Upper Peninsula attorney has been accused of taking indecent liberties with area children. Complaints and statements filed in Houghton and Ontonagon Counties have charged the attorney with sexually molesting youngsters of both counties. One of these allegations is currently under investigation by the Michigan State Police, who have declined any comment at this time, explaining that any formal statement now may tend to jeopardize their investigation. No warrant has been issued in this case. More curious is a 1972 Houghton County case which charged the same attorney with taking indecent liberties there, which, after 4½ years of frustration and disappointment on the part of the parents and police, still has never reached court, and shows no signs of ever doing so.

It's not clear why the 1972 case was never brought to court, or why Houghton County Prosecutor Sterling Schrock refused to authorize a warrant in the case. Similar cases in Houghton County have resulted not only in court action, but in convictions, on the basis of what appears to be substantially less evidence. This has led some interested citizens to speculate that this attorney was given preferential treatment because of his prominence in the community and his peer relationship with the prosecutor.

Prosecutor Schrock denied any knowledge of the case when first interviewed on the matter in mid-September, though later he admitted to recalling the case vaguely. During subsequent interviews he claimed to have lost his files on the case, and refused to comment on the matter. Still later he said that he had found "part of my files" though he wouldn't make it clear whether or not the part he found included the 1972 indecent-liberties-with-a-minor charge.

Police who worked on that case said they had asked for a warrant but that Schrock had refused to authorize one. One officer who had been in on the 1972 case said that after the lie detector verified the young man's statement that he had been sexually molested by the attorney, the polygraph results were sent to Attorney General Frank Kelley in Lansing, where "the whole darn thing got lost in the bureaucratic shuffle." The Attorney General's office is reluctant to discuss the matter at all.

The apparent preferential treatment granted to this attorney has stirred resentment among local citizens who view this as an abortion of the concept of equal justice and fair play. One Ontonagon County citizen speculated that such liberties with justice were only possible because of the accused man's highly placed connections. He is, for example, a personal friend of Michigan's Lieutenant Governor James Damman. Damman said that he would be "very much surprised" if there was anything at all to the accusations, adding that he has known the accused for well over a decade and regards him as a fine citizen and a close personal friend.

In light of the unresolved Houghton County case, the more recent allegations, and the increasing incidence of sex crimes against children in the daily news, a growing

## WHADDAYA DO WHEN THE WELL RUNS DRY!

A matter of well-founded opinion by  
Mikko Kauteri

BESSEMER CITY COUNCIL fans may be treated to a double-header tonight as two growing controversies are likely to surface when the council meets in regular session at 7 P.M. The first is the critically low level of water in this part of the country, and the second is due to a belated awakening of the citizens in these parts to the fact that, while we survive on the lowest incomes in the State of Michigan, we also have the highest rate of property taxation. And in both cases the well seems to be fast running dry.

THE WATER SHORTAGE in this area is the natural result of a dry summer. But that doesn't make the folks who have to tote their water feel any better about it. Some Gogebic Range residents have been toting water for more than a month now, and others with private wells may soon expect to join them. This, of course, imposes hardships on these people, and deprives them of a healthful and wholesome environment which is one of their basic human rights. This hardship plays doubly hard on the older and more feeble members of the community.

CITY WATER SUPPLIES are also dropping off to crucially low levels, with, in some cases, barely enough pressure to keep fire-extinguishing sprinkler systems from coming on accidentally. The low pressure also imposes problems in the area of regular fire-fighting, and each fire further reduces the water level.

THE RELATIONSHIP of fire and water is particularly interesting in this area, where we saw the government willing to fly in huge tankers from Alaska to put out a bog fire which threatened some wildlife, and yet is extremely hesitant to deploy a few tank trucks to insure sanitary living conditions for disaster stricken citizens.

ONE CONDITION which must be met before any real assistance can come is for the governor to declare the area a disaster area. But Governor Milliken is leery about making hasty judgements, and would probably hold some public hearings and referenda on the matter so that he could have some input to ignore. In the meantime citizens can look for Senator Mack, Representative Hellman, and Congressman Ruppe, along with our various state and federal agencies, to pass the buck back and forth like a free-for-all in a volley-ball court.

## BESSEMER COUNCIL MEETS TONIGHT!

THERE WILL BE A SPECIAL SESSION of the Bessemer City Council tonight, Monday, Dec. 6, at the City Hall, beginning at 6:30. The purpose of the meeting will be to establish some understandings among the council, the city assessor, and the county equalization director. This session should lay the groundwork for a county-wide tax revolt which has been brewing for several years and is imminent. This special session will be followed at 7:00 by the regular session of the council.

IN THE REGULAR SESSION the audit report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1976 will be presented. The city's package insurance bid is scheduled to be awarded. And, as is the custom, the meeting will be open to hear comments and complaints from the gallery. Under Reports and Correspondence the council will consider [1] the min-

utes of the Nov. 22 Power Board meeting; [2] the Nov. library report; [3] a letter from Bessemer Township regarding the Geneva Well; [4] a letter from Fred Fesnick regarding the dumping of waste; [5] a Carmen DelliQuadri letter concerning the scheduling of city help; [6] a letter from Colt Industries about the overhaul of engine number six at the municipal power plant; and [7] an announcement of a public meeting on the Little Girl's Point Harbor Study, along with a letter from Russell Hellman concerning the same. In New Business the council will consider transferring \$1000 of revenue sharing money to cover the cost of a ditching project, and will acknowledge what is dubiously called "Title II-Antirecession Fiscal Payment." Under old business the council will schedule payments for the new snow-blower.

number of parents and citizens in this area are expressing increasing concern not only for the well-being of their children, but for the well-being of the concept of equal justice itself.

One example which dramatically illustrates the basis for this concern can be found in the result of a brief FBI involvement in one of the more recent allegations. Because of an interstate aspect in one report of sexual molestation, the FBI checked to determine if this would bring the matter into their jurisdiction. An agent explained that if a person were to cross a state line for the purpose of purchasing sexual favors from a prostitute, that would be a crime in the eyes of the FBI. If, however, a person were to cross the same state line and rape a child, that would not necessarily be a crime, at least in their jurisdiction.

Whether high up connections or social prominence have saved the accused attorney from prosecution, or whether it is simply a brotherhood of lawyers protecting their own kind, or whether there are entirely different reasons for this instance of non-justice we may never know. When asked if he had any intention of ever prosecuting the case if and when he located his lost files, Prosecutor Schrock replied, "I wouldn't make any statement right at this point." Yet if the Houghton County prosecutor is ever going to move on this case it had better be soon, as the statute of limitations on this type of crime may be running out.

In the meantime those concerned citizens will have to depend on the continuing state police investigations for confirming whatever hope they may have left for the cause of equal justice.