

County lawyer torn by bosses

By ROBERT KIPPER

OAKLAND COUNTY—Since Oakland County switched to the county executive form of government last September there has been an ongoing hassle over who controls what under the new system.

In many instances the powers of the county executive and the powers of the board of county commissioners are well defined, but nagging problems persist.

The threatened lawsuit by County Executive Daniel Murphy over who controls the county public works department will likely clear up another authority question: Who does the county civil counsel work for?

Although Murphy announced his intentions to go to court more than two weeks ago, and asked the civil counsel to handle the lawsuit, nothing further has happened.

This is because Civil Counsel Robert Allen has been in an understandable quandary over just who is his boss.

THE BIBLE teaches that man cannot serve two masters. Allen has been asked to serve many masters in county government. As long as the various county agencies are in harmony this doesn't pose much of a problem.

However, Murphy's lawsuit would pit his office against the board of public works, and indirectly the board of county commissioners. Since Allen theoretically serves all three parties, as well as others, he is caught in the middle.

Last September Murphy attempted to have the civil counsel placed directly under his authority.

The board of commissioners insisted on retaining civil counsel under its control, but in a compromise move, agreed to have Allen, or at least a member of his office, available to the county executive as well.

The inherent problems in this kind of arrangement needed only the kind of in-house court action that Murphy is now proposing to be brought out in the open.

ALLEN SAID Tuesday he expected

to decide in the next few days whether he would handle Murphy's suit. His answer could reveal just who he feels most obligated to.

Because of Allen's delay in answering Murphy, William Spinelli, the deputy county executive, said Murphy expects a negative response from civil counsel. Spinelli said tentative plans have been made for an outside law firm to handle Murphy's suit if Allen refuses.

Murphy's suit claims the county executive has authority over the county public works department and the power to name its new director.

The county public works board, made up mostly of appointed county commissioners, has supervised the public works department in the past. Murphy's suit challenges the board's recent appointment of a new acting director for the public works department as well as the board's authority to exist at all.

This places Murphy indirectly in conflict with the board of county commissioners since it authorized the public works board to supervise the public works department.

Course begins for parents

BIRMINGHAM—A course for parents of preschool children, titled "The Making of a Brighter Child," will be offered by the Birmingham Schools' Department of Added Education.

Techniques for encouraging early learning from birth through five years will be discussed in the course to be held from 8-10 p.m. Mondays beginning April 14 at Seaholm High School. Registration is taking place at the administration building, 500 W. Merrill.

Recent studies have revealed that the techniques to be offered in the course can be effective in increasing a child's I.Q. for a lifetime. The methods are simple, practical and require no time beyond what an average parent normally spends with a child.

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