



By Philip H. Power
Publisher

OBSERVATION POINT

Regional Task Force Could Bring Realism To Area's Crisis

Last week saw a meeting take place which has enormous potential importance to the suburbs and to the entire Detroit metropolitan area.

Called by Gov. Milliken and Housing and Urban Development Secretary Romney, the gathering brought together some 250 leaders in the public and private sectors in this area to consider the emerging urban crisis and — much more importantly — to figure out what to do about it.

Romney set the context for the meeting at the very start: "There is no longer any valid reason for setting central city against suburb, white against black or brown. . . While today we are preoccupied with the narrow legal boundaries of our central cities and the many municipalities around them, it should be possible for us to retain the values of decentralized and small scale government where these are constructive and helpful, and at the same time to pioneer new and innovative ways to deal with the essential unitary problems of the whole real city region."

What Romney was really saying is that we are in the middle of a crisis in this metropolitan area, with a patchwork of local governments wasting resources and tax dollars and no clear way of effectively solving pressing problems that are area wide in scope.

SOUTHFIELD'S Lawrence Pernick, chairman of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners, added a suburban dimension to the problem.

"The suburbs now have double Detroit's population," Pernick noted. "But regardless of where people live in the

area, they are lost in the bureaucratic shuffle which too often fails to recognize that it's people who have problems, not local government units.

"The time has come to review the traditional roles of local government, as conditions change and as problems develop. In my view, what is needed is to keep the structure of local government units, but to make them more coherent in an area wide efficiency sense."

Robert Fitzpatrick, chairman of the Wayne County Board of Commissioners, set the focus of the gathering in terms of selecting one of a set of options concerning local government in this area: (1) Retain the status quo; (2) set up a task force to review ways to correct the urban imbalance problem; (3) create some form of metropolitan government.

PARTICIPANTS BROKE down into discussion groups to consider these options. Discussion was spirited and frank, particularly in view of the fact that most people there realized that the time had come for action and not merely more palaver.

Arguments against setting up an all - powerful metropolitan government were many. Suburbanites were reluctant to see their smaller local governments with advantages of being close to people submerged in a swamp of metro government. Inner city blacks argued that metro government represented not much more than an effort to dilute black power, just now beginning to take over the City of Detroit. Equally, everybody was against doing nothing while chaos continued to descend on the area.

The final recommendation was that Gov. Milliken, in

consultation with Detroit Mayor Gribbs and the county boards of Oakland, Wayne and Macomb, select a small task force to make action recommendations within a short period of time.

ALL THIS SOUNDS like another edition of ho hum, with the same people talking about the same old problem, with the same old task force idea being proposed to recommend old solutions.

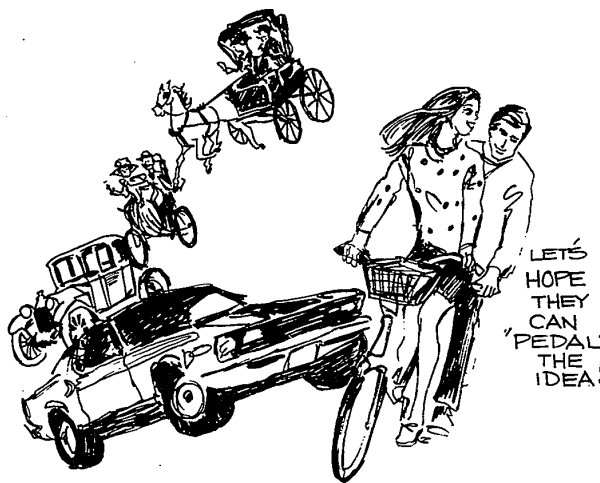
I don't think that is so in this case. What was really happening at the meeting was that two important developments finally came to the surface.

1 - The fact that this metropolitan area is in a crisis is at last apparent to not only suburban folks and Detroit folks, but also to Gov. Milliken and Sec. Romney. By involving directly the prestige of these two men, state and federal government commitment to a solution has been insured.

2 - It is now clear that the essentially voluntary approach to problem solving advocated by the Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments has some serious defects. What the task force will really be doing is looking carefully at the metropolitan problem and at the potential of SEMCOG as presently established to do anything about it.

The task force may or may not come up with anything worth while. But the fact that it exists, with the sanction of state and federal governments, means that there is a healthy awareness that what has been done up to now about solving the problems of this region has been essentially ineffective.

Let's hope the task force gets to work quickly, and that it comes up with a tough, specific, action - oriented report.



Tim Richard writes

Bicycles Are Slow, Noiseless And Rank High In Popularity

The guys with the mini-bikes and ATVs (all-terrain vehicles) are making all the racket, but the truth of the matter is that the bicycle is becoming the most popular vehicle in America.

This year, for the first time since 1897, more bicycles — some 10 million — than automobiles will be sold in this country.

Not only is cycling a slenderizing form of recreation, but 80 million Americans are looking on it as a way to avoid burning up irreplaceable fossil fuels and clearing the air.

Unfortunately, government policy has been weighted against the ecologically clean methods of transportation, such as bicycles and rapid transit, and has favored the gas-guzzling dinosaur, the two-ton car.

But things are changing — locally, in Lansing and in Washington.

SOUTHFIELD HIGH'S ecology students, supervised by teacher James Bugg, are

working to get bicycle trails through the city to such places as the Tel-12 Mall, the Civic Center, the two public high schools, Northland and the Franklin Cider Mill.

Sophomore Jayne Sharp and Junior Pat Vachon have been going after the city's highway department for signs to mark the routes. But whether they'll get actual trails, too, remains to be seen.

In the state capital, Sen. Carl Pursell of Plymouth is working on the appropriations committee to earmark money for a bicycle trail along the Edward Hines Parkway. He has some clout there, so his chances of success are good.

Hines Park, when you think of it, is an excellent spot for bicycle trails. It runs along the Middle Rouge River, and that will make for a pleasant atmosphere. The parkway itself is 17 miles long, and that will mean long, uninterrupted stretches of cycling room.

IN WASHINGTON, U.S. Rep.

Marvin Esch has introduced a bill to use some of the highway trust fund for the construction of bicycle lanes along roads.

Esch, a guy who thinks in 21st century terms, advises us that only local units of government may apply for funding for bicycle routes, and he is encouraging communities in his 2nd Congressional District (Plymouth, Northville, Livonia) to do so.

"This is not a fad," says Esch. "It is a sincere desire on the part of nearly 80 million Americans to combat pollution, clear the air and come up with a new form of transportation that can take its place in a balanced transportation system. Yet there are scant numbers of bike-ways for those who want to enjoy this form of exercise, recreation and transportation."

And Transportation Secretary John Volpe, another 21st century type, adds: "As far as I am concerned, bicycles have equal rights with automobiles on our cities' streets."

R. T. Thompson writes

Take Advantage Of Measles Shots

Thanks to the efforts of the Redford Township Jaycees with the cooperation of the Wayne County Health Department, youngsters throughout Observerland between the ages of one year through age 11 will receive measles and rubella vaccine free Saturday.

The measles and rubella vaccine will be offered in both the new one dose combination and in separate shots.

The big thing about the program is that youngsters from any part of Western Wayne County may participate. The program isn't being made available just to those in Redford Township but rather for youngsters anywhere provided they are accompanied by parents or other responsible adults.

The shots will be available Saturday morning from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at two sites, the

Redford Township Hall at 15145 Beech Daly and the North End fire station at 18300 Beech Daly.

THIS IS A program that should earn the interest of all parents with children in the age range. So much has been written in recent months about the dangers of measles and rubella that all should participate.

The Jaycees have listed some "should" and "should not" on the registration sheets which will be available at the two sites.

Those who should have free MEASLES vaccine include all healthy children 12 months through 11 years of age who have never had regular 7-10 day measles, regular hard measles vaccine, or have had measles vaccine when less than a year old.

THOSE WHO should have free RUBELLA vaccine are all healthy children 12 months through 11 years who have never had rubella (German measles) vaccine.

Those who should not have rubella vaccine are: children with a high fever on day of clinic; children with known allergy to rabbits, ducks, chickens and neomycin; and children receiving immunization within past 30 days.

The program gives parents a chance to have their children immunized at no cost.

Editorial & Opinion

OBSERVER NEWSPAPERS, INC.

Philip H. Power, Publisher

The Livonia Observer - The Redford Observer
The Westland Observer - The Garden City Observer
The Plymouth Mail & Observer - The Southfield News & Observer
The Farmington Enterprise & Observer



Member
SUBURBAN
NEWSPAPERS
OF AMERICA



Published by Observer Newspapers, Inc.
36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, Mich. 48150

Serving the communities of:
Livonia, Plymouth, Plymouth Township, Canton Township, Farmington
Farmington Township, Redford Township, Garden City, Westland,
Southfield, Lathrup Village, Bingham Farms.

A Year Has Passed ... Still No Clues

By R. T. THOMPSON

In this day and age when we seem to be able to solve all types of problems without too much trouble, it seems strange that just a year ago at this time a teenage senior from Livonia Bentley High was struck and killed by a hit-and-run driver...and the case is still a deep mystery to this day.

There have been no clues, no information, no reports from secret witnesses — just a big blank wall as Livonia police officers still look at the accident reports and wonder how a driver could strike and kill a person in the bright sunlight of late afternoon in May and vanish completely.

It was just a year ago, a few weeks before she was to have been graduated from Bentley High, that Chris Beattie was killed.

Her parents appealed to residents of the neighborhood, to anyone who had witnessed the accident to come forward and tell what they knew. They even offered \$1,000 for a secret witness fund...and nothing has happened.

One wonders how it is possible for such things to happen in this modern society...but there it is. A hit-run fatal accident on a bright May afternoon and not a single clue a year later.

We read about such accidents in surrounding suburban communities, and many go unsolved. It just doesn't seem possible that such a death driver could go an entire year without being nabbed, but such is the story of the Chris Beattie death.

For more than a year we have written about this sad incident. We still believe that someone, somewhere, will come up with the information police need to solve the case. Who knows, perhaps the driver will drop in on police and give up? One can't go forever with such a thing hanging over one's head or on the conscience...at least we don't believe one can.