

County Home Rule: There's Hope For Reform

COUNTY HOME RULE
 Shall the County of Wayne elect a charter commission for the purpose of framing and submitting to the electorate of the county a county home rule charter under the constitution and laws of Michigan?
 Yes (x) No ()

County government in Michigan is a many-headed monster. Counties have no single chief executive. They have a group of independently elected department heads. Sometimes one agency of a county finds itself in conflict with another, with no method short of the courtroom for resolving it. Counties have weak taxing authority, and sometimes can't do their jobs properly.

The reason for this sad state of affairs is that county government's outlines were drawn under Jacksonian principles in the

mid-19th century. Those principles called for electing practically every officer and of allowing little local autonomy. The county relies on state law for its powers. The people had little flexibility to design the government to meet local needs.

The principles were bad when they were first developed. They have been shown to be progressively worse through the years, especially since Wayne County became urbanized. They are terrible principles today.

THE 1963 MICHIGAN Constitution held out hope for change by granting counties the right to draw up home rule charters. Cities have had home rule powers since 1909, and wisely took advantage of them to get rid of ward systems, divided executive authority, weak taxing powers and partisan politics.

Unfortunately, the state law implementing county home rule fails to give counties the same flexibility that cities have. Counties will still have to elect their clerks, prosecutors, treasurers, sheriffs and registers of deeds, and must still have partisan elections.

Nevertheless, home rule holds the possibility of reform in Wayne County's government. We endorse the home rule provision on the ballot and urge a "yes" vote by all voters in our communities of Garden City, Plymouth, Redford, Livonia and Westland.

(Oakland County, including Farmington, has no home rule proposal on the Nov. 5 ballot. But Oakland, because of the patchwork nature of its tiny cities, townships and villages, probably needs county home rule even more than Wayne, and we hope

to see such a proposal on the ballot there at some future time.)

If approved, the Wayne County home rule charter proposal would allow the election of 35 charter commissioners, who would have six months to write a charter. The candidates will be nominated Nov. 5, and primary winners will complete next Feb. 17.

WHAT COULD HOME RULE do for Wayne County?

It could allow the election of a chief executive—someone with real administrative authority and power to suggest policy. We need this. Imagine what the U.S. would be like if we elected the Cabinet and had no president!

It could allow the appointment of the drain commissioner and of the county auditors. Those aren't policy-making jobs, and there's

no reason to have them elective. (Besides, we'll wager 95 out of 100 voters can't even name the men or women who hold those offices.)

Home rule could raise the county's taxing authority, presently at 7.07 mills in Wayne, to 10 mills. Some property owners will oppose this. Others will take a look, for example, at the wretched jail and the poor juvenile facilities situation and say, "Let's go ahead." We say, "Let's go ahead."

Home rule could allow the reorganization of Wayne County's 30 boards and commissions; it could give the county greater local authority to reorganize its administrative structure.

That's what home rule could do.

BUT THERE ARE several

things that county home rule proposal can't do.

It can't bring metro government. In fact, the law specifically says that the county can't take over services performed by a local unit unless the local unit agrees. That's a pretty good power veto.

The Nov. 5 proposal, if approved, wouldn't automatically bring home rule. We, the voters, would still have to approve the charter which the commission writes.

Home rule can't bring wisdom to Wayne County government. But it can undo the hands of whatever wise men we do elect to office.

Home rule can't bring Utopia. But it can bring improvement, and we'll settle for that.

—Observer Newspapers

A Graduated Tax For Flexibility

PROPOSAL NO. 1: Proposed amendment to remove the present restriction against the adoption of a graduated income tax.

Shall Sec. 7 of Article IX of the State Constitution be amended to read as follows:

"An income tax at flat rates or graduated as to rate or base may be imposed by the state or any of its subdivisions?"
 Yes (x) No ()

First, a few matters of fact. Passage of the amendment would not mean that the state would automatically have a graduated income tax. According to a recent ruling by Atty. Gen. Frank Kelley, the legislature would have to pass specific legislation before a graduated income tax could be imposed.

Nor would passage of the proposal let local government units—cities, townships, counties and school districts—pass their own graduated income taxes without explicit legislative approval.

So the real issue on the Nov. 5 ballot is whether or not to remove the present constitutional provision against a graduated income tax. Michigan, with a flat rate income tax 2.6 per cent on individual incomes, is the only state in the nation with such a constitutional bar, and the point of the proposal is whether or not it should be maintained.

THERE IS NO doubt that the present constitutional provision barring graduated income taxes is absurd in function, outdated in intent and restrictive in practice.

Its function does nothing to give the state the kind of flexible financing abilities needed by a growing economy and booming population. Indeed, what it does is help maintain the present patchwork jumble that has characterized the state's tax system.

Revenue in this state is based mainly on the property tax, the sales tax, and the flat rate income tax.

The property tax has shown itself unable to meet the growing needs of the state, especially in education, while at the same time progressively soaking the property owners who are not the only ones benefiting from our educational system.

The sales tax is the most regressive possible taxing system, since it taxes equally a family just above the poverty line and the richest millionaire.

THIS LEAVES the flat rate income tax, which has so far worked adequately.

But there's no telling just how it will work in the future, and if the present bar in the constitution is maintained, the state legislature will have its hands tied to do anything about it.

Why should the legislature be prohibited from passing a graduated rate income tax in the future, if the needs of the state warrant it? No reason we can think of, except for some kind of ideological notion about the danger of a graduated income tax.

PASSAGE OF Proposal 1 does not automatically change our tax structure. Its passage would make it possible for the legislature to change the tax pattern, if conditions seemed to warrant it and if the legislature felt their constituents would accept it.

As the League of Women Voters said, "The important thing for voters to remember is that Michigan needs to have every tool available to meet equitably rising state and local needs and costs. A graduated income tax is such a tool."

We urge a "yes" vote on Proposal 1 to give the legislature just this tool.

—Observer Newspapers



MICHIGAN'S WATERS are getting dirtier as more people use them more intensively. This shock photo, made by the Michigan Citizens Committee for Clean Water and Quality Recreation, illustrates the kind of junk that's getting into our waters—and provides a strong argument in favor of the \$335 million "clean water" bond issue (Proposal No. 3).

2 Votes For Our Resources

Two bond issues, one dubbed "clean water" and the other "quality recreation," merit your support on the Nov. 5 ballot.

As the state financiers figure it, the two bond issues, totaling \$435 million in general obligation bonds backed by the full faith and credit of the state, can be paid off over 30 years at about 4 per cent—without an increase in taxes. A combination of (1) increased revenues due to economic growth and (2) retirement of some existing bonds will, they say, make new taxes unnecessary.

PROPOSAL NO. 3: Proposal relating to bonding to abate water pollution.

Shall the State of Michigan borrow the sum of \$335 million and issue general obligation bonds of the state therefor pledging the full faith and credit of the state for the payment of principal and interest thereon for the purpose of planning, acquiring and constructing facilities for the prevention and abatement of water pollution and for the making of grants, loans and advances to municipalities, political subdivisions and agencies of the state for such purposes, the method of repayment of said bonds to be from the general fund of the state?
 Yes (x) No ()

The other \$50 million of the bond issue would become a sewer construction assistance and loan fund to aid local units.

SOME COMPLICATED financial thinking went into the drawing up of Proposal No. 3, a \$335 million bond issue for "clean water."

Under federal law, the federal government will share the costs of these facilities on a 30-70 basis with local units. That 70 per cent is a hefty sum for many municipalities.

So the federal government says, in effect: We'll raise our share to 50 per cent if your state puts up 25 per cent, leaving your town only 25 per cent of the load. (The federal share can even rise to 60 per cent if your town's project is part of a regional plan.)

In addition, part of the state bond issue would be used to prepay the federal share, thus speeding up the building.

Some \$285 million of the bond issue would be used to help pay for construction of \$560 million of new treatment plants (210) and improvements to existing ones (126). Among the likely beneficiaries: Northern Oakland County, southwestern Wayne County and the Detroit system, which serves these suburbs.

The other \$50 million of the bond issue would become a sewer construction assistance and loan fund to aid local units.

PROPOSAL NO. 4: Proposal relating to bonding for public recreational purposes.

Shall the State of Michigan borrow the sum of \$100 million and issue general obligation bonds of the state therefor pledging the full faith and credit of the state for the payment of principal and interest thereon for public recreational facilities and programs consisting of land acquisition and the development of parks, forest and wildlife areas, fisheries and other facilities used or useful for public recreational purposes and for the making of grants, loans and advances to political subdivisions and agencies of the state for such recreational purposes, the method of repayment of said bonds to be from the general fund of the state?
 Yes (x) No ()

PROPOSAL NO. 4 calls for issuing \$100 million in bonds. These, combined with federal aid and local contributions, would add up to a \$168 million total program. A lot of it would help southeastern Michigan.

State parks would get 6,000 more campsites and 18,000 parking spaces. They get pretty crowded, and usage will double by 1990. Cost: \$40.8 million of the bond issue.

The fisheries program will absorb \$23.7 million. Southern Michigan would get some small impoundments to create new fishing areas. And note this: Southeastern Michigan would get a fish hatchery to produce bass, walleyes and a fisher "warm-water" (non-trout) species.

Hunting lands are budgeted for \$7.5 million. Southern Michigan, in particular, would benefit; land is getting scarcer, and prices are rising. The bond issue will help speed up this program and, in the long run, save the state money.

Fully 30 per cent of the \$100 million would go for grants to municipalities, which would have to put up a fourth of the total cost. The funds could be used for pools, local parks, skating rinks and facilities for senior citizens and the handicapped.

It's a well thought-out package. It will benefit suburbanites, city-dwellers and country folks. It deserves a "yes" vote.

—Observer Newspapers

DST Promotes Recreation, Safety

PROPOSAL NO. 2: Referendum on Act 6 of the Public Acts of 1967 (Daylight Saving Time).

Public Act 6 provides that Michigan shall be exempted from observing Daylight Savings Time. The purpose of this referendum is to approve or reject this act.

Shall the State of Michigan observe Daylight Savings Time?
 Yes (x) No ()

With the hands of all clocks in Michigan moving back an hour Sunday at 2 a.m. for the change from Eastern Daylight Time to Eastern Standard, in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Uniform Time Act of 1966, there isn't a better time to urge voters in Observerland to go to the polls on Nov. 5 and decide whether they wish to have six months of Daylight Saving Time on clocks each year.

The federal act requires the observation of Daylight Saving Time for a uniform six-month period by advancing the standard time by one hour at 2 a.m. on the last Sunday in April and moving back one hour at 2 a.m. on the last Sunday in October.

However, the act provides that a state, by law, can exempt itself from Daylight Saving Time on the condition that the law prohibit any local exception within the state for establishing or observing Daylight Saving Time.

THAT'S THE QUESTION before Michigan voters—should they approve Daylight Saving Time for six months of each year as provided by the Federal Act, or should they disapprove and keep the state on Eastern Standard Time throughout the year.

We at the Observer Newspapers favor Daylight Saving Time for six months of the year.

We feel it has definite benefits for the entire state as well as for the immediate area. Michigan is a leading year-round, outdoor recreation state, and its resources and facilities are being used to a greater extent during the spring, winter and fall.

Daylight Saving Time has been a tremendous stimulant for increased use of outdoor facilities by state residents and tourists. Water sports have increased materially, and DST has provided a big inducement to residents of the state to use our facilities and has attracted thousands of travelers who have taken advantage of the extra hour of daylight.

But the time has arrived for Michiganders to make a decision—should the state have six months of DST or should the clocks remain on standard time throughout the year?

There isn't any question in the

mind of anyone but that we can all exist on standard time—we did for years and years and seemed to thrive on it.

By the same token, there isn't any question in the minds of most Michiganders that they have enjoyed that additional hour of daylight during the spring, summer and fall and would like to continue that luxury.

THE ADDITIONAL HOUR has given factory workers and other night employees more time for outdoor activities. They have had additional time for much needed relaxation.

The extra hour has provided an extended opportunity for true family living which has been on a descending scale in recent years. It has allowed for further family fellowship and more time for the wage earner to be with his family and do things they all enjoy.

Statistics have shown that the additional hour of daylight in the evening has been a strong factor in reducing the number of traffic accidents. The dangerous accident period is at the end of the day when motorists are hurrying home through dusk and darkness, tired from the day's work and concerned about family matters.

Under DST, most people have completed their trips in daylight and the extra hour of daylight relieves the Friday night-Sunday night congestion related to Michigan summer camps and lake resort travelers.

Then there is the question of juvenile delinquency. Police officials state the additional daylight hours in the evening tend to reduce juvenile delinquency. Loitering and improper street gathering are appreciably reduced, and persons—particularly women—are able to return home from jobs in greater safety before darkness.

They may be those who feel the additional daylight promotes other problems. But we feel they are minor in comparison to the benefits of DST—that is why we urge support of Proposal No. 2 when you go to the voting booths a week from Tuesday.

—Observer Newspapers

This Is The Week That...

Editor Don Hoenshell is recuperating in St. Joseph Hospital, Ann Arbor, after suffering a heart attack last Wednesday morning at his home. He will resume his column when he returns.

Hillside
 Every Wednesday
 41661 Plymouth Road, Plymouth, Mich.
 Open for Lunch 11:30 A.M.-3:00 P.M. Cocktails 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.
 Dinner 5:00-11:00
 Closed Sundays
 Call GL 3-4301

- Complete Smorgasbord
- 38 Ft. Long Table
- Prime Rib One of 60 Items
- Complete Dinner \$4.50
- Children 6-12 Half Price
- Serving from 5:00-9:30

CHUCK MATSON

- Group Insurance
- Health Insurance
- Pension Plans
- Life Insurance
- Annuities

NEW YORK LIFE Insurance Company
 17000 West 8 Mile Road, Southfield, 356-9480

OBSERVER NEWSPAPERS, INC.
 Serving the communities of:
 LIVONIA PLYMOUTH REDFORD TOWNSHIP
 GARDEN CITY WESTLAND FARMINGTON

Philip H. Power, Publisher

BY CARRIER (Monthly Rate): WESTLAND; GARDEN CITY, 30c
 LIVONIA; PLYMOUTH; REDFORD; FARMINGTON 50c
 BY NEWSSTAND—15c a copy

Member of Michigan Press Association
 Member of Suburban Press Foundation

Published by Observer Newspapers, Inc., 271 S. Main, Street, Box 200, Plymouth, Michigan 48170