

Opinion

Robert Sklar editor/477-5450
Kathleen Moran assistant managing editor

33203 Grand River Ave./Farmington, MI 48024

Philip Power chairman of the board
Richard Agnien president
Dick Isam general manager
Steve Barnaby managing editor
Fred Wright circulation director

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Reaching out Library is on right track

A circulating library in a town is as an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge! It blossoms throughout the year!
— Richard Brinsley Sheridan, 1751-1816.

MAKE NO mistake: There's plenty of knowledge — of all kinds — to be had in the Farmington Community Library.

The two-branch library and its potpourri of services has flourished despite the ghosts of two headline-grabbing episodes:

- The 1984 debate over whether the library board should be autonomous and control its finances as a separate taxing authority responsible for its own millage.
- The 1985 controversy over a library audit that turned up questions about the library's operations and finances under then-library director Gordon Lewis.

Given this backdrop, it's no surprise that library trustees want to be more open about the library's activities and the board's meetings. To accomplish that goal, trustees have named a two-member public relations committee.

BECAUSE THEY'RE another bureaucratic layer, library boards have a stodgy image. People tend to perceive them as a bastion of civic-minded bookworms, who inspire little direct communication with the public.

The Farmington Community Library board recently grew from four to eight members — an action that demands the newly expanded membership to reinforce its credibility. Trustees must demonstrate why — in this case at least — bigger will translate into better.

Clearly, the board's move toward improved communication with its constituents comes none too soon.

It's up to the community, however, to make the move work.

How? By sending observers and spokespersons to board meetings. By reviewing minutes of board meetings. By keeping abreast of how the board spends appropriations from the Farmington and Farmington Hills city councils.

Does pay depend on relative affluence?

WEST BLOOMFIELD'S clerk and treasurer are asking the township board for more money. Now paid about \$33,700, they want more than the 5 percent raises slated for all township employees.

The clerk and treasurer claim that they should get more than all other department heads, some of whom make more money than they do.

The police chief, for example, gets \$40,000 and the clerk and treasurer want more than he will receive, presumably because they are elected officials and because they, interestingly enough, also sit on the township board and decide what the township will pay employees — including board members.

The thought does occur that if they are always to be paid more money than department heads, then it is in their best interest to pay department heads as much as the township treasury, or public, can stand.

ALSO, INTERESTINGLY enough, the West Bloomfield officials claim as one of their reasons for paying themselves more money, the fact that the Bloomfield Township board pays its member clerk and member treasurer \$53,000 and \$51,000 a year, so that they will earn more than Bloomfield Township department heads.

Nobody seems willing, yet, to mention that no township clerk or treasurer has enough work to warrant such salaries. I suppose that this is forgotten in the era of relative affluence.

In the era of relative affluence a person's right to the pursuit of happiness entails making enough money so that the pursuer will feel that he is getting ahead.

GETTING AHEAD is a relative feeling and it depends on making as much or more money than people doing the same work, or people doing similar work, or even people doing dissimilar work but working in the same business or earning for the same employer.

The American Library Association logo.

And by truly giving a darn about what goes into disbursing a \$1-million budget of taxpayer money.

AMONG THE planned changes are holding some board meetings in the Farmington branch, making agendas more meaningful to the public and adding a public comment portion to the agenda — all prudent steps.

Although making wider use of Cable Channel 12 to promote board meetings and library services is an admirable gesture, it's not likely to reach the audience that direct mailings or newspaper coverage will.

Trustees also plan to report on the library's composition — from services for children to duties of librarians. That's especially good to hear. Most users are aware of what's available in the library, but know little about how it all fits together.

SUNDAY HOURS during the school year — scheduled to begin in December — not only are appropriate, but also long overdue.

Can you think of a good reason why school-age children in a community the size of Farmington and Farmington Hills should have to go to Southfield, West Bloomfield Township or Redford Township to find a library open on Sunday?

Clearly, libraries have come a long way since 1833, when the doors to the first American library opened in Peterborough, N.H.

Farmington Community Library's trustees and staff appear in tune with the times. But like any governmental group, their success hinges on community feedback. Don't complain about the library if you can't take the time to let those who run it know what you think.

— Bob Sklar



Bob Wisler

Notice, I didn't say earning. Earning is a passe term that has no real bearing in the era of relative affluence.

Making money goes beyond the old-fashioned notion of earning a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. The law of relative affluence states that a person should be paid not only what he is worth, but what he is worth in comparison to what he thinks someone else is worth.

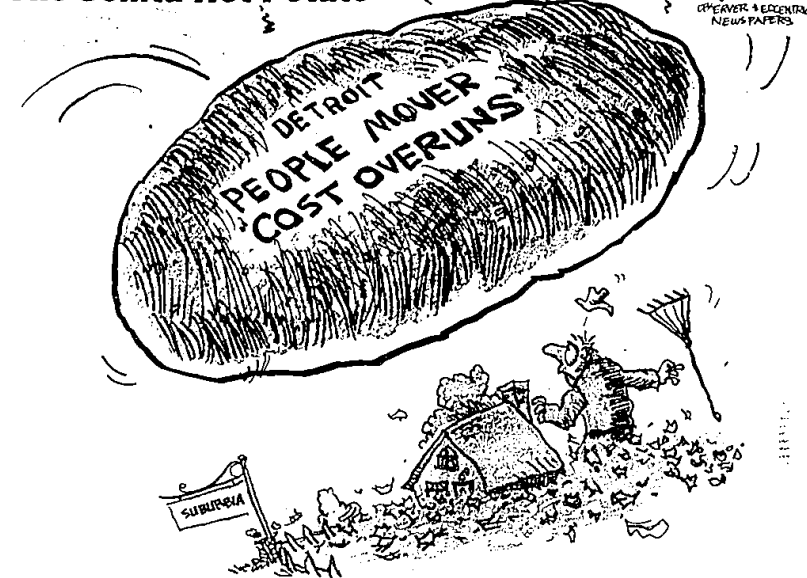
The law of relative affluence explains why Chrysler employees being paid \$13.11 per hour are willing to strike in order to be paid some \$14.42 per hour that GM and Ford employees will be paid during 1987.

Compounding the Chrysler employees' problem, explains a UAW local official, is the fact that Chrysler chairman Lee Iacocca was paid a \$1-million-plus bonus last year and stood to make more than \$4 million from stock options as a reward for creating the New Chrysler Corp.

THE WORKERS, according to the union official, look at Iacocca's salary and then "feel they're not getting their share of the pie."

Perhaps assemblers ought to compare their wages with salaries paid college professors. According to a survey of the Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching, the average college teacher salary is \$27,000, about the same as an assembler.

The Senta Hot Potato



Fessler has traveled far

RICK FESSLER has come a long way since the days when he was a state representative from West Bloomfield, roaring with the lakes country rednecks about the M-275 freeway.

First, he was elected to the Senate. Second, Fessler's Republican Party took control of the Senate last year. Third, he found himself chairing the Important Senate Transportation Committee.

In other words, he's in charge now. And with the power has come responsibility. It has changed him. While it hasn't made him a flaming liberal, Fessler now is concerned about public transportation. And he demurs when others pop off about tearing down the downtown People Mover.

FESSLER WROTE legislation to reorganize the board of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority.

The Big Four — Detroit Mayor Coleman Young, Oakland County Executive Daniel Murphy, Wayne County Executive William Lucas and Macomb County Chairman Walter Franchuk — thought they ought to be in charge of SEMTA.

Fessler tried to help but added a couple of excellent touches of his own: His bill added the state Transportation Department director to the SEMTA board, and it set up a suburban transit board with two members from each county.

Two members from each unit? Sure, a



Tim Richard

man and a woman — get it? Two-thirds of SEMTA's riders are women, and they deserve a bigger voice in the governing process than they've had.

The Senate duly passed the bill and sent it to the House.

THE ISSUE is stalled in a House committee, and the Big Four haven't been too helpful of late. Fessler is sore.

"The Big Four did not show or send anyone to the hearings they had in Detroit or Lansing," he wrote to Rep. Curtis Hertel, D-Detroit, an important figure in the House proceedings.

So Fessler is suggesting the House chuck the idea of letting the Big Four constitute the SEMTA board. He says let the voters elect their transportation commissioners instead — one from Detroit, one from suburban Wayne, one from Oakland and one from Macomb.

No need to worry about apportionment because each district would have about 1 million population.

MYSELF, I never was keen on having the Big Four become the transit governing body anyway.

Take Bill Lucas, the Wayne County exec. I hear he doesn't attend half the Big Four meetings now — too busy getting briefed in Florida on state issues, too busy making the Washington glamor circuit and never a vocal spokesman on substantive issues.

Moreover, Lucas is a Detroit resident. The Big Four plan could give Detroit two seats on the SEMTA board and suburban Wayne zero. Nuts to that.

Most importantly, though, none of the Big Four is a transit user.

Young and Lucas have been chauffeured around for years. Even Murphy has a driver now. Those good ol' boys don't even know what it's like to find parking, let alone what it's like to wait in rainy slush for a bus.

Meanwhile, Fessler is asking the attorney general to determine whether it's legal for the state and the existing SEMTA board to give away the assets of the People Mover to Detroit. He is wary of Detroit's constant effort to accumulate more money and power at suburban expense.

Rick Fessler has come a long way.

Class, glad to have known you

WE PAID tribute to our friends this weekend. My old friend Randy would have liked the party. I wish he could have been there.

You think of these things when you're having a good time and your buddy is missing.

Most of us have had that experience — losing a friend to the inevitable. My friend Randy fits into this story because he should have been at the big party at the Nov Hilton Saturday night.

The occasion — a reunion — of folks who once lived in the city of Detroit but now mostly have put down roots in the suburbs.

BUT THIS was more than a reunion. I thought to myself as I watched the more than 500 people crowd into the ballroom. This was the baby-boom generation gathered to celebrate its survival through two of the most turbulent decades this nation has known.

This was the generation that had suffered through the assassinations, the sometimes violent demonstrations and the wars that killed and maimed us. This was the generation that enthusiastically responded to one president's call to duty and whose faith in government was nearly crushed by another president's lies.

But we had survived to tell our stories and we were smiling as we did so.



crackerbarrel debate

Steve Barnaby

I often have wondered where Randy would have fit into this new and vibrant suburban scene. But he moved off to Arizona during one of Michigan's frequent recessions.

HE NEVER came back — he was killed while serving as a firefighter in Phoenix.

The last time I saw him was during the last reunion 11 years ago — a very different affair. Mostly the same people, but 10 years later they were different.

Not once during the evening was there heard an overinflated story of success or promises to keep in touch.

Time has a way of crushing pretense. We were simply glad to see one another. How we lived or what we did outside of that ballroom mattered little that evening.

Most of us would never see one another again — and we knew it. So we just enjoyed the hours for what they were worth.

Those hours, well, they lasted until 4 a.m. Sunday morning.

AND ALL of us smiled — a lot. And it really felt good.

Last weekend all of Randy's friends were there, and we thought about him and all the rest who have died since that long-ago day in 1964 when we graduated.

We joked about the year-late reunion and noted it was typical of our class — to be a little late. We called it a birthday party — "your absolutely final chance to celebrate a 21st birthday." We even had a three-dimensional cake that looked like the school.

Quips were exchanged — a receding hairline for a bulging waist. But soon, very soon, all that was forgotten.

"HEY, EVERYBODY looks pretty good," someone remarked after a couple of drinks. It was as if time had suspended its sentence for that evening's celebration. For those quickly passing hours we really did look younger.

Some things never change. Diane Davis still was the best dancer; Betty Yendall and John Grand were still the tallest; and Debbie Dybas was still the most graceful. I know because after 21 years I finally worked up the courage to ask her to dance.

Randy would have been proud.