

State job training aid to be 'market driven'

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Three dozen men and women with black UAW jackets shook the rotunda of the State Capitol in Lansing with their chant:

"We — want — jobs — NOW!"

"They're mad. The governor's just as mad that we got no notice from GM about the plant layoffs," said Joe Forbes last week as people waited for the State of the State address.

Now director of Gov. James Blanchard's job training programs, Forbes, a former state representative from Southfield and Oak Park, was planning to hear the speech from his old floor leader's desk in the House chamber although he already knew what was in the 23-minute address.

"WE'RE WORKING on a \$100-million revolving fund," Forbes said. Banks would make loans to business for job retraining. The state would process the loans and pay the interest.

Elizabeth Howe — one-time Birmingham Eccentric reporter, Bendix personnel executive and Democratic publicist and now director of the state Labor Department — joined the conversation.

"It's market-driven. Your boss, Phil Power, had a lot to say about it," Howe said. Power is chairman of Suburban Communications Corp. and a member of the governor's advisory group on job training.

By "market-driven," Howe meant that training needs would be decided by the ultimate users — "It's up to the employers who do the hiring."

BLANCHARD'S speech called the



Joe Forbes, who heads Gov. Blanchard's job training programs, heard the State of the State message from his former haunt in the House of Representatives chamber.

skills fund "the largest state initiative in America to help our businesses provide Michigan workers with new skills."

The reasoning, according to a briefing paper, goes like this:

Some 90 percent of people who will be in Michigan's work force in the year 2000 already are in jobs. Improving public education won't help this "already working majority."

Current state efforts headed by Forbes, Howe and the Department of Education can assist only 200 to 300 firms a year.

The skills fund will offer interest-free loans to Michigan businesses to retrain their employees for new technology. Estimated capacity: 250,000 workers in state-funded training over the next five years.

Established businesses will be able to borrow up to \$1,000 for each worker to be retrained. A firm would be limited to \$100,000.

The companies could use whatever "training providers" they deem appropriate, but it's expected they will contract through public education institutions, particularly community colleges.

"I APPLAUD the job training program he's proposed," said Republican state Sen. R. Robert Geake of Northville.

"We're going to have to look carefully at the details, but this kind of across-the-board program, combined with the elimination of the confusion in current job-training programs is just what we need to get people — and our state — back on their feet," Geake said in a news statement.

Republican lawmakers applauded many ideas in Blanchard's blueprint for 1988, particularly ones which used private resources and responded to the market.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S effort had been more than a year in the works.

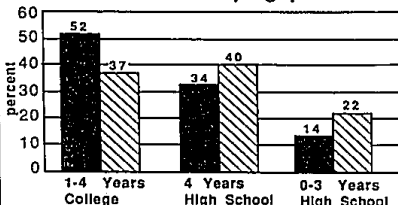
At Blanchard's election night 1986 victory party, Forbes said job training would be a major emphasis of the second term.

It didn't happen in 1987, and many lawmakers expressed disappointment at the lack of initiatives in Blanchard's State of the State speech.

This year's tune has changed. The governor used the term "the cutting edge" several times in the economic portion of his message.

Other items in the job skills chap-

Educational level of Michigan's workforce is not keeping pace



Sources: U.S. Dept. of Commerce and Census Bureau

DAVID FRANK/graphics coordinator

Michigan's workforce is under-educated for the jobs that are becoming available, according to the Blanchard administration's interpretation of federal census and employment figures. The state workforce has too few college graduates and too many persons with less than a high school diploma for the jobs available between the years 1987 and 2000.

ter: • Blanchard's office of job training (Forbes) will join GM and the UAW in funding retraining programs, particularly in the I-75 corridor communities.

• Forbes' office will "launch a new rapid response approach to assist when auto plants are shut down or downsized . . . to help workers

move rapidly toward new employment . . . based on our current pilot efforts which used plant-based labor-management committees to organize the response."

• The state will "promote employee ownership by providing firms and workers with information they need to decide whether employee ownership will work for them."

Elsman makes GOP Senate bid

James Leonard Elsman, longtime Democrat turned "Robertson Republican," is running again for the U.S. Senate.

The 51-year-old Birmingham attorney last ran for the Senate in 1976, finishing last in a four-man Democratic primary that was won by Donald Riegle, now seeking his third term. Elsman called it "ironic" that he and Riegle switched parties in different directions.

Elsman will face former U.S. Rep. Robert Huber of Troy. Huber ran third in the four-man 1976 primary. Another expected entrant is former U.S. Rep. Jim Dunn of East Lansing.

ELSMAN SAID he would work to be a "peacemaker" at this weekend's Republican state convention in Grand Rapids. Citing "Michigan's long tradition of dividing power" between the parties, he said voters are "tired of Sen. Riegle and desiring of a change."

Elsman said he switched parties over the abortion issue and "the movement to return to Judeo-Christian values."

While supporting Robertson, Elsman said he will seek proportional representation at the national convention for George Bush and Jack Kemp supporters.

HE SAID he disagreed with Robertson, the former television evangelist, on such issues as prayer in public schools. "I don't want some



James L. Elsman
Senate hopeful

teachers telling my kids what to pray," he said.

Declaring Riegle would "beat himself," Elsman said the incumbent Democrat's "ultra liberal record, his ineffectiveness and his questionable campaign finances will do it."

But he added, "I'll have to concede him the ultra-liberal, homosexual and pro-abortion vote, but that is not the Michigan I know."

Return to primary, say 2 congressmen

AP — Michigan Republicans, in an effort to be first to pick delegates for the presidential nominating convention, have created a divisive system that should be scrapped in favor of a primary, two Republican congressmen said.

"To me it is just not worth this hassle it has created," said Rep. Fred Upton, R-St. Joseph.

Rep. Bill Schuette, R-Sanford, said, "I think that in the future, we ought to go back to a primary."

Schuette supports Vice President George Bush for the Republican nomination. Upton has endorsed no candidate.

MOST MICHIGAN Republicans in Congress were on vacation during Thursday night's county conventions, and aides said they were unavailable for comment.

Bush was declared the winner Thursday night. But backers of rival candidates Pat Robertson and Jack Kemp said they would challenge Bush delegates before the state Re-

publican convention Jan. 29-30 in Grand Rapids.

Schuette said conventions in his own 10th Congressional District, which includes Midland, lacked the open discussion seen elsewhere in the state.

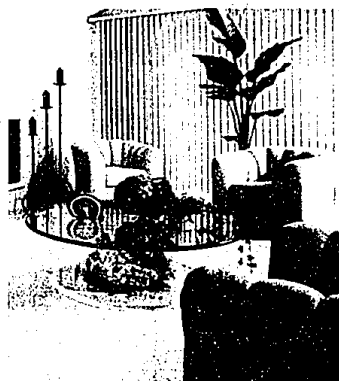
"We're keeping our eye on the ball," Schuette said. "The key thing is I'm convinced in February, when this process is over and our people voice their preference . . . we'll get back together."

The importance of electing a Republican president outweighs intra-party disputes in the party, he said.

UPTON SAID he hoped the ill-feeling in Michigan presidential politics doesn't "spill over to other races."

"You can never tell," Upton said. "It certainly has created some real divisiveness that hopefully will be healed, and I think that is going to take some time."

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