

THE '70 CAMPAIGN

Dr. Geake Learns In State Board Run

By DENNIS L. PAJOT

Dr. R. Robert Geake is an educational psychologist. So he knows a lot about how people learn. He also holds a degree in education. So he knows something about how they are taught, too.

But he's learning a new set of techniques, now, while campaigning for election to the State Board of Education.

"A lot of areas you're not really aware of you learn about quickly when you're a candidate for statewide office. Dozens of organizations send questionnaires asking very specific questions about problems that concern them."

"You have to draft a position statement," commented the Northville man most widely known as an at-large trustee of Schoolcraft Community College.

DR. GEAKE, 34, PROVED his mettle as a student, too, during one recent day of campaigning.

It was a bright day in late September. The leaves were just beginning to turn in southern Michigan. He would be witnessing the extravaganza from his late model Chevrolet stationwagon. In less than a month he'd already put 13,000 miles on the car.

If his wife weren't expecting their first child at "any moment," he would surely have amassed many more miles. "She's a good sport," he replied to a question of whether she objects to his every-night campaigning.

His election to the Schoolcraft board in June 1969 for a six-year at-large term was his first attempt at public office. He has participated in several civic and professional groups, including Rotary, 4-H and PTA, and he holds a life membership in the National Education Association.

His current employment at Plymouth State Home is the only work experience he lists. Having graduated from Ferndale public schools, he took a bachelor's degree in special education in 1958, a master's in guidance and counseling in 1959, and a Ph.D. in education and psychology in 1962—all from the University of Michigan.

This particular morning he reported to his office at the state home on Sheldon Road and then left shortly after 10 a.m. At 10:30 he was perched atop a small table in the upper floor Republican headquarters in Plymouth.

AN INTENT GROUP of about 10 matrons and two teenagers circled him in folding chairs.

"I'm Bob Geake," he began, (the second "e" is silent). "As you know, I'm running for the State Board of Education. Let me tell you briefly a little about the office and the election coming up..."

One hand casually holstered in a pants pocket, the other free to wave or poke the air like commas or exclamation points, he continued: "The candidates are nominated by party conventions. I was the choice of the Republican Party. David Robinson of Detroit was also chosen by that party. He's..."

"Many people have said, and I'm one of them, it would probably be better if they were not elected on a partisan basis."

DR. GEAKE soon explains that he believes election of state board candidates in the spring, along with local board candidates in the annual school elections, would be more practical and would give the voters a better chance to identify with these would-be representatives.

"Actually, the State Board of Education has almost total power over education in the State of Michigan; and it may be taking over more," he tells the Plymouth group.

Later, responding to a reporter's questions, he'll reveal that the most powerful control is held by the State Legislature, which alone has authority to countermand local district expenditures.

He tells the ladies, and the teenagers, that the state board is taking on more power because it's initiating more proposals: "Discipline, for instance, which has been traditionally a local prerogative, is one. The state board is working on a code of conduct; and local authorities will likely follow its lead."

HE EXPLAINS his major campaign issue: that he supports Gov. Milliken's education reform package "with two exceptions."



"I don't favor abolishing the elected State Board of Education, obviously," he said. "I do recognize the reform commission's point when it said the present system makes it very hard to pinpoint responsibility. It is, when you have government run by a committee; especially responsibility for inaction. The governor has taken the position that if he is to be held responsible, he should make the appointments," said Dr. Geake.

"My own view is that there is a lot to be said for direct public voice."

Later he would expand on this and state: "Voters are forced to compromise when they pick any candidate for a particular office. They must weigh whether the (say) eight positions they agree with a man on are more important than the two in which they disagree with him. If they are only electing one man, they have no way to voice their preference on those two areas of disagreement."

"BY ELECTING ME, for instance, the voters can pick Gov. Milliken for all except his parochial stand and pick me to represent the anti-parochial view."

Dr. Geake was a founding member of a Citizens Against Parochialism group and until this particular day had been endorsed only by CAPE, the organization that forced an anti-parochial Proposition C for November. Milliken proposed the direct state aid to non-public schools that will become law if the ballot fails.

Milliken has urged a "no" vote: Dr. Geake said during his campaign day that the ballot amendment is "more restrictive than I would like to have it, but I'm still in favor of it." He favors indirect aid in the form of shared time arrangements and other services.

"I'D LIKE TO INTERACT with you too, while I'm here. Please feel free to ask some questions."

From behind him, a teenage Plymouth boy asked, "What's your position on student disorders?"

"I'm glad you asked that. Dave Robinson and I have made it a prime campaign issue and have drafted a position. It goes like this: 'The primary responsibility of every education governing board should be to keep its facilities open and operating. Whenever anything threatens this, the administration



"A CANDIDATE CAN'T possibly reach all the voters," he said, but Dr. R. Robert Geake confided to about 10 Plymouth women in Republican headquarters during

one forenoon of a campaign swing that takes him about 20 hours a week and has already put nearly 4,000 miles on his personal car. (Observer photos)

that institution is authorized to use whatever minimum amount of force is required.

"Minimum; that's to do what they have to do to keep from shutting you down but no more."

"Students should be expelled immediately for attempting to shut down the college," Dr. Geake concluded.

THERE WERE NO further questions. Declining coffee but accepting a sweet-roll, Dr. Geake excused himself and strolled briskly downstairs and to his car. Next stop: Wall's Restaurant on the north boundary of Flint.

More than one surprise was to come, but the candidate had no way of knowing.

The conservative station wagon with frugal brown vinyl interior nipped the speed limit of the freeway. Traffic was light; allowing the candidate to respond quickly and succinctly to the questions of a reporter traveling along for the day.

HE WAS ASKED, "As a trustee of Schoolcraft College you've had a close look at the issue of faculty and student participation in curriculum development. What do you think? Should faculty, for instance, have a greater say?"

"Yes, I definitely do. Those people on the front lines are closest to the situations," replied Dr. Geake.

"What about students?" "Yes, I think they, too, should have more to say about what they are going to learn."

AFTER CIRCLING a sumptuous buffet table in Flint, Dr. Geake rose to address about 50 members of the Genesee County Secondary School Principals Association and a couple of citizen observers.

"Let me tell you briefly a little about the office and the election coming up..." he began.

The government lesson was shorter, but served to reassure that the candidate knew his.

He repeated his two differences with Milliken, then spoke to another facet of the governor's reform plan:

"It's perfectly obvious we can no longer rely on local property taxes alone to support education. We should have statewide property taxation and statewide reassessment, with the slack taken up by a state income tax. We will have to rely on the taxing authority of the state to have sound, year-to-year financing of education," he stated.

He repeated his support of spring school elections for state board members and added: "Party nomination of candidates could be retained." His answer on partisanship was somewhat different from his Plymouth talk. This time, he said "could."

DR. GEAKE ALSO said he favors reducing the terms from eight years to four and then took up questions from the group's officers.

What prerogative should the state board have to review substantive matters of local school districts?

"With the governor, I believe local school boards should have maximum freedom in hiring and other areas of development."

On a question about a current worry of school principals, a proposed "right to judicial review for expelled students," Dr. Geake said:

"I'm particularly concerned with expulsion of students... I'm more concerned about the propriety of the state board stepping into such local matters."

"It would undermine the authority of local schools and open a Pandora's box for (legislative-judicial) delays," he said, and then added his coup de grace: "The proposed right to review will be adopted if liberal candidates are elected."

Geake and Robinson are facing liberal Mrs. Annetta Miller of Huntington Woods and incumbent Thomas J. Brennan, both Democrats, in the best-two-of-four election.

ON WHETHER local districts should be consulted before or just during state board

hearings on procedural policy development. Dr. Geake said:

"Involvement of local authorities must come prior to hearings. People involved in the schools should be consulted first."

He was applauded. On Proposition C, banning all aid to private schools: "More restrictive than I would like... but I'm still in favor of it... But people with kids in non-public schools who pay taxes are still entitled to something for their money."

He pooh-poohed what he termed "ridiculous" claims of parochial amendment opponents and said, "This is an additive amendment, not a subtractive one."

WHAT DID HE think of the apparent lack of trust between the State Department of Education and local districts?

"The state board has to be more cognizant of exactly what day-to-day operations of the state board are. There has been a tendency of local officials to communicate only with the department, and it might be more useful to communicate directly with board members." That's what he thought.

On school bussing: "Only for purposes of getting kids to the nearest school, not for integration. The neighborhood school is the foundation of good education," he said after noting that "surprisingly, Dave Robinson agrees with me on this one." Fellow Republican candidate Robinson is black, and lives in Detroit.

DOES THE STATE board have the right to overturn local boards on expulsions of students?

"The attorney general says the state board does have the right. It's not good policy. Once it happens, we'll have a series of 'federal' cases, as everyone seeks reversals," said Geake.

Just how much the principals and other secondary school administrators present loved this "student" became quickly apparent.

Jack Mobely, director of secondary schools in Flint, moved that the association endorse Geake's candidacy.

After a brief discussion of the fact that it hadn't endorsed anyone in at least eight years, and that it hadn't heard any of the other candidates, the group unanimously did just that.

Having learned the lessons of the administrators and demonstrated it in his test answers, campaign pupil Dr. R. Robert Geake stepped to the front of at least one class.

Mail Criticism Naive -- McDonald

Objectious to mailing out the results of his annual questionnaire were labeled as "ridiculous" Wednesday by Congressman Jack McDonald (R-Farmington). "Every year for the past four years, I have mailed these results to the people in my district," McDonald said. "Now that it's an election year, my opponent Democrat Fred Harris is claiming falsely that I am abusing a privilege which enables me to communicate with those who sent me to Washington on their behalf," he said.

with thousands of district residents. Anyone who thinks he can go back to Washington as a representative and turn his back on the people who sent him there has no idea what the job is about," he stated. "As long as I am congressman from this area," McDonald said, "I will continue to use every means at my disposal to let the people in the district know not only what I am doing in Washington but what is happening in our Capitol."

Evans Pays Dividend

Evans Products Co. has declared a 15 cent-a-share dividend payable Nov. 14 to stockholders of record Oct. 20. The Portland, Ore.-based firm has a plant at 13101 Eckles Rd., Plymouth. Evans manufactures and distributes building materials used in conventional and mobile home construction as well as damage-prevention devices