

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS COMMISSION

Michigan State University
LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL
RELATIONS LIBRARY

In the Matter of
Mt. Morris Consolidated Schools
-and-
Mt. Morris Education Association

On November 3, 1969 the undersigned, Leon J. Herman, was appointed by the Employment Relations Commission as its hearings officer and agent to conduct a fact finding hearing relevant to the matters in dispute between the above parties, pursuant to Section 25 of Act 176 of Public Acts of 1939 as amended, and the Commission's regulations. Accordingly, and upon due notice, hearings were scheduled and held on November 17 and 24 and December 1, 1969 at Mt. Morris High School, Mt. Morris, Michigan.

James A. Serven, Harold Richards, Dr. Gerald E. Whalen, Joseph R. Knickerbocker, Fred B. McAndrew, Larry Whitney and William H. Heidebreicht, comprising the Board of Education, and William Hartman, Director of Instruction, represented the Board.

Maurice Hart, of the Michigan Education Association; Charles Rayburn, President; Byron Reetz, Vice President; Neoma Page and Christina Panas appeared on behalf of the Mt. Morris Education Association.

Mt. Morris Consolidated Schools

In preparing its budget the Board estimated cash receipt for the 1969-70 year of \$2,036,379. From this sum a deficit of \$37,162.57 incurred last year must be deducted, leaving a balance available for this year's expenditures of \$1,999,216.43.

The budget estimated the disbursements at \$1,998,581. With the addition of the 1968-69 deficit of \$37,162.57, plus deposits in transit of \$4,608.25, a total of \$183,983.52 in increased disbursements was estimated. The net surplus of disbursements over anticipated receipts is \$635.43.

This school, of necessity, is operating on an austerity budget. The Board was authorized last year to transfer 2 mills from the building and site fund to the operating fund. That permission was not granted this year. The millage election on September 13, 1969 in which the Board asked for a 12 mill increase was defeated, with the result that the Board has to operate the system this year with 2 mills less than it formerly had available. Increases resulting from higher assessments and in additional school aid have added some 8% to its income, but increases in costs and higher salary demands have absorbed this increase and failed to meet all the demands made upon the Board.

In an earlier fact finding hearing this year, I sought to resolve the salary and incidental fringe requests of the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 547, representing the maintenance workers, custodians, matrons, cooks and cafeteria helpers in this system. Because of the pending fact finding hearing in which this Association was to be involved, I recommended that the Union accept a 5% increase, subject to further increase if the teachers were able to achieve a higher salary scale. In my report of that

earlier hearing I outlined the Board's financial condition substantially as I have done herein above.

This has not been a situation where the parties have negotiated at arms length, with hostility towards each other and with no consideration for the other's problems. The Board has been frank, open and honest in revealing its finances and in declaring that it would grant higher salaries if it were in its power to do so. The Association has recognized the Board's position and has not sought either to threaten the Board with a shut down of the schools nor even to insist upon substantial increases regardless of the effect upon the Board's treasury. Both parties should be sincerely commended and respected for the attitude they have taken toward each other during the process of this hearing, and I am happy to accord them such respect.

It is agreed that up until this year the salaries paid by the Board have been fair and reasonable and have been consonant with salaries paid in other districts in the Genesee County area. The Board admits that its current salary offer is low compared with others, but it submits that it is powerless to do any more with the funds at its disposal. Because of my report in the maintenance men's hearing the Board changed its offer to the teachers to a 5% increase across the board. This would give Bachelors a starting salary of \$7,035 and a maximum salary of \$10,817.95. The Master's salary would begin at \$7,665 and increase to \$11,775.49. There is also a Bachelor plus 20 schedule of \$7,350 to \$11,079.53. All indices are in nine steps.

The teachers argue that the salary proposal is, as the Board concedes, low, at least in the lower brackets, although in the higher stratum it is fairly well in line with those of the other

schools in the area. The Association asks that a schedule be established based on 4% for beginning through the third year; 5% the fourth through seventh year inclusive; and 6% on eighth through ninth year. The proposed starting base would be \$7,100 which would make the top of the Bachelor's scale \$10,907.55. The Master's index would start at \$7,700 and would increase to \$11,829.31. It is further proposed that the Bachelor plus 20 be amended to Bachelor plus 15 and that a Master plus 15 and a Master plus 30 column be established. The total cost of the Board's proposed package would be \$1,116,192.19 as against a total for the Association's proposal of \$1,128,328.24. The Association points out that the budget contains a provision for teachers' salaries of \$1,136,750. However, this was intended to cover 128 teachers whereas there are only 126 presently on the payroll.

The Board has been paying \$17 per teacher per month for health insurance. The Association requests that it absorb the full cost of health insurance.

I agree that the basic starting Bachelor salary should not be less than \$7,100. I would very much like to recommend the salary schedule proposed by the teachers on the basis of 4%, 5%, and 6% increments which has been the practice in the past. I sincerely regret that the Board's stringent financial condition does not permit me to do so. I reluctantly recommend that the 5% package proposed by the Board be adopted for this year retroactive to the beginning of the school year; with the exception that the beginning Bachelor's salary be changed from \$7,035 to \$7,100. This will increase the Board's total outlay by \$1,235, but the \$7,035 figure is so pathetically out of line that I could not in good conscience recommend it under any circumstance. I do suggest, however, that in negotiating next

year's salaries, the \$7,035 base be reinstated for the purpose of computation of percentage increases so that the proportionate variations between the steps again become constant. I also recommend, if it be possible next year, that the 4%, 5%, and 6% increment formula be reinstated, and that this year's index be reconverted to that formula as a basis for recommending next year's salary schedule. I further advise that the Association present their salary demands in March, and that the Board, if satisfied that they are reasonable and comparable, include them in its tabulation for a millage vote in the spring. If the voting public refuses to vote an equitable millage it should be prepared to accept the consequences.

In order not to worsen the Board's finances any more than necessary, I recommend, again with reluctance, that the present insurance package be continued for the balance of the year.

It is indeed a disgrace to the community of Mt. Morris that it should refuse to finance a school system which would provide more than a skeletonized program of education. A new high school is in progress of construction and should be ready for opening in the fall. There is no likelihood of its opening and in fact there is a strong possibility that the entire school system may not open in the fall because of the niggardly attitude of the population of this city. They may not be interested in quality education but, at the very least, they should be interested in providing their own children with a reasonable standard of education and they certainly must, whether they like it or not, pay their teachers a reasonable salary or they will have no teachers in the fall. To my mind, education is a necessity and it should appear in the same light to the people of this community. The children are the responsibility of the parents of this city, not of the teachers. These teachers should not be called upon to subsidize the school system by accepting substandard salaries while the public enjoys lesser taxes.

Perhaps this criticism is best stated by one of the citizens of this community in a letter by a member of the Board of Education to the Genesee County Herald, from which I quote:

I believe these words are a little too late but I have got to say them anyway.

This community and the district that makes up Mt. Morris Consolidated School System should take their hats off to the administration, the teachers, the custodians, the bus drivers and all salaried personnel in the system. You wonder why? Well, I personally feel that your teachers in this system cannot be commended enough. They have taught since the beginning of the present school year under last year's salary, with increased class loads, a minimum amount of teaching supplies, half day sessions, full day sessions etc. They have quietly asked for a salary increase that is comparable to surrounding districts of our size. This group has not threatened anyone by refusing services, issuing ultimatums, and the like. I feel they left this responsibility up to the school board and the voters in the district.

The voters in the Mt. Morris School District refused three times to accept a millage proposal that would put the board in a position to assure us the services of the teachers at a competitive wage. A proposal of millage that would enable us to provide ample teaching supplies, increase our library books, be able to open our new Elisabeth Ann Johnson Memorial High School, retain our administrative staff, our custodians, and bus drivers.

There were certain individuals during the open meetings held which incidentally one was a disgrace, and organizations namely the Citizens of Mt. Morris which seemed to think we had enough money to do all these things. We were not informing everyone correctly of how much money we had to spend. There were calls of "recall the board", you have 2 million dollars that is all you need" "They did it years ago, and you can do it now."


Well, I believe the time is fast approaching when everyone who voted 'no' to a millage increase is going to see why they were wrong.

It is a shame that a fact finder has to come into this community to tell us, we don't have enough money to pay a competitive wage to the teachers in our schools. This is not a poor community.

I can't blame anyone for saying 'no' to a tax increase, we are taxed to the hilt now. Some how this school system has to live and we have got to pay for it; no one is going to do this for us.

Again my humble apologies to the Mt. Morris Education Association.

Let me pose a question -- doesn't the parochial system in this community impress you? If this school were to close, where would the Mt. Morris Consolidated school system put them? They are paying taxes just like the rest of us only giving a little more than 13.28 mills for operation toward a system that their children do not even attend.



Fact Finder

Dated: Southfield, Michigan

December 12, 1969