

MILEHILITE

Volume 39, Number 2

NILES EAST HIGH SCHOOL, SKOKIE, ILL. Wednesday, September 29, 1976

Niles Township Federation of Teachers declare strike

by Lori Piper and Eric Robin

On Tuesday, September 21, the NTFT (Niles Township Federation of Teachers) officially declared a strike. More than seven thousand students from the three Niles schools were dismissed. According to Illinois state law, any form of striking is illegal. Newly-hired teachers were informed of this law and some were told they would be fired if they did strike. Nevertheless, according to the Union approximately 80 per cent of all District 219 teachers went on strike.

ACCORDING TO ED ERNST, vice president of the NTFT, "They (the Board) don't even want to talk about it. We'll give a little if they do." Ernst was one of the many picketing teachers who felt the board made no effort to negotiate with the Union. Board member Dr. Edward Kaminski commented, "The differences between the Union and the Board are so slight, there is no reason why we should not sit down and thrash out these differences." Board President Shirley Garland offered, "The place for negotiating is at the table, in a calm and reasoned atmosphere. It is not necessary to solve this by a show of force."

According to the Board, the Union specified last year that they wanted a new contract. By March, a 62-page list of proposals which would have cost the Board an additional 9.5 million dollars was submitted by the Union. One teacher said they aimed high because they anticipated coming down during bargaining. The Board found the proposals ridiculous in light of declining enrollment and financial difficulties.

Little progress was made until this August when the same proposals were again offered to the Board.

HOSLER INSISTED much bargaining had taken place, but the teachers stressed

West teacher struck by car

Bill Paulsen, Niles West teacher, was struck by a car driven by a non-picketing teacher on Tuesday, September 21.

PAULSEN WAS NOT seriously injured, but he was taken to Skokie Valley Hospital and released later that day.

The Union is filing criminal charges against the driver of the vehicle.

In another "violent" incident, a bus was driving in East's circle drive, according to Union spokesman Frank Mayfield. Jim Sweeney, Union member, tried to get the attention of the bus driver, but the driver wouldn't stop. Mayfield said, "The driver almost ran Jim over. I yelled at the driver to stop, and I couldn't get his attention. I began slapping on the driver's window to get his attention. About the third or fourth slap the window broke. It was purely accidental; it was not intentional."

Mayfield was arrested Tuesday night but released on bond.

they had only bargained for a total of two or three hours.

As a result, the Board "put its best foot forward" and proposed a new contract which had little or no protections for the Union and said nothing of seniority. Garland stated "We hope the teachers will discover the contract provides substantial economic benefits."

NOW THE UNION would rather have the old contract back, plus a RIF clause, lay-off by seniority, improvements in teachers' rights, more than 40 minutes for preparation, and improvements in files. Criticisms should be dated and in the file where teachers can see them in a reasonable amount of time so teachers can defend themselves. Teachers also want to record grievances at the Board level. Kaminski feels that "we have very good contractual conditions. I see no reason why we should change this."

Secret files were a big issue on the picket lines. Mr. Sokalski, PE teacher, said, "We're not even allowed to negotiate files." The Union thinks there should be a committee to evaluate teachers, instead of just one person (Galen Hosler). The Union points out, "A prospective employer looks at the files and sees a criticism by an administrator and an attached note by the teacher saying the opposite of the criticism. Who would the employer believe?"

Hosler commented, "If a teacher can prove the evaluation was untrue, it will be stricken from the records. Besides," Hosler adds, "It's unlawful to use secret files."

THE UNION IS DISSATISFIED ABOUT THE EXTRA-CURRICULAR activity provisions in the Board's proposal. Three activities assigned for a duration of five years each is too much for teachers the Union feels. The Board explains by saying, "The Union asked for exact figures. We gave them some,

reluctantly, and they don't like them. Why didn't they state some figures?"

ANOTHER ISSUE IS THAT OF RIF (Reduction in Forces) or lay-offs. The Board has what Mr. Mayfield called an escape clause. "Teachers will be laid off by seniority unless some other method is necessary."

To the Union, this is just pick and choose who goes and who stays. Hosler explained, "If you've got a large social studies department with older teachers and a small math department with younger teachers, do you dismiss the younger teachers and do without a math

department?"

HOSLER HOPES most of the striking teachers will return. Gibbs said, "If a teacher doesn't want his job by not coming to work, he will be replaced." Openings gaps will be filled by certified teachers of comparable ability. Hosler also mentioned a teacher can be suspended pending a hearing. Gibbs stressed a teacher could lose his certificate and job by breaking the contract, and be arrested for striking.

Since school began early this year, it's quite possible the year will end at the same time as other schools.



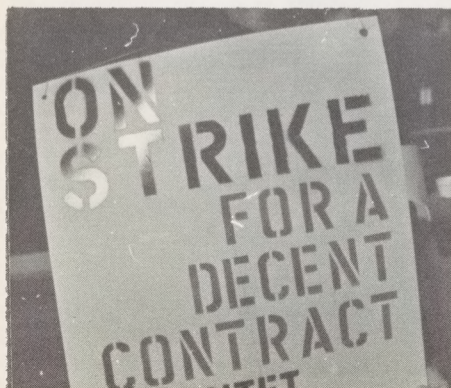
Police arrive . . .

(Photos by Eric Polley)

The threat of violence brought police to Easthi on Tuesday morning, September 21 at 7:45 a.m.



Teachers block Easthi's circle drive picketing for seniority provisions and a decent contract. (See picture at left). False fire alarms were sounded at West at 10 a.m.



Teachers' files private?

Teachers have requested negotiations with the Board as to the actual confidentiality of the Board's personnel files on each teacher.

The conditions stating the maintenance of the files are listed in the latest proposed "agreement" to the teachers. As stated in Article IV Section 4, "Neither a teacher's file nor any of its contents shall be copied ... without the teacher's permission either during or after his service in the school district ..."

section continues on, "...provided however, such file shall be available to the Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent, the teacher's own Divisional Principal, Director of Personnel, and the Director to whom he is responsible." This illustrates that the teachers' secret files are only safe to the point where any administrator, at his own free will, may remove all or any part of the file.

Feedback

Senior finds tactics unreasonable

Dear Editor,

I was, in the words of a tape recorded message, "shocked and appalled" by the Board's refusal to give the teachers what to me seems a reasonable contract.

The issues for this strike are similar to those during the beginning of the 1973-74 school year. For example, the right to file complaints, and the disputed "grievance right," which gives protection to non-tenured teachers. I think the grievance clause would ensure rights much in the same way the checks and balances in the U.S. Constitution limit executive power.

Rather than trying to work with the

faculty, the administration is admittedly trying to break the Union. Threat letters were sent to each striking teacher's home. Euphemistically entitled "Notices of remediability" the letters stated the teachers would lose their jobs if they didn't return to work. Superintendent Dr. Gibbs announced over the air at 2:45 p.m. Wednesday, September 22, on WBBM am that this tactic would frighten teachers to go back to work. Gibbs said that certified teachers are being interviewed to replace the strikers. Rather than breaking the Union, I think this strategy will strengthen their supporters, since under stress and with a common enemy people often unite.

Murray Cohn '77

Dear Editor,

I have spent numerous hours today, September 21, 1976, talking with teachers, school administrators, and Superintendent Dr. Wesley Gibbs. I believe they have given me their honest opinions in the matter concerning the strike; some didn't comment.

The strike is like a divorce. The two parents scream at each other, and who suffers? The kids suffer! In this case the Board and Union communicate ineffectively, and the students suffer. I think it is about time the students realize where they stand in this situation. We are forced out of classes, already behind in school work, and our extra-curricular

activities have been ignored in many areas. Students, are we going to allow ourselves to be ignored academically and in extra-curricular activities? I, myself, say no!

And I encourage more of my peers to get involved and know where they stand. We are a majority, 7,000 students as opposed to 432 teachers, and even a smaller minority of administrators and Board members. We, too, have a voice in this matter! Are we as a majority, going to allow ourselves to be ignorant of this situation we are forced into?

Please, let us be heard!

John J. Diviak Jr. ('77)

Board policies considered "a mess"

Dear Editor,

I have read the policies offered to the teachers by the Board, and it seems the Board has been able to concoct the biggest mess I have ever seen. And put it all down in a booklet they dare call an "agreement."

Anyone who agrees with such a thing as this should be congratulated for being

able to determine what the Board has to say between those hitherto's and therefore.

Name Withheld Upon Request

Editor's note: These letters are not necessarily the opinion of the Nilehilite staff.

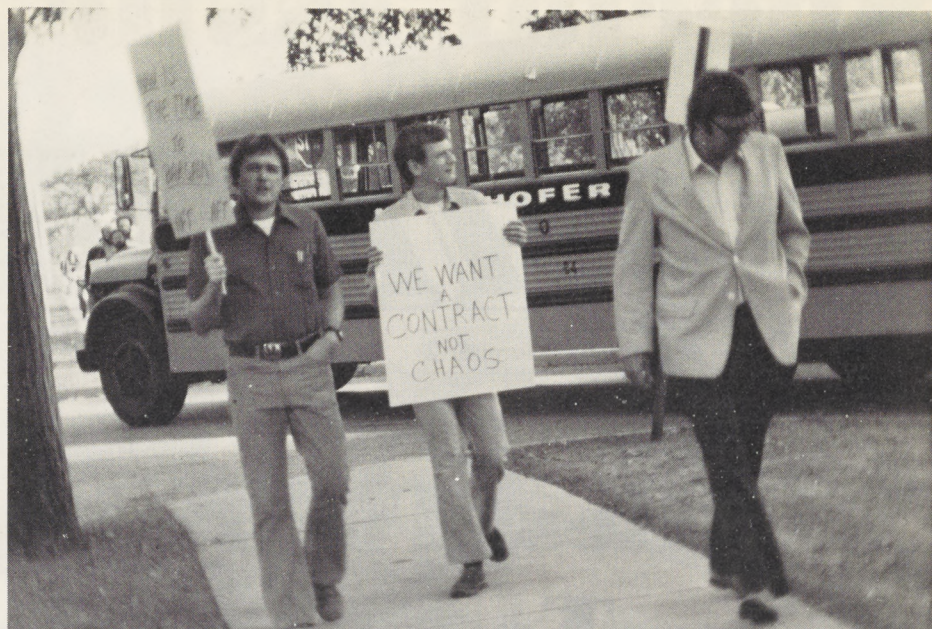
Students hurt by strike

We've heard much about the teachers and the Board of Education of District 219, but little has been said about the students.

IF ALL TEACHERS that do not return to the classroom are fired, as proposed, not only will those teachers suffer, but the students will be faced with the situation of adjusting to new, and less experienced teachers. The quality of the school will invariably drop due to confusion on the part of students and staff. The purpose of the school is to provide the best possible education for the students, and yet the Board is willing to sacrifice good education for a few contract adjustments. As one student's parent explained, "They are working with our most prized possessions."

In addition, students are complaining that they are not kept well informed of the proceedings of the strike. Students receive no special bulletins in the mail, and are asked to call 966-1012 for information, a line which is almost always busy. Students would like to know if school is scheduled, so they can plan ahead. Most students claim they were informed by radio, about five minutes before they normally would leave to catch the school bus. Others heard rumors from unreliable sources, and wanted positive information. Communication for future school crises must be improved.

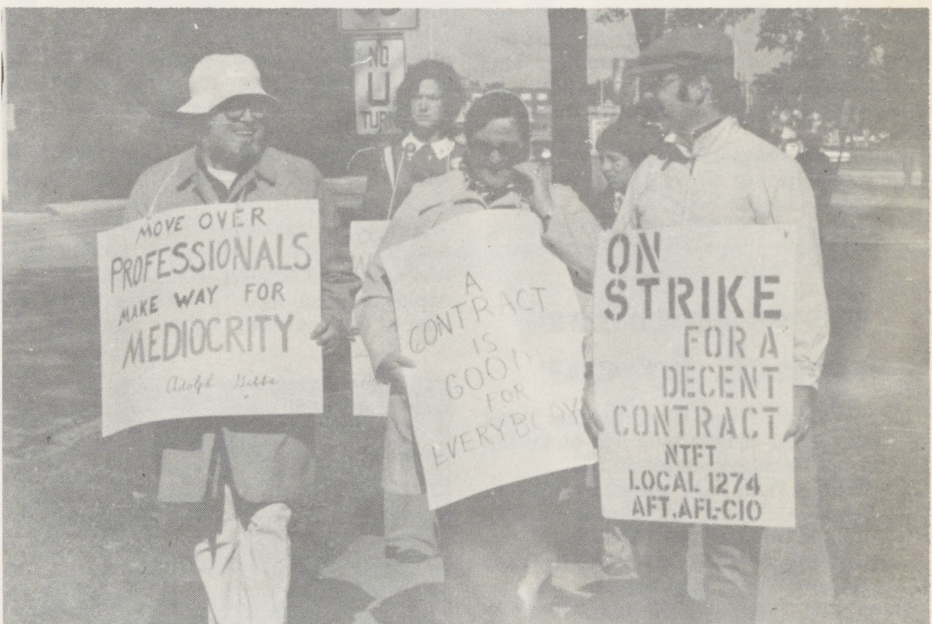
WHEN THE BOARD AND TEACHERS make their decision it would be most considerate if they think of the students it will affect.



Union teachers stressing the fact that they want the contract disputes settled. (Photo by Bruce Gostomelsky)



Mr. Todd Dvorak takes a coffee break during the strike. Teachers spent eight hours picketing last Tuesday. (Photo by Eric Polley)



Cheerleaders and the Pom Pon squad support the union and their efforts.



The sign is brief but conveys the meaning well.

NILEHILITE

The Voice of the Niles East Students

Published during the school year by the students of Niles Township High School East, Lamont and Mulford Streets, Skokie, Illinois 60076. Printed by Des Plaines Publishing Company, Des Plaines, Ill.

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Wednesday, September 29, 1976

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