

'I'm giving her 2 more debates than she deserves'

By RALPH R. ECHTINAW
STAFF WRITER

Like Doctor Seuss' character Sam I Am, who categorically refused to eat green eggs and ham, county executive candidate L. Brooks Patterson continues to decline television or radio debates with opponent Elizabeth "Betty" Howe.

Although Patterson, a Republican, has agreed to debate Howe twice next week, neither event will be on TV or radio. What's more, the former county prosecutor refers to the sessions as "two more debates than she deserves."

The debates will occur at the Royal Oak American Legion Hall on Monday and at the Southfield Town Center on Oct. 1. They will

not be cablecast or otherwise televised.

Although the League of Women Voters, hoping to host a cablecast debate, was already snubbed once by Patterson, it continues to extend the invitation to both candidates. Howe has agreed to appear, but Patterson has not.

League president Sue Montgomery said Patterson's office was called every other day for at least two weeks seeking an agreement to debate.

"We thought two (debates) was more than adequate," Patterson said. "I'm giving her two more debates than she deserves."

Patterson added that his campaign manager advised against accepting next week's two debates.

Said Howe: "I can't imagine anybody saying no to the League of Women Voters. Shame on him."

Howe's campaign manager, Marie Wiegold, complained that next week's debates are "in front of crowds of mainly businessmen. This is mainly (Patterson's) crowd."

Patterson countered by saying that both debates are in southern Oakland County where a lot of Democrats live and will probably not comprise an easy audience for him.

Howe and Wiegold also said that a cablecast debate, like the one the League wants to do, would reach more voters and therefore be more of a public service than non-televised debates.

"If he wants to duck Betty, that's one thing, but he's also ducking the voters," Wiegold said. "I just wonder what he's afraid of. (Betty) is tough and she's smart, but I don't think she's scary."

For his part, Patterson dances around the question of why he won't debate Howe on TV. His personal secretary, Carmen Talbot, said, "It doesn't matter when (the

League debate) is rescheduled to, he will not be there. (The critics) can say what they want to say."

Even on the radio Patterson won't debate Howe. During the Democratic National Convention in July, Patterson was on WXYT's Denny McLain Show and agreed to debate Howe at a later date on the same program, said McLain's producer, Bill Plegue.

But when Plegue phoned Patterson's office to offer the official debate invitation, Talbot told him that Patterson would not debate Howe on the radio.

"I decided not to go on the air with Mrs. Howe," Patterson said. He declined to explain why he agreed to debate Howe on McLain's show, then backed out later.

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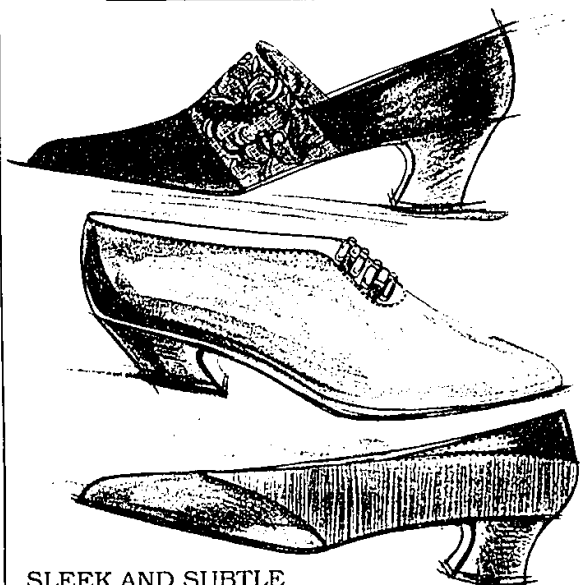
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