

This School Committee is a good one:

Al Sousa, Chairman

Al is the father of four children, one a sophomore at Oliver Ames High. Very active in community affairs, Al was selected "Humanitarian of the Year" in 1976 by the Jaycees in recognition of his many civic contributions. Al is Vice President of New England Life.

Olive Gurney

A much beloved career educator in Easton, Mrs. Gurney devoted 35 years to Easton's children as teacher and principal at the North Easton Grammar School. In her retirement, she chose to continue to help children as a member of the Easton School Committee.

Bill Gloekler

Bill has three of his four children attending Easton schools and brings to the Committee his professional financial expertise as well as six years experience on the Easton Finance Committee. He is Comptroller for Reed and Barton, Inc.

Don LeGrow

As a professional educator and concerned parent, Don makes a solid contribution to the School Committee. He is the father of four children, three of whom attend the Easton schools. Don is Coordinator of Music for the Stoughton Public Schools.

Betty Obenhaus

Betty is the mother of five boys; three are in college and two attend Easton schools. Betty graduated from Stonehill in 1976 having majored in Behavioral Science, a field especially relevant to service on the School Committee.

All well qualified, all outstanding citizens, these people deserve our continued support.

DEC 9



READ BEFORE VOTING!!

In May 1978, when Julian Preuss announced his retirement as O.A.H.S. principal, a committee was formed to screen approximately seventy applications for the position. This committee consisted of nine members: 1 School Committee person, 1 Administrator, 1 Department Head (elected by the O.A. faculty), 2 O.A. teachers (elected by O.A. faculty), 2 members of the O.A. parent Advisory Council, 1 member of the Junior High Advisory Council, and 1 student from O.A.H.S. Seven names were submitted to the Superintendent, and on August 23, 1978, three candidates were interviewed by the School Committee who unanimously approved the Superintendent's recommendation, Bernard J. Fallon. They affirm that this decision, made in good conscience, was based on Fallon's qualifications and experience and made for the best long term interests of Easton's school children.

On Monday, August 28, 1978, at the regularly scheduled School Committee meeting, petitions containing over 4,000 signatures supporting Duncan Oliver for principal, the popular "in-house" candidate, not appointed, were presented to the Committee by a group of supporters who called themselves "Concerned Citizens for Easton Education". They requested the School Committee reconsider the appointment. Although the petition evidenced support of the respected and well-liked educator, it contained signatures of non-residents, non-registered voters, and children as young as eight years old.

On Thursday, August 31, 1978, the Committee stood firm on the appointment of Mr. Fallon and voted not to reconsider. "Concerned Citizens" began two legal procedures against them, one as a group, called a class action suit and the other as individuals, called affidavits for recall. (At all three meetings, the School Committee members were subjected to verbal threats, abusive language, and rude behavior. The School Committee members and the Superintendent required police protection.)

The first legal action, a class action suit, charges the School Committee with violating the Open Meeting Law. The School Committee failed during the open meeting to take a roll call vote before going into executive session. "Concerned Citizens" alleged this violation negated the decision of Fallon and requested an injunction to prevent his taking the position. The Superior Court denied the injunction. Since the error has been corrected in a subsequent meeting, lawyers for the School Committee have asked the Court to render the case "moot". "Concerned Citizens" still insist on a hearing. To date this has cost the taxpayers of Easton \$4,200.00; further action by them will cost the Town of Easton additional moneys, since the Town must provide defense when the Board as a group is faced with legal action.

The second legal procedure was the filing of affidavits by 25 or more Easton registered voters against each of the five members of the School Committee; affidavit signers, swearing under oath, charge each member of not being responsive to the desires of Easton residents and the O.A.H.S. students and not acting independently of the Superintendent.

The first affidavits for recall were declared illegal documents by Judge Taveira in Taunton Superior Court on September 20, 1978, because they lacked notarization and jurat. The second affidavits were processed correctly and sufficient signatures were gathered to recall all five members. The election is scheduled for Saturday, December 9th.

Town counsel ruled that School Committee members, as individuals, are not entitled to defense money from the Town, even though the charges against all five are identical and were precipitated by the same Board decision (the O.A.H.S. principal appointment).



Considering the vagueness of the charges, the School Committee hired lawyers to represent them as individuals challenging the constitutionality of the Town Charter's recall provision. This provision does not require specific grounds for recalling elected officials. The School Committee members feel Charter grounds should be as explicit for recalling elected officials as it is for appointed officials. The members further feel recalling without cause sets a dangerous precedent by interrupting the continuity and stability of town government (not just the School Committee but any elected Town board), and hinders the possibility of good people seeking elected office for fear of public embarrassment and financial liability.

On November 22, 1978, Judge Braucher of the Mass. Supreme Judicial Court denied a taxpayers' request for an injunction to halt the December 9th recall election on the grounds that Town money would be used to finance an illegal election. Although the judge denied the request, he did so "without prejudice" and set a hearing on the merits of this case before the full bench on January 11, 1979. If any member of the committee is recalled on December 9th, the judge may issue an injunction barring the new candidate from taking his seat, until the full bench rules on the constitutionality of the recall provision. There is some question then whether our Town Charter's recall provision violates state election law, since the Supreme Court has agreed to hear the case. The pursuit of this question in the Supreme Court is being paid for by the individual members of the Committee. In their attempts to seek financial help, they have been branded unprofessional and guilty of "illegalities" while being guilty of neither.

Another group of townspeople have rallied to the cause of the School Committee. "Education First" is a non-partisan group of Easton residents who are informing the community about recall through coffee hours and flyers. "Education First" is raising money to help defray the legal expenses incurred by the individual Committee members. At the many coffee hours given in the community during the past two months, the true reason behind the recall has surfaced.

The motivating force behind the recall of five School Committee members now seems to be the termination of employment of the Superintendent.

"Concerned Citizens", which include some O.A.H.S. teachers, rationalize that the end (ousting five moral and ethical people from an office to which they were duly elected) justifies the means (firing a superintendent because he lacks intellectual capacities of a chief educational leader, because he once taught "shop").

The proper redress for "Concerned Citizens" is not full School Committee recall, the purchasing of contracts and the hiring of new personnel. This will have a disastrous effect on taxes, but more importantly, it will be devastating to the educational process of Easton's school children now and in the future.

#### PLEASE VOTE

Support your School Committee by voting against recall and for the five incumbent members; and by sending a donation to:

"EDUCATION FIRST"  
P.O. BOX E 115  
South Easton, MA 02375