

EDITORIAL OPINION

New look in county rule

For most citizens county government remains a largely hidden, often misunderstood bureaucracy permanently fixed somewhere between the local city council and the very top of the federal structure.

This year Oakland County's "hidden government" will spend approximately \$50 million in public funds for such services as local airports, roads, drains, community mental health, police protection, veterans affairs and sanitation, to name a few.

In November 1973, Gov. Milliken signed a new law which proposes to bring Michigan's 83 county governments into greater prominence by reorganizing them along more efficient lines. While the law would abolish certain boards and commissions and allow the county board of commissioners discretionary authority to consolidate old boards and create new ones, the key provision of the act would allow each county to appoint or elect a chief executive called a "county executive" or "county manager."

COUNTY VOTERS have the option of adopting or rejecting the reorganization plan, and, as things stand now, Oakland voters will be able to make their choice on Aug. 6. They will also decide whether the new executive is to be an elected or appointed official.

Opponents of the elected executive concept argue political ambition and the character of the office would be incompatible since executives must be professional administrators, not policy makers. This point was forcefully presented to the Oakland County board recently by representatives of the League of Women Voters from South-

field-Lathrup, Rochester, Birmingham-Bloomfield, Troy, Northville-Plymouth, Royal Oak, West Bloomfield-Farmington and western Oakland County.

Those who favor the election of the county executive claim the post must be independent of political currents on the county board and more responsive to the people. This view is put forth by the Oakland County Democratic Party.

OBVIOUSLY, the executive would be a creature of partisan political choices whichever way the people vote Aug. 6. We believe that, if the League of Women Voters is successful in getting the "appointed manager" alternative on the ballot, the county board must push for the "elected executive" option on the same ballot to give Oakland residents a reasonable choice on both positions.

As a matter of fact, the board has already "appointed" Daniel Murphy, chairman of the county board of auditors, as chief executive of Oakland County. A Republican, he was named by the board's Republican majority. County Democrats, ever hopeful of a political miracle, are reportedly jockeying among themselves for a chance at the party's nomination should the elective option prevail this summer.

However the infighting turns out, the county reorganization act appears to offer Oakland residents a clearer view of their government, one which would be more efficiently structured and accessible to the people who depend upon its services and support it with their tax dollars. At \$50 million a year, that's hardly an unreasonable expectation.

Dan McCosh writes

Memories of the '50s

Friday night at my junior high school, a couple of hundred adolescents killed the night staring at each other across the gym.

The girls were on one side, the boys on the other, leaning under the sagging balcony which was condemned for audience use during the basketball games.

Mostly, the girls danced with each other, except for the slow dances. Those of us who weren't at the dance, were watching the feature at the Main Theater.

Leaning back in the seat, feet up on the back of the chair in front, piling up more gum under the arms or throwing popcorn boxes on the floor.

"Rock around the Clock," starring Bill Haley and the Comets, was first run. Later came "Dimo," "Blackboard Jungle" and "Rebel Without a Cause."

The "delinquent movies" were sort of like exposes, at least adults thought so. Actually, the great classics of teen-age gang warfare were setting a stage for a surly generation of teenagers.

KIDS WERE beginning to watch what other kids were doing. Starting with the juvenile delinquent classics, surfing movies, motorcycle gang movies, and hot rod movies soon followed.

It was the beginning of the youth-consciousness that dominates the national scene today.

Later, youth would be able to take credit for the civil rights struggle,

fighting an unpopular war, riots, street crime and the narcotics traffic.

A whole generation was being molded. Style wasn't all of it, but it was a big part.

The T-shirts, the blue jeans, the Cuban heels with "taps", the two ounces of hair grease, set a uniform for the kids of the day. It's changed, but kids still demand some uniform.

I caught myself staring at a picture of a kid from East Junior High in Farmington recently. Dressed in jeans, rolled-up-sleeved undershirt and jeans, the "1950's" dance was a parody of those times.

THE REALITY was you got thrown out of school if you dressed like that. Long hair, smoking, "taps" on your shoes or a slouching attitude when addressing a teacher were just causes for a couple of days on the street.

A gym coach would casually reach out and mush an offending package of cigarettes he saw in the shirt pocket of a student.

To get a "1950s" car, a '55 Chevy or even an aging Dodge, you had to drop out of school and get a job.

Kids fought more, but hurt each other less. A fight would start because one kid was Jewish and the other Catholic, or because two kids went to different schools.

Fights would start mainly because kids wanted to fight, but most of it was nothing more than a quick flurry of punches.

The teachers in the school were

mainly, your parents' age, and couldn't care less about "relating" to the students. About one in five high school graduates were going to college.

The future then was going to be peace and quiet.

LATER CAME the Peace Corps, the freedom marches, "youth politics" and the arrogant idea that youth, nothing but youth, was going to solve everything.

But in the late 1950s we knew where we stood.

Too long in the drugstore, and the manager threw you out. Too long in the drive-ins and a security guard was rapping on your window. Too many fights and the night football games were cancelled.

The sides were lining up. Later a kid fresh out of college with a degree in basket weaving would step off an airplane in Uganda and announce he was going to bring inside plumbing to the underprivileged.

Storefronts manned by otherwise unemployable college graduates would open in Appalachia, and the kids would announce they were going to do what John L. Lewis, Walter Reuther and Henry Ford had tried and failed.

But then the sound of rebellion was nothing more than the sound of metal taps clicking down the hall after another kid had been sent down to the principal.

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