

# Protester: Fired For Talking

■ *Man hired by carpenters union  
quoted in the Saturday Journal*

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Hired protestor Marcelo Vargas was told his services were no longer needed Monday morning by the carpenters union organizing several protests around town.

Vargas, who had been holding up a sign by First Baptist Church on Broadway and Central NW last week, was quoted Saturday in a **Journal** article about the protests. He said he was fired for speaking to the press and now has no work to help feed his seven kids and a baby on the way.

"This is ridiculous. Basically, they fired me for doing my job," he said Monday as he made his way around town filling out applications for work.

He said he got a call from his boss on Monday asking him if he had spoken to the **Journal** and he said yes. The official told him all picket workers had been told to stay quiet about the protests — not just to the press but to anyone. Vargas said no one told him that.

"I don't think that was a reasonable explanation," he said. "I mean I am out there protesting. That's the whole point. People ask us questions."

Justin Weidner, chief of staff for the Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters in Los Angeles — which has organized several protests around town for Carpenters Local 1319 — said he couldn't comment on personnel issues or say specifically what workers in Albuquerque are instructed to do as far as explaining the cause behind the protest.

"We try to encourage them to communicate our position through our handbill so the message doesn't get confused," he said.

Labor dispute signs have popped up around town over the past three weeks in front of several businesses. People are hired to hold the banners and hand out yellow fliers depicting a rat in a house eating the American flag, talking erosion of wages. The union has not provided details about the protests and how sites are chosen.