

2 vehicles ambushed in UCP strike violence

By JULIE MACK

The wide chasm between United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of New York State and striking workers was shown again yesterday as UCP officials complained about union violence and issued an ultimatum — both of which a union official said do not exist.

Incidents of vandalism broke out in two Staten Island locations, apparently in connection with the two-month-old strike against UCP, resulting in two vehicles with slashed tires and broken windows.

When told of the incidents, a union representative at first said he did not believe the attacks had occurred. Upon hearing the incidents were verified by police, he said he could "almost guarantee it wasn't our men" who were involved.

"I think someone is putting pressure on the union by setting something up," said Michael Lucivero, field representative for the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1181-1061, which represents 100 striking bus drivers and monitors.

The incidents came on the day (See UCP, Page A 10)



Strike violence was blamed for more than \$1,000 in damage to this ambulance when it was ambushed by 10 men at the Staten Island Developmental Center.

S.I. Advance Photo by Tony Carannante

UCP

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the workers faced a deadline to either return to work or lose their jobs, according to Robert Schonhorn, UCP executive director.

Schonhorn said he sent letters to each striker and talked to union officials last week to explain the ultimatum. But Lucivero said yesterday he had not heard of any deadline, and as far as he knew, "negotiations are still open and there have been no new developments."

None of the employees — about 60 drivers and 40 bus monitors — were on the job yesterday, although Cora Hoffman, UCP assistant executive director, said they could still save their jobs if they return this week.

Mrs. Hoffman said that the deadline apparently sparked yesterday's vandalism, which is being investigated by the Police Department's Crimes Against Property Squad.

Both incidents occurred about 10:30 a.m., one at the UCP-operated Community Training Center in Mariners Harbor and the other on the grounds of the Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook, where UCP operates the Karl Warner Center for about 280 mentally retarded and handicapped clients.

The Mariners Harbor incident involved a non-union truck that had "nothing to do with this strike," said Mrs. Hoffman. "We were using that truck before the strike to carry supplies from a warehouse in New Jersey."

The truck, which contained supplies for the Warner Center, was unloading at the Community Training Center to avoid crossing picket lines, said Keith Penman, director of Warner Center.

Penman said that as the driver of the truck backed it into

the rear entrance of the building, "five or six" men got out of their cars and ordered him to get out. The men then slashed the tires and broke the windows, he said, while the driver fled to the front of the building.

Penman said he had little doubt that the attack was connected to the strike. "Who else would do that?" he asked.

The other incident involved an ambulance owned by Holmes Ambulance Service Corp., which apparently lost its way on the grounds of Staten Island Developmental Center. It had been called by the developmental center to take a patient from Building 10 to Bayley Seton Hospital.

But, unfamiliar with the grounds, the two technicians ended up at Building 15, which is leased by UCP as part of Warner Center. The men "had no idea" about the strike, said John Cassidy, Holmes operations manager, so they were startled when the vehicle was approached by about 10 men, who slashed the tires, broke the windshield and rear window and snapped off its antenna.

Cassidy estimated the damage at more than \$1,000. He said the men fled in a green Buick.

Both Cassidy and Penman said the attacks were instigated by picketers. Cassidy said his technicians saw the men lay down their signs before attacking the ambulance.

But Lucivero said he "couldn't believe" that the strikers were responsible. "We are conducting an orderly strike," he said. "It was not our people; I can verify that. They have specific orders about what they are and are not supposed to do.

"This has been a very quiet strike."

UCP officials, however, have complained about harassment

and criminal mischief since the strike began Sept. 26.

Cassidy said that yesterday's incident was not his first with the strikers. "In the last month, I've must have put 20 tires on my vehicles because of this strike. They've been puncturing and slashing the tires two, three at a time," he said.

Mrs. Hoffman said UCP has already made other arrangements for transporting the agency's 700 mentally retarded clients to day programs and recreational events. If the strikers do not return to work by the end of the week, she said, the transportation sector of UCP will be dissolved.

Transportation for the Warner Center and Nina Eaton Center, on the grounds of South Beach Psychiatric Center, will be sub-contracted, she said.

For the 150 people living in UCP-supervised homes and apartments, transportation to day programs can be provided by the city and program centers, as is already done for other agencies.

Any other transportation can be provided by other staff using UCP-owned vehicles, she said.

UCP's "final offer," she said, was for a 7 percent, one-year contract, which would expire in June, with negotiations for a longer contract when the interim agreement runs out.

UCP will also work to close the gap between the wages of newer and senior employees, as demanded by the union, said Mrs. Hoffman.

Currently, the drivers and monitors are earning between \$9,500 to \$12,000 annually. The union has asked for a minimum wage of \$14,000.

Lucivero said that the UCP "really didn't offer 7 percent," although he would not discuss specifics.