



EDITOR'S NOTE. Birmingham and 12 other communities recently held a "Birmingham Tomorrow Symposium" to discuss their long range problems. Gov. Milliken was invited to keynote a session on the theme "ourselves as others see us." The speech was subject to many interpretations -- the most common being that it was an attack on the suburbs. It wasn't, really, but you can decide that for yourself from the text.

By WILLIAM G. MILLIKEN
Governor of Michigan

I don't expect you to solve any of your problems during the short life cycle of this symposium. But at least you can identify them, and begin to move toward solutions.

In the last few years, people in the affluent suburbs have begun to talk about their obligations to the cities upon whose existence they depend. What makes this symposium so important, it seems to me, is that it recognizes the critical truth that the suburbs will not be able to heal the inner cities unless they first heal themselves.

Heal what? From the list of problems discussed in this symposium, you can pick your favorite disease-- pollution, traffic, drugs, the breakdown of the family, the crisis of education--put them all together and they spell Trouble. Only trouble doesn't lie in River City, as it did in the Music Man. It's right here in Birmingham, and in Grosse Pointe, and in Bloomfield Hills, and in Warren, and all through the affluent ring that surrounds Detroit and the other major cities of the country.

ALL OF THE PROBLEMS that I have mentioned, and the others you are discussing at this symposium, are extremely difficult problems for which simple solutions just don't exist. But there is another suburban problem that is even more critical, it seems to me, and that is the problem of apartheid. And until that problem is solved, I doubt very much that there will be any significant progress in solving other suburban troubles.

The isolation and separation of the suburbs are among their most important distinguishing characteristics. This separation exists on several planes--the suburbs separated from the larger cities they surround, the suburbs separated from each other, and the residents of each single suburb separated from each other.

As I said, many enlightened suburban residents have already recognized the necessity for the suburbs to end their separation from the people of the inner cities. And of course many suburbanites understand that the suburbs must end their isolation from each other -- this is what the movement toward metropolitan government is all about.

But separation from each other? I wonder how many suburbanites recognize how isolated neighbors have become from one another? I wonder how many understand how many problems their neighbors are having

'Symposium' Criticizes Smug Suburbs

By TIM RICHARD

Birmingham -- which considers itself, and is widely considered by others, the elite of the suburbs -- is taking a hard look at itself and inviting others to join the criticism.

Out of it is expected to come a "Birmingham Tomorrow Inc." to do for 13 suburban communities what New Detroit Inc. is attempting to do for the central city.

The project began last week with a two-day "symposium," a slickly organized series of speakers from inside and outside aiming, in the jargon of the pamphlet, "to identify assets and liabilities of suburbia and to plan an ongoing program of priorities around which the resources of our communities can rally."

non-profit corporation that will carry on its work are the creation of Synecore, the parent company of the weekly newspaper *The Eccentric*.

S. John Byington, a young Synecore executive who recently got a college board appointment from Gov. Milliken, called the symposium "an over-sized sensitivity session."

While the name "Birmingham" was applied to the activities, Eccentric President Henry Hogan Jr. said it was really a "Suburbia Tomorrow" session.

Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills and Bloomfield Township. The Birminghamites asked for criticism and got it -- good and hard. A Detroit black leader, who said he learned "all about" Birmingham while cutting laws there while his mother scrubbed floors, tried to shock the audience with a particularly juicy four-letter word. No one batted an eyelash.

GOV. MILLIKEN, the keynote, said suburbia's big problem is "apartheid"; the suburbs are separated from the larger cities they surround, the suburbs are separated from each other, and the residents of a single suburb are separated from each other.

Milliken scored the "double standard" of morality on drugs: "The matter has be-

come a national scandal only since it moved from the ghettos to the white suburbs."

The mover struck home with that point. Drugs, they use by youngsters and the alienation of young people were among the most frequently mentioned Birmingham problems.

THE MOST analytical listing of suburban problems and solutions came from a hometown boy, Richard Van Dusen, an attorney, former state representative, candidate for attorney general, Constitutional Convention delegate and legal adviser to Gov. Romney, is currently under-secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Birmingham has no single political future, and indeed it's future is more than the 13

communities invited to the symposium, Van Dusen began. It's part of a metropolitan region, and it should fight political fragmentation by taking a strong interest in the South-eastern Michigan Council of Governments.

Van Dusen praised Gov. Milliken for proposing statewide collection of school property taxes, a move that would equalize every district's tax base and mute competition for high-priced construction.

He said suburbs should "allow low-priest and minority housing...scattered, attractive." This is necessary because of the increasing number of industrial jobs in the suburbs.

And Van Dusen urged strong suburban interest in mass transit, noting that San Francisco area suburbs which

failed to do so are now feeling hurt because they are left out.

In a critical vein, Van Dusen likened suburbanites to "passengers who abandoned the sinking ship (Detroit) and want to get clear and not let anyone else on the lifeboat."

CARL LUCKENBACH, president of an architectural firm, said suburbs "have a certain degree of smugness" about their environment. Suburbanites "put a low priority on their physical environment and a high one on their 'micro-environment'--the home, car, personal possessions."

Zoning, he said, is a "negative" approach to a good environment because it only prohibits bad land uses, and fails to assure good uses.

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What Milliken Said About The Suburbs.

behind the split level facades that collectively create the illusion of tranquility and comfort?

Let me quote from a letter which many Birmingham residents recently received from the Birmingham Youth Assistance Committee. The letter said, and I quote:

"Drugs and illegitimacy, suicides, poverty, neglect, and abuse exist here in Birmingham. That's right -- in the seventh most affluent suburban community in the United States. These tragedies are real and happen every day. They will continue to multiply and can eventually cripple our entire community. Birmingham needs your help now."

That paragraph intrigued me. It implied that the reader would be shocked and surprised to know that there were troubles in the four-bedroom, 2 1/2 bathroom home down the street, the one with the perfect lawn. I don't know whether he would be shocked and surprised, but the assumption seemed to be that he would. And I don't think it was a bad assumption at all.

THE FACT OF THE matter is, I believe, that most people in the suburbs don't talk to each other. Either they don't talk at all, or they don't really communicate when they do. People live in isolation, pretending that their responsibilities as citizens, as neighbors, and even as decent human beings stop at the boundary of their property.

Why this is so I'm not sure. One reason might be the simple fact of physical separation: people aren't crowded together as they are in the cities. Another reason might be the transient nature of the suburbs. What's the use of getting to know your neighbor if the corporation is going to transfer him to another city in a couple of years?

In any event, the suburbs can't know anything about the inner cities until they know themselves. And they can't know anything about themselves until they start talking to each other. And they won't start talking to each other until individual citizens part with -- the obsession with status, the worship of privacy.

Frankly, I believe these attitudes are crumbling, and for that reason I am optimistic. In a memorable poem, Robert Frost wrote, "Something there is that doesn't love a wall." The suburbs are now discovering the truth that line contains.

Suburban walls are invisible, but they are nonetheless powerful. But now the suburbs are finding out that a line on the map provides no permanent protection from the threat of drugs, crime, and environmental decay.

ONE OF THE MOST dismal aspects of the drug scene, incidentally, is that it has only become a national scandal since it moved from the ghettos to the white suburbs. This fact surely demonstrates the double standard of concern that has marked racially divided America.

In reference to the misery of the ghettos, the prevailing rule has always been, "Out of

sight, out of mind." But now that a small portion of that ghetto misery has crossed the city limits, and incidentally crossed the color line, white American parenthoods has panicked.

Perhaps the answer to the problem of the cities -- problems like drugs -- will finally emerge only when every American recognizes that breaking the chain of poverty, ignorance, and despair is in his own immediate, direct interest. For this is one of the practical and moral lessons that all experience teaches; that our own well-being, and the very quality of our own existence and that of our children, is bound up with the lives and well-being of countless other men whose lives may never touch our own.

More than 100 years ago, Abraham Lincoln said: "The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present...As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves."

And so we must think and act anew today. We must detach ourselves from the empty epithets of the past and present and direct our thinking on the path of the future.

We must no longer believe that the poor will always be with us, because we have the capacity to eliminate poverty. We must no longer believe that war is a permanent human institution, because the great mass of mankind wants an end to war. We must no longer believe that young people are unrealistic and foolish, because young people today are, for the most part, motivated by idealism and compassion. And finally, we must no longer believe that racism in America is an incurable disease, because we have seen too much evidence that it can be cured.

A FEW MOMENTS AGO, I said that the walls of suburbia were crumbling. One reason they are crumbling is that the problems of drug abuse, of crime, of the breakdown of families, of alcoholism--all of these problems have become so widespread and serious that they can no longer be hidden. People must talk about them, try to solve them, because they realize if they don't, they may find these problems under their own roofs.

Another reason I believe the isolation that has marked the suburbs is coming to an end is the influence of young people. The young people don't pay much attention to these walls. Where their parents have settled into a state of separate development from their neighbors, the young people have achieved a high level of togetherness.

Young people are making forays into the inner city and finding out about their black neighbors, discovering that poor people black and white, have attitudes worth sharing, experiences worth knowing about, and a mutual concern for each other that is too often absent in the suburbs.

I suppose all of what I've said might sound a bit harsh on the suburbs and suburbanites. But if John Byington's description of this symposium as an "oversized sensitivity ses-

sion" is to mean anything, we've got to be honest with each other.

The fact that I haven't dealt with the strengths of the suburbs doesn't mean that I don't recognize them. The suburbs contain people who have the great advantage of education. The suburbs contain people who have worked hard to build their homes, to support their schools, and to establish an aesthetic quality of life. And the suburbs contain thousands of people who -- like the people here today -- are willing to give their time and their energy to the solution of their problems.

Unfortunately, those thousands are not enough, and they have not been sufficiently mobilized.

An astonishing fact, this middle class slumber, but I believe it is now coming to an end.

Above all we need an end to hatred and distrust. We need to dissolve hatred and distrust between blacks and whites, between rich and poor, between labor and management, between young and old. Unless we replace this hatred with tolerance and understanding, we will not survive as a nation.

This tolerance, this understanding, will never come unless we learn to talk and to work with each other. That is what you are doing here today, and that is why I believe there is hope for Birmingham, and for all of the suburbs of America.

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MAY 4-9

Monday 7 p.m.
Suburban Choralettes. (throughout Mall)

Thursday 7 p.m.
Farmington High School Singers, Falconeairs and 12-Tones, Director, William Feucht. (Sears Court)

Friday 8 p.m.
Wayne Chorus of the Barber Shop. (Sears Court)

Saturday 2 p.m.
Clarenceville Glee Club. (Sears Court)

Saturday 7 p.m.
Bentley High Chorus. (Sears Court)

Saturday 8 p.m.
Suburban Choralettes. (throughout Mall)

Thursday, Friday, Saturday Evenings
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