

Pizzeria denies wage violations

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brought against the chain of pizza parlors by the U.S. Department of Labor following an investigation last year.

Payment of federal minimum wages became mandatory in January, 1977, for collective ownership franchises such as Little Caesar's. Until that time, branch outlets grossing less than \$250,000 in annual volume did not have to pay its employees minimum wages.

Little Caesar's and its president, Michael Ilitch, own and operate 60 pizzerias in the tri-county area, including Farmington Hills. Until the Labor Department investigation, the business was paying its help in carryout stores \$2 an hour — 30 cents below the minimum wage in 1977.

"The pizza parlors, family inns and sitdown restaurants always paid the minimum wage, since they did higher volume," Sheehan said. "But neighborhood carryouts sold less and did not have to pay minimum wages."

"We became obligated under federal law to pay the minimum wage in all of our stores, but we didn't comply soon enough. It was not intentional. We were

not aware of the change in the law. The government did not give us proper notice. We didn't receive a bulletin of federal guidelines."

"We also took exception with a press release prepared by the regional Department of Labor office in Chicago. They said we were ordered to pay the settlement. We agreed to it, there was a consent judgement," Sheehan continued.

"There was no violation, just misinterpretation of the law. There was no conviction, trial or penalty — just a compromise settlement."

In the consent order, the chain agreed to pay \$69,000 to 931 employees. The company was also cited for not paying time-and-one-half to clerks working over 40 hours a week.

"Both parties agreed to the settlement and the judge signed the order," a law clerk for Judge Pratt said.

Sheehan said the company opted for payment instead of being faced with a long court suit.

"We are abiding by it (the law) and we will continue to abide by it," he said.

Elderly await state decision

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nice Jamestown apartment. She had to sell her car when she needed major surgery. Then she moved to another floor of her apartment building because the rent was cheaper.

"After 80 years of independence, she hates to go to her children for help. So she is choosing between food, medication or rent. These are proud people. They're not looking for a handout. They've put their names on waiting lists for housing in other communities because it's taking so long in Farmington Hills. They don't know how much longer they can hold out."

BILL DOUB, assistant director of the Oakland division of United Community Services said Farmington Hills has the fifth largest population of over-60 residents in Oakland County.

In a study conducted by a community service task force on aging, Doub found that 71 percent of all senior citizen households in Oakland County had

incomes less than \$10,000.

"That means 71 percent, or 52,200 households, are eligible for some form of government assistance."

"People look at communities like Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, and Farmington Hills and they think only rich people live there. That's a wrong assumption. We have 32,407 senior households in Oakland County with income below the poverty level."

"It's difficult because of pride to get these people to accept help. Some won't take advantage of free meal programs, but they show up in force at pot luck dinners."

"When a housing project is designated, they come out of the woodwork to sign up for it."

"There is no such thing as low cost housing. It should be considered a community investment. This is crucial, otherwise, a community is going to have problems. Seniors don't want charity."

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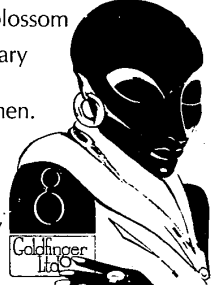
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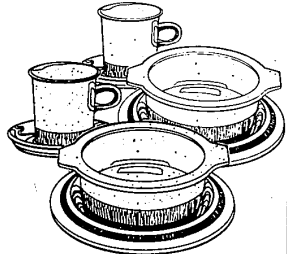
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