

League week recognizes group's contributions

FOR MORE than 60 years, the League of Women Voters has earned a reputation for integrity and service. That's why Gov. William Milliken declared Sept. 20-26 as League of Women Voters Week in Michigan.

In an era when many are involved in other family and professional interests, the West Bloomfield-Farmington Area League of Women Voters stands out as a respected organization whose membership takes an active part in the local political process.

This non-profit group of concerned volunteers works to inform voters and encourage citizen participation in government.

It tries to preserve its non-partisanship, neither supporting nor opposing any candidate or party. Members study issues, discuss them and form a membership consensus before taking a stand.

IN THESE DAYS, described by LWV member, Sheila Oatley as "the era of the vanishing volunteer," league members spend hours monitoring local government and interviewing officials before compiling factual information devoid of editorial comment. The best part of it is that members make neither snap judgment nor partisan criticisms.

The league is best known for voter services. It sponsors candidate meetings, compiles and distrib-

utes voters' guides and participates in other civic services.

It's also open to all citizens — men and women. Current members include many office holders on boards, councils and commissions.

Some of our best public officials come from league ranks.

League members usually make good candidates because of the disciplined minds they develop working within the organization, their ability to examine facts based on merit and to avoid "good old boy" politics.

THE OBSERVER & Eccentric Newspapers join

Gov. Milliken in honoring the league for its vital contributions.

We're proud to be associated with the league in publishing its local, Oakland County and state voter guides.

We're also appreciative of its goal of promoting political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in the governmental process.

And finally, we like what the league says about voting:

"Voting is not easy in a democracy. It was never meant to be. It takes guts. It takes brains. Become immune to emotional appeals. See through stock distortion tactics. Spot phony issues."



Tim Richard

Snob zoning comes under fresh attack

Perhaps David Link's appeal to the profit motive will succeed where newspaper editorial appeals to morality have failed.

The topic is snob zoning. Again. Snob zoning is done backwards from the way zoning should be done. A suburban city or township first calculates how much revenue it needs from each new house. Next it calculates the dollar value of the house to provide the property taxes it needs. Then it zones the lot size required to induce a builder to put up the expensive house.

Another term for it is cash-register zoning. The hell with what buyers need. The hell with the facts that snob zoning cuts up scarce land and requires major government investments in roads, water lines, sewer lines and, maybe, sidewalks. The hell with the fact that young families can't afford them and are literally zoned out of the community.

In snob zoning, the name of the game is to induce big houses and big property tax bills. It also means big material gas bills for heating and big gasoline bills for travel. And when cropland is subdivided, it means food will have to be brought in from a greater distance at a greater cost.

Some of us on newspapers have ranted about it for years, to no avail.

BUT I MENTIONED Dave Link, associate publisher of Professional Builder magazine. He spoke last week in Troy to a gathering of local builders.

He urged the builders to ask local city councils and township boards for a relaxation in their current zoning regulations. The wave of the 1980s, he told them, is condominiums and smaller single-family houses.

"Smaller, more affordable housing products will burst into a full-blown trend by 1982," he said.

As he talked about the rambling, 3,000-square-foot house on an acre parcel, he sounded like George Romney in the 1950s and '60s talking about the "gas guzzling dinosaur," the big car.

THE BUILDING industry is currently flat on its back. Many tradesmen have packed up and headed for the Sunbelt. Things are bad.

Yet, there is a strong ray of light at the end of the tunnel. That ray is the baby crop of the post-World War II era. They glutted the elementary schools in the 1950s and the high schools in the 1960s. Now they are getting ready to enter the housing market.

Unfortunately, they don't make the kinds of salaries yet their parents are making. As interest rates have doubled and tripled, their payments will rise correspondingly. In order to afford a house, the wife must work.

Thus, they can't afford to have as many kids as their parents did, even if they wanted big families. And they don't need such big houses, even if they could afford them.

"THERE ARE simply not enough of the right kind of existing houses in the right location to meet the lifestyles and pocketbooks of the big bulge of baby boomers," said Dave Link.

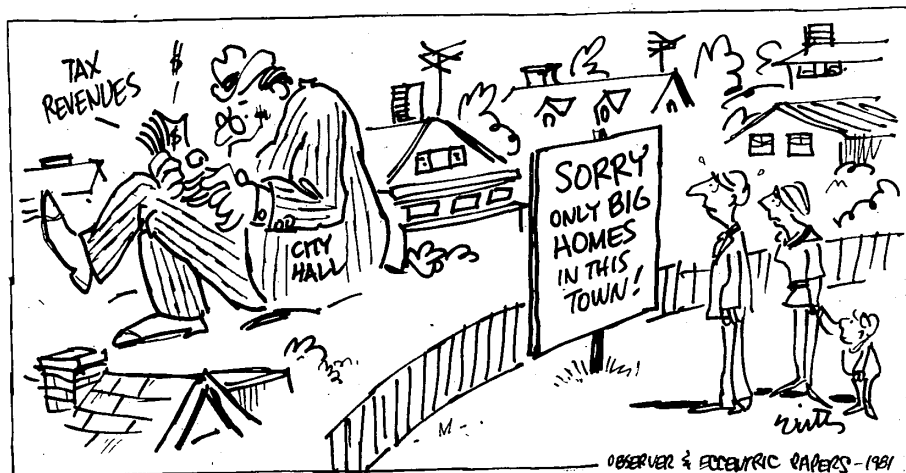
"The industry needs to build two- and three-bedroom houses of 1,000 to 1,300 square feet in the \$85,000-and-under price range."

That is, if the good ol' boys and good ol' girls on our city councils and township boards will let them. Snob, cash-register zoning gets in the way.

We've all heard the Reaganites fulminate about the evils of federal government health and environmental regulations. Those are nothing compared to the restrictions in our zoning ordinances.

Those ordinances have long been branded evil. Now a spokesman for the builders is suggesting they are unprofitable.

Right on, Dave Link.



OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC CARTOONS - 1981

September — the start of a new year

Church picnics. Chamber of commerce dinners. Aerobic dance classes. Football games. Parent Teacher Organization meetings. Music lessons.

The calendar fills up quickly as September arrives. With the start of the school year, suburban communities come alive after a three-month summer hibernation. Suburbs run on a September to August calendar year.

Welcome to the "new" year. September is a time when preparations are made for the winter months that will soon be coming. Yet, there is still a warmth in the air that gets homeowners out to work on their lawns and families out for a final picnic of the year. It's a time for both warm and cold weather activities. A round of golf can still be played before taking a child to a cold ice arena for hockey practice.

WE, ALL, NEED the vitality of the fall season. It can give us a much needed kick in the pants to try to do something new.

What about that course in accounting you have always been meaning to take at the local community college? What about that exercise program that you have never quite had the discipline to begin?

How about borrowing a book from the library to



Nick Sharkey

start that do-it-yourself project at home? Take a chance. Get out of the routine and put a new perspective on your life.

In the fall, our hopes are riding high. Johnny will get all A's in school during this year. Our favorite football team will go undefeated and win the Rose Bowl (sorry about that, University of Michigan, you've already dashed that hope). Auto companies will set sales records during the 1982 model year.

We haven't had to deal with the harsh realities of the next few months yet. Snow shovels and gloves are long forgotten. Leaves on the front yard don't have to be raked — yet, Johnny hasn't been called after school for misbehaving — so far.

And that's good. Relax and enjoy the final few days of an Indian summer.

FALL IS A TIME when your local newspaper is especially important. There's no other place where you can keep up with all of the varied activities of your community.

Twice a week this newspaper publishes important information about what the clubs and organizations are doing in this area. Our calendar of events listings are full of important information for you and your family.

We encourage you to send to the address published at the top of this page news items about club events, awards, human interest items or meetings.

Or take a few minutes to write some of your thoughts about life in your community in the form of a letter-to-the-editor to this newspaper. If you have suggestions on how this newspaper can improve the coverage of your community, please contact the editor listed on this page.

Your community newspaper is here to serve you. We want to help provide you with the information about the wide range of activities available to you.

So take advantage of the spirit of optimism and good will of this September season. Take the plunge and become involved in something different.

Make this your best "new" year ever.

Critique is overdue for League

Every once in a while a columnist is forced to take a deep breath, cinch up the belt and dig against the predictable onslaught of public disbelieve and derision.

These seizures of protest are triggered by the columnist's attack on some sacrosanct person or institution, who or which has risen above criticism in the mind of the majority.

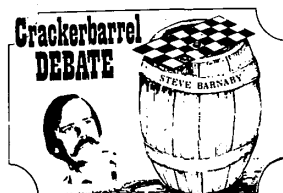
Hold on a few seconds. . . oommmpp . . . ough. Lord help me. I feel an onslaught coming on.

REMEMBER when politics was fun — and intellectually stimulating, also. It really wasn't that long ago. I'm sure you remember those halcyon days. You know, when political leaders were unafraid to crack a joke in public, when voters cast ballots and loved to cheer or jeer a candidate.

For a lot of reasons, we've lost that exuberance, and the stodgy, overcautious reaction is reflected in one of our most respected institutions — the League of Women Voters.

Persons even remotely familiar with the American political system know about the League. It hosts candidates' nights, publishes voters' guides and conducts in-depth studies of social and political issues — commendable endeavors all.

Next week the state will honor this group, which lauds itself on its "non-partisan" and "objective" study of issues and candidates.



GOOD ENOUGH. The League probably deserves the plaudits it will receive. But it should re-examine its intemperance toward the very human side which makes politics function properly.

Over the years, one gets the impression the League would prefer to sterilize the political system, transforming it into a computer readout of facts and figures — no facial expressions, pro or con, allowed.

Politics is anything but non-partisan or objective. People participate in politics because they care, and caring necessarily spawns debate over deeply-felt values.

Today's League-sponsored debates have become anything but that — whether they be on the presidential level or at a local city council candidate night.

Audiences often are scolded like children for laughing, applauding or booing. Candidates are cut off in mid-sentence for the sake of obeying the time rule. Questions, which must be written on cards, are screened — a maternalistic way of telling voters the League knows which questions should be asked and answered.

Voters' guides have been reduced to random bits of nearly useless information. In such rigid molds, the candidates sound alike. Each candidate is asked to submit a biography and to answer a few questions — in a specified, strictly enforced, number of words.

Disobey the rule and candidates are left dangling on an "and" or a "the."

TAKING THE FUN out of politics is one thing. But the League, through its antiseptic practices and lack of understanding of the political system, actually cuts off the flow of information from politician to electorate.

Certainly, we need a League of Women Voters to aid in providing information. But let them do just that instead of sticking with 19th century populist "reforms" which only hinder the process.

So, what's another onslaught?