

editorial opinion

Master plan problems

Downtown Farmington is looking bleak these days.

The north side of Grand River is half empty, with little hustle and less bustle.

Sometimes it seems like this kind of thing runs in cycles, and predictions as long as 10 years ago that downtown is dead were followed by a rebirth which lasted until recently.

At least one resident in attendance at a recent hearing on a master plan said she had attended the past three such hearings.

This is remarkable when you consider they only come once every six years.

AT ISSUE is the future of the downtown area, specifically whether it should "spread" north of its present congested location.

The master plan calls for parking to extend to include the south side of Oakland Street. The idea is that a shortage of parking is one of the reasons for the problems in maintaining commercial activity on Grand River.

The plan has sound logic behind it, as

such plans usually do. The plan is not current zoning, or even proposed zoning.

What it amounts to is an announcement to potential developers that if downtown is rebuilt, the planning commission would probably rezone the area for parking.

The problem is that plans for commercial rebirth have not interested many developers. A casual look along the major arteries of the area demonstrates there is a large surplus of small storefronts.

On the other hand, streets like Oakland are becoming extremely popular for young families seeking housing, as new developments become both expensive and sometimes sterile.

MAYBE SOMEDAY, a visionary developer will come to town, buy up the land and build a new downtown.

But the families who put a stake along Oakland, and many of the residents of the "old village" area behind the street, have already made their commitment.

The designation of their homes as potential parking lots on the master plan does nothing to encourage them and probably injures the value of the whole area.



by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

Gerald Ford announced that inflation is domestic enemy No. 1. Every American householder knew it before the president made his pronouncement. American paychecks, even though bigger, are disappearing faster.

The measure of inflation is a device called the Consumer Price Index, in which the federal government measures average changes in the price of goods and services usually bought by urban wage earners and clerical workers.

The price index is based on the prices of about 400 items which were selected to represent the movement of prices of all goods and services purchased.

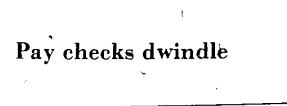
PRICES FOR these items are obtained in urban portions of 39 major metropolitan areas and 17 smaller cities which were chosen to represent all urban prices in the United States. They are collected from about 18,000 establishments — grocery and department stores, hospitals, filling stations and other types of store and service establishments.

Prices of food, fuels and a few other items are obtained every month, while prices of most other commodities and services are collected every month in the five largest areas and every three months in the other areas.

The prices of most goods and services are obtained by personal visits of the Bureau of Labor representatives.

The index measures price changes from a designated reference date, 1967, which equals 100.

THE COST OF LIVING index is weighted with food representing 24.8 percent; apparel representing 8.6 percent; nondurable commodities such as gasoline, tobacco and alcohol representing 14.4 percent; durable commodities such as cars and refrigerators representing 15.7 percent; and services, including medical care and rent, representing 6.5 percent.



Pay checks dwindle

In the past, when categories of the cost of living went up it didn't always affect everyone because not all people were in the market for the items in those categories that went up. But this year, price raises for food have been leading the pack and this affects every American household. Hence, inflation, is felt by all families across the board, whereas in the past it has had a selective effect.

The Consumer Price Index is in the neighborhood of 150. It means that since 1967, which represented 100, prices have increased 50 percent — and that in seven years the value of the dollar has declined by a third.

While this affects the wage earner, the persons who are being strangled are the retired family on a fixed income.

THERE ARE MANY reasons why we have seen price increases this year, but basically, we are paying the price of the deficit spending by the government over the last 10 years, which has forced the government to borrow. This, in turn, creates more money in the marketplace without an increase in the number of goods available. Hence, under the law of supply and demand, the prices go up.

THERE IS GOING to be an economic summit meeting next week in Washington. Let's not kid ourselves. The most important way we can fight inflation is to cut federal spending. This is going to hurt the pet projects of many of our congressmen and is going to be politically difficult.

But, if we don't want our dollar eroded any more, we must immediately make our feelings known in Washington.



by PHILIP H. POWER

Ever since school was supposed to start more than two weeks ago, the big story in the suburbs has been teacher strikes.

As of this writing, teachers have hit the bricks in Plymouth, Grand Rapids, South Redford, and Wayne/Westland districts. They are working without a contract at Redford Union, and the faculty at Schoolcraft College is working under an extension of their old contract while bargaining is going on.

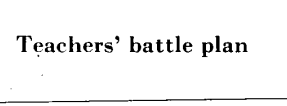
The concentration of teacher strikes in Western Wayne County suburbs is worthy of note. Remember the ill-starred Michigan Education Association battle plan which got some ink around last summer? It consisted of a political and advertising strategy to convince the legislature and the public that teachers needed a variety of benefits and that they'd better get them. Or else.

I wonder if a little part of that battle plan — or a new version — included making the school districts in suburban Wayne County the test cases this year? Perhaps it's just paranoid musings, but I can't help wondering.

WHAT ISN'T PARANOID IS the fact that at the heart of the teacher strikes this year is the drastic inflation that has affected our entire country. Our reporters who are covering the bargaining between teachers and school boards say that the big, big problem this year is money: with the teachers demanding pay increases to keep up with the cost of living and the boards refusing to go along because of tight finances.

Both sides have a point, which is why it's tough to take sides in such cases.

The teachers explain that they, as a group, have fallen behind in the inflationary spiral more than virtually any other school boards point out that



Teachers' battle plan

much of their revenue comes from the local property tax, which does not increase much in inflationary times, and inquire just where the teachers expect them to get the money.

In this regard, it might well turn out in the fullness of time that the celebrated cost of living contract clauses introduced by former Livonia Supt. Roland Upton will be a certain recipe for trouble. If the cost of living goes up next year by, say 11 percent, but school district income goes up by only five percent, and the contract requires payment of an 11 percent increase to teachers . . . Well, then, there's gonna be trouble.

THE DIFFICULTY with teacher strikes, particularly during this period of taxpayers' resistance to increased millage, is that they are ultimately self-defeating.

Even after teachers settle using the strike as a weapon, parents and property owners remain sore, and are hardly inclined to vote more tax millage to pay for the settlement.

Why? Because, quite simply, teachers are public employees who, in theory, are supposed to serve the public interest. They are, however, caught in the tendency today to turn every political and economic decision into an exercise of pressure group tactics, and hence they have little alternative, except to bargain and strike.

But the public at large still holds the notion that as public employees, teachers should somehow not stoop to such tactics. And I'm inclined to agree.

Having benefited in the short run, from the right to bargain and the weapon of the strike, teachers may find that in the long run such methods only contribute to a savagely reduced financial base, and hence not only penalize the kids but also hurt themselves.

Intervention in Chile

President Ford Tuesday night confirmed testimony that the United States was involved in secret political operations in Chile.

His remarks, made during his second press conference, agreed with recent disclosures made by Central Intelligence Agency Director William Colby.

Colby told Sen. Frank Church's multinational corporation subcommittee that \$11 million was authorized by the National Security Council to "destabilize" the regime headed by Salvador Allende.

President Ford and Colby contradicted the testimony of state department officials who one year ago said that the United States followed a strict policy of non-intervention in Chile's affairs.

Senator Church has now asked his sub-

committee to study the testimony made during last year's ITT-Chile hearings to determine if the state department officials perjured themselves.

THE SUBCOMMITTEE'S work relates to the larger issue of whether the United States should seek to influence the internal affairs of other countries.

President Ford said the intervention was "historically justified." But what if it is proven that the United States played a role in the bloody coup that overthrew Allende's government and resulted in his death last September? Is that also "justified"?

We hope Senator Church's subcommittee learns the facts in this issue. Perhaps, we haven't learned our lessons from Vietnam after all.

From our readers

Bad taste
To the Editor:

I am greatly distressed and angry after having just picked up my Sept. 12 edition of The Southfield Observer & Eccentric. While "a picture is worth a thousand words" in many cases, I found the photograph of the deceased or dying Ms. Ciavarella to be in extremely bad taste.

While violent death may be a reality of everyday life, what consideration was given to the living, the loved ones and friends of Ms. Ciavarella when the decision to publish this photograph was made?

IN THIS DAY of controversy over "blood and guts" in other media, I feel it is unnecessary and unpleasant to be blatantly confronted with this type of visual detail on the front page of the local paper. The people in Southfield, I assume, are still literate enough to

read about such tragedies, and are all human enough to be moved by the written word.

If the shock value of this photograph was intended to evoke human reaction, it did that. However, my suspicion is that shock value was aimed at selling papers, not in human tragedy.

I personally would rather have seen the column inches of the photograph used to describe Cindy Ciavarella human being, rather than the graphic illustration you presented.

Elizabeth C. Lewis
Sept. 12, 1974
Southfield

Compassion needed
To the Editor:

I can't tell you how shocked and appalled I was when I picked up the Observer & Eccentric and saw your front page photograph of Cindy Ciavarella, victim of a tragic traffic accident.

My instant reaction was how

sickening this sight must be to her family! Where has common decency gone? Where is your respect for her family's privacy? than this from our news reporters?

Your photographer has shown in the past his capability of producing excellent shots. Please for God's sake — be more selective. Show more human compassion.

Losing a loved one is tragic enough without having to view a sight they may otherwise have not had to witness. Can't we spare them this much?

Grace Zimmerman
Sept. 13, 1974
Southfield

Conflict of interest
To the Editor:

What has happened recently with Watergate is not new. In our country's 200-year history we have had scandals during other administrations.

In examining some of these

scandals history reveals, as today, that there was a great outcry then by the news media by concerned citizens and by public officials and when it was all over, the outraged newspapers, the vocal public officials and the concerned citizens all went back to "business as usual."

To a rational person, it would seem natural that as a result of past lessons learned over a period of 200 years, similar to Watergate, something would have been gained from all of it . . . that some laws would have been passed by our country's leaders that could have plugged the conflict of interest and campaign spending loopholes.

IT'S TRUE that it is difficult to legislate morals. However, the token ethics laws that exist today are vague and penalties almost nonexistent at best which proves that public officials, no matter which era, have never willingly legislated controls for their conduct, only the conduct of others.

Now that the former President of the United States has removed himself from office, the spirit of the majority of our nation's leaders seems to be for uncompromising government. It would seem, in light of this spirit, that conflict of interest and election reforms could be accomplished.

Yet, there are already signs that this is not necessarily the case. Senator Ervin, whose Senate committee originally investigated Watergate and is now responsible for making ethical reform recommendations, indicated recently that he can see conflict of interest and campaign reform legislation

concerning dying among many of his colleagues. If this is true, then we are all the concerned politicians whose cry for reform were heard during the heights of Watergate?

I believe, with a view back to Watergate, that the press should make it their business to watch the nation's progress in the area of reform legislation, report on it and editorialize on each law's potential effectiveness in view of past problems.

This should be done as aggressively as the press sought information on President Nixon's conduct in the Watergate scandal. Total effort is just as important here as it was with "Watergate."

THE PRESS as well as groups like Common Cause should "blow the whistle" on public officials, state or federal, who fail to sup-

port strong conflict of interest and campaign reform legislation. These officials should be exposed. Existing conflict of interest and campaign laws made the abuses of Watergate possible. Without necessary reform these abuses will most certainly continue.

Watergate has demonstrated to all of us that there is a pressing need for reforms. This must be the time to get new conflict of interest and campaign reform laws passed while our public officials are sensitive to the issue, and the nation's desire for the reforms is strong.

If Americans really care about the happenings in our nation today, if corruption, conflicts of interest and questionable campaign practices by our elected leaders concerns us, then we must act. Watergate was the name for that "cancer" that was said to be in the White House.

John Kokalis
Sept. 17, 1974
Troy

f.y.i.*

Shoo-baam!

A Southfield woman called the police Labor Day weekend after hearing gunshots at her neighbor's.

Officers checked out the area on the city's south side. They found a man in his garden — scaring away birds with firecrackers.

Farmington
Observer & Eccentric
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