

Strategist brought in to help resolve Raleys' union-management strife

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

After a week of strike talk and increasing bitterness, Northern California supermarket workers have called in a strategist from their union's international headquarters to help with stalled contract negotiations.

William McDonough, director of bargaining for the United Food and Commercial Workers, came to the Bay Area on Monday at the invitation of the three UFCW locals in Northern California.

Union officials and labor experts said it's common to bring in reinforcements when negotiations aren't going well. The Northern California supermarket talks have dragged on since last fall.

"This is getting late in the game in the bargaining, so it's not unusual," said Mike Henneberry, a spokesman for UFCW Local 5 in San Jose. He said McDonough helped the union obtain a new contract in Southern California last fall after eight months of negotiations.

McDonough's arrival in Northern California followed one of the most difficult weeks yet in the contract talks.

First, Raley's workers voted to authorize a strike against the West Sacramento grocery chain. Then, a three-hour bargaining session Friday ended with the UFCW and Raley's seemingly farther apart than ever.

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