



The Community Minded Union

Locally Speaking

The People Minded Local

Representing: Verizon-NJ Commercial & Marketing, Occupational Center of Union County, North Haledon Police Dispatchers, Data-Tele, Cingular Wireless and American Labor Museum Botto House.

VOLUME 38, NUMBER 3

COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS OF AMERICA

LOCAL 1023, CRANFORD, NJ

OCTOBER 2007

CWA LOCAL 1023 WINS BIG IN TERM EMPLOYEE SETTLEMENT! AGREEMENT GUARANTEES PERMANENT STATUS FOR OVER 300 TERMS!



**Trish Kessell and Rey Massa review
Term Settlement Agreement**

On Tuesday, September 11, 2007 CWA President Rey Massa, Vice President Trish Kessell and CWA National Representative Elaine Waller, accompanied by the local's legal counsel met with Verizon company officials in Avenel, New Jersey to hammer out a settlement regarding the status of over 300 term employees working within the local's jurisdiction.

The status of the local's so-called "term" employees had long been a bone of contention between the parties. The company argued that it had the right to hire a class of employees who, while they enjoyed many of the same benefits as full time Verizon workers, could be dismissed

by the company at any time without cause, had no arbitration rights, and could not retain their jobs passed a specified future date. The union's position was clear: the company was violating the contract by hiring term employees, therefore all term employees had to be made permanent with all deliberate speed.

A formal Arbitration of the issue was scheduled to be held on September 11th. It represented a final showdown between a company dedicated to the idea that it could create a separate workforce that could be

(continued on Page 5)

IN SOLIDARITY



With every tick of the clock we come closer and closer to the expiration of our contract with Verizon, which ends on August 3, 2008.

The Verizon members I talk to all want to know what's going to happen when the collective bargaining agreement expires. Will there be a strike? Are we in danger of losing our job security and benefits? Or will the company be too tied up in its own problems to want to take us on and offer to extend the existing contract? What will happen to those who've retired or are considering retirement? Are they safe?

It's far too soon to know the answers with any certainty, but in the meantime we can't afford to leave anything to chance. The watchword is preparedness. We need to be prepared for any possibility.

None of us want a strike. It's disruptive to both sides. But sometimes, there is no other choice. For that purpose, if it becomes necessary to strike, we'll need to fund it.

I'm happy to report that we have sufficient money set aside to sustain a strike if need be. Hopefully, the company will enter negotiations in good faith and we won't have to use it. But we will if we must.

Among the many important issues raised by the membership are two questions that affect all Americans: health care and retirement security.

You may not be aware of it, but all of Big Business, not just Verizon, has begun an assault on retiree benefits in order to cut expenses. Medical costs are skyrocketing and those on Medicare only have about half their costs reimbursed. According to the experts, it takes another \$300,000 per person to supplement the cost of health care over the average retiree's life span. Prescription plans are a whole other matter. These are costs that Big Business is increasingly unwilling to pay.

Recently, our National Union created the Strategic Industry Fund. This fund is being used to encourage legislative support for a program of national health care. An-

other of its goals is to bring the qualifying age for Medicare down to 55. If enacted by Congress, proposals like these would take the pressure off business to deny retired members their right to live long, healthy lives. Still another way is to stand together in solidarity during bargaining and demand it.

Many companies are refusing to contribute to their employees' pension plans while these same companies' executive officers stuff millions into their own pockets. Exxon, for example, has set a record for profits in the past two years and yet refuses to transfer a penny of this windfall into its pension fund.

Unfortunately for working families, there is no law on the books to compel greedy corporations to play fair with their workers' pensions. Until such time as that much-needed legislation is passed, the only remedy available to workers is to stand together during collective bargaining and refuse to grant the company any give-backs. Give-backs do nothing to protect jobs, wages or benefits.

No one knows what the future holds, but when the time for bargaining the new contract comes around, whatever the company's position turns out to be, whether reasonable or unreasonable, I promise you we will be ready.

Rey Massa

President
CWA Local 1023



ATTENTION HMO MEMBERS AT VERIZON!

The company has advised the Union that three changes will be made to all HMO coverage. First, all limits to mental health benefits will be removed. Second, a \$10 outpatient surgical co-pay will be added. Third, a \$150 in-patient hospital co-pay will be added.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE . . .

TERMS MADE PERMS!

QUARTERLY GRIEVANCE REPORT

THE CRANKY CONSULTANT

MOTHER OF THE MONTH

. . . AND MORE

CWA 1023 GRIEVANCE REPORT

THROUGH END OF SECOND QUARTER 2007

In any given quarter, one area may report closing out more or fewer grievances than other areas. This disparity is caused by the grievance process itself, since grievances are often pending for additional records, or to verify pertinent information, or are in the appeals process.

AREA ONE

Absences and Tardies – Disciplinary
 Vacation, EWD, etc.
 Vacation, EWD, etc.
 Training
 Training
 Harassment and Mutual Respect
 Working Conditions, i.e., Adherence
 Suspension/Letter of Suspension
 Unfair and Unequal Treatment

Total Grievances for Area One: 29

AREA TWO

Absences & Tardies – Disciplinary
 Absences & Tardies – Disciplinary
 Absences & Tardies – Disciplinary
 Absences & Tardies – Disciplinary
 Absences & Tardies – Disciplinary
 Dismissal
 Dismissal
 Dismissal
 Dismissal
 Harassment and Mutual Respect
 Harassment and Mutual Respect
 Harassment and Mutual Respect
 Working Conditions, i.e., Adherence
 Suspension/Letter of Suspension
 Suspension/Letter of Suspension
 Unfair and Unequal Treatment
 Unfair and Unequal Treatment
 Unfair and Unequal Treatment
 Unfair and Unequal Treatment
 Work Completion of Term Employee

Total Grievances for Area Two: 73

AREA THREE

Absences & Tardies – Disciplinary
 Appraisal
 Harassment and Mutual Respect
 Harassment and Mutual Respect
 Harassment and Mutual Respect
 Harassment and Mutual Respect
 Suspension/Letter of Suspension
 Suspension/Letter of Suspension

Total Grievances for Area Three: 106

AREA FOUR

Settled	Absences & Tardies – Disciplinary	Lost
Settled	Absences & Tardies – Disciplinary	Lost
Won	Absences & Tardies – Disciplinary	Lost
Won	Dismissal	Settled
Won	Harassment and Mutual Respect	Won
Won	Harassment and Mutual Respect	Won
Won	Harassment and Mutual Respect	Won
Won	Harassment and Mutual Respect	Won
Settled	Harassment and Mutual Respect	Won
	Harassment and Mutual Respect	Won
	Unfair and Unequal Treatment	Won
	Unfair and Unequal Treatment	Won
Settled	Equalization of Overtime	Won
Settled	Equalization of Overtime	Won
Won	Denial of Union Representation	Won
Lost		
Lost		

Total Grievances for Area Four: 56

AREA FIVE

Settled	Absences & Tardies – Disciplinary	Lost
Settled	Absences & Tardies – Disciplinary	Won
Settled	Management Doing Production	Won
Won	Weather Conditions – Inclement	Won
Won	Harassment and Mutual Respect	Won
Won	Harassment and Mutual Respect	Won
Won	Harassment and Mutual Respect	Settled
Settled	Harassment and Mutual Respect	Won
Lost	Harassment and Mutual Respect	Won
Won	Harassment and Mutual Respect	Won
Won	Harassment and Mutual Respect	Won
Won	Unfair and Unequal Treatment	Settled
Won	Equalization of Overtime	Won
Settled	Harassment and Mutual Respect	Won

Total Grievances for Area Five: 55

Total Grievances for All Areas Through 6/30/07: 323



MOTHER OF THE MONTH



What person's name comes to mind when you think of phrases like "loose cannon," "more nerve than brains," or "square peg in a round hole"?

We here at MOTM can think of many such people, as we're sure you can. But as we ruminate about the goings-on at the BSBC in Teaneck, New Jersey, one name and one name only begins to stand out more than any other—and that name is **Gail Baskerville-Norris**.

There are twenty-one letters in that name. Coincidentally, there are a whole other bunch of woes in the world that haunt adults and scare little children which also contain twenty-one. Two come to mind immediately: Enterobacterial Pestis (the plague) and Ascariasis Lumbricoide (an annoying parasite that sits in your gut and makes you sick).

Gail Baskerville-Norris is one of the up and coming Team Leaders who's been charged with the task of revitalizing the Small Business Group's sales efforts. The strategy is "make the optimal offer on every call or we'll fire you." Naturally, the company doesn't admit this outright. However, **Gail Baskerville-Norris** doesn't pull any punches when it comes to spreading the message. Why pussyfoot around, right? So at one particular meeting she gave it to the reps straight and clear. "Look! If you guys don't make the offer on every single call you get, without exception..." (Even if the customer is deceased, Gail? Even if the customer's been shut off for non-payment, Gail?)... "WE'RE GONNA FIRE YOU RIGHT OUT OF HERE! NO PROGRESSION! NO NOTHING! FIRED! THAT'S IT! THANK YOU!"

Now, we admit that those may not have been her exact words. We've heard many different versions of what Ms. Baskerville-Norris actually said, but we chose this one because it's one of the milder ones, and we

want to be fair. But whatever she said, it contained the words "fired," "dismissed," "gotten rid of," or "terminated."

Apparently, Ms. Baskerville-Norris believes in letting folks choose their own poison.

Fortunately, wiser heads prevailed. Management cancelled subsequent "motivational" meetings at other locations and Ms. Baskerville-Norris (or is it Ms. Baskerville-norris? – 'cause that's the way her IM name is spelled) was told to curb her enthusiasm.

Alas, such was not to be the case.

A few days later, Ms. Baskerville-Norris of "YOU'RE FIRED! THAT'S IT! THANK YOU!" fame tried to discipline a rep for not making the optimal offer to a non-customer who had called us by mistake.

Sounds like the coach needs a lot more coaching—but it shouldn't be at our members' expense.

So, let's hear it (boo's, hisses, catcalls?) for **Ms. Gail Baskerville-Norris** — LOCALLY SPEAKING'S MOTHER OF THE MONTH!

THAT'S IT! THANK YOU, MS. B-N!

BARACK OBAMA GIVES SEIDENBERG A WAKE-UP CALL

In a letter to Verizon CEO Ivan Seidenberg, Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama urges him "in the strongest terms" to reconsider his decision "not to honor the clear decision of Verizon Business technicians" to join CWA or the IBEW.



Telling Seidenberg that the "hard work and dedicated service" of unionized employees have made his company large and profitable, the Illinois Senator reminded him it's been nearly six months since a majority of Verizon Business technicians indicated their strong desire to join the company's 80,000 other union members.

"The next president will sign the Employee Free Choice Act into law, so I encourage you to show leadership by recognizing the unions and entering into negotiations without further delay," Obama wrote.

(Source: CWA National Website)

Term Settlement *(continued from Page 1)*

dismissed whenever it was convenient to cut costs, versus a union local committed to equal treatment for all of its members.

As things turned out, the company offered to settle the matter short of arbitration. Generally speaking, when the company offers to settle it is usually because the company isn't completely sure that it can win. So by settling it hopes to retain at least some of its control over the disputed issues.

The union accepted the company's offer because accepting the settlement meant a tremendous benefit to a large number of members without sacrificing the right to arbitrate the remaining issues at a future date.

Highlights of the settlement are as follows:

All term employees in the Commercial-Marketing bargaining unit as of September 11, 2007 will be converted to permanent employees. They will all retain their original net credited service dates.

New employees in the Commercial-Marketing bargaining unit who are hired after September 11, 2007 may continue to be classified as term employees until the expiration of the collective bargaining agreement on August 3, 2008.

The arbitration hearing has been pended until the outcome of bargaining the new contract. If the term employee issue can be resolved to the parties' mutual satisfaction during collective bargaining, the arbitration will be withdrawn. If not, the union will proceed directly to arbitration and settle the term employee issue once and for all.

Term employees who were separated from service with the company prior to September 11, 2007 will not be returned to the payroll.

A copy of the actual settlement agreement will be posted on all union boards in the Commercial-Marketing bargaining unit offices.

LOCALLY SPEAKING salutes Rey, Trish and Elaine for their hard work and perseverance in seeking full time status for our local's term employees!

CWA LOCAL 1023 WINS RECOGNITION AT NATIONAL CONVENTION



Rey Massa makes award presentation to Locally Speaking Editor-in-Chief Ward Riley at Executive Board Meeting.

The Communications Workers of America National Convention, held in Toronto, Ontario this summer featured some great speeches by our National President Larry Cohen, Vice President Jeff Rechenbach, and other CWA officials. But one of the highlights for us was when our president Rey Massa was called up to the dais to receive four awards on behalf of our local.

The first award presented was the "Bronze Scroll Award for Distinguished Achievement." This award really belongs to all of our members who participate in the local's COPE program. By having \$1 or more deducted from their pay each week to support our legislative agenda, our COPE supporters' donations help elect candidates who will write the laws that protect our jobs, our benefits, and our right to organize workers who want to enjoy the same protections we enjoy as members of a labor union.

The next three awards were accepted by Rey on behalf of Local 1023's newsletter, *LOCALLY SPEAKING* (Editor Ward Riley, Assistant Editor Paula Belmonte) for recognition of excellence in the following categories:

BEST HUMAN INTEREST FEATURE

Second Place

MOTHER OF THE YEAR

BEST NEWS REPORTING

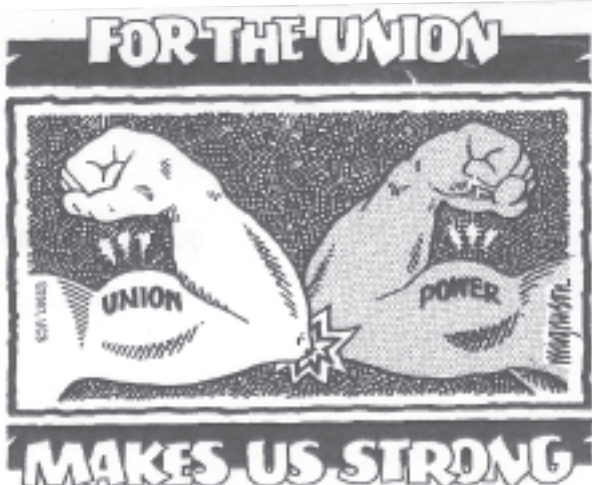
Third Place

WAL-MART LOSES ANOTHER OVERTIME LAWSUIT

BEST OPINION COLUMN

Honorable Mention

BROADBAND EQUALITY NOW!



The Rubik's Cube Syndrome – or How Verizon Turned Less Into Almost Nothing

By The Cranky Consultant

The Rubik's cube was and still is an interesting toy. It's a cube with six sides, each of which is a different color. The goal is to mess it up by rotating the sides around, and then see if you can get everything back to the way it was before you messed it up. I recall it being an annoying "toy" and I don't know too many people who ever actually solved one without either breaking it apart and reassembling it manually or peeling off the stickers and reapplying them (which is an admission of failure and which I personally did many times.)

I bring this up because it reminds me of the current state of the Business Office. Go back twenty years ago, when the toy was popular and there was one department and one person who handled everything. Now, much like the Rubik's cube's six sides, there are six departments (or sides). Demand, FIOS, TBIC, Save-the-Line, The N&T Group, and the FIOS New Connect Group. We are so diversified with internet, cable and wireless that you could actually make a second Rubik's cube consisting of DirecTV, Verizon Wireless, Verizon Online tech support, Verizon Online customer service, Verizon Online customer service, Verizon Online retention, and Multi-lingual. And where does Customer Financial Services fit into all this? Aw, well... that could be the start of a third cube, I guess.

The division and subdivision of the job duties has created a few problems. For one thing, customers often do not get through to the right department, because of the confusing VRU or the fact that they may have questions that one person alone can't answer. Secondly, because you have groups of people dedicated to a specific function, you might have one department with a slow call volume while another is overflowing with customers. Then, there is bridging on every call, of course, every call including the newly identified and as yet untapped market of dead people.

Finally, customers go into the queue for one department. Then, if it's the wrong department (or if their concerns involve more than one department) they go into a queue for another department, which results in doubling or tripling of hold times. As a result, we get mandatory overtime to the maximum, disgruntled customers and huge fines from the BPU. We haven't made access yet this year.

If Verizon quit chopping the job up into smaller and smaller bits, there would be fewer transfers and shorter hold times. Access would improve. Overtime would be reduced, which would reduce the stress on the consultant. Less stress would reduce absenteeism, which would improve access even more.

Verizon's solution? Loan reps out and shift them around, just like the Rubik's cube. People working in

FIOS get loaned to Demand. It's the same with the reps in the Save-the-Line and N&T groups. But the strain on FIOS call volumes results in FIOS calls going to FIOS reps in Maryland. We've even heard a rumor that multi-lingual calls have been sent to English speaking reps in Virginia. All this shifting and changing is done without any consideration for the customer or the consultant. The consultants in FIOS must still make a certain level of sales even if they've been loaned out half the month. The customer is serviced by someone who may or may not be familiar with the latest processes, sales, prices or procedures—or may not even speak their language!

Verizon talks about hiring new employees, but when an entire class quits *en masse* because the trainees think the job is too hard, what does that say about the training curriculum, the heavy job demands, the attitude of the company, and the way things are being mismanaged? When Verizon fires people in training (or newbies who've just graduated and have barely made it onto the floor) for minor infractions, it demonstrates that they really aren't dedicated to solving access problems at all. The company would rather just continue shifting the parts of the Rubik's cube around endlessly in the belief that if you look busy enough people will think that you're actually doing something useful when the truth is that you're not.

GOT A BAD BOSS? – REPORT HIM AND WIN PRIZES!



“Is it me? Or has everybody around here gone nuts?”

This year's **BAD BOSS** award went to a man who was suffering from a rare form of cancer. He filled out all his paperwork for leave and disability benefits. Then his boss threw all the paperwork out, lied and said that he never received it, hoping that months or years would go by before the matter was resolved.

You can read about this modern day horror story and others on www.workingamerica.org/badboss.

This year's top winner received a nice prize. Runners' up get the "Bad Boss Survival Kit," complete with earplugs to tune out the yelling and a rear-view mirror – the perfect cubicle companion so you can always see the boss coming.

Welcome New Members

Nitasha Adams – Madison Demand, **Adebola Adegbemie** – Teaneck CSSC, **Lisa Ali** – Madison Demand, **Eileen Alves** – Madison Demand, **Vashti Augusta** – Teaneck CSSC, **Stacey Battles** – Madison Demand, **Tenisha Beckom** – Madison Demand, **James Berman** – Madison Demand, **Shellyne Brown** – Madison Demand, **Bryant Richardson** – Teaneck CSSC, **Karaina Cannon** – Madison Demand, **Christine Carter** – Madison Demand, **Kimberly Clark** – Madison Demand, **Darren Clark** – Madison Demand, **Delia Clayton** – Madison Demand, **Marisa Cook** – Teaneck CSSC, **Melita Coselli** – Madison Demand, **Maurice Crawford** – Madison Demand, **Sean Davenport** – Madison Demand, **Vanessa Delfi** – AT&T Wireless, **Shakesha Diggs** – Madison SAVE, **Thomas Docherty** – Madison Demand, **Kenya Dominguez** – Madison Demand, **Tiffahaney Downing** – Madison Demand, **Aqila Earles-Church** – Madison Demand, **Richard Eastman** – Madison Demand, **Janine Eubanks** – Teaneck CSSC, **Rahim Fazil** – Madison Demand, **Natasha Fortune** – Teaneck CSSC, **Tara Foxworth** – Teaneck CSSC, **Eugene Gabelli** – Madison Demand, **John Galifi** – Teaneck CSSC, **Eric Garcia** – AT&T Wireless, **Fredlyn Gonzalez** – Teaneck CSSC, **Takiyah Gordon** – Madison Demand, **Tonique Grant** – Madison Demand, **Andrea Grier** – Teaneck CSSC, **Kimrah Harris** – Teaneck CSSC, **Shavonne Harris** – Madison Demand, **Zainab Haruna** – Madison Demand, **Shanae Hawkins** – Madison Demand, **Eric Hilgenberg** – AT&T Wireless, **Lam Hutton** – Madison Demand, **Todd Imperatrice** – Madison Demand, **Jonathan Jaramillo** – AT&T Wireless, **Andrew Johnson** – Madison Demand, **Stephanie Jones** – Teaneck CSSC, **Mitch Jules** – Madison Demand, **Karen Miller** – Madison Demand, **Jill Kennedy** – Madison Demand, **April King** – Madison Demand, **Brian Laguatan** – AT&T Wireless, **Walter LaMarr** – Madison Demand, **David Lang** – Madison Demand, **Al-Nisa Lawson-Herod** – Madison Demand, **Tina Lee** – Teaneck CSSC, **Jose Lopez** – Madison Demand, **Karen Lucas** – Madison Demand, **Kareemah Lucas** – Madison Demand, **Monique Mason-Holloway** – Madison Demand, **Connie Maye** – Madison Demand, **Aurora McDade** – Madison Demand, **Latisha McDougal** – Madison Demand, **Joy Miller** – Madison Demand, **Kevin Mills** – Teaneck CSSC, **David Morales** – Madison Demand, **Bridget Osborne** – Madison Demand, **Hirali Patel** – Madison Demand, **Andrew Pellek** – Madison Demand, **Denise Pollock** – Teaneck CSSC, **Calvin Rice** – Teaneck CSSC, **Solsire Rijo** – Teaneck CSSC, **Lisa Roberts** – Madison Demand, **Dawn Rock** – Madison Demand, **Leon Sample** – Madison Demand, **Elizabeth Seagle** – Madison

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WHAT TOOK SO LONG VERIZON?

When it came to counting the shareholder votes on a proposal to have a “Say on Pay” at Verizon, it took fifteen days to find out that the resolution passed. Fifteen days? Most presidential elections are decided in much less time than that. We assume the auditors were counting the ballots by hand, instead of on their great new supercomputers.

In any event, we won. This is the first time in United States history that any executive officers’ pay packages requires the approval of the stockholders before it can be implemented. At least, that’s the theory.

The bad news is that shareholder resolutions in this country are non-binding on the company. Still, we sent a strong message to Verizon’s Board of Directors. We told them straight out that everyone who has money invested in Verizon is demanding to have a say on executive pay – which to this point in time has been well-documented as excessive and even outrageous.

Meantime, legislation has been introduced in the House of Representative by Barney Frank and in the Senate by Barack Obama to mandate shareholder votes on compensation for corporate executives. Once those bills pass, our resolution will have the teeth it needs to curb the money madness of greedy CEO’s.



MOVING?

*Please remember to give your
new address and phone number
to the Local Office when you move.*

- ✓ You can call: (908) 709-1023
- ✓ You can Fax: (908) 276-8921
- ✓ You can e-mail; cwa1023@verizon.net
- ✓ You can send by mail:

CWA Local 1023

118 South Avenue East, Cranford, NJ 07016

Welcome New Members

(continued from Page 7)

Demand, **Dawn Selby** – Madison Demand, **Kennie Simon** – Madison Demand, **Simrandeep Singh** – Teaneck CSSC, **Steven Smith** – Madison Demand, **Stephanie Souffrant** – Madison Demand, **Derrick Speights** – Teaneck CSSC, **Shannon Stevens** – Madison Demand, **Adam Stowe** – Madison Demand, **Erica Swindell** – Teaneck BSBC, **Veronica Tejado** – Teaneck CSSC, **Jhon Tenorio** – AT&T Wireless, **Aretha Thompson** – Madison Demand, **Miguel Valentin** – Teaneck CSSC, **Crystal Vickers** – Teaneck CSSC, **Brian Vonderahe** – Madison Demand, **Christine Wagner** – Madison Demand, **Derrick Weeks** – Teaneck BSBC, **Joi Williams** – Teaneck CSSC, **Criscia Williams** – Madison Demand, **Kyia Winbush** – Madison Demand, **Allen Witheridge** – Teaneck BSBC, **LaVonda Woods-McLean** – Madison Demand, **Wanda Wright-Smith** – Madison Demand, **Moriah Zavesky** – Madison Demand



Annette Madyun – New Brunswick CTS

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Attention Members!

**Check out the Local's
Website at:**

www.cwalocal1023.net

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

The miner knows that he digs death as well as coal, and the death tonnage is appalling.

— *Saul Alinsky, John L. Lewis:
An Unauthorized Biography*

The Community Minded Union
Locally Speaking
The People Minded Local

The voice of local 1023 endeavors to provide factual, informative and relevant comment on matters of interest to the Membership. Reprint permission is granted to All Union Publications, with credit to the author. All inquiries concerning this publication should be referred to the Editor.

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