

Old prejudices resurface with busing suit

It's back. Or I should say it has resurfaced — many persons just thought it went away.

Last week we learned the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) will file suit in District Federal Court in Detroit asking for a metropolitan desegregation plan — busing.

You remember the busing controversy. Recall the images of hysterical mobs badgering suburban school boards into submission; Irene McCabe walking to Washington D.C.; Federal Judge Stephen Roth; white flight; and lawyers hauling in the big bucks from school districts fighting for the supremacy of neighborhood schools.

Well, about the only things which have changed are that Roth is dead and Mrs. McCabe has been all but relegated to the newspaper clipping files.

OH YES, THERE IS one other thing — the Detroit metropolitan area still is without significant integration.

What a shame it is that we haven't learned from our past mistakes, that we haven't taken advantage of the time since 1974 to properly integrate our communities so the need for another busing fight would be unnecessary.

Many suburban school superintendents are confident that the NAACP will never be able to prove their district "deliberately" discriminated.

They could be correct. They could just as easily be wrong. But even if the suburban school districts win this round, the problem will exist still.

WHEN THE NAACP does file, this metropolitan area will explode and the concussion will rent the moral fiber of every community involved.

All the old hatred, fears and prejudices will resurface. Wasted will be millions of dollars and thousands of hours to fight busing. They will be dollars and hours which could be used for far nobler pursuits.

It will happen only because we didn't integrate. Busing only is a symptom. Integration, or the lack of it, is really the issue.

We all want our children to attend the school down the street. In the long run that is what the NAACP is aiming for.

Forced with the prospect of loading children on a bus and sending them miles away should make clear thinking persons realize that racial integration is a far better alternative.



But when talk comes of integration, few are clear thinking. Don't kid yourself. Busing really has nothing to do with improving education, the dangers of riding a

bus to school or student inability to participate in after-school activities.

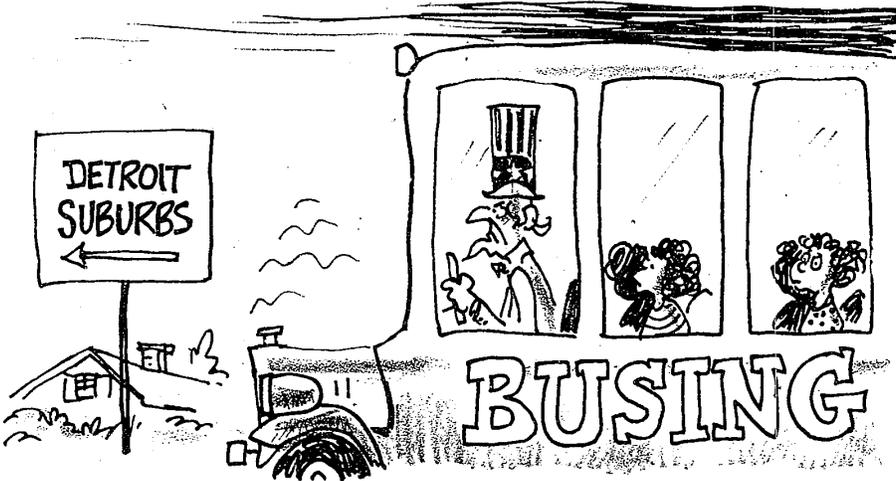
WHAT IT DOES have to do with is the premise that the world is a mentally healthier place to exist if black and white children live in the same neighborhoods and go to the same schools.

Most suburbs haven't reached out, haven't welcomed black brothers and sisters into their communities.

So the NAACP has bided its time and will once again show us the absurdity of burying our heads in the sands of ur white ghettos.

Once again, we will have the hysterical mobs, the lawyers making the big bucks and children suffering just because the suburbs turned their heads on integration.

On the way



The strong case for rapid transit

Over the last several years I have studied regional public transportation — how, if properly designed, it can tie the suburbs to the core city for mutual advantage, how it can help the suburbs prosper if their residents have the ability to travel easily from suburb to suburb.

Detroit is a good study because it is the only major metropolitan area in the country that lacks rapid public transportation.

Rapid transit, for short, is a system where the vehicle can travel quickly from location to location without being tied up by stoplights or heavy traffic. Freeways are an example of rapid private transportation.

In my studies, I have seen a city like Toronto in the throes of deterioration pull itself up by its bootstraps by an integrated regional system which allows all its residents to move freely to all parts of the metro area by a variety of public transportation modes.

I HAVE SEEN the costs of public transportation escalate as has everything else. It has become obvious that if metropolitan Detroit fails to act soon in solving its transportation problems, it may never be



eccentricities
Henry Hogan

able to because the costs will be too great.

I have seen that fixed guideway systems such as subways, are more expensive to construct, but are less expensive to operate compared to buses.

One reason is that they run on electricity produced by coal rather than on gasoline. Another reason is that buses also wear out more quickly, and each bus requires a driver who costs more than \$25,000 a year to maintain. This cost is climbing annually, while fixed guideway systems can operate multiple units with a single driver.

On the other hand, I have seen the frustrations of trying to put together a regional plan that pleases everyone, because of political jealousies which exist between municipalities.

Instead of saying what is best for the health and

prosperity of the region, many public officeholders complain that too much money is being spent in someone else's territory. They fail to realize that building a transportation system takes many years, and the first dollars must be spent in the hub or center of the region.

FOR THE LAST three years, I have served on the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) board as an appointee of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners.

My term was up last week, and I was not reappointed to the board. In my place, the commissioners appointed one of their own members who they apparently felt could better represent them.

Shortly after the new man was appointed, he voted to have Oakland County withdraw from SEMTA. Apparently this is what they considered better representation.

Metropolitan Detroit is in danger of losing its proposed regional transportation plan if all groups decide to go their own ways.

It is time for all residents to decide on what kind of public transportation they want and work for it instead of leaving the decisions to small groups in smoke-filled rooms.

Property tax, nay; sales tax, yea?

"Polls show us," Lt. Gov. James Brickley was telling us the other day, "the property tax is the most unpopular form of taxation in Michigan."

"The next most unpopular is the income tax. The form of taxation with the most acceptance is the sales tax."

That is the tone of things in the State Capitol Building. Pick up any newspaper in Michigan during the last month, and there will be page one stories about squawks over rising assessments, residential taxes that are rising faster than industrial taxes, and screams for property tax relief.

The Powers That Be in Lansing, as Brickley indicated, are thinking in terms of cutting the property tax burden by something like \$500 on an average house.

And the top candidate to replace the lost revenue is the sales tax. Now an even 4 percent, it may be raised to 5.5 percent if voters are willing. And the voters may be willing.

WHAT MICHIGAN voters will accept lies in the face of conventional economic wisdom.

My college public finance text, typical of the conventional wisdom, argued that the sales tax is "regressive" — that it takes a larger proportion of low incomes than of high incomes.

That's because high income folks supposedly save higher shares of their incomes while low-income



Tim Richard

folks must use the bulk of their incomes for consumption and save little.

The conventional wisdom holds that the income tax is fairer — even at a flat rate — because it falls on spending and saving with equal force. "All taxes are eventually paid out of income," we were taught and taught and taught.

If a flat rate income tax was fair, a graduated rate income tax was even fairer, so the conventional economic wisdom went.

Organized labor and the Democrats tried three times in the last 15 or so years to sell the conventional economic wisdom. The voters said "no sale."

MY COLLEGE text was "The Economics of Public Finance" by Prof. Phillip E. Taylor of the University of Connecticut.

It was written in 1953, and if that seems ancient,

guess again. Taylor wrote more than a quarter-century ago on page 409:

"The groups principally agitating for sales taxes during the '30s were those who stood to gain from a lightening of the property tax burden. Specifically, farmers and real estate interests were enthusiastic for the sales tax."

So what is California's Howard Jarvis? A developer and landlord, as I recall. And what is Michigan's Robert Tisch, besides being a drain commissioner who is in contact with farmers? He's also a farmer.

This is not to imply they favor higher sales taxes, though it explains their aversion to property taxes.

MICHIGAN VOTERS are pretty independent. They split their tickets all over the map and are pretty choosy about which propositions they support.

So it will be fascinating to see what lands on the ballot in November and what the voters do. Another Tisch tax cutting proposal is likely to be there. The Powers That Be in Lansing are likely to have a tax shift proposal to cut property taxes and raise the sales tax.

If voters buy the establishment's proposal, as Brickley and the polls predict, then conventional economic wisdom will deserve to be rewritten.



Inflation hits the ballpark

High up in the press box the other afternoon as we waited for the Tigers' home opener to get under way, our conversation turned to the players' salaries as a symbol of how far the value of the American dollar has shrunk in recent years.

Down on the playing field were Alan Trammell and Lou Whitaker, the young second base combination. Although this is only their third season in the majors, they had gone to arbitration and won salaries of well over the league average of \$133,000. And close beside them in the batting cage was Steve Kemp, who also had won arbitration and now is being paid \$230,000.

When these cases were pointed out, one veteran scribe cut in, "You can't forget Rusty Staub, who served as the Tiger's designated hitter until he was traded away last summer."

Rusty's salary was \$200,000 and all he had to do was step to the plate four or five times during a game and take a cut at the ball. Each trip with a bat in his hand cost the Tigers more than \$300.

What helped to bring about the conversation was a bit in the paper the other morning telling the story of Joe DiMaggio, the former Yankee star and now a baseball legend, who was paid little more than \$745,000 for his entire career. This sum is laughed at by the present day stars who are being paid pitchers.

Take the case of Nolan Ryan, the Houston pitcher, who demanded — and got — a contract calling for more than \$1 million a year. And just imagine, he pitches, at the most, only every fourth day.

When you compare these salaries with what the stars of yesteryear received, you can realize just how much the dollar has shrunk.

While no official figures ever were published, it is said that Ty Cobb, rated the best ball player who ever lived, got only \$17,000 and he managed the Tigers white playing.

Then there was Babe Ruth, one of the greatest drawing cards of all time, whose announced salary of \$80,000 a year at his peak brought large headlines in newspapers and magazines around the world.

BALL PLAYERS ALONE are not the symbols. Take a look at the fight game these days and compare the purses with what Joe Louis received and there is every reason for some eyebrow lifting.

During his entire career, which spanned 14 years, The Brown Bomber received little more than \$5 million. Today, Mohammed Ali wants more than that for a single appearance. What's more, he has been getting it.

Then there is Tommy Hears, the Detroit welterweight who has been fighting only a short time, now getting — or asking — for \$300,000 for his next bout.

The sports field is not the only place to look for symbols of the shrinking dollar.

Back in 1914 Henry Ford caused a sensation around the world when he offered \$5 a day for employment in the Ford plant. Workers came here from all parts of the world for that five dollars a day looked like a fortune.

Now the hourly rate for many of these jobs has passed \$10 and still the workers aren't satisfied.

But their wages are never published. In contrast, the money paid the athletes is spread over the nation's sports pages. So they are the real symbols of how far the dollar has shrunk.

And it has been quite a shrinking.