

Houston bus drivers walk off job

HOUSTON (AP) — City bus drivers walked off their jobs Tuesday night in a dispute over pay.

A spokesman for the bus company said pickets went up at 8 p.m. at the company's operational headquarters.

Earlier, both Stanley Gates, president of HouTran, the bus company, and M. D. Hendrix, president of Transport Workers Union Local 260, said the strike was inevitable, forcing 70,000 daily riders to seek other transportation.

A final try at talks broke down Monday after both sides were called together by federal mediator E. D. Kincaid.

The bus company is owned by the City of Houston but technically the drivers are employees of HouTran, which has a \$250,000 yearly contract to operate the service.

While the city meets payroll costs, Gates and HouTran are doing the negotiating. Mayor Fred Hofheinz said Monday he told Gates to "jealously guard the tax-

payers' dollar" by refusing to increase a contract offer.

Bus drivers currently start at \$3.70 an hour, jumping to \$4.45 an hour after two years.

The union has asked for a \$1.35 an hour increase over two years. The city offered an 80 cents an hour hike over the same period.

Hofheinz said the city estimates it will already lose \$1 million operating the bus company this year and according to the union demands would boost the deficit by \$9 million

more. The mayor also said granting bus driver demands would discourage city employees who are prohibited by law from striking.

Hendrix said Houston's bus driver salaries rank 41st in the nation.

Union members voted 659-5 to authorize a strike after the contract ran out Saturday but Hendrix said they delayed calling the work stoppage to give riders time to plan alternative transportation.

Solar act signed into law

The Solar Energy Research Development and Demonstration Act of 1974 was signed into law by President Ford Saturday.

Addressing the energy crisis, the new law calls for a comprehensive program to bring solar energy technologies to commercial development.

"The objective of this latest bill is to bring a number of solar energy technologies into commercial use as soon as possible," said Congressman Olin E. Teague, chairman of the Committee on Science and Astronautics.

"It assures government support of the necessary research and development and provides for cooperative ventures with private industry when desirable," he said.

The solar research development and demonstration program will be administered by the Energy Research and Development Administration. The Act also provides for a program of education in science and engineering, the establishment of a Solar Energy Research Institute and a solar energy information data bank.

Two million dollars is authorized for a "comprehensive definition," which will identify the most promising technologies and develop the associated cost and time requirements. "This will enable us to pursue to completion the practical and sensible approaches instead of having a vague and general open-ended program," Teague said.

The program definition is scheduled for completion by June 30. Although until the program is completed it is not possible to project total program costs, the Act says the urgency of the nation's critical energy shortages may require a federal investment of \$1 billion or more over the next few years.

LeMaistre will not give word

AUSTIN (AP) — A law professor says University of Texas Chancellor Charles LeMaistre has refused to promise faculty members at UT-Austin that the school's next president will be someone who has been approved by a faculty-student committee.

LeMaistre fired UT-Austin President Stephen Spurr in late September, and the chancellor will be in charge of a presidential search committee appointed by regents Chairman A. G. McNeese.

Law Professor Mark Yudof reported to the Faculty Senate on Monday that LeMaistre would not guarantee that a faculty-student advisory committee would be asked to endorse the next president.

LeMaistre has the power to nominate a president for regent approval without consulting anyone.

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