

OBSERVATION POINT

Teachers' Image: Where The Money Is

By Philip H. Power

The group of teachers sitting in a room at Garden City High School (East) was thoughtful and articulate. It was part of a program to consider how to upgrade the image of the teacher in the community.

People talked about their view of the image of the teaching profession.

Militant. Baby sitters. Overpaid. Educated. Servants. Establishment. Sheltered. Dull. Non-human. Figures on a pedestal. Dogmatic. Less status than before. Softheaded. Out of date. Changed, for the better. Changed, for the worse. Less dedicated. Unionized.

They also talked about what they thought their image should be.

Leaders. Educator-instructor. Civilizers. Proficient in their field. Dedication to help kids. Skilled. Specialist. Up to date. Professional. Respected.

DISCUSSION bogged down.

"I'm not sure why we should be concerned," said one woman. "Even if we could do anything about improving our image, it wouldn't help much. And I don't see how we can collectively do much to improve our image."

Another teacher, a man, added: "I'm concerned about my image as an individual teacher. But I don't care much about our collective image. Anyway, we can't do much about it."

There was an air of fatalism.

That seemed strange, for voters in the Garden City school district have approved 12 straight millage issues, the outstanding record for support of education in Michigan.

Out the window we could see the new bricks of the high school auditorium, scheduled for opening this spring, the product of a millage that passed.

"I don't know if the voters will pass the next millage," said another man. "I sure hope so. But there's not much that we can do."

IN ONE SENSE the teachers were right.

Their image has changed over the past 10 or 20 years.

Teachers have become unionized and now bargain for sal-

ary and working conditions. Many of them no longer live in the cities where they work (in the group I attended, four out of 11 lived in Garden City.) Education itself has changed, and certainly the kids are different than they were in the past.

These factors are wide and enormous, probably far beyond the ability of an individual teacher to affect.

Many of a teacher's central

concerns are now represented by the Education Associations or Federations of Teachers. Many other problems can be solved only by the votes of the politicians.

BUT THE discussion puzzled me.

At rock bottom, our education system is a local one - locally run, serving a local population, with local support.

Local support. That means money, which in turn means millage. Which in turn depends on the willingness of local voters to choose to tax themselves to support their educational system.

That's where image comes in. Strong.

If the educators in a community - and that includes not only teachers, but also administrators and members of school boards - are not respected and

looked up to, the voters certainly are going to look at millage proposals with a sceptical air.

And at heart, the success of teachers and the education system generally depends on the willingness of the voters to provide the funds.

Although the image of the teaching profession isn't the only factor in the voters' minds, it certainly is an important one.

If teachers are regarded as

the kind of thoughtful, concerned and able people they really are, public confidence in the schools will pay dividends at the next millage election.

Garden City voters may have passed 12 straight millage elections but if the teachers aren't concerned about their collective image there, the 13th may prove to be a very unlucky one indeed.

R.T. Thompson writes

Board Decision Makes Good Sense

From Southfield comes a news item that should be of interest to all of the communities covered by the Observer Newspaper group.

The Southfield Board of Education has awarded bids for the lights at the athletic field of the new Lathrup High School, notwithstanding considerable dissent from those residing in the immediate neighborhood.

Matter of fact, the school board decided to go ahead with the project with complete knowledge that a public hearing was scheduled on a proposal to limit the length of light poles in Lathrup Village, where the school is located.

THOSE OPPOSING the athletic field lights had hopes of getting an ordinance passed that would limit the length of light poles far below that needed for lighting a football field.

However, the school board took the matter out of the hands of the opposition by awarding the contract. In effect, this meant that the board had acted in advance of the proposed ordinance which couldn't be made retroactive.

But for those who follow the sports scene rather closely, especially at the high school level, the dissidence weren't actually opposing the lights on the basis of noise but rather on the inconveniences that would result by those seeking parking space for night football games or any other athletic events.

It was more or less a pleasant surprise not to hear cries that night games would bring student riots, smashed windows in cars, noisy incidents after games and the like.

ALL OF WHICH BRINGS to mind that the Farmington school system doesn't have any lighted fields and, from all indications, doesn't plan to have any. Harrison High, which is under construction but slated to open next fall, won't have a night plant and after dark, outdoor events are taboo at North Farmington and Farmington High.

Livonia has only one lighted field-at Bentley-- with Franklin, Stevenson and now Churchill playing football games on Friday and Saturday afternoons.

It can't be cost that is keeping the Livonia board from approving lights-a group of parents at Franklin High agreed to raise the necessary amount for mazdas, but the trustees thus far have ignored the request.

In Redford Township, Redford Union, the area's only high school for a long time, has lights, but Thurston plays its football games in the afternoon.

The situation is a bit different in Garden City where the board approved lights for the comparatively new West High, and now both East and West play after dark contests.

Plymouth High has a new light plant for the athletic field, but there isn't any indication at this time as to what takes place once the new Plymouth High opens in the fall.

IN THESE TROUBLED days of generation gap confrontations, it is our opinion that high school sports does more to build up a better relationship between students, parents, administrators and the general public than anything else.

We have noted that those attending high school contests are interested in what is taking place on the gridiron or the basketball court. Those with the long hair, sideburns, granny glasses and what we generally refer to as "hippie" attire are conspicuous by their absence.

During the past football and basketball seasons, we attended perhaps 30 contests in all sections of the area we prefer to call Observerland, and at no time did we encounter an incident of any kind.

We feel that sports and athletic events are great places to leave off steam, and what better way to let loose than at a contest where your own folks are competing?

Perhaps other school boards in the area should follow in the footsteps of Southfield and approve lighted athletic fields. From what we have observed, it can do nothing but good for the community, the high schools, student bodies and general public.

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 FRED PREZIOSO
Plymouth

I wish to express my agreement with the point of view expressed by Philip H. Power in his recent editorial, "Busing Isn't Answer To School Problems."

I do not believe that seeking an educational solution through busing is the most effective way to deal with "de-facto" segregation. De-facto segregation results from unequal treatment of minorities in the area of housing and employment.

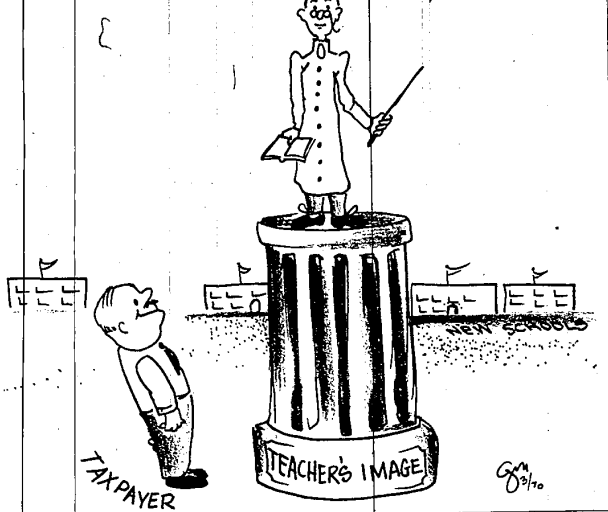
The first problems to be dealt with, therefore, are the inequities that exist in housing and employment.

At the same time, segregation by law (de-jure) is an educational problem because an equal educational opportunity is being denied to members of a minority group who already live within the bounds of a particular school district.

It would seem to me that the role of our courts is to determine which is at issue, segregation by law or by fact.

Accordingly, the courts can take legal action to eliminate the mechanisms of de-jure segregation if its presence is determined. If, on the other hand, the root problem is in housing and employment, other remedies can be sought.

"I'LL VOTE FOR THAT!"



Tim Richard writes

Will Ruling Affect Schoolcraft?

There's a funny thing about law. A legal rule has a way of being carried to its logical conclusion, whether it needs to be or not.

Take the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling several years ago that both houses of a legislature must be apportioned on the basis of "one man, one vote."

The purpose was to give city and suburban dwellers their fair share of representation in the making of state laws. There was reason for it: Populous areas have interests and needs that are different from rural areas, and those interests and needs suffered in malapportioned legislatures.

LAST WEEK the Supreme Court, in a Missouri case, applied the "one man, one vote" principle to community college districts. It ruled that Kansas City,

with about 60% of a college district population, wasn't getting a fair shake when it got three of the six board seats.

Legal scholars must still determine whether that rule applies to the Schoolcraft College district, but to a layman it would appear to apply.

The Schoolcraft College board has eight members. Three are elected at-large, and one each is elected from the five member districts.

That's not proportional representation by a long shot. Judging from the number of registered voters, Livonia School District has a whopping 51% of the population, Garden City 20%, Plymouth 14%, Clareneville nearly 7% and Northville 6%.

If you disregard the at-large seats for a moment, each school district has 20% of the vote on the Schoolcraft board. Thus, Livonia has less than half the power it should have, Garden City comes out even, Plymouth gets nearly half-again as much as it should have, and Clareneville and Northville have three times the voice they should have.

If you consider the at-large seats and the residences of the persons who hold them, Livonia has 37.5% of the board power, Northville 25%, Garden City, Plymouth and Clareneville 12% each.

ON THE BASIS of numbers, then, the Schoolcraft College board would appear to be grossly malapportioned. But in practical political terms, does anyone really care? Are Livonia's interests and needs so different from Northville's that the college would be better run if there were proportional representation?

Only one person, to our knowledge, has so argued. James Boswell, the Livonia School District representative, is the board's most radical member,

and he would like to have more votes for his causes.

Boswell has badly hurt his own case, however, by his great degree of absenteeism. His attitude is so bad that he even declined to pose with the rest of the board for a group portrait.

IF THE AUTHORITIES in Lansing or a court decides that the Schoolcraft board should be reapportioned, all sorts of practical problems will be raised.

Should the college district be split into sub-districts of equal population, without regard to local boundary lines? If that happens, the goal of representing community interests will be frustrated.

Should all trustees be elected at-large? This would satisfy the "one man, one vote" theory, but it would also allow Livonians, should they choose to gang up, to elect the entire board.

How do you determine population? Census tracts follow municipal boundaries, but school district boundaries meander all over. Either a special census would be needed, or some other guideline--such as the number of registered voters or the number of pupils--would have to be used.

Assuming you follow local school district lines in drawing up sub-districts for the college board, how would you get proportional representation?

Mathematically, the simplest way would be to have a 32 member board, with Livonia School District getting 16 seats, Garden City seven, Plymouth five, and Clareneville and Northville two apiece. What a mess!

That's a funny thing about law. A legal rule has a way of being carried to its logical conclusion, whether it needs to be or not.

Sense And Nonsense

Gov. William Milliken has added a new staff member, Mrs. Billie Lilly, to his Detroit office to deal with the news media.

Announcement soon to be made on the Rowan-Martin Show is: If Milliken were nicknamed Willi Milli, we could refer to the governor's appointment as Willi Milli's Billie Lilly--quite a filly.

Editorial & Opinion

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