



By Philip H. Power
Publisher

OBSERVATION POINT

Pollution: We're Much Better Off Here

Most people know by now that we have an enormous pollution problem here in America. Most people also are aware that something is being done about it—cleanup drives on the Rouge River and bottle and can recycling depots being two local examples.

By contrast, one of the major impressions I picked up on a recent trip to Europe was that their pollution problem is much worse than ours and that precious little is being done about it.

The types of pollution plaguing Europe are just the same as we see here at home: foul and smelly air; dirty and cruddy water; constant hammering noise; ruined natural beauty.

The odd thing about it all was

that people did not seem particularly upset.

YOU CAN see water pollution virtually anywhere you go.

The beaches, particularly, are hard hit. On the isle of Capri and all over the Bay of Naples you see oil slicks, bits of tar, cardboard paper, fruit peels, and general rubbish on the surface and washing up on the beach.

Oil goo from wrecked or leaking tankers has ruined several beaches in southern England, and water quality on some others on the French Riviera forced closings.

Lake Como, a beautiful Italian lake famous until recently for its clean clear water, now has minimum swimming. One luxury hotel even built a special

swimming pool, complete with its own filtration system, floating in the middle of a dirty lake.

But if you talk to the people swimming in all the goo and rubbish, they don't seem to mind much. "Oh, well. It's worse than it was before, but..." and a shrug of the shoulders seems to be the attitude.

LOOK ACROSS the Bay of Naples from Capri toward the shore. Nothing but haze.

It comes from the oil refineries on the mainland, and it has ruined an old view, famous since Roman times.

Stuttgart, in Germany, admittedly an industrial town, has such an air pollution problem that even the cab drivers say it's an unhealthy place to live.

London, noted for years for pea-soup fogs, still maintains its characteristic smell: part smoke, part auto fumes, part big city stench.

No one seems to care much. An Italian boatman on Capri peered toward the shore and observed, "Ah, you see a little bit of land. Maybe she's a-gonna change."

And although the London County Council has banned coal fires because of smoke pollution, you still run into lots of Londoners in pubs who will happily recall how thick the fogs were in the old days.

I'M CONVINCED that if pollution is as bad in Europe as it

is at home, European countries will have a much tougher job dealing with it than we will have.

Partly it's a matter of population density. Virtually every European country is much more densely populated than Michigan, and one of the rigid rules of the pollution game is that the more densely packed your people are, the more pollution you will have.

More importantly, it's a matter of conceiving that there is a problem.

Europe has been inhabited for, literally, eons. No European can remember what his land was like before it was settled.

But Americans can. We exalt our wild west, and the conception of what our country was

like before it was settled is a very live one to most Americans.

Our American memory of what our land was like before we settled it—wild, beautiful, free from pollution—is a very strong stimulus, which is why Europe may become buried in rubbish before it happens here.

Tim Richard writes

A Nasty Situation

Maybe it's the Age of Aquarius that's to blame. Or what the sociologists call the "revolution of rising expectations." Or else what Ortega y Gasset called "The Revolt of the Masses."

Whatever the cause, we in the world, in America, in Observerland have lost a measure of civility in our public affairs. We don't simply have a debate, take a vote and go have a drink together. We get nasty about it.

TAKE THAT champion of nastiness, Leonard Woodcock of the UAW. He is unhappy about wage controls, and he has a right to his very valid point of view.

But what is he going to do about it? Argue with President Nixon? Vote against Nixon in the next election? No, he vilifies the president of the United States in his nastiest language, threatens to declare contracts nullified and talks about demonstrations that smell much like a European general strike.

Take the Birchers and their dupes in Farmington School District, a community that used to have a reputation for some sophistication. Some of them don't like the sex education plans and "minority understandings" programs the board of education is instituting. They speak their piece, loud and long and often, but they fail to persuade.

Their obvious recourse is to vote for candidates favorable to their point of view at the next election. They did and managed to elect one person.

But do they stop there? No, because that would be the polite thing to do. They start a low-level

recall movement, drag it on and drag it on.

It's a harassing tactic.

LIVONIA'S got a bunch, too. There, the right-wingers started their recall petitions going just a couple of days before the school board election. It's the old gutter tactic of a wild, excessive accusation that the other guy can't answer in time and harassment.

In Livonia city affairs, the folks who didn't want to see a four-story building go up at Five Mile and Farmington aren't content with (a) being heard, (b) losing at the planning commission level, (c) losing at the city council level and (d) failing to persuade the mayor to veto the ordinance. Nope, it's the threat of a court case and mutterings of "recall."

In Westland, you'd think people would be happy that Mayor Gene McKinney, probably the finest public official in Observerland, is working intelligently and progressively to get that community out of the rural township days and into a modern city with a paving program.

Some of them aren't, however. One must give them a lot of credit for playing by the rules and getting three of their bunch nominated in the city council primary. But their court suit against the paving program is just more harassment.

Strike . . . vilify . . . recall . . . sue . . . harass . . . and finally assassination. It's all part of the same psychological package. It's against the temper of the times to accept a loss gracefully any more.

Editorial & Opinion

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R.T. Thompson writes

Farmington Voters Speak: Dim Future For Youngsters

Philadelphia . . . Lincoln Park . . . Youngstown, Ohio, other small and large school systems in many parts of the land . . . and now Farmington joins the list.

The list of what? The list of communities which have rejected additional millage that would enable the school system to maintain the many extra-curricular activities that have been so valuable in maintaining student and parent interest in school activities.

Farmington voters went to the polls Monday to approve or deny a request for an additional 3.5 mills for the period of one year. It was turned down by a majority of less than 900. That isn't much of a difference, but it is the difference in the school system having varsity sports, arts and music programs for the coming school year.

The board emphasized that these would be the first items to get the axe, emphasized it again and again during the campaign for the millage. There isn't any way that it can change its mind now.

SO, THOSE YOUNGSTERS who have stayed in school because of athletics, art or music won't have any incentive now. The things that have kept them interested are gone . . . this could mean a large number of dropouts despite what their parents say or try to do.

It is a sad commentary on any community where the voters say "no" to competitive sports. We have long considered high school sports as a tremendous morale builder in all Observerland communities.

Varsity contests gave parents a chance to see their sons perform. It gave residents of the competing communities a chance to sit down together . . . to cheer the winners and moan for the losers.

It gave them a chance to discuss situations in the various communities and for the moment a chance to make new friends. These same faces could be seen at football and basketball games . . . the contests served as a common meeting ground.

BUT THAT IS erased from the Farmington scene for at least one year, and just what will happen during that time is hard to predict. Most certainly it won't do anything to build up the morale in the three high schools . . . Farmington, North Farmington and Harrison.

It is a bitter blow for Harrison, newest of the high schools, which was entering into its second year of varsity competition and was looking forward to standout football, basketball, swimming, track and baseball teams.

Imagine the feeling in North Farmington, which had the state's No. 1 football team last fall . . . and now nothing. The Raiders also had one of Michigan's top gymnastic squads . . . now nothing. It was looking forward to great seasons in baseball and track . . . now nothing.

Farmington High has been a power in high school track for several years and boasted the best in Observerland last season . . . now nothing. It had high hopes for football and baseball . . . now nothing.

One could go down the line in other programs in which the three high schools would have been outstanding . . . but now there's no tomorrow, just nothing at all.

IT WILL BE interesting to see what happens in the various community in the coming school year. Nothing to cheer about, nothing to build up interest, nothing to let off steam as generally took place at the various sporting events.

It will be a nothing year for the extra-curricular activities.

One wonders if those who successfully fought the additional millage really know how much it will hurt the system. One wonders if the school board member who was so adamant in fighting the issue will be able to face the roars that are bound to come in future board meetings.

One wonders if the 18-year-olds, voting for the first time, who apparently opposed the millage, will feel proud of their actions when the realization finally comes that they have helped take away from the present students the things they enjoyed during the three years in high school.

One wonders if those who opposed the millage because their own high school was closed will feel better because they have cut off programs in the public schools. These are the same schools that many of their children will be attending in September. It kind of sounds like cutting off your nose to spite your face.

ONE WONDERS IF Farmington

will follow in the footsteps of Lincoln Park, which had a state championship football team one fall and then dropped all extra-curricular activities the next fall by failure of a millage request.

Lincoln Park has managed to exist, but the morale of the high school is much lower than when there was a champion to root for and heroes to adore.

Then there's the situation in Philadelphia where all activities have been dropped and school officials, juvenile authorities and the police are conjecturing what will happen this fall.

The Philadelphia story is one that is being followed closely by every school system in the land. The Farmington situation will have the attention of every school board and administration in Michigan.

Especially will this be true in Livonia where the school board had gone on record of taking similar steps if a request for a renewal of 3.5 mills was rejected for a second time.

WE HAVE A belief that voters often think the school boards are making idle threats and will take steps to keep the programs going despite millage failures.

The Farmington action definitely shows that this is not a threat. There isn't any money to carry on the programs. The voters have spoken, so has the board . . . there will not be any extra-curricular programs for at least a year.

What happens during that time will be very interesting.

