

DAILY NEWS

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Time for day of reckoning?

IT is four months into the strike and you're watching someone's slow motion free-fall into poverty, only that someone is you.

You tell yourself this is a bad dream. But the stack of unpaid bills on the kitchen table, the looks on your kids' faces and those vile collectors who keep calling in the middle of Mets games say differently.

It doesn't matter whether you're a truck driver in Long Island or a lawyer on the lower East Side, the sense that someone is stealing your job makes you want to lash out just as much.

Still you walk the picket line, wait and hope, because you don't know what else to do when its 1991 and you live in the United States, the anti-labor capital of the industrialized world.

Once in a while you "throw down," which is what 30 striking lawyers and paralegals did Wednesday after learning their bosses were planning to hire temporary replacement workers.

They occupied their former offices on Avenue A and have refused to leave until the managers of the Legal Services Corp. negotiate a new contract or call the cops.

Of all the people in the legal profession in this town, the 250 lawyers and support staff at Legal Services, who provide free representation to the city's poor in non-criminal cases, are the worst paid.

"You've got some people (support staff) who've been working here for 15 years and barely make \$20,000," said Fernando Lebron, a paralegal.

Rubin England's been a Legal Services attorney for 20 years. He makes \$51,000 a year. A kid just out of law school can go to a big private firm and start at \$70,000 before he's even passed his bar exam. That's why in Queens the senior attorney for Legal Services has less than two years on the job. Few lawyers stay for long.

And four months into the strike, the city's landlords are having a field day against low-income tenants in Hous-

ing Court.

"We're at Legal Services because we're dedicated," England said. "The management here has the money to pay us decent salaries but they won't." Unlike other publicly funded agencies, Legal Services got big in-



creases from both Washington and the city this year. But Christopher Lunding, chairman of the corporation and partner in one of those big Wall Street firms, chooses not to use the money on his workers.

Lunding, who lives in an exclusive private community in Greenwich, Conn., did not return calls about the strike.

Lunding should spend a week in the hellhole called Bronx Housing Court. After seeing what his workers and their clients deal with every day, he should then resign for impersonating a do-gooder.

But lawyers aren't the only ones confronting Neanderthal management.

At White Rose Food in Farmingdale, L.I., 500 truck drivers and warehouse workers have been on strike for six months against owner Arthur M. Goldberg. White Rose delivers food and other supplies to more than 2,000 stores in the New York area.

It is a profitable company, but not profitable enough for Goldberg, who threatened to permanently replace the strikers, then moved all operations to New Jersey and virtually closed the Long Island plant last week.

Even Forbes magazine can't stand this guy. The financial magazine once called him a "greenmailer" and "a

small-time corporate raider who acts as a kind of pilot fish for the sharks of Wall Street...."

Goldberg's spokesman, Rick Delello, insisted that White Rose is merely trying to bring labor costs under control and is not union-busting.

He should tell that to Bernie Vincent. The only job Vincent has ever had is as a White Rose driver, for 24 years.

After six months on the picket line, Vincent is four months behind on the \$1,200 mortgage for his house in Ridge, L.I. "I owe another \$1,200 just for gas and electric, and forget about the rest of the bills. I don't know where to turn."

His wife just found a job making \$138 a week. That pays for food for them and their two children. "We all want to go back to work but the company won't even talk to us," he said. "They just want to replace drivers making \$15 an hour with guys making \$8."

This week, the House of Representatives passed a bill prohibiting employers from firing strikers and hiring permanent replacements. This is what has been going on for 10 years, since President Reagan gave them the green light by firing 11,400 air traffic controllers in 1981.

Now the bill goes to the Senate. Even if it passes, George Bush has promised to veto it. The AFL-CIO says the striker-replacement bill is organized labor's top priority and the equivalent of the civil rights bill of labor.

The guys who say this — Lane Kirkland, Tom Donahue and the rest of the AFL-CIO leadership — have been feasting for years at the same restaurants as the Christopher Lundings and Arthur Goldbergs. You now need numbers on their backs to tell them apart.

Perhaps a one-day general strike of this country's unions would bring enough pressure on Congress to pass the bill. That is something that would frighten Kirkland as much as it would Bush.