

Geake rebuffs welfare bill critics

By Tim Richard
staff writer

State Sen. R. Robert Geake, a mild-mannered former child psychologist, seems half surprised, half amused, at the vehement reaction his bill is getting from Gov. Blanchard and Social Services Director Ames Mansour.

"The bill doesn't really cut the social services budget," said the Northville Republican. "I don't think they really understand what's in it."

Geake's bill, which the Senate passed 10-10 Wednesday in a hall of verbal bullets, is a small part of the \$2-billion social services budget. It would:

- Cut \$80 million of "general assistance" payments to 117,000 able-bodied persons in the 18-54 age bracket during six summer months.

- Add those funds to other social services programs: \$20 million to Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and \$50 million to medical assistance — a 6-percent hike to health-care providers.

FAR FROM being a heartless ogre as Blanchard and Mansour portray him, Geake insists he is repairing the damage caused by the Democratic administration, which he says actually under-funded social services by \$100 million.

"This means there is a shortfall of about \$100 million that must be solved, either by 1) a supplemental appropriation next year, 2) new funding this year or 3) a reordering of existing programs," said Geake.

As chair of the Senate appropriations subcommittee on social services, Geake chose to "reorder existing programs."

"The cutoff would not apply to persons on welfare who are elderly, children, physically or emotionally disabled or adults caring for children at home," he said.

Supporting Geake's bill were 17 Republicans and three Democrats. Among area senators, it was supported by Republicans Doug Cruce of Troy, Richard Fessler of West Bloomfield and Rudy Nichols of Waterford, and Democrat Patrick McCollough of Dearborn.

Opposed were Democrats William Faust of Westland and Jack Faxon of Farmington Hills. The bill

faces stiff opposition in the Democratic-controlled House and a promised veto by Blanchard.

GENERAL ASSISTANCE (GA) has been a target of Michigan Republicans for several years.

Only 21 states have any GA program at all, Geake said. Only Michigan and eight other states pay GA to able-bodied persons without children, and most of those pay it temporarily.

In testimony to Geake's subcommittee three weeks ago, Mansour admitted, "We're getting a growing, chronic population in GA. It was intended to be short-term help. Slightly over one-third had no job in the last five years."

"From 1980 to '83, some 970,000 persons exhausted their unemployment benefits. It is presumed (by Geake) that many cut off from GA will find work. But the labor market in Michigan is still very weak. Michigan is still in its fifth consecutive year of double-digit unemployment," she said.

Placing GA benefits at \$1,150 for a six-month period, she said, "We should not force them out of the state. Two had people tell me they should be forced out of the country."

GEAKE HAD his own study of what might happen to GA recipients, and it was far different:

"In 1976, during the recession resulting from the Arab oil embargo, Massachusetts eliminated general assistance for employable adults when its unemployment rate was very high. A follow-up survey in 1978 revealed:

- "31 percent were hired. A follow-up survey in 1978 revealed.
 - "31 percent were employed.
 - "47 percent were not employed but were living with friends or relatives.
 - "18 percent were not working and were living alone and receiving food stamps and/or a variety of non-government sources of income.
 - "3 percent were in institutions such as the armed forces or prison."
- The whereabouts of 1 percent were unknown.
- Unemployment has been falling in Michigan and nationwide, yet general assistance caseloads continue to rise. Why?" Geake asked.

He blamed liberalized benefits and programs, more people becoming aware of how easy it is to

get benefits and people working for cash in the "underground economy" who obtain GA illegally.

SEN. DAVID Holmes, D-Detroit, whose 4th District has 11,300 GA recipients, highest in the state, also bitterly denounced the Republican bill. Holmes said the measure not as cutting off idlers but as hurting local businesses.

GA benefits, Holmes said, "support business people such as grocers, landlords, hardware and soft goods, retailers and wholesalers in my district to the tune of \$18 million."

To Holmes the culprit was business. Calling it cheaper to pay welfare than to create minimum-wage jobs, Holmes said:

"Private capital and government have failed the people. Capital is being used to cannibalize corporations, gut the domestic job market, indulge surplus accumulation and hoarding of luxury."

"The least this body can do is to appropriate \$400 per person to ship people one way to the Hawaiian out-islands and equip them with a regulation spear-gun, machete and canoe with fishbaiting, an instruction manual for lagoon cave housekeeping and a recipe book for pineapple, coconut, banana, fish and wild herb preparation."

BLANCHARD denounced the bill in a news conference, saying supporters were "hypocritical" for increasing payments to doctors, hospitals and other health-care providers.

But Senate Majority Leader John Engler, R-MI, Pleasant, said increases are justified in order to encourage physicians and other providers to remain in the system.

Cutting GA, Engler said, will send "a clear signal of a different approach. We are defending what has become the majority position nationally."

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As a community service, Botsford General Hospital will be offering a free training program for area citizens in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). The ultimate purpose is to enable citizens to perform CPR for heart attack victims until emergency medical personnel arrive. Certified instructors will teach the course.

The one-session, 3-hour "Heart Saver" course will be offered the first Thursday of each month at 7:00 P.M. in the Community Room of the Administration & Education Building directly to the East of the Hospital.

To pre-register (required), please call the Department of Health Promotion and Development at 471-8091, on Monday through Friday from 9:00 A.M. to 5 P.M. Class size is limited, so please register early. Botsford General Hospital is located at 28050 Grand River Ave., Farmington Hills 48024. (North of Grand River, behind the Botsford Inn).

Bids awarded on road projects

Low bidders have been confirmed on several Oakland County road projects. The Michigan Department of Transportation announced 66 projects including:

- Reconstruction of the intersection of Livermore and Waukegan, including addition of a fifth lane for left turn at all four legs of the intersection and resurfacing of 3.8 miles on Waukegan from Crooks to Dequindre in Troy. The \$1,286,841 city of Troy project is to be completed by November by Thompson-McCully Co., Belleville.

• Reconstruction of 2.1 miles on Adams from Walton Blvd. to north of Dutton. The Oakland County Road Commission project is to be completed by October by Thompson-McCully Co., Belleville.

• Resurfacing, curb reconstruction and lane widening on one mile on Coolidge from Maple to Big Beaver in Troy. The \$378,604 city of Troy project is to be completed by November by Cunningham-Gooding, Ypsilanti.


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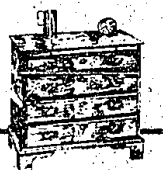
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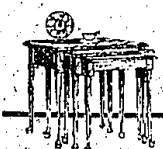
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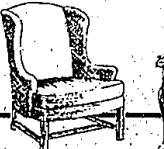
Queen Anne Tea Table
WAS \$369
Now \$375



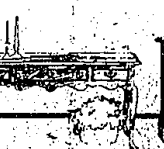
Bachelor's Chest
WAS \$749
Now \$489



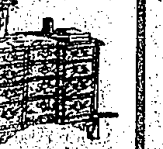
Nest of Tables
WAS \$519
Now \$339




Wing Chair
WAS \$689
Now from \$439



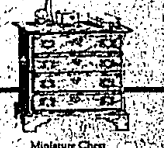
Sofa Table
WAS \$829
Now \$545




Block Front Chest
WAS \$1069
Now \$699




Chippendale Sofa/Loveseat
Loveseat from \$1069
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