

editorial opinion

Guess who pays, again?

A group of taxpayers in Oakland, Wayne and Macomb counties think that suburban homeowners receive the least amount of service for the most amount of tax dollars.

This group has more than just a point. A leader of the group, Greg Kennedy of Southfield, claims the property tax bases of most Detroit suburbs have risen concurrently with the annual revaluation of homes.

As if to add insult to injury, many suburban school districts have lost large amounts of annual state appropriations in the last fiscal year. Kennedy is incensed that Gov. William Milliken is now asking southeastern Michigan growth communities to share their expanding tax bases with less fortunate southeastern Michigan communities.

"In other words," says Kennedy, "we, the taxpayers, must foot the bill for construction of bigger and better sewers, wider streets, more expensive fire equipment, more fire and police personnel just to take care of these new buildings Detroit gets the gravy and we're left holding the bag."

In certain areas suburban taxpayers should be willing to share some tax burden with taxpayers in Detroit. Such areas might include the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Detroit Zoo, Belle Isle and transportation and water systems.

ONLY A VERY uncharitable suburbia, with no interest in the arts, zoos, metropolitan parks or efficient and economical transportation and water

systems would seriously consider not supporting services that benefit suburbs.

The thrust of Greg Kennedy's argument is, however, on target.

Instead of growth-community revenue sharing dollars going to services that growth communities benefit from, it's more likely that these dollars will go to support and propagate diseconomies that already exist.

And it would be unfair to single out Detroit as the only southeastern Michigan community that inefficiently administers tax dollars.

There are many non-growth suburban communities where as much, if not more, public spending inefficiencies exist.

TAKE, FOR EXAMPLE, suburban communities that exist side-by-side. One is booming, the other not. The booming community needs a bus, so they buy a government surplus bus for \$500, put \$300 into repairs and the bus serves the city well for more than three years.

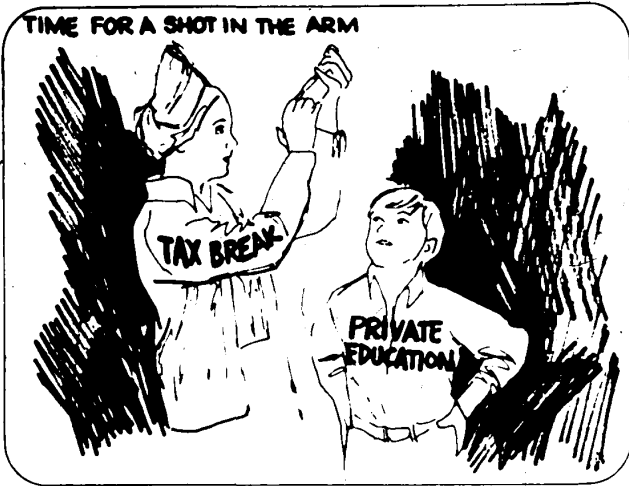
The community that is not booming also needs a bus, but they buy a new bus for \$8,000.

Under Milliken's tax-sharing plan the prospering community is asked to share its tax base with the community that is not administering its funds in an economic way.

Who pays?

The homeowners taxpayers, the middle class, in the prospering community—who else?

W. MICHAEL MILLER



Private schools do public a favor, deserve a break

Pity the plight of private education. Every time public school teachers negotiate a raise in salaries, private schools have to have to attempt to be competitive and match that raise.

The problem, however, is that the public school system can go to the voters and ask for increased property tax millages to cover the cost. They also have such things going for them as state aid, federal aid and automatic revenue increases when the property assessors periodically reassess upward the value of the homes in a district.

IT IS EASY to say private schools can raise their tuition, but the plan facts of life are that most private schools have reached the point where any substantial increase in tuition will mean a substantial decrease in enrollment.

Slowly but surely, even those schools with out-of-sight tuitions and great endowments are being strangled to death by conditions over which they have no control. The only answer for life is for continued charitable support by individuals to help support private education.

IF THIS PRIVATE support is not continued, in the long run it will cost the taxpayers many more dollars because those students who are now being educated in the private sector would then have to be educated in the public sector, causing greatly increased costs to the local school systems.

There were some rumblings a couple of years ago that there should be some limitation on deductions for charitable giving because these deductions allowed some high-income people to reduce their taxes. The rumblings were quickly scrapped when the tax planners realized how much more it would

Eccentricities

BY HENRY M. HOGAN JR.

cost the government to provide social services if there were no charitable organizations around.

THE CONVERSE PHILOSOPHY is now true. Bills have been introduced in Congress to allow people to use the tuition paid to private education as a deduction for income tax purposes because it might, in the long-run, be the only way private education can be supported.

Obviously, any deduction reduces the tax intake for the government. But if something isn't done for private education over the long term the cost to the government will be vastly more than the impact of a tax deduction.

THERE IS JUSTICE in allowing such a tax deduction because the people who are sending their children to public schools are deducting the tuition for their children through the payment of their property taxes.

Those parents who elect to send their children to private schools are also paying their fair share through taxes without burdening the public school system with additional students.

If more clear thinking on the subject is not done, shortly, and action taken, private education could slip from the scene, leaving us all a great educational asset.

Putting the stops on a fast one

Some school administrators, eager to get more local tax support, are pulling a fast one in their presentations to local folks.

The trick is to make it look as if the state is "failing to meet its obligations in appropriations for our school district," or some such verbiage.

The method is to show a series of figures purporting to demonstrate that state aid is declining. Actually, what it shows is that state aid is declining as a proportion of the local budget.

So ask the local superintendent to show you—not those tricky percentages—but the raw dollar

figures. Often you'll find the opposite is the truth. State aid is rising in raw dollar terms.

The reason state aid is falling as a percentage of the total budget is that local school districts are spending money faster than the state can increase appropriations; that is, the schools are spending it faster than folks can earn it.

Not all school officials are guilty of this trick, but enough are so that the taxpayer must be on his guard whenever he hears a school official moaning that "the state is failing."

Senate rumor mill goes to work on Esch, O'Hara

Try this rumor on for size.

U.S. Rep. Marjorie E. Esch is going to drop out of the Republican Senate race in Boston. There are so many candidates splitting up the regular party vote that conservative Bob Huber is likely to take it.

Try another one.

U.S. Rep. James O'Hara is going to drop out of the Democratic Senate race if Secretary of State Richard Austin gets in Boston. There are so many white candidates that Austin, as a black with some labor support, is likely to take it.

And there's Law Engman, Grand Rapids lawyer and former chairman of the Federal Trade Commission.

ANYONE BUT Baker has a reasonable shot at the nomination in a wide-open race, but Engman is the puzzle.

BOTH TALES surfaced last week, and both were vigorously denied by the candidates or their spokesmen. The noteworthy thing is that Esch and O'Hara must be considered the front runners in their respective parties, and each is the most experienced candidate on either side of the aisle.

If they stay in, Michigan voters will have the biggest brawl in the September primary they've had in years. The kinds of crossovers we saw in the Republican senatorial primary of 1970 and the Democratic presidential primary of '72 will be non-existent.

ESCH, AN ANN Arbor resident whose 2nd District includes Livonia and Plymouth, must be considered the darling of the party establishment. That Max Fisher is in his financial camp is extremely significant.

The rumor that Esch will pull out seems to have emanated from Democratic State Chairman Morley Winograd and is being pushed by other Democrats. Esch's camp scoffs at it.

But Esch has allegedly failed to excite voters—which is a matter of opinion. And he has failed to scare off rival candidates—and that's a fact.

There's Huber, a one-term congressman. There's former Supreme Court Justice Tom Brennan, with his Irish name and unwillingness to commit himself on issues (and his messy resignation from the court because of his involvement with a private law school).

There's Deane Baker, a University of Michigan regent, rich enough to finance his own campaigns.

Ever since I knew him in college, Engman's style has been to move next to someone in power, impress them, he's academically brilliant and pull off a plum by appointment.

From a Grand Rapids law practice, he went to the White House staff under John Ehrlichman, kept his nose clean of Watergate and landed the chairmanship of the FTC. It brought him Time Magazine's rating of one of the 40 outstanding young men in the country, but it didn't give him any kind of power base to run for the Senate.

So what's he doing in a race with the heavy weights? Lew simply doesn't make dumb mistakes, and he's got to have something up his sleeve. Will he back off the Senate race and go for the House in Jerry Ford's old 5th District? Attorney general in '78?

O'HARA, A-SUBURBANITE from Utica, has great credentials as a UAW liberal and the support of veteran Democratic congressmen. He works inch by inch toward big goals.

The charismatic Rep. Don Riegle of Flint will excite young voters and independents, but they are scared in party primaries.

State Sen. John Oberbacher of Grand Rapids is a bright young chap that no one can figure out. Bloomfield Township lawyer Jim Elmsman's candidacy is being ignored by most political writers.

And Austin? A senior citizen. No record as a legislator. But plenty of exposure in his current job. A cautious, likeable accountant.

Political parties talk about open primaries but secretly loathe them because they can be so expensive and bloody. If Esch and O'Hara don't drop out, perhaps others will.

from our readers

Editorial opinion is criticized

Editor:

Steve Barnaby hit a raw nerve when he requested human life with garbage pickup.

To be uncomfortable, because of poor garbage collection is certainly not the same as losing a human life because of the questionable competence of an ambulance company.

Mr. Barnaby is shocked at the so-called disaster in the appalling death of one school boy, but takes great delight in mocking the citizenry for trying to save many lives.

His thinking is much the same as Coan citizen Lachman, who seems to feel that one-third million in taxes is too much to ask to save an untold number of lives in our city.

The essence of the point by the fire men seems to be to me an objection to the manner the director of safety and risk manager ordered the firemen not to respond to any more human rescue calls and the way these two men forced upon the council the issue of subsidy to an ambulance company.

Upon questioning the city manager said this order to the firemen was premature and it was to be implemented after the contract with the ambulance company was signed.

Just where in this state or any other are the citizens forced to call an ambulance for immediate aid instead of the fire department? Ambulances are known for transport, not for quick response and immediate aid.

It seems to be time for the council of Farmington Hills to seriously question the motives of Mr. Hickey and Mr. Mayors in this matter.

The council also might want to find out why Mr. Hickey doesn't take care of such odds with the very same money supposed to be spent on the next emergency.

Editor's note: The Feb. 12 editorial said that poor garbage pickup can have an uncomfortable and even harmful effect on health problems. It can evolve into the refuse of the volunteers or those in sympathy with them. In a Feb. 5 editorial Mr. Hara also lauded the volunteers, by saying "these men have served the city by actually putting in many hours of their own time to aid persons in distress."

In the Feb. 12 editorial, he recommended the volunteers for their volunteerism in being concerned for the human rescue issue.

JEAN DEMBICKI
Farmington Hills

HUGH MULLY
Farmington Hills

Northwestern expansion plan is opposed

Editor:

There are several reasons why North western highway should not be extended. The \$100 million cost will be paid directly by the people of Michigan, and money is desperately needed to repair present roads.

The northward road, off 148th beyond Orchard Lake, are not completed and these roads will stop the Orchard Lake-North western bottleneck.

Michigan population has been in a steady decline for five years and this is a concern.

The Michigan State Highway Department has paid Wixom (near) to build the proposed expansion of the highway. They even had the gas for the fueling.

Resident thanks good samaritans

Editor:

May I just take this opportunity to say thank you to three gentlemen in Oshtemo?

Thank Dr. Fred Isack, officers Joseph Roth and James Worthington for assisting me while I was stranded with a flat tire on West Eighth Mile and Giff Saturday evening, Jan. 24.

Your courtesy, kindness, effort and time was most appreciated.

Everyone should have a neighbor like Dr. Isack and Farmington Hills police like officers Roth and Worthington.

MARY ANN RAYORN
Farmington Hills

'Seniors' charter says thanks for aid

Editor:

This is to thank members of the Farmington Hills Chapter 300 of the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP).

for their generous donation to the convenient home project.

Also a thank you to Martha Turner, the senior citizens center at the Amherst Lodge Hall on Grand River for donating from her project.

Also a thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Steve R. Moore (AARP members from Berkley).

I also would like to thank the prodigy manager of the Orchard Lake and 10 Mile Great Street for his help on the fruit and donut.

THOMAS ATKINSON
Farmington Hills AARP committee chair.

Farmington Observer & Eccentric

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