

Guest Editorial: ... On The Right To Criticize

Some recent columns have aroused the letter writers. If I question the soundness of the administration's fiscal and foreign policies, I am denounced as "anti-democratic" for not abiding by the will of the majority who elected LBJ; if I hint that the halo surrounding every move of Dr. Martin Luther King is not pure gold, but contains some elements of demagogic alloy, I am "anti-Negro." And when I point out some of the utter bigotry enshrined in the Anti-Defamation League's "Danger on the Right," I am "anti-Semitic." Had the writers seen a doctor's report which said I was allergic to some of the new drugs, I might have been called "anti-biotic," too.

And this piece will probably prove me "anti-intellectual" as well, since it conflicts with the judgments of the literary critics who have hailed "Another Country," by James Baldwin. I had heard the author was one of our authentic geniuses, but had never read him. Then I saw him on several TV panels, breathing fire and threatening genocide for the whole white race unless it met his terms, and decided to order "Another Country."

When it came, I opened it casually, read one page, cried, "Oh, no!" and took a shower, determined henceforth to confine my fiction reading to "Five Little Peppers and How They Grew." But the other day I caught the tail end of a news broadcast which indicated the Baldwin volume had been okayed by a Chicago school board, in spite of some criticism, as required reading in a junior college.

If that stunned me, it also stirred me into giving the book another chance. This time I started at page one and forced myself to go through it at one sitting, interrupted only by three baths.

I was right, you see, the first time. The philosophically opposed to censorship. I would insist there must be some other book the school board could find that more valuable in reading the young mind. Finally, I'm damned if I can see how this story of the sex life of a bunch of abysmal slobs and sluts, told in a dialogue that never uses a five-letter word when a four-letter synonym can do the trick, can be classified as literature.

Not that I'm opposed to any mention of sex. As a matter of fact, I have some very pleasant recollections on the subject and am grateful to primitive man for discovering it. Indeed, in my book it is ranked above the invention of the wheel.

Politics.... As Usual

In last week's Observer, we reported a warning from Thomas R. Nolan, Farmington Township Republican Chairman, to the fellow Township Republicans, that the Township was threatened with a political takeover by the "Union Democrats." He was referring particularly to the UAW.

We feel this statement was neither constructive nor correct. Our two-party political system differs from the multi party system which exists in most countries. Unlike the European political parties — which are relatively small groups of true believers — the Democratic and Republican Parties, in this country, are those coalitions of small groups that ignore each other much of the time.

Periodically, at conventions, these groups manage to achieve a consensus on certain issues and candidates. And they manage to work together for varying periods of time.

This system does not sound very stirring. But it has had much to do with the stability and rational progress of this nation. Labor is an important element within the Democratic Party — though a number of im-

But there is, I maintain, a demarcation line, albeit concededly shadowy and well-nigh impossible to trace with exactitude, that marks the difference between honest sex and sheer smut. And the Baldwin work clearly invades the 38th parallel, so to speak.

In this highly praised volume, any time two people—whether of the same or opposite sexes—get together, desire fills its ugly head. Boys gets girls, to be sure, but boys also gets boys. There's action on every page.

The only good I can see in it is that no kid who reads this novel is ever again to be satisfied with the pornographic "comic books" that have aroused PTA groups all over the nation. Still, if "Another Country" had pictures, it might be an even better seller. And who knows? They may appear in the next edition.

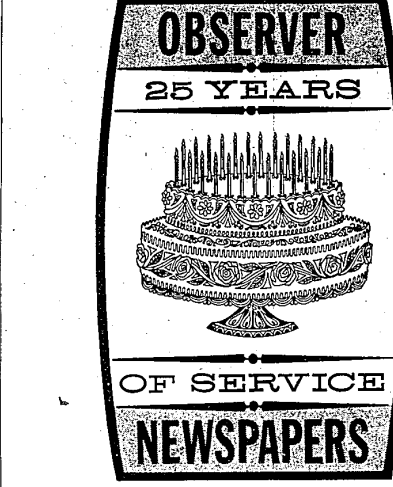
I'm not sure, feeling as I do, I'm qualified to discuss the art of creative writing. But I remember my Aristotle correctly, one of his precepts was that the audience, in order to achieve catharsis, must be able to identify itself emotionally with one of the characters.

Not necessarily the completely virtuous one. In "Crime and Punishment," for example, we suffer all the tortures, the fears and the doubts of the assassin. And the most memorable Shakespearean performance I ever saw was a portrayal of the misshapen body and soul of "Richard III" by John Barrymore, in which he played the murderous king's faults to the hilt and yet somehow kept him human and by the Barrymore magic made you completely identify yourself with him.

But I doubt even the famous "Profile" could do anything for the Baldwin cast. Would the members of the Chicago school board mind stepping forward and tell us—even if we don't pay taxes in their city—just which one of the unsavory characters in "Another Country" they identify themselves with—and why?

It might make interesting reading, even though they might retain their jobs next time around. Morry Riskin in the Los Angeles Times—

"Another Country" is a dirty book, BUT I do not doubt it is written realistically about life in a particular depraved part of New York City. Few of us are even close to it, think about, or would have the ability to imagine... And to carry Riskin's theory another step further, those of us who criticize the John Birch Society for its book banning attempts in public schools are called Communist and anti-American. Myra Chandler.



READER SPEAKS UP: 'City Needs New Parks'

Editor: No More Taxes I'd like to address this letter to the poor man's Inez Robb, Myra Chandler. I disagree with her on her economy package of "no more taxes" and "no more parks." Do you know why? Because I'm not going to approve money for more schools either. If our schools used to full capacity what we have already built it would be different. We have got to educate the rest of the kids in Livonia—and more if they come—but we have to do it with what we have—no more money for building or buying.

Although we disagree on this issue I want to be counted as one who is grateful the paper is maintaining the same policy as set by Paul (who I didn't always agree with either)—at least you take a honest stand. Please keep on being the watchdog, if you can, for that Council. JACK DRUGG.

Thank you Editor: On Thursday, Feb. 18 we were guests of the Observer Newspapers at the first annual Foreign Exchange Students' Banquet at the Mayflower Hotel in Plymouth.

In attendance were 17 foreign students (representing 10 countries, as well as their American families, the American Field Service area representatives and those from seven chapters in the Livonia, Plymouth, Farmington and Redford Township areas. We wish to express our appreciation to Mrs. Chandler and the Observer Newspapers for sponsoring the banquet (which we understand was conceived by the late Paul M. Chandler), to Ralph Lorenz for the tasty dinner and interesting commentary, to Mr. George Romney for her inspiring remarks and to Skip Brunsal for his lively entertainment.

We believe that the foreign exchange programs of the American Field Service and Youth for Understanding contribute to better understanding and peace in the world, and we are grateful to those who lend encouragement. The Joseph A. Bone family (including Jose Barretto de Azevedo, of Brazil) Nolan "Sour Grapes" Editor: The front page article in The Observer of last week, setting forth some of the quotes from a statement by Thomas R. Nolan, local GOP chairman, seems to indicate a very bad case of anticipated "sour grapes." He seems to be blinded by the obsession that mere association with a union member, any one, Republican, Democrat or Independent alike, ineligible to examine and criticize the morality or the legality of some of the official acts of the Township Board.

The assumption by any governmental officials of a "sour grapes" aura is not in keeping with the hard won tradition of American democracy and will not be a free people, as evidenced by the more than two to one vote to repudiate the morally questionable previous action of their pay raises. Mr. Nolan should realize that the more uniformed invective he spouts to uphold the "sacred cow" atmosphere the less effective he is in performing a useful service to the community. W. ALLEN NELSON.

Reasons for Parks Recreational land for Livonians, especially children and young people, is important, and so is the probable saving to taxpayers in purchasing park lands which might otherwise become subdivisions with increased government costs. But also important to most of us is the mere presence of open land with stands of mature trees and natural vegetation. Other cities impress not just with buildings and highways, but by concern for preservation of open spaces and interesting or beautiful natural features. President Kennedy, in hoping for "ordered, beautiful cities," stressed this kind of planning. The 400 acres of land along the Tarabusi Drain is one of the few remaining large pieces of such land which can be saved for public enjoyment of its slopes and valley (or which Livonia has fees), its trees, vegetation and bird life.

This is a natural drainage area, absorbing and draining surplus ground water from surrounding areas. Trees and vegetation use this water, retard its flow, and prevent the washing away of the soil. Allowing this area to remain a natural drainage area, undisturbed by earth moving, buildings or paving would mean less soil erosion and ugly gullying of its slopes and help retain its native beauty for us, incidentally, we can help a little too in this way to reduce the silting and pollution of rivers and lakes down stream to which water from this drainage eventually lead. And we can also preserve a little of Livonia's natural countryside. MRS. KING ADAMSON

Worry About Litter Reader: This is my answer to Editor, "Integration—Plan For It." Our suburbs is not integrated yet—buy why the "no need to panic?" We have property here that is over run with neighbors dogs and litter which could never be found or allowed in Detroit—or any city! Negro property owners take a pride in their land and home and a ride around Livonia will show you many white property owners who do not. We moved here thinking it an area we could be proud of but if negro families is all we have to worry about—well, just their pets and children. Maybe good neighbor laws can start being enforced in the area. We can't walk into our own yard without a pack of dogs—large and small running to us and barking until you have to go inside. We never see our neighbors just their pets and children. Maybe integration will get our neighborhood cleaned up. LIVONIA PROPERTY OWNER

Observing the Scene...

By MYRA CHANDLER You might say it's like having 1290 babies. Every issue (and in 25 years there have been 1290 Livonia editions) is like giving birth—the same breathless anticipation, sense of emergency, stress, anxiety, and finally delight—an edition is out—another miracle performed! From the first 1500 copies delivered on Wednesday, Feb. 28, 1940, to this issue of 27,750 Livonia editions, there has been loving care given by all the editors and publishers connected with the paper down through the years. To them, and to us, who still carry the cudgels, God be with us.

There is no question in my mind that our late publisher, Paul Chandler, was the conscience of the community and kept a watchful eye for unsavory deals involving land, money and the biggest bugaboo, liquor licenses. A watchful eye has been cast over the Livonia scene, looking for any outbreak resulting from the death of the watchdog.

M'thinks a trial balloon went up last week with the recommendation for a liquor license by the City Council—The applicant is George (Pete) Altes Delmar, alias Clarence, G. D. Howard.

The proposal was made by James McCann, which is not strange at all. What is strange and interesting is the fact that two Councilmen voted against the application—Dr. Dan Allen and Rudy Kleintner. Liquor licenses are usually approved by the Council unanimously. Why? There are 125 applicants, some going back to 1940 and Mr. Howard's is a new application just recently referred to the "Committee of the Whole." But it came to the Council without discussion. Most unusual.

Also the applicant's address on Norman Street in Livonia is not the same as his voting address on Greenland Court. Now that the application has been approved by five Councilmen, it will, of course, receive scrutiny by the state enforcement division in a routine way. If there are any irregularities involved they will be so stated.

On the positive side, Mr. Howard is also the Michigan Trenching Company whose contract was just renewed by the City and who does a satisfactory job. But that is a different hat.

It is always a source of disappointment to me when School Board members or administrators buckle under pressure from a few. Schools should be leaders and must protect, yet, encourage, the exposure to new ideas.

In my 10 years of viewing the school scene, I have observed the South Redford school officials under tremendous pressure, yet they have always refused to capitulate on their progressive programs.

In Plymouth this week there was immediate capitulation. A team of young people has been speaking in high schools around the state issuing an invitation to attend the Moral Re-Armament Assembly Center this summer on Mackinac Island. An assistant principal in Plymouth heard the young people speak and approved their approach and their attendance at the Monday assembly in Plymouth High School.

A teacher, several parents, and some students protested on the grounds of "religious overtones," whatever that means. Moral Re-Armament replaces no religion. It does exactly what it says. It extends an opportunity for people to learn morality. It seeks to uplift the character of people—young and old. It makes no point that is not already stressed in the Pledge of Allegiance or Star Spangled Banner. For the Plymouth High School Principal and the Superintendent of Schools to coldly cancel this engagement without observing what the assistant principal had approved was short-sighted. They went to the pressure of a few. It was a loss to many.

Yesterday's Headlines

25 Years Ago This issue marked the beginning of Livonia's oldest paper, the Livonian. Front page news for this issue included the pre-emptive of 500 new homes for the area and a request to residents to vote in the spring election April 1. 15 Years Ago The Livonian of Feb. 24, 1950 reported the open house at Bentley had been a success with over 1200 people attending. The center of attraction was the fabulous library center in the third "Federal Government Studies 10 Years Ago City's School Needs" was the headline from the Feb. 24, 1955 Livonian. In response to the city's call for Federal aid the U.S. Office of Education has sent a representative to look over the situation. Another front page article reported that the school's operating fund would be \$2 million. KERRY GUENTHER.

People

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