History often repeats itself, and unions often use the same tactics with several employers simultaneously. Therefore, close and regular communications should be made with other employers dealing with the same union and with employers trade associations dealing with other local unions in the construction industry.

Such liaison will signal what is to be expected in bargaining and will provide a feel for the union’s tactics as well as coordinate a more solid front of employer bargaining in the industry.

In addition to communications between individual employers, the various management trade organizations are excellent forums to discuss activities of union strategies and past history. Certainly, liaison between employer trade associations should include an exchange of bargaining agreements. This will provide data to management negotiators which can be used to refute union claims regarding agreements with other employers.

Also, it will go far to insure that one employer or multiemployer bargaining group does not give up more than another and does not flame the union’s unquenchable thirst for “one upsmanship” for higher wages and additional fringe benefits.

Historically, project owners have not been sympathetic to having their job progress stopped during an economic strike. However, there is presently a genuine recognition by many major industrial owners that an owner’s policy of pressuring a contractor to avoid strikes at any cost has greatly contributed to the inflationary spiral in the construction industry in both wage rates and restrictive work practices.

It is wise for the employer associations and even individual employers bargaining with a union to keep the owners informed of the status of negotiations and solicit the owners’ support for the contractors’ position. A fully informed owner will be more likely to support the position of the contractor when his job is shut down by an economic strike.

The employer bargaining committee should also maintain liaison with owners and construction users associations if there are any in the area, since the impact of owner support can be a material factor in adding bargaining clout to the employer’s position at the bargaining table.

It cannot be overemphasized that a coordinated bargaining effort is a forward step in effective bargaining. So often employers in the construction trades must accept unfair bargaining agreements because the owners, or the general contractors in the case of subcontractors, demand a job be completed without the delays which accompany strikes or other labor disputes.

Certainly, this problem is not easily resolved, but it is also certain that communications between affected parties should be used. Seek the cooperation of owners and general contractors before the labor dispute clouds develop. Understanding between owners, general contractors and subcontractors of the trials and tribulations of bargaining will strengthen the management bargaining position.

Similarly, establishing relationships with management negotiators for different employer trades will be a very valuable alliance. Inasmuch as bargaining occurs only every year to three years, it is important to learn from the experiences of other management negotiators. Foster the exchange of ideas and bargaining history of the unions in your area.

There is strength in numbers, and common goals among employers can be more easily attained if the employers present a unified front to the unions.