

The Free Ride Is All Over In Plymouth Twp.

After hearing numerous complaints during the past few weeks about the increase in tax bills in Plymouth Township, we feel it is about time to set the record straight and place the responsibility where it belongs.

The Observer Newspapers have been blamed for the higher tax bills. The State of Michigan is getting some of the blame; fingers have been pointed at the Wayne County Tax Bureau and at Township Supervisor John McEwen, who is also the township assessor and the only one legally responsible for the township assessments.

Most certainly the Observer Newspapers couldn't be responsible, and these spreading kind of propaganda should better check their information. The Observer pointed out to Plymouth Township residents some weeks back that the tax rate would be reduced but that actually many tax bills would be increased because of higher assessments.

The higher assessments were the result of the new state constitution which provides that all land and property shall be assessed at 50 per cent of its true cash value.

THIS MADE IT mandatory for Supervisor McEwen to order a reassessment and re-evaluation of land in the township in order to fulfill the provisions of the Constitution. McEwen did request the Wayne County Bureau of Taxation to make an assessment but only at 25 per cent of the true value. That's only half of the job, but it did raise the total valuation and did raise the values of land in every section of the township.

As a result many landowners who have rather large holdings found their taxes raised as astronomical figures. And many shed tears as big as elephant tears when they received their latest tax bills.

That's why we feel it is time to set the record straight.

It has been known for years that there were inequities in assessments in Plymouth Township. For years many owners of large plots of land have been riding the gravy train, a train that suddenly came to a jolting stop this year.

It isn't as if warning weren't given that the days of the free rides were over. Arch Vallier, the City of Plymouth elected supervisor to the Wayne County Board of Supervisors, a member of the City Commission and also of the County Board's taxation committee, predicted a huge increase in township taxes almost two years ago.

College: Mind Vs. Subconscious

Freedom of college students to speak out or to protest is often confused with license—license to damage the school they are attending presumably for higher education. The point was aptly made by Howard Mumford Jones of Harvard:

"The college is neither a mental hospital nor an auditorium for loud debate. It demands sterner and more dedicated allegiance.

Its life is the life of the mind, not of the subconscious; its contribution to social welfare is appraisal, not crusading. Health and sanity are its requisites and a proper understanding of what is intellectual liberty truly means."

He said then that his committee was studying the tax situation throughout the county and had discovered Plymouth Township was low in its assessed valuations. He indicated property owners could expect big boosts within a short period of time.

Supervisor McEwen scoffed at the statements then, but apparently Vallier knew of what he was talking. The truth came out a year ago when the county raised the township tax rate \$18 per thousand to make up for the low assessments. But the tax rate was lowered, but increased valuations more than made up for the reduction.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE for the hike in the tax rolls this year? Those who have been riding the gravy train for years when they knew the assessments were low must share some of the blame. The township supervisors, who condoned the low valuations and used the low tax base as a selling point to induce builders, developers and industries to locate in the Township, must also share the blame.

Supervisor McEwen inherited some of the inequities, but he also preferred to do nothing until forced to take action by the state constitution. Even then he ordered only a boost to 25 per cent of the cash value on land instead of the 50 per cent ordered by the constitution. Which leads one to wonder: What was the same land assessed at prior to his order?

As a prominent tax expert in Detroit so aptly stated: "One began to wonder when land assessed at \$100 per acre was being sold for as much as \$5,000."

—R. T. Thompson

Large Apartments Benefit Community

The argument of having developments of primarily one-bedroom apartment units rather than two- or three-bedroom units was heard recently in Westland, among many other suburban city councils and township boards.

Although a Westland developer gained council approval for his new site plan including more two-bedroom units than originally planned, the vote was 4-3 in the minority that the additional two-bedroom units would pose a problem for local school officials who would have to find room for more students.

But the developer pointed out a factor which is becoming more and more prevalent in today's suburban society.

IT WASN'T TOO many years ago, like in the past decade, when newly-married couples had the choice of an apartment, with a minimum of living space, or a single-family home with the added space but also with added costs.

Ten years ago, most couples were satisfied to start out in a one-bedroom apartment with the plan to move into a single-family home when the family started to grow.

But this thinking has undergone a drastic change in recent years and township officials had better become aware of it.

They usually get into a two-bedroom apartment or townhouse and use the smaller bedroom for a study, den, guest room, and any other purpose they have in mind.

One of the nice things about the Christmas season is the giving of gifts to family and friends.

Sometimes these are useful (A pair of warm socks, for example, or a radio for your office.) Others are not so useful. (How many men have expressed a gasp upon viewing the pleasantly hand-painted necktie sent by Aunt Edna?)

These newspapers regard the communities they serve as both family and friends. For purposes

of the Christmas season, we have constructed a little shopping list of useful items. We certainly wish the gifts we have in mind could just be neatly wrapped up and put under the tree.

They can't. But these newspapers can do their best to try to get them accomplished during the coming months.

FOR LIVONIA, a sense of identity. This city of 103,000 people is

the fifth largest in the state. But as Livonians never tire of saying, the community really consists of 59 subdivisions in search of a city.

This was the thinking behind the recent bond proposals for building a civic center which, in theory, would have helped to pull the city together. The parts having to do with improving roads passed; the others didn't.

Maybe a city center is the answer. Maybe it isn't. But continuing efforts should

be made to exploring this key problem. Perhaps some surveys might be useful to explore people's attitudes.

It might even be that Livonia, being a new kind of city, needs a new and as yet unexplored kind of civic identity.

But civic identity and unity it needs.

FOR PLYMOUTH, completion of the work on development of the downtown, in cooperation with the surrounding township.

Plymouth is an old community, with the kind of genuine city center that Livonia lacks. This city center, however, is slowly being strangled, and forward-looking people in Plymouth are trying to do something about it.

If these newspapers could tie some red ribbon around a couple of underpasses for the C&O railroad tracks, we'd do it.

But we look forward to bringing to the Plymouth community the results of the local government survey now being developed by the Citizens' Research Council.

FOR FARMINGTON, a sense of cooperation between the city, township and villages.

Recently, some of the mistrust between the various local government units in the Farmington area has been overcome. People in the city are beginning to understand the hopes and fears of people in the township, and vice versa.

There is still real confusion over when a study of local government development in the area will take place and by what agency. But the constructive thing is that all parties seem to agree that a survey is needed.

Once the facts are out on the table, people can get together to make some reasonable decisions about the future of this rich and complex community.

FOR REDFORD TOWNSHIP, completion of plans now under way.

This includes developing a real system of storm drains and sewers, so that much-needed paving of streets can continue with the growth of the community.

It also means completion of the civic center plan, which will bring some order and focus to the expansion of local government services.

We also would like to put some tinsel around a few new industrial plants for the north end of Redford Township. The Redford Township school district tax base needs some beefing up, and industry is certainly the best way of doing it.

FOR WESTLAND, we wish industrial development to give this new city the kind of tax base it needs.

Progress in Westland has been rapid ever since the voters decided to incorporate as a city. New buildings have been built, fire and police developments developed, and a plan for the development of the city worked out.

Now what's missing is money. Tax money. A lot of it.

FOR GARDEN CITY, we wish a new era of development.

One of the first suburban communities in the metropolitan area, Garden City developed early compared to, say, Livonia.

In a sense, this early development has hindered the progress of the community now. There are zoning problems. There are problems involving updating certain neighborhoods. There are the inevitable problems of red tape with federal government programs.

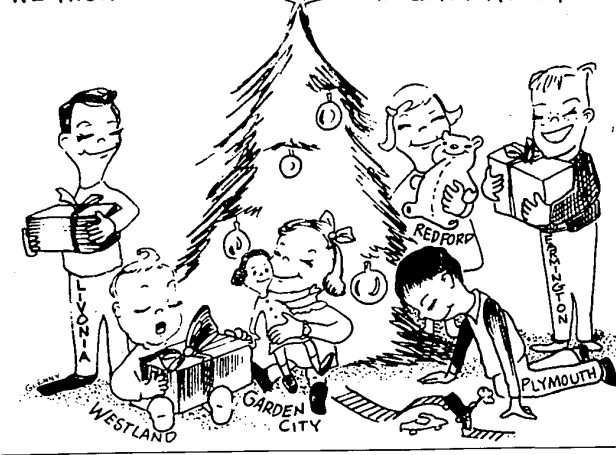
A redoubled effort in these areas would bring out the real potential of the city.

FOR ALL OUR readers in Observerland, we wish a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year.

From the Publisher's Desk—OBSERVATION POINT

By Philip H. Power

WE WISH IT WERE AS EASY AS THIS...



This Is The Week That

... By Don Hoenschell

They're naming a new Federal office building in Detroit for Patrick V. McNamara and it couldn't happen to a better memory.

Pat's dead now but what he left still lives as one of the guttiest political performances Michigan has seen.

You may know the stuff about Pat being a plumber and a good one. He was union through and through, no great sin in these days.

He got elected to the old 23-member city council in Detroit and one day stalked out calling the other 24 "a bunch of jerks."

It was enough to kill a guy at the polls. But the charm and stature of this big bluff man with the deep voice of a chain saw cutting through oak and the flowing gray hair and the deep eyes that saw more than you cared to reveal!

PAT McNAMARA was a man who could take advantage of accidents. And that's what he was. Nobody except Pat and a couple of other people wanted him to go to the United States Senate. Senator Homer Ferguson was riding high, and rocking the Big Forum with a union guy-plumber-maverick was unthinkable.

But go back a bit. Blair Moody, a great newspaperman, had been appointed to the Senate to succeed Arthur Vandenberg. The deal was made with Moody while he and Former Gov. C. Lansing Williams rode back to Lansing from Vandenberg's funeral in Grand Rapids.

Moody was defeated in his first try at the polls by Charley Potter, a legless war veteran from Cheboygan. Moody started to run the next time and here comes Pat.

For the first time (there was only a second), Soapy blessed Moody in the primary and who wouldn't? Pat ran against him decidedly out of favor with Williams and the people on top. Then Moody contracted pneumonia in the Upper Peninsula and Ron Linton—a former UPI star in Lansing and then Moody's aide—telephoned daily bulletins to Lansing about the progress of Moody's recovery. Moody was transferred to the University of Michigan Hospital. There he died, tragically cut down in the middle years. Some who loved him and detested McNamara, not because Pat was next in line, launched a campaign: "Show You Care, Vote For Blair." And a dead man came close to winning.

Pat, in effect, was choked down by resisting Democratic threats. Soapy embraced him

politically because it was the honest and right thing to do. Pat had a lot to learn and he did it well.

There was a night in Escanaba when he stood in a high school corridor telling blue jokes to the people when he should have been on the platform reciting clichés. He didn't make a mistake twice.

So Pat beat Ferguson in a surprise to almost everybody except himself. Doris Jarrell answered the telephone that night in the headquarters and said wonderingly: "He did it, he beat Ferguson."

PAT GOT CANCER and the medicine and treatments held him together. He looked great when this one met him at City Airport in Detroit at the height of the Cuban crisis.

"This is going to violate our editorial policy, Pat, but you look great."

"It's OK," he said. "Give my regards..."

And there was Pat again and again. He called people jerks if they were and he stood up even when it counted.

President Johnson stepped off the stage at the AFL-CIO convention in Miami last week to sign the bill naming the Detroit building after McNamara.

Live on with us, Pat, if only in bricks.

SENSE 'N' NONSENSE

The city of Plymouth now has had its open housing ordinance for nearly a month and the town is still standing, contrary to beliefs of some of its citizens. Apparently, some minority would rather stay where they are than make the big move into the community.

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