

Militancy not bad, MEA official tells teachers

Nobody brought out a guitar for a round of the old union song, "Solidarity Forever," but the issues of labor contracts and strikes were very much on the minds of upper Thumb teachers Friday night.

About 125 of them from the 11 school districts being represented in contract talks by the Tri-County Bargaining Association gathered at the Colony House, northeast of Cass City, for hot dogs, beer and soft drinks, and a message that striking may be the best way to get what they want.

Delivering the message was Luis Diaz of the negotiations office of the Michigan Education Association, with which the TCBA is affiliated.

Of the 11 districts, as of Friday, a settlement had only been reached in North Huron, and that was still pending ratification by both sides.

The other districts in which the TCBA represents the teachers are Cass City, Owen-Gage, Akron-Fairgrove, Elkhart-Pigeon-Bay Port (Lakers), Unionville-Sebewaing, Decker-ville, Harbor Beach, Millington and the Tuscola and Huron Intermediate School Districts.

Other than North Huron, the only optimistic note concerned Akron-Fairgrove, where, it was reported, a settlement is likely before the start of school.

DIAZ HAD NO SOONER started speaking, about 8:45, when about 40 Cass City teachers started coming in, after having met for three hours and decided to strike if no settlement is reached by the start of school Sept. 3. They were wearing "We need a contract" buttons. (See story elsewhere in this issue.)

The MEA executive and former teacher talked about what he termed equity and fairness.

It isn't fair, he claimed, for teachers in these inflationary times to go for a long period without a renewed contract — "You're wiping out your savings." — and it isn't fair for some teachers to make only half as much as other teachers "just around the corner" with the same education and experience.

He drew a chorus of "whews" from the crowd when he said some of the contracts settled so far elsewhere in Michigan provide that in the final year, teachers with master's degrees at the top of the pay scale will make \$32,000 per year.

The average teacher salary now in Michigan, he said, is more than \$18,000 per year.

THEN HE SAID, "MILITANCY is not bad . . . It provides better contracts."

Last year, there were 70 teacher strikes in Michigan, the most ever. "The increased number of strikes has produced a larger number of settlements early."

For the upcoming school year, Diaz said, the MEA started with 267 locals without contracts. There have been 47 settlements so far and, he claimed, "all create a pattern . . . with some kind of reflection toward the cost of living." Many of the settlements, he said, have provided for double digit pay increases per year, that is, at least 10 percent. (The 1979 increase in the cost of living was more than 13 percent.)

The obvious key to reaching agreement, he noted, is that, "Both parties have got to want to come to an agreement."

He urged the teachers to use all means to reach agreement with their respective school boards and that that "might mean you might have to withhold your services."

He added a precaution that

"sometimes the contracts (resulting) from strikes aren't as productive as we would like them to be" but the next contracts are "unbelievable" as both sides don't want another strike.

"STRIKE" WASN'T THE commonly used term Friday night. Preferred was "withholding of services" and "job actions."

Whatever the term used, such actions are illegal under Michigan law and more than one teacher wanted to know about the odds of getting fired if they went on strike.

That possibility exists, Diaz responded, but the odds are against it happening. Of 600 teacher strikes in Michigan since 1968, teachers in only three districts lost their jobs. (One of them was in Reese.)

He added, in response to another question, that in court cases involving those districts where teachers were successfully fired, the

courts have laid out a procedure school boards must follow in order to do so.

That doesn't mean school boards will follow it, but if they don't, Diaz pledged, MEA attorneys will defend the teachers. "If you are on an approved job action . . . everything you need, you will get."

FOLLOWING HIS PRESENTATION, Diaz was asked by the Chronicle if teachers in all districts represented by the TCBA might walk out in support of teachers in districts without contracts.

That won't happen, he said, because such an action could be an unfair (and thus illegal) labor practice.

He wouldn't say if the goal is for the TCBA to eventually negotiate a single contract for all teachers in the upper Thumb, though it would be legal to do so.

He denied that the long-range goal of the MEA is to negotiate a single contract for all teachers in Michigan.

Suspect held

The Tuscola County Sheriff's Department is investigating the possibility that a Cass City man is connected with at least 10-15 burglaries in the area.

Presently facing a single charge of breaking and entering an unoccupied dwelling is Clifford Billings, 61, of Lot 14, Walnut Trailer Park, S. Seeger Street.

He was arrested Tuesday, Aug. 19. He is charged with breaking into a barn on E. Dutcher Road, Ellington township, the previous day.

He was arraigned before District Judge Richard F. Kern, who scheduled a preliminary examination Sept. 2 and preliminary exam Sept. 5. Bond was set at \$10,000, which as of Tuesday afternoon, had not yet

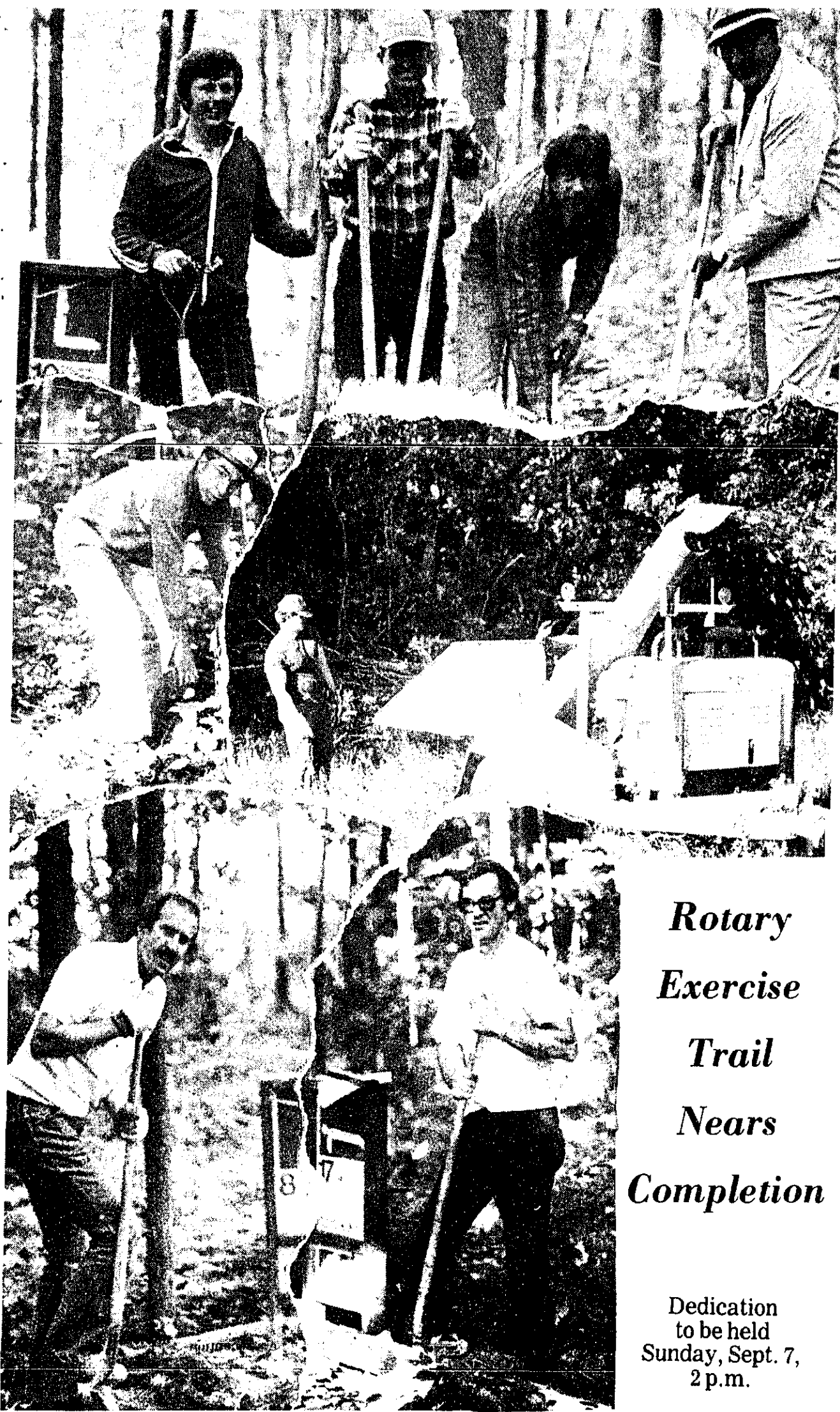
been posted.

According to Detective Larry Walker, the suspect was caught with some of the items taken from the barn in his possession.

Officers are now attempting to trace numerous items found in his mobile home, believed to have been stolen. Most are small, such as tools, Walker said. A "truck load" of suspected stolen items was recovered.

In addition, the mobile home was confiscated and hauled away Monday, as it is also believed to have been stolen.

At this point, according to Walker, it isn't possible to say whether more than one person was involved in the suspected 10-15 break-ins "that we know of."



Rotary Exercise Trail Nears Completion

Dedication to be held Sunday, Sept. 7, 2 p.m.

FOR THE BETTER part of two years the Cass City Rotary Club has been working to complete an exercise trail in the woods at Cass City Recreational Park. This was part of the crew one night this summer that worked to complete the project. Top, from left: Newell Harris, Bill Kritzman, Bob Schott, Jim Bauer. Second row: Don Tonti and Jim Jensen, who is helping make trail chips for underbrush. Jensen is the son of Rotarian Ken Jensen and Mrs. Jensen. Bottom row, from left, Tom Proctor and Mike Weaver. (Complete details of the upcoming dedication and how the trail operates will be presented next week.)

Union to help telethon

Members of United Steelworkers Local 6222 of Cass City and other volunteers will be manning telephones Sunday and Monday and conducting other fund raising activities in conjunction

with the Jerry Lewis Labor Day Telethon Against Muscular Dystrophy.

The union, which represents employees at General Cable, raised more than \$5,000 last year for the fight

against the disease, according to Helen Bartle, one of the local organizers. It was the first time it undertook the effort.

Center of activities will be the union hall in the Hahn

Real Estate Building, 6240 W. Main Street, next to Veronica's Restaurant, with hours the same as for the telethon, 9 p.m. Sunday to 6:30 p.m. Monday.

The Cass City telephone number for persons who would like to phone in their pledges will be broadcast during the local station portion of the national broadcast, which will be about 15 minutes of every hour.

In this area, the telethon will be broadcast over WJEM, Channel 5, Saginaw. As there was last year, there will be a fishbowl in front of the Hahn building for persons who would like to drop off their contributions in person.

Children who would like to canvass the town can stop by the union hall at 8 a.m. Monday to pick up canisters.

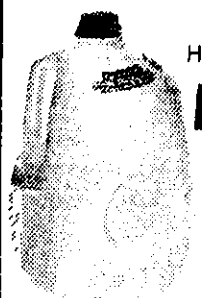
Nationally, slightly more than \$30 million was raised in the Jerry Lewis Telethon last year.

Of the money raised last year, according to the Muscular Dystrophy Association, 83.4 percent was spent for program services, 1.38 percent for fund raising and 2.8 percent for management and general operations.

Of the money spent for program services in 1979, \$18.03 million went for research, \$33.26 million for medical services, \$2.02 million for professional education and training and \$3.27 million for public health education.

In Michigan, the association operates a clinic at Midland, summer camp at Port Sanilac for children with muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular diseases and supports research at the University of Michigan, Michigan State University and Wayne State University.

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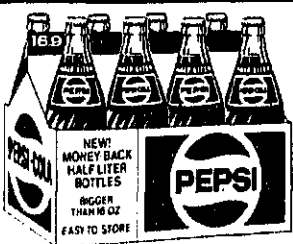
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