

THESE ARE Observerland's congressional districts as they have looked since 1964, when the Legislature adopted a 19-district plan. In the case of the 19th District, 60 per cent of the people reside in the Oakland County portion, 40 per cent in

Wayne County. It's likely that after the 1970 census, a new district will be carved out of western Wayne County, covering part of the present 17th, Redford Township, Livonia, Northville and Plymouth.

Observerland suburbs may find themselves in the middle of a mad scramble for congressional seats in 1972.

The reasons are two: ● Population shifts will force the Legislature to re-draw the congressional district boundaries. Western Wayne and Oakland counties have seen greater changes during the 1960s than almost any spot in the state.

● Michigan's population has failed to grow as fast as the nation as a whole. There's some chance, therefore, that the number of U.S. representatives will be reduced from the present 19 to 18 after the next census. That would intensify the scramble.

SO FAR, MOST of the political planning has been speculative in nature, and no new districting plans have been

drawn. But the political pros are at least thinking about it.

Republican State Chairman William McLaughlin, of Northville, says the state party has done a little "brainstorming" so far but nothing else.

McLaughlin himself is on a seven-man national committee of the GOP to draw up legislative guidelines on reapportionment.

Says former 19th District Rep. Billie S. Farnum, a Democrat who was defeated in 1966: "The average congressional seat after 1970 will be about 455,000 population. If there is no enlargement of the House, Michigan might lose a district."

THE MOST commonly held theory is that a new line will be drawn along Eight Mile Road.

At present, the 19th District, represented by Republican Jack McDonald, covers western Oakland County and three communities in Wayne County -- Redford Township, Livonia and the City of Northville.

Under this theory, Oakland County would be nearly large enough to have two full congressional districts instead of 1.6 districts.

Oakland's 1970 population is expected to be 197,000, according to state Commerce Department estimates.

That would mean that the present Oakland portion of the 19th would become a congressional district on its own, and the Wayne County portion would be combined with another district.

Such an area can be expected to vote for a Democrat. Redford and Livonia both voted for Democrats for the Legislature in 1966.

IT'S SIGNIFICANT, then, that Republican McDonald, who started his political life in Red-

ford, recently moved into Farmington, in Republican Oakland County. If he were to stay in Wayne County, he might be out of a job after the 1972 election.

Leading Democrats, such as Farnum and Livonia Councilman Jerry Raymond, say openly that that's why McDonald moved.

There's some possibility, however, that McDonald might wind up in the same new district as 18th District Rep. William Broomfield (R-Royal Oak). Farnum figures McDonald would rather run against Broomfield in a Republican primary than take on an entrenched Wayne County Democrat such as Martha Griffiths (Detroit) or William D. Ford (Taylor).

WHAT WILL happen to Redford, Livonia and Northville?

They would be too small, still, to form a congressional district of their own. They might be tossed in with part of Mrs. Griffiths' 17th District in northwest Detroit. Or they might wind up with part of Ford's 15th District, which comes as far north as Garden City, Westland and Canton Township.

Says McDonald:

"The 18th and 19th Districts have been experiencing a tremendous population increase, and I'm certain the district will shrink in (geographic) size. Some of the area will have to be added to Detroit to make up for the lack of growth there, and some of the area to the north of the present districts might have to be added."

McDonald doubts, however, that Michigan will lose a congressional seat. "Michigan is closer than the one per cent range as to having the seat," he said.

And some politicians think that Congress is more likely to increase the size of the House rather than force some states to cut their congressional delegations. The House since 1960 has had 435 members.

IN ALL OF this, there are implications for the Plymouth community and Northville Township, too.

Those communities make up a small portion of the 2nd Congressional District, which is dominated by Washtenaw County (Ann Arbor) and includes Livingston, Monroe, and Lenawee.

Second District Democratic Chairman Robert Dwyer says, "I don't know what will happen here. If we lose a seat, it would be logical to put Plymouth and Northville back into a Wayne County District."

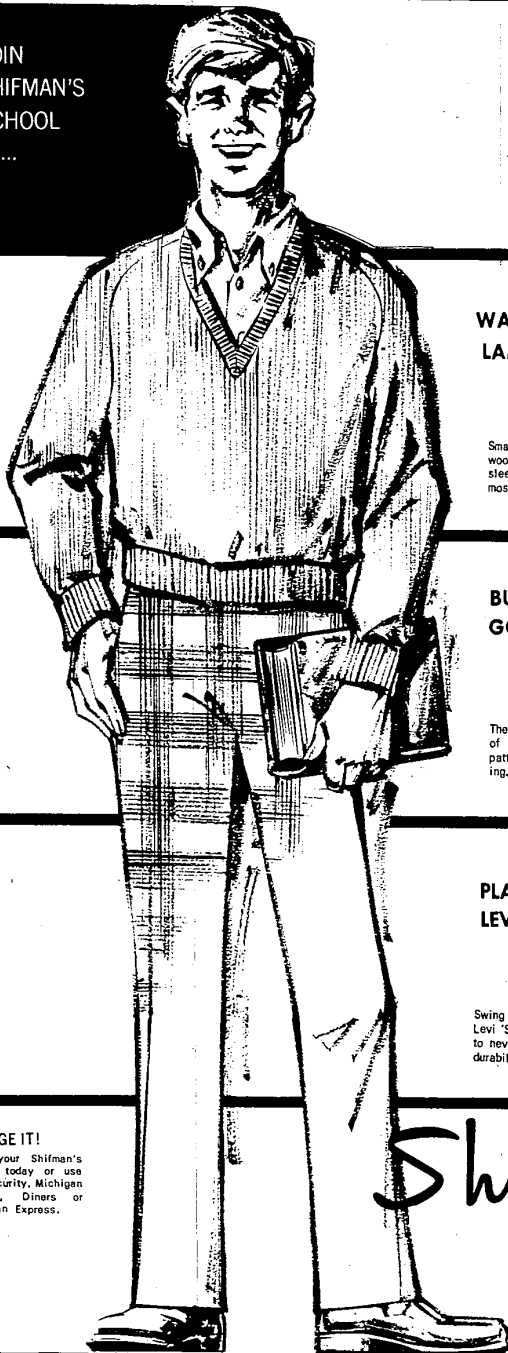
Dwyer also predicts that two Wayne County Democratic congressmen may wind up running against each other.

If Plymouth and Northville do indeed get detached from the 2nd and added to a Wayne County district, it will be a homecoming. Before the 1960 census, Mrs. Griffiths' 17th District ran from northwest Detroit all the way out to the Wayne County line.

THE 1960 CENSUS threw Michigan into political turmoil. Michigan gained its 19th congressman at that time, but the Legislature was unable to agree on a redistricting plan in time for the 1962 election. So the 19th congressman was elected at-large.

By 1964 the Legislature drew new boundaries, and Farnum won the additional seat. Congressman-at-large Neil Staben, a Democrat, ran for governor that year and was beaten by Gov. George Romney.

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