

## Residents Were Considered

With the election campaign nearing an end, it is evident that Birmingham's business district improvement plan is an important part of the platform of each of the 11 candidates for city commission.

There has been a strong implication that the commission, and therefore its current commissioners, has been at fault in not involving the citizens more directly in the formulating of that plan.

This is not a valid position for any candidate to take. This is not a fair criticism.

The residents of this city have had more than ample opportunity to acquaint themselves with the Central Business District Development Plan and to express their views.

A YEAR AND a half ago, the commission invited residents to a public meeting on the subject. The response was almost nil. There have been other meetings, too.

The Birmingham Eccentric has given extensive coverage to this plan.

As far back as Nov. 23, 1960, we published a full page on the subject, reporting on the initial planning for the program.

In May, 1961, we called attention to a public meeting in June. Our subsequent story on that hearing showed that residents expressed both criticism and praise of the plan.

ON AUG. 31, 1961, we reported on Page One the formal presentation of the plan to the commission by the Central Business District Development Committee.

In our issue of Nov. 22, 1961, we published an editorial on our Editorial Page explaining the CBDD Plan, with a map to show how the downtown area would appear with a mall, off-street parking and peripheral route.

We ended that editorial with this remark:

"We earnestly solicit your comments."

AN ARTICLE on Dec. 7, 1961, reported that only a half dozen people appeared at a CBDD discussion meeting between the commission and plan board.

And there have been numerous other news and feature articles reporting on the plan.

Let no one say that the residents of Birmingham have not been given ample opportunity to be informed of and to become interested and involved in planning for an improvement of our downtown business section.

## How We View City Election

Birmingham has good reason to be proud of the interest of its citizens in local government, as evidenced by the number (11) of candidates in Monday's city commission election.

We are pleased that so many people are seeking election to office; this is something we have been advocating for years.

Although it makes the voters' task more difficult to choose from among so many candidates, it certainly is reassuring to note this kind of community interest.

Voters should keep in mind Monday that there are THREE commission seats to be filled. We believe that it is an act of good citizenship to vote for THREE individuals; we do not think that "plunking," or voting for only one candidate, is politically moral and in keeping with the character of our community. Quite frankly, it is nothing more or less than "packing" the ballot box!

ONE FACT that should make the task of selection easier is the known performance of the two incumbents—William H. Burgum and William E. Roberts.

They have impressed us with the consistently high quality of their performance, their integrity, their knowledge of municipal affairs and their predictability of action.

Whatever the issue, and regardless of possible political consequences to themselves, they speak their minds—clearly and emphatically.

In short, we strongly believe that they qualify for, and deserve, favorable consideration.

IN LIGHT of the fact that at least one newcomer will be elected—inasmuch as Mayor Florence H. Willett has declined to

NOW, LET us look at another aspect of this problem.

There has been some implication that self-interest groups are promoting the plan. This is not so. It would be true.

IF the business community's efforts to improve the attractiveness of the downtown area were motivated only by a primary concern for profits and with a disregard for the health and welfare of the total community.

We submit that the businessmen in raising \$17,500 for the study of the business area did not do so exclusively for commercial reasons.

They did it in the interest of total growth and maintenance of the quality of our community.

The entire city would be vitally affected whether the downtown was good or bad.

AGAIN, WE say the criticism of self-interest is not valid and is not fair.

There is a mutuality of interest in how good the downtown area is and in how good the rest of the community is going to be—in respect to the tax structure and aesthetics.

We do not want to see another Royal Oak or Pontiac—a dead business center could not help but affect the vitality of the residential area.

To be sure, the groups involved in the planning for our city do have self-interests. But they do not act solely out of self-interest; rather, it's what you might call self-enlightened interest in the total community.

TO SPEED up action on the plan, the commission decided to discuss it with various civic-governmental organizations interested in the development of their community.

Thus, the commission was able to obtain preliminary distillation of the best thinking in the city before taking the plan to the public. This resulted in a better thought-out, better-planned program.

We commend this approach. The public is entitled to the most thorough thinking, the best planning before being asked to become involved in the final action and being asked for pay for it.

We urge the candidates in Monday's election to recognize the good sense in the action to date and to commend rather than criticize the commission.

And we urge the voters to view the prospective commissioners in light of the thoughts expressed here.

seek re-election as a commissioner — we must take a look at the question of electing another woman.

Certainly, Mrs. Willett has demonstrated most dramatically that women can and do have a very definite contribution to make to city government.

In her eight years as commissioner, including three as mayor, she has proved that there is much to be gained by having the woman's point of view and judgment.

Her record would certainly give support to those who urge the election of a representative of the distaff side—to continue to make available to the community the valued contributions of a woman commissioner.

There is, without question, merit to this kind of thinking.

THE DECISION of the voters next Monday is most important to the future of Birmingham. The slate of candidates is an outstanding one this year.

We urge that thoughtful consideration be given to the qualifications of each candidate since their willingness to run merits a corresponding citizen responsibility in knowing who may serve the city best.

So, let us go to the polls Monday, then, and—

Keep in mind that there are THREE commission seats to be filled and that we should cast all three of our votes.

Remember that the two incumbents—Mr. Burgum and Mr. Roberts—have demonstrated their worthiness of re-election.

And give consideration to the question of whether another woman should be elected, in a sense to succeed Mrs. Willett who has served her community so effectively these past eight years.

## Don't Put It Off Any Longer



## Read It, Then Vote for It

Next Monday, April 1, the voters of the state of Michigan will make a momentous decision: Should we adopt a new constitution for our state?

The facts are well known that Michigan's present Constitution is over 55 years old and completely patched by nearly 60 amendments.

It is obvious that the agricultural Michigan of 1908 was completely different from the manufacturing Michigan of today.

None of these things, of course, should be a consideration. The only question to be faced by the voter is—is the proposed new constitution better than our present document? If the answer is yes, then the decision on how to vote is answered.

IN COMPARING the new and old documents, one should go section by section to see the changes.

You will notice that the new document provides for a Civil Rights Commission, gives local government more opportunity for "home rule," extends the term of office for governor and state senator to four years so that the public officials have a chance to get some work done before they have to hit the campaign trail again.

It eliminates the biennial spring election, which will save local units of governments hundreds of thousands of dollars, and forces the state administration to consolidate its 128 departments and commissions into 20 major departments under the governor.

This will end the continual quandary of who is responsible if a department goes.

IT PROVIDES for the appointment of some of the now elected officials so that instead of a politician, a professionally qualified educator could direct the school systems, a CPA could audit the state's books and an engineer could run its highway department.

It provides for a new Court of Appeals to relieve the Supreme Court docket; and provides for retired judges to fill court vacancies until the next election, so that you no longer have political hacks appointed and then re-elected because they are incumbents.

It provides for the elimination of the justice of the peace system over a period of years and replaces it with county courts of competent and fair judges.

It provides for apportionment of both the State Senate and House of Representatives with a closer eye to population than the present document.

THERE ARE many additional changes that you will note as you go through the document.

The Eccentric feels that section-by-section the new constitution is a better document than our present one. We urge you to see for yourself and then vote YES on Monday.

## A Free, Responsible and Aggressive Press Is Democracy's First Line of Defense

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## PEOPLE'S COLUMN

### 'Gil's My Boy,' Says Car Critic

To the Editor:

Lives there a man who dares to rise above the multitude and proclaim the awful truth? Lives there a man brave enough to reveal the conniving and deceitfulness of big business?

Is there a champion of the innocent automobile buyer who puts his full-value dollar on the line and gets "discounted" value that has been willfully designed into cars?

Hallelujah! Hurrah! And Bravo! How refreshing it is in this world of over-statement, misrepresentation and fraud to hear the welcome voice of a crusader for value, Gil Jordan—a David among Goliaths!

I've known all along that I've had a lot of company in observing that each year, gradually but inexorably, the auto industry has a man brave enough to shamefully taken quality out of the cars that they've foisted onto the public with more curves and gloss, yet when you look below the surface we find the sad reality.

YES, GIL'S my boy—and I hope that neither he, nor you, Mr. Editor, retract the truths in that masterpiece, and if he would like more material for a book he should (See PEOPLE'S COLUMN, 5-B)

I WILL BE the first to rally 'round Brother Jordan and carry

the banner: "Jordan for the journalists OSCAR of the decade." Hall, Gil, you're my boy!

I would add to the high-level conference conversation, which would go this way: "How is your school coming?" said the big chief to the head of research, "on our model 'The Ultimate'?"

The disposable car, the one that after 12 months we can push a button and by remote control the car will fall apart and the owner then must buy a new car each year as the new ones come out.

Then in reply, the researcher who has at his disposal a multi-million dollar technical development center and the best in brains in the business, dejectedly said, "Sorry, Chief, we're trying hard, but that model is still several years away. BUT, don't give up hope, we can do it—we will do it, soon!"

## Yesteryear Happenings

From the Files of The Eccentric

50 YEARS AGO  
March 25, 1913

The losses from our big 56-mile-an-hour wind just one week ago today with rain, sleet and snow are nothing. When the morning papers of Wednesday came out telling of the loss of 8,000 lives and 350,000 people in Ohio, Indiana, Missouri and Illinois, being homeless and in a starved condition, our troubles from these elements—our losses pale into insignificance.

Fully 8,000 people are reported drowned in the death-dealing floods which swept through Ohio, bursting reservoirs and swelling rivers into rushing lakes. According to the latest dispatches, 5,000 are reported drowned in Dayton, 1,000 in Hamilton, 540 in Piqua, nearly 100 dead and missing in Delaware and hundreds in other cities through the state.

The Birmingham Choral Society will give the second concert of the series on Tuesday evening April 8th, at the Birmingham M. E. (See HAPPENINGS, 7-B)

## Eccentricities

By HANK HOGAN

A bill before the legislature that seems to have the most citizen interest is an amendment to the school transportation act to make it mandatory for school districts to transport both public and nonpublic school children.

Under present Michigan law transportation to non-public schools is optional with the local school district. The bill was introduced in the State Senate amid a blare of trumpets with probably the largest number of senators ever to co-sponsor a bill.

ONE OF THE reasons it has become popular locally is that the Board of Education of the Bloomfield Hills School District decided that this bill was not in the best interests of the district's residents and shipped out around 5,000 letters to the residents to get them to write their legislators.

Unfortunately, in their eagerness to slay the dragon, the facts and figures that they presented were not entirely accurate. As a matter of fact, they were downright misleading.

While the state Superintendent of Public Instruction said that the collective total all school districts would pay under the bill would be \$400,000, Bloomfield said it blare have to pay out \$216,000 itself and only be reimbursed \$42,000 by the state.

THE SCHOOL BOARD erred in two respects. The first was that they presumed that because there were 1,000 nonpublic school children in the school district, they would have to transport all 1,000.

Statistics show that over 50 per cent of the nonpublic school children would not qualify for transportation because they either live within a mile and a half of their school or they live in an incorporated area. Secondly, they failed to take into account that non-public school hours could be staggered so that less buses would be needed. The proposed bill specifically states that the superintendent of public instruction can set the hours of the nonpublic schools.

THE COMBINATION of these two factors change the financial picture tremendously.

I don't happen to agree in principle with the bill. I feel that people send their children to private or parochial schools because they believe their children will get a better education. For this benefit, I believe that they should stand the cost.

Also, if the state gives this service, it is entitled to some control. An example of control is the fact that the state can set school hours. Curriculum could come next.

BECAUSE I don't agree with the bill doesn't mean that I condone the efforts of the Hills school board.

It seems to me that this petty effort to kill a bill could in the long run hurt the school district's future attempts to get additional revenue by the voters.

Why should one-third or more of the voters vote for any more taxes if their children are not attending public schools and the school board does not feel that nonpublic school children are entitled to any of the fruits of more educational dollars?

By  
KEN  
WEAVER

## City Beat



GEORGE Teacher



LENORE Pupil

If Mrs. Romney were to be given a grade for her knowledge of Michigan's old and proposed new constitutions, it would have to be an A.

Whether they agreed with her opinions or not, teachers would have to marvel at her knowledge of her subject. "She certainly knows her subject," remarked many an individual after the governor's wife's speech before the meeting last week of Birmingham-Bloomfield Hills Service clubs.

We should have elected her instead of George, was another frequent, though not original, observation.

TWICE The men afforded her a standing ovation, before and after her address.

Speaking rapidly and taking deep breaths frequently, she held almost everyone in the audience spellbound. She spoke without a prepared text and went from one point in her theme to another without a hint of hesitation.

She displayed a sense of humor, yet obviously grew more serious as she went on. The smiles grew less frequent as she progressed in her speech.

She referred to her audience as "friends and neighbors" and talked of "our community." The Romneys are, of course, residents of Bloomfield Hills.

FROM HER own comments, her husband must be given some credit for whatever knowledge of state government the first lady possesses.

You've heard the expression "tell it to George." You might change that now to "listen to George."

Mrs. Romney said that she has in these past few weeks been doing her homework. "I listen to George a lot," she declared.

Commenting on her personal appearances in support of the new constitution, the first lady said she had received a telegram from George the other day.

(See CITY BEAT, 5-B)