

# editorial opinion

## Associations stress involvement

Subdivision associations, a feature of suburban developments since the outward movement from central cities began, are alive and well—at least in Farmington Hills.

The Woodbrook Subdivision Association in north Farmington Hills has been keeping a close watch on the activities of governments which affect residents. Plans for developments in the Woodbrook area are brought to the attention of residents.

Not only does the subdivision association watch the activities of governments, it also coordinates such chores as keeping weeds cut in the subdivision.

Both kinds of activities are important. Residents should be aware of and involved in local governments. Residents also should take an interest in the general appearance and condition of their neighborhood. An active subdivision association, such as Woodbrook, can help in both areas.

## Area residents use 'free' time

The recession hasn't meant bad news for everyone in the Farmington area.

Dr. Don Nichols, chairman of the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College, says enrollment at the Farmington Hills branch has held steady despite the country's economic problems.

Residents who might be working less because of layoffs or curtailed overtime seem to have decided to spend their free time back in school. Nichols says that enrollment figures are about the same for the winter and fall sessions, as opposed to a history of lower enrollments during the winter term when compared to the first registration period.

The Orchard Ridge enrollment shows that many area residents are making

good use of their time. More education will mean a better life for them and a better society when an economic upturn demands the skills they are learning.

And it is specific skills, rather than general education, which the Orchard Ridge students are seeking. Nichols says many students at the campus are persons with degrees from other schools who have enrolled in vocational programs.

There is a place for both the traditional "liberal arts" training and vocational preparation in the broad educational spectrum. The Orchard Ridge campus offers both, and other residents can find meaningful ways to occupy their time by using the important community resource.

## Student voices are important

For a group often accused of not representing residents, Southfield's school board has made an impression on the representatives of an important part of the community—the students the district serves.

Two students appointed to represent peers before the school board have been impressed by the trustees' willingness to listen to their views. One student representative, Miss Suzanne Schultz of Southfield-Lathrup High School, said she feared the step might be tokenism.

"But it hasn't turned out that way."

Miss Schultz commented "They're all receptive and helpful."

Miss Schultz, along with Miss Mary Beth Cylkowski of Southfield High, have been impressed with individual members and the board as a whole. When a school board can reach students, it shows that the group indeed does care about the community.

The idea of student representation in board discussions is a good one. The Southfield school-board and the students involved should be praised for the way in which the idea has been implemented.

## Area-wide solutions needed

Hard and fast rules seldom are useful. The Southfield city council might think about that in future consideration of issues involving area-wide planning.

A discussion of whether the council should support a Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) study of water pollution included statements about the appropriateness of regional planning and controls.

SEMCOG has been attacked by many officials as being an attempt to subvert local authorities. It is important that agencies such as SEMCOG be watched closely so they do not step into areas which they are not designed to handle.

On the other hand, some problems by their nature are area-wide. Only solutions

which are area-wide can solve such problems.

Among area-wide problems are pollution and waste disposal. How can Southfield end pollution of streams through the city when someone upstream insists on dumping waste? And without an area-wide plan, an attempt by Southfield to find a place to dump garbage merely is passing the problem on to the community where dumps are found.

Southfield officials should watch carefully that local control of services such as public safety is maintained. In other areas, the city should cooperate with regional planning and problem-solving attempts.

## Eccentricities

by HANK HOGAN



### Public interest must prevail

A strike is a two-edged sword. Labor and management are certainly both better off when they can solve their differences through collective bargaining.

A strike should be resorted to only when there is a tremendous gap between what the employer offers and what the employee is asking because, once a strike starts, deep wounds are cut that are difficult to heal.

Obviously, when a strike occurs, the employer is hurt because he usually is put out of business, at least temporarily.

The employee is hurt because he loses wages in the hope that, in the long run, he will gain more than he loses.

But, he is also taking the chance that the employer will try to continue in operation with non-union help and that eventually, the original employee job could disappear.

A third party, the public, suffers from a strike.

OF LATE there has been increased conflict in a relatively new field, the withholding of services or striking, by municipal or educational workers.

The effect of this conflict gets greater notoriety because when ordinary employees strike, few of the public are involved. As soon as governmental employees strike the public in general is involved and is the general health, education and welfare of the community.

By law, school teachers are not allowed to strike. But there aren't very many judges who have the guts to tell them that.

## Observation Point

by PHILIP H. POWER



### Who represents the children?

In all the agonizing hassle about teacher strikes, a crucial point has got lost in the shuffle. Just why did the Legislature originally pass a state law prohibiting strikes by public employees including teachers?

The reasons are three. One is bad, one is only moderately good, one is very good.

Because the Legislature back when it passed the law forbidding public employee strikes was controlled by lawmakers who were generally rural mugwumps, thoroughly opposed to any kind of union activity. In today's times, and particularly with respect to schools in the metropolitan area, this is simply silly and out of date. Teacher unions are a fact of life, past laws preventing their existence simply will not work.

2. Public employees ought to be prohibited from striking because, as public employees work for the public at large, there is nobody to bargain with or strike against.

In broad terms this argument has some sense, a strike by public employees is a strike against citizens in general, and does not readily fall within the classical reconciliation of labor and management interests that the collective bargaining process imposes.

In the narrower context of school boards and teachers, however, school boards are elected to be the representatives of the local taxpaying public; hence the school boards are the bargaining agent for the public, and the ultimate constraint on the collective bargaining process is the public's willingness to pay for schools and teacher salaries.

3. WHEN TEACHERS strike, the real losers are the children whose education is jerked around and botched up, but who are not and cannot be part of the collective bargaining process. This is a thoroughly sensible reason to prohibit teacher strikes, yet it is a point so far lost in the juvenile display of emotionalism that has so far characterized discussions of the problem.

What recourse do the children have when teachers strike? Boycott the classroom? State law requires their attendance, and anyway a boycott would be self-defeating. Vote against millage? They can't.

What shall the children do when school boards become intransigent and refuse to bargain? Urge their parents to vote down millage? This would not be in their interest, which must be quality education. Run for school board? State law prohibits candidates for office under 18.

What can the children do when the Legislature fiddles around with an absurd patchwork of state laws that virtually guarantees teacher strikes? Vote against the cowardly legislators? Most school children cannot vote.

The teachers have their unions; the public has its school board; school administrators have their state association. But what organized group represents the children? None. Not only are the children an unorganized group, but they are prohibited by state law from doing much to protect their interests.

The net result in this elaborate minuet of power politics with each interest group claiming to be acting in the children's interest is that the kids get the shaft.

It's a damn shame, and I think it's high time the teachers and the school boards and the legisla-

tors started talking about the real point—the kids whose educations are being ruined.

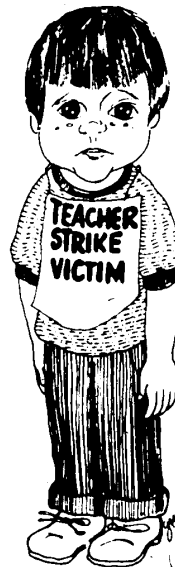
JUST HOW far off the point discussion of teacher strikes has wandered is illustrated by some comments by Plymouth Education Association President Dolly Carter McMaster, reported in this newspaper last week. "The PEA is one of the teacher unions which have decided to support the Crestwood District teachers by sympathy strikes of their own, other local unions which have agreed to strike include Redford Union and South Redford."

"PEA President Dolly Carter McMaster said she would not attempt to justify her actions or those of members who walk off the job. 'I know that I am breaking the law and the contract, but teachers in Plymouth feel that what is at stake is far greater than their own individual security and our own individual jobs.'"

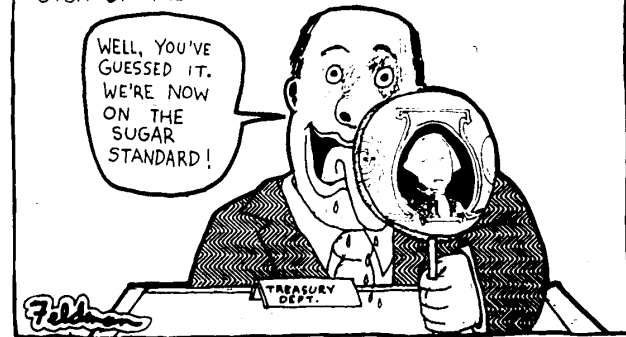
On the issue of what would happen to Plymouth teachers who did not choose to walk out, Mrs. McMaster said "There is no legal punitive action that the PEA can take against people who are abiding by the contract. It's as simple as that. However, life can be made hell for them."

When the thinking of supposedly responsible adults gets that twisted, is it any wonder that we all have good cause to be saddened and angered at what's happening to our children today?

## LOST IN THE STRUGGLE



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## Your ecology calendar

Ecology-minded persons who wish to save cans, bottles or newspapers for recycling may use these facilities:

To wash the containers, thoroughly wash the containers, remove all metal caps and rings from the glass and separate the glass by color.

To prepare cans, clean only. Paper need not be removed.

Newspapers should be tied in bundles with heavy string or rope or secured in heavy paper bags.

• SOUTHFIELD-In the old city offices, 2800 Berg Road at Ten and One-half Mile, one block east of Telegraph.

• TROY-At the DPW Yard, 4895 Rochester Road, from 9 a.m. to noon on the first and third Saturday of each month.

• LATHRUP VILLAGE-At the Public Services Building, 19101 Twelve Mile Road, adjacent to the high school. Newspapers are collected 10 a.m.-2 p.m. by volunteers the first Saturday of each month.

• BIRMINGHAM-Daily newspaper pickup with regular trash. Newspapers must be bundled separately.