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Milk plant workers' strike averted

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — A milk plant union workers strike which could have cost dairymen more than \$1 million per day in losses was narrowly voted down Sunday.

Members of eight Teamster locals voted 225 for the contract and 199 against.

But several of the operations were solidly against ratifying the contract.

There was some question as to whether the historic precedent of having the total

vote of all employees determining the fate for all would be abandoned.

Union officials said they may push to have the vote tallied at each plant and have each plant stand on its own.

Elmhurst Dairy sites at Prattsburg and Worcester, N.Y.; Empire Cheese, in Skaneateles Junction, N.Y.; and two of the three pollio Dairy plants voting all voted heavily against the contract.

Robert Forsythe, general manager of the Syracuse-based Northeast Dairy

Cooperative Federation, had said the strike could have resulted in over seven million pounds of milk being dumped daily. Forsythe spoke on behalf of the milkshed's 10 major milk manufacturing plants.

Three major points were hashed out: workers' wages, pension benefits, and health and welfare contributions.

The offer made to the union by plant operators allows for an increase in the employee labor rate of 65 cents and hour this year followed by an additional 60 cents next year and a third increase of 60 cents in 1982.

That brings the total wage package to \$1.85 an hour over three years.

The dairies agreed to increase the current Health and Welfare contributions from the present rate of \$20.24 per employee per

week to \$25.24 per employee per week for 1980-81.

An additional one dollar will be given the third year to cover inflation.

Plans for the pension fund would sweeten the current \$13.30 per employee per week pot to \$15.30 this year and then raise it to \$17.30 in 1981-82.

The offer was said to be the richest ever made to employees by this group of plant operators.

In an attempt to avert a strike, New York's Governor Hugh Carey sent a state mediator to join the federal mediator and the two sides at the bargaining table.

Talks had broken down over demands by Teamster bosses in the major areas of wage rates, pension contributions, and health and welfare fund.

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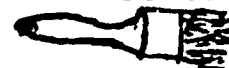


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