



Struggle for Power The Longest School Strike: In New York State History

Leon Bock

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Two people participating in the same events, yet on opposite sides, give an engrossing view of a struggle which engulfed a large community in northern Westchester County in New York State. It became the longest teachers strike in New York State's history. Even though they are personal memoirs, both authors try to give as full a picture of the personalities, institutions, and issues driving the struggle as each experienced it. The narrative is in two parts, side by side, and event by event. Both are impressionistic accounts that do not claim to be objective. Dr. Leon Bock's account is the viewpoint of a leader of a major institution, the Lakeland School District. In representing the district he had the heavy responsibility to merge the interests of students and parents, faculty, the taxpaying community, and the Board of Education. Mr. Thomas Kavunedus, a faculty member, served as a negotiator for the Lakeland Federation of Teachers. He saw his responsibilities as extending to the promotion of learning and teaching environment which would foster excellence. The contract with the school district, which Mr. Kavunedus had participated in promulgating years earlier, was a major step in raising teachers out of the dark ages of coffee in the boiler room, and hopefully greater professionalism. Both authors disagree with one another on many of the issues. Most of these issues bedevil our schools today. Yet, there is enough civility to recognize that partisanship need not be so all engulfing that it demonizes the other side and its objectives. No narrative of such a complex event can be totally accurate and objective. The authors try to focus on the interpersonal relationships, rather than serve as a textbook history of this series of complex events. There is no intention to discredit, or malign any of the personalities in the narrative; rather they are presented as the writers experienced them under conditions of stress.

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