

Opinion

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18(A)

O&E Thursday, June 5, 1988

Rolnick, Inch merit support

STABILITY is valuable. But it's not always a must. Sometimes, a new voice is better.

But in the case of the upcoming Farmington Board of Education race, it seems wisest to return to office two-term incumbents Janice Rolnick and R. Jack Inch.

That's not to suggest that challenger Paul Blizman isn't qualified. Quite the contrary. He'd probably be a fine trustee.

But with four new faces in the past three years and a new superintendent just named, stability seems particularly important. As Rolnick aptly put it, "We need people who knew where we were, not only where we want to go."

BESIDES, we see no reason to boot either Rolnick or Inch from office.

Both are fiscally responsible and free thinkers. Both come to meetings prepared. And both truly care about the upbringing of the district's 10,323 students.

Moreover, they're not afraid to articulate their views.

No fence-sitter, Rolnick is on guard at a time when the Legislature is taking a long look at equalized school funding, perhaps by channeling some locally raised dollars to more needy districts.

A background investigator and former teacher, Rolnick has emerged as one of the board's leaders — a no-nonsense leader who's calm and forthright under fire. Her excitement for the district and student achievements is infectious.

Rolnick calls for wider teaching skills, introducing foreign language in the elementary, toughening graduation requirements, an expanded gifted education program, academically oriented co-curricular activities, more emphasis on elementary science, better meeting the ethnic needs of students, enhancing staff development, setting up a districtwide communication council and improving facilities to enhance the learning environment. She keeps close watch on curriculum development and is a big booster of lifelong learning.

In Clarenceville: Morrison, Mogan

IT'S A fertile time for the Clarenceville School District, nearing its 150th anniversary.

Programs are blossoming. Such projects as student competency testing and a developmental kindergarten are under way. The district will award jacket or sweater letters, similar to those given to athletes, to students who keep up a certain grade point average.

Clarenceville voters should head to the polls Monday, June 9, with a good deal of pride. The 2,003-student district includes parts of Farmington Hills, Livonia and Redford Township.

Voters will decide whether the district will keep moving, and who will be on the Clarenceville Board of Education to guide the district at the beginning of its next 150 years.

On the ballot is the renewal of eight mills of operating funds. These eight mills are part of the 29 voter-approved mills for general operating expenses for the schools. The other 21 were renewed in a millage election last year. We recommend that the eight mills be renewed.

VOTERS SHOULD understand that this isn't a millage increase. Renewal would mean that programs wouldn't be jipped in the bud or uprooted.

Voting for the renewal would tell officials that the community, which has been surveyed about its educational priorities, is satisfied with the direction in which the district is moving.

Also on the ballot are candidates for the Clarenceville school board. Two offices, each with a term of four years, must be filled.

WHAT'S MORE, she knows what it takes to bring more women into top administrative positions. Says Rolnick: "A big problem is that women who are qualified often don't think they are. We have to seek them out and encourage them to apply."

An educator for 30 years, Inch has been one of the school board's most outspoken and probing members.

If re-elected, he'd work toward inspiring underachievers, making social studies more relevant, re-emphasizing reading and other basic skills, assuring computer application literacy and providing more continuity in the curriculum.

Inch doesn't run from controversy nor turn to mush when the heat is turned up. And he's the first to admit the school board "doesn't live on a castle on a hill." You have to admire the way he strips off the kid gloves and bareknuckles it.

At times, however, Inch over-explains a point, moves off on a tangent and comes across as overly defensive. Conciseness would be a virtue worth pursuing.

BLIZMAN, an attorney and former juvenile social worker, is making his first run for the school board. If he's not elected, we'd encourage him to try again.

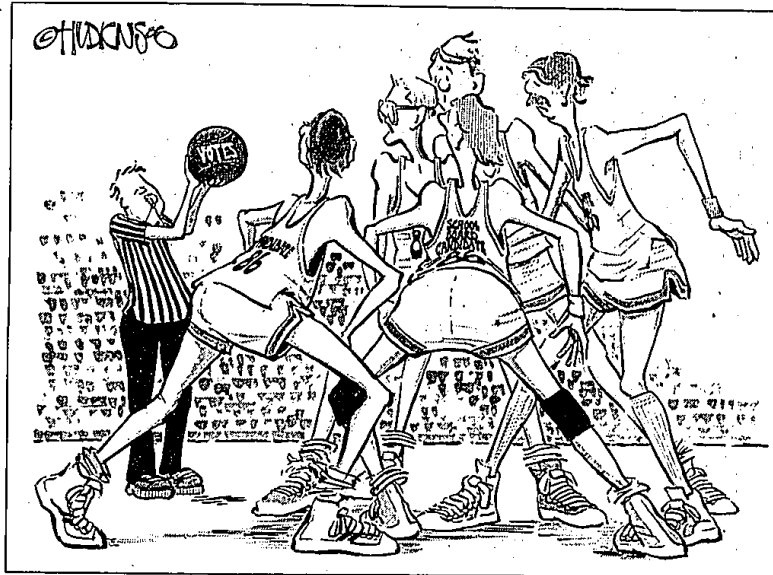
Not afraid to challenge the status quo, he obviously has done his homework. He has specific ideas and gives examples. He's not running by whim.

Blizman is the kind of person who would tread cautiously in money matters but always with an eye toward how students might be short-changed.

He's looking to halt deterioration of school buildings, strengthen vocational education, distinguish the middle schools from the senior highs, make school facilities more available to the community at large and encourage teacher recruitment in light of sweeter retirement incentives. He'd also urge a Teacher of the Year award as part of a push to increase teacher professionalism.

But this year, Rolnick and Inch should be re-elected.

— Farmington Observer



Ho-hum OCC race still deserves voter attention

SAD TO SAY, the campaign for three trustee seats at Oakland Community College has turned into another yawner.

No civic group saw fit to sponsor a forum where all the candidates could be quizzed about the 27,000-student college and its future in Michigan's redeveloping economy. Even the OCC Faculty Forum fell through. No issues were developed by any of the candidates.

We direct the reader's attention to Page 9A of today's edition, where eight of the nine candidates responded to this newspaper's questionnaire. We make no endorsements. But we can underline a few points for your thoughtful consideration.

ALL EIGHT candidates appear to be well educated and capable of making rational decisions at monthly board meetings.

David Hackett, an incumbent, has served for 22 years with no thought of self-aggrandizement. Hackett burns the flame for two pet issues — the environment and equal opportunity for women to advance. Thus he adds a refreshing balance to the prevailing interests on the board.

The three candidates have indicated that they are dedicated individuals who would work hard on the board. They each would bring perspectives and qualities with them that would benefit fellow trustees, school officials and the community.

We applaud first-time candidate Linda Brandemuhl and are sure she has much to offer. She is an active member of the community, serving in the PTA, Friends of Grandview (Elementary School), as a Cub Scout leader and in the Grandview softball program. She has tested youngsters for developmental kindergarten and supervised children.

WE RECOMMEND that voters return Daniel Morrison and send first-time candidate Michael Mogan to the board.

Morrison, now in his third term, is the father of nine children and has been a foster parent for some 50 more. He knows what parents expect from a district. He has accumulated knowledge and experience on the board.

Mogan is a member of the National Association of Social Workers and has been a teacher. He has experience in dealing with young people. As the father of a child who will start school in the district, he brings a viewpoint that would balance that of other trustees.

We recommend that voters say yes to the millage renewal and select Morrison and Mogan as trustees. The combination will plant new ideas as well as nurture others.

— Farmington Observer

Paul Funk, a General Dynamics engineer, has the strongest degree of involvement with OCC of the non-incumbents. Besides taking courses and serving as an adjunct faculty member, Funk has been active on a high technology advisory committee at the Auburn Hills Campus. This indicates that OCC, a low-visibility institution for the rest of the county, ranks high among his civic priorities. Funk also has been active in civic groups and as president of a homeowners group.

Franklin Burn, officer in a civil engineering firm, has had limited contacts with the college. But don't overlook his five leadership positions — a homeowners group, two engineering groups, a church board and a township wetlands appeals board. Apparently civic activists who know him up close think well of him.

STILL TROUBLESOME is the situation of Margaret MacTavish, an incumbent trustee who makes her living as an administrator at Macomb Community College. Yes, the attorney general found no conflict of interest between the positions — at least in the narrow legal sense.

But those experienced in covering education have ample reason for taking a dim view of an administrator in one educational institution serving on the board of a second — especially when the trustee can be a thorn in the side of the administration. And there does appear to be some competition between Macomb and Oakland for personnel and programs involving job training.

As for the other candidates:

Social worker John Erich appears familiar with and supportive of OCC's value to the returning student.

Judith Wiser, now in real estate, has taught at OCC in the past and has a healthy interest in the arts.

Ruth Bornstein, a research assistant for Detroit Public Schools, and Norma Ross, director of community education in Madison Heights, have strong backgrounds in education if no direct contact with this particular community college.

The active candidates all deserve public thanks for their interest in OCC. We wish more civic groups shared that interest.

Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

Special moment

Nature's creature draws out our kindness

THE IMAGE WILL remain stamped in the mind.

It's a simple scene — a suburban park nestled against the passing river. Volleyballs, Frisbees and baseballs fly through the air.

Children run and laugh while men and women talk, nibble on chips and enjoy the smell of charcoal smoke wafting over hamburgers.

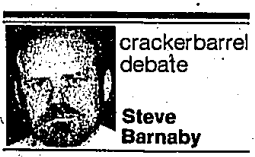
Few notice the seagulls as they fly to-and-fro, scavenging for scraps dropped by playful picnickers.

For the moment it is typical — typical until a frightened and violent squawking interrupts the sun-drenched reverie. Heads turn upward, toward the intersection of two trees.

SUSPENDED FROM a fishing line is a hapless seagull; one wing caught in the accidental snare.

Barbecue utensils and jump ropes are dropped, picnic tables deserted as crowds run to gather around the spot where the bird has become a prisoner. Overhead, the seagull's companions gather en masse, patrolling as sky sentries. Their protest echoes through the trees and out over the water.

Dogs bark and young children cling



crackerbarrel debate

Steve Barnaby

closely to mothers' legs as the captive's cries become louder and more frequent.

Adults gather in a loose pow-wow to map out a strategy.

A man, in his 30s, starts to climb one of the tall trees but is stopped when his memory of tree-climbing days is captured by the reality of what his mind and body are willing to do this day.

Remaining in his lowly perch, he instructs a younger, more eager replacement who climbs to a loftier height.

Indled out by the beer consumed earlier in the day.

JUST MINUTES before strangers, the picnickers are allies, wedded in a common cause — to return the captive to freedom.

After despondent futile attempts, the rescuers rig a long pole volunteered by a faceless member of the crowd. The wire is finally snapped, and the bird, still wrapped in his snare, tumbles to the ground like a flying ace shot from the air.

The crowd laughs as the rescuer who unravels the line from around the captive's wing is bitten.

He drops the bird to the ground and silence sweeps through the gathering. They wait to see if the bird will fly. It flaps and struggles and, like the virgin plane at Kitty Hawk, struggles to the sky.

Applause and cheers overcome the crowd as the seagull reaches for the skies and becomes lost among the swarm that awaits its return.

The birds return to their foraging. The picnickers wander back to their leisure and children laugh while adults nibble on chips and enjoy the smell of charcoal wafting over hamburgers.