

# **District 1199NM**

## **Remembering our history!**

On February 1, 1988, nurses from St. Vincent Hospital in Santa Fe went on strike. The nurses struck over wages, benefits, and working conditions. One of the strike leaders was Delma DeLora who is the current President of District 1199NM. The strike was successful and ended on February 8, 1988. The 1988 strike was the first and only strike of nurses in New Mexico Labor History.

# The New Mexican

Santa Fe/Northern New Mexico

Tuesday, February 2, 1988



Striking St. Vincent nurses seek support from an LPN as he leaves the hospital early Monday.

Photos by Sydney Brink/The New Mexican

## Pickets go up, tempers flare at St. Vincent

By MELISSA ADAMS  
The New Mexican Staff

Picket signs went up, tempers flared and both sides filed unfair labor practice charges against one another Monday, the first day of a nurses' strike at St. Vincent Hospital.

Both sides filed their charges with the National Labor Relations Board in Albuquerque. Day 2 of the strike was to continue today with early-morning picket lines outside the hospital.

Attorneys for the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Workers District 1199 claim the hospital negotiated in "bad faith" at the bargaining table.

St. Vincent attorneys claim the strikers harassed employees, visitors and patients as they entered and exited the hospital grounds early Monday.

Attorneys for the hospital and the union talked all day Monday, Harty said.

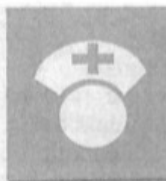
Meanwhile, striking nurses started their first day, charged up in their intent to picket until they are successful in seeking better wages, continued benefits and continued working condition policies outlined in previous contracts.

"We're in for the long haul," said Jack White, a registered nurse.

While the picket circled the entrances, they stopped cars to see who was in them. "We aren't trying to bother anyone, we are just trying to keep out nurses from the bargaining unit," said Delma DeLora, president of the local union. She told those on the picket lines to take license numbers of "scabs" but not to pound on cars.

Santa Fe police officers arrived at the hospital shortly after 6 a.m. and warned the picketers not to harass hospital workers and visitors.

"I don't have a problem with them as long as it's orderly," said Assistant Police Chief Jim Salazar. Some protesters ignored the warnings of security guards hired by the hospital,



## Nurses on strike: Day 2

■ LPNs express resentment

■ Mood at the hospital

■ Graphic on issues

Page A-2

but they did obey police officers.

"We don't want to make any arrests. These are Santa Fe people. They aren't out to hurt anybody," Salazar said.

Joan Nolan, who has been a nurse for 20 years, has worked at St. Vincent for six years. "This is the worst I've seen any nurses treated," she said.

"This has been a long time coming," said Sue Cook, a registered nurse.

Police Chief Ray Sisneros said his department would monitor the picketing.

Strikers booed and called workers "scabs" as buses entered and left the hospital grounds carrying nurses to and from parking lots located away from the hospital.

As the bused workers entered the hospital grounds, those supporting the nurses clapped, waved or motioned with thumbs up.

One doctor stopped to complain that the picket lines kept patients away from medical offices adjacent to the hospital. A dentist supporting the nurses sent doughnuts.

When the administration claimed picketers were blocking traffic, DeLora advised people to walk straight lines across the streets instead of circles.

Union members must devote 36 hours a week to union activities to be eligible for strike pay of \$35 a week for single adults and \$50 a week for those with dependents. Additional emergency money is available through the national union.

In filing unfair labor practices against the hospital, attorneys

See Pickets on Page A-2



Sydney Brink/ The New Mexican

### Light load

*Striking St. Vincent nurses attempt to get a look at the lone occupant of a bus who is seated behind the bus driver. The hospital assigned buses to pick up workers at designated sites in Santa Fe to help employees avoid picket lines.*

## Pickets go up outside St. Vincent

Continued from Page A-1

Morton Simon and Carol Oppenheimer claimed the hospital "put the union into the position where they had no alternative but to strike. The hospital's final offer did not move one iota in the direction of the union's demands."

The hospital bargained in bad faith by trying to split the union between licensed practical nurses and registered nurses, the attorneys said. The take-backs contained the the hospital's final offer were "the ultimate slap in the face," they said.

On the hospital side, the unfair labor charges are leveled against the union's picket line.

"We have had incidents of obstruction of cars, harassment of employees and patients," said Charlie Cullin, hospital spokesman.

"We also have reports of people pounding on cars. Our aim is to achieve a safe and open operation, to continue the health care services and, for employees who wish to come to work, to do so without being stopped coming or going," he said.

The attorneys for the union

also are seeking an injunction to force the hospital to begin to bargain in good faith with the union. Such an injunction would be sought in district court. Action on either grievance, however, moves through an administrative judge within the NLRB, which issues an opinion that can be challenged and taken to a federal appeals court.

As of Monday, the hospital had 15 patients. By Monday night, no new admissions had been made into the hospital, said Joe Harty, the administrator on duty. Two expectant mothers were considered possible admissions.



*Bobbye Johnson, an LPN, walks the picket line at St. Vincent.*