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Unions protest at 'Real World' site

By Michael Klein
Inquirer Staff Writer

The Real World, meet the real world.

Placard-wearing union pickets have set up this week outside the former Seamen's Church Institute, the historically certified Old City building where MTV's hit series *The Real World* is to begin a four-month shoot next month.

The half-dozen pickets were protesting a nonunion contractor hired to prepare the building at Third and Arch Streets as living quarters for the seven young people who will star in the reality series.

Their placards identified the contractor as "G. Caputo," whose headquarters is unknown. A man who answered the building intercom declined to comment.

The local carpenters' union is behind the picketing, according to sources in two building-trade unions. The group was the last holdout in a lengthy labor standoff at the Convention Center that was settled in July, one day before the state would have ejected all of the facility's unions.

Carpenters staffed the picket line on Tuesday. Members of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, District Council 21 took over yesterday.

"When they start filming, we plan to be here," Eddie Simpson, a business rep with District Council 21, said yesterday morning.

The Real World has been set in 14 other cities, including the union strongholds of New York, Chicago and Boston, apparently without foofaraw.

This week's picketing is "why Philadelphia is a great town," said Pat Gillespie, business manager of the Philadelphia Building Trades Council, the umbrella of local construction unions. "Protect the proletariat."

Ed Coryell Sr., the carpenters' business manager, did not return phone messages. A representative of Yaron Properties, which owns the building and has its offices at Second and Market Streets, denied knowledge of the pickets two blocks away.

MTV referred calls to Bunim/Murray Productions, which produces the show. The company, which had employees at the site yesterday, declined comment.

Informational pickets occur daily at job sites. It is not clear how the sites are selected.

Officials with other unions, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said they might overlook the nonunion labor involved in the *Real World* rehab because they believe that the MTV exposure would be a plus for Philadelphia and workers in its film and television industry.

The union officials said unspecified labor leaders were trying to broker peace.

Contact staff writer Michael Klein at 215 -854-5514 or mklein@phillynews.com.