

OBSERVATION POINT

Busing Isn't Answer To School Problems

By Philip H. Power



Schools in these suburbs are segregated. They may serve kids of Italian, Chinese, Polish or what have you origin. But no black children.

This is not true because the law says white children must go to schools separate from black children (as it used to be in the south), but rather because practically no black families live in these suburbs.

AS LONG AS OUR schools are set up to serve children from a given neighborhood in a school district, and as long as we're going to have virtually no Negro families living in suburban neighborhoods, we're going to have segregated schools.

This is called de facto (Latin for "by fact") segregation, as opposed to de jure ("by law") segregation.

Lately there has been much concern about de facto segregation in our metropolitan areas. Liberals have argued that it seriously distorts the thrust of our nation's concern for equal opportunity. Many parents, concerned for whatever reasons about their educational system, have argued that de facto segregation is just something that has happened and that very little can or should be done about it.

The argument has been particularly strong over busing. The idea was that in order to break down de facto segregation caused by segregated housing patterns, you would take white children from white neighborhoods and bus them across town to mainly Negro neighborhoods and schools. Vice versa. Negro children would be bused to white schools.

Usually, busing has been proposed within a given large city school district, with the hopes that in the long run it would result in an integrated school system.

But with more and more white families moving out of the core city to the suburbs, it became increasingly clear that busing within a single school district was not a full answer.

SOME IN EDUCATION circles in Detroit have talked informally about the virtues of setting up busing programs which applied to both the City of Detroit and suburban communities such as Plymouth and Southfield.

Needless to say, such an idea would not be a popular one among the majority of suburban parents - parents who may be the farthest thing from being bigoted but who resent the idea of their child being bused for an hour every morning and afternoon in service of a principle that seems to have little application to their own community.

Last week, legislation was introduced in the U.S. Congress that, in effect, would prevent federal funds from being used to support busing programs.

Since virtually all busing programs presently in operation depend at least in part on federal support, such legislation, if passed, would probably eliminate any chance of seeing busing programs either within Detroit or from Detroit to the suburbs.

Although most of my liberal friends are disturbed at such developments, I have never thought much of the busing idea.

Certainly, busing children to schools sets up a superficially integrated education system. But I have never seen any evidence to suggest that the children, jammed together by virtue of a bus ride, ever gained in schools a real sense of living together as human beings and not racial symbols.

Further, the aggravation and inconvenience of a busing program is clear. Two or three hour bus rides each day produce boredom and discipline problems, as well as being a mammoth waste of time.

But the heart of the anti-busing argument is that it doesn't really solve the school integration problem.

As long as Negro families are prevented (by whatever means, ranging from lack of income to covert discriminatory practices by homeowners and real estate agents) from living in mixed combinations with white families, our neighborhood schools are going to remain segregated. Busing programs, no matter how elaborate, aren't going to change that. All they are is a pale palliative.

INDEED, THEY MAY BE worse. For as long as people can content themselves with the rationalization that busing pro-

grams are actually making our school systems integrated and just, attention will be diverted from the much more difficult and

important problem of insuring that people can live wherever they choose, regardless of the color of their skin.

That's the real issue. And that's why cutting support for busing programs isn't such a bad thing in the long run.

STRIKE UP THE PRAISE...



Tim Richard writes

Praise For Detroit Concert Band

Did you ever travel a thousand miles from here and have someone ask where you're from? And didn't you figure no one would know the name of your suburb, so you said "Detroit" or "near Detroit"?

And then didn't you figure that all Detroit was famous for was pollution-spouting automobiles and that horrendous "Motown sound"?

Well, think again about that last characteristic. We've had a sound brewing around here for a long time that most of us hardly appreciate. And it took the British to discover it for us: It's the Detroit Concert Band.

IT TOOK A COUPLE of things to make me think of it. One was that after I finished last week's column, about the things suburbanites appreciate but Detroit pays for. I forgot to mention those concerts at the State Fairgrounds and Belle Isle played by the Detroit Concert Band, out of that city's parks and recreation budget.

The other was a program last week on Channel 36. It was an hour story made by the BBC about John Philip Sousa, "the March King."

There were still photos of the house where Sousa was born in Washington in 1854, portraits of the U. S. Marine Band he conducted for many years, even a couple of film clips of the stiff-armed old patriarch himself made in 1929, three years before his death.

There were music analysts describing Sousa's style (the composer of America's most patriotic music used French styles, it seems), interviews with people who knew him, and excerpts from some of his other works (he wrote suites, light operas and songs in addition to marches).

In this hour, only one band was featured in Sousa's works.

It was the Detroit Concert Band, conducted by Leonard B. Smith, himself a cornetist and composer of no small ability.

Smith appears to be a student of Sousa's music, his instruments and his instrumentation. He repeated the March King's variation on the trio of "Stars and Stripes Forever" by having the piccolos and then the trombones step out for a chorus piece.

ALL OF IT MAKES one feel a little foolish for ignoring the

Detroit Concert Band as one of the region's cultural assets.

Since returning to the metropolitan area a little over three years ago, I must confess I've been over to see them only once during the summer. The concert was excellent.

One felt a little uncomfortable in the audience, however.

There were a few very young couples, but most of the rest of the people were in the Lawrence Welk age bracket. The 25-40 age group was poorly represented.

That will be corrected this year. Meanwhile, we needn't be ashamed, on interstate visits, of being from "Motown." Detroit's the place that's keeping Sousa alive.

Dennis L. Pajot writes

CED Would Modernize Government

Here's hoping the voice of the Committee for Economic Development (CED) stands out among shouted ideas for modernizing local government.

CED proposes that government below the state level be reorganized into two layers, a regional area jurisdiction to handle all facets of public service below state jurisdiction, and a small community type local jurisdiction for functions of more intimate, localized nature.

CED NOTES THAT big city government is unwieldy. A single city council can neither properly relate to over a million people, nor properly compel solutions to problems that such a large concentration of people create.

CED notes that people in all walks of life cannot identify or understand, let alone trust, the many jurisdictions that handle just special types of regional services now.

The recommendation is, in a sense, a return to the concept of our founding fathers - only with a recognition that circumstances have changed.

Original constitutional government subdivisions provided for federal, state, county, cities, small villages and rural township interaction.

THE COUNTY, CITIES, small village and rural township breakdown was realistic when population concentrations - scarcely reached county lines, and when cities and villages were small enough for elected officials to know the majority of the residents personally - and when townships needed only to act on problems of rural farmlands.

Now cities are so huge their real identity extends far beyond their incorporated boundaries. The City of Detroit is the center

for thousands of people who commute in and out daily, either living there and working in a suburb, or living in a suburb and working there.

A city councilman can't know a fraction of the people he represents.

Now county problems are minor compared to those of the city that dominates its culture.

SOME VILLAGES, and small cities retain the character recognized by the original breakdown. CED notes this and recommends that such communities be retained as "local districts."

Townships, especially in or near a metropolitan area, are being faced with problems for which township government was never intended to deal.

Now - in fact - there is a need for restructuring the jurisdictional breakdown. This has long been recognized and various proposals put forth and some attempted. Some are evolving into partial solutions.

None yet promises to be a full answer, except perhaps this one by CED, a research agency of non-partisan businessmen and educators based in New York.

UNDER THEIR PROPOSAL, a big city such as Detroit could be divided up into small community districts to elect local mayors and councilmen to handle "community" problems.

Under their proposal, the larger problems of Detroit as a whole would be recognized as a problem complicated by contingent "regional" concerns, and those problems would be turned over to a regional level of government.

Under their proposal, the problems of counties such as Wayne County would be recognized as so interrelated to those of Detroit, and the same contin-

DISSENT

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by AILEEN GUY
Livonia

To add to the article which appeared in the Observer regarding throwing snowballs at school buses, I would like to say that something should be done about throwing snowballs at any moving vehicles.

It seems as if the children who do this have parents who do not care that their children throw these snowballs. The windshield, the side windows, the rear window, and the body of my car has been struck with snowballs (and some of these snowballs contained rocks inside of them) ever so many times.

Many times I have stopped my car and have talked to some of these children, but most of the time, they disappear. Many times I have ducked while driving my car when a snowball came smashing on the windshield, and almost lost control of my car. If I should hit one of these children, I would feel just terrible about it, or if I should do some other damage to someone else's property.

A couple of weeks ago while driving down my own street, a boy who lives on our street - a policeman's son at that - was throwing snowballs at cars and he threw one at my car.

I stopped my car and said to him, "Do you know that just this past week a 12-year old Livonia boy was killed by a car when he was throwing snowballs like you are?" He said that he didn't mean to hit the car.

I don't care about this, but the fact that his older brother made some rotten remark to my son about my having stopped my car and having the nerve to say anything about his younger brother's snowball throwing.

This boy was throwing snowballs right in front of his own house - and his parents didn't try to stop him. This happens over and over again in front of his own house, and in front of the other children's homes.

The parents see this, and see nothing wrong in it. What sort of adults will these youngsters grow up into?

I know that I am not the only motor vehicle operator who is burned up with this situation. What can be done to stop this sort of thing?

gent region that their jurisdiction would be turned over to the same regional government.

The government of the contiguous counties with the same regional ties would be likewise consolidated into this regional government.

THE MANY AGENCIES, such as the Detroit Metropolitan Water Service and the Huron Clinton Metropolitan Authority, which already handle separate special regional services, could be disbanded and their functions assigned to the single regional government.

Instead of a hodge podge of townships, villages, cities, counties, regional agencies and "forgotten citizens" trying to get action out of state government shotgun style, the regional agency could act as a sole intermediary between state and local government.

This would help return state government to its proper role as the intermediate step to federal government, likewise simplifying the demands on federal government.

THE OLD COUNTY and state functions are now so weakened by big city, regional and local government appeals to the "big brother" federal "clout" that big brother is bypassing the state level more and more relegating it to a forgotten cousin role.

This simplification of the local-to-state lines of interaction, coupled with more intimate "local district" government to interact with the people and, in turn, with the "one" regional government is a simple and promising solution.

Now, if someone could just get the politicians to think in terms of problem-solving ideas, rather than position-preserving manipulations...

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