

# 175 Housing Job Workers Go On Strike

## List Unfavorable Working Conditions, Out-of-State Employment Reason

3/1/40

Approximately 175 workers on the Gonzales Gardens half-million dollar low-cost housing project on Forest drive went on strike yesterday morning and attributed their action to "use out-of-state labor and unfavorable working conditions on the project."

First to walk out were nearly all the carpenters on the project and they were followed by steel workers, who struck 100 per cent.; laborers and some brick masons. It was estimated that 80 per cent. of the working force struck.

L. B. Chapman, president of the local building trades council and business agent for the council, said the strike was brought on in the main by the employment of out-of-state workers and by "highly unfavorable working conditions."

A carpenters' committee headed by Mr. Chapman and including W. L. Brazell, president of the carpenters' local, T. H. Miller, acting shop steward on the job, and D. E. Darby, met yesterday afternoon with others concerned with the strike at a special called gathering to discuss the matter.

Members of the committee announced last night that they bore no ill feeling toward the local or national housing authority and that wages had nothing to do with the strike. "The report that dissatisfaction on our part with the wage scale, or with concrete forms being built away from the project to evade the wage scale is all wrong," a spokesman declared.

Chapman said the contractor, Loftis of Charlotte, N. C., had agreed to the request of the building trades council that South Carolina labor and materials be used on the project, but that "25 per cent. or more of the labor and much of the materials have come from out of the state." Members of the carpenters' committee expressed that working conditions played a big part in the striking of workers. They claimed the fence around the project was for the purpose of "hiding the work and the way the workers have been treated, to the general public."

Chapman said he had communicated with the contractor constantly and requested better working conditions. "I asked him to draw up an agreement, or let me draw up one, to work all union men on the job," he said, "but he declined to do so." Mr. Chapman added, however, that out-of-state workers had given "fine cooperation" to the local council and that the strike list included many of these men. He said the steel workers and others were "in sympathy" with the striking action of the carpenters and that "everyone knew the men weren't being treated right."

Arthur Wellwood, executive director of the Columbia Housing authority, said last night that he had no comment on the strike, but he asked Washington officials of the Federal States Housing authority to send a representative of the labor division to mediate the strike.

E. Skidmore, representing the contractor, said last night that the views of the workers had never been presented to him or to Mr. Loftis. Other than that, he had no comment to make.

There will be a conference at 11 o'clock tomorrow morning among Mr. Wellwood, Mr. Loftis, Mr. Chapman and the housing authority official in Washington.