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Lights. Industrial action ! Jan 20th 2005 | HOLLYWOOD From The Economist print edition A strike looms in Hollywood IS

HOLLYWOOD , so accustomed to luvvy-duvvy self-congratulation (this month the Golden Globes , next month the Oscars) , about to indulge in a hardball labour dispute ?

Americas 500-or-so casting directors and associates-the unsung people-brokers who select actors for a films director or producer-are threatening to strike if the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) refuses to grant them union recognition and health and pension benefits. Since the AMPTP represents the big studios and , by extension , big corporations such as General Electric and Viacom , it might seem an unequal contest-except that the Casting Society of America (CSA) , representing 368 of the casting directors , has the backing of the 1.4m-strong , much feared International Brotherhood of Teamsters. The Teamsters represent some 4 , 100 studio drivers , location managers and location scouts , and their refusal to cross picket lines would be hard to ignore. In other words , the AMPTP has a bit of a headache , made worse by the need this week to resume negotiations for a new three-year contract with the 98 , 000-member Screen Actors Guild-brilliantly satirised recently in the movie "Team America"-and the 80 , 000-strong American

Federation of Television & Radio Artists. Even so , the studios are not about to admit defeat. In an informal meeting with the CSA last week , the AMPTP offered to provide health and pension benefits ("the studios are very sympathetic , " says one studio insider) , but remained adamantly opposed to unionisation. Its position ahead of a meeting scheduled for early next month is that the casting directors are independent contractors : if they form a collective bargaining unit they will automatically be in breach of federal and state antitrust laws-and the Teamsters will be guilty of inducing them to breach their contracts with the studios. Yet virtually every other group in Hollywood , from scriptwriters to costume designers , belongs to a guild or union that negotiates working conditions. Moreover , as the CSA pointed out late last week in an advertisement in the trade press , "almost all other groups , including actors , directors , writers , drivers , location managers , production office co-ordinators , grips , electricians , editors , costumers and craft services" receive health insurance and a pension plan. Steve Dayan , of the Los Angeles Teamsters , says bluntly : "Forget the legal issues. Morally and ethically the studios should be taking care of these people." The studios may be ready to agree benefits , he says , but without a union to protect them , how can the casting directors be sure that the agreements will be kept ? Embarrassingly for the studios , many movie people agree. As Woody Allen puts it : "Casting directors are responsible for the one element that holds audiences in thrall more than any other : the cast. How can they not be afforded the health and

retirement benefits the rest of the community enjoys ? I support their unionisation effort." Gone are the days when the seductive power of the casting couch over aspiring stars was compensation enough. 100Test 下载频道开通，各类考试题目直接下载。详细请访问 www.100test.com