Advent's motivation for move challenged

(Continued from page 5) neighborhood bordering Advent's video-screen factory, has been fighting Advent for over a year because of polystyrene fumes emitted from the company's Emery Street plant. The neighborhood groups claim that styrene causes "nausea, headaches, and dizziness" and eventually cancer, while Sprague claims it is "just an odor." But the cost of cleaning up this odor is small compared to that of building a new plant and Sprague has also told the Chronicle that he no longer plans to move even without eliminating the source of community hostility.

So why is Advent really leaving? Sprague told me that moving his company to New Hampshire will save Advent $1.5 million: $600,000 in lower taxes and insurance payments, $300,000 to $600,000 from the "lower wage scale" in New Hampshire, and $200,000 to $400,000 from the elimination of seniority. These figures seem open to question, too, since they do not take into account the cost of training new, inexperienced workers or the cost of relocation. Sprague has also told reporters he is moving because he needs a one-story, 160,000 square foot plant — but he has also admitted that "we didn't look very hard in Cambridge.

"If "opposition to the collective activities of its workers is the only reason for removal of its plants and Advent's refusal to offer acts to present employees in Port

smooth," as Fleisher, Olney, and Kowal allege, the company could be found guilty of violating section 8(a)(a) of the National Labor Relations Act, which prohibits "discrimination in regard to hire or tenure of employment or any term or condition of employment to en-
courage or discourage membership in any labor organization." But it won't be an easy case to prove. The NLRB has historically been loath to use the investigative subpoena to force employers to divulge company records such as its minutes of meetings, and Kowal considers such records essential to his case.

Meanwhile, the Advent workers will continue to press Sprague to act on the "pay" portion of the "Stays or Pay Demand. On January 26, the personnel department issued a four-page memo informing employees that the company would pay for only one additional month of health insurance, that vacation benefits would be pro-rated, and that workers i.a. "all of our depart-
ments except speakers" were eligible to collect benefits from the Federal Trade Readjustment Act (TRA), which provides that workers laid off due to foreign competition can collect benefits equal to 70 per cent of their average weekly pay. (Advent is trying to qualify their speaker department for TRA as well, but if the Federal authorization does not come through, General

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Manager James Cobb told me that audio employees would receive "nothing" from the company. Workers are demanding six months of 100 per cent severance pay, a six-month exten-
sion of the medical plan, and the choice to be retired at current wage levels in New Hampshire. But it's not clear what recourse the Advent workers have against a company which refuses to negotiate, and which ended its memo on separation benefits with this statement: "It is important that we re-
emphasize that both the TRA and unemployment benefits de-
pend on the reason for your separation from the company. Only people who are laid off due to lack of work (emphasis in original) will be eligible to col-

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