

## OBSERVATION POINT

## Snowmobiles: An Example Of Noise Pollution

By Philip H. Power  
Publisher

The controversy now going on about mini-bikes reminded me the other day of a similar but more cooling problem.

A reader who called about the mini-bike matter mentioned that her family had, in addition to two mini-bikes, two snowmobiles. After we talked about mini-bikes, I asked her how she liked the snowmobiles.

She said she and her husband liked them a lot, particularly the feeling of freedom they gave when zipping over the snow in the northern part of the state in winter.

"But there is one problem," she added. "The darn things are so noisy that I think I'm losing my hearing from being around them so much."

She may be more correct than she thinks.

SOME TIME ago, Dr. Fred H. Bess, who is director of audiology at Central Michigan University, reported that tests made last winter on 21 snowmobile race drivers at the Michigan Snowmobile 500 at Sault Ste. Marie showed that all had "marked permanent hearing loss."

Recordings made at the race showed that even spectators may have experienced temporary hearing damage.

Dr. Bess also cautioned that tests run on 17 snowmobile drivers and riders who used the machines just for cross country riding showed that they had temporary hearing damage. "With repeated exposure," he added, "that could be cumulative and be permanent damage."

BESS ADDED that snowmobiles produce more noise for the driver than a racing car because, unlike a car, the exhaust system is in front of the driver and passengers.

The noise experienced by the driver of a standard snowmobile is about the same as if a person stood next to the engine of a jet plane at the airport, Dr. Bess explained.

He called for snowmobile drivers to wear protective ear coverings to prevent hearing loss, and noted that a person should not drive a snowmobile for more than 30 minutes without some kind of ear protection.

AS ANYONE who has been out in the woods and heard a snowmobile snarl by knows full well, the problem is not confined to the drivers and passengers of snowmobiles only.

Upper Michigan residents, who often seem to care more fiercely about the deer herd than anything else, claim heatedly that the breeding cycle of the deer is seriously affected by the loud and

unexpected sound of snowmobiles.

There is some evidence that other animals are affected by the sound, too, and it is clear that wildlife simply clears out from areas constantly used by snowmobiles.

Dr. Bess urged that the government establish and monitor "safe maximum sound pressure levels for snowmobile engines."

Howard Larson, vice president for environmental affairs of this Outboard Marine Corp., which makes snowmobiles, was reported to have said the industry was working to lower the machine's noise level between now and 1980.

IF BY 1980, why not now? One of the things that makes me sore is the callous assumption by both industry and owners of vehicles of all types that they are

entirely free to produce sound pollution in virtually any degree they wish, ignoring the wishes of the guy who simply wants to stand around and feel the quiet.

Snowmobilers, for example, have as much right as anyone else to be in the woods. But do they have the right to ruin the silence for miles around? Do the snowmobile manufacturing companies have the uncontrolled right to make machines with minimum

noise suppression systems?

I submit the answer to these questions is "No."

I also suggest that one reason the snowmobile makers don't much want to make their machines quiet is that a big, loud noise on a machine makes the buyer feel he is getting a racy, sexy job, and that in turn sells more snowmobiles.

The same points apply to: sports cars; motorcycles; power

lawnmowers; railroad trains; buses; mini-bikes; chain saws; outboard motors.

We all need to recognize the rights of each of us to live in an environment as free as possible from noise pollution. And the way to make sure that happens is to put controls on manufacturers to make sure their products do not pollute our environment any more than absolutely necessary.

Tim Richard writes

## Good PR Must For Schools

UNLESS SOMETHING'S DONE  
WE'LL PAY DEARLY...



It's common to hear school board candidates, especially those of a conservative political stripe, argue that schools should use more "businesslike" methods.

So who's first in line to criticize when a school district adopts a business method? Right.

In the case at hand, it was John Stymelski who dissented when the Livonia Board of Education voted to rehire Morgan O'Leary as the district's public relations man.

PUBLIC RELATIONS is one of the essential functions of modern business. Every firm above the hole-in-the-wall size either hires a man to handle PR or gets itself an agency which handles several accounts.

Being against a PR man is like being against the double-entry accounting system or installing telephones.

Most school districts around here have such a person on the payroll. Far from being a pur-

veyor of subliminal evil, the PR person accumulates a lot of routine matter, comes up with good feature stories about what's going on in the classroom, and answers a lot of fact questions for busy reporters because he's got the time to look 'em up.

TRUSTEE STYMELSKI'S opposition seems based not so much on the idea of the PR function as on political considerations. He worries about the man swinging people into doing things they don't want, or selling the administration point of view rather than the board's.

Well, if the administration is out of tune with the board, then the board ought to get a new superintendent. The Livonia board not having fired Supt. R. H. Upton, it may be presumed he is generally in tune with the board majority.

As for the contention that the PR man will turn people's thinking around, perhaps trustee

Stymelski hasn't been reading these columns of late.

This observer personally chewed apart Supt. Upton for a statement (probably written by PR man O'Leary) that was too extreme an attack on the governor's budget cuts. The Upton-O'Leary powers of political seduction are, at best, rather limited.

IT IS IRONIC, if not irrational, that Stymelski of all people should object to the schools' hiring of a PR man. Stymelski himself had the services during his campaign of a very competent professional, Dale Welling by name, although I assume it was on a volunteer basis.

And at a recent board meeting, Stymelski read from a letter over his signature in which he objected to one school program or another. It was quite a polished piece of prose. Nevertheless, those who have ever heard Stymelski speak know he didn't write that letter all by himself.

## There's Nothing Wrong With Our Kids

By MAURIE WALKER

There's nothing wrong with the kids today.

The same zeal, temptations, ambitions and disappointments the "establishment" experienced "centuries ago" are being realized by today's young people.

In the good "old days," youth had places to congregate, the corner drug store, the malt shop, the little independent grocery store, all were gathering places.

It wasn't a mob gathering, the areas were too small. It was just a group of the old gang who would meet at these places and talk teatalk.

Today these meeting places have disappeared. Even many of the chain drug stores have discarded their soda fountains, the one last stronghold for youthful discussions.

ONE OF THE SAD facts of today's world is that there are really few places young people can gather. So where do they head for? The parks.

Here a small group sometimes becomes a mob. Should there be a few trouble makers, perhaps even a few dope pushers or what we "old folk" called wild kids, trouble is in the making.

Kids never change, really, from one generation to the other. They like to be with groups their own age. They don't dig the language of the older folk anymore than the older folk understand teen language.

In many instances, youthful trouble is the fault of parents. Sure, they will drive the kids to a mall or park, in fact almost anywhere so long as the youth isn't underfoot to bother them.

But to have a gang of their children's friends hanging around the backyard or in the recreation room is, for many parents, just too much trouble.

Young people, by nature, like excitement. Without thinking, they will join in anything that at the moment looks like fun.

Police have stated that the majority of young people who gather in parks and at rock festivals are there strictly for the enjoyment of some harmless fun. It's the few trouble makers who give all a bad name.

Again, the blame, in many cases, stems back to the parents. The finger of shame is pointed at those adults who "just know my child won't do anything wrong" but do nothing to insure this belief.

The crime in these instances is that many parents don't want to believe their child will get into trouble, and in fact, couldn't care less.

Left alone and unsupervised, left feeling not wanted at home and with no place to turn, the potential for serious trouble is there.

Police records show that many a parent doesn't become concerned about a child until something happens.

As an example, in one park incident, a mother was outraged at the police because they wouldn't let her go into the park to look for her daughter while there was a threat of trouble. It was 11 p.m. and she had dropped the young girl off at the park at 7 p.m.

This mother was not concerned about her daughter until she saw police cars surrounding the park, four hours

after she had bid her daughter goodbye.

As one of the police officers so aptly put it, "This woman wasn't worried about her daughter mingling in the park with strangers. It was the sight of the police that frightened her."

Youth Bureau records show that many a young person runs away from home because they feel they are not wanted. The so-called "generation gap" is as much the fault of parents as of the youth.

Money and worldly goods aren't all a child needs or really wants. Even though they would probably deny it, a young person

needs to feel wanted, needs to know parents care where they are and what they are doing. They secretly want supervision.

True, many parents allow the "gang" to hang out in their home. But the percentage is much too small as juvenile records sadly show.

Being a parent isn't an easy job nor a part-time job. It is a 24 hour a day, seven-day a week job. It's frustrating at times but by the same token, if done well, rewarding.

There is nothing wrong with the kids today. The majority are doing a great job in a tough period of growing up.

## Who Does Have Answers?

By CORINNE ABATT

Out of the hundreds of words I read and type every week, a five word quote keeps running through my mind. "I don't have any answers." It came in an interview with Greg Miller, of Southfield, Groves High School valedictorian.

It stayed in my mind, I suppose, because it's incredibly hard to find an 18-year-old who doesn't have all the answers to what's wrong with the world, what's wrong with the establishment, parents, the government— you name it, they have the answers before you pose the questions.

At first, I read Greg's comment as a kind of pleasing and refreshing display of humility. But the more you let your mind mosey around over the words, the more intriguing they gets.

answers, neither did Columbus, or Einstein, or Edison, or Pasteur or the Wright brothers, or Salk, or Madame Currie. All they had to begin with were the questions. The skeptics who stood over their shoulders saying things like "It can't be done," "The World is flat," "Man will never fly"—they had the answers.

HAVING ALL THE ANSWERS is a luxury which we as parents are prone to wallow in through some unwritten and abused right called "parental prerogative."

As we dote out our endless supply of often over sermonized moral tinged answers, we can find satisfaction in platitudinous rationales such as "experience is the best teacher, if I knew then what I know now"—what, do we really know, I wonder.

The only trouble with a firm, pat answer, is that it amounts to a firm, pat judgment.

Now, I realize what a see-saw mess the world would be in if all we had was questions, but I'm talking about the big stuff, things that concern man and his future, education, welfare, happiness, satisfaction.

It's so easy to come up with simple answers—far harder and less comfortable to say "I don't know"—to stand apart and say, "I have no answers." It's a lonely road—the one that takes you searching, asking, probing, questioning.

There's no sign to tell you when you've passed "go" and there's no winning the game. It becomes a life long quest to seek better ways, instead of finalities with momentary satisfactions rather than complete ones.

But, let me ask this, "Is there really any hope for a better future with our present answers?"

## Editorial &amp; Opinion

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CHILDREN ARE HUMAN.

Galileo didn't have all the