

# Pink slip

## Whether it's the 1st or 5th, it hurts

By JAMES GRANNAM

Gary Smith has been teaching for six years. He just received his fifth pink slip. But Smith just is going to be spending his summer wondering if he is going to be recalled in September. He is getting out of education and into business for himself.

To some—especially parents—this may sound understandable. To others—particularly pink-slipped teachers—this is the worst road to take.

A decrease in student enrollment and a multitude of financial cuts has increased the number of pink-slipped teachers in the Oakland County area.

Recent millage approval in Birmingham, Bloomfield, Southfield and a bond issue in Troy may secure some positions for teachers in the near future, but not for others.

Farmington School District's millage was defeated.

Once voters in Rochester approved their school millage, the board of education recalled all 14 pink-slipped teachers and eight administrators.

Birmingham School District pink-slipped 10 teachers. Bloomfield laid off 11 teachers. West Bloomfield recalled all but 14 of the original 78 pink-slipped teachers. Farmington pink-slipped about 100 teachers and Southfield sent notices to 200 teachers. All but 46 of Southfield's pink-slipped teachers were then recalled after the June 14 millage passed. There were no pink-slipped teachers in the Troy school district.

HOW DO Smith and other laid-off teachers respond to their unemployment?

"It's a very traumatic experience," said Smith, who prefers not to reveal his real name. "Like letting a bear loose in a cage. He explained that when he was told there was no longer a position for him, he felt like he was being thrown out of a house. He said that he felt like he was being thrown out of a house. He said that he felt like he was being thrown out of a house."

Smith contends there is a failure in providing education in the United States. "Our most important national resource is our children. Yet when it comes time to buy new books and improve education, we respond."

## SEMCOG fights to keep transit role

The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) was fighting in the Michigan Legislature this week to keep its single most important power—its right to appoint members of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA).

Legislators, partly out of hostility to the voluntary association of 100 local governments, partly out of obligation to Detroit Mayor Coleman Young and Gov. William Milliken, appeared almost certain to re-

duce SEMCOG's appointment powers as they sought to pass a bill to finance rapid transit construction.

SEMCOG's general assembly last Thursday called on the legislature to retain SEMCOG as the major appointing authority for the seven county transportation agency board, a role SEMCOG has played since SEMTA was formed in 1968.

But the mayor and governor, in an effort to give Detroit a greater voice in regional transportation policy, were pushing for a reorganization bill that would give most SEMTA board appointments to the mayor and county boards of commissioners, with SEMCOG retaining a diminished role.

At present, the SEMTA board has nine members—six appointed by SEMCOG, three by the governor.

In a COMPROMISE effort, the SEMTA general assembly urged the legislature to create a 15-member SEMTA board with eight appointed by SEMCOG and seven by other powers.

After a long debate, the general assembly passed a resolution offering that breakdown:

- Detroit: five members—three by the mayor, two by SEMCOG
- Suburban Wayne County: three members—one by the county board of commissioners, two by SEMCOG
- Oakland County: three members—one by the county board, two by SEMCOG
- Macomb County: two members—one by the county board, one by SEMCOG
- Washtenaw, Livingston, St. Clair and Monroe counties: two members—one by SEMCOG, one by the governor

The general assembly took no position on the desired method of funding rapid transit construction.

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are not as concerned about losing their jobs as the older instructors are.

Young, female teachers, particularly, see themselves going into another profession like public relations and advertising, said Ruckhaber. "They have no dependents and are young enough to go into another field."

Alan Rutter, an industrial arts teacher at Seaholm High School, says he may get out of teaching completely.

"Pink-slipped once in two years, Rutter has the advantage of securing a job in the building industry."

I am still looking for a teaching job," he said. "But if towards the end of the summer nothing definite comes up, I'll probably go into the industry."

Rutter agrees with Smith and Miss Thelen, saying that education doesn't have it together.

"Teachers know they can't do anything except sit and wait. This experience deep feeling of powerlessness."

**THIS WAS** the feeling shared by one Birmingham teacher who was pink-slipped for the first time in two years.

"I am just waiting out the summer," said Mary Thelen, a teacher at West Maple Junior High School. "Even though I am at the bottom of the list, I am hoping that the recent millage approval will result in my being called back."

"Frankly," Miss Thelen finds herself in a bind. "I am afraid that if I get a summer job I won't be eligible for unemployment compensation if I am not recalled in the fall."

Instability is one characteristic that pink-slipped teachers feel during the uncertain summer months.

In Miss Thelen's case, she wants a job that she knows she can return to year after year. Even if I was assured that I could substitute five days a week, I would feel more secure," she said.

Lake Smith, Miss Thelen contends that people don't realize the impact pink slip has on students. "The sad thing is that I am not going to get out of education, but rather advance myself in the area of special education."

But even that is uncertain at this point.

"Being pink-slipped is very damaging to a person's ego and self-esteem," said Rutter. "I am lucky I am in a position where this is not hurting me financially."

**RECHABER FOUND** that among the teachers he counseled, the majority of those pink-slipped do not do anything about their predicament.

He explained that some teachers develop realistic, vocational goals, explore alternative careers and pursue additional training.

**IN HIS COUNSELING** sessions, Ruckhaber noted that young and single teachers

But others just sit around and wonder what it's going to be like in September.

"Even though there are no teaching positions, they believe they will secure a position simply because they are good teachers," said Ruckhaber.

But many districts, which hire only a few replacements, are likely to employ a beginning teacher whose salary will be several thousand dollars less than that of an experienced teacher.

**REALIZING THE** importance of being certified in a high demand low supply area of education, Cindy Laskey, a teacher at West Maple Junior High, is in the process of obtaining a master's degree and certificate in learning disabilities.

"Being pink-slipped three times in 2½ years and one full year of teaching encourages me and other young teachers to become specialized in the field of special education," said Miss Laskey.

But like all other demanding areas, that field will probably experience an overflow of supply in a couple of years, she added.

(Using the millage approval in Birmingham, Miss Laskey hopes to be recalled because she feels even though she is low in seniority, she is a good teacher.)

"It's very aggravating when you know you're qualified," said Miss Laskey. "But because I love teaching so much, I am not going to get out of education, but rather advance myself in the area of special education."

Like her colleagues, Miss Laskey says the students are actually the losers when teachers get pink-slipped.

"The sad thing is that the kids get used to it," she said. "Once you get used to something, you become too apathetic to change it. I hope that isn't the case in Birmingham."

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