

## The strike: How and why

by Ron Miller, Scott Jacobson, and Robert Feder

This was more than an ordinary labor dispute — more than a disagreement over salary or fringe benefits. When the rank-and-filers of the Niles Township Federation of Teachers voted on September 3 to walk off the job, they were to raise serious questions about the relationship between a school board and its teachers. And the opening week of school for 7,600 students would be disrupted.

### The strike begins

The union meeting at Skokie's Holiday Inn on Labor Day proved to be the sparkplug that triggered the teachers' involvement. Ken Drum, the cool, efficient president of Local 1274, Niles Township, presided over a well-organized, but emotional conference which resulted in a 240 to 30 vote to strike and position picket lines around the three high schools and the district offices. Tuesday morning the picketing began, and 93 per cent of the faculty of 475, including many non-union teachers, either participated in or refused to cross the picket lines.

### Issues delay bargaining

Basically, there were two major centers of dispute. One was a clause in the previous contract which gave non-tenure teachers — those being evaluated for permanent hiring — the right to file a complaint against any evaluations they felt were unfair. The Board, finding this clause too restrictive in its selection of permanent teachers, wanted to delete it in the new (1973) contract. Its displeasure with the clause was compounded further by the union's victories in two appeals to Board decisions, and a third which is now pending in court.

But the union tenaciously refused to surrender this right. "If you don't have a right of grievance, then any teacher can be intimidated," said James Dougherty, Easthi's union vice-president. The Board eventually conceded.

**ANOTHER PORTION** of the contract which bogged down negotiations regarded supervisory duties for the teachers. This year, the Board decided to avoid lay supervision, replacing it with faculty supervision in the cafeteria and halls, because "... teachers can more humanistically apply the rules of the school to the kids," said Mrs. Shirley Garland, president of the Board. She stated that the Board was recognizing that teachers can communicate more openly with students, and that students always resented the "hired outsiders."

The teachers do not deny their obligation to prevent and correct trouble in areas outside the classroom. But they ask why they must be assigned to such tasks. Union spokesman Charles Buddeen believes that assigned supervision can be abused, and has been used by the administration to harass certain faculty members. Furthermore, said the strikers, the Board's proposal would have taken valuable time from the teachers, time they normally used to provide additional help for students. The Board proposal was that supervision should be

included in the list of possible assignments (usually related to planning and problem solving) that teachers are required to fulfill in addition to their classes. But the teachers want assignments where they would be helping students, rather than policing them. Any supervisory jobs should be voluntary, and should pay extra, believe union officials, who eventually won this point also.

### Other issues resolved

Salary was involved in the discussions, but union officials insisted that it was not a cause of the strike. Teachers were willing to bargain without a walkout. They did request more than what the Board was offering, most notably, a cost-of-living salary increase every year in addition to the regular increment — the annual increase awarded for the teachers' additional experience in the district.

The Board offered a package which didn't guarantee that the teachers would keep ahead of inflation. District 219 Superintendent Wesley Gibbs said that it was almost impossible for the Board to make such a guarantee when its own budget is unprotected.

Finally a compromise was reached. For the first year of the contract, the teachers will receive a five per cent increase, plus increment. Moderate increases will follow for the next two years.

A minor issue in the strike was the request by union officers for released time to attend union business, a provision of the old contract. Dr. Gibbs asserted that the union does not work for the interests of the students or the Board, but only for its own. The union was granted a continuation of this provision anyway.

### Strike unexpected

The strike provided both sides with some surprises. The Board had been certain that the teachers would not walk out, at least, Dr. Gibbs had assured them as such. And Drum, who had labored diligently last spring to elect three candidates to the Board who would be sympathetic to the union, found that neither Ben Lipin, George Hanus, nor Mrs. Evelyn Rosenzweig greatly influenced the attitude of the Board toward the union.

### Working for an agreement

The bargaining sessions began slowly, according to reports (they were closed to the public). Negotiators sifted through the legal terminology and settled minor differences. When chief negotiators Wesley Wildman (Board) and Drum reached the major issues, it became apparent that both sides were very determined to get what they sought, although Dr. Gibbs said that the Board was in a "flexible position" and was not restrained by any "irrevocable policies." Assisted by a mediator, Lawrence Doppelt, the two sides met for more than 20 hours during the weekend of September 8 and 9, and reached the settlement Sunday.



(Photo by Michael Fryer)

## Timetable of events

Saturday, April 14

Three "liberal" Board of Education members (Ben Lipin, George Hanus, Evelyn Rosenzweig) elected, largely thanks to massive Teachers' Union efforts.

Saturday, June 30

Teacher's old contract officially expires.

Sunday, September 2

Board-Union contract negotiations reach an impasse. Union leaders request strike vote.

Monday, September 3

Union members vote to strike all three Nilehi schools, 240 to 30.

Tuesday, September 4

Teachers' picket lines formed. Dr. Gibbs calls for resumption of negotiations. Union rally stresses "solidarity."

Wednesday, September 5

7,600 Nilehi students told not to report for first-day classes. Board-Union negotiations resume.

Sunday, September 9

Following marathon weekend bargaining sessions, negotiators reach tentative contract settlement. Union members approve new contract, 247 to 25.

Monday, September 10

Ending their six-day strike, teachers report for Institute Day at all three divisions. Board holds public meeting.

Tuesday, September 11

7,600 students report to classes at East, West, and North.

## Contract terms resolved

During contract negotiations between the District 219 School Board and the Niles Township Federation of Teachers, sixteen issues were resolved. Of the sixteen points, the following nine seem to be the most controversial.

### 1. Non-tenure teachers.

With the exception of first year teachers, non-tenure teachers have the right to grieve dismissal. There will be a minimum of four evaluations per year.

### 2. Grievance procedures.

A tenure teacher may grieve dismissal and arbitrate. The teacher may file in court or agency and grieve, pursuing claim if Board rejects arbitrator's award.

### 3. Teacher evaluation.

Remains the same as old contract, which includes no electronic eavesdropping without prior knowledge of the teacher.

### 4. Supervision.

Supervision in non-academic areas will be voluntary and paid. If more supervisors are needed, assignments will be rotated. The board may reject unsuitable volunteers.

### 5. Salary.

Teachers will receive 5 per cent increase of pay the first year. During the second and third year of the contract teachers will receive an increase of 4½ per cent plus ½ the increase of the cost of living.

### 6. Duration of contract.

The contract tentatively accepted by the union will expire in three years on August 31, 1976.

### 7. Make-up days.

There will be no school make-up days for time lost during the strike.

### 8. Total load.

In the Physical Education Department some teachers will instruct six classes a day and others five during the first year of the contract. The same holds true of the second year, but gym classes are limited to 40 students each. All gym teachers will carry five classes the third year with a maximum of 40 students each.

### 9. Reprisals.

No reprisals will be given to striking teachers.



Mrs. Shirley Garland



Kenneth Drum



# The strike: Who and what

Editorial

## Power struggle emerges

The strike is over. But the conflicts surrounding it are still very much alive. And there is every indication that previous years' hostilities between administration and teachers will be back again this year.

**WE BELIEVE** the ongoing struggle between Dr. Gibbs and Union leaders (and in smaller measure between some East administrators and teachers) is both unhealthy and unnecessary.

Worst of all, when this bitterness manifests itself in the form of a strike or other group effort, the innocent victims are, of course, the students.

We do not seek to destroy any spirit of reconciliation by discussing these conflicts. But we do wish students would understand the background behind the Administration-Union struggle and why we believe it is so detrimental to the Nilehi school system.

**WHEN SUPERINTENDENT** Charles Szuberla resigned from Nilehi following the 1970 Palm-Pildes firings, the Board of Education was in trouble.

Their public image was low and their financial status was weak. The effect of an unprecedented student walk-out at East and the community's rejection of a bond issue was devastating.

In the midst of all this, the Board had to find a new superintendent: a man who could restore public confidence in the system and financial stability in the budget.

Enter Wesley F. Gibbs.

**WITH AN** impeccable record as a professional school administrator, Dr. Gibbs was just what the Board was looking for.

Almost immediately he set out to "trim the fat" from the payroll and "humanize" the school district.

Incredibly competent at managing the budget, he put Nilehi on sound financial footing at long last.

**SIMULTANEOUSLY**, he successfully brought parents and students into the school's decision-making process by forming "problem sensing" committees, and their off-shoot, advisory committees.

Everyone was happy, right? Wrong.

**FROM THE** teachers' standpoint, Dr. Gibbs meant big headaches. They believed themselves to be professionals. But in their eyes, Dr. Gibbs treated them like laborers.

Without warning, he asked the Board to fire 47 teachers. By "trimming the fat," he stuck a knife in the Union's gut. And even now, when the 47 teachers incident is mentioned, the wound is deeply felt.

Then Dr. Gibbs determined the long-time department chairman structure to be unmanageable. He needed to have all the departments headed by administrators answerable only to him and the principals. So his managerial system would constitute phase two of his "assault" on the teachers' power.

**THE THIRD** major stab to the Union would be dealt by Dr. Gibbs in his relations with the district's Educational Policy Development Committee (EPDC).

Not only would he "dilute" the Union's power by including parents and students on the committee, but in two (and maybe three) cases, he would violate the spirit of the EPDC, in the Union's view.

By revising graduation policy without EPDC consent, and by urging the purchase of a new office building without EPDC consultation, he would further offend Union leaders.

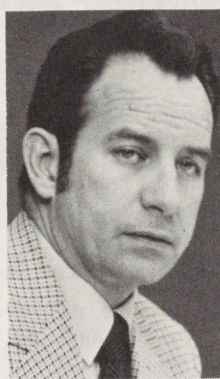
**THE EFFECT** these and countless minor conflicts had on Gibbs-Union relations is enormous.

And so, we believe, it is more because of the tremendous hostilities created over the past three years than because of the actual contract terms themselves, that the Union struck District 219 last week.

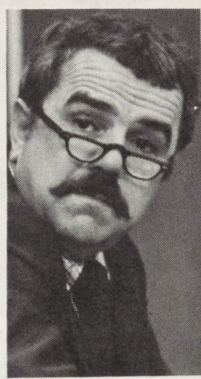
**WE BELIEVE** that both Board and Union should have put students' interests first and reached a settlement before September 5.

And even more important, we believe the bitterness between Dr. Gibbs and the teachers has not subsided in the least.

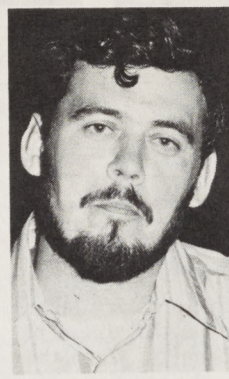
Surely, a school environment is no place for such a pervading aura of hostility and contempt.



Dr. Wesley Gibbs



Milton Herzog



James Dougherty



Charles Burdeen

## Cast of characters

by Robert Feder

Throughout the strike, various news media bombarded the public with a barrage of names and faces. The following provides a brief sketch of the most significant people involved in the drama surrounding the strike:

**Charles Burdeen**, information officer for Nilehi Teachers' Union. Chief spokesman to all news media and general public for the Union's position throughout contract negotiations and strike. Business Education instructor at West division.

**Lawrence Doppelt**, strike mediator. Called in to mediate negotiations over the weekend. Former National Labor Relations Board attorney. Chicago law professor.

**James Dougherty**, Union vice-president for East division. Member of teachers' negotiating team and coordinator of all strike activities at East. Science instructor.

**Kenneth Drum**, Union president. Head negotiator for teachers. Responsible for all Union activities. Head of Union executive committee. Reputed architect of Ben Lipin, George Hanus, Evelyn Rosenzweig Board of Education victories. Faces tough opposition in upcoming Union elections. Business Education instructor at West division.

**Shirley Garland**, Board of Education president. Soft-spoken, likeable Board chairman. Elected to Nilehi Board in 1972, elected president in 1973. Housewife and mother.

**Wesley Gibbs**, Nilehi school district superintendent. Top administrator and representative of the Board of Education. Chief opponent to Union leaders. Reputed to have once, "declared war on the Union." Noted for successes in areas of efficiency and economy. Became superintendent in 1970. Professional administrator.

**Robert Healey**, president of Chicago Teachers Union and Illinois Federation of Teachers. Spoke at September 4 Nilehi Teachers Union rally to encourage strikers to maintain solidarity. Told them "you're fighting a battle for every teacher in the state." Also called Niles Township, "the jewel in the necklace of the suburbs." Union activist.

**Milton "Mick" Herzog**, Nilehi community relations director. Chief spokesman for Board and administration during negotiations. Close in philosophy and attitude to Dr. Gibbs. Also summer school director. Former Phoenix instructor.

**Roland Moore**, publisher of the Skokie News. Supplied much strike information to community. While considered to have conservative bias, his stories printed about strike were both fair and impartial. Lifelong district resident and East division graduate.

**Niles Township High School Board of Education**. Seven-member Board elected by the community, represented taxpayers during negotiations. Members include: Shirley Garland, James Gottreich, James Moore, Irwin Ginsburgh, Ben Lipin, George Hanus, and Evelyn Rosenzweig.

**Oscar Weil**, executive director of Illi-

nois Federation of Teachers. Held much-publicized September 9 press conference to express support for striking Nilehi teachers. Characterized many of the Board's bargaining offers as "trash" on the negotiating table. Union activist.

**Wesley Wildman**, chief negotiator for the Board of Education. Headed administration's bargaining team. Took a vacation in the midst of negotiating period. Also negotiates for Chicago Board of Education.

## A funny thing happened to us covering the strike

This special two page issue of the Nilehilite is devoted exclusively to news and analysis of the teachers' strike.

**AFTER FUNCTIONING** under the most adverse conditions, the editors suffered untold hardship to produce the most complete chronicle of strike information available anywhere. Here are the highlights of their adventures.

Editors Scott Jacobson and Ron Miller, editorial director Robert Feder and news editor Dennis Kaplan were covering all angles of the strike story when the first hint of trouble at the bargaining table was discovered.

**THEY WAITED** for three hours outside the Holiday Inn meeting room while teachers voted to strike on Labor Day.

When discovered hiding in a broom closet during a union rally (trying to get a scoop), Jacobson, Miller, and Feder were roughed up and evicted by angry Union members. Jacobson, who was still healing from recent surgery, was grabbed by the arm and forcibly dragged out of the building.

**EARLIER**, JACOBSON and Miller conferred with Skokie News publisher Bob Moore. In his zeal to emphasize a point, Moore grabbed two tomatoes from his desk and hurled them at the editors.

Thanks to the thoroughness of the editors' coverage, City News Bureau frequently requested information from them on student reaction to the strike.

**WHILE LURKING** in the corridors of the Central Administration Building (trying to get a scoop), Miller bumped into Dr. Gibbs and Mrs. Garland, who had just come from negotiations. After justifying his presence in Dr. Gibbs' office, Miller got an exclusive interview from both.

Anxious to get both sides of the issue, the editors stood in pouring rain and oppressive heat to gather reactions from picketing teachers.

**FEDER AND** Kaplan attended a closed session with two board members for specially selected North division students and their parents. Although uninvited, they insisted on trying to get a scoop.

When negotiations and Board executive sessions lasted until the early hours of the morning, Feder often drove to the Central Office to keep tabs on the meeting times and electricity bills.

**AND FINALLY**, after the strike was settled, Jacobson, Miller, Feder and Kaplan stayed up for 36 hours to compile this record of the past week's events.

