

School board should have made millage 'special'

The Farmington school board hasn't matched its three millage proposals with its special election date.

The board has decided on an April 29 election on three different proposals. There are two alternatives for operating funds and a third question concerning taxes for textbooks, equipment replacement and building repair.

The two operating questions make voters pick between a four-mill tax increase, which district officials say will finance an educational program equal to 1973-74's, or a two-mill increase which will keep the program at its present level.

A SPECIAL ELECTION for school tax issues has become standard operating procedure for many school districts. School supporters feel they might need another chance to pass a millage if it fails at a special election, or they feel smaller voter turnouts at special elections favor passage of tax increases.

However, if the Farmington school board wants to justify a special election it should have planned a "special" tax proposal: one which would finance the schools at the level the board and administration feels is needed to offer an acceptable program.

At a regular election, the school board

could ask for taxes to keep the program at the current level.

In other words, the board should have put only the four mill increase on the April 29 ballot.

Previously, we supported settling the financial future of the Farmington schools at a regular election rather than a special election. If the board wants a special election, it should make a proposal to match.

editorial opinion

A political time machine

Ed McNamara let the cat out of the bag with his blast last weekend at the City of Detroit's method of controlling metropolitan water service. Frankly, some of us hoped the had relationship between Detroit and its neighbors in the southeastern Michigan region could be resolved before it got to open warfare. But McNamara, as mayor of Livonia, felt he had to blow the whistle, and you can't argue with an Irishman's conscience.

McNamara's scathing criticism of Detroit's water methods and warning to the suburbs were only the latest and best published in a series of arguments that have marked the deterioration of Detroit political relationships. Locally, such persons as Schoolcraft College Trustee Arch Valier of Plymouth, Wayne County Commissioner Mary Dumas of Livonia and several in Farmington have been talking about it.

RACIAL TENSION is not at the heart of the matter. Racial polarization simply intensifies the situation. The problems were brewing when Roman S. Gribbs was mayor of Detroit (1969-73), but Coleman A. Young's political style is probably more at fault than anyone's skin color.

To understand Mayor Young, you need only to look at he has two principles:

1. Everyone else should give Detroit lots and lots of money—the federal, the state, the suburbs.

2. Mayor Young will control all the jobs, with the help of the loyal Nanci Rowes and Joyce Garretts.



Tim Richard writes

For all his mod clothing and street talk, Young is an extremely old-fashioned politician out of the mold of the Jacksonian "spoils" system. Tweed, Tammany and the rest. The notion of unselfish public service is as alien to him as soap and water to a hippie. Control money. Control jobs. Here's how Young's principles work.

WATER—The water department, begun as a city utility, has been expanded to include 80 communities, including all in this newspaper's circulation area. Logically, we should be thinking in terms of making it a multi-county authority, perhaps under the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG).

Young is going in the opposite direction, however. In Detroit's old charter, the board had four Detroit members and three suburban residents. The new charter, which took effect last July 1, specifies that "at least four members of the board must be residents of Detroit." McNamara notes that this gives Young the power to make all seven appointments from Detroit.

McNamara also notes that the Detroit water board spreads capital improvement costs for City of Detroit projects over the entire water service area, which means suburbs pick up about two-thirds of the costs of Detroit's benefits, but Detroit contributes nothing to suburban expansion. Control money. Control jobs.

PARKS—Although Detroiters get their fair share of usage of the nine metroparks run by the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority, Detroit politicians have lamented—with some justification—that HCMA parks were developed too far into the hinterlands of the five-county area.

So HCMA's director, David Laidlaw, proposed about two years ago that HCMA take over and operate Detroit's deteriorating Belle Isle, a truly regional facility. Certainly, that would benefit autoless inner city residents and ease the pressure on Detroit's budget.

So far, Young has never said yes or no to the proposal and has, in fact, behaved as if it didn't exist. His idea is that HCMA should simply write him a check for the operation of Belle Isle. Just the other day, Councilman Emma Henderson, a Young henchperson, complained she hadn't seen any HCMA money yet.

Well, it'll be a cold day in hell before HCMA turns over its cash to Detroit. If HCMA is to spend money on Belle Isle, then its directors should continue to insist that they run the show so that everyone in the five-county area paying the taxes gets an equal crack at recreation and parks jobs.

ON OTHER ISSUES it's the same. Young's administration talks about a Detroit-only transit system, when it's as obvious as the nose on your face that a transit system must be multi-county. Detroit, with half or less of Wayne County's population, controls two-thirds or more of the seats on the Commission on the Aging. The Juvenile Facilities Network is a topic on which County Commissioner Dumas will talk your ear off; don't laugh at Mary because she's a female, she's been there. The Wayne County executive issue.

It took a heroic effort on Great Britain's part to admit it was no longer one of the super powers, but British politicians quit gumming up the international works and eased problems at home once they adjusted their egos to economic and geographic realities.

Governmental services in southeast Michigan will be more efficient once Detroit and its 19th century mayor realize they're no longer the London of an undeveloped and subservient empire.

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