

## Gnau's appointment in doubt

By ROBERT KIPPER

OAKLAND COUNTY—The Republican majority of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners may have lost its chance to name whomever they choose to the county road commission.

By hesitating until this year to make the appointment, the GOP may have lost its opportunity to do so.

As a result, confirming John Gnau Jr.—a friend and political associate of County Executive Daniel Murphy—may now be pointless unless county commissioners are willing to fight for that appointment in court.

UNTIL RECENTLY, Gnau's appointment to the road commission seemed a foregone conclusion. The Republican caucus of county commissioners selected him privately and planned to make the appointment official during the closing session of the full board Dec. 19.

Republicans held a two-thirds majority on that board and confirming Gnau should have been elementary. However, seven Republican commissioners failed to attend the meeting and voting on the appointment was postponed.

By holding the matter past the new year, a question has risen as to the board's authority to now make the appointment. Custom, if not specifically state statute, has ruled that a new road commissioner must be picked before the end of the year.

## analysis

As a result, the sitting road commissioner, who would have been replaced, may now stay on. Gnau, or anyone else the county board appoints, may have no position to fill.

IT WAS the term of Frazer Staman that would have expired at the end of the year. However, since no successor has been named, he is authorized to continue as road commissioner.

Now that there is some question about the county board's right to replace him at this late date, Staman said he is considering staying on even after the appointment of Gnau or someone else is made by the county board.

If the situation gets that far, a judge would probably have to decide who should sit by whose authority on the road commission.

STAMAN SAID his decision had nothing to do with Gnau personally or with Gnau's close ties with Murphy. However, many of his statements had an anti-Murphy edge. But Staman insisted it was the capricious way the appointment is being handled by the county board that angers him.

Staman said a decision hasn't been made on if he'll remain in office after the county board names a successor. That, he said, is a decision for others to make, presumably his fellow road commissioners.

Stamen said the entire road commission should fight the way appointments are made.

Neither the other road commissioners nor John Grubba, executive director of the road commission, admitted being part of an attempted showdown with the county board. However, each said they supported Staman's right to hold on to his office.

GNUAUS SELECTION may be in for additional rough going according to Staman, a Republican, who said Gnau-barkers are having a difficult time keeping the entire Republican caucus in line.

Other county sources have indicated that some maverick Republican commissioners are less than happy with the attempt by certain commissioners to stigmatize the caucus into granting Murphy much of what he asks for.

The disgruntled ex-commissioner described the Gnau selection as "a political pay-off" by Murphy. Gnau served as finance chairman of Murphy's campaign for county executive and contributed \$1,000 to Murphy.

Describing Murphy as "King Daniel," Staman predicted "He (Murphy) isn't going to get the support he needs from Republicans (on the Gnau confirmation)."

The commissioners are supposed

to act like adults, not get whipped in fine and told how to vote by some body.

STAMAN SAID several Republicans weren't "buying the authority that Murphy is assuming," and predicted that the Republicans may choose an alternative candidate for the job.

However, as of Tuesday, the Republican caucus seemed prepared to go ahead with plans to approve Gnau at Thursday's board meeting.

Fred Houghten (R-4), of Rochester, who will assume chairmanship of the board Thursday, predicted Gnau would win approval and was quoted as saying the board would take "whatever next step is legally appropriate" if Gnau can't take office.

At least one Republican commissioner announced she would defect.

Commissioner Mary Dearborn (R-22), of Birmingham, said she would nominate a fellow Birmingham resident, former mayor and city commissioner Charles Rendrew, for the post.

Why does she oppose Gnau?

"I don't like to see that obvious of patronage done," Mrs. Dearborn said. "We've never had it before in Oakland County and I don't think just because we now have an elected county executive that we should start."

The Democratic caucus plans to nominate former county commissioner James Matthews of Pontiac for the road commission—a gesture that until recently would have been merely a token offering.

However, if one or two other Republicans break rank, or if attendance is again poor, the appointment that seemed sewed-up a month ago could develop into an open contest.


## Tax installment due this month

The fourth quarter installment for taxpayers who filed estimated tax on their 1974 income is due Wednesday, Jan. 15.

The provision in the law for taxpayers to pay estimated tax in four equal installments means that all of the tax should be paid by Jan. 15.

says R. L. Plate, IRS district director. He says taxpayers should file declaration voucher number four from the Form 1040-ES package.

A detailed explanation, "Tax Withholding and Declaration of Estimated Tax," IRS publication 505, is available free at district IRS offices.



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