

## OBSERVATION POINT

# The Problem: When Will Governments Agree?

By Philip H. Power  
Publisher

Consider these facts, for there's a pattern behind them:

• This Nov. 3 residents of Farmington will vote yet again to determine what kind of government will run the city and the township. In this case, it's a proposal for the city to annex the southern part of the township. If it passes, the remainder of the township (with or without the villages of Quarkertown and Woodcreek Farms) will probably incorporate as a new city.

• Last week, the Lathrup Village city council learned that it is now standing alone in its fight against the proposed route of the new I-696 east-west freeway. Pleasant Ridge has dropped its court battle. Lathrup officials are still absolutely opposed to the route, and are now waiting to see what the federal government does before considering further legal action.

• The City of Plymouth, already feeling nostalgic because grades 10-12 have been transferred from the old high school downtown to the new one in Canton Township, is now considering how to handle its projected financial burden. Some members of the city commission are talking about having a city income tax, a step which most observers say will end any chance for consolidation of the city with surrounding Plymouth Township.

WHAT'S INVOLVED in each of these cases, in addition to the immediate problems at hand, is a situation where two or more suburban local government units — with one surrounding the other(s) — are trying to work out just how they should work together. It's one of the most important problems they have in the suburbs.

It's to be presumed that the intent of officials in each unit is to seek solutions which serve the people best for the least cost.

Sometimes it doesn't work out that way, mostly because people can't get together.

There's more cooperation these days between Southfield's Mayor Norrman Feder and Lathrup's Mayor Richard Cogger than there was between the two cities in the past. But people remember when it got so bad that Lathrup refused to take down barricades to allow Southfield residents to drive through to their homes while 12 Mile Road was widened two years ago.

And there's some reason to believe that if Southfield and Lathrup could have worked out a unified front about the I-696 route, the highway boys would have had to come up with a proposal which was satisfactory to the interests of both communities.

Similarly, people in Farmington Township are constantly worried that plotters in the city are scheming to get their hands on the township's rich industrial tax base, while the city folk fret that in the long run they'll be land-

locked with no possible route for expansion.

In the meantime, Grand River deteriorates, low income families in the southern part of the township suffer, and township roads go from grim to impassable.

The same kind of situation exists between the city and township in Plymouth. There, some politicians are unexpectedly blunt about the problem: "Joining the city and township isn't any real problem," one township politician told me a while ago. "The real issue is who runs the thing once it's pasted together."

THAT'S THE crux of the matter.

Everybody agrees that cooperation between local government units — especially the kind that lowers the cost while preserving the kind of independent identity that Lathrup Village, for example, wants — is desirable.

The classical problem has been that local politicians have been reluctant to give any of their sovereignty for fear they would lose their political base and get tossed out of office.

In the past, state law about annexations, consolidations and incorporations was so complicated, cumbersome and petty that any minority interest in power could effectively prevent any kind of cooperation.

THEN THIS FELLOW up in Lansing got smart and set up the State Boundary Commission, which was supposed to make some kind of order out of chaos.

The Commission initially had substantial power to determine the form and content of incorporation actions, although its authority over consolidation elections was limited and annexations continued to be handled through county boards of supervisors.

That his system didn't work out very well is attested to by the agony of Farmington, which was trying for over a year and a half to get its boundary question sorted out and still hasn't made it. Indeed, some of the problems

with the annexation proposal to be voted on in November are the direct result of the Boundary Commission's lack of authority over such actions.

BUT THIS YEAR the legislature got even smarter and passed legislation that turned substantive authority over annexations and incorporations together with limited authority over consolidations to the Commission.

This legislation won't take effect until next spring, so no immediate changes can be expected.

But as time goes along, and as local governments slowly learn that the people won't stand

for unnecessary and costly duplications of government functions, the commission will begin to play an increasingly important role in shaping the form of local government here in the suburbs.

In effect, what's happened is that the state has at last provided communities in this area with the legal tools to do their jobs.

And although this won't assist Lathrup fight the I-696 route, or help Farmington through the annexation election next month or sort out the City of Plymouth's financial problems, in the long run the way has been cleared for a rational approach to how local government boundaries and functions are to be sorted out.

R.T. Thompson writes

## Dads Goal: End Vandalism

The recently organized Dad's Club, of Livonia Bentley High, is stepping a bit over the usual guidelines for such a group in a program it hopes will curtail vandalism at high school athletic fields and perhaps end such acts eventually.

Generally when a Dad's Club is formed, it is with the thought of doing as much as possible to boost the school's athletic and band programs.

The idea behind the club is to become a booster of sports, principally because most of the Dads have a son on one of the varsity squads or because Pop was a big star during his schoolboy days and still has a great deal of the rah, rah spirit.

But such isn't the story of the Bentley organization. Naturally the Dads have been boosting the football team and the band, but they have taken on the project of telling the story of vandalism to every home within a square mile of the high school field.

And it will have the assistance of the Bentley varsity squad in handing out pamphlets door-to-door to homes within the mile square area around each of the Livonia High Schools — Bentley, Franklin, Stevenson and Churchill.

That's quite a bit of walking, and there'll be quite a bit of talking since the Dads and athletes hope to stop at many of the homes to get across their message.

MASTER-MIND of the project was George Fefles, Bentley High athletic director, who was asked by the Dads to suggest a project that could be of value to the entire community.

Ordinarily an athletic director might have come up with something that would have aided the various varsity sports.

But Fefles isn't an ordinary

athletic director. He took the matter under consideration for several days and finally asked the Dads Club to consider getting the word around about the unusual amount of vandalism that has cost the school system thousands of dollars in the past few years.

He told of the ways bands of youngsters have ripped up the sod on the gridirons. He told the Dads of the tremendous damage to the stands where one set of seats after another has been ripped out.

He mentioned the manner in which these bands of kids have thrown rocks at the lights on the high poles around the field, smashing bulbs and forcing the school board to spend thousands replacing them.

He took some of the Dads to the press box at Bentley and showed them where the vandals had ripped off locks, torn up the seats, battered the shutters and then decided to leave the place with a big smell — which they did effectively.

"And," George stressed, "That is the situation at each of the other schools, even at the brand new Churchill High facilities."

SO, COME ANOTHER week or so the Dads and the varsity club members will take to the bricks to give the residents the hard facts.

They'll pass the word along that residents should quietly call the Livonia police if they see anyone or group of persons acting in a suspicious manner around any of the athletic fields.

Residents will be informed that they need not be involved in the matter in any way, just pick up the phone, let the police know what they see, and that's the end of their responsibility. . . the men

in blue will take over from that point.

"If the Dads can convince residents that they will be doing a public service and also sell them on the idea that they will be saving the school system a lot of money, then it will be a job well done," says Fefles.

We think it is one of the best projects ever suggested to an organization and hope the Bentley Dads start something that will spread to similar clubs at the other schools.

In these times when everyone is aware of the tax dollars going to the schools, any move that will cut down some of the spending should be welcomed.

We hope the residents accept the challenge of the Dads and do report incidents . . . perhaps the wave of vandalism can be stopped quicker than one would believe.

Tim Richard writes

## English Have Right Idea

ties, and the Legislature has the authority but won't do it.

Even the "kids," as they like to be called even while demanding the right to vote and sit on college boards, have been a failure. They preach ecology and clean up a river once in a while, but there's little evidence they are abating their own trashing.

And to top it off, the revolutionaries, who profess to be the most anti-corporation and ecology-minded of all have failed us. "Pun" Plomondon, one of the FBI's 10 most wanted men, was busted by the state bulls after he

got caught throwing away a beer can on that lovely I-75.

BUT THERE'S hope, it says here in the September Michigan-Out-Of-Doors magazine.

Some English chemists are working on a way to make plastic containers disintegrate after they're thrown away. In other words, our trash would crumble of its own accord.

Dyes added to the plastic would cause the containers to break down under the sun's ultraviolet rays. Those are the rays that tan your skin when you're out on the beach.

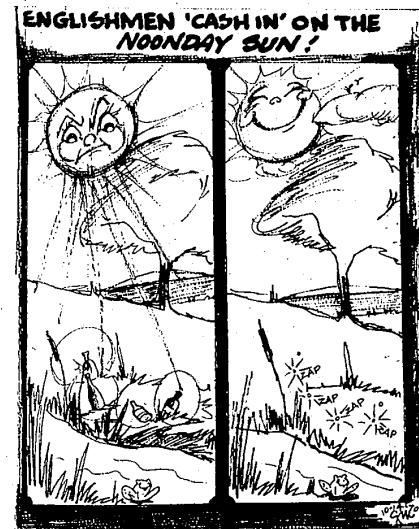
At present, the English chemists are shooting for a plastic that breaks down in three months, but they have reason to believe this could be speeded up to two weeks.

NOT ONLY outdoors lovers but urban-oriented municipal officials should relish such a development in the field of plastics.

One of society's great problems is what on earth to do with trash that isn't tossed into the woods but is actually deposited in a trashcan and picked up in due course by a sanitation department. They've got to put the stuff SOME place.

So they look around for landfills, which are growing scarce and which a lot of folks don't want around their domestic tickle-lacky. A growing population is generating a trash problem that's growing even faster, and some of the trash could be eliminated by a plastic that disintegrates in the sun.

Right on, Englishmen!



## Editorial & Opinion

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## DISSENT

### Mom Denies Lagging Sports Interest

By LAURA CALLOW  
Livonia

I do not know whether R. T. Thompson's assessment of student lack of interest in high school athletics is accurate in general. I do know, however, it is not the case in one specific instance.

In the ninth grade, one of my sons went out for basketball. He was tall for his age (5'10"). But there were six boys who were 3 to 5 inches taller. The coach spent almost the entire practice time with these six and let the other boys sit. In eleven games my son

played the last minute or half minute of six games. For an entire season he had a total of five minutes on the floor.

Needless to say, he did not go out for basketball in the 10th grade. Instead, he joined a hockey team sponsored by the Livonia Parks and Recreation Department.

The department has a policy that requires each team member be given several minutes of ice time during each playing period. Consequently, my son has almost as much playing time in one period of hockey as he did in a whole season of ninth grade basketball.

Personally, I commend the Livonia Parks and Recreation Department for this policy. It is, in my opinion, one of the reasons for the immense popularity of their program. Furthermore, it demonstrates the fact that boys today will devote their time to hours of hard practice if they are given a chance to play.

I suggest the junior high and senior high school coaches review their treatment of boys who do show interest in athletics. Could it be in their zeal to have a winning team the coaches are in effect discouraging many boys from going out for sports?