

# Different views emerge in debate

By JUDITH DONER BERNE  
STAFF WRITER

It was somewhat ironic. There were Elizabeth Howe and L. Brooks Patterson, sitting in union the Optimist Club pledge to "devote so much time to the improvement of your self, you have no time to criticize others."

That's after Howe had called Patterson "the poster boy for incineration." And Patterson had belittled Howe's insistence on Oakland County charter reform as "a Trojan horse."

Perhaps the Optimist creed is suspended during the political season.

At any rate, it was the Southfield Town Center Optimists which last Thursday hosted the second and apparently last debate for the two candidates running for Oakland County executive.

It was a pretty setting. The candidates were flanked by greenery and flowers in the first-floor Atrium of the Southfield Town Center's 2000 Tower. Perhaps 40 Optimists and their guests attended, as well as politicians such as Oakland County party chiefs Donald Turner (Democrat) and Jim Alexander (Republican).

Some passers-by watched from above.

And no one had trouble determining that Patterson and Howe have very different views of and plans for carrying out the county's highest office.

Here are some of them: ■ On running county government:

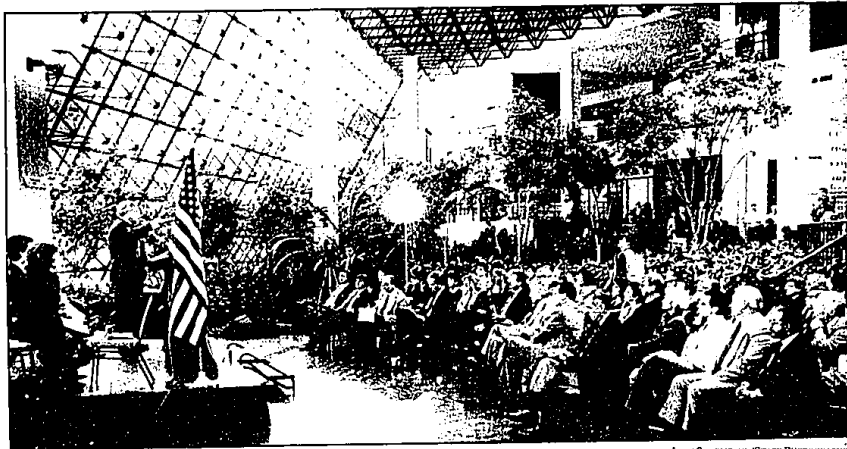
Patterson — He plans to finance an employee suggestion program out of his own pocket. He would spend six months talking to on-the-line employees in each department — and then reorganize county government. "I'm looking forward to downsizing."

Howe — She wants to decentralize functions: "We don't need to build another courthouse tower." She would utilize unused buildings in other communities and move some services out of the Pontiac complex. She plans to reduce personnel through attrition and buyouts.

■ On solid waste:

Howe — She is unalterably opposed to incineration. "I voted last November as if I lived a mile from an Auburn Hills incinerator, instead of in Pleasant Ridge."

Patterson — He originally backed incineration plan. Now he says the county should act only in a supervisory and educational role. But, he amends, "We're not going to just leave the trash in your driveway. Technology will



Listening up: The Town Center Atrium in Southfield provided a nice backdrop for the views of Elizabeth Howe and L. Brooks Patterson as they responded to journalists' questions.

catch up with our demands in Oakland County."

■ On mental health:

Patterson — He supports Oakland County's negotiations with the state on taking over its mental health functions.

Howe — She charges that Oakland County government is gridlocked on the mental health issue.

■ On restructuring county government:

Howe — In the 70's she helped formulate Oakland County government. Now she says that charter needs an overhaul. "It is dominated by friendly backscratching." She would create an ethics commission that would not allow employees to run for office on county time.

Patterson — He would amend rather than overthrow the county charter. "No government works well," he says.

Who won the debate?

"I was impressed with her today. It seems that he is really running away from her," said Manuel Yatooma, a Southfield business man who lives in West Bloomfield. "It's too bad they don't have more exposure. There's maybe a hundred people here."

"It was great. I think he's got a plan. I think they both did a good job," said Scott Griffin, a Birmingham businessman who lives in Southfield. "I really wanted to hear Elizabeth Howe. I think we

have a good choice here."

Said Mark Reisig of Southfield, "Patterson is an excellent speaker and debater. Ms. Howe is very straight forward — less political. It helped me — but I won't say which one won."

"I've never been a Republican and always thought that Patterson was a capable guy, said Manie Banner, who recently moved from Southfield to West Bloomfield. "No matter what happened (during the debate), I would vote for him."

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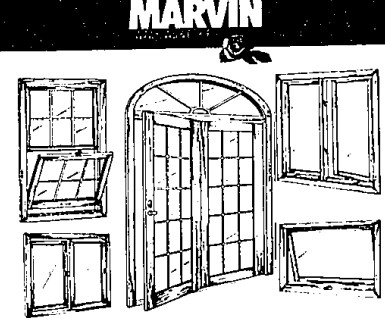
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