

editorial opinion

Resolution should be copied

The Southfield city council's unanimous passage of a resolution concerning the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff for "anti-semitic" utterances might well be action to be considered by other local government bodies.

U.S. Army Gen. George S. Brown, in an address at the Duke University School of Law, remarked that a renewed Arab oil embargo might prompt America to "set down the Jewish influence in this country."

Southfield's resolution called for President Gerald Ford to assure that the position of the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff remain objective and free of bigotry.

The council's resolution argued well the reasons for local governments to take similar stands.

"...In these troubled times (the statements) cannot be routinely dismissed as a mistake in judgment.

"It is obligatory of all citizens to speak out against all persons who engage in the illiterate practice of contempt and bias, and especially those in positions which command respect, so as to make it quite clear that people in this country will not tolerate or excuse perpetrators of prejudice."

Brown's statements, as the resolution says, cannot be passed off as a massive lack of sensitivity, or as any reasonable comment on the U.S. position in the Middle East. They reflect only dishonor on the U.S. Army, the joint chiefs of staff and the U.S. government.

Political sign pollution

The Beautification Council of Southeastern Michigan, through President Shirley Richardson of Farmington, has urged all political candidates to remove signs as soon as possible.

"Throughout many of our communities, we can still witness evidence of the many political signs that remain on public properties," the Beautification Council says.

"We are aware that displaying political signs is essential to conducting a campaign, and hope that the politicians will realize the importance of removing their signs now that the election is over."

Some communities in the area have tried to ban all political signs, with scattered success.

Many politicians swear by signs as one of the most effective ways to gain name recognition. However, many residents swear at the signs as eyesores.

Vigorous campaigning is an important part of the American political system. A vigorous campaign does not necessarily mean plastering the countryside with signs, though.

Persons responsible enough to be considered seriously for public office also should be responsible enough to remove signs after a campaign is over. Whether a candidate removes his signs after the election should be one factor voters consider if the candidate again seeks a public office.

Drive deserves support

Providence Hospital's drive to raise \$4 million to help finance a 103-bed addition has the title to "New Dimensions." Its success will mean an important community resource continues to grow and prosper.

Although the addition will cost about \$15 million, the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent De Paul, the Roman Catholic order which operates the hospital, have pledged almost two-thirds of the amount. The rest of the money is being sought from the community the hospital serves—from those who use the life-saving facilities.

First-rate health care is a requirement of any community. It influences business and industrial growth, and it maintains residential property values. Southfield is a more attractive place for both businesses and residents because fine health

care is available nearby.

Last year, Providence admitted nearly 18,000 patients. It handled 13,000 outpatient visits, more than 100,000 X-rays, 13,000 surgeries and more than 900,000 laboratory tests. Its annual bed-occupancy rate is 95 per cent, hospital officials say, the highest in southeastern Michigan.

Those astronomical numbers translate into hundreds of lives saved and much pain and suffering eliminated. In return, the community should be ready to participate in the fund drive.

Volunteers will be seeking donations from area businesses and residents beginning Thursday. The community should remember how much service the hospital renders when it decides in what extent to participate.

Burke's law not impressive

Troy City Council is expected to review the closed-door policy of the zoning appeals board after a public hearing on Dec. 16.

Council has acted wisely in giving this issue public attention and careful consideration. The zoning board wishes to continue a format which allows any deliberation to be held in secret session.

SUCH A star chamber policy is not in the public interest. The zoning appeals board claims it is quasi-judicial in nature and can therefore justify secret meetings.

If the zoning board believes that secrecy is consistent with justice in this country, board members have been misled.

City Attorney Stanley E. Burke has advised the zoning appeals board that its

quasi-judicial nature permits secret deliberations. Although a formal state attorney general opinion has not been written, senior lawyers in the department informally feel secret meetings of zoning appeals boards would be in opposition to the Michigan open meetings law.

The state law says public bodies must vote in a public forum. The zoning appeals board votes in secret.

THE PUBLIC'S business must be conducted in public. Troy residents now should be only too aware of the value of such a policy of openness.

Other cities whose zoning boards vote in secret should take a close look at this policy.

Citizens should be forceful in demanding a change in this policy of secret meetings.


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Eccentricities

by ELVA HOGAN



The Grinch who stole the government

The fine art of political fund raising must be reformed. Nobody can honestly deny it.

Years ago we bemoaned the fact that the high cost of running for office meant that only the very wealthy could participate.

At least the rich man was free from outside pressure because he used his own money to get elected.

Today many of the "poor man's" candidates have discovered a way to raise great sums of money for campaigns and compete with the wealthy.

THEY LOOK around and see who is interested in governmental action and solicit funds from these special interest groups.

So now instead of government by the rich, we have government by special interest.

The new Lieutenant Governor elect got into trouble because some land developers contributed to his campaign for the state legislature.

Judges still solicit campaign money from the attorneys who have to appear before them every day. Obviously, an attorney who has contributed a large sum is not going to get any special consideration from a jurist who has to run again for office in the future and will need more money then.

GOVERNMENT HAS closed the door by law for big, mean corporations giving money to political campaigns.

But no one seems alarmed that labor unions who are lobbying daily for all sorts of new laws are contributing in some cases more than 50 per cent of the campaign funds needed by would-be and incumbent Congressmen or state legislators, plus additional personnel to help.

I have not figured out why a corporation or land developer is bad and a labor union is all right when condemning special interest, unless of course, they have contributed enough to enough of office holders that they can pressure for this protection.

WHILE I HATE to see the federal government finance elections, we must prevent special interests from buying elections and elected officials.

There must be limitations set on the amount any person or organization can give and they must be strictly enforced.

The lesson of Watergate and related fund raising schemes has to be that government can be stolen from the American people unless we have campaign funding reform.

From our readers

Election coverage helped voters

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to thank you and the editorial staff of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers for your endorsement of my candidacy for the Lathrup Village city council, and for the excellent coverage given all the candidates, not only for Lathrup, but for all political offices. As a voter, it helped me considerably in making my selections at the voting booth.

At this time I would also like to compliment your staff on the very informative PR seminar we were privileged to attend last month.

An interested photographer myself, I especially enjoyed hearing more about the photography department and seeing more of Gary Friedman's expressive photographs. The entire staff did a superb job in enlightening the public in many areas.

Thank you again for the kind words.

GEORGE LEGGATT
Lathrup Village
Nov. 6, 1974

Avon Township needs a healthy Rochester

To the Editor:

As the public hearing date for the city's annexation petition draws near, we feel there are some important facts that citizens should consider. In this we do not mean just city or township residents but the total community.

There has never been any doubt in our mind that Avon Township is important to the City of Rochester. We also feel that the City of Rochester is important to Avon Township. Most people from outside our immediate area do not even differentiate between Rochester and Avon. They tend to consider the whole general area as Rochester. In effect if Rochester continues to prosper, it has no adverse effect on the surrounding area. On the other hand, if Rochester's fortunes take a downward turn, eventually that will have an effect on the surrounding area.

We sincerely believe that the proposed annexation, while immensely important to Rochester, is not all that detrimental to Avon Township. In terms of land area, the proposed annexation represents approximately six percent of the total area of Avon Township. From a financial standpoint, the effect of the proposed annexation is even less significant. The assessed value of the annexation area is approximately three percent of the total township assessed value. With the growth that exists in the township the loss of this tax base would be more than made up in any single year. Finally, in terms of people we are talking about a fraction of one percent of the total township population. The loss of population would probably be recovered in a single month.

If there is any single factor that dominates the proposed annexation area, it is Parke-Davis. At most people are aware, the future of Parke-Davis is very much in doubt. While their plans to relocate have been postponed, there is no assurance that they will not be renewed in the future. It might be well though to take a look at the past. For decades, the City of Rochester has provided water and sewer services to Parke-Davis. From a governmental standpoint, it is the City of Rochester that has kept this industry within our community. In order to do this it has been necessary to make capital improvements in the system to, in part, meet the demands of this industry. When Parke-Davis announced their relocation plans, we became painfully aware that we would not only lose a major customer but also the future potential to use the capacity that has been built for that customer. One can easily take this position that it was a gamble from the onset. As a gamble though, the benefits have been to the entire community but the losses will be very much restricted.

When the petition for the annexation was submitted to the State Boundary

Commission, we could fully anticipate a certain official reaction. As expected, it contained certain words, such as "strip annexation," "gerrymandering," "land grab," etc. that are designed to appeal to emotions. While the emotional appeal may be effective, we would hope that the citizens of this community would consider of more than just this approach. We firmly believe that the future of both Avon and Rochester are closely tied together. What effects one community, either positively or negatively, will eventually have a similar effect on the other community. It is in this context that we would hope the citizens of this area would consider the proposed annexation. If the annexation is not allowed, there will be some who feel that would constitute a major victory. In the long run, one has to wonder if there would be any winners.

WILLIAM S. SINCLAIR
City Manager
Rochester
Nov. 18, 1974

Resident has right to open meetings

To the Editor:

Recent newspaper articles have made me aware of a situation I cannot condone, prompting this letter of opinion. I feel the zoning board of appeals' practice of ruling on issues behind closed doors is contrary to my interest as a resident of Rochester. I firmly believe that a resident of the community has a right to know the reasons for a zoning decision, not just the final decision.

There may have been a time, in the past, when closed-door decisions on public affairs seemed justified. Today, however, I fully subscribe to the need for increasing citizen awareness and participation in matters involving the future of the community.

In my opinion, the newspaper account of the supportive arguments for closed-door decisions were not convincing reasons to continue this practice. I find it difficult to accept closed-door decisions of the Board as being justified just because a judge may or may not make a decision in chambers. Also, the argument that some communities do (and some don't) tolerate closed-door zoning decisions does not mean Rochester has to have them.

As a concerned resident, I hope the council will take the initiative and pursue an early resolution that will open up to the community the doors to zoning board of appeal meetings.

T.N. EASTERDAY
Rochester
Nov. 15, 1974

Headline criticized

To the Editor:

I want to express my appreciation for the balanced and fair coverage of the recent judicial election extended by your paper. I believe that your reporters were thorough and adequately informed the citizens of the issues involved.

Having started on a positive note, I would like to take exception to the headline appearing over a past election article stating that "Judge Webster criticizes election process."

A reading of the article following that "head" indicates that the substance of my comment was that I wished to think carefully about the method of selection of judges and let the trauma of election night, and all that went before, pass before I made any comment on that issue. In that context I did state that it "may be" time to consider changes in the method of selection of judges but that I wanted to carefully consider my own position before commenting.

Having been appointed, and now having been elected in a contested race, I do feel that I have experience that will permit concrete contribu-

tions to the public debate that will inevitably ensue in the next few years over the questions of the method of selection of our judiciary, but I feel that any such comment would be premature at this time.

I appreciate the opportunity to clarify the impression made by the headline on the article.

Robert B. Webster
Sixth Judicial
Circuit Court
Nov. 14, 1974

Federal funds for nature

To the Editor:

In reference to the Editorial Opinion page in the Nov. 7 issue of The Observer and Eccentric you published two articles side by side. One was called "For the Quality of Life" in which the plight of the continuation of Drayton Plains Nature Center was explained because it cannot go on without further donations. Anyone who is aware of nature and has ever been there need not be told what a wonderful last natural place it is.

On the other side Mr. Philip H. Power writes on his Observation Point about how buildings and houses of the past have been of late turned into landmarks and through the National Historic Preservation Act got the federal government to set money aside for legal protection not to be torn down or defamed by development.

If Livonia and Farmington can do it why can't Oakland County enable the Nature Center to continue? I am merely pointing out the paradox of these two articles.

Mrs. Marion Allen
Ferndale
Nov. 17, 1974

Open Forum

Letters to the "From our readers" column should be limited to between 100 and 200 words and be signed with name, address and telephone number. Letters of a longer length will be considered in terms of content and availability of space. The Observer & Eccentric reserves the right to edit all letters for length and good taste. Names of letter writers may be withheld under exceptional circumstances.

Sense And Nonsense

No special favors

Keeping the peace isn't always that easy for the police.

The overflow crowd at the football game between neighborhood rivals Bloomfield Hills Andover and Lahser filled the Knights parking lot far beyond capacity.

Cars were figuratively parked on cars, and only the coolest of heads could untangle the autos after the game.

Bloomfield's "finest" were scattered about the scene watching the fans leave the scene.

A traffic jam was inevitable.

One enterprising football referee after the game thought different, and demanded some type of super-human action by the police to remove the cars and speed-up the referees exit from the scene.

"You my friend, have got to be kidding," one officer told the referee.