

# Why 52 At State Hospital Face Layoffs

By TIM RICHARD

Although it's a tax-supported institution, Northville State Hospital is suffering the effects of a recession. It hasn't had the usual turnover of employees. As a result,

the hospital is running at the rate of a \$100,000 deficit. Supl. Richard Budd has notified the staff that he may have to lay off as many as 52 employees to avoid that deficit. Last week he was meeting with state Mental Health De-

partment officials in an effort to avoid the deficit without layoffs. "We've stopped hiring," Dr. Budd told Observer Newspapers last week. "But it doesn't always work—for example, such skilled positions as labor-

atory and x-ray technicians would have to be saved to balance the books. To save 38 salaries, there would have to be 52 layoffs because it takes three layoffs to eliminate two jobs, assuming compensation costs being what they are.

Dr. Budd explained: "Normally we have a turnover of employees. In the nursing department, we've had up to a 40% turnover in one month—mostly attendant nurses." But the hospital has been losing fewer and fewer attend-

ants to the automobile industry lately, in the current economic belt-tightening.

"IN THE FIRST six months of the fiscal year (July to December), we usually carry additional people; in the second six months, the normal exodus from the employment rolls will level off the staff," he said. When that "normal exodus" didn't occur, NSH officials in January found themselves heading for a \$100,000 deficit. As of the end of last week, no one had been laid off yet. "We have started the layoff procedure. I announced that two weeks ago. It takes a couple of weeks to set up the administrative procedure. It can be called off at the last moment, but I can't start it at the last moment," Dr. Budd said. Then he cautioned: "The longer I wait to lay off, the more people I have to lay off."

Low-seniority and probationary employees with no civil service status would go first. One complicating factor is that a skilled employee with low seniority could, when facing a layoff, "bump" a less skilled employee.

Dr. Budd estimated that about 30 of the 52 who would be laid off would be from the nursing service, which has 500 of the 570 jobs along with the highest turnover.

Such a layoff, if it occurs, will "tighten" the hospital staff but won't be cutbacks in any programs, Dr. Budd said. "If we put us back to last June's (patient-staff) level."

MEANWHILE, A committee of NSH employees has sought television time and written letters complaining about the impending layoffs and charging that NSH is being discriminated against by state-level officials.

"I do not feel this is true," Dr. Budd responded, adding that "the Department of Mental Health has been working closely with Northville. The hospital programs have been continuing to expand."

Of the employer's efforts he said: "They have a right to have a voice. They can write to the governor, the Legislature, the Mental Health Department. This is part of their enthusiasm."

"Many statements have been attributed to me," he added, "but they do not represent me or the hospital administration."

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