

editorial opinion

Campaign disclosure needed

Farmington-area residents are closely linked to a campaign reform law which passed the Michigan House of Representatives this week. Common Cause, the nationwide "citizens lobby," supported the bill. The state president of Common Cause, Sue Rennell, lives in the Farmington-area, as do others actively supporting the bill.

Although the bill has its weaknesses, it's an important step in minimizing the chances of corrupt campaign practices. No law can completely eliminate the willful abuse of public trust. The surest way to prevent possible graft and conflict-of-interest, however, is public disclosure of the financial backing of candidates.

Public disclosure permits political parties

ties to police each other's financial dealings. The weight of public opinion, rather than laws, will encourage candidates and parties to run clean campaigns.

The weaknesses of the bill stem from a conflict between rights of privacy and disclosure. The bill requires that officeholders, and their spouses, disclose major sources of income. However, the provision that only the sources, not the amount of income, need be disclosed is a good idea.

The bill is now before the State Senate, where many changes could be made. Some kind of campaign reform law seems likely to pass. One based on disclosure is better than a law in which the threat of punishment is the main deterrent.

Hall administrators need help

Meadow Brook Hall presents its administrators and the community with difficult choices between preserving a historically significant monument and promoting a functioning cultural and educational center.

While care and planning are necessary to preserve its historical integrity and the public trust, the hall offers great promise of continuing to be an area-wide community asset for a large number of years.

Lowell Eklund, hall administrator, has in the past expressed pride in "turning a white elephant into a profit-making venture." But without proper counseling and a long-range program to ensure the recommendations of experts stay in force for a period longer than the tenure of one man, the danger remains that this "monument to a flamboyant age" will have its value diminished for the future.

**SHORTLY AFTER** Meadow Brook Hall opened to the public in 1971, Eklund told his university colleagues: "We welcome your comments and particularly your ideas for productive programming.... We shall welcome your interest and involvement. Together I sincerely believe we can develop Meadow Brook Hall into a significant university and community resource."

But professional advice has rarely been sought, and when it has been offered, recommendations have rarely been followed. Eklund appointed a Meadow Brook Hall Advisory Committee. It never met.

Professional advice for the conservation of art treasures at the hall have not been acted upon for three years. Scholarly evidence of mistaken attributions of paintings were not reflected in revised guide books, tape recordings and plaques.

**THROUGHOUT THE U.S.**, mansions of historical significance are operated by professional commissions, which often include on their staffs a curator, restoration architect, architectural historian, horticulturist and interpretative programmer.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, a private organization chartered by Congress in 1947, functions to encourage the development of historical sites. It

can provide the names of experts who have been called in by other mansions functioning in the combined form of living museum, cultural and conference center.

Such a consultant could provide the management analysis needed to set up a hall commission with power to implement policy, to report to the trustees and to oversee policy.

Sources with information and experience include the Henry Francis DuPont Winterthur Museum in Delaware, the Viscaya estate of industrialist James Deering in Florida and the Biltmore and Breakers mansions left by the Vanderbilt estate.

**TO SAFEGUARD** the hall's future, its administrators should:

- Utilize profits to determine the historical significance of its artifacts. Items continue to be sold without professional evaluation.
- Implement a program to conserve its art treasures already identified as being in danger of destruction. Tapestries are still hanging on the wall that have been identified as being in need of immediate repair and restoration.
- Utilize university resources. Better use could be made of the art department and other readily available resources.
- Utilize area resources. The Henry Ford Museum and Detroit Institute of Arts have expertise to share.
- Establish a policy for transferring resources from the hall. The movement of objects within the hall has also been questioned by experts.
- Establish clear guidelines for its use in conferences, private and semi-private parties.

It appears that as a result of the Observer & Eccentric's investigation, the Oakland University administrators have moved to restore the "The Woodcutter" by Raffaelli, which is a positive sign. On the negative side of the ledger, they have locked the archives of Michigan architecture in the art department from which much of the resource material for this investigation was collected. And they have contacted former Oakland University Professor Charles Brownell asking his permission to give the materials away.

Eccentricities

by HANK HOGAN



Sign language

In the old days, the signs by the side of the road were part of the fun of traveling by car. The laws banning signs on expressways allow us to enjoy natural beauty more, but condemn us to a certain dullness en route.

Remember, as you were driving along, the restaurants with big signs in front saying "Good Food." Usually, after eating in this type of establishment, you wondered what the alternatives were.

A lot of restaurants had signs saying "Home Cooking." Knowing how some wives cook, the proprietors of these places were taking quite a chance.

**ANOTHER GOODIE** you used to see along the highway was "Modern Cabins."

This was usually used by cabin owners when a new motel sprang up in the area.

Possibly a cabin became modern when plumbing was installed.

Another favorite, "Clean Restrooms," proclaimed proudly on little old gas stations situated far out in the country.

It's possible that the operator did not know what clean meant.

**THE SAME LITTLE** old gas station might have the sign "Mechanic on Duty" when there was no

body there but a gent who couldn't pour gas into your car without spilling it.

A sign that always was prominently displayed was "Under New Management" and yet, this never really told anyone whether or not this was an improvement.

My favorite phrase is the one that says "World Famous Resort." I have always felt that if you have to use such a title, you aren't.

The law finally cracked down on the use of "Wholesale Prices" but even today you see the sign "Discount Prices" on many stores that are not the cheapest places in town to shop.

**A SIGN THAT** bothers me today is a trading stamp sign atop a gas station that no longer gives away trading stamps.

"Fast Service" and "Speedy Lunch" many times mean a slow waitress.

"One Day Service" often meant three days when you counted dropping off and picking up days.

The all-time classic, of course, is "Free." What it really meant was that there is no such thing as a free lunch, but they didn't have room to put on the sign.

Possibly, if the people who had used these phrases had lived up to the billing, they wouldn't have been bypassed by an expressway.

Observation Point

by PHILIP H. POWER



Real togetherness

A couple of weeks ago Judd Arnett, the amiable and humane guy who writes a column for the Free Press, had a piece headlined "You Suburbanites Need That Detroit Spirit Too."

On first glance, the head put me off more than a bit. It seemed to suggest a lecture by the wise city-folk against the youthful suburbs which are causing all the problems for Detroit. But reading further produced a different impression.

"Frankly," Arnett wrote, "I think Detroit is dead—unless its friends in surrounding communities give more than lip service to its recovery. Likewise, there is the feeling that there are suburban towns and communities which won't cut it forever unless they, too, become part of a regional 'solid front.' Somehow there must be stronger grouping of common interests, a more determined expression of the spirit of Detroit, the metropolitan community."

**OBVIOUSLY** Arnett and many others who have been saying this same thing for many years are quite right. We will all hang together, or else we will all hang separately, twining in the noose of the gigantic problems that are testing our society in this area.

But to reiterate this point is to reiterate a platitude. The real question, from the suburban standpoint, is what practical consequences flow from such a realization that we are all in the same noose together.

To begin, it is absolutely clear that we are not going to have regionalized political government in this area. The idea of some regional metropolitan council telling Plymouth, for instance, how to handle its affairs is anathema. If anyone needs evidence of how such a thing would work out, just recall the power play the Detroit Water Board tried to pull on the suburbs a couple of months back.

No, we are not going to have regional government, nor should we. But what are we going to have?

**ANSWERING** that one is not easy, particularly in light of past experience.

When the suburban communities in western Wayne County tried to get some court and other county facilities more conveniently located in Westland, the idea got shot down at the county board faster than it flew up.

Only after mammoth haggling has a preliminary agreement been worked out which would allocate seats on the new Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority board in such a way as to protect both the interests of the suburbs (which have the people) and Detroit (which has the rolling stock.) Suburban leaders, however, including Oakland County Executive Dan Murphy, still don't like the plan and are busy preparing alternatives.

Against that kind of background, it's a little hard to feel that Arnett's call for a more sympathetic attitude toward Detroit's problems by suburban legislators and congressmen will make much of a difference.

**A BIG PART** of the problem is that very few institutions exist for any kind of useful exchange of ideas between Detroit and the suburbs.

SEMOG, originally, was supposed to help in this process, but it has gotten hopelessly bogged down in endlessly detailed studies of housing and population trends on the one hand and endlessly parochial debates on more important issues on the other.

The State Legislature and the Wayne County Board of Commissioners are, by their very nature, political institutions, where delegates representing fractional interest groups (e.g. Detroit or the suburbs) engage in trade-offs without much chance for thoughtful discussions of longer-run questions. New Detroit has some board members who live in the suburbs, and although greatly useful, its work has by necessity concentrated on Detroit's problems.

The news media in Detroit mostly talk to Detroit news sources, and suburban media talk by and large to suburban sources. So there is little consonance of discussion even in the media.

So where does all this leave us? I'm not sure, except in agreement with Arnett that we should talk more often about these matters.

It's the only way.

Farmington Observer & Eccentric

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From our readers

Walkers ripped off

Editor:

On July 14th the City Commission ripped off Birmingham pedestrians! Resolutions were passed approving changes in M-1, the Hunter-Woodward corridor.

At a time when it is important to encourage the public to use gasoline by walking and bicycling, it does not make sense to spend public funds on highway construction which increases the difficulty a pedestrian faces in crossing M-1.

M-1 splits Birmingham down the middle. It passes through business areas; it has eight lanes and a median. Over the years, signalized crossings with crosswalks have progressively disappeared. In the 1/2 mile from Fourteen Mile Road to Lincoln, there are no marked crosswalks, and the city engineer has asserted that all one

needs to do to eliminate an unmarked crosswalk would be to fill in the median at a bi-directional crossing. That is the program.

It would make more sense to promote safety by narrow speed limits. Ferndale, where traffic is heavier, holds to the 35 mph limit while Birmingham has a nominal 45 mph limit. Could it be that Ferndale is more "decadent" or more realistic? You can cross M-1 in Ferndale on foot.

Why has the commission approved such a plan? They are afraid that if they don't the State Highway Department will do nothing, or do what it wants to do without asking the city.

The DSH & T is committed to provide for nonmotorized transportation. It is not necessary to tear out median plantings and disrupt cross traffic to satisfy highway engineers who would put crosswalks in such places as half way from Oakland to Winton where there is no possible need, just because there is room.

The Michigan Highway Commission can stop this folly.

JOSEPH E. WILLIAMS  
Birmingham

**Paid letter writer**  
Editor:

It is pretty bad when a public relations person who has received compensation from the Postale Stadium Authority and is now public relations consultant to William Clay Ford's close friend uses letter to the editor column to expound his theory that the TAXPAYERS of the state of Michigan should subsidize Mr. Ford for \$200,000 a year.

Yes, that is the position of a Bloomfield Hills letter writer. He is the one that said in a recent letter that the stadium is not receiving a fair share from the media.

I am wondering how many seats, maybe even boxes, Mr. Ford has

given the writer for his venture into editing.

If you cannot be truthful in all ways, you should keep tongue in cheek.

J. B. CORNWELL,  
Pleasant Ridge

**Disappointed**  
Editor:

In over 65 years as a citizen of Birmingham I never thought I'd see the day come when I would say, "I am disgusted and disappointed with a once wonderful, interesting paper our city looked forward to reading since way back to George Mitchell and Mr. Whitehead."

My sister once set the type and printed the paper in the lower floor of the white brick building in back of the shoe store on Pierce street.

When dear George Averill took over, we still had an interesting

paper. It was all about our city and all activities and holidays. And, of course, the growing population we all expected. But it was still a paper we all looked forward to each week.

Now when an article like the one for the First Presbyterian Church fundraiser, Fred for Bread, is brought in two weeks in advance, it is ignored.

Since the Observer came into the paper, they can't even find a small corner for a written article.

And I can tell Birmingham why. It's because all they have room for today are articles about riots, violence, rape, robberies, killings, and pictures of gruesome traffic accidents. Plus page after page of pictures of houses for sale, and articles about outlying communities. Now I can see why the subscriptions are falling off.

In closing (all the bureaucrats are not in Washington, D.C.) I feel the

First Presbyterian Church should receive a written apology from the Observer & Eccentric.

This will be my last article for my once loved paper, so I hope you can find space for it.

BEULAR WENORPH PETERSEN  
Birmingham

**Fine coverage**  
Editor:

The Birmingham City Commission has asked that I write to thank you for your fine news coverage of the Birmingham Dial-A-Ride program.

This coverage has been a great help in getting the program "off the ground" and very informative to the public wish to take advantage of the services offered.

CAREN B. KING,  
Deputy City Clerk