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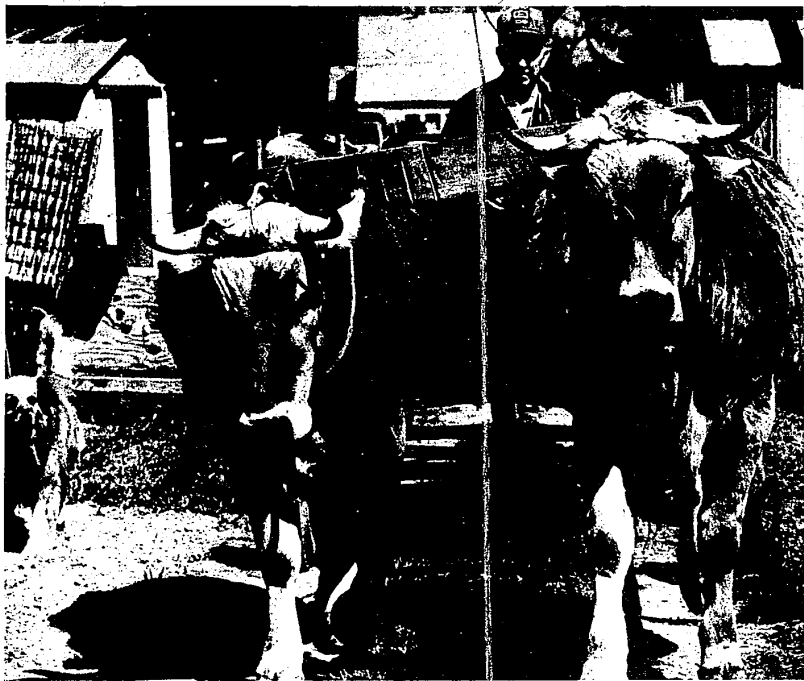
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RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Traditionally, beasts of burden were restricted to the solitude of the country. But a ride down Orchard Lake Road in Farmington Hills reveals we have a pair of oxen content to watch the traffic go by and plow the five acres owned by Larry Dalton.

Urban mirage?

Yes, those were oxen on Orchard Lake

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

Urbanization hasn't swallowed up the last bit of rural flavor in Farmington Hills — you can still buy a hearty team of oxen in the city.

Two oxen, weighing 1,400 pounds each, graze in a small pen on Orchard Lake Road south of 13 Mile, oblivious to nearby commercial strips and parking traffic.

The animals belong to Lawrence and Beulah Dalton, who both were raised on farms and continue to maintain that lifestyle on their five acres west of Orchard Lake Road.

A crude wood sign at roadside announces that the oxen are for sale.

"Dalton is asking 'about \$3,000' for the castrated bulls, named Brutus and Buster Brown. The siblings are three-year-old Brown Swiss oxen, described by the family as gentle and spoiled."

"I've raised them from the time they were five days old and bottle fed," said Dalton.

The animals were bought from a dairy farmer in Wixom.

"I've had several people inquire

Two oxen, weighing 1,400 pounds each, graze in a small pen on Orchard Lake Road, south of 13 Mile, oblivious to nearby commercial strips and roaring traffic. A crude wood sign at roadside announces that the oxen are for sale.

for them," said Dalton, who placed an ad in a Sunday newspaper.

Calls have come from Lansing and Ann Arbor. Some folks, lured by the curious road sign, have stopped by to look over the animals.

RAISING THE BEASTS has been a hobby for the whole family, including the Dalton's 12-year-old son, Jerry, who used to ride on their backs.

In winter, Brutus and Buster pull a bobbed. In the spring and summer, they pull a wagon through the Dalton's huge vegetable garden.

Dalton worked a team of oxen while a logger in his native Franklin, N.C. He designed several custom-made yokes (a harness crossbar with two U-shaped pieces that encircle the animals' necks) for Brutus and Buster.

"They need more pasture," Mrs. Dalton said. "We don't want to sell them for beef."

"These happen to be pets," Dalton said. "Is it a shift? You bet it is. It's a shift from the worst tax we have to a better tax."

TAXATION BASED on property owned was a good way to tax around the turn of the century, Brickley said, when the vast majority of Michigan residents made their living off the land.

"Today, it continues, as archaic as it is. It's an inequitable, uneven, regressive tax."

The May-19 plan is an attempt for a more equitable tax structure, "that happens also to cut government."

The plan's best feature, Brickley said, is that it limits to 6 percent the growth in property tax revenue to schools and local governments.

"They won't be getting as much new money as they have been getting,"

the animals have an easy disposition. They even let Billy, a goat who shares their pen, boss them around. "He butts them in the rear end," Mrs. Dalton said. "But they're very gentle."

Each ox eats two bales of hay and eight pounds of grain each day. The animals earn their keep by pulling a wagon over the fields that in the next few months will yield corn, squash, tomatoes, carrots "and just about every other vegetable you could think of," Mrs. Dalton said.

SHE CANS the vegetables and fruit from their half dozen fruit trees from July until the first frost each year. Mrs. Dalton, who was raised on a farm near Five Mile and Middlebelt in Livonia, says the family eats all it can and gives away the rest of the fresh produce.

Dalton is already looking ahead should Brutus and Buster be sold. He plans to raise pigs next.

And the family shouldn't be too lonesome if the oxen move on. They'll still have Billy the goat, Goose the goose, King the dog, a horse and a pony.

Detractors are heckled at Ross meet

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

Sen. Doug Ross's friends greatly outnumbered his foes at a town hall meeting in Farmington Thursday night.

The freshman state senator from Southfield and recent target of recall threats addressed his legislative priorities before answering questions from constituents mostly about the Proposal A tax cut plan Michigan voters will decide on May 19.

The tax cut, which Ross supports, was the impetus for the recall campaign launched by Milford resident Robert Tomczyk last month.

Tomczyk and a band of his supporters attended the forum and set up a makeshift recall petition booth in a corner of the library meeting room.

But when Tomczyk read his litany of gripes against Ross, dozens of the senator's supporters hissed and heckled the beleaguered head of the recall committee.

PROPOSAL A would cut property taxes on operating millage by 50 percent up to a maximum of \$1,400 a homestead. The proposal also would limit growth of property tax revenues to 6 percent a year.

The state would be required to reimburse local governments and school districts for all revenue lost from the tax cuts, which would be made up by increasing the state sales tax from 4 percent to 5 1/2 percent.

Recall supporters wanted Ross to support placing a more radical tax cut proposal backed by Shiawassee County Drain Commissioner Robert Tisch on the May 19 ballot so that voters would have a choice between the two plans.

The recall group also has attacked the senator's liberal voting record. "Proposal A is not a perfect effort," Ross said. "This is just a first step for those of you who don't think it's enough of a cut."

Tisch last year asked for a straight \$2 billion cut in the state's \$9 billion budget and was defeated.

"Most people judge the bottom line," Ross said. "They don't have time to look at all the property tax proposals, that's my job."

"And Tisch wasn't supported by the majority of my constituency," Ross based his support of Proposal A on three things:

• A reduction in property taxes without a dollar-for-dollar shift to some other tax.

• Some control over future increases in property taxes.

• No massive destruction of state services.

Ross has scheduled a second town hall meeting on Proposal A for Thursday at the Southfield Civic Center at 8 p.m.

Murder suspect charged

An 18-year-old Waterford Township youth was charged Thursday with the fatal beating of a Farmington man who died Wednesday several hours after an argument over an alleged debt.

John Allan Creith is charged with open murder in the death of David Charles Yacobelli, 23.

Creith stood mute at his arraignment before Farmington 47th District Judge Margaret Schaeffer. He is being held without bond in the Oakland County jail pending a May 15 exam in district court.

According to police, Yacobelli was confronted by two persons in the outside hallway of his Chatham Hills apartment, 36611 Grand River, at 2:30 a.m. Wednesday.

He delayed seeking medical treatment until 4 p.m. when he arrived at the Bio-Medical Applications Clinic on Schoolcraft Road in Livonia.

Yacobelli, who had had two kidney transplant operations, spent 12 hours a week on dialysis at that clinic.

When his condition worsened, he was transported to Mt. Carmel Hospital in Detroit where he died at 6:53 p.m.

A Wayne County medical examiner's report shows that Yacobelli died of internal abdominal injuries suffered in the attack.

A second suspect was questioned by police but subsequently released without being charged.

Yacobelli's death was the first reported homicide in Farmington this year.

Farmington teachers oppose Proposal A

The Farmington Education Association, the union representing local teachers, is opposed to Ballot Proposal A.

"Under this proposal, more than \$200 million for education will be lost in the first year alone," said Thomas Chrzanowski, FEAA president.

"The Farmington public schools will experience a loss of approximately \$2.5 million. This negative effect is compounded even more when viewed in conjunction with the 25 percent cut in funds proposed at the federal level."

Passage of Proposal A will result in a gradual erosion of programs, reduced

educational opportunities for students, and reductions of personnel, Chrzanowski said.

"The board (of education), teachers and administrators in Farmington have worked hard to develop an educational program which attracts people to this community," Chrzanowski said.

"The residents have consistently demonstrated their support for education which is vital to the future of the thousands of children who attend our schools."

"Tax reform should not be at the expense of those children and their future."

Brickley stumps for tax change

By Karen Sue Hormes
staff writer

LT. Gov. James H. Brickley urged Michigan residents Friday to vote for Proposal A while they have the chance to opt for a "moderate to conservative" tax proposition that benefits taxpayers.

"My advice is grab it while you can get it," he said, addressing 200 members of the Senior Men's Club in The Community House in Birmingham.

"It's too good an opportunity for taxpayers to pass up."

In the past 10 years, eight tax proposals have appeared on the state ballot, he said. Voters defeated them all.

"A LOT OF the proposals were designed for government, not for people. This one is designed for people. Should it fail on May 19, he said, a lot of "Dracanian and radical proposals are walking around the corner."

Brickley, like Gov. William Milliken, is campaigning heavily these last few days before the special election. Brick-

ley said he's been all over the state — or will have been — by May 19.

"I'm just amazed. There's a lot of cynicism, a lot of frustration out there (toward government)."

Complicated proposals, like A, "just feed on that distrust" and red herrings thrown out by Shiawassee Drain Commissioner Robert Tisch, he said. Tisch is calling for a more stringent tax reduction plan.

PROPOSAL A'S primary advantage, Brickley said, is that it addresses property taxes, the most volatile of issues.

Property taxes, he said, have increased 10 percent a year, statewide, for the past decade.

The plan reduces property taxes for operations on homesteads by 50 percent, or up to \$1,400 total. The plan can not affect the small amount of property taxes used for retiring bonds.

Since such a reduction would cause a \$1.2 billion loss in revenue for local governments and schools, the state would reimburse them.

To do this, the state would increase the state sales tax from 4 to 5.5 cents, Brickley said, earmarking the revenue for local governments. (The state also would spend less.)

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The May-19 plan is an attempt for a more equitable tax structure, "that happens also to cut government."

The plan's best feature, Brickley said, is that it limits to 6 percent the growth in property tax revenue to schools and local governments.

"They won't be getting as much new money as they have been getting,"

Brickley said, adding that this is the major reason educators, teachers and some school boards oppose it.

Both the Birmingham and Bloomfield Hills school boards oppose Proposal A.

"And nobody's going to reimburse them for that," he added. "In 10 years, that will save a lot of people a lot of money."

THE 6 PERCENT cap, he said, will keep taxes from getting where they were.

"This proposal really brings property taxes to heel, so to speak."

Middle-income earners would benefit most from Proposal A, Brickley said, and tourists, least.

Provisions are included in the plan, he said, to add \$100 million in benefits for retirees and increase the circuit breaker benefit for senior citizens.

Brickley will be in Bloomfield Township today, addressing the Republican 300 Club in Roma Hall. He will make his appearance at 6 p.m.

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