

POINTS OF VIEW

County execs combine humor with politics

League of Women Voters, take note.

Finding out a politician's stands on issues doesn't have to be dull.

Take a cue from the new Brooks and Ed show at 12:30 p.m. Sundays on WDIV-TV before you organize your next Meet the Candidates forum.

Or from the Ed and Brooks show. The names of the two politicians rotate each week — equal billing, you know.

It has hosts who aren't afraid to smile (ever seen a candidates night moderator?); it includes a guest; and it features questions from the audience that don't have to be reviewed by a LWV member.

Part of the charm of this half-hour with the Wayne and Oakland County executives, which debuted Sunday, is the understatement of humor.

Example: Ed McNamara asked L. Brooks Patterson to say who he'd like

to see as the new mayor of Detroit. "I don't know how appropriate that would be," Patterson said. "It would be the kiss of death," McNamara said matter-of-factly.

Another facet is that McNamara, a moderate Democrat, and Patterson, a conservative Republican, show that it's possible to agree to disagree.

On the topic of this day — the economy — their divergent stands are apparent. "Detroit's future is tied to Oakland County," Patterson said.

"I disagree," McNamara said. "Oakland County's a 'have' community at the moment. But Detroit is the identifying name. If Detroit has a terrible image, Oakland County has a terrible image."

Audience applause — without a cue card. (And there is an audience, unlike some candidates nights.)

Patterson countered that Oakland County is the engine.



JUDITH DONER BERNE

"The engine should take a bigger load," McNamara returned.

Asked whether Oakland County should help foot the bill through a tax for the Detroit Zoo, Belle Isle and the Detroit Institute of Arts — Patterson said no way.

And in answer to a question from the audience about urban sprawl, Patterson said, "I don't call it sprawl, I call it development."

Still Patterson had his moments, calling Mike Illitch "a saint for the city."

The show is divided into quadrants: pater between the two; a guest to help discuss the topic of the day; Ed and Brooks commenting on some newsy items; and a question-and-answer session with the studio audience.

It runs along pretty quickly, too quickly perhaps for Detroit News columnist Jon Pepper, the week's guest. Pepper suggested in a subsequent column that Patterson had cut into his time.

I think it was more that not enough time was allotted for the guest segment. If they're going to bother to have a guest, then let's have another couple of minutes to hear more from him or her.

Just like a new restaurant, the first weeks out are a test run. Some refine-

ments must be made. And the reviewer must go back in mid-season for another taste.

Still, having the region's two main power brokers (now that Coleman Young is definitely on his way out) sit down together and discuss the issues that haunt metro Detroit may provide solutions to revive it.

Back to the League of Women Voters. You perform an important voter service. But you need to change the way you perform it.

You can reach a lot more people if you present Meet the Candidates forums in a livelier way. Maybe you should book Brooks and Ed (getting both parties is non-partisan, right?) as moderators right now.

Judith Doner Berne is assistant managing editor for the Oakland County editions of the Observer & Eccentric. You can reach her at 901-2563.

Return weather forecasts to entertainment era

Wouldn't it be refreshing if, just once, the TV weather person turned to the chippy anchorette and said, "Hell, blondy, I haven't the slightest idea what the weather will be like tomorrow."

Sonny Elliot had the right idea. When he was a TV weatherman, he spent most of his allotted air time yacking around until he only had a few seconds left for the actual forecast, which he quickly pushed off the pier. Then he signed off.

WVJ Radio is the only place left where you can hear weather as it should be heard.

Elliot, when he was on television, knew forecasting the weather was an inexact science. He gave you his best guess wrapped in baloney so you'd still like him, even if he guessed wrong.

That was then. Today, forecasting the weather, as we all know, has evolved into an exact science delivered by professionals who rarely, if ever, err.

Does this sound familiar?

"The bicastal didactyl will flummox directly over the Alaskan town



PHILIP SHERMAN

where 'Northern Exposure' isn't filmed, causing a periodical rift in that cheese belt (cue Tilt-A-Whirl graphics).

"That cheese belt rift will auger and materialize into a rootinootin condition known as diagonal autobam, which will settle over the Great Lakes, unless, of course, it doesn't."

Save it. Give us back Sonny Elliot.

"Yes, tomorrow will be cold and scrappy, which, when combined, means we'll be looking forward to crappy weather."

"But as a stagehand in Twirling Bowl, Michigan once said (Elliot takes Twirling Bowl off Michigan map, tweaks it, makes squeaking sound, puts it back), you can tell the work of a cereal killer, because he always leaves his victims face down in a pool of milk."

That's entertainment.

That's not someone standing hip deep in murky water, offering the expert opinion that the Mighty Mississippi won't be receding any time soon.

That's not someone telling us about cloud formations over Montana while missing the minitornado that nearly peeled the roof off a condo complex in Ypsilanti.

That's not a bunch of someones combining their collective expertise earlier this year and predicting that this summer would be much, much cooler than any other on record.

Give it up, boys. You could only work this gig for so long, so turn it over and check the expiration date. You're past due.



TAMMIE GAVES/STAFF ARTIST

We want Sonny. Now. Hey, Ernie Harwell got a second chance. Elliot should, too. If you agree, drop us a post card, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009. We'll print your comments.

Seniority system hampers Congressional operations

"Under these rules, each member has just five minutes to question a witness. Then the chairman can cross-examine as long as he wants. When the chairman is finished — if any time remains — the other subcommittee members can vie for it, according to seniority."

That was how, in 1972, a young Republican congressman from Michigan named Don Riegle described the seniority system in Washington. It wasn't just that the old guys were committee chairs; they also set the agendas, dominated hearings and generally shafted young and minority party members. All a secretary of state had to do was stall five minutes, and young whippersnappers like Riegle couldn't quiz him for another year.

Two decades later, Americans have sent 25 percent new members to the U.S. House of Representatives. Have things changed?

"To a great extent, nothing has changed," said Joe Knollenberg, a freshman Republican from the 11th Congressional District, which includes the suburbs of Oakland and Wayne counties. "The committee structure is such that, if you're a freshman, you go to the end of the line."

On the Small Business and Urban Affairs Committee, he has been a tad luckier than young Riegle, asking Henry Cisneros, Housing and Urban Development secretary, two questions in six months. "Many times I'm passed over," said Knollenberg, "or the bell rings and we have to run and vote."

Shucka, reporters have better luck than that. Knollenberg, 59, is serving in his first governmental elective office. With redistricting, he replaced two veteran congressmen: Bill Broomfield, of Royal Oak, Birmingham and Lake Orion, 36 years, and Carl Pursell of Plymouth, 14 years.

Even the seating arrangement works against newcomers in both parties who want reform. Senior members of both parties are in the center. New members sit on the ends.

"To get ahead, Riegle said in 1972, "play the game and be one of the boys. . . . Avoid major controversy, get yourself re-elected time after time and accumulate power slowly."

Knollenberg can't play the game. Michigan voters, with more rage than intelligence, last year imposed a three-term limit on both state lawmakers and the congressional delegation.



TIM RICHARD

Texas and Massachusetts can re-elect their stalwarts forever. Michigan's team will have to get out in six years.

Will that hurt Knollenberg's effectiveness? "Absolutely. It creates an unfairness. We feel it in the freshman class," he said.

Jim Harrington, host of the Channel 7 "Spotlight" program where this conversation took place, believes a lawsuit challenging the Michigan constitutional amendment is inevitable. Knollenberg supports a proposed U.S. constitutional amendment by Bill McCollum, R-Fla., to have uniform term limitation — say, six terms. It also would limit the terms of committee chairs.

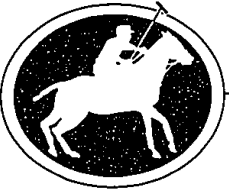
Knollenberg said it's a "hot item across the country" with 81 percent support in the 11th District and 70 to 75 percent support in the nation. "The American people want it. If the American people want something, eventually they're going to get it."

So all Congress has to do is vote for the McCollum amendment and expect enough state legislatures to follow suit — right?

Wrong. The McCollum amendment "is buried in committee, covered," said Knollenberg. He has signed a discharge petition to force it out of the House Judiciary Committee for a floor vote, but that requires 218 signatures, half the House membership.

In other words, you can't even debate reform unless the old guys say yes.

Tim Richard's office phone is (313) 349-1700, but he suggests you write to your congressman at House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515.



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Southfield Polo Team vs. Tampa Bay Polo Team
on Saturday, July 17, 1993, at 2 p.m. (Rain date: Sunday, July 18)
at Duns Scotus, Evergreen and Nine Mile Roads (parking in the Southfield Civic Center north lot, Evergreen and 10 1/2 Mile, with shuttle service to the polo site)

Tickets: \$6 at the gate; \$5 in advance • \$1 children 12 and under
Advance tickets at Southfield City Hall main reception desk; weekdays 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Proper attire requested

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