

## 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. Soft-headed. Out of date.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 salaries.

## Sense And Nonsense

Gov. William Milliken has added a new staff member, Mrs. Billie Liley, 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 Liley—quite a filly.

## Editorial &amp; Opinion

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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 skeptical 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.

Matter of fact, 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 dissidents 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 field.

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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.

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 Clarenceville and Northville two apiece. What's that?

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.

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.

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