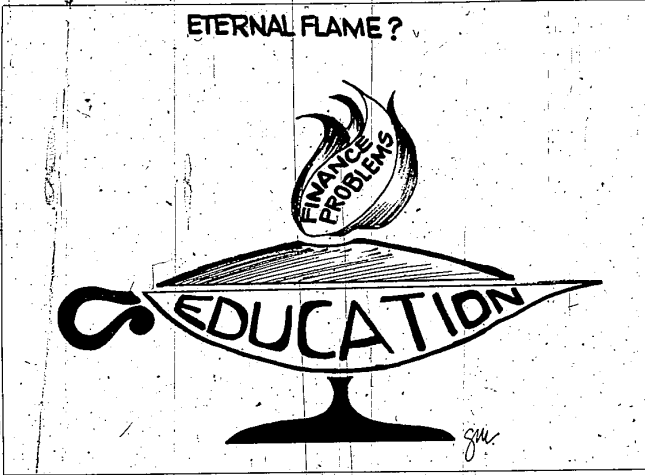




By Philip H. Power  
Publisher

OBSERVATION POINT

# Education Reform Still Tops On Agenda For New Year



R. T. Thompson writes

## A Service That Doesn't

For months folks have been complaining about the slowness of the Postal Service. It appears they're paying more now, two cents more for first class, than last Christmas and the service just gets worse each day.

There isn't any time of the entire year when folks have an excellent chance to compare mail delivery than at the Christmas holidays. That's when almost everyone goes all out to mail greeting cards. Most persons put more cards in the mail then than during the other 11 months of the year.

And most mail their greetings in ample time to have all in the hands of loved ones and longtime friends well in advance of Christmas Day.

FOR YEARS the Post Office Department hired additional help during the Yule period to make certain all mail was delivered ahead of the big day. For years hundreds were employed for the temporary work including many colleagues who had the opportunity to pick up some extra cash.

Then the powers that be in the Postal Service decided to eliminate temporary workers and give the regular mailmen a chance to earn some of the overtime. That system worked well for the simple reason that the regulars

could handle the mail much faster and better than the temporary help.

In each of the past few years, the ones in command, in Washington and not at the local level, have cut back the overtime. The word was for mailmen to sort as much mail as possible in the limited time during the early morning and then make deliveries, leaving the unsorted mail for another day.

Overtime was slashed to an absolute minimum, especially this year, when mail service ended on Dec. 23 and did not resume until Dec. 26. In the past, regular carriers remained in the office sorting mail while substitutes made deliveries, and there always was a Dec. 24 delivery, regardless of what day of the week.

SO WHAT happened this year? We already know that no deliveries were made from Dec. 23 to Dec. 26. We already know that few, if any, of the mail carriers accrued much overtime. We know because we asked some of the mailmen in various areas and they told us so.

The slow deliveries are the fault of the mailmen. Rather, they are due to the system ordered by Washington which

appears to be designed to discredit the Postal Service.

Why the supposed "brains" in the national capital are doing everything possible to slow down service is a vexing question for area postmasters. They realize the ordered changes aren't working but are helpless to do anything about it.

Never was poor service more apparent than at the recent holiday season.

Time was when one could drop a letter in boxes in the loop area of downtown Detroit in the morning and have it in the hands of the receiver by afternoon. Postal authorities took pride in that kind of service.

There was a time when one could drop an air mail letter in a suburban area in early afternoon and know it would reach its destination the following day.

But those times appear to have vanished. Now, one can post an air mail, special delivery letter in a box in late afternoon and then suddenly realize that it won't be picked up until late the next morning.

REMEMBER WHEN one could mail a letter in Livonia and have it delivered in Plymouth or Redford Township, adjoining communities, the next day?

We received a Christmas greetings card on Dec. 27. It had been mailed in Livonia on Dec. 19. Matter of fact, we received numerous cards as late as Dec. 28 that had postmarks of Dec. 19 and 20.

If that is the new Postal Service, the system devised in Washington for quicker deliveries, then we recommend going back to the days of the Pony Express. It was a bit more dangerous, but one couldn't say it was any slower.

So 1973 is here, and as the French say, the more things change, the more they are the same.

From 1969 on, the key issue in this state has been how to revise an outmoded and inequitable system of financing education by the property tax.

It led to a taxpayers' revolt which has made it impossible for local school boards to pass local millage for education for the past three years. It contributed to the school busing crisis which dominated the political scene ever since the judges ruled for busing in Pontiac. It helped create a situation in which, of the approximately 80 school superintendentships in the tri-county area, 40 are vacant. It was a key issue in the November election, in which voters turned down a new plan which would have set a limit on property taxes and added an income tax.

Last Friday, on the last possible business day of 1972, the Michigan State Supreme Court held that the present education financing system is unconstitutional and must be changed.

So as we move into 1973, bright with the hopes of a new year, we find before us the same darned issue of education financing we have seen for the past three New Year's Days.

performance in this area, it seems an optimistic hope.

OF THE TWO approaches to education finance reform - full state funding and equalization of funding via a changed aid formula plus additional state tax revenue - the former seems the least likely to be adopted, mainly because it was essentially this plan that the voters rejected last November.

Jiggling around with the state aid formula - which is intended to equalize support for each child, regardless of what district he is in, but which doesn't seem complicated but surely is something the Legislature could work out without going through a big spasm.

The approach has the big defect of still relying on the property tax. But in the current atmosphere of high voter suspicion against school boards and, the like, it might have an advantage of giving taxpayers a way of voting against things they don't like.

This coming year will see the Legislature going round and round on this one, with Democrats generally favoring state control over financing approach (because it eliminates the property tax) and Republicans favoring jiggling with the state aid formula (because it retains the property tax).

If all this sounds like something you've heard someplace before, you're right.

Le plus qu'il change.

Leonard Poger writes

## How A Detroit Mayor Helped These Suburbs

The most popular political game in the suburbs is knocking Detroit and its elected leadership.

There was one bright exception last Friday morning, the day after Mayor Roman Gribbs of Detroit announced that he won't seek a second term in 1973.

GENERALLY, that kind of announcement doesn't stir emotions west of Telegraph Rd. and north of Eight Mile Rd.

Gribbs is being credited with helping the suburbs by at least one Observerland mayor who, in private, appreciates the Detroit's efforts in getting federally-shared revenue out of Washington, D.C.

In past years, cities usually received federal loans or grants only for specific purposes - even if the project wasn't needed or else was given a low priority.

For example, most suburbs need more policemen and equipment. Most federal grants in that area are for equipment, not manpower, although the manpower problem is given a higher priority in suburban city halls.

THE OBSERVERLAND

mayor pointed out that Gribbs fought long and hard for federally-shared revenue, which helps a lot of suburbs near Detroit.

Granted, Gribbs was mainly looking out for Detroit which has its own money problems.

Nevertheless, his efforts in the revenue-sharing field paid off with the government helping a lot of suburban cities without the prior restrictions on what the money can be used for.

In some suburbs, the federal funds are being used to offset a property tax increase - or at least keep any tax increase to a minimum.

In Garden City, some of the funds were used to build a \$450,000 enclosed civic arena, which includes an ice rink.

GRIBB'S departure from city hall - which seems to be a burial site for budding political figures - may not bring a loud chorus of cheers from suburban city halls.

But the taxpayers in the suburbs should be appreciative of what Gribbs did to lighten their local property tax load and improve local services and facilities.

### Editorial & Opinion

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## Ryan Doesn't Know His Racing

Interesting indeed was the recent news report from Lansing where House Speaker William Ryan (D-Detroit) said he will formally propose that horse racing, dog racing and offtrack betting all be part of a single private corporation regulated by the State of Michigan.

He suggests such a plan would eliminate the continuing legislative battle over legalizing dog racing and offtrack wagering in the state.

Ryan has been a strong supporter of dog racing, which narrowly failed to win approval of the Legislature in early December.

ALL OF THIS leads one to wonder if Ryan realizes all the ramifications.

First, there is the matter of getting the lawmakers to approve dog racing and offtrack betting, each illegal at this time. It is doubtful if either will be passed

in a single year. Dog racing may make it in 1973, but offtrack betting is another matter altogether.

Then one has to consider the benefits to the state. Everyone familiar with state government knows of the huge amount of bureaucracy. One shudders to think how much would be needed with the state guiding a corporation which would include thoroughbred, harness and dog racing plus offtrack wagering.

During 1972 it is estimated the state received between \$25 million and \$30 million from the race tracks... this without the state investing a dime. All of the work is done by the tracks and the money turned over.

Figures aren't available from the tracks about profit or loss statements for 1972, but it is doubtful if the two thoroughbred and four harness racing operations will show profits of more than \$2 million. This is due to the

dismal seasons at the Detroit Race Course and Hazel Park thoroughbred racing plants.

WE MIGHT point out to Ryan that his proposal would be just as much in line had he suggested placing Ford, General Motors, Chrysler and American Motors in a single corporation regulated by the state or aligning the Lions, Tigers, Pistons and Red Wings under state supervision.

The same is true of the four major professional sports teams. If horse racing, dog racing and offtrack betting are to be under state guidance, then the individual owners of the four teams should be forced to pool their efforts and have the state tell them how to operate.

It makes just about as much sense as Ryan's proposal. All are licensed by the state, and it makes just as much sense as having Michigan become the gambling czar.

R. T. Thompson

### Sense And Nonsense

Our friendly ecology nut advises:

Everyone who bought an electrical appliance, either for himself or as a gift during the holidays, voted 'yes' on raising Detroit Edison's rates. Think about it.