



By Philip H. Power
Publisher

OBSERVATION POINT

Primary Election Leaves Busing Issue Still Deeply Frustrated

To frustrate is a transitive verb. The dictionary in my office says it means:

"1. to make (plans, efforts, etc.) of no avail; defeat; baffle; nullify.
2. to disappoint or thwart (a person)."

It is also the best word I can find to describe the net results of yesterday's primary election, which turned more than any I have ever seen on people's strong feelings about one issue: busing.

Virtually every candidate who appeared on yesterday's ballot was against busing. Some important races for congress and for the state house were decided on the basis that voters felt one candidate was more firmly opposed to busing than another. Discussions, speeches, ads, and leaflets concentrated on busing

nearly to the exclusion of other issues.

But after all the rhetoric and sound and fury, the situation is just about as it has been for the past six months: The overwhelming majority of people living in the suburbs fear and detest the idea of their children being bused to some inner city school, but they sense that there is very little they themselves can do to stop it. That's frustration.

SOME PEOPLE and some newspapers have attacked local politicians for being excessively concerned with the busing situation, to the exclusion of thoughtful discussion of other important issues.

That's a fair enough point to make, given the importance of tax reform, land use control, housing scandals, mass transit,

and so on. But when balanced against the passion that people here feel about the busing issue, these admittedly important issues fade into insignificance.

The politicians know this, and although they might like to discuss other things than busing, they also know full well that in a political system where office holders are supposed to represent to at least some degree the concerns of their constituents they have a realistic obligation to talk about the central overriding concern of the day.

That's busing. And although there is very little a county drain commissioner or a township trustee or a local judge can do about affecting the way the busing thrash turns out, the demands of the electorate that these candidates talk about busing are irresistible.

THE REAL point of frustration now, of course, is that we have voted and our candidates have either won or lost, we are all still just where we were before election day with respect to busing.

Judge Roth is still issuing orders of various sorts. The Circuit Court of Appeals is still cranking up for an appeal hearing on the busing ruling, and the U.S. Supreme Court is still standing majestically in the wings waiting for an eventual appeal.

And the ordinary guy who hates the idea of seeing his kid bused away but who isn't a

lawyer stands around wondering what in blazes he can do.

That's why things like local advisory votes on busing, even though they have no bearing at all on the way the issue turns out, have such a high voter turnout. And that's why candidates for offices which have no way of affecting the busing issue win elections on a strong anti-busing stand.

And that's why anti-busing meetings like last week's in Livonia draw such a big crowd, even though the outcome of such a meeting probably won't affect the issue much.

It may be fashionable to call all the outpouring of words and meetings and advisory votes pointless and ill-directed. But they do offer something very important to people who feel frustrated in their need to do something directly to express their feelings about busing.

After all, busing is the most deeply felt issue to hit this area since the depression. And if you felt that some court was about to order a depression purely on the basis of its legally constituted authority, wouldn't you be going to anti-depression meetings?

Tim Richard writes

Put Blame Where It Belongs

ST. IGNACE

In this little resort town at the north end of the Mackinac Straits Bridge, a small band of long-haired collegians is digging away the ground around the little statue of Father Jacques Marquette in the cemetery next to the Catholic church.

They have my strong sympathy, these archaeologists and students from Michigan State University, because as a newsman who has conducted investigations with bits and pieces of evidence, I have a "feel" for their problem.

THE TEAM, headed by the blond, bearded Dr. Jim Fitting, is looking for the foundations of Pere Marquette's mission church and other buildings that clustered along the northern shore of Lake Huron in the 1670s.

From tiny shreds of evidence sifted from the soil, archeologists can make fantastic deductions about what sort of society existed on this outpost of Christian civilization three centuries ago. And so the area is staked out and divided by strings, and each shovelful of dirt is sifted and strained for clues.

What was in the buildings? How were they arranged? Was Pere Marquette's church arranged on an east-west axis, in the style of European cathedrals, or parallel to the shore?

And especially, what kind of impact did the fur traders have on the economy of the Huron and Algonquin Indians?

Dr. Fitting says the businessmen's impact must have been

"tremendous," but businessmen, unfortunately, don't write histories or diaries, and so there is little written evidence on their activities.

One French explorer, Dr. Fitting said, made latitude and longitude surveys, did soundings of the harbor and may have had accurate maps of the shoreline. But in one of those accidents which profoundly affects history, the civilian explorer's canoe was upset on the way back to Montreal, and all his records were lost.

So what do we really know about St. Ignace or the Joliet-Marquette trip down the Mississippi? This evening I delved into four different histories of the region, and repeatedly the foot notes refer to "Jesuit Relations" — the tales related in reports by the missionary priests of the Society of Jesus.

This is not to knock clergymen. This is only to say that they wrote chiefly about the things they were interested in — saving souls — and not about the real history of the place.

Any student of history knows that traders, with their iron kettles, iron axes, beads, iron fishhooks, brandy and rum, did far more to destroy the economy and society of the Indians than any black-robed Jesuit or blue-coated soldier. And yet the traders almost never wrote history.

I THOUGHT OF these things as I read the newspaper accounts (when the bass weren't biting) of the proceedings in the Judge Roth school desegregation case.

The Detroit papers and ours have done a brilliant job of covering the court case and the anti-busing meetings, yet like the "Jesuit Relations," we have failed miserably to tell what the private economy — the builders, developers, Realtors (that's a trademark, and they want it capitalized), and common homeowners — have done to create this segregated society.

We report the trivia at township board and city council meetings, which are public, but never get into the board meetings of the Realtors and developers, where the real power to segregate is exercised.

So that's why I stood at the edge of the MSU "dig" at St. Ignace, with my camera around my neck like any fugitive tourist, reflected on the problems of writing the story of mankind, and said a silent prayer to St. Ignace Loyola in favor of the archeologists.

Schoolcraft Traffic Snarls Getting Worse

Inasmuch as those who travel Schoolcraft Road, east and west, know it will probably be another two years before the freeway is completed, it would appear that those in charge of the construction should make their plans known ahead of time and give motorists some idea of what to expect.

In the past three or four weeks, some of the main arteries that cross Schoolcraft have been reduced to one lane for traffic with a resultant long backup of cars every time the traffic signals change.

We see no reason why the contractors on the freeway can't make it known to the public in advance when they intend to make such drastic changes in the traffic pattern.

FOR INSTANCE, a driver going north or south on Farmington Road suddenly runs into what appears to be a roadblock without any suitable signs of trouble. Farmington changes from two lanes of traffic each way to one at the Schoolcraft intersection.

If the contractors, the State Highway Department or the Wayne County Road Commission — whichever is responsible for the change — had posted large signs along the road or had taken the time to notify area news media of the upcoming changes, one

wouldn't complain . . . but apparently this isn't to be.

The traffic jams have happened at the intersections of Schoolcraft with Middle Belt, Merriman, Farmington, Stark, Levan and Newburgh in recent weeks, all without any advance notice to the motoring public.

We expressed a similar feeling earlier when sudden changes were made in the Schoolcraft route going east and west. It's kind of miserable to be driving along one of the main arteries and then suddenly find that the two lanes of traffic has become only one and motorists become involved in long snarls because one lane of cars is trying to work its way into the other. Just try and get into the one open lane when traffic is at its highest peak.

THEN THERE'S another problem caused by the many large trucks hauling tons of dirt from the area being removed for the depressed portion of the new freeway.

Wonder how the truck drivers would feel if a couple of motorists drove side by side on Schoolcraft and refused to allow any car to pass. We shudder to think of the language that would be used. Yet, place the shoe on the other foot, and such things are perfectly all right.

R. T. Thompson writes

What Is Needed To Teach Parents?

A 13-year-old Livonia boy is in Wayne County General Hospital in critical condition. He has been for the better part of three

weeks...as the direct result of collision between a mini-bike and a small truck on Schoolcraft Road near the intersection with Melvin.

That brings to mind the question: "When will parents learn that mini-bikes can be very dangerous, are forbidden on any public thoroughfares unless the driver has an operator's license and by ordinance and law must not be driven anywhere except on the private property of the parents or on specially designated mini-bike lanes?"

In this particular instance, the police report shows the youngster was going south on Melvin and then scooted out in front of the truck without any chance of stopping since the bike lacked brakes.

Only by the grace of God did he come out of the accident alive, and only because of the skill of the staff at the hospital is he alive today. The last reports from the hospital was that he is still in critical condition and was in intensive care only a few days ago.

ALL OF WHICH brings to mind the repeated warnings of the various police departments in Overland that mini-bikes are dangerous and shouldn't be placed in the hands of youngsters.

The Livonia department has had numerous calls of violations and has a policy of taking the bike into custody and then making the parents go to the station to retrieve the property.

For a long time, officers thought this type of action would make parents wake up and make them realize that the mini-bikes aren't for children. They mentioned the numerous complaints about noise, and one

had to admit that they do make a lot of racket.

They mentioned the danger of driving along the sidewalks and the possibility of hitting youngsters or aged persons who just can't move as fast as they did years ago and make perfect targets for fast-moving bikes.

They told parents of the city ordinances and state laws forbidding mini-bikes on public thoroughfares unless handled by one with a driver's license. They pointed out that a youngster has to be 16 before he or she can get a driver's permit.

AND WHAT EFFECT did all of this talk have? Very little, officers point out.

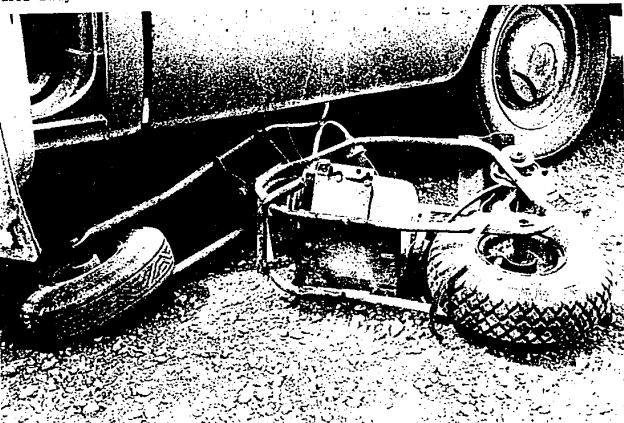
Even though parents know that youngsters under 16 can't operate a motor driven vehicle legally in Michigan, they persist in buying the mini-bikes and then seem to have an idea they can flout the law.

Parents spend money for the bikes and then want their children to use them. There probably are a good many that insist their children must follow the rules, but there apparently are a good many more that let Junior to go out and have a good time.

These are the ones that scream like wild Indians when told by the police they have to come to the station to retrieve their property.

And that leads back to the start of this editorial. What will it take to get the message home? Does it mean that a youngster has to be killed before parents realize they have given a lethal machine to their youngster?

We hope not... but it appears that's going to be the only solution. Most certainly that is learning the hard way.



WILL IT TAKE more scenes like this to awaken parents to the dangers of mini-bikes? A 13-year-old Livonia boy was riding this bike when it collided with a truck. He suffered serious injuries and only by the grace of God is he still alive today although in a hospital in critical condition. (Observer photo by Maurie Walker)

Editorial & Opinion

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