



By Philip H. Power
Publisher

OBSERVATION POINT

Suburbs Should Have Ability To Control Highway Billboards

Some day in the not too distant future there will be two new expressways in this area, one running along Schoolcraft Road through Redford Township, Livonia and Plymouth, and another running north and south along Haggerty Road through Canton Township near Westland, Plymouth, Livonia and Farmington.

Undoubtedly there will be billboards of some kind along these roads.

But just how big they will be and where they will be put is an issue of enormous local importance.

That's the local angle on the big fight now brewing up in Lansing over the billboard control bill. It's a piece of legislation that one local lawmaker, Rep. Marvin Stempien of Livonia, has strong views on.

SOME WEEKS ago, legislation controlling the size and location of billboards on state roads at last passed the House of Representatives.

It was a tough law since it set minimum standards and contained an amendment authored by Stempien that would

allow local government units through which roads passed to set their own standards which could be more strict than those set up by the overall state bill.

Stempien was thinking precisely about the new expressways in this area, and his concern was that local government sign ordinances would be made ineffective unless protected by his amendment. For example, the City of Livonia already has a local sign ordinance considerably tougher than the proposed state bill.

Then last week, the State Senate knocked out the local option amendment in passing the bill, kicking off a fight in which house members and environmentalists charged that the senate had knuckled to pressure from the highway lobby.

THE SENATE version of the bill is now back in the House, and Stempien says it probably will be referred to a conference committee to see if differences can be ironed out.

"What I'm worried about, in addition to the idea that there ought to be tough controls on billboards," Stempien says, "is

that if the bill passes with the local control amendment knocked out, the billboard lobby can then go into court and argue that the legislature intended no local government unit to set standards any tougher than the state law. This would hurt terribly communities in the northwest suburbs, which are trying to control signs along the new expressways."

There is some hope the conference committee will hold the line that the local control amendment should stay in the bill. All state representatives from this area, excepting Joe Forbes who represents part of Southfield, voted for the house version as amended.

Sensors from the suburbs showed a mixed pattern in voting on the bill. Senators David Plawecki from Redford Township and Daniel Cooper representing Southfield voted against the bill without the local control amendment, while Senator Carl Pursell who represents Plymouth, Livonia and Farmington voted for it.

MORE EFFECTIVE control of billboards on our state high-

ways has been a high priority for a long time. And, in this age when local communities are losing the ability to control their own destiny, the local control amendment to the highway billboard control bill is a key issue for us in the suburbs.

Rep. Stempien should persevere in his efforts to keep his amendment in the bill.

If the legislation goes to conference committee, let's hope that the billboard lobby is kept out of deliberations.

After all, things are ugly enough along our state's roads. Local communities should have the ability to control things like highway billboards, and the state senate's recent action needs to be rescinded.



Tim Richard writes

Turn Around Needed In Public's Thinking

Growth is taken as a fact of American life. It has become almost an idol. Growth has even become a matter of national policy.

The Eisenhower Administration in the mid-1950s had a National Commission On Goals, and its major recommendations were all in terms of how much more we could produce by the Year X, when the population would be Zamount greater and so on.

To make it bipartisan, the Kennedy Administration made a game of "growthmanship," as it came to be called in political rhetoric, charging that there was some kind of gap between what we were producing and what we could produce. The growth of everything was accepted as a natural and laudable goal, much the same as folks in the Middle Ages considered the bringing of souls to Paradise as their goal.

TODAY'S environmentalist thinking is challenging "growthmanship" head on. A couple of items in the news recently are cases in point.

In Ann Arbor, Mayor Robert Harris is asking the city council and planners to review that great municipality's policy of growth, with the idea of calling a halt somewhere along the line. The immediate problems are the limited capacity of the town's sewage treatment plant and the city's inability to build roads fast enough and maintain them, along with overcrowding in the schools.

Mayor Harris suggests two obvious plans -- requiring developers to make contributions toward new schools, major roads and sewerage capacity -- and limiting annexations -- but he also slipped in this more drastic idea: "We would fix a limit on the

number of units of housing that would be authorized by city council in each calendar year ..."

The first result of such a policy would be that growth would be forced increasingly on surrounding townships. This would include not only those on Ann Arbor's west but could also affect areas on the east, such as Observerland's Plymouth and Canton townships.

But what if all mayors and township supervisors began thinking the same way -- as ultimately they all will? In time we will run out of places upon which to force growth.

AT THAT POINT in time, we must quit growing.

Heretical as it may sound, we must quit increasing our population, our per capita consumption of irreplaceable natural resources, the lot sizes of our houses, the number of automobiles per family -- the implications are massive.

The other item in the news is a bill in Lansing to create a state commission on the impact of population growth on our natural resources.

As I have tried to point out on this page in the past, population growth is not our only problem, although zero population growth must be one of our prime goals.

Rather, we must also be thinking in terms of the big effect a little population growth has on this land. The mere fact that our population growth is slowing down by no means gets us off the environmental hook.

No gradual adjustment of policies will do the trick. A major turn -- around in the public's thinking must be achieved. We must reject an old god -- not the god of Moses Paul but the god of automatic, mathematical growth.

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 JERRY GIST
Campus Globe Editor
Schoolcraft College

Guidelines, parameters, safeguards. This is what the Schoolcraft College Board of Trustees wants from the Student Senate before considering their recent request for a student advisory seat on the board.

Even the concept in principle of such a seat was rejected until the board knew exactly what this seat was to entail.

This may be considered understandable, however, to a greater degree unreasonable in the pure concepts of an advisory position.

One of the problems involved is obviously the definition of 'advisor.' In its pure form an 'advisor' is one who exercises power to advise. To accept an advisor is to take counsel. With this definition it is hard to conceive the reason to reject a student advisor to the board.

Our society has an abundance of advisors, ranging from the President's Cabinet to student counseling on campus.

Why is it then a student advisor to the Board of Trustees is inconceivable? Who but a student can relate problems and concerns of the student body to such an entity. One may assume the student's concerns of this campus but unless you are a student you can never really understand.

I FEAR THE VERY concept of an advisory seat has been obscured with visions of student take over. By no means is this the case. This is a student-trustee rapprochement, not an act of usurping the board. The successful connection of these two lines of communication would have prodigious effects on the college as a whole.

It is hoped that the Board of Trustees will take a long and serious look at the question and exactly what this seat means. The reason for the Waldenwoods Conference was "the cultivation of the spirit of fraternity and good fellowship among us, both as a direct source of pleasure and as a powerful factor in rendering efficient service; the power of the hand the skill of the intellect may be a part engaged for hire, but the last full measure of expression is a volunteer response from the heart."

If this was in vain, I am ashamed to have participated. We have gone to the board with this spirit in mind, and have been rejected. Only four out of eight have turned their backs to us. I hope that those trustees reading this will keep in mind, a person who refuses to change his opinion is like standing water, soon to become stagnant.

Sense And Nonsense

Washington Columnist Roscoe Drummond, in Livonia for a Town Hall lecture recently, lined up a few "new best-sellers in the toy department" inspired by the current political scene.

He listed:

A Muskie doll -- "you wind it up and the Ted Kennedy doll shakes."

A Humphrey doll -- "you wind it once and you never have to wind it again."

A Ted Kennedy watch -- "it doesn't show the time of day, just the years, '72, '76, '80, '84..."

A Nixon clock -- "every hour a cuckoo comes out and announces a new set of policies."

R.T. Thompson writes

Why Shouldn't Townships Pay?

Although the Wayne County Board of Commissioners hasn't taken official action, the day of reckoning nears for those unincorporated townships that have received free police protection from the Sheriff's road patrol.

Included is Plymouth Township, which for years has realized that the protection provided by the road patrol was far from adequate, but since it didn't cost anything, then it was termed adequate.

Going back as far as the administration of the late Roy Lindsay, through the leadership of retired Jack McEwen and now under Maurice Breen, Plymouth Township has often talked about starting its own police department or of working a deal with the City of Plymouth for services.

NOT TOO MANY years ago, a committee was organized to study the feasibility of working with the City of Plymouth and the City of Northville for police services covering five communities. The proposal was to join in an agreement that would include Canton, Plymouth and Northville Townships with the facilities of the two cities.

It probably would have answered the problems since both cities have communication

systems that would have flashed word of incidents to cars patrolling the areas.

For some reason, the proposal never got off the ground ... probably because the three townships were faced with paying what each considered excessive amounts for the services.

Just to review the situation -- and this applies principally to Plymouth Township -- few reports are turned in about break-ins and thefts for the simple reason that residents know from experience that the sheriff's road patrol wouldn't answer a call for a long period unless a car happened to be in the immediate area.

This is not the fault of the road patrol but due to lack of personnel and cars to cover such an extensive area, ranging from as many as 30 to 40 miles for a single car.

For years, former Supervisor McEwen refused to admit to inadequate protection, pointing to the few complaints. Perhaps from his viewpoint and the complaints, he was justified. But this came at a time when the crime rate was climbing in all parts of Wayne County.

THEN IN 1970 the commissioners adopted a resolution to

the effect that free patrol service would be eliminated. The resolution set no specific date for the withdrawal, and that has given the townships a bit of breathing time.

The townships would have been billed starting last Dec. 1, according to a recommendation by the County Board's special subcommittee on the county budget.

That proposal has been turned back to the committee for additional study while the commissioners review all the legal ramifications. The board also faces court action from the townships involved.

In the meantime, it appears the townships should begin making plans to pay for contracted services for use of the road patrol or install their own police departments.

The City of Romulus is the only out-county area currently contracting for the Sheriff's services. Romulus pays \$174,461 per year for 24-hour service of one patrol car seven days per week.

IT APPEARS the problems are much the same in neighboring counties.

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners took the first step recently to charge unincorporated townships for county law enforcement services. It passed a resolution which will provide services by the Sheriff's department to Highland Township for \$17,000 per man per year, not including cars or other equipment.

THE DAYS WHEN Plymouth Township had services of the road patrol and a state police patrol, because Col. Fredrick Davis resided in the township, are gone. Davis no longer is with the State Police, and thus special service is eliminated.

From Northville Township comes word that residents there are considering a proposal for a well-manned police unit, adding to the present two-man staff.

Plymouth Township has more homes, more residents and more money and the time has come to give homeowners the protection they should have ... not a single car from the road patrol covering several communities.

Editorial & Opinion

OBSERVER NEWSPAPERS, INC.

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The Livonia Observer • The Redford Observer
The Westland Observer • The Garden City Observer
The Plymouth Mail & Observer • The Southfield News & Observer
The Farmington Enterprise & Observer



Published by Observer Newspapers, Inc.
36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, Mich. 48150

Serving the community of:

Livonia, Plymouth, Plymouth Township, Canton Township, Farmington
Farmington Township, Redford Township, Garden City, Westland,
Southfield, Lathrup Village, Franklin, Bingham Farms,
Village of Beverly Hills