

By PHILIP H. POWER
Publisher

OBSERVATION POINT

Walter Reuther: The Man
Who Made The Suburbs

It came as a shock early Sunday morning, as I was listening to the news. Walter Reuther, for 35 years the mover and shaker of the United Auto Workers, was dead.

The mind flashed back to spring 1957, to the first time I had ever seen Walter Reuther in the flesh.

It was in the big drab auditorium at Ford Local 600, the world's largest union local, which serves the sprawling wasteland at River Rouge. I was there during a political campaign stop.

It was the 20th anniversary of the Battle of the Overpass in which the Ford workers had stood up to Harry Bennett's Tommy gun toting bully boys.

The room was jammed. Men, mostly with the creased faces and clothes of old working men, sitting impatiently, sallow under the fluorescent lights. Then Reuther came in, walking very, very quickly up to the podium, and the room erupted.

Then he started to talk. The red hair, turning sandy even then. The stabbing fingers and pounding fist. The voice, higher than I expected, moving and soaring with the passion and emotion that were so strong in the man.

Justice. Equity. Social concern. The history of the union. All these are abstract things, but he made them so real for his audience that they sizzled and flamed there in that dim gray-brown hall.

Then everybody stood up, in the intensity of the moment, linked arms, and sang to the tune of "Onward Christian Soldiers" the UAW song. "Solidarity forever. For the union makes us strong."

The hair on the back of my neck stands up, even more than 10 years later, when I recall that scene.

REUTHER WAS A titanic man. His contributions to the labor movement and to collective bargaining cannot be overstated.

But to us living in the suburbs, he played another, equally important, role.

In two crucial ways, Walter Reuther made the suburbs what they are today.

It was his union that provided the automobile industry with the kind of strong, responsible unionism that enabled it to produce more cars for less money than anyone would have dared imagine.

And it was the easy availability of cars that enabled people, previously bogged down in the

big city, actually to move to the suburbs.

Some people may say that the UAW made it harder for the auto companies to produce cars. But talk to any expert on labor-management relations, and he'll tell you that it's much better for management to negotiate with a strong, responsible union than with a weak, divided one.

Walter Reuther made the UAW a strong, responsible union.

REUTHER ALSO made it possible for the auto workers themselves to live in the suburbs — cheek to cheek with the white collar workers and executives.

For it was the gains Reuther got for the union members at the bargaining table that enabled them to get enough income — and, with guaranteed annual income agreements, a stable enough income — to buy a home in the suburbs.

Research shows that in Westland and Garden City, for example, nearly 2/3 of heads of households are union members. In this area, that means the UAW.

I know auto workers, guys working on the line, who live in Plymouth, Livonia, Farmington, Southfield — communities regarded solidly as upper middle class.

And that's just the point: Reuther's success at the bargaining table made union members something more than mere workers; he made them members of the great American middle class. He took them out of tenements and put them in single family homes in the suburbs.

REUTHER MANAGED this all without turning himself or his union away from the broader issues of our society.

Under Reuther, the UAW has been passionately concerned about issues that, strictly speaking, do not concern the union but

which concern all of us as Americans: Social justice; racial equality; continuing education; pollution.

It's my guess that in Michigan, at least, there has been no more powerful or effective force for social progress than the UAW.

That's another reason why Reuther's death came as such a blow.

And that's why I expect to have the hairs stand up at the back of my neck whenever I hear again, "Solidarity forever. For the union makes us strong."

Tim Richard writes

What One Learns At A Demonstration

More persons almost got killed in Ann Arbor during a protest march last week than were shot to death at Kent State University. But because there were no actual deaths, no one wrote much about it.

Some 1,500 persons were being led down Packard Street about 5:30 p.m. Wednesday by the "ad hoc coalition" composed of Students for a Democratic Society, the Black Students Union, International Socialists and the New Mobilization Committee.

The hard core of the coalition is 200 persons, perhaps fewer. The rest of the marchers were simply sympathetic with the dead Kent State students and opposed to the Nixon Cambodian maneuver.

From the sidewalk near the rear of the march, I could hear

the sound of fists pounding on a car. Then the car, an olive drab Dodge, took off from a point about one-third of the way through the line of marchers and quickly hit a speed of 35 or 40 mph.

The crowd split. Fifty marchers could easily have been mowed down if they'd been less agile, but no one was injured.

The driver, as of week's end, still was unidentified and on the loose. Three persons in the march told me they saw a Washtenaw County sheriff's deputy patch on his brown shirt, and two swore they saw an Ann Arbor police patch on his blue shirt.

WHY DID the driver try to break up the march and endanger the lives of "the kids"? A sideline viewer of the march can only speculate, but here are some raw materials:



VIET CONG flag waves over U-M rally...



...WHILE U.S. flag is painted for all to walk on. (Observer photos)

R.T. Thompson writes

Michigan Week Meets Its Goals

All communities, in what we prefer to call Observerland, will join in Michigan's unique celebration of Michigan Week, a celebration that isn't duplicated by any other state.

It's a week-long program designed to make all of us happy that we live in the great Wolverine State — happy enough that most every community joins in the celebration.

Michigan Week is 17 years old this year, and it is getting bigger annually. The celebration started in 1953 when a group of leaders from all professions decided to do something about the state's year round case of "Monday morning blues."

Their solution was to invite all residents, individually and collectively, to join in telling Michigan's story to the world.

FROM THAT BEGINNING has come a program that starts on Sunday and concludes the following Saturday. Traditionally it is held during the third week in

the month and, at least in Observerland, it receives more than passing attention.

The goals are the same today as they were 17 years ago: to give Michigan citizens a greater knowledge and appreciation of their state; to expound the state's assets and resources; to give the nation and the world an inspired view of its advantages; and to foster a spirit of co-operation among all communities and people to make the state more livable and attractive.

Most of Observerland will kick off the week with the Mayor's Exchange program Monday. Mayors of cities and villages of similar size and problems exchange executives for the day.

And one would be surprised to discover how many ideas are exchanged as the visiting mayor sits down with the council or commission of the city and village to tell of the problems his area has and listen to those of the place he is visiting.

There is something on tap

every day of the week. The programs vary in every community as each tries to do something that will show the world that Michigan is a great place to live in.

SCHOOLS FROM kindergarten through the university use it as an excellent time to climax their year with programs stressing historical, geographical and economic aspects.

One of the week's features is the Michigan Minuteman honors program. A Minuteman is anyone — farmer, banker, industrialist, civic leader, school teacher, or what have you — who takes a minute to tell someone of Michigan.

And in some places, restaurants feature entire menus of foods grown or produced in the state. That's something few other states can do — produce a complete meal of nothing but products of the state.

HERE ARE SOME of the facts to which Michiganders point with pride.

The state has more fresh water coastline than any other in the Union. It has more than 70 developed winter sports areas, more than 11,000 inland lakes and 36,000 miles of streams.

Big Mac, which spans five miles over the Straits to connect the upper and lower peninsulas, is one of the world's great bridges and is part of an attraction for more than 13 million visitors.

These visitors often camp in one of the state's 75 parks, three national forests or 150 municipal camping parks for a total of more than 15,000 prepared camp sites.

There's plenty of room for such campsites because Michigan's rivers and streams would reach 1 1/2 times around the world if placed end to end, and Michigan's public roads and streets would go around the equator more than four times.

Small wonder that Michigan Week has grown so much in 17 years — it's the big chance to sell Michigan, and folks are busy doing it everywhere during the celebration.

Editorial & Opinion

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• The marchers also chanted about President Nixon and Vice President Agnew. At best the chants were derogatory. The ones about Agnew were obscene.

• When talking to newsmen wearing neckties, the marchers referred to "police" or "cops." In their own speeches and chants, they referred only to "pigs."

• The American flag was referred to in an obscene term suggesting incest.

• One of the speakers at the rally was a representative of the Gay Liberation movement who roundly condemned President Fleming for refusing to allow a homosexuals conference. The GL group was described as an oppressed minority, like blacks and women, and the speaker said they only want "the right to love our fellow men."

There were other such elements, but my memory is kind enough to blur them.

ANYWAY, IF YOU take those elements and transport them to the Kent State campus, and then mix in a little throwing of rocks and chunks of concrete, stir it up with an arson job on the ROTC building — well, you can see how a guardsman or an off-duty policeman would get the urge to kill.

Me, if I had had a loaded rifle at Kent State, I doubt I would have fired. But I would be much obliged if I were spared the temptation.

Lorraine McClish Writes:

Interest Lags
In School Board

When the Southfield Democratic Club hosts a candidate forum for school board members this week I expect to find myself in a fairly large room sparsely populated with candidates' wives, their friends and neighbors, and my fellow reporters. I've attended these affairs before and I see no reason to believe it's going to be any different this year than in the past.

The school board election will be held in June, less than 5% of the two-cities' voting public will pull levers, and somewhere around 1,800 persons will have handed over an awesome responsibility to two people.

THE NEWLY-ELECTED board members will join with five other residents of Lathrup and Southfield to handle better than \$13 million (or 62.8% of your tax dollar this year); approve textbooks and curriculum for your child; hire and fire his teachers; buy and sell land; set the tax rate; and borrow money you've got to pay back — to name a few facets of this job.

Added to the list of school board chores defined by the state there is another factor newly elected board members must be prepared to cope with that is not written down anywhere.

It is a phenomenon stemming from the "age of enlightenment"

we've somehow created which demands that everybody question everything. Who ever heard of a student-petition questioning school board policy, say, three years ago? Or a school board hiring an administrator on the sole basis of his being used in next year's teacher-contract negotiations? Or the parent-uptising that took place over the teacher's sex-education manual?

Right or wrong, the authority once held by school board members has been severely shaken with challenges on nearly everything from all sides.

I do not question the challengers, or the demonstrators, or the protestors or any of their combined rights. What I question is their whereabouts on election day.

WITH STUDENTS being shot to death on campus — with a nation divided over how the president of the United States commands the Armed Forces — with school children in California being excused from outdoor classes because the air is a health hazard, history is surely repeating itself "with times that try men's souls."

And it is just as surely not the time to let an election go by without participating.

Indeed, it is the only way that democracy can work.