

editorial opinion

City, business boosted by plans for old winery

Good luck, John White. The new owner of the former LaSalle Winery building will need it if he is to accomplish his plans of renovating the 96-year-old structure and converting it to offices and a theme restaurant.

We wish him luck in his endeavors not only because we like to see people with vision and guts get ahead in the world, but because what he's proposing sounds like a double boon to the City of Farmington.

ON ONE HAND, an old building that may fairly be considered an eyesore would get a new lease on life. Restaurants and cocktail lounges of cinderblock, chrome and plastic are fairly common throughout these suburbs. Restaurants with some architectural character, some atmosphere, some history are a little harder to come by.

On the other hand, Farmington's image will benefit if White can pull his resources together and bring off the project. As one of the oldest cities in Michigan, Farmington is a proper home for the kind of enterprise White is planning. Even the office part of White's project sounds intriguing. Offices can be pretty sterile looking places. Offices in the old winery, if suitably decorated, could be interesting places in which to work, think and do business.

THERE'S YET another reason for wishing White luck. As the city administration has fairly warned him, he has a lot of work to do. He'll need a building permit to undertake his renovations, which may well involve rebuilding the entire interior—who knows? There will be negotiations between him, his architect and a safety-conscious city. It will be frustrating. There will be times when he will go home at the end of the day and ask himself if being a builder and a visionary is worth it. We hope he will stick it out and complete the job. White's notion of making little dining rooms of the 10 by 13 feet vats is intriguing. Old English and early American country puns often had such little dining rooms intimate and romantic. And now we have the prospect of such a delightful anachronism in Farmington.

WE APPLAUD the city council in holding out fair hope that White's project will get the town's

one remaining, unissued liquor license. Such licenses are valuable. Neighboring suburbs, obsessed with gaining more property tax revenues, often insist an entrepreneur invest \$1 million to \$1.5 million in brick and mortar before they will yield such a license. If White can make good his development plans, the council certainly owes him favorable consideration on a liquor license.

In addition to providing the City of Farmington something it truly needs—another fine dining establishment—it will complement the existing line of fine restaurants along Grand River from Botsford Inn on the east to the Holiday Inn and Inn On the Park in the western section of Farmington Hills.

IF THE LIQUOR license is approved for White, his establishment will benefit the community by increasing the dining appeal and drawing outsiders into the Farmington area. That will be both an economic and social asset for the town cities. It makes you hungry just thinking about it.



A New Life

One of Farmington's oldest landmarks, the LaSalle winery on Grand River, hopefully will be transformed into a new source of pride and revenue for the Farmington community if its

new owner follows through with his promise to convert the building into a restaurant and offices for other wholesalers.

Vote shows suburbs' attitude hardens

I have been writing this column regularly for nearly 10 years now and never have I seen relations between the suburbs and Detroit grimmer.

After many years of sweat and toil by countless men and women of good will, both in the suburbs and in the core city, people are simply beginning to lose hope.

Lose hope that the streets of Detroit can ever be made safe for ordinary citizens, black and white. Lose hope that the schools of Detroit can ever clamber back from poverty and start to give children the kind of education they need. Lose hope that business will ever consider Detroit safe enough to locate in and thereby provide jobs to the thousands of men and women who are out of work.

Lose hope, in short, that the city of Detroit can ever become once again a real city.

Observation Point

by PHILIP POWER

THIS OBSERVATION is not prompted by Sunday night's riot at Cobo Hall or by the Detroit police department's clear inability to cope with the situation. The events of Sunday were just one more shocking symptom of the city's deterioration.

Businessmen who live here in the suburbs who have stores in Detroit are beginning to figure out how they can bail out without too much financial loss. Families which had been accustomed to going down to the Art Institute regularly are turning elsewhere for their leisure.

Corporations which have had their headquarters in Detroit for years are beginning to relocate in the suburbs. Crowley, Milner recently announced its move to Troy, and several other large companies are in the middle of their own agonizing decisions to move.

Men and women who have lived in the suburbs and worked in Detroit for years and years are beginning to look for other jobs. A friend of mine who has worked at the City-County Building for some time put it this way: "For years, I went downtown without giving it another thought. But in the past two months, it's become a real jungle. You get hassled just walking in the streets in broad daylight, and my wife's beginning to get nervous."

PERHAPS the most illuminating hard data on the state of mind in the suburbs and in Detroit is provided by the vote count in the recent primary election.

One of the races contested was for the U.S. Senate. Richard Austin, a clerkman, the Secretary

of State, and one of the most decent people in Michigan public life was defeated in his attempt to win the Democratic Party's nomination. Just how he lost is fascinating.

In the city of Detroit, Austin won nearly 90 per cent of the black vote, according to members of his campaign staff. In the suburbs, if he got 10 per cent of the votes he was lucky. In outstate precincts, where suburbcity problems are not acute, Austin picked up 35 to 50 per cent of the vote.

Remember, in looking at these statistics, that Austin was one of the best known men in the state, with a very high approval rating for the job he has done as Secretary of State. And remember, further, that he won overwhelmingly in his two previous tries for office. In 1970, Austin carried largely suburban and white Oakland County by 55 per cent; four years later, Austin the incumbent swept Oakland County by 68 per cent.

But two weeks ago, Dick Austin got five per cent of the vote in Birmingham, seven per cent in Plymouth Township and Rochester, nine per cent in Livonia, and six per cent in Farmington.

Dick Austin did not collapse as a politician in just four years solely because of unfavorable publicity about gifts from his branch managers. He collapsed as a politician precisely in those suburbs which gave him majority votes in years past.

Why? Because people in the suburbs are simply fed up with the problems of Detroit and because Dick Austin, like many people in Detroit, is black.

THAT IS a terrible conclusion to reach, but I fear no other is available. The voting statistics are irrefutable.

What all this means for the future is by no means certain. I suspect that what will probably happen is that the suburbs will simply turn their back on Detroit and its problems until—and only until—the authorities in the core city can get their crime problems under control.

Indeed, the only issue I can think of that in any way could bring the interests of Detroit and the suburbs together is that of crime. Until that is done, Eight Mile really will be a wall.

State Police play tricks with young driver figures

I want to give you an idea of the kinds of nasty statistical games the Michigan Department of State Police is playing with young drivers, but first consider these games of logic:

Half the married people are women. But women are involved in 100 per cent of the divorces.

Less than half the people in Detroit are white. But whites are involved in 100 per cent of the interracial incidents.

Both statements are true but fantastically misleading. Now consider this model of two automobile collisions:

In collision No. 1, drivers A and B are involved. In collision No. 2, drivers C and D are involved. Driver A is age 20, B is 30, C is 40 and D is 50. Conclusion: Drivers of age 20 are only one-quarter of the driving population but are involved in one-half of the collisions.

WHOA! you say, and you'd be correct. There is a trick being played, and it's the word "involved." It takes two persons to make a divorce, two or more races to make an interracial incident, and two or more cars to make a collision.

So now consider what the Department of State Police is doing in its recently published "Michigan Traffic Accident Facts" for 1975:

"Significantly, driver age group 15-24 represents 25.8 per cent of the total licensed drivers in Michigan. However, they account for a disproportionate number of all accidents at 36.4 per cent and an involvement of 40.8 per cent in all fatal accidents."

You can see right through that one, of course. The trick is that word "involvement."

HERE'S ANOTHER State Police trick that is just plain statistically invalid:

A chart labelled "Drinking drivers in per cent of all drivers involved in accidents" is aimed at the 18-20 age group. It shows that in 1972 drinking drivers in the 18-20 age group constituted 87 per cent of all drivers involved in accidents. In 1975 drinking drivers in the 18-20 group were 12.7 per cent of the drivers involved in accidents.

The State Police conclusion: Drinking drivers in the 18-20 age group increased their involvement in accidents by 45.9 per cent in just three years!

Tim Richard

It's an apples-oranges comparison. What the State Police did was compare the 8.7 per cent figure to the 12.7 figure. But you can't do that because these are percentages of different bases.

The comparison would be fair if exactly the same number of accidents occurred in 1975 as in 1972. In fact, however, the number declined.

Young drivers are made to look far worse than they really are.

THIS KIND of statistical trickery aimed at young people isn't new for the State Police.

They once came up with figures showing a fantastic increase in drunk driving arrests among young people from 1971, when the legal drinking age was 21, to 1972, when it was lowered to 18.

What the tricksters failed to point out was 1) the legal definition of drunk driving was lowered at almost exactly the same time; 2) state and local police began selective enforcement of the drunk driving law in 1972, being super-watchful for young drivers; and 3) the figures showed only arrests and not convictions.

It's pretty clear what's going on: There's a campaign on to raise the legal drinking age in Michigan. The misleading and even false statistics issued by the State Police will be used to feed that campaign.

Young people had better study their math just as intensely as they study driving when they return to school in fall or else the cops are going to convict them politically on a bum rap.

3 bills needed to correct pension abuse in Capitol

Inflation usually hits hardest the people on a fixed income. Retired people who have planned their investments to provide for a satisfactory standard of living for the rest of their lives are eaten alive when the cost of living goes up.

But this is not true of all retired people. If you happen to be under a federal government pension—that is, a retired member of Congress, a retired federal civil service employee or retired military person—Congress has put you in a different position.

The ordinary employee pays slightly less than six per cent as his contribution to social security. His employer also pays a similar amount on income up to \$15,600.

When you work for the federal government, you put in seven per cent of your salary into retirement annuities. Federal employees are not covered by social security.

THE KICKER is that the federal employee pension plans are indexed for inflation. When the consumer price index rises three per cent or more, federal pensions are increased. But there is a special add-on bonus of one per cent given to federal retirees when the index rises three per cent or more.

What this means is that a retiree receives a four per cent increase—not three per cent—when the consumer price index goes up three per cent.

In other words, the more inflation we have, the better off federal retirees are.

An example is that since 1969, the consumer price index has risen 50 per cent.

During this period, federal retirement annuities have been increased, 10 times, increasing 63 per

Eccentricities

by HELEN HUGHES

cent. This means that federal retirees are in a position to improve their lifestyles 26 per cent faster at the expense of the American taxpayer.

THE SEVEN PER cent they pay toward their retirement annuities does not adequately fund their pensions. The comptroller general has told Congress that the estimated normal cost of these pensions is at least 28.74 per cent of pay.

Congress has passed a pension reform act for private industry. If we are going to have any fiscal responsibility, there must be a pension reform act for the public sector.

Public officials should not profit from increased inflation, particularly since many of these same public officials have contributed toward the inflation.

To correct the one per cent kicker abuse requires three separate acts of Congress, because the pay bills for civil servants, congressmen, military and foreign service personnel are all treated separately.

There are bills before Congress to correct this abuse. Obviously, because the pension of the congressmen themselves is involved, they will be in no rush to correct this inequity unless they are reminded by the people that it is time for a change.