

Federal mediation in Twin Cities Teamsters strike

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A federal mediator called on Teamsters union officials and company representatives to meet Thursday in the fourth day of a strike by 2,500 workers against the Honeywell corporation.

Production and maintenance workers in Teamsters Local 1145 struck the Minneapolis-based company midnight Sunday after rejecting the recommendations of the union negotiating committee by a 58 percent margin. The atmosphere at Sunday's meeting became highly charged when workers challenged a proposal that would require all new-hires to pay 20 percent on the yearly \$2,000 deductible, while the existing membership would continue to be covered 100 percent.

The wage structure of the proposal would also affect new-hires. For instance, current workers classified as labor grade 10 are hired in at \$9 an hour and reach \$12.32 after 14 months. The new agreement would lengthen this progression to three years.

Honeywell has proposed a 14 percent wage increase over the life of the four-year agreement in an effort to sweeten its offer. But workers are not impressed after working under contracts that have provided only yearly lump-sum payments or no increase at all, while health care costs have risen.

Pickets at the Honeywell facility in the suburb of Golden Valley spoke about the issues. One worker said, "Under the new contract offer the company and the union wanted the new-hires to pay the increased insurance rate. But we figure that in four years when the next contract comes up, they're going to come back and try to shove the increase down our throats. We've got to stand up for the new-hires because in four years the new-hires will be voting with us, and we want them to look out for us, too. The company wants us to fight among ourselves."

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"The new union brother working next to you," stated a second picket, "gets less coverage and less pay during the first three years of the contract. It's a union-splitting issue. They want to break the union."

"I think the union wants to break the union," said another picket.

In the 1980s, Local 1145 numbered some 10,000 members. Honeywell has since spun off its military armament-producing plants under the name Alliant, while shifting a considerable number of jobs to both Mexico and China.



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