

# How To Halt Plea Bargains

# Nature Center Begun For Oakwoods Park

By EMORY DANIELS  
**ROCHESTER**  
 The recent sentencing of Spiro Agnew has given rise to renewed discussion on the validity of plea bargaining in the system of justice.

## Pressmen Ratify New 2-Year Pact

A new two-year contract between Observer Newspapers Inc. and Local 13 of the International Printing Pressmen & Assistants' Union of North America was ratified Sunday by the local's membership and executive board.

Covered by the contract, which has an economic reopener at the end of the first year, are some 50 bargaining unit members of ONI composing and press rooms.

The new pact culminates bargaining talks which began in June and includes employe wage adjustment provisions, as well as increased fringe benefits. It is retroactive to July 3, which marked expiration of a previous three-year contract.

Local 13 represents the I-PAU throughout southeastern Michigan. This ratification followed the internal approval voted by the union's Observer chapel, co-chaired by Tom Kneffel for the pressmen and George Willard as representative of the composing and camera personnel.

suggests that much of the sentence reduction or avoidance for drinking under the influence of alcohol, is the result of plea bargaining by prosecutors to reduce the backlog of cases and avoid jury trials.

Thus, there was great interest in the legal profession in a conference held in October at Oakland University, Rochester, on just this subject.

Publisher Philip H. Power expressed his pleasure at the harmonious conclusion of the extended bargaining period, hailing the contract as assurance of uninterrupted service to the seven communities served by ONI.

Among those present were Michigan Supreme Court Justice John B. Swainson, Secretary of State Richard Austin, and State Police Director John Platts.

Also joining the high-level conference were representatives of district courts, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Traffic Safety Assn. of Detroit, Automobile Club of Michigan, State Bar of Michigan, Sheriff's Assn., Traffic Improvement Assn. of Oakland County, Police Chief's Assn., and Michigan Women for Highway Safety.

Their conclusion was that "lesser" traffic offenses should be "decriminalized," taken out of the criminal law and handled expeditiously through an administrative

arm of the existing judicial system.

Some conferees felt systems should be left with an administrative agency such as the Dept. of State, which already has some programs in effect.

Austin asked for more liaison between his department and the courts in pre-sentencing review of driver records. He said many judges are lax in reporting convictions of bad drivers.

Austin said his department is trying to become more skilful in detecting problem drivers before they get into serious trouble.

Computerized driver records, Austin added, show 75 per cent of all accidents involve drivers with two penalty points or fewer.

Recreational opportunities will soon be increased because of a ground breaking ceremony held last week at the future nature study site of Oakwoods Metropark near Flat Rock.

State county, township and park officials participated in the event marked by a spadeful of dirt "turned over" to mark initial construction of a new \$240,277 nature center building which is expected to be in public use sometime in 1974.

When completed, the 6,800 square foot building will include separate rooms for exhibits, lectures by park naturalists, observation room, aquarium, indoor turtle pond,

lobby and restrooms. Special features include a small auditorium and a combination lunch - classroom to aid school groups using the center.

The nature study area covers 350 acres bordering the Huron River and backwaters of the Flat Rock impoundment. This water feature has several baysou, wooded islands and marshlands inhabited by frogs, muskrats, turtles, fish and ducks.

Several flowers are uncommon, and hopefully new species of waterfowl will be attracted to the area. The site, rich in American Indian history, was originally a part of

the Huron Reservation in the 1800s.

Realizing that the natural features of the area would make this site an outstanding natural interpretive area, more than 10 years ago HCMA planners included this nature study area as a major facility for "Oakwoods Metropark."

Land acquisition over the last 15 or so years has cost \$1.3 million, and recent projects have cost about \$63,000.

"The nature study area is expected to be especially beneficial to the residents of the City of Detroit, downriver area and western Wayne County," said Kreger.

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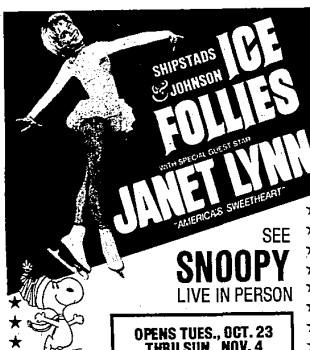
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