

BILLIE FARNUM: 'TOO MANY OBSTACLES TO VOTING'

Billie S. Farnum, 49, is busy around the country working for the Democratic National Committee, but he still has a strong interest in Michigan politics.

A candidate for Congress again? For governor? A party job within the state? It's too early for him to say, but his interests lie in all those directions.

One thing is certain: He wants his party to become more community-oriented, because suburban's strong interests are in community affairs, he thinks his party has been too national government-oriented and has, as a result, failed to win the interest of younger people.

An Oakland County resident, Farnum was a deputy secretary of state in Lansing and a party official before his appointment as state auditor general in 1961. He was elected to the post in 1962.

When the new state constitution abolished the post as an elective one, Farnum ran for Congress in 1964 in the new 19th District, which includes western Wayne and Oakland Counties, and won. But he and several other Democratic freshmen were washed out in the Republican tide of 1966.

We asked him to stop into the office one day recently so we could check up on what he has been doing. Here are the questions and his answers.

Voting Laws

Q. Since leaving Congress, you've taken a job with the Democratic National Committee. What's the title of the job, and what do you do?

A. Farnum: "I'm deputy chairman in charge of registration and organizations."

Q. I have a two-pronged program in registration. One is the long-range legislative program, which is necessary to eliminate the bottlenecks and the hurdles that the electorate have to climb over and run around in order to exercise that most precious heritage, the elective franchise.

Q. There are many of these obstacles. One of them is residency requirements that are unreasonably long. In some states, it's as much as two years before you can register to vote. One of the problems we have today is that our population is quite mobile—approximately 25 per cent is moving (each year). So when you have long residence requirements, you're creating quite an obstacle.

Q. By the 1968 presidential election, we'll have 120 million people eligible to vote, we'll have 12.4 million who have reached voting age since 1964; and as a result of a Bureau of the Census survey after the 1966 election, we found that approximately 30 million people were unregistered.

Q. The best data today, including the new people who will come into the voting populace by 1968, shows that if nothing were done, we could have as many as 35 million people who are unregistered. So there's a big job here.

Q. Let's get back to some of the other problems. "The period is limited, and it's generally too short for public convenience; they have inconvenient hours that ignore the working and



One Eye On Voting Laws

living habits of people; and we have the old quill (registration) procedures in many, many places where we might have, in the same governmental area, some of the most sophisticated data processing equipment available.

Q. We have early closing dates. Sometimes the distance from home or work makes registration difficult for people. We have some states with requirements for women to re-register after marriage or a divorce—those are relics.

Q. I could go on...

Federal Action

Q. What actually do you do in the job to try to correct these registration laws?

A. Farnum: "Well, I've been traveling to a number of states where their legislatures are in session. I've been talking to legislatures about the problems being created as a result of their statutes and asking them to correct it. Some of the legislatures are correcting. Some are not. Some will continue to ignore it."

Q. We may get to the point in this country where, in order for people to vote for the President, vice president, U.S. senator and the congressmen, we'll have to have some kind of national registration so everyone will have an opportunity to vote for those offices, at least.

Q. It is not without the bounds of our U.S. Constitution to provide this opportunity.

Q. What about your working with the party structure?

A. Farnum: "In the states, I'm working on coordination with party people with all outside groups that are interested in working with the Democratic Party."

Q. What are some of these outside groups?

Q. & A.

A. Farnum: "Educational organizations, Veterans organizations, Labor organizations, Business organizations."

Q. It's a job of coordination and cooperation, and motivating and stimulating people to do a good job of registration.

GOP Worked

Q. In the state legislative election case May 23 of Anthony Licata vs. James P. Hoffa, young Hoffa (the loser) suggested on election night the Republicans did a better job of going to the polls than the Democrats, and the Republican organization did a better job of getting its people out. What do you think about that?

A. Farnum: "I agree."

Q. What sort of registration job needs to be done in the State of Michigan?

A. Farnum: "Well, there's a tremendous registration job to be done. 'The people who will be of voting age in 1968 will be 4.8 million. We've had 486,000 young people who will be able to vote who weren't able in 1964, when the number registered was 2.3 million. The number to be registered is about 1.5 million.'

Q. Plus the fact that because of the change in the law in Michigan—which was changed by the Republicans from a four-year to a two-year period—we've had approximately a million people who have been dropped from the registration rolls in 1966.

Q. (Farnum referred to a law which requires city and township clerks to delete from the rolls the names of persons who haven't voted in two years; before 1964, the law allowed four years.)

Q. To bring it closer to home, to the 19th Congressional District, 30,302 people who voted for me in 1964 did not vote in the congressional election of 1966. And every one of those persons, because they did not vote, were dropped from the registration rolls.

Q. Which means that in order to get back even with 1966, those 30,302 people have to be re-registered.

Q. So besides the mobility of the population, which causes problems; besides the new people coming in; because of what I call an archaic system that we have in our state, I do not think that either the populace or the political parties, which are under-financed and over-burdened, should have to take on this kind of a job of working in order to be able to get people qualified so they can exercise elective franchise."

Eye On Mc Donald

Q. What kind of research is the Democratic National Committee doing on Jack McDonald (the Republican who defeated Farnum in 1966)?

A. Farnum: "The Democratic National Com-



Another On McDonald

mittee has a sizable research operation and a most competent deputy chairman in charge of research—Bill Phillips.

Q. And not only Jack McDonald, but we do research about all Republican members of Congress, so we know exactly how they're voting and what they're doing; so it's not designed specifically for any individual.

Q. I was reading your Sunday edition (May 7) and I see here where Mr. McDonald says he introduced a bill called the Human Investment Act. You would take from reading his comments that he was the sole author of this. "Well, the real introduction of the Human Investment Act was done by Tom Curtis (R-Mo.) who on Feb. 5 said he was being joined by 121 co-sponsors. Curtis said the bill was originated by Sen. Winston L. Prouty (R-R.I.) and he called it an 'improved version' of a 1965 bill. Jerry Ford (House GOP leader) said the Human Investment Act was co-sponsored by the entire Republican House and Senate leadership."

Q. I don't think the people of a district should be fooled by the fact that somebody says "I'm the author of this, and I'm going to do the great good."

Q. Maybe you ought to know that in the House of Representatives, only one individual can be the sponsor—the original sponsor—of a piece of legislation. But if another member of Congress wants to also sponsor that legislation, he can get the bill, cross out the other person's name, write his own name, toss it in the hopper, and 200 copies are printed so they can spread them across their district.

Q. Did you do this yourself in your term in Congress?

A. Farnum: "I did it in a couple of in-

stances, yes."

Q. Are you still registered to vote in the State of Michigan?

A. Farnum: "I sure am. I'm a resident of Michigan—born here, brought up here, been a resident here all my life, and I'm gonna continue to be one."

Q. Are you still interested in Michigan politics from possibly an elective post?

A. Farnum: "I'm interested in Michigan politics from two points of view—not only from the elective, but also the organization structure of the Michigan Democratic Party."

Young Voters

Q. A survey shows that about 25 per cent of the younger people in the country identify with the Republican Party, about 35 per cent with the Democratic Party and a larger group, 39 per cent, with no party—they call themselves "independents." Why is this?

A. Farnum: "Two reasons, actually."

Q. "First, we have had a number of public officials who have been preaching this 'independence.' We've entered an age of 'cosmetic politics'—I'm talking about the attraction of the individual over the oscilloscope, the television."

Q. "People spend most of their leisure time—surveys show, especially in our suburban communities—watching television."

Q. "Then, political parties—and this is both political parties, not just the Democrats—have failed to identify with things in the community that people in the age 40 and under group identify themselves with."

Q. "They're concerned with raising their children in the community, and rightly so. They're more concerned with whether they're going to have sewers, in the metropolitan and suburban areas, or water, or the conditions of their streets and lights, and so on."

Q. "But the political parties have had a tendency to become more national in terms of the scope of the programs they talk about... People in that age group just have not identified themselves totally and wholly with those programs of either political party."

Q. "So we've had a drifting away from the concept of our democracy—the competition between two strong political parties."

Vote Partisan

Q. What's the solution—partisan elections at the local level, including cities and school boards?

A. Farnum: "Partisan elections at the local level. But I think that the parties have got to recognize the situation, and I think the parties—and I have advocated this for a long, long time—have got to be more concerned with the local problems of the people right where they live. And how they solve them there—in the community where they live."

Q. "If a party is going to be strong and vibrant, it's got to be part of the community. It cannot be aloof, it cannot be off somewhere else."

Summer Fun!

YOU DON'T have to be on the lakeshore or at a resort to have fun if you're young and live in suburbia. Schools and pools are bustling with youngsters — and leaving tired mom alone for awhile — on hot summer days. Shopping centers, too, are providing fun for families with such diverse entertainments as trout fishing and a circus. This is just a small sample of the activity.

More Schooling: Cure For 'Unrest'

James F. O'Neill, the Livonia executive who is a Republican member of the State Board of Education, has proposed a program of school changes aimed at "reducing social unrest" of the Detroit riot sort.

Underlining them is to keep kids in school more months of the year, more years and for more useful courses. At a school superintendent's meeting in Lansing Thursday, O'Neill said that "juvenile delinquency runs at a 1,000 per cent higher rate among dropouts or 'push-outs' than among those who continue their education. In addition, there is obviously a much greater element of social unrest among this group."

O'Neill cited these advantages of year-around school operation: It would "provide a greater opportunity for teenagers to secure jobs during their vacations (and) prevent swamping the job market with high school graduates at one time."

Highlights of his proposals: ● Giving attention to basic health needs and to remedial assistance. ● Emphasizing "citizenship programs to assist the students in developing proper self-respect, respect for others and respect for authority."

● "Utilizing the schools on a year-around basis to substantially reduce the 50 million children who are literally showed out on the streets every summer."

● "Upgrading the image of technical programs, not only in the eyes of the students but even more so in the eyes of the parents."

● "Raising the legal dropout age from 16 to 17."

● "Raising the legal driving age from 16 to 17. Studies indicate that as the driving goes up, grades go down, and that as car ownership increases, so does the dropout rate."

● "A \$100 cash bonus will be paid to the person who catches a special large trout."



SWIMMING IS ONE of the most popular summer recreation programs in any community. Here, Plymouth youngsters frolic in the High School pool during a recreational swimming hour. The Plymouth program also includes swimming lessons.



LIVONIA YOUTH, Inc., has programs in many schools. At Stevenson High School last week, Linda Taipale and Carl Sheldon play a game of bumper pool.



AT WESTLAND CIRCUS — Shrine Circus clowns Chester (top) and Joe Sherman will be among the acts when the circus visits Westland Shopping Center, Wayne at Warren roads, Aug. 7 to 12. Free tickets are available at the center. Shows are Monday through Saturday at 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., with a 9 p.m. show Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.



KIDDIE KAMPUS, at Farrand School in Plymouth, offers a pre-school recreation program for boys and girls age 3 to 5. The summer recreation programs in Plymouth are sponsored by the Adult Education Department of the Plymouth Community School System.