# Kuhn woos Cropsey on regional water bills

George Kuhn won an important point Friday when he convinced state. Sen. Harmon Cropsey that regionalizing the Detroit Water and Sewerage Depart-ment wouldn't amount to robbing De-

Harmon Cropsey that regionalizing the Detroit Water and Swerage's Department wouldn't amount to robbing Detroit targayers.

"Detroit has been determined in federal court not to be the sole owner of the water and sewer system," said Kuhn, the Oakland County drain commissioner and chief proponent of bills to give suburban customers a voice in setting water and sewer rates. Cropsey, a Republican, arose at 5 am. In his Decatur farm home to drive to Detroit and Southfield to chair the Senate Local Government Committee's bearings on the bills Kuhn advocates. In two hours of morning testimoney in the City-County Building in Detroit, Cropsey heard 22 Detroit officials, residents, political and union leaders complain that the regionalizing bills would "confiscate" Detroit's jewels.

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"NO CITY of Detroit taxes are used support this system," said Robert

"NO CITY of Detroit taxes are used to support. bits system," said Robert Fredericks, Kuhn's deputy, in the afternoon session in Southfield.
"The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department is a public utility. It is operated as an enterprise fund, and its revenues are received from rates and

supply and sawage disposal services, the Tvoy attorney said.

West Bloomited and Fredericks produced copies of 1975 Detroit memor showing the city's \$15 million equity in the system had been repaid.

"Hundreds of millions of dollars to improve and upgrade the sewage treatment plant" came from the federal government, the state, and user charges — not Detroit tax funds, they said.

THAT IMPRESSED Cropsey, the only man on the five-member committee to sit through all five hours of testi-

only man on the five-member committee to sit through all five boars of testimony.

Committee members missing the
hearings were Republicans Harry DoMaso of Battle Creek and Norman
Salnikle of Lambertville, and Democrat
Patrick McCollough of Dearborn.

Cropsey also liked the answers suburban officials gave to charges by Sen.
John Kelly, D-Detroit, that the suburba
slapped a "markup" of up to 340 percent on water and sewerage charges,
and then blamed them on Detroit Mayor Coleman Young.

Fredericks and Royal Oak City Englneer Richard Cole said local charges
are "strictly for the operation of the
system" and aren't used to pay for city
halls and other non-water and non-sewer spenses.

After the hearing, Cropsey sald com-

muttee action on the bills wouldn't come this week because the Senate has scheddled several all-day budget ass-sions. Republicans have 20-18 control of the Senate, so passage is possible. The bills face a cloudier foture in the Democrat-controlled flouse.

PRIDAY'S HEARING marked the

FRIDAYS HEARING marked the first time in a decade that regional was ter bills had been actively discussed in the Michigan Sennic.

In 1977 a similar bill by Rep. John Bennett, D. Redford, was passed by the House of Representatives but died in the upper chamber.

Under discussion are a pair of bills sponsored by Seri. Richard Fessler, R. West Bloomfield, which would:

• Create an assembly of 100 governments which buy water and sewage treatment services from the city of Detroit. With one vote per 10,000 pepulation, the assembly would include elected officials from Wayne, Oxland, Macomb, Lapper, Genesee and Monroe

Bequire the metropolition assembly to elect a regional water board of nine members — three from Detroit and six from the suburba. The board would run the "wholesale" portion of the water and sewerage enterprise, selling services to Detroit and this other 100 communities. Those communities would set their own retail rates to homewomers and businesses.

"It would bring some fairness to an

unfair rate system, and Fessler, an of Detroit's right to make contracts."

Charlis Williams, DWBD director, member witer board was "no information to its puretier toor, terms in the Horses. Substant a,
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DETROITERS, HOWEVER, saw the

bills as a secial threat to black control of the city.

Robert, (Riddy), Battle III, former-IAW regional director speaking for the lat Congressional District Democrats, likened the water system to a child raised by a parent (Detroit), "and now an outsider comes along and says wore going to take him away."

Erma Henderson, Detroit Council president, saw the bills as step one of a "metropolian takeover" of Detroit. "The metropolitan assembly will be dominated by those who wish to disempower the city of Detroit."

DONALD PALEN, Detroit corpora-tion counsel, said the bills violated the Michigan Constitution by "impairing the rights of bondholders and the city



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