

M-14 Hearing: Grumblers Silent

One often wonders about the value of public hearings on proposed freeway and highway routes by the Michigan State Highway Department.

Especially after attending the public hearing last week in Plymouth when property owners and those involved were to present their complaints about the proposed route for the expansion of M-14 through Plymouth Township.

The meeting attracted some 400 persons who must have been interested or they wouldn't have bothered attending on a night that was bitter cold and when driving conditions weren't of the best.

A CASUAL GLANCE at the audience was enough to convince us that a great majority had attended an informal hearing in the Township Hall about a year ago when things got a bit hot and heavy at times.

The Highway Department representatives did a magnificent job that night, warding off some complaints, candidly answering others and then stating in a matter-of-fact manner that the proposed route was the best in their judgment and that it probably would be the one adopted.

There shouldn't have been any question in the minds of those who attended that the Highway Department had spent months of study on various routes and finally decided this one was the least expensive and the best suited for the purpose of extending M-14.

However, there were many who left grumbling over the rather pointed statements of the highway people. Most expressed the thought, "wait until we attend the formal hearing."

Well, the formal hearing was held, as required by federal law

in instances where part of the cost comes from federal funds—and the complaints were few and far between.

Mayor Harvey Moeke, of Livonia, and Irving Rozian, former chairman of the Plymouth Township Planning Commission who was ousted by Supervisor John McEwen because his thinking didn't coincide with that of the Township Board, made the loud noise.

Rozian, a bitter opponent of the route through Plymouth Township since it will go through his dwelling, presented a case for the northerly route which swings north on Sheldon Road and then parallel to Five Mile Road. It would take part of the land presently planned by Ford Motor for expansion of the Plymouth Township Plant on N. Sheldon Road.

Moeke registered a complaint over the accessibility of entrance or exit from the proposed highway from Levan Road in Livonia to N. Sheldon Road in Plymouth Township. He pointed out that there would be a great deal of traffic from workers at plants in the area and that none could leave the freeway for more than four miles.

OTHER THAN THAT, absolute silence from the residents of Ridgewood and N. Territorial who will be affected by the route.

Perhaps they felt it would be of little value to register their complaints. Perhaps the hearing was a "cut and dried" matter, but one never knows if he doesn't speak up.

Don't be surprised if legal steps are taken in the near future—rumors have been heard of at least two proposed suits that could shake quite a few skeletons out of the closets.

—R. T. Thompson

From the Publisher's Desk OBSERVATION POINT

By Philip H. Power

One week ago, to the day, the distinguished legislature of the State of Michigan went into formal session.

This important event followed the unusual record of the 1967 special session of that self-same legislature, which was marked by a total failure to take action on either of the two issues which precipitated its being: open housing and lower court reform.

Open housing got blown out of the water, primarily because of the reluctance of suburban law makers to vote for something they knew to be morally right, but which was at the same time politically inexpedient.

Matched against this high motivation, the much-publicized absence of Governor Romney (off somewhere abroad to promote his faltering drive for the presidential nomination), was essentially unimportant.

Lower court reform, which appears to have been comprehensible only to rural justices of the peace (whose jobs would have been supposedly wiped out by the proposed bill), collapsed in a fog of vague and meaningless comment.

One wonders just how much money was spent on this particular exercise in futility. But again, we must realize that we are a democracy, and that our legislators are elected by the people. Perhaps we all deserve just what we get.

AND WHILE WE'RE on that, a story appropriate to mark the birth of the 1968 exercise in legislative leadership comes to mind. Perhaps we ought to regard it as a cautionary tale, which is to say it's the sort of thing that actually happened, but couldn't happen to us, but which at the same time has a certain moral.

It seems there was this state senator from somewhere, which shall remain nameless, in the northern part of the state. He got in during the early 1960's, and 'tis true sirrah, he was a fine figure of a man. Tall, dark, handsome, with curly hair and a suave manner. A lovely way with the ladies, and he had such a fine and handsome wife.

So fine, in fact, that it turned out that she not only controlled the family purse-strings, but also had a lot to say about her husband's vote on the floor of the Michigan State Senate.

Talk to the old-time pros. They'll tell you.

WHILE THE STATE Senate was in session, Mrs. State Senator ignored the customary place of non-legislators in the Senate galleries. Instead, she resolutely

took her place on the Senate floor—for each and every session.

In fact, her place was well known. It was on the second couch from the right hand side of the entry-way to the Senate floor. The two of them would march in together, husband and wife, the husband to take his place at the fine antique desks that grace the Senate chamber, and the wife to set herself down on the second couch from the right.

And when the matter came to a tight vote and the lobbyists were crowding around offering various (quite legal, no doubt) inducements for the legislators to vote this way and that, and while the living space around most of the Senators' desks was more crowded than downtown Calcutta, what did we see around the desk of the honorable State Senator of our story?

Nothing.

At all.

No one.

I'm serious.

Instead, all the people were cluttered around the second couch from the right. Talking to whom? To Mrs. State Senator, that's whom!

And then she would come to a judgment (some might call it a calculation, but that's a gross injustice and slur on our fine American womanhood), and she would instruct her husband on the proper way to vote his (sic) conscience. He would comply.

WELL, THINGS GOT so bad for our fine State Senator, that even he began to get concerned about his intestinal fortitude.

It was an important bill. Lobbyists offered inducements (still quite legal, no doubt) hitherto undreamt-of to those legislators still on the fence. Our Senator studied the documents, analyzed the implications, and picked up the rumors of what arguments the lobbyists were offering (presumably to his wife).

He made a judgment. He was going to vote for this bill.

Guts!

Tough man!

Stout fellow!

He revealed his sudden resolution to his wife that evening. Perhaps he expected a scene. Perhaps he anticipated that his wife would have a constructive reaction to his new courage.

From her, no comment.

Only, it should be noted, she silently disagreed.

AND NOW, GENTLE reader, we must digress to point out that our State Senator here had only one pair of shoes, which he carefully placed in his closet before retiring for the night.

Bed-time comes. Exhausted from his labors, our hero falls into a deep and satisfied sleep.

But then slumbergery comes. Friend wife is still awake.

Carefully she takes the only pair of shoes. Softly she creeps into the kitchen. Horribly she sneaks the shoes into the family refrigerator.

Day breaks.

Our hero awakens, stiffened by resolve in the high honor of public trust.

He begins to dress. Underwear. Shirt. Trousers.

Shoes. Shoes? Shoes!!

"Where are they?" the anguished cry leaps forth.

"Why, dear, I have no idea. Didn't you put them in the closet?" comes the bland answer.

"You can imagine the rest. It's soggy in Lansing (as usual). Cold. Damp. Dismal. What rational man would go out in such weather without footwear?" To paraphrase the old Chinese laundryman, "No shoesee, no votee."

Disaster.

Capitulation!

ONE CAN ONLY hope that our state legislators will listen to this modest tale, reflect on their performance during the past special session, and take heed. I wish them luck.



This Is The Week That

... By Don Hoenshell

Last week this pillar of truth and objectivity offended some policemen from chiefs down to patrolmen by calling for higher standards, before raising their pay 25 per cent.

The carnage was awful and suggested that a Michigan Bell Telephone Co. might do well to wrap the lines in asbestos.

Anyway, we always figure if a paper is big enough to take a position it should be big enough to give space to dissenters in keeping with the standards of good taste and of the liberal laws.

The Livonia Police Officers Association fired off a rebuttal and here it is, printed without editing and maintaining the misspelling of the name of Atty. Frank J. Kelley, the chief law enforcement officer of Michigan.

An Open Letter to Don Hoenshell

I think you missed your calling by not applying for the Michigan State Police instead of being a newspaper reporter, but if your recent absurd and pointless article in the January 10 Livonia Observer containing innuendos and generalizations is any indication of your abilities, I do not believe you would qualify as a private guard.

If you had taken a few moments to do a little research on the matter of police training, (other than the State Police) you would have obtained some very interesting information such as the existence of the Metropolitan Police Academy for Wayne County, the Oakland Community Police Academy, an extensive eight week course sponsored by, and primarily taught by, the FBI, and continuous in-service training classes on every conceivable facet of police work imaginable.

The officers of the Livonia Police Department take full advantage of any and all such schools we are offered, plus numerous schools which are paid for by the individual officer and he attends on his own time.

You seem to feel that Attorney General Kelly is all wet in his request for increased pay for police officers. You might try going through proper channels to secure a seat with a scout car crew for a couple of weekends and then tell us about Mr. Kelly's plan, or better yet, go down to the 10th Precinct in Detroit and tell the first police officer you see about how strange Mr. Kelly's idea is; however, be sure you are fleet of foot.

It seems to be most aggravating to you that our uniforms are similar to the State Police. To an extent you are right. Both departments wear standard issued trousers and shirts as do numerous other departments. Our uniforms were selected solely on the basis of practicability and neatness.

You have another training program that "you just would not believe". It is called "Hit the Bricks and Stop the Crime". Our probationary program out here is one year, if you make it, and you are those who do not, you are a confirmed member of one of the best police departments in the state.

Stop in at the station some time, Mr. Hoenshell. I am sure it will show wonders for clearing up the many innuendos and generalizations contained in your article.

Livonia Police Officers Association

State Of The State Romney And The Suburbs

Gov. Romney's "State of the State" message last week had something for everybody, but a number of his proposals are of particular concern to suburbanites.

Once again, the governor has proposed a "Department of Community Affairs"—a measure that could certainly aid small units of government and those which are growing rapidly.

"Such a department could assist local communities in planning, land use, housing, relocation and redevelopment problems, finance, federal liaison and public personnel requirements," Romney said.

THE FEDERAL AID problem alone would merit some sort of Community Affairs department at the state level.

For one thing, the number of federal aid programs continues to grow, and it takes almost full-time attention to keep track of them.

For another, there is some tendency for Congress to look with greater favor at systems of grants to the 50 states rather than to the tens of thousands of individual local units. This necessitates some sort of clear, formal state administrative machinery to help the local units—which after all, are creatures of the state.

Missing from the governor's message was another call for a State Boundary Commission—a unit that could make sense out of the bitter, dirty, jungle warfare between our cities and townships over annexation.

Romney's press secretary assured us, however, that the governor still favors a boundary commission, and that the item was "dropped in order to reduce the message's length."

A MATTER of concern to suburban school districts, with high family incomes but low property tax bases, is the possibility of teacher strikes in the event contracts can't be reached at the bargaining table.

Romney favors permitting collective bargaining by public employees, but he would prohibit strikes. The complicated legal question is: When are teachers really on strike? The governor's answer?

"So that there can be no question as to when teachers are on strike, I recommend that the first day as the opening day of school in the absence of local agreement to the contrary."

ROMNEY WANTS TO encourage voter approval of a Wayne County Community College District, and he said his budget message will ask \$200,000 in planning and development funds.

This should interest voters in the Bedford Union, South Redford and Wayne (Westland) school districts, who are not directly served by a community college at the moment.

Romney said his budget will include more funds for education, but they will be based on the present state aid formula. There wasn't time, he pointed out, to take into account a newly-completed, whopping analysis of school finances prepared for the State Board of Education.

ONE ROMNEY PROPOSAL will take the governor off a political hook, and it has already been endorsed by Detroit's Mayor Cavanagh—a plan to let cities levy additional excise taxes.

Although politically good, the idea seems weak in its economic. Cities presently have the property tax and a limited income tax as their major sources of revenue. To add excise taxes to this structure seems to be a step in the direction of a "patchwork" tax package. That's bad.

Moreover, excise taxes are collected a tiny bit at a time, and the man who pays them usually doesn't yell too loudly. To a politician, that's good.

But this observer thinks the tax ought to be right out where you can see it and feel it. If it be true that cities do need more money, then the Legislature should allow them to raise the rate of the income tax, and let the political chips fall where they may.

—Tim Richard

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SENSE 'N' NONSENSE

Believe it or not, there is a Westland city ordinance (number 109, in case you're interested) which contains the following section: "It shall be unlawful for any person or persons to be engaged in or aid or abet in any fight, quarrel, or disturbance in the city of Westland." This makes it rough on husbands and wives discussing new husbands and for city councilmen discussing a controversial topic.

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