Case: The Wilson County Hospital

The Wilson County Hospital has just recently seen its nurses organized after a long bitter struggle that included dismissal and forced rehiring of some of the organizers. The nurses contended all along that the only reason that they needed to organize was to force the hospital administration to listen to important complaints. The complaints were primarily about the poor working conditions and inappropriate patient care brought on by lack of proper facilities. The administration long ignored the nurses’ pleas, claiming that available funds precluded them from doing anything about the facilities and working conditions.

The nurses have asked for a 7% cost-of-living increase in salary for each of the next three years. The hospital has steadfastly refused to offer any kind of increase in salary, claiming that it simply does not have the money available to pay for increased salaries. Further, since it has no money available, the hospital administration has declined to bargain with the nurses’ union about salary. The nurses’ union has been designated official bargaining agent for the nurses at Wilson County Hospital by the NLRB after the election. Vernon Cohn, the hospital administrator, was quoted as saying, “Hell, it makes no difference what they want to talk about. There’s nothing I can do. We have no more money for salaries and therefore there’s no sense in talking about it. I will not meet with the nurses to discuss salary.”

Wilma Jones, the president of the local union, was reinstated in her job with the hospital after having been fired prior to the election. The NLRB found that Wilma had been fired for her organizing activities. In addition to a cost-of-living adjustment, Wilma feels very strongly that the nurses have several ideas on improving conditions and facilities for patient care (if only management would listen). Some method for presenting these ideas is needed because many of the nurses feel even more concerned about these issues than about salary increases.

Questions

1. **Discuss the hospital administration’s refusal to bargain from both his viewpoint and a legal viewpoint.**

2. **If you were chairman of the board of directors for the hospital, what actions would you suggest to deal with the problems present in the case?**