

623 settles negotiations

"No one wanted to put the students in the middle again"



"Amen."

photo fred wolf

Representatives of the School Board and the teachers of District 623 agreed on a salary schedule for the 1970-71 school year.

A settlement was reached on March 24, 1970, at 4:30 AM and approved, the next day by an overwhelming majority of the teachers. John Rose, Vice-chairman of the Teacher's Council, estimated that there were no more than, "25 dissenting votes out of the more than 300 teachers voting."

The settlement itself raises the salary of a beginning teacher with a B.A. degree to \$7,475 up \$475. A teacher with a M.A. and 12 or more years of experience will earn \$15,399 up \$979 and a teacher with a Doctor's degree can earn a maximum of \$16,595 up \$1,055.

The settlement also included an increase in various fringe benefits, elementary teachers will get more preparation time, High school and Junior high coaches salaries will be increased, Health and Hospital insurance will be offered, and several other benefits will also be increased.

In a marked contrast to the disruption and disagreement that accompanied the '69-'70 salary schedule negotiations, the negotiations this year were conducted in an atmosphere of calm and mutual search for an equitable salary schedule.

Dr. Lloyd Nielson, superintendent of district 623, explained why; "Last year we used the labor-management model of salary negotiations. . . The teachers asked for a 3% raise so the board had to come up with something equally ridiculous; it countered with an offer of a 1% increase."

"We found out this just didn't work," he said, "So this year we did it differently. . . We first exchanged data and discussed and contested each other's data. Then each side brought in different salary ranges and fringe benefits. . . By March 25, the board was at \$7,425 and the teachers were at \$7,550."

"This year both sides acted responsibly and reasonably," Nielson continued, ". . . and I think they demonstrated the matter can be carried out with a minimum of dissatisfaction and conflict."

Rose agreed, when he stated, "I think to act in a manner that would. . . rebuild both groups wanted to show they had responsible leadership. They felt they had their prestige in the community and, of course, no one wanted to put the students in the middle again."

BURNSVILLE, STILLWATER Districts propose merit pay

In at least two districts this year, Stillwater and Burnsville, experiments and research are under way to study the question of "merit pay."

Merit pay is in essence more pay for better than average teachers.

Burnsville teachers agreed with the board's proposal of a new approach to teacher pay. They did not however, agree with the board's specific proposal.

In Stillwater, the teachers contract settlement arrived at included \$20,000 for a career teacher merit program.

It is planned that the teachers will help determine who merits extra pay.

The primary concern held by Burnsville district residents is that any form of merit pay might evolve into a system of punishment rather than reward for exceptional teachers.

The argument goes that the "apple polisher" teacher who never causes the board and administration trouble might get the extra pay while the exceptional teacher who occasionally might "make waves," would be penalized.

The Burnsville board estimates that the change will ultimately take two years to enact. Teachers who initiated a committee study of the board proposal say it may

take longer.

The Burnsville board has also proposed adding teacher competency to the traditional reasons for raises, education and experience.

There is some legal red tape to be cut first. Superintendent Robert L. Miller said the fact that teachers after attaining tenure are traditionally on a continuing contract "maybe where the law is going to catch us."

For example, a career teacher may merit extra pay one year and then go into a slump the next year. Under a continuing contract, "what has been given, cannot be taken away."

Value of law questioned

The Minnesota law governing relationships of School Board and Teacher Organizations, passed in 1967 has proved to be "not of much value" according to Robert Bell, State representative from 49B in view of last year's negotiations.

Bell feels that there was a lot of dissatisfaction in the way the negotiations went and the resulting strike.

Some time needed for the following processes:

1. Recognition of teachers organizations by the Board upon application prior to October 31.

2. Naming of apportioned members to five member Teacher Council by Oct. 31 by teacher organizations.

3. Teacher Council organizes itself by November 10.

4. Board's committee meet and confer at reasonable times with Teacher's Council in an effort to reach agreement on economic aspects of employment, and to exchange views and information with respect to other matters.

5. Prior to March first either party may request an adjustment panel, (made-up of one board representative and one teacher representative along with a third neutral member) if any matter regarding economic aspects has not been agreed upon.

6. If the results of the Adjustment Panel are not satisfactory to either party by April first, a hearing may be requested.

7. Within 15 days of the hearing, the Panel shall report its findings to each of the parties and to the Commissioner of Education.

There was a disagreement last fall when Charles McCarty, presently a mayoral candidate in St. Paul, revealed that he felt the members of the Adjustment Panel's were being paid too much.

He was referring particularly to the St. Paul School district.

The statute referring to this point states that Adjustment Panel members "should be paid their expenses." As Bell pointed out, the disagreement arose over how their expenses were determined.

Reminiscings of yester year

The stormy 1969-70 teacher salary negotiations that culminated last September in student walk-outs all began in November 1968.

In addition to raises in salary, the teachers wanted added benefits in leaves of absence, sabbatical leaves, and changes in the pay scale for experienced teachers. "There was definitely pessimistic character about the talks. They were very destructive of morale," reflected Rossett. He feels they became more difficult after other parties, such as lawyers were added.

By February of last year it was apparent that progress was not being made and long, hard negotiations were ahead.

By the end of that month, the possibility of teacher strikes, though very remote, had been discussed by some people.

State law provided that if agreement was not reached by March 20, an adjustment panel would be set up, composed of a teacher's representative, a school board representative, and a neutral member agreed on by both.

In April, the panel put out a report recommending a higher salary schedule, but not high enough to please the teachers. Talle refused to sign the report, and state law made no provision for procedure if the report was not accepted.

Throughout the summer, informal meetings were held, but no progress was made. The opening of school rolled around and no settlement had been made. The board stated that to re-open talks after the adjustment panel had made its report would be a weakening of the law.

To protest lack of talks, the teachers decided to withhold all extracurricular activities not specified in their contracts.

When this happened, the students became involved, saying action hurt their education.

On the night of September 11-13, a hearing was held at the district office where students, teachers, and others expressed their opinion. The next morning, a lyceum was held at Ramsey where Nielson and Bonkowske spoke to the students, but failed to quiet their complaints.

Shortly after the lyceum ended, a walk-out took place in which students stayed in the gym or milled around the halls.

Over the weekend, another walk-out was planned and held at Ramsey and Kellogg early on Monday, September 15. Most of the students returned to class before noon.

Later that week, teachers agreed to take on extracurricular activities again.

On September 22, the board made a pro-September 29 because it was not retroactive. The negotiations were finally over.



photo fred wolf

Last year's teacher board negotiations culminated with withholding of extracurricular activities

Salary scales vary

The following list gives districts in which formal or tentative salary agreement with teachers had been reached.

Hastings 200	7,200	8,100	8,900
	11,640	13,980	14,780
	(12 steps)		

(Tentative agreement based on teacher proposal. Top pay is for educational specialist.)

St. Anthony 282	7,450	8,500	
	11,400	15,200	16,000
	(10 steps)	(12 steps)	

(Master's plus 45 top pay.)

South St. Paul 6	7,400	8,300	8,750
	13,228	15,023	15,838
	(10 years)	(10 years)	(10 years)

(Master's plus 45 for top pay. In addition, full-paid teacher income protection and an additional \$500 for doctorate degree teachers or specialists.)

West St. Paul 197	7,425	8,316	8,762
	11,583	15,072	15,815
	(12 years)	(12 years)	(12 years)

(Master's plus 60 for top pay.)

Stillwater 834	7,400	8,140	
	14,800	14,800	15,760
	(14 years)	(14 years)	(14 years)

(Master's plus 60 for top pay. Settlement included \$20,000 package for career teacher merit pay.)

NSP-Maplewood	7,450	8,568	9,685
	12,367	15,049	16,986
	(12 years)		

(Master's plus 60 credits for top pay.)