

# \$3 Million School Ready To Go But Teachers, Students Lacking

## Residents Twice Refuse to Raise Expense Taxes

Inkster, Mich. — (UPI) — All the clocks are working, ticking away the school year. Lathes, grinders and drill presses stand ready in the classroom shops. Most of the classroom desks are in place. The gym floor gleams with varnish and the swimming pool needs only to be filled with water.

The spanking new \$3 million Hamilton J. Robichaud High school here has just about everything — except students and teachers.

Residents of Dearborn Township School District No. 8 approved spending the money for the new high school which was to open this fall.

But then they balked and twice turned down referendums to raise taxes to provide money for operating expenses and teachers for the new school.

"Too many frills," the taxpayers complained. "We can't afford this kind of thing."

On Double Shifts  
So the new high school, which was going to be the pride of this community west of Detroit, stands idle while

junior high and high school students attend classes on split shifts in the old Roosevelt School building about a block away.

The new school is named for the district's present superintendent who has been on the job since 1942. Robichaud finds this embarrassing and insists he did not want the school named for him.

Robichaud and high school principal Ben J. Karwowski don't, however, think the new school is filled with frills.

High school juniors and seniors attending classes on split shifts at Roosevelt now get, for the most part, only four courses a semester — the bare minimum for graduating or being admitted to a college.

If the new school had been opened, all students would have been able to take six courses.

Better Equipped  
More important, according to Robichaud and Karwowski, the new school building has the equipment and room to provide "vocational" type courses that cannot be offered in the old building — courses such as salesmanship, industrial mechanics, electronics and home economics which require well-equipped laboratories and shops.

While old, red-brick Roosevelt school is jammed with students on double shifts, just a block away stands the beautiful new school, tan brick

with blue trimming on the outside.

The school is built in three wings with a circular library at the end of the "academic wing." Glass-enclosed corridors with tile floors connect

the wings. Another wing holds "shop" and home economics classrooms and science laboratories filled with brand new lathes and sewing machines and other equipment. There is also a 75-foot long

swimming pool, a huge gymnasium and an auditorium that seats 600 in soft, theater-like chairs.

What is the financial problem that keeps the new school empty of students?

Lacks Industry  
Robichaud says the district's territory is a typical "bedroom suburb," mostly residential property with little industry to help bear the tax load.

The neighboring city of Dearborn, for example, has a property tax base of about \$29,000 per student, thanks to industry like the Ford Motor Co.

But District No. 8 has a tax base of only about \$6,170 per student, the ninth lowest among Wayne county's 43 school districts.

This means a tax increase lands hard on homeowners. The school tax rate is now \$23.95 per \$1,000 assessed property valuation.

Its low tax base makes District No. 8 a "distressed" district under state law and it gets extra money from the state—but not enough to solve the problems.

Robichaud and other school officials talk hopefully of getting the school open before this school year ends, perhaps even before the second semester begins in February.

A citizens advisory council is at work on plans to get the new building in use. But the taxpayers still must be convinced.



YOUNG PRINCE GREETED — Princess Michiko lifts her eight-month-old son, Prince Hiro, in her arms while Crown Prince Akihito looks on. The young Japanese Imperial couple had just returned from a 16-day visit to the United States. The infant prince was awaiting his parents at Togu Palace at Tokyo. At right background is an unidentified nurse. (UPI Telephoto)



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