



By Philip H. Power,  
Publisher

At last week's Republican national convention, President Nixon said his administration intended to lower property taxes to reduce the local taxpayer's crushing burden. This week, Senator McGovern is supposed to release his new version of a plan which will guarantee income to the poor and reduce property taxes.

It's clear that the national candidates know darn well that the taxpayer revolt we have seen so much in this area is a serious matter nationally.

But it's equally clear that despite pious claims of good intention to do something for the taxpayers in Michigan, very little

has been accomplished here since Gov. Milliken said that tax reform and financing for schools was his number one priority two years ago.

The legislature has wrangled over tax relief since then, with Democrats insisting on a graduated income tax as a substitute for the property levy and Republicans in the state senate remaining adamant against it.

On the ballot this November will be a referendum setting a limit on property taxes and making up the difference by flat rate income tax.

So far so good, except that the local property taxpayer has taken it in the chin for these last two

years, and if the referendum fails, he'll continue to do so.

**BEST EXAMPLE** of the problem emerged last week in Livonia, where residents of the school district were informed that although their property tax rate will be lower this year, their total tax bill will be higher.

How does this happen?

Through a change in the state equalization factor -- a change which was not voted on by the taxpayers!

In Livonia, for instance, the equalization factor was increased from 1.79 to 1.89 this year. This means that assessments levied on homes in Livonia must be multi-

plied by 1.89 to get the equalized valuation, which is the amount on which property taxes are levied.

A home that had an equalized value of \$15,000 last year paid \$531 in school taxes. With the equalization factor increased by 5.5 per cent, this year's equalized value will be \$15,825.

Even though this year's millage rate was reduced about eight-tenths of a mill to 34.62 applying this lowered rate to an increased equalized value means that the owner of the home will be paying \$547 in school taxes -- a \$16 increase.

**THIS TAX** increase was not voted on by local taxpayers. It can take place in exactly the same

way as in Livonia in any suburban community in this area.

What this juggling of our property tax really works out to is taxation without representation! Keeping in mind just how big a furor this principle caused about 200 years ago, it's not surprising that taxpayers are in revolt now over the same thing.

## FAIR WARNING...



## OBSERVATION POINT

# What's This? Rate Goes Down But Tax Bills Are Up?

Tim Richard writes

## Will High Court Reverse Itself?

Last week I raised some questions about the State Supreme Court's recent ruling prohibiting probate (juvenile) court judges from allowing some 15 to 17-year-olds to be tried as adults in criminal cases.

At that time I suggested the Governor's Special Commission on the Age of Majority be reconvened in order to grapple directly with the problem of how old a person should be to stand trial as an adult for his crimes.

**TWO THINGS** have happened since then.

One is that the Supreme Court has granted a re-hearing at the request of outraged probate judges. There is no guarantee that the high court will reverse itself, but there is at least a chance.

The other is that the Republican state convention last week-end nominated Mary Coleman for a vacancy on the State Supreme Court. Mrs. Coleman is a probate judge from Calhoun County (Battle Creek). She is the only female and the only nominee with probate bench experience in the huge field.

It's not my purpose to endorse anyone but to report some of Judge Coleman's thoughts on the high court decision.

"**THERE WAS NO** precedent...no reasoning in the Supreme Court's decision to overturn the existing law," she argued. "Other states have the same wording in their laws, and it has been upheld in the courts."

There are "factors" which a probate judge must weigh, she said, before deciding to waive jurisdiction over a juvenile and sending him to circuit court for trial.

"One is the seriousness of the crime -- a vicious crime.

"Second, he must be age 15.

"There must have been a pattern of bad behavior on his part.

"The juvenile court facilities may be inadequate." By court facilities, she meant not just the courtroom but also the detention home or training school. If these are inadequate to hold a particularly tough customer, the judge can send the accused over to circuit court.

Finally, she pointed out, a subject can't be sent to a juvenile home once he has reached age 17½. So the probate judge must decide another method for handling the 17½-year-old or shift him to circuit court where, if convicted, he could get a prison sentence.

"We have court rules. I helped write those rules," Judge Coleman said.

**IN THE CURRENT** Supreme Court case, she said, a 17-year-old was sentenced by the Washtenaw circuit court to prison after a second felony. His attorney wanted to withdraw from the case, but the Supreme Court refused to let him.

If on re-hearing the case the Supreme Court lets its decision stand, there's a chance that a few

hundred young men convicted of vicious crimes will be sprung from prison. Some would go free; others would spend a few months in a juvenile home, there to teach tenderer minds Lord-knows-what.

The problem of crimes committed by young people is

immense. One set of figures I recall says half the nation's serious crimes are committed by persons age 18 and under. No cheap cries of "compassion" or "law-n-order" will solve anything.

We haven't heard the last of this problem.

Leonard Poger writes

## Unity Needed In Suburbs, Townships

The Detroit public schools' desegregation case has done little for the suburbs besides financially benefiting job printers turning out anti-busing window signs.

The case and Federal Judge Stephen Roth have resulted in a deep bond of unity and common purpose for the suburban school districts.

**WHEN AND** if the Detroit desegregation case is resolved one way or another, the suburban sense of unity will probably remain.

On the other side of the coin, it's too bad that suburban city halls -- whose mayors and counterparts in township halls need organizational unity more than the school officials -- have failed to do the same thing.

In a real sense -- in the pocket-book -- city and township officials in suburban Detroit need an

organization to define their roles, point out common problems, and recommend solutions more than their counterparts in the school board offices.

In public schools, there is basically one service to provide -- education -- and the state legislature pays for most or nearly half of the bill in most suburbs.

**BUT CITY** and township halls are expected to provide a variety of services, ranging from police and fire protection to rubbish pickup, street maintenance and lighting, recreation programs, parks programs, among others.

The cities and townships get some help from Lansing but not nearly as much as school boards.

It's about time the suburban city and township officials get together on a common cause to establish their sense of unity and

then continue to share their goals and problems after the initial problem is resolved.

A perfect example is the soon to be implemented increase in wholesale water rates by the Detroit water board.

**A RECENT** meeting of the Western Wayne County Association of Mayors and Supervisors was held to discuss the issue and an approach was agreed upon.

The approach concurred by a dozen officials was to pressure the Detroit Water Board to have more suburban representation on it.

But what may have been missed is that the suburbs should have more than half of the power on the board since most of the water customers live outside of Detroit.

If the "one-man-one-vote" principle were applied to the

water board, there would be no trouble in getting suburban representatives on the board.

**THE DETROIT** water rate increases -- which were received in the suburbs last spring as an announcement instead of a possibility -- are just one of the many regional problems in which the suburbs are getting the short end of the stick.

There are many others which the suburbs are deeply involved in but are too busy trying to fight their own inferiority complex with Detroit and state legislators in Lansing to get together and join efforts.

The suburban school boards have done it on the busing issue and there is no reason the suburban city and township officials in the region can't do the same thing for their own problems.

## Editorial & Opinion

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Philip H. Power, Publisher

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## Happy Thought . . . Schools Open On Time

Although contracts haven't been ratified in many school systems and in others teachers have agreed to start classes while negotiations continue, there appears little likelihood of the strikes that have hit several districts in the past few years.

In other words, classes will begin as scheduled and the teaching staffs have agreed to go to work . . . and that's good news to parents and students alike.

There isn't any single factor that disturbs a community more than to have youngsters sitting around the house for periods ranging from as many as two months while negotiators for the teachers and school board argue over money matters.

when the entire community was sharply split over the merits of the strike.

We well remember when an Ann Arbor judge finally got the two groups together by simply making it known that the negotiations would continue without a break until an agreement was reached.

With that kind of an ultimatum, the negotiating teams sat down, went over all facets of the disagreements and did come up with a solution that could be accepted by both sides.

That was all fine and good for the teachers, the school board and the administration, but there was still a bad taste in the mouths of parents who saw their youngsters starting classes a month later than surrounding districts.

It meant curtailed vacation

periods, it meant classes extending an extra week in June, and it really put a lot of parents to unnecessary nuisances.

Actually, there always a feeling that the teachers didn't think they had gained that much by walking the bricks although they had won points on the basis of principle.

**THAT'S WHY IT** is so gratifying to learn that Plymouth teachers agreed to start classes while the negotiating team continues discussions with the school board -- administration team over money matters.

The situation isn't settled, but at least the air has been cleared, and parents don't have to worry about their youngsters going back to school on schedule.

We feel sure the groups will be able to resolve the financial positions in the near future. But we certainly feel the teachers acted wisely in voting as they did.

Their vote did include a provision that the negotiators can call a strike if an absolute impasse is reached . . . it is to be hoped that time never comes.

The touchy situation in Redford Township at both the Redford Union and South Redford schools has been resolved, and now it appears all districts in Overland will have peace for at least another school year.

And that's one of the happiest thoughts of the day. Kids in school, parents breathing a sigh of relief -- and we believe the teachers have that same feeling.

**WE WELL REMEMBER** the Plymouth strike of two years ago