



By Philip H. Power, Publisher

# OBSERVATION POINT

## Legislative Process Breaking Down In Tangle Of Politics

The legislative process in the State of Michigan is not working.

The present State Legislature was elected in November, 1970. In 1971 the Legislature passed the age of majority package (important law, but easy to pass), somewhat less repressive drug laws, no-fault divorce, and an increased income tax rate. So far this year, the Legislature has adopted a miserably watered-down billboard control bill and legislation to help finance a new stadium in Detroit.

Still up in the air are congressional apportionment, overhaul of the state criminal code; wiretapping, off-track betting, no-fault auto insurance, abortion reform, continuation of the 1.3 per cent income tax, and the entire 1972-73 budget. Of these, all except the budget bills were introduced in 1971.

It's a terrible record, and one which hurts us in the suburbs more than other groups in the state; because the changes in our society which require legislative remedy hit us in the suburbs faster and harder than elsewhere.

WITH ONLY seven weeks left before the summer recess effectively ends any meaningful legislative activity, the temptation is to call them all a bunch of narrow-minded goons and hope they all get licked when they try to run for re-election.

While there may well be some merit in this approach, it isn't entirely fair or analytic of the problems the Legislature has faced over the past two years.

Two heavily emotional issues - reapportionment and cross district bussing - have been very important in botching up the normal legislative process. State Rep. Marvin Stempien (D-Livonia) estimates that these two matters alone have chewed up at least one-quarter of the Legislature's time over the past year.

The thrust of the reapportionment issue is purely political and self-interested. Any legislator wants to be sure that his own chances for re-election are not hurt by any redistricting that might be done; when it comes to a politician saving his own skin, normal legislative procedure be damned!

Complicating the apportionment question are the ambitions of many state legislators to carve out congressional districts for

themselves. Sometimes this ambition is acted out fairly responsibly (locally, Stempien and State Rep. Dan Cooper, representing Southfield, are examples). Other times (John Bowman of Roseville being the best illustration), personal ambition replaces public responsibility.

The impact of bussing is well known. In the Legislature it produced the most emotional debate in many years and this cut entirely across normal political lines. Democrats were raging at Democrats, and Republicans at Republicans; leadership powers over delegations were accordingly reduced to nothingness.

A FURTHER explanation of the futility of the Legislature lies in the complicated question of the budget.

Last Friday, in one of the most important votes this year, the State Senate rejected an effort to put a property tax - graduated income tax referendum on the November ballot.

As State Sen. Carl Pursell (R-Plymouth) points out, you can't have much meaningful discussion about what to do with government policy until you have settled the matter of how you are going to get the money. This issue has been at the heart of legislative inaction for at least three years now, with the major hangup being the refusal of majority Republicans in the State Senate to accept the idea of a graduated income tax - an idea endorsed by Republican Gov. Milliken, the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, and the Michigan Manufacturers Association.

Frankly, I do not expect the Legislature to sort out this problem itself. The governor and Atty. Gen. Frank Kelley have asked the State Supreme Court to rule on the matter of property taxes, and it now looks as though the court will direct a solution where the Legislature has been unable to act.

WHAT DOES this chronicle of failure and futility mean?

First, that the legislative process is effective when issues are clear enough for meaningful debate and compromise is possible. That is not the case this year.

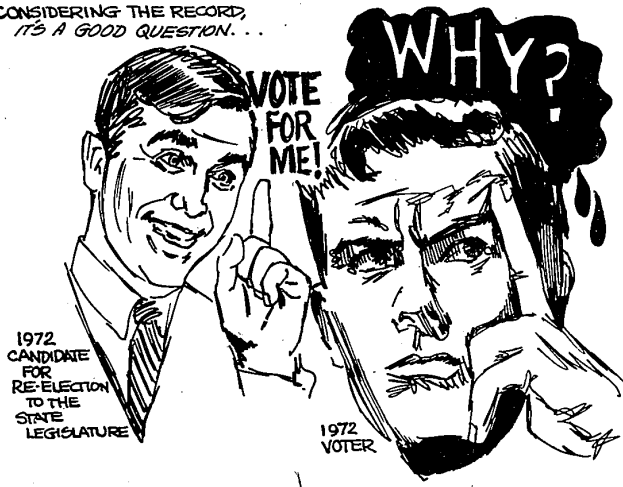
Second, the legislative process does not work when highly emotional issues (self-interest in reapportionment, bussing) are involved.

Third, despite these two very understandable explanations for failure this year of the

Legislature, when the guys hit you up this fall for your vote, you might well ask them what

in blazes they were doing while everything was going to pot up in Lansing.

CONSIDERING THE RECORD, IT'S A GOOD QUESTION...



1972 CANDIDATE FOR RE-ELECTION TO THE STATE LEGISLATURE

1972 VOTER

Tim Richard writes

## Answer These Questions --And You'll Be Typed

OK, so John Sinclair is a radical, Hubert Humphrey a liberal, Bob Dole a conservative and Carl McIntyre a reactionary.

But how about yourself? What are you, politically, and how can you be sure? You don't have a chance to vote on all the congressional bills or even study them, and thus to build up a voting record.

Well, here's a test to help you gauge your own political instincts. It's not composed of legislative bills but of "gut" words aimed at an emotional response. (It'll also give you a laugh or two, perhaps.)

Two simple rules: You're not talking into a microphone, so be honest and don't write the answer that you think is expected of you; and if no answer suits you, pick the one that suits your feelings best.

1. IRENE McCABE (a) deserves every !?/& blister; (b) is slightly zany; (c) is sure pretty and peppy; (d) will stand in the history books with Barbara Fritchie.

2. X-rated movies are (a) a tool of the "devil," who is really the nature god Pan; (b) not really dirty to psychologically normal people; (c) dirty and should be boycotted or prohibited; (d) dirty, a tool of the Devil - and there really is a Devil.

3. Franz Liszt was (a) huh? (b) a figure of minor importance in musical history; (c) a musical genius due for a well-deserved revival; (d) forerunner of these long-haired musicians living in sin with a succession of women.

4. "Dirt" conjures up images of (a) the good Earth, (b) a middle class, white, suburbanite hangup; (c) filth, to be eliminated by deodorants and Mr. Clean; (d) what hard working folks aren't afraid to get on their hands.

5. Southfield is (a) a cold, commercial wasteland; (b) a

swinging, art-conscious, sophisticated community; (c) a concrete jungle; (d) a suburb of Tel Aviv.

6. BLACK PEOPLE are (a) better than white honkies; (b) disadvantaged, and I'll support federal programs to help them; (c) equal to white people, when they work; (d) a danger to property values.

7. Parks (a) should never be patrolled by police; (b) are good for a community; (c) are good for a community, but not near my subdivision; (d) a lure to pot-smoking hippies, and we homeowners don't want 'em.

8. Judge Roth is (a) crazy for being so slow; (b) crazy but courageous; (c) crazy; (d) crazy, and we'll lynch him if he comes to our PTA meeting.

9. Schools should be financed by (a) steeply graduated income taxes on giant corporations and have student-faculty boards of education;

(b) more federal aid; (c) a limited income tax, preserving local control; (d) less than they are, because those teachers and administrators just inflate their own salaries.

10. Kids should (a) drop out of school after eighth grade to avoid becoming trainees for technology and dupes of capitalist advertising; (b) take lots of sociology and intergroup relations; (c) take business administration and engineering; (d) drop out of school after eighth grade to avoid tinkering by sociologists.

TALLY THE number of answers by letter. The "a" answers are geared to attract radicals; the "b" answers, liberals; the "c" answers, conservatives; the "d" answers, reactionaries. If you are intellectually consistent, you should see a pattern of letters and thus be able to classify yourself.

## Sense And Nonsense

President Nixon said early in his administration that he favors social integration of the races and told black leaders to "watch what I do and not what I say."

Two years ago, during a furor over the threat of forced integrated housing in Warren, Nixon said he doesn't favor "forced" housing integration.

Several weeks ago, President Nixon said he doesn't favor "forced" integration of public schools. This came just two days after Florida voters overwhelmingly endorsed an anti-school bussing amendment to the U.S. constitution.

Well, Mr. Nixon has made it perfectly clear where he stands on integration.

Livonians either do or don't have their priorities in the right order ... depending on how you feel about the hockey craze sweeping the suburbs.

A Livonian who is involved with the Ford Rink ice show revealed that after a long session of trying to turn 500 students into a polished team of performers, she and a friend retired to a local bar to talk things over.

There they met a group of Livonians who were just coming from a hockey banquet.

"First," our informant said, "we talked about hockey. Then we talked about figure skating. And then we talked about sex."

## Board Gets A Mandate

Farmington residents turned out in record numbers April 24 to defeat a Farmington Schools' request for 3.5 mills for one year. That vote must not only be accepted as being record but should be viewed as a mandate of the people to operate the schools with funds available.

The outcome was close, 205 vote margin, and it is amazing that 5,980 residents did see fit to vote "YES" on the question when additional school millage questions are dropping like dead flies across the state. But 50 per cent of the district's registered voters turned out and, bitter as it might be, the outcome must be accepted and trims made.

IT WOULD be ill - advised for the school board to attempt another millage election during 1972.

The best chance to pass the millage was on April 24 because a strong campaign was conducted and met by minimum group opposition. The climate was ideal for passage, except for fears of cross - district bussing and taxpayers' fed up with rising home assessments.

With George Wallace campaigning for president, bussing will remain an emotional cloudburst until November regardless of what decisions are made by Judge Stephen Roth or what appeals are filed. Assessments will continue to rise and relief will never come until legislators get off their duffs and put a meaningful educational reform package on the ballot.

The temptation for the school board to try another election is strong because who among us would enjoy having to decide how to trim \$400,000 from a \$17 million operating budget that already is fatless from trims made by two millage defeats last year.

TRIMMING that \$400,000 may require eliminating all extra - curricular activities, including varsity sports. It could mean laying off another 40 teachers in addition to those laid off last year, or closing a school down, or going on half - day sessions.

The board's challenge is to make those trims in the most judicious manner possible, but the cuts should be made and attempts for another millage vote forgotten about until 1973.

The criteria should be to trim in such a manner as to hurt students less. At this point, we can forget about hurting parents and alumni but should concentrate on trimming \$400,000 in such a way to do least harm to students.

Especially important are the losses which must be borne by elementary pupils. Last year, the cuts unfairly hurt the elementary youngsters more than secondary students. Decisions like this should not be repeated.

The actions which must be taken will seem drastic to school trustees and the 5,980 residents who voted in favor of the millage. But some lessons, in this country must be learned outside the classroom and, in Farmington, must be learned by 6,185 adults who must be slapped in the face with the truth instead of having it penetrate their ears.

-Emory Daniels

## Editorial & Opinion

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