

Murphy goal: more county unification in 1982

By Suzie Rollins Singer
staff writer

Oakland County Executive Daniel T. Murphy pledged to move more aggressively in 1982 to unify county operations under his office.

"I admit that I have not been aggressive enough in pursuing this goal," Murphy told the Board of Commissioners Thursday in his annual State of the County address. "I have perhaps been oversensitive to the charge of power grabbing."

More unification and streamlining, he said, would lead to better cost containment. Oakland voters adopted the unified county government plan in 1974, placing many operations under the executive.

COMMISSION vice chairwoman Lilian Moffitt, R-Bloomfield, supported Murphy's goal.

"The board, as well as the executive, have been lax in fully implementing Act 139 (unified county government). It was mandated by the people, and they were promised there would be abolishment of several boards. I think we need to actively pursue that," Mrs. Moffitt said.

Murphy agreed. "I will not repeat these mistakes in 1982. Instead, I will actively pursue implementation of the provisions of the law requiring that civil counsel and children's institutions be under the policy control of the Board of Commissioners and the administrative and appointive control of the county executive."

Murphy is presently at odds with the commissioners over who may appoint the next civil counsel to replace Robert Allen, who is resigning Feb. 16. Murphy has told the commissioners he will take them to court if they challenge his right to make the appointment. The commissioner's general government committee is scheduled to discuss the appointment next month.

THE ISSUE of who shall control the Children's Village institutions, which are currently under the jurisdiction of the county probate court, has not yet been addressed.

Murphy's political allies called his message excellent and optimistic, while his foes criticized him for attempting to "neuter the board."

"I thought the speech was excellent," said Commissioner Marilyn Gosling, R-Bloomfield Hills, a Murphy supporter.

"I particularly like the portion on COLA," Murphy attacked Wayne and Macomb counties for approving cost of living allowances (COLA) in their union contracts, charging it is an unjust method of payment.

"In Oakland County, we have never granted COLA and all the hidden, ungranted and budget-busting costs that go with it," Murphy said.

"Workers should be paid wages as high as is reasonable, because that is humane and good for the economy as well. But they should be paid according to the work they do and not in accordance with the statistical manipulations of the federal bureaucrats," he added.

MURPHY PROMISED that as long as he remains county executive, the budget will never be written with red ink.

"We have cut the tax rate for 1982, as we did for 1980 and 1981. We have proposed that property assessment in-

creases be held at 2.3 percent county-wide.

"We all would like to cut the county property tax rate again this year, but we won't be able to without risking a deficit situation."

"Our taxpayers have never seen the word deficit with their tax bills, because we've never had one of those. And as long as I'm county executive we never will," he added.

THE OPTIMISTIC executive predicted that by the third quarter of 1982, Michigan will pull out of the recession.

"Inflation is coming down; federal taxes have been cut and will drop again this July, and interest rates are retreating. Significant and potentially far-reaching negotiations between auto company management and labor are now taking place which will almost certainly correct some of the industry's greatest problems," Murphy said.

Dr. Joseph Montante, R-Orchard Lake, praised Murphy's optimistic outlook. "Dan's philosophy is very similar to my own thinking."

"I also think it's a good idea that he's committed to fully implementing Public Act 139. It's never been really ironed out and it should be," Dr. Montante added. "Dan's a forceful and knowledgeable person, and I have complete confidence that he'll keep the county running in the black."

POLITICAL FOES of Murphy's were less impressed.

"It was just words, words, words, meaning nothing," said Alexander Perinoff, D-Southfield. "If he takes more power under Act 139, he's just making more movement to neuter the county commission."

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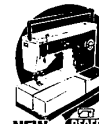
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