



Member rally boosts bargaining at Citizens Communications



Photos: Jack Weyer

MEMBERS RALLY

The Local 1245 bargaining committee at Citizens Communications discussed the status of negotiations at a rally of over 200 members in the Sacramento-area hotel where bargaining took place.

Tentative pact at PG&E increases job security

By Eric Wolfe

Local 1245 members will begin voting this month on a tentative agreement with Pacific Gas & Electric Co. that improves wages and enhances job security.

The tentative agreement, reached in the early hours of the morning on Oct. 15, provides general wage increases of 3% annually for the three-year term.

Perhaps more importantly, the agreement provides three-year wage protection for any member of the bargaining unit who is demoted for lack of work, regardless of whether the lack of work is the result of electric industry restructuring.

Other important job and income security provisions include a near-doubling of the voluntary severance program, enhanced early retirement provisions, and a requirement that the

company hire additional regular employees if and when use of contractors exceeds a certain threshold.

A special edition of the Utility Reporter containing all proposed changes to the labor agreement was mailed on Nov. 1 to Local 1245 members employed at PG&E. Ratification will be by mail ballot.

The agreement also increases payments to current retirees and to members now on Long-Term Disability.

The proposed agreement makes significant changes to demotion and lay-off procedures. These changes were being explained to members by union representatives in special meetings conducted at the worksite on company time.

The landmark settlement makes changes in a number of other areas, and authorizes interim bargaining on a variety of subjects.

This year marks the first time since 1993 that Local 1245 and PG&E have engaged in full-scale negotiations. In 1996 the parties agreed to extend the terms of the agreement through 1999.

A number of factors made this year's bargaining particularly complex. Ongoing restructuring of the electric industry has made the future less predictable than before. In addition, the bargaining was conducted prior to the Administrative Law Judge's recommendation in PG&E's General Rate Case at the California Public Utilities Commission.

Local 1245 members at PG&E should watch the mail for their ratification ballots and carefully follow the instructions for returning the ballot.

General Rate Case falls far short of PG&E request

An Administrative Law Judge has recommended that Pacific Gas & Electric Co. be awarded just \$18 million more than 1998 revenues in its General Rate Case.

This is far short of the \$822 that PG&E requested and could impact future levels of service quality and reliability.

Administrative Law Judge Mark Wetzell said the increase requested by PG&E "exceeded the levels needed by PG&E to provide safe, reliable and responsive public utility service."

However, the impact of this proposed decision on service reliability is

in serious dispute. In recent years PG&E has significantly increased spending on system maintenance, largely in response to public criticism of the utility's performance during two severe storms in early 1995. PG&E had looked to this rate case for revenue to continue these efforts.

Wetzell's recommendation reduces money for PG&E's tree trimming operations, a reduction that could have a direct impact on future service reliability during storms. Inadequate tree trimming was a major factor in the outages of 1995, when storms blew tree limbs into power lines.

Local 1245 Business Manager Jack

McNally urged the CPUC to deliberate carefully before making a final ruling in the case.

"Without adequate revenues, PG&E cannot afford the people and materials needed to make this system perform up to the high standards that the public expects," said McNally. "PG&E was widely criticized for downsizing in the early 1990s—and rightly so. But now it appears the CPUC could push PG&E back into that same posture, which could have serious consequences for our members and the service they provide."

A final decision could be made by the end of the year.

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Week of November 15
Ballots Mailed Out
for PG&E Contract
Ratification Vote

December 13
Ballots for PG&E Contract
Will Be Picked Up
at Post Office at 10 a.m.
Ballots received after this time
will not be valid.
(Please verify this information by
checking the instructions that
come with your ballot.)

February 5-6, 2000
Advisory Council
Concord, CA

May 6-7, 2000
Advisory Council
Concord, CA

August 5-6, 2000
Advisory Council
Reno, NV

November 4-5, 2000
Advisory Council
Concord, CA

APPOINTMENTS

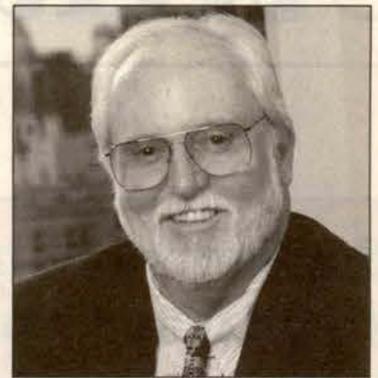
CONFERENCES AND
CONVENTIONS

**National Construction Organizing
Conference**
Richard Dunkin
Art Murray

IBEW Nuclear Conference
Darrel Mitchell
Howard Steifer
Dan Lockwood
Mark Taylor

Successful PG&E negotiations are fitting way to enter Y2K

By Jack McNally, Business Manager



Negotiating a new collective bargaining agreement with PG&E is a fitting way to close out a decade of unprecedented challenges for Local 1245.

When the 1990s began, our union could look back with pride on four decades of steady progress in wages and benefits. Our labor agreements were consistently among the very best in the utility industry.

The 1990s blew like a cold wind through this pleasant scene. Prompted in part by industry restructuring, PG&E began scaling back its workforce. Job security became a pressing concern for our members. And Local 1245 responded aggressively to these concerns.

In 1993 and again in 1994, we negotiated early retirement and vol-

untary severance packages to shield our members against involuntary discharge. At the same time we warned that downsizing threatened the quality of customer service, and by early 1995 we were engaged in a massive public relations campaign to stop layoffs.

As important as these protests were in saving jobs in the short run, our long-term interests required us to find a way to work with PG&E to keep the company healthy and keep our jobs secure. The creation of a labor-management partnership, inaugurated in April of 1995, provided a framework for achieving these goals.

No doubt about it, the partnership has had many rough moments. But it has also provided a valuable frame-

work for Local 1245 to address the job security concerns of our members at PG&E. The hiring hall—which once swelled the PG&E workforce by over 3,000, then shrank back to below 1,000—succeeded in its mission of cushioning regular employees against layoffs. Labor-management committees have given us a forum to encourage PG&E to aggressively pursue new business opportunities. And the renewal of the labor agreement in 1997 assured continuation of the severance benefit, as well as preserving all other provisions of the previous agreement.

The tentative agreement now being submitted to our members at PG&E for ratification builds upon these successes. It provides three-year wage protection for any member of the bargaining unit who is demoted for lack of work. It essentially doubles the voluntary severance benefit. It provides for retirement without penalty at age 55 with 30 years service.

The agreement also includes a successorship clause that protects the jobs and contractual rights of our members if PG&E sells or spins off parts of its business. And the agreement provides general wage increases while preserving company-paid medical premiums.

The 1990s was a difficult decade for utility employees and for our union. But we have come through it with a better understanding of the changing world we live in, and with an even stronger labor agreement to safeguard the interests of our members at PG&E.

Of course we'll face new issues in the coming decade, challenges we can't even begin to predict. But I say, "Bring on Y2K!" We're ready.



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Members demonstrate displeasure with Citizens' offer

Representatives of Local 1245 are scheduled to meet in mid-November with representatives of Citizens Communications in an attempt to resolve terms for a new agreement between the parties in light of the membership's overwhelming rejection of an Oct. 1 offer by the company.

After intense negotiations and a large late night rally by Local 1245 members in support of their negotiators at the Sacramento motel where negotiations were taking place, Citizens made what it termed a "best offer" to the Local 1245 negotiators. The offer included a number of issues that had been the subject of tentative bargaining table agreements, as well as several issues that had not been agreed to at the table.

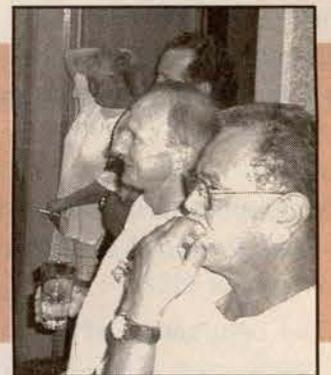
The negotiations had been difficult in light of the differing expectations of the parties. Local 1245's members had hoped for improvements in contract language concerning seniority, wages, and fringe benefits, while Citizens entered negotiations intent on obtaining concessions on a number of fringe benefit issues such as long term disability, medical insurance premium copays, and retiree medical.

The Oct. 1 rally by union members at Citizens Communications provided a big lift for the negotiating committee, according to Local 1245 Advisory Council member Mike Mena.



Above: Local 1245 Business Rep. Jack Osburn and the union negotiating committee report on bargaining to members employed at Citizens Communications. Below left: early arrivals at the hotel where the rally was held. Below right: members listen to an explanation of the company's proposal.

Local 1245 members last month rallied in large numbers to support their negotiating committee at the Sacramento motel where negotiations were taking place with Citizens Communications.



"It was really a good feeling of support and unity and everybody was up. When the negotiating committee came in they looked tired.

When they saw us they got a shot of adrenalin. A lot of old-timers said they had never seen anything like it at the company," said Mena.

The rally was attended by over 220 people, out of a bargaining unit of 309.

Later that night the company made a "best offer" to Local 1245's negotiating team. Included in that offer were improvements in contract language concerning seniority, a radical change in job descriptions and classifications, improvements in wages for a sizeable group of call center employees, and compromises on the fringe benefit issues for which the company sought concessions. Absent from the best offer were any substantial improvements in fringe benefits.

On the night of Oct. 21, Local 1245's members at Citizens gath-

ered at meetings throughout the company's system to discuss and vote on the company offer. By a ringing three-to-one margin, the membership rejected the company offer. Among the reasons most often cited by those voting against ratification were the increase in medical insurance premium co-pays, the company's realignment of certain jobs, and the absence of improvements in the fringe benefit package.

"The company and the union were 180 degrees off each other when we went into negotiations," said Local 1245 lead negotiator Tom Dalzell, "and we just didn't close the gap enough for our members. Our members understood the proposal that they voted on, and just were not happy with it. In November we'll have to build on the work that we've done so far."



Photos: Jack Weyer



Slavery, air solidarity & American gulag

Nurses show dramatic surge in organizing

Nurses are organizing in unprecedented numbers and winning tough contract language that sets staffing ratios at hospitals and prohibits cost-saving practices that nurses say leave patients at risk.

About 20,000 registered nurses have joined unions nationwide through federally supervised elections in the last two years, and there are active campaigns to sign up at least 10,000 more, according to the San Francisco Examiner. About 18% of the 321,404 US registered nurses are now represented by unions. In California, the figure is 35%.

The resurgence of unionism among nurses is due in part to dissatisfaction with the health industry's increasing focus on profits. Nurses have charged that the profit motive has begun to eclipse the health profession's traditional commitment to healing.

Nurses have become prime movers in political efforts to bring the health care industry back to its original mission. In California, nurses helped gain passage of four nursing bills, including one that will set minimum nurse-to-patient ratios at all hospitals in the state. The law was the first of its kind in the nation, but similar bills are in the works in Pennsylvania and Nevada.

Unions are also negotiating contract language that sets staffing ratios at hospitals and prohibits cost-saving practices that nurses say leave patients at risk.

More than 600 people rallied in late October in Minneapolis to protest the arrest of eight immigrant workers by the Immigration and Naturalization Service at a newly organized city hotel. In August, 22 workers at the Holiday Inn Express in Minneapolis voted to join Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 17. On Oct. 13, eight of the workers, all of whom were on the negotiating committee, were turned over to the INS by the general manager. All the workers were arrested. Jaye Ryknyk, principle officer of Local 17, told the Minneapolis Star: "We don't want employers to believe they can hire undocumented workers and then, if they begin a union, they can turn them in to the INS and walk away. This is a new slavery. This is economic slavery."

► **The Tenacious 28:** Twenty-eight workers at Gary Steel, a distri-

bution facility in Oakland, Calif., voted unanimously last month for representation by Machinists District Lodge 190 after waiting more than five years for a wage increase. The workers wore buttons throughout the campaign, held weekly organizing meetings and faced away from their boss during a captive audience meeting.

► **Maquiladora Wages Fall:** Wages in the maquiladora plants

along the Mexico-US border have fallen 23% since the North American Free Trade Agreement was implemented five years ago, Labor Notes reported. Mexico has about 4,000 maquiladoras, employing over one million workers. Wages are often less than \$4.50 a day.

► **Cooperation Across Borders:** Flight attendants represented by the Teamsters, three Italian unions and one Dutch union signed an international cooperation agreement to meet the challenges facing 32,000 workers at Alitalia, Continental, KLM and Northwest. With airlines forming global agreements of their own, "it's with great urgency that the unions respond by forming a global alliance to represent their members effectively," said IBT Airline Division Director Ray Benning.

► **American Gulag:** The International Union of Operating Engineers argued that the sheriff in Aiken, SC conspired with Tenneco Packaging to have a union activist committed to a mental hospital, Labor Notes reported. After two weeks, a judge ordered the activist released when a private psychiatrist found that he had "no symptoms of mental illness" and was not a threat to himself or others. Sending dissidents to mental hospitals was a common practice in the Soviet Union.

► **Basic Vegetable Rally:** Demonstrations were planned this month for San Francisco and King City to support a strike by 750 Basic Vegetable workers who have been on strike since July 7. Basic Vegetable is proposing to eliminate the workers' pension plan, freeze wages for three years, contract out jobs at will and impose a two-tier system for wages and medical insurance. For more information contact Teamsters Local 890 at (831) 424-5743.

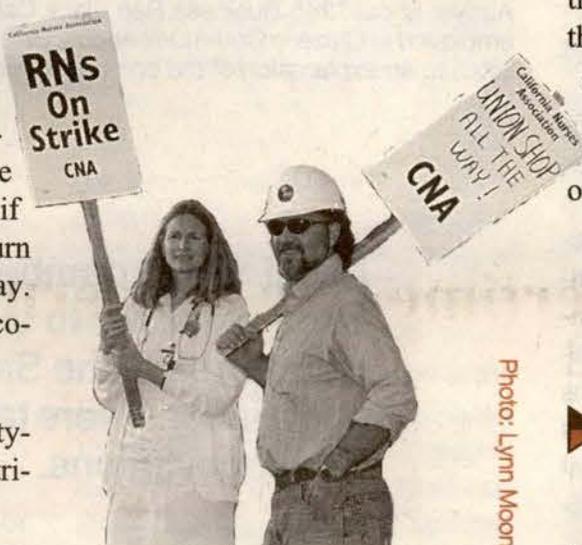


Photo: Lynn Moon



Photo: Dan Lockwood

Assisting nurses on the picketline at Sierra Vista Hospital in San Luis Obispo are (above, from left): Local 1245 members Mark Taylor and Lynn Moon. Above right, Local 1245 Business Rep. Mike Haentjens joins a striking nurse on the picket line. Other Local 1245 members lending a hand were Dan Lockwood, Andy Chestnut, Jim Hays, and Matt Huzsarik. The nurses were picketing for agency shop and over concerns about the quality of patient care. During a four-day lockout of the nurses, replacement workers were brought in.

Outside Construction work continues strong

Work continues to be plentiful for Local 1245 members in Outside Construction.

In Nevada, more than 60 people are employed by Harker and Harker performing underground and overhead work in transmission and distribution.

There is an abundance of distribution work in San Diego with various contractors.

Southern California Edison, which has about 68 crews working through various contractors wants to increase that number to about 120 crews.

Work on the San Jose light rail project is coming to an end. Employment on that project has been through L.K. Comstock and Railway Electric.

Fiber projects with Union Power and ILB have been providing em-



Photo: Landis Martila

Local 1245 members attending a recent Outside Construction unit meeting in Sacramento, Ca.

ployment for many from the Oregon border down to Morro Bay.

Unscrupulous non-union contractors are out and about. Questions have been raised concerning the wages paid by United Utilities, a non-union outfit operating in the

Sacramento Valley area, as well as questions about the qualifications of United Utilities' workers. If you see anyone from this company working in your area, please contact Landis Martila or Art Murray at union headquarters: (925) 933-6060.

SAP raises overtime pay concerns at SMUD

Will the Sacramento Municipal Utility District be able to handle overtime calculations correctly when it begins using the SAP computer program this month?

You can be sure that Local 1245 members at SMUD will be watching their paychecks closely for a while.

"We've been told to keep good accurate records of overtime because SAP may or may not run into difficulties," said Art Torres, SMUD elec-

trician and delegate to the Local 1245 Advisory Council.

There is less concern over regular pay because SAP is supposed to have a default program that takes care of straight time wage calculations.

But if overtime pay is incorrect, SMUD can expect to hear about it.

"If overtime gets rolled over to the next pay period, it could have IRS

ramifications for the members," said Torres. There could also be ramifications for the District, which has legal obligations to pay wages in a timely manner.

"People who have worked with the system say it is not a user-friendly system," said Torres.

"Everybody's kind of up in the air," said Local 1245 Business Rep. Dennis Seyfer.

Abram joins staff

Latrese Abram has been hired as a confidential secretary at the Local 1245 headquarters in Walnut Creek.

Abram, a graduate of Heald Business College, formerly worked as an administrative assistant in a Berkeley management consulting firm. She lives in Bay Point.

Welcome aboard, Latrese!



Unit update

Unit 3714, Ukiah, now meets at Wright Stuff Pizzadrome, 720 N. Main St., in Ukiah. Meetings still begin at 5:00 pm on Wednesday of the first full week of the month.

Roy Runnings,
Business Rep.

Unit 3716, Napa, now meets at Molly's Seafood and Grill, 3012 Jefferson St., Napa. Meetings still begin at 7 pm on the first Thursday of the month.

Larry Pierce,
Business Rep.

Utility Reporter: 'clear winner in a crowded field'

The judge's report is in: the Utility Reporter topped the field among labor newspapers for general excellence in coverage of the 1998 elections.

The Saul Miller award for General Excellence was presented to Local 1245 by the International Labor Communications Association.

In awarding the Utility Reporter the top award for all local union publications nationwide, the judges had this to say about the 1998 election edition, published in October 1998:

"Very clever center pull out voters uide. Extra points for avoiding party tags in endorsement dewscriptions. The language is easy to understand. Issue discussion is cool, reasoned and persuasive. The graphics and layout enhance understanding, using simple but highly effective symbols. A clear winner in a crowded and very competitive field."

Nevada stewards conference examines impact of SB 438

Shop stewards from Sierra Pacific, Wells REC, and Mt. Wheeler Power gathered at the Peppermill Hotel in Reno, Nev. on Oct. 23 to discuss grievance procedures and other developments in the industry.

Guest speakers for the training included Mike Reed, Local 1245's



Nevada stewards for Local 1245 gather at the Peppermill.

He noted the significant role played by labor, including Local 1245, in achieving passage of SB 438.

SB 438 headed off a more radical vision of utility deregulation promoted by the Public Utilities Commission of Nevada. That proposal would have prohibited the existing utilities from performing various revenue cycle activities, such as metering, meter reading, billing and customer assistance.

SB 438 did not authorize competition in basic distribution service.



legislative lobbyist in Nevada

Reed discussed the importance of the recently-enacted Senate Bill 438 in protecting labor agreements as utility companies go through divestiture and establish affiliates for the generation part of their business.

He noted the significant role played by labor, including Local 1245, in achieving passage of SB 438.

SB 438, also the focus of remarks by Sierra Pacific consultant Duane Nelson, passed in the closing moments of Nevada's 1999 legisla-

Nevada resolutions

The Nevada AFL-CIO at its 43rd Annual Constitutional Convention adopted resolutions urging a boycott of all Wal-mart/Sam's Club stores, and asking union members to not support initiatives creating new taxes for the benefit of narrow programs.

Wal-mart is being boycotted for a variety of anti-labor practices.

The concern over initiatives is that earmarking funds may benefit some special interests to the detriment of government employees operating less popular programs like treatment plants, jails, etc.

Sierra Pacific partnership meetings on divestiture

Safety, staffing, and classification issues are among the subjects discussed at the bi-monthly labor-management meetings between Local 1245 stewards and management at Sierra Pacific.

Most recently the committee met at Valmy Power Plant outside of Winnemucca, Nev., where discussions focused on how to build on the Local 1245-Sierra Pacific partnership to deal with impending divestiture of Sierra Pacific generating assets.

Attending for the union were Business Rep. Ray Thomas and the Local 1245 union stewards. Attend-

ing for the company were John Seeliger, plant manager, Trudy Haszlauer of Human Resources, and

Dan Potter, labor relations manager for Sierra Pacific Resources, along with various supervisors.



Photo: Ray Thomas

Union members participating in labor-management meetings at Sierra Pacific include, from left: John Mauldin, Jan Stabile, Randy Odborn, Curtis Ross, and Ken Lutzow.

Reno conference on organizing

Union organizing was the focus of an Oct. 22 conference at the Peppermill in Reno, Nev. for Local 1245 members from Sierra Pacific and the Geysers.

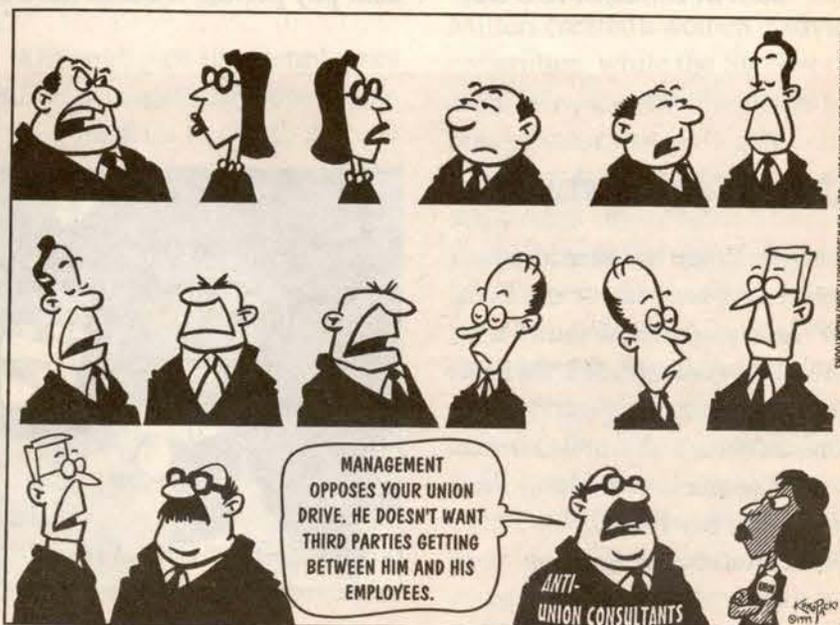
The need for organizing has increased as the utility industry undergoes restructuring and divests generating assets in Nevada as well as California. Members heard from IBEW International Representatives Steve Moulin (7th District) and Frank Maio (9th District), who provided information on current organizing activities.

Local 1245 is gathering information for possible organizing activity at Southwest Gas.

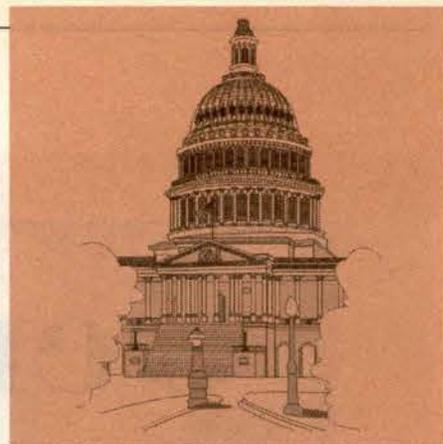


Photo: Ray Thomas

Local 1245 staff and stewards at organizing conference in Reno.



Working families win important victories in 1999 legislative session



After all is said and done, politics is about people. And labor politics is about working people.

In the 1999 session of the California legislature, union members utilized the political process to advance the interests of working families.

The California Labor Federation assembled a large package of bills under the banner "Building Prosperity" to promote the interests of workers and their families. Labor's small contingent of professional lobbyists was joined by ordinary union mem-

bers throughout the legislative session in buttonholing legislators and advocating for labor's legislative priorities.

"Rank and file action made the difference as Federation bills moved successfully through the Legislature,

and in many cases, across the Governor's desk," the California Labor Federation reported at the end of the legislative session.

Check out for yourself what working families accomplished through old-fashioned grassroots efforts.

'Building Prosperity' bills signed by Governor Davis

Basic Utility Service Protection Act: Assembly Bill 1421 - Signed 10/9/99

Sponsored by Local 1245 and Coalition of Utility Employees (CUE), this bill was not technically part of the "Building Prosperity" program, but it was vitally important to members of Local 1245. The new law protects customer service and jobs in the natural gas sector by requiring each gas corporation to provide bundled basic gas service to all core customers in its service territory unless the customer specifically requests another supplier. The law also requires the CPUC to allow only a gas corporation to provide revenue cycle services in its service territory, and requires the CPUC to require the distribution rate to continue to include after-meter services. Similar protections were proposed for service and jobs in the electric industry, but the legislature stripped these provisions from the bill.

Daily Overtime Pay: Assembly Bill 60 - Signed 7/20/99

Restores the requirement that employers pay time-and-a-half for work exceeding eight hours in a day. The bill allows exemptions from this requirement in cases where the workers themselves at a given work location vote for an alternative work schedule, such as a 9-80 week.

Sick Days for Family Care: Assembly Bill 109 - Signed 7/23/99

Allows a worker with paid sick leave to use one half of annual leave to care for an ill child, spouse, or parent. Passage of this law helped pave the way for similar language to be negotiated into the new tentative labor agreement at PG&E. By putting the language in the labor agreement, the benefit remains binding on the employer even if a future legislature were to repeal the law.

Age Discrimination: Senate Bill 26 - Signed 8/2/99

Reverses a recent Court of Appeals ruling that essentially invited age discrimination against older workers. This law gives older workers more protection against discrimination than they previously had.

Picketline Rights: Assembly Bill 1268 - Signed 10/5/99

Conforms state law to the federal Norris-LaGuardia Act standards for temporary restraining orders and for union liability during labor disputes. This replaces the previously-existing state law which allowed employers to enjoin union activity without open testimony and cross-examination in a court of law.

Health and Safety: Assembly Bill 1127 - Signed 10/10/99

Strengthens workplace safety protections.

State Disability Insurance: Sen. Bill 656 - Signed 10/12/99

Requires the Employment Development Department to study the impact of SDI benefit eligibility for family medical leave.

Omnibus Civil Rights: Assembly Bill 1670 - Signed 10/10/99

Strengthens existing laws against discrimination. Extends harassment protections to "contract workers," and to persons who are discriminated against based upon the victim's perceived membership in a particular group; raises the cap on damage awards; prohibits the genetic testing of employees; requires employers covered under the California Family Rights Act to provide reasonable accommodation for pregnant employees for the duration of their pregnancy.

Garment Industry: Assembly Bill 633 - Signed 9/29/99

Makes all manufacturers liable for the guaranteed wages, including civil penalties, of the entity with whom they have contracted to make garments; establishes due process procedures for filing a wage and overtime claim, appeal actions, and court enforcement; grants a right of private action to employees to recover wages and overtime payments due from a manufacturer who has contracted with an unregistered manufacturer.

Other labor-related bills signed into law:

- ◆ Prevailing Wages: SB 16 protects wage standards in construction.
- ◆ Apprenticeship: AB 921 strengthens apprenticeship standards.

"Building Prosperity" bills vetoed by Governor Davis:

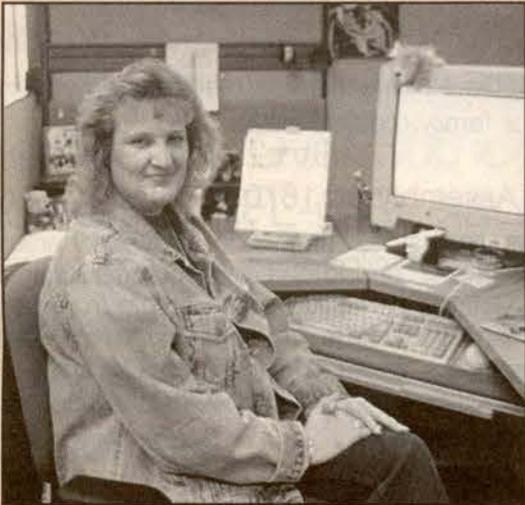
- ◆ Right to Organize: Assembly Bill 442, Cedillo - 9/28/99
- ◆ Underground Economy: Assembly Bill 1652, Steinberg - 10/11/99
- ◆ Workers compensation: Senate Bill 320, Solis - 9/27/99

Two year bills: in process when session continues in January:

- ◆ Child care compensation & retention: Assembly Bill 212
- ◆ Disclosure of corporate tax credits: Assembly Bill 1220
- ◆ Transportation Bond for Infrastructure: Senate Bill 315
- ◆ Unemployment insurance: Senate Bill 546
- ◆ Immigrants Rights: Senate Bill 996

General Office at PG&E

Accounts Payable



Kathleen Dongan, Accounting Clerk and union steward.



Utility Clerks (from left) Thelma Fontanilla, Cheet Nobello, Carolyn Collins, and Ana Fong.

For the most part they work behind the scenes. But the public would surely notice if they were out. Because the Local 1245 members working in the General Office play an essential role in holding together the utility, which keeps gas and electric service coming to PG&E's customers throughout northern and central California.

This month we feature some of the faces working in the Accounts Payable, Payroll, and Building Services, located in the General Office complex at 240 Market and 77 Beale Street in San Francisco.

As with every other part of PG&E's business, the employees are adapting to new conditions brought on by the utility's restructuring. They remain confident they can get the job done. The Payroll Department puts it: "We always come through."



Above, from left: Carrie Matthews, Accounting Clerk II in Accounts Payable; Mary Ann Cousin, Accounting Clerk C in Payroll; and Brenda Fisher, Accounting Clerk II in Payroll.

Payroll Department



Local 1245 members in Payroll Department include: Helen Barlas, Daniel Mendoza, Agueda Sarmiento, Richard Malouf, Maggie Cadiz, Hansa Kapadia, Helen Klausung, Sandra Hipon, Renny Dowling, Theresa Dai, Carol Lord, Jeanette Pancharian, Lucille Scott, Ernestine Hunt, Don Winders, Brenda Fisher, and Mary Ann Cousin.

**'We always
come through!'**

Office at PG&E



Vanilla, Cheet Nobello,

For the most part they work behind the scenes, far from the public view. But the public would sure notice if they were suddenly gone. Because the Local 1245 members working in PG&E's General Office play an essential role in holding together the organization that keeps gas and electric service coming to PG&E customers throughout northern and central California.

This month we feature some of the faces who make up Accounts Payable, Payroll, and Building Services, located in PG&E's General Office complex at 240 Market and 77 Beale in downtown San Francisco.

As with every other part of PG&E's business, General Office is adapting to new conditions brought on by utility restructuring and they remain confident they can get the job done. As Brenda Fisher in Payroll Department puts it: "We always come through!"



Gary Gee, Materials Handler (left), and Ron Dere, Materials Leadperson.



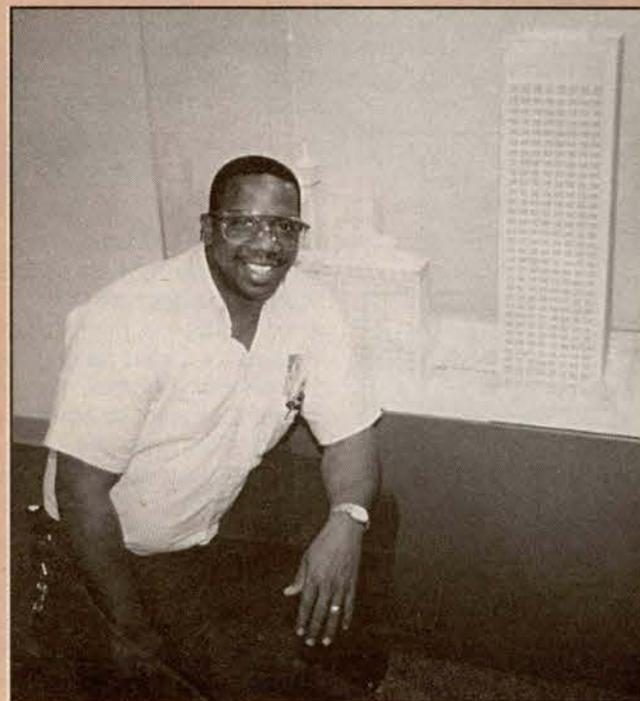
Above, from left: Carrie Matthews, Accounting Clerk II in Accounts Payable; Mary Ann Cousin, Accounting Clerk C in Payroll; and Brenda Fisher, Accounting Clerk II in Payroll.

Building Services



da Sarmiento, Richard Malouf, Lisa Dai, Carol Lord, Jeanette Cousin.

'We always come through!'



Jeff Lewis, Utility Worker.



Standing, from left: Clerk, Pati Nunez, Teresita Hernandez.



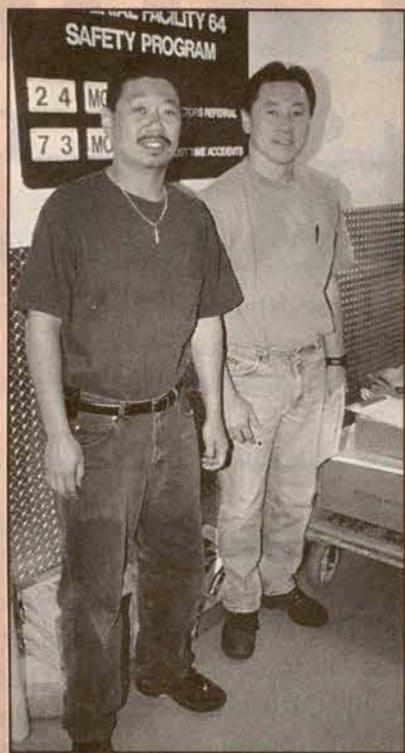
Art Font, steward.

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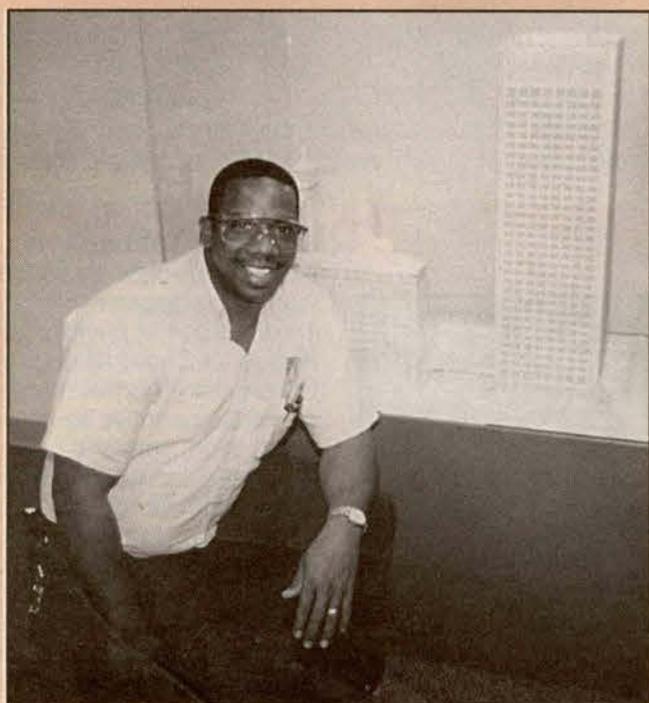


Gary Gee, Materials Handler (left), and Ron Dere, Materials Leadperson.



Standing, from left: Jack O'Sullivan, Senior Lead Clerk; Rodney Butler, Utility Clerk; Pati Nunemann, D Clerk. Seated, from left: Benjamin Aganon, D Clerk; Teresita Hernandez, D Clerk; Darrell Smith, Utility Clerk; Cathy Zugar, D Clerk.

Building Services



Jeff Lewis, Utility Worker.



Art Fontanilla, Materials Handler, is a union steward.



World Trade Organization?

When world trade ministers meet in Seattle in late November, President Clinton won't be the only one on hand to greet them. Over 300 organizations, including the AFL-CIO, have pledged to stage massive protests to publicize their concerns that the World Trade Organization (WTO) is an organization out of control.

Does the World Trade Organization help the world economy by tearing down trade barriers, as proponents claim? Or is the WTO trampling the sovereignty of national governments and depriving citizens of the right to establish law protecting workers, the environment, food safety, and the public health?

As befits the millennial spirit of the days approaching the year 2000, the protest at the upcoming ministerial meeting of the WTO in Seattle is shaping up to be spectacularly large, loud and diverse. Union members will find themselves marching side by side with groups ranging from Friends of the Earth to the obscure Ruckus Society of Berkeley, Ca., which recently led a "Globalize This!" training session for protesters at a farm near Seattle.

The WTO conference, which begins November 29, has ener-

gized the ranks of organized labor in much the same way that NAFTA did a few years ago.

The Seattle-based Washington State Labor Council, serving as a sort of informal host to the protest, recently passed a strongly-worded resolution that proposes a national labor campaign to force US withdrawal from the WTO if it "does not begin making decisions favorable to the environment, food safety, and workers' rights" at the conference.

The AFL-CIO dispatched a number of organizers to Seattle to work on the mobilization. Although AFL-CIO President John Sweeney has been working with various corporations in an effort to include labor concerns in the WTO's deliberations, most unionists (and other working Americans) seem ready to classify transnational corporations as the clearcut enemy when it comes to world trade.

Sweeping Powers

Why all the fuss? The conventional wisdom is that free trade is good for everyone, and the leaders of the world's industrial nations herald the WTO as a vehicle for promoting global prosperity. The WTO is in fact the inheritor of a 50-year campaign to promote free trade and combat the sort of protectionism that plagued the world economy during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

In eight rounds of talks since 1947, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade gradually did open up world markets. In 1994 these negotiations established the WTO, which was given unprecedented powers to make legally-

binding rulings on trade disputes between countries, and authorized retaliatory, punitive trade sanctions. These sweeping new powers, and the zeal with which the WTO wields them, has led some to suggest that the acronym "WTO" more accurately stands for World Take Over.

Indeed, the WTO's decisions have real consequences for nations and their citizens. For example:

- The WTO stopped the US effort to reduce air pollution by cleaning up gasoline on the grounds that this would discriminate against producers of dirtier oil, such as Venezuela. The WTO decision in effect overruled an environmental vote by the US Congress.

Photo: David Bacon



Conrado Tabuada is a sixteen-year-old maquiladora worker. He began working in Tijuana's border plants when he was 13. Cheap labor gives transnational corporations a powerful incentive to move production from the US to low-wage locations like the maquiladoras of Mexico. Labor and human rights activists worry that the WTO could use its enormous power to keep such nations from enacting and enforcing laws protecting worker rights.

Outside a closed battery recycling plant on Otay Mesa in Tijuana, Mexico, open pits of toxic waste pit the landscape, and chemicals leaching up from the ground form a crust on the ground. In the barrio of Chilpancingo, below the mesa, 19 children were born with no brains in 1993 and 1994, because of pollution from this and other maquiladoras on top of the mesa. Future efforts to legislate environmental cleanup could be subject to a veto from the World Trade Organization unless steps are taken to curb the power of this secretive, undemocratic organization.



Photo: David Bacon

· The WTO last year declared illegal a US environmental regulation requiring that imported shrimp must be caught by methods that minimize harm to endangered sea turtles.

· The WTO ruled this fall that the European Union can no longer ban the importation of US meat contaminated with growth hormones, despite a lengthy report by independent scientists showing that some hormones added to US meat are carcinogens.

These few examples are a mere preview of the WTO's potential power. Environmentalists fear that the WTO could strike down provisions in long-agreed treaties to protect the ozone layer, to control the dumping of toxic

wastes overseas, and to ban trade in endangered species.

Just as disturbing, the WTO appears to have the power to strike down national laws that protect the rights of workers on the grounds that such laws are an impediment to free trade. A nation's right to enact or strengthen minimum wage laws, child labor prohibitions, or health and safety regulations could be challenged by the WTO.

In the absence of such labor protections, labor costs go down. This is precisely the dynamic that leads corporations operating in America to transfer production to countries where wages are cheap and safety regulations are minimal, or to drive down US wages by merely threatening to leave.

Secret Tribunal

So who exactly is it who would sit in judgement on the laws protecting food, the environment, and safety on the job?

The WTO allows countries to challenge each other's laws and regulations as violations of WTO rules. Cases are heard and decided by a tribunal of three trade bureaucrats, usually corporate lawyers, according to Peter Montague, writing in Rachel's Environmental and Health Weekly.

"There are no rules on conflict of interest, nor is there any requirement that the three judges have any appreciation of the domestic laws of the countries involved. The judges meet in secret at locations

and times that are not disclosed. Documents, hearings and briefs are confidential," says Montague.

And there are no appeals to anyone outside the WTO.

Although the WTO is still in its infancy, its function and its direction are clear. It is an organization essentially created by transnational corporations and run by those who serve corporate interests.

Perhaps the only thing more astonishing than this raw grab for power is the speed with which the public has identified the threat and mobilized to counter it.

The conflict between the corporate and the public interest will be laid out in millennial style this month in Seattle.

...or World Take Over?





Good, bad, and downright unbelievable

In an effort to publicize the conditions that some women have to work under, the National Association of Working Women (known as 9to5) periodically conducts a "Rate Your Job" contest.

To participate, workers send in stories that illustrate "good, bad, and downright unbelievable practices on the job."

Here are a few examples from past competitions in the category of outrageous requests by various managers to their secretaries:

- Repair a hole in his trousers, while he's wearing them.
- Take his stool sample to the lab.

- Go to a bar and beep him if she finds any good-looking women.

- Wax the hair off his back.

- Cup her hands for his cigarette ashes.

- Clip his nose hairs.

Winners in the outrageous workplace behavior category included a manager who fired his assistant for having a terminal illness and causing insurance rates to go up, a law firm that decided to protect a new carpet by bolting secretaries' chairs to the floor in a way that some were unable to reach phones or keyboards while seated, and a manager who, when a suspicious-looking package



arrived in the mail, told his secretary: "this might be a bomb—you open it."

Entrants can call 1-800-522-0925 for a free scorecard and entry form for the next contest.

WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

Laundresses revolt

Production of detachable collars and cuffs and shirts used to be big business in Troy, NY; washing, starching and ironing the collars was an important part of the process. Several hundred Troy women worked 12 to 14 hours a day, doing this back-breaking work in 100 degree heat, in air full of chloride and sulfuric acid.



In the summer of 1865, the Troy laundresses decided they had enough when the bosses introduced new starching machines. The machines were too hot to handle and cut prices for starching in half. Under the leadership of the fiery Kate Mullaney, the laundresses organized the Troy Collar Laundry Union.



The Troy Collar Laundry Union succeeded in raising the wages of the laundresses from \$2-3 a week to \$8-14! Kate Mullaney became one of the most important women labor leaders of the 19th century. Meanwhile, in Jackson, Miss., a June 18, 1866 "Petition of Colored Washerwomen" startled the white establishment. The petition announced the intention of black laundry women to charge a uniform rate for their labor. Says historian Philip Foner, this was the "first known collective action of free black workingwomen in American history."

Majority of women say they would join union

Women, more so than men, think union representation means better wages and benefits, increased job security, fair treatment and respect on the job.

According to a recent poll by Peter

D. Hart Research Associates, 57% of women polled say they would vote for a union tomorrow.

This statistic has important significance for the future of union organizing. In industries where women

are the majority of the workforce, workers win union elections 60% of the time, according to America @ Work.

Recognizing the importance of giving women a voice on the job, dozens of unions and state federations have created departments, committees and training programs for women members and increased efforts to bargain for equal pay and working family issues.

In 1998, the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers created a women's advisory committee, while the Steelworkers established the post of assistant to the president for women's affairs. In the past year, dozens of state federations and central labor councils have held their first women's conferences.

What's true for women in this country is true around the world: Women are increasingly taking the lead in holding multinational corporations accountable. Through such forums as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the AFL-CIO is pressing for key international labor standards on equal pay and nondiscrimination in employment.

Magazine cites Local 1245 benefit

America @ Work, the official publication of the AFL-CIO, featured Local 1245's benefits package at Pacific Gas & Electric as an example of how union bargaining helps working families.

The article describes various labor agreements that help working women juggle work and family responsibilities. Through unions, the article says, working women "are bargaining improvements in elder care, tele-commuting, job sharing, voluntary overtime, shorter workweeks and voluntary reduced work schedules. For example, Electrical Workers Local 1245 won major benefits—

medical, dental, vision coverage and more—for part-time employees at Pacific Gas & Electric in Walnut Creek, Ca."

Although part-time employees at PG&E pay a share of the premium for their medical benefits, the fact that they have these benefits at all is a product of past negotiations by Local 1245 with PG&E. This is a feature of the labor agreement that directly affects women, who comprise a large share of the part-time workforce at PG&E.

The AFL-CIO highlighted the Local 1245 agreement as a model for other unions to emulate.



Appeal court upholds state ergonomic standard

The California Court of Appeal on Oct. 29 affirmed and expanded Cal-OSHA's ergonomics standard.

Enacted in 1997 after years of lobbying and litigation by the California Labor Federation, California's ergonomic standard requires employers to respond to injured workers by identifying and correcting the ergonomic hazards that cause painful, expensive injuries. The standard was challenged in court by the American Trucking Association, the California Chamber of Commerce, the California Manufacturers Association, among other employer groups.

On Oct. 29 the appeal court rejected claims by the employer groups that the law did too much to protect workers. The court also upheld the unions' claim that all workers should be protected, not just those employed by larger corporations.

"More than 800,000 California workers are hurt or made ill on the job every year," said Art Pulaski, executive secretary-treasurer of the California Labor Federation.

"California has pioneered important protections for workers in high-tech, low-tech and every line of work. We are thrilled that the court took the side of people who put their lives and their health on the line to keep California's economy strong. This decision is a key step in reducing repetitive motion injuries," Pulaski said.

The ergonomics standard was issued by Cal-OSHA in 1997 under requirements of the 1993 workers' compensation reform. The standard

requires employers to respond to injured workers by identifying and correcting the ergonomic hazards that cause painful, expensive injuries. The four-year delay in writing and implementing the standard was the result of tactics adopted by the administration of then-Gov. Pete Wilson.

During this period of delay, from 1993 to 1997, repetitive motion injuries increased from 27,700 to 32,300 annually, according to the Department of Industrial Relations.

Unions successfully argued against an exemption for businesses with fewer than 10 employees. However, loopholes in the standard require that two workers suffer injuries before an employer must take action, and failed to set standards for corrective action.

"We will continue to raise this issue, to reduce the number of times workers must be hurt before the standard applies, and to require that employers take effective action to eliminate injuries," said Pulaski.

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney hailed the court's decision in a statement released in Washington DC.

"The court upheld the ergonomics standard—the first in the nation—despite a vigorous and coordinated attack by big business which too often values short-term profit over workers' long-term health. The California court decision carries additional significance in that it comes as the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration is preparing to publish its proposed rules to prevent ergonomic injuries at the job site," said Sweeney.

By the Local 1245
Safety Committee



Steering through the storm

Fall and winter bring severe driving conditions to most of the nation. Driving in snow, rain and fog can be treacherous. Here are a few tips to keep in mind when driving:

Get a feel for road conditions by testing your vehicle's brakes for skidding. It takes three to nine times the distance to stop on wet roads than on dry pavement.

Decrease your speed and increase the distance you follow other vehicles.

Do not pump anti-lock brakes. Smoothly apply these systems. Remember, when your wheels are rolling you still have control of steering;

when the wheels lock you're just along for the ride.

If you start skidding on a slippery road, don't panic! Take your foot off the gas and steer in the direction the rear of the vehicle is sliding.

Your lights should be on when driving in bad weather.

Pay special attention when driving through shady spots in roadways. They are the first to freeze and the last to

thaw.

Keep up your scheduled vehicle maintenance. When driving in inclement weather in any type of isolated area, always have a full tank, some extra clothing, munchies, water and cell phone.

I'M ON
THE WAY!



Tools: yours, mine, ours

Regardless of whose truck, toolbox or drawer they come from, tools need to be maintained, repaired, and sometimes replaced.

This is true at home as well as at work. Knives and garden tools can injure.

Neglect tools and equipment and they may well let you down

Take responsibility for the safety of any tools you come across—whether it's yours, mine or ours.



GOP tries to delay federal standard

Pro-worker legislators in the US Senate last month beat back an attempt by Republican leaders to delay ergonomic standards.

The Republican leadership attempted to prohibit the Occupational Safety and Health Administration from issuing a standard—or even voluntary guidelines—on ergonomics hazards. The prohibition came in the form of an amendment to a Labor Department funding bill.

They were forced to withdraw the amendment after a filibuster by pro-worker legislators led by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.).

Current members of the Local 1245 Safety Committee are: Stoney Burke, Alameda Power & Telecommunications; Keith Hopp, Pacific Gas & Electric; Ralph Muraca, City of Santa Clara; Mark Rose, Davey Tree; Al White, Pacific Gas & Electric; Rod Wright, Modesto Irrigation District; and Assistant Business Manager Art Murray.



Time for campaign finance reform

By Orv Owen

Knowledgeable political observers and pollsters have commented on the key role played by seniors in any election. A higher percentage of seniors vote than other age groups, and Republicans and Democrats both know that it is very difficult to win the House, Senate or the Presidency without a sizeable part of the senior vote.

The National Council of Senior Citizens, the Congress of California Seniors, the American Association of Retired Persons and other senior groups are effective advocates helping seniors speak out in unity and purpose, and they are supported by grassroots activists who form the backbone of the "Senior Power" movement in the United States today.

It's time for our grassroots activists to turn up the heat on our congressional representatives to earn their salary and do the job they promised to do for our votes. As I view it, many of the current congressional representatives would be fired for lack of production if they worked for a private company.

After watching and listening to the Senate debating the so-called "Cam-

"Many of our sons and daughters have died for our democracy, but our system of government is now being sold down a river of big business money."

Granny D

paign Finance Reform" legislation, it became clear to me that the Republican majority would not allow a change in the current system of government, which I call "government of money, by money, and for money." It became even clearer to me after listening to these senators defending the corruption that prevails in our so-called democracy of the people. Certainly the people's business is not getting done.

Doris Haddock, a grassroots activist affectionately known as "Granny D," wanted to convince Congress that "we the people" want and care about campaign reform. In an effort to get Congress to ban "soft money" in political campaigns, this 89-year-old great grandmother walked across America, from California to Wash-

ington, D.C.

Granny D's words are worth noting: "Many of our sons and daughters have died for our democracy, but our system of government is now being sold down a river of big business money." She further stated: "It's up to each of us to do something and I hope you care."

Keep the faith!

Seniors: Labor's secret weapon

Seniors are labor's secret weapon at the ballot box. Among union voters, 27% are seniors.

The AFL-CIO is so convinced of the importance of seniors it is developing an older and retired members strategy for upcoming elections in year 2000. And it's not just to save Social Security that the AFL-CIO is targeting its senior members.

Most retirees remain interested in issues that affect their profession. This interest is demonstrated by the creation of labor retiree organizations—like the monthly chapter meetings of the Local 1245 Retirees Club.

The same interest has been noted by Bob Rootes, staff coordinator for Steelworkers Organization for Active Retirees.

"Don't make the mistake of stereotyping what older people care deeply about," said Rootes in a recent issue of *America@Work*. "They still care about OSHA, the 40-hour week, trade and many other working family issues."

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.

Jay Cain, 32 years
Revere, MN

Manuel Estorga, 27 years
Guadalupe, CA

Robert Fernandez, 27 years
Salinas, CA

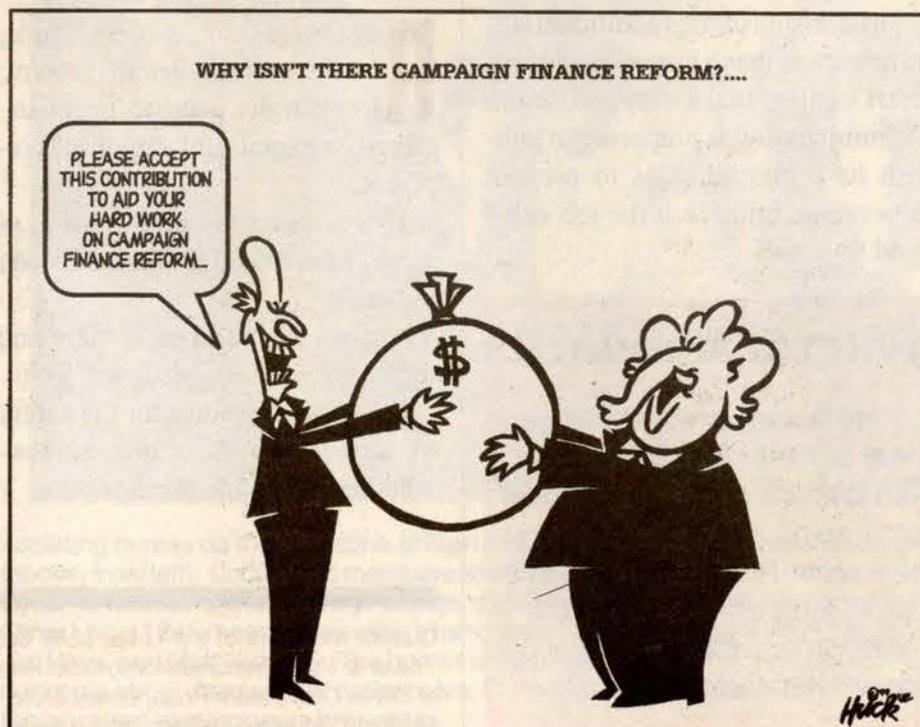
James Morrison, 37 years
ShingleTown, CA

Dennis Phipps, 39 years
Yuba City, CA

Frank Ruiz, 42 years
Fowler, CA

John Stephens, 35 years
Antioch, CA

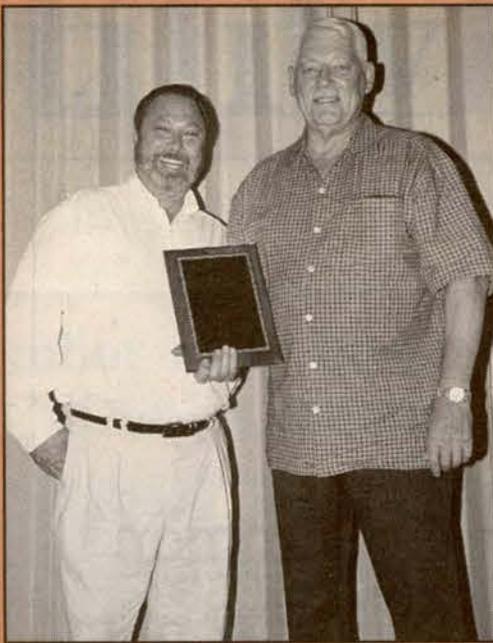
Roland Winter, 40 years
Burney, CA





**Stockton, Ca.
August 7, 1999**

50 Years



Former Executive Board member William Peitz (right) and Business Rep. Gary Hughes

30 Years



Marvin Stern (right) and Business Rep. Gary Hughes

35 Years



Wendell Lowe, Business Rep. Gary Hughes, Richard Genereux



50 Years
Peitz, William

35 Years

Baker, Edward
Bulum, G W
Cagle, N J
Genereux, R E
Hamilton, Ronald
Kidder, C W
Lowe, Wendell
Rees, Gale
Ruth, L M
Winters, J H

30 Years

Andersen, James
Bates, James
Franco, Manuel
Gray, Leroy
Johnson, Chester
Manley, Michael
Munoz, Jerry
Orozco, Lorenzo
Perondi, Orlando
Poggio, Gary
Quitiquit, Marion
Romero, Larry
Sterni, Marvin
Waltrip, Charles

25 Years

Alcaraz, Phillip
Andersen, Richard

Anderson, Horace
Andona, Gary
Apley, Grant
Bernall, T Greg
Brock, Gaylon
Camenzind, Richard
Chavez, Manuel
Coggins, Carl
Emanuel, William
Galvez, Larry
Genuit, Ronald
Giacosa, Michael
Gibson, Marcus
Gomez, Arthur
Gregorich, Margaret
Helmle, Eric
Hickman, Douglas
Hightower, Dale
Jones, Thomas
Kelly, Albert
Lalonde, Michael
Lang, Douglas
Litz, Mardella
Lock, Yvonne
Lockhart, Michael
Macias, Ralph
Maddox, Molly
Malaspina, Wayne
Mccready, Stanley
Menor, Richard
Miller, Denton
Morante, Robert
Moresco, Sharal
Munoz Jr, Andrew
Neilson, Ronald
Ottman, Joseph

Pacheco, Daniel
Quisjalvo, Ted
Rodriguez, Ronald
Roerber Jr, Jack
Romero, Daniel
Salazar Jr, Rosalio
Santillanes, George
See, Marla
Shaeffer, Rick
Stevens, John
Tuchtenhagen, Kathy
Vierra, Jenise
Williams, Mike
Woods, Michael

20 Years

Attaway, Deborah
Bates, Bradley
Bunney, Timothy
Chavez, Jorge
Chiles, Donna
Clipper, Dan
Collins, Patricia
Cook, Constance
Cookson, David
Cooper, Steve
Coulter, James
Craig Iii, Charles
Crump, Wayne
Dion, Oneta
Durstun, David
Franklin, Lonnie
Gouveia, Dennis
Harris, Daniel

Hood, Lawrence
Imperial, Albert
Johnson, Henry
Kane, Jim
Kunstal, Kathleen
Lewallen, Terry
Liljestrand, Ronald
Llamas, Jesus
Lyons, Patricia
Manning, Monica
Martini, Renato
Mclaughlin, Rodney
Mendoza, James
Mercado, Olivia
Meyer, Pauline
Moore, William
Mullins, Ronald
Namekata, Andrew
Nichols, Melva
Nunes, Gaelynn
Parks, Gary
Peirano, Mike
Prato, Stephen
Ramos, Robert
Richter, John
Riendeau, Jeff
Schmaltz, Roger
Scott, Douglas
Serna, Raymond
Stemen, Charlotte
Takahashi, John
Vacca, John
Vanfleet, Aaron
Weathers, William
Wooten, Robert
Zaich, Paul

25 Years



20 Years



The Wage and Wealth Gap— and You



The economy is supposed to be doing better than ever—at least that's what we keep hearing. And it really is great for the big bucks crowd, who are rich enough to become richer in the booming stock market. But if you think your PAYCHECK is buying less, you're probably right.

Despite the economic recovery, average family incomes are still lower than they were in 1989. While the wealthiest 1 percent of families got a raise of nearly 70 percent between the late 1970s and mid-1990s, the real income of the middle one-fifth of families stagnated.

The next time you hear about the stock market's record highs, remember this: Only 3 percent of America's stock, mutual and pension funds belongs to families with incomes in the bottom 80 percent. The richest 1 percent own *half* of all stocks and bonds.

In fact, the gap between America's richest and poorest families remains near its post-World War II high.

Let's Close the Gap: Unions narrow the wage and wealth gap. Union workers earn about one-third more than nonunion workers—and this “union advantage” is even bigger for women, African Americans and Latinos. Unions also work for local economic development, for keeping good jobs with good pay in the United States, for laws and policies that enable us to make livable wages and for protections for families suffering hard times.

Strong unions mean that working families—not just wealthy CEOs and investors—benefit from the work we do.

Sources: Income statistics: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 1997; stock ownership: Surviving the Bottom Line, PBS, 1998.



ILLUSTRATION BY STUART BRIERS

SPEAK UP! Please share your favorite stories about today's economy, and how your working family is coping. Contact the Common Sense Economics Project, AFL-CIO, 815 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006. Fax: 202-508-6987. E-mail: 71112.2271@compuserve.com

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD—FOR A FAIR SHARE OF AMERICA'S PROSPERITY.