

A4 CENTRAL ILLINOIS/STATE

Decatur, Illinois · Friday, December 3, 1999

## JOBS: Company says helping laid-off employees a top priority

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numbers of people laid off but not from occupations such as these."  
Throughout the process of merging Illinois Power's parent company, Illinois Corp., with Dynegy Inc. of Houston, Texas, among the top considerations has been how to deal with employees, said Shirley Swarthout, a spokeswoman for the utility.  
Illinois Power is providing severance packages to some employees, early retirement to others and has hired an outside firm to assist employees with their job searches. Some employees may relocate to Houston.  
The company also is planning a job fair for next year to assist employees with finding new jobs with local employers.  
Among the largest local work force reductions since 1980 was the change that occurred at the Caterpillar Inc. assembly plant.

"At our high point there were about 4,500 union members," said Karen Verhusen, president of United Auto Workers Union Local 751, which represents the workers. "In 1980 there was a big layoff. At one point there were about 950 laid off," including herself.  
Many of those laid-off workers never returned, although some did because of attrition, Verhusen said. Today, about 1,350 hourly workers are at the plant, she said.  
In the past, when industrial workers were laid off, they either got another job or returned to work for the work force, Sorenson said. While the strong economy makes it a great time to look for a job, the relocated employees normally will not start at the same income levels as those for the jobs they left, she said.  
"We met with some people from the Illinois Power human resources department in September," Soren-

son said. "I felt most of the people affected are very employable. Once we receive notice from the state that Illinois Power has filed a formal layoff notice with it, we'll get involved immediately. We'll contact the company and offer our rapid response assistance."  
Two other local layoffs were close to the situation at Illinois Power, Sorenson said. One was when Tate & Lyle PLC acquired the A.E. Saylor Mfg. Co. and a lot of higher-level positions were eliminated, and the other was when the Adolf Meyer Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Center was closed by the state, she said.  
"When a person has worked for a company for many years, and fully expected to retire from that firm but now finds they cannot, that can be as devastating to a highly skilled and credentialed person as is the loss of a factory job to an hourly worker," Sorenson said. "Those peo-

ple probably have a house, two cars, maybe a boat and face a change in their lifestyle that is emotionally trying."  
James Finn of The Finn Group, a job services and consulting firm in Decatur, said he still encounters people who believe they will always have a job with their longtime employer. He said people need to realize that job loss can happen to anyone.  
"It's often a significant grief experience," Finn said. "There is denial and anger that occurs when they have grief. You need to try to be aware of things so you can be prepared if that happens to you. Not only do you feel loss and anger but, depending on the number of years of employment, you can feel betrayed."  
Younger people he interviews laugh when he tells them they can have a good career with a single firm, Finn said.

"They've seen their parents, aunts, uncles or neighbors downsized," he said. "The 'job for life' idea does not connect with them."  
Some companies do a great job of helping their former employees figure out what to do next, Finn said. People sent to his firm for counseling have their strengths assessed and efforts are made to help channel them into new career paths where their interests lie.  
"Often there is no lack of possibilities but the people are so stunned they don't know how to make the transition," Finn said. "The stress on a family can be immense, not just the financial issues but the emotional ones as well."  
John D. "Jack" Strong, retired president of the defunct Federal Kemper Insurance Co., once a large local employer, said he helps Illinois Power is doing its best to help the displaced workers find new jobs but by not making contacts with

other local employers but also providing mental health counseling.  
Strong retired when another insurance firm purchased Kemper, then closed down its operations. He was among the architects of the original Decatur Advantage, a community improvement program that was geared to improving the local quality of life following the severe economic downturn of the early 1980s.  
"In the Decatur Advantage, we said nobody is a little bit unemployed," Strong said. "People in that situation need a lot of emotional support. To step up and ask for that support is a very difficult thing to do."  
"I hope in the Christian spirit we recognize that these (Illinois Power) people are hurting. It's a real shock for them. I hope we can say we gave them our love and support. That support at times can be just listening."

## SURREAL: Protesters claim victory

**Continued from A1**  
I waited two hours to get in, then another hour inside before I gave up and left. The ceremony was eventually canceled around noon because many top dignitaries never arrived.  
And so, the protesters claimed victory and international headlines to focus American and global scrutiny on the WTO for the first time in its existence.  
The rest of Tuesday was chaos. Nothing that I had planned to write about was happening; no one knew when it would end.  
Outside the Washington State Convention and Trade Center, war raged in the streets. Rubber bullets flew, clouds of tear gas filled the streets. A crowd now estimated at 40,000 showed its displeasure with the WTO.  
Most of them were peaceful demonstrators in favor of labor unions. They took advantage of the crowd and began smashing windows, spraying graffiti and, in some cases, looting.  
I spent some time talking to protesters but stayed indoors when the bullets started flying.  
On Wednesday I spent an hour chasing bad information about where President Clinton would speak. When I finally arrived at the correct location, I was stopped by a sneering Secret Service agent who informed me that I was not getting in.  
What are the protesters so angry about?  
They are angry that the WTO does not force other countries to accept U.S. laws protecting wildlife. They are angry that WTO policies tend to export high-paying manufacturing jobs to other countries. They are angry that U.S. corporations seem to have more influence over WTO decisions than average people.  
And, by and large, they are right.  
Anyone who spends a week on the inside at the WTO sees the trade association dinners attended by big business and trade negotiators. Yes, the ministers consult other sources, but the environmentalists and consumer groups have far less cash to throw around.  
For instance, the American Farm Bureau Federation held a reception Wednesday that was also funded by American agribusiness corporations. It was also attended by trade ministers. The sumptuous buffet included smoked salmon, capers, brie cheese, roasted vegetables, a dizzying variety of pate, roasted pork, chicken and

## PROCESS: Biotech issue uncertain

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Lamy said the dichotomy of trying to accomplish secret negotiations while being transparent is causing confusion.  
For example, the European Union on Tuesday agreed to discuss forming a working group on biotechnology in WTO talks, when it had previously opposed such a group. WTO officials said the outcome of the issue is not certain.  
Even some European Union member nations were incensed that the issue was broached. Barsheley defended the conference and the WTO negotiating structure. She said all nations are now invited to take part in negotiations.  
"We've come a long way. It used to be that just 20 or 30 countries would be involved in making the decisions," she said. "I can't imagine how a country finally included in negotiations would be unhappy with the transparency of it."

But there are still negotiations regarding key issues that take place between two or three countries. Members of the international activist group Friends of the Earth said in a news conference Thursday that developing nations still felt left out.  
The organization has established five working groups to tackle issues. The agriculture group is chaired by Trade and Industry Minister George Yeo of Singapore.  
A key issue in the negotiations is the reduction of export subsidies. The United States and many other countries are arguing for the elimination of export subsidies, while the EU adamantly opposed to any more reductions.  
U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman said Thursday that the working text of the agriculture document still contains the words "reduction" and "elimination."

## Eight protest lack of action on gay rights bill

**By ANTHONY MAN**  
M&S Strategist/Reporter Staff  
SPRINGFIELD — A small number of gay-rights activists protested Thursday at the Illinois Capitol as the legislature finished its fall session without voting on legislation that would ban discrimination based on sexual orientation.  
Eight lesbians and gay men spent about 90 minutes in the Capitol and left quietly after an exchange with secretary of state's policy. The police got involved after protesters chanted "shame" at state Reps. Timothy J. Johnson, R-Urbana, and Rick Winkler, R-Champaign.  
The representatives oppose the legislation that would add sexual orientation to the state Human Rights Act, the law banning discrimination on the basis of race, gender and religion. It would apply to employers, most landlords, financial institutions and public accommodations such as hotels and restaurants.  
Mary Lee Sargent of Champaign, who was involved in early 1980s demonstrations in favor of the Equal Rights Amendment, was a leader of Thursday's group. She reminded Thursday with the police who were in charge Thursday. Several of them were junior officers during the ERA protest days.  
They threatened the group with arrest for demonstrating without a permit. Sargent said they might come back next year, ready to get arrested, if it would help generate attention for their cause.  
Activists at one point thought there would be a vote on the gay rights legislation during the fall session. Rick Garcia of Equality Illinois said backers would not ask for a vote unless they are positive they have enough votes for House passage.



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## FIGHT: Bystanders kicked and punched

**Continued from A1**  
low investigator Detective Patrick McElroy showed little confusion about who was in the fight. But it left many questions about what actions each took during the brawl.  
According to the officers, accompanying Howell to the game were Spates and six others neither charged by police nor expelled from the school district.  
With Honorable at the fight were Carson, Fuller, Terrence Jarrett, Bruce "B.J." Mann, Errol Bond and Richard Palmer, the officers testified.  
On the stand, Taylor said the Sept. 17 fight appeared to have begun when the two groups met on the north end of the track near the Eisenhower bleachers.  
It was Spates, Taylor testified, who threw the first punch, directed against Mann. (Taylor said it was unclear whether Spates was verbally provoked into doing so.)  
Howell and Palmer quickly rushed to the brawl's aid, Taylor said, at which point the melee grew chaotic and swelled to 15 to 20 participants.  
As Howell tried to flee several attackers, Taylor said, the fight moved into the stands. Taylor said a half-dozen bystanders sustained kicks and punches as the brawl made their way through the crowd and after Howell.  
It was during this part of the fight that amateur video captured the action. The fight eventually was played on national television.  
Bond, Mann, Fuller, Carson, Jarrett and Honorable all were expelled for two years. The Decatur school board allowed Howell to withdraw before he was expelled.  
Their expulsions drew the attention of the local

Rainbow/PUSH Coalition and subsequently touched off two weeks of negotiations, demonstrations and counterdemonstrations in Decatur, drawing Jackson, the Ku Klux Klan and others. The school board later voted to reduce the expulsions to a year.  
The expelled students (except Mann) have sued in federal court to overturn the board's decision and reinstate them in regular school.  
A preliminary hearing is held to determine whether there is "probable cause" against a defendant, giving the state the go-ahead to prepare for trial. Prosecutors typically show probable cause with little complication. Many defendants waive the preliminary hearing and let the judge set a trial date.  
No trial date is set for the four defendants, however. Pressed for time, Macon County Circuit Judge Jerry L. Patton told the lawyers he was watching the clock and would cut the hearing short. He halted it during cross-examination of McElroy and recessed the hearing until next Thursday.  
Assistant Macon County State's Attorney Scott Ruster said it is unusual for a preliminary hearing to be recessed and held over.  
"I'm sorry it was continued," said Mark Lyon, a Chicago lawyer representing the four defendants, with colleagues Ruth Walden Walker of Decatur and Ronald Draper of Chicago.  
"I'd rather have had a decision today," Lyon said. "And I hope that on Thursday, Dec. 9, the judge remembers all the good things said about my client."  
Draper said he, Walker and Lyon are, for now, representing the four defendants collectively. Who will represent the defendants individually at trial, he said, will be determined later.

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