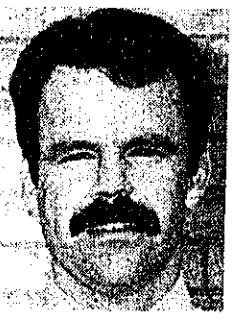


## PEDALING AROUND

## Struck and unstruck

By Mike Eliasohn



As a reporter, I have mixed emotions about strikes and labor negotiations.

News is always nice, but like any issue where there are two sides, covering the story can be a bit of a pain.

I am writing this on Thursday, Aug. 28. Come Wednesday morning, the day the Chronicle comes out in which you will be reading this, I know I will be taking one of two photographs for the front page.

The photograph will either be of children returning to school or teachers carrying picket signs.

I will get more mileage newswise if the teachers are on strike -- heaven knows how many stories will be written before a settlement is reached -- but like probably everyone, prefer that agreement is reached without a strike.

Having never observed a negotiating session, perhaps I don't understand why it is often so hard to reach an agreement.

It makes no difference whether it is the United Auto Workers and General Motors or a school board and teachers.

Both sides know when they sit down for the first time they eventually will reach an agreement.

I suppose I sound idealistic -- especially for a cynic like me -- but I don't understand all the rigmarole that is part of negotiating.

Management offers much less than it knows it will have to give and the workers submit a list of proposals (a polite word for "demands") that is much more than they know they are going to get.

Eventually, sometimes after a lengthy strike, both sides reach a compromise. Why couldn't they have compromised in the beginning?

The answer, of course, is that management thinks it can get away with less by holding out and the workers figure they can get more by holding out.

School boards, at least in theory, have more reason to hold out than private employers. Unlike General Motors, a school board cannot raise its prices to compensate for higher wages.

Complicating the situation is the question of what is considered a fair wage for someone who works less than nine months a year, granted that some work very hard during that period.

The way teacher pay is determined has changed quite a bit from the days when the superintendent figured out his budget for the year and then told the teachers, "Here is how

much you are going to get." Both sides in most instances now have professional negotiators to do most of the talking.

Part of the reason is that teacher contracts are very complex these days and it takes an expert to understand them. The agreement with the Cass City teachers that expired runs 37 pages; Owen-Gage's was 33.

The major reason for professional negotiators, I suspect, is that it allows both sides to be nastier. It's the idea of a hired gun.

It's hard to be demanding when the persons on both sides of the table see each other every day and may play golf or bowl together.

But whereas the superintendent, if doing all the negotiating, can say to a teacher negotiator, "Now, John, you know we can't afford that," when it's two professionals doing the talking, such niceties are presumably missing.

I get the impression that if Cass City teachers go on strike, they feel the public will take their side -- that is, put the pressure on the school board to settle.

I don't have much supporting evidence, but I suspect the opposite is often true.

The public doesn't give teachers the respect it once did, but it also feels that as educators of its children, if teachers are to be respected, they shouldn't be striking.

The result is that many members of the public, instead of supporting the teachers, think of them as greedy.

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Nobody is perfect department. Albert Miljare died in 1918, not 1912, as mentioned in last week's centennial farm story.

Someone finally told me. A month ago when we ran a photo of Germania Road being blacktopped between Bay City-Forestville and Cass City Roads, I said it was in Evergreen township. I'm sure Greenleaf township would be happy if Evergreen helped pay for it.

At the last Elkland township board meeting, a complaint was lodged about a gravel pit operation in neighboring Greenleaf township. I should have asked him sooner, but Greenleaf Supervisor Gerald Bock said there were two operations, maintained by different asphalt paving contractors, and both temporary.

It may be more difficult to make friends than to make enemies, but friends are well worth the trouble.



**TAKING PLEDGES** in the Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy telethon Monday afternoon in Cass City were, from left, Sherry Kappen, Betty Greenleaf and Karen Fischer. The local effort, sponsored by United Steelworkers Local 6222 netted \$2,239 in telephone pledges and \$1,232 in cash contributions, down from the more than \$5,000 raised last year by the union. Nationally, a record \$31.1 million was raised.

Life in this world will be better when people learn to bear other folks' burdens as cheerfully as they air their faults.



**DROPPING IN** the money collected by him and his brother Rob to combat Muscular Dystrophy was Scott Albee. They collected about \$60. Guarding the fishbowl for cash contributions were John McDonald and Jackie Heronemus.

## Summer youth job program big success

The federally funded Summer Youth Employment Program, now ended, was a big success, it was reported last Thursday to the Thumb Area Consortium Administrative Board.

For the first time since the program began in 1969, all available positions were filled.

Slightly more than 400 youths, ages 14-21, from low income families received employment with various government agencies, paid at the minimum wage of \$3.10 an hour for 20-40 hours per week of work.

The Human Development Commission, which ran the program for the consortium, overspent its original allocation of \$461,101. Consortium Executive Director Frank Lenard worked out a 3-for-1 swap with the state Bureau of Employment and Training (BET), receiving \$30,000 in unused summer youth program funds, in exchange for which the consortium gave up \$10,000 in Youth Employment Training Program funds, which is a year-round program.

The summer youth program also received a clean bill of health from the state bureau, an employee of which interviewed participants and worksite supervisors Aug. 18-19. A review of records was conducted earlier.

"As no major problems surfaced in the review," the letter from BET official Milton O. Waters said, "no corrective actions are needed." As always, Region 7A (Thumb Area Consortium) has demonstrated its ability to operate an exemplary Summer Youth Employment Program.

In other action, the consortium board adopted an affirmative action timetable for the fiscal year that starts Oct. 1. The timetable sets goals for percentage of minorities to be enrolled in each of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) programs run by the consortium.

The "bench marks" are set by the state, based on data obtained from various sources. By Sept. 30, 1981, the timetable calls for women to make up 45-55 percent of total enrollment (the percentage varies, depending on the program); blacks, 1 percent; Hispanics, 4.4-5.6 percent; other non-whites, 1 percent; handicapped, 11.1 percent, and older workers (55 and over), 4.3-5 percent.

As of June 30 of this year, the percentages enrolled were: females 46-64.9 percent; blacks, 4.1 percent;

Hispanics, 2.1-5 percent; other non-whites, 3-2 percent; handicapped, 6.3-12.3 percent, and older workers, 1.2-3.1 percent.

If the goals aren't met, Lenard said, the federal government might withhold some funds, but he doesn't expect that will happen as long as an earnest effort is made to comply with the minority requirements.

Reports submitted for the April-June quarter for the various CETA programs run by the consortium showed 7 percent of its total funds being spent for administration, versus 15 percent allowable, and the lowest of the 10 consortiums in the state.

The Thumb consortium will spend a total of almost \$7.8 million this year for programs and administration.

The board authorized leasing of an IBM photocopier and collator (sorter), for \$711 per month, which includes service and making of up to 15,000 copies per month, to replace another machine. The consortium makes from 8,000-10,000 copies a month now.

CETA Title VI work project requests approved included four workers for Elmwood township, four for Columbia, four for Wells and three for Elkland, all to cut roadside brush in conjunction with the Tuscola County Road Commission.

Also approved were three workers for Grant township to cut brush and clean up the cemetery and four in Sheridan township to paint the township hall.

Most of the projects will expire by Sept. 30, when funding runs out.

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