

Leaders Must Catch Up To Reality, Or Follow

Citizens of Livonia and Redford Township are being ill-served by the ducking and dodging of their politicians over society's greatest crisis — civil rights.

Political figures retreat from controversy, fearful of reality and plagued by the prickly heat of job security.

They are waiting to be pushed. They want voters to once again spell out the duties of public office.

The one shining exception in the area is Plymouth, where 20 civic and governmental leaders have established a series of eight community-wide priority goals toward achieving lasting racial peace — whatever happens.

Plymouth isn't in the market for tanks and guns. The leaders of the community want to control rumors of riot and unrest, want a meeting of minds between the races and an opening of communication lines.

IN LIVONIA, Mayor Harvey W. Moelke has established a school for housewives; he is opposed to open housing and has pressed for a stop and frisk ordinance. Gun permits have doubled. Nobody ever made peace with a poke in the nose.

Livonia Councilman Rudolf Kleinert has sponsored an open housing ordinance to the consternation of the others. What to do with a hot potato? Duck and dodge, they argue, and maybe it'll miss.

The ordinance was introduced through a parliamentary back door and whisked back into the council chambers for study.

The route it took leaves no one committed in any way, freezes the proposal in a pigeonhole while councilmen fidget and public sentiment can be formulated.

That is where it will stay until councilmen can check the politi-

cal winds.

REDFORD TOWNSHIP'S latest move is even less understandable.

Police Chief Edwin Gleza — who has been briefed by experts who have gone through Detroit's troubles — proposed a township Human Relations Commission, "to foster mutual self-respect, understanding and to promote amicable relations among all racial, religious and ethnic groups in the community."

But Supervisor Aldrick Bellaire dashes up with a restraining hand.

Bellaire said he would go along with a commission if he could make the appointments — "We don't want any volunteers" — and if its duties were restricted to education and research.

He said he wants a group capable of talking with the people "if a Negro moves in here." It's like saying he wants a policeman if somebody commits a crime.

Bellaire's objection to an official commission under an ordinance is that when and if it makes a mistake, "they become official mistakes." That's leadership with a capital B.

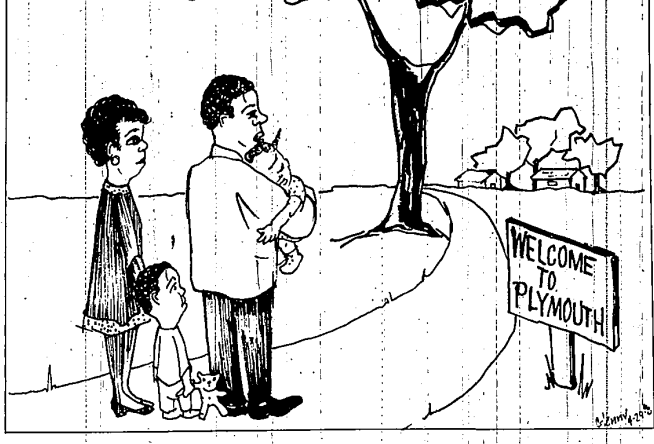
The people in the suburbs are frightened and want more than an Alphonse-and-Gaston act in Redford and an armed camp in Livonia.

They want more than a city council that won't make a decision, more than implausible simperings from officials they elected to office.

Livonia and Redford Township, take a look at Plymouth — and catch up.

—Don Hoenschell

A BEGINNING



—From the Publisher's Desk—

OBSERVATION POINT

By Philip H. Power

As this is being written, citizens of the city of Plymouth are going to the polls to vote on a fair housing ordinance.

The measure was passed by the Plymouth City Commission last December on a 4 to 3 vote, following which a group of Plymouth citizens circulated petitions to put the matter on the ballot.

I have no idea whether or not the ordinance will be passed, but in this hour of waiting I think it only appropriate to reflect for a moment on the issue of fair housing as it applies to Plymouth, to communities in Observerland, and to our entire society.

I see no reason why America should now suddenly become known as "The Land Of The Free (In Most Things Except Housing, Of Course)."

THE SECOND PROMISE was involved in the Civil War which tested whether the very union that was the United States would endure.

It was made by President Lincoln specifically to the Negro people of America: That slavery should be ended; that all citizens, Negro and white, should be equal in the eyes of the law; and that no one should be deprived of his rightful place in everyday living and the chance to enjoy the things that bring happiness to other folks just because of the color of his skin.

That includes living in a decent home of your choice.

There is some evidence that Negro citizens are now denied this right, particularly in suburban communities, while other citizens are not.

It is this that makes the issue of fair housing an essentially moral matter. It seeks justice for all, not just some, and in so doing it strikes to the heart of the promises made by America to all of her citizens.

PUBLIC CONCERN with fair housing has shown a gratifying increase in recent months.

Although the state legislature continues to duck the issue, the U.S. Congress did not. The voters in Flint and Birmingham have approved local fair housing ordinances, and the issue looks close in Plymouth.

A fair housing ordinance was introduced last week in Livonia's City Council by Councilman Rudolf Kleinert, a sensible and thoughtful man.

There has been some discussion of similar moves in Farmington. Even Redford Township's Chief of Police Edwin Gleza called last week for a human relations group in that community.

We Say 'Rubbish,' To City Hall Secrecy

Mayor Thomas H. Brown of Westland spends part of his time lecturing local newspaper editors and reporters about printing governmental information that is harmful or may, or may not, have a harmful effect on future city action.

A phone call from the mayor in mid-February made it clear to the Westland Observer editor that he did not appreciate the newspaper printing a report from a city administrator to the mayor and City Council on the merits and disadvantages of the city having its own garbage and rubbish collection service.

The report, issued to the council in a closed-door meeting, outlined the cost factors if the city wanted to start its own collection service.

However, the conclusion of the four-page report was that the city advertise for bids from private contractors.

lowest of the new bids were \$1.19 and \$1.20 per pickup with the rates going up 10 cents per year in the second and third year of the contract.

This compares favorably with the rates paid by Garden City, \$1.35; Dearborn Heights, \$1.35; Livonia, \$1.49, and Wayne, \$1.25, received after that city had to advertise twice to get any bids at all.

Westland's current rubbish contractor, Hayden Refuse Co. of Westland, submitted a bid of \$1.85 per unit per month to Garden City officials several months ago, considerably higher than the low bid accepted.

BUT IN THE administrative report given to the Westland Finance Director William Engle estimated that the city would pay at least \$1.25 per unit per month.

Now that the bids are less than anyone expected, it was proven that the published story resulted in no harm to anyone concerned.

In fact, it could be argued that once the private contractors read in the Observer that the city had an administrative report saying the firms are pricing themselves out of business and that any maintenance type of work could always be done for less money by a municipal government than by a private company, the firms decided to lower their bids in order to keep the city's business.

So when a city official claims that publishing a report on a sensitive topic may harm the community, the Observer says: "Rubbish!"

—Leonard Poger

WHAT IS THE ISSUE involved in fair housing? What really does the concept mean?

Stripped of its controversial and emotional trappings, it is nothing more than one means of fulfilling two promises which are inextricably locked into the blood and history of our country.

The first promise goes back nearly two centuries to the founding fathers of this nation. It has simply to do with a pledge that America shall be the land of the free for everyone — not free for some and partly free for others.

This country has grown great because that promise has been substantially kept — with certain exceptions.

FAIR HOUSING LAWS are really very simple. They merely make explicit a right deeply embedded in our moral code and in the statute books of this nation.

They ask only that anyone (Negro, Jew, Pole, Italian, Irish, WASP anyone) be given an equal chance to choose a place in which to live and raise a family.

MOVEMENT, particularly on an issue as emotionally charged as fair housing and race, is always difficult. It has been too long delayed.

Yet it is possible to sense a growing feeling on the part of people here in Observerland that the issue must be faced; that the promise embodied in America must be kept.

Look at it this way.

If you were a Negro, would you want the promises that inhere in your American citizenship to be kept?

I think so.

SO WHAT'S TO STOP the FCC issuing a ruling that an individual soldier could not fight in a given combat zone if that sector's action is to be televised to the soldier's home town?

With a fighting force of 510,000 American men in Vietnam, that adds up to 510,000 units that the brass would have to keep track of in a sort of TV guide listing of the Vietnam War.

Sounds strange, but the whole idea might do more to personalize the casualty lists than telegrams from the defense department.

Don't say the TV re-run season couldn't be worse. Wait 'til they start re-runs of last winter's newscasts.

Fashion Note — wary women, who didn't cut off horns when they shortened dresses to minimize skirt length, are lucky. British fashion designers, who introduced the mini-skirt, now decree that next fall's hemlines will be at mid-calf length. Wonder what this will do to girl-watching?

Air pollution officials emphatically deny that they have suggested a limit on the number of political talks permitted to be broadcast on television and radio this year.

Students are advised to take it easy or they'll lose their battle for newspaper headlines. The students' latest caper of taking over classrooms and administration buildings might induce the faculty to do the demonstrating.

Nationalities, languages and campuses may differ, but college students the world over now have a common denominator — they protest.

Bell Gets Folksy

The people involved don't think so, but the strike against Michigan Bell has its lighter moments.

With male supervisors on the job, the usually well-trained, dulcet voice of Michigan Bell has taken on the confided manner of the issue room-of-the-house trying to act as housewife.

Instead of answering your call for help with "Directory assistance," you are likely to hear "Up there, you're sure it's George you want... we have a Fred at that number."

Or in the case of a long distance call, "Look, the guy isn't there! I mean the party does not answer."

All in all, things have become rather folksy.

—Elizabeth Wissman

THIS IS THE WEEK THAT...

by DON HOENSHELL

This lawyer fellow in Detroit looked across the desk at a client who was obviously not very solvent and kept twitching his head as though shaking off flies.

"I want you to arrange a face-to-face meeting for me with Khrushchev," said the client.

"Perfectly OK," smiled the lawyer. "The fee will be one million dollars."

So it is Law Day in the United States and time for reflection on the system, the people who have it as a way of life and the folks who make it work.

TO A LAWYER, nothing very much is impossible for a fee. That's his profession, folks. And a lawyer more often than any of us suspect, gets the nuts and bolts of our society to represent. That's the key word.

Laymen sniff at lawyers sometimes for the deeds of their clients. Over in Brighton a few years ago, Martin Lavan, a fiery barrister of the old school, was terribly abused for daring to represent the killer of a State Police trooper.

Lavan was doing his job. More than just that, he was giving us all a lesson in democracy. Without people like him we could be subjected to the vigilante mobs and the lynchings. Maybe the result would be accomplished with more sophistication, but the fact would remain.

It has always seemed a little strange that a people must be governed by a system they don't understand well enough to fight their own battles. They must hire a lawyer to explain it to them.

It works, though, and until somebody finds a better system, we'll go along with it.

Do lawyers get paid for everything they do for a client? Of course not, not any more than doctors or architects or any other professional.

In that esoteric jungle of laws and writs, stare decisis and wondrous motions, there is a lot of after-school fretting and worrying. Lawyers are people, too.

So on Law Day we salute the legal profession.

Law Day on May 1 — a day when the nation reflects on its legal heritage and rejoices in the order it provides — was devised in the 1950s to take the sting out of other versions of May Day.

ON THAT DAY Russia celebrates its revolution and parades its armament. It is a symbolic thing, a show of national destructive force, a flexing of muscle so that all the world may see.

The phrase "May Day" has an international code for distress and a call for help.

Here, we have Law Day in observation of a basic right of every man to live as he will so long as he does not infringe upon the rights of others.

People around here might not have taken such an interest this year had it not been for the young Livonia Lawyers' Wives Club, one of the workingest organizations around.

In its first year, the club has already been honored by the State Bar of Michigan and Mrs. Ernest Grant and her group are already getting ready for an encore.

LESSON IN AGE

A third presidential possibility has taken himself out of the 1968 race.

First was George Romney, governor of Michigan, age 60. Romney said he couldn't drum up enough support from the "rank and file" of the Republican Party.

Second was Nelson Rockefeller, governor of New York, age 59. He said he couldn't drum up enough support from the "rank and file" of the Republican Party.

Third was Lyndon Johnson, incumbent president, age 59. He said he doesn't want to campaign when he's working full time on finding a political solution to the Vietnam war.

There's a lesson there someplace.

Maybe it's got something to do with this young — or at least youth-oriented — society we live in.

Johnson had aged, normally and gradually, since he took office. But on television Sunday night there was a twitch in the forehead and another in the right cheek that wasn't there before.

He looked bad physically.

So here's one bet that the political parties, if they're thinking hard, will turn to young blood and new faces for their candidates this year.



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