

# School Bargainers Hail Faster Aid Effort

By TIM RICHARD  
Sunday Editor

The Michigan Legislature is moving to avoid the kind of "cliff-hanger" school openings people witnessed here in August and September.

To the sound of applause from school chiefs and teachers' leaders, the State Senate Appropriations Committee will hold hearings Dec. 5 on next year's state school aid bill.

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Plymouth and Farmington school districts.

PLYMOUTH'S recently retired superintendent, Russell Leblister, would like to see the state aid bill passed early enough so that negotiations with teachers could be completed by the first of April.

"When 40 per cent of your operating budget is in doubt until after school's out in June," Leblister said, "it's extremely difficult for a board of education to fix an operating budget."

Earlier passage of state aid, he said, will also enable school boards to fix the amount of voted millage they will need and go to the taxpayers for more, if necessary.

And the number of school districts running deficits this year, because of the late passage of state aid, is "frightening," he added.

Because of the amount of time school districts must spend in collective bargaining, Leblister said, there may result a "drift toward area-wide or state-wide bargaining—something that neither boards nor teachers want."

Plymouth school district negotiated a one-year contract with teachers in August, Leblister began work on bargaining, retired June 30 and turned the reins over to a new man, James Rostman, to finish, new speed-up "encouraging news."

AT SCHOOLCRAFT College, Howard Kahn, administrative assistant to the president, can list practically all the dates of the school aid bill's steps through both houses of the Legislature, and he called the new speed-up "encouraging news."

The college and the Faculty Forum, bargaining agent for instructors, reached agreement Aug. 23, it was ratified in the next couple of days, and fall classes started Aug. 28. That one-year pact was the first ever negotiated at the college.

Kahn pointed out that "we were a half-march into the new operating year without knowing what our state aid would be."

Despite the "cliff-hanger" at Schoolcraft, other colleges had even worse luck. Macomb and Lake Michigan community colleges flailed by weeks to open on schedule.

Anthony V. Rizzo, geography instructor who heads the Faculty Forum bargainers, said he "couldn't blame the board for being timid" about writing a new contract until the aid bill was passed.

One of the ill effects of the state-caused delay, Rizzo pointed out, was that Schoolcraft lost 18 faculty members "because they were not sure of what was going to come out of negotiations. That's unfortunate. We lost some good people."

WILLIAM KLOOTE, a Plymouth resident, is executive secretary for the education associations of Farmington and Bloomfield Hills.

In Farmington, teachers attended orientation sessions Sept. 5, opened school the 6th and ratified a new one-year contract on the morning of the 7th.

In Bloomfield Hills, however, school started 14 days late. "I'm sure it would have been helpful if the state aid bill could have been passed sooner," said Kloote.

Negotiating during the summer session was particularly hard, he said, because "it's difficult to pull teachers together then to get an expression of opinion. They have other jobs, or they're traveling, or they're commuting."

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Rizzo, the Schoolcraft faculty bargaining chief, said that teachers there could, if necessary, have been contacted by mail during the summer for ratification of a proposed contract. The difficulties and cost, however, are obvious.

And so on Dec. 5, the Senate Appropriations Committee, headed by Republican Frank D. Beadle of St. Clair, will get to work on the aid bill some three weeks before the new session of the Legislature is to start, and nearly seven months before the next fiscal year begins.

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