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# POST AMERIKAN

Bloomington-Normal, Illinois

Special issue

May 1978

Normal's  
firefighters  
on strike!

FREE THE  
FIREFIGHTERS

WE ARE  
ALL ONE  
BIG  
UNION

DAD!

FREE THE  
FIREFIGHTERS,  
JAIL THE  
COUNCIL  
MEMBERS

A FAIR CONTRACT • WOOD  
LOCAL  
24 42  
MEN DAYS  
FIREFIGHTERS KEY TO FREEDOM

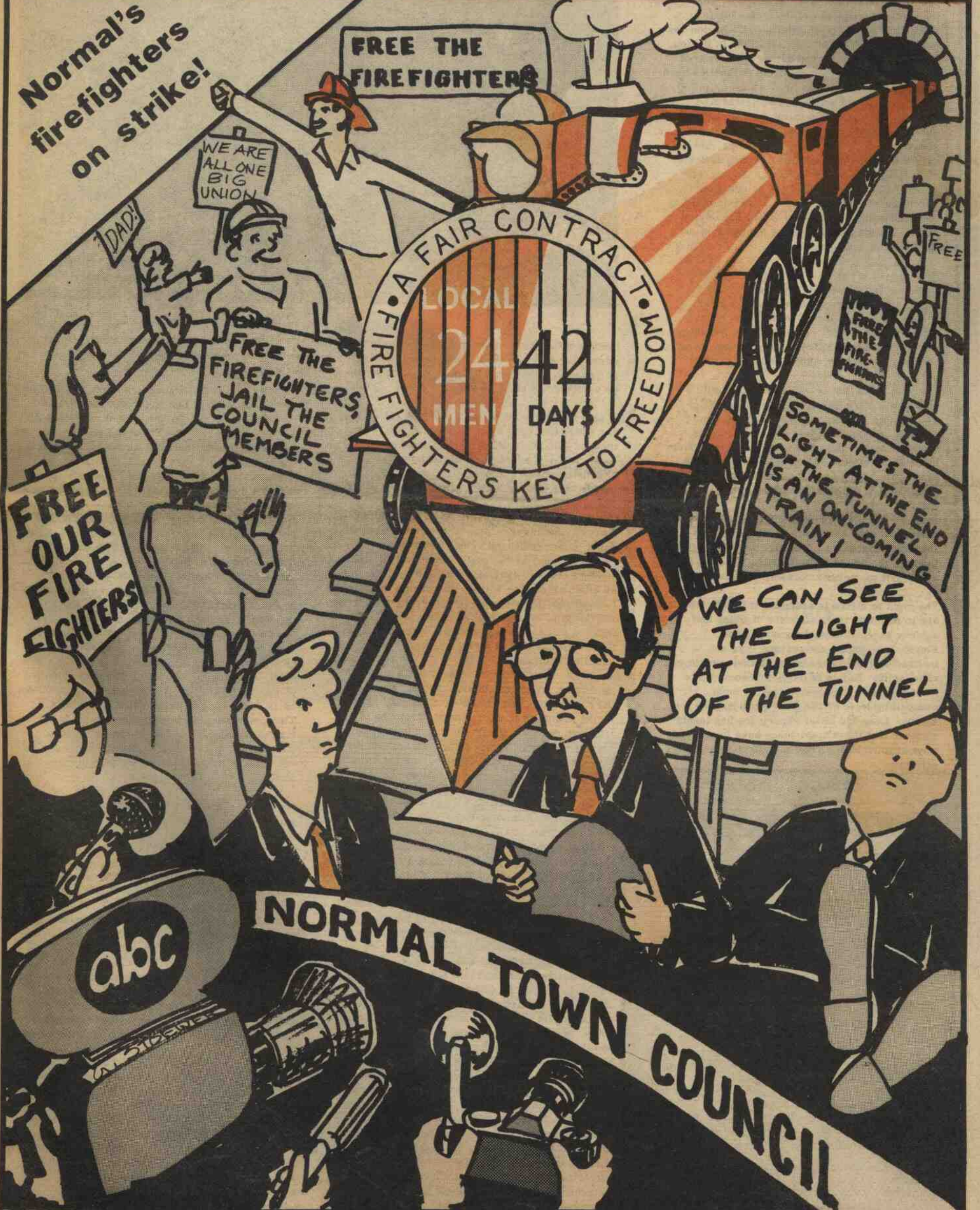
FREE  
OUR  
FIRE  
FIGHTERS

SOMETIMES THE  
LIGHT AT THE END  
OF THE TUNNEL  
IS AN ON-COMING  
TRAIN!

WE CAN SEE  
THE LIGHT  
AT THE END  
OF THE TUNNEL

NORMAL TOWN COUNCIL

abc



# Striking firefighters

Strikes by fire fighters have recently been the subject of comment by editorial writers, journalists, public officials, and other "opinion makers." The immediate focus of this commentary has been the strike which occurred in Dayton, Ohio, in August. Without significant exception this commentary, while recognizing the legitimacy of many of the grievances which prompted the strike, has categorically condemned the use by firefighters of the strike tactic as a means to redress their grievances. Dayton has been moved to center stage, because in Dayton, some 15 buildings burned during the course of the strike. Repercussions from the tactics used during the Dayton strike have not been limited to the general public. Some dedicated fire fighters and good union members have been moved to question the appropriateness of the strike tactic for fire fighters. Others have raised their voice in outright opposition to the right to strike for fire fighters. Among this latter group is Dennis Smith, the editor of Firehouse Magazine. In an article published in the Washington Star, shortly after the Dayton strike, Dennis Smith justifies his position in the following manner:

"Because of his special expertise, the fire fighter is irreplaceable. Therefore, his responsibility to continue his service is an ethical one, not a legal one. Without him there is devastation. All other civil servants should have the right to strike, for they do not share in this unique, ethical consideration."

There is much that is true in Dennis Smith's statement. Fire fighters are irreplaceable. The fighting of fires, unlike the collection of garbage, cannot be deferred to a later date. Unchecked, fire destroys utterly. Fire fighters do share an ethical and moral commitment to protect the public from devastation by fire. The image of fire fighters, picketing a burning house, clashes violently with the traditional values shared by professional fire fighters. The concern expressed by Dennis Smith and others is thus understandable. The conclusion that fire fighters should not have the right to strike is, nevertheless, neither correct, nor acceptable.

The right to strike is essential if fire fighters are to maintain their standard of living and achieve acceptable working conditions. Employers--public and private--are not inclined to grant concessions to their employees voluntarily. Nor is it likely that they can be moved to grant concessions by the most compelling logic or the most eloquent plea for equity. Long and bitter experience has taught workers that these approaches have impact only when coupled with strong and effective strike action.



Binding arbitration has been used as an effective alternative in some situations. Arbitration is no panacea, however. Interest arbitration can be a protracted and expensive process.

It also results in an imposed solution rather than one which is forged by the contracting parties themselves. Most significantly, however, in most cases, it is simply a non-existent alternative since where arbitration is not mandatory, it is typically refused by city officials.

Can the practical realities of power be accommodated to the traditional values of the fire fighter? Yes. With proper organization, fire fighters not only can, but already have, conducted effective strikes without disavowing their commitment to safeguard the general public from the threat of devastating fire. In short, fire fighters can and have conducted "ethical strikes." An example of such a strike occurred recently in Joliet, Illinois.

On April 1, 1977, at 7:15 am, the members of IAFF Locals 44 and 2369 went on strike. The strike action came after almost 12 months of fruitless negotiation with the city administration. The strike was 100% effective, with only the fire chief and one non-union employee not participating. Shortly after the onset of the strike, the Joliet city manager issued a statement assuring the public that the city had taken steps to provide adequate fire protection by assigning supervisory personnel from other city departments to work the fire stations. The strike continued solid through the first and second day and was augmented by the action of the city workers, members of Local 440 AFSCME, who honored the picket lines established by the fire fighters. By the evening of the second day of the strike, these events apparently convinced the city to adopt a different approach to the strike. At 9:30 pm, April 2nd, the city manager telephoned strike headquarters and told Mike Lass that he had just ordered the Chief and all other personnel assigned to the fire stations during the strike to go home. He further advised that, "the City of Joliet, is now totally without fire protection," and that fire protection was now the responsibility of Locals 44 and 2369. There is reason to believe that the city manager's action represented a tactical move to create a crisis atmosphere in order to break the strike. Concurrent with the departure of the Chief from the fire station, the city manager made direct personal appeals to individual fire fighters on the picket line to abandon their stations and return to work. The City's move was not without effect. The immediate reaction of the local leadership was a genuine concern for the safety of the public. Urgent attention was immediately directed to

devising a response that would assure emergency fire protection for the public without undermining the integrity of the strike.

In a very short time, a decision was reached to contact Local 1544 IAFF, located in the neighboring city of Lockport, and request that Local 1544 provide five off-duty fire fighters to work at the central fire station in the City of Joliet. Lockport Fire Chief Don Russell, who had recently retired from the Joliet fire department, after 28 years of service, was also contacted and asked to accept command of the Lockport fire fighters on emergency assignment in Joliet. Both Local 1544 and Chief Russell agreed to the these requests. By 9:45 pm, Chief Russell and five Lockport fire fighters had arrived in Joliet. Strike leaders issued passes to them which authorized them to pass through the picket lines at Joliet Central Station. Steps were also taken to establish communications and coordination between the Lockport fire fighters and two nine-person "flying squads" composed of members of the Joliet locals. Although not publicized, the "flying squads" had been formed on the first day of the strike to act on a stand-by basis in the case of serious fire emergency. This emergency arrangement continued in effect for the remaining six days of the Joliet strike. As a result, the citizens of Joliet did not suffer any serious fire damage during the course of the strike.

By the fourth day, the fire fighters strike remained solid and the pressure on the city administration was increased by the decision of members of Local 440 AFSCME to also go on strike. At this point, the City resorted to filing a complaint in Circuit Court, in an attempt to obtain an injunction against the strike. The City's attempt was not successful. The Circuit Court judge deferred the question of issuing an immediate injunction and ordered both parties to undertake continuous around-the-clock negotiations to resolve their disputes. The critical factor in the judge's decision not to issue the injunction was the ability of the Joliet fire fighters to provide credible assurances that the citizens in Joliet would be provided adequate fire protection while the negotiations proceeded.

It took an additional four days, but, on Good Friday, April 8th, final agreement was reached on the terms of a new contract and for the return to work which were overwhelmingly ratified by the memberships of Locals 44 and 2369. These terms included, an agreement by the City to pay the members of Lockport Local 1544 and Chief Russell for the services rendered to the city during the course of the strike. Lockport fire fighters and Chief Russell elected to contribute these monies to the Joliet Fire

## THE POST AMERICAN

The Post American is an underground community newspaper that we've been putting out in Bloomington, Normal, Illinois, for over six years. For Volume VIII, #1, which came out April 25, three of our staff members wrote twelve pages about the fire fighters strike here, and a staff artist drew a cover supporting the strike. When Local 2442 saw the paper, they asked us to put together a special issue consisting of our articles and the cover plus some more photos and some articles they gave us. These articles, which did not appear in the regular Post American, are Striking Fire Fighters, Semi-Fight Fires on pages 2 and 3, The Legend of the Silver Spanner on page 3, and the Circuit Court contempt motion on page 12. The photos on the back cover are from a rally on April 26.

The Post American comes out monthly. Subscriptions cost \$2.50 for 12 issues, and our address is P.O. Box 3437, Bloomington, IL 61701. You can call us at 334-7232 or 334-6945.

# still fight fires

Fighters Strike Fund. The solidarity established between the Lockport fire fighters and the Joliet fire fighters as a result of the ir cooperative strike action is reflected in the words of Joliet fire fighters Joe Walsh and Jim Locke, writing in the Summer issue of Illinois Fire Fighter, who described the situation when the Joliet fire fighters returned to work in the following manner:

"As Chief Russell and the members of the Lockport Local 1544 returned from their last fire run, Chicago News Reporters waited with local media reporters as the count-down began. At precisely 5:30 pm, April 8, 1977, Joliet fire fighters and fire officers marched back on the job, amidst cheers, shouts, and words of thanks to the brothers of Local 1544 who had helped us during those trying times."

At this point, it might be useful to examine more closely the tactical decision of the Joliet fire fighters to provide emergency fire protection during the course of the strike. At first blush, such a tactic would appear to be inconsistent with the purpose of a strike. The reader might ask, "By bringing in Lockport fire fighters to fight Joliet fires, were you not, in effect, 'scabbing' on your own strike?" The answer to this question depends on how one perceives a strike action. If the reference point is a strike as it typically occurs in private industry, the answer would be yes. The clear objective of a strike in private industry is to shut down production. The more production shut down, the more effective the strike. This analysis, however, does not necessarily apply to strikes in the public sector.

The basic objective of any strike is to apply pressure to the employer. Strikers apply pressure to the employer by using their control over their labor to take away from the employer something which the employer values, or needs. The strikers then enter negotiations with the employer to establish the terms, i.e., improvements in wages and working conditions, under which the strikers will give back that which they have taken away. In the private sector, a strike ideally shuts down production and thereby deprives the employer of profits. The greater the impact of the strike on the employer's profits, the greater is the pressure on the employer to meet the strikers' contract demands. Thus, any activity which results in a continuance of production represents an attack on the strength of the strike and must be suppressed by the strikers if possible. If one sees fire fighting as the equivalent of production work, it is easy to understand how a tactical decision could be reached to establish pickets around a burning building.

The pressure points in a public sector strike are not the same. They are both different and more difficult to isolate and act upon. These differences, however, are what enabled the Joliet fire fighters to provide emergency fire protection and also apply effective pressure in support of their bargaining demands. In a municipal setting, fire fighters must secure approval for their bargaining demands from the majority of the city council. The termination of services which results from a strike, however, has no direct impact on these officials resembling the impact that a loss of profits has on a private employer. The direct impact of the strike is upon the residents of the community at large who have, at best, only indirect influence on these officials. In order to apply effective pressure, the strike action must take away, or threaten to take away, from these officials something which they value or need. Usually, the primary concern of these officials is the maintenance of their own personal political power and authority. Properly organized, strikes can accomplish this while still providing emergency fire protection to the community at large. A strike by fire fighters, even a partial one, creates an interruption of "business as usual." It establishes a condition in the community of what has been described by IAFF President Howie McClellan, as "creative disorder." As such, the strike creates a tension in the community which the local politicians may perceive as potentially threatening to their political power. Strikes generate publicity and force local decision makers into a volatile public arena where their decisions will be evaluated on the basis of how quickly and efficiently they are able to return the community to "business as usual."

The strike results in a direct loss in the personal authority of these elected officials since they are no longer able to command the strikers. In essence, the strikers take control over delivery of fire protection away from the politicians. The strategic objective in any fire fighter's strike must be to establish and maintain a condition of creative disorder, in a manner which maximizes the threat to the personal power and authority of the local elected politicians. With proper organization, this objective can be achieved without resorting to the tactic of withholding emergency fire protection from the citizens at large. Actually, the Joliet strike tactic of calling in a company of fire fighters from Local 1544 increased the pressure upon the local politicians. Not only did it neutralize one of the city's strike-breaking tactics, but it also increased public sympathy toward the strikers. The tactic also did not restore personal authority to the politicians since both the volunteers from Local 1544 and members of the "flying squads" were under the command of strike leaders.

Evidence of the embarrassment caused to the politicians by this tactic may be found in the fact that after they discovered what had happened, they unilaterally broke a mutually agreed news blackout in order to issue a public statement which implied that they were responsible for securing the emergency help from Lockport. In the end, Joliet fire fighters were able to give back to the mayor and city council of Joliet, "business as usual," and their authority to direct the affairs of the fire department in exchange for a fair settlement of their contract demands.

Variations of the tactic used in Joliet have also been successfully employed in strikes in Danville, Evanston, and Lexington, Kentucky. Of course, this does not mean that any single tactic will ensure a successful conclusion to a given strike. A strike produces disorder in a community, which in turn, produces the energy that can lead to a positive settlement. Properly utilized, the tactic of providing emergency fire protection during the strike, places a limit on the disorder without choking off the pressures generated by the strike. Additional and complementary tactics must be formulated and creatively applied by the strikers and their leaders. The most critical of these are tactics which will force the politicians to sit down at the bargaining table with the strike leaders and negotiate the strike to settlement, while the strike remains in progress.

In addition to the moral and ethical considerations, there are serious practical dangers in conducting a fire fighters strike without placing limits on disorder. In the short term, while such a strike can be successful, it can also elicit repressive reactions which can overwhelm the strike. The most serious dangers lie in the long-term impact. An unlimited strike can act as a provocation which will mobilize the formation of broad-based efforts to enact repressive legislation. There is no intention here to criticize the good will of the brothers in Dayton. After great forbearance, they initiated a strike and attempted to make it as effective as possible. Their decision to use tactics which are commonplace in the private sector is understandable in the absence of any clear alternative. There can be no question that the Dayton strike has been seized upon by reactionary and anti-labor forces as a pretext for shackling the efforts of fire fighters to secure fair working conditions from recalcitrant and obstinate city administrations. The tactics used in the Joliet strike may provide a model which is more adaptable to the special concerns and circumstances of fire fighters.

By Mike Lass and J. Dale Berry

## Legend of the Silver Spanner

It was close to midnight, well into the fifth day of the Joliet fire strike. Suddenly, I was jarred from my sleep by the piercing wail of a siren. I looked out my bedroom window--the large two story house across the street was a mass of flames.

A red and white Joliet fire engine, with four Lockport firefighters on it, rumbled to a stop in front of the burning home. Hose was being pulled, equipment was being hurriedly taken off the truck, ladders were being removed from their racks--the formidable task seemed an impossibility for just four men.

Suddenly, shadowy figures dressed in long black coats and helmets began to materialize from the surrounding gloom, they began assisting the four firefighters; they put on air masks, grabbed axes, ladders, hoses, they began attacking the fearsome blaze. Soon it was all over, the fire was

out, the hoses were repacked, and the equipment was returned to its proper place.

I had to find out who those ghostly figures were. I quickly dressed and headed for the group of men across the street. The short walk only took a few minutes, but when I arrived, the only people there were the four Lockport firefighters.

I asked them who were those men all dressed in black. The four men gave me a knowing smile. They said, "We don't really know, they disappeared as quickly as they arrived, but they did leave one thing: a small hand tool that all firefighters are familiar with. It's still over there, on the front porch."

I walked over to the front porch, went up the steps, and there, gleaming in the moonlight, carefully placed on the welcome mat, lay a shiny new

I returned to the four men standing next to the idling fire engine. I asked them if this strange occurrence happened at every fire since the strike.

They said yes it did, and not only here in Joliet, but in Springfield, Danville, Evanston, and Lexington, Kentucky as well.

They are the mysterious men of the Squad of the Silver Spanner.

--Rick Parks,  
April 5, 1977

# Strike!

# Normal locks up

POST-NOBE. AS we go to press, the Normal fire fighters are on the 14th day of their strike, and in their 24th day of jail. This chronology relates the strike's history to this point.

**June 1977** Local 2442 of the International Association of Firefighters formally asked the city council for recognition as the bargaining agent for Normal firefighters. The city postponed recognition, holding off until an election could be held among the fire department employees. In addition, the city said it would decide which employees could vote in the election, and said it would exclude captains, lieutenants, fire inspectors, and probationary employees. The city refused to accept a union representative's suggestion that the Illinois Department of Labor help decide who could be in the bargaining unit.

**Sept. 30 1977** Normal firefighters voted 16-0 for the union. For the purpose of holding the election, the union temporarily agreed to Normal's narrow definition of which employees could be in the bargaining unit—that's why only 16 of the fire department's 27 employees could vote. In concluding pre-election negotiations, the union said that agreeing to the terms of the election in no way limited the scope of future bargaining.

**Oct. 17 1977** The Normal Town Council recognized the firefighters union and instructed its staff to begin contract talks.

**Oct. 19 1977** The firefighters handed the city a 29-point contract proposal.

## City stalls

**Oct.-Dec. 1977** Contract talks were repeatedly stalled by the city's objections to fire department officers serving as members of the union's negotiating team. At one point the city agreed that the officers could participate in the talks, but only as part of management's negotiating team.

**Wed. Jan. 11, 1978** Declaring an impasse in stalled negotiations, union president Ron Lawson said he would ask the city council to direct its staff to negotiate in good faith.

**Mon. Jan. 16** Mayor Godfrey declared that the city's refusal to talk while a fire captain and lieutenant sit on the union negotiating team represents the wishes of the full council. "The matter is closed," Godfrey said.

**Wed. Jan. 18** The firefighters union announced a job action, saying its members would no longer work any voluntary overtime beginning Jan. 26, 1978.

**Fri. Jan. 20** New talks were set for Jan. 26, but in a letter city attorney Frank Miles warned that fire department officers better not show up on the union's negotiating team. If they show up, Miles' letter threatened, the city staff will outline for the union the steps the town might take to minimize the possibility of ineffective supervision caused by or resulting from the divided loyalties of the town's command personnel.

**Thurs. Jan. 26** Both sides reported progress, but no resolution, after a four-hour bargaining session.

**Wed. Feb. 1** Three firefighters called in sick, closing one substation and prompting Asst. City Manager Carl Sneed to publicly speculate that the "unusual circumstance" may well be a job action. "The three firefighters really were sick."

**Fri. Feb. 3** After no progress in a short bargaining session, city attorney Frank Miles said he would ask the city council to either withdraw union recognition or draft an ordinance prohibiting fire officers from being members of the union.

In the Deep South, they used to call them "road gangs"—chained men laboring under the sweltering sun, while a deputy with a shotgun on his lap chaws tabbaker on the hill.

Chain gangs make good movies, full of oppression, excitement and escape scenes. They also made terrible nightmares for people sentenced to "60 days on the gang."

A vision of Mississippi, Alabama or Georgia perhaps, but not of Normal, Illinois, at least not until March 31, 1978.

On that date, Judge William Caisley took unprecedented action. He sentenced an entire city department's work force to a 42-day term of jail and work.

Since then, the firefighters have spent half of their sentence working under armed guard at the Normal Fire Station, and half in the county jail.

Over 3 years ago, some of the men organized Local 2442 of the International Association of Fire Fighters (AFL-CIO). By Oct. '77, all the men had signed up, and negotiations began between the town of Normal and the union.

The town's bargainers immediately stalled on one



ABOVE: These folks were among 200 strike supporters who attended a rally at the Law and Justice Center just before the firefighters were jailed.

issue—the union members had chosen a captain and lieutenant to sit on their bargaining team.

The town refused to negotiate, claiming the officers were management, unable to come under union contract, and ineligible to bargain for the union.

By March 20, things had come to a head. Four firefighters had already been reprimanded for union activity, and the city council passed an ordinance prohibiting officers from coming under union contract.

Seeing no alternative, the firefighters walked out on March 21, precipitating the longest firefighters' strike in history.

Firefighters don't strike often, because a firefighters' strike is illegal. Illinois public employees have no right to collective bargaining, and no right to strike.

The firefighters risked their livelihood and positions in an illegal strike, knowing that the city would use its full legal powers against them.

For help in applying that legal pressure, the city hired some experts—the international law firm of Seyfarth and Shaw, specialists in public employee union-busting. After two recent losses to firefighter unions in other cities, Seyfarth and Shaw badly needed a victory in Normal.

But the Chicago lawyers and the town of Normal were up against something greater than they expected—a solid and determined union.

The firefighters' attorney said it was "a classic case of civil disobedience." Judge Caisley said it was contempt of court. He sentenced the firefighters to probation, and ordered a return to work.

The firefighters agreed, but gave the town until 8 a.m. the next day to negotiate. If they didn't get a contract, they agreed to strike again, violating their probation.

The town, believing that once firefighters returned to work they would stay, negotiated half-heartedly, until 3 a.m.

Good as their word, the firefighters began their second 100% strike in the morning.

The firefighters went back to the picket lines, battling the town. But at no time did they endanger the citizens, since they responded to every fire alarm.

Negotiations dragged on as the town and Seyfarth & Shaw stalled. And the town felt it had the court as its trump card—expecting the firefighters'

BELOW: After a day of "work release," Normal firefighters are transported back to the McLean County jail.



# striking firefighters

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probation to be revoked, town officials hoped a stiff fine or jail sentence would break the strike.

The courtroom was tense on March 31, as laborers, students and families gathered to support the firefighters.

The judge read his original conditions of probation, and one by one the strikers rose and faced the court, declaring their guilt before applauding supporters.

After revoking their probation, Judge Caisley sentenced the union's negotiating team (4 men) to 42 days in jail, and asked the city to go to the jail for negotiations.

Then Caisley sentenced the other 20 men to 42 days also, but required them to continue fire service on an every-other-day "work release" program.

24 firefighters, 42 days in jail.

Local 2442 of the International Association of Firefighters.

24/42

A strange twist of courtroom irony.

Judge Caisley said he regretted his decision, but felt he had no legal choice. According to state law, the striking men are criminals, and he had no legal power to force the city to negotiate in good faith. The judge could only encourage the town to negotiate by forcing it to pay wages for fire service and deputy guards -- \$5-6,000 a week.

The 25th firefighter, Captain John McAtee, was not sentenced--he was on vacation when the strike began, and was not covered by the original back-to-work order.

Displaying the solidarity which has made the Normal firefighters famous, McAtee rose and addressed the court. Saying his actions in joining the strike showed he was also violating the spirit of the law, McAtee asked to be sentenced to jail, too. Though impressed by McAtee's courage, the judge declined.

Negotiations continued half-heartedly and sporadically until April 14, when the city made its "final offer," which the firefighters unanimously rejected.

As the first month of the strike passed and the half-way point in the jail sentence was reached, the firefighters and their families remained determined to win a fair and decent contract: a contract which includes the captains and lieutenants, who struck with the firefighters--a contract which ensures a total amnesty for



strikers and which ensures a fair and balanced standard of wages and benefits.

The town, meanwhile, threatened to fire the strikers and began advertising for new firefighters.

But political pressure and popular support for the jailed men pointed to political suicide for the town council and staff if they continued their stonewalling.

The strike continues. At 8 a.m. every morning, the chain gang is resurrected. A truckload of firefighters are brought to Normal Fire Station #1 for another 24-hour shift, and the second crew is returned to jail.

But these men do not walk with stooped backs or dragging feet. They walk tall, firmly and freely. They yell, cheer and give the victory sign.

The Town of Normal can win in the courts. The Town of Normal can have their firefighters jailed, forced to give service. The Town of Normal can stonewall at the negotiating table or threaten firing.

But there is one thing the Town of Normal has proven unable to do, and that is break the spirit of 24 firm firefighters and their families, who will survive jail and forced labor till their rights are recognized.

--MGM

## Strike!

**Fri. Feb. 17** The Normal firefighters union voted 21-5 to authorize the negotiating team to call a strike if necessary.

**Sat. Feb. 18** The Daily Pantagraph reported that Bloomington firefighters voted not to respond to Normal fire calls if the Normal department strikes.

**Fri. Feb. 24** Three fire department officers were reprimanded and one handed a one-day suspension for refusing to attend a "staff meeting" at Normal city hall. The officers, all union members, skipped the meeting because the union was refusing to perform all voluntary overtime work.

**Mon. Feb. 27** Another bargaining session broke up after only one minute. City officials said they would not discuss the content of any contract proposal as long as Captain Frank Hanover and Lt. Jim Watson remained on the union's negotiating team. The union insisted that its members have the right to choose their own representatives in collective bargaining.

**Fri. March 2** The Bloomington-Normal Trades and Labor Assembly pledged support to Normal firefighters. In a letter sent to Normal city officials, the labor group accused the city of using "union busting tactics."

**Tues. March 7** The Normal Town Council met in a 2 1/2 hour closed door session about firefighters talks, while four informational pickets outside handed out statements of support from the Trades and Labor Assembly.

**Mon. March 13** Another bargaining session got nowhere, and the city council met in executive session again. The city still maintained that department officers could not sit on the union negotiating team.

**Mon. March 20** Unsuccessful in winning their way in negotiations, the Normal City Council simply legislated their position. They passed an ordinance making fire captains and lieutenants a part of "management" and thus excluded from the "bargaining unit"--the group a union-negotiated contract would cover. Union President Ron Lawson had stated previously that such an action on the part of the city council could provoke a strike. It did.

## Strike begins

**Tues. March 21** After an all-night union meeting, all 24 firefighters--including captains and lieutenants--went on strike at 6:30 a.m. (The 25th union member, Capt. John McAtee, was on vacation and joined the strikers later.)

Normal officials immediately asked for a restraining order against the strike. After searching an hour for a judge who would handle the case, Normal officials secured the back-to-work order from Judge Caisley. The hearing was held without notice to the strikers or their lawyer, preventing the union from telling their side in court.

Tuesday night the firefighters voted to ignore Caisley's back-to-work order.

**Wed. March 22** In an early application of their divide-and-conquer strike strategy, Normal officials singled out the two probationary firemen and fired them.

Normal announced it would suspend and finally dismiss firefighters who continued to refuse to work. Officers would be fired on the third day and others on the fourth day, city officials threatened.

In the first of a series of hysterical editorials, the historically anti-union Pantagraph asserted that the firefighters planned to strike from the

(Please turn to next page)

BELOW: A McLean County deputy guards firefighters on the first evening of their forced "work release" program. The strikers are clapping after hearing supportive songs sung by ISU students who marched from the campus for a show of solidarity.



# Strike!

## Community sings, shouts,

Normal, Illinois, is not the kind of town where you expect to find union battles and a community in uproar.

In a town like Normal, citizens rarely attend city council meetings. Even more rarely, do they turn out to condemn and shout down their elected representatives.

A campus town like Normal expects a little

campus rowdiness. Rarely do students and laborers seriously unite to force an issue.

And in a sleepy, middle-class community, how many people will get up at 7:30 a. m. to shout and cheer for "jailbirds"?

Normal, Illinois, has gone through some changes this month: changes brought down by an intransigent city council, a determined group of firefighters and their families, electrified by supportive students and labor.

The firefighters of Normal went on strike on March 21. But they continued to perform fire service, hoping to convince the city to negotiate with them.

The town hoped jailing the men would break their spirit. The town council didn't realize the support and heat this would produce.

The first mass support action for the strikers was a candlelight vigil March 28, the evening the men returned to work for 20 hours to await a settlement. While negotiations took place, a crowd of 50-150 gathered, singing songs and anxiously waiting throughout the night for word on negotiations. The city, however, stalled, forcing the men to strike again the next morning.

The following Friday, March 31, a crowd of approximately 200 supporters crowded the chambers of Judge William Caisley, applauding the strikers when they announced their "guilt" of striking and received their jail sentence.

Mobilizing to support, a broad front of labor, students and strikers' families swung into action. Labor staffed picket lines. President Lloyd Watkins of ISU was christened with his first "sit-in," as a group of students and laborers went up for a "visit" after he refused to meet with them.

Students continued to picket, attempting to pressure the ISU administration to action. The evening the firefighters were jailed, March 31, students held a candlelight vigil outside Hovey Hall, ISU administration building, "parading before a silent building because of a silent administration." Later they marched on Fire Station Number 1, serenading the now-imprisoned men.

On April 1, the first morning when men were transferred from the regular county jail to

(Continued from preceding page)

time they first sought recognition as a union. The paper urged: 1) that Normal firefighters who refused to work be disciplined; 2) that the city of Bloomington discipline one of its firefighters who spoke at the Normal City Council meeting; 3) that the City of Bloomington discipline its firefighters if they did not respond to fire calls in Normal; and 4) that if provisions for such disciplinary actions do not yet exist, then they should be legislated.

Editor Harold Liston also charged that local firefighters were being manipulated by outsiders from the union's international office. This insult to city employees was to be repeated tirelessly by Normal officials throughout the strike.

**Thurs. March 23** City officials walked out of a sometimes angry negotiating session when the union refused the city's demand that firefighters give up claims for amnesty and return to work while contract negotiations went on. Firefighters insisted that they would work without a contract, and pointed out that the city had continually stalled contract negotiations. A 29-point proposal was handed the city in October, but five months later, the two sides still hadn't discussed any of the points - discussions always got bogged down by the city's insistence that the union could not bargain for captains and lieutenants, despite the officers' acknowledged preference for the union. Both sides said the other was not bargaining in good faith, and union attorney Dale Berry told Normal corporation counsel Frank Miles that he didn't know what he was doing.

City officials said they would ask that union members be found in contempt of court for ignoring Judge Caisley's back-to-work order.

Three days of tense speculation about what strikers would do if there were a fire ended Thursday evening, when the alarm sounded for the first time since the strike's beginning. Eighteen striking firefighters put out a small fire around a light fixture.

**Fri. March 24** Hoping that the strike would end before he had to decide, Judge Caisley postponed a decision on the contempt hearing until Monday and ordered both sides to negotiate during the weekend.

Caisley also ordered Normal to rehire the two probationary firefighters it had fired.

Union attorney Berry argued in court that a contempt citation would further polarize things, making a settlement harder to reach. In addition, Berry argued, firefighters had devised a fire protection plan, and the city was in no danger.

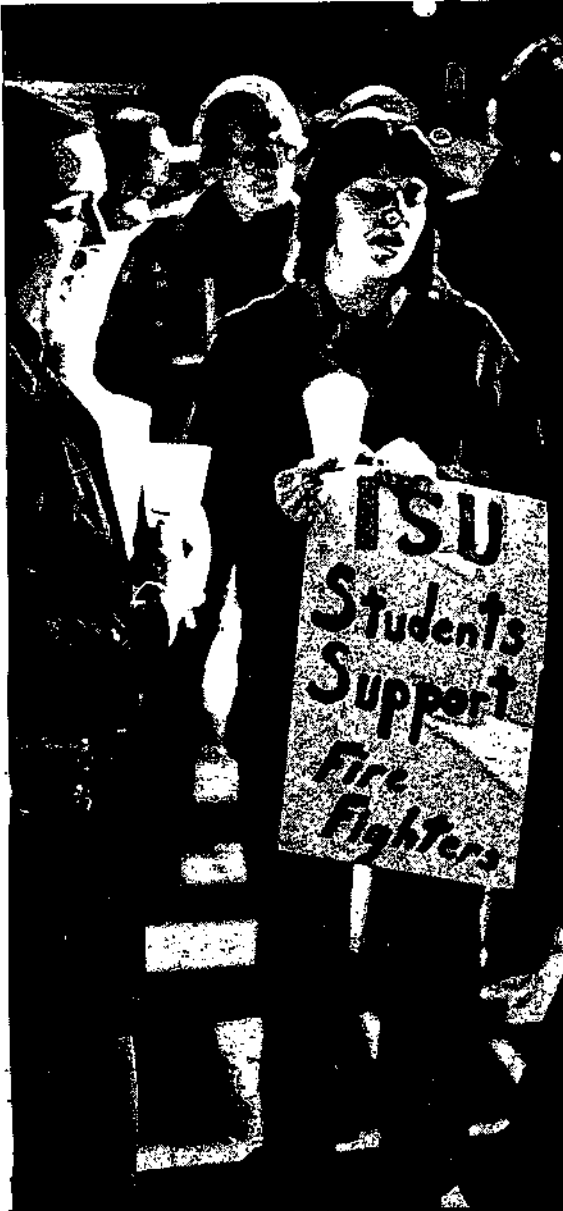
According to the Pantagraph, 100 people including firefighters from other cities and members of Bloomington municipal unions jammed the courtroom to overflowing.

**Sat. March 25** The second in the Pantagraph's series of hysterical editorials chastized Judge Caisley for ordering the rehiring of Normal's probationary firemen.

**Sun. March 26** After striking firefighters answered four fire calls Saturday, Fire Chief George Cermak told the Pantagraph, "We do have a pretty good level of coverage now."

In a court hearing Sunday evening, both sides reported that 28 hours of negotiations during the weekend had not settled the strike.

The hearing was the first appearance of international law firm of Seyfarth & Shaw on the city's side. Employing 100 attorneys in its Chicago office alone, Seyfarth & Shaw specializes in working for management in public employee labor disputes.



ABOVE: ISU students joined other firefighter supporters at a candlelight vigil March 28.

## What are

Only three basic issues have been preventing settlement of Normal's firefighters' strike

**Amnesty** is the first issue. All along, the firefighters have been asking that they not be punished with suspension, dismissals or other reprisals for participating in the strike. Normal refused to agree until their April 14 "final offer," when the city finally offered amnesty.

**Maintenance of Benefits** is the second issue. Basically, firefighters are asking for the same benefits they enjoyed before the strike, only in writing. The city proposed a new method of figuring fringe benefits that would actually leave the firefighters 30% less than they had before.

In later offers, the town agreed to maintain present benefits for the firefighters currently employed if the union would agree to a fringe benefit cut for future firefighters. The city's proposal laid the foundation for a divided union, and the firefighters refused to accept.

Firefighters are not on strike asking for more money. Their contract proposals do include a raise, but the strikers are asking only for the same raise they had already been promised. But fire-fighters want the city committed, in writing, to its promises.

The make-up of the bargaining unit is the third, and most difficult issue to resolve.

The city claims that of the fire



# & signs its support

county jail # 2 (Fire Station #1), they received a surprise.

A crowd waited, cheering and eager, supportive of the striking men. Day by day the crowd grew, a phenomena of solidarity, song and support. In rain or sunshine, wives, students, citizens and labor gathered to clap and cheer for the jailed strikers.

They bounced from the paddy wagon, leaping with upraised fists. They cheered back. The crowd sang and clapped; wives and children ran forward for a quick hug and kiss before deputies could intervene.

Support continued through the day. McLean County labor, united with the firefighters, maintained a 12-hour daily picket line. Citizens donated food for the strikers and their families. Daily, fire departments and union locals of other cities came to share in the picket duties.

On March 3, the stonewalling city council had the surprise of their lives, as over 400 laborers, citizens, students and firefighters' families gathered at Normal city hall, packing the council chambers. The crowd, incensed by provocative statements from councilpersons Jocelyn Bell and Paul Harmon, closed down the proceedings with shouts, jeers, chants and songs.

Two weeks later, the crowd returned, only to be barred from the door. Peacefully, the crowd assembled outside for some guerilla theatre, where the city council, peering down for the

"light of the end of the tunnel," found that light to be a locomotive, numbered 2442 (as in Local 2442 of the International Association of Firefighters) which promptly sent them flying. Over 70 state troopers, county deputies, Bloomington and Normal patrolmen plus ISU security gathered--obviously not to watch the theatrical premiere.

From theatre, new songs and long days on the picketline, the firefighters have found support from a cross section of the community. Canvassing, leafletting, gathering petitions and convincing local businesses to support the firefighters, a coalition of labor, students and firefighters' wives have provided an active and local support.

The firefighters are in jail, unable to strike or withdraw their labor. Dignity demands that they hold fast, ignore threats, and continue to strike until a settlement is reached.

But you can't picket from jail. You can't go to city council meetings or talk to your neighbors. And if the city wins, politics will continue "as usual" in Normal, with little recourse for change or action.

So labor, students, families and citizens support their firefighters, knowing their victory is a victory for all and a beginning of some new changes in quiet ol' Normal, Illinois.

--MGM



Supporters cheer a new shift of firefighters arriving from jail.

## the issues?

department's 27 employees, captains, lieutenants and fire inspectors are management, and therefore not eligible to be represented by the union in collective bargaining. The city originally wanted to limit the bargaining unit to only 16 employees. But the officers do not see themselves as management--they are union members and want to be included in the union-negotiated contract. Captains, lieutenants, and the fire inspector all went on strike, and went to jail. That is how they voted on the bargaining unit question. Since the union argues that all 25 employees who actually fight fires should be in the bargaining unit, the union is willing to exclude only the chief and the assistant chief.

The city argues that the captains and lieutenants are supervisors, and therefore management. The union disputes the officers' alleged supervisory role, and says the officers are "lead workers"; they function like football quarterbacks--they are still members of the team even though they call the plays while on the field.

Normal says there must be a representative of management working on each shift. Since the chief and assistant chief are not always around, the city looks to the captains and lieutenants.

In Bloomington, captains and lieutenants are part of the bargaining

unit. But Bloomington's department employs more assistant chiefs, who are not represented in collective bargaining.

To satisfy Normal's need for "management presence" and allow officers in the bargaining unit, the two negotiating teams tossed around ideas for creating additional assistant chiefs positions which would be excluded from the bargaining unit. But no concrete proposal developed.

In Iowa, the controversy over whether captains and lieutenants should be in or out of the bargaining unit was settled in March. The Iowa Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that the fire officers could be represented by the union.

On WJBC Forum April 14, Gloria Elvidge explained the motives for Normal's hard-line stance.

"What the town of Normal is doing is a recognized, well-known commonly attempted tool to reduce the negotiating number of a union group to the lowest common denominator--thus putting the most pressure on the least number of union members to gain the greater advantage at the bargaining table."

The future strength of the union itself is at stake in the bargaining unit debate--that's why the two sides are fighting this issue so fiercely. (More on this in an adjoining article.)

# Strike!

**Mon. March 27** After hearing testimony about the progress of negotiation (or lack of it), Judge Caisley postponed for another day the conclusion of the hearing on whether firefighters would be held in contempt of court.

Two striking firefighters testified that Assistant City Manager Carl Sneed had said that the Normal City Council was not flexible on the bargaining unit issue and was "willing to let buildings burn" before moving on the question.

Sneed avoided a direct denial, saying only that he could not recall making the statement.

More accusations that the city was bargaining in bad faith surfaced when Mike Lass, the firefighters' international representative, described the city's offer during the marathon 28 hours of weekend negotiations ordered by the court. The city's offer for overtime, vacation pay and other fringe benefits amounted to less than the firefighters were receiving before the strike, Lass said.

**Tues. March 28** Judge Caisley dismissed the contempt charge against Captain McAtee, since he had been on vacation when the strike began and was not properly ordered to return to work at the time.

Caisley found all 24 other firefighters guilty of contempt of court, and put them all on six months probation. As a condition of probation, Caisley required that firefighters return to work.

Mike Lass, the representative from the International Association of Firefighters, was also sentenced to probation for contempt. As a condition of probation, Caisley ordered Lass to refrain from advocating any work stoppage.

After court, the firefighters conferred and agreed to return to work, while round the clock negotiations began. They agreed to walk out at 8 a.m. Wednesday if they didn't have a contract by then.

To show community support for the firefighters, supporters organized a candlelight vigil outside the site of negotiations in Normal. At varying times during the evening, 50 to 150 people attended.

Illinois State University students began to come out in support of the firefighters, with one group calling for school to be dismissed due to the lack of fire protection.

**Wed. March 29** Late night negotiations finally broke down when James Baird, Normal's outside attorney, presented a final "take-it-or-leave-it" proposal to the union, which firefighters unanimously rejected. With no contract, firefighters walked off the job again at 8 a.m. For the second time, 100% of the department went on strike, a development which union attorney Berry said made labor history. Within hours, probation officer Ed Beverage filed papers to revoke the firefighters' probation.

3,000 leaflets flooded the ISU campus, urging students to organize support for the striking firefighters. A delegation of student supporters visited Mayor Godfrey and two council members at city hall, and returned angry at the officials' attitudes.

Representatives from 25 union locals met Wednesday night to plan support activities for the strikers.

**Thurs. March 30** Fifteen mechanics, garbage collectors and street workers--half of the Town of Normal's Public Works Department--called in sick, most likely in support of the striking firefighters.

(Please turn to next page)



# Strike!

(Continued from preceding page)

Firefighters picketing at the McLean County Landfill slowed garbage dumping as Bloomington's union garbage drivers refused to cross picket lines. Supervisors had to drive the trucks into and out of the landfill.

Union members and students also picketed in front of ISU's administration building where Normal's mayor Dick Godfrey directs ISU's Department of Public Affairs, the university's public relations office.

A group of strike supporters, previously unsuccessful at arranging an appointment with ISU President Lloyd Watkins, went directly to the administrator's office. When the Secretary said the President was not in, the group sat down and said they'd wait. Eventually Watkins emerged from his office, where he'd been all the time, and declared that ISU could not take a stand in the strike. While Watkins was talking to the crowd, some sharp-eyed students noticed Normal Mayor Godfrey slithering out of the office President Watkins had been in.

The Pantagraph published another installment in its hysteria-in-editorials series, this time calling for Normal to arrest (for trespassing!) any group or persons outside city jurisdiction who pickets city facilities. The paper also encouraged the town to fire workers who call in sick in sympathy with striking firemen.

## Strikers jailed

**Fri. March 31** Accompanied by at least 200 supporters who packed the courtroom and overflowed into the corridor, 24 striking firefighters admitted violating their probation by refusing to work. Judge Caisley sentenced the firefighters to 42 days in jail, with all but the bargaining team assigned to a "work release" program of 21 work days and 21 jail days. The men were divided into two groups, with one group working each 24-hour shift while the other was in jail. The Normal headquarters fire station was declared the new "work house" center under Sheriff King's control, and the striking firefighters worked under armed guard.

A small group of ISU students held a candlelight vigil in the quad all evening, informing passers-by of the developments. At 10:30 a group of 20-30 marched to the fire station to show solidarity with the first shift of firefighters sentenced to slave labor.

**Sat. April 1** Strike supporters gathered at the headquarters fire station at 7:30 a. m. to cheer firefighters as sheriff's deputies supervised the first shift change. The first morning only 30-40 supporters turned out, but as the strike progressed, the crowd gradually built to a steady turnout of 70-100, with crowds sometimes bulging to over 200.

Firefighters had often asked that city council members get involved directly in negotiations, instead of relying on the city staff's judgment. When strike supporters appealed to state representative Gerald Bradley for help Saturday, Bradley persuaded the council—for the first time—to meet directly with firefighters. But in another divide-and-conquer attempt, the council met only with firefighters who were not members of the union's negotiating team.

Later, in an amplification of their theme that the union was being manipulated by "outsiders," the city proposed dropping all non-local residents from the negotiating teams of both sides. The strikers refused, pointing out that their team would have no attorney, while the city would still have its corporation counsel, Frank Miles.

Neither talks between the negotiating teams, nor between the council and the firefighters, resolved major issues.

# Strike supporters shut

It was about five minutes before the Normal Town Council meeting was set to begin on April 3. I wandered to the back offices where Mayor Richard Godfrey and other council members were trying to compose themselves, getting ready to face the crowd.

In the council meeting area, there was standing room only, and not much of it. At least 200 supporters of jailed firemen were chanting and clapping in unison, "free the firefighters, free the firefighters," while another 200 more—prevented by police and locked doors from entering city hall—rallied in support outside. Preparing coverage for Wednesday's national broadcast of the Harry Reasoner Report, an ABC film crew panned the crowd and recorded.



ABOVE: A smiling Dick Godfrey greeted photographers minutes before the April 3 town council meeting began. The mayor wasn't smiling for long.

members, striking farmers, and ISU students, and these wives and friends of the jailed strikers, all these 400 gathered tonight support the Normal firefighters, and that support is here right now, and the city council had better deal with it.

To the council members, the scene must have looked ominous, as the chanting continued, and continued, and continued, the crowd's voices and clapping building and building in intensity. The council members must have felt under seige.

So as I watched the grim faces of the town council members, I asked Mayor Godfrey, "What are you going to do?"

"Oh, do our usual soft shoe routine and break into a chorus of the Star Spangled Banner," the mayor replied. "After all, this is what they pay us the fat salaries for," the \$3600-a-year part-time mayor joked.

Godfrey's high spirits didn't last long.

\*\*\*\*\*

Taking the mayor's chair to begin the meeting, Dick Godfrey warned that the firefighters' issue was not on the agenda, and so the full council would not discuss it. Prepared statements from individual council members were allowed, but no statements from citizens. A few boos and catcalls followed, but Godfrey's stern warnings and gavel poundings quieted them.

## First insult

Council members Paul Harmon and Jocelyn Bell read prepared statements that were so aggressive and so insulting to the firefighters that the crowd became infuriated. The crowd's angry rowdiness, which later shut down the council's meeting, can be traced to Bell and Harmon's provocative statements.

Claiming that the firefighters "brought it all on themselves," council member Harmon denied that the town council put the strikers in jail. He further insulted the firefighters by implying that they were puppets being manipulated by

their incessant rhythmic demand, "free the firefighters, free the firefighters."

The crowd's unified chanting and clapping generated an inspiring energy that dominated the council chambers and communicated an unmistakable and strong message: these laborers, rubber workers, teamsters, garbage workers, these teachers, electricians, bus drivers, carpenters and machinists, these Bloomington firefighters, out of town firefighters, these UAW

BELOW: Supporters cheer as the firefighters file into the county police van for the trip back to the county jail. The strikers "work release" sentence handed down by Judge Caisley calls for the firefighters to alternately spend 24 hours on duty and 24 hours in jail.



# down council meeting

the "outsiders"--union attorney Dale Berry, whose competence and ethics Harmon questioned, and International Firefighter Association representative Mike Lass, whose handling of the negotiations Harmon labeled "a disaster."

Delivering his entire three pages of distortions in a smug, snippy tone which further angered the crowd, Harmon was frequently interrupted by the crowd's roars of indignant outrage.

The mayor's stern gavel-pounding--combined with the solemn mumblings of such pieties as "duly constituted body" and "no outbreaks will be tolerated"--temporarily contained the crowd's angry retorts.

But as the astonished onlookers realized that Godfrey intended to let each council member slander the firefighters without rebuttal, their anger grew.

As council member Jocelyn Bell began, Godfrey's gavel-pounding grew more frequent, and his warnings escalated as he threatened to have people removed.

## "Outside agitators"

Believe it or not, Jocelyn Bell actually used the words "outside agitators" to explain why the firefighters were not accepting the city's offers.

Bell never finished her statement--she was drowned out by firefighter supporters demanding a chance to reply. The mayor's face got redder as his pious warnings were also drowned out. The council finally called a recess, and retreated to the back offices.

Captain John McAtee, the only striker not sentenced to jail, obtained permission to address the council when they returned to continue the meeting.

McAtee's simple honest sincerity was a sharp contrast to the attitudes council members expressed. As a captain, McAtee pointed out, he had joined the union and gone on strike. Other captains and lieutenants had gone to jail. Why wouldn't the council recognize this and negotiate on the issue of officers in the bargaining unit? he asked.

Challenging the council to poll the strikers, McAtee denied that Lass and Berry were controlling the union members. McAtee received loud

applause when he charged that Harmon's and Bell's statements were an abuse of the forum created by their elected positions.

Mayor Godfrey's attempted reply was interrupted by boos. When Godfrey managed to quiet the crowd inside city hall, shouts and chants from the rally outside drifted in. When Godfrey's reply was finally shouted down, the council recessed once more.

Returning, the council attempted to deal with their regular business, totally ignoring the assembled citizens.

## Red faces

Boos, catcalls, claps and chants grew to a roar. Motions before the council were met by shouts of yea and nay, making a vote impossible. The gavel banged, faces reddened, and tempers flared.

While Godfrey delivered one more warning to the crowd, the boos suddenly turned to cheers. A puzzled Godfrey turned to the city manager to find out why. When the red-faced mayor was informed that the young woman behind him had (think back to sixth grade) put rabbit ears behind his head, the gavel pounded for the last time. The meeting was over. The council retreated to the back rooms and stayed there. All regular business was postponed to the next Council meeting.

But the assembled citizens were not ready to end the meeting. Anxious to try out the plush chairs they paid for, citizens held their own city council meeting, passing resolutions in favor of a fair contract, and sentencing the Town Council to 42 days hard labor under police guard, commissioned to fix every pothole in the streets of Normal.

When 13 off-duty cops were called in to supplement the 7 already present Chief McGuire warned that the city hall would be cleared in five minutes. To avoid a confrontation, firefighters' supporters left.

BELOW: Hundreds of firefighter supporters packed the April 3 town council meeting April 3. When the council refused to discuss the jailed strikers, the crowd responded with jeers, boos, chants and shouts, eventually forcing the council to adjourn without completing its agenda.



# Strike!

**Sun. April 2** Two members of Normal's street department organized a food collection for the families of jailed firefighters. The community response was excellent; 40-50 full sacks of groceries were collected in one afternoon.

**Mon. April 3** Firefighter Vance Emmert Jr. became the strike's first scab, when he signed an affidavit in jail agreeing to voluntarily return to work. Union international representative Mike Lass said the rest of the jailed firefighters were strong, and that, "Now we won't have to carry someone we've had to carry all along."

One firefighter was released from jail on appeal bond, but remained on strike. And Captain John McAtee, never convicted of contempt because the strike started during his vacation, also remained on strike and out of jail. The other 22 firefighters remained in Sheriff King's custody.

A public opinion poll broadcast on Peoria's TV 31 showed heavy local support for firefighters. The station asked 341 Normal residents "Do you approve or disapprove of the Normal firefighters strike?" 44% approved, 33% disapproved, and 24% were undecided.

At the Normal council meeting Monday evening, 400-500 supporters rallied to demand the council free the strikers. The crowd became so insistent that the Normal council finally adjourned, without getting any of their regular business finished. (See separate story.)

**Tues. April 4** The leadership of the State's largest union local, Peoria's 22,000-member UAW #924, announced support for the Normal firefighters. Support could be in the form of money, personnel to help organize community support, or use of contacts in the state legislature.

**Wed. April 5** Normal officials launched a publicity offensive, convening central Illinois media at city hall to hand out thick packets of charts and numbers that were intended to prove that the city's stance in the negotiations was the only reasonable one. Apparently sensing a hype, many local media did not bother to pass the city's claims on to their audiences.

Another negotiating session resulted in little progress.

Normal's strike made national news, with at least three minutes of filmed coverage on the ABC Harry Reasoner Report. The announcer said it was the first time in U.S. labor history that an entire city department had been jailed for striking.

**Thurs. April 6** A week after hearing the arguments, Judge Calsley issued a preliminary injunction against the strike, without including conditions suggested by firefighters attorney Dale Berry. Although Calsley agreed with Berry's suggestions, the judge said he lacked the authority to order the Normal town council to negotiate directly with firefighters, to grant amnesty for firefighters' actions during the strike, and to add Fire Department Chief Cermak to the city's negotiating team. The chief's knowledge of the department's structure would help talks about who should be in or out of the bargaining unit, Berry said.

Jailed firefighters announced a "Jail Walk-a-thon" to raise money for a burn center in Springfield. Sponsors were being sought to pledge a certain amount of money for each day, specific strikers walk around the jail's recreation area.

City attorney Frank Miles and striking fire captain John McAtee debated on WJBC's "Problems and Solutions," where McAtee angrily labeled Miles a "master of misrepresentation."

(Please turn to next page)

# Strike!

# Normal's strategy:

(Continued from preceding page)  
**Fri. April 7** The Daily Pantagraph reported that the strike was costing Normal \$5,000 a week, not counting legal fees or extensive staff time.

Negotiations broke up bitterly. The union accused the city of "stonewalling" to break the men in jail. The city claimed the union delivered an ultimatum that the city had to "conceptually agree" that officers could be in the bargaining unit before talks could resume.

Union representative Mike Lass explained that talks had sometimes gone along the line of trying to assemble a package of concessions firefighters could make in return for getting captains and lieutenants into the bargaining unit. Before wasting more time along those lines, Lass said, the union wanted city agreement that the officers' inclusion was a possibility if the right package of concessions could be devised.

At a pro-firefighter afternoon speak-out scheduled for the ISU quad, nine ISU cops showed up to "watch things." A small group of strike supporters sang union songs, accompanied by music from acoustic guitars. The police told them to stop, saying "no music on the quad."

**Sat. April 8** Despite heavy rain and the early hour, over 200 supporters turned out for a rally at 7:15 a.m. at the Normal Fire Station, also known as County Jail #2.

Of 50 downtown Normal businesses asked to display a "Free Our Firefighters" poster, 33 agreed and only 17 said no, even though some of the 17 still indicated personal support.

**Mon. April 10** A benefit concert for the firefighters at the Jay-Z-J Saloon raised \$350 for the strike fund.

Upset that the Daily Pantagraph was leading the contest for Most Hysterical Editorial, Channel 27 TV jumped into the competition with an admirably off-the-wall piece. Condemning the "ugly mob action" and "union rabble-rousing" which shut down Normal's town council meeting, the TV editorial attempted to spread terror with this fiction: "Officials and certain firemen have been harassed in their homes and had their lives threatened. Our reporters have reason to believe there may be violence this week—at least that's what outside agitators are hoping for." After this editorial was broadcast, Mayor Godfrey secretly inquired about having the National Guard mobilized even though the "outside agitators" were never identified and the TV station offered no evidence for its claims of impending violence.

**Tues. April 11** The strike gained state-wide attention again with the Chicago Tribune's publication of a front-page feature on the jailed firefighters.

A meeting of the strike support steering committee produced plans for door-to-door canvassing to get supporters' signatures and a "whitelist" of businesses which supported the strikers, with suggestions that strike supporters patronize stores listed.

Tentative long-range plans included a one-day general strike of all Bloomington-Normal unions to back up a possible work stoppage by firefighters at the workhouse center.

**Wed. April 12** Stanley Johnson, President of the 1.2 million member Illinois Federation of Labor, declared his support for Normal firefighters. In a letter to ISU President Watkins, Johnson asked the university president to use his prestige and stature to bring an early and fair settlement to the strike.

State Representative Thomas Hanahan, sponsor of appropriations for the Illinois Board of Regents, said he would hold ISU accountable for the town council's union busting effort and act to freeze or reduce ISU appropriations and grants if the strike is not settled fairly.

At your workplace, can you tell the difference between the workers and the bosses? So can the Normal Firefighters, but the town council won't believe them.

The main issue preventing settlement of the Normal firefighters strike is deciding the make-up of the bargaining unit; that is, deciding which employees would be covered by a union-negotiated contract and which employees would not.

The detailed and technical arguments about who is or isn't management sometimes dim the real meaning of the bargaining unit question: will any strong public employee union be permitted to survive in Normal?

The city's apparent answer to this question is responsible for the frequently-heard charges that the city's real strategy is union-busting.

From the beginning, the city has tried to keep the bargaining unit as small as possible, by trying to exclude captains, lieutenants, fire inspectors, and probationary employees. The city wanted the union to bargain for only 16 of the department's 27 employees.

But all the captains, lieutenants, fire inspectors and probationary employees wanted to be in the bargaining unit—they wanted collective bargaining and they wanted the union to represent them. They all went on strike, and to jail. The union wants to represent all 25 of the workers who actually fight fires, leaving only the chief and the assistant chief out of the bargaining unit.

The smaller the proportion of employees in the bargaining unit, the weaker the union—that's the city's strategy. Under the city's original

plan, the union would have represented less than 60% of the fire department.

"We're not asking for a penny more in benefits," union attorney Dale Berry was quoted in the Chicago Tribune. "We are even willing to give them a no-strike clause. All we want is a contract and recognition of all the men as members, and yet they're fighting it. They're just trying to divide the union so they can bust it."

Charges of "union busting tactics" were heard even before the strike began, because the town insisted that fire department officers could not sit on the union's negotiating team. For five months, the union's 29-point contract proposal was never even discussed because city officials steered talks into discussions about who could or could not represent the union in contract talks.

City officials know that other city workers are watching the firefighters' fight for an effective union. "The city figures if they can beat us, the other departments won't go union," the Chicago Tribune quoted union president Ron Lawson.

## Last union busted

Normal busted an attempted union among Public Works employees in the summer of 1973, and the same key city administrators now battling the firefighters were responsible. City Manager Dave Anderson told a public works employee, according to a 1973 Post-American story on the union-busting.

In 1973, the city simply refused to recognize the union as the employees' bargaining agent. Strikers were immediately ordered to go back to work or get fired.

After successfully busting the Public Works employees' union, why did city officials voluntarily agree to recognize the firefighters union?

The public works union was weaker than the firefighters from the beginning. At least 25% of the department never even signed union cards, and only 8 of the 13 union members went on strike. In contrast, the firefighters had 100% union sign-up (and later, two 100% walk-outs.)

When faced with the request for a union election last summer, city

## Normal's

Normal city manager Dave Anderson, an anti-union hard-liner. In a 1973 Post-American story about Normal busting an attempted union in its public works department, Anderson was quoted saying, "Unions have outlived their usefulness."



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# limit bargaining unit to keep union weak

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officials knew that the entire fire department supported the union. An outright refusal to deal with the union would probably strengthen anti-management sentiment.

City officials settled on this strategy: they would agree to the union, and recognize it as the firefighters' bargaining agent, as long as the city could insure that the union would be weak.

Limiting the size of the bargaining unit was the key to the city's plan. If the city could split captains, lieutenants, fire inspectors and probationary employees away from the union, it would be weak enough for city officials to live with comfortably.

From the time firefighters first asked for a formal election and union recognition in late June, 1977, the make-up of the bargaining unit was an issue. It took almost three months of negotiations to settle the terms and conditions of the vote for a union, which ordinarily is a simple procedure.

## Election

But the city insisted that officers and probationers were not eligible to vote. Rather than hassle with that before the union even had the formal right to bargain for firefighters, union representatives agreed to the town's conditions for the union election; only 16 of the department's 27 employees could vote. But the union added one stipulation which came back to haunt the city: nothing in the election agreement would limit the scope of future bargaining.

(In other words, the union left the door open to re-negotiate the make-up of the bargaining unit.)

In late September, the union won the election 16-0. In mid-October, the town council officially recognized the union as the firefighters' bargaining agent.

According to union International representative Mike Lass, city officials thought they had already won the bargaining unit issue (and ensured a weak union) when they let only 16 firefighters vote in the election.

## bargaining team

Normal's city attorney, Frank Miles has earned himself the label "master of misrepresentation" in his role as chief spokesperson for the town's negotiating team. In one bargaining session, Miles deeply angered strikers by asserting that firefighting is a "cushy, racket job."

When the union handed the city a 29-point contract proposal two days later, the fight was on. The union's plan included officers in the bargaining unit.

The union's negotiating team included two officers, and the city objected. At first the city insisted on the officers sitting on the City's negotiating team, to represent management!

For five months, the two sides did not get to talk about the content of the contract, because the city only talked about dropping officers from the union's negotiating team.

Eventually, city negotiators threatened to ask the city council to either withdraw recognition for the union, or pass an ordinance positively removing captains and lieutenants from the bargaining unit.

## Strike authorized

By the time that city council meeting rolled around, the firefighters union told president Ron Lawson to call a strike if the city council took either action.

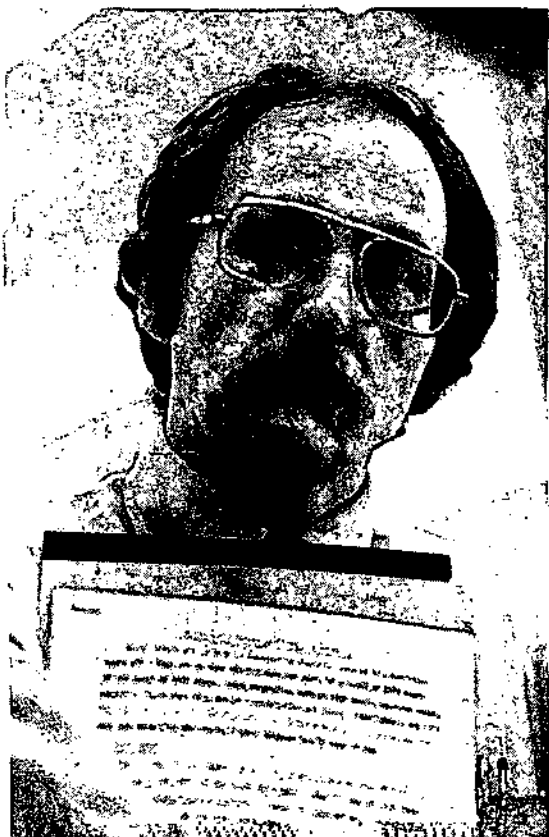
On March 20, the council passed the ordinance excluding captains and lieutenants from the bargaining unit, and the strike began the next day.

By mid-April, the city had conceded that the two probationary employees could be represented in collective bargaining, and had "pretty much" conceded the issue on lieutenants, according to Mike Lass, a member of the union's negotiating team.

As the Post-American goes to press, Normal still hasn't agreed to let fire inspectors and captains be covered by a union contract. The strike will continue until the town changes its position, according to union attorney Dale Berry.

stories on the firefighters' strike were written by Mike Matejka, Dan LeSeure, & Mark Silverstein.

As assistant city manager, Carl Sneed handles day-to-day labor relations for Normal. Sneed convinced strikers that the town would not bargain in good faith when he told two of them that the city council "would let buildings burn" before moving on the bargaining unit issue.



# Strike!

## 'Final' offer

**Thurs. April 13** Six days after talks broke down, the town claimed it had a proposal which would end the strike. But in another divide-and-conquer strategy, the town proposed splitting the firefighters into three groups, presenting the proposal to each group at the same time, but separately—and then holding a secret ballot election on the proposal.

The union agreed to meet for a regular negotiating session, but rejected what representatives called the city's attempt to undermine the union's solidarity and to dictate the methods of ratifying a contract.

**Fri. April 14** After launching a media campaign based on the claim that their "final proposal" contained significant concessions, city officials presented their package to the firefighters' negotiating team.

Firefighters again attacked the city's devious attempts to divide the union and destroy the strikers' solidarity, this time by mailing—before firefighters themselves had even seen the plan—copies of the "final proposal" to each firefighter's wife. An accompanying cover letter, firefighters charged, misrepresented the proposal.

Though firefighters would not comment on the city's proposal, evidence emerged that the city's boasts of concessions were merely phony publicity building designed to pressure the firefighters into accepting the offer.

Mayor Godfrey indicated that firefighters reacted angrily when they read the proposal, and a neutral state mediator who sat in on the talks said that the city's package was basically nothing new.

Joining the city in its media campaign, Normal Chamber of Commerce President Bruce Kaiser in a hastily called press conference, declared that firefighters should accept the city's "more than fair" offer. Kaiser later told the Post-American that he and other members of the business lobby's board of directors learned the details of the city's package in a Friday afternoon meeting with city council members. Though Kaiser admitted never having talked with firefighters to learn their side of the dispute, he didn't feel his information was one-sided. "I know all the council members, the director of ISU's University Union said, and I've been talking with them all along keeping posted on the stances both sides have been taking."

On the evening news, Peoria's WMBD-TV reported that another telephone poll of 330 Normal residents still favored the firefighters, and indicated strong dissatisfaction with city officials. Asked if they approved of the Normal firefighters' strike, 43% approved, 37% disapproved, and 20% were undecided. When asked if they approved or disapproved of the manner in which the mayor and city manager handled the strike, only 22% approved, 47% disapproved, and 31% were undecided.

**Sat. April 15** By a 23-0 vote, the firefighters rejected the city's "final offer." By Judge Caisley's arrangement, the entire union membership met together at the fire station for the discussion and vote, the first time in two weeks the men had all been together, and the first time the members of the bargaining team had seen the outside world since being jailed. After meeting an additional four hours to draw up a counter-proposal, the striking firefighters went back to jail.

While firefighters' wives and other supporters began door-to-door canvassing and petition circulating, news media continued to report that the city was through—there would be no more offers to the firefighters.

The next step, media reports suggested, could be the firing of all striking firefighters.

(Please turn to next page)

# Strike!

(Continued from preceding page)

**Sun. April 16** Accepting some of the points in the city's "final offer," firefighters presented a counterproposal. After five minutes of looking it over, the city negotiators left, calling the proposal "clearly unacceptable." Normal city attorney Frank Miles said the union offer still included captains in the bargaining unit and still extended present benefits to new firefighters—both unacceptable to the city.

In an unusual move, state mediator Ed Schultz asked to speak to the Normal Town Council during their Monday night executive session. Although mediators ordinarily speak only with the two bargaining teams, Schultz said the stakes are simply too high to worry about protocol in this case.

**Mon. April 17** The 100 attorneys employed at the downtown Chicago offices of the international union-busting law firm of Seyfarth & Shaw received a surprise Monday morning, as they had to cross a firefighter's picket line to enter their plush office building. Chicago-area firefighters picketed the building to call attention to the law firm's responsibility for jailing strikers in Normal.

Though reporters were not even aware a request had been made, Governor James Thompson announced at a Peoria news conference that he had turned down Mayor Godfrey's request that the national guard be mobilized.

In reaction to the shutdown of their last town council meeting, Normal officials called in 75 police to restrict entry to Monday night's meeting. (See separate story.)

**Tues. April 18** Godfrey denied asking that the national guard be mobilized. Instead, the mayor said, he has only asked about procedure for bringing out the guard in case a pro-firefighter rally in Normal became too much for local police to handle. Claiming that "outside influences"—who the mayor identified as pro-firefighter union groups—were planning "disruptive tactics," the mayor justified both his inquiry and his call-up of police for the town council meeting.

Calling it a "sham" designed to confuse the public, city bargainers rejected the union's counterproposal to the city's "final offer."

The Daily Pantagraph Inc., which uses children as paper carriers to soft-hearted customers will pay on time, editorially criticized firefighters for "using children" in their door-to-door canvassing. One teenager was circulating petitions in support of his father and the firefighters.

Strike supporters began a series of radio ads urging people to "look for the sticker in the window" and patronize those businesses which support the firefighters.

**Wed. April 19** Mailed to each ISU dormitory resident, 9,000 leaflets argued that even with firefighters assigned to the forced "work-release" program, Normal—and especially ISU dorms—still lacked top quality fire protection. Asking for student support for the firefighters, the leaflets explained that the run-down strikers were working 50% more hours than usual, and that with over half the off-duty force locked up at any given time, it would take over half an hour for the extra men to respond if they were needed to combat a major disaster like a dorm fire.

Union attorney Dale Berry said he would meet Friday with American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) people to relay complaints that strike supporters were unconstitutionally denied entrance to Monday's Normal town council meeting.

## 'We represent the

Normal C. Council is a white man, almost 40 years old, who works for a large anti-union employer, who lives in a \$70,000 house in Precinct 2, who. . .

In spite of polls and petitions to the contrary, the Normal City Council has insisted throughout the firefighters' strike that only it knows what the citizens of Normal want.

Twice Peoria television station WMBD, Channel 31, did surveys that showed more people in Normal supported the firefighters than opposed them.

The first survey, done March 30 to April 2, showed that 44% of 341 randomly selected Normalites approved of the strike. Only 33%

opposed it and 23% were undecided.

The second survey, done April 11-13, indicated that 43% approved and 37% disapproved of the strike. But more importantly, 47% of the 330 people polled disapproved of the way Mayor Richard Godfrey and City Manager Dave Anderson handled their jobs during the strike. Only 22% approved of the two men's performance.

In addition, a petition in support of the firefighters was signed by 2500 Normal citizens and presented to the council April 17. Only 2096 people voted in the last town council election.

But if the council doesn't represent the will of the citizens of Normal, it does represent one particular group strikingly well.

Carl Sneed, Normal's departing assistant manager, unintentionally gave me the clue to just who the city council represents.

He said that he, Anderson, and the council members were getting scores of calls from people opposed to the firefighters. He even predicted that these opponents would force a recall election if the council "gave in" to the firefighters.

Who calls council members?

The upper middle-class manager, the professional, the real estate baron,

### Abe supports firefighters

"All that harms labor is treason to America. No line can be drawn between those two. If any man tells you he loves America yet hates labor, he is a liar. If any man tells you he trusts America yet fears labor, he is a fool. There is no America without labor, and to fleece the one is to rob the other."

--Abraham Lincoln

STATE OF ILLINOIS  
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE ELEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT )  
COUNTY OF McLEAN

TOWN OF NORMAL, ILLINOIS, A  
Municipal Corporation,

Plaintiff

v.

LOCAL 2442 OF THE INTERNATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION OF FIREFIGHTERS,  
WAYNE ABBOTT, DON BEVERS, GARY  
BROUGHTON, TOM ELSTON, VANCE EMMERT,  
JEFF FEASLEY, FRANK HANOVER, MEL  
HARPER, RICHARD HORATH, WILLIAM  
KERBER, KEN KERFOOT, TOM KORN,  
RON LAWSON, MIKE LEISNER, JOHN McATEE,  
RICK MILLS, RON PATTERSON, LOREN  
PETERS, AL ROLLINS, JERRY SCHWARTZ,  
RICHARD SUTTER, RICHARD SYLVESTER,  
GARY TRENT, CRAIG WALL, JIM WATSON, and  
MICHAEL LASS,

Defendants

CASE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

MOTION REQUESTING A RULE TO SHOW CAUSE WHY CERTAIN NAMED DEFENDANTS SHOULD NOT BE HELD IN CONTEMPT OF COURT FOR VIOLATING THE PROVISIONS OF A TEMPORARY RESTRAINING ORDER

NOW COMES THE TOWN OF NORMAL, ILLINOIS, A Municipal Corporation and Plaintiff herein, by Frank Miles, its attorney, and moves this Court to enter an Order requiring Defendants Local 2442 of the International Association of Firefighters, Wayne Abbott, Don Bevers, Gary Broughton, Tom Elston, Vance Emmert, Jeff Feasley, Frank Hanover, Mel Harper, Richard Horath, William Kerber, Ken Kerfoot, Tom Korn, Ron Lawson, Mike Leisner, Rick Mills, Ron Patterson, Loren Peters, Al Rollins, Jerry Schwartz, Richard Sylvester, Gary Trent, Craig Wall, Jim Watson, and Michael Lass, and each of them to show cause why they and each of them should not be held in contempt of court. This Motion is supported by the Affidavits of George Cermak and Carl Sneed, attached hereto and made a part hereof.

THE TOWN OF NORMAL, ILLINOIS,  
A Municipal Corporation,

BY:

*Frank Miles*  
Frank Miles, Its Attorney

Frank Miles  
Corporation Counsel  
100 E. Phoenix, P.O. Box 589  
Normal, IL 61761  
Telephone: 309/454-2444

# people,' council says

the business owner, all the men who run things and whose control over the workplace would be shaken if unions start a wave of organizing in Bloomington-Normal. Republicans all.

Not surprisingly, all the council members derive their income as managers or professionals, and all but one get their living from the largest institutions in Bloomington-Normal. Not accidentally, those institutions have the most to lose from unionization.

Remarkably, five of the seven council members live within one quarter of a mile of each other, clustered within 3- or 4 blocks of Ash Park. Two of those, Jocelyn Bell and Paul Mattingly, live one house one house apart on Valentine Drive. The other two council members live within a few blocks of each other about a half mile away.

Normal's not big, but it's bigger than that. Four of the city council members--William Hammitt, Vernon Maulson, Bell and Mattingly--live in the second precinct. There are 25 precincts in Normal.

Three of the council members work for Illinois State University: Mayor Richard Godfrey as head of the PR bureau, Parker Lawlis in the placement service, and Mattingly

as a professor in the geography department.

ISU, Normal's largest employer, has the largest stake in hindering the success of public employee unions. ISU wants to keep its clerical workers and teachers unorganized.

Bell, a homemaker, depends on a husband at State Farm Insurance for her bread, while Paul Harmon is a corporate lawyer for the Illinois Agricultural Association. (Harmon admits that he could be called on to work against-IAA's clerical workers if they start organizing.)

The sixth member, Maulson, is an attorney for General Telephone, whose operators and repair people are already organized.

But Gen Tel, State Farm and IAA all employ large numbers of not-yet-unionized clerical workers.

Though Hammitt does not work for a large non-union employer, (he's business manager of the BabyFold) he has taken a public stance indistinguishable from his neighbors.

It's a cosy clique at the council table, so it's no wonder they see outsiders everywhere. An outsider is simply anyone who doesn't work for a large anti-union employer, who doesn't live in a \$70,000 house in Precinct 2, who.

--D. LeSeure

# Strike!

(Continued from opposite page)

The town of Normal began taking applications for full-time firefighter jobs, but said the action had no connection with any plans to fire strikers. The eligibility list was depleted and had to be increased anyway, officials said.

Finally realizing, apparently, that jail was not going to break the strikers' and that their imprisonment was building public opinion--even at state and national levels--against the Normal town council, the Pantagraph editorially called for the firefighters' release as the first of 10 suggested steps to ending the strike.

Strike supporters said they would circulate petitions calling for an election to change Normal's form of government. A ward system, with representatives elected from specific geographical areas, would be more responsive to public opinion than the present at-large election of council members, according to strike supporters.

**Fri. April 21** The Daily Pantagraph reported that Judge Caisley privately suggested that both sides in the strike submit the dispute to binding arbitration.

The American Civil Liberties Union formed an investigation subcommittee to determine if there are grounds for a suit against the town of Normal for unconstitutionally restricting entry to their April 14 town council meeting.



## Call 'em yourself!

### The Normal Council

Jocelyn Bell, 1105 Valentine, ph 452-7750

Richard Godfrey, 205 Veronica Way, ph 452-3710

Paul Harmon, 6 Clinton Place, ph 829-8245

William Hammitt, 1103 Spear, ph 452-1527

Parker Lawlis, 1304 Stephens, ph 452-5309

Paul Mattingly, 1101 Valentine, ph 452-2359

Vernon Maulson, 314 Augustine Way, ph 452-3470



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Normal's outsiders

# Normal hires professional union-busters

The firefighters were on strike, so this reporter went to the courthouse March 27, when the men were put on probation, to cover the courtroom scene.

The Town of Normal was represented by City Attorney Frank Miles, but also by a quiet but fast talker, an unfamiliar face. Grumbles and moans surfaced from the crowd when he appeared.

Suddenly, buzzers rang in the courtroom. The firefighters ran from the room, hustling down the stairs and dashing to Normal. A fire alarm had sounded, and although they were on strike, the firefighters still responded to calls. The spectators were amazed at their quick action and obvious dedication.

Except one man. The one with the unfamiliar face.

He stood up, faced the court, and charged that the men were answering an engineered false alarm to "impress the court." The alarm was minor, but real.

Who was he?

He obviously made people angry. In the lobby afterwards, a Bloomington firefighter cornered him, and questioned how this man could dare walk the earth. The outsider gave a half-hearted grin (coupled with a look of disgust) and headed for the door.

This reporter cornered him next. Who do you work for? Your firm? How many attorneys are on retainer? What are your specialties? What do you charge?

Each question got the same sick grin, as he retreated behind the barrier, seemingly immune to human interaction.

He was representative of an international law firm, a firm with offices from Los Angeles to South Africa--Seyfarth, Fairweather, Shaw and Geraldson, a large, corporate-oriented labor law firm.

A "corporate-oriented labor law firm" is a complex way to say something very simple--they are union busters.

S & S has built a reputation across America for

preventing unionization, or stalling a bargaining session so long and with so many gimmicks that weak and powerless unions result.

Under the leadership of Ted Clark, S & S has a special program they sell to municipalities, a program to make unionization difficult and trying.

The Town of Normal bought the goods, for an undisclosed price, by bringing in S & S as their legal consultants.

When questioned to the cost of S & S, Mayor Godfrey replied that he didn't know. David Anderson, city manager, has an idea, but he wasn't really sure.

Estimates vary but the most certain is about \$116 per hour.

The Town's relationship began months ago, when attorney Miles attended a S & S seminar on collective bargaining.

As the union drive intensified, the town brought in S & S seating them at the negotiating table. Soon, they, not the usual city representatives, were presenting proposals to the union. S & S was obviously in control and dominating.

Under the direction of S & S, the town stonewalled negotiations, continually coming to the table with "final offers," trying to subvert the strength of the union through court action and jail sentences and hoping that prolonged negotiations will dampen the spirit of the strikers.

But S & S has another stake in Normal--their reputation.

Seyfarth & Shaw have been trying to stop unions for years, Mike Lass, Field Representative of the International Association of Firefighters says, "I've been dealing with them across the bargaining table since 1967."

Selling their special public employee program to cities, S & S has tried to stop firefighters' strikes in other cities.

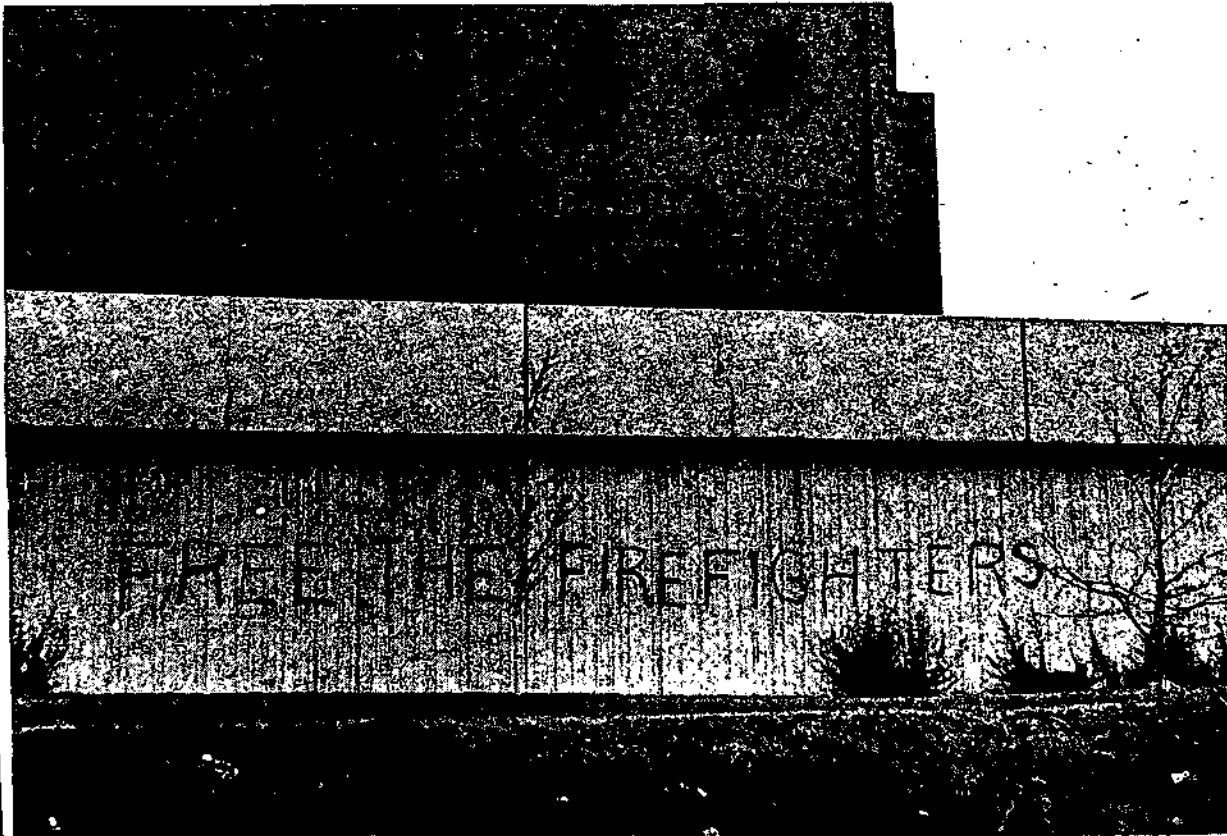
The union faced them in Springfield, and beat them in Joliet and Danville. In Aurora, according to Dale Berry, the union's legal representative, a firefighters' strike was averted because the city attorney was confident enough of his own ability that he refused S & S's offer, and a quick settlement was reached.

So Normal, a traditionally conservative community, was S & S's chance to recoup their image after their recent tarnish in other cities.

With their Chicago force of over 100 attorneys, their offices in Los Angeles, Washington, New York, London and South Africa, S & S has been able to bring skilled professionals to work.

But certain things they've not been able to control--like the popular outcry about their expensive fees and the determined group of firefighters, who fear no court sentences or legal gimmickry, who are ready and able to stand up for their rights.

--MGM



ABOVE: ISU's University Union carried a message of support for striking firefighters.

## 'Fire my people, it's war!'--Lass

As the Post-American goes to press, hints that Normal officials are seriously thinking of firing the strikers are surfacing more frequently in newspaper and TV reports on the Normal firefighters.

According to Mike Lass, a representative from the International Association of Firefighters, such an action "would mean war."

"If the strikers were fired, and no longer had legitimate employment rights, then they would have to resort to illegitimate means to keep people from taking their jobs."

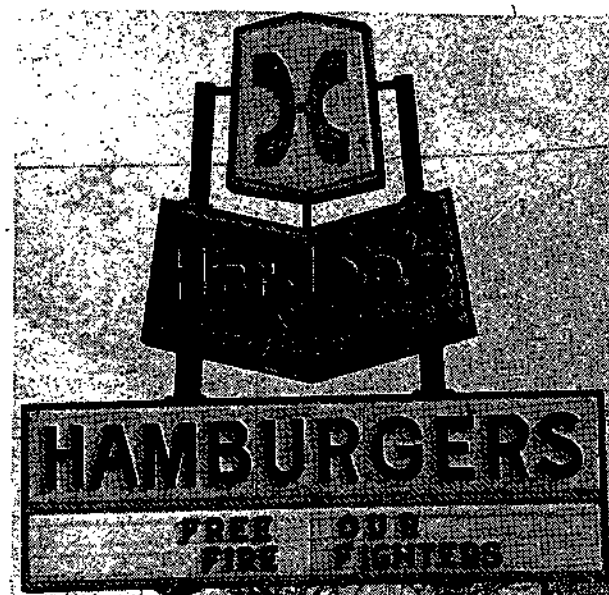
Though Lass would not be specific, he was serious.

"You bet I'm serious, dead serious," the strike organizer repeated emphatically. "My people don't lose jobs because of a strike. No one is going to take their jobs away from them, not without a fight."

Sitting at strike headquarters under a sign reading "NO VIOLENCE, NO MATTER HOW PROVOKED," Lass continued, "Right now we're fighting nice. Fire my people, and it's war."



Mike Lass, International Association of Firefighters Field Representative



# Massed police guard council meeting

The Normal Town Council met again April 17 under heavy armed guard. Although officials knew that strike supporters intended to be totally orderly, planned to attend the council meeting only for the first 15 minutes, and had arranged for members of the Bloomington firefighters union to serve as marshals in the crowd, Normal officials severely restricted the number of people allowed to enter city hall.

Pretending to enforce the fire code, the council admitted only 81 observers, and generally let in only people claiming they were attending for a particular item on the council's agenda. Since the firefighters' strike was not on the agenda, police turned away almost all strike supporters, though some of the firefighters' wives did get in. Union attorney Dale Berry charged that the restricted entry policy was a violation of the first amendment to the Constitution.

About 75 officers from three or four police departments appeared at city hall, surrounding the building and lining the council chambers shoulder to shoulder.

John McAtee, the only striking firefighter not jailed, had earlier received permission to talk to the council at the meeting's beginning. After his address, he and firefighter supporters in the audience left, joining the hundreds of supporters who demonstrated peacefully outside. The crowd moved away from the city hall building, gathering on a slope by the east parking lot to watch strike supporters stage some hilarious street theater ridiculing the council's handling of the strike.

Mike Lass, a representative from the firefighters' international

headquarters, said he and union attorney Dale Berry met with Normal police chief McGuire and city attorney Frank Miles hours before the council meeting. In addition, Lass said, fire captain McAtee spoke with Mayor Godfrey. These city officials were completely briefed on the strike supporters' plans, Lass said.

## City briefed

Since city officials knew there would be no disruption of their council meeting, the massive show of force was only theater, Lass said.

And Normal was taking advantage of the city of Bloomington to stage that theater. Louis DeVault, Bloomington's assistant police chief, told the Post-American that he had "no idea at all" that Normal officials had met with strike leaders about preventing a disruption. DeVault said Normal had requested Bloomington's assistance several days before the council meeting, and had called again Monday afternoon to confirm their need for help. Bloomington sent 35 officers, according to DeVault.

Speaking to the town council, McAtee read a statement from Don Penn, laborers' union business agent. Penn traced the history of civil disobedience in the labor movement, from the time of Eugene Debs' imprisonment to the illegal sit-downs and factory occupations which finally won auto plant organizing battles in the 1930s.

McAtee also presented petitions with 2500 signatures which firefighters' wives gathered in their door-to-door canvassing in Normal. McAtee said the 2500 signatures "represented about a thousand more people than voted in the last election."

## Phony

McAtee also read a statement from Pam Lawson, whose jailed husband is president of the firefighters local. She attacked the city for trying to undermine the strike's solidarity by sending a copy of the city's "final proposal" to each firefighter's wife. Referring to the city's accompanying cover letter, Ms. Lawson said the town's expression of "genuine sympathy" was "phony as a three dollar bill."

After reading statements, Captain McAtee staged some theater, too. Since the city sent its "final proposal" to each firefighter's wife, McAtee said, they are entitled to vote on it. Producing a ballot box, McAtee called the strikers' wives to the podium, one by one, to drop secret ballots into the box. When a council member accused McAtee of conducting a charade, he replied that it was no more a charade than the city's "final offer." During the voting, some of the council members just got up from their chairs and left.

After the voting, McAtee and other strike supporters joined the rally outside.

BELOW: Police lined the Normal Council chambers shoulder to shoulder April 17.



ABOVE: To show solidarity with jailed firefighters, a small group of supporters gathered at the headquarters fire station March 31, singing and shouting encouragement to the first shift of strikers working under Judge Calsley's "work release" sentence.





ABOVE: Firefighter supporters gathered at the county jail April 26 in a show of solidarity with strikers locked up inside.



ABOVE: Howie McClennan, President of the International Association of Firefighters, flew in from Washington to address the statewide rally in support of Normal's striking firefighters.

## Illinois firefighters rally in Normal

BELOW: Firefighters from all over Illinois gathered for a rally at Normal's headquarters fire station April 26. After several spirited hours of singing, cheering, speakers and theater, the group moved to Bloomington's Law and Justice Center, to show support for striking firefighters imprisoned in the county jail.

