

## How We See Ballot Issues

# Schools Need New Tax Plan

A quality public school education should be at the top or near the top of every parent's list of priorities for their children.

It is obvious that a good local school system has a lifetime impact on a youngster and what he or she does after completing their education.

For those reasons, both Proposals C and D should be approved by voters at the Nov. 7 general election.

**PROPOSAL C** would shift the burden of school financing from the regressive local property tax to the State Legislature, which then would decide which taxes would replace property taxes for school operations.

The local property tax already has been stretched to the limit in most suburban school districts, and it certainly does not do the job of raising sufficient funds to finance one of the most important public services offered by government.

Of any kind of tax to pay for any service, the property tax is the least fair and the least just for people in any income bracket, but even more so for those with modest or pension incomes.

The unjust property tax system now has Dearborn homeowners paying 12 mills for schools (\$12 per \$1,000 of state equalized valuation) and getting

an estimated \$1,250 of expenditures per student. A few miles away, Wayne - Westland School District has a tax levy of 36.6 mills -- the highest in the state and three times the Dearborn levy -- but gets only \$950 per student.

By lifting the property tax off of the over-burdened shoulders of homeowners, there would be financial relief for thousands of senior citizens, who in many cases have to pay an outrageous percentage of their modest income for property taxes.

**PROPOSAL D** should be approved by Nov. 7 because lifting the constitutional ban on a graduated rate income tax would open the door for a long-needed

justice and fairness to our tax system.

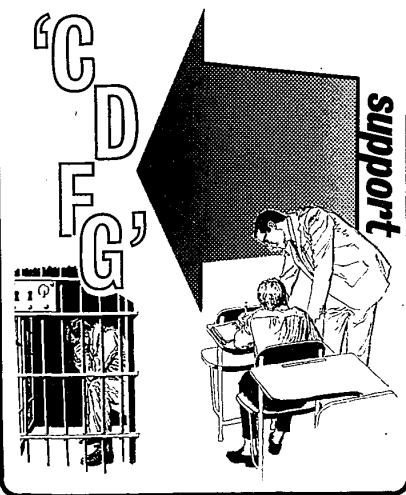
Most economists have long argued for a graduated rate income tax as the fairest possible and we agree.

The current flat rate tax carries over to a degree one of the evils of the local property tax in that it places much of the burden on modest and middle-income wage earners without a real recognition of a person's ability to pay.

Studies by Gov. William Milliken's staff show that most suburbanites would either benefit by a savings in the shift from a property tax to a state income tax hike or have one tax offset the other.

But in any case, decrease or increase in taxes, Proposal D represents the fairest and most just manner to finance public education in Michigan.

IT'S TIME...



## Does State Owe Vets?

Proposal E on the Nov. 7 ballot would allow the state to borrow \$266 million to provide tuition and cash bonuses for Vietnam veterans who are Michigan residents.

It is an unusual proposal because it seeks to supplement existing federal aid programs for returning veterans with additional state benefits.

There is absolutely no question in our mind that society as a whole owes a great debt to the

men and women who served their country in Vietnam. The real question involved in Proposal E is whether or not it is appropriate for Michigan taxpayers to pay for additional benefits for our state's veterans.

We think not, and accordingly urge a "No" vote on this proposition.

After all, veterans serve in the U.S. armed forces, not state militias. They are selected by the federally run Selective Service System, not through some Michigan-only agency. Traditionally, the federal government through the Veterans Administration has taken responsibility for providing benefits to all veterans regardless of state of origin.

We see at this point no overwhelming argument that this pattern should be broken with approval for an expensive \$266

bond issue for a purely Michigan benefit program.

It can be argued that present federal programs for veterans are inadequate. This is true. But the solution to this problem is not to augment existing programs on a state by state basis, but rather to improve the present, federal package.

It can also be said that Michigan previously had similar programs for World War II and Korean War veterans. But merely to say that such programs existed in the past does not necessarily prove that to have a new one now would be the right thing.

On balance, we feel the best way for all veterans to get the generous kind of aid they deserve is through the federal government and not through Proposal E.

## DST Good For State On Balance

Once again Michigan voters will have a chance to put the state in line with the rest of the country by passing the daylight savings time Proposal A on Nov. 7.

It will be the second time in recent years that voters will face the ballot issue, and we again urge that it be passed.

In 1968 the issue narrowly missed approval when it lost by only 490 votes of the more than 2.8 million votes cast.

This time voters will find the wording of the ballot issue much simpler, stating that "the proposed law would change Michigan to daylight savings time from the last Sunday in April until the last Sunday in October of each year."

Not only would it put Michigan in time with the rest of the country, but it would give Michigan residents an extra hour of daylight to enjoy summer evenings.

To the golfer it means that he will have more time on the golf course, and to the homeowner it means he will have more time to do his outdoor work and keep his weekends free.

But to those interested in the environment, it also means an hour less each evening of using electrical power. It would be better for the environment, conserve on power and save pennies on electrical bills.

In our estimation, the advantages far outweigh any disadvantages.

## County, Suburbs Deserve New Jail And Juvenile Home

It's a shame that Wayne County is being forced by a court order to build a new jail. As a matter of civic duty and human decency, the leaders and voters should have provided proper quarters for persons awaiting trial or serving short sentences for minor matters long ago.

Instead, prisoners themselves filed a suit and won a court order for new facilities. Even if these people are prisoners, they don't deserve to be treated like rats. They're still human.

A new jail will be built eventually, regardless of the method by which it is financed. It will cost \$39.6 million and include a downtown facility for 750 inmates and an out-county facility in Westland for 400.

**PROPOSAL F** on the Nov. 7 ballot would provide 6/10ths of a mill for five years to pay for a new jail. If it fails, the jail will still have to be built, but through different financial arrangements. These could involve a bond issue that might double the cost over a long period of time.

Which makes more sense: To finance new jail facilities on a pay-as-you-go basis or to burn up a lot of money on interest payments? Clearly, it's cheaper to pay 60 cents per \$1,000 of state equalized valuation for five years. We fully endorse a "yes" vote on Proposal F.

The faster and more cheaply we build a new jail, the better. If you don't like the idea of "coddling" prisoners, then look at it

this way: Jail conditions currently are so bad that judges are reluctant to send prisoners there. We will be protecting ourselves from these criminals by forthrightly approving Proposal F and working speedily.

A COMPANION proposition on the Wayne County ballot is Proposal G, which would provide 4/10ths of a mill for five years to build \$29.3 million in juvenile facilities.

The present youth home, on E. Forest at the Chrysler Freeway in Detroit, would be expanded from its present capacity of 215 juveniles to 325.

In addition, a new detention facility for 110 youngsters would be built on a 75-acre county site near Michigan Avenue and Meridian roads in Westland.

It's in suburbia's interest to have such facilities near by. For years we have heard suburbanites complain that county services are all in downtown Detroit and that the traffic is terrible. Well, here's a chance to develop a western county services area.

"Facilities" mean more than just a detention home. Courtrooms, administrative offices and staff facilities are included in the 1985-90 construction plan.

By 1980, western Wayne County will have a greater population -- both total and juveniles -- than Detroit and the eastern suburbs. It makes excellent sense to begin the planning and building right now by giving support to Proposal G.

## Abortion: A Personal Decision

Proposal B on the Nov. 7 ballot deals with one of the most emotionally charged issues to hit the state in many years -- abortion.

The proposal, if approved, would change present state law sharply limiting abortion to allow a licensed physician to perform an abortion in a state licensed facility at the request of the mother up to 20 weeks of pregnancy.

Few issues are so personal and so private as an individual's attitude toward abortion.

Few public issues have been so heatedly debated, with so few minds changed as a result.

An individual's attitude toward abortion is likely an expression of his most deeply held religious and ethical beliefs. Newspaper editorials, whether for or against Proposal B, are likely to have virtually no effect on the reader's views.

Accordingly, we simply urge each voter to consider Proposal B carefully and to vote according to the dictates of his or her own private conscience.

## How You Can Make Halloween Safer

It's trick-or-treat time in most Observerland communities.

The traditional Oct. 31 has been officially declared as Halloween in most of our cities and townships.

This year, like last year, stories of Halloween tragedies come to mind. The following are some simple steps that parents can take to insure that their children have a safe and happy Halloween.

• If you're going to give out treats, turn your porch light on. That way the little hobgoblins will know where they're welcome and will be able to navigate your porch steps better.

• Give out only wrapped candy. Recent instances of tampered-treats have been unfor-

tunate and can be avoided.

• Tell your children to bring their treats home to be inspected before sampling them.

• Have your children confine their trick-or-treating to your immediate neighborhood and if possible, go only to homes where the neighbors are known.

• If possible, go with your children. Make sure that little children are accompanied by older ones.

• Have children wear costumes that will show up clearly in the dark and avoid masks that impair their visibility.

• When driving on Halloween, be careful of youngsters crossing streets. Make sure your children know pedestrian rules.

## Editorial & Opinion

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## The Public Gets Invited -- Out

By MARTHA MAHAN

The Clarenceville Board of Education appears to prefer pragmatism over following the law in its handling of teacher union contracts.

Last year it tweaked the public's nose by ratifying its contract with the Clarenceville Education Assn. (CEA) at a closed door "public" meeting from which press and public had been "invited out."

This year, after negotiators reached agreement on a tentative contract, the two sides agreed to keep its terms secret until both sides had ratified.

**THEN THE BOARD, at a public meeting before the teach-**

ers had voted, ratified this year's pact.

Under the Michigan School Code all official board actions must be taken at regular public meetings. And under the same code, records of official actions automatically become public records and subject to public inspection.

But Supt. David McDowell still refused to let the press know terms of the contract, citing his secrecy deal with the CEA.

He said the board didn't want "premature publicity" to get the teachers rattled into possibly turning down the agreement.

But the Observer feels the public had as great a stake in the agreement as the teachers. The public is paying the bill. More-

over, the law is on the public's side.

Supt. McDowell told the Observer that he had talked with a Dr. Edward Pfau whom McDowell identified as a member of the State Department of Education's legal division and had been advised that withholding contract information from the public was "in line with what most districts do."

BUT DR. PFAU, who turned out to be in the department's research (not legal) division, said the conversation had taken place before the board acted to ratify.

"I don't remember the conversation exactly," Dr. Pfau told the Observer, "but I think it was something to the effect that it could make agreement less of a

problem" if details were withheld from the press.

Dr. Pfau said he also had reminded Supt. McDowell that there currently is a bill in the Legislature which would require any district which had failed to reach a contract with its teachers by June 15 to perform all further bargaining in public.

Dr. Pfau opined he saw little chance of the bill's passage, but added: "It shows the trend of public thinking."

That trend would appear to be that while it might be more pleasant for the board to tie itself into a contract and present it to the public as a "fait accompli," the board wasn't elected to perform pleasant tasks but to stand in for the public's interests.