Dining workers differ on outcome of strike vote

By Barry S. Surman

Interviews with employees of MIT Dining Service indicate no certain whether to accept or reject the Institute's final contract offer when it comes to a vote next week.

The membership of Local 26 of the Hotel, Restaurant, Institutional Employers, and Bartenders Union, AFL-CIO, will vote on MIT's offer of a two-year contract, according to Nick Zaccardi, local steward at Walker Memorial. Local 26 President and Business Manager Dominic Bazzotto confirmed that the vote will be held Wednesday night at MacGraw House, adding, "If I had to take a guess, I'd guess it would be accepted."

Subhash Agrawal, an employee at Walker Memorial, disagreed with Bazzotto. "I don't think many people are going to go for it [the contract]," he said. "Ninety percent will vote no."

We're going to go and strike if an percent [annual pay increase] is nothing; they [MIT] did nothing on related duties," he added.

The Institute has claimed that the related duties clause in job descriptions of Dining Service employees is necessary to maintain flexibility for supervisors. Union members and representatives complain that the elastic clause is abused by supervisors. MIT negotiators refused to remove the clause from job descriptions as part of their proposed settlements.

"The biggest complaint we have is in job descriptions, and MIT is going to move on it," Zaccardi said. "I don't like related duties."

An employee at Walker Memorial complained about mis-use of related duties over the summer. "We did a lot of dirty work - sweeping, cleaning. My job is to serve [meals]."

"I'm supposed to be a pot washer," said Tony Caulillo, "but they make me do everything else here ... they make me clean out grease, clean out pipes." He also found fault with the Institute's monetary offer, "I think we should make a lot more money ... I'll vote no."

Many workers expressed concern about the contract clause but plan to vote for it anyway. One cook's helper said he was "satisfied. It's a good contract," despite the related duties clause. If a strike is called, he added, "I'd cross the picket line ... I couldn't afford to go on strike."

Other workers at Walker Memorial and Lobdell were pleased with the MIT proposal. "I will accept the contract," said Bill Coppi, cook's helper at Walker.

Dan Hanrahan, an employee at Walker, rejected the contract on all counts. "I don't like the contract," he said. "I think we're entitled to a little more money ... a 51 cent raise ... is ridiculous." He saw the contract as benefiting older employees primarily. "The contract is made up for the guys who've been here ten, fifteen years ... there's nothing for the younger guys." He continued, "What have I got to lose in a strike ... there's nothing in that contract that would make me want to stick around, do twenty years here."

Hanrahan was less than optimistic about the membership accepting his view. "They'll end up taking the contract," he said.

Bazzotto explained that there will be no recommendation from the stewards union, despite his indications to the contrary earlier this week, because "the stewards voted three to three on the contract."

Following that vote, he reconvened the union negotiating committee, which decided "to take it to the membership with no recommendation." By a vote of three to three, according to Bazzotto.

An employee at Walker Memorial complained about misuse of related duties over the summer. "We did a lot of dirty work - sweeping, cleaning. My job is to serve [meals]."

"I'm supposed to be a pot washer," said Tony Caulillo, "but they make me do everything else here ... they make me clean out grease, clean out pipes." He also found fault with the Institute's monetary offer, "I think we should make a lot more money ... I'll vote no."

Many workers expressed concern about the contract clause but plan to vote for it anyway. One cook's helper said he was "satisfied. It's a good contract," despite the related duties clause. If a strike is called, he added, "I'd cross the picket line ... I couldn't afford to go on strike."

Other workers at Walker Memorial and Lobdell were pleased with the MIT proposal. "I will accept the contract," said Bill Coppi, cook's helper at Walker.

Dan Hanrahan, an employee at Walker, rejected the contract on all counts. "I don't like the contract," he said. "I think we're entitled to a little more money ... a 51 cent raise ... is ridiculous." He saw the contract as benefiting older employees primarily. "The contract is made up for the guys who've been here ten, fifteen years ... there's nothing for the younger guys." He continued, "What have I got to lose in a strike ... there's nothing in that contract that would make me want to stick around, do twenty years here."

Hanrahan was less than optimistic about the membership accepting his view. "They'll end up taking the contract," he said.

Bazzotto explained that there will be no recommendation from the stewards union, despite his indications to the contrary earlier this week, because "the stewards voted three to three on the contract."

Following that vote, he reconvened the union negotiating committee, which decided "to take it to the membership with no recommendation." By a vote of three to three, according to Bazzotto.

An employee at Walker Memorial complained about misuse of related duties over the summer. "We did a lot of dirty work - sweeping, cleaning. My job is to serve [meals]."

"I'm supposed to be a pot washer," said Tony Caulillo, "but they make me do everything else here ... they make me clean out grease, clean out pipes." He also found fault with the Institute's monetary offer, "I think we should make a lot more money ... I'll vote no."

Many workers expressed concern about the contract clause but plan to vote for it anyway. One cook's helper said he was "satisfied. It's a good contract," despite the related duties clause. If a strike is called, he added, "I'd cross the picket line ... I couldn't afford to go on strike."

Other workers at Walker Memorial and Lobdell were pleased with the MIT proposal. "I will accept the contract," said Bill Coppi, cook's helper at Walker.

Dan Hanrahan, an employee at Walker, rejected the contract on all counts. "I don't like the contract," he said. "I think we're entitled to a little more money ... a 51 cent raise ... is ridiculous." He saw the contract as benefiting older employees primarily. "The contract is made up for the guys who've been here ten, fifteen years ... there's nothing for the younger guys." He continued, "What have I got to lose in a strike ... there's nothing in that contract that would make me want to stick around, do twenty years here."

Hanrahan was less than optimistic about the membership accepting his view. "They'll end up taking the contract," he said.

Bazzotto explained that there will be no recommendation from the stewards union, despite his indications to the contrary earlier this week, because "the stewards voted three to three on the contract."

Following that vote, he reconvened the union negotiating committee, which decided "to take it to the membership with no recommendation." By a vote of three to three, according to Bazzotto.