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A longstanding injustice finally confronted

A lot of stories flow over an editor's desk in a year. Some are only slightly perused, others grudgingly edited, and some even enjoyed.

But every once in a while, a story hits the desk which an editor just can't ignore.

Such was the case with a story written by Observer & Eccentric reporter Mary Rodrique which appeared in several of our editions.

It revolved around the battle being waged by Japanese-Americans seeking restitution after being put in internment camps during World War II.

Ms. Rodrique found several Japanese-Americans, perhaps your friends or neighbors, living in the area who experienced this shameful blot in American history.

The precedent is frightening. Because of their ethnic heritage, 110,000 Japanese-Americans were imprisoned.

Keep in mind, German-Americans and Italian-Americans were spared this treatment.

A presidential commission has scheduled hearings to confront this longstanding injustice.

But for many, like Bloomfield Hills resident Kaz Mayeda, the issue goes far beyond monetary compensation.

"THE CONSTITUTION FAILED to protect me. If we don't pursue (redress), then we leave it wide open to pass down to our children and grandchildren. It will be perpetrated on them," said the Wayne State University professor.

The truly frightening fact is how few Americans know the incident happened or knew it for the three years their fellow citizens were interned.

Much criticism has been heaped on German citizens who claim they were unaware of the concentration camps holding Jews and political prisoners.

Some went out of their way to remain uninformed.

And even though the consequences of this neglect were much graver for European Jews, the similarities between the racial segregation is striking.

One might expect a mad dictator to imprison an ethnic group, but one can only hang his head in shame to know this happened in a democracy.

Certainly, it would be impossible to undo the injustice done to Japanese Americans. But we should learn from our errors instead of hiding them.

But think back. Do you remember ever reading about this atrocity when you were in school? Some persons do, most don't. Those who do recall it being taught say it was quickly brushed aside.

THIS COUNTRY must face up to its mistake. Our proudest moment will be when it is taught and retaught in our schools systems.

In totalitarian governments the truth often is hidden if it proves to be embarrassing. In a democracy, truth, no matter how hard it is to swallow, is a virtue.

Now that's an educational issue over which all of us can get excited.

Tim Richard

Let's shake our 'mill town mentality'

Reading Prof. Richard V. Knight's scholarly paper on Detroit's re-development, I was reminded of Brer Rabbit's song in the old Disney movie:

Ev'ry day's got a laughing place.
A laughing place to go-ha-ha Take a frown, turn it upside down,
And you'll find yours I know-ha-ha.

Knight, whose specialty at Cleveland State University is urban affairs, thinks Detroit is "an emerging cosmopolitan or world city." He is deadly serious. And optimistic.

If we think of Detroit as losing jobs and industrial tax base, then we are looking at it all wrong, he contends.

Knight delivered this paper in 1979 at a Henry Ford Community College conference, and it was brought to my attention recently by the workshop director and editor, John W. Smith of HFCC's political science faculty.

IF WE LOOK at Detroit with the old "mill town" mentality, Knight says, we will see only problems — decentralization of industry, high unemployment among inner city residents, loss of population.

The mill town mentality sees only factory jobs as contributing to production. Not so, contends Smith.

"The proportion of work that takes place off-line has been increasing. Off-line work takes place primarily in cities wherever the plants, processes and products are designed and financed, where materials are purchased and shipments are arranged, where production schedules are set and operations, inventory controls, marketing efforts are monitored."

Knight calls these occupations "advanced services" and says their contribution to value-added in manufacturing is becoming more important but is still overlooked by urban policy makers. These advanced services people deal in blueprints, formulas, computer programs, contracts, marketing plans and other pieces of paper or electronic data. They don't touch metal, rubber or paint.

MOREOVER, the advanced services workers may not work for giant corporations, and they didn't stand in lines saying "Help Wanted" to get their jobs.

Corporations contract out for auditing, engineering, advertising, PR, insurance, investment banking and research services. These firms are housed in corporate office towers downtown, in older downtown buildings, in suburban offices and research parks.

These firms serve not only auto makers in Detroit but the rest of the nation, and even the world. Hence Knight's conclusion that Detroit is becoming a world class city.

His numbers are impressive. New York City, he figures, has 113,000 central administrative and auxiliary jobs; Chicago is second with 85,800; Detroit, a close third with 84,600.

BUT DETROIT is doomed to frustration if it thinks only in terms of attracting old-style, blue-collar factory jobs and training young people for them.

School curriculum and counseling are the keys. Counselors need to understand the kinds of advanced services job Detroit is providing and the highly-skilled blue collar jobs instead of thinking of unskilled assembly line jobs.

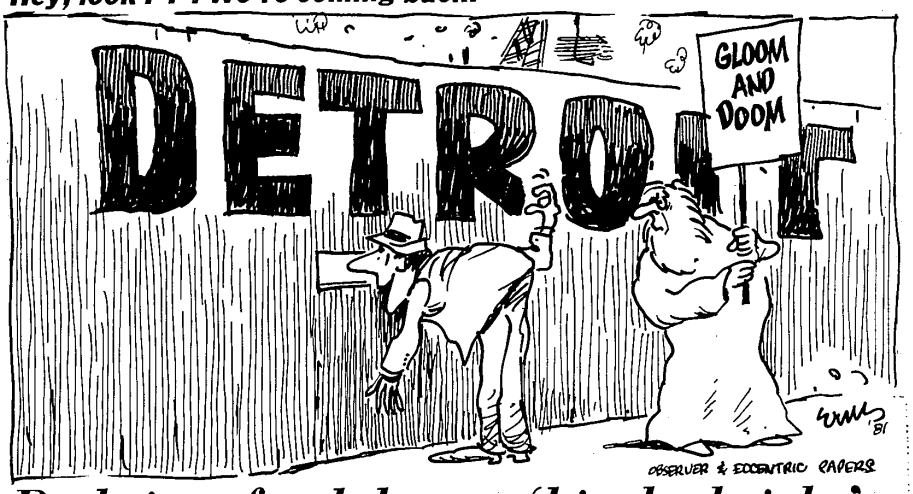
The entire hiring pattern in advanced services companies is decentralized, with openings also being advertised by word of mouth.

And so instead of being a doomed mill town, Detroit, in Knight's view, "is on the forefront of building a new type of world city" — a cosmopolitan city where work, living and recreation go on within the same borders.

I have condensed literally 50 columns of his paper into one newspaper column, but I think I've captured the essence of his approach. Take the frown and turn it upside down.

OAE

'Hey, look . . . We're coming back.'



Bad time for labor to 'hit the bricks'

Nick Sharkey

This will be a year of labor peace for many local school districts. Most districts have current faculty contracts which will not expire this year.

Only Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Walled Lake (part of West Bloomfield) and Warren Consolidated (part of Troy) are still negotiating teacher contracts for the coming school year.

This is a marked contrast to recent years when the end of summer has been marred by an exchange of insults between school board and teacher union officials.

A rash of teacher strikes reached a peak in Michigan in 1979 when teachers walked out in 70 school districts. Perhaps the nadir in this area was 1973 when a strike in the nearby Crestwood district, where many parents themselves are union members, resulted in the firing of a majority of the teachers.

TEACHERS ARE wise to be cautious about hitting the bricks this year. If my hunch is correct, they would find that the public is not sympathetic to a walkout.

If they are unsure, they may want to check with members of PATCO (Professional Air Traffic Controllers). PATCO's strike has failed to gain the backing of the public.

It can be argued that the air traffic controllers' work stoppage was special, and circumstances make it different. That is, because of the relatively small size of the union (17,000 members), it has been selected as an easy target by a new, conservative administration trying to act tough with labor unions. Also, because air traffic controllers are already well paid, their demands for more money are difficult to accept.

But a larger issue in involved than the PATCO strike. Look at the small crowds that returned to Tiger Stadium last week after the 50-day baseball strike. Consider the concessions made by employees of Chrysler Corp. and the city of Detroit. Study the agreements made by eight unions to save the Philadephia Bulletin over the weekend.

THE FRIENDS of labor in places like Lansing and Washington, D.C. have seen support for pro-labor legislation shrivel.

Some pundits say the labor movement is suffering its first real setback in momentum. They point out that, since the 1920s, organized labor has gradually but consistently won its demands. Now there's a change.

That may be overstating the case. What these temporary setbacks mean in the history of the labor movement has yet to be determined. It would be a mistake to exaggerate them.

BUT NO ONE can dispute that the new Reagan Administration is the least friendly to organized labor Washington has seen in many years.

This message is not being lost to government officials at the local level. Unions representing government employees, such as teachers, can expect only difficult times in the next few years.

If teachers are smart they will hit the books instead of the bricks. As any current events teacher would tell the class, this is not a good year for labor strife.

'The Bird' pepped up baseball a spell

No more will we hear the chirping of "The Bird" from the pitcher's box of Tiger Stadium. Never again will we smile as he stoops to manicure the mound. No more will crowds have a chance to call "We want The Bird" at the conclusion of one of his victories.

After a long silence, the Detroit Tigers' top brass have let it be known they have done as much as they can for pitcher Mark Fidrych, whose wild golden locks reminded fans of the "Sesame Street" character.

The Tiger brass even went so far as to suggest he take his free agency opportunity and try to find a job with another club.

The announcement was a long time coming, but it was known as far back as 1981 Opening Day that The Bird wasn't coming back.


Mark Fidrych chirps no more

HE HAD BEEN sent back to the minor leagues just a few days earlier. Sparky Anderson, the white-haired manager, was asked when The Bird might be recalled.

the stroller

W.W. Edgar

"If I have anything to do with it, he won't be back," said Anderson sharply. Then he added that cutting loose The Bird wasn't a tough decision to make.

"You see," he said to The Stroller, "he was a freak. He had one good year, then pitched himself out. Fellows like him come along about once in 20 or 25 years. It was just the Tigers' good luck that he came up with this club."

"Of course, I don't make the decisions. So what I say is not official and shouldn't be printed."

But now the silence has been broken by Jimmy Campbell, the Tigers general manager who acted like a father to Fidrych when he was the idol of baseball in 1977. That year, Fidrych was named starting pitcher in the All-Star game, one of the highest honors that could come to a rookie.

Somewhere along the line, Fidrych injured his arm and shoulder, developed a bad knee and spent more time in medical centers and hospitals than on the mound at Evansville in the Triple-A League.

BUT THE BIRD will leave behind plenty of memories. As he returns to the suburban gasoline station in Massachusetts, he will have the satisfaction of knowing he brought more life to baseball than anyone since the days of Babe Ruth.

The Bird was a financial savior to the Tigers, too. The mere mention that he was to pitch caused a long line at the ticket windows. Seldom did he pitch before fewer than 50,000 fans. So he will long be remembered in the top offices, too.

The Bird's name will be linked with such out-of-the-ordinary players as Denny McLain, who won 31 games in his best year; Boots Poffenberger, another pitcher; and the likes of Dizzy and Daffy Dean of the St. Louis Cardinals.

But in all the years, there was only one Bird. Anyone else who tries to chirp from the pitcher's box or manicure the mound each inning will be only an imposter.

The Bird will leave as the latest example of William Shakespeare's famous lines: "Man has but one brief moment upon the stage, and then is heard no more."