

New Dem caucus vote aims 'to clear air' in Senate

By TIM RICHARD

They admitted the 3 1/2 hour Senate Democratic caucus was better, heated, spirited and punctuated by strong language. But neither Sen. William Faust (D-Eastland) nor Sen. Daniel Cooper (D-Oak Park) will openly criticize Majority Leader William Fitzgerald, who received a barrage Thursday night for his members of running the legislature's upper house.

"I made the motion that we hold new elections for all caucus positions at the end of the current session," said Faust, who himself is affected.

THE DEMOCRATS will hold a new election then for the leader's post, assistant pro tem (currently John Bowman of Roseville), assistant president pro tem (Jack Faxon of Detroit), assistant majority leader (Faust), floor leader (Cooper) and caucus chairman (Michael O'Brien of Detroit), along with three assistant floor leaders.

"What it does is give the caucus the opportunity to cleanse itself. This will clear the air," said Faust, whose district includes Garden City and Canton Township.

"There is some bitterness. There are some senators who are totally pleased. I want to check out the charges. I never openly complained about his leadership," said Faust.

FITZGERALD, as nearly everyone

knows, would like to run for governor in 1978. There is no blame when he finds himself introduced to audiences as "the next governor."

The trouble came when former Democratic staffer Frank Lee quit and made written letters to the senators complaining that Fitzgerald was monopolizing staff time and encouraging staff members to spy on each other.

The leadership position is the kind where one has vast opportunities to make enemies, Faust and Cooper agreed.

"BECAUSE OF the nature of the job," said Cooper, "Bill had to say 'no' to a lot of people. That's frankly why a lot of people don't want that job."

"He's competent. He works very, very hard. I think perhaps he has rubbed some people the wrong way. 'I've never had any trouble with Bill at all,' said Cooper, whose district includes Southfield and Farmington.

Faust added, "The leadership is a managerial job. Anyone with ambitions for

higher office shouldn't be in that position because it's his to keep your personal ambitions and your leadership duties separated."

Fitzgerald is a capable leader and a bright star in the Democratic Party, if he sometimes don't trip him up.

"My mind's open," Faust said.

THE CAUCUS had been sought by Sen. Patrick McCullough of Dearborn, himself harboring gubernatorial ambitions.

Fitzgerald, 34, was elected majority leader his first day as a senator in 1973. He had earlier served two terms in the house.

As leader, he appoints committees, sets legislative priorities, serves as spokesman for the party position, and chairs the senate personnel committee, where he can exercise great power over staff appointments and promotions.

One Republican senator, who asked to remain anonymous, frankly calls Fitzgerald "arrogant" and tells of a University of Michigan graduate student, entering in the leader's office, whom Fitzgerald asked to give him a shoeshine.

Judge, prosecutor hopefuls meet public

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Oakland County residents may attend a Judge and Prosecutors' candidates night Oct. 14 in Birmingham. The 7:30 p.m. meeting, sponsored by Southfield Homeowners' Tax Association, Citizens' Tax Council and Taxpayers United, will be in First Baptist Church on Bates and Willet, one block north of Maple Road.

Candidates for Oakland County circuit judge in the Nov. 2 general election will each give a brief presentation and answer questions from the audience.

They include Birmingham District Judge Alice Gilbert, Southfield District Judge James Clarkson, Royal Oak District Judge Francis N. O'Brien, David Breck of Birmingham, Robert Carr of Waterford, Bernard Kaufman of West Bloomfield, incumbent Circuit Judge James Thorburn

and Robert Webster and circuit court appointee Steven Andrews, who seeks a two-year term.

Also appearing will be Republican Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson and his Democratic opponent Timothy Dunan of Troy.

"IT'S VERY important the voters meet the candidates instead of relying on billboard names," said Gregory Kennedy, president of the Southfield Homeowners' Tax Association and Citizens Tax Council and vice-chairman of Taxpayers United.

GOP's Elliott praises Dem prosecutor

Oakland County Republican chairman Arthur G. Elliott said Wayne County prosecutor William Cabahan is Democratic has rendered "an important public service" by focusing public attention on the need for mandatory prison sentences for persons convicted of serious felonies.

"Cabahan's disclosure that 46 per cent of all convicted felons never lose a day of their freedom points the central problem with our courts," Elliott said.

Elliott made his remarks in support of an Oakland County Republican Executive Committee platform plank that also calls for mandatory prison terms for felons.

"The law must be just," Elliott asserted. "But if it is to have a deterring influence on potential offenders, it must also be certain."

"And this is the tragic failure of our present handling of convicted felons. The courts fail to deter, because they fail to punish with any reasonable degree of certainty and uniformity," he added.

Elliott said a uniform imposition of mandatory prison sentences is essential, "if we are to avert a complete breakdown in our criminal justice system."

He added he was "encouraged that the two most influential prosecutors in the metropolitan area, Cabahan of Wayne County and L. Brooks Patterson of Oakland County, are in agreement on this important issue."

Group homes needed for the retarded

The Macomb-Oakland Regional Center (MORC) is in need of group home facilities for mentally retarded citizens, according to Norm Belanger, MORC coordinator of group home development.

"Group home facilities typically house 12 or fewer clients and offer a semi-independent living arrangement," Belanger said. "Builders or investors of new construction projects also are encouraged to contact our agency," he adds.

MORC contracts with a non-profit agency, which leases the group home facility. The facility should be in good repair, have three or more bedrooms with a minimum of 140 square feet per bedroom.

Barrier-free design group homes for clients confined to wheelchairs are especially needed. These facilities should have such conveniences as wide doorways, ramps in place of steps, and ground floor accommodations.

If you have a group home facility for sale or lease, contact Norm Belanger at MORC, 18200 Nineteen Mile Road, Mt. Clemens.

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