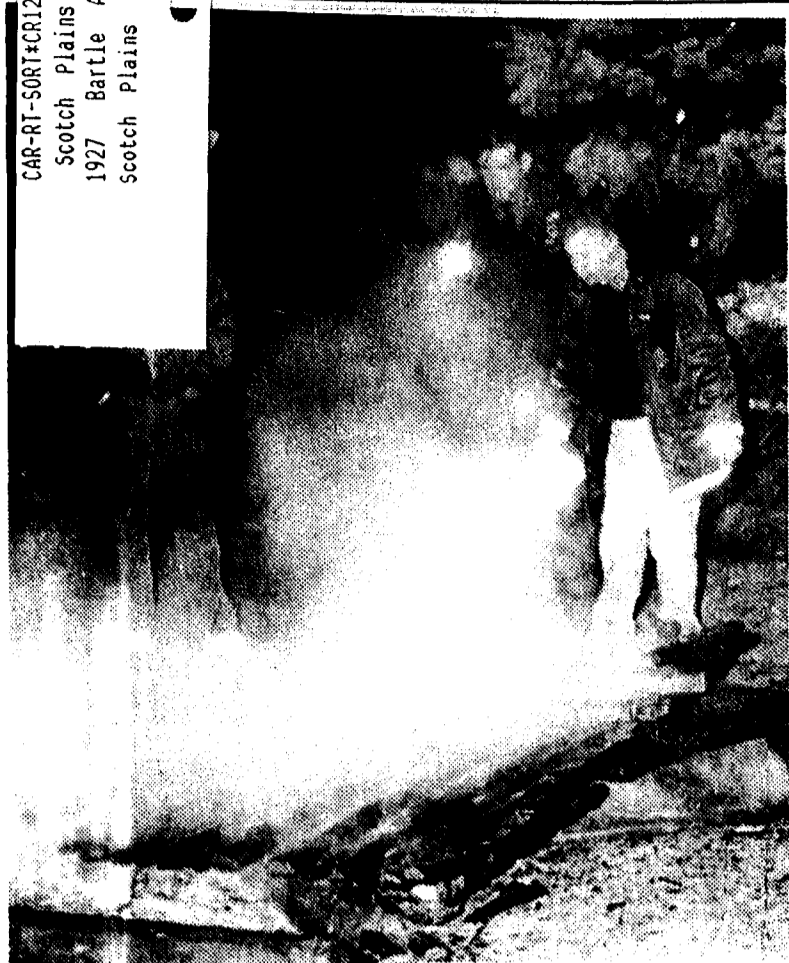




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HOLY SMOKE...Members of the Fanwood Volunteer Fire Department were summoned at 6:45 p.m. on December 22 to extinguish an electrical fire which destroyed the municipal Christmas crib scene at Fanwood Railway Station Park on North Avenue. The blaze was attributed to a faulty junction box which provided illumination for the display.

INCIDENT AT EVERGREEN SCHOOL LEFT UNEXPLAINED

Redistricting of Some Students Draws Objections by Some Parents in Two Areas

Dr. Choye Expresses Pleasure That Parental Protests Over Reshuffling Weren't Based On the Belief That One School Is Academically Inferior to Another

By ELLEN RADIN
Specially Written for The Times

The December 22 regular public meeting of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education focused on facilities and enrollment as well as the 1993-1994 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. Personnel and other matters were also addressed.

REDISTRICTING

Several residents of Country Club Estates and Riverside Estates attending the meeting objected to a recommendation to redistrict their children from the Coles School to the Brunner School.

The redistricting was recommended by Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Carol B. Choye, in a report dated November 22. Dr. Choye had also recommended moving the Office of Pupil Services to the high school and reassigning certain pre-Kindergarten and English as a Sec-

ond Language pupils.

Dr. Choye said her recommendation was based on her desire to provide "a strong educational program for all youngsters within the fiscal limits." Dr. Choye stated she had also tried to make the best use of existing space and to move as few students as possible. Residents attending community meetings held over the summer, she said, had repeatedly expressed the desire that the fewest possible number of students be redistricted.

She proposed the redistricting of Country Club and Riverside Estates, the superintendent said, because those two developments were "self-contained areas" in which the children played together, the school bus would be able to make all stops in a short period of time and the travel time between the first and last pick-up and

the last pick-up and the school were short.

Several times throughout the meeting, Dr. Choye stated she was pleased that objections to the redistricting were not based on any feeling that one school was academically inferior to another.

Some of the parents disagreed with Dr. Choye's estimations of the travel time, saying a total of a half hour was being added to their children's school days.

Dr. Choye said the need to keep a racial and ethnic balance in the schools, in accordance with state law, was also a factor. Country Club and Riverside parents stated their neighborhoods were "a proverbial United Nations," and that they believed Dr. Choye's recommendation was based primarily on racial and ethnic grounds and not the reasons she stated.

Dr. Choye and the parents are scheduled to meet again in January before the board votes on the superintendent's recommendation.

AUDIT

The board voted to accept the 1993-1994 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report prepared by Suplee, Cooney & Company of Elizabeth. Board member Richard R. Meade abstained from the vote.

The company's corrective action plan advised that

- The assistant superintendent for business remit the prior year unexpended balances for federal projects to the State Department of Education.

- That each line of appropriations recorded in the financial records agree with line items of the approved budget.

- Actual disbursements be reconciled to general ledger controls.

- All disbursements for student activities be backed up by invoices or paid bills.

PERSONNEL

In response to the personnel report of the superintendent, one woman

questioned the board regarding incident involving a custodian and pupil at Evergreen School. Although she stated her name when asking a question, this woman refused to provide *The Times* with the correct spelling of her name or to describe the incident until after she met with Dr. Choye. After the meeting, the woman stated she preferred not to speak *The Times* at all.

The board declined to discuss the personnel matter at the regular public meeting. The board indicated the matter would be discussed in executive session, and the board might return to public session.

The board did in fact return to public session after midnight. The board announced that it had voted to hire switch employee Edward Wittel from full to half-time effective December 23, to place Mr. Wittel on a paid leave of absence from December 23 to March 31 and to accept his resignation effective June 1.

The board's resolution did not state that Mr. Wittel had been involved in any "incident" or give any reason for its action. The resolution named board member Morris H. "Butch" Gillet and seconded by Mrs. Theresa Larkin was unanimously passed by roll call vote.

The board in the public session also approved several other personnel items involving leaves of absence, substitute teachers, et cetera.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Dr. Choye also reported on the status of strategic planning, saying that the strategic planners had met December 2 and 3 for an annual view.

It was decided, Dr. Choye said, focus on academics, clarity of language in strategic planning literature, finances and communication.

The strategic planners would prepare a glossary of terms and begin to set priorities for the 1995-1996 year.

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Union County to Receive \$9.2 Million in Savings In Fiscal 1996 as State Assumes Court Takeover

Legislation, Which Becomes Effective on Sunday, Was Approved by Voters in 1992; Only Essex County Property Owners Will Receive a Larger Reduction in Their Tax Bills Than Union County Owners

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Times

The state takeover of the county courts system, which was signed into law last week, will result in an estimated savings of \$9.2 million for Union County in fiscal year 1996 with 506 employees, including 27 judges, shifting over to the state payroll. The turnover becomes effective on Sunday, January 1.

The legislation was co-sponsored by State Senate President Donald T. DiFrancesco, who represents the 22nd Legislative District, which includes Westfield, Scotch Plains and Fanwood, among other communities, and Senator William L. Gormley of Atlantic County.

The final enactment of the law follows a year of negotiations between state and county officials, state employee labor leaders and representatives of the 77 unions that had been representing the county courts employees. Voters approved the takeover as a question on the ballot in 1992.

In total, 7,700 employees in the 21 counties will now receive their paychecks from the state. The Governor, Mrs. Christine Todd Whitman, has said the takeover will result in a savings of \$349 million to taxpayers by 1999.

Included in the takeover are 1,554

Superior Court Division employees, 1,494 Criminal Division workers, 1,451 Family Court staffers, 2,601 probation workers and 600 general support workers. These workers will join 1,500 employees currently in the state court system.

The law stipulates that counties pass on \$15.2 million in savings to taxpayers statewide by Friday, June 30, a total \$106.4 million for 1995-1996, \$187.4 million in 1996-1997, \$267.6 million for 1997-1998 and \$349 million for 1998-1999.

The state will finance the takeover by reportedly placing \$30.9 million into the current budget and by raising

million in the 1997-1998 budget and \$395.6 million in the 1998-1999 Budget.

State Supreme Court Chief Justice Robert N. Wilentz told reporters the takeover will provide equal justice throughout the state. He said court employees are currently paid based on a county's wealth or its labor policies. He said the new system will provide equal justice and equal pay for employees. He did say, however, that these two changes will not occur immediately. Each year the state will put more funds into the system until the takeover is complete by 1999.

Union County will receive the second highest savings in fiscal 1996 after Essex County which will see a savings of \$15.8 million. Following Union County in order are: Passaic, which will save \$9 million; Middlesex, \$8.5 million; Bergen, \$6.7 million; Monmouth, \$6.6 million; Morris, \$4 million; Somerset, \$3.1 million; Ocean, \$2.5 million; Hunterdon, \$1.7 million, and Warren, \$1.5 million. The legislation mandates that those costs go passed onto taxpayers.

In terms of employees, Union County is eighth in the total number of 506 court workers. Essex is first with 1,087 followed by Hudson with 676; Middlesex, 617; Camden, 592; Passaic, 564; Monmouth, 545; Bergen, 526; Mercer, 356; Morris, 342; Ocean, 329; Atlantic, 279; Burlington, 273; Gloucester, 219; Somerset, 184; Cumberland, 168; Warren, 107; Cape May, 96; Hunterdon, 82; Sussex, 80, and Salem, 72.

A ceremony was held at the Statehouse in Trenton December 19. Among those who participated were Chief Justice Wilentz and Senators DiFrancesco and Gormley.

Under the terms of the legislation new state employees will receive benefits based on civil service regulations. A compensation plan will be

in place by the summer of 1998 for state court employees.

Wage garnishment and child support orders along with vacation, time and sick leave that has been accumulated will all be transferred over to the state system and credited.

Those workers that are in a county pension retirement will now become members of the Public Employees Retirement System. Workers will become eligible for unemployment and health care benefits from the state.

County elected officials throughout the state had complained that they have had to raise taxes in order to pay for the courts.

Revamp to Affect Over 506 Employees At County Court House In Elizabeth

\$143.6 million in their next budget. The state will have to raise \$228.2 million in the 1996-1997 budget, \$315

Centennial Celebration To Begin on January 1

Bridge to Be Named After Pioneer Family

The year-long celebration of Fanwood's 100th birthday will get under way officially at the annual reorganization meeting of the Mayor and the Fanwood Council on Sunday, January 1, at noon.

At the conclusion of the reorganization meeting, the Mayor and council will depart to the bridge just west of the railroad station. In a brief ceremony, a plaque will be affixed to the bridge to name it officially as Sheelen Crossing in honor of one of Fanwood's pioneer families.

The Sheelens operated a country store for many years at the northwest corner of South Avenue and what was then Russell Road, now Sheelen Crossing. The landmark structure still stands on the same site.

After the plaque ceremony, there will be a light reception in the Fanwood Community Building — the old railroad station — where refreshments will be served. During the reception there will be a video presentation featuring the life of John M. Shippen, the first American-born black professional golfer.

John Shippen served as the candy master and the golf pro at Shady Rest Country Club in the 1920's and 1930's.

Shady Rest was the first African American Country Club in the United States, and it later became the Scotch Hills Municipal Golf Club.

Present at the celebration will be Mrs. Gayle Conlin of Fanwood attended in 19th century dress. Throughout the centennial events, she will assume the role of Fannie Wood, for whom legend has it, Fanwood was

given its name. All the citizens of Fanwood are invited to attend the inaugurating activity of a year-long celebration of the Fanwood Centennial.



TOP EMPLOYEE...MediShare Health Professionals and Home Infusion Therapy in Edison, an affiliate of The John F. Kennedy Medical Center in Edison, honored 12 of its employees during the recent World Home Care Week. Pictured, left to right, are Mrs. Judith L. Verney, Coordinator of Preventive and Primary Care Programs for the New Jersey Department of Health; honoree, Mrs. Gale Davis of Scotch Plains, and Mrs. Susan Marchese, Director of MediShare.

Township Man Arrested in Bombing Of Subway Train Remains Hospitalized

Edward J. Leary Charged With 45 Counts of Attempted Murder

Law enforcement officials continued to seize evidence over the weekend from the Scotch Plains home of Edward J. Leary who they claim is responsible for the December 21 firebombing of a New York City subway train which injured 45 persons, four critically, including Leary.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, township police and the Union County Prosecutor's Office have all assisted in searching Leary's home for evidence. Union County Superior Court Judge Ross Endalvie issued a search warrant of the suspects two-story, five-bedroom home at 12:45 a.m. on December 22.

The bomb, which consisted of a mayonnaise jar filled with gasoline and an external lighter and a timing device, exploded onboard the fifth car of the 10-car No. 4 subway train line as it stopped at the Fulton Street station which is just one-block east of

the World Trade Center.

Leary, a 49-year-old unemployed computer analyst, has reportedly been charged with 45 counts of attempted murder, nine counts of first-degree assault, one count of third-degree assault and possession of a weapon. He was expected to be arraigned, possibly this week, while still in his hospital bed in the burn unit of the New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center in Manhattan.

Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau said Leary faces life in prison if he is convicted on all counts. New York Governor-Elect George Pataki said the suspect should face the death penalty if he is convicted.

Leary's attorney, Stephen Murphy, who has gained notoriety by representing defendants in the controversial Howard Beach and Bensonhurst cases in New York City, told reporters his client is an innocent victim who has been unfairly tried and convicted by the news media.

It was also reported last week that New Jersey Transit authorities said they did not believe Leary was responsible for placing two pipe bombs on its No. 114 last month. The bus line runs from Dunellen through Union County including Scotch Plains and into Manhattan. Both devices were found by the driver of the empty bus. While a 14-inch device was determined to be fake, the other seven-inch device was real and was detonated in the Watchung Reservation by the Union County Bomb Squad.

In placing together their case against Leary, authorities believe the firebombing was part of a series of planned bombings to extort money from the New York City Transit Authority.

Police told reporters that they removed a number of papers from Leary's 1987 Dodge which they al-

lege gave 12 pages of specific notes on the suspect's strategy. Included were sketches of bombs and an outline of his plan to terrorize the city subway system.

One note reportedly said, "Place bombs in subway, create fear, make demands, call police, call Federal Bureau of Investigation." After searching the notes they found in a car and house and in his Brooklyn apartments, law enforcement officials said Leary referred to himself as "The Mad Bomber."

Authorities have also said they believe Leary had intended the bomb to go off after he exited the train as the train was in a subway tunnel under the East River.

Some 61 items were removed from Leary on December 23 and impounded. They included three computers, cassette tapes and compact disks.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

DEADLINES HELP PAPERS SERVE YOU

Those preparing press releases for submission to *The Westfield Leader* or *The Times* are reminded all copy should be in the hands of the Editor at 50 El Street, Westfield, by 4 p.m. on the Friday before the Thursday on which they wish it to appear.

Leader releases also may be mailed to Post Office Box 250, Westfield 07091, and Times releases to Post Office Box 368, Scotch Plains, 07076, meet the above requirements.

For events which happen the week end prior to publication, press releases should reach the Editor by Monday the week of publication at 10 a.m.

Obituaries will be taken until Tuesday at 5 p.m.

For events which are planned weeks or months in advance, we encourage submission of stories as early as possible prior to the event.

The above deadlines are meant to enable us to prepare your copy correctly and fully.

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