

Faxon seeks probe of cultural institutions

By Tim Richard
staff writer

State Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, is asking lawmakers to probe the operations and financial needs of Detroit's cultural institutions, notably the Institute of Arts and the Zoo.

Meanwhile, state Sen. R. Robert Geake, R-Northville, reported that Gov. James Blanchard's 1985 budget proposes for the first time that state aid be given to the zoo — a grant of \$1.5 million.

The Faxon measure, a resolution which has been referred to the Administration and Rules Committee, would set up a five-member committee to study the operations of these institutions.

But in the back of Faxon's mind is the idea of setting up a state or regional commission to run one or more of the cultural institutions.

The 20-year legislative veteran knows political trouble lies ahead.

"THE CITY has been willing to give up the losers," said Faxon in an impromptu interview on the Senate floor recently.

By "losers" he meant the Maybury TB hospital in Northville Township, which is now Maybury State Park, and the Detroit House of Correction in Plymouth Township.

Detroit Mayor Coleman Young refers to the art institute, historical museums, main library and zoo as the city's "jewels."

"They go back to another era when Detroit literally subsidized the state," Young once said. He professes to see a plot by "wealthy Groesse Pointers" and other suburbanites to take away Detroit's jewels and says:

"The answer to that is, No. The answer to Detroit's problems is not the dismantling of the city."

THE ISSUE has been developing since 1976, when then-Gov. William G. Milliken and Young reached agreement on a "Detroit equity package." This state would pick up part of the tab for services offered by Detroit but used by many non-Detroiters.

The state's portion of Detroit's bills now looks like this, according to Faxon:

- \$18 million to the Detroit Institute of Arts, virtually all the public funding DIA gets. In 1976 the state put in only \$3.3 million. The city's current portion of the DIA budget is less than \$100,000.

- Nearly \$2 million for the Detroit Historical Museum, nearly triple the 1976 appropriation of \$700,000.

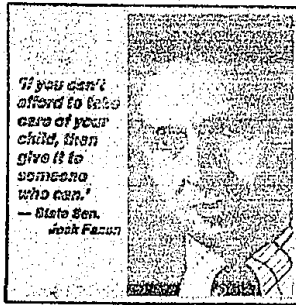
- A \$4 million discretionary grant to the city.

- \$9.2 million to the Detroit Department of Transportation pension fund. (Blanchard has proposed eliminating this from the 1985 budget.)

- \$7.2 million to the Detroit Main Library. The state now covers virtually all of the Main Library's costs.

The zoo wasn't subsidized in the 1976-84 budgets. But a spokesman for the Senate Fiscal Agency said the new Blanchard budget contains \$1.5 million for it. A subcommittee within the Senate Appropriations Committee is dealing with the measure.

FAXON SAID his proposed committee should "make recommendations for what additional dol-



"If you can't afford to take care of your child, then give it to someone who can."
— State Sen. Jack Faxon

lars may be necessary to ensure the success of these institutions."

The special committee would make a progress report by June 30 and a final report Dec. 31.

Last fall a Senate committee probed city and private funding at the art institute. Outstate senators wondered aloud whether Detroit was diverting art institute money into the general fund by charging the art institute for police and fire protection that weren't justified.

Faxon was a northwest Detroit legislator before the 1982 reapportionment prompted him to move to southern Oakland County, where many of his former constituents had moved. The Detroit Zoo is in his new district.

He said residents of the suburban neighborhoods around the zoo "are properly concerned about its maintenance and upkeep. When this zoo was built, it set a national example. No one wants to watch it deteriorate."

THE ZOO operates with a budget of \$5.8 million. Its operating revenue — from parking and admissions fees and concessions — brings in \$2.6 million, according to the 1984 city budget.

The Detroit general fund picks up the \$3.15 million remainder of the bill.

In addition, private donations help build zoo exhibits and feed animals. These aren't shown in the city budget. The Senate Fiscal Agency spokesman said senators have asked to see the entire zoo budget, and so far Detroit officials have orally agreed, though they have yet to provide it.

The American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums last year denied accreditation to the Detroit Zoo. Zoo Director Steve Graham estimates \$10 million to \$20 million in capital funds will be needed to restore the zoo.

The great ape house has been closed. The veterinary hospital needs repairs. Many exhibits are allegedly deteriorating. The accrediting agency suggested Detroit either "place a higher priority on facing the zoo's problems" or "re-evaluate its desire to maintain a zoo."

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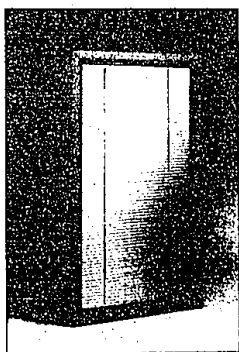


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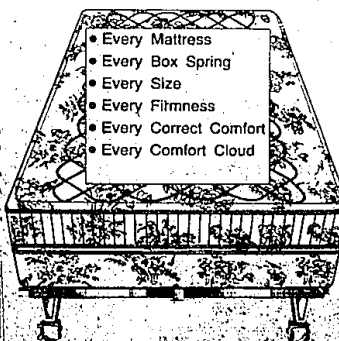
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