

# Rep. Brotherton calls for workers' comp overhaul

State Rep. Wilbur Brotherton (R-Farmington) this week called for a major overhauling of Michigan's unemployment and workers' compensation systems during the current legislative session to reform what he says are long-term abuses.

"The abuses in workers' compensation have driven the cost to business so high that many companies are being forced out of state," said Brotherton. "In addition, there is no money available to improve the payment schedule to the needy."

As newly elected vice-chairman of the economic development committee, Brotherton said he will push for reform within the next two years.

"FOR THE PAST five years, we have done nothing but talk about reform, and the situation has gone from bad to worse. The most critical problem is the workers' compensation law, which involves the settlement of

more than 70,000 claims every year at a cost of more than \$800 million," he said.

Brotherton claims Michigan's system is the least equitable in the nation. It provides fewer benefits for injured workers than other states while imposing far higher costs on business.

Paramount among the abuses, he says, are claims filed by retired workers for ailments they maintain were acquired on the job.

"The retiring workers file claims for ailments like back trouble or emphysema which they say were acquired because of work conditions over the years. Because of the looseness of the law, administrators dole out one lump settlement for these so-called job-related injuries."

"Normally, claims are filed for accidents that happen at work. Employees are paid each week until they return to work. The law was never intended to

cover lump sum settlements to retired workers."

Brotherton feels another abuse is payment made to workers who file for benefits because of job-related stress. He cited the case of a Chrysler factory worker who shot and killed two co-workers several years ago.

The court ruled the man mentally incompetent to stand trial. Brotherton said the man is collecting workers' compensation for mental stress caused by his job.

"The major problem with the Michigan Employment Security Commission (MESC), Brotherton says, is that a worker can quit a job for any reason and collect compensation."

"It's not fair to let a person quit a job without a valid reason and then be allowed to collect MESC benefits," he said. "That's a farce."

Brotherton said he hopes the legislature will conduct a thorough study of the abuses and revise the systems within the current legislative session.

"If there is no revision in this legislative session, then at least let's put a time limit on when these present laws go out of existence. This way, the legislature will be forced to deal with the issue now, instead of putting it off to some vague date in the future."

House Republicans have proposed that an expiration date be attached to both the workers' and the unemployment compensation acts during the current session.

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## Obituaries

### LETTY E. KEITHLEY

Mrs. Keithley, 78, of Farmington Hills, died Jan. 17.

Survivors are: nephew, William Everett of Calif.; niece, Mrs. Mary Lee Huse of Calif.

Services were conducted Jan. 20 at Heene-Sundquist Funeral Home. Burial was at White Chapel Cemetery, Troy with the Rev. Thomas Wilson of St. John's Episcopal Church officiating.

### BERTHA HOTZ

Mrs. Hotz, 75, of St. Petersburg, Fla. died Jan. 18 in Metropolitan General Hospital of St. Petersburg.

She lived in Farmington for several years before moving to Florida.

Survivors are: son, Maurice Jr., of Morley, Mich.; sister, Mrs. Agnes Webb, of Morley; Harold and Sam Schaefer, 17 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

Services were conducted on Jan. 22 in Thayer Rock Funeral Home, Farmington. Rev. J. Kenneth Hoffmaster officiated. Burial was in Grand Lawn Cemetery.

### HARELY RAY DIX

Mr. Dix, 84, of Farmington Hills, died Jan. 19.

He worked in the tool and die division of Ford Motor Co. He was a World War I veteran who served in France as a corporal for two years.

Survivors are: wife, Ada; sons, Harley, Willis, Robert; daughter, Bernice Myers; 12 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

Services were conducted Jan. 22 at the Heene-Sundquist Funeral Home, Farmington. Burial was at Oakland Hills Memorial Gardens Cemetery. Rev. Charles Beynon of the First United Methodist Church officiated.

### DANIEL MURPHY

Mr. Murphy, 90, of Detroit, died Jan. 19 in Detroit.

Survivors are: wife, Margaret; son, Frank J., of Livonia; Rev. Daniel Murphy, of Birmingham; daughters, Mary Keller and Eileen Drotar, of Farmington.

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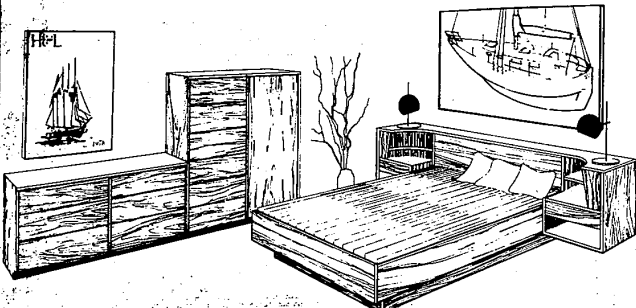
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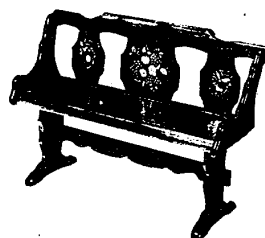
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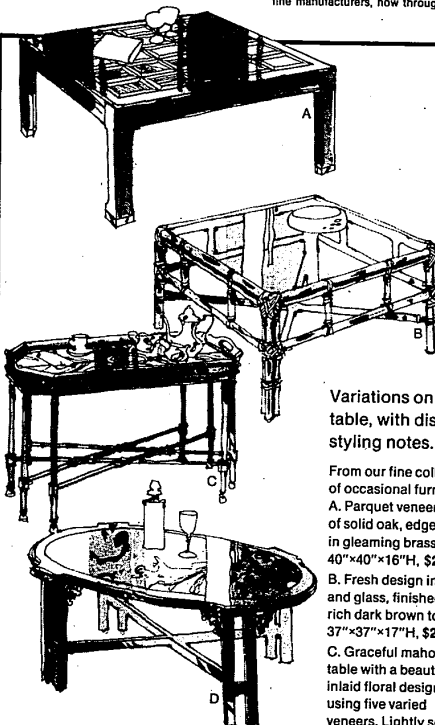
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