

Industry, Si; Workers, No!

By TIM RICHARD
Managing Editor

Right in our own back yard, there are something like 5,000 or 8,000 guys of work, and yet the strike at Ford Motor Co. seems somehow remote.

At the Livonia transmission plant at Plymouth and Levan, the estimate is 5,000; at the Livonia parts depot at Plymouth and Middle Belt, about 1,000; at the Sheldon Road heater-air conditioner plant in Plymouth Township, another 1,100.

But most of those guys don't live around here.

The estimate I got talking to UAW members and leaders on the picket lines was about 10 per cent actually live in the same town where the plant is located. Most of the rest come from Detroit or the more southerly suburbs.

It brought to mind the observation of a man who has his finger on the pulse of the Plymouth community's development: "More people now work in Plymouth than live here."

IT'S ONE of the curious things about suburban municipal administration and real estate policy.

Everyone wants industrial development, but building homes that the guys who work in the plants can afford is another matter.

It has to do with per capita tax base. If you have lots of industry and control the population, you can keep the property tax rate low.

You control the population through "breathing space" zoning ordinances. Instead of 55 and 60 foot lots, you require minimums of 70 or 80 or 100 feet.

A Livonia official figures that \$35,000 homes would provide the break-even point in the tax base. That is, if industrial development is maintained, and if the average home price is \$35,000, then the property tax rate can be kept stable.

A laudable goal, keeping taxes stable.

SOME PEOPLE in Farmington a few months ago had a University of Michigan professor of public administration in to speak about local development and consolidation.

This professor said housing ought to be provided under local plans for the people who are going to work out there.

To some members of the audience, this was heresy. They are paying some pretty stiff taxes, and you don't keep taxes from soaring out of sight unless you protect your industry, and maintain the highest possible quality of residential development.

But no one argued publicly with the speaker. Humph! The guy was a professor, and what does he know about practical things?

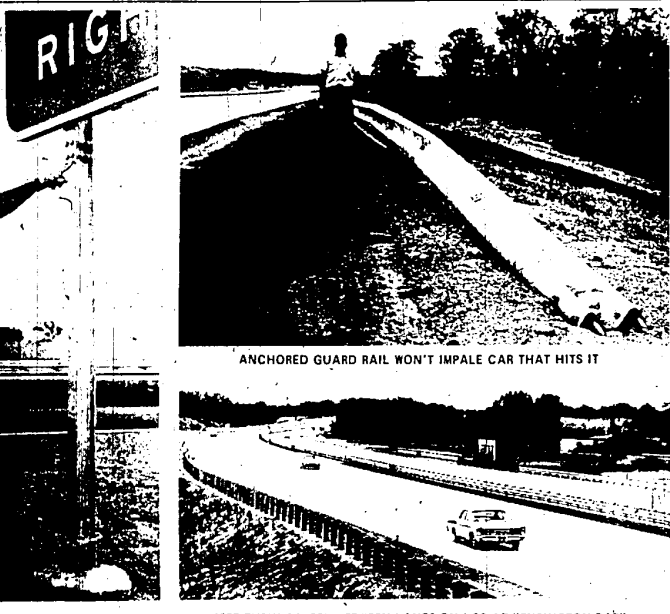
Another time, there was a dinner with some Farmington school teachers, and they complained in conversation that a lot of them didn't live—and couldn't afford to live—in Farmington. The dinner was in Danish Inn, which isn't exactly a humble cafe, so possibly the teachers were exaggerating a little.

SO HERE is the practical question facing suburbia's policy makers:

Can you lure industry's investment without having the industrial plant workers move out here, too?

And the moral question is similar: Should you lure industry to the suburbs with no intention of providing homesites for the plant workers?

The answer to both questions seems to be "yes."



ANCHORED GUARD RAIL WON'T IMPALE CAR THAT HITS IT

NEW 'BREAKAWAY' POST

'SEE-THRU' SCREEN BETWEEN LANES ON I-96 AT KENSINGTON PARK

Off-The-Road Safety Steps

No sooner had our Sept. 17 picture story on off-the-road safety hazards hit the streets than we received these pictures from the State Highway Department. The Observer story quoted 19th District Congressman Jack McDonald's comments

F'ton Players Set 'The Male Animal'

The Farmington Players will open their 1967-68 season the first week in November with "The Male Animal."

The comedy-farce, by James Thurber, will run for three weekends.

Performances will be in the Players Barn, on 12 Mile Rd. west of Orchard Lake Rd., on Nov. 3-4, Nov. 10-12, and Nov. 17-18.

THE PLAY is directed by Kaye Britton, whose work will spark the fast and funny play about academic freedom.

Joe Harper has the male lead with Joan Stone as Ellen Turner, his wife.

Others in the cast are Mildred Sullivan as Cleo, Barbara Shewell as Patricia Stanley and Hugh Schalkline as Wally Myers.

Ted Budgen will portray Dean Damon and Dennis Broadhead will appear as Michael Barnes.

Joe Ferguson is played by

SCHEDULED for mid-winter by the Players is "Anastasia," with "Barefoot in the Park" slated for spring.

Season tickets may be obtained by calling Virginia McNelly, 476-2749. Friday and Sunday night season tickets are \$5 and Saturday night season tickets are \$6.

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