Gradually, county boards take on a one-party hue

It was politics as usual when the Cakland County Board of Commissioners met for the first time in 1983. The order of the day was to approve appointments to various boards and commissions—a routine matter.

But Democratis' tempers flared when the Republican controlled board failed to reappoint Commissioner James A. Doyon, D-Madison Heights, to the Personnel Appeals panel. Doyon is former chairman of the five-member panel, which represents the final step in the county employees' grievance procedure.

"We're starting off on the wrong

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foot," Doyon told the board, calling it "an untenable abuse of power."

TO THE DISMAY of Doyon and his Democratic colleagues, the board appointed Commissioners Anne M. Hobart, R-Waterford Township, and Nancy McConnell, R-Bioomfield Hills, to the panel.

Doyon charged the board was playing politics with an appointment which previously hadn't been subject to political pressures. "For over a decade,

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we've had bipartisan representation on this board," he said. Calling it an "attempt to emasculate protections of employees," Doyon said the action destroys safeguards built into the system. He added that neither Hobart nor McConnell has knowledge of the merit system, a set of rules which govern county employment.

REPUBLICANS SAID they chose the most competent people for the

when Doyon asked his Republican colleagues if they were hinting he wasn't competent poet hinting he wasn't competent for the job, Commissioner John E. Olsen, R.-Huotington Woods, countered, "I'm disappointed he thinks he's the only one who is qualified to serve on the panel."

Olsen later admitted, however, that some Republicans felt Doyon wasn't an impartial decision-maker.

'I think the feeling was that his own view of equity was much more liberal than you would find among the general populace. Some Republicans felt we ought to get two people who would bring a more balanced, impartial viewpoint to the panel."

MOST DEMOCRATIC commissioners believe this is just one more example of Republicans trying to gain absolute control.

ple of Republicans trying to gain absolute control.

They've virtually wiped out all Democrats from serving on boards and commissions, said Commissioner Lawrence R. Pernick, D-Southledd.

They're like sharks. Once they've tasted the blood, they can't stop," Pernick believes Republicans are just flexing their muscles.

They want to show people there is a Republican strongbold left in the state, he said. My own feeling to that they look upon Oakland County as the last bastion of Republicanism. That view could be detrimental to Oakland County tapayers, Pernick contended.

Oaktana County (aspayers, accommended, "If Democrats have demonstrated leadership ability, it's not utilized. If we have good relationships with (Democratic) legislators, we won't be in a position to use that influence."

position to use that influence."

FOR EXAMPLE, Pernick said,
Commissioner Betty Fortino, D-Pontiac, played a major role in approaching
Democratic legislators to bely get a
\$1.2-million grant for Gien Oaks County Park in Farmington Illis. Don Deni,
a Waterford Township Democrat, and
member of the Parks Commission last
year, also had contacts in Lansing.
But neither won a seat on the parks
bourd. The Republican majority reappointed Parks Chairman Lewis Wini
and appointed Commissioner Richard
R. Wilcox, R-Orionville, to succeed
Deni, whose term expired Jan. 1.
Pernick contends the appointments
represent a significant depature from
past practice.

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"We had a bipartisan Road Commis-sion. Both Democrats and Republicans

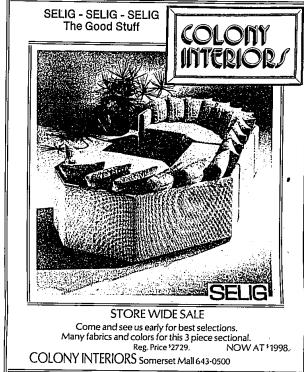
served as delegates to SEMCOG."
Currently, Republicans serve on the three-member Road Commission and as delegates and alternates to SEMCOG.

Pernick believes County Executive Daniel T. Murphy played an important role in swaying Republican commis-sioners.

"He doesn't make those decisions (board and commission appointments) directly. But he's made it clear that Republicans would like to have abso-lute control over all county opera-



Republicans are "like sharks. Once they've tasted the blood, they can't stop," says Democratic Commissioner Larry Pernick. (This is actually a 10-foot femon shark at Soa World.)







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