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VOLUME

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School Board Votes 5-3 To Discontinue Mid-winter Vacation

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education voted last Thursday to discontinue the one-week mid-winter vacation each February, and replace it with a smattering of individual holidays throughout the school year. These will include Washington's Birthday (which usually marked the start of the mid-winter recess), Columbus Day, Martin Luther King's birthday, Yom Kippur and Lincoln's birthday and Veterans Day. The vote was split, 5 to 3.

Voting in favor of the demise of the February week, long heralded by skiers and resorters, were Board President Peter N. Britton, John McCormick, Lee Reilly, Walter Siff and Charles Ferguson. In opposition were Sheldon Anderson, Richard Bard, and Meyer Freiman. Joseph Parry was absent.

Anderson expressed the opinion that the elimination of the vacation week would result in a "repercussion," and felt the new calendar was "not suitable." At the present time, the Scotch Plains-Fanwood district is one of five in Union County which do not have a school holiday on the birthday of Martin Luther King. While the majority of districts do honor the birthday of the civil rights leader, few enjoy the same mid-winter vacation which Scotch Plains-Fanwood does. Westfield still has a week off in mid-winter, as do East Orange and Montclair, but the vast majority of other districts in the state only have Christmas and Spring holiday weeks.

While public reaction to the demise of the mid-winter vacation has not yet surfaced, response from the teaching staff was immediate. Mrs. Ellen Davis, president of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Education Association, asked that action be deferred until after consultation with the administration and staff. The teachers might be able to provide ideas for "wiser use of the time," Mrs. Davis said, noting that the new calendar was "very different from what we're used to."

Board President Peter Britton said the move had not been

made as a result of requests from any local groups, but had been decided upon following discussions of the Board alone.

The board meeting was attended by about ten students from Terrill Junior High School, who presented a petition signed by 500 students at the junior high, expressing concern over "the furor" which arose at the January board meeting regarding a Martin Luther King day assembly at Terrill. During the January meeting, one parent had questioned whether the black national anthem had been sung at the assembly, which was compulsory for all Terrill students. Since that time, the board received a letter from James J. Hopes objecting to the program and asking that Terrill Principal Francis Dezort and Superintendent of Schools Fred Leberge be reprimanded for permitting it. Britton saw no cause for such action, he said.

The Terrill students not only saw no cause, they would like to see more of the same type of programs as that presented by the Black Student Union. They invited open discussion of the issue with the public attending the meeting, but none chose to discuss it. According to the students' petition, the program was "a rich and enlightening learning experience." The group spoke of the late Dr. King, and black history, and the assembly provided an opportunity for personal interchange on the "controversial topic -- prejudice," the students said. The school, which numbers 800-900 students, is more than 90 percent white.

A.W. Freeland Reinstated By Marburger As Assistant School Superintendent

Although last year's Board of Education intended to deny tenure to former Assistant Superintendent for Business Alfred W. Freeland last Spring, apparently a slip-up in the correct procedural tactics has negated the board's actions. Freeland has been reinstated in the job, according to a decision made this week by N.J. Commissioner Carl Marburger. Marburger further ordered that Freeland be paid back salary and benefits retroactive to last July 1 subject to reduction by his other earnings since then.

On April 29, 1971, the Board of Education in a split decision voted not to renew Freeland's contract, and so informed Freeland next day by letter. The action was taken despite the recommendation for granting of tenure by Superintendent of Schools Fred Leberge. However, the board did not specifically "fire" Freeland - thereby permitting him to serve in the Assistant Superintendent capacity until June 30, when he had met the three-year calendar requirements for tenure.

Subsequently, Freeland left the district and assumed a similar

post in Montgomery, Somerset County. He filed suit against the local district on the tenure issue. With the suit pending, the Assistant Superintendent for Business post has not been filled.

Marburger noted that the board could "easily" have denied tenure to Freeland any time prior to June 30, 1971 by exercising the 60-day clause in its contract with him, terminating his services before that date. However, since that requirement was not met, Marburger said he must support "strict interpretation" of tenure statutes even though

Governor's Tax Study Committee Proposes Broad Revenue Reforms

Halpin Warns Of Redistricting Dangers

Union County Clerk Walter G. Halpin has issued a warning that the citizens of Union County are in double jeopardy and may face a financial primary election burden because of the drawn out delay in Congressional redistricting by the State Legislature and the possibility of eleven slates of delegates to the National Democratic convention this coming July.

"The Governor, the New Jersey Congressional delegation, last year's and the present legislature have all been playing a game of cat and mouse in regard to the law requiring reshaping of Congressional districts following the 1970 census. I wouldn't be surprised if the Courts make up their minds for them, and this is what they are looking for to get them off the hook," Halpin said.

He further stated that the State Legislature is locked in to the June 6, 1972 primary inasmuch as both parties, under our system, must elect their delegates to the National conventions already scheduled for July and August, so any hope of advancing New Jersey's statutory June primary to September is out of the question. Furthermore, unless some of the Democratic presidential hopefuls pull out as contenders following some of our earlier primaries, the Republicans in Union County and probably in every County in New Jersey where voting machines are used may possibly vote a paper ballot. Halpin explained that there are only nine lines and fifty columns on our voting machines. Assuming all of the present eleven Democratic presidential contenders file their own slates, this would leave no room for the predictable one line Republican slate, requiring a paper ballot and a staggering printing bill to the taxpayers.

To compound the situation, Halpin indicated the Courts could possibly grant the Legislature additional time to redistrict until September and a special primary election would be required just to select congressional candidates, again of staggering costs to the electorate. "What great fun that would be at the expense of the taxpayers," Halpin said.

he had been informed of a board's "intent" to deny tenure.

Marburger ruled: "The commissioner has relied again for guidance on the clear expression of the courts and he notes, in particular, the expression of the court (in a specific case) that the right of tenure does not come

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Proposals Offer Substantial Reduction In Property Taxes

The long-awaited report of Governor Cahill's blue-ribbon Tax Policy Committee was made public during ceremonies at the State House in Trenton yesterday. The report recommends a total restructuring of the State's antiquated revenue raising methods and a massive reduction in the property tax. It is essential to note that the Tax Committee's report embodies some 200 recommendations to the Legislature. The State Senate and the State Assembly must act upon the recommendations in order for them to become law.

V. J. Pollitt, council president in Fanwood and a member of the Tax Committee, has prepared the following "Questions and Answers" regarding major recommendations of the report. Pollitt noted that the Committee met for nearly 2 years in an attempt to eliminate inequities in the present tax structure. "Our primary purpose was to create a structure to more equitably distribute the tax burden, and not to create new taxes simply to add to the tax burden," Pollitt said.

Q: What will be the effect of the recommended changes upon the average taxpayer?

A: Generally speaking, taxpayers with adjusted gross income from \$0 to \$15,000 will realize a net reduction in their total tax burden. Persons with adjusted gross incomes between \$15/\$25,000 would stay about the same and persons with adjusted gross incomes in excess of \$25,000 would pay a larger share of the total tax burden.

Q: What will be the effect on the property tax?

A: Every property owner in Union County will receive property tax relief. The 1971 total property tax levy in Union County was \$175,722,367. If all the Committee's recommendations are accepted, the 1971 levy would have been \$121,385,253, a reduction of approximately \$54.5 million. Expressed another way, a Fanwood home with a market value of \$25,000 in 1971 had a property tax bill of approximately \$1,020. Under the new tax structure the tax bill would have been \$598. In Scotch Plains, a home with a market value of \$25,000 in 1971 had a property tax bill of approximately \$973. Under the new tax structure the tax bill would have been \$553. Throughout New Jersey we currently raise approximately \$2.25 billion from the property tax, which represents approximately 57% of all State and local taxation. Under the new policy that percentage would be reduced to approximately 33%.

Q: Will we have a State income tax?

A: A graduated income tax at one-half the New York rates is recommended by the Committee. It would raise approximately \$550 million. It would be based upon rates of 1% to 7% of adjusted gross income with the 7% occurring at \$23,000. Commuters who already pay a New York State income tax would receive a tax credit for all taxes paid on



VAN DYKE POLLITT

income earned in New York State.

Q: How is the property tax reduction possible?

A: The Committee recommends the take-over of schools' funding by the State. This totals approximately \$1.3 billion. A uniform State-wide property tax assessed at \$1 per \$100 of equalized valuation is recommended. This uniform property tax would raise approximately \$555 million. The State funding would

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Recycling Drive On Saturday

The regular monthly recycling drive for Scotch Plains-Fanwood residents will be held this Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. For the first time, the Jaycees will be manning the trucks and collecting the discarded newspapers, glass, and cans. They have assumed this public service, begun last year by Environmental Action Group.

Residents are asked to be very careful to take their materials to the CORRECT swim club. The drive is held at Willow Grove Swim Club, which is at the end of Evelyn Street. Evelyn Street is off South Martine Avenue. The drive is NOT held at Highland Swim Club, which faces directly on Martine Avenue. A member of the Board of Governors of the Highland Club (Mary Ellen Lane and Martine Avenue) has reported that some residents are mistakenly leaving their deposits at that club.

Residents are asked to bundle and tie their papers, to remove all tin rings from glass bottles and to sort glass according to color, and to crush and flatten cans, with lids inserted inside.