

Schoolcraft instructors are really middle-of-the-road, says the Forum president

A Moderate Faculty Voice

By DENNIS L. PAJOT

"Most people think all our faculty members are a bunch of liberal trouble-makers. That's not so."

Richard Arlen, the new president of the Schoolcraft College Faculty Forum, hopes to improve the image of the community college's teachers' union.

His predecessor, Stuart Bloom, feels Arlen is exceptionally well qualified to do that. Arlen has the administrative knowledge — something Bloom, as a history instructor, admits he could have used more of.

A MAN WITH deep roots in Plymouth, Arlan is in his second year at Schoolcraft as an accounting instructor in the business department.

A graduate of Plymouth High School, Arlan earned his bachelor of science and master of business administration degrees at Eastern Michigan University and spent four years in the Air Force in electronics.

Now 40, he spent 12 years in private industry in accounting and administration before coming to Schoolcraft in the fall of 1969.

His area ties are strong. The family came to Plymouth in 1946, and his father, Frank, was a businessman, civic leader and city commissioner.

With his wife and two children, Richard Arlan lives at 1441 Hartsough in Plymouth. He once ran for the board of education — unsuccessfully — and he has been active in civic affairs.

Last year Arlen was a member of the Faculty Forum's constitutional revision committee, whose recommendations were later adopted. He served on the all-college building committee, previewing campus development plans that were later approved by the trustees.

SITTING BACK in his chair in the tiny office he shares with another faculty member, Arlen explained:

"I took the job because enough people on the faculty thought what I did last year represented what they'd like to see done this year. I'll be concentrating on organization — trying for a more orderly manner and follow-through."

Translated, it means he will seek better relations with the trustees and administration. Faculty-trustees relations he sees as something that has been less than positive. Faculty-administration contacts he knows to be necessary because of the threat from a rival organization.

The Faculty Forum represents 88 persons on the faculty of 160-plus. The Faculty Forum is affiliated with the Michigan Education Assn., to which nearly all Observer-land teachers unions belong.

About 30 or 40 other faculty members,

however, have switched to the Schoolcraft Professors Union, affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, an organization which is franker to admit it is, and acts like, a labor union.

The apparent reason for the change was what some consider "more restrictive terms" of the contract which the Forum wrote with the college after a month-long strike this semester.

ARLEN FRANKLY doesn't think the Professors Union has a legitimate complaint: "They can't give an answer when asked what portion of the contract impairs their ability to teach. I know. I've asked them."

And Arlen doesn't believe the radicals of the SPU will hold on long even if they did force an election and beat the Faculty Forum for the right to be collective bargaining agent.

"Most of them are former officers of the Forum," Arlen said. "What happened in the Forum will happen if the AFT takes over. As soon as the large body of teachers sees it's their voice, they'll get into it. They'll exert their rights. If (the SPU) will become more moderate."

There would be no real advantage to hanging to the AFT, Arlen said, because there would be a period of readjustment that could be damaging to faculty-campus-community relations.

ALREADY, UNDER the new Forum constitution, he has implemented one method of improving relations: Declaring that part of his job is to "make the contract workable," Arlen has offered to meet informally with college administrators on potential contract grievances.

"If the trustees are acting in good faith, this type of joint meeting should significantly reduce formal grievances. Our idea is to handle the problems before they get that far."

But so far it hasn't worked that way. The contract has been in effect less than two months, and already 18 complaints have gone to the grievance procedure. Most are over scheduling disputes.

Arlen stressed: "This faculty is a reasonable, middle-of-the-road group of people. We're interested in doing a good job in the classroom and with the students. We don't want to run the college, as some trustees may think."

AND AS FOR the community, Arlen points out that the public has a lot invested in Schoolcraft College. "We're more than willing to go out and talk to any group. They can call me (591-6400 ext. 342), and if I can't make it, I'll see that someone else gets there."

"One thing I'm not going to do — rock throwing. We've had enough of that.

"I think, because I haven't been on campus during the early years of disputes, that I haven't really had any deep wounds to be opened. My approach will simply be to get the parties together and say, 'Look, we've got problems. Let's get the problems solved.'"

Arlen wasn't around during the obscenity controversy of 1968 and was new during the anti-war moratorium rally of 1969. Nor was he directly involved in negotiating the contract that is prompting some instructors to switch to the AFT affiliate.

THERE'S A MIXED group of new officers.

Vice president is Stuart Bloom, the former president. Secretary is Sandra Florek, a counselor who hasn't been on stage in past controversies. Treasurer is Gerald Cavanaugh, who teaches manufacturing skills.

His MEA regional liaison man is Oscar Poupart, data processing instructor and



RICHARD ARLEN won't be a rock-thrower.

head of this year's bargaining committee. His state MEA liaison is Richard Rusche, biology teacher who hasn't been prominent in any of the controversies.

These officers, along with 20 elected department representatives, serve as a senate to conduct Forum business, subject to a referendum of the full membership.

One footnote: Arlen expects the Faculty Forum to take an active part in college district politics next spring during the trustee elections. But right now he says he doesn't know which trustee will be supported or opposed.



FACULTY FORUM leaders at Schoolcraft College are Stuart Bloom (left), past president and now vice president, and Richard Arlen, the new president. (Observer photos by Dennis L. Pajot)

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