

Metropolitan Timothy, secretary of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate (center) and a group of nuns and priests look up into the newly-renovated rotunda of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher yesterday.

(Brian Hendler)

Holy Sepulcher cupola unveiled after 68 years under wraps

IN what Jerusalem Christian officials described as an unprecedented event, members of the three major historic churches gathered to pray together in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher to celebrate the dedication of a new cupola over the tomb of Jesus.

With Israeli and Palestinian officials sitting on either side, the Greek Orthodox and Armenian patriarchs, and Franciscan monks, representing the Catholic Church, each recited prayers. Choirs from the three churches also took part.

For the first time since 1929, when the last of many earthquakes and fires ravaged the ancient church, erected in 335 by Emperor Constantine, the scaffolding under the cupola was cleared away and light streamed over the edicula covering the tomb itself.

However, the cooperation between three churches was as impressive as the inside of the dome itself. In the past, they have often been at loggerheads over their respective rights to the church they share.

"We all sacrificed a lot, in comfort and in spirit," said Metropolitan Timothy, secretary of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate.

The three church leaders, he said, had bypassed traditional procedures and given up some of their authority to accomplish a task which otherwise would have taken forever, he said.

He added that never before in recorded history had the ancient church witnessed such a ceremony.

HAIM SHAPIRO

in which all three churches took part. Archbishop Gurig Kapikian of the Armenian Patriarchate agreed that the ceremony was unprecedented. "It was a first," he said.

The donor, George Doty, a Roman Catholic investment banker from Rye, New York, whose gift of almost

US Israel Bonds workers on strike

MARILYN HENRY

NEW YORK

TWO union locals representing some 300 workers at Israel Bonds have gone on strike in the US after the two sides failed to reach an agreement on a contract that expired Tuesday night.

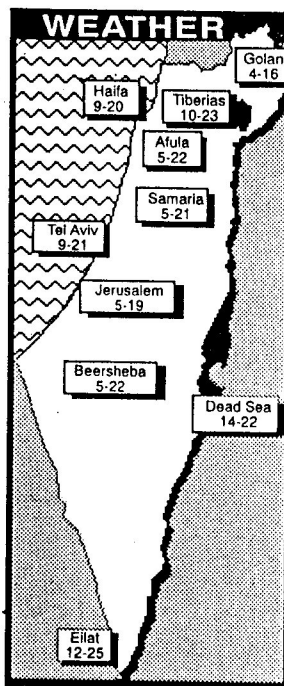
About two dozen employees picketed Bonds' Manhattan headquarters yesterday, shouting, "No contract, no work."

"The strike is a situation where nobody wins," said Natan Sharony, the head of Bonds, whose three-year stint in the US ends this week.

He said he thought an agreement could be reached "very soon." At issue are a salary increase and the amount that workers would contribute toward their medical insurance. Each side said yesterday that the other group was not prepared to compromise and they are not talking.

"We were prepared to compromise, but they were adamant, inflexible," said one union leader.

That view was disputed by Sharony, who will be succeeded next week by Gideon Patt. There are two percentage points separating the sides' positions on a wage increase. "Tell me, that is an unreachable gap?" Sharony asked.



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by

Judy Siegel-Itzkovitch

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