

# Scotts Bluff Star-Herald

Good Morning!

It's Thursday

May 29, 1975

74th Year, No. 278 Scottsbluff - Gering, Nebraska 24 Pages, 2 Sections 15 Cents



## Bridgeport Miller Hearing Draws 200

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Of the Star-Herald

BRIDGEPORT — A hearing on charges, including exceeding authority in allegedly suspending a principal, suspending a student on policy not adopted by the board, keeping the school in a state of turmoil and threatening teachers if they took complaints to the school board, against Supt. Duane Miller was conducted by the Bridgeport Board of Education Wednesday before about 200 persons.

Miller, hired by the board effective Jan. 1, was suspended from his duties as superintendent of the Bridgeport Public Schools May 12.

The hearing opened at 4 p.m. and was still in progress at 10:15 p.m. Due to the approximately 200 persons attending, it was held in the high school auditorium instead of in the superintendent's office as originally scheduled.

THE FIRST witness for the board was Calvin Henne, elementary principal for 11 years. Henne told the board that he was summoned to Miller's office and asked by the superintendent: "Henne,

why the hell don't you resign?"

Henne said he then told Miller that he wanted a tape recording of the entire conversation. Both taped the session and the tape, more than an hour long was played.

In the taped conversation, Miller told Henne that teachers were upset because they could not meet without having Henne's approval and said that they felt Henne was interfering with their right to assemble.

HENNE SAID the teachers misunderstood the "approval" and that his purpose was only to know when and where the teachers were meeting in the event one was wanted.

Miller said Henne had intimidated personnel, that he complained and criticized the superintendent's actions and stated "If you are unhappy with what I'm doing, take your complaints to the board or shut up."

Joe Wells, high school for six years and acting superintendent since Miller's suspension, testified that Miller suspended him from his duties Feb. 7, told him to go to his office and stay there.

Wells said he returned to his office and about 45 minutes later Miller came to Wells' office and said he did not have the authority to suspend him and asked him to stay on.

"I TOLD HIM he had suspended me and I was going home at noon, and I did," Wells said. He voluntarily returned to his duties Feb. 11.

The Wells incident was blamed by Mrs. Ann Smith, vice president of the Bridgeport Education Assn., and faculty member for five years, and Mrs. Carol Juelfs, BEA president and teacher, as being at least a part of the cause of breakdown in discipline and had a divisive effect on teachers.

Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Juelfs, stating that they were relating the consensus of views of the faculty, added that four teachers resigned and about 75 per cent of the high school faculty was actively seeking other positions before Miller's suspension.

BRIDGEPORT Police Chief Darrel Brown also was a witness for the board. He related some meetings with Miller in

which, more than once, he described Miller as becoming irrational.

It was about 9 p.m. before Miller, accompanied by his attorney, David Nuttleman of Gering, was given an opportunity to respond to the accusations.

Repeatedly Miller said he tried to tell school personnel that if they had complaints they should take them to the board in the established procedure: in writing.

"I'M NOT HERE to convince you that you need me, but to convince you that you've got problems. You can face them now or wait until the next guy comes to town and gets his windows knocked out."

Miller, with 20-year-old court proceedings concerning him and entered into the record, was questioned about having had mental care related to the court action.

To the questioning of the board's attorney, Robert Bulger, Miller answered, "I was once treated in a hospital for a sprained ankle too. Is that relevant here?"