

editorial opinion

Ross deserves board tap as unifying president

Squeak, squeak!

You could hear the votes rub against one another in the Farmington school board central office Monday evening as the tally was being made for trustee race. Only 59 votes separated first place winner Helen Prutow from third place loser Bud Pickett.

Incumbent Merv Ross had some uneasy moments, too, as he squeezed to a second place victory, outdistancing Pickett by 36 votes.

ALTHOUGH IT was a close race, the results indicate a definite voter preference. The defeat of Board President Bill Corliss shows that voters were fed up with the incompetent leadership he provided.

Re-election of Ross, on the other hand, demonstrates that voters want an experienced voice on the board to lead the Farmington educational system out of its quagmire.

That's why Ross should be elected board president by his peers.

Political protocol calls for the elevation of Anne Struble to president. She now serves as vice president.

But protocol should be ignored. Mrs. Struble's performance gives solid reason to believe she would be less than adequate as president.

The board is at a critical juncture. It needs to re-establish its credibility in the community. One major reason the millage increase request went down to defeat was that voters have lost confidence in the general performance of the board.



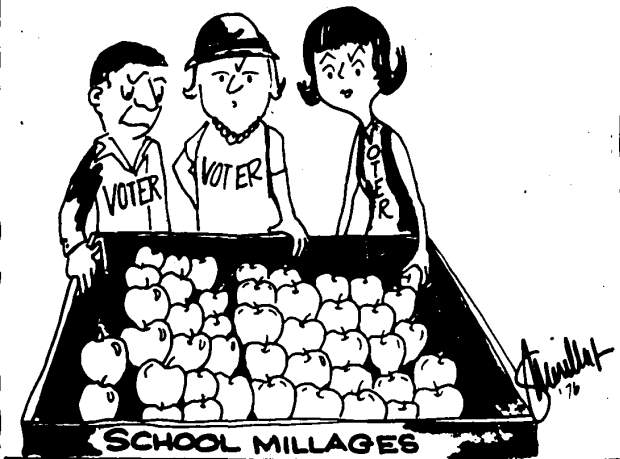
After all, who would want to entrust their tax dollars to a mob of seven which can barely approve the minutes of the previous meeting?

ROSS DOUBTS he can get enough support from his colleagues, because of political alliances opposing him. Those political alliances, too, should be cast aside for the sake of the district.

Although no one is a perfect trustee, Ross has matured. He is capable of providing the much needed leadership.

It's time the board ceased its personal bickering. Too much is at stake. Trustees like Mike Shippee and Emma Makinen should bury the hatchet and back Ross. Other trustees should forget their own political ambitions for the time and also cast their votes for Ross.

SOME WERE RIPE - SOME WEREN'T.



Voters pick and choose

Local school elections are usually the best weathervane of public opinion, and Monday's voting throughout the metropolitan Detroit suburbs was no exception.

Some results and then some conclusions.

All 16 suburban school districts which had millage renewals on their ballots saw them succeed. Conclusion is that local voters are comfortable about supporting their local schools at past levels of taxation.

Thirty-one millage increases were voted on, 15 passed and 16 failed. Conclusion is that voters were prepared to pick and choose among tax increases, according as local needs and conditions varied.

THE TWO BIGGEST requests for additional millage—8.3 mills in Royal Oak and six mills in Lake Shore—were passed. Obviously, voters in these districts concluded that failure to pass the increased millage would have left their school systems in a state of collapse. They were not prepared to accept, and so they voted yes.

The three smallest millage increases on the ballot—0.53 mills for Schoolcraft Community College, 0.5 in Van Buren and one mill in Lake Shore—all failed. Equally obviously, voters in these districts felt that the millages requested were not centrally important in the future health of the educational program they were to have supported. Weighing the comparatively small educational benefit against the comparatively small increase in taxes, voters chose to keep their money.

Of the 26 intermediate-sized millage increase questions on the Monday ballot, voters split evenly, approving 13 and turning down 13.

Locally, voters in Avondale, Birmingham, Livonia, Southfield, West Bloomfield and Walled Lake school districts passed the requested increases, several doing it the second time around. In these communities, school officials were successful in pointing out that cost inflation and cuts in state aid made increased local school taxes a necessity if class size, hours and educational programs were to be preserved.

The local school districts where millage increases were rejected—Farmington, Plymouth and Garden City—all have particular problems which helped deafen the ears of voters to the millage appeal.

The Farmington school board couldn't get together on what would be cut if the millage failed. Plymouth has been embroiled in a fight over a football coach's resignation, among other things. Garden City—historically a staunch supporter of its local school system—has been a fractured community ever since a bitter teachers strike in 1975.

Observation Point

by PHILIP H. POWER



THE RESULTS of Monday's voting tend to lend support for the argument that teacher strikes are counterproductive when local taxpayers are asked to ante up after the settlement.

Garden City, Plymouth and Livonia all experienced strikes within the past two years. Voters in the Livonia district turned down the millage increase the first time around, and voters in the other two both rejected millage increases Monday.

Last fall, both Farmington and Southfield districts went right to the start of school before working out settlements with their teachers. Farmington's request for millage lost, and Southfield's won only narrowly after an ill-advised attempt by property owners to put out an anonymous leaflet against the millage back fired.

THE FAILURE of voters in the district supporting Schoolcraft College—Livonia, Plymouth, Garden City, Clarenceville and Northville—was particularly disappointing to college officials.

Schoolcraft has been doing an excellent job lifting the sights of local residents, and officials there hoped the 0.53 mill issue would pass on the grounds that it was small compared to increases asked by K-12 districts.

But what happened is that the Schoolcraft millage failed in those K-12 districts which had a local millage on the ballot and paid where no local taxes were at issue. The millage elections brought out the "no" voters.

OVER ALL, the pattern is encouraging to those of us who feel that quality of education in our local school is important to the quality of our life. Last year, you may recall, the taxpayer revolt was in white heat. No millage increases were passed, and even some renewals were defeated.

This year, voters were independent-minded, basing their votes on local needs. What they seem to be saying is:

Yes, let's support our local schools and keep educational quality reasonably high. But we will not dig into our pocketbooks where there does not seem to be full justification.

That's a sensible attitude.

Citizen-politician must get used to the sunshine

Maybe our beloved George Romney was a little bit to blame.

In all his public life, Romney exalted the role of the citizen-politician, the person who led a private life and gave part of his time to public affairs, the way a religious person lites his salary to his church.

While most folks in Oakland County are governed by part-time elected officials, and prefer it: those part-time officials sometimes get into the habit of thinking of themselves as a little bit different from the full timers. Part-timers particularly want a relaxed set of rules when it comes to conducting the public business in public meetings.

YOU COULDN'T HELP getting that impression in following the debate over the "open meetings" bills in the Michigan Legislature.

Chairman Tom Brown (D-Westland) and his house towns and counties committee were placed under a tremendous amount of pressure for special consideration from persons who served on city councils, township boards and school boards that met only weekly or twice a month.

The common argument was that citizen-politicians needed secret meetings because they weren't professional politicians and that's the way you did it in the business world—a h'l of quiet chat.

It gave you an appreciation for the professional politician who is used to operating in bright light and calmly dealt with the give and take of frank and open debate.



Tim Richard

If an open meetings bill allows one subject to be discussed in secret, rest assured the board will discuss two subjects. If the law allows two subjects, the board will discuss four; if it allows three, the board will discuss nine.

All of the foregoing may be covered as a put-down of part-time public officials for their secretive habits. That is not my intention.

First, one ought not to condemn all part-time officials for the secrecy sins of a majority.

Second, despite their lack of confidence in their own abilities to conduct all public business in public, our local part-timers are probably capable of obeying such a law; their ability to survive in daylight is far greater than they themselves realize.

Finally, plain citizens here should pat their friendly state legislators on the back to stiffen their spines and get them to pass Substitute Senate Bill 920 without a lot of loopholes. Sunshine is good for children, adults and government.

Airline, rail costs up

How regulations feed on themselves

Government Regulation III

In the last two columns, we discussed at length how government regulation has unfairly taken cyclamates off the market, to the detriment of the public, and how DDT has been banned as a pesticide when existing evidence shows it is not harmful, with the Pacific northwest suffering more than \$50 billion in damages to its forests as a result.

Another problem with governmental regulation is that it breeds regulation.

Thomas E. Kauper, assistant U.S. attorney general in charge of anti-trust, testified before a Senate subcommittee hearing on how regulation started in the air transportation field.

LATE IN THE '30s, the government experimented with different ways of handling a system for

Eccentricities

by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.



subsidizing the air transportation of mail. In 1930, Congress granted the postmaster general broad powers over the routes, rates and practices of carriers hauling air mail under government contract.

Kauper explained: "The predominance of mail over passenger service was rapidly diminishing, however, and, by 1937, air carrier income from passenger service was twice as great as mail income. Unregulated carriers, without air mail contracts, began to compete with air mail carriers, who naturally complained about their unregulated competitors' greater economic freedom."

Thereupon, the Interstate Commerce Commission pushed for extension of economic regulation over all air carriers, under the general theory that it is unfair and "chaotic" for unregulated firms to be allowed to compete with their regulated counterparts.

tended its sway to motor trucks and water carriers, too.

Because of this regulation, American consumers are financially penalized.

IN TWO PARTS of the United States, Texas and California, unregulated intrastate carriers flourish. These operations can be compared to those of their CAB-controlled counterparts.

The contrasts are striking. In the relatively free California intrastate market, fares range from 4.76 cents to 7.31 cents per passenger mile. On the east coast, where there is federal regulation, the cost of similar hauls runs from 8.63 to 11.6 cents per passenger mile.

An equally striking disparity shows up in the Texas intrastate market, where Southwest Airlines, a carrier licensed solely by the Texas Aeronautics Commission, competes with Braniff Airways and Texas International Airways, both CAB regulated carriers.

ALTHOUGH IT didn't get off the ground for nearly four years because of judicial challenges by Braniff and Texas International, Southwest Airlines now serves the Golden Triangle (Dallas, Austin and Houston) at a profit, charging fares which average 20 to 50 per cent less than comparable CAB-regulated tariffs.

In a study for the Brookings Institution, it was concluded that, in 1969, air passengers paid excess fares to domestic trunk airlines regulated by the CAB ranging between \$366 million and \$538 million.

The question, then, has to be raised: For whose benefit are the airlines being regulated?

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