

# Substitute teachers can qualify for benefits

By CORINNE ABATT

This was brought to the attention of the Observer & Eccentric by two per-  
manent substitute teachers who have  
been informally lobbying for better  
recognition for their group. They are  
Mrs. Mary Cassidy of Redford Town-  
ship and Mrs. Frances Courtade of  
Southfield.

In order to qualify for unemploy-  
ment comp through the Michigan Em-  
ployment Security Act (MESA), subs  
must teach 14 weeks with the same  
district, work 12 hours or more a  
week and earn a minimum of \$25 for  
each of the covered weeks.

Because school districts weren't cov-  
ered by the act until January 1975,  
some subs have been hard-pressed to  
accumulate 14 qualifying weeks with  
the same district.

Occasionally a school district has  
gotten around the act and their finan-  
cial responsibilities in unemployment  
pay by cutting off subs after 13 weeks  
work.

The ladies Cassidy and Courtade  
had appealed to state legislators for a  
change, saying that the qualifications  
meant to help subs had in fact done  
them harm.

BOTH WHO have been rubbing in  
the Redford Union district for years,  
reported their calls for work dropped  
off after the act passed and they  
would much rather teach than collect  
unemployment comp at a cost to the  
district.

Having discovered the SUA, they  
have much less guilt about the possi-  
bility of collecting unemployment.

SUA is a federally financed pro-  
gram which provides unemployment  
assistance to those who do not qualify  
for unemployment benefits under any  
other program.

A MESA spokesman said that if a  
substitute teacher has to use the  
whole past 52 weeks, from September  
1974 to now, to find enough qualifying  
weeks, then she or he would be eli-  
gible for unemployment through SUA.  
He also said the qualifying weeks  
don't have to be with the same dis-  
trict.

At the time when the substitute  
teacher becomes eligible for state ben-  
efits, the claim is switched over.

Benefits are calculated on a scale  
similar to the MESA. Libert Gregory of  
the SUA office said a person with  
no dependents whose weekly salary  
was \$120 would be eligible for \$67  
unemployment comp.

THE SUA PROGRAM was created by  
the Emergency Jobs and  
Unemployment Assistance Act of 1974  
and recently signed into law by Presi-  
dent Ford. Gregory said it will contin-  
ue through December 1978 when it is  
scheduled to run out. He emphasized  
"scheduled," giving the impression  
there is a possibility it could be contin-  
ued.

Those interested in pursuing the  
SUA benefits must go to the office,  
16480 Woodward, south of McNichols,  
Highland Park. Once the application is  
approved, checks are mailed.

Mrs. Cassidy, commenting on SUA,  
said, "Mrs. Courtade and I heard  
about it and decided to make sure the

money was really there for substitute  
teachers and wouldn't hurt the school  
districts... we think that substitute  
teachers should take advantage of it.  
We don't know what impact the pres-  
ent state law will have on substitute  
teachers. Hopefully, a new state law  
will be passed in October when it  
should come up for a vote in the  
House."

One bill slated to come before the  
state legislators is SB 889, which pro-  
vides for a substitute who teaches at  
one assignment for 80 days to be eli-  
gible for leave time and other privi-  
leges granted a regular teacher includ-  
ing salary equal to the minimum regu-  
lar teachers receive.

A sub who teaches 130 days in a dis-  
trict during one school year and who  
is reemployed the following year shall  
be offered a contract the same as a  
regular teacher if the qualifications  
are in order.

This is one thing which the two  
women have been fighting for—recog-  
nition of the substitute teacher as an  
integral part of the work force.

As it stands now, subs receive no  
fringe benefits.

Mrs. Courtade recalls the year she  
taught, 18 weeks straight, right  
through to the end of the school year,  
turned in all records and closed up  
the room. But she still didn't get paid  
for Memorial Day although at that  
point she was doing the job of a regu-  
lar teacher.

The two women keep the phone  
wires buzzing between their Wayne  
and Oakland county homes and Lan-  
sing. If the tie-bar bill which includes  
889 as well as 900 and 901 does come

up for a vote and is passed, the ladies  
will scan their victory carefully.  
"And if we don't like it, we'll be  
right back there again for more im-  
provements," Mrs. Cassidy says.

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