



By Philip H. Power
Publisher

OBSERVATION POINT

Local Politicians Work Hard At Their State Conventions

Local Democrats spent this past weekend in Grand Rapids for their fall state convention, and area Republicans will be doing their thing this coming weekend in Detroit.

I admire people who put themselves through the aggravation of political conventions.

You drive to the convention site, often a long way from home. You then hassle with the hotel clerk about your reservation which mysteriously got lost.

You then sit in district caucuses listening to candidates you don't know much about and who cannot be heard over the hubbub. You read through an enormous pile of printed matter pushing one candidate or another, followed by smaller but more

confusing papers describing convention rules.

Chairs are hard. Air is foul with cigar smoke. Talk goes on and on and on. And on.

Evening comes and the rumor mill starts. You stay up too late, perhaps have one or two belts too many. Trying to sleep is tough because there are all those drunks in the halls, raising Cain just outside your door.

It's not an easy life, and the commitment to the democratic process that local delegates of both parties show in attending their conventions is something worthy of praise.

AN IMPORTANT addition to the already busy schedule of local Democrats in Grand Rapids was

the sharply increased number of special interest caucuses.

For years there has been the labor caucus, recently split into the UAW and the AFL-CIO caucuses. And five or six years ago the black caucus became important.

But last weekend there seemed to be no end of these special interest groups meeting.

On Saturday you could have gone to the woman's caucus at 6 p.m., the youth caucus at 7 p.m., and the New Democratic Coalition caucus later on.

The Wallace caucus met on Friday, as did the educator caucus. The chicano caucus met more or less continuously during the convention, as they had a candidate in the running.

Several older delegates were walking around with big badges reading "Senior Power," and I expect there will be a senior citizens caucus next year.

I spent some time with the other press guys covering the convention working out just how many caucuses one delegate could attend. If a delegate were under 30, a woman, of Mexican origin, a very liberal Democrat, a teacher, and a member of the American Federation of Teachers, she would have demands made on her to attend the youth, woman's, chicano, NDC, educator and labor caucuses.

By the time she got through with that, I suppose she might have the energy to attend her own district caucus.

THE REPUBLICANS do not have much of this proliferation problem. But it could be significant for the Democrats.

Farmington's Aldo Vagnozzi, who has attended a whole bunch of Democratic state conventions and who chaired the 19th district delegation this past weekend, has some doubts.

"I don't know whether all the special interest caucuses are good or bad," he said. "But I do think that increasing the number of special interest groups will lead to more bargaining at the convention. This in turn may lead to increased reliance on the old 'midnight caucus,' at which reports come in from districts and interest groups, and where adjustments are made in the

ticket to preserve representation for all elements of the party," Vagnozzi remarked.

"The other problem is that some people who attend special interest caucuses are not delegates to the convention, and this may result in overstating just how strong a particular caucus is in representing the group of Democrats present at the convention.

"However, I do feel that this past convention was one of the most open and fair ones we've ever had," Vagnozzi concluded. What is clear is that the Democratic party -- always a coalition of varying groups -- is continuing this tradition, but now in a more direct and strenuous (for the delegates) way than ever before.

MAKE IT A HOLIDAY TO REMEMBER...NOT ONE TO TRY AND FORGET



Big Holiday Ahead...Let's Stay Alive

Drive safe and sane; start early for your holiday destination and leave early Monday for the return trip; don't partake of alcohol if you are driving; and get everyone home alive.

These warnings have been issued by the Michigan State Police and the Automobile Club of Michigan as they prepare for the Labor Day weekend, traditionally the worst of the entire year for traffic deaths.

Labor Day in recent years has recorded the most road deaths of any of the five major holiday periods. Traffic fatalities in the period from 1967-1971 have averaged 35 for that weekend with a high of 51 in 1968 and a low of 24 a year ago.

MAXIMUM COVERAGE will be assigned during those periods when traffic is expected to be the heaviest...from 3 p.m. to at least 9 p.m. each day. Special attention will be given to those road sections having a bad accident history.

Club officials expect 3.3 million vehicles will travel 740 million miles during the holiday weekend. To aid motorists and to help reduce the number of accidents, AAA will operate its "Bring 'Em Back Alive" holiday news service.

A staff of 25 will be gathering and disseminating information on traffic and tourism to just about every radio station in the state. The service will put out 70 bulletins between 4 and 11 p.m. Friday and 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday, Sunday and Monday.

For the State Police, pass days have been canceled for post troopers, post sergeants, court

officers, school liaison officers and recruiters. District commanders have permission to use district and post detectives as needed as well as district safety and traffic officers.

Check lanes will be suspended and personnel used on patrols. Department aircraft, weather permitting, will supplement the car patrol activities in daylight hours.

BUT THE ANSWER lies with the motorists. It means little what preparations the State

Police and AAA take to stress safety and to issue bulletins telling where the traffic jams are if the drivers don't heed the warnings.

There isn't any question that all highways leading north, west, east and south will be jammed Friday as folks take advantage of the long holiday weekend for the final visit of the year to summer cottages and to the resort areas.

And the story will be the same beginning late Monday afternoon and extending well past midnight.

Heed the advice of the State

Police and the AAA... use common sense in driving at all times. If you have been drinking, then don't drive. If you intend to drive, then don't drink.

Be careful, follow all rules of safety and always watch the car ahead and oncoming traffic.

It was the direct result of motorists following warnings that brought a dip in traffic deaths over the Labor Day holiday from 51 in 1968 to 24 in 1971. Why not be one of those that will drop the total below 24 this year and continue the safety drive?

'Age Of Majority' Work Left Unfinished

It looks as if Gov. Milliken should re-convene his Special Commission on the Age of Majority to help Michigan clear up its juvenile laws.

The reason is the new State Supreme Court decision prohibiting the trial of youths under 18 as adults in cases of serious crimes.

The old law sent the young accused first to Probate Court, which has jurisdiction over the affairs of minors and legal incompetents, but allowed probate judges to waive jurisdiction when they felt the accused should stand trial as an adult.

Usually, the probate judge did so in cases which were particularly savage and got a lot of publicity. The probate judge was handed a lot of discretionary authority,

and now the Michigan Supreme Court has said "nix." Tried as juveniles, a lot of young killers and rapists may be back on the streets in a couple of years as a result.

THE AREA OF criminal law was one where the Age of Majority Commission failed to make any recommendations, as it did in the areas of contracts, drinking, medical treatment and the like. The job needs to be finished.

The commission's report, submitted early in 1971, noted that "Age 16 and under are juveniles, and are not generally subject to the general criminal law."

"Age 17 and 18 are hybrids and may be proceeded against in

either juvenile court or general criminal court.

"Age 19 and upward are no longer subject to juvenile law, and are exclusively subject to the general criminal law and penalties of the state."

"Age 15 and 16 are exceptions in serious felony cases. The juvenile court judge may exercise his discretion and waive or not waive jurisdiction to general criminal court."

The last paragraph was true until the high court's decision earlier this month. If 15-17-year-olds are to be tried as adults for their crimes, the State Legislature is going to have to spell out the rules precisely, not leave it to the discretion of a local judge.

THE AGE OF Majority Commission later noted: "In the area of the responsibility for one's criminal acts, we have always treated persons age 18 and older as full adults. And even our 17-year-olds are meeting this responsibility regularly...As a matter of practice, it is estimated that 99 per cent of all offenders age 17 and older are taken to district and circuit court, not to juvenile court, regardless of the seriousness of the offense."

The governor's commission put itself in a bit of a logical box by recommending that 18 be the age of majority for practically everything. Query: If a person isn't responsible for major debts, jury duty, voting and military service

at age 17, should he be responsible for crimes at that age?

The question demands an answer, one way or another. Gov. Milliken's Special Commission on the Age of Majority, though heavily loaded with lawyers, nevertheless has enough members with psychology and anthropology in their academic credentials to make it the best vehicle for answering that question.

Since so much harm and mayhem can be created by persons who are legally "children," then shouldn't we, on practical behavioral grounds, re-think our definition of "child?"

Leonard Poger writes

Suburbs Need Legislators' Attention

The past political history of western Wayne County suburbs shows clearly that once elected to the state house of representatives, the incumbents will remain in office for the rest of the decade when the boundaries are changed to reflect the federal census and population changes.

WHEN THE new state house of representatives convenes in early January, we hope the new suburban members will pay more attention to the special problems facing the suburbs -- which are legion in number.

In the past decade, much of the legislators' collective attention was spent on helping Detroit take

care of its problems -- also legion in number.

As the core city for the southeast Michigan region, Detroit certainly shouldn't be overlooked or short changed when it comes to legislative problems.

BUT THE latest population figures show that more people -- and usually more problems -- exist in the suburbs than in Detroit.

To address themselves to the suburban problems of the '70s, the new legislature should draft an agenda of action soon after taking office.

This would probably avoid the new and veteran legislators from

reacting to crises as they come up instead of trying to come up with solutions to problems without the problem itself long past the stage of easy solution.

IN WESTERN Wayne County and southeast Oakland County, certainly tax reform for public schools should be at the top or near the top of any agenda.

Suburbs surrounding Detroit have considerably higher school tax rates than the core city -- something which is usually overlooked in any discussion on property tax elections and busing issues.

ANOTHER issue should be

some form of revenue sharing to allow the suburbs to avoid the financial problems Detroit is now facing.

With more people in all age groups settling in the suburbs, there is more of a variety of services to offer in the city government's recreation, transportation, and housing plans.

Suburbs have some special problems of their own and the new legislature should recognize these and develop some positive and lasting solutions.

At least, it would be more worthwhile than cranking out the anti-busing resolutions for their constituents at election time.

Editorial & Opinion

OBSERVER NEWSPAPERS, INC.

Philip H. Power, Publisher
The Livonia Observer • The Redford Observer
The Westland Observer • The Garden City Observer
The Plymouth Mail & Observer • The Southfield News & Observer
The Farmington Enterprise & Observer



Published by Observer Newspapers, Inc.
36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, Mich. 48150

Serving the communities of:

Livonia, Plymouth Township, Canton Township, Farmington Township, Redford Township, Garden City, Westland, Southfield, Lathrup Village, Bingham Farms.