

## Farmington businessman writes

## Book outlines ways to improve schools

By BARBARA UNDERWOOD

Can the father of 10 with a background in the construction business solve the ills of today's educational system? Maybe and maybe not, but Robert J. Lytle of Bingham Farms, who calls himself a "consumer of education services," is trying.

Lytle's "Liberty Schools," published in November by his own Structures Publishing Co. in Farmington, outlines "A Parent's Voucher Plan, A New Way to Handle School Money."

Lytle advocates giving tax money to be used for education to parents in the form of vouchers and allowing them to choose the school their children will attend.

The idea is not new—it was first suggested by Adam Smith, American economist at the time of the Revolutionary War. Limited experiments with vouchers have been tried in California and New Hampshire, but the system has not had widespread use to date.

Lytle draws on his 18 years' residence in the Birmingham School District in describing in his book some of the problems of education today.

"I BECAME," he writes, "convinced that the primary needs of schools were freedom and diversity even before reading about the voucher system of

education," he states in the preface to his book.

"If we could give each principal some autonomy . . . then these principals offering the best and most effective program would attract more pupils. The school closing dilemma, which was the central problem in our district, would solve itself," he continued.

The voucher system could, "by providing a competitive climate, improve the effectiveness and consumer responsiveness of schools; permit neighborhood schools becoming surplus by virtue of declining enrollment to be closed by parental choice, not administrative edict; and open the door to new potentials in the future of education."

In 18 chapters, Lytle discusses many aspects of the voucher system, including free choice of schools from kindergarten through the university level.

He explains how the system would allocate funds for school supervision, maintenance, equipment, transportation and other needs. He touches on vocational, religious and private schools and how they fit into the voucher system. Tests and grades, integration and year-round schools also are covered.

BECAUSE THERE would be free

choice of schools statewide, Lytle theorizes that the result would be integration of schools by choice, eliminating the need for any sort of forced busing to achieve racial integration.

"Sponsors of forced busing to effect racial integration are related to those friendly folk who brought us prohibition and the automobile seat-belt interlock system and, in the end, will probably have as much success," he writes.

In conclusion, Lytle states, "Reform is most unlikely to come from within the educational establishment; it is a well-entrenched bureaucracy with a mission altogether palatable to and appreciated by the general public."

"It is a most comfortable bureaucracy whose members enjoy the ultimate in job security, a comfortable income and considerable social status. They are not about to rock the boat."

Although he states that "legislation will be required to make the liberty school idea a reality," and that the courts seem to be the only agency that can knock the artificial prop from under our educational system. . . . Lytle said last week, "If I were writing the book now I would have some additional thoughts."

A FIRST STEP in establishing the voucher system in an existing school district would be to "get the majority of the voters aware of this," he said.

"That's a better way to go. Lytle said he could see 'everybody laying the groundwork' for a mileage increase in the Birmingham School District."

"If a substantial part of the electorate said they would vote down a mileage unless they got a free choice of school, I think there is a good chance of getting it," he predicted.

School administrators and the Birmingham Education Association (BEA) are opposed to the liberty school concept, "because they dread any kind of competition," Lytle said.

Lytle applied some of the liberty school theories to situations in the Birmingham School District.

Using Bingham Junior High as an example, Lytle said under the voucher system Bingham would receive the same amount of money per pupil with which to operate as the other junior highs in the district, to be spent as the parents choose.

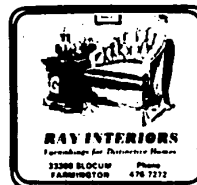
THE STUDENTS might not "get as much quantity or quality because of the number of students, but if they

value a neighborhood school more than the facilities at other junior highs, it should be their choice," he explained.

"If the money per pupil is kept the same throughout the district, to be spent locally at each junior high, it wouldn't be burdening the students going to the other junior highs with supporting an inefficient school, as Bingham may be," Lytle continued.

A beginning step or temporary solution to providing a free choice of schools in a firmly established district such as Birmingham could be realized with complete open enrollment in the district, Lytle said.

"But to become really effective it has to have two features not present in open enrollment as it is practiced in the district today: transportation—that's essential—and autonomy for the principal," he explained. "Without those it is a joke, pure conversation."



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## MSU coeds study criminal justice

Two Farmington girls, both seniors at Michigan State University, are majoring in criminal justice.

Terry Ann Stricker is the daughter of Mrs. Helen Stricker, 31875 Kingswood Square, and a graduate of Our Lady of Mercy High School. Carol Gully is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Gully, 28181 Kikarion, and a graduate of Harrison High School.

The criminal justice program gives students the opportunity to integrate academic theory with field work. Each will work for one term with a law enforcement agency at the local, state or federal level.

Upon graduation, students may become parole officers, work for private and industrial security offices, go on

to law school or pursue graduate studies in criminal justice.

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