



By Philip H. Power
Publisher

OBSERVATION POINT

1971 Brought 2 Key Issues For Suburbs

The year 1971 was an odd one for the suburbs.

It was a year during which it looked as though they really were going to build a stadium for the Lions in suburban Pontiac. But then when the costs became clearer and when the state legislature passed a hotel sales tax bill for Wayne County, it seemed as though the new stadium would be built in downtown Detroit.

It was a year in which the contractors started tearing up Schoolcraft Road to build the new expressway which is supposed to be finished sometime in 1972 but probably won't be completed until 1974. But then it was a year in which no progress was made in building overpasses for railroad lines or resolving problems with existing expressways, such as the exit-entrance ramps at I-696 and Orchard Lake Road in Farmington Township.

It was a year in which there were more children than ever before attending local schools. But it was also a year when the legislature never quite got around to resolving the problem of how to finance public education in this state and the taxpayers revolted against the property tax by turning down millages all over the place.

So in many respects, 1971 was a mixed year.

TWO KEY developments, however, came through loud and clear: population growth and the bussing issue.

Population growth, which everyone said was going to be the big fact of the suburbs during the decade of the 1960's, was pinpointed this year when the results of the 1970 census finally became available.

While Wayne County as a whole was only growing at a rate of 1.1% from 1960 to

1970, mostly owing to out-migration from Detroit, and while Oakland County was registering a 31.5% growth rate during the past decade, the suburbs served by this newspaper were growing at a rate of over 52%.

Look at these rates of change over the past decade: Farmington City — 50.1%; Farmington Township — 83.2%; Southfield — 120%; Lathrup Village — 31.5%; Plymouth City — 34.1%; Plymouth Township — 109.2%; Canton Township — 107.5%; Livonia — 65.1%; Westland — 50.3%. The only suburbs showing low growth rates — Garden City with 10.1% and Redford Township with 0.9% — are fully developed communities.

What all this population gain, accurately revealed for the first time this year, suggests is that the suburbs are now the most powerful influence in the state and the nation.

We will be getting more money from government, assuming a per-capita distribution formula; we will be gaining more political power, particularly when congressional and legislative districts are re-drawn next year; and we will be looked to for regional leadership, particularly as Detroit struggles from one crisis to another.

ALL THESE facts were centrally involved in the other issue to dominate this year — bussing.

Originally the response of the courts to the charge that school systems in Detroit and Pontiac were segregated, the issue came to roost in the suburbs when Federal Judge Stephen Roth hinted in a ruling that he was thinking of requiring suburban school districts around Detroit to participate in eliminating legally

sanctioned segregation in the schools.

The issue produced a major new political organization, the National Action Group, which spread from Pontiac to nearby suburban communities. It probably re-elected U.S. Senator Robert Griffin. It forced northern liberals who had been pointing the finger of blame at the south suddenly to sit back on their haunches and figure out just how far their liberalism went when their own kids were involved.

It also made politicians, liberal and conservative alike, realize that although the suburbs might be the coming dominant force in

politics, they could not be written off as just another lumping of people.

For basically, the bussing controversy is a uniquely suburban issue, bringing with it all the hopes, fears, and aspirations of suburbanites, coupled with an antiquated tax structure and rising political power of the black majority in Detroit.

Obviously, it will take many years — perhaps a decade — to work out the bussing issue. But what 1971 proved was that the issue existed in full, deep-blooded intensity, and that no one in the suburbs could ever ignore it again.

Tim Richard writes

Brains A Must?

"Democracy," said the late H.L. Mencken, "is the theory that the people know what they want and deserve to get it — good and hard."

And they may be getting it harder than ever if Federal Judge Damon Keith ultimately gets his way in a case involving the Plymouth city charter.

Judge Keith ruled unconstitutional the entire section of the Plymouth charter requiring that city council candidates (1) be property owners and (2) be residents of "the city of homes" for at least two years prior to the election.

The city will appeal on point 2, and the case will be of interest to all Observerland cities because they all have residency requirements of at least one or two years. Judge Keith suggests the only requirement be that one be a registered voter, which requires six months residency in the state

and 30 days in the community.

THE IRONY is that most governments, when hiring a clerical person, require that the person have some minimal level of education, usually high school. In fact, it's even necessary for a janitor who sweeps the floors to have some degree of literacy so that he can follow printed directions and read the bulletin board.

But do we require our councilmen and legislators to be wise? No. Do we require them to have some understanding of constitutional law, statutes, political science, economics, biology? No, no, no, no, no. Do we even require them to be literate? No.

The lawyers have an explanation for it. To run for a policymaking office is a "right," but one has no legal "right" to be a clerical employee or a janitor.

That may be good constitutional law, but it's hardly good sense.

And we are now at the point where, by Judge Keith's ruling, a city can't even require that its councilmen be around town for a year or two so that the folks can get to know them a little and size them up.

IN THE FIELD of political science, there's a theory that lawmaking bodies should be representative of the populace. By this theory we should have some degree of proportionate representation of occupational groups, races, sexes, age groups, income classes and levels of knowledge.

This contrasts to the old notion that the laws should be written and signed by the likes of Adams, Jefferson, Lincoln and that elitist crowd.

The new notion of democracy may make good constitutional law, but it's a dumb way to run a government — assuming, of course, that one accepts the debatable proposition that the people running a government should be smart.

Board Table Lobbyists?

The upsetting thing about the issue of so-called "advisory seats" on the Schoolcraft College board was not so much that it got four of the five votes needed for passage, but that it was even taken seriously.

Stripped of its gimmicky wording, what the Schoolcraft board was discussing wasn't "advisory" seats at all. It was discussing whether lobbyists should be seated at the board table with freedom to take part in the deliberations at any point.

Special interest groups — teachers, their unions, other staff, students, alumni, businesses and guardians of the public morals — have their place. They can and



Dismissal Has Plymouth Agog

By ELINOR GRAHAM

The recent manipulations of the Plymouth school board have been a topic of conversation at holiday parties in the area. There have been many unanswered questions and a few that have been answered.

General reaction to changing the lock on Supt. James Rossman's office is one of distaste and embarrassment to the whole community. It has brought up the query, "Could they be keeping evidence vital to Rossman's defense out of his reach?"

MEMBERS OF THE previous board of education have been asked, "Why on earth did you hire the man in the first place?"

The answer is always the same. The members say that after months of carefully studying the credentials of scores of applicants, Rossman topped the field with the qualifications they required. And after three years of working with him they maintain they had not regretted their choice.

In June of 1970, after three years in the Plymouth school system, Rossman discussed leaving the district, with the board. His point was that he did not want to follow the pattern of replacing a longtime superintendent and be criticized for not "filling his shoes."

The board persuaded him to stay. It seemed Rossman was his own man and was doing just what he had been hired to do.

should be heard on appropriate issues. They can and should serve in the college's committee structure.)

But the idea of having lobbyists in the center of things and calling them "advisors" is too much to be borne. One thinks of the GM and Chrysler lobbyists writing tax laws in a Republican state senator's office in 1961, or of Gus Scholle calling the shots among Democratic legislators, with enough horror — but here a college board nearly voted in favor of giving lobbyists speaking rights on the legislative floor, so to speak.

That was a close call.

TIM RICHARD

Another mystery pops up. Consider the timing in this one.

"An almost entirely new board took office later in June 1970. There was the usual summer vacation recess. But now we hear reports that in November of that year the board was unhappy with Rossman for not carrying out its directives."

In a short two months, this almost new board was becoming disenchanted.

"Could it be the new high school? Or the auditorium? Remember the fuss over that?"

It seems architects for the school were hired two boards ago, so he can't be blamed for that. The second high school is going along according to schedule.

As for the auditorium...that was explained. The orchestra pit had to be that deep to allow for a door into the storage rooms. The balcony had to have the extension that cuts down on the view of the stage from the front rows of seats. It was a compromise they had to make so the balcony can be divided into two classrooms by sliding walls.

"Maybe it was the teacher's strike?"

THE TRUSTEES MADE it very clear at the time that he was following the board's directives on that. Thus it can't be the strike.

So the questions continue: "How could the board take the awesome step of firing Rossman without all its members present?"

"Was Board Member John Graves really sick that night?"

"Was Board Member Wilson Sick at a party at Hillside Inn that fateful night?"

"Why was Ed Draugellis retained to represent the board in this matter when it already retains a firm which specializes in labor relations?"

"Did Rossman himself write the introductions for the dedication ceremony of the new high school, or did someone hand him a piece of paper with the suggested list?"

"Is the board divided into two cliques?"

Let us hope Rossman, the board and the community can come out of this situation with some shred of dignity.

W.W. Edgar writes

Lakes Should Be Cleaned Out

Now that the wheels are in motion to complete the purchase of the Maybury Sanatorium and grounds and convert the area into a state park, the time has come to take a serious look at the three lakes — Phoenix, Wilcox and Newburgh — that will link the park with Edward Hines Drive.

Transition of the Maybury property is being made possible through a grant of \$1.5 million from the federal government and it would be almost a mockery on the lavish plans to have the three lakes left in their present polluted condition.

FOR SEVERAL YEARS

attempts have been made to clean up the lakes and make of them a real recreation area much after the fashion of Camp Dearborn, near Milford. But with each attempt the Wayne County Road Commission has claimed there are no funds available for the work that would have to be done.

Those, in the know, who have looked at the lakes, claim they should be deepened. It is said that Wilcox Lake is little more than six feet deep. Because of this the algae flourishes and rises to the surface, making boating almost impossible — and fishing just a dream.

Along with the suggestion to deepen them, other plans have

been discussed, including, the installation of a huge, lighted fountain in the center of Wilcox. This could be done, engineers claim, by burying pipe in the lake.

This fountain, which would recycle the water, would suck the water from the bottom and discourage weeds.

ASIDE FROM BEAUTIFYING the area, the lakes could be a perfect recreation link between the state park and Hines Parkway.

They not only would provide swimming, boating and fishing in the summer months, but ice skating in the winter. Thousands of young folks who now must accept the wee hours of the morning in neighboring ice arenas for hockey practice, could utilize the lakes for ice skating and practice and the older folks could enjoy an evening of skating, too.

County officials have frowned on the idea of deepening the lakes on the pretext that the anticipated cost of a half million dollars is too much.

Is it? The three lakes could not only provide recreation, and add to the beauty of the area, but also could be a tourist attraction.

If the north end of the metropolitan area can have Kensington Park, and the East Side enjoy Metropolitan Beach, the west side also is entitled to some outstanding facilities.

What could be better than Newburgh, Wilcox and Phoenix Lakes.

It's time to take another look.

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