

# Union Workers Rally Against Crystal Sugar Lockout

Dave Kolpack, Associated Press

MOORHEAD, Minn. (AP) — Hundreds of American Crystal Sugar workers and others showed up in Moorhead with signs, banners and even guitars Thursday in a rally for employees who have been locked out for 11 days.

About 1,300 union workers have been locked out of five sugar processing plants in Minnesota, North Dakota and Iowa in the company's first labor impasse in 30 years. The largest beet sugar processor in the U.S. had offered a 17 percent pay increase over five years, but workers were upset about provisions covering job security and health care costs.

American Crystal Sugar vice president Brian Ingulsrud had no specific comment about the rally, other than to say that no talks were scheduled.

"We would have liked to have had the employees on the job working today," Ingulsrud said. "We think that the offer that we put in front of them was a very good one."

American Crystal accounts for 38 percent of the country's production of sugar from beets and 15 percent overall. It has been using replacement workers since the lockout began, although the company is currently in off-peak mode and not processing beets.

The rally started near the company's Moorhead headquarters, where workers chanted pro-union slogans and targeted company vice president and Chief Operating Officer Joseph Talley. "Pink slip Joe," they yelled.

The group walked several blocks to a bridge over the Red River separating Minnesota and North Dakota, where one of at least two guitar-playing marchers, D-Roy Anderson, played the Jimi Hendrix song "Hey Joe." Anderson made up his own version Thursday when he saw buttons and signs about Talley.

"Hey Joe, where you are going with that big knife in your hand? Hey Joe Talley, when you going out and backstabbing union workers again?" Anderson sang.

Talley has been the company's chief spokesman in negotiations. "I imagine that's maybe why he is taking the brunt of their frustrations right now," Ingulsrud said.

Anderson said the contract dispute "is about human rights. It's not fair."

Some marchers were union workers from other companies. Delta Air Lines baggage handlers Dave Lee, 61, and Marty Knaeble, 47, came from the Twin Cities to join the

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rally.

"We've got to stand with our brothers and sisters," Lee said. "They're fighting to maintain our standard of living and have some control over our work environment."

Knaeble said he met American Crystal Sugar employees from all five plants involved in the lockout. The company has plants in East Grand Forks, Moorhead, Crookston and Chaska, Minn., and in Hillsboro and Drayton, N.D. and Mason City, Iowa.

"The turnout was excellent," he said.

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