

OBSERVATION POINT

A Grim Celebration Of Trick-Or-Treat

By Philip H. Power, Publisher

One of the dirtiest Halloween tricks I've heard about has nothing to do with ringing doorbells, peeping windows or damaging property.

It was the tactics used by some anti-bussing people to try to make their Oct. 25 school boycott effective.

They tried to get children scared stiff. It happened in a number of places throughout Observerland, and the procedure went something like this:

A child or group of children would be waiting for a school bus. An adult would drive up to them and say: "If you go to school today, they're going to bus you to Detroit" or "they're going to bus you to Inkster."

Such a lowdown tactic had a number of bad effects. It intimidated some children from missing a day of class. It undermined their respect for the school teacher and officials who told them nothing of the sort was about to happen.

But worst of all, it damaged the confidence of those children in the people who had sent them to school that day - their parents.

IN PLYMOUTH, Earl Gibson, the assistant superintendent for public relations, said: "We had reports from youngsters in almost every school of adults having driven by bus stops urging them not to board the busses. Most of them said they were told that if they did ride the bus, they would wind up going to school in Inkster."

Then he added something very significant:

"There was no recognition or identity established in any of the instances, but in every case there was nothing but women involved - no men."

All along, I thought only dirty old men did things like that to children, but with Women's Lib everyone is getting involved, I guess.

SOUTH REDFORD Supt. Joseph Rzepka, whose district

was one of the hardest hit by the boycott, said he received calls from parents saying they didn't send their children to school that day because they understood those would be the first to be bussed.

"More than one parent felt that their child was going to be bussed that very day," Rzepka said, adding that children who were staying home told those who went to classes they would be on the list to be bussed soon.

There was no general campaign of that sort in the Livonia, Garden City or Wayne-Westland school districts, but we did pick up a second-hand story from a Livonia junior high teacher about a girl who was told at the bus stop that she had better carry a knife with her because she would need it in Detroit.

That's another thoroughly evil thing about that Halloween trick: Many parents will never find out that their children were exposed to such vicious propaganda

because the kids are too frightened to tell them.

Farmington has been rife with rumors that bussing was imminent.

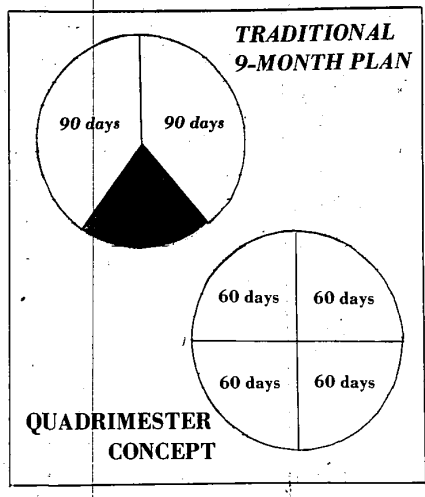
I'M NOT saying that everyone who is opposed to cross-district bussing to achieve racial balance would stoop to such low tactics.

But I am warning the anti-bussing forces to check carefully on the kinds of persons who are trying to form alliances with them.

The people opposed to bussing have a legitimate point of view, whether one agrees with it or not, and their cause will only be discredited by associating with the sick minds who threaten children at school bus stops.

The boycott itself solved exactly nothing. It didn't change anyone's mind about anything. It was feeble in most places anyway. It did damage - whether severe or slight I don't know - to trusting young children.

It was the dirtiest Halloween trick I've heard about.



R.T. Thompson writes

Year-Round School May Be The Answer

With all of the anti-bussing talk, the numerous meetings of groups in practically every community, the way parents have become worked up, perhaps it wouldn't be such a bad time to bring up a subject that could stir up more agitation in the months ahead.

We are referring to year round schools which proponents say will provide better education at reasonable cost.

Northville has been in the midst of a study for the past two years but hasn't been able to sell such a program to the parents and students.

But in some sections of the land, year round school programs are being tested and initial reports indicate they are being accepted and endorsed as not being that bad.

Those favoring the plan point out that when absence or poor performance causes a student to fail, he repeats only one term and not a full year.

A two-year pilot program in Hayward, Calif. provides for four quarters of 90 days each with three weeks between quarters for students and two weeks for teachers.

TEACHERS USE one week of each break for parent conferences, staff development, and planning. Support of the program's implementation was strong with 81 per cent of the parents surveyed voicing approval.

In Prince County, Va., a year round school has been inaugurated to alleviate split sessions. Emotional polarization on the issue led to a bitter storm of protests from opponents of the plan, with a threat of a lawsuit over the calendar change.

As hundreds of districts across the country undertake serious studies on the feasibility of introducing year round schools in their areas...either in the quarterly semester plan or one of several other arrangements...it becomes increasingly clear that lengthening the school year is not a bad nor panacea.

Rather the advocates assert, it is an effective and practical means of achieving better learning at a reasonable cost.

Intelligently and cooperatively implemented, say proponents, the year round concept provides the basis for accomplishing worthy objectives such as making available more classrooms, reducing class size, strengthening the curriculum, eliminating obsolete facilities, meeting the special needs of disadvantaged children, talented students and other special groups, and last but not least, making better use of funds.

YEAR ROUND SCHOOL is something that has been talked about for 50 years, and now is being tried. But interest in the

concept has been growing by leaps and bounds in the last few years.

Many educators, including several in the Observerland area, are considering year round school as a solution to the problems of overcrowded schools, skyrocketing costs and rising dropout rates.

When the United States was an agricultural society, the three month vacation was necessary so children could help with the farming. The cost of letting the one room schoolhouse stand idle in the summer was small.

But today, less than four per cent of the population is engaged in farming and schools have become multi-million dollar plants.

Although many of the school systems in the immediate area have discussed the program and some, like Northville, have actually made lengthy studies, none has seen fit to adopt year round schools.

The school boards and school administrators might do well to see what has happened in other parts of the land.

They are looking for ways to cut down on new construction. Anyone close to the situation knows that a new school building costs many times more today than a decade ago.

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT has skyrocketed, more classrooms are needed. This requires more teachers and facilities and this means the taxpayer will be asked to approve additional millage and that means a higher property tax in Michigan.

The plan proposed in the Northville study contrasts the traditional nine-month plan, in which students attend classes for 180 days and then have 10 weeks off in the summer, against the quadrimester concept.

Under the quadrimester plan, the school year would be divided into three semesters of 60 days and the student would have a choice of which three he would attend.

However, the programs calls for no less than 25 per cent to be on vacation in any semester, thus assuring year round classes.

TAKING IT for granted that the plan would bring savings in construction and reduce other costs, the biggest opposition came from those who traditionally have summer vacations and refused to think of going at any other time.

Thus a problem would come up if the student elected to go to school in the summer semester and take a vacation in the fall or winter. Parents can't arrange two vacations in one year and none wanted to go without their children or have the children on vacation with the parents busy.

Maurie Walker writes

Why Not A Holiday Every Month?

The confusion over which day Halloween was to be celebrated, Saturday or Sunday - or maybe Friday - plus the ignoring in many areas of Veterans' Day due to the fact it had been moved from Nov. 11 to Oct. 25, makes us wonder how many more holidays will be changed.

Of course, in addition to Veterans' Day, three other holidays have already been moved to Mondays. Washington's Birthday, normally Feb. 22, was observed on Feb. 15 this year. Memorial Day, which in the past was observed on May 30, was moved to May 31, a Monday. Columbus Day, Oct. 12, was changed to Oct. 11.

The Federal Monday Holiday Act has pushed tradition down the drain.

If it is used to its fullest extent, sometime in the future, we could have one Monday holiday every month of the year.

FOR EXAMPLE: New Year's Day is traditionally on Jan. 1. But since Jan. 1 isn't always a Monday, why not move New Year's Day to the first Monday in January?

In February we have already tampered with Washington's Birthday, moving it from the 22nd (which by the way was a

Monday this year) to the 15th, a Monday.

We don't need to have Valentine's Day or Lincoln's Birthday in February, so why not move one or both to a Monday in March?

Easter Sunday spoils the whole pattern of our Monday holidays, so the first Monday in April could be designated as Easter. Why not? Sunday is too traditional.

Memorial Day has already been changed to give us a three day holiday in May.

NOW IN JUNE, we have Father's Day and Flag Day to play with. Surely one of them could always be on a Monday.

Independence Day fouls things up because it has always been called the Fourth of July holiday. This is being moved to a Monday.

August is a bad month: no holidays. But wait! We haven't celebrated St. Patrick's Day yet. Oh sure, that is supposed to be on March 17. But here is a day we could move to the first Monday in August, and maybe make it a national holiday to compensate for changing months.

Labor Day in September falls into line. It's always on a Monday.

We have already made two date changes in October, Columbus Day and Veterans' Day. Let's make it a clean sweep and make the last Friday or Monday of the month Halloween. This would avoid a lot of confusion.

Thanksgiving Day, falling each year as it does on a Thursday, has to go. The last Monday of the month is bound to be deemed a much better day to observe this old-fashioned holiday.

ONE MORE MONTH in the year is left - December. Christmas, too, is always a problem, except when it is on a Friday or Monday. We can see this being changed to one or the other to

conform with our "holiday a month" year.

This whole program would eventually make life a lot simpler. Of course, it might take several years for all of us to remember what holiday falls in what month and on what day.

Another problem suddenly comes to mind, though. It's the matter of Christmas cards. Until we all learn what day it is to be celebrated, we might not be certain when to mail them.

We could remedy this by mailing them on the first Monday in December.

For a while though, it might seem strange receiving a Christmas card which says, "Here's wishing you a happy holiday - I think."

Commendable Idea

By W. EDWARD WENDOVER. Remember the war? You know... the one in Vietnam? It's not over.

Today and Saturday (Nov. 6) have been designated national "moratorium days" by anti-war groups who advocate student strikes, work stoppages, boycotts, business closings and special programs in schools, churches and shops to redirect attention to the fact that the war is not over.

Student Mobilization Committee spokesmen say they have contacts at Schoolcraft and Oakland Community Colleges and Stevenson and Clarenceville High Schools in Livonia where they expect high absentee rates caused by striking students.

Anti-war speakers and films are scheduled at Schoolcraft.

WHILE FEW, if any, of these measures will succeed in disrupting the normal daily routine of anyone to the point where he or she is forced to stop and remember that the war drags on, the idea is commendable.

As President Nixon draws near to the end of his first term and eyes re-election, the 1968 campaign promise of "winding the war down" seems lost behind the recent Vietnam election farce and the wage-price (but not profit) freeze that was ordered as a solution to economic stability caused, in large part, by the profitable, big business of war.

Perhaps we cannot get Nixon to end the war now, but we should not give up trying to do so.

It might not help, but it certainly would not hurt, if each of us in some small way takes a moment today - and everyday - to remind someone else that the war is still on.

The war in Vietnam is not over - just forgotten.

Sense And Nonsense

It's generally agreed that the recent open forum on anti-bussing held recently in Clarenceville was a fiasco.

The adult audience acted abominably when a handful of students - with all the idealism of their age - said they favored bussing; a hand-waving, kiss-tossing Irene McCabe did her pitch for NAG; and Supt. of Schools David McDowell squirmed when parents pinned him down on his views on bussing.

But something good came out of it, after all.

School officials found out that the high school auditorium's fire curtain was inoperable.

"Oh, you mean I was sitting in a hot seat after all," quipped McDowell when he learned about the inoperable curtain.

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