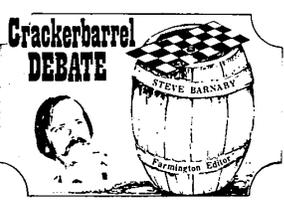


editorial opinion

Can Murphy, Young find public forum?



Speaking out is a civic duty, best for city

When the feds say you've got \$438,000 to spend, it's time to speak out.

That is the situation in Farmington Hills where the city council is considering how to spend the bucks from a community development block grant program.

Unfortunately, too few residents understand how important it is for their voices to be heard on this matter.

In past years, funds from this program have been used to improve the city's south end, an area much in need of rehabilitation.

Without these funds, residents would probably be left without such vital improvements as storm sewer drains, recreation (Waldron Park) and a most important basic—housing.

FOLKS SOUTH of Nine Mile want their community to be as good as any in the city.

An ad valorem tax—passing the plate around the whole city—has never been a popular way of making improvements.

So the block grant program is a blessing for Farmington Hills.

But it is less of a blessing if residents stubbornly stay home and refuse to be heard.

You don't have to write your congressman or the president. All you have to do is wander into city hall.

More importantly, the city council genuinely wants to hear from residents.

You're cordially invited to spend \$438,000. Hope to see you in city hall.

Winter's Catch 22

For persons unfortunate enough to live off the Main Drag in last week's white-out, life could be a real Catch 22, no-win proposition.

In one of our neighboring counties, harder hit by the blizzard, motorists by the score got stuck on subdivision streets.

When they let their fingers do the walking through the Yellow Pages, they found that tow trucks were often commandeered by the National Guard.

If they found a tow truck that wasn't commandeered, the driver refused to pull out cars from unplowed streets.

Snow removal agencies completed the noose by refusing to plow streets that were blocked by cars which couldn't be towed because the streets were unplowed.

The way out was that neighbors learned new lessons in self-sufficiency by playing a new game called "Let's See How Many Neighbors Will Help."

Meanwhile, closer to home, one snow plow driver showed his system of values by pushing much of the snow in an office parking lot onto its two spaces reserved for the handicapped.

It's a sign of progress that Oakland County Executive Daniel T. Murphy is holding meetings with Detroit Mayor Coleman A. Young. In that atmosphere, no one will be inclined to address the other as "you people" or advise someone to "hit Eight Mile Road."

There are, however, some missing links. What voice does Oakland's sizable Democratic minority have in those meetings? What voice do Detroit homeowners outside the downtown area have? What voice do the folks in suburban Wayne County have after all, they outnumber Oakland residents and probably will bypass Detroit in the next census?

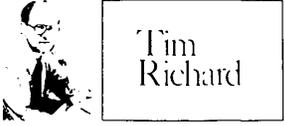
In short, while it's good that Murphy and Young are becoming Dan and Coleman to each other, they don't really represent everyone in southeast Michigan.

THE ATMOSPHERE for resolving many metropolitan problems could be vastly improved by adoption of the following modest proposals:

•Mayor Young, officially a delegate to the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, should attend an occasional meeting. He hasn't shown his face to SEMCOG in the four years he has been in office.

•Murphy should be elected one of Oakland County's three SEMCOG delegates. That decision is up to the county board of commissioners.

At present, Oakland's three delegates are all



commissioners. Republicans, with a 15-12 board majority, send two of their troops; Democrats get one seat.

LILLIAN MOFFITT, vice-chairwoman of the board, thinks it would be "an excellent idea" to make the county executive a SEMCOG delegate.

Mrs. Moffitt (R-Bloomfield) notes that Young, even though he doesn't attend, has a pipeline to the voluntary regional planning agency through his alternate—his administrative assistant, Bill Cihuffo.

Commissioner Robert Page (R-Birmingham), a SEMCOG delegate, says the idea has "some merit."

But he doubts the board will care to yield one of its seats. Page thinks Murphy is getting heard now because 1) the executive spoke at a recent SEMCOG General Assembly meeting, 2) he spoke on the same platform with Young at a SEMTA conference and 3) his staff briefs commissioner Page's general government committee on SEMCOG-related issues.

Page said Murphy, like Young, should say in effect, "I'll rattle with those people in Washington and the governor, and send my right-hand man to rattle with the SEMCOG delegates."

LARRY PERNICK (D-Southfield), chairman of the minority caucus on the county board, thinks it would be helpful to have the executive on the SEMCOG delegation—particularly since Board Chairman Wallace Gabler (R-Royal Oak) has chosen to break past practice and not be a delegate. "I think we lost clout" (when Gabler chose not to get into SEMCOG), Pernick said.

There have been private discussions of how to add Murphy to the Oakland delegation, he said. One idea is to get the county a fourth seat. "The problem is how to add a fourth seat—Wayne County and everyone else would ask for adjustments in their delegations," Pernick said.

The Democratic leader says Republicans have their political problems over the question. "The regionalist segment of the GOP has one representative in Page; the anti-regionalist segment has its representative in Henry Hoot (R-Troy). Who should step down in favor of Murphy?"

Pernick has the third seat. He's unwilling to give it up to Republican Murphy because "I think it should be bipartisan."

Pat Nowak, Murphy's right-hand man in inter-governmental matters, would like to see the county executive in SEMCOG. So far, no one can figure out how to do it politically.

Maybe Nowak will have to hang around SEMCOG sessions and do it informally.



Neighborliness

If there was a good side to the Great Blizzard of '78, it was more than the parties folks had because they couldn't get to work... more than the good books youngsters read because they couldn't get to school or go out to play... more than the dedication to serving the public shown by some employees who got to work.

The good side was the neighborly feeling, the old-fashioned pioneer spirit that supposedly died with the end of barn-raising and the advent of social legislation.

The spirit of neighborliness was still alive in the suburbs. The notion that life is impersonal was buried in two feet of snow. The good stowed through. (Staff photo)

Tax 'reforms' sock the middle class

Get set, folks, we are about to be "reformed" again.

Every time a governmental official uses that word, it means people with the greatest voting power are about to get a break at the expense of those who either have less voting power or belong to the long-suffering silent majority.

Last month, Social Security got reformed. This month, the president wants to reform the income tax laws and the union representation laws.

Social Security had to be reformed because, over the years, Congress has increased benefits without increasing correspondingly the taxes.

What started out to be a fiscally sound retirement program has turned into a social welfare program. The problem is that, as inflation has eaten into the value of the dollar, retired people need more money to live on, but they are no longer contributing to the program.

So the people now working must pay for these benefits, and the government is robbing Peter to pay Paul.

THE NEW REFORM has really socked it to the present workers, and the political realities are that next year we will have another reform because of the public outcry. Then, in a couple of years, we will have to have reform again because the system will be broke again.

The obvious answer is that Congress should appropriate money to the Social Security system out of the general fund every time it wants to increase benefits; otherwise, our children and their children won't have any money in the fund when they retire.

The proposed income tax "reform" merely pushes the burden from the low-income families to the middle-income families.

The highest income families get hurt, but there are so few of them that the real burden is carried by the middle.

This middle-income group, which is the backbone of America, is also the group most affected by the eroding dollar and the increased Social Security tax.

The rates will be lower, but so will deductions if all the "reforms" pass. The tax credit for dependents, compared to the present tax deduction of \$750



Eccentricities

per dependent, means more taxes if your income is more than \$25,000.

Eliminating the gasoline tax and sales tax deductions hurts the middle-income people but not the super-rich.

THE PROPOSAL to reduce the deduction for business lunches or as President Carter calls them, the "three-martini lunch" is probably the least thought out reform and the biggest grand-

stand play for the common man.

The philosophy apparently is that there is some benefit or pleasure above and beyond the business benefit that people derive by eating out. And this benefit or pleasure should be taxed.

Carrying this philosophy to its logical extreme, the President feels we should somehow be taxing pleasure. Only time and your imagination will tell what will be taxed next.

When government starts telling business people how they should go about promoting their businesses to make a profit for their shareholders, it should first show them it knows how to live within its own budget.

In fiscal 1978-79, the federal government plans a budget deficit of more than \$80 million. Half of the deficit is because of tax reform.

Now, who's kidding whom about "reform"?



By W.W. EDGAR

The Stroller Other side of the table

Every time The Stroller picks up one of the public prints and reads where some individual or group has stormed the citadel of local government to complain about conditions in their neighborhood or to protest against some applicant for a business establishment, he can't help wondering how these people would feel if they were sitting on the other side of the council table.

He can't help feeling that they might sing an entirely different tune if they had to cast a vote that would be for the benefit of the entire community instead of just a small neighborhood.

They'd soon find out that their willingness to serve the public as a lawmaker would lead into some trying and even maddening circumstances. The Stroller knows. Some some years ago, he was filled with vim and vigor and eager to be of service to the taxing public.

IT WAS BACK in the days when the transition of Livonia Township into the City of Livonia was taking place, and he gladly accepted a position on the charter commission and later served as vice-president of the first city council.

In this so-called vaulted position, The Stroller was really enjoying himself. He was proud of the fact that a tax limitation of five mills was frozen into the charter. He was still prouder of the fact that the city council decided it could run the city on a mill—\$1

per \$1,000 of assessed valuation, inasmuch as the top valuation of residential property in the early '50s was \$5,000, it meant no one would be asked to pay more than \$5 a year in city tax.

Things were going along smoothly until spring came, with its muddy roads and caved-in streets due to heavy rains.

Then one night, about 11 p.m., his home phone rang. It was an irate taxpayer—and an elderly one at that.

"I WANT YOU" to send a load of gravel over here right away," she almost screamed over the wire. "There's a big hole at the entrance to my driveway, and I want it taken care of NOW!"

Heading with her that no load of gravel could be sent over at that time of night was fruitless. She screamed even louder. "What kind of councilman are you? I thought you promised to take care of our problems."

The Stroller pointed out that, as a taxpayer, she was paying only \$5 a year in city taxes and that such demands were out of order.

When she continued her demand, The Stroller tried to be diplomatic and asked how much of her \$5 should go toward police protection and how much should go for fire protection and the other services in the city.

When she finished stating her portions of the \$5 that should go for the various city services, there was only 75 cents left of her \$5 tax payment.

How much gravel do you think the city can purchase for 75 cents? The Stroller asked, and pointed out that if more than that were spent, it would have to come from another taxpayer's share of the taxes, and maybe his road would crack up, too, in the spring thaw.

She hung up. The Stroller has not heard from her since.

THEN THERE WAS the night a newcomer to the city, who had moved into a neighborhood where street lighting was being installed, stood before the council. He claimed he was the father of four children and needed his sleep to be ready for his job the next day, and that the new lights were shining in his window and keeping him awake.

He was really pouring it on until the late Jack Whitehead, a member of the council, called out, "Young fellow, you don't have a problem. Just lay your head at the foot of the bed and the lights won't bother you."

Yes, there is a laugh now and then on city councils in the various communities. But mostly these highly enthusiastic public servants find they are targets for abuse—oftentimes by their best friends.

The other side of the table isn't so rassy.

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