

## Reform Could Hamstring Special Ed Program

by WYLIE GERDES

A special tax which allows Oakland County to operate one of the five best special education programs in the United States is about to be swept away by Governor William Milliken's educational reforms.

Ted Cunio, director of special education for the Farmington Public Schools, is urging parents of children in special education programs to write legislators and the governor. He hopes political pressure will preserve the tax where logic apparently has failed.

used by the Oakland County Intermediate School District for special education.

One of the governor's proposals says the Oakland County Intermediate District would be replaced by a regional district without any powers to tax. Therefore, a tax would disappear which voters themselves approved.

"It's not that we're asking the state for something. We just want to keep what we have," Cunio says.

"Under the present proposal for educational reform, the one mill special tax in Oakland County would be eliminated. This would mean cutting over \$15 million in services for the special education children the first year of the new educational program," says Dr. William Emerson, superintendent of schools for the Oakland Intermediate District.

education students would return to the regular program if the tax disappeared and weren't replaced.

Which special education programs would suffer?

"It's like 'Who do you shoot first, your son or your daughter?'" Cunio says.

Besides hobbling the special education program in the county, Cunio says the tax limitations remove a basic right of parents to decide how much should be spent for education of their children.

"This would be taking away from the local citizens their right to provide quality education above and beyond what the State of Michigan in your proposal would consider to be average. Local operation, if we are to continue to operate one of the best education systems in the country, as we presently do in the State of Michigan, cannot be jeopardized," Cunio says in a letter



BIG RED—A couple of youngsters get stiff necks the other day from a prolonged stare upwards at the 20-foot high Santa Claus stove. Big Red is located on Grand River in the City of Farmington, in front of the old Pioneer Olds building.

(Evert photo.)

## Bells Toll For Parent Volunteers

The Farmington Board of Education has issued a call for parents to volunteer to serve on a study committee charged with examining starting times for elementary schools.

On Nov. 10, the board agreed to form a study committee after hearing a complaint from the Farmington Education Association (FEA) on elementary starting times. The FEA is the collective bargaining unit for Farmington teachers.

"But I don't think the FEA is a convenient vehicle to obtain nominations," he added. Perrin moved to add four members to the committee and that Peters be authorized to appoint both teachers and parents, Vagozzi then commented on a complaint from the pick only board members, administrators and parents and the FEA should select the teachers.

"I had hoped you would select a committee which at least had a pretext of legitimacy," said Roger Allen, FEA president.

"My impression was we would form a committee to study school starting times and a report would be made back to the board," said Lichtman, "Now we are getting embroiled in mechanical procedural questions and personalities."

The answer is derived from the 1-1/2 mile rule of thumb, applied because of economics and state policy.

THE EFFECT ON Farmington would be drastic, Cunio says. Four of every 10 special

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## Busing's Expensive

# Yardstick Won't Stretch

By EMORY DANIELS

## analysis

A recurring problem facing school administrators is informing parents why their children cannot be bused to school.

The answer is relatively simple to arrive at, but sometimes parents are unhappy when they receive the wrong answer.

The answer is derived from the 1-1/2 mile rule of thumb, applied because of economics and state policy.

side of the path have had their privacy invaded because of motor bikes, excessive usage of the pathway—especially during the summer—and vandalism which has occurred twice (stealing and the painting of a patio).

"Needless to say, an area which looks an official mile and a half because of a few yards, is not in itself justification for asking young children to walk to Bond Elementary School."

BRIAN OLIVER, administrative assistant for Farmington Schools, said the school board had the pathway built more than a year ago at the request of parents.

Oliver confirmed the children Slavin mentioned live under the 1-1/2 mile limit. "We cannot budge on this," said Oliver. "If we relax the limit for one subdivision, we would have to for all, and that would run into large sums of money."

Oliver said the district has a policy that it will bus children living a mile from school if they have to cross a county road. The only other exception

\$490-\$560 to bus 14 children. But there are more than 14 children attending Bond School who walk 1-1/2 miles to school. If the limit were relaxed, the district would not have a yardstick to apply to other requests.

"Nobody can predict how many requests would be made, but it is almost certain that every walkway the district has built would be closed with busing provided. The cost would rise to a point where the district would be forced to ask voters to approve mileage to expand the bus fleet."

Assaults and child molestings are a stark reality. We want buses for our children. The path by all rights should be closed."

The West Franklin Estates board of directors has a petition signed by a majority of its homeowners asking for the busing. There are 14 children from West Franklin Estates attending Bond School.

The association has asked for busing in the past, but its request was denied.

ACCORDING TO Oliver, it costs the district between \$35-\$40 a year to bus each child. Thus, it would cost between

Another way of looking at it: It would cost the district more than \$50,000 if the number of children being bused were increased by 10%. And a 10% increase would not be hard to justify for a district constrained

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## today's hot line

## what's inside

### Cancel Bridge

Mother had better cancel the Bridge Party Friday because Farmington schools will let out early. Hours of dismissal and a report on what teachers will be doing are given inside.

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### Local Letters

Farmington readers write letters about consolidation, the good job police are doing, the township PRD ordinance, and about children running wild.

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### Deaf Ministry

A Plymouth church is offering something new in services—special sign language interpretation for those who are deaf. Read about it in the church section.

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### New Work

The Suburban Chorale will open its Christmas Concert with a musical selection rarely heard in this area. For the details on the time and place of the concert, along with the program, see

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### What's Your Thing?

It doesn't matter if the legitimate theater, art shows or concerts are your thing you'll find some ideas on how to spend your leisure time in today's paper. Start with the amusements page for some of the basic facts.

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**He's in Business On Your Street**

Your neighborhood boy is gaining valuable business training through his Observer route. The \$0.75 you pay him each month for our new Carrier Subscription Plan assures his success in his first business venture. Be sure to ask for a receipt, which will guarantee delivery of The Farmington Observer.



EROSION'S WORK—Erosion has cracked the concrete abutment surrounding the culvert serving the drain running through Lincolnshire Estates. Since this picture was taken, the cracks have widened and the abutment is leaning forward, threatening to fall into the ditch.

## Homeowner Seeks End To Muskrat Colonies

Victor Bogdan is an average, middle-income businessman who is unhappy with his second role as a muskrat trapper.

Bogdan says the drain serving Lincolnshire Estates in Farmington Township is infested with muskrats. He has already trapped one and has pictures to document his claims.

HE MOVED to his home at 2937 Raleigh two years ago. Soon after, he became perplexed with conditions of the drain. Months later he began contacting township officials to seek relief.

Last spring, Bogdan obtained a promise from the township administration to prepare construction estimates so Lincolnshire homeowners could be aware of the costs involved to repair the drain.

Seven months have passed, and he is still waiting for the engineering estimates. "Each time I call, the reply is that the estimates are being prepared. Now I ask you, does it take six months to prepare two estimates?" asks Bogdan.

THE TOWNSHIP says the ditch is a natural waterway and that property lines go to the exact center of it, making the drain the responsibility of adjoining property owners.

"During the frequent rain storms," says Bogdan, the ditch "becomes what appears to be

an open sewer.

"The debris that is left must be disposed of by ourselves. The erosion which takes place from the fast moving water is getting to be an uncontrollable state."

MAINTENANCE and repair of the concrete abutment surrounding the culvert pipes, he says, is a major engineering and construction task and cannot possibly be done solely by adjoining property owners.

The Oakland County Drain Commission says it is not responsible since the ditch is a natural waterway and not a county drain. The county says it is not authorized to do anything unless petitioned by the Farmington Township Board.

The ditch causes other problems, says Bogdan. "Aside from being unsightly to residents entering the subdivision, children find this a tremendous spot to play their games, falling to realize that the broken area of the bridge abutment could give way at any time, thus producing a serious accident."

"Astute from the possible injury which may result while playing there, there is also the chance that some child may be bitten by a muskrat which seem to be in abundance in this ditch.

"How much worse must this get before someone agrees to

take action? Must a child be injured before local officials are aware of the problem at hand? Or must the erosion problem become so bad that it threatens to take more of our property?"

Bogdan in October sent letters to Sen. PHILIP A. Hart, Congressman Jack H. McDonald, State Rep. Raymond L. Baker, the County Drain Commission and Farmington Township.

TO DATE, he has received but two replies. Hart promised to contact the proper local officials, and the county said it could not help unless approached by the township.

Problems caused by erosion are now getting worse, says Bogdan. The concrete abutment, only cracked in October, is now leaning and will soon fall into the ditch.

Bogdan is still waiting for engineering estimates. Work of this type is usually financed by a special assessment district. Bogdan hopes it won't be entertained by special assessment. The homeowners "could not by any means physically handle the task at hand," he says. "Therefore, our tax money must be put to proper use in this situation and the responsibility be honestly claimed by either the township or the county and rectified as soon as possible."