

No new talks near in Boeing strike

SEATTLE (AP) — Boeing Co. supervisors worked Thursday on production of jetliners close to delivery as a strike by 57,000 Machinists union members continued with no new talks in sight.

Boeing chairman Frank Shrontz apologized in a telegram to Defense Secretary Richard Cheney for any delays the strike might cause in delivery of Boeing products.

If the strike continues, "delivery delays of our products will be inevitable, but we will keep you apprised of our progress," Shrontz told Cheney.

"We hope the strike will be short-lived...I assure you that the Boeing Co. will do all it can to resolve this issue at the earliest possible time."

Industry analysts said the

strike's outcome could set a trend for contracts at other aerospace companies.

No new negotiations were scheduled in the strike that began Wednesday when a three-year labor contract expired without agreement over a new pact.

Strikers include 43,300 in the Seattle area, 12,000 in Wichita, Kan., 1,700 in Portland, Ore., and smaller numbers at a half-dozen other locations.

Machinists said they wanted a larger share of Boeing's economic good fortune and fewer hours of mandatory overtime at the company, which is pressing hard to increase aircraft production because of record aircraft orders.

The company, the world's largest commercial jet builder with 65 percent of the free world's market, is in its fifth consecutive year of record jetliner orders.

Boeing officials said they were trying to use supervisory personnel to finish aircraft close to delivery, including a Malaysian Airlines 747-400 jumbo jet due to be delivered Friday.

Boeing spokesman Harold Carr said company officials met Wednesday to discuss the strike but he declined to predict what might happen next. He said he was "not aware of any meetings Thursday."

Union officials have said they'd be willing to resume talks at any time, but haven't heard from Boeing.

Carr said Boeing's operations were continuing without the machinists, "but one obviously needs to recognize that we're operating without 43,000 people who are normally here."

He said he had no figures on how many machinists might be crossing picket lines Thursday, but "my perception is it's minimal."

About 400 pickets were walking lines at any given time in the Seattle area, Daniels said.

Boeing's offer included an immediate raise of 4 percent with 3 percent raises in both

1990 and 1991, annual bonuses of 8 percent of a worker's gross earnings this year and 3 percent the next plus some reduction in mandatory overtime.

Industry observers could only speculate how long a strike might last. The last Machinists walkout at Boeing, in 1977, lasted 45 days.

"There's economic pressures on both sides to compromise their differences," said Wolfgang Demisch, analyst with Union Bank of Switzerland in New York.

Economists said the Seattle area should easily weather a short strike, especially given workers' built-up savings from months of overtime.

But Bret Bertolin, a specialist with the state office of the forecast council, said the state agency estimated a month-long strike would mean \$160 million in lost payroll, and \$15 million in lost state revenues.

Robert Chase, an economist and research director for Pacific Northwest Executive, a University of Washington Graduate Business School publication, said Boeing workers might cut back on spending if a strike appears lengthy.

But Charles Nelson, a University of Washington economics professor and director of the UW's Institute for Economic Research, said the strike was neither surprising nor a major economic threat.

Florida trip costs man job

LEAVENWORTH, Wash. (AP) — The chief financial officer of a medical center struggling with mounting debts has resigned at the request of a hospital administrator who recently apologized for excessive travel expenses.

George Eshelman, a certified public accountant working as a consultant to Cascade Medical Center, resigned late Wednesday afternoon at the request of Administrator John Semingson.

Hospital Board Chairman Dick Einar said Thursday he was not surprised Semingson had requested Eshelman's resignation, but said the board had not requested it. "The board only hires one individual, and that's John," Einar said.

"I was told by John that I could either resign now or they (the medical center board) would ask for my resignation Thursday," Eshelman said.

The medical center, operated by tax-supported Chelan County Hospital District 1, is facing serious financial difficulties. The district has issued as much as \$1 million in interest-bearing warrants, and Semingson conceded Monday that liabilities exceed assets.

About \$1.5 million in patient fees owed the center either haven't been billed or collected, partly because of problems with a new computer selected by Eshelman.

Eshelman said he is confident the \$210,000 computer system, installed this spring, eventually will be an important management tool. He said he had been working diligently with the computer firm to get the billings out.

Eshelman worked on a part-time, hourly basis as the hospital's financial expert since the fall of 1987. His earnings in 1988 were \$48,353 and were \$40,113 through August.

"I don't think I've been passing out bad advice. I don't think I made a lot of major bad decisions," he said. "If my leaving can put things back together, great."

Eshelman blamed the center's financial difficulties on a drop in the numbers of patients.

Eshelman accompanied Semingson on a 16-day trip to pick up an ambulance in Florida in January. On Monday, Semingson apologized and offered to repay part of the \$3,000 spent on the trip, which included stops at Las Vegas, New Orleans and Disney World in Florida.

Meanwhile, findings of an audit of the medical center's records that began Sept. 6 won't be released for several weeks.

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Tall firs found near Springfield

Foresters say they have found a stand of what they believe are the world's tallest Douglas firs about 20 miles east of Springfield in the Willamette National Forest.

The evergreen trees top 300 feet and rise out of a creek bed that meanders down to Little Fall Creek. Estimated to be about 500 years old, the 20 tallest firs are surrounded by a 150-acre stand of old growth timber.

The tallest tree in the stand has been measured at 322 feet, said John Cissel, a planner for the Lowell Ranger District. That's about 100 feet taller than the average old growth Douglas fir, he said.

Maynard Dawson of Salem, who has documented the size of many big trees, said the tallest tree on record is a 368-foot-tall redwood in Northern California.

"For Douglas fir, anything over 300 feet is a rare and amazing tree," Dawson said, adding that he plans to measure the firs next week.

The tall Douglas firs were discovered when planners and biologists were gathering information for the Willamette's forest-management plan. Cissel measured the trees when he started reviewing options for managing the area under the forest plan, which has not yet been approved.

Cissel said a number of factors contributed to the size of the trees: The soils in the area are deep and rich, which is rare in the Cascade Range; the site is somewhat sheltered from winds and other bad weather conditions; the tallest trees are growing on flatter ground near the creek; and the area may have received more sunlight than normal.

Rick Scott, Lowell district ranger, said there are no plans to log the old growth stand.

Skinheads sentenced for beating man

MEDFORD (AP) — A Central Point man and a Medford woman have been sentenced to probation for beating a man after taunting him as a homosexual.

Christopher Drew Bostwick, 20, was sentenced in Jackson County Circuit Court to four years of probation recently. Laura Jean Dailey, 20, was sentenced to three years of probation.

Both pleaded no contest to

fourth-degree assault midway through their trial last August.

Both were ordered to pay restitution to the victim, who testified Dailey hit him in the head with a rock and Bostwick hit him with a metal bar in the attack last March in Medford.

The victim said Dailey and Bostwick had been taunting him as a homosexual for a couple days before the attack and

threatened to kill him.

Friends of Bostwick testified that he had told them he didn't like homosexuals.

When Bostwick was arrested, police said he had a jacket emblazoned with emblems of a skinhead group known as the National Front, which is based in San Francisco and sponsored by the white supremacist group Aryan Nations.

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