



By Philip H. Power
Publisher

While judges, politicians and school boards have been fussing inconclusively about bussing, the main topic of conversation in these parts has turned to President Nixon's new economic policy and in particular to Phase II.

Only last week, an Oakland County Circuit judge ruled that the wage-price freeze was unconstitutional in certain cases. He probably will be overruled by higher courts. But it's interesting that this first legal setback to the freeze came from a judge sitting in a primarily suburban county.

Interesting because many of the aggravations and defects of the Pay Board-Price Commission setup hit workers and businesses here in the suburbs harder than elsewhere.

SOME EXAMPLES.

• This newspaper has received through newspaper trade associations and from government handouts no less than 58 single-spaced typewritten pages of regulations, rules, interpretations and guidelines. Most businessmen I have talked to have received as much, taking into account they aren't on the government's press release list. Nobody I've talked to knows exactly what all the verbiage means; I certainly don't.

• What with all the guidelines, both the Pay Board and the Price Commission seem to be in their rulings ignoring what they decreed in the first place. The Pay Board allowed the United Mine Workers 15.8% first year wage increase to go through, even though it was nearly triple the Board's own 5.5% upper limit.

The Price Commission, not to be outdone, approved last week

six price increases. The percentages involved were 7.6, 7.2, 4.5, 3.9, 3.8, and 2 -- all but one being over what is commonly believed to be the Commission's own 2.5% upper limit.

• The government itself, which might have been expected to be toughest in enforcing its own rules, has hardly been all that strict. Chief example is the United States Postal Service, which has on file with the Price Commission a request for a 23.9% increase on third class mail.

THE ODD thing about all these examples is that they bear most directly on big business or big labor, elements not particularly representative of the suburban economic scene.

The 58 pages of rules, for example, are darn hard for a small businessman to plough his way through, let alone understand. By contrast, a Washington lawyer friend of mine reports that a substantial part of his firm's recent business has come from big business clients asking for help in contacting government insiders to get a quick interpretation or a tentative ruling on one point or another in the regulations.

Leonard Poger writes

History Needs Attention

Most of the action in municipal government takes place before city councils, township boards, and local planning commissions.

This is about right since those groups have the chance to act on anything of controversy.

BUT THERE is one corner of municipal government which doesn't seem to have much appeal--as local politics is concerned and it's a shame they don't get more attention than they do.

We're talking about local historical commissions and the unsung jobs they are performing, usually without much fanfare or publicity.

A Westland historical commission member said recently that it is vitally important for a community to learn about its past so it can better understand the present.

We couldn't agree more.

BUT THE residents aren't the only ones forgetting about local historical commissions.

In Garden City recently, the chairman of the local historical commission learned to her dismay that one of the city's first churches was demolished.

No notice was given to the commission before the demolition so that the group could get final pictures and collect some of the valuable records inside the church.

We suggested to the chairman

average taxpayer are still taking it on the chin.

It's precisely these groups who are getting hurt who make up the backbone of the economy of the suburbs. And plenty of people are getting sore.

As one small businessman from Southfield put it, "I want to know just what the hell is going on. First they say we're gonna have guidelines, but then anybody who has the clout or the influence -- management or labor -- can go in and get just about what they want. It isn't fair."

I agree. It isn't fair.

The President's policy to stop inflation will eventually fail or succeed according as the average American tries his level best to go along with the anti-inflation guidelines. But if he sees the big guys getting away with what they want, regardless of the rules, he's going to do the same thing. And that will be the end of the anti-inflation program.

The people in Washington might want to think that over before they make too many more decisions like they've made recently.

HOW DO YOU KILL A MONSTER?



Why Can't We Buy Returnable Bottles If We Want 'Em?

By MARGARET MILLER

A few years back, my shopping routine used to include a drive of several miles to a favorite party store, where the cost of various beverages was lower by the case and I could stock up on several kinds my family enjoyed.

They all came in returnable bottles. I had a wooden case for each kind of beverage, and I could keep track of the kinds needed each week and return the cases and bottles for a refill.

I stopped going there when the store no longer could obtain beverages in returnable bottles.

BUT NOW I travel even further in my weekly errands -- I take large sacks of empty bottles and cans to the only going-concern recycling center in Observerland.

I make the trip because I feel it's one small thing I can do if I feel real concern over the way trash is filling up our landscape.

But the trip is unsatisfactory, much as I appreciate the devoted efforts of those fine volunteers who man the center.

Frankly, I find those great vats of empty cans and bottles rather depressing.

For one thing, I know the empty containers brought there are but a drop in the bucket compared to the millions used.

For another, I've been told that under present industrial processes, it's just not possible for the manufacturers to recycle all the used glass and metal -- recycled material can account for only a small percentage of the new product.

And last, but definitely not least, I know I'm paying more for those bottles I can't return, and I don't like it.

Maybe what bothers me most is the fact that the problem is so large and my possible contribution to a solution so puny.

BUT GREAT PROGRESS could be made toward significantly reducing the containers that clutter our environment, and at this point the local governments and the large retail outlets are the ones who could help.

Environmental action groups have asked local governments in this area to ban non-returnable bottles for soft drinks and beer and ale.

That would be a major step in reducing the volume of trash. Wayne, Garden City and Northville have passed ordi-

nances making it illegal to sell beverages in no-return bottles after the first of next year. Plymouth's city commission voted some months ago to ban non-returnable bottles beginning next Jan. 1, then this month missed by an eyelash rescinding the action and finally moved the effective date to Jan. 1, 1973.

Other local governments have declined to act, arguing -- with some validity -- that restrictions work hardships on merchants when they are not in effect in neighboring communities.

In the meantime, everyone sits tight, the stores stock beverages in non-returnable bottles and cans, and the used containers pile up.

LACK OF ACTION also is noticeable in the stores. One major supermarket chain made a big publicity splash a few months ago by announcing it was going to have beverages in returnable bottles because its customers had indicated by vote that was what they wanted.

The announcement may have won some customers, because other chains emulated the action, as far as it went.

But the customer soon learned that all it meant was that a very few brands of soft drinks and beer--no low-calorie and no mixes--are available in returnable bottles, and that even those frequently are out of stocks while the shelves are filled with disposable containers.

Now I'm well aware that the reason for the almost universal use of no-return containers is that many customers went along with manufacturers and retailers in referring them.

And I also realize that there are unmet needs that couldn't possibly be packaged in returnable containers. That's where the recycling centers are needed, and would continue to be.

BUT TWO FACTORS in the question nag at me. The first is that I, as a consumer who would prefer to buy returnable bottles and save money and trash can space by returning them, am denied any choice in the matter.

And the other is all the environmental pollution entailed in manufacturing and even recycling all those containers, and the persistent vision of great piles of trash just taking over.

School Kids Don't Like Balanced Meals

By Marie McGee

The neighborhood school concept that promotes the walk-home-for-lunch theory played a big part in scuttling South Redford's elementary school hot lunch program.

Not enough kids were staying for lunch, and the program was losing money.

But that's only part of the reason.

EARLY LAST FALL there were signs that the program was faltering because of menu offerings. A hot lunch program basically has to be well-balanced to be nourishing. And to achieve that, ARA Food Service opera-

tors had to use vegetables. Like beets. And sweet potatoes. Even peas and carrots. Remember them?

But the pampered appetites of South Redford's bubble gum set weren't having any of it. They threw the vegetables into the waste bin faster than you can say "Johnny Lightning."

It made ARA's job of supplementing the daily diet with nourishing goodies ever harder.

But there's a bright note to the situation. While a wholesome lunch is important, most educators believe it's healthier for the youngster to split the school scene for awhile, even for a steady diet of peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches and a popsicle.

Editorial & Opinion

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Sense And Nonsense

The following lines were found in Ford World, a company publication, and are reported without comment:

"Press releases and brass bands, banners and jingles, hoopla and bally-hoo... and why not? Ford's two-ton infants represent thousands of machine and man hours -- from the capricious drawing board to the computerized conveyor belt on the assembly -- and you played a part in their birth.

"If you're excited, that's exactly how you're supposed to feel."

Use Only U.S. Stamps

"Stamps" to be produced and issued by a so-called "independent postal system" may not be used on deposits in the U.S. mails, the U.S. Postal Service cautions.

Referring to reports that "ipsa stamps" with denominations of one to 50 cents are to be issued by a private firm on Nov. 30, the Postal Service noted that putting those stamps on envelopes or packages would disqualify the envelopes or packages for mailing in the U.S. mails.

This is true even if the mail should carry additional legal U.S. postage stamps, the Postal Service added.

If deposited in receptacles for U.S. mail, letters carrying the so-called "stamps" are subject to return to mailers and postage due charges.

Mailers should make certain that the only stamps to be affixed to their letters and packages are the official U.S. postage stamps, if they want to insure prompt delivery.