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# Green Giant workers accept company offer

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Although all but three of nearly 250 Green Giant workers who met on Saturday voted for a benefits package offered by the company, the majority of them expressed anger that the company was offering too little to compensate for losing their jobs.

Arnulfo Gomez, 33, who has worked for the company for the last 13 years, held his hand up high when the "no" vote was taken.

"I don't want to accept crumbs," he said.

Mary Winfield agreed, but she voted for the package anyway. As she saw it, she didn't have much of a choice.

"We are not satisfied, but they didn't give us another road," said Winfield, who has been with the company for 12 years. "They said, 'You leave or you leave.' What kind of choice is that?" (For a summary of the benefits package, see page 11.)

In April, Green Giant announced that it would keep only about 150 of its nearly 400 workers after it scales down its Watsonville plant operations and moves much of the other work to Mexico at the end of the year. Many of the workers, as well as Teamster union treasurer Sergio Lopez, said the move south is really to exploit the Mexican workers, who are expected to get paid about \$4 a day. Workers at the plant here get an average of about \$7 or \$8 an hour.

"They want to go to Mexico to fill their pockets with money," Lopez said.

He assured the group that the benefits package was the best he and fellow union negotiators could get from the company. Both sides have been at the table since Green Giant announced its intentions in April.

He called the agreement "historic," but added "We are not happy, we are sad. It is not a time to celebrate."

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After the vote was taken at the Veterans Hall, where the meeting was held, a group of about 50 people marched from the hall along Lincoln Avenue, up Freedom Boulevard to Burger King, calling for a boycott of the restaurant. Burger King is owned by Grand Metropolitan of London, which also owns Green Giant.

The marchers held up signs calling Green Giant's actions unfair and asked people to boycott Burger King and all other companies owned by Grand Met. But most people going into the restaurant didn't know it was owned by Grand Met or saw the connection.

Abel Rocha was in the restaurant with his two children. He too didn't know Burger King is owned by Grand Met, and he didn't care. He was not sympathetic to the marchers, saying Green Giant has the right to go wherever it wants to and he would continue to bring his children to Burger King.

His 10-year-old son, Israel, said the marchers were "sick in the head."

"Burger King is the best," said the chubby-cheeked boy, putting a handful of fries in his mouth.

The marchers walked in front of Burger King for about 30 minutes before leaving. Cars honked as they passed the picket line, some drivers and passengers raising fists to show support.