

Still on strike, your honor

NEW YORK (AP) — On the best of days, the city's vast court system is slow, confusing and inefficient. So what happens when the mayor fires the company that manages hundreds of striking public defenders?

The answer, four days into the strike: The usual. Legal Aid Society attorneys picketed outside courthouses, but inside all was calm. Judges juggled their calendars; Legal Aid supervisors filled in for striking staffers; private lawyers were hired to handle arraignments; some Legal Aid staffers showed up for trials and other previously scheduled proceedings.

In a perpetually snarled system that constantly verges on chaos, it was just another day.

The 1,000 public defenders walked out at midnight Friday, demanding better pay and health benefits. On Monday, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani canceled the city's longstanding contract with the Legal Aid Society, a private agency that represents most of New York's indigent litigants, including criminal defendants.

Giuliani, a former federal prosecutor, said he was "absolutely offended that lawyers would strike." He said the strike meant Legal Aid couldn't fulfill its contract and said "there are many lawyers in this city that are looking for work."

Giuliani said Legal Aid will have to make concessions to get a new contract, including cutting management salaries.

Few defendants were immediately affected by the dispute because the lawyers' union decided that striking lawyers would continue to represent their clients in cases that had already gone to trial.

"It looks manageable for now," said Mary de Bourbon, spokesman for the Queens district attorney's office. "But by the end of the week arrests usually go up."

The lawyers have rejected an offer of 2 percent raises in each of two years. Their union has sought raises of 4.5 percent, matching recent management raises. The lawyers have averaged about \$45,000 a year.

On Tuesday, Giuliani, a Republican, demanded that Legal Aid roll back the 4 percent raise it granted its managers and supervisors, agree to a no-strike clause, and give up its exclusive deal to represent indigent clients.

And he said any Legal Aid lawyer not back on the job Wednesday morning would be left out of any future deal.

Legal Aid's \$140 million annual budget is covered mostly by the city, which provides \$79 million for criminal court cases alone. The state and federal governments and private philanthropies cover most of the remaining costs.

Manhattan Criminal Court Judge William Mogulescu, who handles arraignments and other judicial odd jobs, said he had to adjourn only one case because of the strike.

City jails, which last month reached 100.6 percent of capacity, had been a source of concern. But Tom Kelly, spokesman for the Corrections Department, said the system probably would not feel any effect before the end of the week.

Striking lawyer Karen Smolar, 28, said she doubted the courts would be seriously hindered by the strike. "We don't pretend there won't be lawyers to do what we do," she said.

POW's children want to move on

ARLINGTON, Va. (AP) — Declared dead after 29 years, Col. Charles Shelton, the last American listed as a prisoner of war, was eulogized Tuesday as "one of the most excellent military officers our nation ever produced."

Although his five children asked that the Air Force change his status to killed in action, the children said after attending a graveside memorial service they still don't believe he is dead. But they said it was time to move on.

"He's been gone all these years. We want something," Lea Ann Shelton, the oldest of the siblings at age 42, explained at a news conference later.

"This is our way of creating some closure and getting on with our lives," said John Shelton, 38.

"We are honored today to memorialize one of the most excellent military officers our nation ever produced," Rev. Charles Shelton Jr. said during the ceremony, held on the fourth anniversary of his mother's death.

"History will prove his legend to be more fact than fiction."

Shelton said his father, who was shot down over Laos on April 29, 1965 while flying a secret reconnaissance mission on his 33rd birthday, was a proud family man who enjoyed his friends, cherished his children and "fought his foes ferociously."

"He served his country well, very well indeed," Shelton said, alluding to his father's ultimate sacrifice.

Wall Street firm to cut back employees

NEW YORK (AP) — Goldman, Sachs & Co., the nation's biggest privately held investment bank, is considering cutting up to 10 percent of its work force over the next several weeks, a source close to the firm said Tuesday.

The cuts, ranging from 400 to 900 employees, are expected to hit traders and support staff in the firm's fixed-income department the hardest. Like other Wall Street firms, Goldman has suffered from sharply lower trading and underwriting profits as a result of this year's bond market plunge.

Last year, Goldman reportedly earned \$2.3 billion, up 75 percent from 1992, making it the most

profitable firm on Wall Street. But profits this year have plummeted more than 70 percent in the fiscal year's first nine months largely as a result of trading losses, according to published reports.

Other major Wall Street firms have slashed thousands of employees this year to cut costs.

Goldman is conducting annual reviews of employees' performances that will be used to decide which jobs to cut, according to the Goldman source, who spoke on condition of anonymity. Industry observers said that Goldman's fixed-income operations would bear the brunt of the job eliminations.

A Goldman spokesman declined to comment.

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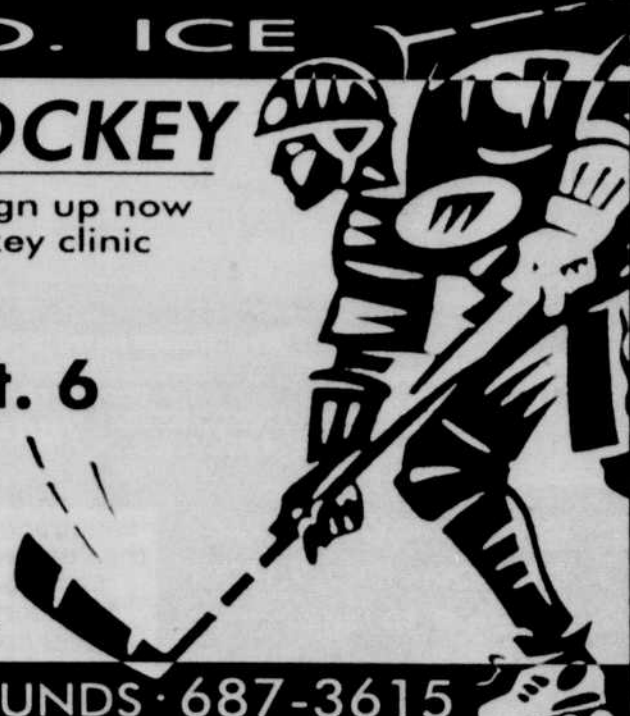
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