

OBSERVATION POINT

Voters Prefer Income Tax To Support Schools

By Philip H. Power
Publisher

Results of last week's school elections in this area were mixed. Basically, two kinds of patterns emerged.

In some areas -- Plymouth, South Redford, Redford Union, Wayne-Westland, Garden City -- the voters were fairly clamorous. Turnout was low, and the outcome contained few surprises. In each of these elections, no millage questions were on the ballot.

In other places -- Livonia, Farmington, Southfield -- interest was high, voters were exercised, and the results shocked some people. In each of these elections, new millage or renewal of old millage was up for voter decision. Clearly, in school elections as elsewhere, money talks.

THE MOST interesting results were in Farmington and Livonia. Acting unlike their fellow Oakland County citizens in Southfield, who approved all three millage issues on the ballot, Farmington voters turned down the school board's request for renewal of 4.5 mills.

They also elected to the single vacant seat on the board Mrs. Elizabeth Brennen, who was publicly identified as being opposed to the millage and generally regarded as being the most "conservative" candidate.

A similar result was turned in by Livonia voters, who elected by a whopping margin Martin F. Seitz, the only candidate who was against the 3.5 mill renewal that the school board requested. Unlike Farmington, however, Livonia voters approved the money renewal that they had turned down earlier this year.

Informed observers in both Farmington and Livonia said that both Mrs. Brennen and Seitz rode to victory on the back of voter irritation at the millage questions rather than because of their personal political clout.

If this is so, it suggests some important conclusions that school officials and thoughtful voters in this area ought to consider.

FIRST, voter dissatisfaction with schools as the source of apparently never-ending tax increases has not cooled off one bit. Even though millages in Livonia and Southfield were passed, high voter turnout in both cities suggested that it is no longer safe to assume automatic passage of millage in the future.

Although the prospect of dealing with Mrs. Brennen and Seitz sends waves of chill down backs of school officials in Livonia and Farmington, there is no denying that they both effectively suggested in their campaigns that voters who were sore at increasing property taxes would

find solace in their representation. They represent important constituents in their communities, and their voices on the board will carry commensurate weight.

Second, schools in the suburbs are still in deep trouble. Farmington, in particular, is going to have to cut \$1.5 million from an already tight budget. This, coupled with the fact that the state legislature is still shilly-shallying around with a state aid to schools formula, means that school officials are going to have an even tougher time than usual in planning how to meet the needs of kids.

THE KEY OUTCOME of local elections, however, was little noted by either of the Detroit daily newspapers or the radio and TV stations. It occurred in Wayne-Westland, where voters were asked to express an advisory opinion on the desirability of financing state education by a state-wide income tax with proportionate reduction in the property tax.

The income tax method was preferred by nearly 2½ to 1!

I have been arguing -- without much success -- for some time in this column that financing educa-

tion by a local property tax was ineffective, unfair, and outdated. I have also been trying to suggest that the income tax, particularly if graduated according to ability to pay, was much better and that voters preferred it.

It's nice to have the voters validate my argument.

We can only hope that our state legislators will see that both the merits of the issue and political expediency (as measured by the Wayne-Westland advisory vote) now argue for elimination of the property tax and substitution of an income measure.

GOOD MEDICINE
WHY DOESN'T
SOMEONE
ADMINISTER
IT?



R.T. Thompson writes

There Isn't Anything Wrong With Our Youth

They may have long hair, mustaches and beards, wear odd looking glasses and even stranger clothes, and they may take pains to act more knowledgeable. But take it from one who has been mixing with high school teenagers quite a bit in recent weeks, there isn't that much difference between youngsters of today and those of one generation removed.

How does one come to that conclusion with all of the talk about drugs, dope, drinking, fast driving and all of the things blamed on our youth today?

One only has to attend the sports events of the past months, the various athletic banquets at the area's high schools and you are thoroughly convinced. There isn't anything wrong that activity won't correct.

WE VIEWED the activities at the first banquet of the Thurston High Boosters Club and never saw a better mannered, more alert group of youngsters.

They cheered, just as we did years ago, when athletes were honored for outstanding feats. There was a look on the faces of those in the sophomore and junior classes of awe, and you knew they were thinking of whether they would be the ones receiving the plaudits and applause when they became seniors.

Then there were two track meets at Livonia Franklin High, one for girls and the other for boys teams in the Northwest Suburban League. It included athletes from Birmingham Groves, Redford Thurston, Westland John Glenn, Livonia Franklin, North Farmington and Oak Park.

The competition was fierce because the schools were battling for league titles and individual championships.

One saw girls running the half-mile and finishing just as strong as their male counterparts, but it made one realize that youth hasn't changed a bit when the losers raced up to congratulate the winners.

It didn't matter if the victor was white or black -- and Oak Park has quite a few black athletes -- the congratulations were just as sincere and the

crowd applause just as great.

THEN THERE WAS the championship game of the Les Anders baseball tournament which matched Redford Union against Livonia Stevenson. Sure, there were some long-haired players in the lineups but the hitting, fielding, pitching and general all-around comradeship were equal and perhaps better than that of 15 or 20 years ago.

The hillsides surrounding the diamond were jammed with folks who came out to see the

championship. There weren't incidents of any nature, and it made one feel proud of the present generation when the two teams lined up after the final out and congratulated each other for a fine performance.

No thoughts of anything other than the best feelings, no incidents of a poor loser trying to belittle the smiling winner; just genuine respect and a wish for more luck in future games.

IT WAS THE SAME thing at the all-sports banquets at Farm-

ington and North Farmington High Schools.

So, one has to say there isn't anything wrong with the youth of today. They have the same competitive spirit, they love to win, they hate to lose, but they aren't carrying grudges regardless of the outcome.

Our task is to keep the teenagers busy, give them the activities they enjoy, just as we did, and you'll learn that the world isn't that bad.

These kids have definite ideas of what they want, and one thing they don't want is idle time.

Tim Richard writes

Parties Differ About Registration Law

If politics was logical, certain Democrats in Michigan would be at each others' throats. It isn't, so they aren't.

On the one hand, we have the United Auto Workers union and the AFL-CIO, which support a Republican candidate every time hell freezes over but no oftener, joining with NAACP and some voters to challenge a state voter registration law.

That law, enacted by a Republican Legislature and governor, cancels the voter registrations of persons who haven't been to the polls in two years, the idea being to eliminate "dead wood" from the books.

THE LAW is no bother to the normally concerned citizen, who has, on the average, three of four chances every single year to vote -- a regular school election, one or two special school elections, a city primary, a city general, the biennial partisan primary and partisan general. All he has to do is go to the polls once during the two years and he's OK.

On its face, the law isn't discriminatory, but it so happens that the pollsters have found that Democrats are less punctual about getting to the polls in non-presidential elections.

Thus, the two-year registra-

tion law tends to knock more Democratic voters off the lists than Republicans. This is what the plaintiffs in this suit are interested in changing, and the talk about helping Negroes is so much window dressing.

The Democratic position in the Legislature is that the books should be cleaned only every four years, and party reformers often propose registration for life. The legislative position tends to emphasize the importance of voting in the presidential election as a method of keeping one's registration alive.

ON THE OTHER hand, we

have Bruce Miller, Wayne County Democratic chairman, arguing to the Detroit charter revision commission that Detroit's city elections should be partisan.

Since Detroiters vote 65 to 70 per cent Democratic, the effect of such a change would be to make the final election in November a dead letter. Detroit officials would, for all practical purposes, be elected in the summer partisan primary.

The City of Westland used to have that kind of system until the Jaycees (which some folks consider Republican-leaning as a group) fought for and won a charter change.

SO THERE YOU have it: One group says voters should be permitted to ignore the 12 or 15 elections that take place between presidential elections and still maintain their eligibility; the other side says Detroit -- and, by extension, other cities -- should for all practical purposes elect their officials in partisan primaries.

The logical thing to do would be to have Doug Fraser of the UAW get into the ring with Bruce Miller of the Wayne County Democrats and slug it out, and may the better ideology win.

But politics, as I said at the outset, isn't logical at least at the philosophical and ideological levels. Because Fraser and the UAW et al will argue their case in a dull courtroom and Miller his case before the Detroit charter revision commission, the inconsistency of their ideas won't be brought out.

What, then is the relationship between the two battles?

Why, partisan political advantage, of course.

Corinne Abatt writes

Answer For Motorcycles?

Seldom does a solution to a problem present itself with such clarity. There was a moment of excitement when it hit and a feeling of superiority as I carried the idea in my head.

During a drive in the country with my teenage daughter this week, we stopped for a snack at a drive-in restaurant. There in the lot were about 20 big motorcycles.

"Geeze, look at those cycles," my beauty said, emoting like a miser finding a trunkload of gold. It wasn't easy to look -- the glare of the chrome in the sunshine was blinding.

She took it upon herself to make me an instant cycle expert.

"Those are the big Harley Davisons, with twice as much

horse power as a VW. They cost like a couple of thou -- geeze, they must have rich parents," she commented, longingly.

A policeman strolled into the lot, hand on pistol, looking to the right and to the left -- possibly for cover. I was comforted -- momentarily -- having no great desire for a country rumble with a bunch of Hell's Angels.

Shortly out the door came a group that looked like the Podunk PTA board -- chewing on toothpicks, hitching up loose fitting pants and several of the grey-haired, paunchy wasted couples wearing "his and her" shirts that were the rage of the mail catalogue clique back in 1967.

"I don't believe it," my beauty said flipping oversized sun

glasses on for a closer look.

"You own these cycles?" said the cop ready for action, the heel of his arch supporter shoe raised like a track star about to spring.

"You betcha," said one rider.

They climbed on, revved their motors and disappeared down the two-lane road in a rush of sound and exhaust trails.

There was a funky lull in our conversation as we continued our drive across the countryside.

Finally I said because I couldn't resist commenting, "I'll bet that if more folks like that discovered cycles, it would kill off the craze once and for all."

"You better believe it," was the faint reply.

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Philip H. Power, Publisher

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