

Charity in Michigan: an Act of Law / *Brent A. Larsen*

Before long the euthanasia issue will affect more people than just the bureaucrats and professionals. Soon, employers will have to worry about whether or not the help will show up for work. I always show up *on time* for work, mostly to insure that the first pot of coffee is not just hot brown water.

One time I showed up with the Captain Morgan hangover blues, and the boss had to tell me that my ear was hanging down my cheek. It seems I'd won a knife fight early that morning. The police showed up and asked if I wanted to go downtown for a cup of coffee. They even offered to take me to the doctor to have my ear sewed back on. I told them I doubted they could make coffee as well as I, but I was willing to go find out because I didn't feel like working anyway. I refused the medical treatment for reasons that will soon be clear enough. I waited until I got home to sew my ear back on. The boss was not impressed, what with my ear and all. But what could he say, I always show up on time.

Unless I have the razor blade shits. Everyone knows you don't leave the house when you have the razor blade shits. If that stuff ever ran down inside your pants, it would smoke your leg. And I ended up being right about the coffee downtown. It was just hot brown water.

Yesterday, the state house began discussing legislation concerning doctor-assisted suicide. Nice.

Right now, some cheesy little doctor wearing a new BMW baseball cap is treating your local state representative to an overpriced dinner at a tavern in downtown Lansing. He may even be able to arrange for a regular cash bonus over the next few years or some female entertainment later on tonight. He'll offer these gifts as a cheap ransom to your representative to pass legislation that will keep those terminally ill patients coming back to the office.

Doctors need the money. Business has been slow lately and it's their own fault. They've specialized so much that they *have* to turn away business. Everyone knows you couldn't get a general practitioner to give you the Heimlich maneuver if you were sitting next to him on the bus and gagging to death on a peach pit. They have specialists for these things.

My friend, The Boulda, is a registered nurse who does nothing but look at assholes all day long. If it doesn't look like a musty, hairy, alien face, his department won't have anything to do with it.

"Just assholes," he says. Western medicine is like that. It is a lucrative business that requires a strong stomach for more reasons than just the sight of blood. And assholes.

And your health insurance company has a few agents entertaining with corporate money in Lansing tonight. This is a small investment for all the millions they'll save if the state makes it legal for those long-suffering patients to do themselves in by the hundred. Such a representative is easy to spot. He usually sports a sample of the company lapel pin he is trying to get you to wear. If you still can't spot him, assume he's the guy inviting the wearer of a BMW baseball cap to check out the alley behind the tavern.

I just got off the phone with my friend Buteo, who lives in Lansing. "I tried to go to bed early tonight, Larz, but the police scanner is going crazy. Fights are breaking out at every major steak house and stripper bar in town. The National Guard just showed up at the bar across the street and they're hauling everyone off to jail who's wearing a lapel pin or white coat. The city impound lot is full of foreign cars. By the way, Larz, you haven't come to see me in a long time. When are you going to stop around next?"

"When you learn to make coffee," I told him.



Several new cemeteries have been proposed pending the outcome of the talks. I heard some Hollanders discussing this at the coffee shop this morning. "Pure economics," exclaimed one as he removed his hat to scratch. "The nice thing about bodies is once you plant them, that's it. A thousand bucks a crack and no harvest ever. I can just hire a migrant to mow the grass and kick the teenagers out at night." His counterparts all mumbled and nodded in agreement. The Dutch are like that.

What started out as an act of mercy by a benign doctor stands to be a for-profit business guaranteed by the Michigan state legislature. Like automobile insurance.

If you work for a drug manufacturer, your employer is probably setting up a deal right now for hemlock and whatever else they decide to use to help people check out of this motel. This will become a lucrative business too. My neighbor was not slow to react. He was planting herbs this morning when I stopped over. I was instantly suspicious.

"Did you hear the news this morning?" I asked him. He had. My stomach began to turn. He figures there will be a market for those who want to go the natural way. "The wife has been on the computer all morning," he declared while we headed for the house for coffee. As we sat down, he continued. "She figures we can

capture 15% of that market in this area. And I'm thinking of putting a two-acre cemetery on the back of the property." Now I snapped. I called him a capitalist pig and threw my coffee in his face. It was just hot brown water anyway, certainly not worth drinking. I'll only do something like that if I have *two* good reasons. Very few people have the knack for making good coffee, or an honorable living.