

Farmington Observer & Eccentric

Volume 86 Number 35

Monday, February 17, 1975

Farmington, Michigan

32 Pages

Fifteen Cents

Laid-off teachers say board ignores plight

By SUSAN AVERILL

Pink-slipped before last June and not rehired, 10 teachers from the Farmington school district are substituting daily to keep one foot in the school system. Soon, they won't even be able to do that.

Because of Michigan's new unemployment compensation law for temporary workers, the school board has adopted a policy to allow substitutes 12 full weeks of work in the district. After that, they will be called only once a week, if that, to prevent them from attaining the 14 weeks' work required for unemployment benefits.

THE 10 substituting teachers are protesting the board's policy and calling for a special consideration of their plight.

"We just don't think it's fair," said Nancy Klein, one of the pink-slipped teachers. "We know those kids, we know the school system and we're more familiar with the school buildings than any of the new subs would be."

Her feelings were echoed by Chris Farrisby, who left a job in Taylor to move to what she thought would be a better district.

"They hired us when there were a lot of applicants for the job, so they had a wide range of choice in what kind of quality they were getting. You might say we were hand-picked for the job. But now they're not even going to let us substitute."

It isn't only their quality or familiarity with Farmington's school which would make them more valuable to the school district than other substitutes, they insist, but also dedication.

"We haven't taken any days off. At least I know I haven't," Margo Stocker said. "I feel we are dedicated or we'd gladly go down and collect

unemployment as laid off teachers," Evelyn Kaplan agreed.

"OUR ACCOUNTANT told me we'd be better off just to sit back and collect unemployment. I'd get more out of that than I would out of a substitute teaching job, not to mention what I'd have to pay in gas," she said.

The group hopes the board will waive its policy, to allow them to work on a daily basis.

"We've been told that there is some kind of difference between a pink-slipped teacher and a substitute I'd like to know what it is," Ms Klein said.

While substituting, each of the teachers is paid \$375 an hour, without benefits of any kind—the same rate any other substitute would be paid. Yet they have been asked to mark report cards, something a substitute doesn't ordinarily do, they said.

"They want us to assume practically the full responsibilities of a regular teacher," said Chuck Leonard, a former physical education teacher who was asked to teach Spanish. "In one of the junior high schools, the principal informed me that I had to mark the cards."

MRS. FARRISBY has worked for six weeks as a replacement for another teacher who suffered a heart attack. She has been paid the daily substitute rate, she said, though she has fully taken over the duties of the regular teacher.

Fern Butt said the policy questioned her integrity as a teacher.

"The work is there. We want to continue subbing." "We don't want the one day-a-week and we don't want the unemployment compensation. We want the privilege of being able to teach the kids."

"We've almost lost our own identity," Mrs. Stocker said. "The kids will come up to you and ask, 'Are you a real teacher?' The office people will ask, 'Who are you today?'"

In order to keep a teaching certificate, the former teachers must at least substitute on a regular basis. The current board policy, they maintained, might not allow them adequate number of days per year, and thereby cost them their certificates.

Mrs. Farrisby said she and her husband originally had bought property in Farmington Hills because of the reputation of the school district.

AFTER TRYING to break into the district as a teacher and finally being hired three years later, she was promptly pink-slipped, but told not to worry.

"When I talked to Lefroy Bartman (director of personnel) about it, he said not to worry because they had never laid anyone off permanently, and that I'd probably be rehired by October."

When they hadn't been rehired by December, the teachers went to Bartman with a petition saying they would waive all rights to unemployment benefits if the district would continue to at least let them substitute after Jan. 1, 1975, when the new unemployment benefits law went into effect. They were refused the waiver.

"Don't get us wrong, we're not blaming Bartman because there is nothing he can do about it. It's the law," Mrs. Farrisby said.

"We appreciate their feelings and their action," Bartman said.

"But by law, you just can't give up your rights."

Legislation to amend the bill where substitutes are concerned is still pending. In the meantime, Bartman said he plans to contact State Sen. Daniel S. Cooper (D-Oak Park) and State Representative Wilbur V. "Sandy" Brotherton (R-Farmington Hills) to see what they're doing about the situation.

The school district is not bound by contractual agreement to provide for their pink-slipped teachers, but Bartman insists it has a "moral responsibility" for them.

As he sees it, there are two solutions: either the amendment to the original bill will pass and take effect immediately, or the school board might reconsider its policy with respect to these particular teachers.

SHOULD the board decide to reconsider its policy in favor of these teachers, Bartman said it would set a troublesome precedent.

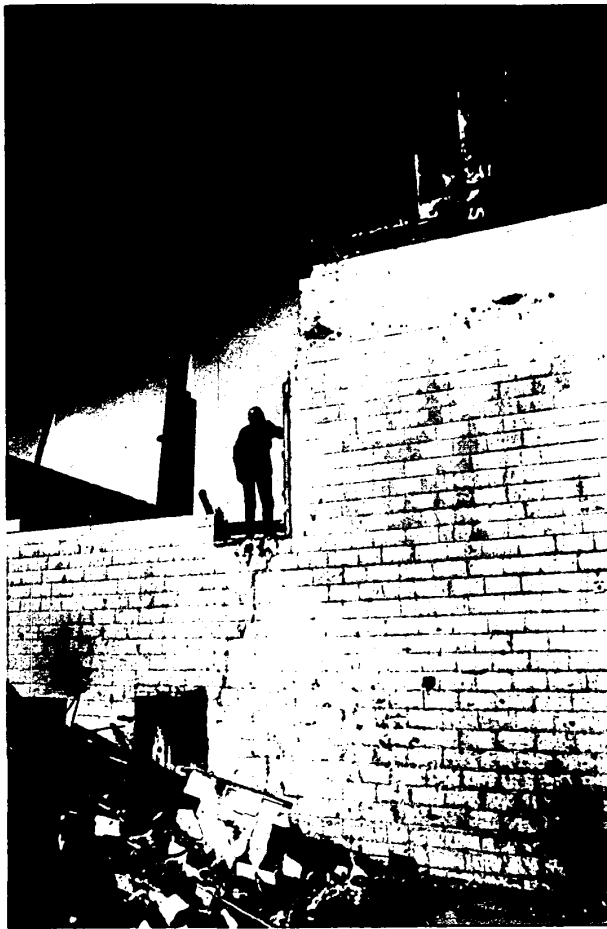
"If we decide to waive the policy for these teachers, what happens if the millage doesn't pass, and we have to lay off more teachers? By setting this precedent, we could end up paying a lot more in unemployment benefits," he said.

The teachers said they felt abandoned by the Farmington Education Association (FEA).

"It's like they (FEA and the board of education) are washing their hands of us," Mrs. Stocker said. "No one feels they're really responsible for us."

Gerald Kaplan, counselor at Warner Junior High School and president of the FEA, said there was nothing the teachers' union could do.

"Legally, the school board has every right to lay off teachers with proper notification. There really is nothing we can do at this point."



Smoldering remains

Fire Tuesday caused \$100,000-\$200,000 damage to Fendri Building Supplies, 22000 Gill Road, Farmington Hills. Owner Junior L. Fendri of Farmington Hills said welders had been repairing one of the firm's elevators earlier in the day. The fire is believed to have started then, he said. Firemen from stations 1, 3 and 4 fought the blaze from 6 to 8 p.m. There were no injuries. (Photo by Craig Newman)

The Observer & Eccentric index

News	Section A
Columns	20
Community calendar	18
Good life	16-17
Obituaries	12
Sports	21-23
Suburban life	19-20
Classifieds	Section B

Adult classes draw students

By CORINNE BHATT

FARMINGTON HILLS—The students who go through the double doors of Bond School, 31500 Thirteen Mile Road, each morning at 9 a.m. are different from most.

For one thing, they're there because they truly want to be. For another, they range in age from 19 to early 60s.

They carry their books, notebooks and briefcases proudly. For them, these are symbols of a better life.

All those who walk the halls of the old building, are in the high school completion program offered by the adult education division of the Farmington public schools.

Until recently, classes were held in wassie Elementary School. Because of the growing enrollment and expanding curriculum, Don Howell, adult education director, said, "We simply outgrew the portables."

A HANDFUL of people signed up when the courses were first offered two years ago. Now, there are 30 and, hopefully, there will be more next fall.

According to the 1966 Talus report, Howell said, "there are 8,000 in the community who haven't finished high school. We'd like to have a hundred next fall, and we could handle 200."

There's a special camaraderie among people who are learning because they like it. Most of those in the Farmington program meet in the second floor lounge for coffee and conversation before classes.

Many of the younger women in the group have just said goodbye to their pre-schoolers who are safely in a special nursery center on the lower floor of the building.

Mrs. Kathleen Moffette, in her early 20s, drives out every morning from Detroit with daughter, Heather.

(See ADULT, page 12)

Washington sales featured

Besides Monday's closing of banks, post offices and some municipal offices, George Washington's birthday will also be observed this week by local merchants with special sales.

Special advertising pages in today's edition inform readers of George Washington Birthday Sales in Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, West Bloomfield, Troy, Farmington, Southfield, and Rochester.

For the many employees who will be off work and wish to take advantage of these sales, refer to that feature of today's Observer & Eccentric.



When the weather is cold, the best thing to do is stay inside. But when the temperature breaks upward for a day or two, a walk down Nine Mile Road with your mother is kinda fun. Sure, the

snow is dirty, and the mud is dirty, and the sky is dirty. But getting a little dirty is part of the rite of winter. And just wait until spring and all those mud puddles... (Staff photo by Gary Friedman)