

editorial opinion

Open discussion is vital

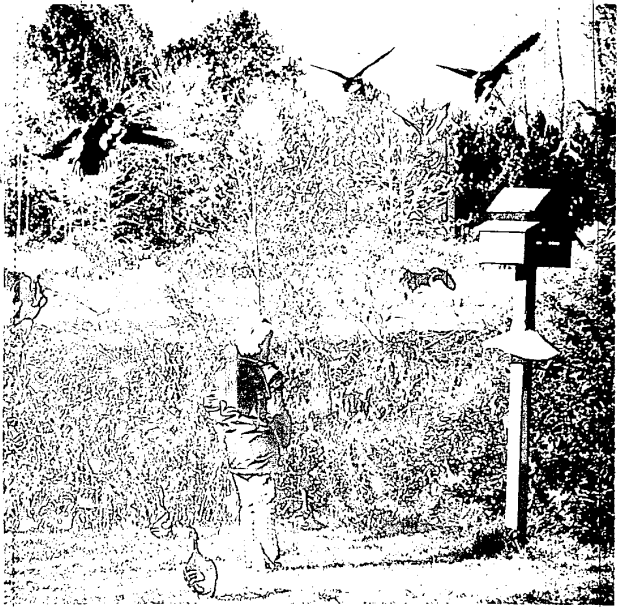
The Farmington School Board recently felt compelled to hold a private meeting to discuss the possibility of requesting another millage election. The decision is too important to the community and thousands of individual students to be discussed privately.

The timing of the election and the amount of millage to be requested bear heavily on the chances for passage. Although the school board must make the final decision, it may be alienating its best supporters by holding discussions privately.

ALL FACTORS relating to the millage request should be made clear to the community. If there are political reasons for a certain packaging of millage, or for timing of the request, they should be stated frankly.

The board may be accused of manipulating the election in hopes of winning passage of the property tax, but after all the board's business is guaranteeing the best possible education for Farmington-area students. If that requires taxes, the board should not be bashful in asking for them. After all, it is the children of the community whose interests will suffer, rather than the school board's. Telling voters that the future of their children is the issue at stake is the best way to impress upon them the seriousness of the matter.

THE FARMINGTON School Board, over the past years, has fostered open communication between the district and residents. It damages the progress made in uniting the community behind the school system when decisions are discussed privately by the board as a whole. It smacks of paternalism.



Photographed by Barbara McClellan

For the quality of life

Drayton Plains Nature Center faces a severe financial crisis. Located four miles north of Pontiac, the center attracts young and old from the entire county.

Directors of the center are hoping Oakland County residents will donate \$50,000 to enable the Nature Center to continue operation. If the funds cannot be raised the 137-acre center may be forced to close in the next six months.

UNLESS DONATIONS increase much of the center will be returned to the state and subject to resale for development.

We hear much these days from citi-

zens who voice concern about the quality of life, about the environment and ecology.

A donation to the Drayton Plains Nature Center would represent a highly visible and effective step to help preserve and enrich our quality of life.

AND, WE DO not have to knock down the door of some state or federal agency. This is something that can be done by residents, themselves.

Here stands a real challenge. Drayton Plains Nature Center needs your support. Put your money where it will count 100 per cent. The center is located at 2125 Denby Drive, Drayton Plains.

From our readers

Community needs arts program

To The Editor:

I was sorry to read that Farmington Hills has derived financial support to the Farmington Arts Council.

Any community needs a recognized arts program, one that will encourage artistic endeavor, that takes a broad view so that no area is neglected and none receives undue emphasis. A good arts council, which you are fortunate enough to have, encourages and supports promising painters, architects, sculptors, musicians, writers, dancers, and is concerned with handi-

crafts and preserving historic landmarks.

An arts council informs and teaches the citizens of a city about the finest that is being done anywhere in these areas.

In Livonia we do not have an arts council so Mayor McNamara found it necessary to create an arts commission. The city council has recently un-derwritten, to the extent of \$2,000, a performance of "The Barber of Seville" which will be presented in March at Churchill High School by the Oakway Symphony Orchestra and the

Michigan Opera Theater, upon the recommendation of the Arts Commission. The people who live in Farmington Hills have shown their great interest in music by their participation in the Oakway Symphony as musicians in the orchestra, or as active, supporting members of the symphony society.

It appears that residents of Farmington Hills have more interest in the arts than one would ordinarily expect to find. To many, art is not a hobby—it is a way of life.

NELDA BIRLISI
Livonia

Oct. 29

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Eccentricities

by HANK HOGAN



Sixth grade--an era of change

Do you remember the sixth grade? The sixth grade is not a class in school, but an era in one's life.

The sixth grade is when girls are taller than boys and are showing the first signs of womanhood.

The sixth grade is when boys hate girls so much that they spend hours talking to them on the telephone but wouldn't be caught dead talking to them in the school corridors.

It is a time when boy meets girl and, for the first time, finds out that the opposite sex is different and attractive.

PART OF THE ritual of sixth grade is a ballroom dancing class. The reason it stands out is because it combines the sensitivity and absurdity of the age into small, delicate moments.

It is a time when boys and girls are forced to stand face to face with the opposite sex and even touch each other. The touching is a little difficult, since the girls are towering over the little guys.

It is a time when the little girls trade their blue jeans for dresses and white gloves and the boys start combing their hair and washing their faces.

Observation Point

by PHILIP H. POWER

In these days of gloom and doom, it's a real pleasure to be able to devote a column to some things that are going well.

That's just what's happening in the suburbs with respect to preserving the irreplaceable landmarks of our history.

For years, as subdivision developments gobbled up farm land and as villages razed ancient buildings in the rush to cityhood, suburban growth has steadily eliminated most traces of the past.

Only recently, with projects such as the Old Village in Plymouth, have suburban communities come to realize that the buildings and houses of the past could be turned to productive and esthetically pleasing purposes in the present.

Last week saw two news stories that indicate that progress is accelerating.

IN FARMINGTON, the site of some of the finest historical buildings in this part of the state, steps have started to place the city's historic district in the National Registry. Included are 21 properties right in the center of the city, which constituted the crossroads of three of the most important Indian trails in southeastern Michigan. The Orchard Lake Trail, probably used by Chief Pontiac, followed north along Farmington Road; Shiawassee Road now followed the trail of the same name; and the Grand River Trail follows what is now Freedom Road. According to Paul Schreiber, a distinguished local historian, a maple tree which was a landmark in those days is still standing at the age of around 250 years.

DESIGNATION as a historic district is made possible through the enactment in 1966 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which allows states to designate landmarks and got the federal government involved in preservation at the community level.

Young hoodlums?

To the Editor:

In so many ways Birmingham is an enlightened community which does well by citizens fortunate enough to have taken up residence here. But the presence of young hoods in the neighborhood of local high and junior high schools should cause deep concern to all of us.

Early in the cheerleading season, it became dangerous to drive in the vicinity of Seaholm high school. Freshly washed and even brand new cars were pelted with hard apples and eggs. Appeals to the police were useless because the mobsters fled whenever a dome light appeared.

Now as we approach the top time for the young hoodlums, Halloween, one gracious lady, a senior citizen of not especially robust build and with a history of medical disability, is being held virtually a prisoner in her home at all hours after sunset.

RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS serious blot on Birmingham's reputation as a decent city are the parents of these young hoodlums, who should know where their children are after nightfall and should assume responsibility for full and severe discipline. But in this Dr. Spockian age permissiveness seems to be the order of the day. The schools wash their hands of taking any responsibility for their students, and the parents have been brainwashed into thinking that if they strike firmly for law, order and decency they will be labeled brutal.

What was it Dr. Johnson said when he heard that students were no longer flogged for failing to study? "What they gain at one end, they lose at the other."

Since some of this sadistic nonsense occurs at night on school days, why aren't the schools, for which we pay fantastic taxes, insisting on enough homework to keep the young hoodlums at home at their desks? And why are cases of vandalism and even

arson in the high schools left unreported in the papers?

Crime is crime, no matter what the age of the criminal, and better to move swiftly while the child is still in the correctable stage than to wait until he has to be tried for his acts as an adult.

Carl G. Wonnberger
Birmingham

Oct. 28

Elitist comment?

To the Editor:

Your editorial (and Publisher Hogan's columnist commentary) on Proposal C appearing in the Oct. 24 Observer & Eccentric is absolutely incredible. I know that those of us living in the northern suburbs are supposed to be economic conservatives, at least by reputation, but this is ridiculous.

The editorial notes two "problems" with electoral repeal of the food and drug sales tax:

(1) "Both constitutional provisions and simple responsiveness to the will of the electorate argue that tax decisions should be left in the hands of the legislature."

(2) It is a piecemeal approach to an overall problem which ought best be treated as a whole."

YOUR FIRST POINT, besides being grammatically incomprehensible, is illogical. Why should legislators, rather than the people themselves, make substantial tax policy decisions? Wasn't it legislators who gave us such landmark tax policies as the oil depletion allowance, etc.?

Is the legislature any greater a sounding-board of the popular will than the polls, the latter at least being a venue where absolutely equal access to the mechanisms of decision-making is guaranteed regardless of the extent of one's influence or prior

IT IS A TIME of giggling to conceal self consciousness.

It is a time when a little boy drops a frog down the back of a girl's dress to get her attention, rather than telling her that he likes her.

The curve of the sixth grade ballroom dancing class is that some people never learn how to dance because of self consciousness. Yet, maybe the dancing class is meant only to serve as a transition in life into future boy - girl relationships.

THE SIXTH GRADE also is a time when the little boy is king. He is discovering that his muscles work and he can become an athlete.

He finds he is a leader of the smaller kids in his school, yet is not quite expected to exercise the responsibilities of leadership.

On the other hand, it is the age where the little boy finds out that the little girl is smarter than he is.

The problem with the sixth grade is that it lasts only a year and all those wonderful new experiences are soon forgotten when the youngster changes schools and has to start at the bottom of the ladder in seventh grade.

Some things are going well

The federal government has set aside \$436,000 for historic preservation in Michigan, which will be used on a matching basis to help property owners preserve their sites.

In addition, the law provides legal protection for designated sites, so they may not be torn down or defaced by later development.

The Farmington Historical Society and the city fathers have taken real leadership on this project, and deserve a big vote of thanks.

SO, TOO does the City of Livonia, which is in the middle of negotiating to acquire the 150-acre Hill Farm, located on the south side of Eight Mile Road just east of Haggerty.

It's a big, white, classical farmhouse, built in 1841, surrounded by a dairy barn, a hay barn, sheds and other appurtenances of farm life of the 19th century.

The city wants to buy the farm -- and to run it as a farm -- as a monument to the architecture of the past and as a living memory of the city's farming history.

Only two working farms are left in Livonia today, and the city fathers have the idea that a professional manager could make the land productive enough to get the project to a self-sustaining level. Visions of hayrides and cider festivals are dancing in the city fathers' heads, and the adults and children of a now-urbanized city will be able to get a priceless look at their past if the project goes through.

Progress in preserving and revitalizing historical sites aren't unique to Farmington and Livonia, but these two communities deserve special mention for their outstanding progress in recent weeks.

Here's hoping there's more of it throughout the suburbs.

From our readers

campaign contributions? Why isn't the constitution, in fact, the perfectly appropriate situs for reflection of the predominant public sentiment?

Your second point, on its face, appears to have more merit. Certainly piecemeal tax provisions in the constitution are arguably undesirable in the sense that they are "special legislation" in what purports to be a "general" document. However, the legislature, you will recall, has been repeatedly and persistently prodded in the past to make such reforms as you allude to in your editorial. It has not reacted in the slightest. What better way, or what way more in fitting with our constitutional scheme of government, is there, given attempted recourse to the legislature, to accomplish a reform which though supported by a majority of the population, has not been translated into statutory reality?

PUBLISHER HOGAN'S commentary on "ability to pay" is out of the middle ages and merits no extended criticism. Suffice it to say, that his column on point was not only naive and misleading, but it reflects as well an apparent class bias so deeply ingrained in Mr. Hogan's personality as to be worth the effort or trauma to expunge. I'll leave that to his analysts.

Proposal C is a sound proposal taking a first step in the direction of a completely progressive tax structure—the end result being that every one's wallet or pocketbook will be affected equally, the poor and disadvantaged especially being spared the unequal effects of inflation, and not insignificantly, the economic roots of hunger, malnutrition, and sickness. I strongly urge a yes vote on Proposal C and I believe you have done a severe disservice to the public interest with your elitist editorial and comment.

John M. Burhoff
Birmingham

Oct. 25, 1974