

# Harlem, Lapeer meet

## Lucas talks values to Baptists

Third of four articles on candidates for the Republican gubernatorial nomination.

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

**H**ARLEM-BORN Bill Lucas speaks the same language they speak in the farm-country town of Lapeer: "Moral values — ethics — family values."

The Wayne County executive spoke Tuesday morning to a dozen ministers representing the Michigan Association of Christian Schools in Calvary Baptist Church and underscored as many common links as he could.

"It was part of the public school system in Harlem. My children were not," said Lucas, who with wife Evelyn, saw to it that all six Lucases went to Catholic schools. "My grandchildren will not be," he said as the churchmen nodded approval.

"Nothing will benefit the public school system more than competition from the 100 independent, church-affiliated private schools, Lucas said.

"IS IT FAIR," asked one minister, "to make us pay our competition?" — a reference to parents who pay state and local taxes to public schools and also support their private schools.

"I've paid all along," Lucas replied, indicating he favored no tax break for parents who pay private school tuition.

"But a voucher system could work very well," he said, alluding to an idea long touted by conservative columnist William F. Buckley Jr. Under it, the state would issue parents vouchers, which parents could spend at the school of their choice — be it public or church-related.

It illustrated the apparent distance Lucas has come politically since the early 1960s when he was a New York vice squad cop and Fordham University Law School senior and was recruited by the late Democratic Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy into federal service.

From the Justice Department, Lucas went to the FBI and its Detroit

office, where then-Wayne County Sheriff Roman S. Gribbs hired him away in 1968 as undersheriff. Lucas succeeded Gribbs as sheriff by appointment in 1969, was thrice elected on the Democratic ticket, and in 1982 was elected first Wayne County executive.

Then his political troubles started.

"MOST OF THESE people (his department heads) came from outside of government," Lucas told the group. "I like input from strong people around me. A leader needs tough men and women who tell you the way it is. And you have to be strong enough to control them."

"I told them it would be only four years. The power brokers would vote us out, or try to kick us out of office. Re-election would be difficult."

"Every step I took, obstacles were placed in my way by leaders of the Democratic Party," Lucas said, even though 77 percent of the voters backed him and indicated the need for change.

"Increasingly they (Democratic leaders) accused me of being a closet Republican. They were probably right. But that's what the people wanted. Maybe they were closet Republicans, too. Those were Republican principles."

Lucas switched to the GOP in May of 1985.

A LAWYER for some private schools asked about the state budget, and Lucas put more distance between himself and his former political associates.

"We (incumbent Gov. James Blanchard and himself) both walked into office on the same date (Jan. 1, 1983). He went left. I went right."

"He went for a tax increase. I said, what could we do with what exists, through better management?"

(Actually, Lucas really supported Blanchard's income tax increase at the time, and even considered a Wayne County millage proposal, but quickly and quietly dropped the idea.)

"The Democratic House and Senate rammed through a 38 percent income tax increase in 1983. Only 17 percent of all of it went to paying off the state debt."

"I eliminated over \$100 million in county spending. There's all kinds of room for good management."

LUCAS TOLD the clergymen what they wanted to hear about state-funded abortions — he's against them — but he also talked about innovations in combating the high infant mortality rate. Through education and pre-natal care programs, he said, Wayne County gave young mothers-to-be options to abortion.

"The Blanchard administration just became aware of it," he said.

Lucas faulted Blanchard on economic fronts, too, saying "the state must be competitive with other states and on a worldwide basis." He cited:

- Unemployment compensation — Michigan should institute the "waiting week" for benefits that most states have.

- Workers compensation — tighter definitions than Michigan's "industrial" ones.

- Single business tax — easing up on unprofitable businesses.

"Nothing has been done in 3½ years on those subjects," he said.

"COMPETITIVE" was a theme he hit again at a luncheon meeting of the Lapeer Rotary Club.

Pointing to headlines in the local weekly paper about a drug-related murder, Lucas laid out his concept of a "crime tax" — the cost honest homeowners and business people pay in property insurance, security alarms and private guards, "over and above what we pay government," for protection from crime.

"Michigan leads this nation in the number of walkaways from prison. Last year, 1,800 inmates just walked away," he said.



Bill Lucas, Wayne County executive and Republican gubernatorial hopeful, admires the wooden ducks carved by another Bill —

Southfield resident Bill Lovell. Lucas campaigned last week in the Livonia Senior Citizens Center.

## Lucas ducks TV debate, Murphy says

Dan Murphy, a Republican candidate for governor, said he is disappointed to learn that rival Bill Lucas is planning to "duck" the televised League of Women Voters' debate scheduled for Sunday, July 27.

"I was extremely surprised to learn that Bill Lucas has apparently decided to avoid the League of Women Voters' debate. It appears that Bill Lucas is unwilling to face the voters of this state and explain his position on the issues," Murphy said.

Murphy is Oakland County executive. Lucas is Wayne County executive.

They are among four candidates squaring off in the Aug. 5 primary for a chance to face Democratic incumbent James Blanchard on Nov. 4.

All candidates participated in selecting the date of the televised debate and were represented at a meeting to review the ground rules, Murphy said.

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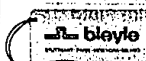
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