



By Philip H. Power
Publisher

OBSERVATION POINT

How We're All In Danger Of Drowning In Our Own Rubbish

Visited any rubbish dumps lately?

That's the old fashioned name for what they're calling "solid waste disposal sanitary landfills" nowadays, which is where they're putting most of the stuff that we chuck out here in the suburbs.

As I stood there, looking over the landfill and the mounds of plastic and paper and refrigerators and milk cartons and chairs with the springs popping out, I wondered what an archeologist of the future would think about our society based on the rubbish he might paw through.

I think he might be tempted to pronounce the iron law of civilization: As civilization increases, the amount of stuff it throws out rises exponentially.

IT CERTAINLY is true for our society today.

A study recently published showed that while the amount of solid waste discarded by our population has doubled in the last 50 years, it has doubled yet again in the cities in the last 20 years. Cities, according to the study, are accumulating nationwide a trash heap of 250 million tons per year; this includes 28 billion bottles, 48 billion cans, 4 million tons of plastic, 30 million tons of paper, 100 million tires and over three million junk cars.

If things are bad now, they'll be worse in the future, according to the same study, because of our national fascination with packaging, which is predicted to have increased by 65 per cent between 1958 and 1976. Ninety per cent of all packaging is tossed on the trash heap.

The problem of avoiding a slow death strangling in our own rubbish is particularly critical here in the suburbs for two reasons: 1) The high income of families in the suburbs means they have the ability to get more stuff than other population groups, which means they throw more away, too; 2) Suburban communities, by themselves, are not large enough to efficiently solve alone the problem of how to get rid of the rubbish.

Most communities in this area have private garbage contractors, who for a fee pick up rubbish and dump it in a sanitary land fill somewhere outside of town. Most communities have study com-

mittees studying the problem (even the new City of Farmington Hills, moving quickly off the mark of cityhood, has one), without coming to any startling, new conclusions.

Oakland County is working on a county-wide incinerator plant which might be running in three of four years, and SEMCOG has a grandiose report showing how rubbish from all seven counties in the metropolitan area pass through transfer points and into big incinerators and compactors, whence it is thrown into a landfill.

NONE OF THESE studies get to the heart of the problem, it seems to me, in a time when we are facing a gasoline shortage, the price of lumber has doubled in the past year because of wood scarcity, and the prices of nearly all foods are still going up because of supposedly inadequate supplies.

The simple fact is that we waste too darn much of what we use.

We buy a car one year, and in a couple of years we trade it in even though it's running perfectly well because the auto companies have come up with a new model (its called planned obsolescence) and we buy one to keep up with the neighbors.

We waste too much because of shoddy manufacture and poor service. We buy one of those little transistor radios which works all right for three months and then goes dead. If someone who is will-

ing to fix it can be found, it'll cost more to fix it than it was worth originally, so we throw it out.

Our own laziness contributes to the problem. We buy pre-packaged, convenience foods, even though they cost much more per once than ordinary food, and then we throw out the equivalent of four or five big trees per year just in the paper used in the fancy packages.

SCIENTISTS have been telling us for years that the stock of natural resources and supplies of energy on this earth are not infinite and that we are depleting them at a rising and dangerous rate.

For a long time we didn't pay much attention. Now it's getting tough to get gas, even at four or five cents per gallon extra. Families are cutting down on meat because it's too expensive. Folks are delaying home improvements because lumber is up.

Our wasteful habits are catching up with us, and it's hurting right in the pocketbook.

Any change, of course, will require a massive shift in attitudes by the American people.

But there is one straw in the wind that may signify a change: a sudden and massive increased interest in antiques.

Go to any country auction, and you'll find the place jammed. Folks are buying things like old chairs or wicker baskets or wooden boxes — things that were made

to last, things that have been fixed when they broke, things that had none of the shiny tacky-tacky

throw-it-away feel of our modern times. I hope it keeps up.

GOOD QUESTIONS:



PRICES
VALUE
SAVINGS
ECONOMY
HONESTY
SERVICE
???

Tim Richard writes

Propaganda Machines Are Busy

With great shows of piety, the oil industry is giving us ideas on how to save gasoline during this "energy crisis."

Standard has ol' Johnny Cash sayin' y'all should drive a I'll slower, and Boron suggests car pools, "improving driving habits" and other such bromides. The Highway Users Federation mentions keeping your engine tuned and your tires properly inflated.

All of which is like telling a man with TB and a cut finger to put a bandage on his finger.

Watch the propaganda machines of the oil companies and their allies in the months ahead and see if any of them come to grips with some of the real causes of the energy crisis. You'll know you've found an honest oil company when you find one that gives you this advice:

Don't buy that big car with the 350 hp engine. Buy a compact with a 100 hp engine instead. Granted, you may save five or 10 per cent on gasoline by driving 10 miles an hour slower, but you'll save 50 per cent if you get a car

that gives 25 miles per gallon instead of the luxurious monster that gives only 10 or 12.

Don't get air conditioning on your car. When you get caught on the Lodge Freeway in 5 p.m. traffic, roll down your window and breathe in the fumes. After all, you're helping to produce those fumes, and it's only just that you should breathe them in, just the way the residents do on the surface streets. You'll save gasoline and become an avid supporter of rapid transit — and hopefully, even a user of rapid transit.

Don't get your 12-year-old a mini-bike. If he doesn't run one, he won't use gasoline. Besides, there's hardly anyplace for a kid to run one. If he should happen to find a place in the city to ride one, most likely he rides around foolishly in a circle, making a

racket and getting nowhere. A bike will give him more exercise, allow him to use the street and get someplace, and be a whole lot quieter.

Unless you're a lumberjack or a country doctor, think over those plans for a snowmobile next winter. Seems kind of unpatriotic — doesn't it? — to run a big toy when our wildlife is endangered and fuel is expensive, even when you can buy it. Look at snowshoes or hiking boots instead.

Each year, the outboard motor builders have come up with more gigantic models, and today there are many of more than 100 horsepower. If you're going to water-ski, you can do it with a motor one-fourth that size; if you're not going to water ski, 10 or 15 horsepower are more than enough for even our large inland lakes.

R. J. Thompson writes

Stress Need For Safety In Driving

It's that time of the year again when motorists have to be extra careful . . . the kids are out of school for the summer and that means one has to be on the lookout constantly for youngsters darning into the street.

It makes no difference how often youngsters, especially those between the ages of five and eight, are warned of the perils of traffic; they forget almost as soon as told and race between cars to meet a friend on the other side of the road. That's when boy meets car and usually boy winds up in the hospital and driver in the police station for a complete report.

Statistics show that June, July and August are all high accident months for children as pedestrians and bicyclists.

Children from the ages of five through eight suffer the most injuries: Most are struck when they run into the street in mid-block. The majority of accidents occur

on the Sunnydales, residential streets, not main Five Mile and the thoroughfares, and two of three of these struck are boys.

This despite repeated warnings from teachers throughout the spring and early summer school days to stop at the curb, look both ways, wait until it's safe and then walk across the street.

As one teacher in an Observance school pointed out, "These youngsters are so excited about summer vacation, these warnings go in one ear and out the other without striking a thing. We make special efforts to tell the kiddies to be careful not to take any chances and stress that things are much different than during the school year. Some heed the warnings, but there are always those bold souls who forget and they are the ones in trouble."

Many injuries are caused by bike riders who disregard Michigan's bicycle law. Once again

youngsters can't wait to get their bikes out and start riding up down streets and highways almost the minute classes are over.

Quickly forgotten are the laws which say bicyclists must always drive as close to the right side of the street as possible. This means traveling in the same direction the cars are going, even on 12 Mile Road.

Don't let anyone tell you that you should ride against traffic. He's wrong and you will be if you follow his advice . . . perhaps dead wrong.

Now that summer is here and classes are out, here are some tips for bike riders.

Ride in a straight line; don't weave and look before you change course.

Always stop at the curb before entering a street from an alley or a driveway. Make sure the way is safe before you enter.

If you ride a bicycle at night,

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 Dr. A. Edward Katz

It is difficult for me to understand the Observer's observations concerning past "factionalism" on the Livonia Board of Education. This reference has occurred frequently, both in news stories and editorially, most recently in Mr. Power's Observation Point of May 31, 1973.

His statement specifically was, "Livonia, whose board was famous for factionalism a couple of years ago, has gained calm with two new members...."

Perhaps I am being hypersensitive, but the "calm" has been shattered so frequently and violently during the past several months that it makes the old boards look positively tranquil. And it's a good thing for the schools. Let me explain what I mean.

DURING MY eight years on the Livonia board, I can remember many heated arguments reflecting genuine differences in opinion. However, all held each other and their views in respect. More importantly, all were united by their overriding common interest in providing the best possible education for the children of Livonia's schools.

Because of this, conflicts were resolved by majority of the educational system. This is the way the legislative process is supposed to work, and the two newest members, Mr. Akey and Mr. Pridgeon, understand and accept this.

They are not the disrupters of the current board; Mr. Stymelski and Mr. Seitz are, and have been for the past few years. They generate conflict and breed suspicion by throwing around meaningless labels when they disagree with the majority.

It is their inability to accept majority rule in this legislative body which produces the factionalism. When five board members of as diverse views as those represented on the board's 5-2 majority can reach agreement, they cannot be acting as a "rubber-stamp" for anyone. Yet such phony accusations are a way of life for the two-man faction.

To get back to the original point, when factionalism represents real divisions of opinion rather than personal antagonisms, the public should be informed.

This factionalism is not a matter of liberal vs. conservative; the five-member faction for the past few years has included both. It is, rather, education as a primary value vs. a "know-nothing" shotgun attack on our schools.

The current board is just as factional as ever, and it's a good thing for Livonia's schools that the majority faction prevails.

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