

Pathetic postscript

No excuse for poor turnout

We're often told it takes a whole village to raise a child. Well, where were the voters in the village Monday?

When just 2,882 of 64,041 registered voters in a community turn out for a school election, that's not a resounding mandate, that's pathetic.

What gives?

There were nine candidates in this school board race for two open seats. So, one can't say there wasn't enough variety.

There were some clear-cut issues to debate: school finance, violence and safety. So, non-voters can't say at least one of those didn't affect them in one way or another.

Face it, voter apathy and school elections go together as much as ham and cheese.

School officials will use words like "sad" to describe anemic voter turnouts and scrunch up their faces in puzzlement as to why.

Rest assured, though, they're quite happy when only the people who support "quality education" show up to support candidates who support "quality education." If anything, the outcome of Monday's election gave them reason to break dance in joy.

We understand voters are a beleaguered bunch.

In less than a year, there has been a Presidential election, a school tax renewal election, a referendum on school finance reform June 2

and, Monday, one for the school board. Some members of this area's electorate probably feel as if they're spending more time in school gymnasiums than a varsity basketball team.

And, it's no wonder we hear how some people turned up to vote June 2 and couldn't understand why there were no school board candidates on the ballot. Likewise, we're not surprised to find people who turned up at the wrong precinct confused because they forgot this was a school election and not a general one.

That's no excuse for a 5-turnout, though. Quality of the schools is important to everyone, including the majority of residents who don't have children attending them.

Standard of the schools affects property values and, as a result, taxes.

When the double-digit assessment notices come in the mail, people immediately beat a war drum to the city assessor's office and demand answers. They should consider the fact more than half their property tax dollar goes to the schools.

Or when a school driveway is destined to spill onto their residential street, or their kid gets shuttled to another elementary school on a bus because of overcrowding, people are the first to stomp up to school headquarters on Shilawassee and ask why.

Many could've answered the questions themselves on Monday.

Halt state's internal turmoil

Is there some Natural Law that says there must be ill feeling between a big urban area and the rest of a state?

Certainly there is friction between metropolitan Detroit and outstate, just as there is between Rome and the rest of Italy or Boston and the rest of Massachusetts. But must there be battle lines in perpetuity?

As we pointed out last week, there is ill feeling on the part of Gov. John Engler and his outstate friends — in both parties — at how "Detroit" voted on Proposal A, the school finance plan that would have beefed up outstate school funding and given table scraps to these suburbs.

We hoped Engler et al. would refrain from retaliating by "recapturing" categorical aid from suburban schools — as if our schools had "captured" it in the first place. The Legislature's 12th century Robin Hood tactics are out of place today.

Legislators from the region, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments and local elected officials need to put together a bipartisan act to protect metropolitan assets. Items:

- The Detroit Institute of Arts and Detroit Symphony Orchestra come first to mind. In a recession with tax collections down, Lansing cut off DIA and DSO at the knees. Now the governor says Michigan jobs are growing faster than the national average, and unemployment is below the national average for the first time in a generation. Arts funding needs to be revisited. We're talking about world class institutions, not pork.
- Roads are an obvious need. Anyone who travels freeways and main arteries in the metropolitan area knows his tires will hit more potholes and patches on top of patches than on the satiny two-lane county roads of outstate. Engler

and his predecessor, Jim Blanchard, were both too hesitant to recommend the obvious — more fuel tax revenue, and more to the area where the roads are the most pockmarked.

■ Public transit continues to limp. In part we in the metropolitan region have made ourselves an outstate laughing stock by our inability to get our own act together and recommend a permanent funding system. It gives others an excuse to ignore the problem.

■ Urban sprawl — the paving over of farms, woods and meadows where there is no population growth — continues. No governor since Bill Milliken (1969-82) has even known what urban sprawl means, let alone advocated the kinds of municipal conservation policies needed to stop cancerous development.

■ State parks, particularly in the sprawling urban area, should not be candidates for "privatization" or turnover to local units that will operate them as semi-private fiefdoms.

We in the metropolitan area have outgrown the 1950s attitude that only tree stumps, not people, exist north of M-59 and west of US-23. We're all traveling the outstate area much more — not just the waterfalls but also the museums and playhouses.

In return, outstaters need to shed the syndrome, particularly noticeable in Grand Rapids political circles, that "Detroit" is a vast, money-sucking sewer.

We all need to learn to live in Michigan together. Forming another state is out of the question. The result would be another Yugoslavia that breaks up, then breaks up again, and yet again.

It's unnatural that governance of a state should break down on "Detroit" versus outstate lines.

ARKIE HUDKINS



LETTERS

He'll be back

First, I want to offer my congratulations to Roberta Feldman and David York for their election victory. The campaign trail was a long, grueling yet exciting one and I enjoyed the challenge.

Second, to answer the question of whether I'm going to run again, I'll quote the "Last Action Hero" and "Kindergarten Kop," Arnold Schwarzenegger, "I'll be back."

Third, I wish to thank all those who worked with me on my campaign, those who believe in me and those who voted for me.

I want you to know I will be active team-building and consensus-building with all involved to ensure our schools provide a safe and secure environment for our children, that they receive a "World-Class" education, that the district administration and the school board demonstrate fiscal responsibility and accountability to us for our taxpayer investment, and I will continue to work hard to build and maintain the bridges of open communication.

However, I will be there to ask the tough questions and serve as a conscience to the district administration and the school board to remind them that they are accountable to us, the people, and that we will expect nothing less than positive responsiveness, professionalism, and concern for all members of the community, especially the 80 percent of the residents of this school district who have no children in the system, but who bear the lion's share of the financial burden of supporting the schools and who have not had a voice.

Finally, those of you who did not vote, yet want change; you cannot sit idly by waiting for the world to knock at your door. You must be involved and work together with all concerned to make a positive difference. Now we have a new beginning, let's make it a great one.

Terry Fobbs, Farmington Hills

probably any other type of living creatures that exist in the wild.

These animals no matter where they come from, are victims, capable of suffering the painful effects of loneliness, fear, confusion and death. But, they can't express their agony in words.

"Unless they suffer, unheard they cry, in agony they linger, in loneliness they die." (author unknown)

Each year millions of animals are subjected to test new products, as an example, the household product industry tests the toxicity of floor wax and detergents, by injecting these substances into the stomachs or under the skins of beagles, rabbits, and calves. This produces vomiting, diarrhea, breathing distress, convulsions and paralysis. And, no pain killers of any kind are given to these suffering creatures.

Rabbits are the test subjects of the cosmetics industries infamous Draize test. The rabbits are immobilized in wooden stocks, and since rabbits cannot make tears, because they have no tear ducts, they cannot wash their eyes. The results of these tests are corneal ulcers, hemorrhaging and blindness.

Who knows to this day, what else these animals are subjected to, once the experimenters get them behind the closed doors of their laboratories.

The use and abuse of animals in product testing must stop. That's why People for Ethical Treatment of Animals have launched a National Consumer Campaign to stop this testing using live animals.

Write to your congressman and senator in Washington, D.C. (20515) and urge them to support and pass the Consumer Products Safe Testing Act, and to promote the rights of animals to humane treatment.

George R. Mell, Farmington Hills

A word from the sponsor

We appreciate the coverage given to the forum "Exposing the New Right Agenda" by your newspaper. However, nowhere in your article or editorial was it stated that the sponsors of the program were the Greater Detroit Section of the National Council of Jewish Women and the Jewish Community Council of Metropolitan Detroit. We want to clarify this so that we who conceived the idea for this program can explain our motivation for presenting it.

It was not our intention to stereotype either the religious right or left. We strongly believe that religious principles should be respected. The impetus for this presentation came from our concern that there are people who would try to impose their beliefs on others, particularly children in our public schools.

We firmly support the clear separation of church and state. We especially wanted to reach the majority of people in the middle and sensitize them to this issue. Our intention was to educate people, get them involved and allow them to reach their own conclusions.

Wendy Wagenholm,
State Public Affairs Chair
NCJW-Greater Detroit Section
David Gad-Harf, Executive Director,
Jewish Community Council

Thanks for support

I publicly thank my family, friends, and supporters who took an active role in my school board election campaign.

Your individual contributions and efforts were all important in the ultimate success of the campaign.

I also want to recognize and thank both Helen Ditzhazy and John Cotton for their distinguished service to both the Farmington Public Schools and to the community. We have been well served by your dedicated and caring work on the board of education. Thank you both.

Dave York, Farmington Hills

Animal rights

Every month, tens of thousands of animals die needlessly, due to the unrelenting nightmarish, inhumane, and painful tests, conducted by and in our nation's commercial, military, and federally funded university laboratories. These animals include dogs, cats, rabbits, calves, horses, cows, pigs, goats, doves, kittens, puppies, turtles, primates and

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:
What can be done to bring more people out for school elections?



'Date repayment always helps.'
Janet Kidd
Farmington Hills



'I didn't know this was happening today, except my wife told me. I think it's intentional. One reason I came (to vote) was out of spite.'
David Smith
Farmington Hills



'Link it with other the elections. We've had a Presidential election. We had a vote on Proposal A. How many times are we supposed to vote?'



'Better reporting of (upcoming elections) in the newspaper.'
Norene Yuskowatz
Farmington Hills

The Farmington Observer

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