

## OBSERVATION POINT

# 1972 Agenda For Suburbs Contains Three Key Issues

By Philip H. Power  
Publisher

As we swing into the new year of 1972, three big issues directly affecting the interests of the suburbs must be resolved:

**• EDUCATION FINANCING REFORM** — Every suburban resident who owns a home or pays property tax knows full well that this is the single most pressing issue on the suburban agenda.

For three years now it has been quite clear that the property tax is an unfair and inequitable way of supporting local education. For at least as long, it has been equally clear that the best way of financing education is through a graduated statewide income tax that accurately taxes people according to their ability to pay.

The legislature has ducked this one time and time again. Its shilly-shallying has resulted directly in the refusal of most suburban taxpayers to vote any

more millage to support local schools and indirectly in the bussing crisis which has caused a spasm of anxiety throughout the suburbs.

I don't see how any legislator can face the voters in this election year without having faced up to education financing reform.

**• MASS TRANSIT** — Anyone who lives in the suburbs and works in downtown Detroit knows the importance of the need for a mass transit system in this area. So does anyone who has any concern at all about making jobs in suburban business and industry available to workers from the entire metropolitan area.

The governor proposed last year a two-cent per gallon increase in the gas tax, with 1.4 cents going to build streets, freeways and roads, and 0.6 cents for urban mass transit. The legis-

lature failed to act on the proposal.

Frankly, I can't agree with the governor's emphasis on yet more freeways and roads; the ones we have already have clearly not solved the problem of how to get around the area, especially during rush hour, and the suspicion mounts that even more freeways simply are not the answer.

But paying off the road building lobby may be the price for getting started on a comprehensive program of mass transit in this area — the only one of similar size in the country with no mass transit system.

**• RE-APPORTIONMENT OF DISTRICTS** — The 1970 census proved what everybody had known all along: The suburbs were growing faster than any other segment of the state.

Now the state legislature is

facing up to the requirements of the U.S. Supreme Court's one-man-one-vote ruling by redrawing the lines of congressional and legislative districts so they are equal in population.

In theory, such remapping will give added strength to suburban representation in Washington and Lansing, regardless of which party winds up being the net winner in seats gained this November. If, however, the legislature cannot agree on a plan, the issue will be thrown into the courts; once it's there, anything could happen, including a ruling that all congressmen and legislators have to run at large, statewide.

The legislature should, insofar as possible, set partisan bickering aside, and get down to the guts of promptly reapportioning suburban districts in such a way as to

fairly reflect the recent growth of the suburbs.

THESE THREE issues seem simple to settle; in fact, they are not.

However, they have been on the agenda for far too long already. Delay in settling them has hurt both the suburbs and the state.

Moreover, this year is an

election year, and it's the year when our representatives will be coming around asking us for our vote.

Before we promise it to any politician, let's ask him just what he did to help settle the big three issues facing us. We've got a great chance to put the politicians and not the average taxpayers on the hot seat this year.

## 1972

POLITICAL CANDIDATES:  
HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU —

UNRESOLVED	RESOLVED
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION FINANCE REFORM	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MASS TRANSIT	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT REAPPORTIONMENT	<input type="checkbox"/>



Tim Richard writes

## A Fix That Can Be Easily Remedied

Michigan Democrats are in a fix — but only because they think they are.

Their 1988 national convention ruled that delegates to the 1972 convention must be persons elected this year. By Michigan law, precinct delegates are elected two years ahead of time — 1970 — and will elect a fresh crop of state convention delegates next May. These state delegates will select the national convention delegates.

Democrats, therefore, are pushing a bill to hold a new election of precinct delegates in April. Their reasoning is that the nation now has the 18-year-old vote and these youngsters didn't have a chance to take part in the 1970 precinct elections.

As State Sen. Dan Cooper (D-Oak Park) put it:

"The exclusion of these new voters is without justification and is unfair to them. Without the April primary bill, they will not be able to become precinct delegates and will be excluded from the selection of presidential candidates."

Sen. Cooper is full of wrath at Lt. Gov. Jim Brickley and the 19 Republican senators who voted to adjourn in mid-December without taking up the Democrats' pet bill for an April election of precinct delegates.

THE SENATOR FLUNKS homework this week.

Take Southfield, which makes up a large part of Cooper's 15th

District. The city and township had 52 precincts, as of the August 1970 delegate election. In 17 precincts, no one ran for delegate, and 17 elected delegates failed to attend the convention in late August.

Thus, 34 of the 52 delegate seats were vacant for that convention. These vacancies can be filled by other interested Democrats who show up. There's nothing to stop persons in the 18-20 age bracket from being appointed to the vacancies that occur.

Moreover, the mere fact that no persons under 21 will be elected precinct delegates doesn't mean the young adults can't become state convention delegates.

Like many areas throughout the state, the 18th Congressional District followed the "open" rule of picking state convention delegates. As a Southfield Democratic leader put it: "We decided to permit all precinct delegates, and all party members who have expressed a desire, to go to the state convention."

A party membership costs \$5. Thus, anyone in the 18-20 age bracket can get into the mainstream of political activism by buying a membership and going to the state convention.

IN POINT OF fact, the Southfield Democrats in 1970 did pick an 18-year-old delegate — Bonnie Moss, by name.

And so there is no reason to hold a special \$750,000 state primary election in April to pick new precinct delegates in order to give representation to the 18-20 age group.

Any young person who will work for the party will be greeted with open arms and will have no

trouble getting himself a state convention delegate seat and can have a crack at picking the national convention delegates.

But perhaps Sen. Cooper can be forgiven for not knowing those political facts of life. You see, he didn't attend that 1970 district convention.

## 'Property Values' Have New Meaning

By DAN McCOSH

In America's search for euphemisms to cover up the unpleasant facts of life with a good word, probably the only industry more florid than morticians is the real estate business.

The man who coined the phrase "property value" is probably lying under a valuable hunk of real estate right now, clutching an honorary dictionary given by grateful salesmen in the profession who have given him deceptive phrase their own version of immortality.

THEY DON'T mean "property values" at all, what they mean is the price of property. The effect of this slight of tongue on the average homeowner's state of mind has been incredible.

When GM, US Steel and the DSR announce their annual round of price increases, the homeowners knuckles whiten on the edge of his morning paper, the President moans and the Congress bellows.

But when the price of the roof over his head goes up, it brings peace of mind, and quiet smiles as he contemplates selling the old homestead at three times the price he paid for it. It's a great hedge against inflation, they say.

The fault to this logic would be apparent if someone said a three-year-old Ford was going to be worth more than its purchase price. "It's worn out" you say, and mutter about the declining dollar.

The reality doesn't sink in until you cash in on that "hedge against inflation," deduct closing, commission and points, and try to use that money to buy another home — or did you expect to live in the street?

That retirement cottage costs a lot too, because "property values" are skyrocketing all over, and you have to pay the "value."

PROPERTY VALUES go up for other reasons, too, like when

you build a cement plant on a main street and the owner wants to buy enough land to park his trucks next to that nice subdivision.

They go up for the guy who sells the land, and who fights for the rezoning, who then puts his "value" in his pocket and leaves, because he doesn't want to live anywhere near that "valuable" land.

Or "That land is too valuable to build dinky residential houses," the developer cries, which means he thinks he can get a higher "value" if he sells to an apartment builder.

A SECOND EUPHEMISM is "low income housing," a tag which is usually attached to what we used to call "cheap" housing.

"Low income" has connotations of racial strife, neighborhood decay and welfare mothers. Let's ignore for the moment that it also includes students, young families and your grandmother.

This has been expressed in the suburbs as a wild fear of putting a low rent or price tag on anything. Apartments, mobile homes, townhouses and condominiums go up like mushrooms, at a minimal cost per square foot, and logic says they should be "cheap housing," but they are not.

"Cheap housing" would be attractive to those newlyweds, students, and grandmothers as well as the evil poor. Even some well-established folks who might feel there is nothing immoral about spending less than a quarter of their incomes on a roof over their heads — people of simple tastes.

"Cheap housing" they want, but as long as it's called "low income," it will probably remain at the end of the long arm of the zoning board.

But then maybe it's not a good idea. Cheap housing would compete with the expensive stuff, and it might slow the steady rise of property values.

R.T. Thompson writes

## How Callous Are We?

Years ago we visited the home of a friend, and the first things that caught our attention were three tiny statues of monkeys all in a group. One had hands over the eyes, a second had hands over both ears and the third had hands over the mouth.

Seems strange that we should recall this visit of 30 years ago as we enter into a new year with high hopes of bigger and better things, especially after a year which has been marked with unemployment, a decided dip in the economic situation and general unrest in most sections — unrest in this area principally over forced bussing between school districts to relieve segregation and give all students equal education opportunities.

We are now several days into a new year that has had a happy beginning for most of us. We already are looking forward to a continuance of the happy days and for a prosperous year during which we can forget the unhappiness of 1971.

ALL OF WHICH brings us back to the three monkeys and how they fit into two of the saddest happenings of the past year . . . two incidents that took the lives of two youngsters in Observerland and made 1971 a tragic year for their parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunts and uncles.

Chris Beattie, a senior at Livonia Bentley High, was run down and killed by a hit-run driver last May just one month before she would have had the biggest and happiest time of her still young life . . . high school graduation.

The incident happened in late afternoon on a bright, sunny day, but now six months later and in a new year, police officers haven't been able to find a single clue leading to the identity of the killer-driver.

Craig Schultz, a student in the Plymouth School district who was a promising young baseball player, was found dead at a street intersection in a quiet residential area two nights before Christmas. Craig was riding his bicycle when something happened and he was found lying on the sidewalk with the bike atop his body.

How long Craig lay on the cold sidewalk no one knows. Plymouth police have asked any witnesses to step forward and tell their story . . . to date none has.

Livonia police have made numerous appeals to residents of the area in which Chris was killed to come forward with any information. No one has.

ARE WE TO TAKE this to mean that we now live at a time that makes living creatures of the three monkeys. Are we in a period when we see no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil?

In these instances it appears that nothing but good can come from speaking out and helping provide answers that will relieve the minds of bereaved parents and kin.

It's the saddest of all commentaries when resident of two communities prefer to follow the advice of three monkeys and close their eyes, ears and mouths to evil rather than open their mouths, ears and eyes to a good cause.

## Editorial & Opinion

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