

CONFERENCE OF NEWSPAPER UNIONS, AFL-CIO

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STRIKE BULLETIN #1

Nov. 3, 1994

Thurs., 1 p.m.

Meeting with Mayor Jordan

Today Mayor Frank Jordan met with union and management representatives separately and asked the two to come together for a 7 a.m. meeting in his office tomorrow in an effort to work out a settlement. Both sides agreed to be there.

"Any effort to bring the two sides together is encouraging. We're glad the mayor made this effort and the other side responded positively. We look forward to the talks," said Doug Cuthbertson, chair of the Conference of Newspaper Unions.

Cuthbertson, Jordan, federal mediator Ruth Carpenter, Agency vice president Richard Jordan and Youth Employment Coalition director Kristen Bachler will be at the meeting along with other top labor and management officials. Congressman Tom Lantos, who also has offered to mediate, will attend. Yesterday, Newspaper Agency President James Hale told a news conference that he wanted contract negotiations to resume.

Worker replacement letter

The companies are mailing out a certified letter to all employees threatening to replace them if they do not return to their regular shifts on November 9. "Replacements will be hired for all positions where there are vacancies due to the employee's refusal to report to work," wrote James Hale, president of the Newspaper Agency.

Union officials said this tactic is commonly used by managements attempting to instill fear in workers and break a strike. In this strike, the companies do have the right to permanently replace workers, but this is a matter of concern only when a union loses a strike. We have put together a powerful campaign including an advertising boycott, a decirculation drive and a community effort that is putting maximum pressure on newspapers. We feel confident the papers realize they are vulnerable economically and this attempt to frighten our workers is an act of desperation. When you have the strength to win, you get a contract and an agreement that everybody goes back to work. This is a strong strike, we will win a contract and everyone will go back to work.

We believe such a tactic will turn public opinion further against the companies and make it far more difficult for the two newspapers to return to normal operations once the strike is over.

Details on how negotiations broke down

The companies are spreading false stories that negotiations stopped because the Teamsters and other unions quit bargaining, got up and walked away from the table. In fact, the unions gave management a proposal covering both economic and non-economic issues that included several major compromises. That offer was handed to chief company negotiator Richard Jordan about two hours before the strike

deadline. After that point, management never contacted the unions or offered any response. At 10 p.m., the unions had no other choice but to honor the strike deadline and to tell their members to walk out. Throughout the closing hours, chief union negotiator Doug Cuthbertson urged management to continue working toward a compromise and warned that the deadline was in earnest.

Free Press update

A scoop by Chronicle Political Editor Susan Yoachum and Pamela Burdman leads the Internet edition of the San Francisco Free Press today. Hundreds of reporters, editors, artists, photographers and columnists have offered to work on our alternative strike paper, which is scheduled to be distributed to homes and on streetcorners throughout the city on Friday afternoon. Production Editor Jack Ivers has asked union members to loan Macintosh computers and other equipment to the operation.

Overview of the negotiating issues

When the talks broke off, negotiators were discussing management's proposal to overhaul its newspaper delivery system. The companies say the present system uses more Teamster drivers than are necessary and that the system is too costly. They failed, however, to present a clear plan to improve the system and refused to describe the number or type of job cuts they were seeking. Union officials said they were willing to consider changes but told the companies they would need a detailed proposal so they could evaluate it. The Teamsters have said that 150 adult driver jobs are threatened by management's overhaul plan. Many of these drivers have worked for the companies for more than a decade. Also among the victims would be hundreds of youth carriers who rely on their jobs to help their families make ends meet.

In the wage area, we have already suffered through a 19-month pay freeze. On top of that, the inflation rate was about double our wage increases during our last contract.

Under the management wage proposal, we would get the magnificent raise of \$12 a week the first year -- or 30 cents an hour, and a few additional raises of only about 2.47 percent a year. The unions had responded with an initial raise of \$20 a week and further increases at a rate of 4.4 percent a year.

Throughout bargaining, the companies have pleaded financial hardship, originally saying their difficulties made a wage freeze necessary. But they have refused to provide any evidence whatsoever. In fact, retail advertising spending is climbing and newspaper profits in California and throughout the country have soared an average 20 percent, according to industry analysts.