

editorial opinion

Politicians mystified

What can be done about voters who won't vote? That's the question in the minds of Farmington Hills politicians as they reflect on the dismal turnout during last week's election.

After all votes were tallied, it was found that only 13 per cent of the 28,000 registered voters pulled the lever down. In other words, a minority of voters determined who would run the city's business for the next four years.

City Clerk Floyd Cairns says the percentage voting would even be lowered if voting laws were different and voting registration records could be purged differently. Actually, he says, only about 10 per cent of the voters cast a ballot.

WHICHEVER WAY it's counted, the voting turnout was deplorable.

At this week's council meeting an informal discussion developed between council members, city administrators and a few audience members on a possible solution.

As in most discussions of this type, more questions were raised than answered.

Why do voters stay away? What can be done to attract them to the polls? Should voting ordinances be changed so voters can more easily find the polling booths? Should there be more publicity during election time?

In an attempt to answer these questions, the council is contemplating formation of an ad hoc committee composed of city leaders and residents.

Even Councilmember Joan Dudley, who abhors ad hoc committees, is going along on this one.

This ad hoc committee will need a special blessing from on high to conquer this problem. As councilman Keith Deacon says, the biggest problem is apathy.

"I don't know what more we can do. Anybody who had his eyes open couldn't miss the fact that there was an election," he says. "Between the city-wide distribution in mailboxes, the city newsletter and newspaper coverage, I just don't see how voters couldn't have known something was going on."

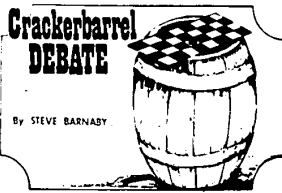
The whole matter came up when Councilmember-elect Joanne Smith requested that signs be put up on roads leading to polling booths. She claims many voters didn't know where they should vote.

Cairns isn't very enthused about that idea, saying it would be prohibited because some roads are owned by the county.

Besides, he says, polling places are listed on voters registration cards.

"Many people just don't take the time out to read their own voting card," he said.

Whatever the reasons, voters aren't turning out. I find it amazing in a community such as Farmington Hills. For one thing, persons in the Hills



pride themselves in being educated middle class Americans. Some example they set for future generations when they stay away from the polls!

SECONDLY, elections in Farmington Hills are conducted like big secrets.

In an attempt to keep the community tidy, an ordinance has been adopted prohibiting the use of campaign posters. That's dumb.

Granted, campaign signs wouldn't increase the percentage of voter turnout that much. But a change in that ordinance certainly would show a healthy change of attitude among residents.

Elections never were meant to be a secret. Bally-hoo is part of the game.

Farmington Hills residents should have enough confidence in themselves to realize they live in the type of community where political signs, for the most part, will be cleared up after an election.

During township days, election posters were allowed and the community didn't disintegrate. But the Detroit paranoia has set in. Too often the cry is heard, "look what happens in Detroit when campaign signs are allowed to be posted."

Nonsense. Farmington Hills isn't Detroit. Ordinances could be adopted to police campaign sign posting. Since Farmington Hills still is a relatively close-knit community, peer pressure alone would force campaigners to rip down signs.

Residents need to see that elections are important in their community. Hiding the fact that an election is taking place doesn't help the situation.

The tragic part of the entire matter is that as it now stands, city leaders are being elected by small special interest groups who are willing to work.

A true reflection of how the community feels isn't shown.

Maybe the ad hoc committee won't be able to do much, but let's give them a chance.

Meanwhile, Mr. and Mrs. Voter, perk up and take interest! It's your community's future that is at stake.

Farms come full circle

The notion that we had come full circle agriculturally first dawned on me one June Saturday as a farmer—a relative of a relative by marriage—and I drove the back roads of Berrien and Cass counties to a blugill lake.

"He used to grow 50 acres of strawberries, but he don't no more," he used to be a big pro-lifer, but he don't no more," said the farmer, gesturing with his thumb at his old friend's place.

Come to think of it, my own companion wasn't working his farm except for the vegetable garden. He'd inherited the farm, so it was paid for, his fishing rod, shotgun and deer rifle were paid for, he'd found a chest was cheaper than a cigarette. How come these farmers had quit?

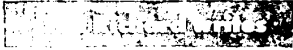
"Can't afford to farm," he answered. "Costs too high. Damn government. Minimum wage for the fruit pickers, all the housing and benefits you gotta give 'em, you can't sell your fruit for enough to make any money. So we're waitin' for the subdivisions." Many seemed able to afford the wait.

THE FRUIT PICKERS who were now unemployed hadn't been with Michigan agriculture forever. Time was when most city workers had a relative—parents, brothers, uncles—back on the farm.

Summer vacation was a trip to the farm. Kids rode farm horses instead of going to the riding stable, kids slashed in the deep holes that formed in the bends of rivers instead of going to a civic pool or park beach, and kids picked fruit.

Times changed. Families dispersed, child labor laws came on the scene, so the farmer couldn't even hire kids to do what his nieces and nephews used to do. Migration labor came from Texas and Alabama. Then came more laws.

The laws contributed greatly, not to the migrants' welfare but to pricing their labor right out



of the market. Another way of looking at it is to say the laws lowered the price of automation. Cakes and green beans are mechanically picked today. The farmers who were into strawberries, however, just went blugill fishing.

Other farmers came up with a gimmick. They put up signs saying "Pick Your Own." When newspaper and television reporters came by, they said picking your own vegetables and fruit meant you could cut your grocery bills by half, get absolutely fresh produce and have family fun in the fresh air.

We had come full circle—almost.

MEANWHILE, BACK in the cities, the unemployment and welfare rolls are multiplying. The fruit pickers had been lured to Michigan by just a few dollars and were being kept here by good welfare payments.

Had we actually hurt the fruit pickers more than we had helped them with minimum wage laws, housing laws, compensation benefits? How could that possibly be? It says right here in my old economics text that the chief purpose of minimum wage legislation is "the abolition of poverty."

It just can't be that that liberal senator from Dearborn who masqueraded as a pickle picker was wrong? It can't be that the sociologists and humanitarians concerned with the silent, disadvantaged minority were wrong? There must be a fascist of chamber of commerce plot somewhere.

Meanwhile, the signs are popping up. "Pick Your Own." And the suburban station wagons pull up.

signs are two often brakes being looked at and the vehicle going out of control due to the sudden surprise and shock. Fortunately, most people who have experienced this prank escaped injury and damage to their vehicle.

There's no such thing as a harmless prank, someone is always unnecessarily inconvenienced, frightened or otherwise harmed.

Every responsible parent should keep their children in the house on the evening of Oct. 30, for what starts out to be fun too often accelerates to ever-increasing thoughtless mischief and property damage, and ends up in tragedy for all concerned—pranksters as well as victims.

DANIEL A. BYRNES
Chief of Police
Farmington

Eccentricities

by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.



What price liberty?

Two hundred years ago, 56 men signed a document which they called the Declaration of Independence.

They gave us a free America, but they paid a price.

•Five of these signers were captured by the British as traitors and were tortured before they died.

•Two lost their sons in the Revolutionary War.

•Another two had sons captured.

•Nine of the 56 fought in and died from wounds of the hardships of the Revolutionary War.

•Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships swept from the seas by the British Navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts. He died in rags.

•Thomas McKean was so hounded by the British that he was forced to move his family almost constantly. He served in the Congress without pay, and his family was kept in hiding. His possessions were taken from him, and poverty was his reward.

•Vandals, soldiers, or both, looted the properties of Ellery, Clymer, Hall, Walton, Gwinnett, Heyward, Rutledge and Middleton.

•At the battle of Yorktown, Thomas Nelson saw his home destroyed in the fighting. He died bankrupt.

•John Hart was driven from his wife's bedside as she was dying. Their 13 children fled for their lives. His fields and gristmill were laid waste. For more than a year he lived in forests and caves, returning after the war to find his wife dead, his children gone. A few weeks later, he died from exhaustion and a broken heart.

•Morris and Livingston suffered similar fates.

Observation Point

by PHILIP H. POWER



Suburbs vote for 'lib'

The newspapers call it the women's movement. The critics seek to diminish it by the excessively cutesy "women's lib." The advocates call it a drive for simple equality.

Regardless of the name, the congeries of ideas and action represented by the movement of women into the mainstream of social equality and political participation certainly constitute one of the most profoundly revolutionary developments of our times.

And it's a real development, not idle chatter. For the biggest news story coming out of last week's local elections was not who won and who lost, but rather the remarkably successful performance of suburban women running for election into the formerly male preserve of local government.

OUT OF 12 women who ran for election in these suburbs, only two lost. And there are now three communities in this area who have more than the single token woman on the city council.

In Plymouth, history was made when Mary Chids moved up from a seat on the planning commission to join Beverly McAninch as members of the city commission. Mrs. McAninch also ran as the incumbent mayor.

Orchard Lake also boasts two women on the city council, as Frances Y. Gadd was re-elected and was the top vote getter. A strong prospect to become the community's next mayor, Mrs. Gadd will have as a colleague on council Katherine M. Baker.

Westland also will have two women on city council, as the virtually unbeatable Justine Barns led the vote-getters, only to be followed as number two by Gail McKnight. Mrs. Barns does not feel two women sitting on council will in itself make anything different. "I look on the council as seven members, not five men and two women. I will not vote as part of any team. If I agree with the rest of the council, then fine. But if I disagree, it will be on the basis of issues and not what the rest of the council is doing," says Mrs. Barns.

ONE OF THE few women defeated in her election bid was Mary Markowicz, who was the loser

in Garden City's race for mayor by only 91 votes. Geraldine Kiesel, previously a member of the commission which wrote the city's new charter, was elected to city council, finishing as the number two vote getter.

In Rochester, Frances A. Weaver won a four-year seat on the city council by one vote. She was the only successful council candidate who opposed a local amendment to allow alcohol to be served at the community house, and she has been a spectator at most council meetings for the past several years.

In a real upset, Lillian Jaffee pushed her way to membership on the Southfield city council. How did she lead all candidates? "I worked hard. I door-knocked. I went to coffees. I studied and I learned the issues. I hope to be able to work with all the people in Southfield as I promised. This was definitely a people's election."

In Farmington Hills, Joanne Smith found her past political disappointment rectified. Two years ago she ran for the city council, but lost, then when Margaret Shaeffer resigned her council seat to become district judge, the expectation of appointment was not fulfilled. This year, however, Mrs. Smith led the ticket.

THE WOMEN who won election this year did not campaign as "women's libbers." They ran as people, campaigning hard, learning the issues, organizing their campaign workers, turning out the votes. So do men.

They differ politically, ranging from left to right to center on the political spectrum. So do men.

They ran because they were concerned about their community and wanted to do something about it. So do men.

In short, these successful women entered the political process on their own merits and won on their own efforts. They are living evidence that the women's movement has become much more than cocktail party talk, and in their victories they constitute the cutting edge of a long-awaited and much-needed movement toward equality in our country.

Congratulations

No harmless prank

Editor

Your article of Thursday, Oct. 30, "Treats, but no tricks," although well intended and informative for some, was upsetting to me. With this community experiencing a 45 per cent increase in vandalism, I feel you should have excluded paragraphs four through nine from your article.

Such harmless pranks as soaping windows, ringing door bells, nailing strings, tapping windows, logs placed between inner and outer doors, writing on lawns with flour, and all the other so-called harmless pranks done with the idea of having fun don't turn out to be very funny if you happen to be an invalid, a frightened woman

ing alone, or a senior citizen. And don't kid yourself, all too often these are the people that are on the receiving end of such fun, the ones less able to cope and most easily upset or frightened.

I WONDER how your readers would respond to stomping on dog droppings. There is nothing at all funny about this prank if the dog droppings happen to end up all over "your" feet or worse yet, if the flames ignited your clothing and serious injuries resulted.

Reference to the popular trick of pretending to pull a rope across the roadway, the only danger you see is if the good little kids happen to stand in the roadway. Talk to a few who have had this sudden and totally unexpected prank "pulled" on them. The re-

sults are too often brakes being looked at and the vehicle going out of control due to the sudden surprise and shock. Fortunately, most people who have experienced this prank escaped injury and damage to their vehicle.

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