

...By Philip H. Power

OBSERVATION POINT...

Crime: Our Leaders Fan The Flames Of Fear

Riots. Crime in the streets. Violence. Racial agitators, both white and black.

Make no mistake about it. This is the agenda for this election year and, quite possibly, for some years to come. Beside this complex of worries, even the war in Viet Nam pales, mainly because Viet Nam is halfway across the globe and violence in the streets lurks just outside our front door.

Senator Philip Hart just released a poll which showed that over one third of people are afraid to walk alone out of doors in their own neighborhoods at night. The percentage is probably much higher in primarily Negro areas.

When you have this many people actually frightened — with a fear that is so sharp and concrete that it strikes every time night falls — you've got political dynamite.

HERE IN OBSERVERLAND and throughout the country the point at issue is not whether these concerns with race and violence are real. They are; to ignore them would be to stick your head in the sand.

Rather, the crucial point is how these concerns are to be handled by our society, by our political and local government leaders, and by ourselves. Responsibly? Punitively? Inflammatorily? Calmly?

We may well have more violence this summer in Detroit; here as in the Negro community who are seriously advocating violence; crime in the streets is increasing.

These are facts. The issue is what we choose to do about them and how we go about doing it.

THIS IS a very difficult issue for two interrelated reasons.

1) Human instinct. When faced with violence, it's instinctive to react with violence, to demand an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

The big problem with this solution is that although it may work in the short run, it doesn't really solve anything. Violence met with violence will in turn result in intensity.

The long run solution to the problem of crime in the streets

or riots in Detroit is not counter-violence or repression or fear; rather it is to sort out the basic causes of crime in the streets or riots and do something to eliminate them.

This is not do-gooderism. It's hard-headed realism because it seeks a real solution to a serious set of problems and not just temporary relief.

And it's just this sort of constructive and realistic approach that is so difficult to take because it goes against our instinctive reactions.

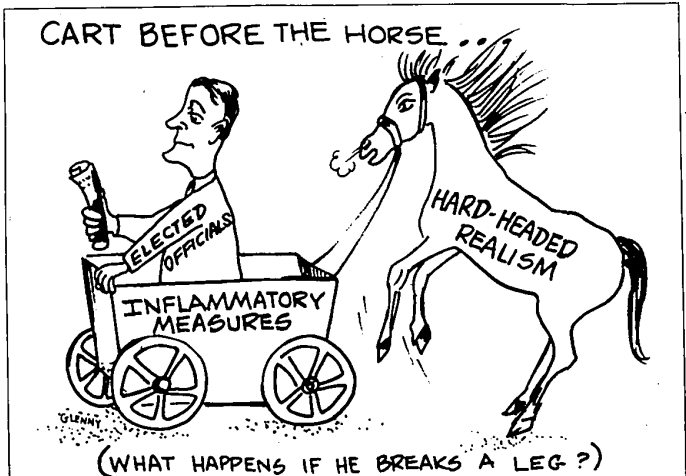
2) THESE CHOICES MUST be made within a community context, and the leaders charged with making choices must both lead and be responsive to their communities. Here in Observerland, where people are almost entirely white and where many have fled from the inner city for fear of advancing Negroes, this problem becomes a serious matter.

It's easy to take the irresponsible route — which may well be the popular one with the voters — by crying about the coming invasion by rioters, by demanding stigmatization of certain sorts of criminals, by making inflammatory statements, by stirring of the kind of fear which itself prohibits a long-run solution to our problems.

It may be popular, but it's dangerous in the long run, for an inflated community is hardly in a position to think rationally about long-run solutions to immediate problems like riots and crime.

RIGHT NOW, IT'S an open question whether certain leaders in Observerland will have enough sanity and responsibility to talk about long-run solutions. In fact, there is some evidence to suggest that some leaders are flirting with irresponsibility — perhaps for the sake of courting popularity, perhaps for other reasons. The hearing of the Michigan State Senate's Crime Investigating Committee, held last week in northwest Detroit and reported in this paper on Sunday offers a case in point.

Negro witnesses at the hearing were openly heckled by the audi-



ence, and one Negro resident of Northwest Detroit, Willis Tabor, was rudely badgered by State Senator Stanley F. Rozycki of Detroit.

The Committee didn't try to maintain much order at the meeting, as Jackson Republican Sen. James Fleming explained, because "We did let the people be more expressive of their opinions than we would normally at a public hearing because we wanted to get the real feeling of the people and what they want and need."

Evidently, lack of courtesy and outright rudeness was what the Committee thought the people wanted.

Whether this contributed real solutions to the problem appears to have escaped the Committee's attention.

IN LIVONIA, with the political pot boiling merrily along and elections scheduled for April 1, Mayor Harvey W. Moecke weigh-

ed in a week ago with an order setting up a police-administered gun school.

The Mayor took action after being advised that the number of gun permits issued in Livonia had more than doubled after the Detroit riots last summer. Moecke said safety for present gun owners was the main goal of the school, although he did not — perhaps because he couldn't — explain just why the school would not act as an invitation for more Livonia residents to apply for permits.

"Our police and law enforcement agencies... are capable of handling any unpleasant situations," Moecke also said. "It is their problem, not the problem of individuals. People need not feel that they must protect themselves." The Mayor also contended that idle talk about "like-tribution to unrest."

Somehow one wonders why the Mayor didn't apply his own admirable words to the gun school he was so happy to have publicized in the first place.

PERHAPS THE MOST troubling example of this problem came to light in Redford Township, where Police Chief Edwin Gleza has been giving a series of semi-public briefings about the plans of Negro militants for this summer.

Gleza was very explicit in his remarks addressed to the Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs and to the Redford Chamber of Commerce. According to Redford Observer Editor Dennis Pajot, who attended two of the briefings, phrases like "kill a white child in the suburbs" or "dynamite police stations" or "blow up suburban communities" were used.

Now it should be made clear that Gleza said he wasn't predicting that these things would happen in Redford Township or,

indeed, that they would happen at all this summer. He added that he was giving the briefings because he felt a responsibility to keep the business community, a "potential target" this summer, fully informed and that he wanted to build confidence that police officials were on top of the situation.

GLEZA MAY BE right. But simple prudence also requires that officials do so in such a way as not to inflame the community with rumors of distortions of their remarks. There is evidence this has happened with Gleza's comments.

Two members of a local public utility company's security staff have already called State Police authorities, inquiring about the substance of Gleza's speeches and expressing surprise that such statements could be made at public meetings. Reportedly, other local police chiefs were shocked at the explicit nature of the briefings.

Gleza himself is aware of the problem. "The reason we don't want to make this material too public is that it might incite the whole white community," he has said.

He is quite right. It isn't clear, then, why Gleza was so explicit in his briefings; he could have accomplished his aims without talking about murdering white children. Nor is it clear why, if Gleza wanted his remarks kept entirely confidential, he set up his briefing before semi-public meetings.

THE ARGUMENT is not that we should ignore the possibility of trouble this summer or in the future.

Rather, it is that there are ways of doing this which avoid excesses which can inflame and terrify people in ways which will make a long-run solution to the problem of violence that much harder. Law officers and public officials know better than most that a terrified community is a volatile and dangerous community.

Hopefully, people will reflect on this truth as the coming days lead us toward the long hot summer.

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It would make you proud to win a picture-taking contest.

It would also make you proud to win a newspaper design contest.

But it makes you five times as proud to win a contest based on usage of pictures, because it means selecting a and blending pictures with the total appearance of the paper.

That's the kind of contest our Farmington paper won. The Farmington Enterprise & Observer took first place in usage of pictures in a contest sponsored by the Michigan Press Association.

IT WAS A SPECIAL sort of triumph for us.

We'd been trying to get away from the country weekly kind of pictures in which a committee of seven sits and stores at the camera.

Yet we wanted to stick with local people and local subjects.

We figured we were on the right track when we began getting compliments not only from club publicity chairmen who were in the pictures, but from you, the readers, who appreciated a thoughtfully-prepared newspaper.

The Michigan Press Association judges sort of endorsed our opinions.

THE AWARD WAS won by a lot of people.

Frances Evert, our contract photographer, probably took the majority of the pictures and responded continually when the editors asked for fresh angles and off-beat poses.

Her husband, Ralph, also shot some photos and is largely responsible for the fine quality of prints that we received.

Shirley Berger, formerly of the Enterprise staff, came up with a number of picture assignments and the idea for an antiques feature.

Page after page contains feature stories — and the photo assignments — worked up by the talented Elizabeth Wissman.

Sue Shaughnessy, current chief of the Farmington news staff, was responsible for the front section layout of the June 11 entry.

Sunday Editor Tim Richard personally photographed a number of assignments and designed the June 11 picture page, "Warm, Muddy Waters," about the late spring floods.

Sure, a lot of people have won photo contests with one lucky shot. But this one took a lot of shots, a lot of hard-nosed selecting, a lot of designing — and a lot of good people who get out and cover the news without waiting for it to come to them.

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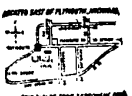
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