

The firemen came before a meeting of the Fire Committee under the chairmanship of Alderman Milton Farris. The Committee agreed to more than was recommended by the arbitrator. They agreed to grant a 2-step 8.8% wage increase effective January 1 (the first legal date; as Dr. Ed Harrison, as arbitrator, had double-checked the legality and had gotten a written opinion from the City Attorney and other legal counsel). In addition, the City agreed to begin employing, in October, 72 additional men so that they would be trained and, effective January 1, they would cut the work-week from 60 to 56 hours. It would require 72 additional men to fully man the stations and reduce the hourly work-week to this extent.

From the standpoint of the overall cost to the City, the new men reflected an equivalent of 7.2% increase in wages. This, added to the 8.8% offered, meant a 16% increase to the City.

The firemen left the meeting without comment and walked off the job the next day. The City had anticipated this, had drawn the necessary injunctions, and had secured a legal injunction that evening preventing the firemen from leaving their jobs. This injunction was publicized and made effective, but the men refused to return to work.

A meeting was held with the Mayor, City Attorney, and the chief of the Firefighters. Chief Hildebrand was authorized and did issue direct orders to each of the men to return to work under the authority of the injunction, and further gave direct orders that if they did not they would be either fired or suspended, depending upon their status under Civil Service rights.

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After this action was taken, the Mayor received a personal letter from Archbishop Hallinan, apparently instigated at the request of the Firefighters. He suggested that the Mayor appoint Judge Sam McKenzie to review the legal opinions involved in the granting of wage increases during the year 1966. The Mayor declined to accept this suggestion, because they had already taken the steps of supporting Chief Hildebrand in the notification of each member of the Fire Department ordering them back to work with the alternative of suspension. Secondly, if the opinion of the City Attorney and other counsel had been overturned by Judge McKenzie, they were not able to financially meet the demands of the union. They felt the only course open to them was the one taken of firing those who refused to work and replacing them with recruits.

I thought you would want to have these facts as presented by the City.

R.H.