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How To Say 'No' Without Saying 'No'

How to say no without really appearing to say no was apparent in Observerland again last week.

The sleight-of-hand occurred when the Farmington City Council received a letter from the Human Relations Committee of the Oakland County Board of Supervisors requesting that the local cities consider enacting open occupancy ordinances.

City Manager John Dinan offered an out to the Council when he said that "The city has not had a problem in the area of open occupancy housing" and suggested that the matter be referred to the local human relations group.

That's a good way to duck an issue: (1) Say that there is no problem and (2) refer the matter to a committee for study.

Councilmen, however, used a slightly new tack.

The state Legislature has the issue of a state-wide law on open occupancy on its agenda, they said. "If the legislature passes a law, we don't have to."

With this the Council "received and filed" the request. It will probably never be seen again.

The fact that the state Legislature is considering an open-occupancy law hasn't stopped Plymouth from introducing an ordinance.

According to estimates, a dozen Oakland County cities are looking at the idea.

The push for open occupancy laws deserves better treatment than it got in Farmington last week.

—Sue Shaughnessy

'Locals' Don't Always Hate Big Brother

The paradox of local governments' hollering about the increasing power of the state and federal governments was pointed up again in Farmington last week.

The Farmington City Council ducked any stand on a request for a local open occupancy ordinance from the Human Relations Committee of the Oakland County Board of Supervisors.

The reason was that the Michigan Legislature is considering a state-wide act during its special session.

Maybe the increasing concern of the state and federal governments with local matters is fine with the politicians—when the matter might be touchy.

This Is The Week That

. . . By Don Hoenshell

National and state Democrats will send missionaries into the suburbs shortly in efforts to patch together something for 1968.

They're looking for a Moses. There's only been one so far, and that was his real name.

Weep for the Democrats, folks, if you have a compassionate whim.

The suburbs is where they lost it in 1962, after a decline starting in 1958. There was this scene in the House on Grand Avenue in Lansing. The returns were in and Gov. Williams mused:

"I suppose I should go downstairs and thank the fellows for carrying me in with them."

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IT WAS TO LAUGH, since just four years earlier Williams astounded politicians by sweeping in with him a full administrative board—then secretary of state, lieutenant governor, attorney general, treasurer, auditor general and the rest.

But blaming Democrats in Detroit turn conservative in the suburbs, their blue collars bleach out to white. And the suburbs grew during that period, and they're getting bigger every year.

In 1960, Republicans started cutting into the union, Negro and other ethnic vote of Democrats in the city. In 1962, the stronger move toward Republicans plus Gov. Swainson's veto of the Bowman Bill—which would have barred Detroit from taxing nonresidents—were major factors.

Republicans, recognizing this, capitalized on the swing.

There were the crowd-counters, a scene at Detroit's Downtown YWCA where George Romney outdrew Democratic Gov. Swainson. A check showed the Romney crowd was recruited from all over Detroit.

It was smart politics, nothing wrong at all.

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DEMOCRATS, WITH THEIR base in the cities and organized labor, now must attract the increasingly conservative suburbanite. The city-suburban gap complicates this.

Nationally there is a second-look taking at LBJ. In Michigan, whether you like him or not, Zolton Ferency is a problem

The party of idealism is still that, but just how to approach the problem of victory is still hidden somewhere in the maze of conflicting blocs of philosophy.

It is tough for a political party to operate en masse without a rallying point — a Gov. Williams, a Gov. Romney. Both are in many ways alike, devout, ambitious, colorful.

Democrats will be in the suburbs shortly to try to heal the rifts between the organizations and the party clubs, to try to make the party something solid for 1968.

Whether it works is anybody's guess at this time.

It depends on whether the political dukedoms of a three-time loser in the state can be merged again into a cohesive party.

In Michigan, the two-party system depends on it.

A Suburban View

The Russian Revolution

Yesterday marked the 50th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. Regardless of her Communist ideology, the Soviet Union is an important factor to America. Below are two articles analyzing life in the U.S.S.R. from an Observerland point of view.

ADVERTISING is just now beginning to catch on in the Soviet Union. Russian industry, for many years entirely state-directed, has at last discovered profit as a criterion of economic efficiency. This new sign was spotted in Moscow.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Sue Shaughnessy, Editor of the Farmington Enterprise and Observer, traveled in the Soviet Union from August 26 to September 16 this year as a member of the Citizens Exchange Corps. In this article, she discusses the concerns of the average Russian citizen, and draws some parallels between life in the U.S.S.R. and Observerland.)

By SUE SHAUGHNESSY

By now the street cleaners of the Soviet Union have finished the cleaning tasks in Moscow's Red Square, the Palace Square in Leningrad, and a score of other spots throughout the country.

The debris is swept away and life is returning to normal within the Soviet Union as yesterday (Tuesday, Nov. 7) marked the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of "The Great October Socialist Revolution."

In case your history is rusty that's the revolution whereby the Red Guards (led by Lenin) successfully overthrew the White Guards, or Provisional Government, led by Kerensky.

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WHAT ARE the hopes and dreams of the average Soviet citizen as he begins the second 50 years of life under a Communist regime?

Briefly they are close to the hopes and dreams of the citizens of the world, the USA and right here in Observerland.

The Soviet citizen wants to provide a better life for his family, he wants quality education for his children, and above all he doesn't want war.

He is also extremely proud of the progress of and development of his country. You must remember that 50 years ago Russia was one of the most backward and underdeveloped nations in the world. Today it is an industrial power second only to the United States.

Thus the average man in the street is proud of his country and convinced that the socialist system as practiced by the Communists is the best in the world. Any fond hopes of the citizens overthrowing the current governmental structure are preposterous.

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CONTRARY TO popular belief the Russian people are not warlike. There is nothing that the man in the street fears more than another war. This feeling is much more intense and outspoken than it is in America. Many times a man on the street would ask me if the Americans wanted war and breathe a sigh of relief when I replied, "Absolutely not."

When one stops to realize that practically every Russian family lost at least one relative during World War II, and it was their homes and farms which were turned into battlefields, the intensity of feeling is not surprising.

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IN VOLGOGRAD (renamed from Stalingrad) the government has constructed a huge memorial park commemorating the citizens and soldiers who died during the great battle of Stalingrad.

There is a monument, complete with an eternal flame, just outside the walls of the Kremlin in Moscow. Another monument marks the spot the Nazis were stopped in their drive to Moscow and there is a monument marking the nearest stop the Nazis reached in the effort to take over Leningrad.

Kiev, which was occupied by the Nazis, also has a similar park.

After seeing these parks, and while in the impressive Galley of the Heros in Volgograd, I asked the Russian guide, "Don't you people want to forget the war?"

The answer was never. "Some things are too horrid to be forgotten," she said, "forgiven but not forgotten. It was too terrible to ever forget."

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THE SOVIET CITIZEN wants to know about the world outside his borders. The travel restrictions placed upon him by his government is perhaps the most annoying feature of his life.

As a result any foreigner is besieged with questions from the man in the street.

All one has to do is to appear on a street looking very much the part of an American tourist and you soon have a crowd. The most forward are the young students and many of them can speak English. Curiosity, however, is not confined to the young generation.

In this aspect the people are very similar to the residents of Observerland.

Since returning from the Soviet Union in September it has become an everyday occurrance for people to stop me on the street as well as people who call the office on routine business to ask me about the trip and what the Russians "are really like."

The best answer to that question is the oversimplified phrase of "the Russians are people just like the American people."

Governments may be different and disagree, but the people are the same.

APARTMENTS are going up all over the Soviet Union in a continuing building program designed to replace housing space destroyed during World War II. The building boom in the U.S.S.R. is paralleled by the surge of home building in Observerland.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Philip Power, Publisher of Observer Newspapers, traveled extensively in Russia during the summer of 1960 while he was a student delegate to the World Congress of Orientalists. He is convinced that the changes now going on in Observerland are as revolutionary as anything now happening in the Soviet Union, and in this article he probes some of the developments now taking place in both societies.)

By PHILIP H. POWER
Publisher

What we have is two revolutions, one noisy and doctrinaire and the other quiet and pragmatic.

The Russian revolution began with a bang; its small clutch of leaders were convinced that overthrowing the Tsars would usher in an entirely new kind of human existence. Fifty years later, the leaders of the Soviet Union must realize that human existence is built not on theory but rather on roads, schools, factories and houses.

The American suburban revolution started ever so quietly just about the same time that the Bolsheviks were storming the gates in Petrograd. It had no real leaders, and it had no high flown theory behind it. Fifty years later, it isn't even certain that people recognize it for the revolution that it is.

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BOTH REVOLUTIONS, however, have concentrated on an astonishingly similar agenda. Housing. Transportation. Industry.

While I was in Russia in 1960, the key domestic priority was to build housing for a growing society which had lost nearly half of its homes during World War II. Apartments were springing up downtown in all the large cities, and the ordinary Russian citizen was beginning to get the idea that perhaps his life wasn't going to be limited to a few square yards of housing space.

When Americans started moving out of the big cities to the suburbs, they wanted to get away from the stone and concrete of the tenements. They wanted land, with their own homes and perhaps a backyard in which they and their children could play a little football and lead the good life. Today, if one feature marks Observerland, it is the constant push of new home building.

While the style of building is different — apartments versus suburban homes—the thrust of the concern is the same in both societies: A better home for a better life.

Coupled with this has been a concern for transport that deeply penetrates both societies.

What's our biggest headache in Observerland? Roads. Commuter traffic. A place to park. Railroad tracks without over or underpasses. Widening projects on Plymouth and Farmington Roads.

People who have homes have to be able to get around. Our suburban revolution has evolved a kind of car culture to provide this mobility. But to date it has not worked out how to deal with all the cars that its culture has made necessary.

In Russia, public transport was originally intended to be the cure-all. The subways in Moscow and Leningrad are amazing museums of painting and sculpture with train tracks running through the marble lobbies. The buses in Moscow worked while I was there on an honor system for payment. No conductors, but the penetrating stares of the other passengers if you didn't pay.

But look at what the Russians are doing now. They've concluded an agreement with the Italian auto firm of Fiat to build a big factory to make cars. And what are the Soviet leaders saying to their people? You'll be able to buy cars and other consumer goods . . . after a while.

During the next fifty years, the Russians will be trying to solve the parking and commuter problems that are troubling us now.

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THE BIG THING in the Russian revolution was state ownership of the means of production; that's what communism is all about. The economy was supposed to produce so much that everyone was going to get as much as he or she needed, with the state nicely organizing everything and eliminating the ugly misery of capitalism.

But fifty years later, the Russians are in the middle of the biggest economic revolution they've ever faced. They have discovered profit, good old capitalist profit. They found that the state might be nice, but it couldn't produce the goods efficiently. All of a sudden they're designing indexes of profit as a way of directing the way the economy runs.

If this is a revolution, it's no greater than what's happening now in American suburbia.

Our suburban communities were supposed to be bedroom cities, where people lived only to work some place downtown in the big city. But land is too expensive down there, and the hour-long battle of the commuter is just too much frustration and trouble.

Result: An immense industrial building boom in suburbia. Livonia, Plymouth, Farmington and Westland all have industrial areas; all compete fiercely to attract industry.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING in both Russian and American suburban societies is big change. You can call it revolutionary if you want.

The Russians have discovered, fifty years after the big bang, that things don't work the way theory predicts. They're changing and adapting, turning to a quieter and more pragmatic approach.

Profit is being added as a criterion to the management of the economy. Cars are being produced to satisfy consumer demand. Apartments are being built to give people a place to live a decent life.

The Americans have learned, fifty years after they started quietly moving to the suburbs, that there are a lot of problems they didn't expect, possibly because they went about it without thinking much about the consequences.

People need roads and parking places, but there isn't much money to provide them. Industry is moving to where the people are. Homes are being built at a terrific rate, leading to zoning battles as emotional as anything fought in 1917 in Russia.

The Russian revolution, which came to life an an instrument of theory, has seemingly discovered pragmatism and even a little Yankee horse sense.

The American suburban revolution, which came to life not as a revolution but as a change of address, is realizing that a little planning might be a helpful thing.

The odd thing is that both revolutions, one communist and one free, are confronted with solving much the same kinds of human problems. Maybe that's encouraging.