

# Legislative committee listens to voluntary-quit hassles

By TIM RICHARD

It was "a classic case of harassment," said a state legislator when a former Bendix Corp. employee in Southfield told how he was unable to collect unemployment compensation after being forced to quit his job.

Dennis G. Fasset, who spent 16 years with Bendix, told a special Michigan House of Representatives committee Monday how he was pushed out of his job and entangled for 16 months in the red tape of the Michigan Employment Security Commission.

"For 15 of those 16 years, I got along fine," Fasset said. Then in 1976 there was a reorganization that left him "at odds" with his immediate supervisor.

ABOUT SEPT. 1 that year, Fasset testified, "my supervisor told me I was no longer considered an asset to Bendix. He suggested I resign."

Two higher-ups declined to interfere, which would entitle him to \$5,000 in severance benefits.

Said his supervisor: "As long as I am here, you will never get a layoff, and you will regret your decision to stay," according to Fasset.

On Sept. 14, 1976, he resigned. The next day he went to the MESCC to ask for a waiver of the rule under which he would have to wait 13 weeks before collecting unemployment compensation—the law when one quits a job voluntarily.

Today, 18 months later, Fasset said he has been through several appeals and still hadn't collected—even though his former supervisor admitted the conversation that forced his resignation.

Fasset now works in Wayne County.

Associated Newspapers. His only consolation: "That supervisor was asked to leave three months after I was asked to leave."

FASSETT'S CASE so fascinated a half-dozen members of a special house committee studying the problem of voluntary quits that they listened to him for more than a half-hour and asked more questions than of any of the other dozen witnesses Monday morning in Westland.

An Oakland County hearing is scheduled for 10 a.m. Friday, Feb. 24 in the board of commissioners auditorium, 1200 N. Telegraph, Pontiac.

State Rep. Ed Mahalik (D-Romulus) said MESCC hearing examiners habitually believe the employer over the employee.

Rep. Roy Smith (R-Ypsilanti) asked: "What can we do. Should we allow use of a lie detector in hearings?"

Fasset didn't think that would help. His problem, he said, was that "in my personnel jacket, Bendix didn't include the real reasons for my leaving. . . There was a period of three years when I received no (semi-annual) review. There were reviews in my files that I hadn't signed."

While an employee may be able to comment in writing on an unfavorable review, there is no way anyone but the company can have the last word in the file.

THE HOUSE committee, chaired by Rep. Claude Trim (D-Springfield Township), is scratching its collective head about how to reword the state unemployment compensation law to achieve two goals.

One is to prevent the underserving from quitting their jobs and drawing

## Compensation is issue

unemployment compensation benefits. The other is to allow the deserving—they were visibly impressed by Fasset's story—to collect when forced to quit jobs.

The employer's side was told several times by operators of nursing homes.

One such firm was Whitehall Convalescent Home of Novi, formerly of Farmington.

"In 1977 we paid \$2,500 to voluntary quitters, mostly to people who had moved out of the state," said office manager Margaret Thurmond. "In 1976 we paid \$4,100. We had to spend \$6,900 in (classified) advertising for new workers."

In contrast, said Whitehall owner Lloyd Johnson, the firm's Florida home had to pay only one unemployment claim in 16 years—a legitimate one. And since 30 per cent or more of

convalescent patients are on Medicare, Johnson said, payment of jobs less desirable to voluntary program.

SINCE JAN. 1, 1972, "our hospital has paid out over \$160,000 to people who resigned," said Mitchell Nimmoor, personnel director of Garden City Osteopathic Hospital.

"In 1977, .88 per cent went to employees who voluntarily quit. Our work force numbers just over 1,000. Ninety per cent are women. Their off-the-job demands involve education, advancements, responsibilities to children and spouses, marital adjustments and pregnancies, to name a few."

"It seems that almost anyone who can live through the 13-week qualification period will be able to draw several hundred dollars before having to go back to work."

This "phantom payroll" of quitters who boast about their benefits "has a ballooning negative effect on the morale of those employees who stay on the job," Nimmoor said.

BARD YOUNG, Region 1-E director of the United Auto Workers, said these "contractual quitters." Young cited these cases:

"Laid off his regular job, a man takes a new job 150 miles away, visiting his family on weekends. There are problems with a teenage son. The man must quit to return to his family in

Wayne County. He can't collect benefits for 13 weeks.

"The 'dragnet' case—two unions in a plant settle contracts but the third strikes, idling the entire plant. Workers in the first two unions can't collect unemployment compensation.

"A mother with no husband has a full-time job in a plant, moonlighting in a restaurant. Unable to take the burden, she gives the restaurant three weeks notice of her resignation. Two weeks later, the plant lays her off. Since she voluntarily quit her restaurant job last, she can't qualify for unemployment

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## Bigger staff for Patterson?

Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson may be getting some of the additional staff he has been requesting for more than a year.

The personnel committee of the County Board of Commissioners last week voted to give the prosecutor two more assistant prosecutors and two more clerks. Patterson had asked for five assistant prosecutors.

The personnel committee's recommendations were forwarded to the finance committee, where some insiders say the proposal will die.

Oakland County Executive Daniel T. Murphy has maintained a position that the county should add no staff and grant no raises until July 1. Several Republican county commissioners said Murphy might veto the staff increase if it is approved by the full board. Murphy was unavailable for comment.

The personnel committee had voted to give Patterson the additional staff in spite of a county personnel department report saying the prosecutor did not need the staff increase. That department, however, is part of the county executive's administration.

Patterson and Richard Thompson, chief assistant prosecutor, had predicted the department would support Murphy's stance.

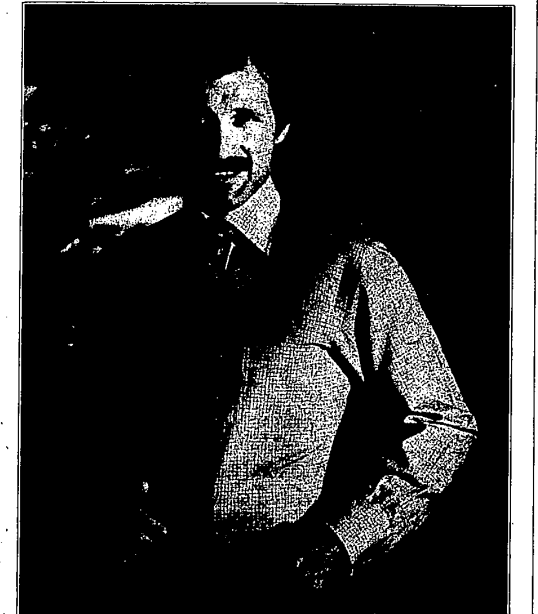
### Arson loss

There were 8,810 arson fires state-wide in 1976, totaling over \$14 million in property damage. This was 10.9 per cent of all fires and 7.4 per cent of all dollar loss.

Last year, there were 8,036 "suspicious" fires in Michigan, fires which circumstances indicate the possibility of arson. Property loss was over \$13 million.



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