

Youth Power? They Don't Use It At Polls

Voters In 20's Performed Poorly In Primary, Survey Shows

By PATRICK HINDERT

Despite claims of increased political claims and involvement, non-voting remains relatively common among the "younger generation."

Young voters display almost a 10 per cent worse record at the polls than older voters. These conclusions are based upon a study of how various age groups in Observerland went to the polls during the Aug. 6 primary election. The conclusions are supported by similar studies made on a national basis by the University of Michigan Survey Research Center.

A random sampling of 900 persons showed that 25 per cent of the registered voters between the ages of 21 and 30 voted compared with almost 35 per cent of the registered voters above the age of 41.

Men, on the whole, had a better voting turnout than women. Males between the ages of 41 and 45 recorded the highest age group voting average among either sex, a not-so-hot 43 per cent.

WHAT FACTORS caused the younger generation to present such a dismal voting portrait?

First, the demands of early adulthood may intrude in an active way to distract the young person's attention from politics, and hence undermine his interest in voting.

Young people in their 20's are inevitably preoccupied with personal interests and obligations. Whether this preoccupation results from the quest for a mate, the search for a suitable job or the care of preschool children, the result is usually the same—their eyes turn inward.

When the voter approaches middle age, these personal concerns no longer preclude political interests. The voter begins to integrate into the community, and the politics of the outside world begin to attract closer attention.

SEVERAL CITY and township clerks in the Observerland area agreed with this "personal interest" theory. But they were surprised at figures which indicate that women show an earlier voting interest (ages 31-35) than men (ages 41-45). Westland City Clerk Marian McWilliams concluded that "women must grow up and become politically aware when their children start school. I guess men are still too concerned with the family's livelihood at age 30 or 35."

The act of registration requires as much, if not more, effort than the act of voting. In Michigan, if some continuity in vote turnout is not maintained, the voter must register every two years to remain eligible.

Newly eligible voters are faced en masse with problems of registering, while older, once registered, voters are not.

A SHIFT in residence, presumably more common among the young than the old, poses another deterrent to voters, because it usually requires a complete new effort at registration.

These factors could help to explain why residents in rapidly developing cities, like Westland and Livonia, have poorer voting records than residents of more established areas, like the cities of Plymouth and Farmington and Redford Township.

"Transients definitely cause our registration numbers to fluctuate," reports Plymouth City Clerk Eugene Silder. "But I am not certain that this creates unfair burdens for younger people."

A third factor which may help cause non-voting among the younger generation is their lack of political education and sophistication. Young people, especially those lacking a college education, increase their comprehension of national politics, and therefore their participation at the polls, during the course of their adult lives.

SINCE MANY young voters are less familiar, and hence less concerned, with local issues and candidates, this factor was probably more important in the Aug. 6 primary than it would be in a presidential election.

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Two final factors—television and property ownership—may help to explain voter participation among the younger generation in specific types of elections.

It is almost impossible to estimate the effects that a life-long contact with television has had upon the minds and emotions of the younger voters. But after witnessing their reactions to candidates like the Kennedy brothers, Eugene McCarthy, John Lindsay, and others, it appears that the new generation of American voters is attracted more to personalities than issues.

If no personable candidates are listed on the ballot, the young voters may demonstrate their indifference by not voting.

Finally, since young people are less likely to own property than older people, they probably are less concerned with elections concerning taxation.

THE YOUNGER generation represents a significant proportion of the potential national electorate. According to the University of Michigan Survey Research Center, nearly 20 per cent of the eligible voters in America are age 30 or less. And this figure is expected to increase.

Non-voting among such a vital block of Americans is a serious problem which should concern every American. In the words of Redford Township Clerk Dorothy Rice, "God help us if the younger people don't take an interest in voting—they are all we have left."

How We Made This Survey

Eight cities and townships in the Observer Newspapers circulation area were surveyed by reporter Patrick Hindert in his study of how suburbanites voted by age categories.

The clerk keeps a card for every registered voter. The card is stamped each time a person comes to the polls. It shows only whether he voted—not, of course, how he voted. This is a public record.

Hindert checked the records in every second precinct of each community. He drew a random sample of 10 voters from each survey precinct, checking each registered voter's (1) age, (2) sex and (3) voting performance in the Aug. 6 primary.

There is one statistical weakness in our report: It shows only the performance of registered voters, and not the performance of unregistered persons. Presumably, the showing for persons in their 20s would have been worse because a higher percentage of young people fail to register or are ineligible.

Michigan Won't Build Any New Interstate Roads

LANSING -- The Department of State Highways is ready to implement the recently signed Federal Highway Act of 1968, but said it does not plan at this time to take advantage of a provision authorizing construction of additional miles of interstate highways.

Henrik E. Stafest, state highway director, said the act authorizes construction of 1,500 miles of interstates on top of the previously authorized 41,000 miles. However, Congress did not allot funds for construction of the additional miles.

"Simply stated, this gives the states a choice of completing their previously authorized interstate programs as planned, or of swapping some of their previously announced projects for new ones," he said.

"We fully intend to complete our 1,081-mile portion of the previously authorized system. These highways as much needed and long overdue, and we do not intend to juggle priorities."

Stafest said Congress made it clear that the extra mileage should be used only for critical missing links and not simply to extend the system where it would be desirable to have an extension.

He added that the U.S. Department of Transportation is expected to set right standards for approval of missing links.

In testimony on the highway bill last June, Stafest urged that the interstate system not be expanded at the expense of other pressing highway needs.

"The interstate program has been spectacular -- without it we could not begin to accommodate the almost insatiable increase in the number of vehicles that are traveling our highways," he said.

"But these great highways have not been constructed without a serious impact on the total state highway system. It is our position that the states be given more flexibility to meet other critical needs following completion of the previously authorized interstate system."

Stafest said the Highway Department informally considered two possible additions to Michigan's interstate system in the event Congress authorized -- and funded -- additional mileage.

Routes considered were proposed M-275 between Interstate 696 at Novi and Interstate 75 at Clarkston, and an extension of Interstate 69 between Marshall and Port Huron via Lansing and Flint.

Stafest also reported that the new act provides additional money for highway construction. Michigan will receive about \$55 million of these funds in fiscal 1970-71, and \$85 million in fiscal 1971-72, raising federal aid to about \$20 million annually for "reasonable and orderly" acceleration of construction.

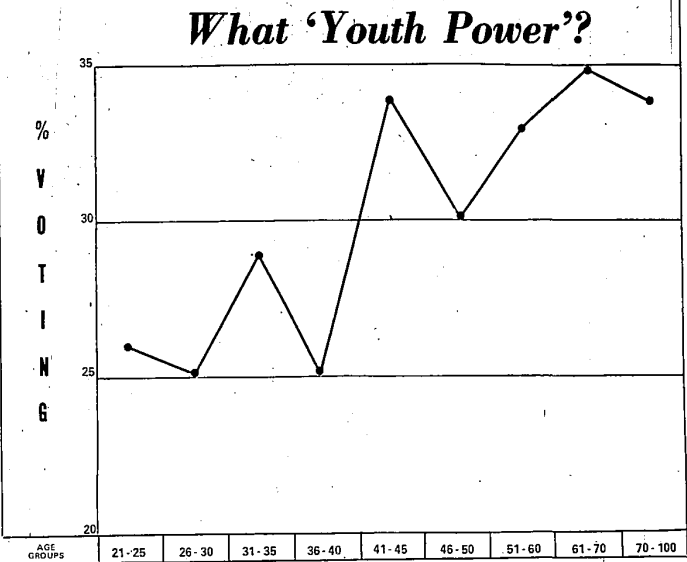
Fair Campaign Code Is Signed By Gary Frink

Gary R. Frink, Democratic nominee for Congress in the 19th District, says he has signed the Fair Campaign Practices Committee, Washington, D.C.

"I signed the Code now, earlier than is standard practice, because I want to make it clear that my campaign will be dedicated to its principles of fairness," the 35-year-old Pontiac attorney said.

"It is my intention and that of my campaign staff that this campaign will be based on the highest standards of fair play. I hope that my opponent will do the same."

Frink said that he supports fully the purpose of the Code: "There are basic principles of decency, honesty and fair play which every candidate for public office in this country has a moral obligation to observe and uphold, in order that, after vigorously contested but fairly conducted campaigns, our citizens may exercise their constitutional right to free and untrammeled choice and the will of the people may be fully and clearly expressed on the issues before the country."



McDonald Hits U.S. Highway Budget 'Game'

Congressman Jack McDonald (R-19th District) charged Friday the Johnson-Humphrey administration is "trying to fool the American people" by including cuts in the highway program as part of the \$6 billion, expenditure reduction ordered in the Revenue and Expenditure Control Act which was passed this year by Congress.

He said Budget Director Charles J. Zwick "is playing a numbers game" when he warns that the spending cuts will include \$200 million of the highway program.

"The highway program has nothing to do with the regular federal budget," McDonald said. "Its funds come from trust funds collected from motorists at the gasoline pump and for auto equipment. The unwarranted cuts in highway expenditures will delay the completion of safe highways -- vitally needed as the crush of 90 million vehicles overtaxes older roads, but will not reduce the budget deficit one cent."

McDonald charged that "the administration talks about consumer protection while cutting back on highway safety."

He said it is "shameful that the administration would gamble with public safety and attempt to convince the American people that highway program cuts represent prudence in government. Safe roads should be of highest national priority. The money is there -- already paid by motorists and commercial highway users."

public affairs

SS Beneficiaries May Make Status Changes Locally

The 71,000 Social Security beneficiaries in the Detroit-Observerland area who need to report changes of address, or other events that affect the payment of their monthly benefits, may do so through the Social Security office at 18500 Grand River in Detroit, Sam F. Test, district manager, said. Reports may be made by mail, telephone, or personal visit. Test said that up to now, beneficiaries were encouraged to notify the Social Security Administration about the occurrence of these events on postcard forms pre-addressed to one of six Social Security record centers throughout the country.

Municipal League Convention Theme Is 'Cooperation'

Delegates to the Michigan Municipal League's 70th annual convention on Sept. 19-20 in Lansing will be seeking solutions to the social ills of urban living and other complex municipal problems.

Over 1,200 city and village officials and their guests will concentrate on the "Accent on Community Cooperation" convention theme as they listen to leading authorities from across the nation.

The convention opened formally Wednesday in the Lansing Civic Center when University of Michigan President Robben W. Fleming and Floyd H. Hyde, mayor of Fresno, Calif., gave keynote addresses.

J. Lewis Powell, a Washington, D.C., management consultant, spoke at the convention's opening luncheon.

Wednesday afternoon two panels of top-flight personalities will lead concurrent forums on "New Dimensions in Employee Relations" and "Mobilizing Community Effort to Meet Human Needs."

Taking part in the first group will be Jerome LaFollette, deputy chairman, Public Employment Relations Board, State of New York, and Jerry Wurf, president of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO.

MML delegates will find a wealth of resource talent at the Thursday morning workshop sessions. Consultants for a symposium on local fiscal problems will be U.S. Rep. Martha W. Griffiths, D-17th Congressional District, Michigan, chairman of the subcommittee on fiscal policy of the Congressional Joint Economic Committee, and John Shannon, assistant director on taxation and finance for the U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations in Washington, D.C.

Numerous state-agency representatives will be available during the workshop period. Edward M. Levin, special assistant to the regional administrator, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, will participate in the housing workshop.

AT THE THURSDAY afternoon annual business meeting of the League, delegates will consider a series of policy statements and resolutions and elect six members of the League's board of trustees. The board will meet that afternoon to select the League's president for the 1968-69 year. Grand Rapids Mayor Chris H. Somevold is the current president.

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