

Opinion

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A modest idea for area Dems



Tim Richard

IN SOME rural townships, Republicans are so strong that there are no Democratic candidates. Any politics with Democratic leanings run in the Republican primary.

After looking at the results of the Nov. 7 election, one wonders if Oakland County Democrats shouldn't consider that strategy. Republicans not only swept all countywide offices by 2-1 margins but added two seats on the Board of Commissioners to collect 19-8 control of the legislative body.

No, it wasn't the Reagan landslide, though Reagan helped. Republican margins have been growing steadily since the 1974 election. And credit must be given to the absolutely splendid Republican headquarters, precinct and telephone center organizations.

ON THE OTHER hand, the Democratic organization appears to be slipping.

Its executive candidate had no platform except to cripple the executive budget and give it all to the Sheriff's Department. The candidates it recruited for clerk-register and drain commissioner were essentially UAW political workers without solid credentials. Its prosecutor candidate had never prosecuted as much as an ordinance case, didn't care to campaign and hardly read the newspapers.

Its sheriff and treasurer candidates — Hank Hansen and Louis Miller Jr., respectively — were very good to splendid, but that wasn't enough.

So weak were the Democrats that they couldn't persuade even one non-partisan south-end mayor, clerk, treasurer or city attorney to do his/her patriotic duty for the party of FDR, HST and JFK.

Yet the Democratic Party has some loyalists of high intelligence, civic virtue and potential for higher office — Larry Pernick of Southfield and Dennis Aaron of Oak Park leap instantly to mind — and it is too bad to see the party totally crushed. Thus, I am only half joking in suggesting

that Oakland Democrats run in the Republican primary for county offices. We would have essentially a non-partisan system.

REPUBLICANS HAVE a few problems of their own, however, that will become apparent one day.

Michigan Republican politics make sense only when you understand that there have been two Republican parties, at least since the fistfight between the Roosevelt and Taft delegates at the 1908 Bay City convention.

It's true in Oakland County even today.

Items:

- Republicans disagree on whether to consolidate the drain commissioner under the executive.

- Republicans disagree on whether to seek abolition of the Road Commission, the way Wayne County has done.

IN OTHER words, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners actually has a three-party system disguised as a two-party system.

Every fortnight, the board holds two meetings — the Republican caucus and the full board meeting. Under the extremely skillful leadership of County Executive Daniel T. Murphy and some of the more philosophical heads on the commission, Republicans have been able to present a united front — so far.

If Democrats want to have any real input into the system, they should quit running as Democrats and run as Republicans, making Oakland politics effectively non-partisan. That shouldn't be a shocking idea. Some Democrats like Abe Lincoln better than some Republicans do.



Group home decision due

ON JAN. 1, the new state Supreme Court will take over. "New" in this case means one newcomer — Dorothy Comstock Riley. Six other justices will remain on the job.

Riley's successful political campaign included attacks on the court's ability to handle cases with dispatch, so it will be interesting to see if her presence will result in faster legal opinions.

One of the first things the court should be able to do, if so inclined, is decide the issue of placement of state-licensed group homes in residential areas.

Before the justices since last May has been a case which should decide whether local governments can do much to stop people from putting group homes for the mentally retarded in residential areas.

THE CITIES of Livonia and Southfield took a joint appeal to the state Supreme Court in a last-ditch effort.

The state law governing placement of group homes specifies that homes of six or fewer residents can be placed in any residential area. The suit filed by the cities maintains that, because of the nature of group homes they should not be placed in single-family residential areas over the objection of the residents and municipalities.

Livonia City Attorney Harry C. Tatigian maintains that the issue is one of proper zoning.



Bob Wisler

Attorneys for the cities say that if the decision goes against them, it will be difficult in the future for any community to maintain that group homes for retarded and mentally ill should not be allowed in residential areas. Local governments simply will not have a legal leg to stand on.

ALMOST WITHOUT exception, cases involving a community's right to challenge the placement of group homes have been decided in favor of the group homes and the state Department of Social Services, which licenses them.

In fact, there is some suspicion that city officials who have struggled against placement of group homes carry on the fight for political reasons.

Residents upset at the idea of having a group home in their neighborhood descend on city hall demanding protection. City hall invariably realizes that upset residents will be upset voters at election time unless the city does something to save their wounds.

THE CITIES often claim — as Southfield and Livonia did — that placement of such homes will give them an "excessive" concentration of group homes.

The law which spells out the procedure for establishing group homes is against an "excessive concentration." But, Tatigian said, the law doesn't define what constitutes an excessive concentration. Because Livonia has several group homes and other cities have none or fewer, the city has maintained that an excessive number are opening in Livonia.

An attorney for the other side maintains, however, that group home residents in Livonia are less than 11 thousandths of 1 percent of the city's population.

When and if the high court finally reaches a decision on the Livonia-Southfield suit — and expectedly turns the cities down — it should put an end to much of the controversy and the idea that people can stop such facilities by filing a lawsuit.

Like most fears, the fear of living near a group home is exaggerated. Where the homes have been built, neighbors have found they have not had the trouble envisioned and that for the most part, group home residents are pretty quiet folk who, like most people, just want to get along with a minimum of controversy.

Police just filled out a theft report

RANDOM THOUGHTS of a newspaperman:

- During the long Thanksgiving weekend, I had a visit from the parents-in-law. To get away from turkey leftovers, we ate in a Southfield restaurant Saturday evening.

Returning to the car, we found my in-laws' window on the passenger side had been smashed.

As I started to inspect the damage, my father-in-law suggested that I stop. "Maybe the police will be looking for evidence when they arrive," he said.

He called the police department and was disappointed to learn no one would be coming to the scene. "They said all they could do was take a report to support our insurance claim," he said.

I THOUGHT of the current squabble going on between Southfield and the villages — immediately north — Franklin, Beverly Hills and Bingham Farms. Southfield is trying to sell the villages police and fire protection. The villages are resisting, saying their residents would lose services if they disbanded their local public safety departments.

"We would have sent someone," said Thomas Good, director of Beverly Hills public safety. "We had two or three car window smashings over the weekend and sent out police officers to the scene every time."

Good said his police officer would have found out what was stolen, taken any available serial numbers and inspected the site. He said Beverly Hills police investigate about 1,800 similar incidents every year.

I doubt if a police investigation would have solved this crime. But I know the victims would have felt better to have had a policeman at the scene.

Maybe that's why village officials are fighting Southfield's "help."

- THE NIGHTMARE came true. In the fallout of President Reagan's landslide victory Nov. 6, an able state legislator, Wilfred Webb, D-Hazel Park, was defeated.

That wasn't known until last week when the Oakland County Board of Canvases found a 444-vote discrepancy in the election returns for the 68th District. This district includes the southeast part of Troy,



Nick Sharkey

Hazel Park and Madison Heights.

The winner then became Gregory Gruse, a graduate student at Wayne State University.

Webb was respected in state government and in his local district. Although he has been in the legislature only since 1982, he has been appointed to several key committees, including the colleges and universities, the education and the taxation committees.

Webb was superintendent of Hazel Park schools. He is held in such high regard in his hometown that they named a junior high school after him.

Gruse was a virtual unknown. He didn't participate in candidate forums. He didn't answer the League of Women Voters questionnaire. He didn't attend the Civic Searchlight interviews. He didn't show up for a scheduled interview at the Troy Eccentric.

There were rumors that Gruse ran for public office to conduct research for a class assignment. Gruse has since denied that charge.

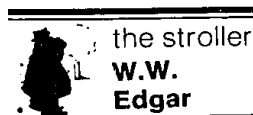
Whatever his motivation, Gruse had something going for him. He is a Republican. Although he lost in Madison Heights and Hazel Park, Gruse carried Republican Troy by a 2-1 margin. The overwhelming Troy total gave him the victory.

Troy wasn't alone in voting blindly for any candidate carrying the Republican designation. In Livonia and Canton, white supremacist Gerald Carlson almost won more votes than incumbent U.S. Rep. William D. Ford in the 15th Congressional District.

Carlson was disavowed by the Republican Party and taken off all campaign literature. Yet, on the ballot he was listed as a Republican. Democrat Ford took the 15th — 8,710-8,678.

Spare me of those who want a voting button in every living room. I prefer fewer informed voters who care about their ballots.

Shoo-fly pie and mock duck



over other dishes later in life.

Mock duck was simple to make. Mother would go to the meat market and buy the largest slice of beef she thought suitable. Once she returned home, the job of preparing it was under way.

She would fold the piece of beef and then sew it to make it appear and act as a pocket. Once this was done, she would stuff it with the same sort of dressing that other folks were putting into their turkeys.

The filled beef went into the oven, and it was roasted just as a turkey would have been. Mother brought the finished roast from the oven to the table and then sliced it.

Those slices were about an inch wide and had a center about four to five inches. What a delicacy! The meat had a special flavor, and the dressing seemed to taste better than turkey dressing. We ate to our

hearts' content. Just thinking about it made this Thanksgiving Day all the brighter.

AT THE COUNTRY hotels where most folks went, you didn't get mock duck but a dish that was as good as, or better than, any meal you could get at the dining emporiums.

It was chicken and waffles. Just thinking about it, with a shoo-fly pie for dessert, made The Stroller a bit homesick.

It seemed the Pennsylvania Dutch women had a knack of making chicken gravy. They must have made it by the gallon. When you ordered chicken and waffles, you received not only a goodly supply of chicken but several waffles that were accompanied by a pitcher of chicken gravy.

What a treat! Chicken and waffles with chicken gravy and shoo-fly pie washed down by a cup of coffee — well, that was one of the finest meals a person could enjoy.

You didn't have to wait for a holiday to enjoy it.

And even more enjoyable in those days was that the price of the dinner was only 50 cents.

What a treat the price was, too!