

editorial opinion

OCC women's day fails to allow objective view

If a member of the Ku Klux Klan spoke at a college, I'd be very surprised if some kind of rebuttal or question period weren't included in the program. So, when Sister Joann Nitz was allowed to use International Women's Day to expound her socialist convictions at Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills, I was taken aback when the question-and-answer period was abruptly terminated.

Many in the audience, including myself, had several questions for Sister Nitz, as well as comments on the film "We're Alive," a presentation on women in prison. Both Sister Nitz and the film presented distortions as facts. But the OCC Women's Center, which sponsored the program, didn't allow time for those distortions to be questioned.

I strongly resent the failure of the program's organizers to present an objective view of women in prison and the scheduling that didn't allow for rebuttal to Sister Nitz's subjective diatribe.

For example, interspersed among the film clips of prisoners discussing their plight were statements flashed on the screen. One such statement said that 90 per cent plus of all convicted felons in the U.S. plead guilty because they cannot afford a lawyer.

I FIND IT HARD to believe that the majority of courts in this country refuse to appoint lawyers for indigent cases. In fact, Sister Nitz works for an organization of legal defenders whose sole in-

come is derived from Wayne County court-appointed cases.

Sister Nitz claims she didn't have enough time to document her allegation that the media receives orders to distort the news. If such proof exists, it certainly seems that exposing a vicious manipulation of the news deserves more time than her appeals to join the struggle of the oppressed.

Last Sunday, the CBS news program "Sixty Minutes" presented a 20-minute segment on the AFL-CIO's battle to unionize southern textile workers. Representatives of J. P. Stevens, a major target of the drive, declined to appear on the show, but the program's directors made a valid attempt to show both sides of the issue.

Unfortunately, the audience at OCC's program were cheated of the opportunity to examine both sides of the coin. There are, without question, a great number of injustices in our legal and social systems; but members of an audience deserve more than a diatribe if they're expected to make intelligent judgments about social change.

WE'VE SEEN high-ranking officials and organizations caught in lies, and we've seen the negative results of social change conducted ostensibly for the public's good. Most Americans have shed the mantle of innocence, and we don't swallow everything that comes down the pike. Certainly the audience that expressed enough concern about prison conditions to show up at OCC deserved a whole lot more than rhetoric.

By Lynn Orr

A gimmick is no transit plan

The Oakland County Road Commission has a lot of gall to suggest that its slide show advocating a light-rail transit plan be given equal weight with plans of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority and be submitted to the federal government for funding. There is every possible reason not to give the OCC's gimmicky the same consideration as SEMTA's work.

First, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) is the region's legally constituted maker of broad transportation plans—not OCC. SEMCOG's authority comes from local officials from seven counties while OCC consists of three appointed officials from one county.

Second, SEMTA, by two different acts of the Michigan Legislature, is the legally constituted regional transportation agency. OCC is acting where it has no legal authority and no acknowledged expertise.

Third, SEMCOG's broad studies and SEMTA's 14 detailed alternatives are based on years of

study and detail work. OCCRC slapped together its quickie plan in three months, including all of two weeks for an origin and destination survey.

Fourth, OCCRC has an axe to grind. It sees public transportation as a threat to road money as state and federal governments move to set up unified transportation funds.

Fifth, OCCRC has no support from any major agency outside Oakland County and precious little support within Oakland County for its pretty slide show. The Macomb County Road Commission wouldn't touch the Oakland project; the Wayne County Road Commission joined the study but has backed away from joining OCCRC in its political battle. County Executive Dan Murphy sees good points in the OCCRC thinking but recognizes only SEMTA as the region's public transportation agency.

The Oakland County Road Commission should pack up its traveling slide show and start fixing up some of the potholes on county roads.

'No war—on strike'

If the Army were unionized . . .

There is a strong effort in Washington by the public employee unions to organize the armed services.

I can see it now, if this attempt were ever successful.

Instead of a draft, all hiring would be done through union halls. Instead of two-year stints, each union member would have to spend a six-year apprenticeship before he got his full journeyman's soldier card.

The Army would go on a 37½ hour week. Picture the middle of a battle, after 7½ hours the union steward would claim time and a half for his men. If the battle raged on a Sunday, then it would be double time.

Everything would be done on a seniority basis. The night patrols wouldn't be the most qualified or experienced men. Rather, they would be the most junior men.

The armed forces would have to plan their wars better, because the union would make them schedule their manning a week ahead of time.

THE AIR FORCE will have to negotiate manning for planes and the Army for its tanks like the railroads negotiate for engineers and firemen. This, of course, will help the unemployment rate because union manning always requires more men than necessary to do the job.

Sergeants would become foremen, and every platoon will have to have an additional union steward.

If the Army decided to introduce an improved weapon such as a machine gun, which could kill more people per hour than the old guns, they would have to negotiate this with the union because it might mean a reduction of the work force.

They would also probably have to give six



by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

months notice to the union and provide adequate retraining.

All grievances would have to be mediated. The chaplain would be replaced by representatives of the American Arbitration Association.

No one could be assigned KP without a union hearing first.

JOBS WOULD be classified to make sure there was no encroachment of jurisdiction. In the midst of battle, if mortars were needed instead of rifles, a different crew would have to be called in.

Of course, union men would never fight against non union armies.

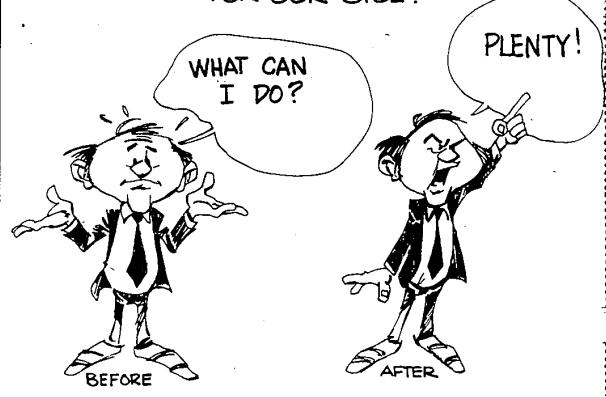
Picket signs would replace rifles if the union didn't get its way.

I can even imagine a sign being posted "No War Today. On Strike for Better Fighting Conditions."

In order for union chiefs to keep their jobs, they must get more money for their members each time they negotiate. The increases have no relationship to increased productivity.

The only benefit I can see to unionization of the armed services is that eventually soldiers would get so expensive the world might have to give up war.

LET'S HEAR IT FOR OUR SIDE!



City Hall fights, beats 'synthetic government'

Consider the following: the Michigan State Highway Department, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, the Wayne County Road Commission, the Oakland County Road Commission and the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority.

What's common about them? In a sense, they are all synthetic government units, synthetic in the sense that they are created over and beyond the old-fashioned government units such as cities and townships.

Another thing that's common to them is their great power over local governments and ordinary folks living around here. What SEMTA does about mass transit will affect the style of life of people living in this region more than nearly any other government unit; the Wayne County Road Commission makes its decisions nearly in a vacuum.

A last thing that may become common about these synthetic kinds of governments is that they are—just possibly—losing some of their power to smaller local governments and the people.

Remember years ago when the State Highway Department was planning I-96 from Detroit to Lansing? The plan was to bypass a lot of little communities such as Williamston and Howell. The locals raised hell about what would happen if all that money-producing traffic were shunted away onto the freeway, but the highway department simply ignored the local protests and went ahead.

RECENT events suggest a small but important change is taking place in the power of the big, synthetic government units to make decisions in a vacuum.

A little while ago, the State Highway Commission voted to can the planned M-275 through western Oakland County. Why? Not because the highway department wanted to, but rather because the people out in Commerce Township and other small communities in the area objected.

Northwestern Highway, a project dear to the hearts of the developers and real estate speculators who have visions of profits dancing in their heads, is still in limbo. And the extension of I-496 through communities in southern Oakland County such as Lathrup Village is still stalled in the courts. Why? Because the people and their local governments squawked loud and long.

State says 'no' to growth

There was a college professor who had a favorite trick question for his political science classes: "The U.S. Constitution provides for three levels of government—federal, state and local—right?" His students would nod agreement.

"Wrong!" he would say. "The Constitution mentions only federal and state governments. Local government is a creature of the state. Local government has only the powers the state chooses to give it."

The lesson came to mind several times in the past year as the U.S. government and the State of Michigan made major decisions to restrict suburban growth and to redevelop Detroit. Actually, there were many decisions, but the cases of "super sewer" and M-275 stand out.

THE STATE NATURAL Resources Commission said no to the Wayne County Road Commission's plan to build a \$200 million sewer interceptor and Lake Erie treatment plant to serve western Oakland, western Wayne and eastern Washtenaw counties.

There were all sorts of political reasons, such as fear of the political empire-building of the Wayne County Road Commission; and there were environmental fears, such as the Huron River running dry if it weren't recharged.

But the big fear was that population growth didn't justify gobbling up more land for development, especially with a developed city like Detroit being left behind. It's significant that the super sewer project was opposed not only by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (regional planning agency) but the cities of Detroit and Ann Arbor.

THE STATE HIGHWAY Commission in January said no to the M-275 project, some 25 miles of freeway in a north-south corridor of western Oakland County.

Again, the arguments against it were environmental—damage to river headwaters, taking of dwindling park property and so on.

Underneath, however, the real argument was growth, with cities and townships there arguing that their master plans and business growth potentials were being disrupted. In short, the decision

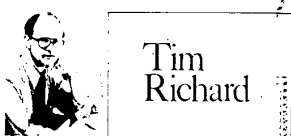


•The proposal to convert the Wayne County Child Development Center in Northville Township was received with rage by the citizens of the township, the City of Northville, the adjoining City of Plymouth and Plymouth Township. A crew of citizens numbering some 200 went down to the Wayne County board two weeks ago and raised a stink. Although the entire board has not yet voted on the idea, the committee studying the proposal voted unanimously against it.

ALL THESE examples—and there are others—suggest that when local people or their directly elected local governments organize and fight a proposal coming from one of the synthetic government units, they can succeed.

I suspect there are two reasons for this: 1) Most of the proposals coming out of the big, indirect government units are those that have to do with growth, in one form or another. M-275 was a growth issue; so was Super Sewer, which eventually was dropped after the cities of Ann Arbor and Detroit beefed. Many of the local communities involved in growth plans imposed on them by super-government agencies simply don't want the growth. Or they don't want it in the way proposed. So they object; and they're showing some success.

2) The big synthetic government units are never elected directly. The county road commission is appointed, and so is the State Highway Commission; SEMCOG delegates are appointed by member communities, and the board of SEMTA is appointed. There is a power in direct election by the people which exceeds appointment. Direct election forces decision-makers to consider the views of the people, where appointment does not. That's what's really behind the power of local government against synthetic government. It's a trend we can all applaud.



restricts not only new growth but the outflow of people and money from Detroit.

The Wayne County Road Commission is suing the state over super sewer, and the Oakland County Road Commission is suing the state over M-275. They're fooling themselves, of course, but it makes work for lawyers.

THE COMMON FOLKS, on the other hand, are behaving as if they had never heard of redeveloping Detroit and restricting growth in the suburbs.

The suburban sprawl facilitated by the postwar radial freeways, and then fed by the racial conflict in Detroit in the '60s and '70s, continues. The big growth areas are still the outlying suburbs.

Meanwhile, Henry Ford II is telling some folks who work in Dearborn that they're jobs are being moved to Renaissance Center.

Meanwhile, Detroit proceeds with plans to build a riverfront arena for a hockey team, whether the hockey team wants to play there or not.

Meanwhile, the federal Urban Mass Transit Administration pledges \$600 million to the regional transportation authority on the basis of a plan that will pump 94 per cent of the money into Detroit, and with the requirement that another \$600 million of private investment go into Detroit.

All of which reminds one of the college professor who said that local government is the creature of the state. Local government can do only what the state chooses to let it do—and, of course, what the federal government gives it aid to do.

Farmington Observer

Division of
SUBURBAN COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION

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352-5400

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