



By Philip H. Power
Publisher

OBSERVATION POINT

Ecology, Race Relations Making Progress Here

There were a couple pieces of good news last week.

They decided to save the old maple tree in Farmington, and Roosevelt Lyons, who lives in Southfield, had a lot of visitors.

The tree was threatened by a city paving project, and when this word got out a tremendous ruckus was raised.

People telephoned this newspaper; lawyers talked about the matter; community-minded people started taking a close look; kids in school started writing letters to the paper; a demonstration on the tree's behalf was arranged by the people who live next door.

The upshot was that the City of Farmington decided to spend \$11,000 to relocate the paving

away from the tree and to enclose an open ditch nearby.

THE CASE of Mr. Lyons has not been settled as definitely as that of the tree in Farmington.

Lyons recently moved into a new \$50,000 home in Southfield. Last week, someone threw a brick through the patio window; earlier, someone had painted the words, "Nigger--go home," on its side.

Lyons, you see, is black. He holds three jobs, and his wife teaches school. Evidently, he wants to live here in the suburbs for the same reasons as anyone else.

But when the brick came through his window, he got mad and started talking about the situation.

Since then, he's had a lot of visitors, white visitors, who wanted their friendship to show.

He's also had a lot of telephone calls. "I've had people call me saying, 'Don't give up. Don't move. We understand your problem,'" Lyons said. "Not one call whatsoever has been nasty," he added.

And people along his street have stopped by to leave their phone numbers and ask Lyons to call them if anything else happened or if he needed help.

THE REMARKABLE thing about both the tree in Farmington and the black man in Southfield is that people got involved. No one fancy. Just plain people, who say that something wrong was happening and wanted to do something about it.

Ecology costs money; in Farmington's case, it costs whatever part of the paving project change it took to save the tree, which is probably around \$5,000.

Developing a more open attitude toward race in the suburbs also costs; but probably the cost can't be measured in terms of money. The bill comes more in courage and human pain, caring and a sense of fear.

In both cases however, people were willing to pay the costs involved.

The old maxim says that you don't get something for nothing. What was accomplished in the suburbs last week was a good proof of just how right the old saying is.

SCORE TWO FOR SUBURBIA'S FINEST!



Charges Column Is Wrong

DISSENT

View points expressed in DISSENT do not necessarily reflect those of Observer Newspapers, Inc., but are presented in the belief that publication of all segments of thought on a public issue is a prerequisite to understanding and progress.

By JAMES L. MELOSH
Livonia

I would like to comment upon the article "Tim Richard writes" in the May 19 issue of the Observer. Mr. Richard refers to me by name, and if the Observer wishes to be fair, I deserve equal space.

The entire editorial was based on the assumption that I am a member of a teachers' union that is plotting to sinisterly take over the Livonia Public Schools for the sole benefit of the Michigan Education Association.

The quality of Mr. Richard's reporting is evident when two facts are made known: I am not a member of the Michigan Education Association or any other union, and I have not been endorsed by this group.

I DO NOT represent any organized group. I am a candidate representing my own personal points of view. I want to make it clear to the voters of the Livonia School District that I wish to be judged on the basis of my views, education, and character and not on the basis of the actions of others in my profession.

Mr. Richard is obviously prejudiced against teachers; I hope that his views are isolated examples and not reflective of the voters of this school district.

The Michigan Education Association and its various local groups have apparently generated a great deal of ill feeling. These groups have also generated some ill feelings with me. I must be candid in admitting that I am in agreement with most teachers in desiring full school days, smaller class sizes, and higher teacher pay.

I am, on the other hand, strongly opposed to some union activities. This opposition led me to resign from the Michigan Education Association last year in philosophical protest. I must repeat, I am not representing any union as Mr. Richard so falsely implied.

Also of concern to me is a tendency which I see in the unionization of teachers that puts the emphasis on teachers rather than students. At the same time I believe students would benefit from better quality teachers and that better teachers should be attracted by higher pay.

I also believe that students would benefit from smaller classes. I have not seen the present Board of Education or the Livonia Education Association take enough action to improve the quality of the teaching in Livonia.

IF THERE is any one group I would like to represent on the Livonia Board of Education, it is the students. There is seldom anyone speaking directly for them. I think schools should do things with and for students, and not just to them.

Recently some of Livonia's finest students conducted a mock Board of Education meeting in which they expressed their feelings about several issues including the evaluation of teachers. In the several weeks since, the board has not considered the complaints.

This mock session was interesting when viewed from another point of view. The president of the teachers organization and the superintendent both spoke for the status quo.

I maintain there are some bad teachers in Livonia, as well as in other districts, and no one in a position of leadership is actively doing anything about improving or removing them. I resent people like Mr. Richard assuming that I agree with these practices when in fact I do not.

By implication Mr. Richard implied that I was interested in union activities and not students. This is erroneous. I like students and that is why I am a teacher. When I became a teacher the pay was definitely not attractive.

The great majority of teachers, I feel, are genuinely interested in the welfare of each individual student, and this motivation has spurred many conscientious educators to take active roles in the boards of their respective areas. It is the initiative of these individuals that will bring to education the progress that it deserves.

Mr. Richard's closing comment is of interest: "There's much to be said for a board that's a little on the dumb and innocent side." I would like to know what can be said for boards that are dumb and innocent.

If Mr. Richard intended an evaluation of the present board this statement may be partially accurate but to advocate this is an absurdity. I think there should be people on the Board of Education who know what education is all about so they can validly evaluate what the administration is recommending as policy. We don't have that now.

I would like to close with several questions about Mr. Richard's journalistic completeness. Why did he single me out as a candidate for the Livonia Board of Education and raise these false charges? Why did he not investigate his facts? Why does Mr. Richard fail to see a conflict in Mr. Craft being a former teacher and now an administrator in the Northville Schools?

But, if the Observer wishes to take this position, they should apply all the criteria for evaluating all the candidates to all of the candidates and not attempt to smear one particular candidate by name.

Corrine Abatt writes

Time For Males To Get Attractive

If the sexes are to achieve the equal status that so many of our younger generation profess to believe in, then our young women should take a critical look at their male counterparts.

If a woman takes the time to look attractive for her man (which is a way of showing respect for him), then doesn't she have the right to ask that he do likewise? Upon such mutual self-respect one can build a meaningful relationship.

Without it, there are the subtle controls of inequality—the controller and the controlled, the dominant "do as I please" male and the subservient "everything to please him" female.

THESE THOUGHTS began to take shape on the first hot Sunday in May.

Ignoring the looks of disbelief and the quiet comments such as "look guys, mother's here" I spread my blanket on the sandy beach of Cass Lake.

It's a public beach, I told myself, and if I want to bring two fifth grade girls out in the sun for the afternoon, I should be able to ... but it wasn't easy. I felt about as welcome as the Egyptian color guard at a Yom Kippur service.

The beach was blanket to blanket teenagers and young adults all out on the first hot day to "make contact."

My 11-year-old said, with the naivete that she will lose far too quickly, "I wonder why they all come here—nobody's swimming."

Indeed, out of the thousand or so gathered on the beach, only a

handful ever got wet—let alone swam.

BUT THAT'S NOT really the point of my outburst, for there's nothing wrong or new about the motive. Beaches have always been great places for ogling the opposite sex.

With the feeling that when one is in a foreign country, one should observe the customs and culture of the natives, I decided to do some serious people watching.

First, I had better explain that I am neither an ardent woman's liber nor a man hater—some of my best friends are men, but something is happening that makes me want to burn my copy of "The Sensuous Woman."

In the broad expanse of prone bodies, one could pick out a hundred or more attractive bikini-clad (maybe unclad is more appropriate) young women—shiny hair, scrubbed faces, light, well applied makeup, clear skin.

In that same broad expanse, I spotted two clean, attractive beach boys. To a man, the rest were sloppy, grimy, unshaven. In most cases, their long hair was hanging listless, unshaped and in loose separated strands. One, who walked by with a big comb sticking out of his jeans' hip pocket, had a bush that could easily have hidden several bats and a nest of gerbils.

The long and short hair of it does not bother me as much as the lack of concern about personal cleanliness. These young men seem to feel that their maleness is the only credential necessary for attention of the opposite sex. And apparently, it IS all that is required.

When "do-your-own-thing" becomes a license for total disdain for everyone but the individual, when it leads to total self-involvement and disregard for others, then the sands of time may mark this generation as one who said they were fighting for love and lost the battle because they didn't care.

Tim Richard writes

Where Does Your Trash Go?

Few jobs are harder in this technological era than they were a generation ago. A notable exception is hauling out the trash.

As a kid, I recollect that a family of four generated only one or two cans of garbage and another of trash during a typical week.

When the old homestead in Detroit was first built in 1939, there was the additional chore of hauling out ashes, but that stopped when the coal furnace was replaced by oil and later by gas.

Today one isn't shocked to see

20 or more containers of trash and bags of grass at curbside in our subdivision. One would think the amount would be less because every home has a garbage grinder. But instead the amount of trash gets greater ... and greater ... and greater.

IT'S A MAJOR problem to collect that trash. Recently the City of Farmington, a rather well-run municipality in my estimation, found itself so far behind in trash collection that it took a drastic step.

The city council lifted the no-burning ordinance for a few weeks so that paper and other such materials could be disposed of and the trash burden lightened. That was ironic. Usually one associates burning with the pollution of the environment, but in this case it was the opposite.

Mark Twain once made mockery of American burial customs, arguing that if continued they would lead to a nation piled high with reeking caskets. But before we hit that point, we may be wallowing in our own trash. The Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce outlined the scope of the problem:

"THE LATEST national survey report (1968) indicates that every man, woman and child produces close to 5.3 pounds of refuse per day! And this is only part of it.

"This average includes only collected wastes; it does not include what may be burned or

disposed of by individuals or industrial wastes disposed of by business firms.

"Adjusted figures bring the total average figure up to 10 pounds per person per day."

If that's so, then a family of four in a week would generate 280 pounds of refuse. That's seven tons and more in a year.

All sorts of other statistics are available, but they only boggle the mind and one can't remember them anyhow. Let's just say that our increasing use of wrapping paper, bags, coated boxes, jars, throwaway bottles, aluminum packages, plastic bottles, etc., ad nauseum—that we're junking up the environment.

WE'RE ALL generating junk as fast as we can, but no one wants to store it. Sites for sanitary landfills are getting harder and harder to find, and rural townships object to being the trash heaps for urban dwellers, and understandably.

The Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments is trying to round up money for a consultant's study that would make an inventory of existing landfills, locate new sites, project volumes for future years and propose a system of disposition. But SEMCOG is having a little difficulty getting the donations it needs.

Everyone wants to toss out stuff, but darned few persons are worrying about what happens to it.

Editorial & Opinion

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