

# Cruz/Monterey

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## Cannery workers irked by layoffs

By Bob Johnson  
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A small group of cannery workers has decided to challenge the decision of the London-based Grand Metropolitan Corp. to lay off 400 employees from the Watsonville Green Giant plant and shift the work to an expanding company facility in Irapuato, Mexico.

The Watsonville workers and their supporters will set up picket lines from Oct. 20 to 27 to protest the layoffs. The struggle against Grand Metropolitan has received pledges of support from small groups sprinkled across the country and even as far away as Japan.

In June, workers accepted a settlement that gave full-time employees one week's pay for every year of work. Those with more than 20 years of seniority will re-

ceive two weeks' pay for every year put in at the Watsonville plant.

On Tuesday, the Watsonville City Council unanimously approved a resolution supporting the protest and asking landlords and PG&E to be lenient with laid-off workers who are unable to pay their rent or utility bills.

"Grand Metropolitan has relocated operations which would have otherwise been handled at the Watsonville Green Giant plant to Mexico, where workers are paid less than \$4 a day," said Green Giant worker Anolfo Gomez, who read the resolution in Spanish before the council's vote.

"The termination of nearly 400 jobs at the Watsonville Green Giant plant will have a devastating impact on the workers and their families. It is unjust for Grand Metropolitan to dismiss workers of more than 20 years who have helped make the

Green Giant plant more profitable," he said.

Gomez was speaking for a group of 15 workers who have been meeting and talking about challenging the decision since they learned in April that this would be their last year at the plant.

"It's a just cause that the Green Giant workers are fighting back rather than taking this lying down," said Mayor Todd McFarren as the council moved to endorse the week of protest.

Watsonville-based Teamsters Local 912, which represents Green Giant workers, has scheduled a press conference today with representatives from the Sierra Club and the National Toxics Campaign to air a video on conditions at the Green Giant plant in Irapuato and to announce a campaign for corporate responsibility. The teamsters local has lost at least 2,000 jobs

during the last five years as frozen food firms have moved their broccoli and cauliflower operations from Watsonville to Mexico.

Salinas Valley growers who have supplied broccoli and cauliflower to the Watsonville plants have also suffered the loss of their most stable markets with the flight to Mexico.

"It's going to be a significant loss — broccoli growers won't be able to sell to the freezers if there aren't any freezers left," said Ed Angstadt, president of the Salinas-based Grower-Shipper Vegetable Association of Central California. But the growers who stand to lose contracts supplying broccoli and cauliflower to the Green Giant plant do not figure to mount their own protest because, Angstadt said, "We're too wrapped in so many other things that we just haven't had time."