

ticipated that its demands for drastic wage and benefit cuts would result in a strike and made arrangements long before making its plans known to the union.

Early in 1988, Morgan asked its buyers to overstock Nicolai doors in anticipation of the strike, Gilbert said. He said Morgan hired a consultant with experience in strikes and began to advertise for replacement workers before asking workers

for the 30 percent wage cut. Apparently, Gilbert said, Morgan management thought the strike would last no more than 45 days and reassured stockholders that the situation was under control.

Now, nearly two years later, Morgan has failed to reach the 20 percent profit mark it set out to achieve by cutting union wages, even though the replacement work force is working at or below the 1988 wage

level. Morgan stock has fallen and the company has lost millions of dollars because of the strike, Robinson said. He explained that Morgan continues to lose money even with the cut in labor costs because the strike has hurt the company's image of high quality.

Morgan has lost customers, and investors have pulled out of the company because of Morgan's precarious financial posi-

tion, Robinson said. Morgan is also burdened with the added expense of ongoing training for replacement workers and round-the-clock security guards at the plant.

"They've lost more than they've gained," Gilbert said.

Morgan has refused to enter into binding arbitration to resolve the dispute, despite urging from the Springfield City Council and state legislators.

Morgan defended its position

on arbitration in an ad in the *Springfield News* in January, 1989, which read:

"The parties to the current labor agreement, like most others in the private sector, chose to use the collective bargaining process to negotiate economic issues. Binding arbitration ... is traditionally used in the public sector where the right to strike or lockout is not available to the parties."

Morgan management disputes most of the claims made by the union, and the NLRB has sided with Morgan in most of the cases involving unfair labor practices.

In the *Springfield News* ads, Morgan said the Nicolai Company lost money in three of the five years immediately preceding its purchase by Morgan, and said no basis exists for union claims that Morgan was in debt when it purchased Nicolai.

LeeRoy Pasquini, human resources manager for Morgan's western operations, said in an August 1988 letter: "It is not, nor will it ever be, our intention to break the union. We have worked diligently over the past two years to reach an equitable agreement through on-going dialogue and negotiations."

However, Robinson disagreed.

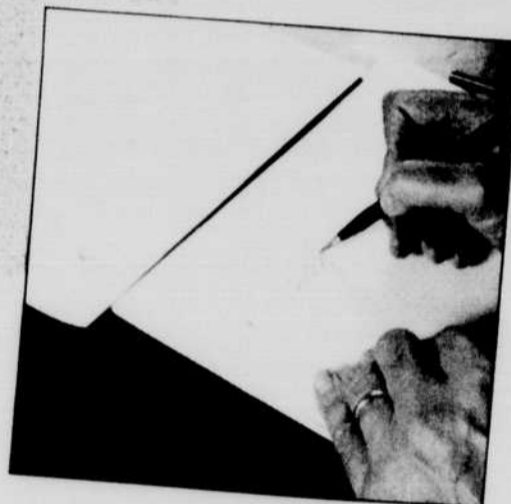
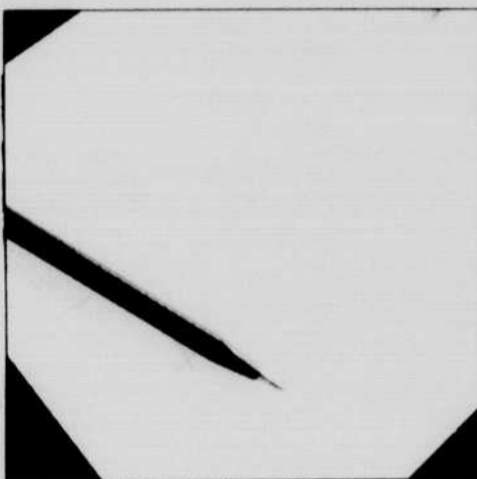
"In the negotiations, Morgan set up a tiered pay scale that cut the wages of the common workers the most," Robinson said. He added that Morgan offered slight pay increases to workers with special technical skills who could not easily be replaced in the event of a strike.

Robinson said he believed the disproportionate wage cut was an attempt to weaken solidarity among union members. However, only 40 of the 300 original strikers have returned to work at Nicolai, and Robinson said the majority of those waited more than a year before returning to work.

As the controversy between union leaders and Morgan management wages on, Nicolai workers — strikers as well as replacements — continue to feel the effects.

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