

Livonia, Plymouth Busy Planning And Working For The Future

I once knew a man who was a city manager over in the western half of the state. His city was in trouble. Rubbish wasn't being picked up; streets weren't in poor repair; the State Health Department said the water was polluted; the central business district was dying.

"So what are you going to do," I asked.

"Well, maybe we can get some help from the Federal Government," came back the reply.

That made me sore, even though I was working for a Congressman at the time. For

it was crystal clear both that this particular city hadn't had the gumption to do anything for itself on its own and that the Federal programs the city manager vaguely knew about weren't going to do the job.

The old saying, "You've got to do it for yourself," applies just as much to cities as it does to people. And there's good evidence that two cities in Observ-erland are starting to do it for themselves.

Last Wednesday, they had a meeting over in Plymouth at 6:30 a.m. to discuss the future

of the downtown area. I don't know how you feel at 6:30 a.m., but I generally feel that the limit of my discussion powers at that hour is whether or not I'd like another 40 winks of sleep.

Anyway, there were all those people... 65 in all... at that ungodly hour just to talk about the future of their city and about what they could do to help out.

They talked about a lot of things. About the need to pave

Main Street. About an enclosed shopping mall. About development of a loop around the center of town. About planting trees. All in all, a list of 58 problems and solutions were discussed.

Next step, which will also take place at 6:30 a.m., is to determine the order of importance of all these suggestions and set a time table for some action.

These meetings are being

held under the joint sponsorship of the Plymouth Area Chamber of Commerce and the Planning Commission. As is the case with so many farsighted and progressive things in Plymouth, the key forces operating behind the scenes are Carl Pursell, Chamber President, and Harold Fischer, Planning Commission Director.

Over in Livonia, the City Council has at last dotted the i's

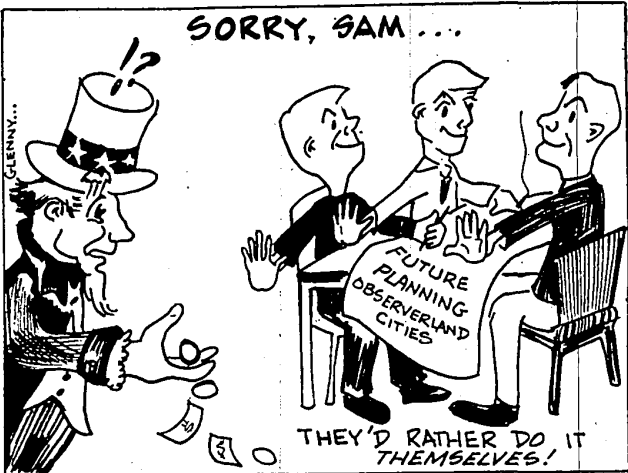
and crossed the t's, putting a proposal for a \$15 million city building plan on the ballot for November.

This program is aimed at doing something about Livonia's biggest problem: Lack of a city center. It includes an expansion for the civic center, a new municipal court building, new fire stations, and assorted paving and widening projects for the streets in the central part of the city.

The politicians were scared of this one, what with tax increases and increased salaries for teachers supposedly bugging the voters. But a special committee of the Livonia Chamber of Commerce, headed by Dr. Robert Hornbeck (another guy who puts the health of his city above his own), put the heat on the politicians. He was backed up by Chamber President Elvin Dougherty and Roland Upton, the Assistant Superintendent of Schools who usually can be found where the useful action is.

Point of both these developments is that if our cities don't start now to think about where they're going to be in 20 years time, we'll be in big trouble. Nobody is going to do it for them. They've got to do it themselves.

It takes guts, energy and a whole lot of community concern for people to get involved in programs like these, but it's worth it.



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This Is The Week That

... By Don Hoenshell

It's traumatic for a preacher's kid who got kicked out of high school four times as a senior to put the knock on teachers since they shall inherit St. Petersburg, Fla.

They've been St. Paul, the first great distributor of wisdom, but mostly Lazarus, that poor underpaid martyr to honesty and rectitude in a world of ignorant thugs.

In the classroom it's don't bust windows in the haberdashery, don't spit on the sidewalk, wash behind your ears and get your homework done early and neatly.

Now in many places the courts are forcing teachers back to work, and the Livonia Education Association is looking forward to spring negotiations and maybe hitting the bricks.

Say it ain't so, teach.

If it happens here, they blow a tradition. For 20 years they've been economically deprived—people you can feel sorry for and pity. Take a teacher to lunch, and all that.

Now they want to be the UAW, marching and demanding like punch press operators. But walking out of a factory is legal, and a score of court cases uphold this kind of thing.

In Michigan we have the Hutchinson Act, which says it is illegal for public employees to strike. In 1965 they got exclusive bargaining powers, but that's all. To the most effective bargainer belongs the spoils, but please forgive the expression.

So we've arrived at the conclusion that striking by teachers is against the law. But what is a district to do when they hit the bricks?

They want to be like the UAW: Ok, so let's:

● Repeal the act establishing the Teacher's Tenure Commission, which guarantees teachers the right to work. The UAW has wanted the teachers' annual contract for years, eh, Walter?

● Repeal the act establishing the Teachers Retirement System.

● Eliminate teacher contracts, which they can break when the district next door offers more dollars, but the district cannot without being hauled before the Tenure Commission.

● Make them employes rather than professionals under contract, and pay them by the hour. BA's like unskilled workers, MA's like skilled and PhD's according to their political clout.

Teachers don't want this, and neither does anyone else.

If it is a profession, teachers have a dedication to education and to the kids. If not, we should know it now. The kids should know, too. And how can you recall a mal-educated kid for repairs, like General Motors does occasionally?

We often get the examples from teachers of the plumber or an auto mechanic who makes more. It takes more years to be a master mechanic and no football games on Saturday.

So hit the bricks, teach.

But when the kids throw bricks or paper wads?

Forget it, it's only a law.

And we know if enough do it, it's OK, eh, teach?

Why is it that the homeowners who demand more industrial and commercial development to ease the tax burden on residential property are the most vocal objectors to rezoning requests which would allow new plants and shopping centers?

Almost Mandatory For Farmington Youngsters To Drive

Nothing—not even the issue of kid's driving—is ever a black and white matter.

Take, for example, the reaction of some Farmington people we talked to about Jim O'Neil's proposal to raise the minimum auto license age from 16 to 17.

O'Neil, a member of the State Board of Education, reasons that young people—especially males in the 16 to 24 age bracket—have pretty bad driving records, and more importantly that there's a direct correlation between youthful car ownership and bad marks in school.

In Farmington, there's no public transportation to amount to much, and one mother threw her hands up in horror at the suggestion of raising the driving age.

"People want their kids to drive," she said. "They don't want to have to chauffeur them to jobs, to clubs, to the library and dances."

Farmington high schools have cooperative programs whereby some students hold part-time jobs. One of the perennial problems is finding jobs in what is something of a bedroom suburb. Even when jobs are available within the Farmington community, the youngster has to find some sort of transportation.

One young fellow we talked to started his job at 16. He would have to walk two or three miles or be chauffeured if he couldn't drive.

He also drives to the library frequently.

(That's a funny thing about

suburbia. Everyone here considers it, on balance, more desirable than Detroit; yet in Detroit a kid is never far from a library and can usually reach it by public transit if it's too far to walk.)

Suburbia's entire cultural system is built around the car—big lots, houses far apart, many places without sidewalks, scattered shopping centers rather than corner stores.

Our sports editor, a thoughtful guy named George Maskin, re-

cently wrote about the desirability of community-wide sports complexes that would serve three or four high schools, rather than an inferior sports layout for every school.

Good idea—but remember that it will require more spectator driving than ever.

Yet those late-night accidents... those bad marks in school... that car-craziness... they keep nagging at you.

It's not a black and white matter.

Maybe the ultimate solution

will be that we'll abandon the two-ton, \$3,500 annual combustion 300-horsepower car.

Maybe instead we'll develop a half-ton, 40-horsepower electric car that will be functional rather than a status symbol, and that you can't get killed in so easily.

Three of the four auto companies will probably be unhappy about it. But such a car might ideally suit the needs of youngsters in towns like Farmington.

—Tim Richard

A Sticky Situation Is Cleared Up

It was a long time coming, principally because no other member of the Schoolcraft College Board of Trustees would take the initiative to ask for an opinion from the Board's attorney, but the air has been cleared on the status of Dr. George Martin, of Livonia.

From the moment Dr. Martin filed his petition as a candidate for an at-large member of the Board, there have been rumors that he would be in violation of a conflict of interest.

The reason, his wife is a member of the Schoolcraft faculty and many of the Board decisions would have a direct effect upon her as a teacher.

The point in hand was the recent decision of the Trustees to approve a contract for the teaching staff after negotiations over a period of more than eight months.

There were those who thought Dr. Martin should abstain from voting on the contract since he in effect was voting to give or deny his wife a salary increase.

That's when Trustee Sam Hudson, of Plymouth, took the much needed action and asked for an official opinion from the Board's legal advisor—in this case the firm of Draugelis and Ashton of Plymouth.

The answer came a week ago when Attorney Edward Draugelis gave an opinion that there was no conflict of interest present under the Michigan law in answering the questions posed by Hudson.

Hudson asked:

"Is there a conflict of interest, insofar that a member's vote on the proposed agreement be-

tween the Board of Trustees and the Faculty Forum representatives of the instructors at Schoolcraft College?

"Is there a conflict of interest involving that member and his vote on any action by the Board of Trustees involving benefits to the instructors at Schoolcraft College?"

Draugelis pointed out that, after a review of the Michigan case law, there is no conflict of interest present under these facts such as would disqualify this member of the Board of Trustees from voting on any action involving benefits to the instructors at Schoolcraft College. He said his conclusion covered both questions.

He wrote of a provision in the state laws known as the Married Woman's Act which establishes that any compensation received by the wife is part of her separate estate and therefore the husband has no legal interest in the same.

The law further states "the

disqualifying interest must be a private and personal one."

Under these conditions, Draugelis concluded that he finds no disqualifying interest existed under the set of facts presented.

Perhaps members of the Board should look into matters of this nature well in advance of such an instance that cropped up over here.

Dr. Martin never had any doubts as to the legality of his vote and those members of the Board of Trustees or those from the general public who thought otherwise should have resolved the matter several months ago.

We don't think it is quite fair to Dr. Martin to wait until such an important matter as voting for or against a salary contract comes up and then question a possible conflict of interest.

We are happy the matter has been resolved and Dr. Martin can vote as he pleases without any reflections upon him of any nature.

—R. T. Thompson

It Makes A Difference

A student from First Junior high in Livonia comments that the Observer printed a very good picture of near moustache on the face of Charles Murphy of Franklin High.

But he goes on to ask why the Observer doesn't print the picture again with a shot of one of the many bearded teachers in the Livonia school system. He indicates this is another case of do as I say, not as I do.

However, the problem of the Murphy moustache appears to be one in direct violation of the school dress and appear-

ance code drawn up by students from the three high schools in Livonia and approved by the Board.

This isn't a question of do as I say and not as I do. The students supplied the words in this instance and one of their own brood is breaking it. Students at Franklin High reportedly aren't happy about the situation but Murphy isn't backing down. That's the situation right now but a decision is expected next week when the matter goes to court.

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