

# A Message To The Community

**A**s we approach the one-year anniversary of the labor walkout at our newspapers, we certainly don't feel it's an occasion to celebrate. We are mindful of how much hardship has been caused to our employees and their families, including those on strike. And we know that the community has suffered as well through this difficult time.

Even as we consider the past year, we are hopeful that new ideas and new approaches, on both sides, might yield a realistic settlement based on where we find ourselves today - 12 months into the strike.

**A year later, a lot has changed.**

Since the strike started, more than 65 bargaining sessions have been held with the six unions but we don't seem to be getting any closer to a settlement. We do want to reach a settlement. We do want to move forward, but it is imperative that the unions accept the reality of where our business is now.

We care about fairness toward our employees. That's why our original offer called for fully paid health care through HMOs, no layoffs and a 10.3 percent wage increase over three years, on top of already good salaries. Five of our 11 unions settled contracts and are working today. It's obvious that they felt our offers were fair.

**Unfortunately, union leaders did not allow employees to vote on our offers.**

Even if a settlement were reached today, more than 500 jobs will have been lost to our community. Some of those lost jobs reflect the damage that this strike has done to our business and some are related to the improved efficiencies. Certainly the economic loss that we've suffered will not allow us to accept the feather-bedding of past years.

**On the picket line and in the streets.**

The unions and their supporters continue to throw star nails, break windows, damage newsracks and steal newspapers, block entrances to our facilities and yell racial and sexual slurs. They've even targeted employees at their homes.

We absolutely do not find it acceptable for employees and their families to be threatened and intimidated. While we believe in the strikers' freedom of speech and their right to picket, we question their right to continue to throw out racial and sexual slurs at our employees as they enter our facilities.

**Amid all this, the two newspapers continue to serve readers.**

From the first day of the strike, we made the decision to continue publishing. We feel a deep sense of obligation to this community to provide news and information every day. Our two newsrooms have continued to make improvements, particularly in the area of local news. By continuing to publish, we have preserved two vigorous, and separate, editorial voices in this community.

**Where do we go from here?**

We'll continue our commitment to publish The Detroit News and Detroit Free Press every day. And while we proceed with efforts to build our business back, and to continuously improve our service to customers, we'll keep meeting with the unions in the hope that we can achieve a resolution.

Meanwhile, we want to thank our hundreds of thousands of readers and the thousands of advertisers who have stayed with us. It's been gratifying to continue to do what we do best, serve readers and customers who put their faith in us every day.

Thank you for the privilege of serving you.

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