

Green Giant workers offered severance pay, other benefits

By EMILIO ALVARADO
STAFF WRITER

Green Giant workers who will lose their jobs when the company moves most its Watsonville operations to Mexico next year overwhelming approved a benefit package Saturday that includes severance pay, medical benefits and job training provisions.

About 250 workers met Saturday morning at the Veterans Hall with Teamsters Union officials, who explained the package for nearly two hours before a vote was taken. Joe Fahey, president of Teamsters

local 912, encouraged the group to accept the package, but expressed his disdain for it and the company.

"We don't like it; it doesn't replace your job," he said. "No amount of money can replace the loss of your job."

But he pointed out, "I think this is all we can get out of them."

The package, which will cost the company about \$2 million, includes three main provisions:

- **Severance pay:** Under this provision, regular full-time employees with less than 20

years with the company will get one week's pay for every year of employment. Those with more than 20 years will get two week's pay for every year.

Seasonal workers, those working at least 100 hours a year, will also benefit. Those with one to nine years will get half a week's pay, or about 20 hours pay, for every year. Workers with more than 10 years will get ¾ week's pay, or 30 hours pay, for every year with the company.

To be eligible for the severance pay, workers must remain

with Green Giant until they are released by the company. They can get the money in one lump sum or in weekly allotments. In case of death, payments can go to designated beneficiaries.

- **Company job training:** Those who qualify and have senior ranking can apply for the remaining jobs at the plant after the company scales down its operations. Workers applying for those jobs must have lost their former jobs due to company reductions and could replace workers with less seniority whose jobs had not been cut.

Testing, if any, for these new jobs will be done uniformly, with a full description and qualifications of the jobs outlined clearly. Union official said this is done to avoid favoritism.

- **Early retirement:** Employees 55 and older, who are eligible to receive monthly benefits from the pension fund, can receive an extra \$1,000 lump sum if they elect to retire early and inform the company by Aug. 3 of their intentions. This payment will be made when the employee is released by the company.

- **Medical and dental benefits:** Green Giant will pay for regular employees' medical insurance for four months after they are released. Seasonal workers have the same benefits, but their coverage extends for three months after they are released.

In April, Green Giant, which is owned by Grand Metropolitan of London, announced that it would cut its work force of nearly 400 to about 150 and move the bulk of its operations to Mexico at the end of the year.