

Contractor To Counter Protesters

Lone Sun Official To Hold Own Sign

BY PHIL PARKER
Journal Staff Writer

Protesters spent much of Wednesday afternoon marching in an oval on the sidewalk outside the Hotel St. Francis at 210 Don Gaspar Ave., chanting

"Lone Sun's a rat!" and holding signs reading "Lone Sun Unfair."

The president of Lone Sun Builders Inc., Chet Karnas, begs to differ, and today he intends to beat (or, at least, meet) the protesters at their own game. He said Wednesday he plans to drive this morning from Albuquerque to Santa Fe, where he'll stand outside the Hotel St. Francis as well,

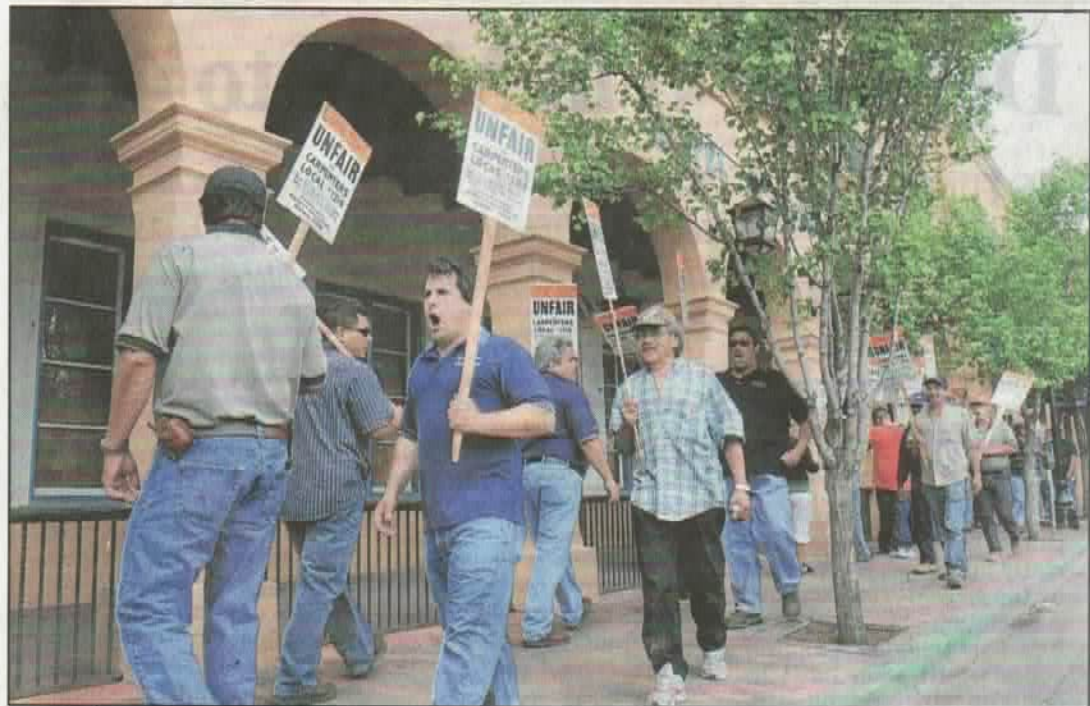
with a banner trumpeting his construction company's "Great wages and benefits." He'll also be handing out fliers that begin: "The real truth behind the lies."

"I'm trying to take a stand," Karnas said. "My intent is for these unions to go find true, real rat outfits that don't pay wages and have benefits. They shouldn't use these tactics against good people."

The protesters' signs said they were backed by Carpenters Local 1319. Three men watching from across the street said they were running the protest, but refused to give their names.

None of the protesters would speak on the record with the **Journal** either, though several yelled toward a reporter,

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EDDIE MOORE/JOURNAL

Some 30 union employees and volunteers for Carpenters Local 1319 picket the Hotel St. Francis on Wednesday, complaining that Lone Sun Builders Inc. hires non-union labor.

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"Those guys always lie!" and "Don't lie!"

Lone Sun is a subcontractor doing renovations within the Hotel St. Francis. Karnas said he does not hire union workers because "I spent 21 years developing a benefits package I'm extremely proud of."

Those benefits include, he said, paying 95 percent of single employees' health care premiums (75 percent of their family plan), an average wage higher for tradesmen than non-union competitors, a 401(k) program with matching contributions and more.

"I've contacted union representatives many times," said Lar Thomas, a lawyer for Gerald Martin General Contrac-

tor, the company that hired Lone Sun for the St. Francis job. "The only response I get from the union reps on the phone is talking points. They have no specific details, they don't know if workers like their rate of pay, they just say everyone should be union."

One of the men who organized the protest told the *Journal*, "It's very, very simple. What we're about is getting folks a decent living wage, health care, a pension. ... We talk to employees, that's where we get our information."

The same man said, "We've had no citations by the police department, no violence and no one arrested."

Thomas disputed the second claim. Earlier in the day, he said, "There was an individu-

al who's purportedly a union representative who decided to step on the foot of the superintendent on the job as a means to press his point."

Thomas said Gerald Martin, the general contractor, intends to press charges.

None of the protesters holding "Lone Sun Unfair" signs actually works for Lone Sun. The supervisors said they were split between volunteers and construction union staff.

The *Journal* reported on similar protests in Albuquerque in April, also organized by Carpenters Local 1319, outside a Baptist church and a Sunflower Market. One of the protesters told the *Journal* he was being paid \$10 an hour to be there. He was subsequently fired for speaking with the media.