

Why We Support B'ham, Hills Ballot Proposals

It's June again and the electors in both the Birmingham and Bloomfield Hills School Districts are faced with approving or turning down increased millage for school purposes.

It is often heard that property taxes are too high and that schools should look for their revenue elsewhere. This is a very convincing cliché until you view the alternatives.

When schools seek more state or federal aid, the money is taken from monies collected around the state or nation and distributed on the basis that those with more need get the most.

Naturally in our area we contribute proportionately higher taxes and based on need we receive less in return.

AND WHEN THE STATE or nation pays out money it is usually an attempt to bring the quality of education up to average rather than to excellence.

Both of our school districts have long passed the average level. This is borne out by the high number of local students who are readily accepted into institutions of higher learning upon their completion of studies here.

The question, then, before the voters now is, do we continue this quest for excellence or do we let crowded conditions resulting from our rapid growth rob us of our acknowledged quality?

We are, of course, talking about OUR children, and the answer must be that Birmingham and Bloomfield move forward.

THE PROPOSITIONS in Birmingham are twofold.

First, there is a bonding proposal amounting to \$5,350,000 for two new schools plus additions to five other schools, a new administration building and some other remodeling and equipment.

The plans include no frills. It is necessary to provide classrooms for our expanding population.

This proposition should be supported.

The second proposal is for an increase of 5.6 mills for operation. A major portion of this is to staff the new schools and classrooms.

A smaller percentage will be used for increased teachers' salaries and enrichment in the programs offered to Birmingham students.

Vote for College, Too

We may be repeating the same message that appeared on this editorial page a year ago, but the situation has not changed as to the need for community colleges.

The electorate approved the principle last year but forgot to vote for the money to implement the program.

To rehash the whys and wherefores of the community college proposition on next week's ballot, let us look back at higher education in Michigan over the last 10 years.

Very few people know that 25 per cent of the state general fund budget goes to higher education.

WHAT HAS happened in Michigan is that the state, because of a dearth in private colleges was forced to set up a series of institutions of higher learning so that our college age population would have an opportunity to be educated.

At the present time we have 10 such institutions with another one coming up in the Saginaw area.

The problem is that it costs each institution from \$800 to \$1,300 to educate an undergraduate student. But the student pays less than \$400 towards this cost of tuition.

Population experts tell us that within the next 15 years our college population will triple. We know that the state can't increase its educational budget threefold in that period so something must be done to lower the per student cost.

SOME OF THE OTHER MORE progressive states like California have faced this problem by creating community colleges. These are built locally and offer a two-year program in both liberal arts and technical or trade type schooling.

Because they don't have to be staffed like the institutions that offer graduate programs, they are cheaper to operate.

Because of this the cost of educa-

THE PORTION for staffing new classrooms is necessary. The portion for higher salaries and enrichment of program should be judged on what kind of school district we want.

We do not believe that this community should settle for mediocrity; and we, thus, encourage support for this second proposition.

In Bloomfield Hills there are also two propositions.

The first is a bonding proposal for \$7,045,000 for new buildings, additions to existing facilities, a new administrative building and a new bus garage.

Again, this request is a result of expanding population over which no one has control.

PROBABLY in the next 10 years we will reach the point where there is no more land for population expansion and the school system can take a breather from the construction business.

Until that time arrives we have little choice if our children are to have adequate classroom space.

We feel that this proposition should be approved by the voters.

The second proposition involves a \$625,000 bond issue for construction of physical education facilities, including a swimming pool in a proposed new high school.

While this may not be considered a true expenditure of educational dollars, we feel that the overall benefit both to student by physical development and the community make it worth while.

Neighboring school districts have such facilities and it offers an opportunity for local students to release their physical energies in school rather than on highways or by-way.

We commend the school board, however, for separating this item from the purely academic needs.

We have endorsed the four propositions which will lead to higher local taxes, but we would like to stress that in general failure of local support does force school systems to seek funds elsewhere.

The money for these improvements will come from somewhere, and through local election the local residents keep control on how much and where this money is spent.

If we wait for state or federal funds, we will pay the same amount or more and will have little say in how the money should be spent.

BESIDES THE cost, community colleges make sense because there are some students who just don't need four years of college to be effective in their chosen field. And these students can go to college locally at a substantial savings to themselves. They don't have to pay room and board and can have outside local jobs while living at home.

Also there are some courses being offered at our bigger institutions which could be offered much more economically in community colleges.

ALL THINGS considered we believe that the community college district should be approved. In the long run it will relieve the cost pressures on the state of Michigan in the field of higher education, it will make higher education available to more people because it will cost the student considerably less, and it will allow our institutions of higher learning to devote more of their facilities to really higher learning.

The extra cost in the short run will be more than repaid by less need of new taxes in the long run for the state.

To bring the community college district into existence you must vote YES and then select a district board.

Perhaps one of the few great potato eaters today is Mary Churchill Soames, Winston Churchill's youngest daughter. She wants potato growers to provide spuds that "do not look bad" when eaten. She says she'd just love to be able to eat four times as many potatoes as she now consumes—but only if they would not show too plumply. Well, we agree that potatoes often can be made to taste just delicious, but we never did figure that they could be grown to figure less on the form and outline of those who over-consume them.

PEOPLE'S COLUMN

Bond Issues? So Why Not Let George Do the Job?

To the Editor:

It's bond issue proposal time again in Birmingham and Bloomfield. We're all aware of this by now, I'm sure.

This is the one, and I might add the only, tax we vote directly on ourselves. Thus, it becomes a great temptation to the oppressed taxpayer to rebel at this tangible level and put his "X" into the "No" square. There is also the prevalent complaint that the property tax base of school support is wrong.

But what are the alternatives? Perhaps a state income tax, because all taxes should be based on ability to pay. Then we could do away with local school boards and let an agency in Lansing direct all policies.

OH WELL, what do school boards know of community needs anyway? They only have to shoulder their consideration and devote their time unfruitfully to the betterment of our children's educational opportunities.

We could vote "No" and the state would have to give us more money because the kids are here in ever increasing numbers and they do need facilities to accommodate them. And we would have to pay more taxes by legislation and we wouldn't have to bring ourselves to the unpleasant task of voting for an additional \$4 million a year that would be easier for us to let "them" do it all for us.

Then "we" would have to be self-reliant? After all, shouldn't the government take care of us all?

Then "they" will have to change the ground rules and "we" won't have to shoulder our own responsibilities all the time. Romney is in Lansing now. Let's all sit back and let "George do it" for us.

CONCERNED TAXPAYER

THEN THERE is that silly old swimming pool proposal in Bloomfield. Of course, Birmingham has five pools in two high schools and three junior highs, and the whole community enjoys and benefits from extended usage of these pools in the evenings and in the summer.

But this doesn't satisfy everyone because last July 25, The Eccentric published a letter from a lady resident who opined that the city needed a municipal outdoor pool more than it did a golf course.

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CONCERNED TAXPAYER

PEOPLES COLUMN

Urges Rezoning, Help Keep City Residential

To the Editor:

This letter is addressed to The Birmingham Eccentric because your paper is the medium of information to the public and because we believe you have a deep interest in the welfare of our City.

The Birmingham Plan Board recently recommended to the city commission that a small piece of vacant commercial property on the corner of Larchlea and West Maple be rezoned to residential. This is the only piece of commercial property on the south side of West Maple in this area.

The city commissioners have agreed that such rezoning would be in the best interests of the city as a whole, but have, to date,

(May 26), refused to make the change because they feel it would represent a financial loss to the property owner.

IT IS the contention of the residents in this area that the size of the property in question is only large enough for one or two stores, which would serve no useful purpose, but rather prove a traffic problem and become a blight on an otherwise attractive area.

We feel that the residential theme of Birmingham should be preserved. We also feel that in the future a petition will be made to the commission to rezone the other vacant lots (presently residential) to provide parking facilities for the commercial property.

IT WOULD seem that a neighborhood dotted with small stores gradually deteriorates and property values of many residents depreciate. We believe that our commission, in consideration of one individual, would be unjust to the majority, and that in their capacity as city leaders, have pledged themselves to protect the rights of its residents.

WE CAN believe that in their good conscience and unprejudiced judgment, that they could possibly elect to favor one, rather than many.

This letter is an appeal for assistance in maintaining our city's standards of beauty.

DONALD W. H. ROTHANG
369 Larchlea
Birmingham

Keep It In Shain Park

As part of the centennial celebration, the City of Birmingham installed some unusual playground equipment in Shain Park.

The equipment includes metal animals on springs, a small merry-go-round, swings with animal shaped seats instead of ordinary flat seats, a jungle gym shaped like a steam engine and a slide.

If you have had an opportunity to venture through the park since the Village Fair moved out, you couldn't help but notice that the kids took to this equipment like ducks to water.

With the centennial over, it is our understanding that the City plans to move this equipment to a site at the new recreation center at Lincoln and Cranbrook.

WE SINCERELY HOPE that the recreation board reconsiders this decision and leaves the things where they are in Shain Park.

Shain Park for a long time has been nothing more than a well-landscaped shortcut to other places in town.

With this equipment it would be a place for people to go and stay awhile. It would encourage some of the residents to actually use the park instead of just admiring it.

If we are going to devote land area to recreation, let's make it useful for recreation.

WE REALIZE that there are hopes of installing some beautiful sculptured swans in the middle of the park someday. While the swans, we are sure, will add much to the aesthetic value of the community, by themselves they will not bring about greater active use of the area.

We have seen many innovations in our community since the centennial celebration. Some will pass when the spirit of the occasion passes; others, like the alley beautification, will stay with us.

Let's carry over this new spirit of Shain Park—one that entails human beings enjoying themselves—into other aspects of community living.

Let's keep the playground equipment in Shain Park.

Eccentricities

By HANK HOGAN

The final gavel has been pounded and the 1964 Regular Session of the State Legislature is now history.

The legislators limped home last week after practically 17 months of continual meeting. And there is still the possibility of more special sessions this year.

While historians will tell you that this has been the most-meeting-legislature it has also been the most active in bills introduced and finally passed.

The reputation of the legislature will not, however, be predicated on the amount of work done. Like Caesar, the good is oft interred with the bones of a buried session.

THE PRESENT LEGISLATURE will be remembered probably for one bill.

In 1964 the state legislature passed a bill that would end straight party voting by the polling of one lever in a voting booth or making one "X" on a paper ballot.

The legislature did not, of course, pass a bill that would prevent straight party voting. This is still possible by merely voting individually for each person your party has nominated.

This so-called "Massachusetts Ballot" is not new. We are the 18th state to enact it.

The other 17 states who have made it part of their laws are fairly split between those dominated by the Democratic Party and those dominated by the Republicans.

BUT IN MICHIGAN August Scholle is against it. And if August Scholle is against it especially so is the Democratic Party.

He is against it because it will end the illiterate voter from walking in and looking for some deceased president's picture and pulling one lever. And this will cost labor votes.

He is against it because it forces the voters to think and make a fair selection between each candidate running for each office, instead of blind lever pulling.

The public need not be concerned about knowing who are candidates and who are donkeys because that is printed under the name of each candidate.

YOU WILL SEE in the next 90 days furious activity to get petitions circulated in an attempt to nullify this new law.

If 138,000 people in the state sign petitions, it will place the issue on the ballot in November for the people to decide. While this will delay the effective date of the act, proponents of the idea are not afraid of letting the people look this over.

After all, if it is put on the ballot it won't be lumped into the regular partisan section and the people will have to decide yes or no individually, not by a straight party lever.

AND SINCE THE VOTERS who are protected by one-lever voting probably won't be able to read or understand the proposition they will vote on it.

This would leave the decision to the voters who have taken the time to think about it, whether they be Democratic or Republican. And the thinking person sort of thinks it's about time this happened.

At the time November arrives everyone will have heard more about the "Massachusetts" or "People's" ballot.

As a matter of fact, you may get to wondering if the legislature passed any other bills.

City Beat

By KEN WEAVER

Let's set the record straight. No governmental agency has termed the area west of Woodward—south of Lincoln—east of Grant a slum area. Nor has there been any governmental survey to determine if it is a slum area.

No person in authority has designated this as a "slum area" who has used the term in describing it, then?

This writer. In this column on April 2, I wrote that "some homes in this section of town qualify for inclusion in the term 'slum area'."

Later on in this piece of writing I raised the question of what the people would do about these houses "in the slum area" who harp on the theme of keeping Birmingham residential.

No one has spoken up yet. Writers of letters to the editor since that column was published has also used the term.

HOW DO I get off calling it a slum area? Let's see what the dictionary says about the word slum: "A thickly populated street or alley marked by squalor or wretched living conditions; a city district comprising such streets."

I suppose a strict interpretation of the word would prove me wrong. So be it, for those who derive satisfaction from this observation.

But what was I really getting at? What did I hope to accomplish? Certainly, my purpose was not to hurt or embarrass anyone. I do not expect widowers and pensioners on small incomes to spend their money on their homes instead of on food.

Nor did I wish to injure the reputation of young people in this area or cause them to lose their friendships.

BUT I DID wish to stimulate some compassion for the people in this section of town, to inspire someone to come to their assistance.

Let those who insist so adamantly on maintaining the residential characteristics of this city prove their good intentions by coming to the aid of the people in this end of town, I thought.

Perhaps they will initiate a program to clean up, paint up and fix up some of the more deteriorated houses, I thought.

With the cooperation and assistance of the occupants, there could be a project that would give us all renewed pride in our city.

Sadly, I must report, there has been no such move.

Certainly, nothing could have been done without some embarrassment, some self-consciousness on the part of both the doers and the receivers. But should this prevent anything from being accomplished?

BY THE dictionary definition, there is no slum area in Birmingham. (See CITY BEAT, 7-B)

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