

Opinion

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Back McDonald for county board

IT'S JUST another useless bureaucratic layer made up of opportunists whose top goal is to enhance their political careers.

That's a common although misguided notion of the 27-member Oakland County Board of Commissioners. For a generation, Oakland has been a pioneer in providing public services on a countywide basis.

With the trend toward tighter state and federal budgets, county government — by necessity — will present an even stronger voice as the year 2000 draws near.

As we underscored during the primary campaign, Oakland residents, more than ever, will look to the county commission for leadership, enterprise and hard-nosed money management.

IN THIS vein, and given his proven commitment to community service, we believe John McDonald, a 12-year incumbent, should be re-elected county commissioner from the 27th District, which takes in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

Ironically, McDonald's Democratic opponent, former Oakland County Sheriff Johannes Spreen, probably has better name recognition.

Theirs is one of the few county commission races to capture the media's fancy. And it's not surprising. McDonald is taking Spreen's candidacy so seriously he held his first campaign fundraiser this year.

A moderate Republican, McDonald has built a reputation for supporting the county executive, not serving merely as his puppet.

DILIGENT IN attendance, well prepared in discussions and attentive to detail, McDonald is the archetypical county official. He works for a purpose and a cause, self-evidently. A headline seeker he's not. His insight into county government has proven particularly beneficial during budget considerations.

Moffitt and Perinoff should be re-elected

WE URGE voters in northeast and southeast Farmington Hills to return two incumbents to seats on the Oakland County Board of Commissioners Tuesday, Nov. 4.

In the 15th district, which includes northeast Farmington Hills, we support David Moffitt. The Birmingham resident has served one two-year term.

Moffitt is a member of two standing committees — personnel and health and human services. He is also the elected GOP commissioners' spokesman to the county Republican Executive Committee.

A precise, energetic attorney who has been active in community volunteer work and grass-roots politics, he has a thorough knowledge of county and local issues and has been responsive to the needs of the individuals and governmental units he serves.

He believes in extensively researching issues. We look forward to him becoming more authoritative in his decision-making now that he has two years of experience behind him.

THE BEST bet for voters in the 21st district, which includes southeast Farmington Hills, is Alexander Perinoff.

The Southfield resident has been a commissioner since 1969. He is a former county board chairman and a former Southfield municipal judge and councilman.

Perinoff has the experience and insight needed to guide the county toward the next decade as the face of problems ranging from roads to solid waste.

Saying "no" to more property taxes, Perinoff would support a gas tax to improve the county road system. "The only ones who should be taxed are those who use the roads — motorists," Perinoff said in an earlier interview.

He was a supporter of the enhanced 911 emergency calling system and also is backing a plan to burn solid waste, lessening the use of landfills and accompanying toxins.

Under government structure, Perinoff favors consolidating the county Department of Public Works under the drain commissioner. He recognizes the county's responsibility to help undeveloped townships with the county sheriff's road patrol.

Asked what qualities he brings to the job, Perinoff said common sense, among others. We agree.

— Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

We care what you think

READERS ULTIMATELY determine the quality of a newspaper — especially one heavily colored with community news.

We firmly believe that is how it should be. So if you'd like to share your opinions, write us. In our view, letters to the editor reflect the vigor, diversity and wisdom of the community.

We reserve the right to edit and condense letters. In most cases, letters should be limited to 300 words. Letters that focus on local or grass-roots issues are particularly welcomed.

Letters must be original copies. They

should be typewritten or legibly hand-printed, double spaced and have suitable margins. Carbons, reprints and photocopies will be discarded.

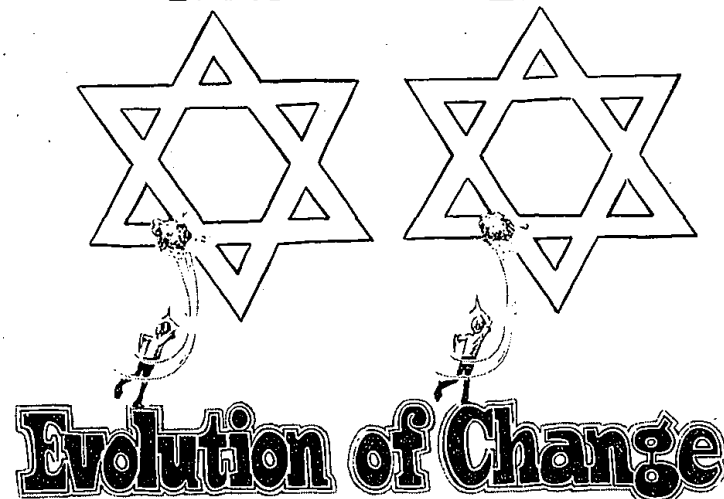
Letters must be signed and include the address and telephone number of the author. Names of authors will be withheld from publication only for reasons we consider to be compelling.

Send letters to: Readers' forum, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River, Farmington 48024. We'll be happy to consider printing them.

— Bob Sklar

THINKING 1940s

1980s

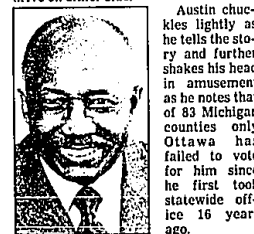


Dick Austin's last hurrah?

DICK AUSTIN IS TO controversy what L. Brooks Patterson is to the Committee for Humane Treatment of Prisoners: a stranger.

So when an interview with the soft-spoken secretary of state scares up a scintilla of scintillating scandal, scoop-minded scribes take note.

Here is the scoop: Austin missed a question on his last driver's license test. "I answered that you should drive to the right if there is a barrier in the road," Austin said during a recent campaign-trail stop. "Apparently, you may drive on either side."



Austin chuckles lightly as he tells the story and further shakes his head in amusement as he notes that of 83 Michigan counties only Ottawa has failed to vote for him since he first took statewide office 16 years ago.

"I asked the legislators over there what it would take for me to carry Ottawa, and they



said I would have to switch parties. I offered them a compromise. I said I would consider retiring after this next term if Ottawa voted for me."

SUCH TALK is not the only hint that Austin, a 73-year-old Democrat, may be running his last campaign. This election is important to him, he said, because it will allow him to preside over the sesquicentennial celebration of Michigan's "rich history."

Retirement is far more likely than voters to oust Austin. The Republican challenger, Birmingham businessman Weldon Yeager, served with Austin over 20 years ago at the state's constitutional convention. But Yeager has had none of Austin's success at the polls. Austin says he respects Yeager but doesn't expect a tight race.

When he retires, Austin will leave a legacy of an office that has been transferred from the patronage-packed domain of his predecessor, James O'Hare, to an efficient, competent,

computer-age system of doling out drivers' licenses and license plates.

Austin took over an operation that would not accept personal checks. Today, most people can order by mail the plates that expire on their birthday, making long end-of-March lines a bygone scene.

AS SECRETARY of state, Austin tried to swamp drivers with a barrage of safety information. He was a strong advocate of mandatory seat-belt use. He thinks the 55 miles per hour speed limit saves lives but he believes a speed limit of 65 would be just as effective if it were enforced.

Austin is particularly proud that Michigan was the first state to allow voter registration at secretary of state offices and he speaks fondly of the Canadian system where it is the government's responsibility to register voters. "Registration should not be an artificial barrier to the right to vote," he said.

No matter where they register, most voters this November will likely again cast their ballots for Austin.

"I believe I have established a good record for achievement," he said.

Even those folks in Ottawa County would grant him that.

Lucas is swinging wildly

FOR CHALLENGER William Lucas, the days, indeed, are dwindling down to a precious few. With less than two weeks to go, Cool Hand Luke continues to jab, feint, weave and hook, but he can't seem to land a solid blow.

The champion appears unflustered. His hair is still slicked down. He looks taller than ever. He isn't tiring or sweating hard. He's almost smiling as the challenger attempts to land a telling blow.

As the time runs out, it looks more and more certain that Lucas is on a futile quest as he chases after the governor.

Lucas has now called Blanchard a liar several times in an effort to put more life into his campaign to become America's first elected black governor. He has said the governor needs to grow up. He has said and implied that the governor and his aides are deceiving the public.

IN HIS wildest swing yet, the challenger has claimed that he will take over the city of Detroit and install the state police to quell crime. He says the governor is afraid of Coleman Young or he would do the job. It was certainly a roundhouse swing, but it may have taken as much out of Lucas as it did out of the governor.



Lucas has been trying to parlay long odds into the governor's manse ever since he took up training for the championship fight.

The problem is that until now, people haven't paid much attention to his campaign. He has listed one idea after another as ways to handle what he perceives as Michigan's problems. But he has until now looked more like a Don Quixote figure trying to find a windmill that he can knock over.

If anything, Lucas was losing ground, not making up the more than 20 percentage points he needed to pull even with Gov. Blanchard.

HIS CAMPAIGN, the advertising employed, the tone of his remarks as reported in the media, all took on negative quality.

Instead of attracting people to his cause, Lucas was losing people. Republicans started jostling each other in an effort to put distance between themselves and the GOP gubernatorial stan-

dard bearer. They saw no gain in being identified with a Lucas-Engler ticket.

The big push that was to send Lucas along the golden road to victory was the Reagan connection. Reagan appeared in Michigan on Lucas' behalf, called him Cool Hand Luke, and tried to glim him with the Reagan luster. But even that hasn't seemed to make much of a difference.

THERE WAS some hope that Lucas could stagger Blanchard with the now, three-year-old tax raise issue, but that fizzled. One poll even showed that 50 percent of the state favored the temporary tax increase which now has been eliminated.

Lucas' latest effort to land a haymaker was the attack on Detroit's crime rate and on the Coleman Young-Blanchard alliance.

That surely is a tune that gets a sympathetic ear in some parts of the state. Pummeling Coleman Young is a pleasant sound to much of the populace outside of Detroit.

In fact, this may be Lucas' last hope at finding an issue that appeals to some part of the populace — to try to beat up on Coleman Young in an effort to get the white voters who so far have been cool to the Lucas candidacy.

My guess is that even that won't play in Peoria.