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CANDIDATES TRADE ACCUSATIONS OF DISTORTION; BLANCHARD BACKS WORK COMP CHANGE

GRAND RAPIDS--Republican candidate William Lucas dropped his characterization of Governor Blanchard as a "liar" in favor of a "Pinochio of Politics" nickname as the two Wednesday traded charges of distortion of the other's record. And Mr. Blanchard announced he now favors a revision of the state's worker's compensation disability definition.

In the first of two planned debates, the governor said Mr. Lucas has misstated both the size of Wayne County's financial problems and the extent of its recovery while the County executive made his accusations regard Mr. Blanchard's tax and budget policies. The 45-minute debate, hosted by the Economic Club of Grand Rapids and the city's Chamber of Commerce, was scheduled to be televised state-wide later that night. The second debate is planned for Monday in Detroit.

Both camps claimed victory in the debate, with governor's aides saying it went better than expected in a forum which only serves to enhance their opponent's publicity. Mr. Lucas said people will finally see the difference between the two.

After criticizing the governor's record on raising taxes and spending and saying Michigan has lost 107,000 jobs in contrast to the governor's claims of growth, Mr. Lucas said he would not longer "call Jim Blanchard a liar. So I call him the Pinochio of politics."

"This election is about a choice. Who will provide the leadership over the next four years. You spent the last four minutes distorting the last four years," Mr. Blanchard said. He repeated his claims of the "nation's highest credit rating" (which is, however, applicable only to shortterm notes; the state's long term bond rating is lower than 42 other states) as a result of eliminating a \$1.7 billion debt, plus improving the state's business climate by better worker's compensation procedures, lower unemployment costs, and lower business taxes for small companies.

On worker's compensation, the governor said he favors a "standardized definition of the definition of disability", and said it should be changed before the end of the year when the current definition expires. Last year, he opposed Republican efforts to replace the definition with one closer to the national "Larsen" standard.

But in a dual press conference after the debate, Mr. Blanchard said that while there is not standard definition, "I would like to move toward the Larsen definition." Mr. Lucas had already proposed adoption of that definition.

Mr. Blanchard dodged a question of whether he supports lifting the freeze on unemployment compensation benefits, saying he is awaiting a study by the Economic Alliance of Michigan, a non-government group. Mr. Blanchard said the state probably cannot afford indexed benefits, which 33 other states have and which are provided under the law as of the first of the year. "We have to consider extending the freeze," he said, while not committing himself to that option.

Mr. Lucas ridiculed the governor's reliance on the pending report, saying, "Everything waits until after the election. You have to judge now."

Mr. Lucas used an "are you better off theme" at the debate's close, saying the answer is no on questions of public safety, drugs, criminals beating the system and state spending. "It is too late for proposals and promises. You have not performed," he said.

The governor, whose summation was interrupted briefly by a heckler demanding he justify his support for state-funded abortions, accepted the Lucas challenge and said, "By almost any measure, everybody can be proud of what we accomplished over the last four years."

The two sparred on who made the toughest decisions to deal with their respective deficits, with Mr. Blanchard saying that was reflected in his call for a tax increase and said Mr. Lucas dropped a proposed 1-mill increase in county taxes after the state "bailed out" the county by dropping claims of about \$45 million of \$135 million it claimed was owed by the county. The county acknowledged a \$26 million obligation but settled for a \$89.5 million payment over nine years.

Mr. Lucas said although he signed a 10-point plan including the tax hike, he never actually made the proposal. In a July, 1983 letter to the governor, he said a tax hike was unacceptable. He said his tough decisions involved cutting the size of county government and holding pay levels down for what were the highest-paid county employees in the country, as well as eliminating some programs.

The governor scoffed at Mr. Lucas' claim he faced a \$390 million debt in 1983, citing a letter estimating a current year deficit of \$38 million and an accumulated debt over several years of \$130 million. Mr. Lucas said the larger figure includes unfunded pension liabilities, among other things, which have now been properly brought up to date.

"In Wayne County, things are still the same, with the threat of payless paydays, a deficit of up to \$70 million," the governor said, adding that among the unpaid bills are sheriff's uniforms and in contrast with the state, the county has the lowest credit rating in the nation.

"I don't think we can afford to let Wayne County's mess to become Michigan's mess," Mr. Blanchard said. And critical of Democratic county commissioners' plans to raise salaries up to 65 percent, the governor said that is typical of "financial shenanigans" in the county, with Mr. Lucas providing no example. Mr. Lucas said the deficit would not exceed \$35 million, and employees continue to be paid.

Mr. Blanchard rejected Mr. Lucas' claim, repeated at the debate, that 4,491 criminals have escaped or walked away from state prison facilities over the last four years, saying only 22 have escaped in his term. The claim reflects desperation tactics, he said, and includes those who may have failed to check in while stationed at prison farms and halfway houses, but eventually returned.

Mr. Lucas suggested the escapees and walkaways are "preying on the elderly, selling drugs in schools," and committing other crimes, and blamed the governor for releasing 1,500 criminals under the emergency overcrowding prison act. The charges continued Tuesday's debate on the crime issue.

Mr. Blanchard said it was hard to take his opponent seriously on crime since "you have presided over an incredible explosion of crime."

CHAMBER SURVEY SHOWS GRIFFIN FRONTRUNNER IN SUPREME COURT RACE

Former U.S. Sen. Robert Griffin enjoys a large lead in the 24-person race for the state Supreme Court with incumbent Dennis Archer and East Lansing activist attorney Zolton Ferency running almost even for a second seat, according to a survey commissioned by the State Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Griffin had 27 percent of combined first and second choice votes while the other two were tied at 11 percent.

Mr. Griffin was the first choice of 21 percent of the respondents while Messrs. Archer and Ferency each got 6 percent of the first choice vote. As a second choice, Mr. Griffin got 6 percent while incumbent Archer and Mr. Ferency each got 5 percent. Undecided, however, were 55 and 73 percent of the total, respectively, in the first- and second-choice poll.

Reporting the results of the September 29-October 1 survey conducted by Marketing Resource Group, Inc., in the Chamber's "Random Sample" newsletter, other first choice finishers were Thomas Fitzgerald (4 percent), Barbara MacKenzie (3 percent), James Kallman (2 percent) and Dean Robb and Gerald Kauffman (1 percent each). Another one percent of the respondents volunteered someone else as their first choice and a like number refused to respond to the question of who their first choice would be in the field of 8 named.

Although there are 24 candidates for the state's highest court on the ballot, the survey listed eight candidates--the party nominees (Republican, Democratic and Tisch) and the three of the better known candidates who initiated their placement on the statewide ballot by filing affidavits as independent candidates.

The survey indicates a "very fluid" situation where up to three-quarters of the Michigan electorate are undecided, the report noted. It concluded that with the large block of undecided voters and because many voters who vote in the races at the top of the ticket fail to vote in the judicial races, it is difficult to accurately forecast the results of the upcoming election, however, Messrs. Griffin, Archer and Ferency have emerged as the frontrunners as of the date of the early October poll.

The MRG-administered telephone survey of the 800 registered voters based upon statewide voter turnout in the 1982 general election has a statistical margin error of plus or minus 3.5 percent within a 95 percent degree of confidence.

FARM FAMILIES TO RECEIVE CRISIS COUNSELING

Crisis counseling will be provided by the Michigan Department of Mental Health for the state's flood-stricken farm families and other flood victims, Governor Blanchard announced Wednesday. The governor said the department asked for and received an emergency grant of \$87,000 from the National Institute of Mental Health to help pay the costs of the counseling program.

"For some farm families, crisis counseling is a life and death matter," Mental Health Director C. Patrick Babcock said. "We are also aware of many non-farm families who are in crisis situations because of the flooding. These disaster victims may also benefit from short-term counseling, and we plan to work with established community emergency services to accommodate requests for help."

The counseling will be provided by local community mental health workers in conjunction with other agricultural service agencies, such as the Governor's Agricultural Assistance Network and the Michigan State University's Cooperative Extension Service.

Mr. Babcock said money provided under terms of the grant will be used to retain one disaster coordinator for a 60-day period and to pay current mental health workers or temporary mental health workers for additional hours devoted to crisis counseling.

COMPENSATION COMMISSION TO MEET FRIDAY

The State Officers Compensation Commission will Friday begin its process of determining salaries for top state elected officials for the next two years. The 9:30 a.m. meeting at the Detroit Auto Dealers Association building, 1800 West Big Beaver Road in Troy, will be to elect a chair and establish schedules for its deliberations.

The commission is required to decide in the month of December the salary and fringe benefit levels for the governor, lieutenant governor, supreme court justices and legislators. Those determinations are effective unless overturned by a two-thirds vote of the Legislature by February 31.

FAR EAST TRADE MISSION STARTS FRIDAY

A 19-day trade mission to Korea and China, with the aim of establishing links between Michigan's truck and bus component manufacturing industry, leaves the state on Friday, Department of Commerce officials said Wednesday.

The mission, led by D. Grgeory Main, director of the department's manufacturing services bureau, includes state officials, executives from six corporations and a television crew from Michigan State University's WKAR-TV who are creating a documentary on the state's efforts to generate new international business. The mission marks the fourth time the state has gone to China and the first time to Korea.

Accompanying Mr. Main and Commerce Department official Nancy R. Farris will be executives from Borg-Warner Incorporated of Troy, Crown Group Incorporated of Warren, Kysor Industrial Corporation of Cadillac, Livernois Engineering Company of Dearborn, Sealed Power Corporation of Muskegon and the Walbro Corporation of Cass City.

APPOINTMENTS BY THE GOVERNOR

MICHIGAN COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS: Susan Hoover Vititoe of Grosse Pointe Farms, succeeding Susan A. Price; Cledie Collins Taylor, Ph.D. of Detroit, succeeding Junia Doan; Harrington M. Cummings of Fremont, succeeding Walter R. Boris, all for terms expiring June 1, 1990. Senate confirmation is required.

REPORTS FROM STATE OFFICERS

Audit reports from Auditor General Pinkelman:

Board of Professional Engineers, Bureau of Commercial Services, Department of Licensing and Regulation, covering May 1, 1983 through April 30, 1986.
Vocational-Technical Education Services, Department of Education, covering July 1, 1980 through April 30, 1986.
Michigan Board of Pharmacy, Bureau of Health Services, Department of Licensing and Regulation, covering March 1, 1983 through February 28, 1986.
Office of Accounting, Department of Management and Budget, covering July 1, 1981 through June 30, 1986.