

Injured workers group eyes comp 'reform'

By Tim Richard
staff writer

An angry new group is looking with suspicion over the shoulders of a legislative committee rewriting Michigan's workers compensation law.

"Our group was created by injured workers. We should not be treated as criminals, liars and cheats," said Richard C. Fournier, vice president of Michigan Injured Workers, a non-profit lobbying and support group.

Added MIW President Walter Crowley: "Workers comp is a sham. It costs employers a fortune and neglects workers."

Operating from Box 148 in the downtown community of Rockwood, MIW's southeastern Michigan chapter held meetings that attracted several hundred persons last month in Livonia's

Stevenson High and this week in Pontiac. Other MIW chapters are in Lansing, Grand Rapids, Flint, Pontiac and Kalamazoo.

CROWLEY CRITICIZED the joint legislative committee's decision to meet behind closed doors with a governor's representative to work on a compromise package of workers comp reform bills.

"There will be no further testimony taken from an open format. MIW takes strong opposition to this," Crowley said.

The panel consists of three senators (two Republicans and a Democrat) and three representatives (two Democrats and a Republican): Sen. Doug Cruce, R-Troy, William Faust, D-Westland, and Dan DeGrow, R-Port Huron; and Reps. Juanita Watkins, D-Detroit, Robert Emerson, D-Flint, and Paul Hilligonds, R-Holland.

Two sections of the existing workers comp law which establish entitlement to benefits are due to expire this July 1.

If they expire, Michigan would be the only state without a workers comp law. The result: Workers injured on the job would have to go through the expensive and time-consuming process of suing employers for damages in circuit

court, as they did prior to 1912.

THE REPUBLICAN caucus in the Senate has a clear idea of what it wants. The GOP's nine bills were outlined in a memo by staff member Jürgen Skoppel.

He said the GOP bills "do not reduce benefits" but are aimed at cutting off "non-deserving recipients." Examples: • For the worker to be paid for an

"aggravated injury," the injury must have occurred in "other than the normal performance of work, thereby cutting off recovery for injuries which merely occurred while at work but were not caused by work (such as mere overwork 'mental stress' claims)."

• A recoverable disability would have to arise both "out of and in the course of employment," which Skoppel calls "reversing judicial dilution of the law."

Other bills would require a hearing judge to write a full opinion, with findings of fact and conclusions of law. An appeals board generally would review only questions of law.

"I KNOW Sen. Cruce's views," Crowley told the Livonia gathering last month. "They're damn sure not your views."

Nevertheless, Crowley said MIW awarded Cruce an "associate" membership.

"We're not a puppet of organized labor," Crowley said. And it became clear that MIW has its differences with labor.

In Crowley's view, "Rather than point the finger at each other, employees and employers should point the finger at the carriers. Doctors, attorneys and insurance companies (carriers) make money off this."

GUEST SPEAKER at that MIW meeting was Sam Fishman, president of the state AFL-CIO, a one-time UAW plant worker and a Southfield resident. In Fishman's view, organized labor is the friend of MIW, with corporations, Republicans and insurance carriers being the common enemies.

State teacher union bucks proposed certification rule

Michigan Education Association officials have voiced partial opposition to proposed certification rules adopted by the State Board of Education.

"We are strongly opposed to the certification renewal language which was adopted, but let me stress that we are strongly in support of the remainder. MEA supports all measures to keep qualified teachers in the classroom," said Beverly Wolkow, executive director of the teachers union.

The certificate renewal language will require those entering the teaching profession after Sept. 1, 1988, to return to pre-certification status every five years until six hours of approved coursework are completed.

"MEA FEELS strongly that this arbitrary determination that teachers must return to school every five years will not serve as an effective incentive to

current teachers. Nor will it more effectively prepare future teachers to enter our classrooms," Wolkow said.

"In private industry, every successful business knows the value of providing training and opportunities for updating of skills and professional growth. Local school districts should be encouraged to follow that standard."

"We feel strongly that programs to improve, update and add new inspiration to classroom performance should be mutually determined by teachers and their local districts. Such a process is already taking place at bargaining tables across the state."

"The renewal requirement will add hardship to teachers in areas where higher education is not readily available," she said.

LIT seeks students for science course

Applications are being accepted for Lawrence Institute of Technology's 17th annual Summer Science Institute (SSI) scheduled for June 17 through July 26 on the LIT campus in Southfield.

The six-week program is open to high school juniors who are interested in science, computer science, mathematics or engineering, have maintained at least a B average, and have received no grades lower than a B in math and science.

APPLICANTS should have completed one year of both chemistry and geometry, and two years of algebra by

the end of the 1984-85 academic year.

LIT's program is limited to 80 students who have demonstrated superior achievement and who have been recommended by their counselor or principal and science or math teacher.

Applications must be postmarked by April 26. Admitted applicants will be notified by May 10 and must accept by May 20.

For applications or further information, students should contact their high school mathematics or science chairperson, guidance counselor, or Dean Zaven Margosian, School of Arts and Science, Lawrence Institute of Technology, 21000 W. 10 Mile, Southfield 48075.

Cabaret evening

Bob Bosch, Fiddlin' Al and bass player John Clonca are part of a Cabaret Evening sponsored by Oakland Parks Foundation. Comedian Bruce Garish, with his Al Kalline and Ernie Harwell impressions, will also be featured at the Tuesday, March 19, event in White Lake Oaks Golf Course.

Tickets are \$25 for contributors and \$50 for patrons. The contribution is tax deductible with proceeds benefitting the All-Visitor Trail at Independence Oaks County Park in Clarkston and Oakland Parks Foundation.

For more information, call 335-2771.

PARTICIPANTS receive tuition-free instruction by full-time LIT faculty members in topics ranging from chemical kinetics to computer techniques.

Participants also will use the college's digital computer, visit research laboratories, and attend lectures by some of the nation's leading corporation executives, researchers and engineers.

The program is funded each year by LIT and grants from local corporations and foundations. The only cost to the student is a \$50 non-refundable registration fee. All materials will be furnished.

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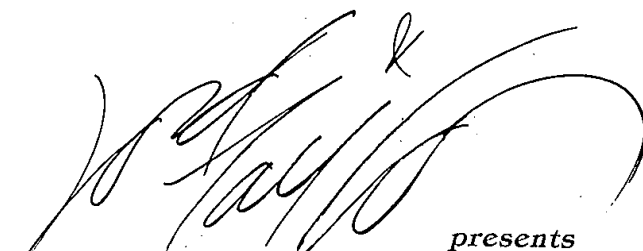
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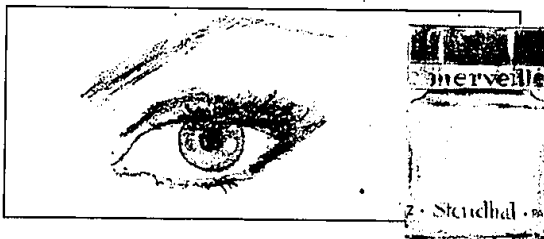
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