

TEACHER STRIKES IN NEW JERSEY:
A STATISTICAL AND IMPRESSIONISTIC ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a thirty year profile of teacher strikes in New Jersey. It demonstrates that the number and severity of teacher strikes has systematically declined. The author suggests that this long term decline in strike activity is at least partially explained by the maturation of the system and its participants. It suggests that surges in strike activity are related to external forces and the strike activity in this state is influenced by location and population density.

Over the past three decades, almost 200 teacher strikes have occurred in New Jersey. These strikes have caused the loss of over a half million teacher days and over three million student days. These job actions have affected hundred of thousands of families and played an important role in determining how public sector collective bargaining is viewed in New Jersey. This article provides a statistical perspective on these strikes and draws some impressionistic conclusions.

Although many strikes of public employees have occurred in New Jersey, all of them are prohibited under the state's common law. The original employer-employee relations statute did not mention the strike and that was one of the reasons why then-Governor Richard Hughes conditionally vetoed the measure [1]. The thinking in the legislature was that there was no need to mention the strike in the law because court decisions had already made it clear that strikes of public employees were prohibited within the state. This thinking was confirmed two years later in *Lullo v. International Association of Firefighters*, where the state's supreme court said it saw "no substance to plaintiff's claim that the broad scope of the 1968 act envisions collective bargaining with all the implications the

term carries in the private employment sector, including the right to strike [2, at 439].

The New Jersey law permits binding arbitration of unresolved contract disputes for public safety employees only. For all other employees, including teachers, the impasse procedures consist of: 1) mediation supplied by the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC), after one or both parties have informed PERC that an impasse exists; and 2) if mediation fails, the parties select a factfinder from lists supplied by PERC. The factfinder takes testimony and gathers information and is empowered to issue a set of nonbinding recommendations.¹ These recommendations may become the basis for a settlement, but either party may reject them, and the only recourse is return to the bargaining table.

New Jersey has over 800 school districts, each of which negotiates separate collective bargaining agreements. Almost all of the teachers are represented by the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA). At the beginning of the negotiations era in 1968, most teacher associations bargained separately, i.e., the teachers were not combined with other school district employees in a common collective bargaining agreement. By the end of the period, however, most contracts covered a wide assortment of school district employees, ranging from teachers through secretaries to bus drivers. Under the New Jersey law, furthermore, collective negotiation rights are extended to most supervisory employees, but the higher ranking officers in school districts are not permitted to be represented in the same bargaining unit as the teachers.

TEACHER STRIKES IN NEW JERSEY: THE FIGURES

Figure 1 gives a thirty-year profile of the number of teacher strikes in the state, beginning with 1968, the year in which the state's first public sector bargaining law was enacted. Two themes are articulated clearly by this exhibit. First, the overall trend in teacher strikes is declining. The slope of the regression line through the data is negative. To look only at the beginning years and the latest years, New Jersey teachers averaged about ten strikes per year in the first three years of Chapter 303 and about two strikes per year over the past ten years.² Second, the period of peak activity occurred between 1975 and 1981, with the largest number of strikes occurring in the 1979-1980 school year.³

¹

PERC pays for the cost of mediation. The parties share the cost of the factfinder.

²

Table 1 will show that between the 1992-93 school year and the 1997-98 year, only five strikes took place in the state.

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In 1979 and 1980, there were additional strikes of hospital personnel in Hudson County, Kearney, and the Trenton Psychiatric Hospital and a strike of New Jersey Turnpike personnel.

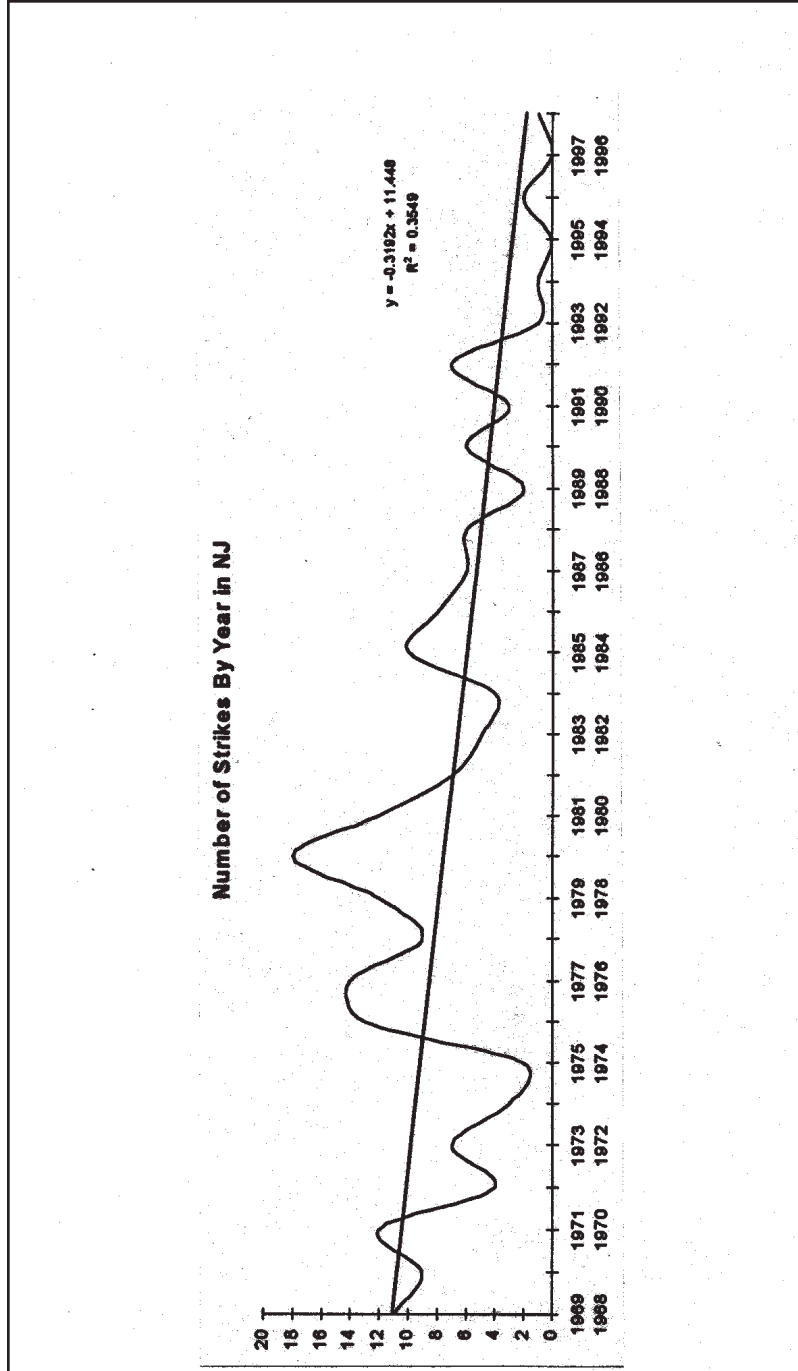


Figure 1. Number of teacher strikes by year in New Jersey: 1968-1998.

Figure 2 shifts the emphasis from the number of strikes to the number of days the strikes lasted. As would be expected, the general trend mirrors that found in Figure 1: The number of strike days experienced a relatively steady decline over the period studied. The largest number of strike days were lost between 1969 and 1971, where the Newark teachers led the way. Between February 2, 1970 and March 27, 1971, they engaged in two strikes—one lasting seventeen days and the other, fifty-five days. During that period of time, Jersey City teachers also engaged in a lengthy work stoppage, and strikes of shorter duration took place in Cranford, Hamilton Township, New Brunswick, Passaic, and Trenton. Some of the significant strikes in the 1977-82 period involved Cherry Hill, Glassboro, Hanover Township, Patterson, Perth Amboy, Pitman, Saddlebrook, Sussex County, Trenton, Willingboro, and Woodbridge [3].

Figure 3 describes the number of teachers on strike during each of the thirty years studied. In addition to depicting, once again, the overall negative trend in strike activity, this figure identifies the peak years as coming in the first three years after the passage of Chapter 303 and in the latter half of the 1970s. As shown in Figure 4, the largest number of teacher days lost in a single year occurred in the 1970-1971 school year, showing the influence of the strikes in Newark and Jersey City. Figure 5 focuses on student days lost, with the data beginning in 1977. Once again, the expected negative trend is evident.

Figure 6 puts all of the aforementioned information together. The key variables from all of the other figures are incorporated into this exhibit. The key variables are number of strikes, number of teachers on strike, number of strike days, number of teacher strike days, and number of student days lost. As expected, all of the variables are closely related, and all of the data show two periods of peak activity in teacher-strikes—1969 through 1971, and 1975 through 1981.

TEACHER STRIKES IN NEW JERSEY: THE TABLES

The tables basically provide the numbers behind the figures, but those tables add a locational dimension—they break the data down by county. Table 1 focuses on the number of strikes by year, as did Figure 1. It shows that northern, highly urban Bergen County is, by far, the leader in teacher strikes. With thirty-four strikes over the thirty-year period, Bergen County has had more teacher strikes than the next two counties combined—the eastern shore county of Monmouth with sixteen and the center-state county of Middlesex with fourteen. The least strike-prone counties tend to be more rural in nature and usually in the southern part of the state. Of the five counties least prone to teacher strikes, four are in the south and only Sussex is from northern New Jersey. They are Cape May and Sussex counties with one strike; Cumberland with two; Atlantic with three; and Ocean County with four.

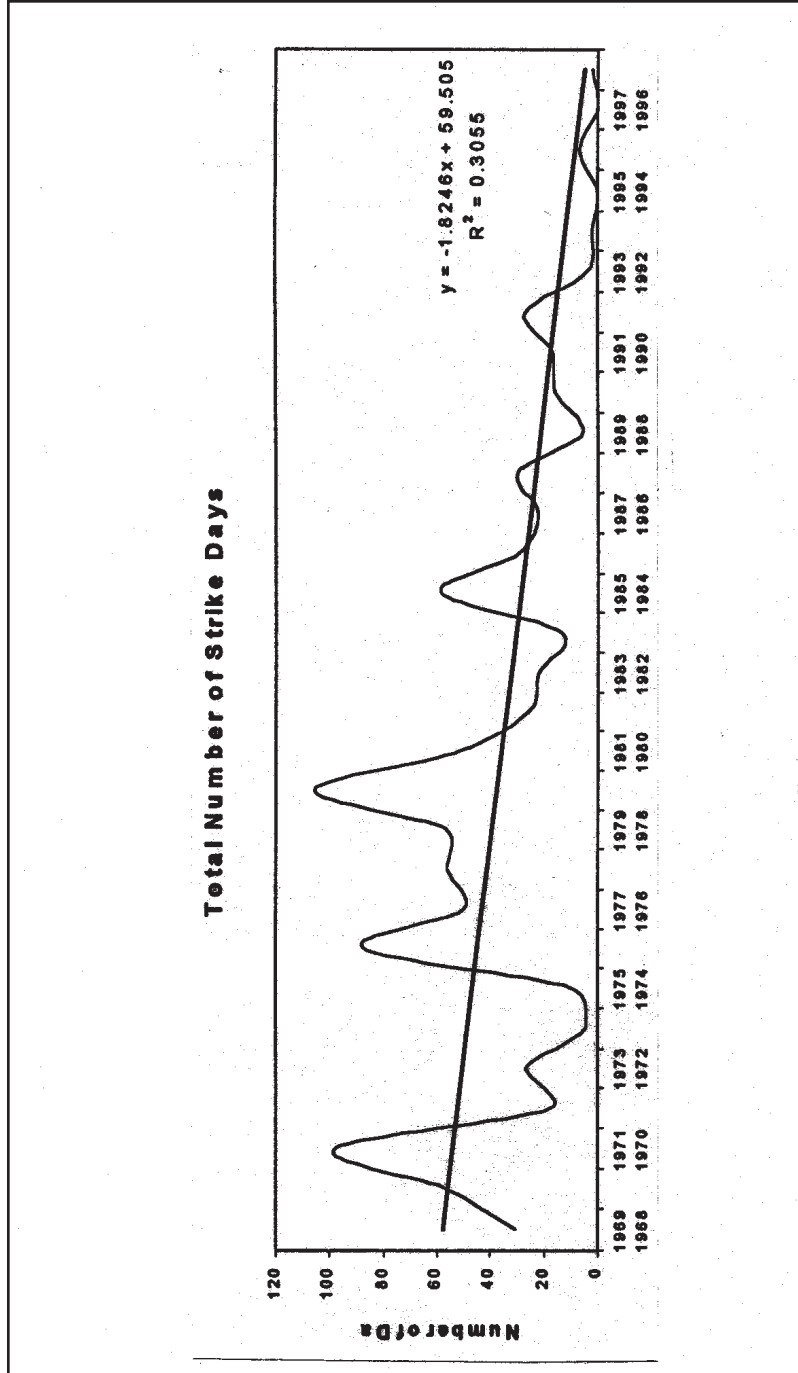


Figure 2. Number of days districts were shut down: 1968-1998.

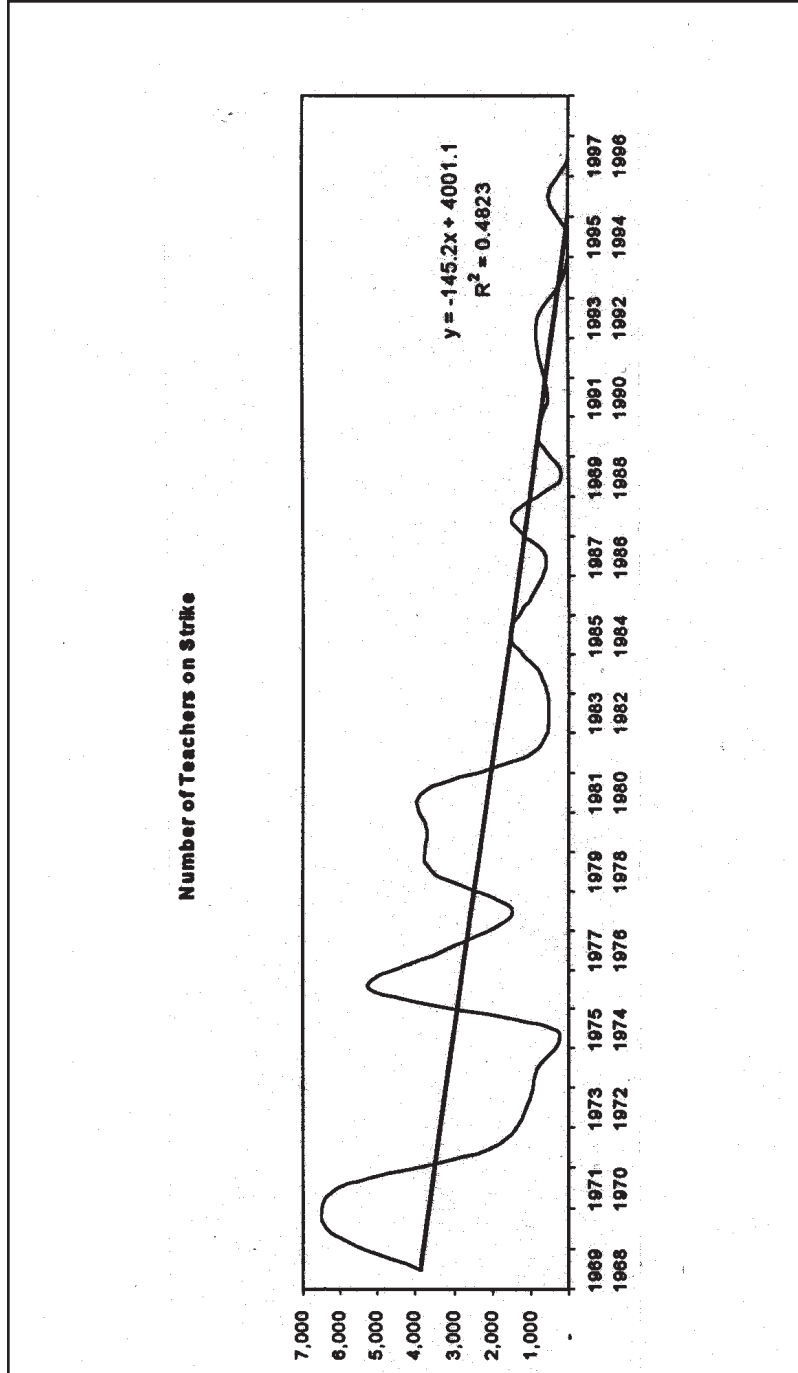


Figure 3. Number of New Jersey teachers on strike: 1968-1998.

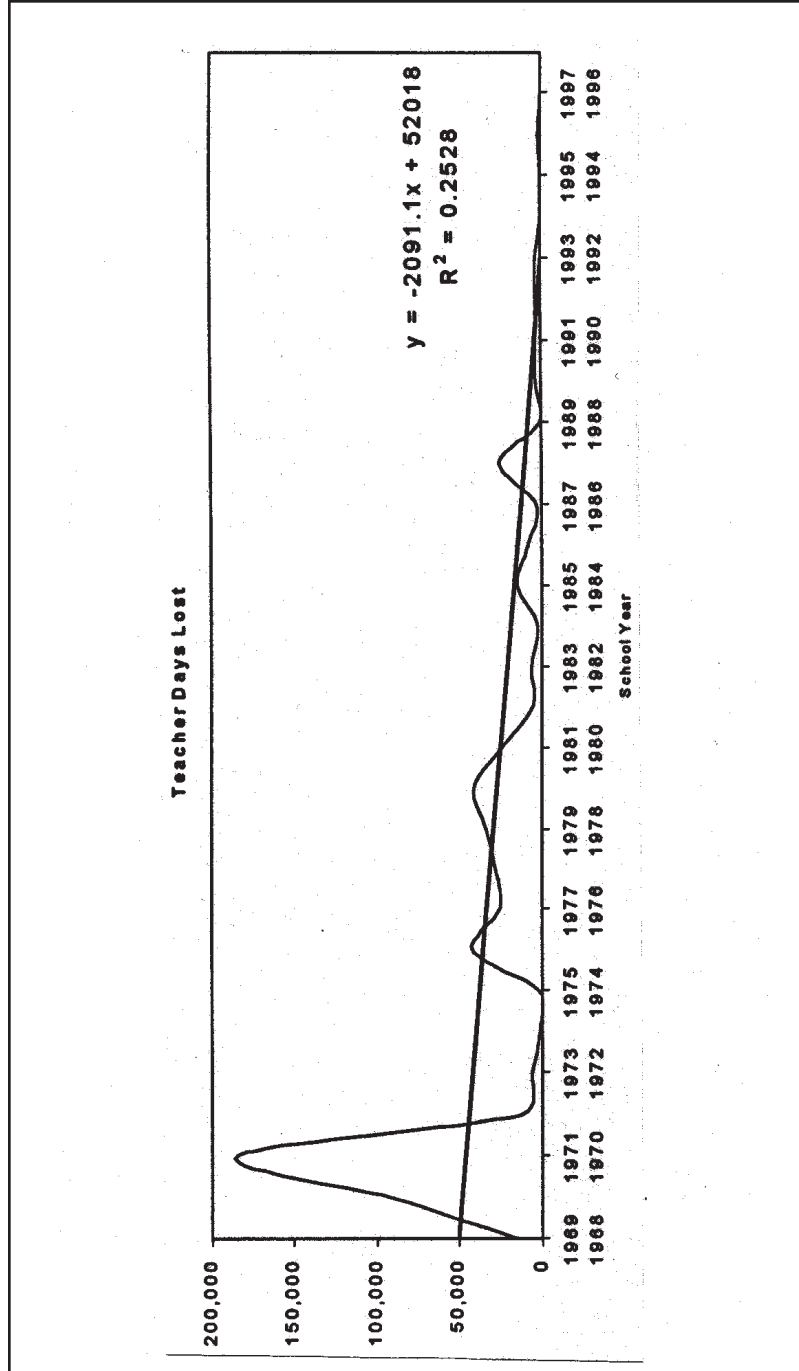


Figure 4. New Jersey teacher days lost: 1968-1998.

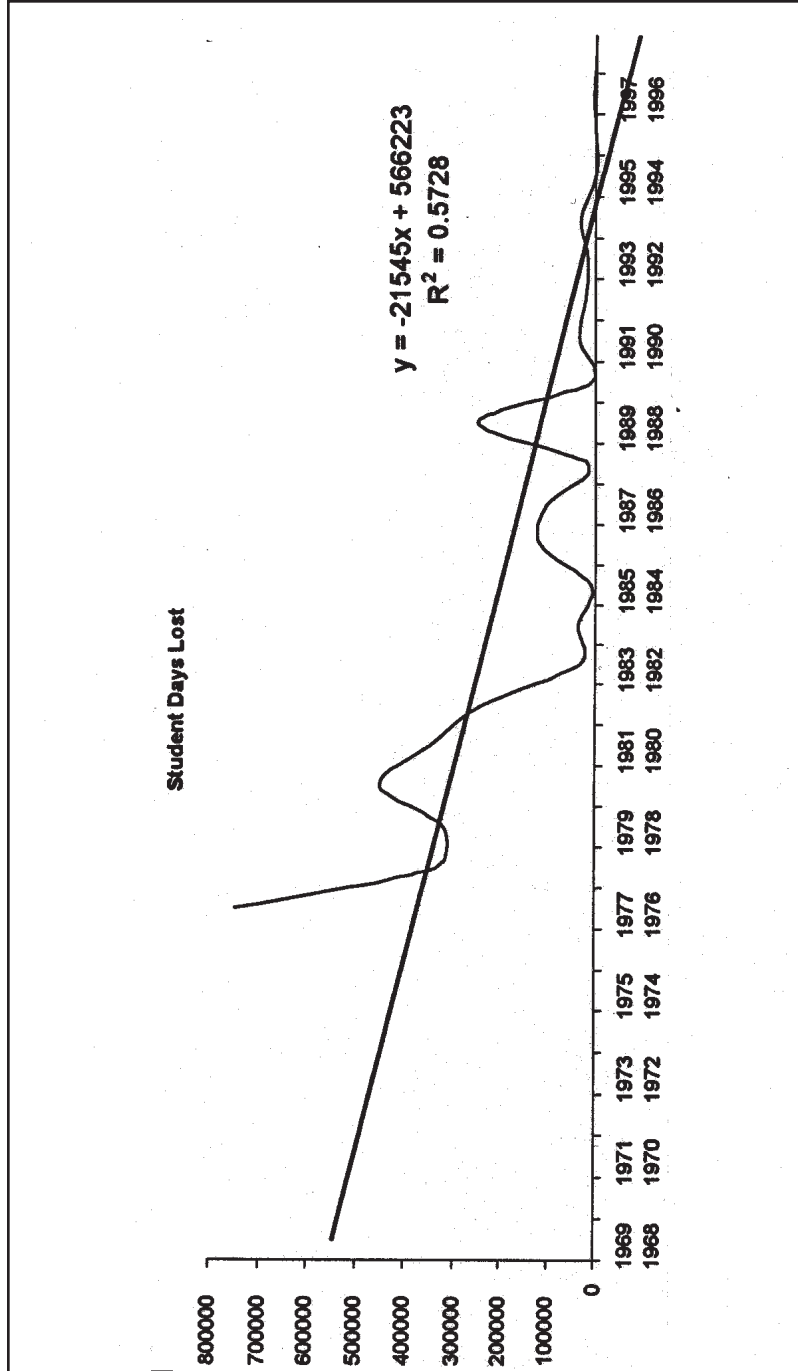


Figure 5. Student days lost: 1969-1998.

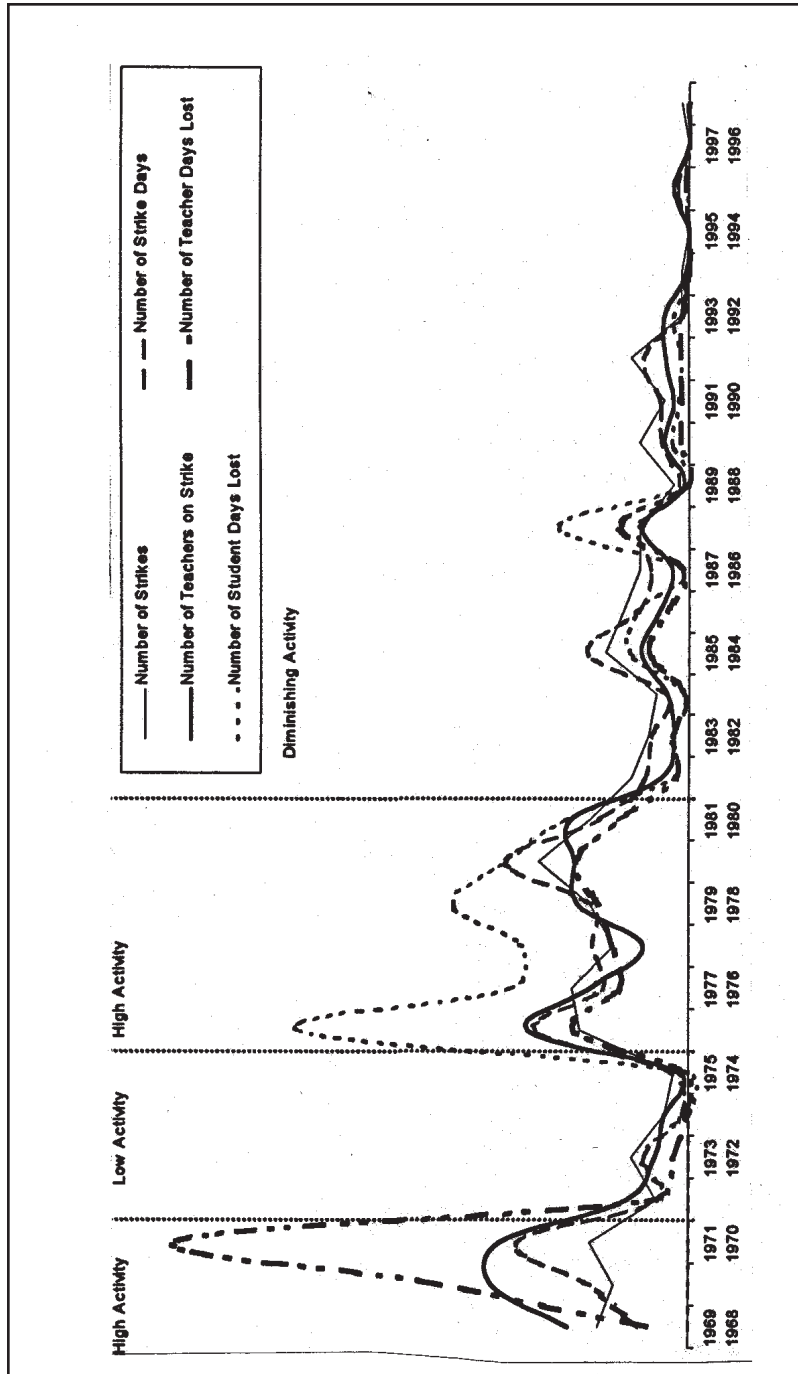


Figure 6. Composite portrait of Figures 1 through 5.

Table 1. Number of Strikes Per County Per Year: 1968-1998

Year	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
Atlantic	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bergen	3	1	4	0	4	0	0	0	2	4	1	1	2	1	3	
Burlington	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	
Camden	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	0	
Cape May	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Cumberland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Essex	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	2	0	0	
Gloucester	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	
Hudson	2	2	1	0	1	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	
Hunterdon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Mercer	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	
Middlesex	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	1	0	
Monmouth	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	1	0	2	1	2	2	0	1	
Morris	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	
Ocean	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Passaic	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	
Salem	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	
Somerset	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	2	0	1	0	1	
Sussex	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	
Union	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	
Warren	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	
Totals	11	9	12	4	7	3	2	13	14	9	12	18	12	7	5	

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Totals	Rank
Atlantic	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	18
Bergen	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	34	1
Burlington	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	11
Camden	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	5
Cape May	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	20
Cumberland	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	19
Essex	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	5
Gloucester	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	8	11
Hudson	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	5
Hunterdon	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	6	14
Mercer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	11
Middlesex	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	14	3
Monmouth	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	2
Monmouth	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	5
Morris	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	16
Ocean	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	16
Passaic	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	13	4
Salem	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	16
Somerset	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	9
Sussex	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	20
Union	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	10
Warren	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	15
Totals	4	10	8	6	6	6	2	6	3	7	1	1	0	2	0	1	195	

The total number of strike days per year (Table 2) is based on the number of days a school district was shut down by a strike. According to these data, the peak year for teacher strikes was 1979-80, when school districts in ten counties were closed for more than 100 days. Eighty-eight days were lost in 1975-76 and from 1969 through 1971, 155 days were lost, but the bulk of those days came from the two Newark strikes. In the last ten years, New Jersey school districts were closed for a total of eighty-one days, and in the last five years, the total number of district closure days was eleven.

The trend in the number of strikes does not precisely mirror figures on the number of teachers on strike in a given year. The data suggest that more strikes in the late seventies and early eighties occurred in the smaller school districts, leading to a disproportionately smaller number of teachers on strike and fewer teacher days lost.

The number of teachers on strike per year is obviously influenced by the size of the school district. Table 3 shows that over the past thirty years, slightly more than 50,000 New Jersey teachers engaged in a strike. This averages about 1,700 teachers a year. But the teachers of Essex County alone accounted for fourteen thousand of those teachers, or 27 percent of the total. Table 4 reports the same kind of information. Those tables show that in a typical year, about 19,000 teacher days are lost to teacher strikes. Essex county supplies 44 percent of the lost teacher days. The Essex County information in Tables 3 and 4 is strongly influenced by the aforementioned 1970-71 strikes of Newark teachers.

Table 5 reports on the number of student days lost because their teachers were on strike. We do not have accurate information prior to the 1975-1976 school year because the records listing the number of students in attendance at each of the striking schools is faulty. The data that we have, however, reinforces other information. The overall trend in lost time is negative, and students in the more metropolitan counties lose the most time. The three leading counties for loss of student days are Union, Camden, and Passaic. Essex and Hudson would surely be in that list were data from earlier years available.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

If we were to take the entire thirty years that have passed since the enactment of New Jersey's first public sector bargaining law, we would conclude that a typical year would produce about eight teacher strikes. These strikes would involve about 1700 teachers, last between four and five days, and lead to an average of 135,000 student days lost. However, a closer analysis of the information indicates that the simple computation of thirty-year averages paints a flawed picture. If the last ten years were taken as the database, the typical year would read as follows: about two teacher strikes, involving approximately 350 teachers, lasting less than four days, and costing about 11,500 student days. The first conclusion

drawn from the New Jersey teacher strike data is: in comparison with the past, today we have fewer strikes, involving fewer teachers, and affecting fewer students. While one may argue that even one day lost to an unlawful strike is too many, the data presented here show that if there ever has been a teacher strike problem in New Jersey, that problem has lessened significantly since collective bargaining for teachers came to the state.

A second conclusion can be drawn from Figure 6. The data clearly show that there were two surges in strike activity. The first surge took place between 1968 and 1971. This was followed by a lull and then another swelling in the strike statistics occurred between 1976 and 1981. After 1981, strike activity resembles a diminishing sine wave, declining to the point where recent teacher strike activity has been almost negligible.

We have no definitive answer as to the causes of these surges, but we have some speculations. These surges in strike activity have been influenced by exogenous factors as the rate of inflation, the level of unemployment, “cap” laws,⁴ or local or statewide politics. One possible explanation of the 1968-71 surge comes from the timing itself. Strike activity increased in the year after the first public sector collective bargaining statute was passed. Possibly, the members of the local teacher associations looked upon the new law as a means of alleviating their frustration after so many years of being unable to bargain over their terms and conditions of employment. The rise in strike activity, therefore, may have come from a carryover of a desire of the teachers (and perhaps of school boards as well) to flex their muscles, coupled with inexperience in dealing with the negotiations process and the failure to comprehend the personal costs associated with a work stoppage.

The merger of the New Jersey Education Association and the National Education Association may have also contributed to the 1968-71 surge. This merger took place in 1969-70, and it provided the statewide educational association an enriched source of money and lawyers. The availability of new financial resources may have encouraged the local organizations to flex their muscles. The new assistance at the bargaining table may have led the parties into discussions of unfamiliar issues with people who were unfamiliar with one another, making the settlement process more difficult.

The second surge also occurred shortly after New Jersey had adopted a new bargaining law. The modification to the original law took place in 1974, just before this second upwelling in strike activity. And in the middle of this period, the New Jersey Supreme Court rendered a series of decisions that not only limited the scope of bargaining but also made unlawful many agreements that the

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The New Jersey “cap” law limits the amount by which a unit of government may increase its operating budget without voter approval.

Table 2. Total Number of Strike Days Per Year

Year	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
Atlantic	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bergen	6.5	1	12	0	11	0	0	19	11	2	4	4	12	12	19	0
Burlington	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	0	0	0	0	0	0
Camden	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	19	12	0	0	0	0
Cape May	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cumberland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Essex	0	17	55	1	5	0	0	4	0	0	3	21	6	0	0	0
Gloucester	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	9	0	0	0
Hudson	9	18	5	0	9	0	0	26	9	0	0	0	9	0	0	0
Hunterdon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mercer	1	1	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	7	7	0	0
Middlesex	0	9	11	8	0	0	0	0	14	0	0	27	0	1	0	0
Monmouth	0	0	0	9	2	0	9	6	0	17	1	4.5	7	0	1.2	0
Morris	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	12	0	0	3	13	0	0	0	0
Ocean	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Passaic	4	8	0	0	0	2	0	6	3	0	0	7	0	1	0	0
Salem	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	4	0	0
Somerset	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	1	8	10.5	0	1	0	2	0
Sussex	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0
Union	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	11	1	0	13	0	0	0	0	0
Warren	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	0	0	0	0
Total	30.5	57	98	18	27	5	10	88	50	56	56.5	105.5	51	26	22.2	0

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total	Rank
Atlantic	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	14
Bergen	7	8	3	12.5	0	0	2	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	156	1
Burlington	0	0	0	4	0	0	5	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	45	10
Camden	0	3	0	3	0	3	3	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	56	7
Cape May	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	20
Cumberland	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	20
Essex	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	119	2
Gloucester	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	8	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	27	12
Hudson	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	93	4
Hunterdon	0	0.5	0	0	1	0	3	0	5	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	12.5	15
Mercer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	26	13
Middlesex	3	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	99	3
Monmouth	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	63.7	5
Morris	0	0	9	3	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	46	9
Ocean	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	17
Passaic	0	0	11	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	47	8
Salem	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	17
Somerset	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	31.5	11
Sussex	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	16
Union	2	6	0	0	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	59	6
Warren	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	19
Total	14	58.5	30	22.5	30	6	16	17	27	4	2	0	0	7	0	2	936.7	

Table 3. Total Number of Teachers on Strike Per Year

Year	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
to	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	
Atlantic	85								52							
Bergen	148	85	380.4		143.2			215.5	159.6	53	180	32	144.0	220	306.3	
Burlington										662.6						
Camden	790								1057		989.3	100.5				
Cape May	125															
Cumberland															173	
Essex		3200	3000	589	595		180	2800			1438	364.7	2100			
Gloucester												165	149			
Hudson	870	1518.	700		135			370	1052.				98			
Hunterdon								145								
Mercer	700	560	650									132	997.7	214.5		
Middlesex		527.7	450	1080					300			473.2		63		
Monmouth				388.8	250		195.5	200		481.1	28	191.7	179.7		29.16	
Morris			194			160		537.0				200	400.7			
Ocean		25	300					70								
Passaic	1100	431				420		135	452.6			1600		100		
Salem										29		128		189.7		
Somerset			50			260				97	212.7	159.0		135		190
Sussex																
Union			380					720	17		530.7					
Warren	92								22	62	65					
Total	3910	6347	6104.	2058	1123.	840	376	5193	3210	1500.	3590	3688	3804	960	526	

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1988	1989	1989	1990	1990	1991	1991	1992	1992	1993	1993	1994	1994	1995	1995	1996	1996	1997	1997	1998	1998	Total
Atlantic		96																										233
Bergen	90.28	44	110	89.76					47				37															2485.
Burlington				152					486	242	335.7																	1878.
Camden		81		83				102	100.6						810													4113.
Cape May																												125
Cumberland						67																						240
Essex										1																		14088
Gloucester						280	104			305											334							1517
Hudson		495																										5238.
Hunterdon		68				92			92			30				158												555
Mercer																												3254.
Middlesex	186	386																				199						3555
Monmouth		82	238.1																									2264.
Morris			51	263		53							123															1981.
Ocean	102																											497
Passaic			571.3						90																1			4901
Salem												36.66																383.4
Somerset		155.7										205																1464.
Sussex																												100
Union	360	166.3				1042.																						3216.
Warren				42																								253
Total	738.3	1574	1012.	587.8	1534.	206	816	548	767.4	810	158	0	533	0	1	52515												

Table 4. Total Number of Teacher/Days Lost Per Year

Year to	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
Atlantic	425								104							
Bergen	962	85	4565		1576			4095	1756	106	720	128	1729	2640	5821	
Burlington									1789							
Camden	790								8456		1879	1207				
Cape May	375															
Cumberland														173		
Essex		5440	16500	589	2975		180	1120			4314	7659	1260			
Gloucester								9620	9471			660	1341			
Hudson	7830	2733	3500		1215			145					882			
Hunterdon													264	6984	1502	
Mercer	700	560	5200						4200							
Middlesex		4750	4950	8640						8179	28	863	1258			35
Monmouth				3500	500		1760	1200								
Morris			194			320		6445			600	5210				
Ocean		75	300					210								
Passaic	4400	3448				840		810	1358			1120		100		
Salem										29		128		759		
Somerset			150			260			97	1702	1670		135			380
Sussex												1000				
Union			760					7920	17		6900					
Warren	92								22	62	195					
Total	16674	9066	18461	1272	6266	1420	1940	4164	2648	2797	3322	4109	2492	5237	6236	

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1988	1989	1989	1990	1990	1991	1991	1992	1992	1993	1993	1994	1994	1995	1995	1996	1996	1997	1997	1998	1998	Totals
Atlantic			768																									1,297
Bergen	632	352	330	1122					94			370																27,083
Burlington				608				2430	484	2350																		23,764
Camden			243		249			306	302					3240														33,591
Cape May																												376
Cumberland						134																						307
Essex										7																		288,744
Gloucester						280	312			2440								334										6,547
Hudson			3960																									63,813
Hunterdon			34			92		276			150					316												1,013
Mercer																												16,210
Middlesex	558	7720																										44,862
Monmouth		82	1429																1194									18,834
Morris				459	789	106						123																14,246
Ocean	204																											789
Passaic				6285				270																	2			28,713
Salem											110																	1,026
Somerset			623								205																	5,222
Sussex																												1,000
Union	720	998				2502																						42,343
Warren																												413
Total	2114	1478	8545	2768	2564	618	3372	2931	3308	3240	316	0	1528	0	2	588,182												

Table 5. Total Number of Student/Days Lost Per Year

Year to	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
Atlantic	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2058	401	7000	n/a	20145	17800	35460	
Bergen	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	51450	23245	240000						
Burlington	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		99536	292444	18920					
Camden	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a									
Cape May	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a									
Cumberland	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a							863		
Essex	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	250400		57861	49200	114434				
Gloucester	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a				4406	15200				
Hudson	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	160500	131460			6300				
Hunterdon	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a								
Mercer	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a					8000	68929	8850		
Middlesex	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		55580			56896		1047		
Monmouth	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9240		59641	0	5265	10273		0	
Morris	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	115000		9300	35395					
Ocean	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3020								
Passaic	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	13200	21520			160910		1200		
Salem	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a			0		290		5092		
Somerset	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		1919	18780	21150	7407	1600		0	
Sussex	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a				59868					
Union	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	143000	231							
Warren	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		40	0	2760					
								745810	335589	318822	450383	346689	236881	34852	35460	

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
Atlantic	5251																7309
Bergen	3322	969	2058	4820			900		7500								175070
Burlington			5500				27200	484	4340								277524
Camden		2850		2925		4500	2674			30000							463849
Cape May																	0
Cumberland					1606												2471
Essex						0		n/a									471895
Gloucester						4350		20900					4600				49356
Hudson		24480															322740
Hunterdon		0			727		2061		243		0						3031
Mercer																	86779
Middlesex	4046	72188															189757
Monmouth		60	12138														96617
Morris			3606	2859	502				1060								167722
Ocean	0																3020
Passaic			84640				1500								n/a		282970
Salem									1720								7102
Somerset		947							900								45296
Sussex																	7407
Union	2100	8980															460280
Warren						246101											3030
	9468	11572	10267	1610	248938	8850	34335	21284	16763	30000	0	0	0	4600	0	0	3112225

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parties had negotiated in earlier contracts. These changes undoubtedly put more pressure on the bargaining process.⁵ Furthermore, this was also a time of rapidly rising costs of living. Inflationary rates were moving toward the double digits during most of this time, and the teachers may have been much more conscious of this than were their school board counterparts at the bargaining table.

The last set of impressions that we draw from the data are:

- Teacher strikes in New Jersey have never represented a serious, statewide threat to the citizenry. Despite the fact that New Jersey has over eight hundred school districts, only three times in the past thirty years did the annual number of teacher strikes exceed a dozen. And in the last fifteen years, only once did the number of teacher strikes enter double digits (ten strikes in 1984-85). Furthermore, strikes have usually been settled quickly—an average of about four days.
- The number and severity of strikes has diminished over time. This suggests that as school boards and teacher organizations become more familiar with each other and with the bargaining process, they become more willing and able to reach agreements without resorting to violent acts.⁶
- Teacher strikes in this state tend to be affected by location and metropolitan status. The strike problem lessens as we move from the densely populated, industrial, northern counties to the more rural, southern counties.⁷

This paper has presented much information on teacher strikes in New Jersey and has drawn some impressionistic conclusions. We do not answer the question, “What causes teacher strikes?” and we have not attempted to suggest how to curb them. What we have suggested, no matter how tentatively, is that the problem of teacher strikes does not appear to be too severe in this state, and it has lessened with the passage of time. Further research is needed to examine the causes of teacher strikes and to make interstate comparison.

* * *

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⁵ The key decisions were [4-5].

⁶ This is not to downplay the influence of the courts on strike activity. The courts have made it clear that they will not tolerate strikes and will fine teachers and teaching associations heavily if they do defy a court order to return to work.

⁷ Although we cannot ignore the fact that there are more school districts in the north, and, therefore, a greater possibility for strikes to occur in that part of the state.

REFERENCES

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2. *Lullo v. International Association of Firefighters*, 55 N.J. 409 (1970).
3. Monique Lilly and David J. Morgan, *Thirty Years of Collective Bargaining in the New Jersey Public Sector*, Public Sector Collective Bargaining in New Jersey, New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University, 1998. Unpublished paper available from the Editor.
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5. *Ridgefield Park Education Association v. Ridgefield Park Board of Education*, 78 N.J. 144 (1978).