

editorial opinion

Jaycees help Farmington area

The Farmington Area Jaycees spend thousands of hours of their time helping the community. During this week, Jaycee Week, the community should recognize the group for its efforts.

During the past year, the Jaycees have raised money to buy a show mobile for the Farmington Community Band, and provide a fence and steps in the city park. Those gifts to the community were purchased with money raised by a rodeo the Jaycees sponsored during the Farmington Founders Festival.

Another fund-raising project, the "Walk for Farmington," raised about \$6,000. The money went to the Farmington Area Advisory County, the Farmington Community Center, the YMCA camp program and senior citizens programs.

The National Institute of Burn Medicine received the funds from another project, a house "haunted" by Jaycees at Halloween.

Other activities sponsored by the Jaycees during the past year include a bike rodeo, a junior tennis program, an Easter egg hunt and a Christmas tree sale.

Members donated time to many such institutions as Boys Republic and the Farmington Goodfellows.

Besides raising money for many worthy projects, the Jaycees also have given hours of enjoyment to both adults and children.

Although Jaycee Week lasts only seven days, the group is contributing to the community for 365 days. Residents should be thankful the group of young men and women is concerned enough about the Farmington area to be committed to it.

Tim Richard writes

Seniority reforms not finished

Let's hear a quarter of a round of applause for the 75 new faces in Congress, as well as some of the maturing faces of liberal persuasion, for the overthrow of two crusty committee chairmen in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Young Bill Brodhead of the 17th District and six-term Bill Ford of the 15th voted with the insurgents in the House Democratic caucus to dump F. Edward Hebert, 73, of Louisiana as chairman of the House Armed Services Committee and W.R. Poage, 75, of Texas as Agriculture chairman.

It's much too early to say the tradition-encrusted seniority system has been "reformed," although much credit must be extended Brodhead and Ford for their votes. But there are a lot of other reforms that need to be made, and as witnesses I call Reps. Don Riegle (D-Flt.) and the 2nd District's own Marv Esh (R-Ann Arbor).

CRUX OF THE MATTER is that seniority—the practice of making the congressman with the longest service chairman of a committee—is only one facet of the "seniority system."

What's bad about the seniority system is not so much the seniority part but the fact that chairmen have a lot of power which they can—and do—abuse with a heavy hand.

Riegle, in his highly instructive book "O Congress," tells of the problems faced by a junior member of the minority party (he was then a Republican) in questioning a member of the administration, in this case Secretary of State Rogers. In a session of the foreign operations subcommittee, Riegle tells how Chairman Otto Passman used the rules "to effectively squelch any penetrating cross-examination of the secretary."

"Under these rules, each member has just five minutes to question a witness. Then the chairman can cross-examine for as long as he wants. When the chairman is finished—if any time remains—the other subcommittee members can vie for it, according to seniority. Once the five minute periods were exhausted, Otto used all the remaining time."

Riegle recalls that Rogers "smiled and hemmed and hawed and offered only vague and indirect responses" to Riegle's questions. At the end of the all-too-brief session, "Rogers knew my time was up and that I'd have no further chance to cross-examine him this year."

Now if this abuse of a chairman's power has been corrected, I haven't heard about it, and it's too soon to say the seniority system has been "reformed."

ESCH POINTED OUT in an interview last week that the revolt against the old-time chairmen occurred in the House Democratic caucus. Thus, committee chairmen of the entire House are answerable to the party caucus.

It would be better, says Esch, to have the entire committee elect a chairman, making the chairman responsive to the committee. I think Esch is right.

Each also called the caucus procedure "unworkable. They have to reject the present chairman, then vote on the next highest man in seniority until one person gets a majority," he said. Standard procedure in a parliamentary setting is to pick a chairman from random nominations. Esch said a compromise method might be to pick a chairman from the three senior members of a committee.

A SORE POINT in Congress or any legislature is the amount of staff the minority party gets.

At present, Democrats have roughly a 2-1 majority in the House, but that isn't the way money for staff is allocated in committees, Esch says. "Last year they were going to give us (Republicans) one-third of the staffing, but now we don't know if we'll get it."

In Washington, knowledge is power, and if you have ample staff for information gathering and investigations, you can wield an appropriate amount of power. If, however, your party has one-third the votes but only one-quarter or one-eighth the staff that the majority party has, you're getting shafted.

Democrats are doing it to Republicans now, and Republicans have done it to Democrats in the past, so neither party is pure. Yet it would be a genuine reform to see committee staffing arranged in proportion to the way the American people voted.

Let us, then, award a rousing quarter-round of applause to the young liberals in the House for what they've done so far, but let's not give them credit yet for total reform of the seniority system and committee methods.

HENRY M. HOGAN, JR., Co-Publisher
PHILIP H. POWER, Co-Publisher
R. T. THOMPSON, Executive Editor
MICHAEL A. MARCELLINO, Editor
WYLLIE GERRIES, Acting Managing Editor
ARTHUR SHAFER, Marketing Director
Member of
MICHIGAN PRESS ASSOCIATION
SUBURBAN NEWSPAPERS OF AMERICA
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION

Farmington
Observer & Eccentric

DIVISION OF SUBURBAN COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION

Observation Point

by PHILIP H. POWER



What's coordinated bargaining?

On Tuesday I received a letter from a South Redford teacher who lives in Oakland County commenting on the Crestwood teacher hassle. One part of the letter caught my eye: "It is true that last spring a vote (in the South Redford teacher union) was taken in support of 'coordinated bargaining'."

There is evidence, not limited to the letter I received, that one of the goals of the teachers union is the ability to bargain collectively with a group of school boards to determine wages and working conditions for schools in a given region, say western Wayne County.

What's coordinated bargaining?
It's one of the big issues at the heart of the current conflict over teacher unions, and it affects very directly the ancient tradition of local control of the public schools.

SUCH COORDINATED bargaining would be useful to teachers for exactly the same reasons the Crestwood school board was able (for a very limited time) to fire striking teachers in the district. In a recession with shrinking school enrollments and lots of teachers out of work, the Crestwood board was able to replace on short notice the 188 teachers it fired.

But if coordinated bargaining existed for western Wayne County, school boards would have no hope at all of replacing the thousands of teachers affected.

ALMOST SURELY the State Legislature will be considering such coordinated regional bargaining—or even statewide bargaining—as it fumbles its way to a solution of the Crestwood situation.

If it opts for broader bargaining units, the Legislature very probably will have signalled the

death of local control of schools.
The history of local control stems from the idea that different kinds of communities will find different curricula and funding levels appropriate to meet differing local needs. A rural, farm-oriented community might want the schools to teach some farming subjects, while a suburban community in this area might want to give stress to some vocational subjects such as auto shop.

Some communities might want to tax themselves extensively to support an enriched education program, while others might not; either way, this decision would be put to the local voters in the form of millage propositions.

IT SEEMS CLEAR that if bargaining with teachers is put on a regional basis rather than by individual districts, the decisions involving the level of support required will be out of the hands of the local voters. And since the power of the purse is the power which validates local control, regional or statewide bargaining will end this tradition.

That might be not all bad. Local control has resulted in many inequities: to the students through educations of widely varying quality; to the taxpayers through tax levels of widely varying amounts. The state has already moved to try to equalize school expenditures between districts, but clearly more progress is needed in that direction.

When all is said and done, local control of the schools will be eroded if regional or statewide bargaining with teachers is adopted. People may have differing views about the importance of local control, and if you feel strongly about it the time is now to write your state legislators.

Don't say you weren't warned.

Eccentricities

by HANK HOGAN



The blind spot

Have you ever been driving along the expressway and come upon a car traveling in the left lane at about 40 miles an hour?

You don't know whether to try and pass him on the right and gamble that he won't decide at that time to cross over to the right or took your horn and hope he will pull over.
You don't even have to get on the expressway to have the experience. Try Woodward Avenue or Telegraph any day of the week.

Many states make it illegal to pass on the right.

MICHIGAN DOES not happen to impose this rule on a four-lane highway.

In our state you can legally travel in the fast or left lane as long as you are traveling the minimum speed limit.

The states that have a no-passing-on-right law have good reason to have it on their books. States with right-hand drive (steering wheel on the left) have a blind spot in the right-rear corner and cars passing on the right are invisible to the overtaken driver for a short period of time. Unfortunately, this short period of time could be the difference between safety and an accident.

THIS IS NOT a problem with cars passing on the left because Michigan law requires you to have an outside mirror which eliminates the blind spot on the left.

Secondly, in defensive driving, you have to anticipate what the driver in front of you is going to do, and if he is driving in the left lane he might be going to turn left or pull back into the right-hand lane.

Either decision could lead to an accident, if the guy behind guesses wrong.

Thirdly, if slow traffic is allowed to travel in the left or fast lane, then drivers are almost forced to cut in and out if they wish to maintain the speed limit.

THE ADVANTAGES of a state law requiring slow traffic to travel in the right lane and passing only in the left lane has so much to recommend itself that it is unbelievable that the Great Lakes State hasn't done anything about it.

With the legislature back in session, shouldn't some attention be given to this area of safety on the highways, since our Washington politicians seem to think all accidents are caused by defective automobiles?

From our readers

Concern shared

EDITOR:

I share your (Philip Power) concern and indignation when you write Jan. 16, "No one looks out for help-less kids when teachers decide to strike. The teachers have their unions; the public has its school board; the school administrators have their state association. But what of the greatest group represents the children? None." But I must strongly disagree with your analysis of the situation.

Fundamentally, children do have their parents (the public), and to suggest otherwise seems preposterous.

The parents (the public) have their school board only sometimes, and not everywhere. Not in Southfield for example.

Whether the teachers have their union I do not know, only a teacher can tell.

I find it astonishing that you have missed the basic fact that the parents always have been and still are the most selfless guardians of their children's interests; that all other institutions such as school boards and teachers' unions must, in the final analysis, play a subordinate role.

I hope that upon further reflection, you will speak out again. I am looking forward to reading more on this vital issue.

JOSHUA LIFCHITZ
Southfield

consequences for the communities involved. It should be given the widest possible distribution to the residents of Southfield, Farmington Hills and Franklin Village who will be assessed along with the state and county. Draft statements that the drain could affect wells and water tables might be of particular concern to thousands who rely on private or community wells for their water supply. Information regarding adverse effects on environment and aesthetics is also of broad interest, perhaps especially to the Coral Gables subdivision where continuous flow of a stream may be interrupted and planlife endangered.

THE MULTI-MILLION drain to be located in Southfield along the existing natural drainage course, will also provide capacity for several proposed tributary drains (an additional cost), and discharge to the Rouge River.

It will serve the controversial proposed Northwestern Highway extension, as well as a large portion of undeveloped land now zoned general business and "regional center." These classifications permit the highest density use including 20 to 30 story buildings.

According to the Pernick Draft, the drain, if constructed, would "accelerate construction and provide new building sites in the area." Resultant intensive development of land presently unsuited for such purposes would lead to even more assessments for necessary road building, as the City of Southfield proposes for its Silver Triangle.

Many may wish to question whether such a public financed drain is needed or serves the public interest.

When Franklin Village refused to act as an on-site environmental study, the City of Southfield for this facility, the Oakland County volunteered to fill that position. In view of this, it would seem that the Oakland County Drain Commission has a special obligation to solicit citizen input on this project.

Therefore, to afford greater resident participation, we request that you meet with area representatives to arrange an additional Pernick Draft

open hearing held on a later date during the evening.

These representatives might include local homeowners associations and groups such as Franklin Concerned Citizens, Concerned Citizens of Farmington Hills, League of Women Voters, etc.

Perhaps greater benefits can be derived from an expensive environmental study if people are informed and hearings scheduled to encourage more citizen involvement.

DONNA LEBOW
Franklin Village

Meals on wheels

EDITOR:

Our most sincere thanks for your excellent article which so beautifully related our story about Meals on Wheels in the Southfield Observer & Eccentric. The response we have had in the community has been most heart-warming as a result, and it really feels great to receive such recognition.

We want you to know how much we appreciate your interest and wish to express our sincere gratitude to you and the Observer & Eccentric.

SONIA MACEY
DOROTHY KAUFMAN
Co-chairmen, MEALS ON WHEELS
Southfield

Search for meal

EDITOR:

I don't understand the innuendo in a recent letter published in the Jan. 16 edition regarding the search of two women for a leisurely meal and refreshment, but I do know that all of the business women with whom I lunch avoid Birmingham's restaurants like the plague and drive like the devil to them in Royal Oak, Berkley, Troy and Bloomfield Hills—not necessarily to have a drink with our lunch but because the food usually is better, in those places which serve drinks.

Get us some better places to eat in town and we'll eat in them.

HELEN SENTENY