

Company negotiators walked out of our Aug. 7 bargaining meeting, telling us they weren't interested in hearing what we had to say (although they did take a copy of the following statement and promised to read it.)

Here, for your information, is a summary of what we had planned to tell them:

Talking points for Aug. 7 meeting

We had intended to look at why our off-the-record talks broke down, and suggest where we can go from here.

The current phase of negotiations began some weeks ago, when company negotiators said they didn't understand our priorities. We responded that we had four main goals:

1. A real pay increase, after the effects of inflation and higher health premiums.
2. A fair drug plan.
3. Fair retiree benefits that would last for a foreseeable period.
4. Job security provisions, notably for people who lose jobs to outsourcing.

That appeared to focus our talks. We soon reached a tentative agreement on job security. We made progress toward a drug agreement.

So we suggested off-the-record meetings in an effort to reach a speedy, comprehensive contract agreement.

At those off-the record meetings, we offered significant compromises. We seemed to be making progress. Suddenly, to our surprise, progress stopped. The off-the-record talks broke down, and the company cancelled the next bargaining meeting.

Today, Aug. 7, we had intended to suggest the following:

We were prepared to move forward either on the record or off the record, whichever path the company preferred.

We also felt they should know how the newsroom had reacted to the decision to sell the company.

At a newsroom meeting we held last week, people expressed anger at the way the sale was handled. With the Bancrofts receiving \$30 million from Dow Jones for their lawyers' fees and with Rich Zannino and other senior executives in line for tens of millions more in special severance benefits, the newsroom found it hard to believe that Rich couldn't find the extra \$10 million to \$15 million it would take OVER FOUR YEARS to give us a raise instead of a pay cut. Whether our pay goes up or down matters enormously to us, but the cost to Dow Jones seemed small compared to what it was dishing out to executives and Bancroft lawyers. Was this worth fighting over?

People in the newsroom meeting told us they didn't see why their pay should take any hit over the next few years. If they are going to have to work for Rupert Murdoch, they said, they deserve more pay, not less. Otherwise, many people said, they will begin looking for new jobs. We need to deal with these expectations.

Despite this strong feeling in the newsroom, we stand behind every offer we have made the company, on the record and off the record. We would like to reach a speedy agreement. We need to see a real pay increase, after premium increases and after inflation. Our members are unwilling for us to abandon our positions and accept a concessionary deal. But we stand by all of the offers we have made the company, and remained prepared to negotiate just as before.

In sum: We need to reach a deal of the kind we were heading toward in the off-the-record talks, before the company dug in its heels.