

# Nankin Mills Case Shows The Flaw In Our Tax Laws

The proposed disincorporation of the Nankin Mills School District in Westland is a dramatic example of the inequities and the ineffectiveness of using the property tax as the base for support of public schools and serves as a signal for the state legislature to revamp the property tax problem.

Nankin Mills, whose school board has found it nearly impossible to continue the financial operation of the district, which doesn't have a high school, is the smallest (1.25 square miles) in the state and has the highest school tax rate (\$38.80 per \$1,000 of state equalized valuation) in Michigan.

The community within the district itself is fairly affluent. Most of the homes are in the \$18,000 to \$20,000 price range and the bread-winners are generally in the white-collar economic level.

A 1965 SURVEY showed that more than 90 per cent of parents questioned are willing (and presumably able) to send their children to college.

Statistics also show that Nankin Mills spends (according to 1966 figures) an average of \$514 per pupil, one of the highest figures among the low-valuation districts in Wayne County.

Voters in the district time and time again have gone to the polls to pass millage requests for operational purposes and for new buildings.

But despite this willingness—financial and otherwise—to provide a quality education for their children, Nankin Mills parents are being deprived of their legal because of an ancient tax philos-

ophy that should be either substantially revamped or eliminated.

**THE PROPERTY TAX** levy, besides being inequitable as just not doing its job. There is no reason for a retired couple with a \$20,000 home having to pay the same amount of school taxes as does a working couple with the same home and two incomes coming in.

The most glaring reason for the change in school financing is the comparison of different school districts.

For instance, Nankin Mills has only \$6,803 of valuation behind each student, while River Rouge, blessed with a heavy industrial tax base, has \$52,086 behind each pupil.

The state and federal constitutions contain provisions that all citizens "shall have equal protection of the law" but the educational opportunities—the key to a youngster's future—are keyed to the geographical location of that child's home.

**IF THE CHILD'S** parents live in River Rouge, Dearborn, Harper Woods, Ecorse and any other community with a heavy industrial and commercial tax base, his educational opportunities are better than those youngsters living in Nankin Mills for no reason other than the accident of where his parents decided to live.

Nankin Mills, as a school system, may be dead.

But the legislature should not ignore the reasons for its death and do nothing about correcting the situation, which affects every district in the state.

—Leonard Poger

## From the Publisher's Desk **OBSERVATION POINT**

By Philip H. Power

"Twas the day before Saint Patrick's and, begorrah Sir, what but that a fine, young Irishman, Robert Kennedy, says he wants to be President.

And didn't the feathers fly then? Bobby said at a press conference on Saturday that he is against what President Johnson is doing in Vietnam and that he isn't doing at home to deal with problems of riots, race relations, poverty and pollution.

He didn't make it clear that he wouldn't consider forming a third party if he doesn't get the nomination, if you know what I mean.

Then on Sunday and Monday, Michigan Bell declared a special dividend, what with all the Democratic politics on the blower, trying to find out what was happening, who was supporting (or even talking with) whom, and whose positions had been assessed or reassessed.

By now, the dust has settled enough to see a few things in perspective, although any political guessing has to be pretty much a matter of through a glass darkly at this point.

**THE PEOPLE** around Senator Eugene McCarthy, the only announced candidate against the

President (if you discount George Wallace, which seems only appropriate), could hardly contain their irritation with Bobby. As they see it, McCarthy has been the only guy with enough guts to go out alone and challenge the President, and now that the New Hampshire primary has proven that there are a lot of anti-Johnson votes to be had, Kennedy played the total opportunist by jumping in.

A lot of other Democrats, not necessarily McCarthy backers, think that, too.

The McCarthy people, however, have the gnawing fear that Kennedy is the only guy who can

even hope to give LBJ a fight for the nomination. Most smart politicians in Michigan (and there are plenty of them) expect that as time passes, the McCarthy candidacy will fuse with Kennedy's and that ultimately Kennedy will co-opt the McCarthy people for a strong bid for the nomination.

According to this theory, the process may take some time, but the extremely strong anti-Johnson feelings of both groups make it pointless not to combine it at some point in order to stick it to Lyndon.

**THE WHITE HOUSE** has been pretty quiet, always a bad sign. Normally, when the President is feeling happy, there is a constant flow of news and comments from his office; Sunday and Monday were ominous, as though a thunderstorm were not far off.

The President is known as a man who believes that if you're not with him all the way (and especially when the way consists in Vietnam), then you're against him. He has felt this about even some very muted criticism directed his way by Democrats in the Senate and the House, so you can imagine what sort of feelings he has about Bobby, who made it quite clear he is nowhere close to the President.

"Gee, I sure would hate to be on the White House staff tonight," a leading Observerland Democrat said to me on Saturday, and I'm inclined to agree with him.

So far, Democratic regulars in Michigan (i.e., those who support LBJ) have not said too much; presumably they're waiting to see how the line-up looks after a couple of weeks polls have come in.

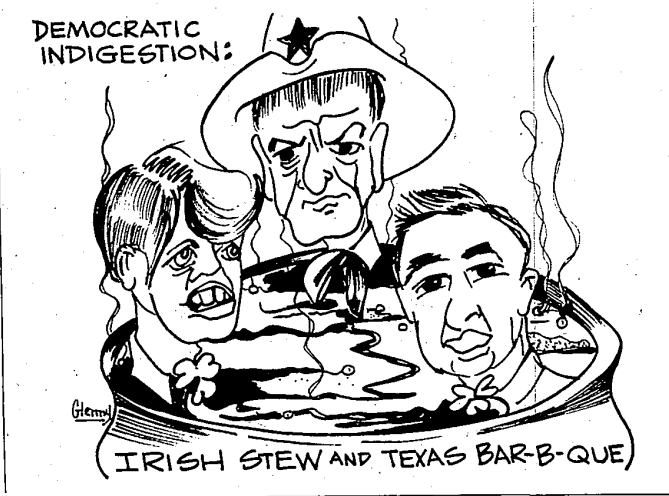
The Kennedy people have been keeping very quiet. In fact, one of the biggest problems Democrats who might want to support RFK have had during the past several days has been finding out whom they should talk to. No one seems to know.

Reportedly, the Kennedy staff made a few phone calls to Michigan before his announcement, but no one seems to know who they called. Former Second District Democratic Congressman Weston E. Vivian has announced a RFK For President group in the Second District, and he may be the only man in the state who knows how to contact Kennedy's offices.

**IN THE LONG RUN**, Kennedy's entry makes it very likely that Johnson, now challenged strongly from an anti-Vietnam position, will move to the right. He knows that the polls show that most Americans are hawks on Vietnam, and most political analysts expect that the President will progressively enfold himself in the American flag as the summer goes on, fighting the war in Vietnam not as a limited action to repel aggression but rather as a great patriotic war.

But there is no question that the New Hampshire results showed that Johnson is vulnerable. Kennedy's entry into the race further weakens the President. All that means is that Richard Nixon's chances to get the Republican nomination have improved, sharply.

Why? Because there is no question that although Nixon is overwhelmingly popular with the leadership of the GOP, he is less strong than New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller in a two-man race with the President. The stronger Johnson appears, the more likely are the Republican leaders to choose Rockefeller as a man who can win; the weaker Johnson looks, the more likely are the GOP leaders to accept Nixon, the weaker but more politically desirable candidate. It looks like it's going to be quite a summer.



DEMOCRATIC INDIGESTION: IRISH STEW AND TEXAS BAR-B-QUE

### Parochial Puzzle

## Unanswered Questions

Unfortunately, the debate over state aid to church-related schools has degenerated. To hear the politicians and the school folks and the clergymen talk, you'd think the only question is: Should the Legislature pass the proposed \$21 million aid bill?

In truth, there is a series of questions, and precious little thought is being given to the rational solving of the school money problem as the debaters hammer over the drab constitutionality question.

**SUPPOSE, FOR A** minute, that the bill is passed and that the church-related schools get the \$21 million they want.

Will they be satisfied with that same amount or rate next year? They haven't been satisfied in the past, you know, with the aid they have received, and have come back for more. Will they quit now—or will they tell us how soon it will be before they ask for more money?

If they get the money, will they begin to pay their teachers the same wages public school teachers get? If the church-related schools are to use government money, then doesn't the government have an interest in their pay scales? And their pupil-teacher ratios?

**NOW, LET'S TRY** the reverse approach: What will happen if the bill isn't passed? Do the parochial schools say they

could close down if they wish, and they're absolutely right. But will they really do it—or are they bluffing?

Will they reduce their enrollment? How much of a burden do they intend to shift to the public schools? The churches themselves will have to answer that one; they can't leave it to Citizens for Education Freedom, because CER doesn't operate the schools.

The opponents of aid to church-related schools will have to face up to a few hard questions, too, and quit hiding behind amateur constitutional law arguments about church vs. state.

Suppose the church-related schools do close down. What are our legislators and school boards prepared to do about it? Will they cram those 330,000 additional kids into the existing classrooms under the existing teachers?

Or will they try to spend, as they're now doing, a sum of \$600 per pupil each year? If they try to keep that level of spending, how will they come up with the \$200 million a year in operating costs? Will they have the guts to back up their objections to aiding church-related schools by doubling the state income tax rates to get the money?

And if the church-related schools do call it quits, what will the opponents of "parochialism" do for teachers for the public

schools? Will they be willing to hire nuns? They may have to.

**STILL ASSUMING** the parochial schools close up shop, here are some questions for both the church authorities and the public school boards:

Will the public school districts be willing to float massive simultaneous bond issues to buy the parochial school buildings? Will the churches sell? At what price? Will they rent? At what price? Suppose the churches and the school boards can't make a deal: Do the public schools intend to put up their own new buildings? Will the property owners, already groaning pretty loudly, enthusiastically vote "yes" on the necessary bond issues?

Still supposing the churches and the public school boards can not make a deal for the church-related school buildings: What will the churches do with them? They can't use every former classroom all day for catechism and social centers. Will they be willing to pay taxes on those unused classrooms?

This writer isn't trying to argue for or against aid to church-related schools. But what we should all be looking at, churchmen and public schoolmen alike, is the big problem: How are we going to educate those 330,000 American human beings now in the parochial schools, and how are we going to pay for it?

Instead, we all seem stuck on the opening question of whether one is for or against a particular 1968 legislative bill.

Tim Richard

**CHUCK MATSON**

- Group Insurance
- Health Insurance
- Pension Plans
- Life Insurance
- Annuities

**NEW YORK LIFE**  
INSURANCE Company

17000 West 8 Mile Road, Southfield, 356-9480

**Sense And Nonsense**

Westland is the scene of other events than just bank robberies, sensational murders, and grand jury indictments—all of which happened in the last several years. The Michigan Jaycees announced this week that of the five top outstanding young men (between 21 and 35) in the state, one lives in Westland and the other is the new principal of a high junior high in the community. This gives Westland 40 per cent of the state's top young men.

"Our country has reached the point where it must decide to eliminate the disabilities of race and poverty, or fall as a free and open society."—Henry Ford II.

**OBSERVER NEWSPAPERS**

PHILIP H. POWER, Publisher  
DALE O. PERIN, Controller  
RICHARD T. THOMPSON, Managing Editor

RUDOLPH WAZIR, Advertising Director  
JAMES W. HEDDERLEY, Classified Advertising Director  
FRED W. WATSON, Circulation Director

Member Michigan Press Association, Subscription Service

### This Is The Week That

... By Don Hoenshell

Listen to Jerry Cavanaugh, folks, and relax: "We will not tolerate lawlessness or violence this summer."

That's what he told suburban mayors and their stand-ins last week in a desperate effort to head off panic and slow down the arms race out here.

Some of the towns have everything but a navy. Cavanaugh's a sincere guy who watched part of his town burn last July. There has been a lot of hot talk during the winter and people are worried about when the tempers match the temperatures.

He told the suburbs his police, if necessary, can control anything likely to happen in Detroit. The thrust of his words to the suburbs was to stand tall, but stand cool, too.

Every community drew its own perspective. In Livonia, Mayor Harvey W. Moeke figured Cavanaugh agreed there should be police preparedness, that the gun school is OK and officers should be equipped with the latest and most lethal weapons.

Cavanaugh said no such thing. In Plymouth, Mayor James Jabara said he was happy, the suburbs and Detroit are building better communications, that one of the big problems now is rumors.

Redford Township Supervisor Aldrick Bellaire expressed confidence Cavanaugh could control Detroit. He said he was sorry Wayne County sheriff's people weren't in on the planning, thus forcing suburbs to rely more on Detroit.

Farmington, through Councilman John A. Allen seemed reassured, again fretting about

From the Cavanaugh meeting and the reaction, it's plain that the nervous suburbs are in more danger of being scared to death than being dispatched by a sniper or a fire bomb.

Fright is more agonizing. Already there have been stories of near-misses with the household pistol. One Detroit story tells of a father who shot his three-year-old son whose early-morning prowling sounded burglar-like to a jittery family.

We've had the early crop of rumors here—the one about the planned blitzes against designated buildings, hit and run attacks. The terrible thing is that some people believe.

During the July riots in Detroit, editors here were busy most of every day squelching reports of supermarkets looted and burning, Topinka's restaurant ablaze and a policeman shooting from a rooftop on Seven Mile.

None of it happened, but people were frightened. Detroit has a rumor control office now and plans are being made to organize similar offices in some of the suburbs.

It will comfort you to know that Rep. Richard A. Young (D-Deerborn Heights) has sponsored a bill in Lansing making it unlawful for an individual to own a cannon, mortar, anti-tank gun or bazooka.

Maybe it's needed the way things are going. The only thing left is a shoot-out at high noon between a housewife and the man who comes to read the meter.

There is one more thing, however. Sanity.

**When Name-Dropping...**

mention us, people will know you have good taste.

**Hillside Inn**

41661 Plymouth Road  
Plymouth, Mich.

Dinners 5:00-11:00  
Lunches 11:30-3:00  
CLOSED SUNDAYS