

# Union To Resume Talks With American Crystal

The Associated Press

GRAND FORKS, N.D. (AP) — Officials representing American Crystal Sugar Co. and its locked-out union workers plan to meet again on June 8, but a resolution to the 10-month-long contract dispute appears unlikely.

Union Local President John Risky first told the Grand Forks Herald on Wednesday that talks would resume.

"We hope there will be negotiations," he said. "The last few times we met, they just listened."

Crystal spokesman Brian Ingulsrud told The Associated Press on Thursday that the Moorhead, Minn.-based company is willing to meet at the request of a federal mediator, "but our final offer is our final offer."

About 1,300 union workers at Crystal sugar beet processing plants in North Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa have been locked out since Aug. 1 because of the contract dispute. The last time the two sides met was in February. Crystal is using replacement workers.

"We're focusing on training these new employees over the summer so that they're ready to run the factories next fall and into the foreseeable future," Ingulsrud said.

American Crystal this spring agreed to a contract with union workers at a subsidiary in Montana. Ingulsrud said the contract with workers at Sidney Sugars is similar to the one offered to the workers at the plants in the Red River Valley and Iowa. Risky disputed that, saying there are big contrasts.

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