

Legal Services Strike Now in Its 6th Week; Big Issues Unresolved

By **DAMON STETSON**

The impasse in a strike by lawyers, paralegal employees and clerical workers against Community Action for Legal Services Inc. entered its sixth week in New York City yesterday, with issues relating to salaries and the control of agency operations still unresolved.

The civil legal services to the poor that Community Action — a nonprofit organization supported by Federal grants — normally provides have been cut back sharply, with no new cases being taken. Management lawyers are handling the continuing cases to the extent they are able, according to Eileen Hoats, speaking for the organization.

This means, she said, that 200 needy clients a day do not have a place to turn for legal help on such matters as landlord-tenant problems, evictions, lack of heat, family problems and eligibility for welfare, Social Security and unemployment benefits.

James Braude, president of the National Organization of Legal Services, said yesterday that he regarded the next few days as critical if the walkout was to be settled soon. He noted that the strikers would be eligible for unemployment benefits as of Jan. 2. The 300 strikers at 23 offices throughout the city are represented by the Legal Services Staff Association, which in turn is a unit of the National Organization of Legal Services. Paul Acinapura is the local president.

The union has been seeking, among other things, substantial pay increases, a pension plan, improved working conditions, strict adherence to affirmative action goals and greater accessibility of programs to the handicapped and elderly. A management spokesman said the union had turned down an offer of a 17 percent pay increase before the strike began.

Robert L. Batterman, a lawyer for the agency, said one of the most critical issues was what he called a union attempt to turn the legal services "into a controlled operation with a lack of recognition that effective delivery of legal services requires professional and skilled management." Each side has filed charges of unfair labor practices with the National Labor Relations Board.

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