

Debate tackles taxes, transit, role

By TOM LONERGAN

A "voice in the suburbs" is what Democratic candidate F. Thomas Lewand says he would be if he's elected Oakland County executive.

Republican incumbent Daniel T. Murphy says he's interested in "what kind of government you are getting and how much are you willing to pay for it."

Those were the themes in the first face-to-face debate last week between the two candidates for the county's top administrative post. The audience was the Troy Chamber of Commerce.

The candidates traded barbs about who could provide leadership, who supported a subway in Detroit — and when — and taxes.

REGARDING THE tax ballot issues on the Nov. 4 ballot, Murphy opposes the two "tax-shift" proposals and is neutral on the Tish property tax cut.

Lewand opposes Tish, which he says would have "a devastating effect" on county government. He supports the "coalition" tax plan, a property tax break combined with a 1-1/4-percent increase in the state sales tax, being backed by Republican Gov. William Milliken and a bipartisan group of legislative leaders.

As of last Thursday's debate, the ballot status of the Tish proposal was still undecided.

Murphy boasted that the county's tax rate (\$4.09 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation) has been reduced the past two years because county government has ended its budget years with a surplus.

"You don't notice it because the inflation rate is higher than the amount of taxes we can lower," Murphy told the 150 Troy area businessmen.

Lewand contends that county taxes



DANIEL T. MURPHY
Republican executive

plan whose ballot status is up to the Michigan Supreme Court.

Murphy opposes the coalition and Smith-Bullard tax shifts, contending they give the state more control over what are now local property tax revenues.

"If you're taken in by the state telling you they are going to be fair and equitable, forget it," said Murphy. "Leave the money here."

The Democratic-controlled Legislature has hurt Oakland County, Murphy said.

LEWAND MAINTAINS that Murphy fails to work well with key legislative Democrats the way another Republican — Gov. Milliken — does. The contention is part of his campaign theme that Murphy is not an effective leader.

Lewand compared the county executive office to the position of Detroit mayor. Both represent a million people.

"Detroit's leader constantly brings home hard-earned tax dollars, frequently at our expense," Lewand said. "In fact, Oakland County residents are tired of Coleman Young bringing tax dollars to Detroit at our expense."

"But how often has our chief elected official been in Lansing and Washington working on our behalf?"

MURPHY COMPARED Oakland County with neighboring Macomb and



F. THOMAS LEWAND/C
Democratic challenger

Wayne counties. He noted Oakland's tax rate is lower, but "we don't get half the money they get from the federal and state government because they consider us a wealthy county."

And he responded to Lewand's lack of leadership charges.

"If calling press conferences and calling the TV stations on every little thing is what leadership is, I guess that's not me," Murphy said.

Day-long seminar on energy

Theodore Lutz, administrator of the federal Urban Mass Transportation Administration, will be keynote speaker at a one-day conference on energy sponsored by the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority.

"Challenges in an Energy-Constrained Future" is set for Monday, Sept. 22 in the Veterans Memorial Building, 151 W. Jefferson, Detroit.

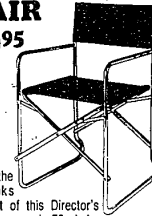
Registration begins at 8:30 a.m., and the program will end at 4:30 p.m. Fee of \$15 includes lunch. To register, call SEMTA at 236-8765.

"We have planned this conference as a means of sharing information energy conservation measures from local, state and federal sources," said Larry E. Salci, SEMTA general manager.

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