

School picks Keep Prutow; add Svoke

There's really no good reason why incumbent Helen Prutow should be off the Farmington Board of Education. And there's no reason why challenger Joe Svoke shouldn't be on it.

We endorse Prutow and Svoke, and we hope the Farmington District voters agree when they cast their ballots in the annual school election on Monday, June 8.

We choose these two because we think they are best suited to work with the entire school establishment — that includes the other trustees, the educators and the taxpayers — to guide the district through a dangerous and confusing time in public education.

But, frankly, we're a little disappointed in this school board race. First, we're still wondering why only three decided to run, especially when one of the two open seats was left vacant with the resignation of Jim Abernethy.

And then, we're kind of mystified at Prutow's campaign. She has the experience (16 years, four terms) and she comes about as close as anyone can to being a professional school board member.

Yes, Helen Prutow does have a lot to offer to the school district. But voters might not realize that after watching her lackluster performances in at least one of the televised candidate forums.

With her experience and her many contacts at all levels of the education establishment, she should have had little problem in boosting herself into a fifth term. But, no, she seemed more

■ We choose these two (Prutow and Svoke) because we think they are best suited to work with the entire school establishment. . .

interested in fending off a certain determined challenger — and it showed. School watchers have told us that it showed.

But Prutow is still qualified to serve. We'd like the voters of the Farmington District to remember that.

Svoke, who comes to school politics after years of board-watching, has an extensive business background that should give him a good foundation for serving on the school board.

He's also shown a willingness to work for the schools. He sits on the district's Safety Advisory Committee, is on the board of the Harrison High School Band and Orchestra boosters, and has been a member of the East Middle School Parent Advisory Group.

Although he claims to support the current board and administration, he has never been afraid to ask questions at meetings, especially when the board is spending money or introducing programs.

We thank the three candidates for their interest in serving on the board of education, and we remind voters to go to the polls in the Monday, June 8, school election.

3 signal a stronger OCC board

Laurance Inerman, Janice Simmons and Sam Yono stand out from the deep, talented field in this year's race for Oakland Community College trustee.

We urge voters to support all three in the Monday, June 8, election.

Inerman, an attorney, impressed us with his thoughtful approach to college issues. We envision the Bloomfield Hills resident as a strong supporter of college technological programs, but not at the expense of sound liberal arts education. Inerman's long involvement with Optimist International, where he's served as a state officer, speaks of his commitment to young people.

Simmons, vice president of marketing and public relations at North Oakland Medical Center, would appear to fill two needs. A former nurse, the Rochester Hills resident pledges to keep a watchful eye over OCC's many health care programs. As a public relations professional, she could also help guide OCC's marketing strategy — a critically important issue as state and grow ever smaller.

Yono, a businessman who was recently appointed to the board, admits he's still learning his way as a trustee. We wish he'd become a more vocal member of the board. Still, the Novi resident appears to have a good initial grasp of what the college represents and how it can best serve the community. Area Chaldeans are justifiably proud of Yono's board status — he is also

■ Three of the four current OCC board members are educators. All four are white. Our choices reflect a desire for the board to expand its horizons to include people from other professions and ethnic groups to better serve Oakland County.

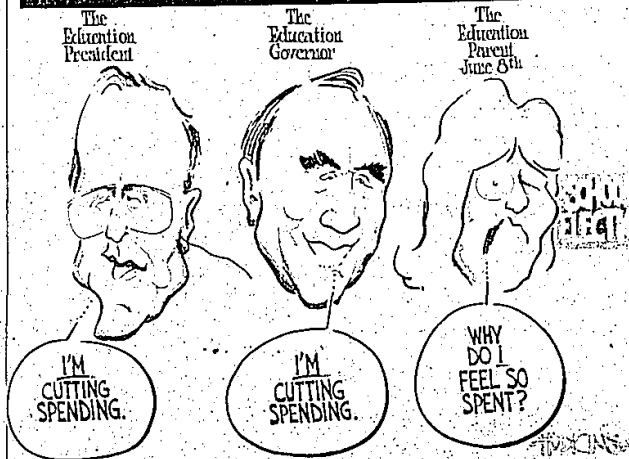
chairman of the Chaldean Federation of America. What impresses us most, however, is Yono's stated commitment, not only to minority students, but to OCC students in general.

Six-year-board member Judith Wiser is an intelligent person with creative ideas. But she has not learned to work as a member of the board, rather than as an individual. Her attitude and comments can create tension and do not always serve the board well.

Three of the four current OCC board members are educators. All four are white. Our choices reflect a desire for the board to expand its horizons to include people from other professions and ethnic groups to better serve Oakland County.

We urge area voters to support Laurence Inerman, Janice Simmons and Sam Yono. They will not only make the OCC board more diverse, but stronger.

— ARKIE HUPKINS



LETTERS

Put DeVries on board

Recent events during the campaign for the Farmington School Board raise some serious questions about two of the candidates:

Helen Prutow's and Joe Svoke's refusal to debate Richard DeVries at one of the candidate nights calls into question the sincerity of their claims of openness and willingness to listen to the community as a board member.

Svoke refused without explanation of any kind. If he wishes to be a representative of the people, he should not hide his reasons.

What is he hiding? If he is elected, will he refuse to explain his actions on all school district business or will this just be his response when he is faced with a difficult decision?

Prutow at least gave a reason. She was afraid that the questions would be biased. I for one don't understand her reasoning. As in other debates, all the questions are answered by all of the candidates. There is no advantage when everything is equal.

Prutow's supporters could have participated in asking questions of the candidates. The real reason appears to be that the debate was sponsored by a group that Prutow dislikes. How petty can one be?

My other concern is the manner in which Svoke and Prutow have engaged in a negative campaign. Both of them have specifically singled out DeVries as being negative for the district.

I always thought that candidates should campaign as to their qualifications, not as to their perception of another candidate. Throughout the campaign DeVries has talked about policies of the board and the administration in terms of efficiency and outcome. Although some of the comments have been critical they have never specified an individual.

The purpose of a campaign is to examine the issues and present the solutions of the candidates. The voters then select the individuals that they feel can best serve them. It is unfortunate that Prutow and Svoke seem predisposed to engage in mudslinging. Shame on both of you. What a lesson in civics that they're providing our children.

I support Richard DeVries because he is an ethical person and carries no political IOUs. He is an individual who is honest, is willing to listen to any individual whether or not he agrees with them, and is not afraid of special interest groups.

Lorne Leon, Farmington Hills

Seek real story behind census

A lot of the usual hand wringing accompanied the Census Bureau's recent release of the Michigan figures.

The rich are getting richer while the poor are getting poorer. Median income in Oakland County, for example, rose a bit over the past decade, while inflation-adjusted incomes for Michigan residents overall fell nearly four percent. Bloomfield Hills families gained 30 percent; Detroit families lost 20 percent.

The big cause was the restructuring of Michigan's economy away from good-paying jobs in heavy manufacturing. We lost nearly 10 percent of all manufacturing jobs over the last 10 years (Detroit lost 30 percent). Worse, the service jobs that replaced them neither paid as well nor had good benefits.

Poverty in Michigan is increasingly concentrated in households headed by females with children. Nearly half such families with minor children are below the poverty level — two-thirds if children are under 5.

Enter at this point, of course, Vice President Dan Quayle and Murphy Brown and the persistent political quacking about "traditional family values."

The main political move today seems to be moan at length the decline of the traditional two-parent family. Fair enough. But have you not noticed that most of those quickest to point the finger of blame never propose much beyond benign and noisy neglect to help out?

(This discussion forcefully reminds me of the comment made to folks who are so anxious to outlaw abortion in order to protect the unborn child: You guys are evidently more interested in the fetus before birth than in the kind of life the child will lead after it's out of the womb.)

The big story about the census data — and one which the big city media of course missed — is the growth and prosperity of the suburbs regardless of the race or ethnicity of suburbanites.

Nationally, nearly half of Americans now live in suburbs. In Michigan, the communities showing population and income gains were nearly all suburban: Oakland County, Western Wayne County, Livingston County and com-



PHILIP POWER

munities around Lansing.

Many of these communities are still largely white; indeed, the suburbs around Detroit are still among the nation's least integrated.

But change is coming. After all, an interest in finding a good place to raise kids, attend decent schools and live in quiet, safe neighborhoods is not confined to caucasians. Minorities of all kinds — blacks, Asians, Chaldeans — are making the move to the suburbs quietly and without big media notice.

It was not always thus.

Twenty years ago, some suburban newspapers were running alarmist stories about neighbors protesting when black families moved in.

I remember a long meeting with my staff to talk over what to do. We decided that the race of those moving to the suburbs was irrelevant to the news. Most media now follow suit.

And, today, suburbs like Southfield are actively marketing their ethnic diversity. The population of Southfield's schools — more than half black, 10 percent Chaldean, two percent Asian and the rest white — is featured in promotional brochures and videos designed to attract families and teachers of varied racial backgrounds.

It's a big story hidden in the census numbers: from alarmist news stories to promotional videos. It shouldn't be overlooked amid all the hand wringing.

Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

Would you suggest something for us to read?

We asked this question at the Reading Express Book Sale in Farmington Hills.



"Flash Point" by Aellen and "The Pulcinch Brief" by John Gisham.
Judy Eldridge
Farmington Hills



"U.S. News & World Report and LeVerne Spencer's books."
Maxine Carlson
Southfield



"I don't read much — mostly the newspapers."
Herbert Hyman
Farmington Hills



"Mad Magazine, I like it. It's funny."
Joe Jonkins
Farmington Hills

The Farmington Observer

TOM BAER, EDITOR, 477-5450

STEVE BARNABY, MANAGING EDITOR
JUDITH DONER, ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR
DICK ISHAM, GENERAL MANAGER
MARK LEWIS, DIRECTOR OF ADVERTISING
FRED WRIGHT, DIRECTOR OF CIRCULATION
Suburban Communications Corporation
Phillip Power, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
Richard Agin, PRESIDENT