

# OBSERVATION POINT

# DISSENT

View points expressed in DISSENT do not necessarily reflect those of Observer Newspapers Inc., but are presented in the belief that publication of all segments of thought on a public issue is a prerequisite to understanding and progress.



By Philip H. Power  
Publisher

## Why Not An Amphitheater Center?

On a recent visit, a friend of mine with no experience here in the suburbs proposed a contest.

"Take a bunch of people who have never been in Livonia or Westland or even Southfield. Drive them through every intersection in the city," he said.

"Then offer them a small but substantial prize if they can correctly identify the center of each city. I'll bet you won't have any winners."

In a sense, my friend was right. With the exception of the cities of Plymouth and Farmington, both old established towns with an identifiable downtown and city center, most of the communities in this area just happened.

Livonia doesn't have a downtown and wants one badly. Westland is new and has a severe case of the sprawls. Southfield has a nice city hall, but its only downtown is at Northland or the Tel-12 Mall.

When you drive from Detroit into Redford Township, the only difference is a little sign that announces you're in a different place.

IT'S THE OLD problem of identity.

It's partly a physical problem: Livonia just doesn't seem different from Redford Township or the eastern part of Plymouth. Southfield doesn't seem much different from the eastern part of Farmington Township.

But you drive from Ann Arbor to Jackson and you get a feeling that you are somewhere different: the whole physical aspect and feel of the two cities is different in a way we don't have here in the suburbs where everything merges imperceptibly into everything else.

It's also partly an economic problem. An executive with a big company gets transferred to Michigan and moves to Livonia. Then he gets a promotion and moves to Southfield. Then he is transferred again and moves to some other state.

Research we did last year indicated that this turnover rate is enormous, around 10% of the total population moving in or out in a year.

IN THIS CONTEXT it's interesting to see a proposal made last week by Livonia Supt. of Schools Roland Upton.

He wants to have a performing arts center developed in Livonia. He wants an amphitheater, which might eventually become a national dramatics camp, similar to what Interlochen has become in the music field. He wants a "heritage lane," set in an apple orchard on the site, bordered with buildings from Livonia's past, which would be moved there.

He wants land for nature study and camping.

In short, he wants to create something in Livonia that would both distinguish the city from others and provide Livonia residents with a sense of past heritage of their community.

UPTON PUTS his idea this way: "This is a large community with little or no identity...It (the project) would give a sense of the past to youngsters who live very mobile lives."

It's still too early to know exactly what the plan involves or whether the Livonia School Board will approve putting mileage for such a project on the ballot.

But Upton's proposal has gone to the heart of one of suburbia's central problems: Lack of identity, lack of roots, lack of a sense of community.

Livonia-and other cities in this area-needs desperately to solve this problem. History solved it for Plymouth and Farmington by creating downtowns.

Upton wants to do it in another way.

I think it's a good idea, well worth study by everyone in the suburbs who wants to make the good life we lead a good deal better.

Tim Richard writes

## There's Little To Fear If 18-21 Gets A Vote

Despite the mouthiness of campus radicals, there seems really to be little to fear if the 18-21 year old group gets the vote--at least in Observoland.

We old fogies over 25 or 30 are unlikely to see vast hordes of youngsters turn our established government in radical directions because (1) the kids aren't all that radical and (2) they aren't likely to vote in full strength.

In fact, younger people in general tend to be lax about registering and voting. Observer Newspapers showed this in a study of the performance of different age groups in the August 1968 primary in Farmington city and township, Garden City, Livonia, Plymouth city and township, Redford Township and Westland.

I REMEMBER it very clearly. The reporter, a college student working as an intern, was certain younger voters were more politically conscious than the other folks.

But he was the type of young professional who stuck to the facts and didn't let his own opinions interfere, and here is what he found:

People in the 21-25 age group had a 26% turnout.

- In the 26-30 age group, 25%.
- The 31-35 group, 29%.
- The 36-40 group, 25%.
- The 41-45 group, 34%.
- The 46-50 group, 30%.
- The 51-60 group, 32%.
- The 61-70 group, 35%.
- And the 71-plus group, 34%.

The pattern is clear: With minor exceptions, the older a person is, the more likely he is to go to the polls. This says nothing about the 18-21 group, of course; but extrapolating from the facts we do have, the only scientific

conclusion is that they would do badly.

It should be pointed out that this study is necessarily slanted--not against young people but in their favor. How? Because it covers only registered voters--the politically interested people. It didn't cover those who never bothered to register.

IN SURVEYING the 19th Congressional District, Rep. Jack McDonald of Farmington set up a separate category for the 18-21 age group, and it showed "the kids" are little more radical than their parents.

On the question of using federal funds to bus pupils to achieve racial integration, men were opposed by 91% women by 92% and the 18-21 group by 65%.

As for federal shipbuilding subsidies, they were favored by 73% of men, 69% of women and 65 of the 18-21 group.

Abolishing the draft was favored by 68% of men, 80% of women and 83% of the 18-21 group.

WHY, THEN, DO most people succumb to the notion that youngsters today are better educated and more politically interested?

One can only speculate. It's this observer's impression that the youngsters get heavy doses of teaching about the federal government in their civics and political science classes but much less about state and local government.

The sociological facts of life are that it takes people some years to settle down residentially and to become awakened politically. It's settled and awakened people who do most of the voting.

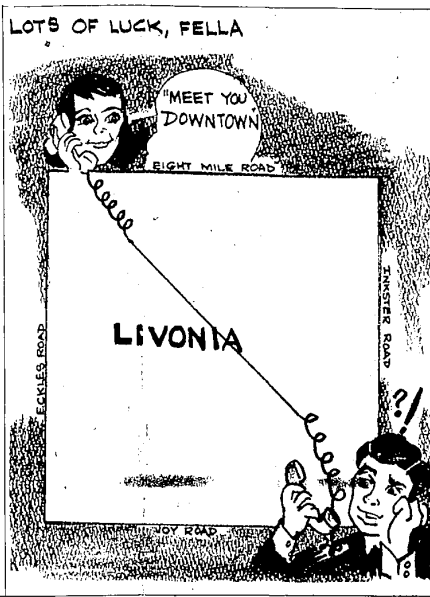
## A Guest Editorial

(Reprinted from Detroit Free Press)

What happened to Annapolis Park, a black subdivision in Westland, in its rezoning fight represents one of those small victories for human values that have to be won if society is to be fit for people.

The Westland city council voted 4-3 to reject the rezoning of 32 acres adjacent to Annapolis for industrial usage. The decision was made despite a strong feeling among public officials that Westland needs industrial property on its tax rolls and despite the feeling of some of the four who voted against rezoning that it would have worked out all right.

The council majority simply decided that if the 500 black families of Annapolis felt threatened by the rezoning, it was not worth the cost. Councilman Ross Tuttle said he would "like to see the black community become a part



Leonard Poger writes

## Urge 'Yes' Vote

Today's society can find many things to disagree and base its disunity on. But next Tuesday, Aug. 4, western Wayne County suburbs can unite and move together on an important issue which virtually everyone agrees on.

That issue is the one-year-old Wayne County Community College, a new educational facility which serves everyone from high school dropouts to senior citizens.

THE PROPOSED property tax, \$1 per \$1,000 state equalized valuation, would bring in more than \$8 million for the college, which includes Wayne Community, Redford Union, and South Redford School Districts within its boundaries.

At present, the college has a budget of \$1.3 million and is limited to holding only night time classes in rented and leased public schools in the county.

Approval of the one-million property tax Tuesday will mean many things to many people.

of the white community and not be divided."

As more and more black families seek to build a life in suburbia, for much the same reasons that many whites have fled the city over the years, they will need the kind of friendly understanding that the Westland council showed.

Too often the residents of the city -- and it is now the black population that is most heavily concentrated in the city -- have been abused by noise and the building of freeways and bad zoning. It is crucial that newer areas avoid where possible inflicting on these emigres the same conditions from which they fled.

The cities of the nation must gradually be rebuilt, because they were stuck together with too little attention for human values. Surely we can learn a lesson or two to see that the new subdivisions being built now aren't fore-ordained to make the same mistakes.

By LAWRENCE PERNICK  
Oakland Co. Commissioner

As a member of the county Board of Commissioners--whose job it is to appoint road commissioners, I would like to reply to your recent editorial regarding Southfield roads.

Because of our great concern with the condition of county roads, the Board has a close working relationship with the Road Commission. In fact, our county is the only one in the state which allocates property tax money to the Road Commission for the purpose of road construction.

WE ARE ALSO jointly sponsoring legislation to correct the gross injustices of the state's present gas-weight tax refund formula which returns only 40 per cent of paid-in taxes to our county while others in the state receive as much as 278 per cent.

The Road Commission has been utilizing all the funds available to it, and from 1956 through 1968 spent as much as \$24 million on construction projects. Of this amount, \$1 million was spent in townships and the remaining \$11 million was spent in cities and villages. Of the latter amount, \$2 million has been spent in the city of Southfield.

Thus, 20 per cent of all the construction performed in cities and villages was performed in the city of Southfield. Yet 1960 population figures show Southfield with only 6.4 per cent of the city and village population, while 1970 figures will be about 10 per cent. In addition, there are 21.55 miles of county roads in Southfield, or 12.4 per cent of all county roads in cities and villages in Oakland County.

Your readers will probably recall these recent improvements:

- 1968
- 12 Mile-Greenfield to Southfield \$233,600
- Greenfield-11 Mile to 12 1/2 Mile \$170,000
- Greenfield-9 Mile to 9 Mile \$51,000
- Greenfield-12 1/2 Mile to 12 Mile \$4,300
- 12 Mile (at Evergreen) \$19,800
- 1969
- 12 Mile (Greenfield to Southfield) \$7,000
- Greenfield (11 Mile to 12 1/2 Mile) \$10,000
- Greenfield (8 Mile to 9 Mile) \$10,000
- Greenfield (12 1/2 Mile to 13 Mile) \$110,000

CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS proposed for the near future are as follows:

- 1970 (Proposed)
- 12 Mile at Lahser \$95,000
- Southfield (at 10 Mile) \$15,000
- 1971 (tentative)
- Greenfield (9 Mile to 11 Mile) \$200,000
- Lahser (Northwestern to 500 ft. N. of 11 Mile) \$180,000
- 12 Mile (Telegraph to Lahser) \$350,000
- Lahser (at 9 Mile) \$35,000

Oakland County is probably the fastest growing area of our State, and the road needs are staggering. But the costs are also staggering. Therefore the need for our city and county to work together to bring in more road construction tax dollars from state and federal coffers is an immediate and constant one.

## Sense And Nonsense

Taxpayers should be happy to hear that the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department is planning to open a regional office in Detroit next fall. This will make taxpayers-supported trips to Washington, D.C., or Chicago by city officials unnecessary as they can now get their information by a cheap telephone call or a 30-minute trip downtown.

## Editorial & Opinion

OBSERVER NEWSPAPERS, INC.

Philip H. Power, Publisher

The Livonia Observer • The Redford Observer  
The Westland Observer • The Garden City Observer  
The Plymouth Mail & Observer • The Southfield News & Observer  
The Farmington Enterprise & Observer



Published by Observer Newspapers, Inc.

271 S. Main Street, P.O. Box 200, Plymouth, Mich. 48170

Serving the communities of:

Livonia, Plymouth, Plymouth Township, Canton Township, Farmington  
Farmington Township, Redford Township, Garden City, Westland,  
Southfield, Lathrup Village, Franklin, Bingham Farms,  
Village of Beverly Hills