

points of view

Candidates must debate in race

JUST LIKE THE young, talented Michigan Wolverine basketball team took on the experienced, No. 1 ranked Duke Blue Devils, thirty-something David Honigman is going after the ranking Republican in Congress, William Broomfield.

Honigman hopes the results will differ from Monday night's Duke victory in which maturity was out. Broomfield, an energetic 69, is counting on his dynasty to prevail.

Some have called Honigman "Impatient" just as the Fab Five weren't content to wait until they were mature sophomores to reach the NCAA Finals. But Honigman is actually two years older than Broomfield when he was first elected to Congress.

In fact, their political paths are quite similar.

Broomfield served three terms in the Michigan House, to which he was first elected at age 26. Honigman was first elected to the state House at age 28, also serving three terms. Both then were elected to the Michigan Senate. And Honigman, as did Broomfield, is running for U.S. Congress as a freshman state senator. Broomfield was elected to Congress



Judith Doner Berne

at age 34 — Honigman, trying for the same feat, is 36.

IN BOTH CASES, money is not a factor.

Broomfield is reported to have a campaign war chest of more than \$400,000 accumulated from his years of fund-raising. This is his last opportunity to retire and convert his campaign funds to personal use.

Honigman spent \$582,000 just to win his current state Senate seat in one of the most expensive state Senate campaigns in Michigan history.

But their personal styles differ greatly.

Broomfield is a gray-flannel suit-style, dedicated Congressman who has spent most of his time and energy dealing with foreign affairs, rising to become the ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. He has generally gone

along with Reagan-Bush policies and has not authored major legislation.

He maintains a Birmingham office, but doesn't spend much time in the area, communicating with his constituency mainly via the mail. A fiscal conservative, he was quickly able to clear himself from any association with the House banking scandal.

Honigman, known for not wearing socks, has a reputation for staying in direct touch with his constituents. He is reputed to have gotten more legislation through the Senate in his first 15 months than many have in their careers. He has flip-flopped on abortion — he once was pro-choice, then pro-life, now votes pro-life but says he doesn't want abortion criminalized.

Broomfield has been consistently pro-life — but once voted to override the President's veto of a bill to ease restrictions on Medicaid abortions in cases of rape or incest.

HOW THEY DIFFER on other major issues is hard to gauge since they've had such different fields of play. So it's critical that voters in the newly-drawn 11th Congressional

District learn their general philosophies and issue-by-issue stands.

This can best be done through debate — which can be carried live and then rereleased on cable.

Broomfield, whose recent elections have been assured, has refused to debate his challengers in the past. Two years ago an area homeowners group invited Broomfield to debate his Democratic opponent, Walter Briggs IV, under their sponsorship. He told them he was "too busy." He also told the local League of Women Voters representatives he would not debate Briggs.

This time, he is obliged. This is the year in which more than 100 U.S. House seats are expected to turn over, — through redistricting, involvement in the banking scandal or irritation with the Washington scene.

Just as Duke and U-M laid it all on the line before the nation, Honigman and Broomfield must give their constituents the opportunity to view and evaluate their best shots. So should all candidates everywhere.

Judith Doner Berne is assistant managing editor for the Oakland County editions of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

Urban sprawl is not racism's fault

THINGS WERE going marvelously in the Southeast Michigan Council of Government's attack on "urban sprawl" when somebody blundered.

SEMOG's steering committee came up with the notion that race is "the dominant social factor" influencing urban sprawl — the paving over of greenfields in excess of the region's population growth.

The idea was expressed as an insulting accusation. Politicians in Oakland, western Wayne, Macomb and Livingston counties saw red. And now an otherwise excellent program is in grave danger.

THE ATTACK on sprawl — called Regional Development Initiative in SEMOG bureaucracy — was prompted by the two-million square feet Auburn Mills Megamall project northeast of Pontiac.

In 1989 the council in a little city that most people didn't know existed approved a project that would soak up enormous amounts of road money, screw up wetlands, generate traffic across neighboring towns and endanger the health of existing shopping areas.

Even places like Southfield and Rochester were alarmed.

Everyone seemed to memorize the numbers trotted out by the SEMOG staff: Uncontrolled development in 20 years would eat up 40 percent more land for a 6 percent population growth.

OUTLYING communities attacked not only the racial remark but began revising the entire report.

Many saw "loss of home rule" as the result of RDI.

"NO," roared Canton Township, saying crime and poor schools were really to blame.

Oakland County commissioners came up with their own report: Executive candidate L. Brooks Patterson saw a plot to stifle northern Oakland's growth. Plymouth Township saw the whole RDI study as flawed. Novi and points west went on the attack.

Brighton, Holly and Pontiac saw themselves as older cities ignored in favor of Detroit.

Some smelled radical socialism — although, in truth, any containment of sprawl is really conserving existing development and holding down taxes.



Tim Richard

MACKINAC CENTER, the conservative, Midland-based think-tank, noted the RDI report ignored a major problem in Detroit — its enormous taxes.

Detroit soaks its people 90 mills of property taxes versus 48 in Troy, 51 in Farmington Hills and Novi, 60 in Southfield, and 55 in Livonia. Moreover, Detroit taxes income, utilities — anything that moves. People want to put their scarce mortgage dollars into housing, not taxes.

Even if the region were populated by 4.4 million homogeneous octoroons, people would still skedaddle from Detroit because of taxes. One can hardly accuse the middle-class blacks leaving Detroit because of racism.

Mackinac Center praises one element of the RDI using scarce federal and state dollars to rehabilitate existing infrastructure instead of building new roads, water mains, sewers, sidewalks and public lighting. Suburbanites should heed that message.

RACISM exists, though its extent can be exaggerated in a state which has a liberal constitution, a Civil Rights Commission, an open housing law, a fair employment law and vocal minority groups to seek their enforcement.

Racism certainly doesn't explain growth in far-out towns like Auburn Hills, Clarkston and Brighton. For every redneck lout, there are 1,000 peace-loving families of good will who simply never stopped to think about the impact of their hard-earned savings on the ecosystem.

We need to conserve land and use our taxes wisely. But the SEMOG steering committee's blunder has insulted so many potential supporters that one fears it may subvert the attack on a genuine enemy — urban sprawl.

Tim Richard reports regularly on the local implications of state and regional news.

Admit racism is root of mass exodus

LAST MONTH I looked in my Observer & Eccentric newspaper and, lo, I learned that what I told you back in October would happen has happened. A majority of the Oakland County Commissioners and several officials in Wayne and Macomb have rejected the part in SEMOG's Regional Development Initiative Task Force report which cited racism as the primary reason for metro Detroit's urban sprawl.

I had also written another O&E column last June making some of the same recommendations for dealing with racism as did the RDI Task Force. In fact, I had made them in a 1987 Detroit Free Press column, as well.

Commissioner John Olsen of Huntington Woods did his best to defend his 14 Republican colleagues' votes against the report and the recall of commissioners Marilyn Gotsling of Bloomfield Hills and Donald Jensen of Birmingham as SEMOG delegates after its publication. (All eight Democrats favored the report).

Olsen stated inaccurately that crime and inadequate education weren't even addressed in it as key issues. But really it rated them second and third in importance, right behind racism.

THE TASK FORCE saw all three of these ills as feeding each other. The reason its premier recommendation that every school district address multi-culturalism (as Rochester, Wayne-Westland, Walled Lake, Birmingham, the Bloomfields and a few more are already doing).

"A million white residents deserted Detroit during the past three decades," do the commissioners, who won't accept the task force's racism findings think all those homeowners and businesses fled because they expected to discover some great new river to the north or west — or perhaps a finer library and art institute?

It's time we admitted that the root reasons for that mass exodus were racism, the economies of racism and



John Telford

a lack of school programs that confront racism.

I'd like to believe that Olsen and his colleagues who opposed the report are truly concerned about education. Accordingly, I want to see them and every other politician — and their constituencies as well — push to pay the full price for quality education in every district. Haven't we learned yet that if we don't invest in every vital facet of schooling now, we'll be forced to spend far more on rehabilitation later?

We can't afford that in a nosediving economy (caused by earlier budget-cutting in schools). This plummeting spiral can be reversed by only one means — education.

IN THE MEANTIME, it's essen-

tial that top-level school administrators take some of the meager curriculum development money they still have and invest it in multi-cultural programming. They've also got to recruit more minority staff.

Finally, fair-minded community leaders, school boards, governmental officials and fellow educators must sustain the courage to stand with their school administrators in these democratic initiatives rather than buckle when the ubiquitous bunches of bigots attack.

Let's all link arms in a brave and unbreakable chain to resist racism. It's still not too late to overcome this scourge that is spreading dangerous divisiveness and despair, throughout America.

John Telford, a Rochester Hills resident, most recently was assistant superintendent in the Rochester School District. He formerly was executive director for secondary education in the Plymouth Canton District.

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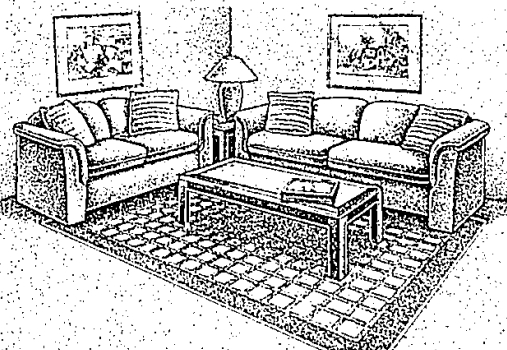
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