



Editor Ron McCrea, second from left, holds a conference with the staff of the new weekly



Tooling up the front page

## Press

### The Madison Connection

*Strikers make Wisconsin's capital a three-paper town*

Madison, Wis. (pop. 176,100), is distinguished as the state capital, the home of the University of Wisconsin, and is a city blessed with three separately owned, competing newspapers. Madison used to have two such newspapers, but last Oct. 1 members of editorial and production unions struck both dailies, the morning *Wisconsin State Journal* (circ. 78,000), the afternoon *Capital Times* (39,000) and Madison Newspapers, Inc., the papers' shared production and business arm. The cause of the strike: automation-related layoffs and pay cuts at MNI. Although about 40% of the workers walked out, the dailies have not missed an issue. Nor has their newest competitor: the weekly *Press Connection*, launched on Oct. 9 by members of the striking unions, who are working for it without pay.

The *Press Connection* is not your typical, antimanagement picket-line broadside. It is a full-size, 16-page weekly crowded with local news features and advertising and distributed free to 65,700 Madison-area homes. The paper's first issue scooped the competition with disclosures of a proposed local property-tax increase, and two weeks ago the *Connection* published an exclusive about CIA spying in Madison during the 1960s. "We had all that talent out on the streets," says *Connection* Editor Ron McCrea, 34, who used to be news editor of the *Capital Times*. "We wanted to offer the community an alternative."

The community, a heavily liberal, white-collar mecca, has been notably ap-

preciative. Mayor Paul Soglin, 32, a one-time student activist, canceled his subscriptions to the *Capital Times* and *State Journal*, and has given the weekly some scoops, like his plan to veto the city council's ban on nude dancing. The county district attorney and several religious leaders and university professors have issued statements backing the strikers. A striker-sponsored poll showed that 20% of readers had canceled their subscriptions or stopped buying either of the dailies since the strike began; the papers, however, report that circulation is down only 5% at the *Capital Times* and 3% at the more conservative *State Journal*.

More important, local businesses are supporting the *Connection*, and a recent issue contained so much advertising that staffers were embarrassed. Joked Copy Desk Chief Skip Frank, former *State Journal* late-news editor: "It's a financial success and an editorial disaster." Though *Connection* advertising has fallen off a bit in recent weeks, the strike paper is solidly in the black.

Yet, despite its admirable record, the *Press Connection* does not match the thorough local and state coverage of its competitors, nor does it try to cover national and international news. It remains very much a shoestring operation, printed on rented presses and edited in three cramped rooms of a warehouse. Some strikers are performing the same tasks for the *Connection* as they did for its rivals, but one of the paper's star ad salesmen is a former feature writer, the production chief was an art critic and the author of the trivia quiz a political reporter.

Nearly all *Connection* staffers would clearly prefer to have their old jobs back. Yet both the *State Journal*, owned by Lee Enterprises of Davenport, Iowa, and the locally owned *Capital Times* have hired

permanent replacements for some strikers, and negotiations to end the dispute are at an impasse.

Some readers hope the *Press Connection* becomes a permanent entry in the local newspaper derby. "If they can keep going for a year, they'll make it," Mayor Soglin figures. Meanwhile the staff voted last month to turn their weekly into a daily beginning Jan. 17, and to start charging a nickel a copy. ■

### The Belles' Toll

*Three magazines in extremis*

As the end of the year draws to a close, the final days of three competing magazines are being lived out in the streets of Madison. *Woman*, *Life* and *Play* are the past few years' top 40-year-old titles. While *Life* continues advertising with numerous cosmetics and apparel companies, *Woman* has up a modest amount of \$5 million in the past year. After the *Play* magazine has been in circulation for the better of half a century, it is now in the hands of...

Although *Woman*, *Play* and *Life* are all well-known titles, it is a worthy effort to keep them in circulation. *Woman* has a circulation of 200,000, *Play* has a circulation of 100,000, and *Life* has a circulation of 100,000. The *Play* magazine was founded in 1928, *Woman* was founded by Evelyn Owen in 1931, and *Life* was founded in 1937. It was bought by Charles Scribner in 1945. *Life* has a circulation of 100,000, *Play* has a circulation of 100,000, and *Woman* has a circulation of 200,000.