

# Commissioner Henry Hoot - steeped in conservatism

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI

His face is angelic. His style is moderate. His politics are classically conservative.

But to many Republican Commissioners on the Oakland County board, Henry W. Hoot of Troy is hardly a messenger from heaven. In fact, the 32-year-old conservative maverick is often a thorn in the side of most regular GOP members.

His independent voting record even led several Democratic Commissioners to say, "If a Republican had to be elected chairman of the board, we'd rather it were Hoot."

"I guess they say that because I debate issues and not personalities," Hoot said. "I try to think through each individual issue. I've taken some heat on issues because of it."

Because of his conservative stance on traditionally Democratic issues and his aloofness from the Republican power bloc, Hoot gets heat from both sides of the aisle.

Hoot said he is free of the powerful influence of County Executive Daniel T. Murphy. His voting record supports the claim.

Murphy and his top administrators have been known to do heavy-handed politicking for their pet projects in Republican caucus meetings. Republicans hold a slim 15-12 board majority and one or two mavericks or absentees reduces the effect of the Republican bloc.

"I listen to what he has to say," Hoot said, "but he doesn't influence my votes. There are probably four or five commissioners who'll vote the way Dan (Murphy) wants them to. And that's usually enough to pass the measure."

WITH HIS BABY-FACE features and blond hair, Hoot, at first glance, appears to be more passive than staunchly independent. Always in control of himself, he is more apt to appeal to logic and pragmatism than emotions.

"The one word I'd use to describe Henry is 'moderate,'" said a board



HENRY W. HOOT In moderation

Democrat. "Everything about the man—his dress, his style—is moderate."

And Hoot's background fits the bill. When he attended Royal Oak Dendro High School, he campaigned for Barry Goldwater. A graduate of Detroit Bible College, he once considered being a minister.

But a love for radio led him to Royal Oak's WEXL, where he hosted a show called "Sagebrush Melodies." Hoot was practical even then.

"Being a disc jockey is a very unstable profession—the number of Dick Partans I can count on one hand."

So he moved into management, first with WOMC and is now general manager of WMUZ.

When the anti-Vietnam War movement reached its peak in the early '70's, Hoot supported then-President Richard Nixon.

"I remember going up to Flint to talk to a bunch of high school students," he recalled. "I thought I was going to be talking to 30 or 40 sleepy students in a civics class. It turned out there were 600 to 700 students in an

**'Government should provide only the basic service. It should not be all things to all people.'**

—Commissioner Henry Hoot

auditorium.

"On top of it, I was following (then-U.S. Rep.) Don Riegle on the program. Riegle hated Nixon. He had the Kennedy appeal. He whipped those students into an anti-Nixon fever. Well, Flint's not the stronghold of Michigan Republicanism anyway."

"Then," he continued, "this Mr. Peepers-type principal got up and introduced me. 'Now speaking for the President, Henry Hoot.'"

"It was all I could do to get out of there with a polite round of applause."

FOR HOOT, the youngest (at 25) man ever elected (in 1972) to the county board, moderate gives way to conservative in politics.

"Government should provide only the basic necessary services," he

says. "It should not be all things to all people."

"Many proposals before the board have a lot of good features. But you do not vote for things just because they have a lot of good features and qualities."

Hoot was roundly criticized several months ago when he led the opposition to a county program to provide welfare recipients bus tickets for one week. The tickets were to have been used to help them get to work.

Under current welfare laws, a recipient can turn down job offers if he or she cannot get to work. Proponents of the program argued that it would help get people off the welfare rolls.

Hoot, however, was adamant in his opposition. "The next thing you know,

the county will be providing alarm clocks to get them up," he said.

"GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT help provide income for people," Hoot maintains. "Sure there are persons, the mentally deficient, the handicapped—something has to be done for them."

"But there are a lot (on welfare) who are able to work and who should be working."

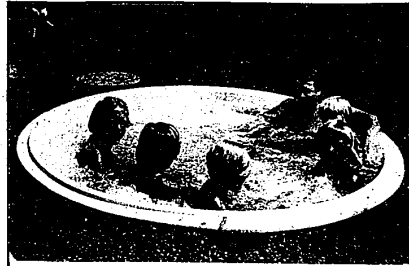
The board's Democrats and "humanists," he said, are "more in

favor of spending government money on a lot of unfired, unproven programs that they feel would benefit lower income people."

"The best thing we can do is to motivate them to go out and work and gain some dignity and income."

Though Hoot pales at the thought of welfare spending, he has few qualms about the county increasing its spending to promote Oakland's businesses.

He has stepped to the forefront in defense of the Oakland County Tourist and Convention Bureau.



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