



By PHILIP H. POWER
Publisher

OBSERVATION POINT

DISSENT

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Are Suburbs Guilty Of Isolation?

By NORMA VAN GIESON
Citizen
Silent Majority
Conservative
Taxpayer
Student
37 Years Old

Gov. William Milliken may be in political trouble over high unemployment and with the people who can't fish in Lake St. Clair, but he sure has guts with respect to us who live in the suburbs.

Speaking last Thursday at a symposium in Birmingham, Milliken got a lot of press coverage with a speech which seemed to say that the suburbs were selfish, filled with apathetic people hiding behind split-level facades of status-seeking narrow-mindedness.

Perhaps that's a fair interpretation of what the Governor said, but a closer look at the text of his remarks reveals a more solid and less hysterical view.

MILLIKEN SAID:

"The isolation and separation of the suburbs are among their most important distinguishing characteristics. This separation exists on several planes—the suburbs separated from the larger cities they surround, the suburbs separated from each other, and the residents of each single suburb separated from each other."

"Many enlightened suburban residents have already recognized the necessity for the suburbs to end their separation from the people of the inner cities. And of course many suburbanites understand that the suburbs must end their isolation from each other—this is what the movement toward metropolitan government is all about."

"But separation from each other? I wonder how many suburbanites recognize how isolated neighbors have become from one another? I wonder how many understand how many problems their neighbors are having behind the split level facades that collectively create the illusion of tranquility and comfort?"

I DON'T KNOW how the Governor got his information. After all, he comes from Traverse City, hardly a suburb.

But I do think he's on to a good point.

How many of us live on our own property, but fail to relate to our neighbors and our community? How many of us live in, say, Southfield, but only talk with old friends who live in Birmingham or Farmington—to the exclusion of our neighbors?

How many of us have ever attended a school board meeting? A city council session? Even our subdivision association meetings?

How many of us have looked across the boundary of our own communities and seen that their problems are ours? How many of us read that the police caught the dope pushers who were holed up in a motel in Redford Township, but then realized that the dope they were pushing was sold in our home towns of Plymouth or Westland?

SEPARATION. Isolation. Apartment. They all mean the same thing.

they're all things most of us would like to avoid.

How did they develop, out there in what many people consider ideal communities?

Part of the problem lies in the transient nature of the suburbs. A guy get out of school and moves to Westland with a family and a job. He gets a couple of promotions and moves to Livonia, and then after a couple of years to Farmington. Then he's transferred to Los Angeles by his company, and someone else moves in.

What good is it getting to know the fellow next door if you're pretty sure he's going to move out in a couple of years? There's more of this than meets the eye. One solid estimate I saw recently indicated that the population of Livonia changes by nearly 8% per year! That's a lot of moving.

ANOTHER CAUSE for the separation is the physical layout of our suburban communities.

People aren't squashed together as they are in the core city; that's one reason they moved out, here. They live on large lots, with not many homes along a street.

There aren't many of the old-fashioned downtowns that brought

people together—only Plymouth and Farmington in this area have anything like it.

And where do people congregate? Mostly in the shopping centers like Wonderland in Livonia or the Tel-12 Mall in Southfield. The centers do a good job of trying to provide space for various community activities, but people are there mostly to shop—not to meet one another.

SO WHAT DO we do about it?

That's a hard one. Milliken quoted James Reston, the distinguished columnist of The New York Times: "The astonishing thing in the fabulously rich country is not that so many people are organizing and protesting against war, inequality, crime, inflated prices, shoddy work, poor services, and polluted streams and politics, but that so many people tolerate all this through feelings of indifference or helplessness, and leave the resolution of public disputes to the warfare of organized minorities."

Reston's right. If we were to realize that pollution, for example, is not inevitable, we would be inspired to do something about it.

Suburban isolation is not inevitable, either. We should recognize that, and start doing something about it.



Tim Richard writes

What Lies Ahead Of Us In 1990?

News of the future—1990—twenty years from now.

WASHINGTON—The board chairman of General Motors today hailed the results of the automaker's congressional sit-in.

After 30 hours of negotiations, the House leadership agreed to give GM a voting seat on the tax-writing Ways and Means Committee.

GM Chairman Brad Nihil said "it's about time that the firm that pays most of the taxes gets something to say about the tax bill itself."

"In our sit-in, we used techniques we developed in the early 1970s as students at Schoolcraft and Oakland Community Colleges when we were seeking first advisory, then voting, seats on the boards of trustees."

"We used the same kind of logic as we used then: If we're paying tuition, we should have some say in the way the place is run."

CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS had earlier argued that GM had sufficient access through lobbying procedures and testimony at hearings, but the young GM chairman, who got his job in a New Corporate Politics take-over two years ago, scoffed at that play.

"We don't want to be sitting

in the audience," Nihil said. "Besides, if we have voting and speaking rights, we won't have to feel we're disrupting meetings when we want to make a contribution to the discussion of a tax bill."

"Our representative on the congressional committee is in close touch with the GM community of stockholders and key employees, and we view this newly-won seat not so much as a gain for GM but as a democratizing of congressional processes."

Nihil denied that the GM victory was a victory for radical-

ism. "It's simply an extension of the rights that others have won—for example, when the Student Mobilization Committee won the right to appoint the Subversive Activities Control Board, and the National Farm Workers took over the NLRB."

THE MOVEMENT is spreading, he went on.

In Michigan, taxpayers are seeking a negotiating voice on local school boards, most of whose seats are held by persons who teach in one district and

serve on the board in another, and by the spouses of teachers.

Turning to reporters at the press conference, Nihil asked:

"Say, you fellows will be sure to get something into today's paper about this, won't you? Our people want to know about it."

What's wrong with your own GM stockholders' reports and employees' newsletters? he was asked.

"Oh, we're devoting the entire issue to Black Power, like the college papers do," he replied. "We don't have time to report about things that affect us locally."

R.T. Thompson writes

Road Board Finally Acts

One wonders just how long it takes for the Wayne County Road Commission to act on a request for traffic lights at intersections which suddenly became so busy that accidents were almost a daily occurrence.

Folks residing in the areas around the intersections of Newburgh and Six Mile and Newburgh and Seven Mile Roads have been screaming to the Livonia City Council for lights at the two intersections.

Each became a real hazard after the widening and paving of Newburgh from Plymouth to Eight Mile. Matter of fact, Newburgh almost turned into one of those speedways that we hear so much about and often become involved in.

BUT THE INTERSECTION of Newburgh and Six Mile posed quite a few more problems than that at Seven Mile — the crossing is only a short distance from Stevenson High School, and that meant unusually heavy traffic in the early morning and late afternoon hours.

Newburgh at Seven isn't exactly the best intersection to get out of while going north. The new highway runs alongside the clubhouse of the Northville Country Club, and drivers find they almost have to get out on Seven Mile Road before they can see approaching traffic.

All of which meant that a

service station on the northwest corner was constantly being called to haul wrecked cars from the intersection after smashups.

The Guardian Angel of motorists must have been hovering over the corner, for none of the crashes resulted in a death.

The ambulance made so many calls to the intersection that residents finally took their case to the Livonia council, which promised quick action.

The fact that Detroit Edison officials indicated several weeks ago that they were awaiting word to install lights at both intersections attests to the actions of the council.

But the Wayne County Road Commission didn't act as quickly as the council, and promises weren't kept. That brought additional accidents, additional calls to the Livonia Police Department with the climax coming Sunday when the traffic bureau was called to one or the other of the intersections several times over the weekend.

WE FEEL THE homeowners in the area surrounding the two high accident intersections had a right to complain to the city and the city to the road commission.

But we can't believe that the county road commission has to wait weeks before taking action.

Does it take a fatal accident to make the members of the

commission realize that a light is needed and needed quickly?

As we mentioned earlier, we did discuss the matter with Edison officials and were told they were awaiting the order to install the lights. As far as we know, the company was still waiting late last week.

Then came the rash of mishaps over the weekend, ones that kept the police busy and the latest information is that the road commission has finally issued the installation order.

WHY DOES IT take so long for the commission to act?

Students at Schoolcraft College begged the administration and the trustees for two years to get a traffic light at the intersection of Haggerty and Six Mile Roads where morning traffic jammed both roads.

The first request by the commission was rejected, so the students petitioned the administration to try again. This time the student body conducted a traffic survey of its own and presented the findings to the administration and then to the commission before the light was installed.

It is our feeling that the road commission should speed up its studies of need for traffic lights — a series of accidents should be enough to convince it . . . not a series of fatal accidents.

It could well have happened at the two intersections.

Sense And Nonsense

Except for one or two students, it was easy to spot the members of the Student Mobilization Committee, the political action club seeking school sponsorship last week from the Clarenceville Board of Education.

Their hair styles and clothing set them apart—and maybe it's a good thing they do. It made identification of the club a whole lot easier for the audience of concerned parents.

LET'S REMEMBER that Americans are conditioned to cataloguing people the easy way. For years, haven't we been trained to tell the good guys from the bad guys in the movies by the color of their hats?

That's the way it was at Clarenceville High School last Thursday night. It was easy to spot the "bad guys," even before they uttered a word.

Of course, identifying their parents in the audience was a much tougher job. They looked just like everyone else in their age group.

Which leads us to wonder what will happen when these kids wise up and change their "uniforms."

They might even win a few.

Editorial & Opinion

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