

# Cannery workers authorize strike

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Following the example of the employees of Richard A. Shaw Inc., employees of Watsonville Canning and Frozen Foods yesterday voted unanimously to reject the company's contract offer and voted 551-to-6 to authorize Teamsters officials to call a strike if necessary.

The rejected contract contained 45 employee "take-aways," Teamster officials said.

Following the vote yesterday morning at Veterans Hall, an estimated 600 employees from all seven Watsonville canneries, and their supporters, marched through the city to Callaghan Park to dramatize their opposition to the canneries' latest contract offers.

"It's pretty clear to the cannery employees that if one employer can get away with this sort of contract, the rest will follow," said Joe Fahey of Teamsters for a Democratic Union, an organization that frequently opposes union officials. "I think the demonstration showed that the workers are determined to get a good contract at all the canneries."

Richard King, secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Local 916, said the Watsonville Canning contract, though leaving current employee wages at the present level, would reduce wages of new hires by \$2 to \$3 per hour.

The company also wanted to take away the union security clause that requires employees to join the union after working 30 days for the company, King said.

King called this "a union-

breaking ploy."

In other take-aways, the company wants to reduce vacation time for seasonal workers, make it more difficult to qualify for health benefits, and eliminate guaranteed work hours per day, according to King.

"I think Watsonville Canning kicked the wrong beehive," King said. "These employees are furious that the company can think they can get rid of benefits in one fell swoop that it took them 30 years to accumulate."

In the last contract, negotiated in 1982, only Watsonville Canning, one of seven canneries in the city, got the union to agree to lower wages.

Officials from Watsonville Canning would not comment on the contract or the union vote.

Employees at Richard Shaw Frozen Foods authorized the Teamsters to call a strike a month ago. However, union officials are still negotiating with the company.

Fahey said many of the terms in the Watsonville Canning contract were "right out of the Shaw contract."

"The only major thing they didn't do was reduce the present workers' salaries, but that's because Watsonville Canning has the lowest wages of any local cannery and they didn't need to reduce them," Fahey said.

He added that the march was called by rank-and-file members at the Shaw plant who "are frustrated because they've been working for a month for conditions proposed by Shaw."

King said the Teamsters have not called for a strike because "we're not at an impasse yet."