

**Battle reopens**

**Regionalize water board?**

Suburban officials are moving on three levels to regionalize the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) in the wake of federal indictments against a Detroit city official and contractors.

"The rate increases, combined with these serious clouds — it's intolerable," said Oakland County Drain Commissioner George Kuhn, who has long battled the city's sole control of a facility which serves Detroit and 103 neighboring communities.

The battlegrounds will be U.S. District Court; the Michigan Legislature and possibly the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, Kuhn said.

IN FEDERAL Court, Kuhn's attorney, William P. Hampton, this week will join the U.S. attorney's office in asking Judge John Felkens to remove James Beckham as director of the DWSD. Beckham and five others were indicted on charges of bribery and racketeering in connection with a sewage-hauling contract.

But Kuhn said he will go one step beyond the U.S. attorney and ask Felkens also to remove Detroit Mayor Coleman Young as special administrator of the DWSD, which is under the supervision of the federal court since a 1977 aptilution case.

"He is all powerful, and he has violated his trust," Kuhn said of Young. "He went around the city council and unilaterally took power into his own hands."

At the beginning of the case in 1977, suburban officials had asked Felkens to appoint an administrator not connected with the city of Detroit. Among the names tossed around were the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Lee A. Iacocca, then out of work after being president of Ford Motor Co. "He had higher calling, God bless him, and saved Chrysler," said Kuhn.

Felkens instead picked Young, citing the principle of city home rule and cloaking the mayor with great powers in dealing with the sewage treatment plant.

KUHN SAID he is seeking help from

several senators in getting state legislation to regionalize political control of DWSD. The seven-member governing board, though it has three suburban members, is appointed and removable by the mayor of Detroit.

"A regional authority would not be beholden to any one mayor," said Kuhn. He added that state Sens. Richard Fessler, R-Union Lake, and Gilbert Dinkel, D-East Detroit, are interested in the project.

"I want them to get all 38 senators surveyed. This should not be a one-man or two-man bill," Kuhn said.

The general plan is to have a nine-member water board with representation based on population — three from Detroit and six from the customer communities.

BESIDES BOARD control, a second target is the Detroit city charter provision which allows only city residents to work for DWSD. A major operating problem has been hiring qualified persons to operate the plant.

"Every engineer, in the state of Michigan has been surveyed twice on working there," said Kuhn. "The pay is infinitely better, but they (engineers) don't want to live there."

He added, "Detroit does not own the

plant. It was paid for with massive federal and state grants, and 65 percent of the revenues come from the 103 customer communities."

Kuhn acknowledged his own petition drive fell 20,000 signatures of what was needed to place a similar change in state law on the ballot.

Detroit will resist any effort to regionalize the DWSD. In a 1981 interview, Beckham called the system one of Detroit's greatest civic prides.

FINALLY, KUHN will try to enlist the aid of Oakland County Executive Daniel T. Murphy, who also holds the title of chairman of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments. Murphy was out of town at the beginning of the week.

SEMCOG, a seven-county planning agency, appoints some board members of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority and the Aracawide Water Quality Board.

Past reports commissioned by Michigan Governors Romney and Milliken have proposed that SEMCOG be an "umbrella" agency for the appointment of regional authorities, coordination of their policies and perusal of their budgets.

**Teachers union lauds Blanchard on budget**

Officials of the Michigan Education Association commended Gov. James Blanchard for advancing "bold and honest proposals to solve the state's fiscal plight."

"We think he has a realistic grasp of the severity of the problem and has outlined a direct and realistic approach to solving the problems at hand," said MEA President Keith Gelger.

Blanchard proposed a 1.5 percent increase in the state personal income tax rate for operations and a 0.25 percent increase to pay of past bills. Current

rate is 4.6 percent.

"We believe his proposals include solutions which will go far toward finally solving the fiscal problem and will make Michigan solvent again instead of putting yet another Band-Aid on an already-gaping wound," said Gelger.

The association, whose local members are bargaining agents for most suburban and outstate teachers, said it was pleased to hear the governor's commitment to solving the cash-flow problem.

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