MONEY BUYS CITY HALL

BY MARK KAPLAN

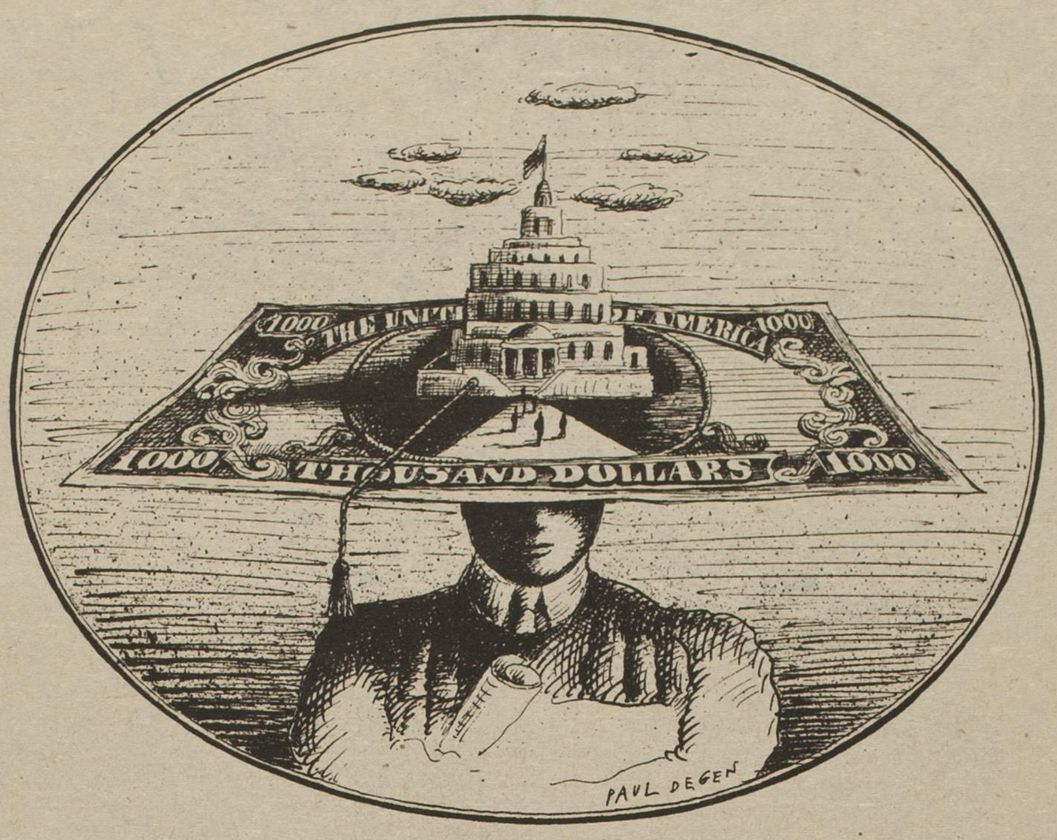
hings are returning to normal in Lawrence in more ways than one. Local elections for School Board and City Commission, a bi-annual process, are finished with once again. Without a doubt, the dual forces of business and land-owners made a coveted election come-back.

The business-real estate candidates won a clear victory. Placing first were Barkley Clark, associate dean of the KU Law School Ed Carter, district manager for Southwestern Bell, and Jack Rose, former Commissioner, director of KU laboratories and an owner of several acres of developable land. The question of changing the form of government from City Manager to Mayor-Council was defeated two to one.

Two years ago, the political records were shattered when two school teachers and a housewife were elected to the Lawrence City Commission for the three seats on the five-member body. Lawrence is a small town, with roots deep in tradition and conservatism. For many decades the town was run by a relatively small clique of downtown business and banking interests, with the governing body made up of like personalities Yet, 1975 saw this pattern radically altered, with two "wage-earners" winning seats on the Commission.

Two high school teachers, Carl Mibeck and Don Binns, brought a fresh and welcome relief in 1975 to the usually stuffy atmosphere pervasive at City meetings in years past. Marnie Argersinger, also elected in 1975, was only the second woman ever elected to the governing body.

The voters who elected these new faces were brought to the polls by the City's forthright attempt to build a new maintainence facility for City trucks in the Pinckney neighborhood north of Sixth street. Well-organized efforts by the neighborhood succeeded in firing interest to the point of voter abandonment of the traditional business candidates, who came in fourth, fifth and sixth out the a running.



Probably the biggest surprise of the '77 election was the ousting of one of the insurgent winners from '75. Commissioner Carl Mibeck, running a tough , though under financed campaign, fell to a fourth-place finish.

Mibeck was forced to take his record before the voters in this year's primary and general election bout, since his third place finish in '75 gave him only a two-year term.

Noted originally for his strong and often vociferous opposition to the Haskell Loop roadway slated for East Lawrence, Mibeck parlayed himself to the forefront of nearly every issue involving a threat to the residential areas of the city. Although this is probably the strongest and broadest base with which to enter a political campaign, for the Mibeck effort, it wasn't enough.

In 1977, it was money, and not "neighborhood power," that called the shots. The "also-rans" of the Commission race, Muriel Paul and Jerry Albertson, felt the sting of an under-financed campaign. Campaign chests for the Mibeck, Paul and Albertson candidacies were small potatoes compared to the winner's. (The sole exception to this might be the last minute surge in the Albertson campaign due to reinforcement rods commonly used in construction of buildings for campaign signs in exchange for Albertson's vocal support of a regional shopping center in the 'burbs.

Though official reports have yet to be filed, it's evident that winning campaigns for Commission were well-planned and well-financed. Most of that money came from local business and real estate. All of it went to elect Ed Carter, for the Chamber of Commerce, and Jack Rose, for the land owners. Barkley Clark, burning political starlet, clawed his way to the top of the heap on merits of class distinction, thoughtfully-prepared newspaper ads and cash to pay for all of it.

The cash drive also buried the proponents of a change in the form of City government. A group calling itself Citizens for Mayor-Council government, placed the question of abandoning City Manager government on the ballot April 5th in an attempt to oust the position of the appointed City Manager and the at-large selection of Commission.

It was a threat not taken lightly by the City. Additional thousands (peanuts) went to propagandize a case for retaining the present form and its present personnel roster. Near the last day of the campaign, the City stepped in a bit of mud by using its public-owned computer facilities to run off a mailing list for a pamphlet urging a "no" vote on the propisition.

Though typical of City Hall's lack of respect for the tax-payers' dollars, it certainly didn't hurt them at the polls. Despite mounting mistrust and disdain for City

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