

Loeb Issues Order To Stop Garbage Strike

Mayor Warns City To Hire New Sanitation Men If Walkout Continues

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Mayor Henry Loeb warned yesterday if striking sanitation workers do not "return to work immediately" others will be hired to take their jobs.

However, the mayor declined to specify if by "immediately" he meant this morning.

Mr. Loeb's warning was issued about 6 p.m. at his office following a day that saw the city's garbage collection brought to a virtual standstill in most sections of the city. City officials said that day passed without any contact with the strike leaders although the mayor issued several statements saying he was ready to talk about grievances.

"Today, Memphis is faced with an illegal work stoppage in the Sanitation Department," Mr. Loeb said late in the day. "This work stoppage directly affects the public health. Let no one make a mistake about it, the garbage is going to be picked up in Memphis.

"If the men do not return immediately, we will have no choice but to employ others to protect the public health.

"As mayor, I represent the whole city. First, I represent these men, and have been available, and will be available, to discuss their problems. Second, and most important, I represent the public, whose health is endangered, and this cannot be tolerated."

Charles Blackburn, director of public works said only 170 of 1,100 sanitation men worked yesterday and they kept 34 of the department's 180 garbage trucks operating. Also out were all but 16 of the 230 laborers working in the streets and drains division and at the city asphalt plant.

There were scattered reports from sanitation men on the job that they were being threatened by union backers roaming the city in cars. Police officers were asked to investigate but made no arrests.

The toughest of many issues involved is a requested wage boost which the union-- Local 1733 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees - presented to Mr. Blackburn only hours before the workers began their strike.

Mr. Blackburn said he union has asked that the pay of laborers be boosted from \$1.80 an hour to \$2.35 and that the pay of crew chiefs who are truck drivers go from \$2.10 to \$3 an hour.

The union also asked for time and a half for all work over eight hours. Mr. Blackburn said, and that workers be allowed to work a full week even though the weather is inclement.

Mayor Loeb claimed the strike is illegal and cited a temporary injunction handed down in Chancery Court Aug. 23, 1966. That injunction forbade the union from striking the city or trying to picket the city to support any contract demands.

The injunction said municipal employees are not within the jurisdiction of the National Labor Relations Board and further, under state law, they were prohibited from striking.

Court officials said the city can ask Chancery Court at any time to hold the strikes in contempt. The president of the union, T. O. Jones, was unavailable for comment throughout the day yesterday.

Garbage collection is a free service of the city government. County citizens must pay for any garbage collection, usually provided by private companies.

The long-term effect of the strike could well be a return to once-a-week pickups in the city. If pay raises are eventually granted, Mr. Loeb may prefer to economize by cutting collections. Former Commissioner of Public Works William Farris instituted twice-a-week pickups in 1963.

There was a feeling among city officials yesterday that the abrupt strike might have been triggered by reports that the New York sanitation strike has been settled with a handsome pay boost for the workers.

"This is not New York and nothing will be gained by ignoring our law," Mayor Loeb said.



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