

Oakland's leaders seek large-scale solutions

editorial opinion

Oakland County does more than run a courthouse. Not dominated by any one city as are Wayne, Washtenaw, Genesee and other urban counties, Oakland's government has developed a host of countywide services and innovations.

By re-electing the incumbent officeholders regardless of party, voters on Nov. 3 can continue that problem-solving kind of progress.

County Executive Daniel T. Murphy, first person in Michigan to hold that title, has a dream of unified county administration under responsive, responsible leadership. We share that dream. Murphy's every move has been to strengthen the executive's hand—not for the sake of promoting himself but for the sake of orderly administration. In the process, he has made a few tactical mistakes and some enemies. But Murphy, a Republican, has defended the faith from attackers in both parties. Mr. Oakland County deserves a full four-year term to continue the work.

Democratic challenger Philip Mastin has been a progressive county commissioner and legislator (the land use bill) and a credit to Oakland, and Murphy could take a few hints from Mastin's style.

Sheriff Johannes Spreen is taking an antiquated law enforcement agency and turning it into an efficient crime-fighting force. The work isn't complete, but Democrat Spreen has been successful enough to warrant another four years in office.

The incumbent sheriff is also seeking to establish a working relationship with local police—but a relationship based on professionalism rather than cynicism.

This newspaper questioned Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson's priorities when he first won

that office four years ago. We still do. His high-publicity approach to prostitution, welfare cheating and pornography has sometimes wasted time and resources that could have been devoted to more serious crimes.

Although he has commercialized crime and played on public fear, Patterson has become a popular figure and will probably be returned to office.

We hope Patterson, if re-elected, will pursue more aggressively organized crime, habitual criminals, drug problems and the elimination of plea bargaining. He has touched on these areas, but they need more attention.

We don't want a society ruled by fear, but we do want one free of crime.

Drain Commissioner George W. Kuhn has the background and the administrative expertise to continue in the job to which he was elected four years ago. When Kuhn pledges to continue fighting Detroit water and sewer rate hikes, to streamline county government, to promote environmental preservation and to respond to residents' problems, we know Republican Kuhn will keep his word.

Deserving a third term, Treasurer Hugh Dohany brings much background (he was once Southfield city treasurer) and a long string of accomplishments into his work.

Republican Dohany has invested county funds

in all Oakland banks, was first in Michigan to establish data processing for tax billings, opened a branch office to bring convenient services to residents and helped earn the county a strong rating from financial institutions which helps hold down interest rates.

The County Clerks Association of Michigan

WHAT PRICE SAFETY?



Public willing to pay

The price is repression

The drama unfolds. Three black youths are arrested for breaking into a fur store in Birmingham.

A call comes to the Birmingham Police Department saying that in revenge for the arrests, members of a gang from Detroit are coming to blow up the Birmingham police station and rape the city.

In the meantime, five black students from a local private high school go downtown with an instructor to see the local movie.

The obvious clash occurs when the local police stop them at gunpoint and search them for weapons.

THEY SAY it can never happen in America, the land of the free and the home of the brave. But it does happen in America, and I'm afraid it will happen more and more.

People in the suburbs are afraid to go to downtown Detroit at night after the recent gang activities.

If people are afraid to walk the streets of a city, something has to be done or the city dies. The only quick way to stop it is repression.

SINCE THE EARLY '60s, we have gone through an era of protecting civil liberties. Judges have become sociologists instead of defenders of the laws.

Police have interpreted court decisions as so restricting them that a lot of them don't really try very hard to keep the bad guys off the streets.

It is now quite clear that the big story about the forthcoming election will not be who won and who lost. Rather, it will be in the attitude of the people: cynical; turned off; resigned; angry; depressed.

There is no better way of measuring the extent of public disillusionment with the workings of our political system than examining voter turnout and registration data. In 1960, the year of the now-legendary Nixon-Kennedy debates, the voter turnout was 64 per cent. In 1972, the year of the Nixon landslide, 55 per cent of those eligible voted. This year, experts forecast that less than half of eligible voters will actually go to the polls.

Voter registration numbers are equally depressing. Of those old enough to vote, 77 per cent were registered in 1960, 75 per cent in 1972, and only 71 per cent this year.

THE VOTERS are telling the politicians something: They don't like what's going on, and as a result they are dropping out of the system. In my view, one of the reasons the public is so disillusioned is that, while producing a lot of talk, the politicians are failing to talk about the right things.

HENCE the following list of unasked questions which should have been discussed during this campaign:

1) In what direction should the country be headed during the next decade? It's not enough to stress love and a government as good as the people are, or to talk about maintaining the stability of the dollar. America has always been a nation with a special, ennobling mission.

2) How can we achieve consensus in America, in an environment increasingly permeated by the shrill, self-serving demands of endlessly proliferating special interest groups? Without a national mission, we cannot develop a framework of unity within our country against which the needs of individual groups in our society can be balanced.

thought enough of Clerk-Register of Deeds Lynn D. Allen to have him serve as president last year.

Allen is an innovator: he has streamlined circuit court record retrieval procedures, developed the first on-line computerized court system in the country, built an impressive attendance record at board of commissioners' meetings—and still remained accessible to the public.

If he wins a third term, Allen can be expected to work to improve records facilities in satellite offices—a prudent move, especially for the south and west parts of the county.

4 stand out in Circuit Court judges contest

Eight persons are competing for four positions on the 6th Circuit Court bench serving Oakland County. Judges are paid \$41,959 and serve six-year terms.

The two incumbents merit re-election.

Judge James Thorburn has distinguished himself during his time on the circuit bench. He has gained a reputation for being a tough but fair jurist.

Judge Robert Webster is respected in the legal profession for the sound reasoning of his decisions.

Alice Gilbert, an excellent and firm judge in the 48th District Court in Birmingham, has shown herself worthy of promotion. She would also bring some balance to the all-male bench.

David Breck, an activist in human relations causes, would add that ingredient to the circuit court. He is a former chairman of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority, has been a Birmingham city commissioner for 14 years and would contribute governmental as well as legal experience.

A—Please ban throwaways

Michigan's roadsides and parks weren't perfectly clean before the advent of throwaway beverage bottles and cans in the '60s, but the litter problem then was a fraction of what it is today.

Proposal A, by the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, would ban throwaway beer and soft drink containers and detachable openers on containers. And it would set up a deposit system for those beverage bottles.

It's a shame Proposal A is necessary. But the truth is that trying to implore slobs with TV commercials of a crying Indian, and threatening litterers with \$100 fines, have failed to work.

Requiring deposits will make it very expensive for the slobs to litter; it will also make it profitable for concerned kids and adults to retrieve and redeem those valuable deposit bottles.

Opposing Proposal A, the litter lobby has conducted such an outrageous campaign that most voters have been turned off. Its key argument is that deposit bottles would force prices up. Actually, anyone who has done comparison shopping knows that prices of deposit beer and pop are nearly always cheaper than the same beverages in throwaway containers.

Every public poll, scientific or casual, has shown the voters are 70 to 80 per cent in favor of banning throwaways. Voters shouldn't be fooled by the expensive campaign of the litter lobby.

The litter problem has become intolerable. Proposal A is the first antidote that seems likely to work. It should be strongly supported on the Nov. 2 ballot.

B—Want younger legislators?

Proposal B, by State Rep. Jackie Vaughan III of Detroit, would change the rules under which we elect state legislators.

Historically, Michigan has said any registered voter could become a state legislator. That makes sense because voters can initiate and hold referendums on state laws, just like legislators.

The 1964 state constitution put both the voting and legislating ages at 21. Since then, the U.S. Constitution has been amended to lower the voting age to 18, but it didn't change the age for legislators, which is still 21.

Proposal B would restore Michigan's historic principle by lowering the age for legislators to 18. It's a logical change and merits support.

To those who say legislators need more education and experience than the typical 18-year-old has, we reply: Let the voters make that decision, candidate by candidate. Experience with school board candidates in the 18-20 bracket shows us few will be elected, but the winners will be of high caliber.

The other part of Proposal B would require that a legislative candidate be a resident of the district in which he wishes to run. At present, the constitution requires only that he be a resident the day he takes office. The part of B would be a step toward preventing carpebagging and political opportunism.

The second part of Proposal B is good, too, and we urge a yes vote on the entire proposition.

C—Poor constitutional law

At first glance, Proposal C, supported by Taxpayers United and spawned by Reagan-style conservatives, has a certain superficial charm. The heart of Proposal C is to limit state taxes and spending to 8.3 per cent of total personal income. Beneath the surface charm, however, lies a horde of bugs.

Proposal C is just plain poor constitutional law. Taxing and spending are matters for the legislature and governor, and for voter initiatives and referendums. The constitution is simply no place for the kind of taxing and spending limits that Proposal C promises, however alluring the promises may be.

Most folks are happy to pay taxes as long as they feel they're getting something for those taxes. It's illogical, then, to set an 8.3 per cent lid

(why 8.3 anyway?) on future generations.

A better solution would be for citizens to ride herd on their friendly state legislators, turning them out of office when they spend too freely.

Passage of Proposal C would have two bad after-effects. Local officials, particularly in schools, would put immense pressures on voters to raise property taxes to make up for frozen state spending; and lobbyists for more spending would look to Washington, with its gravy train in the form of the graduated income tax.

Finally, Proposal C is immensely complicated—just defining its terms would consume many pages—and the complications would only result in a multiplicity of lawsuits. We urge defeat for Proposal C.

D—Mixed emotions on taxes

We have mixed emotions on Proposal D, the Michigan Citizens Lobby plan to lower state income taxes for persons with incomes under \$20,000 (plus exemptions), raise them for the rest of us, and remove the ban on a graduated income tax.

The idea of allowing a graduated income tax is attractive. Among trained economists, 90 per cent would favor a graduated income tax as the fairest possible system.

Unfortunately, in an effort to woo voters, Proposal D's backers came up with a gimmick by which 85 per cent of the population would get a tax cut and 15 per cent would get stuck with the

bill. The whole idea smacks of a cynical "soak the rich," "them against us," "vote yourself a living" philosophy.

True, after the first year, the legislature would be free to make adjustments. But the precedent set by Proposal D would be so powerful that we would likely be stuck with such rates for a long time. And in time, that 15 per cent of the population who would pick up the tab for the rest would likely grow to 20 per cent; then 25; then 30.

There are some advantages to a graduated income tax, but we are sorry we cannot subscribe to the kind of cold, calculating politics evidenced in Proposal D. We recommend voting against it.

Farmington Observer

Division of
SUBURBAN COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION

STEVE BARNABY, Editor
1532 5400

HENRY M. HOGAN, JR., Co-Publisher
PHILIP H. POWER, Co-Publisher

JOHN REDDY, Executive Editor
ARTHUR LANGER, Advertising Sales Manager

Member of
MICHIGAN PRESS ASSOCIATION
SUBURBAN NEWSPAPERS OF AMERICA
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION

Observation Point

by PHILIP H. POWER

3) What's leadership, and how can it be discussed without individual politicians falling into the trap of over-promising? Neither Mr. Ford nor Mr. Carter has really talked about the subtle processes by which they propose to lead the country. Will they try to run the entire government, a la Mr. Nixon? Will they try to set priorities? Will they concentrate on articulating a vision for America?

4) What's politics all about, anyway? As I watched the debates, my disgust with the increasingly transparent efforts of both candidates to manipulate blocs of votes rose with the lateness of the hour. If candidates insist on manipulating people like unthinking symbols in an algebra equation, the people will begin to react in kind and turn off those who insist on manipulating them.

5) How to get competent people to become involved in public service? No government can be run by one man, no matter how able or charismatic. The real guts of our governmental system rests in the willingness of ordinary, capable people to participate in it. At present, between the ravaging advance of the press to invade and destroy the private lives of public servants and the neurotic demands of the political system for unreasonable allocations of an individual's time, the system is set up to provide enormous disincentives against reasonable people getting involved.

That's a short list, but an important one. Regrettably, this year, the discussion around the issues it raises has been nothing more than the sound of silence.