

# While schools neglected

## Brotherton says state overspends

By JACKIE KLEIN

"Money is the grease that lubricates the squeaking wheels of special interest groups. But it's the one common denominator essential to business, industry and government operations."

That's the assertion of State Rep. Sandy Brotherton (R-Farmington) in a special report. Recently, he said 1,000 teachers, most of whom were notified they wouldn't be rehired next year, descended on the state capital.

With their jobs at stake, many teachers were demanding a rewording of state priorities or a tax increase to provide more dollars for schools. Brotherton said, "In some respects, I share their frustration. I don't believe Farmington or Southfield

school districts are getting a fair shake from the state.

"I DO NOT, however, favor any increase in state taxes because I feel they have grown to exorbitant levels already. I will be attempting to reorder our priorities as we consider our 1977-78 budget bills over the coming months."

Since 1968, Brotherton said, state spending has increased 4.5 times while personal income increased 3.5 times. The recommended 1977-78 state budget is \$3.3 billion.

"It has been said that 40 per cent of your income, or four months of your labor each year, goes to support all levels of government," Brotherton claimed.

Without extension of the state fiscal year to Oct. 1, he said a \$100 million spending

cut would have been necessary. A slash of that magnitude would be undesirable with so little time left in the current fiscal year, he contended.

"THE 1976-77 BUDGET has problems," Brotherton maintained. "State equalized valuation on property was less than expected which means less local dollars will be produced for local schools. That in turn triggers more state funds under our equal yield state aid law."

Even before the news of the under-estimated local tax base surfaced, Brotherton said the school aid bill was in jeopardy. The Senate voted it down twice, mainly because its price tag was too high, he said. Another bill has been introduced and the cost will probably be cut significantly before it passes, he added.

"A petition drive calling for a constitutional limit to the state's spending power is fighting a deadline for 300,000 signatures," Brotherton said. "The amendment would limit the state's spending authority to 8.3 per cent of the total annual income of residents."

"Troubles are probably lack of publicity. Most persons like the idea, but time to debate pros and cons will come if the issue makes the November ballot."

WITH EDUCATORS upset over funding levels, taxpayers upset with new assessments and millages falling, a push for a change in school financing is conceivable, Brotherton contends. If another petition drive were launched, the earliest the question could realistically make the ballot would be 1978, he noted.

A proposal to amend the Single Business Tax Act to provide \$50 million in tax relief to small businesses will face tough going but deserves support, Brotherton believes.

Brotherton said increased state spending erodes citizen purchasing power and fuels the fires of inflation. Neither hikes in income or insurance taxes are desirable, he maintains, but under certain conditions he would accept a nuisance tax increase.

"The legislature is a kind of department head for all state operations and as such should re-evaluate its operations and reorder priorities periodically," he said. "In times of fiscal crisis, this is even more important and should force careful pruning of unneeded or unsuccessful programs."

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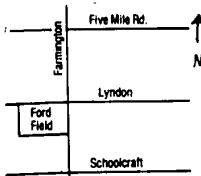
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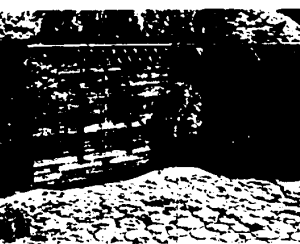
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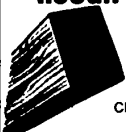
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