

# Who wants traumatic MSU job?

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

"Seven Democrats hold eight of the state education posts that are up for grabs in 1992."

"But only the two trustees of Michigan State University thought of not seeking re-election Nov. 2."

"Six months ago, I was saying enough," said John Bruff, Macomb County attorney and chairman of the MSU board. Bruff finally changed his mind and sought renomination.

"Some Michigan State University faculty members mounted a challenge against him, winning endorsements from the Michigan Education Association caucus." But Bruff hung onto labor's support and finally was renominated by acclamation at last weekend's Democratic State Convention in Flint.

"His colleague and friend, trustee Raymond Krolkowski of Birmingham, did drop out. House Speaker Bobby Crim was nominated to replace Krolkowski."

"TRAUMATIC. Time-consuming. It isn't the joy job it once was," Bruff said of running a major state university with 40,000 students and a budget of \$200 million.

"It's hard to believe the next several years can be worse than the last eight," he said in an interview.

"In my first year (1975), there was the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) investigation (which led to the Spartan football team being placed on probation). I was on a select committee that met once a week for nine months."

"In my term, we've had three presidents — Clifton Wharton, interim president Edgar Hardin and Cecil Mackey. We were 18 months in our search process (for Mackey). I was on the search and selection committee."

"The last two years we've seen budget reductions and executive orders. Instead of across-the-board cuts, we embarked on program cuts... better than 10 percent."

"That's why you see some opposition



Bruff Crim

to me today from some MSU faculty members."

A MAJOR reason for Bruff's running is his support of President Mackey.

"A president always needs support. Mackey is not a popular president. But the board supports Mackey. I'm more experienced and qualified to help than any new member would be."

The MSU trustee's job is time-consuming, Bruff said. "Two working days a month — that's basic. That's 24 days a year — 3 1/2 weeks. I've never taken 3 1/2 weeks vacation."

Unofficially, Bruff, a major party wheelhorse and once its nominee for lieutenant governor, plays a role in recruiting good candidates. He lists Patricia Carrigan, Barbara Sawyer and Carole Lick as candidates he helped bring on board.

"WE INTERVIEWED a number of candidates this year," Bruff said. Top prospect was William Ryan, former speaker of the House who is retiring from the Legislature. Ryan thought about it but finally turned it down, Bruff said.

He even approached Wade McCree, former federal appeals judge and solicitor general in the Carter Justice Department. No luck again.

Meanwhile, Crim announced he wanted to run for the Board of Regents of his alma mater, the University of Michigan. Incumbent Democratic Regent Sarah Goddard Power and Thomas Roach told Crim to forget it.

So Crim opted for the MSU board and was nominated. Bruff is pleased.

The son of Missouri sharecroppers, Crim was the first in his family to complete high school. He has two degrees from U-M, taught school and has a reputation of being a friend of educational appropriations.

"The ONLY 'self-starter' was Nat Burtley, deputy superintendent of schools in Flint. Burtley's campaign described MSU as 'best with internal strife among its labor organizations, the administration and the trustees.'"

Said Bruff: "I was very impressed

with Nat Burtley," said Bruff. "He has knowledge and perception. But he was never a member of the Democratic Party, though he said he had worked for some Democratic candidates. He has a Ph.D. from MSU, but he's not active in any other capacity."

"We told him to get more active in the Democratic Party and MSU, and perhaps two years from now..."

Bruff earned his law degree from the University of Michigan, but his heart belongs to MSU, where he earned his BA in history in 1951.

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