

TIFL 0056265

Teachers union president says proposed smoking ban at schools bargaining issue

By R. Michael Anderson

Smokers at the Duval County School Board meeting last night may have felt like sneaking out to burn one in the parking lot.

A public hearing on a proposal to ban tobacco at all schools received a hearty endorsement from a crowd of nonsmokers.

But the head of the Duval County teachers union told the board that it could not impose a smoking prohibition without the union's approval.

Luan Bennett, president of Duval Teachers United, said the place to discuss the issue is the collective bargaining table.

"We consider this area related to past practice and rights subject to the collective-bargaining law," Ms. Bennett said. "This is a bargainable issue."

Teachers have been allowed to smoke during breaks in teacher lounges and other designated areas in schools for years.

To suddenly tell those teachers that they are no longer allowed to

smoke during the work day would be a change in working conditions that should be negotiated at the bargaining table, Ms. Bennett said.

But board member Bill Bosworth, who suggested the tobacco ban, said the policy, if approved next month, would not be enforced until Jan. 1. That would allow sufficient time to provide smoking-cessation programs for those employees who want to quit, he said.

It also would give die-hard smokers who don't want to quit several months to get accustomed to not

being able to smoke during working hours, Bosworth said.

He called for a survey to be conducted of all students, parents and school system employees before the board votes on the issue.

Several board members said they supported Bosworth's intent, but that they had reservations about forcing smokers to abstain from smoking all day.

"I agree we ought to encourage employees to quit smoking, but I do have a real reservation about us imposing on the teachers a condition

of work," said board member Donald Buckley, a former school principal.

"I agree with you, Mr. Buckley," board Chairman Billy Parker said.

Board member Jack Nooney, who said he quit smoking many years ago, said Bosworth's proposal "is a very sensitive issue."

"We need to go cautiously," Nooney said.

Nooney also asked School Board attorney Neil McArthur if the proposal was a collective-bargaining issue.

McArthur said it probably was, but that Florida's Clean Air Act preempts all local ordinances, so it may also mean that the board has a right to order employees not to smoke.

The attorney said he would have to research the issue further before giving a final opinion.

Most of the people who spoke during the hearing encouraged the board to proceed rapidly toward eliminating smoking and chewing tobacco from the schools.

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FLORIDA TIMES UNION, JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA, JULY 19, 1988

IS YOUR JOB A DEAD END?

542 SALES-AGENTS 543 SALES-AGENTS 544 SALES-AGENTS

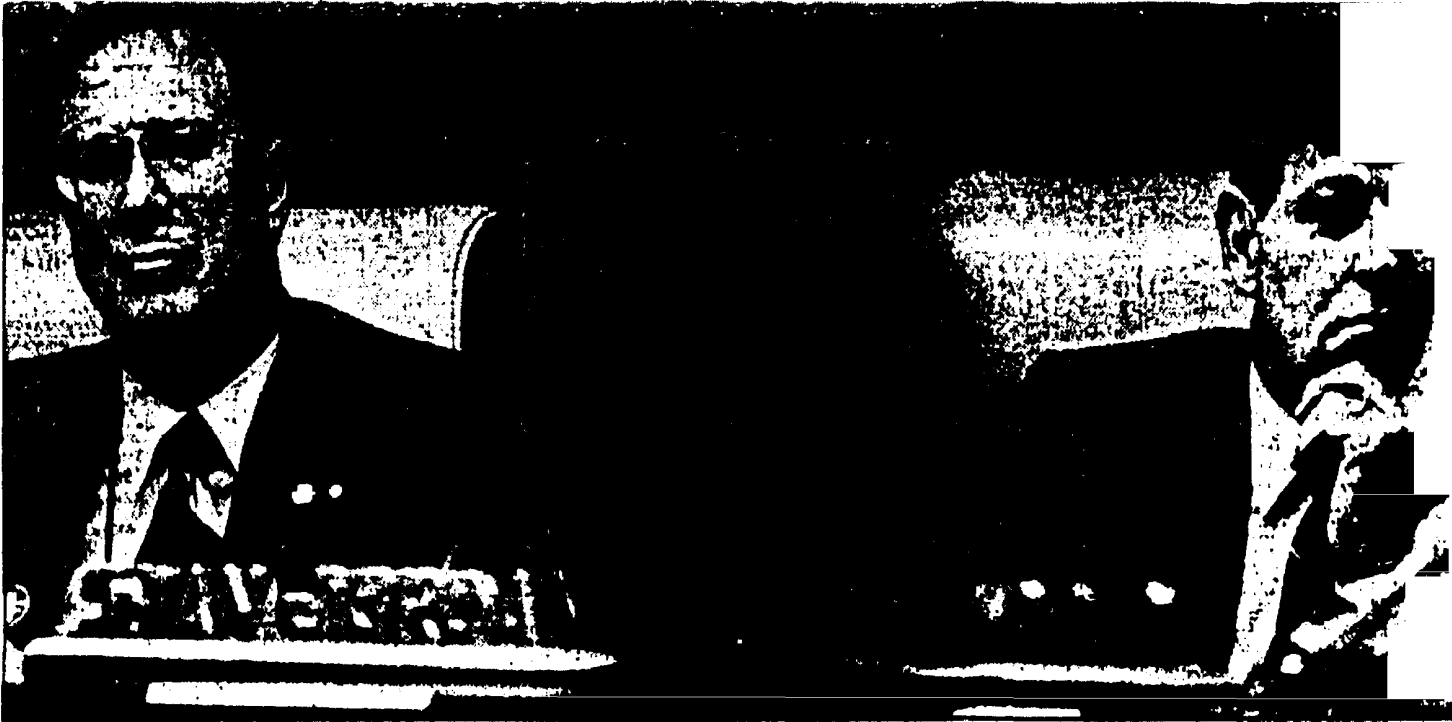
548 TRADES

555 PART-TIME 555 PART-TIME 557 PART-TIME

Electrician \$8/Hr

The Florida Times-Union, Jacksonville, Tuesday, July 19, 1988

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School Board members Bill Bosworth (left) and Stan Jordan listen as proponents of banning all smoking at Duval schools present their arguments at a School Board meeting. No decision or proposal was made at last night's meeting. — Ron

Union says school smoking ban subject to bargaining

(From Page B-1)

Jerome P. Rothstein, an oral surgeon and president of the Duval County chapter of the American Cancer Society, said the organization would offer programs to help employees kick the nicotine habit.

Not only would improved health result from a smoke-free school system, Rothstein said, but taxpayers would win, too, in reduced employee absenteeism, lower disability costs, reduced health insurance rates and lower maintenance costs for plant facilities.

Ivan Zimmerman, director of cardio-pulmonary services at St. Vincent's Medical Center, told the board it had an opportunity to improve the health of all its employees by prohibiting smoking on the job.

Non-smokers can suffer health problems by inhaling "side-stream smoke" from nearby co-workers puffing away on cigarettes, Zimmerman claimed.

Jill Varnes, president of the Northeast Florida branch of the American Lung Association, said her organization would be happy to provide assistance to employees trying to quit smoking.

She said studies have shown that "one smoking teacher can cost up to \$2,500 in health care costs, or substitute costs."

The board will vote on the issue next month.

In other business at last night's

meeting, the board:

- Postponed, again, a decision on whether to remodel and expand the Douglas Anderson School of the Arts or convert the facility to a junior high school and establish Landon Junior High as the new school of the arts.

- Several parents of Douglas Anderson students urged the board not to change the school's function.

- Some of the parents said they thought that the proposed change, suggested by board Vice Chairman Stan Jordan, was a "political power play."

- Superintendent Herb Sang has remained steadfastly opposed to Jordan's suggestion, and has presented a report showing that the move would cost more than the \$10 million allocated for improvements at Anderson.

- Approved the continuation of the existing health insurance program for employees, even though it will cost the board an additional \$5.5 million in rates this year.

- Scheduled a public hearing for 7 p.m. July 25 on a tentative \$383 million budget for 1988-89. The board also re-adopted the current \$360 million budget because the fiscal year ended June 30.

- Approved a grant application seeking \$1.3 million from the state for a pre-kindergarten early-intervention program to help 4-year-old children prepare for school.



Jerome Rothstein, representing the American Cancer Society, urges the School Board to adopt a smoking ban.