

The Sick Out and The Strike Vote

Raleigh Fire Department History - Research Notes by Mike Legeros

Version 1.2 – Updated January 1, 2021

[Change Log goes here](#)



Contents

Turbulent Times.....	2
Part I – Background	2
Part II – The Sick Out	12
Part III – The Strike Vote.....	26
Then What Happened?.....	32
Related Reading	33

Turbulent Times

The United States experienced a recession beginning in the early Seventies. Local governments were hit hard by the recession—which lasted from November 1973 to March 1975—and several large cities faced bankruptcy. Strikes were used as a bargaining tool by firefighters and other municipal employees as they fought for higher wages, better contracts, and other benefits.

From 1970 to 1975, there were 1,730 strikes by municipal employees around the country. They included fire, police, sanitation, and school workers. Notable strikes by firefighters during that period included:

- Kansas City, October 1975
- New York, November 1973
- San Francisco, August 1975
- Tucson, September 1975

Sources: News & Observer, 11/7/73, 8/21/75, 9/29/75, 10/4/75.

Part I – Background

January 1976

Raleigh Police Begin Slowdown in Protest

By ROBERT LYNCH

There were only 13 arrests in the city during the 24-hour period ending at 11 p.m. Tuesday as protesting members of the Raleigh Police Officers Association made good their promise of a work slowdown.

Police records show that normally 60 to 70 arrests are made per day by the Raleigh Police Department. Most involve traffic citations, which technically are termed arrests.

But the slowdown, which began at 11 p.m. Monday, could be the lull before the storm. The RPOA promised late Monday that there would be a flurry of citations issued beginning on Friday if the City Council fails to meet RPOA demands, including a 10 per cent pay raise.

The city manager has offered a 3.5 per cent increase.

At a meeting of the council Tuesday night, the police protest did not come up. The council has a work session scheduled for Thursday.

Friday's potential protest was foreshadowed by the unusually large number of citation books requested by patrolmen on Tuesday. Records show a total of 46 books were issued by 8:30 p.m.

By contrast, records show that on Monday only one citation book was issued and the number of books issued in the previous six days totaled 16.

RPOA members interviewed said officers were stocking up on citation books so they would have plenty to issue beginning Friday. There are 25 citation books in each book.

Patrolman Tommy Vaughan, a member of the RPOA Council, said in an interview that John Knox, another RPOA councilman, counted the number of citations issued on the 11 p.m. Monday to 7 a.m. Tuesday shift and came up with only three.

Vaughan said he went to work at 3 p.m. Tuesday and counted the number of citations issued during the 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. shift. "There were only six arrests during the 7 to 3 shift and one of those was a larceny warrant."

Vaughan said he stopped four or five motorists Tuesday between 3 a.m. and 4 p.m. "I didn't issue a single citation," Vaughan said, adding that he stopped motorists and warned them about speeding and not having tailgates.

"Friday I intend to write every violation I see," Vaughan said.

Four arrests were made during the 3 to 11 p.m. shift Tuesday, three involving relatively serious violations: larceny, a drug violation and drunken driving.

Police records show that during the month of December, for example, a total of 2,081 traffic citations were issued, or an average of slightly more than 67 per day.

However, some months the number of traffic citations exceeds 3,000.

See WORK, Page 6

Index

Arts.....	21	Morrison.....	11
Comics.....	22	Porter.....	19
Deaths.....	22	Sports.....	13
Editorial.....	4	TV-Movies.....	10
Finance.....	17	Want Ads.....	21
Landers.....	12	Women.....	12

1976-01-20 – High Point Enterprise – ‘Unhappy Policemen Slow Down’

1976-01-21 – Daily Tar Heel – ‘Raleigh police slow down’

1976-01-21 – News & Observer – ‘Raleigh Police Begin Slowdown in Protest’

On Monday, January 19, at 11:00 p.m., members of the Raleigh Police Officers Association (RPOA) started a job action to protest the city's failure to 'meet pay hike demands.' Members of the Raleigh RPOA 'decided to stop giving tickets for minor violations, such as traffic offenses.' They also promised an 'arrest slowdown until Friday'. And if City Council hasn't responded by that time, would follow the slow-down with 'an arrest speedup.'

In two meetings on Monday night, about 130 RPOA members—which the association claimed represented two-thirds of the police force—voted to 'demand a 10 percent raise and the ouster of Chief of Police Robert Godwin.'

On Monday, the City Manager recommended a 3.5 percent raise, but the police had been seeking a ten percent raise. That day he also announced 'several changes in department procedures', which followed the release of a consultant's study, which was commissioned by City Council after 'a group of dissident officers demanded the council fire' the police chief. The consultants concluded that 'the department was torn with dissension and intra-departmental politics resulting in stagnation of city law enforcement.'

RPOA spokesman John Knox said the organization demanded a ten percent raise, and that the city should use the proposed 3.5 percent raise to 'fix dilapidated police cars.'

On Wednesday, January 21, off-duty officers and their wives began picketing City Hall.

1976-01-21 – High Point Enterprise – ‘Raleigh Police Demonstrate As Arrest Slowdown Continues’

1976-01-22 – News & Observer – ‘Off-Duty Policemen Picket, Continue Citation Slowdown’

1976-01-22 – News & Observer – Police Pay Par For N.C.



Staff photo by Rob Flynn

Off-duty Raleigh policemen and wives picket in front of the Municipal Building

‘Some 20 policemen and a few officers’ wives picketed city hall’ on Wednesday, January 21. And ‘officials said arrests were off by 30 percent’ as the RPOA had ‘called for a work slowdown.’

Police Chief Robert Godwin ‘called a press conference at which he praised the caliber of his men, pledged an edge to the bickering among the department’s top brass’ and asked city council to consider giving a higher pay hike than the promised 3.5 percent.


At another press conference, the City Manager ‘backed down from a proposal’ to tie the 3.5 percent raise to ‘a reduction in police automobile accidents’. Some officers ‘had resented the tie-in’.

RPOA leaders have ‘vowed to continue their slow down and perhaps use other tactics short of a strike, such as a ‘speed-up of arrests for minor offenses’ and a ‘large scale sick out’.


1976-01-23 – News & Observer – Officers Here Switch Tactics; Ticketing Speedup Off

1976-01-23 – News & Observer – Mayor Urges Police Crisis Talks

1976-01-24 – News & Observer – Police Stalemate May Ease



John Knox



Tammy Vaughn

Officers Here Change Plans, Abandon Ticketing Speedup

On Thursday, officers here changed their plans to speed up ticketing, which includes the replacement of Police Chief Robert E. Goodwin.

Last fall the IUPA had asked for a 10% raise and other IUPA members have said recently IUPA members definitely would not strike "and leave the city government."

Knox said IUPA members decided on Wednesday to drop their plans for the speed up ticketing.

"None of us wanted to go into the streets from the first," Knox told a reporter. "The idea's kind of to be fair to the public for the actions of the city manager."

Knox admitted that there was fear that a speedup would cost the IUPA public support in the fight. "The higher salaries and a better police department."

Monday said that although the police had not supported the action workers during a strike several years ago, the action workers would support the police.

"They didn't support us earlier because they were not organized," Monday said.

Knox said the IUPA is not talking issue with the changes recommended by Zachary. Knox said the recommendations are good as far as they go but he added that police need a bigger raise and a new chief.

"The police know that you can't cut out of a cancer and get rid of the cancer. You have to cut out all of the cancer," Knox said.

From 11 p.m. Monday until 11 p.m. Tuesday, only eight traffic citations were issued to the public. This compared to 100 citations issued during the same period the previous week.

A total of 14 traffic citations were issued from 11 p.m. Tuesday to 11 p.m. Wednesday, as compared to 74 during the same period last week.

From 11 p.m. Wednesday to 11 p.m. Thursday, only five traffic citations were issued.

During the Monday IUPA meeting, the group voted to go into the "blue flu" which means large numbers of police calling in sick. If the administration orders any reprisals because of the protest.

Major Edgar C. Duke, who supervises the patrol and investigation divisions, said Thursday he doubted if officers would call in sick in large numbers.

"We have faith in our officers," Duke said. "I don't believe many of them will react to the 'blue flu'."

"But if it should happen," Duke said, "the public will be protected in one fashion or another."

Mayor Urges Talks in Police Crisis

But the officers Thursday appeared in no mood for discussions.

"We tried it (discussions with administration) for 10 months," said IUPA spokesman John Knox. "Why should we try it again now?"

The IUPA is seeking for a 10 per cent wage increase and the firing of Chief Goodwin. Zachary has offered a 2.5% increase.

Relations between the police and the administration appeared to worsen Thursday afternoon, when a rumor circulated through city hall that Coggins had said the dissenting police officers should quit if they didn't like their job.

Actually, Coggins said he did not believe the dissention with the department was as great as has been portrayed. He said he believed this to be true because most of the officers are in their 30s, 40s and 50s when they usually find other work, according to Coggins. But most of them have chosen to stay with the department.

The mayor called The News and Observer early Thursday evening in an effort to put an end to the rumor which had angered many of the officers.

Coggins said continued demand for Goodwin's ouster is non-negotiable.

Coggins, a developer, illustrated his point by saying, "I would not let my workers debate to me who my boss and supervisor would be."


The mayor said that as a result of conversations he has had he thought the idea of public opinion was having against the police association. But he only mildly criticized the picketing or arrest slowdowns that has been under way for several days.

"I think it hurts the image of the police department," Coggins said, "but they have the right to do it."

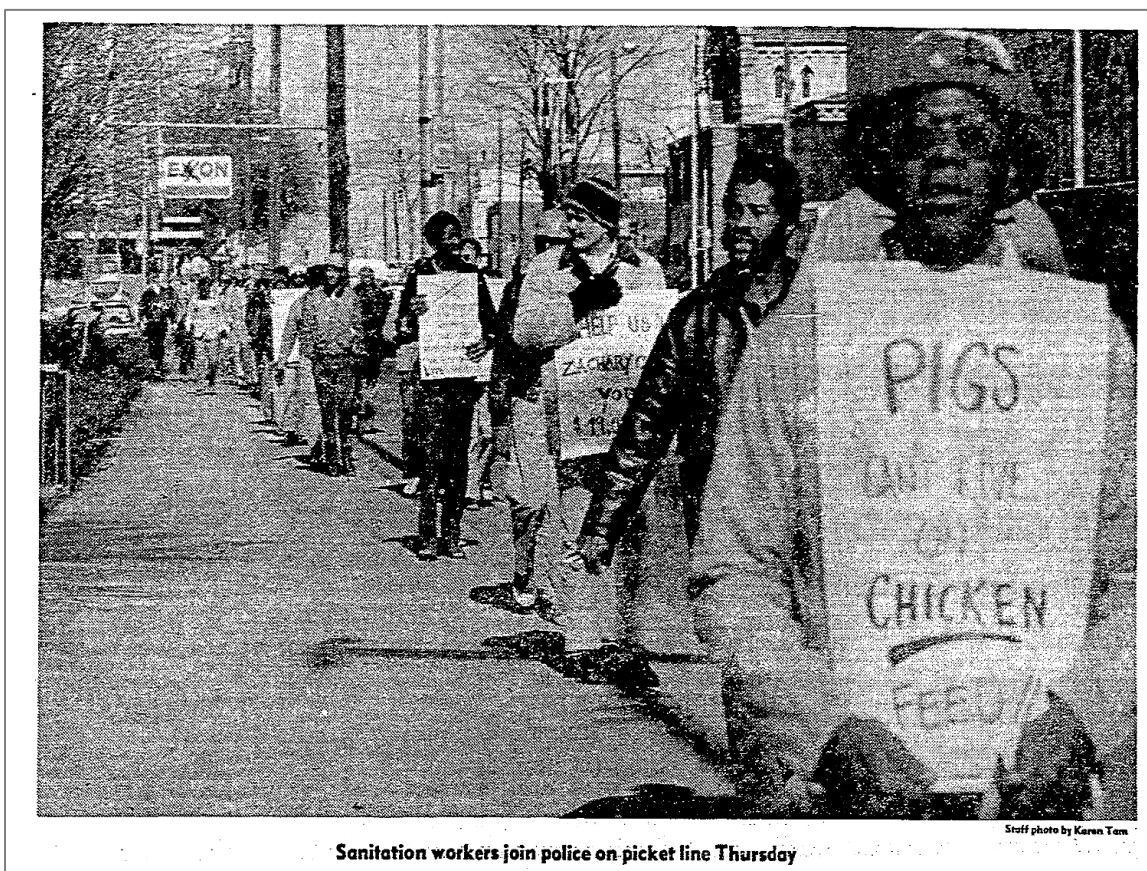
"At the moment, I don't think they are doing anything that would be considered not upholding the law," Coggins said.

Coggins also said it must be kept in mind that the public must pay for any salary increase and that many persons had not received wage increases in several years.

"We must not only consider the city employees but the citizens who are footing the bill," Coggins said.



Mayor Coggins



1976-01-25 – News & Observer – ‘Blue Flu’ Thins Two Police Shifts

1976-01-25 – News & Observer – Patrol Work Goes On – As Boring as Usual

1976-01-25 – High Point Enterprise – ‘Epidemic’ Hits Raleigh Policemen

On Saturday, January 24, about half of 27 city policemen who were scheduled to work the first shift ‘called in sick as a dispute between protesting officers and the city administration escalated.’ Said a city spokesman, police department supervisors ‘filled in for the missing men’ and though the situation was described as ‘above the normal sick calls’ the department had ‘all the beats covered.’

The Saturday morning shift was ‘normally a slower time with fewer officers on duty’ than typically scheduled. The day’s second shift, from 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., had a ‘much larger number’ of officers scheduled to work.

City council members disagreed on whether the protesting officers should be disciplined.

1976-01-26 – News & Observer – Zachary Has 3-Hour Talk With RPOA

1976-01-27 – News & Observer – Police Offered New Proposal by Zachary

1976-01-28 – News & Observer – Police Dislike City’s Latest Proposal

1976-01-30 – News & Observer – New Talks Set on Police Pact

1976-01-30 – News & Observer – Lack of Communication Cited as Patrol Problem

[Above headlines included as references for subsequent stories.]

February 1976

1976-01-31 – Raleigh Times – ‘Firemen back RPOA pay hike’

1976-02-01 – News & Observer – ‘Firemen Seek Higher Pay; Back Police’

Speaking at a press conference, Captain Hubert Y. Altman announced that the Raleigh Fire Firefighters Association (RFFA)—with a membership of 275 out of 310 firemen--supported the police officer’s association demand of a ten percent salary increase. He also implied that the firemen would ‘consider job actions’ similar to those taken the prior week by RPOA members.

For years, the RFFA had been unable to meet with city officials since the IAFF local was reorganized in 1969, because of the ‘city’s insistence [that] it could not meet with employee groups.’ However, as a result of the ‘police work slowdown, picketing, and a ‘sick in’,’ the city was now meeting with RPOA representatives.

Altman ‘expressed confidence’ that Fire Chief Rufus E. Keith would present the firemen’s case and set up talks with ‘high city officials.’ But Altman also noted, in his prepared statement, that ‘if the fire and city administrations are unwilling to work with us, we will then take more appropriate action.’ He added ‘I personally do not approve of letting the city be unprotected,’ but said that firemen in recent weeks had suggested ‘various forms of job action’ that could be taken.

Talks between the City Manager and three RPOA leaders ended Friday afternoon ‘without any indication whether they are closer to a settlement or whether police were considering renewed job actions like their sick calls last weekend.’ The City Manager had avoided using the word ‘negotiations’ or admitted that he was meeting with RPOA representatives because of the state’s ‘anti-union law’ that prohibits local governments from making any agreements or contracts with ‘public employee unions or associations.’



The RFFA had presented a list of the problems they were facing, including:

- The proposed abolition of the city's Civil Service Commission, which 'reviews employee appeals of firing or lack of promotions'.¹
- That their pay be adjusted to meet that of firemen in comparably sized cities nationwide. And also that they have equality with police officers.
- That firemen cannot reach the higher rank of Firefighter II, unless there's an opening.
- That promotions beyond the rank of Firefighter II are rare.
- Reforms of the promotion procedure, which they had already challenged before the Civil Service Commission.
- Filling of existing vacancies.
- Pay for any firemen filling one of those vacant ranks temporarily.
- Proposed new rank of First Class Fire Firefighter, with a five percent pay increase.

1976-02-03 – Raleigh Times – ‘Response to police promised’

1976-02-03 [?] – News & Observer – ‘Firemen To Delay Any Protest’

The RFFA said it would work with the city administration for the next 60 days, pursuing a ten percent pay raise and other reforms.

1976-02-09 – Burlington Times-News – ‘Police Reject Union’

RPOA members 'apparently rejected unionizing' at a Sunday night meeting, when 'less than a dozen' members 'showed up for a meeting on the subject.' Said spokesman Thomas R. Beliveau, 'joining a union' "doesn't suit us right now." The RPOA claimed to have 230 of the city's 300 police officers as members.

'State AFL-CIO President Wilbur Hobby' met with the members 'to outline the benefits of union membership.' He told them that union affiliation 'would not produce instant results' but would help his work in trying to repeal the state law that prohibits 'collective bargaining by public employees.'

April 1976

1976-04-?? – Raleigh Times – ‘Firemen, police plan action’

¹ A consulting firm from Atlanta, hired to help rewrite the city charter, recommended last month that the city dissolve the Civil Service Commission. The commission was created in 1935, under the old commissioner form of government, and was designed to protect city employees from political pressure. The consultant said that the commission 'did not fit into the council-manager form of government' and it was not 'good business practice' to have a body that could overturn the city manager's decision. The RFFA presented a petition with the names of 260 firemen in favor of retaining the commission.

Firemen, police plan action

By CHRIS SHERMAN
Times staff writer

Raleigh's firemen and police, still dissatisfied with the city's proposed 5 per cent pay hike, began making plans Wednesday night that could increase the city's labor troubles this summer.

The city's sanitation workers already have threatened to strike in July.

Members of the Raleigh Fire Fighters Association (RFFA) voted overwhelmingly to picket the Municipal Building in

services, but they warned of increasing militancy within their ranks.

After watching the slow-downs and sick-ins of the RPOA in the last year result in meetings with city officials and some concessions, the city's firemen got "very irritated," said Capt. Hubert Altman, executive secretary of the previously quiet RFFA.

"The squeaking wheel will get the grease. We're not going to stand in the mud and not move. We're going to squeak," Altman said.

If the RPOA takes job action, it would occur in the last month before the City Council completes its budget and makes a firm decision on the pay raise, Knox said. The budget must be adopted by July 1, when the new fiscal year begins.

Although there is no formal agreement with the sanitation workers who are planning to strike July 6, Knox noted, "We said we'd coordinate it with them."

Knox said he opposes a strike, but he claimed more men in the department are

Both police and firemen's groups have proposed methods in which their pay could be boosted other than by across-the-board raises.

Altman said the firemen still want a 13.5 per cent raise to reduce the gap between their salaries and those of firemen in other cities and police here. They also want a new rank inserted in the department that would boost each man 5 per cent on merit.

However, Altman conceded, "I'm sure there could be a compromise, but I don't know

ings at the AFL-CIO headquarters on West Johnson Street, Altman said the group had unanimously agreed to picket. He claimed that in a vote on unspecified further action, the firemen voted "98 per cent

yes."

The firemen's union includes almost all of the department's 300 men, and Altman said all but 25 members had endorsed the union's demands.

He was particularly upset at the failure of their last effort, an elaborate appeal to the city's Wage Review Board. The



John R. Knox

'we aren't waiting anymen

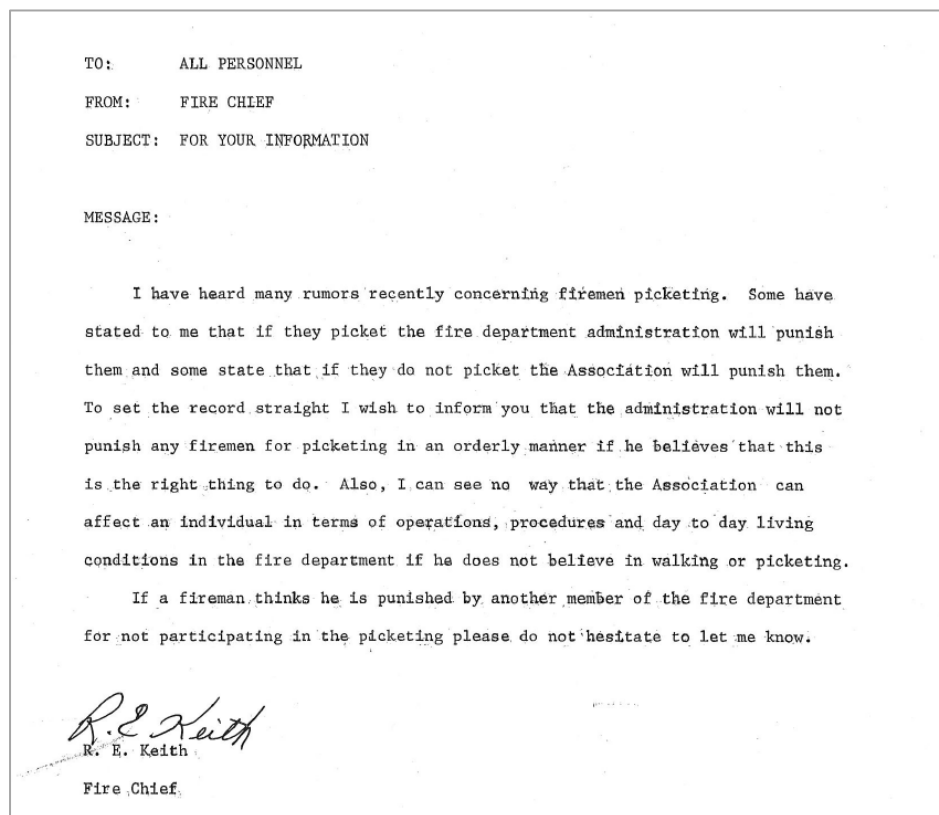
Raleigh firemen and police are 'still dissatisfied with the city's proposed five-percent pay hike' and begin making plans.

RFFA members have unanimously voted to begin picketing city hall in June, and 'to take further, undisclosed action to win a higher raise and other changes in the department.' The firemen want a 13.5 percent raise, as well as a new rank that would 'boost each man 5 per cent on merit.'

RPOA negotiators agreed on 'three packages of pay raises and benefits' that they 'will propose for their members and then fight for.' They included raises from 5 to 10 percent and other things, 'such as a differential for working night shifts, a cost-of-living clause, and the city's paying the employee's share of Social Security or retirement plans.'

Neither group threatened to strike, unlike the city's sanitation workers, which had threatened to strike in July.

Undated – Memo from Fire Chief



In an undated memo, possibly from April 1976 or later months, Fire Chief Rufus Keith informed all personnel that he had “heard many rumors recently concerning firemen picketing.” Some had told him that if they participated in picketing actions then they would be punished by the fire department administration. They also said “if they do not picket [then] the [RFFA] will punish them.” Chief Keith wrote “to set the record straight [...] the administration will punish any firemen for picketing in an orderly manner if he believes that this is the right thing to do.” He also saw “no way” that the RFFA could “affect an individual in terms of operations, procedures and day to day living conditions” if that fire department member “does not believe in walking or picketing.” Chief Keith requested that any fireman who “thinks he is being punished by another member of the fire department for not participating the picketing” to please let him know.

May 1976

1976-05-20 – Raleigh Times – ‘Firemen angered by city pay claims’

1976-05-?? – Raleigh Times – ‘Firemen plan picket, public plea on wages’

Hubert Y. Altman, ‘head of the firemen’s union,’ ‘reacted angrily’ to the claim by city officials that firemen have received raises averaging 13 percent annually since 1971.

Meanwhile, police officers this week ‘began ticketing motorists for many minor, often-overlooked violations’ as a means of pressing their demands for a ten percent pay raise. And the firemen were ‘still threatening more action’ if their salary increase request wasn’t met.

The RFFA also had 500 bumper stickers printed and they were handing them out: ‘Raleigh – First Class Firefighters, Fourth Class Pay.’ They also procured two ‘lighted signs’ to be placed at shopping centers and residential areas during the day. They were also planning to start picketing at City Hall starting on June 7.

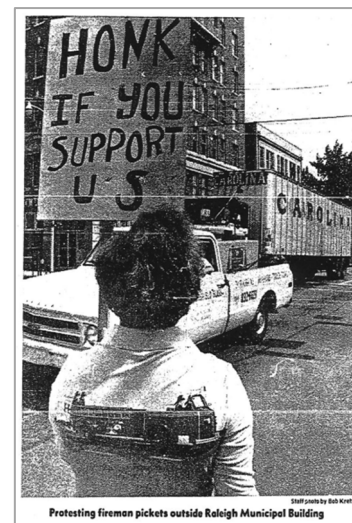
June 1976

1976-06-08 – News & Observer – ‘Chiefs and Pickets Apply Pressure on City’s Wallet’

At City Hall, council listened to pleas from the Fire Chief and the Police Chief that ‘their men be given bigger raises’ than the five percent tentatively recommended for all city employees. Outside, RFFA members were picketing with cardboard signs, with such messages as ‘If you support your firemen, call your councilman.’

The RFFA members also transported a large sign to the municipal building with such messages as ‘Firefighters Will Not Be Blamed For Tax Hike.’

The picketing was called off after two days, reported the Raleigh Times on 6/30/76, because ‘of indications they had a chance to win some gains if they were less outspoken.’



Form 804-8

CITY OF RALEIGH
NORTH CAROLINA

INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

TO: Mayor and Members of the City Council
FROM: City Manager
SUBJECT: Activities Planned by Some Members of the Raleigh Fire Department.

ROOM:
DATE: June 29, 1976

MESSAGE:

On Monday June 28 Fire Chief Keith was informed by a spokesman of the Fire Department employee association that they would begin a job action on Wednesday morning at 8:00. This job action would be in the form of some members of the department "calling in sick". At this point, we do not know the extent of participation by employees of the department.

Prior to receiving this information on Monday, administration had been developing contingency plans that would be initiated in response to any job action that had been threatened by some employees of the department. We have basically completed these plans and the appropriate plan will be implemented tomorrow.

This action is being taken ^{even} ~~over~~ though the council has approved a 5% salary increase for all City employees beginning next month. In addition, the City administration will examine each presently authorized position and if the position can be eliminated without reducing our present level of service, it will be done. If a reduction in the number of employees is possible it will be accommodated through attrition. If enough funds in the salary accounts can be saved through this process, an additional increase - up to 3% - is authorized in January. The City pay plan permits merit increases during the year for meritorious service unless the employee is in the top step for his salary range. Also, there is this year - as in the past number of years, a provision in the pay plan to pay a 2 1/2% longevity bonus to those employees who have been employed by the City 5 years.

The fire stations are in good condition. Five of the fourteen stations have been built in the past seven years. All are well lighted, heated and airconditioned. Of the 15 pumpers in first line service - not including the reserve or up units, eleven are less than 7 years old.

As of the present time, even without the 5% salary increase - we have approximately 150 applicants for positions with the department. This is not being stated or used as a threat but rather to illustrate that the salary being paid is attractive enough to adequately attract applicants to the department.

Page 2
June 29, 1976

A wage study of all City positions has been authorized and will begin this summer.

We have an excellent Fire Department with many dedicated employees. There are however, some members of the department who are apparently dissatisfied.

The mission of the department is to prevent and/or suppress fire. We will carry out that mission in the future as we have in the past.

L. P. Zachary
City Manager

1976-06-?? – Raleigh Times – ‘Keeter disappointed by firemen’s picket’



Keeter disappointed by firemen's picket

June, 1976

By TREVA JONES
Times staff writer

Firemen never picketed during the 40 years retired chief Jack B. Keeter was with the department. And Keeter, now a City Councilman, was upset when firemen started picketing Monday for a 12.5 per cent salary hike. As he left the Municipal Building after a council budget work session, Keeter told several picketing firemen that he was disappointed in them.

"He didn't fuss. He just said this has hurt him; he wished we hadn't done it," said Hubert V. Altman, head of the Raleigh Firefighters' Association. Keeter, interviewed later, said he was disappointed. "Yes, I am, and I don't give a damn if you write it," Keeter said, stabbing the air with a forefinger. Keeter said he is disappointed because of the years he spent in the fire service "of building it up with cooperation and working together" even though he was paid less than other department heads.

"The thing that hurt me -- this thing will filter on down the line," Keeter said of the firemen's protests. "The council made a mistake when we entertained the police at the middle of the year," Keeter said. Keeter said the council should have told police to wait until budget time for salary increase consideration. "The Fire Department was my pride and joy over all the years," Keeter said. "I can see the boys' feelings, and they think they've got to get out there and march and show their colors," said Keeter, who conceded he never thought they would picket. On the picket line today, firefighter Dallas Perry, a nine-year veteran with the department, said he believed the picketing did surprise Keeter. Firemen resumed their picket lines outside the Municipal Building this morning.

Jack B. Keeter
former fire chief

Retired Fire Chief and now City Councilman Jack B. Keeter was disappointed in the firefighters who were picketing. 'Yes, I am, and I don't give a damn if you write it,' Keeter said, stabbing the air with a forefinger. He was disappointed because of the years he spent in the department 'of building it up with cooperation and working together' even though he was paid less than other department heads.'

1976-06-30 – News & Observer – ‘Strike Plan Set By Firemen Here’

Members of RFFA voted Tuesday night, June 29, to begin calling in sick the next morning, as an 'organized attempt to pressure the city into giving them a larger pay raise.' Union leader Hubert Altman predicted that 240 of the city's 300 firemen would participate, and the action would reduce the city's fire protection by an estimated 76 percent. Members voted in the group's headquarters in the state ALF-CIO building on West Johnson Street.

Partly Cloudy
Partly cloudy, hot and humid,
chance of showers. Highs
near 90. Lows near 70.
Details, Page 2.

The News and Observer

TELEPHONE NUMBERS
Main 821-1234
Want Ads 821-4112
Circulation 828-1404

Vol. CCXXI No. 183

54 Pages Today

Raleigh, N. C., Wednesday, June 30, 1976

110th Year

Daily 15c, Sunday 35c



BEFORE 'SICK-IN' VOTE — Hubert Y. Altman, extreme left, a captain in the Raleigh Fire Department and secretary-treasurer of the Raleigh Firefighters Association, meets with other association leaders Tuesday night outside

the AFL-CIO Building on Johnson Street as members wait in background. The association later voted to start "sick-in" pressure for a pay raise today.

Staff photo by Greg Stewart

Strike Plan Set By Firemen Here

By ROB CHRISTENSEN

Members of the Raleigh Firefighters Association voted Tuesday night to begin calling in sick this morning in an organized attempt to pressure the city into giving them a larger pay raise.

The leader of the firemen's union predicted that 240 of the city's 300 firemen would participate in the partial strike, reducing fire protection in the city by an estimated 75 per cent, according to the firemen.

But city officials said Tuesday they were prepared to put into effect a contingency plan with skeleton crews manning some or all of the city's 14 fire stations. And City Manager L. P. Zachary expressed confidence that the city would be adequately protected against the dangers of fire, despite the job action.

The firefighters association voted unanimously to begin the sick-in at a meeting Tuesday night in the group's headquarters in the state AFL-CIO Building on West Johnson Street, according to Hubert Y. Altman, secretary-treasurer of the association. The meeting was closed to the press.

Beginning at 8 a.m. today, the fire association members will begin calling in sick on alternate 24-hour shifts, or every other day, Altman said.

The action, if successful, will force the city to either man the fire stations with supervisors and those firemen who don't join the protest, or pay overtime to keep men on the previous 24-hour shift manning the stations for another day, association spokesmen said.

One tactic is aimed at leaving the fire stations inadequately manned, while

the second tactic is designed to put financial pressure on the city.

Altman predicted that only 20 to 22 men would be in the fire stations on today's 24-hour shift, instead of the normal contingent of 90 men.

The firemen voted to begin what is believed to be the first deliberate disruption of fire services in the city's history in an effort to gain an additional 3.5 per cent raise. They are also seeking the creation of a higher paying job classification for veteran firemen.

The firemen have placed considerable emphasis on the 15 per cent figure because their leaders say they feel slighted that the city police gained a 3.5 per cent raise last winter while the firemen did not.

The City Council last week approved a 5 per cent cost-of-living increase for all city employees, a bonus for low-paid employees, and held out the possibility

Part II – The Sick Out

1976-06-30 – Raleigh Times – 'Three-fourths of firemen 'sick'; 3 neighborhood stations closed'

On Wednesday, June 30, three-quarters of firemen scheduled to work that morning called in sick, as a protest to the city to meet their demands, which included a 3.5 percent retroactive pay raise to match the mid-year raise given to police.²

Normally, 79 men would report for duty, to staff the city's fourteen fire stations. But when the shift started at 8:00 a.m., only 27 had reported to work as scheduled, and 52 had 'marked out sick.' Another ten were on vacation.

As a result, three 'fringe-area' fire stations were closed—Station 12 on Poole Road, Station 14 on Lake Boone Trail, and Station 15 on Spring Forest Road—with the remaining eleven stations staffed with 49 members comprised of '22 supervisors, inspectors, non-protesting firemen, and a few city employees who were also volunteer firemen.' Also, Rescue 1 was removed from service, with only Rescue 9 operating.

² The City Manager said that the police raise was based on the recommendation of a consultant and the 'city's rising crime rate.' He said that the timing was a 'coincidence and not a reward for police militancy.'

CLOUDY

50 per cent chance of rain. Low tonight, mid 60s. High tomorrow, mid 80s. Details, page 2-A.

Vol. 88, No. 159

Phone 821-1234

Raleigh, North Carolina, Wednesday Afternoon, June 30, 1976

64 Pages

15c

THE RALEIGH TIMES

FINAL

Three-fourths of firemen 'sick;'

3 neighborhood stations closed

By CHRIS SHERMAN

Times staff writer

Three-fourths of Raleigh's firemen scheduled to report for duty this morning marked out 'sick' in a protest for higher pay and forced the closing of three fringe-area fire stations and one rescue unit.

Normally, 79 men would have reported for duty this morning to man the city's 14 fire stations. When the shift

began at 8 a.m., 52 had marked out sick and 27 reported for work as scheduled. Ten firemen are on vacation.

Using 22 supervisors, inspectors, non-protesting firemen and a few city employees who are also rural volunteer firemen, Raleigh Fire Chief Rufus E. Keith managed to fill the 11 open stations with 49 firemen. Some companies are working under their normal strength.

Keith insisted that the city's fire protection has not been jeopardized, and said he had asked the volunteer fire companies in surrounding suburban areas to stand by.

"We have got everything in operation except for those three companies. These are the stations on the fringe that have just been built, and other engines in the area will cover them," Keith said. "Every-

thing is operating as normal."

The figure of 79 men normally on duty today does not count the 10 firemen who are on vacation. Officials may cancel those leaves.

Normally, four or five men would be sick on an average shift, according to fire officials.

The stations closed by the chief this morning were stations 12 on Poole Road, 14 on

Lake Boone Trail and 15 on Spring Forest Road. The rescue unit at Station 1 downtown was out of commission, leaving only one rescue unit working out of Station 9 at North Hills.

The makeshift department answered one false alarm at a state government building this morning. A full complement of men responded on two engines and a ladder truck. The only other call by early afternoon

was to clean up a gas spill, a routine task.

City Councilmen this morning said the protest would not press them to grant a large raise to firemen, beyond the five per cent raise given all city employees last week.

With that raise, Raleigh firemen in the rank of Firefighter I, the bulk of the force, can earn between \$8,664 and \$11,964, which is less than that

paid in Charlotte, Winston-Salem, and Durham, but above the starting pay in Greensboro.

Spoken for the other organized city workers, sanitation men and police, pledged moral support to the fire-fighters.

The sanitation workers still plan to vote Wednesday on a possible post-July 4th strike to press their own pay demands.

See 3 NEIGHBORHOOD, 2-A

HOTLINE

asks about firemen

How do you feel about firemen calling in sick? Do you support their partial strike for higher pay and think they are justified in their action? Or do you decry their tactics? In any event, let us know.

The Raleigh Times will open its HOTLINE phones today and tonight to let you have your say. Call 828-5733 and sound off. One change from normal HOTLINE rules, though. We'd like to use your name with your comment. So if you aren't willing to have your comments on the firemen attributed to you, say so when you call.

Noted the Raleigh Times, 'A spot check of individual fire stations early today showed that the fill-ins at the short-staffed stations were fully confident they could do the job. 'You better believe we can cover it,' said Training Officer James Owens, working at Station 5 on Oberlin Road with a rookie. At Station 4 on Wake Forest Road, where three captains and a district chief manned the company, one said he hadn't been on a truck in 15 or 20 years. 'But we'll make out all right.'

Only one call was dispatched that morning, a false alarm at a government building that morning. By early afternoon, the only other fire call in the city was to 'clean up a gas spill.'

Chief Keith insisted that the city's fire protection 'had not been jeopardized' and had also asked the volunteer fire departments in surrounding suburban areas to stand by.

Sanitation workers were planning a possible strike after July 4.

1976-06-30 – Raleigh Times – 'City has emergency procedures'

1976-06-30 – Raleigh Times – 'Two view of duty' / 'No hard feelings held by firemen who showed'

Retiring Fireman William L. Mitchell had never seen anything like today's sick-out in his 30 years and seven months of service. And if today wasn't his last day on the job, he would've called in sick with the five other men from Station 5. 'This should have been done earlier. Promises have been made here for several years, but now we have the type of men here that are fed up with promises and want a showdown.'

Station 5 on Oberlin Road was three men short of its regular eight-man crew. Those spots were filled by 'personnel from the main fire department office.' One fireman at Station 5 said 'The only time I remember this many people being out sick was at a Christmas party a while back, when 34 couples got food poisoning.'

Two views of duty

No hard feelings held by firemen who showed

By BILL GIBBS

Times staff writer

William L. Mitchell hasn't seen anything like today's sick-out in his 30 years and seven months of service. And if today wasn't his last day on the job, he would've called in sick with the five other men from Station 5 on Oberlin Road. Mitchell said he had never seen anything like today's sick-out in his 30 years and seven months of service. And if today wasn't his last day on the job, he would've called in sick with the five other men from Station 5 on Oberlin Road. Mitchell said he had never seen anything like today's sick-out in his 30 years and seven months of service. And if today wasn't his last day on the job, he would've called in sick with the five other men from Station 5 on Oberlin Road.

'Sick' men cite raise given earlier to police

By STEVE KNOWLTON

Times staff writer

Several of the Raleigh firemen who called in sick today said they were fed up with promises of a raise that had not been given. They said they were fed up with promises of a raise that had not been given. They said they were fed up with promises of a raise that had not been given.

13

At Station 3 on East Street, District Chief D. H. Williams worked alongside fire hydrant technician E. C. Emory, and trainee Ronnie Smith. Technician Emory, 'who had not been on a truck on a regular basis for 10 years, said he was 'ready as a radio'.' He was not a member of the RFFA and said he was working because 'the citizens are paying my salary and I won't let them down. It could be my relatives if we do have a fire, anyway.' But he added, it was a personal decision for each fireman who called in sick, and he didn't 'begrudge them being out.'

1976-06-30 – Raleigh Times – 'Two view of duty'

1976-06-30 – Raleigh Times – 'Sick' men cite raise given earlier to police'

Several of the 'sick' firemen spoke to the Raleigh Times by telephone. Frank Marshall said 'I really am sick' but also voiced support for the job action. 'I believe we are getting a dirty deal,' he said. 'We are not asking for anything the police didn't get.' And 'Everybody who works for the city is supposed to get the same thing.' Marshall said he had a pulled shoulder muscle and had been undecided about returning to work, before the job action was announced. He added, he wasn't in any hurry to recover until the job action was resolved.

Wayne L. Burton was more direct. 'I'm behind the job action 100 percent.' He added, 'I hoped, we all hoped that it wouldn't come to this, but the city should have given us the pay increase the police got.' Burton, who was new to the department, had said he has only a little sick time 'built up' but) was willing to exhaust those sick days, 'if the matter is not settled to the firemen's liking.'

1976-06-30 – Raleigh Times – 'Police, sanitation workers stick to own plans'

Sanitation workers planned to vote next Wednesday whether to strike and 'refuse to pick up the city's garbage.'

The RPOA did not have plans for any job action, but was supporting specific candidates in next year's city elections to 'press its case for more pay.'

Following the RPOA members' 'blue flu' earlier this year, the city gave police a 3.5 percent pay raise and increased benefits.

1976-06-30 – Raleigh Times – 'Council holds firm on raise'

All but two council members told the Raleigh Times that 'they won't bend before protests' by firemen, who wanted a 3.5 percent wage hike above what the city had already promised.

The city's budget, adopted last week, included a five percent across-the-board raise, and the possibility of another three percent raise in January, if 'the city saves enough money from a reduction in jobs and attrition.'

1976-06-30 - City news releases



110 S. McDowell St.
755-6194

NEWS

6/30/76

Joyce P. Maret, Director
Research/Information Office

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

30 JUNE 1976

For more information:
Chief Keith, 755-6360

As of 8:30 a.m. Wednesday, 30 June, 1976, approximately 60 per cent of the Raleigh firefighters had reported in "sick."

Chief Rufus Keith said, however, that all engine companies except three were manned. The three unmanned companies are all on the fringe areas of the City -- No. 14 on Lake Boone Trail, No. 12 on Poole Rd., and No. 15 on Spring Forest Rd.

Normally the City has two rescue units in operation. At this time only one will be running and for emergency rescues only, not transportation.

Chief Keith said the firefighting force on hand could handle a major fire and that he has confidence that in the event of a major fire some men who have called in "sick" would come in, as they have indicated previously.

Some off-duty men have said they would come in if they are needed, and he also has available active volunteer firemen who work in other City departments. Volunteer Fire Departments in Cary, Garner, Six Forks, and Wake-New Hope also have been contacted, and the City has a mutual aid agreement with all other volunteer departments in the county.

The Chief and the City Manager stand ready to talk with the firefighters at any time, Keith told newsmen, but they have not approached him to talk. He offered to speak at the Raleigh Firefighters Association meeting Tuesday night, but they declined the offer.

- 30 -



110 s. mcdowell st.
755-6194

NEWS

6/30/76

Joyce P. Maret
Research/Information Officer

30 June 1976

For more information:
Chief R.E. Keith,
755-6360

Raleigh Fire Chief Rufus E. Keith today cancelled all vacations in the Fire Department, effective at 8 a.m. Friday, July 2, until further notice.

In doing so, he said, "I regret doing this, but due to the emergency situation, my responsibility is to protect the property and citizens of Raleigh. If you have any questions concerning this, or if it will cause great hardship, please call me. I will treat each case individually."

In addition, the chief planned to remind all firemen who call in sick that there exists a new Departmental Operating Instruction which establishes a uniform sick leave policy requiring a doctor's certificate for approving sick leave pay.

The policy states, "It is the policy of the City of Raleigh's Fire Department to require a doctor's certificate in order to be paid for sick leave when there is reason to believe sick leave is misused."

The procedure for carrying this out reads: "In order to be paid for sick leave, it will be the responsibility of each employee to present to his supervisor a doctor's certificate stating he is able to return to work after being out sick for any length of time. This requirement will apply to personnel on any shift due to report to work at 8 a.m. July 1, 1976, and thereafter."

The DOI previously required a doctor's certificate for sick leave in excess of two days, or one 24-hour shift.

-30-

July 1976

1976-07-01 – News & Observer – ‘Firemen End Strike; Chief Vows New Talks’

Fair
Fair and mild, little chance of rain. Highs in mid-80s. Lows, upper 60s. Details, Page 2.

Vol. CCXXII, No. 1

98 Pages Today

Raleigh, N. C., Thursday, July 1, 1976

110th Year

TELEPHONE NUMBERS
Main 821-1234
Want Ads 821-4112
Circulation 828-1404

Daily 15c, Sunday 35c

The News and Observer



Firemen End Strike; Chief Vows New Talks

By ROB CHRISTENSEN

The Raleigh Fire Fighters Association called off its day-old strike as a 'good faith gesture' Wednesday after the city agreed to begin a round of discussions with the dissident firemen.

Firemen are expected to return to the city's 14 fire stations at 8 a.m. today after staying away in large numbers Wednesday in a 'sick-out' aimed at pressuring the city into giving them a larger wage increase.

The ending of the strike was designed to give the city and the firemen time to reach a peaceful settlement to the labor dispute, Hubert V. Altman, secretary-treasurer of the association, said in an interview Wednesday night.

Altman said the firemen also did not want to alienate the public by being on strike during the July

4th Bicentennial weekend, a time of increased fire hazards.

"We are going to back off of our strike and we get a chance to talk to the city to see what we can come up with," Altman said.

"This is by no means saying that we are through in seeking public recognition," Altman said.

The firemen's association is scheduled to meet again Tuesday night to assess the progress of the talks and consider whether to resume the strike or other protest activities, Altman said.

The firemen's meeting is set for the night before a scheduled work stoppage by the city's sanitation workers.

The decision to end the strike was made after Altman received a hand-delivered letter at his Rialto Raleigh home by a messenger from Fire Chief Rufus E. Keith, according to Altman.

Keith's letter sought to "reassure" the firemen

that both his office and the office of the city manager is open to discuss your concerns now or at any time in the future. The city administration has had a standing order to meet with city employee groups.

Wednesday's sick-out resulted in 65 per cent of the firemen not showing up for work, according to fire department officials.

The protest forced the city to close three calling suburban fire stations, dispatch one of two regular city stations, and have Chief Keith to answer the calls.

Altman said the large participation in the sick-out demonstrated the firemen's ability to "stick together."

See FIREMEN, Page 14

On Thursday, July 1, the RFFA stopped its one-day 'strike' as a 'good faith gesture' after city leaders 'agreed to begin a round of discussions with the dissident firemen.' Secretary-Treasurer Hubert Altman said in an interview that the 'ending of the strike was designed to give the city and the firemen time to reach a peaceful settlement to the labor dispute.' He also said that the firemen 'did not want to alienate the public by being on strike during the July 4th Bicentennial weekend, a time of increased fire hazards.'

The decision was made after Altman received a hand-delivered letter to his home, by a messenger, from Fire Chief Rufus Keith. The letter sought to 'reassure' the firemen 'that both my office and the office of the city manager is open to discuss your concerns now or at any time in the future.'

At Station 6 on Fairview Road, only one of the eight firemen called in sick. 'It's just a normal day' said Captain F. L. Blake. At Station 9 on Six Forks Road, all six men called in sick. The station was manned by supervisors and 'people like city draftsman Carl Denton, a volunteer rural fireman in Johnston County who had been recruited by the city to fill in.'

Between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., the city answered six calls. The only working fire was an automobile near Crabtree Valley Shopping Center.

As a result of the protest, Chief Keith cancelled all vacations for all of the city's 300 firemen. He also announced a new personnel policy requiring doctor's notes before receiving any pay, starting today. Previously, they had to be sick for more than 24 hours before a doctor's note was required. Altman said that the new policy was illegal.

Noted the news story, Raleigh firefighters were 'generally paid less' than their counterparts in other North Carolina cities.

Raleigh – Starting \$688 per month, maximum \$878
Charlotte – Starting \$742 per month, maximum \$974
Greensboro – Starting \$690 per month, maximum \$879
Winston-Salem – Starting \$770 per month, maximum \$982.

For driver's, the spread was:

Raleigh - \$760 to \$968
Charlotte - \$779 to \$994
Greensboro - \$779 to 1019
Winston-Salem - \$850 to \$1082

1976-07-01 – Raleigh Times – ‘Firemen return to jobs’

1976-07-01 - ?? – Editorial – ‘Firemen Strike Against Public Safety’

1976-07-01 – Raleigh Times – ‘City officials won’t make promises to firemen’

1976-07-01 – Raleigh Times – ‘Firemen happy to return’

On Thursday morning, July 1, the city’s fire stations were fully manned and firemen said they were ‘overwhelmingly glad to be there.’ From the start of shift at 8:00 a.m. ‘it was as if nothing had happened.’ Said one fireman at Station 1 on Dawson Street, ‘I don’t think the guys wanted to leave the city unprotected, but now the city knows the firemen will stand up to them.’

Most firemen saw the return to work as a ‘break in the action’ and all said they would ‘stick with the union if further protest was warranted.’

Said Captain Jonny Sandy at Station 5 on Oberlin Road, ‘I’m neither disappointed nor surprised at the course of events. The union took the right course and got the city to talk again.’ He also said ‘I think the men will be willing to go out again.’ And they’ll be stronger if they repeat the action, because they’ve demonstrated two good-faith gestures already, by stopping the picket and the ‘sick-in.’

Almost all of the firemen who were interviewed felt the city was ‘using pressure tactics’ by cancelling vacations and setting a ‘stringent’ sick leave policy.

Driver D. L. Gill at Station 5 was not upset by the pressure. ‘We pressured the city, now they’re pressuring us. I believe in the long run that will be good for the union because at least it got us talking. We have to get both sides to mutual ground; it makes both sides happy.’

1976-07-01 – N&O – ‘Firemen Here Return to Work’

The N&O reported that ‘most municipal officials interviewed Thursday [said] it was unlikely firemen would get more money.’ Mayor Jules J. Coggins said he doubted that City Council would agree to an additional raise for the firemen.

Leaders of the RFFA, the RPOA, and the sanitation workers union met behind closed doors to discuss forming a ‘coalition’ to ‘gain additional money and benefits.’ However, said Donnie L. Perry, ‘a leader in the firemen’s association’, a joint strike was not discussed. The meeting was held at Boyd’s Vulcan Industries, and about eight people attended.

Also, the RFFA was considering a public relations campaign to ‘get public opinion behind larger salaries.’ Another campaign was discussed to ‘approve the transfer of budget funds to municipal salaries.’

1976-07-02 – Raleigh Times – ‘Firemen pin hopes on talk with city officials’



Reported the newspaper, leaders of Raleigh's protesting firemen planned to sit down with city officials that afternoon.

1976-07-02 – Raleigh Times – Hotline Survey – 'Calls evenly divided on firemen'

The Raleigh Times asked its readers for reactions to the strike and received 31 telephone calls. Sixteen 'deplored the action', fourteen supported, and 'one caller liked points on both sides.' Those opposed 'generally felt the sick-in was illegal, endangered the lives of Raleigh citizens and felt firemen already are earning more than enough money.' Several callers thought the city should fire any firemen who couldn't prove they were actually sick, but who called in sick.

Supporters said that the firemen deserved a raise because of the profession's dangers. Or they noted that the police received an additional pay hike, and that the firemen are paid less than police to begin with.

HOTLINE
asks about
firemen

How do you feel about firemen calling in sick? Do you support their partial strike for higher pay and think they are justified in their action? Or do you decry their tactics? In any event, let us know.

The Raleigh Times will open its HOTLINE phones today and tonight to let you have your say. Call 828-5733 and sound off.

One change from normal HOTLINE rules, though. We'd like to use your name with your comment. We use just initials in HOTLINE. So if you aren't willing to have your comments on the firemen attributed to you, say so when you call.

1976-07-02 – Raleigh Times – 'Altman works hard in firemen's benefit'

Altman works hard in firemen's behalf

By CHRIS SHERMAN
Times staff writer

When Hubert Y. Altman joined the Raleigh Fire Department 15 years ago, he was a single man from Harnett County who didn't have a lot of purpose to his life.

He was more brassy than the average rookie then, according to an associate, and he didn't hold his tongue about the favors he saw being traded back and forth in the department. But he didn't apply himself much to his job — just another in a string after he had tried Florida, sold plumbing fixtures, and spent four years in the Navy.

Now, he's the outspoken leader of the firemen's union and at the same time a company captain who is respected at a fire scene and who might have a shot at a district chief's white hat.

In the months of protest by the city's firemen culminating in Wednesday's massive sick calls, Altman has emerged as a strong-willed spokesman who mispronounces occasional big words, but rarely fails to get his message across.

It is his flat country voice that will be presenting the firemen's concerns to city officials this week as the union abandons confrontation for negotiations.

Beneath his modish hair and leisure suits he still has the grin, the face reddened from outdoor work, the straight back and burly chest at 40 that he probably had as a young fireman.

For the first few years on the force, he conceded in an interview Wednesday, "I just didn't care and bear down as I should."

Then he found both marriage and religion. Ten years ago he got married. Nine years ago, he said, "I became a Christian and was born again."

He is as serious about his personal life and morality as he is about the firemen's wage demands, and all are tied together in his view.

Leading the firemen in their recent actions, "Some people might think is un-Christian," Altman says, but he feels it's his moral obligation.

Those who have worked with him say he is hard-working,

candid, and dedicated about his personal life and his dual duties in the fire service.

He wouldn't give up that job now. "My little boy loves that his daddy's a fireman."

He's the kind of captain, one fireman said, who will take a man aside privately to counsel him on marital problems.

He was a bottom-rank firefighter for nine years before he was promoted to the rank of driver, and he says, "I saw people using favoritism and getting personal gain." It took him only four more years, however, to get his next promotion to his present captain's rank.

"I saw how hard it was I had to work, and I didn't forget it," he said.

"This caused me to have a general feeling of, someday, if I could, to see a fair fire department," Altman said.

He considers himself fairly conservative, but he has adopted the unpopular view that, "The little man keeps getting less and the South is going to have to go union to get out of this."

He's the secretary-treasurer of the union and, since there is



Hubert Y. Altman
for 'a fair department'

no president, he is the chief spokesman. But he is not its rabble rouser, according to several. He stays in touch with the ranks by collecting dues from each individually, and is less radical than some of them.

As an example of Altman's hard work, Raleigh Fire Fighters' Association (RFFA) lawyer Howard F. Twigg estimated the captain put in about 200 hours of his time, collecting statistics and photos for an elaborate appeal to the wage review board — an attempt to work within the system.

1976-07-04 – News & Observer – 'Firemen Claim Data Support Wage Plea'

RFFA leaders gave city officials 'eight pages of data' to underscore their plea for a 3.5 percent wage increase.

This was during an hour-long meeting with city officials that ended with the city saying 'they would deliver a formal response to the firemen's renewed wage demands by the end of the week.'

The meeting was held at the Parks and Recreation office on Wade Avenue. In separate interviews afterward, neither side 'admitted giving any ground' in what was described as a 'cordial' meeting.

Asst. City Manager Dempsey Benton said the 'five-member city grievance committee' would report to the City Manager 'the first of the week.' But no date was set for a 'return meeting with the firemen.'

The data was compiled by several members of the RFFA, who spent two days 'collecting salary information to compare Raleigh to firemen in four major North Carolina cities.' Each of the comparisons showed Raleigh firemen behind other cities, Altman noted in an interview after the meeting.

1976-07-06 – Raleigh Times – 'Firemen to report on talks'

On Friday, there was an ‘unprecedented’ meeting between the RFFA and city officials. It was the first time that representatives of the firemen’s union had met directly with any city officials other than the Fire Chief. At a planned meeting of the union membership that night, the RFFA leaders would deliver a report on the meeting.

Meanwhile, with staffing back to normal at fire stations, Chief Keith had rescinded his ‘emergency ban on vacation leaves’ on Sunday, July 4.

1976-07-07 – Raleigh Times – ‘Firemen give Friday deadline’

On Tuesday night, July 6, RFFA members agreed to give city officials until Friday to meet their ‘wage and promotional demands.’ Failing this, they would ‘renew their job actions Monday.’ Speaking for the RFFA, Captain Hubert Altman wouldn’t say whether the members would call in sick, or use a different tactic.

About 70 members of the RFFA met at the AFL-CIO building. They also agreed ‘not to pick up garbage during a strike by sanitation workers,’ as was suggested as a contingency plan by some city officials, by putting non-striking city employees on trash trucks in the event of a strike.

‘The men said they would stand 100 percent behind objecting to performing any jobs outside their job classification,’ Altman said.

Also, firemen, police, and sanitation workers continued to discuss ‘forming a coalition of city employees to press their demands.’ Representatives of the RFFA, the RPOA, and the grievance committee of the sanitation department met at the ‘city hall snack bar’ on the eve of a garbage strike.

1976-07-07 – City press release



110 S. McDowell St.
755-6194

NEWS

7/7/76

Joyce P. Maret, Director
Research/Information Office

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

7 JULY 1976

The following statement was issued at 4 p.m. today, July 7, by City Manager L. P. Zachary regarding the sanitation workers strike:

"Earlier we stated that some Sanitation vehicles would operate today. Because of the high emotional level that developed, it was decided to allow a cooling off period for the rest of the day. The Sanitation trucks will go out tomorrow morning according to the following plan.

"In order to provide protection for the Sanitation vehicles, they will be moved to the Fire Station late this afternoon or tonight with the exception of Station #5 on Oberlin Road and Station #1 on Dawson Street. No more than two large vehicles will be at any one station. Tomorrow morning the Sanitation workers not on strike are to report to the Sanitation Division Headquarters where they will be assigned their route and truck. The Sanitation vehicles will leave from the Fire Stations to cover their assigned routes. It is the responsibility of the Police Department to provide protection for the Sanitation vehicles and crews in their respective beat area.

"Any striking Sanitation employee who threatens an employee not on strike will be dismissed and if warranted, a criminal citation will be issued.

"The effort tomorrow, Thursday, will be to collect the solid waste from critical public and private facilities and to complete the routes not collected yesterday. Approximately one-half of the City waste was collected Tuesday.

- more -

7/8/76

110 s.mcdowell st.
755-6194

8 JULY 1976

STATEMENT FROM PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR LYNN BAIRD REGARDING SANITATION WORKER'S STRIKE, 8 July, 1976:

1. We have all of the sanitation vehicles normally used in the collection of non-residential garbage in service this morning. We will collect most, if not all, of the non-residential garbage in the City which was scheduled for Tuesday collection. This involves 11 trucks in service and approximately 20 people.
2. Essentially the same personnel that reported to work yesterday are with us today.
3. The landfill is in operation and we would encourage citizens to carry as much as they can to the landfill.
4. We are implenting a contingency plan today. The first phase of this contingency plan involves the distribution of a two-week supply of plastic bags, beginning at 12 noon today. Citizens may go to any fire station in Raleigh and pick up two plastic bags per family.

The plan involves collection of organic waste materials. Citizens are asked to separate organic from inorganic material, placing the organic materials in the

- more -

1976-07-09 – Memorandum from City Manager to RFFA and all fire personnel

7/13/76

July 13, 1976

Memorandum to: Raleigh Fire Fighters Association
All Fire Personnel

From: City Manager

At a meeting on Friday, July 9, 1976, the special committee of Fire personnel asked for a written statement on the position classification and pay study.

The committee asked for a copy of the study guidelines. This has now been provided to them. It will be provided to others who request it.

Administration is now preparing to receive proposals from outside consultants to perform this work. It will not be performed by the Personnel Department. The time schedule should provide for completion by January 31, 1977. It will be available for use in budget preparations for next year.

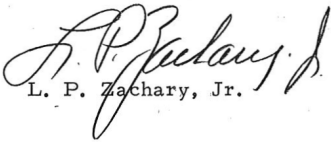
Administration will ask the consultant to evaluate the pay levels in the Fire Department and comment specifically on whether a proficiency pay step above the Fire Fighter I level should be adopted.

Fire personnel will be given ample opportunity as individuals and as groups to express their ideas on salary needs to the consultant. When the study is complete, it will be reviewed by administration, presented to the City Council and made available to employees who wish to review its conclusions.

Administration intends to use it as the guide in making recommendations to the City Council. The conclusions will be carefully considered for future budget preparations.

The consultant will study and recommend actions on the comparable pay levels for various positions in the City organization. A significant part of this work will involve comparison of Police and Fire positions in terms of duties, responsibilities and comparable salaries.

If you have questions, please contact the Personnel Director.


L. P. Zachary, Jr.

LPZjr/wp

1976-07-10 – News & Observer – ‘City Fires Strikers; Private Firms Hired’

1976-07-10 – News & Observer – ‘City Encourages Residents to Help Remove Garbage’

On Friday, July 9, the city fired 157 striking sanitation workers, and tentatively hired two private contractors to ‘help haul away Raleigh’s mounting garbage.’ The city implemented an emergency plan, sending garbage trucks ‘rolling through residential neighborhoods’ for the first time since Tuesday. But

because of the ‘serious lack of workers’, which city officials attributed to ‘intimidation tactics by strikers,’ the amount of garbage that was picked up was only half ‘envisioned in the emergency plan.’

Because of that setback, the city started two additional emergency measures. First, they hired Waste Industries to begin emptying dumpsters the city had placed at all 38 city public schools. They also tentatively hired C. C. Mangum Company to start hauling garbage on Monday. The city also placed garbage trucks at all thirteen city fire stations, for residents to drop off garbage bags.

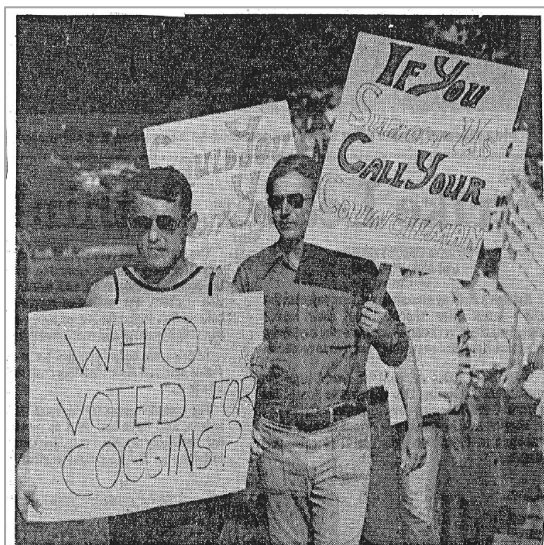


City officials had hoped to put 27 trucks on the road on Friday, using non-striking sanitation workers and ‘city laborers’ from other city departments. The expected to collect 200 to 220 tons of garbage. Instead, only 13 trucks were sent out, and 110 tons was collected.

1976-07-15 – News & Observer – ‘Strike Leader Rethinks Rejection Vote’

On Thursday, July 15, the city’s striking sanitation workers rejected the city’s latest offer early that morning. Their leader surprised City Council hours later, however, by saying he had reconsidered after ‘a divine spiritual understanding.’ He planned to urge strikers at a meeting on Friday morning to accept the offer and end their nine-day strike.

1976-07-15 – Raleigh Times – ‘Firemen, police picket’



PICKET LINE — Raleigh policemen and firemen joined the picket line on behalf of striking sanitation workers Thursday. Policeman T. H. Vaughan, one of the leaders of the Raleigh Police Officers Association, leads the sign carriers here.



Policemen and their families picket in support of striking sanitation workers.

On Thursday, July 15, thirty off-duty firemen and policemen ‘walked a picket line’ that morning outside city hall to show sympathy for the sanitation men fired last Friday. Other expressions of support included petitions circulating among city employees, and half of 100 parks maintenance workers calling in sick that morning.

In a prepared statement, the RPOA charged the City Manager and Mayor with making ‘examples of the sanitation workers’ and that the city ‘should spend its money on a raise rather than fighting the sanitation workers.’

‘We’re not asking for anything. It’s got nothing to with us,’ Officer Thomas R. Beliveu said. He and Officer T. H. Vaughn said the sanitation workers were fired because they’re the lowest paid and more easily replaced than policemen or firemen.

The picket signs read ‘Help sanitation clean up city gov’t’ and ‘King Coggins – Tyrant’ and ‘Will the RPOA be next?’ among other messages.

Part III – The Strike Vote

1976-07-15 – Raleigh Times – ‘Firemen take tougher stance’

‘Increasingly frustrated and angry by the city’s stance on negotiations for a pay increase,’ RFFA members on Wednesday night, July 14, endorsed two new tactics: a possible strike and a petition drive to ‘oust’ Mayor Jules J. Coggins.

On the morning of Thursday, July 15, Fire Chief Rufus Keith was ‘preparing contingency plans’ for a strike, and feared the union might have the support to call one, but doubted ‘it would have 100 percent support.’ He said ‘I’ll have a plan we can survive with’ and ‘it’s a possibility some of them could lose their jobs.’

The RFFA was demanding a 3.5 percent raise and creation of a new rank of First Class Firefighter. But talks with city officials so far have ‘amounted only to repeated promise of a pay study’ said Captain Hubert Altman. ‘They have given us nothing’ in the two weeks of meetings between the city and RFFA officials.



Talk of a strike by firemen, ‘an unprecedented move for Raleigh,’ had been ‘spreading among the rank-and-file firemen for several months.’ The motion for a ‘referendum on whether to strike’ passed unanimously at the Wednesday night meeting of the RFFA, which was attended by some 100 members.

The RFFA planned to poll its membership, 270 firemen, over three days starting on Sunday, July 18, with results announced on Wednesday. They would strike if the action was endorsed by two-thirds of the members.

Also unprecedented was the RFFA’s call for removal of the mayor. Under the city charter, a petition with 6,246 signatures could force a primary election between Coggins and any challengers within 60 days. The RFFA statement about the recall was the ‘first public word about the recall petitions.’ Said Altman of the Mayor, ‘He’s not conservative, he’s bull-headed’ and complained about Coggins’ ‘take it or leave it’ attitude. ‘Things are really going to get worse and worse’ Altman predicted.

The Wednesday, July 14, meeting of the RFFA was attended by only two non-members, Michael Lass, a representative of the IAFF, and former councilman Michael Boyd. The former, from Evanston, IL, was

there to advise the firemen on union procedures. The latter has played an active role on the side of the sanitation workers and their strike.

Also, that morning, RFFA members joined city policemen who were 'picketing in sympathy' outside city hall for the striking sanitation workers.

1976-07-19 – Raleigh Times – 'Firemen warned on strike'

Keith threatens job loss

Firemen warned on strike

By TREVA JONES
Times staff writer
Raleigh Fire Chief Rufus E. Keith has warned Raleigh firemen that they'll lose their jobs if they go on strike.

Keith said today that he will use a city personnel rule that allows suspension or dismissal for participation in any action that disrupts or disturbs normal operations.

Firemen began voting Sunday on whether to strike for

higher pay. Fire Captain Hubert Y. Altman, spokesman for the Raleigh Firefighters Association, said results of the vote should be known Wednesday morning. Firemen may vote through Tuesday.

Keith mailed letters to all the firemen Friday, spelling out what he plans to do if they strike:

"The purpose of this letter is to make you, as an individual, aware of the seriousness of this

act. Simply put—the moment you go out on strike, you are no longer an employee of the City of Raleigh Fire Department," the letter said, in part.

In the letter, Keith told firemen he has "empathy" with their demands for a 3.5 per cent pay hike and the creation of the rank of first class firefighter. But Keith said he has been told repeatedly by city officials that there is no money to support these demands.

Both Altman and Keith said today that they believe Keith's letter and the collapse last week of a 10-day sanitation laborers strike have affected the earlier resolve of some firemen to walk off the job.

Altman said previously he believed firemen would vote to strike. However, he said today that he sees only a 50-50 chance of a vote to strike.

Keith said he doesn't believe the men will vote to strike

"I think things have changed a little bit," Altman said this morning. "I couldn't swear—but I think they have weakened."

Altman said he believes some attitudes have changed as a result of the sanitation strike. Some 157 sanitation workers struck July 7 for a 3.5 per cent pay hike. But the city firmly refused the demand, fired the strikers and began hiring replacements. The

strike ended Friday with no gains by the strikers.

The Raleigh Fire Fighters Association (RFFA) claims to represent 270 of the department's 309 employees.

Keith said his main purpose in writing the letter was to insure that every individual fireman had a chance to sit down alone, or with his family, and

See FIREMEN, page 2-A

Reported the RT, Fire Chief Rufus Keith had warned his firefighters that they'll lose their jobs if they go on strike. He said today that he will use a 'city personnel rule' that allows 'suspension or dismissal for participation in any action that disrupts or disturbs operations.' The Chief mailed letters to all firemen on Friday, July 16, 'spelling out what he plans to do if they strike.'

The letter read, in part, 'The purpose of this letter is to make you, as an individual, aware of the seriousness of the act. Simply put—the moment you go out on strike, you are no longer an employee of the City of Raleigh Fire Department. The letter also noted that Chief Keith has empathy for their demands, but he has been told repeatedly by city officials that there's no money for the demands.

Both RFFA spokesman Hubert Altman and Chief Keith said today that they believe the Chief's letter plus the 'collapse last week' of the ten-day sanitation worker strike 'have affected the earlier resolve of some firemen to walk off the job.' [The strike ended Friday with no gains by the strikers.]

Altman said today he saw only a 50-50 chance of a vote to strike, versus his earlier statements where he thought they would fully vote that way. Keith said he didn't believe the men will vote to strike.

Chief Keith said the main purpose of his letter was to 'insure that every individual fireman had a chance to sit down alone, or with his family, and discuss the possible consequences of a strike.' He also told firemen to contact him, the office secretary, or his administrative assistant, to let him know who could be counted on. He said about 40 firemen had responded. And if there was a strike, Chief Keith would use the remaining firemen and call on the 'volunteer firefighters throughout Wake County to provide fire services for the city.' He said 'I can work around this one way or another.' He also said he hadn't made any plans or provisions yet for paying volunteer firefighters, if they were called to provide assistance.

The RFFA members were voting by secret ballot. Two locked boxes were carried around to all fourteen fire stations. After ballots were cast, two men carried the boxes to the next station. Two other men had

keys to the boxes, which would be opened on Tuesday, July 20. And the ballot boxes were taken to each station three times, so RFFA members on each of the three shifts could cast votes.

Text of letter to firemen

This is the text of a letter sent to all Raleigh firemen by Fire Chief Rufus E. Keith, warning them that if they go on strike they will lose their jobs:

Dear Raleigh Firefighter:

I have watched the turn of events among the members of the Raleigh Firefighters Association in recent weeks with a growing concern for the safety of the citizens of Raleigh and the operation of our Fire Department. It is my legal duty as Fire Chief to provide for adequate fire protection for the citizens of Raleigh and I assure you that fire protection will be provided.

I also wish you to know that I have empathy with your request to the City Council for a 3.5 per cent raise and the establishment of the position of First Class Firefighter. I have met

repeatedly with the City Manager in an attempt to make the administration aware of our needs. They have told me that they can see the reasoning behind your requests and job actions to the present but the funding needed is just not available at this time.

I have welcomed the Raleigh Firefighter Association as a method of feedback and as a line of communication. Captain Altman and I have had numerous intense discussions which have enlightened me to the needs and wants of the members of the Association and for that reason I respect and have attempted to implement the requests of the association. However, you must realize that I am the sole person in charge of all personnel and operations of the Fire Department. For this reason, I cannot cater to the

specific needs of the Association because I must represent all employees and not any one group, either a majority or a minority.

I know that each one of you considers it an honor to be a Raleigh Firefighter. The Raleigh Fire Department is the best in the state and ranks at the top in the nation in my opinion. I want to keep it number one in the eyes of our citizens. In recent years, we have seen much improvement in the public opinion of the Raleigh Firefighter as a highly trained professional.

On July 14, a majority of the members of the Raleigh Firefighters Association voted to take a secret ballot of the members of the Association to strike. The purpose of this letter is to make you, as an individual, aware of the serious-

ness of this act. Should the moment you strike, you are no longer an employee of the City of Raleigh Fire Department.

Should you choose to strike:

You are subject to the loss of all benefits entitled to you as a City employee. If you view the attached and realize just how these are, (Keith fits on an attached

I am sure that the Raleigh Firefighter Association will be able to handle the serious act. Let me echo the sentiments. To go on strike is one of the gravest consequences. Do care that you are making this drastic action. It is important to me, my personal contract is also important to the safety of the approximately 145,000 citizens of Raleigh.

**Firemen
vote no
on strike**

1976-07-20 – News & Observer – ‘Fireman Vote Appears Close’

On Tuesday, July 20, the RFFA was concluding three days of balloting on whether to ‘strike for higher wages.’ And a two-thirds majority was required to approve the action. Fire Chief Rufus Keith had warned the firemen that a strike was ‘an action of the gravest consequence’ and all who walked off the job would be fired.

1976-07-21 – Raleigh Times – ‘Firemen vote no on strike’

‘It gives me great pleasure to announce that the outcome of the vote was much less than the two-thirds needed to call for a strike, therefore there will be no strike’ said Hubert Altman to the Raleigh Times. He told the newspaper that 247 of 270 members voted, but did not reveal the exact vote. But he said the votes were ‘strong’ against a strike. And added ‘This is a relief to us as members of the Fire Fighters Association.’ The votes were counted in the RFFA office at 714 W. Johnson Street.

Members planned to meet that that night to 'discuss future activities' and Altman noted 'he knew of no immediate plans or any job action.' Another member of the RFFA executive board, J. C. Munns, 'said strong emphasis will be put on working to form a coalition of all city employees.'

Michael Lass, a representative of the IAFF, 'said he and local board members think the strike vote had a unifying effect on the membership in that everyone shared in the decision-making.' "Nobody wants a strike," he said. "It's an extreme circumstance."

1976-07-22 – Raleigh Times – 'Firemen feel pay demand not worth job loss'

Firemen interviewed after the failed strike vote, taken by the RFFA, said their demands for a 3.5 percent pay hike wasn't worth the risk of getting fired. The RFFA said on Wednesday, July 21, that they didn't receive the necessary two-thirds vote from its 270 members to proceed with a strike. The RFFA did not release the results of the vote.

'I know I got to have a job' said fireman Ernest Bridges, who added he didn't think the demand for the raise was worth the strike. J. C. Munns, a member of the RFAA executive committee, echoed those sentiments.

1976-07-30 – Raleigh Times – 'City vs union – Labor problems far from settled'

City vs. union

Labor problems far from settled


By NICK PETERS and CHRIS SHERMAN
Times staff writers

City officials and restless municipal employees agree that despite the city's success in breaking the recent 10-day sanitation strike, labor problems in Raleigh are far from over. Possible solutions are clouded by charges and countercharges from each side. Both city officials and labor leaders feel that the other's irreconcilable attitude will be to blame if no progress can be made towards resolving the city's complex labor problems in the next six months.

The keystone in the city's

'They can unionize, but we can't bargain or execute contracts with them. It makes it difficult to deal with the beast, and for the beast to deal with management.'

— W. Lynn Bold
Public Works director



repeatedly pointed to state law prohibiting collective bargaining between city employees and municipal governments as justification for its hard line against the sanitation men, and more recently against the threat of a firemen's strike.

City Hall, labor leaders say, has only put out brush fires and is buying time. They say there has been no breach of faith by city employees, as exemplified by the firemen's vote last week not to strike.

City employees are actively seeking a coalition of their departments to lobby and politic more effectively for their needs. And if the city doesn't go farther than the wage study, it

won't be working against each other in their battle with the city.

For the time being "the men will sit back and let it lie," said Altman. "But if they (the employees) continue to be ignored, there'll be stronger action," Altman said.

For their part, city officials realize there is nothing they can do to stop a coalition.

"There is no way council can head off a coalition of city employees if they so decide," said Councilman William R.

A news analysis

[Story is largely a recap.]

'Pending a hoped-for change in the city's attitude, employees are actively seeking a coalition so they won't be working against each in other in their battle with the city.' And the RPPA plans to 'sit back and let it lie,' said Hubert Altman. 'But if [the employees] continue to be ignored, there'll be stronger action.'

October 1976

1976-10-06 – Raleigh Times – '60 jobs going by year's end in city cutback'

1976-10-06 – News & Observer – 'City Wage Hike Still Scheduled'

1976-10-06? – Raleigh Times – '9 fire captain's jobs cut'

On Tuesday, October 5, plans were announced to eliminate nine captain's positions in the fire department. The cuts would result in an annual savings of \$115,000 [and were part of a citywide effort to trim 60 positions, as requested by the City Manager]. The 'cutbacks' were presented to City Council on Tuesday night, October 5, and 'have reduced the possibility for promotion in the department where firemen have said the chances for promotion have been limited.'

The eliminated positions were the captains on the 'three ground ladder trucks' [or service trucks]. The department planned to keep captains on each of the 15 engine companies and two [aerial] ladder companies, for a total of 51 remaining captains.

None of the current captains would lose their rank, but six existing vacant positions will not be filled. Three captains will be promoted to new positions as district chiefs, said Chief Keith. The three new District Chief positions had been sought by Chief Keith to 'increase the supervision of firemen scattered across the city.'

The department's two districts will be reorganized into three districts, with three District Chiefs now on duty each day.

[The captain's positions on the three service truck companies were never restored. The units operated as two-person companies until they were eliminated in the mid-1980s, each replaced with a larger aerial ladder company.]

1976-10-07? – Raleigh Times – 'Promotion lag upsets firemen'

'Administrative budget-trimming has eliminated any hopes of promotion for Raleigh firemen and worsened low morale in the city's troubled fire department, a union spokesman said this morning.'

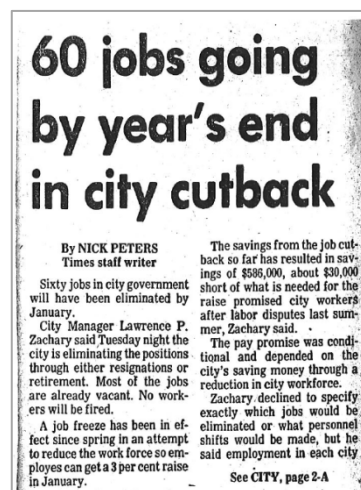
Said Hubert Altman, 'Now there are no promotions whatsoever in sight' because of decisions to eliminate nine captain positions.

The cuts were announced at a City Council meeting on Tuesday night, October 5. At the same time, the City Manager said each city department would have to trim personnel, to pay for a three-percent 'wage hike' for all city employees in January. The City Manager said overall 60 positions would be eliminated, but he didn't release details of the cuts in other departments.

Altman 'charged that the positions were eliminated without any warning' to the RFFA and 'in retaliation for their job actions this summer, when many members 'participated in a sick-in when they didn't report to work, saying they were ill' and also the 'strike vote that didn't pass.'

The elimination of the nine jobs 'provoked such concern in the fire department' that the RFFA executive board held an emergency meeting on Wednesday night, October 6. The union has also scheduled a 'mass meeting of its members' for next Wednesday, to consider what actions to take.

Altman emphasized that the firemen 'want to win public support and indicated that a job action or strike is not likely.'



Though the cuts will save the city money, which will fund three new District Chief positions and help pay for the January raise, Altman dismissed those gains as ‘cutting off your nose to spite your face.’ He claimed the department could save almost as much money by instead ‘not filling 14 existing vacancies for privates, or Fire Fighter I.’ He also ‘contended’ that the extra chiefs were not needed.

‘It seems to me they’re cutting the little man to give to the big man,’ Altman complained.

1976-10-13 – Raleigh Times – ‘Fire chief defends job cuts’

1976-10-14 – Raleigh Times – ‘Fire fighters plan leaflets on job woes’

1976-10-14 – News & Observer – ‘Firemen Protest Cutting of Rank, But Table Action’

On Wednesday night, October 13, RFFA members decided to distribute flyers and possibly return to court to ‘protest a cutback in promotions.’ However, they ‘showed no enthusiasm for a job action’ to press their point. Said spokesman Hubert Altman this morning, ‘the men are pretty well down and out. They don’t know if anything will work.’

The members voted first to ‘tell city officials to keep a proposed three percent raise rather than take away captains’ positions, which the union says offered firemen chances at promotion.’ In a second vote, they changed their decision to ‘continue to press for both a pay hike and more promotions.’

Fire Chief Rufus Keith agreed last week to ‘abolish nine positions for captain, six of them already vacant, as part of a city-wide payroll-trimming’ ordered by the City Manager to ‘pay for a mid-year boost in wages.’

Said Altman, ‘We voted last night to build a case against the city of Raleigh, the biased promotion system and favoritism.’

The members also decided to distribute ‘20,000 leaflets complaining about low morale in the department’ and ‘possibly take new legal action against the department’s promotion system.’

Altman and other firemen were still awaiting a decision in the last lawsuit, contesting that J. C. Munns should have been promoted to Captain. The city’s Civil Service Commission agreed with the union, but city officials had appealed the decision and the case had not been tried again. Noted Raleigh Times on 10/14/76, Munns appealed his ‘lack of promotion’ to the Civil Service Board, claiming that ‘fire department promotions were corrupted by bias.’ Munns won the promotion, but city officials appealed the decision to the state courts. No date had been set for trial.

February 1977

1977-02-15 – Raleigh Times – ‘City job categories face knife in plan’



On Tuesday night, February 15, consultants were planning to recommend to City Council a reduction in the number of job classifications. The study of classifications and pay grew from last year's labor disputes involving firemen, policemen, and sanitation workers.

1977-02-21 – Raleigh Times – ‘Flunkie` Altman now among chiefs’

Captain Hubert Altman was selected for a seat on the city employee credit union board, beating out Public Works Director W. Lynn Beard, John R. Knox of the RPOA, and others. This was the first time that a non-department head was selected for the board. Altman said, of ‘being included with all those department heads,’ that ‘it feels weird being up there with all those people and I’m the only flunkie there.’

1977-02-23 – Raleigh Times – ‘Consultants suggest axing two police jobs’

Private consultants proposed abolishing two ‘merit ranks’ in the Police Department, First Class and Master, held by more than 100 officers. They also recommended that the First Class Firefighter position, sought by firemen, not be adopted.

They were part of recommended job classifications for all city employees, from their study that also included salaries.

Recommendations for pay would be made on March 15.

Then What Happened?

Captain Altman, Chief Keith, the RFFA, and related parties found themselves again in headlines in 1978 and later, for reasons including:

1978 – August – Former city councilman Michael Boyd was elected chairman of the city Civil Service Commission, and began taking steps to take a more independent and active role in city government. A review of the commission by council was conducted in late 1979, prompted in part by their ruling on Hubert Altman (see below). In February 1980, council asked for resignation of three council-appointed commission members, expressing their displeasure with recent commission actions. At issue were complaints by council that the commission had been overstepping its authority.

1979 – July - The Civil Service Commission started hearing a grievance of Altman that he had been denied eligibility for a promotion by Keith, because of his union activities, and thus constituted harassment. Hearings, lawsuits, rulings, and appeals continued until 1986. The findings included that, yes, harassment was demonstrated, and, initially, yes, that he should be promoted. But the latter was later overturned.

1980 – April – Fire Chief Rufus Keith created a task force to involve ‘rank and file’ members in the writing of new promotional policies. But at the first meeting, minutes after starting, most of the attending members walked out, objecting to Keith’s decision to add two of his own appointees to the task force, which is otherwise elected by department members. Six of the nine members walked out, but one later rejoined.

1980 – April – The News & Observer reported on two civil service appeals that had proved costly to the city. One was to a former ‘emergency radio dispatcher,’ awarded an additional 14 months of back pay, after the commission ordered his reinstatement after being fired. The award was appealed in court and the city lost. The second ruling was for fire department Captain James Munns, for back pay after the commission ruled that he had been unfairly denied a promotion. Munns was promoted, but the back pay award was delayed due to disagreements on how the interest in the award was computed.

1980 – June – The RFFA called on council to give firefighters a 15 percent pay hike instead of the 10 percent raised proposed by city budget officials. They also requested that salaries be raised in the lower ranks, to reduce overlap with the higher ranks. These overlaps occurred after the creation of the First Class Fire Fighter position in December 1978. Said RFFA president J. C. Munns, the firefighters assumed that when the new position was created, the other salary ranges would be adjusted accordingly. ‘We’re just asking them to start working on it,’ Munns said. ‘We realize all the overlap can’t be accomplished in one year.’ At the request of council, the city was preparing a study of the pay ranges of both fire and police.

1982 – October – Chief Keith was charged with favoritism by Driver Michael Murray, who tested to be promoted to Captain. He said he had the highest composite rank among candidates, but the fire chief passed him over. The fire chief denied the allegations. ‘I followed the procedure all the way through,’ Keith said. ‘The fire chief selects the best one for the position. And I’ll defend what I did all the way through.’ Murray had appealed the decision to the Civil Service Commission. Murray said that Keith ‘exceeded the department’s formal promotional procedures by holding interviews with six candidates and conducting an informal poll of the department’s ten district chiefs, procedures that the fire chief usually does not use.’ Said Murray, ‘I feel he did it to eliminate me.’ He also speculated that since Keith announced his coming resignation, effective November 30, he wanted to promote certain members before leaving the department.

Related Reading

History of Raleigh Fire Department Labor Related Actions, Activities

<https://legeros.com/blog/raleigh-labor-history/>

The Hubert Altman Affair – Research Notes

<https://www.legeros.com/ralwake/raleigh/history/writing/hubert-altman-affair.pdf>



City panel hears firefighter's complaint

By BRUCE SKEFF

The Raleigh Civil Service Commission began a hearing Monday of a grievance by the spokesman for the Raleigh Fire Fighters Association who contends he has been made ineligible for one of the department's top administrative jobs.

An attorney for Fire Captain Robert V. Altman, executive secretary of the fire fighters' association, told the commission that because of his union activity, Altman had been transferred within the department against his will and kicked out of the running for the city's vacant fire marshal post.

Altman was the chief spokesman for the local firefighters association in 1976, when the group's protest over low pay culminated in a one-day "sick out." June 26, when three fire stations were shut down and the rest operated on skeleton crews while dozens of firefighters stood home.

A large audience attended the hearing, including dozens of Raleigh firefighters, Walter Hooty, state AFL-CIO president, and representatives from the state and national firefighters unions. No action was taken by the commission, and the hearing is expected to be resumed sometime in August.

Altman had begun a protest in 1977 when Fire Chief Rufus E. Keith transferred him from a firefighting unit into the department's inspection and fire prevention bureau. He dropped that grievance before the procedure reached a point where action could be taken.

Altman protested again last April when Keith moved him out of the bureau and back into a firefighting unit. Both times he complained that the transfers constituted

harassment and punishment for his union affiliation.

Both transfers, Keith testified Monday, were made as part of a new training program in which Altman was the first participant. The program was designed to rotate captains from firefighting units into the fire prevention bureau and then back out again. Their fire inspection and prevention training would then be put to use in the field, Keith said.

When the job of fire marshal — who heads the fire prevention bureau and is one of three assistant fire chiefs directly under Keith — became vacant early this year, Altman told Keith he wanted it, Keith said.

Keith testified he told Altman he was inclined not to promote him to the high post because of his part in the 1976 "sick-out" and his subsequent activities as spokesman in the union. But, Keith continued, he never ruled Altman out for the post and told him he would consider his application for the job, which is still vacant.

Fire captain says he feared firing

By SUSAN SPENCE MOSE

Raleigh Fire Capt. Robert V. Altman testified Thursday that he recently spoke to the commission with Fire Chief Rufus E. Keith during the past three years because he feared he would be fired for union activities.

Altman, a leader of the Raleigh Fire Fighters Association, said he had been told by Keith that he was not to be promoted to the vacant fire marshal post because of his union activities. Altman said he was not promoted to the vacant fire marshal post because of his union activities.

Altman said he was not promoted to the vacant fire marshal post because of his union activities. Altman said he was not promoted to the vacant fire marshal post because of his union activities.

Altman said he was not promoted to the vacant fire marshal post because of his union activities. Altman said he was not promoted to the vacant fire marshal post because of his union activities.

Altman said he was not promoted to the vacant fire marshal post because of his union activities. Altman said he was not promoted to the vacant fire marshal post because of his union activities.



Ruling affects fire department

Altman promotion ordered

By BRUCE SKEFF

The Raleigh Civil Service Commission ordered the city Tuesday to promote Fire Captain Robert V. Altman to city fire marshal, saying Altman had been denied the post because of his union activity.

The commission ruled Altman's claim that he was discriminated against because Altman served as spokesman for the Raleigh Fire Fighters Association.

Jobs directly under Keith — the commission ruled — Altman's activities had the best qualifications for the job but that his union activity "had seriously prejudiced his chances for promotion."

The commission said the city was to promote Altman to the vacant fire marshal post. The city is expected to appeal the commission ruling to Wake County Superior Court.

The ruling came after more than 10 hours of a hearing that had stretched from July 1 to July 10.

The commission also ordered that Altman be paid the difference between his current salary and the fire marshal's salary and the fire marshal's salary and the fire marshal's salary.



Robert V. Altman

Altman promotion overturned

By RONALD KEED

Saying the Raleigh Civil Service Commission had "grossly exceeded its authority," Wake Superior Court Judge James H. Poe ruled yesterday a commission order that the city promote Fire Capt. Robert V. Altman and pay him up to \$100,000 in damages.

Earlier the commission's order was supported by evidence and went beyond the commission's powers.

But Poe directed the city to re-advertise the position internally.

He said the city should have the fire marshal appointed on "objective findings" and must not discriminate against anyone, particularly Altman, on the basis of race, religion or union affiliation.

In ordering Keith to give Altman the job of fire marshal — one of three assistant chiefs

