

Thefts worry Magnuson

decriminalization poor idea

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Haltom Police Commission Chairman Glenn Magnuson is worried about the high number of thefts throughout the region so far this year.

Thursday, while the commission was reviewing the crime statistics for May,

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Magnuson said he was "concerned about the number of cases of shoplifting, theft of goods under and over \$200 in value, and thefts from cars. Thefts make up 35 per cent of the forces' case load and is a poor reflection on society's morals."

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He asked Chief Ken Skerrett to include a comparison of the number of different types of crimes investigated in the first six months of 1976, with his June report.

Skerrett said if proposed changes Ottawa is considering are ever instituted then thefts will no longer be considered crimes.

He explained the federal government is considering taking actions against property out of the crime category and only actions against people would be considered crimes. Skerrett noted some system would be set up to mediate the disputes between the thief and the victim and resolve the problem.

Judge William Warrender compared such a system to the misdemeanor offense classification used in the United States.

Magnuson said in his opinion theft is still a crime even if it isn't an action towards a person and only against property.

He said he could understand some system of restitution being worked out but wouldn't care for theft being considered simply a dispute

between the victim and the thief. Magnuson predicted such a policy would create severe social morality problems.

Mayor Harry Barrett said municipalities in Haltom are having enough problems now with vandalism without making things worse by decriminalizing theft.

"They" will be walking off with our office doors if that is done. There will simply be no deterrent," he declared.

Judge Warrender said he suspected Ottawa's plan was motivated by the need to cut down on court backlogs.

Skerrett reminded the commissioners that right now the subject of decriminalizing theft is only being studied and noted public outcry over the abolition of capital punishment might discourage the government from making any more criminal code changes. He said decriminalization of theft should be used as an experiment with juveniles first before it is instituted.

Magnuson said he was concerned about the psychological effects of making theft a non-crime.

Up to the end of May, 728 of



AFTER A MEMORIAL service at Eden Mills Presbyterian Church Sunday afternoon several parishioners placed flowers and plants in the cemetery beside the church.

the 2,763 cases investigated by Haltom police were theft. After five months of 1976 there have been 458 shoplifting cases handled by the force, 197 cases of theft, 12 cases of theft from cars and 61 incidents of cars being stolen.

—There has been a lot of rain in the past week, which is good for the lawns but not welcomed by vacationing students.

—This week is Canada Week.

Dump fight

After more than two hours of argument at Haltom Regional Council Wednesday, the great dump debate remained the way it was before the debate got underway.

Council reaffirmed a decision made two weeks earlier to overrule the public works committee and delay further work on a proposed landfill site known as site F in the vicinity of Tremaine and Britannia Rd.

That could be considered a victory of sorts for the Tremaine-Britannia Citizens' Group. Had the vote gone the other way, the group would almost certainly have found itself before the Ontario Municipal Board and the Environmental Hearing Board fighting the case. This way, there is still a chance it may not go that far.

However spokesman for the group Dave Katz said his position and the position of the group is that no further consideration should be given to that location and that other alternatives must be investigated immediately.

During the meeting Wednesday, Council ordered investigations that involved dry waste sites and expansion of the existing Burlington site A. That goes hand in hand with a resolution deferring any further action on the Bri-

annia Rd. site F at this time. Earlier in the month, council had rejected the works committee recommendation urging the expenditure of \$19,000 for drilling and \$2,500 for a conceptual design of site F.

Council debated that resolution for a second time during a long and often heated session. The recommendation was defeated for the second time, but by a skimpy 12-11 vote.

A third part of the recommendation—requesting a study of the Milton Brick site at Milton Heights being used as a dry waste site in conjunction with the expanded Burlington site—did pass.

Mr. Katz told the council he and his neighbors had left the last meeting feeling that a temporary stand on the issue had been reached. "I didn't realize it was quite so temporary."

He said he felt there was a certain amount of railroading being done. "If the full data had been presented, there would be more choices than sites A or F."

During his first appearance before the council, Mr. Katz did not ask that site F be eliminated from all consideration, but rather that other alternatives be considered more fully.



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