

Metal Workers Strike

Completion Date Of Dorm In Doubt

by Rich Andrews

Basically, the dispute between the sheet-metal workers and management is over wages. The workers have been on strike since May 1, and all construction on the new dorm has been halted because no workers will cross the metal workers picket lines. So far, there have been only two meetings between labor and management since the strike began — Wednesday, May 14 and one scheduled for Tuesday, the 20th. The metal workers strike is not localized; strikes have hit Dubuque, Cedar Rapids, Iowa City and Peoria. All have been out since the first.

Outrageous Demands

According to a spokesman for the Schebler Co., the subcontractor doing the metal work, the union does not want an agreement. Management is offering \$1.50 an hour increase in a year—the union refuses. The spokesman stated that until the union budes from its “outrageous, extreme demands” there can be no settlement. He stated that the management is not anti-union, as they hire only union help. But, the union must stay within reason. “Actually, the only way I see this ending is for the government to

step in. There’s no question as to the need for a raise for them, but there are limits to sane demands.

No Guidelines

“The president can say all he wants to about wage guidelines to hold inflation down, but in construction, there are no guidelines. Construction is a booming business today, but one man can do only so much, as can one company. Each man has only so much worth; they must realize this. They do need a stepwise increase in wage, but an increase based on rises in cost of living or loss of dollar value is impossible. We’re not that modern, and unions not that reasonable.”

No matter what kind of settlement is reached, no contract agreements can be changed to which the company is already committed. The work was agreed to at a flat price, not a cost-plus arrangement. Included in the price was an anticipated raise for the workers. Any cost exceeding that anticipated will be absorbed by the company.

More Strikes Ahead

The spokesman concluded, “It does not look very good. They don’t want an agreement yet.

When one union local settles, they all will — but not at the demands they are now making.”

The metal workers were progressing at the same rate as the rest of the building was going up. Priestier Construction, the general contractor in charge, will file a progress report within a few weeks, but until then, no completion date can be forecasted. This date is contingent on work, however. The sheetmetal workers are now out. The painters are out; they were due to start work on the dorm when the sheetmetal workers left. The painters cannot picket a job they have not started, so no picket lines of theirs can be set. The common laborers have been without a contract since May 1, but have not struck as yet. After the metal workers have settled, either the painters or the laborers could strike and stop work.

Work Could Stop

So far, only the laborers are involved in the communications center construction. But as work progresses, work could conceivably stop there also, because of the absence of necessary metal work.

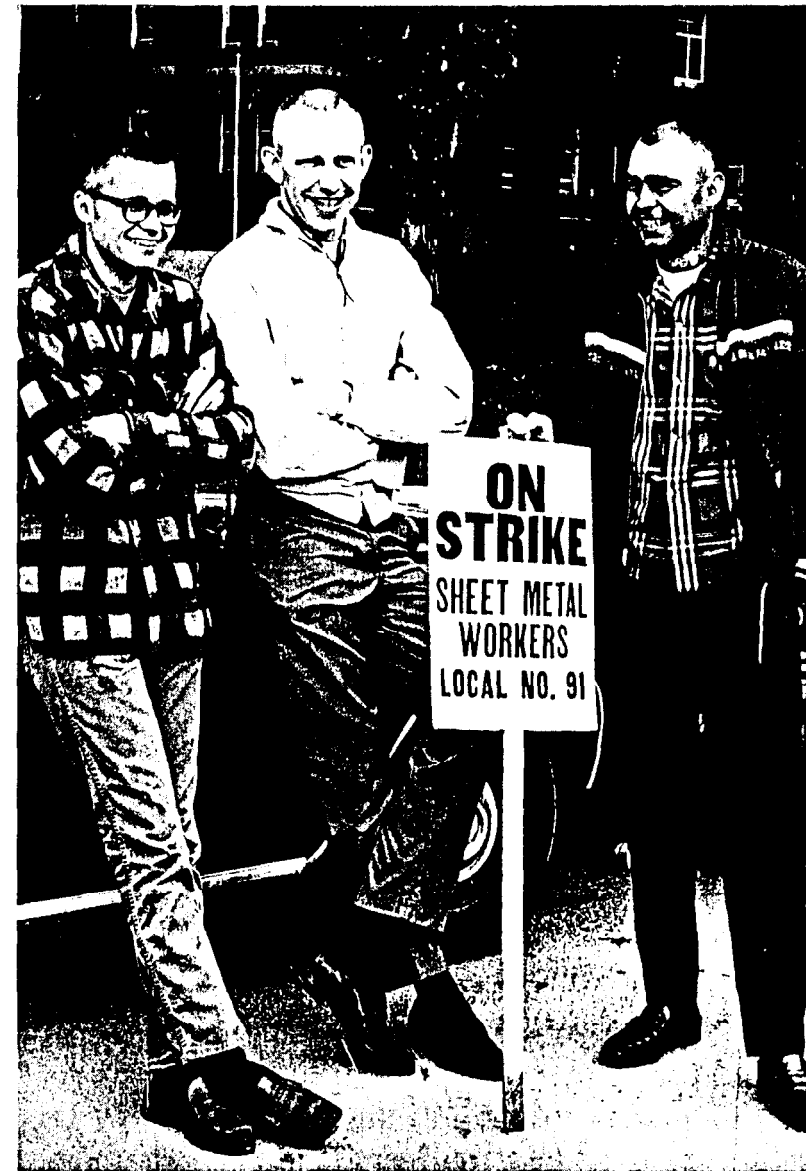


photo by Pat Andresen

As pictured above, students aren't the only persons who protest.