

OBSERVATION POINT

Education, Not Punishment, Will Solve Drug Problem



By Philip H. Power, Publisher

The big banner headline in 72 point type ran right across the top of page one in the Plymouth Mail & Observer, but it could have applied equally to any of the suburban communities here in the northwest corridor: "Study Shows Third Of PHS '70 Class Tried Marijuana."

The story reported the results of a drug use survey taken by the Plymouth Jaycees among students at Plymouth High School.

The facts were familiar: at least 31.4 per cent of last year's seniors had tried pot; up to 9.1 per cent of the seniors had experimented with hallucinogens such as LSD and mescaline; 4.7 per cent had used narcotics such as opium, morphine, codeine and heroin.

With minor variations and without taking an exhaustive survey, it's fair to say that most suburban high schools are experiencing the same thing: The drug culture, so much discussed as a wholly new thing a few years ago, has become an accepted fact of life here in the suburbs as well as in the inner city.

IT'S THE CASUALNESS, the normality of the whole thing that strikes me.

Talk to some suburban high school kids, and phrases like "blowing grass" or "shooting horse (heroin)" or "snorting coke (cocaine)" are used with the same kind of elaborate casualness as high school kids in the 1950s used to talk about drinking beer or whiskey.

Part of the casualness, of course, is a wish by the kids to seem cool about the whole thing. Drug users, in some high school circles, have the same kind of big man image that drinkers or tough guys used to have in the high schools of 20 years ago. And this pressure (called "peer group norms" by the educators and sociologists) has a lot to do with the spread of drug use.

But when a third of an entire graduating class says

they've tried drugs regarded by society as illegal, and when the figures for lower classes indicate an even greater spread of use, we've got something that isn't just a fad.

A BIG PART of the problem has been that until recently, we have tended to regard drug use as a criminal activity rather than as a social phenomenon.

Laws regarding marijuana used to have mandatory jail sentences, even for first time users. The fruitlessness of this approach emerged when we discovered that kids sent to jail merely emerged with a thorough post graduate education in all kinds of drug use.

It's tempting, of course, to regard drug use as just another kind of crime, best to be handled through the normal institutions of the courts and jails. But when a third of a high school class admits to drug use in a survey, you suddenly realize that you can't very well lock up this many people.

And failure to enforce such laws as do exist on drugs merely tends to reinforce the charge that our entire legal and

social system is a vast exercise in meaningless hypocrisy.

MOST POLICE authorities and most educators here in the suburbs have gotten over the idea that the drug problem can be tackled solely by police work.

As Carl Berry, one of the organizers of the Plymouth survey, said: "We have to educate the adults that there is this problem. This problem has to be taken out of the police department and put into the community to help the user. We have to educate the community as to the possible effects."

The Plymouth people have formed an action group, Council for Community Concerns, to deal with this and other problems. Other suburban communities have established drug counseling programs and "rap lines," where parents and children can get information on drugs and their use.

It's a good trend, and it indicates that here in the suburbs, common sense and community involvement are beginning to replace fear and excessive reliance on punishment.

TRAGIC EVOLUTION OF 'COOL'



EDITOR'S NOTE: The writer, a resident of Redford Township who works in Plymouth, is totally blind.

By GEORGE ILLINGWORTH

A problem faces suburbanites which will become severe as bad weather approaches. We cannot disregard it, nor will it disappear just by looking the other way.

To people who use cars, the problem of public transportation seems insignificant. However, what guarantee have you, that the faithful family car will start on the coldest of mornings?

Here are the facts as they stand. The Detroit DSR has taken off five busses which came into Plymouth. This cut in service not only affects Plymouth, but also Redford Township, Livonia, and Westland. Since I work in Plymouth and live in Redford Township, I feel the pinch from both directions.

DETROITERS WERE told that there would be no changes until Nov. 9. However, on the morning of Oct. 14, when passengers boarded their busses for Plymouth, they were handed schedules which became effective on Oct. 19.

As I stated before, I feel the pinch from both directions. For example, the area east of Middle Belt to the Detroit city limits is without transportation from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. True, the DSR is losing money steadily, because few people come west of Farmington Road, and some come only as far west as Telegraph.

It boils down to one thing. There are still a number of us who do not, and cannot drive due to physical disabilities. For many of us, this is the only way of reaching our jobs. In that category, you might also consider those senior citizens whose physical condition has reached the point where it is no longer safe for them to drive.

We are cut off from three major shopping centers. Westland, Westland, and Livonia Mall. The plain simple truth is that no matter what bus company takes over, public transportation can no longer support itself.

THE ONLY ANSWER is a subsidy from each community. You pay for fire and police protection, and for school aid; why not pay for a share of mass transit from which everyone can benefit.

It is true that many of us gripe about the City of Detroit. However, up to the present time, they have provided us with pretty good bus service. When you consider that you can ride from Kellogg Park to Washington Boulevard for 85 cents, that is pretty reasonable. I am aware, however, that it is now \$1.45 one way.

WE DO HAVE some alternatives.

1. We could urge our leaders to make a provision in their community budgets for a mass transit subsidy.

2. We could pressure the shopping centers to contribute their fair share for subsidy. After all, who benefits from the revenues?

3. Last, but not least, the communities could band together and purchase a fleet of mini busses and form a local transit system.

Perhaps SEMTA (South-eastern Michigan Transit Authority) will come to our aid. I propose that a committee of interested citizens from each of the communities involved be formed to study the matter. Let's have your responses.

R.T. THOMPSON

Tim Richard writes

Snobbery At The Cash Box

Every person and institution in the world has good and bad points, but it seemed that all the bad things about local government, hometown pride and suburbia came out at once one night last week in Commerce Township, Oakland County.

Those bad things were: Cash-register government, bigotry and arrogant snobbishness.

The Oakland County parks and recreation commission was holding a public meeting on a proposal to purchase the 236-acre Old Homestead, a private park, in order to have a county park on Lower Straits Lake.

Let us ignore the manners of the populace, which were reliably described as bad, and concentrate on the social and political issues at hand.

TAKE CASH-REGISTER government:

"When the township becomes a city, we won't be able to afford to have 30 per cent of our land for recreation," says the supervisor.

The moral of his story is that the overriding concern

should be the township treasury, not the people's crying need for recreation land in a region that needs desperately to preserve it.

Commerce folks noted that 22 per cent of the township land is already in recreation land — Proud Lake, Huron-Clinton property, several gun clubs and golf courses. What they chose to ignore that evening was that they are part of a gigantic metropolitan region.

TAKE BIGOTRY:

"Why should we have outsiders here? Let them go back to Belle Isle, Palmer Park and Goose Lake," said a man whose nationality would lead one to believe that he is no pioneer resident but that his

parents or grandparents grew up on what we now euphemistically call the "inner city."

"Why should Oakland County taxpayers pay for Wayne County's recreation?" demanded another. He didn't mention the possibility of forbidding Wayne County residents from shopping at Northland.

TAKE UTTER snobbishness:

"The type of people the park will attract..." said one. "How are you going to control that many people?"

"It's the motorcycle gangs."

A park, it was charged, would pollute the lake. Well, most of the public parks we've

seen have restrooms; many have sanitary hookups. If you really want to pollute a lake, however, there's no better way than to build a bunch of private cottages, cheek by jowl, with septic tanks.

The traffic argument? The traffic is already there.

The crowded parks argument? The way to avoid crowds is to have more parks, not fewer.

All the arguments against a county park in Commerce Township really boil down to one thing: The folks up there have theirs made, and the rest of the metropolitan region can go hang.

Here's hoping the Oakland County parks and recreation commission doesn't back down.

The Bothersome Question Isn't Who We Are But How Many

By BETTY MASSON

There's a new movie opening soon in Observerland that's bound to do well with the matronly matinee circuit — on the basis of its title alone. It's called "Diary of a Mad Housewife," and stars Carrie Snodgrass, whom critics say suffers on the screen with much finesse, as she tries to find her identity.

Most suburban housewives can identify with this crisis caused by two small daughters, one nervous poodle and a college education.

BUT IT ISN'T so much that we've lost our identity as that we aren't sure who anybody else is. I'm only sure of one thing we aren't in my house, and that's what's making a schizophrenic of me.

Like almost everyone else in suburbia, we subscribe to the great "you've got to be busy to be happy" philosophy and we're contenders for the prize except in one department.

So... I live in a house with 1½ hockey players, 2½ sailors, one bibliophile, one would-be Peggy Fleming, one ballerina

cum Shakespearean actress, two basketball lovers, two race car drivers, one freedom-loving dog, one extroverted, and one introverted guinea pig, plus two converted guinea pigs who would really like to live in a grass hut under a palm tree, and 3½ radicals who think injustice is not having minibikes and maxi-coats.

What we really need is a housekeeper. I've finally learned it isn't me, nor is it the other conservative.

As for the radicals... forget it. It isn't consistent with creativity. And it's too late now... I

never recognized finger paint as a threat to my sanity.

According to the census bureau only six people live in our house. It looks like 16, and I may go mad keeping track of them all.

I have a sneaking suspicion that Carrie's solutions to her problems, a lover (unless, his name was Escoffier and he had a compulsion about washing windows) or group therapy sessions aren't the answer to mine.

But I'll be the first in line at the box office... I may get some invaluable ideas on suffering with finesse.

Speeding The Garbage

It's about time police departments in Redford Township and Livonia and the Wayne County Sheriff's road patrol take a look at another type of drag racing along Schoolcraft Road.

Did you ever get stuck behind a pair of garbage trucks trying to pass each other on Schoolcraft with one refusing to allow the other to go ahead?

Well, we did. It's quite

something to see the two large trucks speeding along at about a 50 mph rate with as many as 10 or 15 cars strung out behind, vainly trying to pass while the drivers have their fun. It may take a few mornings to nab the culprits, but we're sure that every motorist who has had to follow the trucks will agree the sooner the better.

Editorial & Opinion

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