

Workers back on job at Richard Shaw Frozen Foods

By JOAN RAYMOND
Sentinel Staff Writer

WATSONVILLE — Workers for Richard A. Shaw Frozen Foods processing plant returned to work from the picket lines today following Friday's settlement of a tense strike that lasted almost six months.

About 250 workers were scheduled to return to their jobs by the end of today's work day following individual interviews by company managers with the former strikers.

The mood was positive as workers filtered into the vegetable-packing plant. There was excitement in the air. It was something like the first day of school.

Although employees regretted having to settle for a \$1.20 per hour pay cut in exchange for a profit-sharing plan and other benefits, they were generally happy to be back to work on the assembly line, in shipping and receiving, maintenance and other departments.

They said productivity will probably increase because of the incentives from the profit-sharing provisions of the new three year contract.

Some former strikers were angry upon returning to work and vented that anger during the interviews, but only one worker of those who had been interviewed, was not rehired, said company vice president Steve Shaw, in an interview this morning.

"A few were yelling and screaming and venting their emotions, but only one was terminated," said Shaw. "She was terminated on the spot."

Shaw said the anger was mainly from Spanish speaking workers. A substantial part of the Shaw workforce is Spanish speaking.

"The mood is really positive to a degree, although I'm sure there are still questions in the minds of the workers," commented Shaw.

Some employees doubted whether the strike had been worth it, although they could not lay blame on Teamsters Local 912 contract negotiators.

"We're happy to be back," said assembly line worker Patricia Arnold, of Prunedale.

She felt "everyone lost, all the way around," in the strike.

Arnold said some employees did come back to work angry, "but their attitudes changed after the interviews."

The company issued interview guidelines to personnel staff.

The guidelines included these points:

- "Welcome them back to work! Let them know we 'CARE' and understand the struggle and personal problems they have encountered.

- "Stress that from this point on we are a team. Why are we a team? Because of profit-sharing.

- "Try to determine if there is any hard feelings toward the company. Make sure they understand there is no hard feeling toward them.

- "Let them know we will be establishing new work standards. We are going to be running a tight ship.

- "We want to solve problems before they get out of hand."

The interviews lasted from 10 to 30 minutes per employee.

"I'm happy," said returning worker Christina Rosetta of Watsonville. "No, the strike was not worth it," she said.

Warehouse worker Albert Haenelt, a five-year Shaw employee, said he hopes the profit-sharing provision will make up for the wage cut.

Receiving department employee Mick Luvvano said he had turned down a job offer from the Pajaro Valley School District to return to his job at Shaw.

"I've been here six years. I'm used to my job her. I like it," com-

mented Luvvano. "I'm glad to be here working."

Luvvano described the settlement as a "loss." He agrees the settlement could have been reached within a few weeks if a fact-finding team had been started early in negotiations and if communications had been better among striking workers, Teamsters and the company.

There was a report from a neutral fact-finding team showing the company has been losing profits over the past three years and that turned strikers toward a contract ratification.

Shaw said that a 10-member contract negotiations committee would stay intact but would evolve into a "cost containment" committee.

By 9 a.m. today employees were back on the assembly line packaging frozen vegetables in plastic bags.

A shipment of brocolli that was picked early this morning in Salinas was trucked to Shaw for processing at 11 o'clock.

Up to 20,000 pounds of brocolli can be processed in one hour, Shaw said.

Shaw said employees are "bound and determined" to make the new contract a success. The company expects its workforce to expand to 1,000 when the processing season picks up the first week of March.

A few blocks away, the strike continued at Watsonville Canning near

where violence erupted Tuesday night. Shaw workers said today they felt Watsonville Canning was being much more hard-nosed toward the striking workers than Shaw had ever been.

Strikers have been putting pressure on returning Shaw workers to the point that some workers have asked for tightened security, Shaw said.

"Watsonville Canning employees are telling our workers they sold them out," said Shaw.

Board chairman and owner Richard Shaw Sr. said his company has sustained \$270,000 in damage to equipment from the strike. The damage included sugar put into equipment and tampering with hydraulic equipment so that it must be repaired, he said.

More violence in Watsonville

By HERON MARQUEZ ESTRADA
Sentinel Staff Writer

WATSONVILLE — Strike-related violence erupted for the second time in as many days Tuesday as police used tear gas to turn back from the downtown area a crowd which had attempted to disrupt operations at two local frozen-food plants.

Seven people were arrested, six of them juveniles, for throwing rocks and bottles at officers and motorists during the course of the disturbance. Police estimated it lasted six or seven hours.

Several people were injured, including one driver who had a rock thrown through the window of his car, a police officer who was hit in the foot by a rock, and a tow truck

driver who was hit in the head by a rock.

Police said one man in custody was forcibly removed from the hands of officers by 20 to 40 people who gathered in front of Watsonville Canning and Frozen Food Co. at approximately 3 p.m. The group later grew into a crowd of about 150 people, police said.

There were broken windows at Watsonville Canning and Sambrailo Paper Co. One parked automobile was overturned, but the two occupants were not injured, said Watsonville Police Capt. Terry Medina.

Police also reported that numerous cars were hit by rocks and bottles thrown by the crowd in the area

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Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel



Union worker Patricia Arnold, left, of Prunedale was back on the line at Richard Shaw Frozen Foods this morning and happy to be there. President Dick Shaw, above, greeted returning workers in the lunch room before the first shift started.

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near the plants and later in the downtown area several blocks away.

The Tuesday demonstration was seen by police as the continuation of a week-long effort begun Monday to "do everything possible to shut down Watsonville Canning and (Richard A. Shaw Frozen Foods)" — an aim advertised on flyers announcing a series of demonstrations. Watsonville Canning and Shaw were the targets of a long and bitter walkout by workers over proposed wage cuts.

Shaw workers reached an agreement, by a vote of 275-136, last week to return to work today, but at the price of a 17-percent wage cut. Watsonville Canning has yet to reach an agreement with striking workers.

No major incidents were reported at the Shaw plant this morning, although there were reports of tires being slashed. Workers asked, and the company agreed to continue to provide security because of the threats to returning employees.

Police believe the disturbances the past two days are being caused by disgruntled Watsonville Canning strikers and strike support committee members who oppose the Shaw settlement because they believe it

ition.

Tuesday's violence came after a flier was distributed in the area of the two plants and around Watsonville Monday calling for a week of demonstrations "in a spirit of militant, determined non-violence."

That tactic evaporated Monday, and again Tuesday afternoon when a crowd gathered across from Watsonville Canning and attempted to place a banner across the roadway to prevent trucks and other vehicles from entering the facility.

Police said the assembly and demonstration violated a court injunction against such actions so near to the plants.

Medina said someone threw a bottle of beer at one passing truck and a rock was thrown at another. The group swelled to about 40 people when police arrived on the scene, a police press release stated today. Reports said later the crowd grew to 150.

The man who was taken from police was reportedly the same one who told the crowd, in Spanish, to disregard orders to disperse, Medina said.

When officers moved into the

gathering, it broke up into smaller groups and moved away. Medina said police were then taunted and pelted with bottles and rocks, similar to what happened Monday when another demonstration left numerous windows broken in the downtown area.

Eventually, as police saturated the area, a crowd of about 150 attempted to move downtown for the second consecutive day, Medina said.

Along the way the crowd tipped over a car and continued to bombard passing motorists and police with objects.

Police said due to "the violent nature of the crowd" they were "forced to use" tear gas, lobbing several cannisters into the crowd. Thirteen deputies were called in from the Monterey and Santa Cruz sheriff's departments for assistance, Medina said.

Medina said no arrests were made for the overturned car nor for the injuries to the officer or the tow truck driver. Those arrested were charged with throwing bottles and rocks. The adult arrested was identified by police as Luis Flores, 18, no address given.

Sergio Lopez, secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Local 912, reiterated that his union members were not involved in the disturbance, although the union hall was closed by police.

Lopez and Medina said the hall was closed because crowds were gathering in front of the building, located across from Watsonville Canning. Lopez also said the building had to be evacuated because a bomb threat was received by the Teamsters. The identity of the caller or his organization has not been determined, Lopez said.

"In times like this it's difficult to know who the enemy is," Lopez said.