

editorial opinion

Exempt the Farmington library

The balance between freedom of speech and government controls on verbal art shifts in cycles. Sometimes almost unlimited freedom of expression is permitted. At other times, fairly strict rules have been enforced.

Now, the point of balance seems to be moving toward the side of rule enforcement. The U.S. Supreme Court has left it up to communities to decide by which local standards something maybe declared obscene.

Many communities, including Farmington Hills, have passed ordinances to help them control obscenity. Some residents of Farmington Hills, including Librarian Gordon Lewis, feel the ordinance could be applied to materials in the library.

In other places, books classified as clas-

sics have been declared obscene temporarily.

Lewis believes there should be a clear line drawn between materials available at the library and the types of stores and development the ordinance is designed to control.

In neighboring West Bloomfield Township, for example, the library board has asked for an exemption from the provisions of the ordinance.

The Farmington library board should do the same. No individual or group should be tempted to make the library a target for campaigns limiting freedom of expression.

The most important marketplace in America is the marketplace of ideas—where ideas stand and fall on their own merits. The library is the main source of idea for Farmington area residents.

Local control of liquor

The state legislature now has the opportunity to place control of liquor licenses with the local government, right where such control belongs.

State Rep. James E. Defebaugh (R-Bloomfield Township) introduced the bill. He is supported by major co-sponsors Ruth McNamee (R-Birmingham), Joseph Forbes (D-Oak Park) and William Hayward (R-Royal Oak).

The proposed law would allow local legislative bodies to have a final veto on a license renewal. This marks a step in the right direction. Now, local governments have only power to recommend

and the Liquor Control Commission may reverse the local decision.

The bill apparently does not affect issuance of new licenses. Perhaps this is an oversight. It would be a better piece of legislation if the local government could have a veto on the approval of a new license, also.

We commend the lawmakers who support this bill (H.B. 4254). It is certainly a quick response to an issue that has in the past been a local sore spot. We hope that the scope of the bill can be clarified and widened through the amendment process.

Cuts will do minimum damage

The Southfield School Board made good choices when it cut more than \$180,000 from its current budget. Cuts in state aid payments mean the district will receive less revenue than expected.

The cuts are in areas which minimize the effects on students. However, it will require cooperation from the staff and community to make sure that more serious reductions in programs are not necessary.

The two largest areas of budget reductions are in the use of substitute teachers and in interest payments. No in-service training, on-the-job-training given for staff members, will be scheduled unless required by contract. Substitutes must replace regular teachers when in-service training occurs.

Also, the district will encourage better attendance by teachers, which together with less in-service training could cut more than \$33,000.

The next largest cuts came in interest for loans borrowed to meet payroll expenses while taxes are being collected. The school board in effect is asking the City of Southfield to forward tax collec-

tions on a quicker schedule. It could mean less interest income for the city government but lower interest payments for the school district.

Some of the other cuts chosen by the board will have a more direct effect on students. Teaching and maintenance supplies will be cut, and no overtime will be allowed except in extreme emergencies. That means students and parents will have to put up with messier schools.

Other savings will come from not replacing employes who leave school jobs, or replacing them with persons at lower salary levels.

Some areas cut are important and should be reinstated as soon as possible. Part of the district's testing program was eliminated, for example. Out-of-district field trips also were cut and should be considered for reinstatement.

Even though the cuts were made wisely, parents, students and staff members can further minimize effects by cooperating with plans. The community should realize the budget has been tightened and help wherever possible.

From our readers

Lithuanian plight

Editor: On behalf of the Knights of Lithuanian Council-79, I would like to thank you on the article about Simas Kuzka which appeared in the Dec. 19, 1974, issue of the paper.

The article was very informing as to what went on during his Detroit visit. It was also very informing as to the story of his plight and what he

had to go through to come to this country.

I thank you again for the article. May I say that I hope you have many articles on the Lithuanian people in the Detroit area.

MARY MARGARET PANAVAS
Chairman Lithuanian Affairs

Champion team

Editor: The picture (and caption) of Pam

Bendine playing title-winning basketball was great. The accompanying article by Baer was awful.

The women we do something worthwhile. If Baer is capable, let's have a comprehensive article, in whole sentences, about the champion team. Let's have a good picture of the team. Put it in the top of the page where we expect to read about champions.

JANE HAZEN
Southfield

HENRY M. HOGAN, JR., Co-Publisher
PHILIP H. POWER, Co-Publisher

R. T. THOMPSON, Executive Editor
MICHAEL R. MARCELLINO, Editor
Nicholas County Newspapers
NICHOLAS SHARKEY, News Editor

ARTHUR R. SHAFER, Marketing Director

Member of
MICHIGAN PRESS ASSOCIATION
SOUTHERN NEWS PAPERS OF AMERICA
NATIONAL NEWS PAPER ASSOCIATION

The Observer & Eccentric

DIVISION OF SUBURBAN COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION

Eccentricities



by HANK HOGAN

No one can seriously doubt that this country is faced with many problems—fighting inflation, a recession and developing an energy conservation program among them.

The president has made some proposals, and in the last week Congress has attempted to settle each and every one of them without any demonstrated program of its own, to this point.

It seems as though the country is drifting, and you can't blame the people for having a feeling of despair.

WITH THESE PROBLEMS facing the country, it is appropriate to write this week about a man who faced many odds.

He failed in business in '31.
He ran and was defeated for the state legislature in '32.

He failed again in business in '33.
He was finally elected to the state legislature in '34.

His sweetheart died in '35.
He had a nervous breakdown in '36.
He was defeated for the speakership of the state house in '38.

He was defeated for presidential elector in '40.
He was defeated for Congress in '43.

Hope from the past

He was finally elected to Congress in '46. His successor in his own party was defeated in '48.

He ran and was defeated for the U.S. Senate in '55.

AND HE WAS ELECTED the 16th president of the United States in 1860.

This repeated failure was none other than Abraham Lincoln.

His record should be an inspiration to those who feel they are always facing an uphill battle with few tangible results.

Lincoln, in his own time, was not considered a great man. He was accused of splitting the Republic with his meddling in what we now call "civil rights."

Even the speech he made at Gettysburg was considered trite by the press of his time.

Yet it has survived long after its critics were buried.

And it is still appropriate today as the democratic system has been threatened.

... That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.

There is still hope for our nation.

Observation Point

by PHILIP H. POWER

It took quite a while, but there's finally some good news for the suburbs. The auto industry's rebate plan is working.

In a special Observer & Eccentric poll of local auto dealers, it was commonplace to hear such remarks as "fantastic," "wonderful" and "best sales in years."

Dealers along Telegraph and Twelve Mile Roads in Southfield reported the best sales in many months during the first weeks of the rebate period. In Troy, where a large collection of dealers is located off Maple Road, salesmen were pleased that many customers were buying models on which no rebate plan applies.

"Our floor traffic increased about 50 per cent right after the bonus plan was announced," said Hugh Coughlin, sales manager at Bill Brown Ford on Plymouth Road in Livonia. "Our sales are up about 75 per cent," reported Rick Tomkinson, sales manager at B. J. Ratigan Chrysler Plymouth down the street.

John Chott, at Gene Merollis Chevrolet, on Ford Road in Garden City, called the past January "the best month we've ever had," estimating that the dealership sold between 175 and 200 cars in the first few weeks after the rebates went into effect.

Clarence DuCharme, president of Fiesta Motors, an AMC dealership on Ann Arbor Road in Plymouth, enthused: "In four days we did more business than in the previous 20."

SEVERAL COMMON trends stand out from the survey.

•The rebate plan vastly increased traffic in showrooms—some cases as much as 300 or 400 per cent.

•The old dealer axiom, you can't get sales without showroom traffic, proved accurate, as sales increases closely followed traffic increases.

•Unexpectedly, there was almost as much interest in models on which rebates were not offered as in those covered by the plan.

•The rebate plan appears to have stimulated confidence in customers that things will get bet-

ter, so they are willing to even buy cars not covered by rebates.

(The dealer summed up: "I think people are excited and have a new air of confidence. They think this is going to get the ball rolling again... There are people who are laid off—I'm not an ostrich with my head in a hole. But the people who are working have money.")

QUITE TRUE, and even many of the workers laid off have SUB funds coming in to keep the wolf from the door.

That's what distinguishes the present recession from the depression of the 1930s, and that in turn is why business leaders here in the suburbs are guardedly optimistic instead of terrified.

The success of the rebate plan is an enormously important symbol for everyone in this area, which is so dependent on the health of the auto industry.

BUT WHY, one wonders, did we have to wait so long for price reductions (the net effect of the rebate plan) to be instituted to stimulate sales?

One possible answer was suggested recently by University of Michigan Business School Prof. Ross Wilhelm. He points to 1971, when the Nixon administration suddenly imposed price control and caught a lot of companies with their prices down. Without effective price relief from the feds, these companies found themselves in a terrible profit squeeze.

This time around, Wilhelm suggests, nobody wanted to get caught out in the cold again. Which is why the price cutting took the form of a rebate plan, and why the rebate plan itself is being limited in duration to the end of this month. Then, at a minimum, the industry will be protected if Congress suddenly decides to push a price freeze on the economy.

Wilhelm's point is clear: We are still suffering from the unsuccessful experiment with economic controls by a federal government ill-equipped to do anything of the sort.

From our readers

Nostalgia concert

Editor: On behalf of the Farmington Community Arts Council I wish to thank you and your paper for the coverage of the "Nostalgia" concert for the senior citizens and the handicapped.

Without a doubt the interest of the senior citizens was generated by the superb reporting by Lorraine McClish. She is a very personable reporter and relates well to those around her. She has the keen sense to report her stories accurately and informatively.

The community band and orchestra and the featured Michigan Ballet Theatre had the joy of performing for a full house to the delight of over 800 senior citizens and other friends. We received many fine compliments regarding the programming and we were doubly delighted at being evaluated by the Michigan Council for the Arts especially because the concert was so well attended. Many of the handicapped had not been out of their homes for over a year and the special vans made it possible for them to attend.

So for those that attended because of your coverage and on behalf of the concert band and arts council—we all say Thank You.

MARLOWE BELANGER
Farmington Community Arts Council

School position paper

Editor: In resolving to close one or more schools, the Birmingham Board of Education was moved by the following considerations:

First of all, we are confronted with the problem of declining enrollments. In 1967-68 there were 17,594 students in the Birmingham schools. Today there are 12,722, next year there will be approximately 13,233, a total loss in eight years of more than 4,000 students.

There are many indications that this decline will continue. The number of births in the Birmingham school district has fallen sharply. In 1970 there were 832 births. In 1974 there were 200 less. 543 Fewer children will be starting school in the years to come.

OUR PRESENT enrollment pattern suggests the same conclusion. With the exception of kindergarten which serves both public and non-public schools, every grade in the district has fewer students than the ones that follows it. Our 12th grade class has 516 more students than the 1st. Second, the board has two responsibilities. We must not only provide our children with the best education that we can, but we must also make sure that we get as much educational product as we can for our educational dollar. Operating our schools with excess pupil capacity is expensive and wasteful. The per pupil operating costs in an elementary school that operates well under capacity is almost double that of its neighbor with a high enrollment. We should not permit this, even if we were not facing substantial deficits in the next three years.

Third, while the thought of closing schools is never a pleasant one to consider, involving as it does the reloca-

tion of students and possible changes in neighborhood alignments, we cannot delay or wait for better information or evidence. For almost three years the Facilities Study Committee with the assistance of its representative panel of citizens, has investigated this problem. The Citizens Millage Advisory Committee examined it in the light of its widely varied areas of expertise. A consulting firm has assembled a vast amount of information and data. Individual citizens, too, have taken it upon themselves to study this problem most thoroughly. They have been a rich source of worthwhile suggestions.

WE RECOGNIZE that while these studies have served an invaluable purpose, it is nonetheless the board's job to decide how we can best be stewards over our funds to provide the best possible education for our children. The board in exercising its judgment on this matter must do what it needs to do, it cannot always do what it would want to do. Whatever decision we make will not please everyone.

Closing schools will not be the total solution to our financial problems. Additional millage may well be required in years to come. It seems to me, however, that our school district is now just a crossroads. Either we can continue to let the situation drift along without taking any positive action or we can seize the opportunity to move this school district out of dead center. Exciting possibilities lie ahead. We need to take a fresh look at our programs, our curriculum. It is most essential that parent and citizen involvement play a large role in the future of our district. Our school district is changing. We have to change with it.

ROBERT KETCHUM
President
Birmingham School Board

READERS FORUM

Letters must be original copies and contain the signature and address of the sender. Limit letters to 300 words.