

OBSERVATION POINT

Revenue Sharing Appears Dead

By Philip H. Power
Publisher

It looks as though revenue sharing is dead, and the suburbs are the ones who will suffer the most.

Revenue sharing was supposed to solve the financial problems of core cities and suburbs alike by turning back to both a share of federal tax revenues for unrestricted local use.

President Nixon announced a big revenue sharing program a few months ago, billing it as "The New American Revolution," and said that its passage was crucial if we were to solve the financial crisis that is hitting city and suburb alike.

The numbers were a little vague then, but it looked as

though each community in this area could expect nearly a million dollars per year as its share of the loot. Smiles came to hard-pressed city and township fathers.

Legislation on revenue sharing was introduced in Congress. Local smiles broadened.

BUT THEN Congressman Wilbur Mills, who runs the House Ways and Means Committee whence the bill must emerge if it is going to pass, said he would hold hearings—for the purpose of criticizing the whole idea.

Other Congressmen, initially favorable to revenue

sharing, suddenly realized that a good part of their own clout comes from being in a position to affect federal grants for specific purposes to communities in their districts. If revenue sharing passed, they reasoned, their own power would decline.

Other critics popped up, saying they doubted if state and local authorities had the brains to allocate the shared revenue properly. Others argued that revenue sharing would split the responsibility between collecting the money at one level (federal) and spending it at another (state and local governments).

Then the big city mayors,

who were supposed to be the big guns in selling the plan to Congress, started getting greedy. They argued that Congress should pass both revenue sharing and a bill which would put funding for welfare (one of the biggest and most rapidly growing areas of big city budgets) on the federal government's back. That antagonized a lot of powerful lawmakers.

SO THE UPSHOT is that the initial idea for revenue sharing is dead in Congress as of now. It may re-emerge later, but it doesn't seem that the votes are there to pass it at this time.

Instead, Congress will prob-

ably pass a bill which will fund welfare programs from federal money.

Certainly, that will help the big cities, and it might even lead to some untangling of the welfare mess that exists now.

But it won't help us in the suburbs, mainly because there are very few people on welfare living in the suburbs.

And that means that our income taxes will go up here in the suburbs (to help pay for welfare funding) and our property taxes will continue to rise (to help pay for our own local government.)

With income tax time just around the corner, that isn't a very happy prospect.

See Need To Better Driver Ed

by Margaret Miller

The sight is common on any street in Observerland and around the country. It's the recent-model car with the big sign that says "Student Driver."

These cars, leased so that driving can be taught in the public schools, indicate that driver education has come a long way in the 20 or so years since the students' parents learned to drive. It's had to, considering today's high speeds, complex highway system and millions of drivers on the roads.

But looking at the driver education program in this area at this moment in time, it would seem it has a distance to go.

WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS?

First, driver education is an appendage to the school program, taught after regular class hours and on Saturday by teachers who make it a sideline. But should a program upon which the lives of so many depend be treated as an extra, a frill?

Second, Michigan law requires that the student spend 30 hours in classroom instruction but only six behind the wheel. The first figure may be a bit high for mastery of the material required—the second is lamentably low. In some cases a driving simulator, a movie device that gives the feeling of driving, is substituted for behind-the-wheel time on a four hours to one basis.

Third, because of this small amount of driving time with an instructor, many students practice on their own—with a parent or other licensed driver—during the weeks they are taking the course. This practice actually has the endorsement of some who have studied driving safety.

But the conscientious don't do it, because driver ed instructors tell them not to **AND BECAUSE IT'S ILLEGAL UNDER MICHIGAN LAW.**

Fourth, there seem to be variations from school to school and system to system in the way the course is administered. In one Observerland community, a student having difficulty achieving competence for a temporary permit in the six hours is offered a little more time behind the wheel to get up to standard. In another, he's required to repeat the entire course, including the 30 hours in the classroom.

AGREEMENT THAT improvement is desirable comes from at least two experts.

Mrs. Leota Westfall, specialist in the Traffic Safety Organization at the Highway Traffic Safety Center of Michigan State University, concedes there are problems in a system considered one of the best in the nation. One of them she states this way:

"We believe that our children who are taking driver education should be permitted, or almost forced, to drive with their parents during the time they are taking it, but state law says they can't."

Al King, MSU driver ed instructor, said the current system may be the most economical for school districts that receive \$30 from the state for each student who successfully completes training, but it isn't the best.

MSU would like to see driver education an integral part of the school program, with teachers who make the field their major one.

"It's been treated too long as a sideline," he said. We agree.

Emory Daniels writes

An Excellent Brainwash Job

My initial reaction to "Selling of the Pentagon" was to wonder why CBS spent so many months of investigative digging and consume an hour of prime broadcast time to report the obvious.

The Pentagon does have a public relations division designed to sell military products and concepts to American consumers. Interspersed in the massive PR program are both information and propaganda.

General Motors, AT&T and the American Tobacco Institute also have PR divisions which are equally adept at mixing information with propaganda. The difference, of course, is the Pentagon is using our tax dollars to brainwash us taxpayers.

THE PROBLEM with the 60 minute documentary is that only a few minutes were devoted to the abuses of the military selling efforts with the bulk of air time devoted to "proving" what most Americans should already know.

If the documentary was necessary it is only because the Pentagon stubbornly insists on labeling its public relations branch an information service. This is a misnomer because information is just one byproduct of the entire program—the program is public relations.

An example of military gobbledegook is the labeling of a division within the "public information service" branch. The "Command Information" division's purpose is to boost

the morale of troops the Pentagon will tell you. But its basic function is to brainwash recruits so they'll be willing to kill and feel better about dying.

The training films shown in "Selling of the Pentagon" were designed to brainwash recruits, to take civilians with misgivings about the Vietnam war and convert them into alert combat troops all juiced up to kill the enemy. This brainwashing is a necessary adjunct to war and should be acceptable to Americans.

ONE SCORING blow made by the documentary, however, is that these training films are also being shown to civilian groups including elementary school children. This is a shocking abuse which certainly ought to be discontinued.

This writer spent two years in the Army as a "public information specialist" for the Air Defense Command. Those two years were spent arranging tours of our radar complex for scouts, sending a dud missile throughout Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin to appear in parades, sending majors and colonels to address civilian clubs, arranging cocktails parties in the officers' club, etc.

At least once a year, our brigade sponsored an Operating Understanding Tour with industrialists, bankers, mayors, educators and publishers taken on a week's trip to air defense facilities in Kansas City, Colorado Springs, Texas and New Mexico.

These trips are a smaller scale than the one shown by CBS but a larger number are held each year. The OU trips involve a great deal of expense and are an expenditure of tax funds which ought to be discontinued, especially in our period of tight money.

A few days a month, as my public relations clerical work was completed, the command allowed (and expected) me to publish the brigade newspaper. It came as absolutely no surprise to me that the "newspaper" was really just a house organ with very little news being reported.

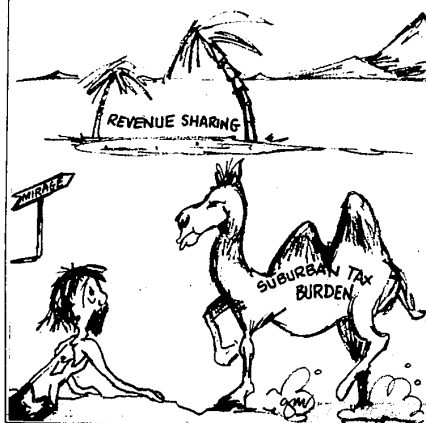
Although the brigade organ was supposed to boost troop morale, the command insisted a great deal of its space be devoted to pictures and stories of civilians touring our bases and going on OU tours. More space was given to DoD directives and to essays by generals on the perennial question—Why Vietnam? And a little more space for biographical sketches with pictures of officers arriving and officers retiring and officers given citations and officers.

THE FACT the Pentagon is spending large sums of tax money on public relations should be a budgetary problem and not involve an idealistic hassle. The Pentagon has been doing this for years and its goals are pretty obvious. Maybe to present a balanced documentary to please the Agnews, however, you must devote much time to reporting the obvious.

The real abuses pointed out by the documentary are: the showing of military training films to civilians, a dangerous brainwashing tactic; the Green Beret karate demonstrations of how to kill efficiently performed for teenagers and very young children; and the large sums of money spent for junkets and war games to "inform" large industrialists who profit from contracts with the military.

Let the Pentagon spew all the propaganda it wants to convince taxpayers. If the taxpayer is gullible enough to swallow the line, let him also pay the fare. But to glamorize killing before youngsters is wrong, whether its done by the Weathermen, SDS or the USA. And brainwashing citizens that Vietnam is a just, moral and necessary war is equally dispicable.

A BUMPY RIDE BACK TO REALITY



Tim Richard writes

Spoilers Of Environment?

"Dear Spoiler of the Environment."

A letter beginning like that, you'd think, would be addressed to the teeming Asian herds breeding beyond their capacity to produce food, or perhaps to the down-river factories that belch black smoke into the atmosphere.

You wouldn't think it would be addressed to us suburbanites—us out here with the manicured lawns, the low population densities, the efficient trash collections, the relatively clear air, the high incomes.

You get a different impression, however, after reading the congressional testimony before the conservation and natural resources subcommittee of the House Government Operations Committee.

SOME MONTHS ago, Chairman Henry Reuss (D-Wis.) and his crew called on scientists and environmental experts to talk about "Effects of Population Growth on Natural Resources and the Environment." That brings the problem home—here—to suburbia.

Consider where your subdivision is built. Mine used to be a cornfield. Thus, as our population expands, it eats up more land—but not just marginal land; we're using up our cropland. Our capacity to produce food is reduced.

What's more, we're eating

up that land at a faster and faster pace. Take a look at the lot sizes 'way down in the inner city of Detroit—30 or 35 feet wide. In northwest Detroit they run to 45 feet for bungalows. Here in the suburbs, they go to 60, 80, 100 feet or more.

You have to be a mathematician to calculate, when it'll happen, but anyone can figure out **WHAT** will happen: At some future date, we'll breed and subdivide beyond the capacity of our land to produce food.

Do you think India should limit its population? Well, one expert says America generates 50 times as much trash per capita as India does. For the sake of the environment, it's far more necessary for the U.S. to limit its population growth than for India to do so. Think about it.

Lately, the neighborhood kids have been on a glass-collecting kick—get the stuff recycled in order to reduce the trash problem. It's a great idea, and they should be encouraged, but it will take far more drastic measures if man is ever to live in harmony with the earth rather than to exploit it.

Said one of the witnesses in Washington: "If the United States were to double its GNP, I would think it would be a much less livable society than it is today."

Editorial & Opinion

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