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DFM workers: We fight on

Top executives at the hedge fund that owns Digital First Media must have felt terrible that employees at the newspaper company weren't getting any raises in 2017.

So they did something about it. They gave *themselves* a raise.

As for DFM's workers: We fight on. A coordinated job action is set for Sept. 19 and bargaining is set for Oct. 11.

Defying an unprecedented and continuing revolt by its own staff, principals at Alden Global Capital, which owns DFM, walked off with hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash and stock after looting DFM to bankroll dubious high-stakes investments.

A new report by journalist Julie Reynolds, [published by a national alliance of DFM workers](#), cites [corporate data](#) filed

with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission to tally the impact of Alden's larceny.

While DFM journalists and other news workers have received just one pay increase in 10 years or more, Alden president Heath Freeman and allies made out like bandits after diverting DFM revenues to stake a claim on Fred's Inc., a troubled chain of retail pharmacy stores.

Alden's investment in Fred's was considered a bust by most measures. Still, Alden CEO Heath Freeman pocketed \$340,000 in Fred's stock awards while Steve Rossi, former CEO of DFM, got \$205,208 for joining the Fred's board.

Joe Anto, another top Alden lieutenant, collected \$408,000 in stock and cash, including a \$100,000 signing bonus, when he left DFM to join Fred's as interim CEO, according to the new report.

DFM workers, meanwhile, spent last year listening to excuses as to why the company couldn't afford even a token pay increase. In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017, DFM earned a 17 percent profit margin totaling \$160 million, but didn't even budget a cost-of-living increase for its employees.

NewsGuild-CWA workers at a dozen DFM newspapers and online news organizations continue to push back. That battle won global media attention after editorial page editors at The Denver Post, one of DFM's top newspapers, publicly condemned their ownership for gutting newsroom staffs.

Freeman and his minions have made it clear they prefer news organizations to serve as cash cows rather than community trusts or defenders of democracy. In leaked comments from staff meetings, executives confirmed their strategy is to ignore the fuss — and their employees' demand for fair treatment — figuring that it will die out sooner or later.

But workers in the DFM campaign refuse to play along, staging one public action after another, rallying supporters through petitions, demonstrations, and guerrilla actions. The Guild alliance is seeking to offset inflation of more than 4.5 percent since the last negotiated raise in 2016.

A new stage in the campaign begins on Sept. 19 as workers gear up for joint wage negotiations in Philadelphia on Oct. 11. Stay tuned for campaign news from local leaders and on www.dfmworkers.org, on www.facebook.com/dfmworkers, and @dfmworkers.

