

READERS' FORUM

Need Shared Learning Volunteers

EDITOR:

Some time ago there was a great controversy here in Livonia about a Shared Learning program. As I understood it, this program was to continue doing with the children what had previously been done, in the way of class trips or parties, except to do these things with other children of our country from different religious and ethnic backgrounds.

In addition, for those children who were so inclined, a pen-pal correspondence was to be encouraged—all of this for those children only whose parents gave written permission. I found

it particularly instructive that the negative response came so close to Christmas and couldn't help but wonder if a lot of those opposed to the program wouldn't also be the ones who stand around and mutter about Godless communism.

I, and others who share a concern about the true meaning of brotherhood, would prefer it if these people would put their energies into doing something about un-Christianlike Christianity!

Having now expressed my disappointment about the postponement of such an official school policy, there is still the idea which has great merit. It would certainly have been easier and more feasible to have the program carried out through the natural channels of the educational system (there doesn't seem to be too much disagreement today that the education that's needed is how we can learn to live together as a species instead of how to build bigger and better bombs).

This does not excuse those of us, who recognize the merits of such a program, from doing something on a voluntary basis. I hope you will share with Observerland readers the following possibility for putting faith into practice:

"PREF (Pre-Adolescent Enrichment Program) is a project of the American Friends Service Committee's (AFSC) Royal Oak Township Youth Service Opportunities Project. The program works with elementary school children in the areas of inter-group relations, cultural education and community service. Small groups of four to six children (fifth or sixth graders) with an adult volunteer leader form the basic structure of the program. Each group of children is deliberately interracial and meets about once a week for at least three months.

"Each group is selected so that most of its members are in the same grade and district, and they will meet in the same junior and senior high school when they get older. It is hoped that friendships will form between white and black children otherwise isolated from each other before they meet in integrated schools. Volunteer leaders will be reimbursed for up to \$1 per week per child for what is spent on activities."

I have been informed by the AFSC worker in the area that there is a long waiting list of boys and girls who need adult leaders. The minimum time (three months) is a lot shorter than many other youth leadership commitments require. Also, a leader is given a great deal of freedom to plan the group's activities and is not tied to a specific formal plan handed out. For those, like myself, who have a fifth or sixth grader, this program makes a natural setting for reaching across boundary lines that others insist upon imposing upon us. Even if your children do not fall within this age range, as you share yourself (and perhaps your family and home from time to time) the benefits to all involved soon become apparent.

I want to say, as a personal testimony, that the experience so far has been most enjoyable. With a group of boys who naturally want to do active things, I am being pulled out of "housewife's lethargy."

My son, when trying to pin down the intent of the program, first thought that we would be "biking" to others. I let him know that this wasn't white paternalism by explaining that we were just going to get together and plan activities for enjoyment and perhaps do a community project to leave something behind as a remembrance of our time together. The idea of being a deliberate black-white group was so that we could learn to do things together.

If there are others who would like to be involved in this program, please feel free to call me at 425-0234.

LOIS F. LANGE (MRS. W.)
32761 Myrna
Livonia

Teachers Should Tighten Their Belts

EDITOR:

Monday night, May 12, the Kimberly Oaks Association held its annual meeting and three speakers were present. The subject was taxes and where they go.

Mr. Bedell of the Livonia school board was asked a question that if the teachers were not given a raise this year, could the school system function properly on whole days for the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth. He said it would be close but he thought it would be possible.

He also stated that the board plans to give the teachers their raise and therefore go on half days unless Lansing comes up with more appropriations.

The writer later asked Mr. Bedell if the children went on half days would they be taught just the necessary subjects such as reading, writing and arithmetic or would art, music, gym, etc., also be taught. He stated that teachers for these extra subjects were available and had to be used. This time furnishes breaks for the classroom teachers and are a very necessary part of the program.

In other words, our children are going to get a "half an education" next year and we who pay high taxes now are going to have to lump it. By our children getting this type of schooling, at what grade level will they find out what they missed during this half-day year?

What could the school board do if all parents of children involved in fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grade studies next year called in stating their children had the "blue fly" and would return to classes the following year? Or perhaps these parents would only send the children one day a week to keep the board happy and yet they would not have accomplished enough studies to be able to pass for the year involved?

People of Livonia, we have a way of fighting back before the school board negotiates with the teachers on their contract. It is about time that the teachers tighten their belts for a year instead of the taxpayer.

Mr. Bedell stated that the average beginning teacher in the elementary schools starting salary was \$9,500. This is more than many men in our city are taking home when they work 12 months of the year and 40 hours a week.

My children are only going to get an education once in their life time and if I can help it they will not be getting a "half" one.

MRS. LOIS ALLSTEAD
Livonia

Editor's Note: It is our impression that the annual pay for beginning teachers in the elementary schools is less than \$7,000 and not \$9,500 as mentioned above.

Tips Hat To Crew

EDITOR:

I would like to publicly thank the loyal employee of the Farmer Jack store in Farmington, especially Mr. McDonald, I lost my purse in the store on Memorial Day, but was totally unaware of where I had lost it. After fruitfully checking everywhere I could remember, I had almost given up hope.

But then Mr. McDonald brought it out to my home for me. It had been found and turned in by one of his employees. In these times when only lawbreakers make the news, I wish to make known an incident proving how truly wonderful people are most of the time. I am very grateful to everyone concerned.

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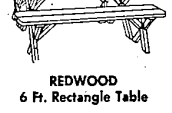
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