

OBSERVATION POINT



Violence On Woodward: The Suburban Youth Riot

The violence that broke out last week along Woodward Avenue in Royal Oak and Birmingham was, in my view, possibly the first outbreak of what may be quite a new phenomenon in our society — the suburban youth riot.

The kids who were arrested last week were by and large neither black nor underprivileged nor poor. They were children of fairly well-to-do parents, who had cars and enough money to buy dope. They were white, and they live mostly in the suburbs.

They could be your kids. Maybe some of them were. And yet they were engaged in violence and vandalism in a way which has shocked and alarmed the older generation.

IN THE MIDDLE of the general and quite warranted condemnation of the behavior of the kids, examination of just why the violence took place seems to have been overlooked.

The fundamental fact behind the events of last week is that large numbers of our children have adopted a life style which both offends the law (use of drugs) and common standards of morality and taste (dress, sexual activity, noisy music).

They cannot practice this life style at home; parents are now aware that the strange grass-like stuff in their son's dresser drawer is not merely dried grass but marijuana.

Similarly, schools are out of bounds, since administrators and police officers are now very much aware of the problem and have been cracking down.

Colleges are generally closed during the summer, so the comparative safety of an apartment in a college town is out. Anyway, many of those arrested along Woodward last week were not college students.

IF THE KIDS can't practice their chosen life style at home or in school, where do they go to do it?

To the rock festivals; for one thing. It seems to me that this fact is the explanation for the unexpected huge size of the crowds at rock festivals such as Goose Lake, particularly when they are out of bounds to the police.

Or the kids drop out and run away to the underground communities in the big cities or communes in the countries. I have talked with many parents in this area whose children have simply walked out.

BUT IF THERE is no rock festival going on and the kids don't want to drop out, they try to go to the public parks.

There they feel they can buy and smoke pot in comparative safety. There they feel they can dress as they wish, listen to their

music, and let their sexual style come out into the open.

They reason that since the parks are public property, there is no reason why they should be prohibited from doing their thing in such a setting.

They further think that laws against drugs are wrong and unnecessary and that people who take offense at loud rock music and sexual displays are old-fashioned pruders, who should mind their own business.

So when the police infiltrate the parks and start arresting drug pushers and when people living near the parks complain about the noise and general goings on and ask the police to close the park, the kids react with amazement, frustration and then rage.

Thus the violence on Woodward Avenue, when the Royal Oak police tried to shut down Memorial Park.

IN THIS ANALYSIS, I have not condoned the life style the kids wish to practice. The fact remains that use of drugs is against the law, just as loud music and open sex offend the common public taste.

But the kids — some of them, at least — explicitly reject the law and common public taste. And as long as the kids take that point of view, and as long as the public and the police insist on enforcing the law, then you have a recipe for continuing confrontation.

Some have suggested, wrongly, I think, that the situation is similar to the unsuccessful attempt to prohibit use of alcohol in the 1920s. The difference is that several generations had been drinking before prohibition was passed, and they condoned the widespread illegal drinking that ultimately led to repeal. Such is not the case with drugs.

SO THERE THE situation rests.

The kids with the money and the cars go engage in their new life style live mostly in the suburbs. So it's a suburban problem.

The police and the public insist that the law be enforced. The kids reject the law and search endlessly for a place to do their own thing, reacting with rage and violence when stopped.

My guess is that the events of last week on Woodward Avenue will be repeated in the future, in one form or another.

My further guess is that such confrontations will not cease until there takes place a shift of attitudes — either by the kids or by the public — comparable in extent to that which led to the kids adopting their new life style in the first place.

And that may take a long, long time.

Tim Richard writes

Milliken's GOP Has A Metropolitan Look

In the same way that Democratic gubernatorial candidate Sander Levin picked Livonia Mayor Edward McNamara as his running mate to appeal to the suburbs, Republican Gov. William Milliken is giving his party an urban-metropolitan look.

First, Milliken succeeded at something no other governor, Democrat or Republican, had even tried: getting the Legislature to approve a \$5 million no-strings grant to the City of Detroit.

For years Democrats and Detroiters had complained that state government had ignored the cities, and here was a guy from Traverse City coming through with money.

SECOND, MILLIKEN tapped Jim Brickley as his running mate for lieutenant governor. Brickley was a popular Detroit city councilman, and there were those who had wanted him to run for mayor.

And if you looked over the list in Sunday's paper of prominent business and civic leaders backing a downtown site for a new stadium, you saw (the names of Ray Gribbs and only one outstanding out-state person. That's right: Bill Milliken).

AND THEN you come to the party's platform. The Neanderthal state senators of the 1950s would have croaked over an entire section on "Urban Affairs and Public Safety." It's Bill Milliken's baby.

"Because half of Michigan's population resides in southeastern Michigan, the Republican Party recognizes the state cannot allow the City of Detroit to decay by default, or the surrounding areas to expand, without planning and financial assistance."

After a boast about state money in housing programs, the platform notes that Milliken was "the first chief executive of any state to appoint a special assistant for urban affairs."

An urban slant to the recreation bond issue, a study of possible state participation and aid to a "New Towns-Inner City rehabilitation project," a \$2 million mass transit grant, a better county home rule legislation. You'd never have seen those items in a GOP platform 10 or 15 years ago.

"SUBURBAN RESIDENTS must have rapid transit from

home, to work and to cultural facilities in metropolitan areas. Tourists must also have access to urban and rural areas. The Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority is urged to immediately develop mass transit throughout the six-county area of southeastern Michigan."

There's a call for the establishment of a "State Dept. of Transportation incorporating highway, rail, aviation, port, rate-setting and other transportation functions."

Yet there's precedent for Milliken's urbanism. Back in the days when the rural Jacksonian tradition was observed by Michigan's Democratic Party, that party's greatest strength was in the out-state area. Until some time after the turn of the century, Detroit was Republican territory.

In Bill Milliken, the Grand Old Party may be spawning another Teddy Roosevelt.

Sense And Nonsense

While Gov. William Milliken denied publicly he was prejudiced against the "Woodstock Nation," and was only trying to control drug abuse with his proposed Goose Lake doctrine to control rock festivals, we note a hint of bias in the ordinance.

According to Milliken's proposal, twice as many showper

capita would be required at the rock fests as sanitary facilities, if there is to be music 'til dawn.

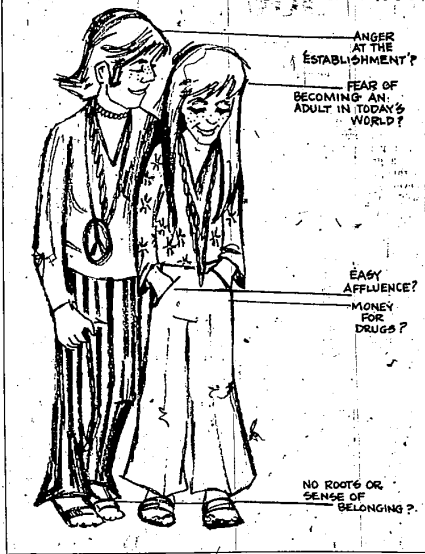
And women's lib might question the logic behind requiring twice as many sanitary units for men as would be required for women, if the ordinance gains acceptance.

If anybody questions whether or not the Republicans run a well-planned convention, we noted that the clerks at the recent convention of the Wayne 19th congressional district had their job simplified by having a copy of the minutes of the meeting before it began.

The normally tedious job of keeping a record of the proceedings was, therefore reduced to a matter of scratching out the name of a few appointments and writing in last minute changes as they came from the convention floor.

Everybody — well, almost everybody — believes in kindness to animals. But there are a few Farmington Road motorists who wish a certain young woman would show as much kindness to fellow drivers. She stopped her car in the middle of the road, got out into the middle of traffic, and picked up a turtle crawling across the road.

ANATOMY OF A GROWING PROBLEM...



SEMTA's Money Needs Should Be Met — And Soon

By JACKIE KLEIN

The Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) has arrived at the point where its future must be decided, or it will become the latest in a succession of paper agencies, another episode in a long history of local lip service to public transportation.

The authority's power to raise money is limited. The potential operating funds of public transit systems will not even be enough to support daily operations, much less the cost of acquiring and improving them.

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners last May supported Gov. Milliken's recommendation that the state provide \$2.5 million in grants to area-wide or regional transportation authorities for research, engineering and demonstration projects, involving the state as a financial supporter of public transportation facilities.

SEMTA received \$1.6 million, which will be used to match federal dollars for the program.

A BILL WHICH would have allowed Oakland County residents, among others, to vote on a proposed two-mill property tax increase to finance development of a regional rapid-transportation system in southeastern Michigan, was not followed through by SEMTA, because the authority felt it was a poor time to add to the property tax burden of residents.

The two mills (\$2 per \$1,000 of state equalized valuation) would have yielded about \$40 million

annually for planning and development of the rapid-transit system, including purchase of existing bus lines.

SEMTA's rapid-transit program has not been defined and no funding means have been guaranteed to carry it out.

Federal assistance has been available, but federal policy calls for substantial state-local effort, with at least one home-generated dollar for each two federal dollars for eligible projects.

THERE CAN BE no substitute for a strong state-local source of financial support if SEMTA is to do its job and public transportation in this region is not to wither and die.

It is not easy to convince a majority of citizens in this relatively affluent region that they would therefore lose something, or that they need good public transportation when they may own two cars.

The TALUS report indicates that the region will grow 57 per cent in population by 1990 and that trips generated by each household will increase by 24 per cent.

Can we accommodate all of the 1990 travel within the region by automobile if every square foot in our major commercial and residential centers are paved for roads and parking?

The state and the region must be prepared to consider ways to pay for good transportation. They cannot afford the complacency of waiting until 1990 to cope with 1970 transportation needs.

The time to decide is now.

Editorial & Opinion

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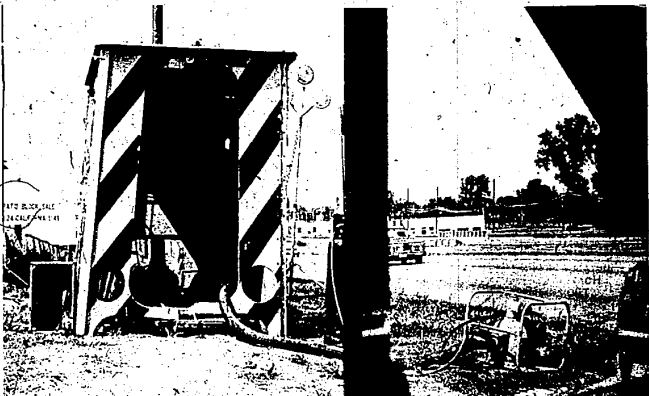
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WHAT'S COMING? That's the question drivers asked as they tried to peek past the Michigan Bell work tent to see approaching traffic at the intersection of Acacia and Telegraph Roads in Redford Township. The

traffic hazard existed for more than 10 days and forced motorists to edge out into the first lane of southbound cars to see if anything was coming. Generally there was, and they had to back up quickly.