

# editorial opinion

## Coffees spark cooperation

"Coffee and comments," the Farmington School District's plan to plumb feelings of residents toward their schools, is the kind of activity which can bring school officials and the community closer together.

"Coffee and comments" was a series of informal meetings in private homes between PTA members and a group of neighbors. The series has ended and a report will be presented to the school board soon.

Though the sessions evoked many gripes about the schools, they also showed those who attended that more attention needs to be paid to the problems the schools face. At a session, a reporter learned the residents there knew little

about basic facts of life, such as state aid.

The sessions also produced another example of cooperation between residents and the school district: a booklet listing facts about the system. The Farmington PTA, which organized the "coffee and comments" series, also compiled the booklet.

The residents who attended the "coffee and comments" sessions seemingly asked appropriate questions about topics concerning their own children. They answered they received showed that solutions are not always easy.

However, participation by parents in school affairs has to be a big part of the solution to both the problems of individual students and the district as a whole.

## No road improvement

(Editor's note: The following is a copy of a letter sent to John Grubba, Director of the Oakland County Road Commission.)

I note in the newspapers your intent to utilize either road commission or the county general funds to improve Opdyke Road in the immediate vicinity of Pontiac Stadium.

This proposal, in view of the enormous backlog of road construction and maintenance in the county, is indefensible, and demands an alternate financing program.

I suggest that appropriate area govern-

mental units, Pontiac Stadium Authority and the Detroit Lions, Inc. absorb the full cost of said improvements in exactly the same way affected non-residential property owners joined with the city of Troy to improve Big Beaver Road in November 1974. This program was done expeditiously, economically and at substantial savings to the taxpayers of Oakland County.

I submit it is an excellent model for special interest road improvement.

LLOYD J. COLENBACK  
Troy

## Smoke won't get in your eyes

Southfield's school board recently lit a torch of freedom—for non-smokers. Smoking will not be allowed at future regular board meetings.

A couple of smokers, Dr. Harold Bussey and board president Paul Blinkilde, proposed the ban. Only one member, Robert Wright, voted against it, and he questioned how such a restriction could be enforced rather than the need for it.

The school board thus joins the South-

field city council in emphasizing concern for non-smokers. Since the discovery of tobacco, non-smokers have been at the mercy of the good manners of smokers. Often it has meant eyes reddened by unthinking smokers.

It's good to see such a ban at meetings of local governmental bodies. Now if they would only ban those meetings in hidden smoke-filled rooms...

## Jackie Klein writes

### Grants have 'strings' attached

Elected officials in three suburbs have refused to apply for federal funds for a three-year community development program.

One of the reasons for the snub was fear of racial and low-income integration indirectly required by the 1974 Housing and Community Development Act.

The Southfield City Council recently voted unanimously to apply for a \$1 million block grant to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Interpretations of the act vary from community to community and there is much confusion about what the new law requires. According to Joseph Sutschek, Southfield deputy city planner, the law provides money to improve housing conditions for low-income families, eliminate and prevent slums and blight and increase employment opportunities for low-income groups.

THE KICKER in the law is that all city housing assistance plans should include a survey of community housing and an assessment of the needs of low-income per-

sons "residing or expected to be residing in the community."

The U.S. Civil Rights Commission wants cities to use at least part of the block grant money to encourage construction of low and moderate income housing to attract minorities and low-income families to the suburbs.

Although Southfield's program includes allocating \$300,000 over a three-year period for long-term, low-interest loans for a neighborhood rehabilitation program, it fails to provide for additional low-income housing.

The Coalition for Block Grant Compliance, a newly-formed group of civil rights, religious and civic factions, will monitor all suburbs' applications to HUD.

The coalition is challenging Southfield's eligibility for the funding and contends applicants must take affirmative action to overcome effects of prior discrimination.

According to the coalition, the law requires plans include development of housing for low-income families, including minorities who work but don't live in the municipality.

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# Farmington Observer & Eccentric

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## Eccentricities



### Social progress and prosperity

By PHILIP H. POWERS

A downturn in the business economy can be the death knell of many social programs.

During the last several years Congress has passed many affirmative action laws, encouraging the hiring of minorities, women, handicapped workers and returning veterans.

In each case, when new employees were hired, the new laws subtly or directly encouraged employers to hire persons of a different type than had been hiring in the past so they would have an employee mix similar to the population mix.

This caused great concern in many quarters because, when hiring or promotion opportunities opened, instead of the best man or woman being hired or promoted, some people got the job, because they helped fill out a hiring quota.

LAWSUITS WERE started, claiming reverse discrimination, which usually got short shrift from the courts because of the nation's commitment for equal employment opportunities.

But, with the downturn in the economy, very few employers are hiring new people. Not only are they not hiring people, but they are laying them off.

Because many of the people recently hired to

conform with the affirmative action laws have not had time to establish much seniority, they fall heir to being among the first to be laid off, which could completely destroy the so-called affirmative action gains that have been made over the last couple of years.

In a few cases, courts have stepped in and ordered companies not to lay off those hired to fill out one of the affirmative action quotas. In these cases, this has resulted in older, more senior workers being the first to go, which certainly has not helped public support of the affirmative action programs.

LABOR UNIONS have been battling because their contracts protect the more senior workers.

There is an economic impact, too, because some of the people hired in compliance of the affirmative action laws are not family breadwinners or in economic need of the job, while other senior heads-of-households find themselves without jobs.

Of course, there is no ready answer because there is equity for both points of view, but it does prove that social progress often can make inroads only in times of prosperity.

## Observation Point



By PHILIP H. POWERS

As the weather gradually gets pleasanter and as auto sales slowly start to inch upward, people are actually starting to talk about things getting better.

But "better" cannot mean a return to normal here in the auto capital of the world — "Normality" meaning years of continued American dependency on big cars, with output again rising to early 1970s levels.

The entire nature of this region's industrial base has been changed — irrevocably and drastically changed — by the events of the past two years, and it would be tragic if the movers and shakers of this area did not realize it and seize the opportunity to adjust to a new course.

THE ARAB OIL boycott and price gouge have fundamentally altered the nature of energy availability and price. The oil cartel may fall apart after a while, and America may gradually become self-sufficient in energy, but that energy will be available only at lower volumes and higher prices than for the past 30 years.

The federal government is now regulating the automobile industry, just as it regulates the airlines or the radio and TV stations. The government may relax the clean air requirements for a while to give the auto companies engineering time and financial room to tool up for lighter cars that consume less gas, but that which the government gives it can just as easily take away.

Auto sales will probably improve slightly as this year goes on and almost certainly be much better in 1976. But the public interest in mass transit is only a symptom of the deeper realization that our society's past reliance on the traditional automobile has entailed massive costs that are only now becoming apparent.

TIMES, IN ONE gigantic lurch, have changed. And whether Michigan in general and the Detroit area in particular are doomed to a decay such as the textile towns of New England experienced after times also changed in the early years of this century is largely in the hands of the men and women who built our economic base — the automobile industry — to greatness.

All the requirements to meet and overcome

the challenges of these changing times exist here in the Detroit area. We have the managerial expertise and perhaps the nation's largest pool of skilled workers. We have the creative engineers, the hard-bitten plant managers, the careful financial analysts. And we have the leaders of the UAW, certainly the least parochial and most broadly concerned union in the country.

And we have, I desperately hope, the remnants of that raw, braiding, hammering spirit that characterized the area in the 40s and the 50s and made Detroit the self-confident, throbbing arsenal of democracy.

THE POINT is that this entire region has before it a gigantic choice. To seek by ingrained force of habit to return to the good old days of the traditional auto industry, which I believe inevitably will result in slow, certain stagnation or to re-deploy the resources available here in such profusion before they slither away to construct an altered economic base to meet the needs of tomorrow, which I think is the only way this area can evolve and grow.

It won't be easy, because breaking past habits is always hard. It will take time and very broadly spread effort, because wrenching a whole region to cope with new problems is very, very difficult.

But there is no necessary reason it cannot be done.

The governor and the area's mayors should recognize it, and call together the planners and thinkers of our state to analyze our new opportunity.

The Legislature and the federal government should realize it, and start thinking how to break new ground in taxation and social services and mass transit to enable business to invest in new ways for a changed world.

The labor, corporate and financial leaders of this area should be aware that their long-term self-interest dictates it, and begin exploring ways to work together to overcome our challenge.

What is at stake is no less than a complete overhaul of the industrial base of Michigan to take account of today's and tomorrow's realities. What is at stake is no less than the continued growth and survival of this entire region.

## From our readers

### Good Samaritan

Editor:

I too was impressed by Mr. Maxwell's letter concerning a Mr. Miller's unselfish act and would like to nominate Jack Langschwager as a good Samaritan of the week in any future news story.

Returning from my cabin last Thanksgiving weekend, my horse trailer bearing failed near the Zilsaukee Bridge. I suppose it was a blessing in disguise for had I continued I would have hit the bizzard that paralyzed Detroit.

Anyway, I managed to make it to the nearest gas station, but they had no parts and being late they couldn't get parts until the next day. So what to do with two horses, a cat and a German shepherd dog?

I happened to remember the name of a person from a previous trail ride who lived in the vicinity and who in turn put me in touch with Langschwager.

Fifteen minutes later after calling him, in near zero weather, Jack came out to meet me, rode one of the horses for me to his house, and provided feed and shelter for us during the two days wait for parts and the expressway to be cleared.

I was never more royally treated during my stay with Jack and his wife Beverly. The trailer was fixed and we returned to Farmington without further incident.

I have since wondered if, whether the roles were reversed, there lives a good Samaritan in the Farmington area who will be as unselfish as Jack Langschwager. I would like to believe there is.

CLARK A. RIDDELL  
Farmington

### 'Even-handedness?'

Editor:

This democracy of ours is in trouble. This great country which constitutionally guarantees the free exercise of religion and which prohibits discrimination by government action is most needously moving towards accepting a policy of religious discrimination in order to implement the "even-handed" Middle East policy enunciated in response to the oil energy crisis.

The most recent example of our government's "even-handedness" is the Army's admission that it excludes American Jews from assignments to Saudi Arabia, and presumably other Arab countries, at the request of the Saudi government.

The Army announced this disgusting policy without shame or apology. In fact, their "business as usual" approach to this announcement is as disturbing as the implications of the policy itself.

President Gerald Ford, in his response to the revelation, ordered a re-

view. My response to his response is, "What is there to review?"

The policy is blatantly anti-Semitic. The policy is a cancer in our governmental structure. Unless it is immediately repudiated and torn out of our system it serves as a foothold for further discrimination.

I would hope that this newspaper would editorially speak out for immediate and clear action by the president and should be fail to remedy the situation then the Congress.

LEONARD TEICHER  
Southfield

### Get in the swim

Editor:

The issue of a municipal swimming pool for Birmingham is one which should go beyond mere financial considerations.

The addition of a pool would greatly enhance Birmingham's appeal as a family-oriented town. Many of us take pride in our golf courses and numerous tennis courts, but these facilities are seldom used by families.

A pool could be used and enjoyed by parents and children alike. Those of us with children at home should get behind the drive for the swimming pool. Its completion will enrich our lives.

HOWARD S. HARRIS  
Birmingham