

**OBSERVATION POINT**

# Problem In Handgun Hassle Is Trying To Collect Facts

Publisher Philip H. Power is on vacation. Today's guest columnist is the senior U.S. senator from Michigan.

By PHILIP A. HART

At a Senate hearing not long ago on a subject since forgotten, a witness told of a chicken and a snake who battled each other bloody over a piece of copper wire, one thinking it a worm and the other thinking it a relative.

It shows what can happen, he said, when opponents on any issue operate on differing sets of facts.

The story was brought to mind again by the flow of mail and comment that followed my introduction of a bill to prohibit the ownership of handguns to all except law enforcement officers, licensed security guards, collectors and target shooting clubs. All other handguns would be purchased at fair market value by the government.

On the handgun issue there is clearly no consensus on the basic facts.

The bill would have no effect on rifles and shotguns although many of my correspondents feel that private ownership of all firearms is threatened.

THE CONFUSION, perhaps my fault, carries to every level. The Board of Directors of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, an estimable

organization of conservationists and sportsmen, shortly after the handgun bill was introduced, passed a resolution that read in part:

"Whereas some elected and appointed public officials have expressed their opposition to the private ownership of not only handguns but also long guns such as commonly used for hunting . . ."

Here, I should admit, the MUCC is in possession of information not available to me because I have heard of no official who opposes the private ownership of rifles and shotguns. Long guns and handguns are quite different in function and threat. They are linked by the word "firearm" in much the same way that automobiles and tanks are linked by the word "vehicle."

Handguns are primarily designed for the killing and wounding of human beings.

Long guns, in contrast, have many wholesome uses and are awkward weapons for the commission of street crimes. Because of their handy design, handguns account for three-quarters of all firearms woundings and killings although they comprise only one-quarter of all the guns in the nation.

BUT TO ILLUSTRATE the differing sets of facts, let me cite the arguments most often

used by opponents of handgun controls.

1. "Criminals won't turn in their guns so only law-abiding citizens will be left unarmed." But the facts, as I understand them, are that criminals are turning in guns every day, though not voluntarily. Every year, police confiscate thousands of weapons from criminal suspects.

However, criminal arsenals are constantly being replenished -- through burglaries, thefts, loans and purchases -- with handguns owned by honest citizens.

2. "Householders won't be safe in their homes if handguns are taken away."

There is a world of evidence that a household without a handgun is more secure than a household that has one. Only a tiny fraction of the times that a household handgun is fired will the bullet bring down a robber or burglar. The usual victims are gun owners or their relatives, children, friends and neighbors.

Most American homicides do occur in the home, and the handgun is the usual instrument because it is most often kept loaded and even a child can operate it.

3. "The Constitution prohibits gun control legislation."

The second amendment to the Constitution reads, "A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a

free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

Very often, pro-gun publications print only the last 13 words of that amendment. But the Supreme Court, reading it in full, ruled in 1939 that firearms regulation is not unconstitutional unless it impairs the effectiveness of the militia (now known as the National Guard).

4. "People, not guns, commit crime. Without handguns, they'd find some other way to kill."

But doesn't the government have some obligation to make killing as difficult as possible? And the handgun, unlike other available weapons, is really designed as an efficient instrument for one purpose: the killing and wounding of humans.

5. "Your mail, you admit, is running heavily against handgun control. Why not heed the will of your constituents and abandon this folly?"

Well, constituent mail is a valuable source of information for any office-holder but it does not always reflect the majority view. Every scientific poll ever taken on gun control shows that most people favor it -- but polls shouldn't control legislative decisions either.

At least every once in a while a politician ought to go where his logic takes him even though it makes political life more difficult.



## Wallace Backers Something Else

The way a mere man would describe the Wallace delegates would be like this:

They walk into local district Democratic conventions with an aura of sanctity and patriotism about them and expect party leaders to jump.

The supporters of the Alabama governor remind everyone at the top of their lungs that their man got more than 50 per cent of the vote in the presidential primary, and how come we don't get more committee seats, and what's goin' on here anyhow?

Unlike the Goldwater backers in the Republican ranks in 1964 and the McCarthy-Kennedy-McGovern people of 1968-72, the Wallaceites did virtually no precinct organizing; they ran few delegates, and most of those got beaten; they know as much parliamentary procedure as a poodle puppy and can't comprehend why they, speaking for the majority, aren't allowed to shout down the chairman or anyone else, any time they feel like it.

I would like to point out that in March, 1972, a group of Livonia citizens from the school advisory council reviewed Livonia's psychological services and recommended that the department be expanded by one member rather than eliminated as Mr. Davis has suggested.

This citizen group's assessment revealed no role of the department in undermining the fabric of American society as implied in Mr. Davis' letter. Interested citizens would like to discuss further the role and function of the department should feel free to contact department members at any time.

begins, "they are not Bryn Mawr alumni nor Junior Leaguers. It's far easier to imagine them at St. Jerome's bingo night or at a Tupperware demonstration than at a League of Women Voters meeting.

"Yet they are more politically involved, more willing to fight it out in the bloody arena of the Democratic Party's congressional district conventions than your average leaguer.

"Bordering on the fanatic in their belief that George Wallace will be the next president -- if they don't finish the job next time -- these Wallace Women are so far removed from the ladies' personally associated with the governor that one must wonder what his reaction is when meeting them on the campaign trail."

At this point, I should point out that Mrs. Juntunen herself is a native of Alabama, hence has some comprehension of what the women "personally associated" with the governor are like.

SHE GOES ON: "Red, white and blue are the colors of the day, obesity the shape of things. Indeed, so many are overweight that one begins to wonder if free Silhouette memberships aren't promised along with law and order and an end to busing.

"Style is not of over-riding concern to the Weight Watchers for Wallace (freshman class) faction; girdles are evidently considered subversive, hair dressers to be avoided at all costs. The few more shapely Wallace gals, the ones with the short skirts, boots and Lady Clairol hair, have more in common with their hefty sisters than the 'Stand Up For America' and 'Send Them a Message' chest banners.

"There is a common denominator -- the shrill voices ('you call this a convention? This is a farce!'); the anger lines etched into old and young faces alike, the chests heaving with indignation -- though these vary in size and structure -- and the absolute certainty that anyone who doesn't think George Wallace is the greatest man alive is a Communist and/or just plain stupid."

So much for a woman's eye view of the Wallace clan. There are those who say the Wallaceites added an element of fun and excitement to the recent round of conventions. Maybe so. But I've seen high school clubs operate with more political sophistication.

## School Psychologist Denies Charges

By DR. CHARLES RUCKHABER, Chairman Psychological Services Livonia School System

In a recent letter to the editor, Howard Davis expressed support for the position that the Livonia Public Schools eliminate their school psychologists who are described as "old world doctors who enjoy practicing intellectual medicine on the minds of children."

In the letter, Mr. Davis implies that psychologists in the Livonia Public Schools employ techniques and goals similar to those employed by Herr Goebbels to "brainwash Hitler's youth and degenerate the German public mind to the animal state."

One is left with the impression that the school psychology department in Livonia is a nefarious propaganda department bent on brainwashing the youth of our city in order to achieve some corrupt end.

Mr. Davis demonstrates not the slightest knowledge of the

role and function of Livonia's Department of Psychological Services and his charges represent a grave disservice to the youth within our schools if allowed to stand unanswered.

In 1959, school psychologists (or school psychological diagnosticians as they are often referred) were introduced into the schools by the Michigan State Department of Education.

The purpose was to provide, through psychological evaluation, a process to identify and more adequately structure educational programs for students who were educable mentally handicapped or trainable mentally handicapped.

The role of the psychologist is NOT therapy. Following the evaluation, more effective educational programs can be instituted and, when warranted, special supportive teacher assistance can be provided. The goal of this program is to allow handicapped students to become more effective learners and to be more able to take an

## DISSENT

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active and meaningful role in society.

THE RATIO of psychological personnel recommended and financially reimbursed by the Michigan State Department of Education was and is one per 5,000 students. This is the ratio maintained at present in the Livonia Public Schools.

Since 1959, service has expanded to include students demonstrating learning disabilities or having physical disabilities since these students also require special programs of educational assistance. When appropriate, consultation is also extended to both teachers and parents. It should be stressed that NO child is seen for psychological evaluation without parental permission.

It is occasionally stated that "there is no special education in life." The implication is that these handicapped youngsters should be expected to "sink or swim" in the regular school program with no assistance.

Were this position accepted, blind students would be given regular classroom readers, deaf students expected to profit from lectures and mentally handicapped expected to function at grade level.

Such expectations are obviously false and would not bear rebuttal if one were not frequently bombarded with this statement by those who thoughtlessly voice the "no special education in life" slogan.

It is by giving such youngsters needed assistance during their school careers that many are able to take their

place in society when reaching adulthood without the need for further assistance.

One should therefore keep in mind that the elimination of Livonia's psychological services would serve to eliminate many of Livonia's excellent and highly regarded programs for the handicapped.

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## W. W. Egan writes

### Difficult To Identify Street Names At Night

With the arrival of summer and the usual army of vacationers visiting Observerland with its many new sub-divisions there is a crying need for improved street identifications in the hours of darkness.

Maybe the street signs are erected with white numbers on green or blue backgrounds. But many of them are so far removed from the intersections that it is most difficult to see them.

Oftimes, the difficulty arises in the daylight hours -- in the newer sub-divisions where the travelers will be visiting for the first time.

ONCE DARKNESS comes it is almost impossible to identify a street unless the motorist pulls over to the side, shines the lights of the car, if possible, on the sign.

In many of our sub-divisions, too, that are built in wooded areas, the trees hide the street signs in the hours of darkness -- and the problem of identification becomes even more acute.

There is a simple solution and in the interest of public safety it should be applied as quickly as possible. All it requires is that the lettering be done with fluorescent paint -- the type that stands out when in the path of light rays.

## Editorial & Opinion

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