

OBSERVATION POINT

DISSENT

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Suburban Horse-Sense About Race

By Philip H. Power

Some very curious things are happening here in the suburbs regarding the mayor's race in Detroit.

In that election, Richard Austin, Wayne County auditor, is running against Roman Gribbs, Wayne County sheriff. Their platforms are basically alike, although Gribbs appears to be taking a somewhat harder line on law and order than Austin.

The big difference between them, however, is race. Austin is black; Gribbs is white.

Now the conventional wisdom about the suburbs, pushed mainly in downtown Detroit, is that they are so blinded by racial prejudice that they can't use any sense. Rubbish, say I.

As proof? Dearborn's Mayor Orville Hubbard and Wayne County Republican Chairman Henry Sladek have both endorsed Austin over Gribbs.

HUBBARD is supposed to be an arch-segregationist, dedicated to keeping Negroes in their place.

But Hubbard is also a complex guy, one of the best municipal administrators around and a top-rate politician.

His evaluation of Austin and Gribbs turns entirely on the matter of qualifications and competence, not on race.

"Austin has a quicker grasp of problems and a deeper sense of dedication than any of the others. He has been fair, impartial and free of make-believe," said Hubbard.

"If I lived in Detroit, I would vote for him. I don't think

he has taken a tough enough line on law and order in his campaign, but if he is elected I suspect he will be very firm on law enforcement."

Hubbard is not dumb. He has 28 years of experience in local government in this area, and he isn't about to be blinded by race. He thinks Austin is the best qualified, and he says so.

DITTO FOR Sladek, who lives in Livonia.

Even though Democrats tend to attack (by reflex action) Republicans as racists and other kinds of nasty people, they should know better. Sladek is a highly effective county chairman for the GOP, armed with a good mind and a quick way of seeing through to the heart of the matter.

On Monday, he endorsed Austin.

"Austin has achieved an outstanding record of leadership and competency, and his expertise in government financing is well known. These are absolutely essential qualifications needed in a candidate for mayor in any big city," Sladek said.

"The position is too big, the problems too enormous, and the consequences too great for an on-the-job training program. On top of this, Austin in his campaign has demonstrated he has the best chance to bring the people together and not further divide the community," Sladek said.

He is not alone. Carl Pursell,

member of the Wayne County Board of Supervisors from Plymouth, has endorsed Austin on the basis of superior qualifications and ability.

WHAT ALL THIS proves is that, contrary to the usual attacks made on the suburbs, some people out here have the sense to make the conclusion that sensible

people anywhere would make: That a better qualified man (Austin) ought to be elected mayor of Detroit over a good but less qualified man (Gribbs), regardless of race.

Mayor Hubbard and Chairman Sladek and Supervisor Pursell aren't fooled by the facts that Austin is black and

Gribbs is white. They are concerned about who is going to do the best job in Detroit, because they know that what happens in Detroit will inevitably affect us here in the suburbs.

They know that a man's ability is the only test that should be made, and they aren't afraid to say so. They deserve congratulations.

By John W. Schlupe
LIVONIA

Hubert G. Locke, Wayne State U. professor, has written a new book, entitled *The Detroit Riot of 1967*. According to the Observer's review (Wednesday, October 8, 1969) this is not a book that condemns the black militants, nor does it defend police action." In addition, Mr. Locke is said to be critical of the mass media coverage of the riots, with the exception of the "perceptive interpretations" appearing in the Observer newspapers.

This synopsis of the book is probably sufficient evidence to prove that we are dealing with another contribution that doesn't tell it like it is. Once more we are told that everybody is to blame but the rioters. Once more we are treated to a philosophical and psychological dissertation that tries to absolve the looters and the burners of any guilt and somehow put the onus on the suburbs.

This strange aversion to face the real facts is, of course, largely to blame for the slow but steady demise of Detroit. Most people who would have it their power but lack the necessary backbone to halt and reverse this tragic slide are content to periodically utter some bland statements to reassure everybody that things can't get worse.

Nobody has the guts to call a spade a spade. It is easier and less painful to skirt the issues and to blame your problems on the wicked suburbanites and the bad guys in Lansing and Washington who refuse to hand over the millions of dollars needed to guarantee the millennium.

The height of ludicrousness was the recent front page headline in one of Detroit's leading daily newspapers. It asked "What's wrong with Detroit?" and, answering their own question, they served up more Pabulum and tranquilizers without coming to grips with the real issues.

During the last 20 years more than a dozen studies have been made regarding a Rapid Transit system for Detroit. Nothing happened. Other cities build new Sports Stadiums. In Detroit, they talk and they talk and the hot potato is tossed back and forth between City Hall and Lansing. And they ask "Why is Detroit dying?"

Other cities crack down on crime and criminals and the police are backed by the entire community. In Detroit, politicians and a segment of the news media yell "police brutality" every time a cop has to defend himself and use force to arrest and subdue some hoodlum. And they ask "What's wrong with Detroit?"

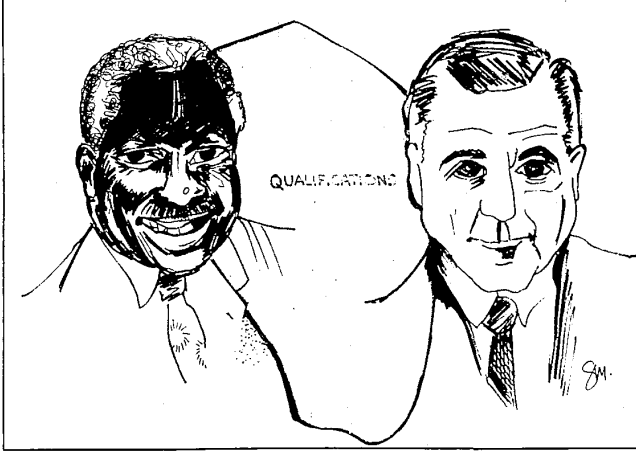
After dark, the center of the city should bustle with activity as thousands of Detroiters and suburbanites flock to shows, night clubs and restaurants. Instead, the streets are deserted, because it is not safe to be out and only a fool or a stranger would venture to roam the streets after dark. And they ask "Why is Detroit dying?"

With great fanfare and much hoopla the Detroit newspapers and the rest of the media recently embarked upon a "I care about Detroit" kick. One Sunday afternoon several thousand hippies and adult fellow-travelers congregated downtown to listen to rock music and to assorted freaks and misfits and to engage in some acts of rowdiness and vandalism.

The media called this a "great success." For a few hours, at least, the problems were swept under a rug and everybody indulged in Euphoria. The same night, however, it was murder, rape and mugging as usual and the poor souls who yearn for law and order are called racists, Birchers and extremists. And they ask "Why is Detroit going down the drain?"

It is obvious that Detroit cannot be saved until we get political and civic leaders with vision and enough guts and intestinal fortitude to tell it like it is and solve the real problems.

THE SUBURBS ARE CONCERNED WITH THE GRAY



R. F. Thompson writes

'Policeman's Policeman' Livonia Chief Choice

It was a long time coming, but Livonia finally has a new Police Chief. Mayor Harvey Moelke deserves a pat on the back for turning the assignment over to Robert J. Turner, a policeman's policeman, who has the respect of his department and the city as a whole for his excellent work as head of the detective bureau and as one of the department's captains.

Turner, who attended Lawrence Tech and was a member of the football team there when it was known throughout the midwest as a "hard-nosed" outfit, is that same kind of an individual as a police officer.

He came to the Livonia force years ago from the Detroit department and immediately attracted the attention of his superiors and officials at the City Hall with his efficient workmanship.

Regardless whether it was a minor case or a major investigation, he gave it the same investigation checking out every possible lead, every clue until it finally came up with the answers.

AS A DETECTIVE, he was considered one of the finest in-

vestigators in the midwest and more than once was offered a post with a larger department with more responsibility and more salary.

He generally thanked the ones making the offers but the answer was the same: "I like it here in Livonia, and I plan to stay here."

It was known at the time Chief James Jordan resigned, several months ago, that Turner just had to be one of the top candidates. There were others on the Livonia force eligible for the examinations, but each knew and expressed thoughts that Turner was the logical successor.

In fact, some of the eligibles

rejected an opportunity to take the exams and a possible chance for a big promotion because they wanted Turner in the chief's seat.

The job was open for grabs and thus applications were received from numerous top men in the profession in Michigan as well as from neighboring states.

Then when it came down to

the final three men, the name of Turner ranked high in the oral and written examinations -- another indication that he had learned his lessons well and could adequately express himself.

ALL OF THESE THINGS added up to the best candidate to Mayor Moelke and he selected that man -- Bob Turner -- for the new chief.

The new boss may not have the finesse of some police chiefs, he may not be able to match some in speaking at conferences and meetings, he may not have the sparkling personality that many feel should go with the job -- but he is an honest-to-goodness, solid policeman who has never knuckled down to anyone and probably never will.

He's the kind of an executive the Livonia department needs to straighten out some of the morale problems that have cropped up and haven't been resolved.

He's the kind of a boss the policemen like -- understanding, kind, firm and one who makes decisions and makes them stick.

We wish him all the best in his promotion and know he'll have a smooth-working operation in a short time once he shakes loose the petty jealousies that have split the department for so many years.

Jim Richard writes

Blame Parents For Unrest

The teacher didn't know a newspaperman was in the little group she was talking with, so it wouldn't be fair to reveal her name or the Observerland school at which she teaches.

She was scolding at the position her teachers union is in. It's safe, after several years, to call the education associations "unions" -- take in the matter of pupil-teacher ratios.

The goal of most unions is to

reduce the ratio to 25 pupils per classroom. At the same time wages are being raised, naturally.

It was strange to hear such a cavalier attitude taken toward the pupil-teacher ratio, especially by a teacher. This observer had always been told that the 25-1 ratio was something of an education necessity and goal, rather like obtaining running water for every building and doing away with the cat-o-nine-tails.

"WHEN I FIRST began teaching in 1949," said the lady teacher, who didn't really look old enough to be a 20-year veteran. "I had 43 pupils in my class."

Today she has far fewer than that, but she insisted: "I didn't have one-third the trouble then that I do now."

Trouble? Here in the refined, middle-class suburbs, where "undesirable elements," to use the realtors' euphemism, haven't been allowed to settle?

"Trouble, indeed, in maintaining discipline and trying to deal with kids who won't re-

spond. "I think one-third don't want to learn anything and don't want to do anything," she said.

And of course, it isn't the success a teacher has with 20 or 30 or 40 students that wears her down by the end of the day. It's the trouble with six or eight or 10 or ...

Another teacher offered: "Do you know, I have parents come in who won't talk to me alone. They insist that the child be with them because junior participates in all the family decisions!"

Everybody in the group had an explanation, and they all came out about the same: Lack of respect. Lack of discipline. Breakdown of law and order in the simplest behavioral sense. Lack of respect for school and institutions. Permissiveness.

TWO THINGS struck me.

First, it was teachers blaming parents -- not the usual parental blame of the school -- that was seen as the cause of student unruliness.

Second, it's quite apparent that the students' unruliness has a price tag. It's costing money.

It's not just the cost of broken windows and damaged property -- but the cost of more and more assistant principals and counselors to handle disciplinary problems, the cost of additional teachers to try to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio, the cost of wear-and-tear on the teachers' nerves, the sheer waste of talented persons' time and energy.

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Sense And Nonsense

The movie industry rates its products as G, M, R or X, depending on the kind of audience it's supposed to be fit for.

This assumes that every movie is fit for some kind of audience. The assumption is incorrect.

Small Cities?

John Allen, the Farmington city councilman who is getting wilder and wilder in his opposition to consolidating the city and township, came up with his strangest rationalization of all the other day.

By remaining a small city, Allen suggested, Farmington could avoid the crime and moral problems that a big city would have.

If Allen were right -- and he's terribly wrong -- then Detroit has found the simple solution to its crime-in-the-streets problem. All it would have to do is divide itself into 170 little cities of 10,000 each, and things in Detroit would be just fine, by John Allen's mental machinations.

--Tim Richard