



By Philip H. Power
Publisher

OBSERVATION POINT

Today's Graduates-- Cool, Quiet, Jobless

I spent part of Saturday in Ann Arbor at the commencement at the University of Michigan, where many young people from this area were getting richly deserved honors.

It was a quiet ceremony, with no outbreaks of violence or raucous demonstration. A few black students a couple of rows in front of us sat down during the singing of the "Star Spangled Banner," but they did it in better taste than the four white students farther down front, who raised their clenched fists in derisive salute.

Michigan's President Robben Fleming, who deserves a lot of the credit for generating the kind of thoughtful rational style of college administration which led to this calm May Day commencement, put it on the line in his remarks: "One of the greatest problems of the last four years is that there has developed on this campus a minority of people who believe that it is perfectly proper to shout down the other man's point of view; indeed, there are a few who believe that the other man is not entitled to a point of view at all. This is terrible and will be stopped."

Tough words for a May Day, while anti-war demonstrators were being carried off by police in Washington. But no one said a word.

I TOOK A careful look at the graduating seniors.

They were overwhelmingly white, very largely middle class.

A glance at the program showed where they came from: Bentley High School and John Glenn, Southfield and North Farmington, Plymouth and Thurston.

These graduating seniors were our sons and daughters. They were one of the first graduating classes from the suburban baby boom of the 1950s.

All the girls wore their hair long and straight and blond and hanging down over their robe-covered backs. The boys had long hair, too, but in a diversity of styles that looked like a barber's nightmare.

They may have looked funny to some, but they were quiet, attentive and interested. Nor were they overawed: President Fleming uttered the time honored lines, "I now admit you to the rights, privileges and obligations for your respective degrees," as the graduates listened intently. But then he added, "It says here," looking down at his script.

The graduating students laughed; it was their style.

ONE UNIVERSITY official to whom I talked later said, "These kids are probably the brightest, best educated graduating class we have ever produced. They were involved in tearing things up here a few years ago, but they seem to have calmed down in the past year. They can think for them-

selves, and they'd be an asset to anybody who needed help."

Then the official stopped, sighed, and said, "But, of course, there aren't any jobs."

It was true.

I asked some of the kids what they were going to do after the

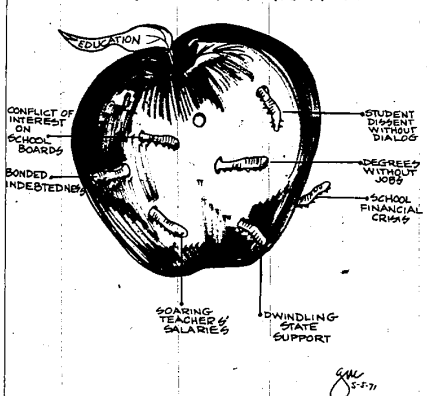
ceremony. "A gas jockey," said one history major. "I'm still looking," said a mathematician with nearly a straight-A average. "I just don't know what I'm going to do," a nice, freckle-faced girl with a degree in education said. "No one's hiring anywhere."

So I walked out of the Chrysler Arena over in Ann Arbor, looked up at the maples just getting ready to put leaves out, and wondered at the resiliency of youth which can live through four years of college and war in Indochina, receive a good education with no prospect of a job, and

come through a graduation ceremony with calm, humor and an important kind of respect.

Those people who say the younger generation is going to pot should have come over to Ann Arbor over the weekend. I think they would have learned something.

BOTANY LESSON FOR THE TAXPAYER—



Leonard Poger writes

R.T. Thompson writes

Why No Action For 14 Months?

It didn't need to happen.

That appears to be the truth of the controversy raging in Lansing and in the five communities that comprise Schoolcraft College over reapportionment of the board of trustees to conform with the "one-man, one-vote" ruling handed down by the United States Supreme Court in February 1970.

Although the college board is functioning under the provisions of the state law, it actually is

unconstitutional under the high court decision.

The ruling came in the Hadley vs. Metropolitan Junior College of Kansas City suit where the board was selected in a manner similar to that at Schoolcraft. A question of proper representation went all the way to Washington, where the court decided it was against the U.S. Constitution.

At Schoolcraft, each of the five districts—Livonia, Plymouth Garden City, Northville and Clarenceville—elects one trustee, and three are elected at large for a total of eight. This is in accordance with the state laws governing community college boards.

THAT'S ALL fine, but the Schoolcraft Board was notified 14 months ago, just two weeks after the high court ruling, that it was unconstitutional in an opinion from its able legal counsel, Edward Draugelis.

At that time he advised the board to seek opinions from the attorney general and to determine what it should do to have the Legislature correct the situation immediately.

Copies of the opinion were sent to all members of the board. But just like the ostrich sticking his head in the sand so he wouldn't see what was going on, the board did absolutely nothing.

True enough, Trustee James Boswell, elected as the Livonia representative but conspicuous by his constant absence, stalked out of the March meeting after telling the board that it was unconstitutional and had no right to exist. He indicated he would have nothing to do with an illegal board, left and never came back for more than a year.

Matter of fact, he didn't put in an appearance until after representatives of the New Democratic Coalition of Livonia took the matter to court and successfully thwarted a June election when the circuit court judge barred such a vote and requested the board to make a suitable solution to the problem by June 1.

THE BOARD PASSED a resolution recently favoring an at-large election of five members with the three present at-large trustees holding their seats.

That is all well, but the question arises: Why didn't the board do something to resolve the matter a year ago when the Legislature could have passed enabling action that would have taken care of the "one-man, one-vote" order?

Why didn't it make public the opinion handed down by its counsel? Why did it prefer to allow the situation to exist for an additional 13 months when a court suit brought the matter to public notice? Why did it take a resignation by the counsel before

the public was made aware of the opinion which the board allowed to appear had been made after the court action was filed?

We have a distinct feeling that the trustees did a disservice to their constituents: that it deliberately suppressed news of vital importance.

We feel it did a disservice to its legal counsel when it turned the opinion over to another law firm for a second opinion. This person had been advising the board in all matters for several years.

WHY DIDN'T the board seek an opinion from the attorney general in the spring of 1970? Why didn't it confer with the elected legislators from the area?

Was it because the trustees wanted to select the new president to succeed retiring President Dr. Eric Bradner? Was it because members wanted to participate in the inauguration of the new president?

These questions have remained unanswered.

Now we have the board agreeing that an at-large election in September would be the proper solution. It has ordered its legal counsel to advise the circuit court judge before the June 1 deadline of that decision.

MEANWHILE, LOCAL legislators are in a heated struggle over two bills presented in recent weeks. One brought out by Rep. Marvin Stempien, of Livonia, would redistrict the college district. The other presented by Sens. Carl Pursell, of Plymouth, and William Faust of Westland calls for an at-large election.

Each legislator feels his bill is the best, and neither is willing to back down. So, it will be interesting to see what happens in Lansing.

Meantime, the college board, which is serving under the provisions of the current state law, is going along its merry way. What we really want to point out is that every single member of the board was aware of the opinion and not a SINGLE ONE raised his or her voice for action during the 14 months, and this includes the absent Mr. Boswell who made his point in March 1970 and then never took the time to press the issue until the New Democratic Coalition of Livonia decided to act. Then he quickly joined the bandwagon.

We say again every single member of the Schoolcraft College Board did a disservice to voters in the college district. All should come up for election if an at-large poll is ordered, and voters should remember that it took 14 months for application of the U.S. Supreme Court ruling to become public knowledge in the five communities.

Big Change In School News

One of the biggest changes in the new type of public school news can be seen by newspaper editors and reporters who have covered school boards and other school activities over the past 10 years.

The mental notes and memories of a newspaperman reveal the sharp contrast of the "old" news and the "new" school news found in local papers.

THE CHANGE shows that school institutions—public and private—are in a money crisis and the change could have been predicted many years ago.

In the early 1960s most local papers had most of their school news devoted to spelling bee winners, installation of PTA officers, routine coverage of board meetings (which in turn concerned itself only with routine actions of hiring teachers, buying classroom equipment, approving bids on ice cream for the cafeterias, and other mundane chores.)

Once a year, there would be a flurry about the annual board

election. Every two or three years, there would be an appeal from officials to the public to approve a proper tax increase for operations.

ABOUT EVERY three or four years, fast-growing districts in the suburbs would also go to the voters to gain permission to issue bonds needed to finance construction of new buildings and additions to existing schools.

But between the millage and bond issue elections, reporters and editors had to depend on the spelling bee winners, purchase of new English books, and an occasional in-depth story on a local school's science program or essay contest winners.

In the mid-1960s, the school news business picked up a bit with the passage of a state law allowing teachers to unionize and negotiate collective bargaining contracts with their boards.

In their public pronouncements, teachers were complaining that local salaries had to be competitive with neighboring schools who were paying as "high" as \$5,500 for first year teachers. (New teachers now get more than \$8,000.)

In turn, the boards and superintendents replied that they don't have the money for the salary demands. "After all, we are spending more than \$350 per student," the board said. (The current average in the suburbs is close to \$900.)

MORE AND more, newspapers were devoting more space to the conflicts and pressures resulting from a money problem—where to spend public school dollars and where to get more money in the future to meet set costs.

Getting less space were the spelling bee winners, science fair displays, and the cute little stories about youngsters making a cake for their kindergarten teacher's 22nd birthday party.

On occasion, newspapers

published an appeal from the local school board and superintendent about the need for more financial support from the State Legislature.

But little else was heard about the money crisis looming on the horizon.

Nowadays reporters and editors handling school problems (there seems to be more problems to report than good news) are getting used to handling complicated issues in education.

For example, newsmen now know the difference between Sec. 3 and Sec. 17 of the state school aid formula which gives more money to low-valuation districts than others with a substantial tax base.

We can also distinguish between allocated millage, voter-approved millage, and bonded indebtedness.

IN REVIEWING past budget stories, newsmen also saw that the percentage of state support was dwindling as school costs—particularly in the salaries' area—was soaring.

A recent Westland Observer front page was devoted to three stories—all on school issues and all candidates for black borders signifying an obituary.

One story told how voters rejected a millage renewal while the others told how two boards in the community laid off 328 teachers and administrators to avoid a serious budget deficit for the following year.

BUT THE same front page carried a picture of a local high school senior winning a first prize for his display in a regional science fair. The boy worked two years on the project and wants to get into the area of organ transplants when he graduates from medical school.

Those kind of school events we like to report.

Goodness knows we've had enough of the other kind in recent months.

Editorial & Opinion

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