STRIKERS, PRODUCERS TALK

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nine hours of talks, but left the door open for a recall of both sides at an undetermined later date.

"The talks were very businesslike and went pretty much as we expected," said Ira Sheppard, a negotiator for the advertisers.

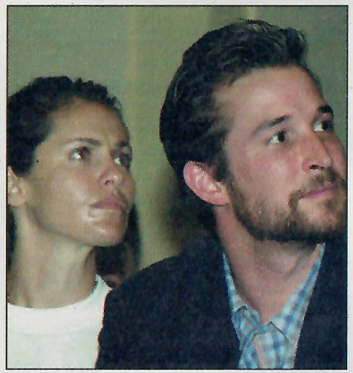
The talks were held at the Sheraton Manhattan in New York at the behest of federal mediators. Both sides aired specifics of negotiating positions as a possible prelude to restarting formal negotiations.

More talks had been tentatively scheduled for today, but mediators apparently decided they had obtained enough information to put the process on hold for now. Sheppard said the decision to forgo talks today should not be taken as a negative indication, adding, "It's difficult to read much into the situation."

Sheppard said most of Tuesday's talks involved mediators meeting with each side rather than face-to-face talks between the two sides. "Everyone has been very cordial to each other," he added.

The actors were repped by Screen Actors Guild president William Daniels, SAG chief negotiator John McGuire, SAG 11th VP David Jolliffe, American Federation of Television & Radio Artists prexy Shelby Scott and AFTRA chief negotiator Mathis Dunn.

Observers believe that the strike, now in its 45th day, could last for several more months if mediators cannot convince both sides to compromise from their militant public positions.



Jim Ruymen

Amy Brenneman and Noah Wyle attend a rally in support of the SAG/ AFTRA strike Tuesday in L.A.

To pressure advertisers, about 1,000 union members attended a raucous rally at SAG's L.A. headquarters Tuesday with fiery speeches by several dozen high-profile members, many of whom stressed the crucial difference commercials pay makes for struggling actors.

Academy Award winner Richard Dreyfuss said the strike is being closely watched by studios and producers who want to low-ball actors in next year's negotiations on the SAG/ AFTRA television-theatrical contract, which expires in July 2001.

"If we weaken now, they will expect us to weaken next year," he said. "This industry is squeezing those who can least afford it. How can we be offered pay cuts in this robust economy?" Advertisers have insisted they can no longer afford to pay residuals for network ads.

Steve Allen, who received a standing ovation, stressed that actors are asking for fair compensation in light of growing corporate profits. "Actors are not asking for any special favors," he said. "They are asking only for social justice."

Other speakers included Noah Wyle, Elliott Gould, Amy Brenneman, Tony Danza, Valerie Harper, Buddy Hackett, Billy Baldwin, Joe Pantoliano, Alfre Woodard, Harry Hamlin, Tyne Daly and Sally Kirkland. The unions will hold a noon rally today in Gotham's Bryant Park with Susan Sarandon, Oliver Platt, Lauren Bacall, Linda Fiorentino and Judd Hirsch expected to attend.

Russians arrest top b'caster

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In recent months, Gusinsky has been feuding with President Vladimir Putin's administration. The tycoon has alleged the Kremlin is persecuting him because it wants to crack down on independent news media.

Gusinsky's Media-Most holding company is one of Russia's largest media groups and is widely considered the most outspoken. NTV's satirical puppet show "Kukli" savages Putin and other top officials every week, enraging officials.

Reaction from the news outlets

PLAYERS

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1997 pic "187," is set as the female lead opposite Rob Lowe and James Coburn in the HBO feature "Proximity" for helmer Scott Ziehl. Rowan is simultaneously shooting the Showtime miniseries "It's a Girl Thing" with Mia Farrow and Stockard Channing. She's repped by Writers & Artists and manager Michael P. Levine of Levine Management.

■



Hicks

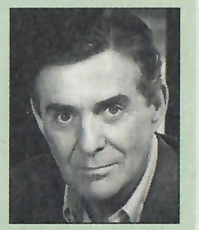
Catherine Hicks, a series regular on the WB's "7th Heaven," has signed to star opposite Mark Harmon in the CBS telepic "For All Time." She's repped by the Gersh Agency and manager Magrit Polak.

■

Tyler Christopher, one of the stars of Black Hawk Entertainment's feature "Catfish in Black Bean Sauce," has nabbed the lead in Winding Road Entertainment's gender-bending feature "Face the Music." Christopher, who recurred on the NBC skein "The Pretender," is repped by Paradigm and Linda Reitman Management.

Also set to "Face the Music" is **Jill Ritchie**, last seen in the Warner Bros. comedy "Ready to Rumble." She's repped by Coast to Coast Talent Agency and managed by Rigbert-Roberts-Rugolo.

■



Harrington

Emmy-winner **Pat Harrington** ("One Day at a Time") will join Ice T and Tom Arnold in the indie feature "Ablaze." Harrington is repped by the Barry Freed Co. and managed by Bash-Selner Entertainment.

■

Teen actor **Tyler Hynes**, who co-stars with C. Thomas Howell in the syndicated television series "Amazon," has joined the cast of Disney's "The Other Me." Hynes is repped in Los Angeles by Gold/Marshak/Liedtke and in New York by Bret Adams.

■

Newcomer **Alba Albanese** has been added to the extensive ensemble cast of exec producer Martin Scorsese's feature "Deuces Wild," which stars Matt Dillon, Frankie Muniz, Deborah Harry and Fairuza Balk. Albanese is repped by Craig Emanuel and Eric Hyam at Loeb & Loeb.