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Dems miffed at 'WASP' appointees

By SHIRLEE IDEN

When Mary Low was confirmed as the latest gubernatorial appointee for the Michigan Women's Commission, it was made clear to the governor that confirmation was made under duress.

Ms. Low was confirmed on Tuesday after two state legislators and a number of concerned women sharply criticized the choice.

It is not that Ms. Low is unqualified. It is simply that she is another Republican woman, white, upper middle class and also an employee of the State Labor Department.

Democrats Daniel Cooper (Southfield-Farmington) and William Faust (Garden City-Westland) charged that the 15 women panel is being stacked with Republican women and upper middle class whites.

Women from a number of areas in the state, many walks of life and including two Republicans, also voiced their objections.

Cooper and Faust both urged broader representation and Faust termed the governor's action "a travesty of the law."

"The preponderance of Republicans on the commission indicates the Women's Commission is becoming an arm of the Republican Party," he said.

Cooper said the issue is the governor's insensitivity to including all segments of society on this commission. He said Ms. Low's confirmation must be termed to be "by default."

"SHE HAS impeccable credentials, but we're upset with the governor for making such an appointment. We will reject any further appointments unless they are more representative."

"The white, anglo-saxon point of view is already there, but it shouldn't be the only point of view."

Cooper explained that four more appointments will be forthcoming shortly from the governor. He said he would like to see them go to Democrats, blacks, and ethnics.

The Michigan Women's Commission was established in 1968 and is made up of 15 members appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate.

"I think what the commission has become is a token," said Annetta Miller of the State Board of Education.

"My relationship with them has been that they are ineffective. To put insensitive people on such a commission makes it a farce. It would be better if men were on it if they were sensitive to women's problems."

Ms. Lavin Blesener, the governor's advisor on women's rights said the governor always "tries to get the right representation."

"But women's issues transcend political lines," she said.

She stated the commission has representatives of business, labor, health, law, government and the self-employed, but admitted the one black on the panel is leaving for a federal appointment and there is no Jewish person represented.

SHE ADDED that one member is anti-abortion and two are anti-ERA (Equal Rights Amendment).

Ms. Lorraine Beebe, author of the legislation, that originally implemented the commissions said women from groups like HOW (Happiness of Women) who oppose the ERA and

abortion and other women's issues don't belong on the commission at all.

"They have one stand and that's to be against everything proposed as important to women's concerns," she said. "And they're a very small minority."

She added the governor appointed two such women and both are Republicans.

Mrs. Beebe, a Republican herself, also terms herself "independent" and a "feminist." She said she has not been happy with the governor's actions in regard to the Women's Commission.

"There was a rumor the governor would appoint Elaine Donnelly of HOW and women all across the state protested," she said. "This is the exact opposite of what the commission stands for. It's not a negative commission."

Michigan became the first state in the nation to establish a commission to review the status of women back in the early 1960s after President Kennedy called together a similar committee.

Then Gov. John Swainson followed the example here with a panel to look into every facet of women's life. Mrs. Beebe said.

"When Romney became governor, the commission fell and he opposed another. I proposed legislation in 1967 for a new commission and it passed. It had the same goals as the original Kennedy concept."

Mrs. Beebe was chairman of the commission from 1972 to 1973 and commission members have special interests," she said. "The commission should be a catalyst or umbrella to look for leadership to solve problems, not just for organizations, but for individual women."

She pointed out that Ms. Low is employed by the Department of Labor and in that capacity deals with proposed legislation from the Labor Department which Mrs. Beebe thinks may be a conflict of interest.

Lee Kefauver is a Republican woman who also went to Lansing to speak against Ms. Low's appointment.

"I've gone to all the meetings of the Women's Commission in the last year," she said. "And I'm appalled at how different it is from what it once was. Since 1972 when they got a funded staff they had been doing a terrific job. They got information on bills that pertained to women and were a marvelous clearing house."

"THEY HAD a diverse group of women that worked well together. Then about 1973, we were informed that the governor's office was not going on appointments to commissions."

There are almost 2000 commissions of various sorts in the state and she said 89 of them have no women and 39 just one woman member.

"About 1975, the governor began to add only Republicans to the Women's Commissions and I got the word from commissioners who were upset about every meeting."

Ms. Kefauver said the women on the current commission are "all upper middle class women who live in a world of their own."

"Only four of them know what it means to worry about money," she said.

At one meeting someone raised the PBB problem and the chairwoman, Patricia Hill Burnett said, "What's PBB?" We felt we had to give help to nursing mothers affected by PBB but the governor's liaison came back to us and said "There's no problem..."

Ms. Kefauver added the commission has been "pulled off lobbying" despite the legislative mandate that calls for the commission to lobby.

Her own criticism of the Low appointment is that Ms. Low works for Keith Molin in the Labor Department whom she terms "the governor's political hatchet man."

Ms. Kefauver charges that the current make-up of the commission includes 11 Republicans, one Democrat and three independents, but Ms. Blesener disputes that saying only seven are Republicans.

State senators agreed that several minority categories of women are not adequately represented.

Montessori school opens new facility

Birmingham Montessori Center is moving from Franklin Road in Birmingham to a new building at 2965 Walnut Lake Road in West Bloomfield for the start of the new school year.

The new school facility is scheduled to open Sept. 12 offering instruction for preschoolers, kindergarten and elementary age children. Extended hours will be offered for working parents.

Extra-curriculum activities at the new site will include music, art, foreign language and gymnastics.

Director of the school is David Weinberg, Weinberg, with his wife, were among those responsible for launching of the Birmingham Montessori Center in 1967 as a nonprofit organization. They also operate a second school in Dravon Plains.

Weinberg is president of the board of the American Montessori Society. The Montessori education technique was introduced in the United States in 1912 with one of the early schools being established by Alexander Graham Bell in his own home.

Band auditions

Student tryouts for the Farmington Community Concert Band will be at 7:30 on Sept. 6 at Harrison High School. Adults need not audition, but should attend the first full rehearsal at the same time and place on Sept. 13.

The band performs 11 months a year, presenting programs for senior citizens, pop concerts, the Farmington Festival and other events.

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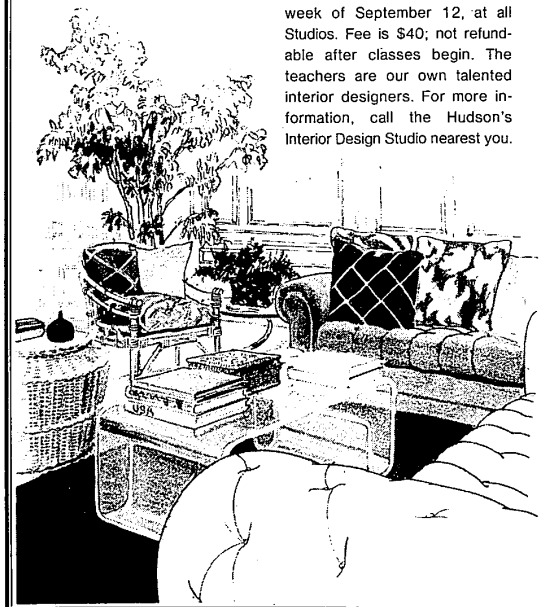
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