

# County Asked To Float Rouge Bonds

By W.W. EDGAR

The Wayne County drain commission has switched its strategy on pollution in the Rouge River basin.

Instead of inviting all communities in the basin to petition for the work and share in the cost of a major study, the drain commission will team up with the Army Corps of Engineers and petition the county for funds for the study.

Only recently the Drain Commissioner Henry Herrick was given jurisdiction over the Rouge by the Wayne County Commission and was proceeding with the legal work of preparing the petitions.

According to state law, it would require two of the involved communities to petition for the work to start before the Drain Commission could take any sort of action.

AT THE TIME the jurisdiction was given, the drain commission was certain that the City of Detroit would be the first to ask that the work be done. And the county officials were given assurance that acquiring the second petitioner would be a simple matter.

With this assurance, county officials set a time limit of 90 days to fire the first shots in the war.

But now the strategy is changed, and the same county commissioners who turned the job over to the drain commission will be asked to help finance a study.

Herrick stated, "We have decided that going to the various communities would be a long, drawn-out process. So, we've decided to take the shorter way and go right to the commissioners to finance a \$5 million study. All we need is a two-thirds vote, and we can go ahead."

HERRICK ALSO said he had looked over the petitions that were being prepared for the bonding companies and found them too restrictive where the individual and separate communities were concerned.

"So we've turned to the Army Corps of Engineers," he explained. "They can make the survey, and they also have access to Federal money that we can't touch."

"The Army can make the study as part of their survey of the entire southeastern Michigan area which recently was authorized by Congress and that will get the work started."

Herrick was quick to point out that he was thoroughly familiar with the attitude of the county commissioners when it comes to appropriating money.

"It may be different this time," he said, "because the money advanced to help with the work would be returned from the sale of bonds."

THE COMMISSIONER also left little doubt that the war on pollution in the Rouge basin would be a long fight.

"I may not live to see it finished—in fact, I don't expect to," he said when asked about the time limit.

"The Army Engineers have been working on the project in some phase for the past 22 years. Now they tell us that it will take at least another five years to make the study they'd want before work is started."

Herrick pointed to the work that the Army has been doing.

"They worked on the lower part of the Rouge—from the Detroit River to Michigan

Ave.—and found they ran out of money. They had to start over, and now the area being covered is from the river to a half-way point to Michigan Avenue."

Asked if the same formula would be used in assessing the

communities for the work as he had planned at the start, he explained that it wouldn't be quite fair to assess those communities in Wayne County that were not part of the basin, such as the Grrosse Pointes. The estimated cost of the

project is \$250 million, and the bond issue can be more attractive with the full faith and credit behind it.

"THE COUNTY, at the present time, has an assessed valuation of \$8.5 billion.

Multiply that by two—under our state assessing laws—and you see that Wayne County has a strong financial base.

"In view of that, we'd have no trouble selling bonds."

"All we need now is the approval of the county commissioners when we make our request and the work can get started."

"I know this is a new turn, but it seems like the best strategy at this point."

This shift means that the work can be further delayed and the plan to construct a companion to the Middle Rouge interceptor will be a long way off.

As he concluded his explanation of the switch in strategy he repeated: "It will be a long war, and I

may not live long enough to see it finished."

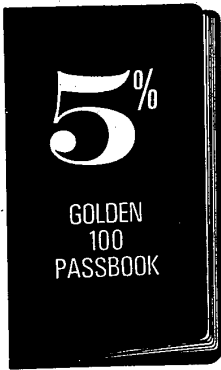
Meanwhile, it appears that for the moment, the work continuing the war on pollution in the Rouge Basin will be left to the Jaycees and the conservation clubs in the area.

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