

Charges of political payoff

Murphy's campaign aide gains road post

By ROBERT KIPPER
 OAKLAND COUNTY—Among those who think John Gnaou Jr.'s appointment to the county road commission was due to his friendship with County Executive Daniel Murphy, is John Gnaou Jr.
 Gnaou was finance chairman during Murphy's successful campaign for county executive in November.
 Asked last week if his closeness to Murphy was a factor, Gnaou said: "I certainly think Dan Murphy had a lot to do with it."

OPponents of Gnaou's appointment have been saying the same thing since Gnaou was chosen by the Republican caucus of the county board of commissioners for the six year, \$7,500 road commission spot—considered a prime political appointment.
 Gnaou also contributed \$1,000 to Murphy's campaign. This opened the appointment to charges of being a political payoff despite Murphy's assertions that he did nothing to advance his friend's nomination.

Whatever suspicion or opposition these ties to Murphy caused, however, they were unable to stop Gnaou's confirmation last week as all but one Republican county commissioner held rank and approved Gnaou during the full board meeting.

Only Mary Dearborn (R-22), of Birmingham, voted against her party's choice.
 "With all the qualified Republicans in Oakland County, I think we could have found someone who wasn't quite so close to Murphy," Mrs. Dearborn said.

EVEN A threatened court challenge to Gnaou's right to sit on the board seemed to be evaporating.

Last week, it appeared that a legal effort might be waged on the road commission's behalf, asserting that the board of commissioners didn't have the authority to fill the road commission slot at this time.

Cutomarily, a road commission slot is filled prior to the end of the expiring term. However, because the Republicans failed to name a replacement to outgoing road commissioner Fraser Staman, his term, which would have expired at the end of last year, carried over to this year.

Some road commission sources argued that Staman might now have the authority to remain on the road commission, prohibiting anyone else.

Foundation, college plan session

Easier daily living for handicapped persons and their families will be the subject of a problem-solving session Wednesday at Mercy College in Detroit.

The meeting, open to the public and free of charge, will include films on ways to make day-to-day life smoother. It will begin at 8 p.m.

Techniques such as transferring a person from bed to wheelchair, walker or crutches will be demonstrated by Helen Milten, R.N., rehabilitation nursing consultant for the Kenny-Michigan Rehabilitation Foundation. Literature dealing with dressing, bathing and housework will be available.

THE KENNY Foundation is sponsoring the meeting with Mercy College, where seminars for area medical personnel are scheduled Wednesday Jan. 22. Similar topics will be reviewed at the all-day seminars.

The Wednesday evening problem-solving session does not require advanced registration. Handicapped persons, families and friends are encouraged to attend.

The Kenny-Michigan Rehabilitation Foundation, founded in 1946, is a Torch Drive and United Way of Michigan agency. Its goal is to help rehabilitate Michigan's disabled residents.

YWCA sets alcohol series

The Oakland Branch YWCA and the Talbot Center will co-sponsor a five-week educational seminar on alcohol. It is designed for the problem drinker, persons who have problem drinkers in the family, youth group leaders, employers and anyone interested in gaining knowledge about alcohol abuse.

The series will be held Tuesday evenings from 7:30-9 p.m. at the YWCA, 800 S. Crooks Road, Clawson, beginning Jan. 14.

Dick Welsbacher, coordinator for the program will be the first speaker. His topic will be "Alcohol As a Behavioral Disease." The series is being offered as a public service to the community. No fees will be charged.

Call Welsbacher at the Talbot Center, 848-4044, or Doroty Moffett at the Oakland YWCA, 636-9100, for further information.

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 --Mary Dearborn (R-Birmingham)

nated by the county board from assuming the job.
 Although Staman insisted his threat had nothing to do with Gnaou or his ties to Murphy, the potential action had anti-Murphy overtones.

BUT AFTER Gnaou's confirmation, Staman seemed reluctant to push the challenge.
 "I guess that's it," Staman said. "I

guess I don't have much choice now (but to step down)."

However, Staman said previously that whatever legal challenge was made it would be prompted by others, or the road commission as a unit. This remained a possibility as of Friday, although many considered it unlikely.

"I don't think Staman intends to make any challenge," said John Den-

man, a road commission spokesman. Denman said any challenge that comes would have to be on Staman's own behalf.

"The initiative for creating or bypassing a problem is in Staman's hands," he said.

ON FRIDAY, the day after Gnaou's confirmation, Staman was still working in his office at the road commission.

Plans have been made for Gnaou to be sworn in as the new road commissioner late Monday morning (Jan. 13). If a challenge comes, it will be made the following day if both Staman and Gnaou attend the regularly scheduled road commission meeting, expected to be seated.

GNAU DIDN'T anticipate any difficulty when he was interviewed following his confirmation. He said he ex-

pected to work well with the two other road commissioners, Fred Harris and William Richards.

Gnaou, a hotel executive and former Bloomfield Township trustee, estimated his net worth at around \$1 million, although the liabilities attached to his various businesses are high, he said.

Gnaou is a partner in Fries-Gnaou Investments, which owns hotels in New York City, Fort Lauderdale and Los Angeles. He is also president of an insurance company, part owner of a map-making firm and director of a tool and die company.

These holdings caused enough concern among some members of the General Government Committee of the county board, which considered his nomination, that Gnaou was asked to appear before the committee last week to answer questions about potential conflicts of interest.

Well-dressed, tanned and confident, Gnaou said none of his firms do business in Oakland County and should pose no conflict with his duties on the road commission.

GNAU FELT his business and management background should come in handy in his new post. He blamed poor management on the recent lay-off of 27 road commission employees just prior to Christmas, and added that a high priority for him will be finding new jobs for these men.

Gnaou said, after reading the highly critical report of the Citizens Research Council, that he agreed with most of its suggested improvements of road commission operation.

Insisting he would be his own man, Gnaou said he expected to maintain a close working relationship with his friend, Dan Murphy.

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