



PG&E hydro plan fizzles in legislature

The fate of PG&E's hydropower resources remained cloudy after the California legislature rejected a plan that would have allowed the facilities to be transferred to an unregulated affiliate of PG&E.

The plan floated in the legislature was supported by Local 1245, which considered it the best option for the union members who operate and maintain the facilities. Following the collapse of the plan, PG&E notified the Securities and Exchange Commission of its intention to auction off the resources.

PG&E's hydropower system consists of 68 powerhouses and 99 reservoirs on 16 river systems originating in California's Sierra Nevada mountains. Members of Local 1245 operate and maintain the system.

Business Manager Jack McNally said the union had preferred that the hydro system remain a part of PG&E Co., the regulated utility. But that option seemed very unlikely in light of legislative and regulatory actions aimed at deregulating power production in California.

"We decided that the next-best option was for PG&E to spin off hydro to an unregulated affiliate, where members would be assured of jobs and the protections of a labor agreement," said McNally.

Other options open to PG&E include selling the plants outright to the highest bidder, a takeover by

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PG&E, Local 1245 bargaining intensifies

Contract talks between Local 1245 and PG&E entered a new phase in mid-September as negotiators began to grapple with money issues.

Those issues include health benefits, long-term disability benefits, pension plan, and wages.

General bargaining began July 9, immediately after which the parties broke into subcommittees to examine a number of key topics.

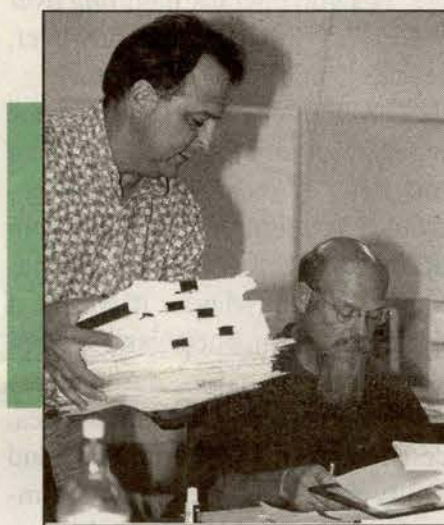
When the committee reconvened on Sept. 2, union and company negotiators tackled non-monetary issues first. Although no agreement had been reached on these issues at Utility Reporter press time, substantial progress was reported in several areas.

In all, the General Bargaining Committee met 10 times in September, with committee members spending about the same number of days preparing for the negotiations.

The company and union reaffirmed their intention to reach a tentative agreement by Oct. 15 if at all feasible.



Photos: Eric Wolfe



Business Manager Jack McNally (above) sought clarification of company proposals when the General Bargaining Committee reconvened on Sept. 2. Conducting research (at left) prior to the start of bargaining were union negotiators Mike Scafani, left, and "Jypsy" Joe Johnson.

Citizens Communications talks enter 11th hour

Local 1245 was locked in 11th hour contract negotiations with Citizens Communications on Sept. 30 as the Utility Reporter went to press.

Citizens, a telecommunications company serving mostly rural customers on both coasts, was seeking substantial concessions on non-wage economic issues, such as medical benefits, retiree medical benefits, and long-term disability. The company was also pushing for substantial concessions on language issues, such as overtime and working hours.

The union, which represents about 300 Citizens employees in California, has been seeking substantial improvements in wages and benefits, and to strengthen the role of seniority in the bidding system.

Citizens' management, instead of opening the agreement for modification, served notice this summer it would cancel the agreement effective Sept. 30.

The company's push for concessions comes at a time when Citizens is doing well financially and pursuing a major business expansion.

Local 1245 considers the wages and benefits at Citizens to be substantially below the standard for the telephone industry. Wages are particularly low at the company's call center in Elk Grove, Ca.

Two Citizens Communications employees were added to the union's bargaining committee during general negotiations. They are Sheila Lawton, a residential Customer Service Representative at the Call Center in Elk Grove, and Marianne Philipenko, a Service Clerk in Susanville, Ca.

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October 23
Stewards Conference
Reno, NV

November 6-7
Advisory Council
Rohnert Park, CA

APPOINTMENTS

**OROVILLE-WYANDOTTE
IRRIGATION DISTRICT**

Oroville-Wyandotte Irrigation District
Negotiating Committee
Marty Costa
Joun Graham
Gay Venson

TOWN OF FERNLEY

Town of Fernley
Negotiating Committee
Steven Henderson
Michael Nevarez

CITY OF REDDING

City of Redding
Negotiating Committee
William E. Andersen
Mark Burgon
Jim Hayes
Marc A. Holliday
Steve Mayberry
Dwayne Norman
Michael Pierce

CITY OF ALAMEDA

City of Alameda
Local Safety Committee
Raymond "Stoney" Burk

**CONFERENCES, COUNCILS &
CONVENTIONS**

Nevada State AFL-CIO
43rd Annual Convention
Lynn Allen
Bob Choate
Art Murray
Ray Thomas
Bob Vieira

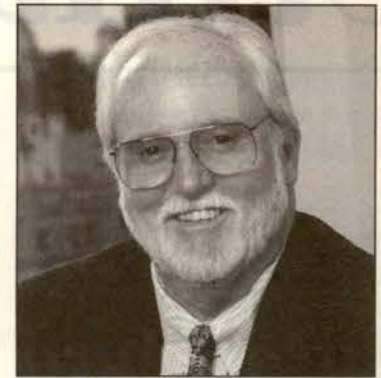
California-Nevada State Association
of Electrical Workers
Richard Dunkin
Jack McNally
Darrel Mitchell
Art Murray
Howard Stiefer

National Construction
Organizing Conference
Jack McNally
Richard Dunkin
Art Murray

POINT OF VIEW

**Bureaucratic haggling
killed hydro proposal**

By Jack McNally, Business Manager



The collapse of recent legislative efforts to safeguard California's hydroelectric resources is one more sorry chapter in the on-going saga of electric restructuring.

As I remember it, competition was supposed to rid the industry of bureaucratic waste and bring savings to California's electric consumers. The bureaucratic haggling over PG&E's hydro resources, however, reveals a much different picture.

The proposal considered in the legislature—reported on Page 1 of this issue of the Utility Reporter—would have permitted PG&E to spin off its hydro resources to an unregulated affiliate. Maybe it wasn't a perfect solution, but it was a reasonable attempt to address the concerns of several important constituencies: consumers, the environment, and utility employees. Perhaps most importantly, it would have resolved an

important issue in the electric restructuring debate and put an end to the wasteful, unproductive bureaucratic sniveling that we were supposed to be leaving behind when California moved to "deregulate" electric service.

The legislative proposal that we supported provided \$275 million for environmental protections. That's not chump change. But some environmental groups turned their back on the plan anyway. They figured a better deal might be had somewhere down the bureaucratic road.

The proposal also provided rate relief for consumers. The current rate freeze, mandated by Assembly Bill 1890 back in 1996, is scheduled to end in 2002. PG&E was prepared to end the freeze 20 months early, resulting in a 10% reduction in bills for California residential customers.

But the so-called ratepayer group

TURN rejected this savings for the consumer. TURN thinks PG&E is shortchanging consumers by valuing the hydro assets at \$3.3 billion—money that would be credited to ratepayers if PG&E spun off its facilities to an affiliate. Some say the value of the assets is closer to \$5 billion, but no one knows for sure.

One way to determine the value of the assets is to subject them to the market test. Senator Steve Peace proposed that California provide a six-month period for any interested party to bid on PG&E's hydro resources, but giving the first right of refusal to PG&E. This approach would have established a fair market value for the resource, while preserving the jobs of our members and the local character of these hydro resources. But that didn't satisfy the critics, either.

Peace's proposal had the additional virtue of preserving PG&E's hydro resources as a California institution. Auctioning the resources off would probably lead to a breakup of that system, and result in out-of-state control of this premier resource.

Unfortunately, the legislature adjourned without taking action. This leaves the issue up for grabs, and some would like to see the matter left to the California Public Utilities Commission—a prescription for years of bureaucratic debate, preliminary decisions, appeals, rescinded decisions, more expert testimony, more decisions and more appeals. And more uncertainty for our members, who have waited long enough to find out where they stand.

There's no question that these are big issues. Leaving them unresolved doesn't contribute to the stability of this industry and the essential service that it provides. These issues belong in a legislative body, where the competing interests can have their say, a solution can be written into law, and we can all move ahead.



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Photos: Eric Wolfe

Bargaining Preparation's the key

Union members really start to focus on bargaining when final agreements begin to take shape. But there's a whole lot more to bargaining than that, and it starts with preparation.

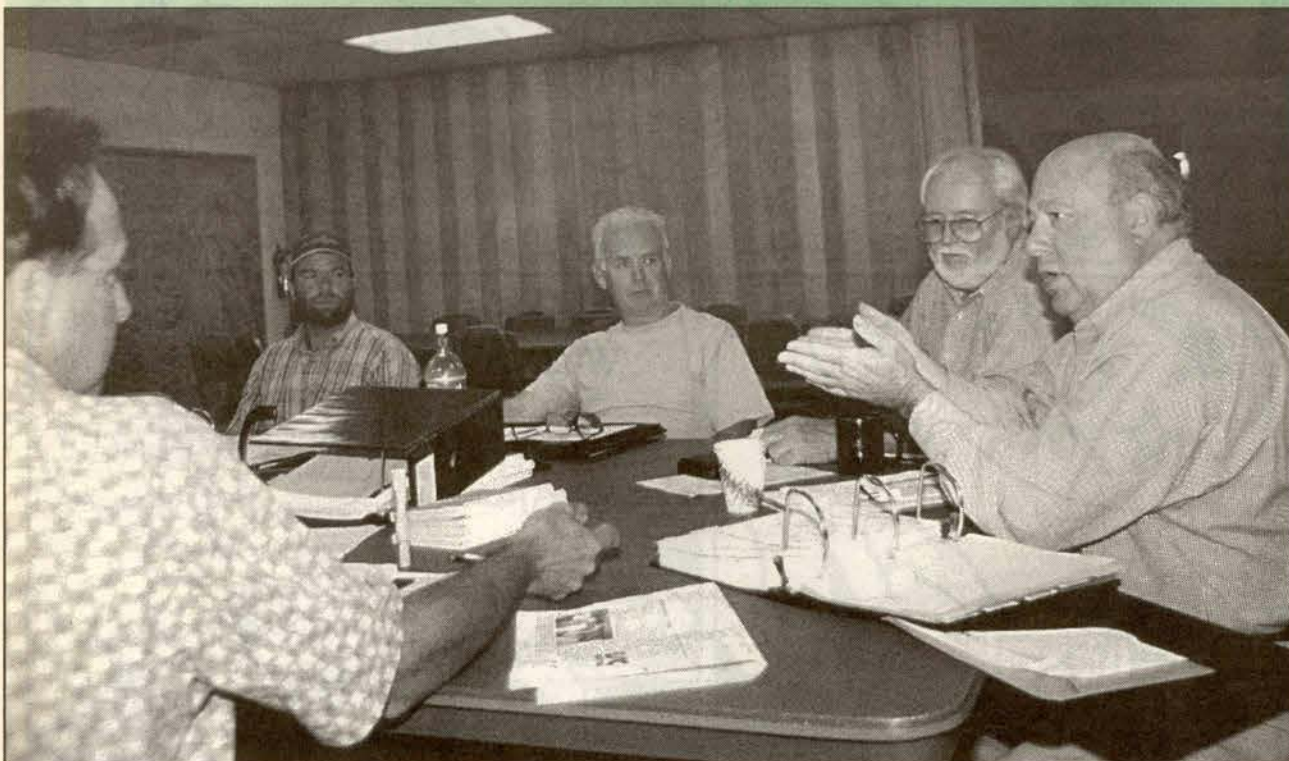
To begin with union negotiators must understand the members' priorities. Their first task is to winnow through unit meeting proposals, identifying the most pressing concerns and shaping realistic goals based on those concerns.

To make a convincing case in negotiations, it's important to know your facts. That takes research. Union negotiators must understand the company—its financial situation and the wider economic environment in which it operates. They need to be acquainted with the regulatory climate, other wage and benefit agreements in the industry, and general economic trends.

Also essential is a good understanding of the existing labor agreement and the rights that it safeguards. Union negotiators must be prepared to evaluate which company proposals are acceptable, which proposals can be accommodated with some adjustments, and which ones are simply out of the question.

By definition, bargaining is a two-way street. If an agreement is to be achieved, both parties must find something of value in it. You can't just grab somebody on the other side of the table by the neck and command agreement, although the thought is sometimes appealing.

In the real world, getting to an agreement takes more than passion. It takes preparation, patience, persistence, persuasion, and pluck.



Top left: Arlene Edwards engaged in research.

Above, from left: Mike Scafani, 'Jypsy' Joe Johnson, Mark Newman, Donna Ambeau discuss research data.

Left: Assistant Business Manager Darrel Mitchell leads a discussion of bargaining tactics with union negotiators prior to the start of bargaining. From right: Mitchell, Business Manager Jack McNally, Larry Darby, Brian Gines, Mike Scafani.



Teamsters, Ghandi, and Gates's gadzillions

At the close of September, the Teamsters union was on the verge of calling a strike in its long-simmering battle with Overnite Transportation Co., the nation's largest nonunion package carrier, Reuters reported. With far fewer than half of the Richmond, Va.-based trucking company's 8,200 drivers and loading-dock workers represented and none covered by a contract, the union planned to use 100,000 workers, volunteers and retirees from other companies to set up picket lines wherever Overnite trucks go. "This is going to be a different kind of strike," said David Cameron, coordinator of the union's Overnite campaign. "The whole Teamsters freight division is going to get involved." Cameron said that all of the company's terminals and trucks would be affected and that it would be nonviolent. "We're going to run a strike that Ghandi would be proud of," he said.

► **Card Check Victory:** More than 600 apple warehouse workers at Stemplit Growers in Wenatchee, Wash., gained representation by the Teamsters after an administrative law judge certified that enough workers had signed authorization cards. The Teamsters and Stemplit had agreed last April to let employees choose to unionize through a card check system, foregoing an NLRB-supervised election.

► **Nevada Victory:** Operating Engineers Local 3 picked up 150 technical service and maintenance workers at Elko, Nev. General Hospital.

► **Writers Choose IBEW:** News writers, assignment editors and production assistants at KCAL-TV in Los Angeles voted to be represented by IBEW despite an anti-union propaganda campaign run by the union-busting Tennessee law firm of King and Ballow.

► **Mayor Says 'Bargain!':** More than 250 UNITE members at Dreison International in Cleveland received a boost when Mayor Michael White announced plans to terminate a tax-abatement agreement if the company does not comply with an NLRB order to bargain with the union. Workers voted for UNITE in March 1998, but Dreison, which produces high-performance motorcycle exhaust systems, has refused to negotiate with the union. (See related tax abatement story on Page 14.)

► **Shameful Situation:** Thousands of children in Pakistan, some as young as eight, work long hours in dangerous conditions grinding and sanding surgical equipment for which the United States is the largest customer. "This shameful situation represents the cruel paradox of glo-

balization—children with too much work, whose parents have no jobs, trapped together in a desperate cycle of poverty," said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney on Capitol Hill, where Congress is looking at the issue of child labor.

► **Poppin Champaign:** Last year, managers at the Champaign County (Ill.) Nursing Home denied some 200 workers a voice on the job by using public funds to hire a union-buster, AFSCME Council 31 charged. But after the workers and organizers exposed the tactics to the media and lobbied county officials, workers won a new election date and a neutrality agreement. On Sept. 2, they voted to join Council 31.

► **Just Don't Do It:** The International Textile, Garment and Leather

Workers Federation, representing 9.3 million workers, sent an open letter to Nike protesting that workplace abuses by its shoe suppliers continue, despite corporate claims to the contrary. Wages as low as \$1 a day, dangerous conditions, physical and verbal abuse and dismissal of workers trying to organize are among the rights abuses cited by the union. "Nike responds to reports of abuses of worker rights with cynicism, denial and concealment," said ITGLWF General Secretary Neil Kearney.

► **Richer and Richer:** Forbes magazine recently released its list of the 400 richest Americans, whose combined worth tops \$1 trillion. Microsoft's Bill Gates topped the list, with a net worth of \$85 billion, up \$26 billion since last year.



New Riverside dispatch hours

Outside Construction dispatch in Riverside, Ca. has new office hours.

Dispatch will open at 7:00 a.m. and remain open through 12 noon.

The office will close one hour for lunch, then re-open from 1:00 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Photo: Eric Wolfe



This Sacramento Municipal Utility District crew installing a residential service in a northeastern Sacramento neighborhood consisted of Lucas Raley and Greg Baird, apprentice linemen, and Garry Dremel, upgraded light foreman.

Unit updates

Unit 3212, Redding, has a new meeting location, effective Oct. 13. The unit will meet at Round Table Pizza, 2808 MacMurray Dr., in Anderson. Meetings are still on the second Wednesday of the month.

Kit Stice,
Business Rep.

PG&E hydro plan fizzles in legislature

► From Page 1

the state of California, or a takeover by water agencies or irrigation districts in the various watershed areas.

Although PG&E announced plans to go ahead with an auction following the collapse of the legislative plan, there has been speculation in the press that PG&E might return to the legislature in January for another try at a deal to place the resources with a PG&E affiliate.

McNally questioned whether the public would be well-served by an

auction, and predicted that an auction would provoke a drawnout battle involving regulators, legislators, environmentalists and others. An auction also would increase uncertainty for Local 1245 members working in hydro.

Threat to Wages

"Hydro assets probably would be split up among several separate owners"—a potential threat to the wages, benefits, and long-term job security of the employees working at

the facilities, said McNally.

For Californians, there is more at stake than just the electric generation potential of the resources. The water that turns the turbines is part of a mountain ecosystem that provides valuable habitat for wildlife and recreational opportunities for humans.

As part of its pitch to transfer the resources to an unregulated affiliate, PG&E offered to fund \$275 million in environmental protection, set aside 40,000 acres of wilderness, and credit ratepayers \$3.3 billion.

PG&E 'Open Enrollment' starts Nov. 1

Local 1245 members at PG&E should watch the mail for their Open Enrollment package during the week of Oct. 25. Open Enrollment is from Nov. 1 to Nov. 12.

Materials for retirees will be sent the week of Oct. 11. Retiree Open Enrollment is Oct. 18-29.

The Open Enrollment package has important information about health coverage and medical plan changes for the year 2000. The Open Enrollment period is the time employees can change medical plans, add or delete dependents, or make contributions to a Dependent Care Reimbursement Account.

Employees should be sure all dependents are eligible. A detailed definition of dependent eligibility can be found in the Summary of Benefits Handbook.

If employees have any questions after reviewing the Open Enrollment package, they can call PG&E's HR Service Center at company extension 8-223-2363, or external phone number 415-973-2363.

Ukiah-area members honored for service

35 Years

Everett, Hank
Shafer, D M

30 Years

Chapman, Blake
Silva, Robert
Spaletta, Clifford
Wiedenmeyer, Dennis
Williams, Mike

25 Years

Andrews, Dan
Bishop, Clifford
Chestovich, Alan

Devlin, Patrick
Ecker Jr, Dale
Garcia, Manuel
Howe, Samuel
Lynd, James
Ramirez, Steven
Roederer, Mike
Tullos, James

20 Years

Cuneo, Kenneth
Eaves, Charles
Gerard, George
Halleck, Lawrence
Hauff, R M
Johns, Michael
Lowe, Stephen
Lowery, Lynn
Meek, Robert
Myers Iii, Sidney
Naughton, Neil
Pedro, John
Simons, James
Townsend, Darryl



Local 1245 members in the Ukiah area were honored in a Service Award ceremony Aug. 21 at the Blue Lakes Lodge. From left: Ken Cuneo, Mike Roederer, Dale Ecker, Cliff Spoletta, Pat Devlin, Jim Tullos, Mike Johns, and Business Rep. Roy Runnings, who presented the awards.





THE CORPORATE AGENDA

- Seeks to slash taxes for corporations and the rich.
- Backs privatizing, downsizing and outsourcing.
- Pushes to deregulate industries and enact free trade agreements.
- Tries to weaken unions and diminish workers' freedom to choose a union and have a voice in politics.

For more information, contact the Common Sense Economics Project, AFL-CIO, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006. Fax: 202-508-6987; e-mail: atwork@afcio.org.

Is there an ugly new CORPORATE AGENDA to boost the bottom line by shifting the burden of HEALTH costs to workers?

CHECK THE FACTS— THEN PASS THEM ON:

- The average premium workers paid for health insurance increased 146 percent between 1988 and 1996, while health care quality and choice decreased.
- In 1996, 8 million fewer Americans had employer-based health coverage than in 1989—primarily because employers shifted so much of insurance costs to workers, who no longer could afford coverage.
- Skyrocketing employee costs also mean many covered workers can't afford coverage for their families. An estimated 23 million children went without insurance for a month or more during 1995-1996.
- Employers are saving money by offering employees managed health care plans that often build profits by limiting treatment and medication. The result: Financial risk is shifted away from employers and insurance companies—which are supposed to be in the business of protecting against risk—and onto patients.



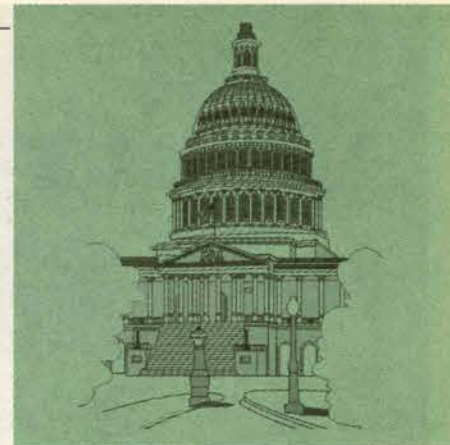
What's the best challenge to the Corporate Agenda? **STRONG UNIONS.**

Union workers are much more likely than nonunion workers to have employer-sponsored health coverage—90 percent of full-time union workers in larger companies, compared with 79 percent of our nonunion peers. Our unions also speak out for national policies, such as Medicare and a Patients' Bill of Rights, that help all working families get quality, affordable health care.

ILLUSTRATION BY STUART BRIERS

Sources: Premiums: Lewin Group Inc.; uninsured: Economic Policy Institute, Families USA.

Labor bills await governor's signature



The importance of political action by unions was crystal clear in the closing days of the California's 1999 legislative session, when labor's "Building Prosperity" campaign scored several important victories.

The legislature passed bills to protect worker health and safety, penalize employers who cheat their employees, protect the rights of workers on the picketline, and boost benefit levels for Workers Compensation and State Disability Insurance.

SB 320—the bill to increase Workers Compensation benefits—was vetoed on Sept. 29 by Gov. Gray Davis, who said the bill "increases benefits

far beyond what I believe California employers can absorb without negatively impacting the economy."

Art Pulaski, leader of the California Labor Federation, expressed disappointment in the veto, but said that unions were "determined to raise this important issue again next year."

Despite the veto of SB 320, unionists had high hopes that Davis would sign other important bills recently passed by the legislature. To become law, the bills must be signed by Davis by Oct. 10. Among the bills that labor has actively promoted are:

Workers' Right to Organize will be strengthened if Davis signs

AB 442. Under this bill, state contractors won't be able to use workers' own tax money to thwart organizing efforts.

Picketline Freedom of Speech, AB 1268, conforms California law to federal law and protects strikers against instant injunctions.

Employers in the Underground Economy will be reigned in by AB 1652. Scofflaw employers will face steeper penalties for providing inadequate payroll records to workers, the wage and hour provisions formerly contained in AB 633. AB 1652 also provides penalties for employers who fail to provide rest and meal breaks. AB 633, which was redesigned to focus on garment manufacturers, is headed toward the Governor's desk as well.

Workers' Health and Safety will be strengthened if Gov. Davis signs AB 1127, a bill by Assembly labor chair Darrell Steinberg. The Federation-sponsored bill passed the Senate 25-13 on Sept. 7, picking up an unexpected vote from Richard Rainey. Rainey represents the district surrounding the Tosco refinery, scene of a fatal accident earlier this year. Rainey faces a strong challenge in the next election cycle in Contra Costa and Alameda counties from worker-friendly Assembly Member Tom Torlakson.

Earlier Victories

Organized labor scored several important victories earlier in the legislative session when Gov. Davis signed bills to:

- ◆ Restore daily overtime;
- ◆ Strengthen prevailing wage protections in construction;
- ◆ Curb age discrimination; and
- ◆ Allow workers to use sick days for family care.

Next Session

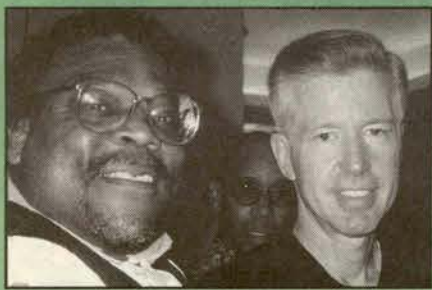
Bills that will still be under consideration when the legislature reconvenes in January include several measures strongly backed by labor, including:

Child care compensation and retention, AB 212, seeks to provide quality childcare by rewarding teaching staff and family child care providers who meet specific educational requirements, who commit to remaining in their child care job for a specified period of time and to pursuing ongoing professional development. Corps members would be rewarded with annual monetary stipends.

Disclosure of corporate tax credits, AB 1220, would provide some necessary oversight to corporate tax expenditures. The bill would require the Franchise Tax Board to disclose certain information on any corporation claiming manufacturing tax credits, enterprise zone credits or wage credits. According to *Time* magazine, it costs every working person the equivalent of two weeks pay every year to fund federal corporate welfare. It makes no sense to give away billions of dollars in tax expenditures without effective disclosure and oversight.

Unemployment Insurance, SB 546, would increase the maximum weekly benefit amount to \$300/week, raise the taxable wage base and provide interest for workers whose benefits have been wrongfully withheld by the state. The bill would implement a "movable base period." It would also ensure that striking workers, workers who are locked out following a strike, and/or workers who are awarded WARN damages are entitled to UI benefits.

Labor Day with Gray



Local 1245 members rubbed shoulders with Gov. Gray Davis at Labor Day festivities in Alameda County. At left, Business Rep. Bernard Smallwood coaxes a smile from the Governor. Among the labor dignitaries sharing the platform with Gov. Davis (above) is Local 1245 Assistant Business Manager Dorothy Fortier, who serves as President of the Alameda Central Labor Council.

Political Action:

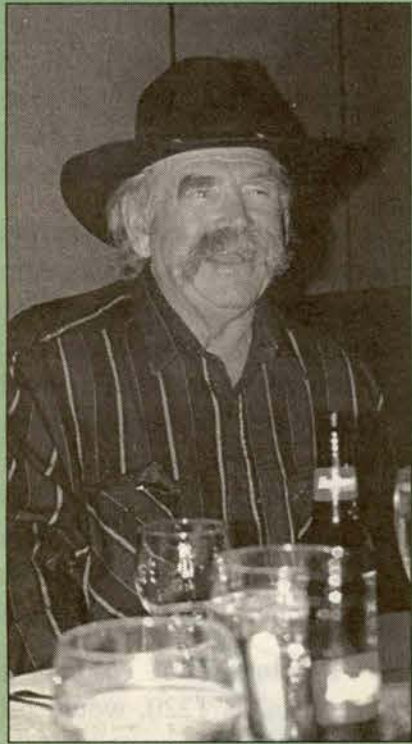
It Makes a Difference!



40 Years

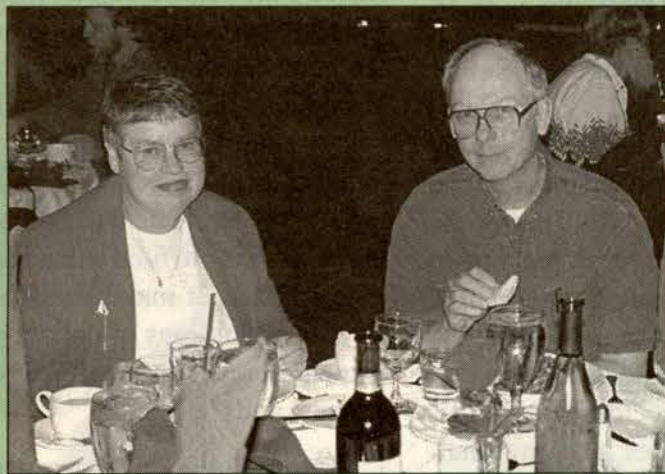


35 Years



RENO, NEVADA

JUNE 5, 1999



A Service Award dinner honoring long-serving members at Sierra Pacific and Mt. Wheeler Power was held June 5 at the Peppermill in Reno.

The longest-serving member in attendance was Ralph Manfredi, who was presented with a 40-year award by Local 1245 President Howard Stiefer.

Others paying their respects to the long-service members were former Ad Council Rep. Bud Gray and former President Leland Thomas, along with Business Reps. Bob Choate and Ray Thomas. Making arrangements for the event were department shop stewards Vickie Borst and Stephanie Baber.





30 Years



25 Years



20 Years



Honorees

40 Years
Manfredi, Ralph

35 Years
Baxter, Michael
Bessey, James
Brandt, James
Calhoun, David
Devine, Dennis
Escallier, Cyril
Flury, Richard
Landa, Neva
O'neal, Michael
Smith, Doug
Smothers, Charlie

30 Years
Arla, John
Bergstrom, Dennis
Chappelle, David
Collins, Heber
Conaster, Robert
Fuetsch, Stephen
Grant, Loyde
Hill, James
Hills, David
Martin, P H
Mayer, David
Morey, George
Reynolds, Ron
Shirley, George
Silva, Robert
Teglia, William
Tisue, Richard
Vieira, Bob

25 Years
Aquilio, Joe
Aramini, Gino
Bagley II, Donald
Bird, Thomas
Bondo, Lynn
Connell, Michael
Curl, Steve
Daft, Greg
Gosar, George
Greenwood, James
Gulley, Sue
Hibbs, Donald
Holland, Ray
Hubbard, Steven
Lambert, Alfred Ii
Lantis, Patrick
Lindley, Guy
Mcelroy, Robert
Mcgowan, Chris
Metcalf, Bernard
Milabar, Gary
Miller, Ronald
Norlen, Thomas
Priddy, Tim
Radekin, Martin
Ramsey, Allan
Reger, Jan
Reuting, Reuben Jr
Ricabal, Jose

Richards, Yvonne
Riggs, Kelly
Robinson, Lewis
Round, Joseph
Salvi, John
Shaffer, James
Stahl, Percy
Stephens, Kathryn
Strachan, Thomas
Surrett, Randy
Swetich, Robert
Taylor, Robert
Tindall, Kathy
Townsell, Anthony
Tye, Marla
Wearin, David
Wines, James

20 Years
Allen, Lynn
Balaam, Bruce
Barker, David
Bass, Nancy
Bauer, Dana
Bergue, Roger
Braun, Michael
Brown, Walter
Burt, John
Byrne, Robert
Carone, Dora
Carpenter, Deborah
Carrica, Carolyn
Chisum, Michael
Coli, Michael
Cote, Deborah
Coulson, Stanley
Daniel, Darris
Delano, Dennis
Depew, Daniel
Downs, Scott
Draper, Wayne
Eide, Robert
Epper, Darel
Etchenberry, Michael
Foster, Suzanne
Frugoli, Ron
Gannon, Dennis
Greco, David
Halliburton, Michael
Hansen, Douglas

Harden, Roy
Harms, Harold
Hayes, Ronald
Jensen, Stanley
Jones, Chris
Kellogg, Robert
Kirsten, Gerald
Kostka, Ralph
Krause, Jon
Kruger, Robert
Lappin, Bert
Lewis, Tom
Lubke, Joel
Lucero, Sondra
Martin, Michael
Matheus, Duane
Mcgilvray, Charles
Miles, Dale
Moneymaker, John
Mora, Louis
Morris, Glen
Morrison, David
Nolan, Russ
Ovrid, John
Pardick, John
Paterson, Wayne
Perry, Wayne
Peterson, John
Potts, Dayton
Rand, Carolyn
Richardson, Jim
Ries, Paul
Sadoian, Wayne
Schlabsz, Dennis
Scibior, Patrick
Sedberry, Larry
Sharp, David
Shepphird, John
Stanley, Alan
Swett, Chad
Thomas, Dale
Thornal, Robert
Tracy, Richard
Urrutia, Steven
Valtierra, Clara
Vidal, Michael
Walker, James
Webb, Miles
Wiggins, Terri
Worley, Alan





Mother Jones: crusader against child labor

By Janet Greene

Yellow fever swept away her husband and the four little ones who had first called Mary Harris Jones "Mother."

But at her death in 1930—63 years later—she was "Mother" to thousands of American working people and their families from New York to California: coal miners, steel workers, iron miners; street car workers, garment workers, and thousands of children who labored in factories from Pennsylvania to Alabama.

How this middle-aged widow, grieving for her husband and children, left Memphis in 1867 and ended up at the head of some of the most important confrontations between labor and capital in the 20th century is a story she tells best herself in her book, "The Autobiography of Mother Jones," published in 1925. Scholars agree she was a remarkable grass-roots organizer, a difficult task around the turn of the century, when the workforce was made up of many

foreign-born workers.

"You pity yourselves," she once scolded the mineworkers union, "but you do not pity your brothers, or you would stand together and help one another."

"The enemy seeks to conquer by dividing your ranks, by making distinctions between North and South, between American and foreign. You are all miners, fighting a common cause and a common master. The iron heel feels the same to all flesh. Hunger and suffering and the cause of your children bind more closely than a common tongue."

Perhaps because she had lost her own family, the "cause of the children" was close to her heart.

In 1900, children were employed in factories and worked up to 60 hours a week for between \$2 and \$13 per week; in the South, wages were even lower.

Employers who hire children, Mother Jones warned, do so to increase their profits. They believed that child labor was docile and would make no "trouble."

Along with others, she called for a federal child labor law to protect children from exploitation.

In 1903, Mother Jones began a dramatic crusade for a national child labor law, in Kensington, Pa., where 75,000 textile workers were on strike for more pay and shorter hours; 10,000 of them were young children. Her "Autobiography" describes the scene:

"Every day little children came into Union Headquarters, some with their hands off, some with the thumb missing, some with their fingers off at the knuckle. They were stooped little things, round shouldered and skinny. Many of them were not over ten years of age, although the state law prohibited their working before they were twelve years of age."

The law was poorly enforced. In many families, the father had been killed or disabled by work in the



Mary "Mother" Jones (1830-1930)

nearby coal mines. In order to feed the family, the mothers had to send their young children to work to get money for food.

When Mother Jones asked local papers to publish the facts about child labor in Pennsylvania they refused saying the mill owners had stock in their newspapers.

"Well, I've got stock in these children," she said, "and I'll arrange a little publicity."

Mother Jones marched with a band of striking children from Pennsylvania to New York to meet with President Theodore Roosevelt and ask for his support for federal legislation to protect children.

"We want President Roosevelt to hear the wail of the children who never have a chance to go to school but work eleven and twelve hours a day in the textile mills of Pennsylvania," she told a rally in New York. "(These children) weave carpets that you and he walk upon; and the lace curtains in your windows, and the clothes of the people."

The march gained publicity for the child labor question and raised money for the strikers. But Theodore Roosevelt refused to meet with the children.

It was another 38 years before any federal child labor laws went into effect.

WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

What They Did

Prior to the Civil War, most women workers were employed in domestic service. They were hotel maids, waitresses and cooks; personal servants, housekeepers and laundresses. Women constituted 24% of the country's manufacturing workers, concentrated in clothing, cotton textiles, shoemaking, and woolen textiles.

There were also women who made artificial flowers, straw hats and umbrellas, slaving away at home with the help of their children. They



were desperately poor. In 1836 the umbrella makers' wages were cut from 14 cents to 10 cents. In 1863 they earned only 6 cents to 8 cents per umbrella.

A labor paper said of the umbrella makers, "No class of female operatives...have suffered more from the lack of just compensation for their labor."



Women who worked as upholsterers and cigarmakers and in other trades were paid half of what men received for comparable work. Due to the depressions of 1853-1854 and 1857, and irregular and seasonal employment, women workers' wages fell far below minimum standards in the 1850s. The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin said in 1857 that "All things considered, the lot of the woman who has to labor for her living is actually harder in the United States than in any other civilized country in the world."



EEOC sues Toyota for discrimination

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is suing Toyota, charging that its Toyota Logistics unit is discriminating against African Americans and women in its hiring practices, Labor Notes reported.

The EEOC said that the company—which handles vehicles arriving at the port of Newark, NJ—makes it hard for outsiders to learn about job openings. New employees are referred by current workers, who are mostly white and male.

The EEOC said that women or people of color who did learn about job openings were passed over.

Poles treated with pesticide

The California Department of Food and Agriculture has announced plans to combat the guava fruit fly, an exotic insect common in Southeast Asia and recently found in Sacramento, Ca.

The program includes the placement of 600 "bait stations" containing bait, a pesticide, and methyl eugenol, an insect attractant, at 600 "bait stations," including utility poles and street trees.

If larvae are found on a property, the foliage of host plants on the infested and adjacent properties will be treated with malathion/protein bait sprays.

"Squirting small amounts of a baited-bait mixture onto utility poles and similar structures in infested areas has been used successfully for many years to eradicate susceptible fruit fly populations," said Peter H. Kurtz, Senior Medical Coordinator

for the Pest Detection Branch of the CDFA. In a paper on worker exposure to pesticide bait, Kurtz noted that there "are a few reports in the medical literature in which workers with heavy exposure potential, e.g. handling recently treated commodities in the field, developed rashes."

Kurtz said that it is "unlikely" that utility pole climbers would come in direct contact with the dried bait material "since they ordinarily wear gloves, long sleeved shirts and trousers" to climb poles.

Based on data collected in the late 1980s, Kurtz said "potential health effects from inhalation exposure are inconsequential."

Splash marks where the pesticide has been applied should be visible on the poles, and pole climbers should minimize direct contact with such areas.

A nation seriously underinsured

Between 1996 and 1997, the number of uninsured persons in America increased by 4%, from 41.7 million to 43.4 million. More than 70 million people went without health insurance for some part of the year.

Half of all children living in households with incomes between \$15,000 and \$25,000 had no health coverage. An estimated 800,000 children receive all their medical care in emergency rooms.

In theory, Medicaid provides health coverage for poor children. In reality, three million eligible children are not enrolled.

In an article published in the January 14, 1999 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Robert Kuttner suggests that underinsurance may be an even more serious problem than uninsurance. Even patients with health insurance are saddled with out-of-pocket payments that burn a hole in the family budget.

Inadequate pharmaceutical coverage is particularly egregious. In 1995, more than 50% of pharmaceutical payments were out-of-pocket,

leading some patients to not fill prescriptions for potentially life-saving drugs.

Rapid changes in the industry have undermined the stability of the doctor-patient relationship. Only 34% of insured adults under 65 have been with their current health plan for more than two years.

A number of trends will tend to exacerbate these problems:

- Rising premium costs for employer-financed and individual insurance policies.

- Increasing part-time employment, often without health insurance.

- Reductions in insurance coverage for particular items, especially medications.

- Economic incentives for doctors, particularly in health maintenance organizations (HMOs), to provide less care.

- A shift from HMOs to point-of-service plans and preferred-provider organizations resulting in higher out-of-pocket payments by patients.

- Rising costs for "Medigap" insurance for the elderly.

By the Local 1245
Safety Committee



Tic-toc, tic-toc, tic-toc: warning signs of violence

Companies are coming to grips with violence at work. Though murders have been on the decline, they still remain the second-leading cause of death on the job. The National Safety Council warns workers to be aware of the signs:

- Continual threats or intimidation.
- Expressions that other employees are out to get them.
- Is easily angered or defensive.
- Talks excessively about owning weapons or brings one to work.
- Uses alcohol or drugs inappropriately, on or off the job.

Look forward, think ahead

Where do I park? Right in front of the store?

It is best when by yourself to find a parking space away from most traffic. Find a stall empty on all sides with no obstacles, such as trees, light poles, other vehicles, etc.

When possible, back in. But do it

with care. Backing in makes your exit easier—when you pull out you have a full view of traffic and pedestrians.

See a tight spot you might fit into? In the long run it might pay off for you to take the time to look for a safer location.



"If that OSHA guy says, 'See, I told you so' one more time..."

Current members of the Local 1245 Safety Committee are: Rod Wright, Modesto Irrigation District; Grant Ritchie, SMUD; Mark Rose, Davey Tree; Ralph Muraca, City of Santa Clara, and Business Rep. Art Murray.



Social Security can be strengthened if everyone pays their fare share

By Orv Owen

Since its establishment into law on Aug. 14, 1935, Social Security has been continually at the center of national policy debates and subjected to subsequent amendments.

When the initial act was passed in 1935, it included only Old-Age Insurance and was limited to private-sector workers in commerce and industry. It was financed by the payroll tax, first levied in 1937.

Benefits for dependents and survivors were added in 1939. Disability benefits were added in 1956, and health insurance (Medicare) was added in 1965.

The Social Security Act of 1935 has proved to be one of the most significant pieces of legislation, if not the most significant piece, ever passed by a Congress of the United States.

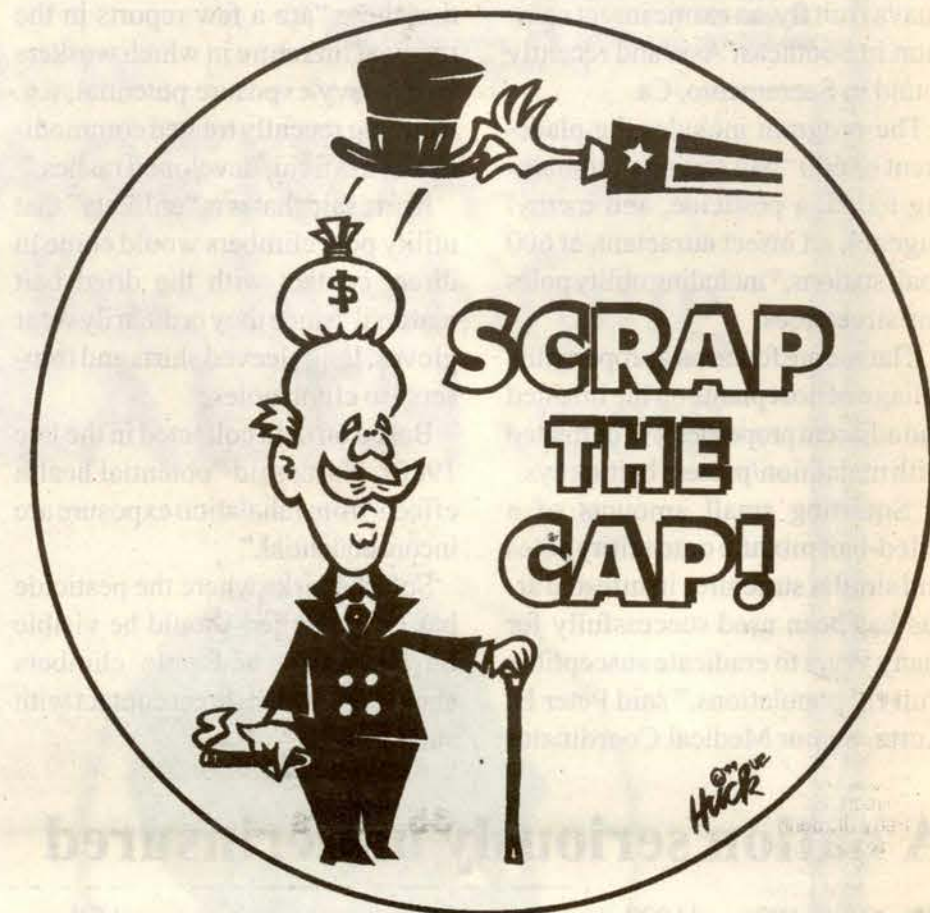
As we all are aware, the current Congress is debating how to maintain the financial security of the Social Security programs and to maintain and improve the current benefits. Unfortunately, proponents of privatization have been busy in Congress drafting new or revised plans to substitute risky individual investment accounts for the current Social Security program.

Unions use retirees as organizers

Unions are expanding the ranks of retiree organizers, according to a recent report in the Wall Street Journal.

One retiree featured in the Journal report was Celia Diecidue, 83, of Miramar, Fla. Diecidue spent two decades organizing garment workers for the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE). Now she works part time, helping to organize nursing-home workers in southern Florida.

"It's always been in my blood,"



According to most seniors, senior organizations, and opponents of privatization, the most positive solution to Social Security's long-term financing problem by far is to raise the cap on Social Security taxable income so the top 5% of Americans continue to pay on all of their salary, just like the rest of us. That's a solu-

tion that does not involve gambling on the stock market or cutting benefits, and it provides a 100% solution.

During my working years, the cap on Social Security taxable income was raised and adjusted to maintain the financial security of the Social Security program. The same approach could be used today.

Most of our citizens are convinced that the system should remain essentially what it is today—a government-backed entitlement program guaranteeing an inflation-protected monthly income for retirees, workers' survivors and the disabled.

As we citizens are the largest lobby in this country, we must lobby our interests with our elected Congressional representative, as you can be sure the insurance companies and Wall Street are lobbying theirs. Write your Congressional representative and Senators today! Tell them you want them to represent your views.

Keep the faith!

Make a Date...

The Local 1245 Retiree Club invites you to join us for companionship, discussion and projects. Current meeting locations are:

East Bay Chapter: meets 2nd Thursday each month, 10 a.m., at Local 1245 headquarters, 3063 Citrus Circle, Walnut Creek, CA.

San Jose Chapter: meets 1st Thursday each month, 10 a.m., at Local 332, 1870 Stone Ave., San Jose.

Congratulations!

The Local 1245 Retirees Club congratulates these recently-retired members of the union. We invite you to participate in—or start!—a Retirees Club chapter in your area.

Stanley Stensrud, 34 years
Bakersfield, CA

Nancy Vineyard-Witham, 11 years
Modesto, CA

Jay Cain, 32 years
Revere, MN

Manuel Estorga, 27 years
Guadalupe, CA

Robert Fernandez, 27 years
Salinas, CA

James Morrison, 37 years
Shingle Town, CA

Dennis Phipps, 39 years
Yuba City, CA

Frank Ruiz, 42 years
Fowler, CA

Roland Winter, 40 years
Burney, CA

Honorees

40 Years

Bolen, Bryant
Erwin, Leonard

35 Years

Bidou, Enid
Crowley, J A
Farris, Dorsey
Ferrari, Agostino
Forester, Jimmie
Korus Jr, W F
Macias, Raymond
Magee Jr, H H
Matheson, Kenneth
Ostrom, Bernard
Poulsen, Lowell
Rodgers, Wm
Shepherd, Raymond
Tweedy, K T
Vincent, J K
Walters, G L

30 Years

Aird, James
Banks, William
Bonnell, Byron
Bryant, Warren
Coston, Samuel
Dodson, Chester
Ellis, Gladys
Gamache Jr, Paul
Grace Jr, John
Greeson, Steven
Huarte, James
Hubbard, Karen
Johnson, Edward
Johnson, Michel
Kelly, William
Knight, Homer
Lockhart, Carolyn
Mandt, Richard
Mitchinson, Stanley
Morris, D A
Peirson, Keith
Perry Jr, John
Pinkston, David
Posey, Steve
Quinonez, Ernest
Reynolds Jr, Ray
Spencer, Rosemary
Steidle, Daniel
Stiles, Lawrence
Thompson, David
Walker, Arthur
Wills, John

25 Years

Aiu Jr, Alexius
Alexander, Larry
Alexander, Steve
Arriola, Michael
Bailey, Michael
Budesilich, Edward
Bufkin, Timmy
Capozzo, Richard
Cardamone, Joseph
Cleary, Paul
Cook, Charles
Cox, Gary
Cox, John
Crews, Neil
Custer, Edwin
Dakopoulos, Andrew
Dorado, Antonio
Eggett, William
Elias, Devoir
Engel, John
Ericksen, Don
Farfan, Michael
Fernandez, Pascual
Finks, Gary
Freitas, M E
Gaeta, Raymond
Gill, Samuel
Gonzales, Andy
Granahan, Daniel
Greaves, William
Henry, Linda
Hernandez, Robert
Heyfron, Judith
Hughes, Jason
Johnson, Steven
Jones, Steven
Lacy, Patrick
Lanum, Dale
Lawton, Arlen
Leroy, Gary
Lopez, Mike

Lopez, Rudy
Lucido, Richard
Macaluso, Michael
Mann, James
Marin, Simon
Martin, A J
Martinez, Anothony
Medrano, Luis
Myall, Edward
Nichols, Stephen
Noleroth, Dale
Nunes Jr, Vernon
Olsen, Delia
Ong, Jeffrey
Payne, George
Perio, Alfred
Powell, Gary
Quesada, Alfred
Ramirez, Frank
Ramos, Ronald
Robinson, Roy
Rosa, Joseph
Rosenstrauch, Chris
Rudovsky, Mike
Salinas, Alfredo
Shuss, Robert
Silmon, Larry

Simmons, Bradford
Slusher, Bert
Smiga, Jonathan
Stagg, Bobby
Strahan, Larry
Villa, Ruben
Villegas, John
Wainwright, Sylvia
Waring, Raymond
Webster, J Harlan
Whent, Murray
White, Ronald
Young, Gary
Young, Raymond
Zunino, Ronald

20 Years

Alioto, Pamela
Barba, Rose
Barnes, Ira
Baum, James
Beber, Marlene
Bertel, Richard
Bigham, Rickey

Bowes, Margaret
Brown, Larry
Bunn, Michael
Burton, Gerald
Bush, Robert
Cajita, Robert
Caldwell, Ronnie
Capsaliaris, Linda
Cederquist, Renee
Ceroti, Everett
Cervantez, Roseann
Cheshareck, Linda
Chetcuti, May
Chhabra, Surinder
Clardy, David
Cochnauer, Brett
Cueva, Angel
Daniel, Peggy
Davis, Jay
Deguzman, Manny
Delima, Steven
Dorman, Anthony
Drozda, Joseph
Eejima, Bruce
Ellyson, Philip
Elmquist, Emery
Flores, Lynn

Frakes, Dale
Franklin, Carolyn
French, John
Gallegos, Theodore
George, Guy
Good, Arthur
Gorman, Dan
Green, Lesley
Hammer, James
Hardin, Jeffrey
Hermis, James
Hess, William
Hogan, Loretta
Holding, Douglas
Hughes, David
Husbands, Brian
Husbanks, Lisa
Ide, David
Imhof, Stephen
Jackson, James
Jenkins, David
Kamp, Philip
Kennedy, Robert
Lamee, Nathan
Lapenna, Joseph
Lee, Dennis
Leon, Larry

Louecchio, Richard
Lyons, Birdie
Madison, Bernadine
Mangante, Christine
Martin, James
Mcguire, Jack
McLain, Charles
McLemore, Cecil
Mills, Tommy
Moore, Dane
Moss Jr, Milton
Moss, Daniel
Murray, Reginald
Nelson, Thomas
Neufeld, Paul
Newson, Pamela
Oler, Michael
Osterlund, Joseph
Pacheco, Wayne
Perales, Mark
Perez, Gabe
Pfennig, Charles
Pierce, Craig
Pine, Samuel
Pollard, Norman
Ramos, Jorge
Ray, Larry

Ray, Phillip
Redinger, Charles
Reed, Wallace
Rego, James
Riccobouno, Glen
Ridenour, Gary
Robertson, Christine
Robinson, Carmen
Robinson, Thomas
Roybal, Mardo
Sanchez, Marie
Scamara, Daniel
Sievers, Charles
Singh, Avinash
Smith, Anthony
Smith, Glen
Thompson, Tenola
Torres, Sandra
Vance, Lauren
Vieira, David
Walker, Timothy
Walko, Michael
Weiher, Charles
Wenzel, Leslie
Wightman, Spencer
Zapanta, Luis



40 years

Bryant Bolen (left) is presented with 40-year plaque by Business Rep. Frank Saxsenmeier.



Oakland, CA
July 24, 1999



35 years



30 years



25 years



20 years

The Top Corporate Candy-Store Deals of 1998



Every year, cities and states around the country hand out government subsidies to corporations with few strings attached. It's the candy store school of economic development. Public outcry about the giveaways has prompted some change for the better in recent years. More states and cities are starting to attach conditions when they offer big companies tax incentives. Some are asking for guaranteed wages, money-back guarantees, and disclosure and monitoring safeguards.

But corporations are still getting a lot of sweet deals in American towns and cities. And each tax break given to corporations means that ordinary citizens will end up paying more in taxes, or going without services, to fill the gap.

Companies often use the argument that they will create jobs in return for tax breaks. But the following examples, compiled by Greg Leroy of the Good Jobs First project, illustrate that local communities often end up with few new jobs in exchange for the tax dollars they are giving away.

Economic Development's Black Hole

In a deal with paper giant Willamette Industries for the expansion of a paper and pulp mill in Hawesville, state officials in Kentucky give Willamette tax credits worth \$132.3 million. Jobs the company must create in return? Fifteen. In other words, a tax credit entitlement of up to \$8.8 million per job!

"When these corporations don't pay their fair share, the taxpayers pick it up in all sorts of subtle little ways," said Doug Doerrfield, a member of Kentuckians for the Commonwealth.

The Apple's Biggest Bite

No place in the United States has paid out more to companies that

threaten to leave town than New York City.

In the mother of all retention deals in US history, the city offered a package worth at least \$600 million (some say \$900 million) for the New York Stock Exchange. The Exchange provides employment, directly or indirectly, to some 4,000 workers. That means the stock exchange got between \$109,449 and \$133,869 per job—and that's just job retention, maintaining the status quo, not creating any new jobs.

The Great Land Grab

The fastest-growing yet least-understood form of development subsidy in America today is tax-increment financing (TIF). Tax-increment financing is a property-tax diversion device, originally intended to help

revitalize blighted inner-city areas. But what was once a progressive development idea has turned into a boondoggle for corporate developers.

Good Jobs First, a labor issues think tank, recently released an analysis of 525 economic development deals in Minnesota. Statewide there were 38 subsidy deals providing \$100,000 or more per job. Thirty-one of these deals involved tax-increment financing. Ten TIF projects were approved at \$200,000 or more per job.

Impoverished Schools and Mercedes-Style Subsidies

Since 1993, under the so-called Mercedes law, Alabama granted subsidies and tax breaks to a long list of corporations, including the car-maker Mercedes.

Alabama Arise, a statewide coalition, eventually blew the whistle on the give-away. Spiraling tax credits, the coalition warned, were threatening the state's ability to fund schools, a constitutional obligation.

On March 8 of this year, the Revenue Department stated that 207 projects had been approved in 1998, to create "approximately 22,668 jobs with a total of \$6,363,812,471 in total capital costs for the capital credit."

In other words, the companies are entitled to as much as \$6.4 billion in tax credits for creating 22,668 jobs—more than \$280,000 per job.

"The practical effect is they don't pay any [corporate] income tax for 20 years in Alabama," said George Howell, director of economic development in the Alabama Department of Revenue.

High Tech, Low Taxes

Microchip plants are considered a great catch in the economic development profession. At a recent national conference, state and local officials showed deference to two Silicon Valley executives as the speakers barked their site location demands.

So it's not surprising that in 1995,

Eugene, Ore., warmly embraced Hyundai's plans for a chip plant by granting it a 100% property tax abatement.

The estimated cost to the community: \$27 million in lost revenues for local services. That was for only the first of three phases. The taxpayer cost later grew to an estimated \$43 million.

Subsidies and Environmental Justice

Louisiana's system of industrial property tax exemptions has long favored capital-intensive industries such as chemical, petroleum, and paper, which are also the biggest emitters of toxic waste.

Environmentalists celebrated last September when Shintech, Inc., a US subsidiary of a Japanese chemical company, withdrew plans for a \$700 million polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plant in Convent, St. James parish. (PVC is a known carcinogen and a source of dioxins.)

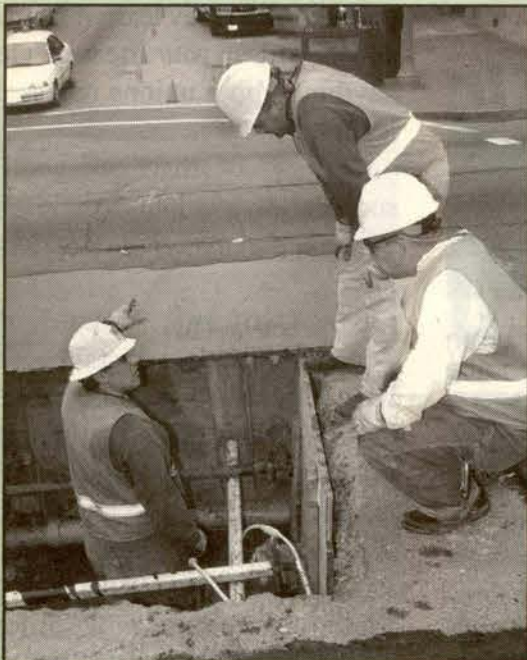
The plant would have been heavily subsidized. The Louisiana Coalition for Tax Justice estimated total tax breaks at about \$119.6 million. For a projected 165 Shintech jobs and 90 contract jobs, that would have been \$469,000 per job.

Tax Burdens Don't Go Away—They Go Somewhere

When corporations are allowed to shirk their share of a community's tax burden, that burden doesn't just go away. It goes *somewhere*. Specifically, where it goes is onto the shoulders of local citizens, who end up shouldering the added burden in the form of higher local taxes or in reduced local services.

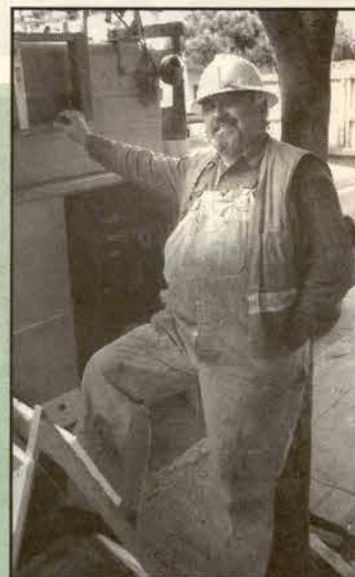
As communities get wise to games companies play, citizens are beginning to demand that local government stop giving away the candy store.

Excerpted from "Terrible Ten Candy Store Deals of 1998" by Greg LeRoy, author of the 1994 book "No More Candy Store: States and Cities Making Job Subsidies Accountable."



Ken Lowther, utility worker; Ross Ortega, fieldman; Jose Castellanos, mechanical equipment operator.

PG&E Gas Pipeline Replacement



Al Zazzeron, street fitter

PG&E crews replaced cast iron gas lines with new plastic ones in San Francisco's Alamo Square/Hayes Valley neighborhoods last August, part of PG&E's long-term project to overhaul the City's gas infrastructure.



Ross Ortega, fieldman; Ken Lowther, utility worker



Jose Castellanos, mechanical equipment operator; Ross Ortega, fieldman; Ken Lowther, utility worker



Talkin' Union



Photo: Courtesy of Oakland Museum of California

to Your Kids

Clerks picketing for union recognition sparked the 1946 Oakland General Strike, a dramatic story recounted in "Golden Lands, Working Hands."

By Eric Wolfe

My son Eli was about four years old when we drove past some folks waving signs supporting San Francisco's decision to rename a street in honor of Cesar Chavez.

I honked and waved, they yelled and pumped their signs up and down.

"Why are those people out there?" Eli asked.

It is a moment that almost every union member faces sooner or later: how do you explain unions to kids?

Eli had already tried his hand at running a business, having once grossed 25 cents as a lemonade stand

operator. I figured now he was ready for a worker's perspective.

"Those people like Cesar Chavez," I said.

"Who's that?"

I explained that Chavez tried to help the people who pick the fruits and vegetables that we eat. I figured that was about all his four-year-old attention span could handle. But those sign-waving demonstrators had really sparked his curiosity.

"But why are they waving those signs?"

I started to explain the upcoming ballot initiative that sought to overturn a city decision to rename a street after Chavez. It went right over Eli's head. But he didn't give up.

"But why were those people out there shouting?"

I tried a different approach.

"You know how I sometimes use money to buy you toys?"

That got his attention.

"Everyone needs money to buy food and clothes and the things they need," I said.

"And toys," Eli reminded me. "And toys," I agreed.

I explained that people got money by working, and their boss decides how much money they get paid. I told him some workers barely get enough money for food and shelter, let alone toys for their kids.

"Why don't they ask the boss for money so they can buy toys?" Eli wanted to

know. This was turning into the longest conversation we had ever had on a social topic.

"The boss won't listen to just one worker because he's too, uh, busy," I said, my analysis borrowing equally from Eugene Debs and Mr. Rogers. "But workers can get the boss's attention if they all go in together and say, 'We aren't going to pick any more vegetables for you unless you pay us more money.' The boss gets worried he won't have anybody to pick vegetables for him unless he pays them more money."

Eli was quiet for a long time. Then he returned to his central concern:

"But why were they shouting?"

"They were shouting because they like Cesar Chavez, because he showed them how to go up to the boss together and ask for more money. When workers get together like that it's called a union."

I let the conversation drift back to toys. I figured it was a pretty good start on "talkin' union" to my son.

I'm the sort of parent who thinks it's important to teach a child how to ask good questions rather than simply indoctrinate them with my own views. But the fact of the matter is, schools don't teach much about labor unions, and the chances are my

kids won't learn anything about unions unless they learn it from me, and the kids in *your* life won't learn anything about unions unless they learn it from *you*.

Fortunately, there are good resources now available to help teachers (and parents) explain unions to kids.

The California Federation of Teachers, with assistance from IBEW Local 1245 and other local unions, has produced a three-hour video that dramatizes the history of unions in California. "Golden Lands, Working Hands," consists of 10 stand-alone episodes that bring to life the many struggles of California workers over the past 150 years.

It's a program older children and teenagers can sink their teeth into. And grown-ups will find themselves learning some surprising things, too.

But you don't have to wait until they're older to start talkin' union to your kids. Everyday life will give you plenty of opportunities to bring unions into the conversation—just like the day Eli and I saw the sign-waving supporters of Cesar Chavez.

By the way, when Eli and I got home from our drive, he ran up to his mother with the news that we had seen a bunch of people on the street yelling and waving signs.

"What were they yelling about?" she asked.

"They want the boss to give them more money so they can buy toys for their kids," he announced.

Eric Wolfe is IBEW Local 1245 Communications Director.

"Golden Lands, Working Hands," as well as a lesson plan for its use in the classroom, is available for purchase. Contact:
California Federation of Teachers
One Kaiser Plaza, Suite 1440
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 832-8812



Cesar Chavez, founder of the United Farmworkers, receives some youthful support during a hunger strike he conducted in 1988 to publicize the farmworkers' cause.

The fact of the matter is, schools don't teach much about labor unions, and the chances are my kids won't learn anything about unions unless they learn it from me, and the kids in *your* life won't learn anything about unions unless they learn it from *you*.