

editorial opinion

'The quality of mercy'

"The quality of mercy is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven — blesseth him that gives and takes him that takes."

The lines from Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice" was quoted by James Spaulding, the lawyer in "Captains and Kings" assigned to instruct Joseph Armagh in the ways of the law.

"Joseph, you and I did not make the Law. Now any fool can pick up a law book and read what the law says and what its apparent intention is, but will that stand up in court? No, sir, not always, rarely ever. It is a lawyer's function to convince judge and jury that the law did not mean exactly that, or perhaps meant even the complete opposite. Only idiots go by a strict interpretation. A wise lawyer can make ducks and drakes out of any law."

Spaulding, perhaps, would not fit the modern image of a law professor, but his counterparts are visible today.

IT DOES not take a superior intellect to understand that the power of the President to pardon, the power granted by the highest law of the land, is the power to pardon crimes committed by a person. Nowhere does it suggest a power to pardon a person who may not have committed a crime.

But, that's where interpretation of the law comes in. President Ford, in his re-

soning, has said that if the Constitution confers the power to pardon a person convicted of crimes, it must also confer the power to pardon someone not convicted of a crime.

President Ford, by pre-empting the judicial system with an early pardon for ex-president Nixon, has elected to take his case to the ultimate jury of public opinion.

Now it is Mr. Ford's task to convince that jury of the correctness of his actions. As of this writing, Mr. Ford is considering pardons for others connected with the Watergate affairs. Such an act would speak to the question of special treatment for Nixon. That Mr. Ford is considering such a mass pardon, indicates he is aware of the tenor of the jury.

MR. FORD'S CASE rests mainly on an act of mercy and a plea for unification of the nation in order to concentrate on the challenges of today.

The wisdom of Mr. Ford's actions will rest on how well the nation unites to meet those challenges.

It will be difficult for the nation to rid itself of the towering shadow of unanswered questions, ambiguities and contradictions of the Watergate era now that the catharsis of the judicial system is no longer available. We can only hope that the promised benefits of the presidential pardon materialize.

Volunteers make sense

None of the cuts made to economize in the Farmington school district — academic, athletic or extracurricular — have had the impact of sending some elementary students home for lunch.

The weeks since school has opened have been a constant barrage of complaints from working mothers, parents living some distance from their school and merely sympathetic people.

In an effort to save an estimated \$20,000, the school district eliminated the option parents formerly had to have their child eat lunch in school.

Now all children walking to school must return home at lunch hour to eat and return in the afternoon.

In some cases this could mean over a two mile round trip during the lunch hour.

In some special cases, the route to school

appears hazardous to the children, particularly around Middle Belt Elementary. Whether or not the lunch schedule is changed, this route should be improved.

The cost saving to the district is mainly in eliminating about 12 noon aides in the lunch rooms.

Many parents have offered to volunteer services as noon aides to keep the full schedule of lunches. As a compromise, this has many advantages.

Volunteers serving as lunch time supervisors help maintain community contact with the schools, are often more effective than paid help, and would allow the continuation of the service the parents are demanding.

We urge the board adopt a volunteer program.

From our readers

Road repair needed

To the Editor:

I cannot understand why the city council and the school board cannot work together in the best interest of the taxpayers, parents, and children of this city.

Last year Franklin Road, between 696 and Eleven Mile Road, was changed to a five lane road which meant it was almost impossible to get to Angling Road School. In fact, the school board meeting scheduled for last fall at Angling Road was changed, because it was such a mess. They were afraid no one could find the back way in between the City D.P.W. and the Oakland County D.P.W.

IN CHANGING the road, it also changed our playground. Our children did not have a playground all of last school year. Now here we are this September and still no playground, after the whole summer to get the job done.

I asked the Board of Education "Why?" and was told it was the city's fault. In talking to the City Administrator, I was told "It was between the school board and the road contractor."

I don't care who is at fault. I just want Angling Road to have a nice

playground. After all, someone found the time and money this summer to put a new parking lot for the teachers and visitors of Angling Road.

Franklin Road is closed again this fall from Eleven Mile Road to Telegraph Road. Which means my daughter, who is in the second grade at Angling Road School, has to leave the house at 8:10 a.m. to get the bus, to be at the school by 9 a.m. when the school is only five minutes away. School is dismissed at 3:30 p.m. and she doesn't get back to her bus stop until 4:15 p.m. Now I ask you, would it not seem plausible for the city to plan major road repairs on school bus routes for the summer?

Please quit passing the buck among the city, school, and the Road Commission and think of our children.

Cheryl Hall
Southfield
Sept. 6, 1974

Reconsider decision

To the Editor:
Here are my feelings on the Farmington Board of Education's decision to have all the elementary children walk home from school for lunch who live within a mile and one-half.

(1) It is not feasible for small children to walk home for lunch in 15 minutes and be back in time for school. Maybe in weather such as now, but not when the snow and rain comes.

(2) I live in Woodbine subdivision and the children have to walk across a bridge that is unsafe in the first place. Last year 2 boys were molested there. In the winter, ice forms on the steps and children could fall and hurt themselves.

(3) The mothers have agreed that an alternate lunch program must be worked out — such as a volunteer lunch program.

(4) It is not right to assume that every family has two cars and car pools can be formed. I thought we were trying to conserve energy. It's bad enough now that we drive them in winter months and surely you can't expect us to drive four days to the school.

(5) I think the whole idea is unfair to the children who walk. They are being discriminated against compared to those who take the bus. If that's the case, all children should be bussed or all should walk home for lunch.

I surely hope the board realizes that this decision has to be changed.

Mrs. David Holm
Farmington
Sept. 8, 1974

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Eccentricities

by HANK HOGAN



In his Gettysburg address, Abraham Lincoln said "... government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from this earth." This is the foundation stone of democracy.

If government is made up of people it will represent the void; if the people, the problem is, are politicians people? From my own experience I have learned that when a man is newly elected to public office he attacks his job with vigor and idealism. Because of the seniority system, he may not be very effective during his first term of office. But, he is truly trying to change the world for the better, as he had promised during his campaign.

WHEN HE IS faced with re-election he becomes more pragmatic and tries to make himself popular to the largest number of people. But the largest number of people may not be the majority of the electorate, but those special interest groups which are very vocal.

The longer a man stays in public office the more practical he becomes in terms of re-election and less in touch with the grassroots people back home.

It is said that Richard Nixon lost contact with reality because he closeted himself in the White House.

ALTHOUGH I HAVE been unable to find the quote, Thomas Jefferson supposedly said that liberty must be nurtured by the blood of pa-

Observation Point

by PHILIP H. POWER



The words were simple, majestic and to the point:

"Now, therefore, I, Gerald Ford, president of the United States, pursuant to the pardon power conferred upon me by Article II, Section 2, of the Constitution, have granted and by these presents do grant a full, free, and absolute pardon unto Richard Nixon for all offenses against the United States which he, Richard Nixon, has committed or may have committed or taken part in during the period from Jan. 20, 1969, through August 9, 1974."

Equally noble were President Ford's objectives: mercy and to finally put an end to Watergate.

Regrettably, his decision was a mistake. Ending the country's pre-occupation with Watergate will quite clearly not be achieved. Because the judicial process of investigation and execution of the evidence, followed by the fact-determining process of a trial, has been short-circuited by the pardon before it really got under way, there will be a surge of public interest in what Mr. Nixon really said and did about Watergate.

The simple frustration of public curiosity — coupled with reports of indictable offenses — will enforce continuing media interest in the still-murky events and motivations behind Watergate, which is likely to last at least as long as any trial proceedings involving Mr. Nixon.

THERE IS a further curious element in Mr. Nixon's random way to end Watergate. How can you pardon someone if you don't know in respect to what precise criminal offense he is being pardoned?

This question becomes particularly important when evaluated in the context of Mr. Nixon's obviously negotiated statement following the pardon, which admitted mistakes and misjudgments but carefully stopped short of an admission of a crime.

It is quite well established that the constitutional purposes for the presidential power to pardon were to provide a court of last resort against a gross and aberrant distortion of justice that might be rendered in a decision by the judicial branch of

Are politicians people?

triot and tyrants every 20 years if it is to survive. If I understand this correctly, it means that the longer a man remains in public office the less he is responsive to the rank and file voter of his constituency.

It is easy to criticize, but then one has the obligation of offering a solution. To me, it's quite obvious that terms of office should be lengthened so that a person is not always campaigning for re-election but that he should be limited to the number of terms he serves — such as two terms in a legislative body or one term as a chief executive.

WE ALL KNOW, when we are elected as chairman of a committee or president of an organization, that we do great things in the first term but have a tendency to taper off when we are re-elected to a second term. There is no reason to believe this is not true in government.

This is not to say that after a man serves his two terms he should not be promoted to a higher office so his experience can be utilized. But to let a man become entrenched in a single position gives him the impression that he owns the office and he can discard the views of those people with whom he doesn't agree.

If we are to have government of the people, by the people and for the people, we must make sure that our representatives are people and represent people.

Perpetuation in office tarnishes idealism.

The kingdom and the power

government. No constitutional precedent justifies a pardon to put an end to national attention to a scandal or, indeed, to grant mercy to a criminal convicted by due process.

My opinion is that President Ford committed an act with both counterproductive and illogical consequences because, genuinely moved by reports of Mr. Nixon's deteriorating health and emotional condition, he allowed his instincts for mercy to outweigh his more proper duty to make sure that the processes of equal justice for all men under the law be fully followed.

In short, the decision was a mistake. And it would be terrible, indeed, if President Ford were now to grant pardon to all others involved in Watergate, on the argument that it would be inconsistent to pardon only Mr. Nixon. One mistake is enough; let's not use it to justify a brazen, absurd cover-up of the cover-up.

SOMETHING USEFUL, however, does come from what otherwise is a sad situation.

President Ford's decision to pardon Mr. Nixon savagely and suddenly ends the honeymoon that has existed between the new president and the media and the American people for the past month.

The media, terrified by the sudden Freudian realization of guilt that it had killed the primal father by driving him from office, has been bending over backwards to give the new president good notices — to the point of stretching ordinary common sense.

Whenever national columnists are driven to spasms of admiration at revelations that a president likes a swim before dinner, intends to sleep in the same bed with his wife, and appears in a bath robe on the front lawn to pick up the morning paper, we can be sure something absurd is going on.

It has been. And since what's needed more than anything about our presidency is a strong dose of realism and common sense, the end to the honeymoon is a long run benefit which cannot be overvalued.

From our readers

Hardship for children

To the Editor:

I would like to state my views on the Farmington School Board's decision to eliminate elementary walking students from the lunch program.

Some of our children will have to walk as much as six miles per day. The children are given one hour for the lunch period. On a fine day it takes 21 minutes to walk to Middlebelt Elementary School from my home. This is an adult's reasonable speed.

This will take up 42 minutes of the lunch hour, if that child maintains that speed without deviation. My main concern is the hardship this will bring to children during the winter months.

Picture if you will, this scene: below zero weather, child walking in snow, wind and severe cold. This child must dress himself before leaving the school in clothing to combat this weather. It takes a well coordinated child 10 minutes to don all the clothes necessary. Children nine years and older would do this in less time, but I am considering the six year old and up.

When children arrive home in severe winter weather the first concern of any parent is to thaw out his child, and dry out his clothing and shoes, boots, headgear, mittens, and long underwear if worn.

On any dryer the time for drying these articles of clothing takes at minimum 20 minutes, closer to 30.

Any Mother will inform you this is no exaggeration and is done daily in winter time with children in this age group.

If Mother dresses this child, he can be ready to leave for the return trip in 5 minutes. There are mothers who will have four children coming home, some two, myself one. So counting the time for my own child, that is 42 minutes of walking time, 30 minutes of drying clothes time, 15 minutes dressing time, and another four minutes to undress upon reaching school. That is a total of 91 minutes.

Now children do have a way of walking at a different pace than an adult, so the time element could be more. In good weather my son walks home in 30 minutes. Last winter it was as long as 45 minutes. Besides the time factor, a child should not be subjected to walking this distance each day regardless of weather. There is also the path the children use to reach the school.

Car pools were a suggestion by Principal Townsend. His assumption that there are cars available, (I am one who is not blessed with a second car) that gasoline will be plentiful.

In our neighborhood there are not enough cars to form a carpool. And to pay someone who does have a car is a further expense for all. The school board is also cutting back on the return bus for kindergartners.

Principal Townsend suggests

older children walk home with these young ones. Here again he is assuming there are older children in each family or available to walk the child home. Some small children are quite isolated from older children in this community and with the time factor are going to be too busy getting home themselves.

Elementary children are being victimized by the school board, by school officials, by teachers who are lucky enough to get contracts to protect their interests. This cut back affects only walking elementary students of Farmington Schools. Why?

Isabella Hermann
Sept. 8, 1974 Farmington Hills

U.S. banks best

To the Editor:

Don't put your money in Canada (or foreign) banks. U.S. citizens are penalized by a 15% non-resident tax. You pay up to 10 percent premium for exchange. Withdrawals are restricted. Canadian deposits are not insured.

Only the U.S. Government secures each U.S. deposit up to \$20,000. No limit is placed on number of deposits. U.S. banks compound near eight percent.

With banks world-wide shaky now — why take a risk at less or no return of losing all your hard-earned money?

You can do no better in the world today than in the U.S.A.

Dr. Lee Franklin Weinstock
Farmington
Sept. 8, 1974