

Austin and Larsen squabble over safety issue

While Richard Austin touted his achievements, his opponent criticized the secretary of state for being weak on traffic safety during a debate in Troy last week.

State Rep. Mel Larsen (R-Oxford) told the Troy Chamber of Commerce

he would be more conscious of automobile and traffic safety if elected secretary of state in the Nov. 7 election.

"The secretary of state is in a key position to be an advocate of traffic safety," Larsen said. "It's time some-

one says if you work to reduce accidents there will be a money savings on insurance. It's the only way to attack the problem."

Austin disagreed with Larsen but focused his comments on his record during eight years in office. He said he

had made the office more accessible to the public.

Stating that the secretary of state does business with 90 per cent of Michigan adults, Austin said he was proud of his accomplishment of running a big business. He claimed his accounting

background was an asset in running the office.

Austin cited seven achievements of his administration and reminded businessmen that he instituted the pay-by-check transactions.

"When I became secretary of state you could only pay for license and registrations by cash, now you can pay by check," he said. "You can also take advantage of mail order registrations, which a million people do annually."

Austin also credited himself with providing advance notices of license renewals by mail, converting branch offices into full service offices, year around voter registration in all offices, assistance to the handicapped, driver education tests in 15 languages, comment cards in branch offices and saving the state more than a \$1 million annually by extending the life of license plates from one to four years.

Larsen, a member of the powerful house appropriations committee and the joint capital outlay committee, criticized Austin's license plates by insurance companies to let the secretary of state be notified when someone's insurance is cancelled," Larsen said. Although traffic safety concerned Austin, he said his chief aim is to provide more economical and convenient services to the public.

"We have to get after the uninsured motorist. We have the same number now as we did 10 years ago. I want to start a pilot project with insurance companies to let the secretary of state be notified when someone's insurance is cancelled," Larsen said. Although traffic safety concerned Austin, he said his chief aim is to provide more economical and convenient services to the public.

Larsen said he also supported a bill for mandatory safety checks of automobiles.

"If we are serious about traffic safety, we must have mandatory vehicle safety checks," he said.

Austin disagreed. "It could cost the

state \$20-25 million to have networks and each vehicle owner would have to pay a fee for the inspection," he said. Austin said he was happy with the existing random safety check program.

"It has fringe benefits too. The police can see if the driver has a license and can also check for drunk drivers, auto insurance and for stolen cars," the incumbent said.

Larsen emphasized traffic safety throughout the debate. He said it was his "number one" priority and that Austin was not doing enough in that area.

"The secretary of state is in a key position to be an advocate of traffic safety," Larsen said.

Larsen proposes to enhance traffic safety programs by improving driver education courses, and cracking down on uninsured motorists.

"We have to get after the uninsured motorist. We have the same number now as we did 10 years ago. I want to start a pilot project with insurance companies to let the secretary of state be notified when someone's insurance is cancelled," Larsen said. Although traffic safety concerned Austin, he said his chief aim is to provide more economical and convenient services to the public.

"I want to stagger registrations for motor vehicles throughout the year so everyone's license plates don't expire on March 31," he said. "I want to experiment with Saturday openings of our offices and increase utilization of the mail options. I also want to eliminate some of the forms by using more intelligent (computer) terminals."

Voucher debate turns one-sided

By TIM RICHARD

In this corner was Margaret Foerch, making the case for Proposal H, the voucher plan.

And in the other corner, making the case against the voucher plan, was Margaret Foerch.

Sure enough. No one from Citizens for More Sensible Financing of Education (voucher proponents) showed up at Schoolcraft College last Thursday night in a debate arranged by the League of Women Voters.

So Mrs. Foerch, a Dearborn school board member and spokesperson for Citizens Against Parochialism, tried to present both sides. But the bulk of her time was spent on the "contra" side.

THE VOUCHER plan, she said, would do two basic things:

- It would provide property tax relief by eliminating that tax as a source of school funding and would instruct the Michigan Legislature to finance K-12 education by other means—mostly the personal

income tax and single business tax.

• It would provide parents "freedom of choice" in where to send their children to school. Example: Both the traditional, lock-step classroom and the "open," individualized classroom are good methods of teaching, but today the parents must send the child to the neighborhood school and accept whatever is offered.

"Supporters say it will increase the quality of education because it will force schools to be competitive," she said.

The method of operation would be the voucher plan. In September 1979, the state would issue vouchers, worth state money, to parents and guardians of children. The parents and guardians would turn the voucher over to whichever school—public, parochial, private—the child is enrolled in. The school would turn the voucher back to the state treasury for money.

HER OPPOSITION had firmly in

place. Mrs. Foerch denounced the voucher plan because "the most remarkable thing is what the supporters do not say."

"They do not say it is parochial—aid to a sectarian school." Of the campaign money raised by Citizens for More Sensible Financing of Education, all but a few dollars came from the Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools, and most of that was from church-related schools.

The voucher plan's constitutionality is "very doubtful." The U.S. Supreme Court has held it is "illegal to do indirectly what it is forbidden to do directly," casting doubt on the propriety of the state's aiding religious schools by channeling state money through parents by vouchers.

Non-public schools could maintain admission standards, though they couldn't be based on religion, creed, race, color or national origin.

Said Mrs. Foerch: "The public schools would be the only place where the economically disadvantaged, severely handicapped and disciplinary problems can go to school. Non-public schools can set any admission standards they want."

SHE CALLED the voucher plan "clearly incompatible" with Proposal J, the Tishch tax-cutting plan. The Tishch plan would allow the legislature to raise the personal income tax from 4.6 per cent to 5.6 per cent and "cap" it there. The voucher plan would require raising the income tax to 6.9 per cent (according to supporters) or to at least 7.14 per cent to as high as 9.11 per cent (according to Mrs. Foerch).

And while the Tishch plan would allow local school boards to levy a one per cent school district income tax after approval of the voters, the voucher plan would give local boards no taxing autonomy.

Council plans travel program

The greater Detroit Section National Council of Jewish Women will feature a "Close Encounters with Council's Travel Program" on Wednesday, Oct. 18 at 8 p.m. at the NCJW office at 16400 Twelve Mile in Southfield.

Sam Trappis, NCJW Travel Coordinator from New York will discuss the tours available to Israel, Mexico, Guatemala, Morocco and Europe.

Refreshments will be served. Call 567-9604 for reservations.



Carlo
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Carlo Maria Gullini, new music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, conducts "Giulini's Beethoven Nine Live: A Gift from Los Angeles." It will be aired in the Detroit area at 4:30 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 29, on Channel 58.

More working Mothers

The belief that more families than ever rely on two salaries is supported by Labor Department statistics showing that 49 per cent of all

mothers with children under 18 were in the labor force in 1976. This compares with 35 per cent in 1965 and 27 per cent in 1955.

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