

# No county strike planned by MEA

By CRAIG PIECHURA

Teachers in 21 out of 28 Oakland County school districts are without a contract today but there are no plans for a county-wide strike to show solidarity, Michigan Education Association (MEA) officials said Wednesday at a press conference.

"Coordinated bargaining doesn't mean coordinated strikes," said Connie Math, chairwoman of the Region 7 Coordinated Bargaining Council.

After saying teachers' "collective unity is our collective dignity and power," Mrs. Math was asked how far teachers would go to demonstrate their unity.

"I don't think they'd allow other teachers to be fired (for striking)," Mrs. Math answered. But she stressed that there is no pact among Oakland teachers to strike on a county-wide basis in support of one, or a few, unsettled districts.

"We don't have a written statement that we're all going on strike if one (district) goes out. Our clout will come in the unity of teachers, a unity of goals. You've got to take baby steps before you jump into a biggie."

**THE "BIGGIE"** Mrs. Math refers to is the goal of "unified" bargaining where a number of school district teacher unions appoint one joint bargaining team. Several Macomb County teacher associations have already taken steps to bargain their next contract with that approach.

With school less than two weeks away, only Bloomfield Hills, Rochester and Hazel Park teachers have reached a settlement with their respective school boards. South Lyon and Holly teacher contracts don't expire this year. The rest are negotiating in hopes of reaching tentative agreements which they can present to the membership for approval or rejection before Labor Day.

Mrs. Math said school boards are using "stalling and foot-dragging tactics" in an effort to force teachers to "accept the last-minute, take-it-or-leave-it offer or go on strike."

William Nunez, chief negotiator for the Southfield Board of Education says it's ridiculous for the union to charge foot-dragging when, in that district, teachers announced they would only meet three days in the final week of bargaining.

Southfield Education Association President Richard Dengate counters

that "it's not the time you spend at the table that counts, it's what you do at the table." Dengate added that Southfield teachers would agree to meet around the clock if progress is being made.

Southfield's 711 teachers are tentatively scheduled to return to school Tuesday, Sept. 4. Still to be resolved are the issues of salary, fringe benefits, class size limits and teacher evaluation.

Walled Lake is negotiating with 548 teachers; West Bloomfield represents 276. West Bloomfield school board members have tentatively delayed the start of school to Sept. 18, a move that drew criticism from the union.

"I think (the school district) found that (deadline) is a problem to them," said Joseph Lupi, president of the West Bloomfield Education Association. "They were planning on a two-week strike and tried to put pressure on us. That hasn't happened."

**BIRMINGHAM'S** 643 teachers are fighting for lower class size formulas, improvement in health and dental insurance and salary hikes, said Pollie Blakely, president of the Birmingham Education Association.

"The unique situation in Birmingham," Ms. Blakely said, "is they are not losing money due to declining enrollment. They are out of the state formula for receiving state aid. They are returning money to the voters in the form of a half-mill reduction. They have enough money to pay teachers. Their budget is sound."

Birmingham school district's chief negotiator Joseph Griffin, director of personnel relations, tried to sit in on Wednesday's press conference by the teachers union at the Southfield Civic Center. He brought Nunez, Southfield's chief negotiator for the school district, with him. They were ordered to leave the room by Tom Fette, an MEA Uniserv director who reportedly told them the meeting was open only to the press and MEA representatives.

"Members of the teaching profession are supposed to be guardians of the truth and protectors of the freedom of expression," Griffin said after being hooded out. "I consider this a breach of that right."

Griffin said as a member of the public he had a right to be present at the public meeting.

"I was indignant but moderately amused," he said.

## National Parks experience boom

The National Park System has come a long way since the days when the U.S. Army ran Yellowstone and people viewed Old Faithful from 11-seat coaches called tallyhops.

Since the creation in 1872 of Yellowstone — the first national park in the country and the world — the idea of preserving the best of America has snowballed. The 77-million-acre system now takes in everything from wilderness areas to the Statue of Liberty and Alcatraz.

Today there are more than 300 sites in the National Park System, 39 of them known as national parks and the rest bearing other tags: seashores, rivers, parkways, memorials, preserves and historical sites.

By act of Congress, 18 more units are entering the system, among them two urban parks.

Such "national recreation areas" — where city dwellers can catch a bit of nature within a few miles of home — already serve San Francisco, New York-New Jersey, and Cleveland-Akron.

Last December, the size of the park system was more than doubled when President Carter proclaimed 56 million acres of Alaska wild lands as national monuments, most to be administered by the Park Service.

**THE ALASKA LANDS** include pristine tundra at the Bering Strait, where it is believed man first set foot on the New World from Asia; the Nostak River's undisturbed drainage basin, a complete and self-contained ecosystem that is our nation's largest and last of its kind; the habitats of whales, sea lions, sea otters, wolves, and brown bears, and the nesting sites for millions of migratory waterfowl.

In recent decades the evolution of the park system has gained momen-

turn. An annual operating budget that amounted to only \$5 million in 1948 now exceeds \$500 million. Nine thousand full-time employees and more than that many seasonal ones now work to keep the system going.

Some of the new directions, such as the urban parks, have disturbed many park system old-timers.

"We have become an agency that tries to be all things to all people," one of them remarked. But the urban parks appear to be a hit last year an estimated 11 million people visited one of them — Golden Gate National Recreation Area, almost the number that went to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the nation's most visited.

In fact, it is the passion for park-going that constitutes one of the system's headaches.

**"MY BIGGEST PROBLEM,"** said a park superintendent, "is to keep people from loving the park to death." Remedies are being considered.

Overcrowding and its resultant pollution have prompted a proposal for Yosemite National Park, for instance, that would restore the natural scene as much as possible by limiting the number of people allowed in the park at any one time and eventually banning private cars. The plan also would eliminate some of the park's shops, the ice rink, a golf course, some tennis courts and most swimming pools.

It is hoped such a plan would enhance one of the parks' natural resources: solitude.

But even solitude, it seems, has its detractors. Park employees report that most visitors crowd into small areas of the parks, soon forgetting the scenery.

"The most popular park use," said a long-time park concessionaire, "is people-watching."

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## Animal drug still legal

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has again postponed a ban on DES as an animal-growth stimulant. Appeals by cattlemen and feed manufacturers prompted the FDA to put off the ban for a second time, until Nov. 1.

FDA spokesman said it was realized that an immediate DES ban would result in economic disruption in the cattle-production industry.

The agency had earlier ordered an end to the use of DES in livestock and sheep by July 20.