Honorariums for his honor?

Lawyers fill judicial campaign coffers

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI
(First of two articles)
You're interested in a successful
career as a lawyer?
Mayne and Ostanda counties, it
follows to be a successful
to be

thors are some of the same lawyers who practice before the judges regularly contribute, some members of the legal commandy say, good fortune will smile upon you and your clients. If you don't, your clients, if you don't, your clients, if you don't, your campaign contributions, critics claim, judges can deliver favorable rulings and dole out hierative court assignments.

There are, of course, those who say "Bah, Humbug" and "Hogwash." Members of the legal establishemnt, said West Bloomfield attorney Stuart Brickner, are reluctant to correct the system even though "everyone knows what's going on." No one wants to kill the goose that lays the golden egg." says Brickner, who has devoted years to studying the

who has devoted years us studying tue-situation. He has run for Oakland County Cir-cuit Court three times and has tried to raise the judge-lawyer money pipeling for the bench. He says Oakland County's tegal establishment and powerbrokers' have worked against his campaigns in the past.

NO ONE DENIES that lawyers pump vast amounts of money into judicial campaigns—especially the relection drives of incumbents. In the judicial elections of 1974 and 1976, for example, attorneys Bruce Leitman, Stanley W. Kurzman and Richard 'A. Campbell contributed more than \$3,000 to a number of candidates.

Richard A. Campbell contributed more than \$3.00 to a number of candidates. In the elections of 1972 and 1974, attorneys Walter R. Denison, Daniel C. Devine, Gerald R. Bartush and C. Devine, Gerald R. Bartush and to candidates for Oxford Court, Pro-cuit Court, Probate Court, the state Appeals Court and Supreme Court. Oxford Court, Probate Court, the State Appeals Court and Supreme Court. Oxford Court, or Birmingham, raised nearly 580,000 for her primary and general election campaigns in 1976. Much of that morey came from attorneys. No studies, however, have been done establishing any definite connections establishing any definite connections preferential treatment. "In an election year, I and a lot of other attorneys spend thousands of others," and Judith Denneyb Doran, a candidate for the Oakland County Cruit Court bench in November. "I'm not sure they (the contributions) are at all helpidu to my practice." She estimates that she sends are all playing to my practice." She estimates that she sends and facility to various podicial candidates in any one election year.

Energy plan to face public

The state Public Service Commission and the energy administration of the state Commerce Department will hold a hearing in Detroit Sept. 26 on the state's plan for coping with energy energencies. The hearing will run 1:307:30 pp.m. City-County Building audiorium, 2 Woodward.



STUART H. BRICKNER

LAWYERS AND JUDGES say there's nothing wrong with the system. They say very few people take any interest in judicial races and it's up to them to put the best and the brightest on the bench.

Most lawyers uniformly discount the calling of judges they deal of the properties of the properties of judges, including Brickner and Mrs. Doran, is trying to implement a system to end the stumping for campaign money which accompanies every judicial race. Even members of the "Pair Committee." however, say the abuses are few and far between.

Their main concern is the judi-

Their main concern is the judi-ciary's public image.

"SUPPOSE YOUR LAWVER had made no contributions to a judge hearing your case!" suggest Wayne Courty Circuit Court Judge Victor J. Baum, of Livoria, chairman of the ad hoc Fair Committee.
"Say the other lawyer made a contribution of \$350. Say all the judge's calls were pretty much against you. Or say the decision went against you. What would you think?
"What does it do to the public's confidence?"

"What does it do to the public's condidence?"
A judge may not overtly throw a case, warns Baum, a 21-year veeran of the Wayne County Circuit Court bench.
Very subtly, he says, a judge commake life easier for a lawyer who has helped grease his election skids.
"Suppose there's a lawyer who's just great at final arguments. That's his strength and evrybody knows it. Then there's another lawyer, who happened to contribute to the relection campaign. This lawyer's just so-so at oral argument.

paign. This lawyer's just so-so at our argument.
"The judge decides that there'll only as four minutes for final arguments. Why, that's not enough time for the dynamite speaker to get warmed up. It'd be a definite advantage to the campaign contributor," he sostions. Baum likes to speak in suppositions. Baum likes to speak in suppositions, the believes there are actually very few abuses. Most of them, he says the abuses. Most of them, he says the abuses and a potent's and Wayne County's courts.

BRICKNER IS MORE direct. He says point blank that Judges "reward" lawyers who outribute to their campaign warchests, "What happens," he says, "is the incumbents have the lawyers to use as a base. They have patronage to dole a base. They have patronage to dole their campaign of the same way as government does."

estates as well as the customary appointments to handle indigent cases. Judges can also determine how much money in fees the lawyer will receive. In some cases, Bricher says, judges can even 'order fees above the statutory limit, but the statutor

ONCE AGAIN, established lawyers and judges discount such charges. "Brichene is wrong," one Oakland County lawyer said flatly. "If a business is in financial trouble and a receiver is appointed—there's darn good fees in that," he said, "But I doubt if a judge would have enough constitutions.

contributors.

As for assignments to indigent defendents in criminal cases, Oakland County Circuit Court Chief Judge Ste-

ven Andrews said they are not that frequent and pay only about \$200 an sssignment.

According to Andrews and his sected According to Andrews and his sected criminal assignments contacts the court. Their names, they say, are put on a revolving list.

THERE MAY BE FEW abuses, but Baum, Brickner and others say judges, relection committees and influential legal groups can and do strongarm attorneys into campaign contributions.

It prompted Michigan State Supreme Court Justice Charlies Lawre Lord to the Companies of the Companies of

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