

OBSERVATION POINT

Who's Gonna Pay For Suburban Bangtails?



By Philip H. Power
Publisher

There's an old line that government consists of a large body of money, surrounded by people who all want some of it.

That's true more often than not, and a good example lies in the suit recently filed by the City of Livonia against the state racing commissioner, the Detroit Racing Assn. and Wolverine Harness Raceway.

Livonia's Mayor Edward McNamara asked an injunction, protesting the extension of the 1971 racing season. But what His Honor really wants is an increase in the \$600,000 per year that Livonia gets as a share of the state's part of the betting handle.

The issue that he's really getting at is pertinent to virtually all suburban communities in this area which have any kind of relationship either with the state or with any broader unit of government. That issue is simple: Who will pay for what and how much?

THE STATE of Michigan collected more than \$20 million from horse racing in 1970. For a government facing budget troubles, it's tempting to increase the racing season, boost the betting handle, and increase the state's take.

Mindful of this, and of the competition that exists in Windsor, Ontario, Commissioner Leo Shirley increased the DRA season by 30 days and Wolverine's by 15 days.

No one knows just how much the state will net from the lengthened season, but it should prove more than peanuts.

The problem, from Livonia's point of view, is that an extended season means more aggravation, more traffic disruption, more need for police and security forces, more expense to be borne by the city. McNamara's argument is that neither he nor the city decided to increase the season, but rather the state; thus, the state has a responsibility to pick up the extra tab.

I DON'T HAVE the foggiest idea if Livonia's suit will be successful.

McNamara admits the suit is a gamble, but it may be a bigger gamble than he thought.

The State Legislature determines the slice of money that goes to cities with race tracks, and even the financial problems Michigan now faces, it could be that the Legislature will decide to cut the subsidies. In fact, one state senator who chairs a powerful financial committee has said that he

thinks the allotments should be eliminated entirely.

McNamara also seems to be ignoring the fact that the DRA is already one of the city's largest property taxpayers, and that the racing associations have been excellent citizens, contributing to the annual fireworks program on July 4 and helping substantially with the fund-raising campaign for the Livonia Family Y.

However, McNamara's main point is solid. The state—or anyone else, for that matter—should not be allowed unilaterally to add cost burdens to suburban governments.

IT'S THIS POINT that is crucial to many suburbs in this area.

The Detroit House of Correction is located on the northern boundary of Plymouth Township. Wayne County is considering sending some prisoners out to DeHoCo to relieve overcrowding in the county jail.

Will the increased prisoner load at DeHoCo add ex-

pense to Plymouth Township government? Will the county be willing to pick up a share? Has anyone looked into the legal implications?

When the stories about a new stadium being built in Southfield were circulating, some residents raised the question of whether the added aggravation and expense would be more than compensated by the increased tax revenues. No one ever really answered their questions, just as no one ever said who should be asked to pay the bill.

Wayne County may build a new jail facility in Westland. Will this facility be a cost to the city? Will the county help share the financial burden?

So it isn't a simple point that the suit over the nags has raised.

Our government structure is complicated, with authority overlapping in many ways. One of the problems this creates is that of who pays what.

No one knows, and perhaps Livonia's suit will start some answers coming.



Tim Richard writes

Revenue-Sharing On Shaky Legs

The notion behind revenue-sharing is a laudable one. The idea is to get more money into the coffers of state and local governments, which after all are closer to the people and satisfy most of our domestic needs.

The case for revenue-sharing, however, rests on a pair of fundamentally shaky legs.

FIRST, THERE'S the false theory that the federal government has "pre-empted" the most productive tax of all, the graduated-rate income tax, and that the state-local units are doomed to fall behind because they have less productive sources of revenue.

The truth is that there's nothing in the U.S. Constitution restricting the graduated-rate income tax to federal use. The states and to some extent local units, are perfectly free to adopt it as their legislatures and voters see fit. If they fail to do so, that's not Washington's fault, and Washington shouldn't be accused of hogging all the money.

While this observer shares with the Nixons, the Millikens,

the Rockefellers and that crowd the hopes that the state-local units be invigorated and strengthened. I don't think their getting a share of federal revenues is the way to do it.

Indeed, that would be an admission of failure. Revenue-sharing would make our states not vigorous solvers of problems, but hollow shells, through which the juices of fiscal life would pass on the way from Capitol Hill.

The states should—and cannot their own houses in order. Michigan got halfway there financially under the 1963 constitution that has enabled us to multiply the aid to universities and local school districts, take many giant steps in mental health, do an impressive job of improving our recreational sources, and even begin granting aid to urban centers and public transportation. The job should be completed.

THE SECOND fault with revenue-sharing is that it puts the responsibility of collecting the money at one level (the federal) and the fun of spending it at another (the state-local units).

The most fundamental law of economics is that our needs always outstrip our resources, that we never have enough money to do all we need to do, let alone want to do. Imagine the spectacle of state and local officials constantly concocting new schemes for spending it and hollering to Washington to put the squeeze on the taxpayer.

One thinks inevitably of the hippie who has rejected work and capitalism but is always hitting mom and pop for some "bread" so that he can travel across the country to a peace demonstration.

Our state and local units aren't like the unfortunates on ADC. If the state-local units want more tax money, let 'em face the voters themselves.

THOSE ARE the big arguments against revenue-sharing. There are all sorts of little ones—e.g., it will perpetuate regressive state-local tax patterns, it will probably discriminate against some states (these things always do), and current federal controls on how aid is spent aren't all bad, and so on.

If, when our Vietnam adventure is over, we begin running surpluses at the federal level, we should do what Eisenhower did following the Korean war: cut federal taxes and let the state-local units raise theirs. It's a proven idea, and it won't subvert our entire federal-state-local system of government.

Jackie Klein Writes

A Day To Make 'Abe' Shudder

If Abraham Lincoln were alive and well he would be celebrating his 162nd birthday on Feb. 12.

Americans will be celebrating his birthday with a legal holiday Monday, Feb. 15. The same day, in Southfield, they'll be holding an off-again, on again primary election according to "government of the people, for the people and by the people."

Honest Abe might shudder at the furor being caused over election dates.

Southfield wasn't sure at first that an election could be held on the legal holiday. Banks will be closed Feb. 15, but the state gave the green light for the local election.

But the real political heat was turned on when the City Council supported a House Bill

that would give Southfield a chance to postpone its elections to August and November dates. All incumbents seemed to favor doing just that.

Some prospective candidates took their time filing nominating petitions. They assumed the elections would be postponed and there was no rush to meet the Dec. 28th filing deadline. Only two filed to contest councilmen and two to oppose Mayor Norman Feder.

AFTER THE ELECTION delay proposal became a reality, the Council did a turnaround and decided not to switch election dates. Charges of "political maneuvering" exploded.

Incumbents maintained they did not, after all, want to perpetuate their terms by eight months as the postponement

would have done. They decided that because state and county proposals would still be on the customary state and national election ballots, switching would not alleviate confusing ballots.

John Riley, who had filed for mayor, and John Yerex, Council candidate, charged "a slick operation to keep more candidates from running."

The city was the target of more had publicity when Jan Murray, another mayoral hopeful, was disqualified because of a technical error on his filing petition and then was reinstated by the Oakland Circuit Court and this meant a primary was necessary.

Conjecture around City Hall by some political observers was the Council would rescind its resolution to stick with the

DISSENT

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By MRS. JOHN MORTON
Redford Township

Now will you believe that we have a drug problem in our own community? Did it take the death of one of our own youths to convince you of the great need for help for our young people?

Now will those officials of our township agree with the group of concerned parents working with RICCOD (Redford Information and Counseling Center on Drugs) that we must begin in our own area, and stop this traffic in drugs?

Mr. Christie, is it still a problem that should be taken care of by Synanon? Chief Gleza, should we still wait until Wayne County or the State of Michigan or the federal government set up a program? Is the \$12,000 that the township voted to give RICCOD too much when it could save some of our own children from this deadly epidemic?

I was one of those concerned parents who hollered and fought with the township officials for some funds to work with and it was not an easy fight, for you of the township board found many excuses for not thinking that the money was needed.

Thank God for our former acting supervisor, Dawn Rice, who was able to see the need and fought along with us.

TRUE, \$12,000 is not enough, but it is a start, and through hard work within our RICCOD volunteers and the generous donations from some of our concerned citizens, we will raise more to stop this disease that is ripping through our township.

Where has our police force been?

It has been a fact for months that a drive-in on Grand River was a place to get dope. You didn't even have to get out of your car or stay longer than 10 minutes—the pushers came to you with any kind of drug you wanted. A Volkswagen bus "easy to spot" has set up a regular concession stand for drugs. Did they just look the other way?

Where are our own medical men? When they were asked if they would help us in this fight against the disease, none volunteered. Out of over 500 letters sent requesting help, only two replies were received and they were both negative.

Now RICCOD needs your help and support. Are you willing to help before it is your child?

February and April dates or that Feder would veto their previous resolution.

YES, ABRAHAM, there will be a Feb. 15 primary for mayor, Murray, who claims he was almost squelched on a minor technicality from opposing Feder, may attempt to even the score.

Riley, who is known to be a City Hall critic, may go into extra rounds in a hot political ring.

If Murray hadn't been successful in court, there probably wouldn't have been a Feb. 15 primary at all. And then again he may have gone further into legal attempts to stop the election.

Whatever happens, Lincoln's birthday in Southfield promises to be exciting.

Editorial & Opinion

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