

Low income housing is the real story, folks

That hombre known as low income housing has ridden into town.

Well partners, it's time to stack the chips and lay the cards on the table.

The issues which has torn apart communities, pitted neighbor against neighbor, deprived political leaders of their seats and lost communities millions of their federal tax dollars is here in a big way.

The basic issue is whether low income housing is wearing a black or white 10-gallon hat. Is the steed it's riding, the community development program, a white charger riding into Farmington Hills to save the day or a black nag out to trample the community's welfare?

Monday's city council meeting, as volatile as it was, is only the tip of the iceberg in community discontent. The upcoming public hearing, yet to be scheduled, could blow the town wide open.

ONE POLITICAL gadfly called the other day and said in so many words (expletives deleted, of course), "Barnaby, you've got to stop being so lofty. Write so everybody can understand you. Give them some aints."

So, folks, here is some plain speaking—some "aint" talking from the editor.

Farmington Hills has two options. It can either



stand out from the crowd and accept the low income housing with all the attached benefits, or it can join the bevy of communities which have rejected it, cheated its residents out of their own tax money and cut off their own noses to spite their collective faces.

Remember, Farmington Hills isn't Birmingham, nor is it Livonia. Too many benefits are at stake for the community to turn down future federal money because of a fear of low income housing.

Ironically, those who stand to lose the most won't be the folks in the affluent north end, who are bound to raise the biggest fuss, but the fami-

lies in the city's low and moderate income south end.

Through the community development program, the southenders will be able to refurbish their homes, have urgently needed drainage installed and eventually be able to pave their streets—finally.

Most importantly, senior citizen housing is at stake. We need that badly—for now and for the future.

BUT A FEW things must be done to salvage the program.

- The southenders' fear that they could lose their homes because of insufficient funds to bring them up to code must be dissipated. Few, if any, persons are going to apply for loans and grants if they perceive that the city is going to condemn their homes.

- The Maureen Lowe case must be explained fully by the administration. Council must demand a public explanation from city administration and force it to be accountable for its actions.

- The city council must stand firm under the public pressure which is bound to come in future weeks from those who oppose low income housing.

This is profiles-in-courage time, gang. This program is more important than your political futures.

- Political opponents must remind themselves that Joan Dudley isn't Satan. She's a conservative. So she wants to get her seat back on the city council. Big deal. She opposes federal money for low income housing; some of us favor it. Let's keep it at that level.

- Public decisions should be made on the issues rather than on personal animosities which have grown up between political foes in recent years.

THIS EDITOR will fight like hell for the community development program. I expect everyone else who has supported it in the past to get off their duffs, come on down to city hall and give the council the support it needs.

This is the main event, the big bout, for Farmington Hills.

A few weeks back, I called on those who built this community and who have since retreated to more peaceful, private pastures to come out and once again serve their community.

So you're a big tycoon now, making lots of dough. Now is the time to pay attention to that town you helped to build.

editorial opinion

Customers win one

The 78 suburban communities who are customers of Detroit's sewage system won a major victory last week when Federal Judge John Feikens ordered the rollback of rates that were to go into effect July 1.

As Oakland County Drain Commissioner George Kuhn argued, Detroit was off base in accepting federal grants for sewer construction and then charging the rest of us for depreciation of those facilities. Detroit was making money on what the rest of us had paid for through federal taxes.

But while we the customers have won one rate case, we still haven't reformed the system. The same kind of financial shenanigans could happen again—and will, unless the Detroit water board is reformed.

The water board, which governs the water and sewage system, is composed of seven persons—four Detroiters and three suburbanites—all appointed by the mayor of Detroit, and all removable on his whim. The concept of "one person, one vote" is totally absent. There is no guarantee suburbia's views will be presented emphatically.

If Detroit were putting up its own money for the expanded sewage treatment plant and other facilities, one could use the old "stockholder" argument—they own it so they should run it. In truth, federal and state taxes and the bills paid by customers are paying the way, so the customers deserve some true representation.

The arena for this reform is necessarily the Michigan Legislature. Suburban voters who are concerned about soaring water and sewer rates, as well as about pollution, ought to ask their incumbent legislators what they have done to get reform of the Detroit water board. The Detroit water and sewer system isn't "theirs." It's everybody's.

SEMTA afraid to alienate the devils

The Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) met this week to pick a preferred plan for regional transportation over the next 15 years from a group of seven alternatives.

Each of the seven plans except the "do-nothing" or status quo plan included substantial increases in demand-response small bus programs (dial-a-ride), increased use of line-haul and express buses, a downtown Detroit people mover similar to monorails at amusement parks, and increased commuter rail service such as along the old Grand Trunk line from Pontiac to Detroit.

The major differences between the proposals were whether there should be a light rail (modern trolley) system on the Woodward corridor, and whether part or all of it should be underground.

The SEMTA board has 15 members: Five from Detroit, three from suburban Wayne County, three from Oakland County, two from Macomb County and two from the outer counties of Washtenaw, Livingston, St. Clair and Monroe.

IT WILL TAKE a two-thirds vote (10) to adopt the final plan.

It seems that reasonable men and women should be able to select the plan that attracts the greatest number of public transportation users at the lowest possible cost.

The SEMTA board found that there were not 10 votes for any of the plans, so they narrowed down the number of alternatives from seven to three.

The three selected were plans with no light rail, a plan with light rail entirely on the surface (except for a small portion in downtown Detroit) and a plan where the light rail was underground from downtown to McNichols Road.

The reason they didn't pick one plan is best described by the old story about the drunk who was hit by a car. A Catholic priest happened by and started to give him the last rites.

When the priest came to the part of the rite where he says, "Do you renounce the devil?" the



drunk looked up and said, "Father, at a time like this, I don't want to alienate anyone."

For a regional transportation plan to be adopted, it must be approved by the Urban Mass Transit Administration in Washington which will provide 80 per cent of the funding and the Michigan Legislature must help provide the remaining 20 per cent.

THE LEGISLATURE won't consider the transportation bill providing bonding authority and taxes to pay for the system until September.

Detroit Mayor Coleman Young, who has friends in the legislature, has said he might pull out of SEMTA unless the preferred plan includes a subway for Detroit.

Macomb County has said it will pull out of SEMTA if there is a subway.

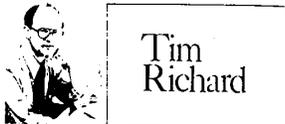
Oakland County has said, through its legislators in Lansing, it wants a fair share of tax dollars collected in Oakland County spent in Oakland County, and that the subway would eat up too many dollars.

Without the transportation bill in Lansing, there won't be any regional transportation plan, and the vote is close enough that every vote counts.

To pick a subway plan would alienate Macomb and Oakland counties' legislators and to pick a non-subway plan would alienate Detroit legislators.

So like the drunk, the SEMTA board said, "At a time like this, we don't want to alienate anyone."

(The writer is also a member and vice-chairman of the SEMTA board.)



No escape — pay Lansing or Washington

There was no escape. Not even 9,000 feet up in the Wyoming Rockies. Not even after a fire-cooked dinner of rainbow trout and beans with a cooler full of Coors for later in the evening.

I scanned the local daily for the schedule at the evening's rodeo and stumbled across reality.

In Dallas, according to the UPI wire service, delegates to a National Education Association convention were voting to fight state-local tax-cut proposals. That wasn't shocking, but the next paragraph was:

"The NEA said it would continue to lobby in Congress for one-third funding of public education by the federal government instead of placing the burden on local property tax payers. Currently the federal government contributes about 8.3 per cent of the funds used in public education."

YOU HAVE TO think about that before the full impact hits you.

If you're old-fashioned enough to read the federal and state constitutions, you will recall the federal government has no responsibility for public education. That's the state's role.

Nevertheless, the federal government has been worming into the education industry on a nickel-and-dime basis. Federal funds go for highly specialized programs rather than for salaries and utilities and books.

After Jimmy Carter was inaugurated, the NEA boasted that its support had made the difference in his very narrow presidential victory. It is planning to collect on its debt. The fact that many other groups claim to have given Carter his margin of victory does not dissuade the NEA. It smells money like a shark smells blood.

AND SO THERE is no escape.

A lot of well-meaning people, and some who are just plain selfish, are out pushing tax limitation plans. They believe that by limiting taxes, they can also limit spending.

It simply isn't so. The plain truth is that tax limitation proposals limit only state and local taxes. They do not—and can not—limit federal taxing and spending.

And that is the chink in the armor, the Achilles heel of tax limitations. The NEA will try for massive general aid to education and probably get it.

While we think of the auto workers and coal miners as having big and potent unions, the fact is that government employees outnumber them, and the biggest chunk of government employees are teachers. While there is no danger—yet—that teachers will outnumber lawyers in Congress and the legislature, there are significant numbers of teachers getting elected to legislatures.

THE SAME article out of Dallas revealed how the NEA will rationalize its quest for those paychecks. The buzzwords are stress and violence.

Stress is so great, said NEA President John Ryor, that teachers are being forced to quit or retire early, particularly in "urban areas." If you catch that euphemism.

More than 5,000 teachers are attacked monthly, and 25 per cent of all schools are subject to vandalism each month, said Ryor—and that is according to a government study, not the NEA's own.

Meanwhile, the NEA will make its own study of violence in the schools because it's convinced administrators cover up a lot to avoid marring their records. That study will be published in 1979 when the NEA convenes again—in Detroit, of all places.

There you have the picture: Teachers want more; state and local taxes are being increasingly frozen by an angry but short-sighted public; the union will wave the bloody shirt and march on Washington. Remember where you read it.

Indy's choice will be honor for Iacocca

From the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, it's not more than half an hour's drive out beyond the west edge of town to the Country Club of Indianapolis. On a day last week that was designed primarily for mad dogs and Englishmen, there were news articles of Detroit area interest at both locations.

Hot? Golly yes, it was hot. Sweltering. Excessively humid, too. But that didn't prevent thousands of golf nuts from tramping the CCI hills as galleries to the 1978 U.S. Golf Association's national women's open.

Nor did the heat cut down on the normal quota of tourists at the Speedway Hall of Fame Museum. This is a noble, white structure that stands in the infield. It is reached from the mainstream of outside traffic by driving under the famed racing strip itself.

Interestingly though, on the day in question a particular car that was making numerous turns of the track never was identified to the scores of museum visitors. They looked on not knowing what it was or why it was there.

At the golf club, there at least was identification of the players.

ONE MUST REMEMBER that the speedway

through bifocals



isn't operated solely as the site of the Memorial Weekend 500-mile race. It's an automotive laboratory in many ways, and the industry uses it (at a price) almost daily in the testing of its products, its tires, and Lord knows what all.

IT MUST BE ADMITTED that it took an outside source to identify for the O&E representative the vehicle on the speedway track which was getting so much attention from insiders. It was a 1979 Mustang, introduced to the press of the nation earlier the same week amid much hula-balo at Dearborn.

At Indianapolis, they're saying this will be the pace car for next year's 500-mile race. For Hoosier die-hards, Lee Iacocca didn't even have to be at the wheel for last week's test runs to command major attention.

"Was said that official announcement of Mustang's selection as the 1979 pace car will be made jointly by Speedway Corp. and Ford Division officials in October. The pace car driver won't be announced until closer to the May date of the race.

Yet, Indianapolis newsmen already possess considerable informational detail. Like for instance that it will be a hatchback model with a specially installed T-top roof. This will permit two track officials to monitor the start of the race in a stand-up position.

A Mustang last served as pace car in 1964, the year it was introduced. That year, Mustang set a sales record which still stands for a new model car.

MOST OF THE GLASSY golfers who stalked the women's national open title at Indianapolis will be in the Detroit area to play in the Lady Stroh's Open on Aug. 17-20 at Dearborn Country Club. It will be interesting to see who becomes the darling of our own golf-wise galleries.

At Indy, even though she didn't win the crown, it was the stylish 21-year-old senorita from New Mexico, Nancy Lopez.

True, her string of five consecutive tournament victories earlier in the year had shot her into unusual prominence. There are plenty of other brilliant players among the gals—like Savannah's Hollis Stacy, who did win the open for the second straight year—but it seems to be Lopez who has captured the golfing world's heart.

An 18-hole round of golf amounts to walking from three to four miles. If it gets too crowded following Lopez when she's in our midst, then you male chauvinists might try stringing along a few miles behind beauties like Laura Baugh or Jan Stephenson.

On a civilian sidewalk in the heart of town, the same approach could get a guy arrested.

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