



Opinion: Letters

Letters to the editor – 7/25/05

By: Readers of the North County Times and The Californian

Anti-union nurses supported

Re: the July 13 story, "Anti-union employees rally at Scripps Encinitas."

I was one of many who attended the rally. I came to support my fellow nurses and health care professionals as they rallied to express their desire for change. The atmosphere of this event was positive and professional, so unlike the pro-union rallies nurses have grown accustomed to seeing these past several years.

The article mentions that the union is holding out for a closed shop and pay based on seniority. Considering that the union collects dues from all the nurses, albeit at a reduced rate for non-union nurses, asking for a closed shop just appears greedy to me. If the nursing union is truly concerned about the improvement of the profession and quality of care, then they would advocate for raises that reward the nurse that is good at her job, expands her knowledge and skills, and stretches to exceed her own personal best.

Your reporter also makes it appear that it somehow is inappropriate for nurses from other hospitals to come to show their solidarity with the Scripps Encinitas nurses. On the contrary, this show of support is to be celebrated. Let's not forget that the nursing unions bus nurses and non-nurses pretending to be nurses into their demonstrations all the time.

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Anti-union employees rally at Scripps Encinitas

By: ADAM KAYE - Staff Writer

ENCINITAS ---- Opponents of the statewide nurses union added their voices to a long-standing labor dispute at an upbeat rally Tuesday at Scripps Memorial Hospital, Encinitas.

The demonstration drew more than 100 hospital workers. Some of them wore smocks, hoisted signs and encouraged their colleagues to reject representation from the California Nurses Association during a planned vote July 27 and 28.

Scripps Encinitas' nurses voted to unionize in 2003 and since then have failed to negotiate a contract.

Since the administration made its final offer in February, pro-union nurses have staged one-day strikes in April and May, filed complaints over patient care to state authorities, and protested the issuance of facility bonds to the Scripps Health system.

About 250 nurses are employed at the 140-bed Encinitas hospital, which is one of six in the county run by the private system.

Union negotiators have demanded a "closed shop," or mandatory union membership, for Encinitas nurses, a salary schedule based upon seniority and the formation of a nurses committee.

"All the nurses are asking for is a fair contract here," union spokesman David Glenn said Tuesday when contacted before the rally.

Hospital officials have said salaries in Encinitas are competitive and that a patient-care committee already exists.

Some employees Tuesday said they objected to paying dues of up to \$100 per month and to the negative publicity the union has attracted.

Union pressure also has created divisions in the workplace, a veteran nurse said.

"I've seen (colleagues) who were best friends and had taken vacations together and now won't talk to each other," said Tracee Gamboa, a 17-year nurse in Encinitas.

An organizer said about one in five members of the audience worked as nurses at Scripps Encinitas. Doctors and other hospital workers participated. Anti-union nurses from other hospitals attended and some of them made speeches.

"Professional nurses don't cut down other nurses," said Suzanne Geimer, a nurse from Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. "We respect each other."

A group calling itself Concerned Scripps Physicians secured the Bert Long Lutheran Field to stage the event. The field is toward the rear of the campus and for the most part out of public view.

Union demonstrations, by contrast, have been staged for maximum visibility on busy Santa Fe Drive.

"This is for the nurses," organizer and Encinitas nurse Russell Fagnant said. "This is to rally nurses within the organization."

It is unclear if Glenn, the union representative, attended the demonstration. Beforehand he said the event "had the management's hands all over it."

"Scripps is ... getting in the middle of it," Glenn said. "The idea of this anti-union rally is to give the idea that there's more support (for rejecting the union) than there is."

Opponents of the union have launched a Web site, www.NotInOurHouse.org, which Internet records show is registered to a Chris Quattrino. A San Diego address is listed for the site, and so is the main telephone number for the Encinitas hospital.

Fagnant said the designer of the Web page is an employee of Scripps' marketing department who created the Web designs on his own time.

Union opponents hoisted signs that said "CNA go away!" and urged their colleagues to spread the word about voting down representation.

In May, the union alleged unsafe patient care at Scripps Encinitas in a complaint filed with the state Department of Health Services. A spokeswoman from that agency said Tuesday that an investigation is ongoing and that she did not know when it would end.

Also in May, because of the labor impasse, the union objected to the granting of \$295 million in facility bonds to the Scripps chain.

The California Health Facilities Financing Authority, however, approved issuing the revenue bonds on behalf of Scripps Health.

About \$17 million in bond revenue is earmarked for a parking structure and expanded emergency department at Scripps Encinitas.

Susan Severns, a secretary at the hospital for 19 years, would be ineligible to vote later this month but said it's time for the union to go.

"We're tired of the negativity," she said.

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