

Typographers settle with Detroit Newspapers

Pact will lead to job cuts

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Members of Detroit Typographical Union Local 18, the bargaining agent for some 95 graphic artists at the *Detroit News* and *Free Press*, have voted to ratify a 10-year contract agreement. The settlement is the first since six unions struck the newspapers in July 1995.

By a margin of about 3 to 1 typographers voted to ratify the pact, which provides for a \$70,000 payment to senior typographers who agree to leave the newspapers by March 1. The agreement extends health coverage for an additional five years or until age 70 for those who voluntarily quit, whichever comes first. The agreement does not contain an amnesty clause for eight typographers fired for alleged picket line infractions during the strike. The victimized workers will be offered the option of taking the buyout.

The Detroit Council of Newspaper Unions has refused to comment on the settlement, citing a confidentiality agreement entered into with Detroit Newspapers, publishers of the *Free Press* and *News*, when talks between the six unions and management resumed under the auspices of a federal mediator last August. Frank Vega, president and CEO of Detroit Newspapers, said he was "pleased" with the ratification.

Seventy-five typographers have been called back since the unions offered an unconditional return to work in February 1997. The new settlement will lead to substantial job cuts, given that management has indicated that it will not replace workers that quit or retire. In 1974 members of the typographical union were promised lifetime jobs by the newspapers.

According to a spokesman for the newspaper unions, about 900 former strikers have still not been recalled to their former jobs. Some 2,500 workers struck the *News* and *Free Press* in 1995 after a series of provocations by management. Despite a drop in circulation, the

newspapers, which are published under a joint operating agreement, last year posted their highest profits since 1989.



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