

Prime Time

Forced Retirement Hurts the Kids, Too

by Harriet Miller

A professor of sociology is about to lose his job at the New Paltz branch of the State University of New York because he committed the sin of passing his 70th birthday.



The students at New Paltz don't want Dr. Kenneth Skelton to be fired, and herein lies a lesson: Young people can be hurt just as much as older people by the penalties imposed by society on the old.

Said Richard Adler just before his May graduation from SUNY at New Paltz: "I've been here four years. My first class was with Dr. Skelton and if it wasn't for Dr. Skelton I would have left. He's just a very inspiring person. He has inspired a lot of people to do a lot of serious studying. I would say that he is probably the best teacher on campus."

Adler helped lead a group of 20 students who call themselves the Committee Against Mandatory Retirement. They measured the student body's interest in the issue by circulating a petition urging an end to forced retirement at the school. When half of the student body signed in less

than a week, the group decided to act on their mandate. They held rallies, met with state legislators, and approached the college administration on several occasions to request a waiver of the retirement policy for Dr. Skelton. The administration has refused to change or modify its policy.

Adler said, "We're really concerned with the principle. It is our education. Where is the line to be drawn when we have no input into what goes on around here? You just can't judge a person's competence by their race, by their sex, or by their age. And that's exactly what's being done." But, continued Adler, members of the school administration "are not interested in anything that has to do with student opinion. If they had an interest in quality education they would recognize a very effective teacher — and there are not many around."

He added that the number of students Dr. Skelton teaches equals the teaching load of nearly five average faculty members at New Paltz. That suggests, among other things, that the professor's presence means an enormous financial saving for the institution.

The committee's soundings of New York state legislators point to the possible January 1978 pas-

sage of a law banning mandatory retirement in the state, an event that may come five months too late to save Dr. Skelton's job. His contract expires this August.

And at Pennsylvania State University, Prof. Ambrose Klain has run into the same administrative arbitrariness as Dr. Skelton has found at New Paltz. The only difference is that at Penn State a professor is too old to teach when he or she turns 65.

Prof. Klain, a postwar refugee from Czechoslovakia, is worried about having to support his wife and two adolescent children on a retirement salary. He has had to go to court to try and save a job for which he received an award for excellence in 1972. His suit is pending.

We may well question what the schools are teaching the students by decreeing that teachers must retire at an arbitrary age, whatever the quality of their work. When the students lose their best teachers, and the teachers lose their jobs, who is left to claim victory?

(Harriet Miller is the executive director of the non-profit, non-partisan National Retired Teachers Association and American Association of Retired Persons in Washington, D.C.)

Tips For Tightening Your Home

One of the biggest and most costly wastes of energy in the home is the unnecessary loss of heat in the winter and increase of heat in the summer through walls, ceilings, floors, doors and windows.

Insulating your home properly is one of the key ways to stop it from being an energy-waster. In addition, these other tips, from the Edison Electric Institute, will help you conserve energy:

1. Weatherstrip and caulk around all windows and doors. If they are leaking air, you may be increasing your heating bills by 15 to 30 percent.

2. Install storm windows or insulating glass. This will cut in half the amount of heat lost through the windows of your home.

3. By drawing shades or draperies on cold days when the sun isn't shining, you can also cut heat lost through windows.

4. Close the damper in your fireplace tightly when you're not using it.

5. And close the doors to the attic, basement, garage, or other unheated parts of your home so you won't spend money heating or cooling spaces when they're not being used.

Orea slates picnic at Trojan

Columbia County Unit 22, Oregon Retired Educators Association, has scheduled its annual picnic for noon, Wednesday, August 3 at Trojan Park near Goble.

Vernonia members of the group will furnish salads and desserts, and other dishes will be provided from other local groups. Each one attending should take table service. All retired teachers and other education association personnel are invited, whether they are members or not. Members are urged to invite those who might be interested in becoming members.

Vernonia members of the unit have accepted a community project in connection with Mercedes Proehl, city librarian, to clip and file all items which might be of reference value in the future. Different members have volunteered for each category listed and the file will eventually be a part of the reference facilities of the library.



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