

OBSERVATION POINT

DISSENT

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By Philip H. Power
Publisher

Society's Evils Come Visiting In The Suburbs

Living out here in the suburbs is the dream of many American families.

White picket fences. Trees and grass. Kids tossing a football (or, with opening day yesterday, a baseball) on the lawn. Space. Quiet. Nice neighbors.

A nice place to raise kids. And no trouble.

CONSIDER, THOUGH a digest of suburban news items from the past week or so.

Over the weekend, police discovered a "bloody torso" stuffed into a garbage can at a home in Southfield. As of this writing, no one quite knows what's behind it all. But local authorities have been troubled for some time about the activities of organized crime groups

in the suburbs, and Southfield is mentioned as one location.

Last week, a high school principal was tarred and feathered on a road south of Plymouth. He reported that a group of hooded men grabbed him on the way home, and that there had been racial trouble at his high school in Willow Run. The Ku Klux Klan has been relatively inactive in the suburbs in recent years, but police are not discounting the idea that the Klan may be behind this recent outrage.

Urban renewal seems a strange idea in the suburbs, yet this Monday the Garden City council voted on a program for their city. Believe it or not, certain suburban areas are affected with just the same kind of urban blight that they

talk about so much in downtown Detroit.

Livonia School District voters last week rejected a renewal of 3.5 mills for operating expenses in the district. Other local school authorities are faced with drastic cuts in their state aid money, and virtually every school district in this area is laying off teachers to save money. Some local school authorities are now saying that the suburban schools have never faced such a financial crisis.

A meeting in Farmington was held Sunday to discuss plans for a recall drive against members of the Board of Education who supported a sex education program in the schools. Also attacking the program is a group called

Movement to Restore Decency (Motorede), which is closely linked to the John Birch Society.

Livonia police, in answering an explosion call Sunday morning, discovered in a quiet home on a quiet street a complete laboratory for making drugs and pills.

ORGANIZED CRIME. Ku Klux Klan activity. Urban blight. Financial crisis. John Birch stirrings. Drug factory.

Are these the kind of things we wanted when we moved to the suburbs?

Of course not.

But they're there, a part of the suburban scene.

A small part, to be sure, but a part that doesn't fit in with

the old image of white picket fences and quiet streets and a nice place to raise kids.

Does their presence mean that our suburbs are on their way to destruction?

Not necessarily. What they mean is that the evils of our civilization will follow us wherever we move, to whatever subdivision we buy a house in.

You don't fight dangerous things like drug abuse or organized crime by pretending they don't exist. You fight them by standing up tough and doing your part.

Only in that way will we make our suburbs the kinds of communities we all had in mind when we moved here.

By ERIC SHAMMAR,
Pastor
Farmington

Recently I attended a public hearing for the proposed Program to Foster Minority Understanding in the Farmington Public Schools. The meeting would have been a comedy were it not for the frightening statements made by those opposed to the study.

Violent hatred, both openly expressed and also subtle at times was directed at the "colored" people. My first reaction when I hear the word "colored" is to ask, What color?

The typical WASP seldom thinks of himself as colored and at times it would appear indeed that he is very colorless, judging from the statements made by those opposed to the splendid report of the committee working towards fostering understanding of other races and cultures other than those of white suburban Farmington and surrounding communities.

The statements of those opposed to this report followed a traditional pattern which has been heard by those who have been seeking to foster understanding and good will. The report is "communist," "fascistic," "un-American" to use the words of some who responded to the presentation of the proposed program.

ONE OBSERVATION suggested that fostering minority understanding really belongs in the home and the church. It is the latter that really grabs me.

Every Sunday morning this pastor, and I would venture to say most pastors present a "minority report" that is accepted by only a minority of our congregation. Again, the label of communist, pink, and un-American is directed to many clergy by those persons who refuse to believe that we are living in the twentieth century.

Our founding fathers had a purpose for the philosophy of free public education. It was to be the melting pot of a new democracy. The public school was intended not to be a kind of mutual admiration society, but that place where persons of every race, color, creed and national origin could come together and be a part of the learning process.

For those opposed to this principle, and of whom there are many, the private school is available. We have seen how private schools have grown basically because persons are opposed to this principle enunciated by the founding fathers and consequently our democracy continues to be weakened.

I SINCERELY QUESTION the wisdom of having community involvement in the operation of our public schools. I am certain the school board wants to do the right thing. However, I trust them sufficiently to believe that these persons, elected in a free election by the people of their community will do the right thing.

It would seem by the past examples of public hearings that about all that takes place is the pooling of ignorance and an open forum for those persons opposed to the basic principles of constitutional democracy.

Even if matters such as fostering minority understanding were to be placed on the ballot, and the result was the turning down of this proposed program, it would not necessarily follow that what the public has decided upon is morally right.

Tim Richard writes

Time Running Out On Parks

Up north of Milford, in the Highland area, there is a hill that's nearly a thousand feet above sea level, and its stony crest faces to the southeast.

If you can get there without being mowed down by a snowmobile, you can see all the way to Detroit on a bright winter day, and the sight is appalling.

Hanging over the Motor City and the Observerland suburbs is a brown haze. If you happen to see it on the above-mentioned bright day when the sky is normally blue, the contrast is all the more vivid. There are all sorts of sources for air pollution, but the brown kind, as I read the literature, is caused by the automobile.

A BIT MORE than a year ago, an interesting story appeared about our weather. It seems that in the more heavily settled area of Wayne County, the heat given off by our buildings and streets and parking lots, coupled with the hot fumes from our autos, forms a rising column of warm air.

The prevailing winds from the west often can't get around this column, and so rain clouds dump their precipitation on Oakland County. Thus, Oakland County is getting stuck with the job of rebuilding some of its drains because its rainfall lately has been one-third more than it used to be over the course of recorded weather history.

The outlook is bleak, at least for the immediate future. Among the 50 million statistics produced by TALUS (Transportation and Land Use Study) was this one:

"We found that between 1940 and 1965, the population of this region (six counties) increased by 70 per cent, but the amount of land devoted to urban uses increased by some 200 per cent."

We aren't, TALUS Director Irving Rubin warned, in danger of running out of land, but there still are critical problems to be faced. One is whether we will be able to preserve recreation, open space and agricultural land. Another is whether we'll continue to develop our land by the existing "sprawl" method.

(Want to get a shock? Get some of TALUS's maps of the urbanization of southeastern Michigan in recent decades and compare them to medical book slides of cancer cells.)

AT THE MOMENT, one can't be optimistic. No one is coming up with any ideas of a greenbelt around the urban area of the southeastern Michigan region.

Quite the opposite: Areas like Commerce Township are fighting the idea that they should contain good-sized parks; they want development — industry (preferably clean),

homes (executives only), little parks (subdivision residents only). Some folks don't want even little parks; teenagers congregate there.

If we're going to stop messing up our weather, browning our air, cementing the landscape and endangering our collective sanity, we're going to have to do some regional — or even statewide — land use planning, and make it stick.

This community-eat-community method will have to be halted.

A society that worships the gods of economic growth and development in perpetuum won't do it. Maybe the younger generation, when it comes into positions of power, will.

Leonard Poger writes

Parochial Foes Were Right

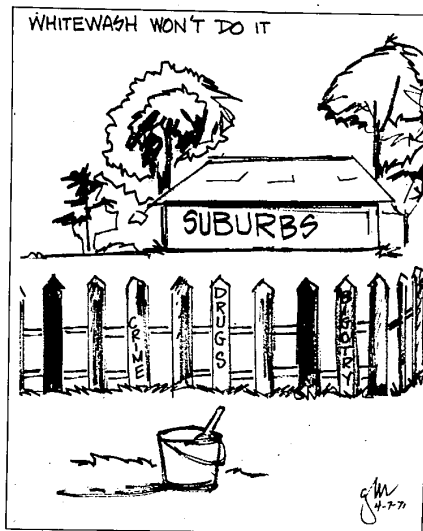
During last fall's campaign over a proposed state constitution amendment to prohibit public funds for support of parochial schools, many people on both sides of the controversy were issuing similar doomsday statements about what would happen if the proposal were approved.

The issue, commonly called "Proposal C", was generally supported by backers of public schools—such as PTAs, Michigan Education Association and Michigan Federation of Teachers, among others.

ON THE opposing side and urging a "no" vote were the Catholic Church, whose large school system was having serious financial problems, and a variety of public officials who had actually opposed parochial in past years.

Their reasoning during the campaign was that Proposal C was worded so that existing auxiliary services and shared-time programs between public and parochial schools would be endangered.

Some public leaders—such as Dr. John Porter, state school superintendent—even went one silly step further and said that the proposed amendment could cut off municipal services, such as fire and police protection, from parochial schools.



He and many candidates for public office were virtually unanimous in the feeling that Proposal C should be defeated.

ONE OF these was former State Sen. Sander Levin, who was trying to move Gov. Milliken out of the governor's office.

Levin in past years opposed the use of public funds for parochial schools. But reading the political winds, he too opposed Proposal C. In doing so, he agreed with the conclusion of his political opponent, hoping to neutralize the controversial issue before the voters.

Before Levin announced his position on the amendment, the candidate sought outside legal advice. Considering that Levin has a Harvard law degree, the State Supreme Court ruling, supporting the voters' adoption of Proposal C last week, has shed some doubt on the merits of a law degree and the outside advice from prominent attorneys.

Among the sponsors are: Mr. McCloskey, Mr. McLure, Mr. McCollister, Mr. McDade, Mr. McDonald, Mr. McEwen, Mr. McKeitt, Mr. McKinney and a Mr. O'Konski. Sound like a

BUT THE court ruling has only echoed precisely what supporters of Proposal C were saying during the campaign last fall.

The Council Against Parochial, which was led in Wayne County by Garden City's Dr. Kenneth Carman, pointed out during the campaign that adoption of Proposal C would not endanger federal funds from coming into Michigan schools.

The council said it would not affect existing shared-time or auxiliary services programs.

But church officials and their supporters said otherwise.

The Supreme Court's ruling not only makes good public policy as far as public spending for church schools is concerned, but it also gave the Council Against Parochial the enviable position of being able to tell its opponents:

"I told you so."

Sense And Nonsense

rip-roarin' St. Patrick's Day celebration? It isn't. They are members of the 92nd Congress and they are sponsoring Bill H.R. 4190, also known as the "General Revenue Sharing Act of 1971."

Editorial & Opinion

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Philip H. Power, Publisher

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