

OBSERVATION POINT



We're In The Region Together

By Philip H. Power

"The State of the Region." That's a good title for a good talk given last Thursday by Kent Mathewson at the annual meeting of Metropolitan Fund, Inc.

MF is a non-profit outfit devoted to research and action on urban problems in the six-county metropolitan area. It has provided early financing and recruited personnel for such agencies as New Detroit, SEMCOG, the Transportation and Land Use Study, and SEMTA (the transit authority).

MF trustees include some of the biggest movers and shakers in this area, and Mathewson is a skilled and effective guy whose ideas lie at the heart of much of what is going on in the metropolitan area.



KENT MATHEWSON
"Think Regional"

THE BASIC THRUST of Mathewson's speech was that as far as this region is concerned, we're all in it together.

He believes that it is "no longer logical to talk about Detroit and its suburbs as two entities" — that the parent and offspring relationship between Detroit and the suburbs is no longer pertinent.

He suggested that the City of Detroit is no longer the dominant political force in the region, and he simultaneously attacked "civic paranoia" which leads people both in Detroit and the suburbs to view each other with suspicion and distrust.

Mathewson argued — quite correctly, in my view — that many problems facing each community in this area are in fact regional problems. Air and water pollution. Tax base for schools. Mass transit. Industrial development. Airport placement.

None of these problems can be solved by each community in the area acting separately. Like the early American colonies, we will either hang together or we'll all hang separately.

NONE OF THIS is really new, although acceptance of the idea of regionalism is going to take a long time, particularly as long as local politicians think it's in their interest to be narrow-minded about their own city's parochial concerns.

Mathewson made some other specific proposals, which are sure to create some controversy in the coming years.

• Strengthen the Council of Governments, by setting up regional authorities to handle regional problems such as pollution. Authorization for such special authorities already exists in the 1962 state constitution.

• Elect the chairman of SEMCOG (South-east Michigan Council of Governments) by a direct vote of citizens in the area. This would develop a constituency for regional views of regional problems.

• Develop "new towns," both in the central city of Detroit and in the suburbs, linked economically and with special transportation systems. This might pave the way for planning population and industrial growth in the suburbs without bypassing people living in Detroit.

• Develop a regional taxation structure so that services shared by all citizens of this area would be financed by all people in the area. It makes no sense, for example, that tax-payers in the City of Detroit should alone assume the burden of supporting municipal golf courses which are in fact used by people from throughout this area.

• Redevelop the TALUS study to take into account the effect developments in this area will have on the ecology of the region. For example, this may make economic sense to put an auto plant in Plymouth Township, but not if water run-off from its parking lot causes flooding in 200 basements in Westland.

THE POINTS Mathewson made in his speech will be debated for years.

But one key conclusion comes through loud and strong: The people in this area and the communities in this area are linked together.

They face common problems, just because they are regional problems. Air pollution affects us because we live in this region, not because we happen to live in Livonia.

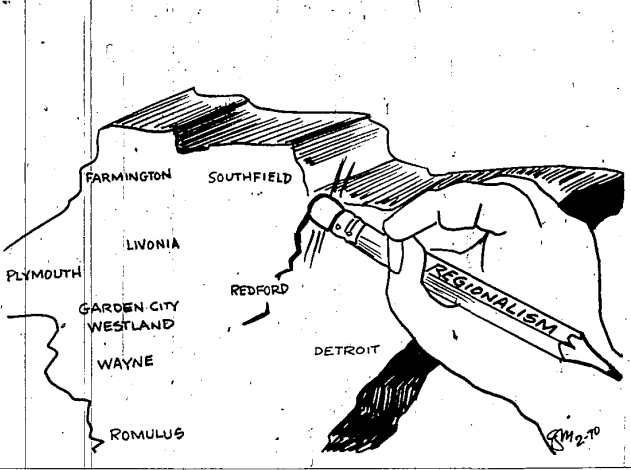
These problems cannot be solved by individual communities

acting on their own. Livonia may clamp down on its own industries, but smoke and soot from the Rouge Rouge Plant can still drift up Farmington Road.

Mathewson's right. We're all in this together.

We'd better start doing something about it.

LET'S ERASE THE BOUNDARIES.



Dennis L. Pajot writes

SEMGOG Made Decisive Choice In Ravitz

'Tis probably more blessing than bane that Detroit Common Council President Mel Ravitz won chairmanship of the Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments Saturday.

Other than SEMCOG executive committee member Richard Austin, there obviously isn't another candidate of sufficient stature to appeal to a cross-section of very sophisticated government leaders in the six-county organization.

With 59 of 65 voting delegates casting their lots with Ravitz, it's also a pretty sure bet that these leaders of local government units don't fear Detroit domination.

Besides, they know they can out-vote Ravitz in any showdown.

RAVITZ HAS A PIVOTAL job now. He's pledged himself to making the voluntary agency of member government units answer the needs of the region.

To do so he must not only overcome suburban resistance, based largely on fear of having Detroit's massive urban problems shifted onto them; he must also overcome black Detroit resistance, based on fears that SEMCOG will help tighten the suburban noose.

If he succeeds in allaying both fears he will set SEMCOG well on the road to constructive service of local member units.

If he fails, the chasm may be split too wide to ever be bridged.

Make no mistake about it, SEMCOG is a comparable agency, it here to stay. It is answering the needs of federal government, which has sufficient clout to keep it around as a clearing house for project administration, if nothing else.

Ample evidence of that clout was shown Saturday night after Ravitz' election was presented by a representative of the federal department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

THIS ONE GRANT alone, of several passed to SEMCOG by federal agencies,

is about four times the contribution of membership fees.

Another \$70,000 in grants presented Saturday was made up of four lesser in dependent fund contributions, representing business, industry and labor.

Ravitz adequately answered the silent question of whether or not he favors a recent suggestion that SEMCOG become a taxing authority, with a poultry elected chairman.

Only the delegates to SEMCOG can make it go this way, he said while noting that he himself did not favor the approach.

Unquestionably the interests of Detroit will get a bigger play with Ravitz coming to the microphones and the chair of the executive committee, which is empowered to enter contracts, etc.

THE INTERESTS OF DETROIT are equally the concerns of the suburbs: regional economy, environmental pollution, transportation networks, refuse disposal, public safety, education and inter-governmental understanding — to mention but a few prominent areas of SEMCOG activity.

Wouldn't it be great if through SEMCOG the public safety problem in downtown Detroit could be eliminated, making it attractive once again for suburbanites to take part in the offerings that only a mass market can make possible?

Those Daring Young Men On Their Flying Snow Machines

Reprint from Michigan Out-of-Doors

A national survey recently showed that 40 percent of all snowmobiles in the United States are in use in Michigan. This may well be the reason why Michigan snowmobilers seem to be stacking up

such a terrible record—there are just more of them.

As of January 4, eleven persons had met their deaths this season in snowmobile accidents in Michigan. Included were five drownings when the machines broke through thin ice. The other fatalities were the result of collisions with automobiles, trees, ditches or other solid objects.

During the entire winter of 1969-69, snowmobilers racked up 11 deaths and another 562 injuries. The 1969-70 figures are off to such a fast start that it appears new records will be set, regardless of what anybody does.

STORMS OF COMPLAINTS are also being leveled all the way from men (and women) of their flying snow machines. Some are ignoring every rule in the book, even though there are, admittedly, few firm rules in the form of laws.

Any youngster, no matter how young, may be turned loose on a snowmobile capable of going 60 or even 70 miles per hour and be within the law. In this case, parents are clearly at fault for allowing the risking of their children's necks. The exhuberance of youth, coupled with high speed, whether on a snowmobile, motor bike or automobile, can quickly add up to tragedy if proper training is not given first.

The law does require automobile and motorized bike-riders to pass qualifying tests. For snowmobilers, though—nothing. Not even manufacturers of snowmobiles are excused. Advertising, whether in newspapers, magazines or on television usually shows a snowmobile rider making thrilling jumps at high speeds. Only a few have been thoughtful

enough to include a warning in these high-powered messages that such activity is only for experts.

If the amateur snowmobiler tries to imitate his heroes in the ads, he will be lucky if he doesn't kill or injure himself. At the very least, he will probably only smash up part of the undergear on his machine. Dealers everywhere tear out their hair every time a snowmobile owner tries one of their foolhardy stunts on a stock machine, then brings the wreckage back to the store to "be fixed."

ADD TO THIS SURGE of self-destructive, the heavy damage to private and public property and the risk to the lives of others by thoughtless snowmobile operators and the whole thing begins to look like a real mess.

It is very true that, only a bare minority of snowmobilers, as in many other things, are ruining the sport for the vast majority who use their machines safely and wisely. Without strict policing by sensible snowmobilers themselves, however, it begins to look like more and more restrictions and laws will be piled onto everyone.

When this happens, a lot of the fun and freedom will go out of this new, healthy, outdoor sport. Thus, it only makes good sense to have every snowmobiler acting as a watchdog over all others.

It is going to be up to the sensible members to show these "snow idiots" what they are doing (i) themselves and others when they act like spoiled kids!

DISSENT

View points expressed in DISSENT do not necessarily reflect those of Observer Newspapers Inc., but are presented in the belief that publication of all segments of thought on a public issue is a prerequisite to understanding and progress.

By MRS. R. SAMMONS

"Livonia Taxpayer"

Since the new year 1970 has started and we dear old taxpayers of suburbia, especially Livonia, are again under attack from some of the so-called high educated of education, who says "you parents are to blame for Detroit's troubles, Detroit's deterioration, you have turned your back on Detroit, you are a low class of people, no education, low income families with a few middle class, middle income, ticky-tacky people who live in ticky-tacky homes and you have no culture, your children have no culture and all this is your fault because it all was found in Detroit which you so-called suburbanites have turned your backs on and ran from Detroit," so said a 27-year-old educator who does not live in Detroit or even in Wayne County, doesn't teach in Wayne County.

Mr. Editor "Thank God" for dear suburbia. We have lived in Livonia going on our 17th year. Myself, I have never lived in Detroit. We were not the ones who turned our backs on Detroit, Detroit turned their backs on us after World War II.

Our servicemen of all walks of life come home to a city, state and the United States after a long, hard war to start a life again, that had been interrupted. Some were not fortunate enough to live to come home.

The servicemen came home to an overcrowded city whose politicians were yelling their heads off because of the overcrowded conditions, crowded schools, too many people to cope with.

They could not accept the burden. Three and four families living in a one-family home. The city politicians, telling everyone, "Wherever you come from before the war, go back."

MANY, MANY MEN came home to their families with no jobs, no homes, no money. So you comes the G.I. Bill of Rights, a bill put through to help our servicemen and families to buy a home.

The citizens, who sat back all during the war with all their comforts and making good money while our men were fighting and losing their lives for the freedoms of the people back home, complained and criticized the government because they had made possible the homeless and unwanted could buy a home much easier.

Then came the problem, where were these homes to be built? The City of Detroit had no vacant land to speak of at all. The builders had to build homes where there was available land, which some had been very good farms.

Today it's 1970. We have all survived the school situation, the phones, roads, and shopping centers. We the unwanted of the City of Detroit have built our own cities. They refused help for us. Our children were crowding their schools. Many, many complaints were in order.

Detroit only wanted the taxpayers who were already there and no more. They did not want to give us help of any kind. Why do they want our suburban money now? Why do some educators teach our children such trifles and then come to us, the low income, low class of people, no culture, will their pay checks?

Then this teacher said "The children out at Northland had nothing to do for excitement and that was our fault because we cheated them, we have no recreation for them. But they could find this in the city of Detroit."

"Thank God" again for dear Livonia, that we have a place to live, where we are a wanted people."

THIS TEACHER was in my home, we were also entertaining our neighbors at which he directed this statement.

"We don't care what people your age think anyway. At your age you aren't long for this world anyway. We are only interested in the young."

I wonder if this teacher thinks the young are paying his wages.

Appreciates Editorial On Land Value Taxes

By Stanley Glamb

Dear Sir:

Your editorial on Land Value Taxation was stimulating. In creating the assessed valuation of idle land or buildings for the purpose of forcing a change in ownership so as to encourage a better use of the land is one thing but to do so at the expense of All homeowners is another.

What good are industrial, commercial or even private housing developments if those not involved are forced to foot the bill by the higher assessments made on their homes as a result?

Unless the industrial or commercial development can benefit the community by reducing the tax burden on existing homes, then why should anyone get excited about the best use of somebody else's land?

There is nothing wrong in growth but do it at your own ex-

pense and not the expense of all homeowners who just can't afford to pay higher and higher property taxes.

And then there is the moral question about the rights of the original owner of the land proposed for development. Just because he is too poor to develop it himself or unable to arrange for proper financing because he doesn't know how to fit in with the established order, must he be forced to surrender his property to the affluent by a legalized trick of the property tax law in which an assessed valuation is made based on an assumed market value?

Replacing the property tax on homes with a tax on income would in effect place human values ahead of land values and perhaps correct some of the inequities connected with land values and assessments based on assumed values.

Editorial & Opinion

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