OBSERVER NEWSPAPERS

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Home Is Where Crime Problems Really Start

Everyone these days has the simple, one sentence answer for solving the crime problem.

Circuit Judge Arthur Moore in Oakland County wants something done before that area is invaded by the "criminal element" from neighboring cities in Wayne County. But he fails to mention that most of the Oakland County crime involves home-grown persons, including youngsters from the $80,000 mansions in the Birmingham-Bloomfield Hills areas.

Others want to hire more policemen, give them a college education, and grant them substantial pay raises.

Still others, including one or two less-than-bright members of Congress, want to temporarily suspend or ignore parts of the United States Constitution so the local police departments would not be handcuffed in handling criminals.

But the problem of rising crime rates (which is partially due to a better method of reporting crimes, some of which was occurring before but was never told to police officers) continues to climb—in spite of more policemen, better salaries for officers, improved training for officers, and numerous other programs put into effect.

But what seems to be continually ignored in the nationwide discussion is a simple four-letter word—home.

This is where the entire child development starts. If parents do their job and care what happens to their sons and daughters, then everything would be fine. If the job isn't done, then all of the policemen in the world aren't going to help us.

Aside from this Utopian view of things it should be pointed out that some misconceptions about crime should be dispelled.

First, the crime rate in the predominatly white suburbs of America is increasing much faster than in the so-called Inner City portions of urban centers (which is just another polite term for Negro ghettos which will continue to be America's shame.)

Second, criminals are not scarred persons with bad breath who can be spotted a block away and should immediately, without the due process of law, be shipped off to prison. The conviction of numerous electrical company executives several years ago in a price-fixing scandal showed that many "criminals" wear white shirts and help elderly ladies across busy street corners.

Third, the nation's newspapers should stop being so defensive on the charge by policemen who say that too much crime news triggers more crime. This is nonsense and should be stated so. The total number of column inches of crime news in any edition of a newspaper is such a small percentage of the paper that it rarely gets any unusual display, with the obvious exception of major crimes.

On suburban crime, this writer can testify of police reports in Oakland County which tell of wholly improper activities, immoral, illegal, and illogical, of teenagers from Bloomfield Hills mansions who carry on just like their poorer cousins from Detroit.

Suburban police chiefs are continually asking for more manpower and higher salaries not to only attract more competent officers into the department but to also keep the officers now on the staff from leaving for higher paying jobs in private industry.

Part of the problem, it should be noted in passing, is the society's ever-increasing cynicism toward violence and inhuman treatment of fellow human beings.

Everyone gets upset about the senseless murder of local persons, but no one seems to get upset about more than 50,000 fellow Americans killed each year in traffic accidents; or 12,000 young men who have died in South Vietnam; or the 75,000 Japanese who happened to be in Hiroshima when the first Atomic Bomb was dropped on a city; or the six million Jews who were in the wrong country at the wrong time in history.

It's about time some more parents did their "home" work and did it fast.

—Leonard Poger

Sense 'n Nonsense

Maybe the peasants can ride to work in a $3,000 car but some of us can afford to ride in a $50,000 bus.

●

If you've been around politics long enough to remember Gov. Romney's nonpartisan Citizens for Michigan you're older than a lot of people. And wiser, maybe.

●

One of the great dangers about summer television is that you'll grow to enjoy it.

●

The mayor attended a seminar sometime ago on The shape of the Suburbs. Now we're organizing a seminar in the suburbs on The Shape of the Mayor.

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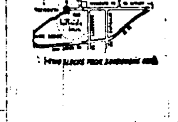


From the Publisher's Desk

OBSERVATION POINT

By Philip H. Power

THIS MORNING I drove out along Jefferson Avenue to see how things looked after the riots.

"Things were pretty messy in the street. Wisps of smoke still drifted by, but I didn't hear the shooting I had heard the night before.

"And there were the National Guardsmen, in full uniform, with bayonets on their rifles.

"This was my city, Detroit. I didn't think it would happen here. But it did.

"I had to stop for a moment and cry. I just couldn't help myself."

THAT WAS a friend of mine, talking on the telephone, just before he moved his wife and four children out of Detroit until things calmed down.

Lots of people out here in the cool, clean, white suburbs used to live in Detroit.

Today, after the riots, perhaps Detroit is a good place to be from.

It's all very nice and convenient.

You can read all about the riots in the Detroit newspapers, or see it on TV. Maybe even get a little thrill of fear when you hear that burning and looting were going on in your old neighborhood, perhaps near your older relatives and former neighbors — and are spreading out from downtown Detroit, out this way.

But as far as people living out here in Observerland seem to be concerned, the riots are fundamentally Detroit's own problem.

WELL, LET'S get one thing straight.

They aren't.

They are as much our problem out here as they are for the people living within the city limits of Detroit.

This is true for three main reasons.

First, one of the reasons the riots were sparked off was that the Negro population in Detroit has come to see itself as crushed into the ghettos of the city, without any possibility of moving out to a place where the air is clean and the streets are safe.

For this, people living in the suburbs may not be responsible; but they certainly are involved, if only because their style of life is what the majority of people living in the inner city aspire to.

Second, it appears that the looting and burning, although touched off by a riot which was racial at its start, was later on taken over by the outright criminal and hoodlum element, both Negro and white.

Reports kept coming in to this office on Monday and Tuesday of white teenagers seen smashing store windows as the looting moved out along Grand River.

Police authorities have suggested that at least some of the people doing the looting out in this direction were not residents of the inner city. If that's not involvement, what is?

THE THIRD reason is the most general but perhaps the most pertinent of all.

For a long time, some people in the suburbs have tried to argue that they and their communities are in some way separate from the inner city of Detroit.

They aren't.

In fact, the suburbs and the inner city are linked by the tightest sort of bonds.

People living in Livonia or Farmington work in downtown Detroit. Residents of Westland or Redford Township go to Detroit for art and theater. When the Detroit telephone exchanges are overloaded, as they were all through the early part of this week, suburban residents have trouble getting calls through.

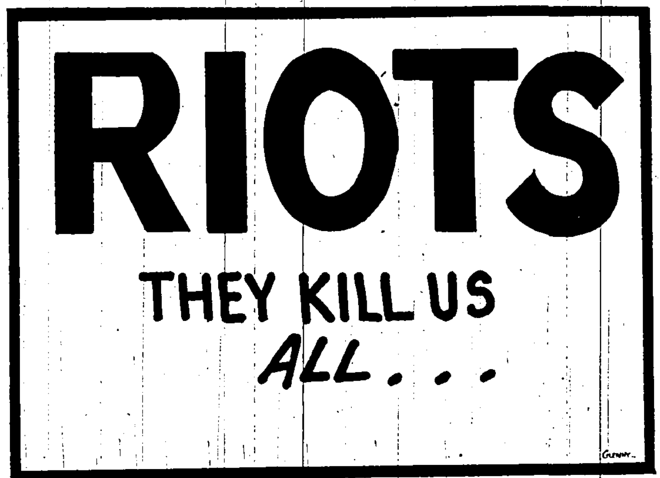
Even the Observer Newspapers, although distributed out in the suburbs, are tied to the inner city through our printing plant located downtown. If the riots continue, you may not get your Observer on Wednesday.

Involved?

You bet.

We're all involved in the worst riots since 1943.

And if we don't do anything about it, we're likely to find that the riots of July, 1967, weren't the last.



This Is The Week That . . .

. . . By Don Hoenshell

In the late 1950's when the economy was sick unto death, millage proposals were dying like an alewife in the tastily fluoridated water of your bathtub.

A school near Flint wiped out its athletic program and cancelled all but the most rudimentary of courses.

That was 1957 when the economy—in Michigan, the bread and butter automobile industry—was in a slump. Now with a boom starting to slide, the hearse is waiting 'round the bend.

This time it is government that needs extra dolars. Not extra, really, but more to provide services for growing populations, just for accommodating its people.

Like to answer a question that has been asked by concerned and harrassed taxpapayers since the ancient Egyptians built the pyramids from the sweat and blood of the people?

How long can we live with this tax burden?

Next Oct. 1, the middle-income folks will get hit hardest with the state's new 2.6 per cent state income tax. Corporations and financial institutions will pass their higher rates on in prices and interest rates.

So it's you and I—struggling with house payments and crabgrass in the backyard—who pay.

Nobody's kidding anyone.

Next year in Michigan it will cost more to get license plates for the family car, to go fishing, to get married and to enter a state park. Maybe it will cost more to smoke cigarettes.

And hundreds of tons of pollutants fall on the suburbs every day, so take it easy on that breathing, fellow.

A fellow in Detroit — and maybe in the suburban cities —will be paying a Federal income tax, a state income tax and a city income tax. That's two - accountants - in - every - house stuff.

Nationally the president's proposed 6 per cent surcharge on that old debbil income tax stands a good chance of being increased to 10 per cent.

All of this is what worries local officials, the suburbs where the middle incomes are tapped for all the rest.

Thata includes state equalized valution which will hike property taxes by up to 10 per cent on New Year's Day, a hangover even for the milk shake addict.

Public officials are reluctant to put this into the dismal package it is.

Because the schools are going to need millage, either extra or continuations of present levies. The cities, already near the deficit point, are in financial trouble. Nobody jokes much anymore.

They plead—and so do we—for perspective.

Because taxpayers are buying howitzers for GIs in Vietnam, airplane tickets and $45 a day hotel suites for legislators on junkets and vehicle safety inspections, and for a trash pickup at home means only that part of the job is done.

Taxpayers are hurting and undoubtedly there is waste in government.

But the perspective is reached only when local needs are met with the same voluntary impact as are the mandatory tax demands of state and Federal governments.

There will be millage requests in all suburban cities in the future and it's easy to write indignant stories in newspapers about tax revolts. But . . .

The state and Federal taxes indicate only how much money we make.

Local taxation, the willingness to meet the needs of the community, shows what kind of citizens we are.

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Maybe We Should Lower The Age for Everything

Today's youngsters are as mature physically, intellectually and emotionally at age 12 as 17-year-olds were five generations ago — so reports the Free Press. It has to do with better nutrition and shots causing faster growing rates.

Earlier maturity is, then, a fact of life. Unfortunately, our laws haven't been adjusted correspondingly. The reason is that lawyers seem to think in terms of precedent and tradition, and not in terms of what vitamins and inoculations are doing to the dynamics of human growth.

What we ought to do is to examine every single law that mentions an age and at least seriously consider amending them to conform to (if you'll excuse the expression) the facts of life.

For example:

Voting — Michigan's age is 21, the same as the age that an 11th century male could begin wearing armor.

Drinking — The fact is that the majority of kids have experimented more or less extensively with alcohol long before age 21. The law no longer controls a "bad minority." It is contrary to the facts of life.

Crime — If young people are going to get the benefits of voting and drinking, they ought to take on some of the responsibilities. The facts are that more and more vicious crimes are commited by teenagers. At present, a person is generally tried for a felony in circuit court as an adult only at age 17. Perhaps that age ought to be dropped to 15. Some pretty serious murders, rapes and robberies are being committed by "kids" of 15.

Work Rules — Our policy has been to "protect child labor," although the real effect has been to reduce the labor supply. If kids are maturing earlier, maybe we ought to let them go to work earlier.

Age of Consent — A lot of men are in prison today for "statutory rape" of girls of 14 who looked like a buxom 19. Biologically, 18 as the age of consent made sense a century ago, when girls reached puberty at 17. Today it's senseless.

There are other laws, but we don't have space to list them all. Rather, the governor ought to appoint a committee of biologists and anthropologists to pull together the facts about the earlier onslaught of puberty in the last third of the 20th century. Another panel of judges and lawyers ought to compile the laws that relate to persons between the ages 12 and 21.

Then the two committees ought to get together and make some recommendations to the Legislature based on the facts of life —and to heck with what the bleeding hearts, prohobitionists, churches, unions, business and the kids themselves might say.

— Tim Richard