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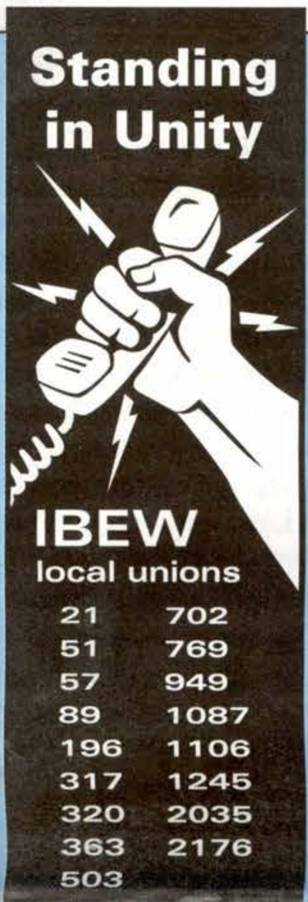
Utility Reporter

IBEW LOCAL 1245 • AFL - CIO

Vol. 52 • No. 7 July 2003

Unity Is Strength



FORGING A UNITED FRONT AT FRONTIER

Local 1245 is forging a united front with other IBEW locals around the country as bargaining gets underway with Frontier Communications. Local 1245's contract with Frontier expires Sept. 30 and the parties are scheduled to exchange proposals on July 14. Frontier has already indicated that it will seek concessions in the 401k match or the employee pension benefit, and may also target post-retirement medical benefits. On the Bargaining Committee for Local 1245 are, standing from left: Larry Martin, Denise Sanders, Business Rep. Jack Osburn, Senior Business Rep. Ray Thomas, Sheila Lawton. Seated, from left: John Shepphird, Tom Greer, Eric Tanaka, and Monte Nelson.

Union supports PG&E bankruptcy settlement

The settlement proposed last month in Pacific Gas & Electric's bankruptcy case could pave the way for a final resolution of the financial crisis precipitated by the energy crisis of 2000-2001.

The product of negotiations between the Creditors Committee, PG&E, and the staff of the California Public Utilities Commission, the settlement proposal would restore PG&E to financial health, pay back creditors in full and reduce electric rates for consumers.

The settlement, unveiled on June 19, would also help reduce the anxiety that has been part of daily life for IBEW members at PG&E since the utility declared bankruptcy in April of 2001, at the height of California's energy crisis.

"Our members have been completely up in the air for two years now," said Business Manager Perry Zimmerman.

"We had a bankrupt employer, we were facing proposals to transfer members to new employers, people were facing displacement from their jobs–this has not been a happy period," said Zimmerman. "Putting this behind us in the best interests of our members, and this settlement is the best option under the circumstances."

If the settlement is ultimately approved, he said, "we can get on with the business of doing our jobs–providing reliable service to PG&E's customers."

The settlement proposal requires formal approval by creditors, US Bankruptcy Judge Dennis Montali, and PG&E's board of directors. It is also subject to an extensive public review by the CPUC.

Opposition to the settlement appeared immediately after it was announced. Some consumer groups want bigger rate reductions for PG&E's customers. Gov. Gray Davis, who may be trying to polish his image in the face of a possible

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Talks resume for new PG&E agreement

Negotiations for a new labor agreement with Pacific Gas & Electric resumed on June 25 when the Local 1245 Bargaining Committee submitted a new package to the company.

The union proposed modifications to the wage, pension, LTD, and medical provisions contained in the offer rejected by the Physical bargaining unit in May. Further, the union proposed that any improvements to the Physical agreement should be applied to the Clerical agreement as well.

The company reiterated its support for the provisions contained in the company's previous best and final offer, voted on in May. However, the company said it would "cost out" the union's proposal and would respond during the next negotiating session, scheduled for July 2 at the union's new headquarters in Vacaville.

Company negotiators indicated the company needed a ratified agreement by September 15 in order to implement all benefit provisions (including pension improvements) by Jan. 1, 2004.

The key elements in the union's proposal were:

♦ General wage increases of 4% in each of the first three years, wage re-openers in years four and five, with retroactive pay for all straight time hours and overtime hours

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Kevin Young

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Negotiating Committee
Jerrid S. Fletcher
Jerry S. Fletcher
Israel J. Haley
Richard L. Leonardo

SACRAMENTO REG. TRANSIT

Negotiating Committee
Rodney Beverly
Constance Bibbs
Brian McCord

YUBA COUNTY WATER

Negotiating Committee
Ron Knudson
Rose Shipman
William Zoellin

ILCA
WLCA

UtilityReporter
July 2003
Vol. 52 No. 7
Circulation: 23,400

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Published monthly at 30 Orange Tree Circle, Vacaville, CA 95687. Official publication of Local Union 1245, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, AFL-CIO, P.O. Box 2547, Vacaville, CA 95696.

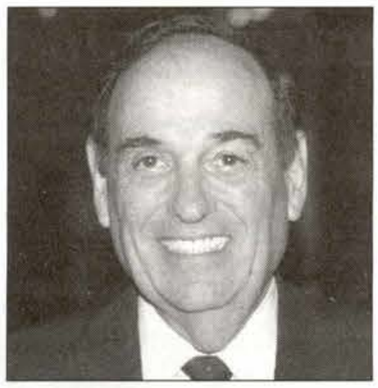
Periodical postage paid at Walnut Creek and at additional mailing offices. USPS No. 654640, ISSN No. 0190-4965.

POSTMASTER: Please send Form 3579, Change of Address, and all correspondence to Utility Reporter, P.O. Box 2547, Vacaville, CA 95696.

Single copies $1. Subscription by arrangement. Have you moved recently? Please send complete new address and your Social Security Number (by U.S. Mail) to: "Address Change", IBEW Local 1245, P.O. Box 2547, Vacaville, CA 95696. Our Web Site can be viewed at www.IBEW1245.com. Our phone number is (707) 452-2700.

YOUR UNION

Excessive executive pay



By Perry Zimmerman, Business Manager

I've never used my column to talk about issues beyond the scope of collective bargaining—until now. I'm going to discuss executive compensation because for some it played a role in producing the "no" vote on the last round of PG&E bargaining.

Anybody who reads the business page of the newspaper knows there has been an unprecedented increase in executive compensation over the last 20 years. This has widened the gap between the compensation of executives on the one hand and average workers on the other. By any standard you care to choose, it is obvious that many executive compensation packages offered by American corporations today are excessive.

Especially troubling are stock options and so-called "golden parachutes." Stock options allow executives to benefit from growth in the value of their stock, but spare them the risks of a decline in stock value. Generous severance packages—the "golden parachute"—all too often reward executives who are "underperforming" or even leading their companies toward disaster.

Of all the criticism leveled at PG&E's executive compensation in recent months, one really stands out. This was the huge severance package given the executive who led the National Energy Group into complete financial collapse. His "golden parachute" leaves him with monthly compensation *for the rest of his life* that is eight times greater than the monthly pay received by the average PG&E worker.

With examples like this, it's no wonder that Americans question the idea that executive compensation is based on risk and tied to performance.

I know many members believe executive pay should be tied to company performance, and should not be excessive in comparison to the pay of average workers. And I agree with this completely. But I do not see this as an issue limited to PG&E. In fact, despite our current differences over bargaining, I am impressed with the intelligence and ingenuity of most PG&E executives. But this personal opinion is beside the point in terms of the larger picture of executive compensation. Excessive executive compensation is not a local issue, it is a national issue that says something troubling about the way capitalism has evolved in the United States.

Am I suggesting that members simply stay silent about excessive executive pay? Absolutely not. I think there are effective ways for members to stand up and have an impact on this important issue.

First, get involved with one of the national organizations fighting for justice on this issue. Writing e-mails to each other about how much so-and-so at PG&E received in stock options is not going to change anything. But we have the power to create some real change by drumming up public outrage about the Ken Lays and Jeff Skillings and Halliburtons of the world. You'll be stepping on some powerful toes in powerful places, but if you feel strongly about the issue, that's where the real fight is.

At the same time, all of us can play a role in diffusing the criticism that is sometimes directed at our own wages. For years, the wages and benefits received by IBEW-represented workers at PG&E have been called "excessive" by critics, most notably the Divison of Ratepayer Advocates at the CPUC. We know that this is not true, and can usually make all but the most conservative people see our point of view. But keeping the public informed about our value is an important, on-going challenge.

Finally, if your children are interested in careers in business, send them to business school to learn the skills, but make sure to send them off with your value system. If we teach our children well, the next generation of business leaders will rise to the top with a different perspective on what is fair and just.

I don't think we can realistically expect PG&E to be much different from the prevailing corporate model. PG&E doesn't exist in a vacuum, and it won't change until the prevailing corporate model changes. Meanwhile, don't let your frustration on this issue overshadow the real issue in these negotiations, which is securing the best wage and benefit improvements that we can achieve. There's a time to be incensed, and there's a time to add up the dollars and cents.

Bodies don't come with warranties

To the Editor:

Most of us don't retire with piss and vinegar. We are worn out. We've given it all "to the company store." You go away feeling the pension will continue, the medical will be protected and you'll still be able to take care of your spouse.

For those of us who are retired now, our pension is diminishing in value. How much longer are we going to be able to afford medical insurance?

Retired members can't vote on contracts. Working members are our only hope. Please understand that what is affecting us right now will affect you pretty soon. Eventually you will find that your body didn't come with a warranty, and replacement parts are hard to find.

It really is important to give a high priority to planning for your future. The cap on the company's payments for retiree medical premiums has wrecked our pensions, and is also wrecking yours, even before you get it. Your pension isn't worth the paper it's written on as long as the retiree medical premium issue isn't dealt with.

I know that members didn't like the idea of making co-payments on their medical premiums. But are you thinking about what you're going to face when you retire if something isn't done?

Right now you have youth and the ability to make a little extra money to make up the amount you may have to kick in on a co-payment. Retirees do not. Few retirees are independently wealthy, despite what some may think. These rising medical expenses really hurt.

The medical savings accounts proposed in the agreements that were voted down won't solve the problem. But they're a start.

Take care of business folks. Think about your future. It will be here tomorrow.

Michael L. Silva
President, East Bay Chapter
Local 1245 Retirees Club

Speak Out!

Got something to share with your fellow union members? Send letters (with name and phone number) to:

Utility Reporter Letters
IBEW 1245
PO Box 2547
Vacaville, CA 95696

Note: We can't print personal attacks or letters dealing with union politics. Opinions expressed in Speaking Out are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IBEW Local 1245.

Local 1245 supports PG&E bankruptcy settlement proposal

▶ From Page 1

recall election, has also called for bigger breaks for customers.

But the hard reality is that the energy crisis–precipitated by the state's experiment with electric deregulation–drained billions of dollars out of the California economy in general, and $13 billion out of PG&E in particular. Residents of California have an overriding interest in reestablishing a stable, reliable electric system with appropriate regulatory oversight. Restoring PG&E to financial health appears to be the surest and quickest route to achieving that goal.

Sacrifices Required

Shareholders and consumers are both required to make sacrifices to finance the deal.

Under the settlement proposal, shareholders will contribute $1.7 billion by forgoing stock dividends until at least mid-2004.

Consumers will also pony up. Electric rates will drop by $350 million a year starting Jan. 1, but could have dropped further given the relatively cheap cost of generating power under today's conditions. Instead, that revenue from customers will be used to pay off about $8 billion in PG&E debts over an extended period of time.

Another $4 billion in PG&E debt will be paid with surplus electricity charges already collected by the utility since energy prices went down.

Members Paid Steep Price

Although Local 1245 members will benefit from having a financially-secure employer, they have paid a steep price for California's failed experiment in electric deregulation.

• On the job, many members experienced hostility and even threats from customers outraged by the market manipulation in 2000-2001.

• In early 2001, as PG&E hurtled toward bankruptcy, hundreds of members were at risk of being laid off until Local 1245 and the Coalition of Utility Employees petitioned the CPUC to prevent it.

• PG&E's reorganization plan created job insecurity, especially for those at risk of transfer to the new PG&E affiliates proposed in the plan.

• The bankruptcy case was an economic dark cloud hanging over the bargaining table during general negotiations.

And now, many members will be hit financially by the bankruptcy settlement itself – as customers facing relatively high rates and as PG&E shareholders with suspended dividends.

But, given the alternative of protracted litigation and continued job insecurity, Local 1245 endorsed the settlement as a way to bring an end to the bankruptcy nightmare.

The latest round of settlement talks were ordered in March by Judge Montali, who appointed Bankruptcy Court Judge Randall Newsome to mediate the negotiations.

Newsome called the settlement "a fair deal for both sides and of great benefit for all Californians." Without a settlement, he said, "PG&E faced a precarious future of uncertainty due to litigation and appeals, with troubling consequences for our state."

Under the settlement proposal PG&E would abandon its plan of reorganization. The utility will also be required to dedicate 140,000 acres of watershed land, mostly surrounding hydroelectric projects in the Sierra Nevada and valued at $300 million, to be used in perpetuity for public purposes.

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Line Clearance Tree Trimmers

Stewards study threat posed by non-union contractors

Non-union contractors are making fresh encroachments in California's line clearance tree trimming industry, and meeting the threat was a major topic of discussion at the Local 1245 stewards conference for tree trimmers on May 31 in Sacramento.

A power point presentation by Davey tree trimmer Carl Lamers featured recent photos of sub-standard work by non-union contractors now working on PG&E property. Lamers' presentation included photos of:

- A tree limb burning in a power line, ignored by a Family Tree crew working nearby.
- "Hangers" left in trees trimmed by Mowbray Tree crews, in clear violation of the California Code of Regulations.
- Oil spills caused by a Family Tree crew that simply abandoned the site of the accident.
- Extensive damage to a customer's home by a Mountain Tree crew.

Staying focused on safe and efficient work performance, Lamers said, would continue to distinguish quality union work from the slipshod performance of non-union contractors.

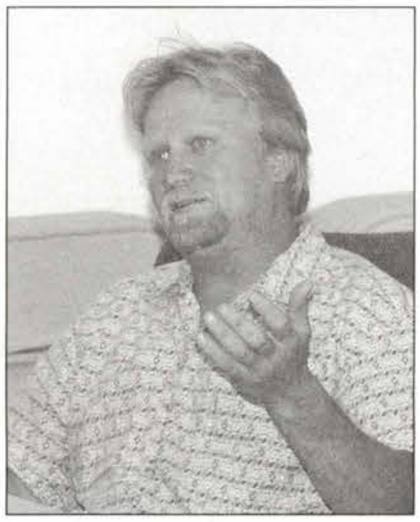
Business Manager Perry Zimmerman welcomed the stewards to the conference and stressed the importance of keeping the industry unionized in order to protect existing wage and benefit standards.

Tree trimmers engaged in a spirited discussion of safe work practices, talked about the grievance procedures at the various unionized contractors, and also shared information on recent grievances of particular interest.

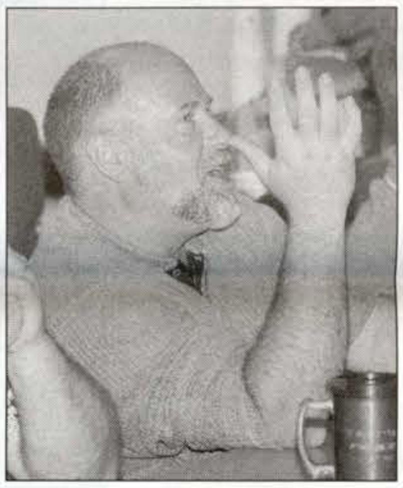
Attending the conference were Gil Suarez, John Shepherd, Jeff Atkinson, Jim Gorman, Rod Danyuer, Tim Gray, Virgil O'Neal, Dan Woody and Carl Lamers from Davey Tree; Nick Schader and Hector Arellano from Asplundh Tree; Brock Navarro from EPA Provco; and Raul Ruano, Chris Drinkard and Gerald Edwards from Arbor Tree.

Nick Schader, Asplundh Tree

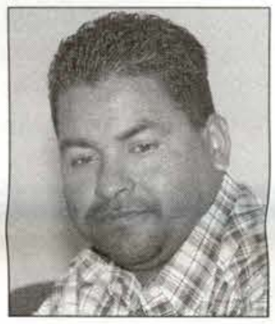
Gerald Edwards, Arbor Tree



Jeff Atkinson, Davey Tree, discussed the increased pressures on Local 1245 members to get production up, and the impact on health and safety.



Jim Gorman, Davey Tree, offerred his view that the company has an obligation to direct the crews and assign work productively.



Raul Ruano made the point that safe work practices are necessary for any company to prevail. Without safety, profits are lost.

Story & Photos by Eric Wolfe

John Shepherd (gesturing, at right) said that union tree trimmers needed to be competitive, but they had to stand up for their rights simultaneously.

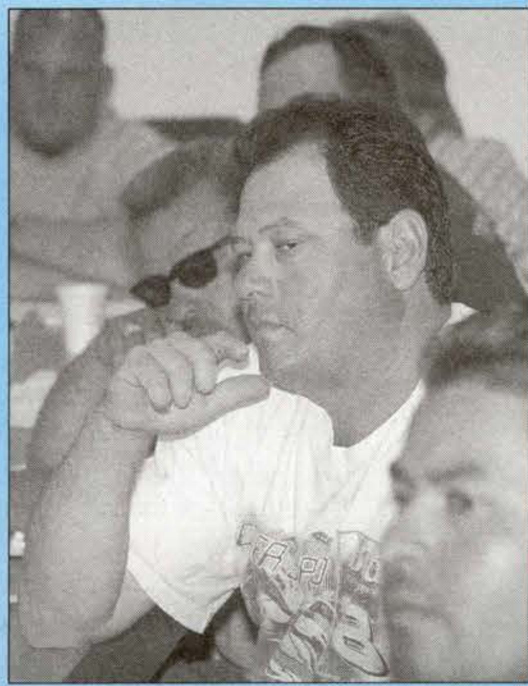
Line Clearance Tree Trimmers

Carl Lamers power point presentation documented shoddy work practices by non-union contractors Mowbray Tree, Family Tree and Mountain Enterprises.

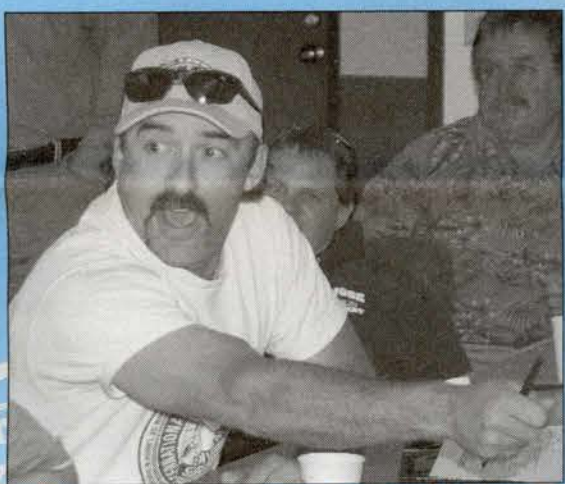
Dan Woody, Davey Tree

Brock Navarro, EPA Provco

Virgil O'Neal, Davey Tree

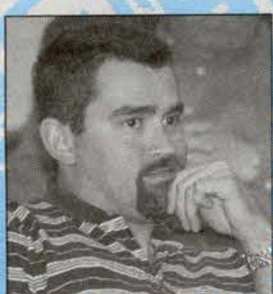


Gil Suarez, Davey Tree, raised safety concerns with respect to the increased pressure that companies are placing on line clearance tree trimmers.



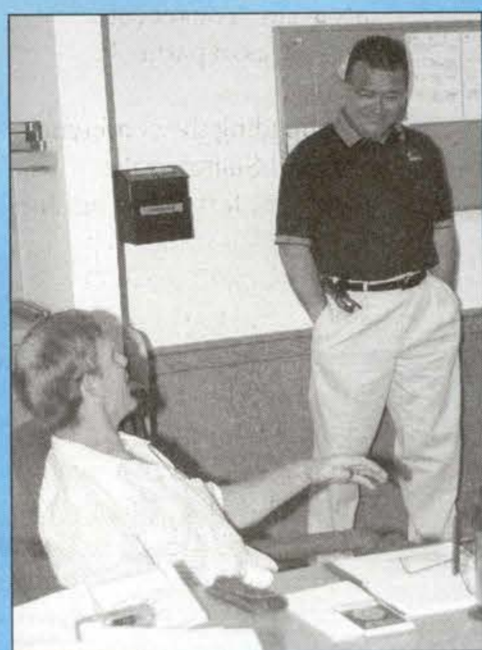
Tim Gray, Davey Tree, was adamant that the company must cooperate in bulding a good relationship with its employees in order to promote productivity.

Business Manager Perry Zimmerman discusses the importance of keeping the line clearance tree trimming industry organized.



Chris Drinkard, Arbor Tree

Hector Arellano, Asplundh Tree



Rod Danyuer, Dave Tree (left), relates a story to Business Rep. Junior Ornelas during a break.

Slandered soda, speared boss & yacht economics

Strike could bring blackouts in France

French energy workers threatened to trigger countrywide blackouts to bolster their more than month-long series of strikes against pension reforms and the privatization of state utilities, according to a report in Reuters.

For over a month, state energy workers have carried out intermittent power production reductions and strikes. Wholesale power prices in France, Europe's top power exporter, have more than quadrupled for peak hours due to the ongoing labor actions.

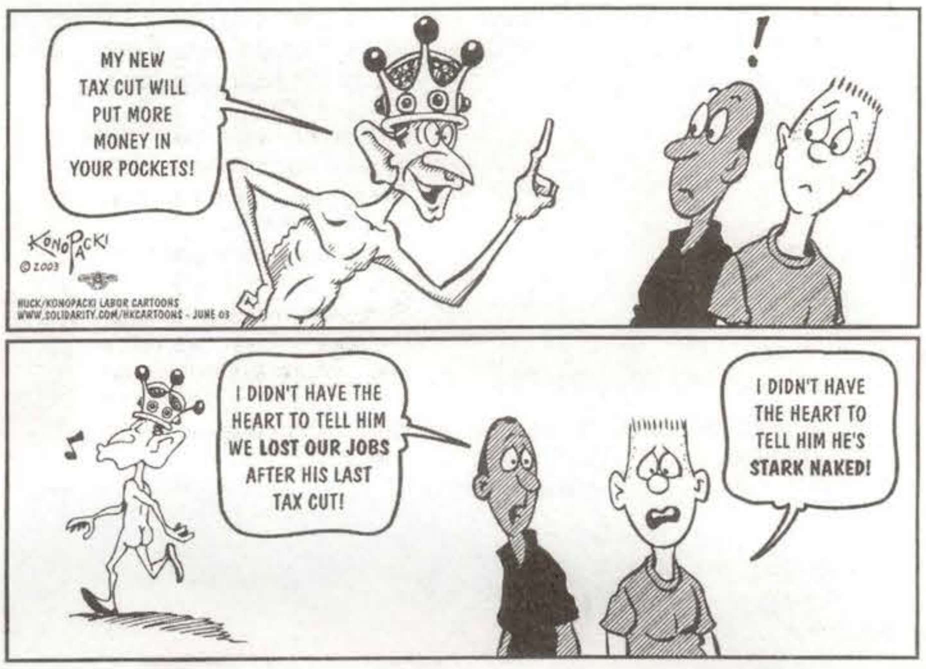
An action on May 13 led to the biggest strike-induced power output cuts in a decade—about 10% or 12,000 megawatts. That strike also resulted in exports being nearly halved to about 5,000 MW.

But there have been no blackouts—last seen in France in the 1980s—because the unions are fiercely protective of the French tradition of public service, according to the Reuters report.

Workers believe the real threat to service is the proposed sell-off of the state-owned Electricite de France and Gaz de France.

In the sixth week of industrial action, energy workers planned to reduce power production as part of a nationwide strike, and to join transport workers and teachers in a national strike on June 19, according to an official from France's largest state utility union, CGT.

Rick Bronson, a 12-year employee of the Coca-Cola Bottling Company, was sacked after being spotted glugging down a soft drink made by the rival Pepsi company, Yahoo News reported. "Coke is really grasping at straws on this one," said Jim Santangelo, principal officer of the Teamsters union local that represents Bronson. The Teamsters claim that Bronson was fired for his work three months ago in organizing Coke merchandising workers. The union says that Coke fired Bronson under a company rule that bars "slander" of the world famous product after he was seen drinking the rival soft drink. "Hey, Rick's a Pepsi drinker, what can he do?" Santangelo said, noting that Bronson was drinking Pepsi in the backroom of a store, not on live TV.



Boss Speared: Workers fired from a Volvo dealership on the Indonesian island of Borneo attacked their Swedish boss with spears during a dispute over severance pay last month, the Associated Press reported. Michael Olsson, who was stabbed in the back and slashed in the face at a meeting with the workers, was trying to negotiate with the workers, who were demanding that eight managers also be fired and that the company give them $1.2 million in compensation.

Highest Jobless Rate: The US unemployment rate rose in May to 6.1%, its highest level in nearly nine years, Reuters reported.

Prolonged Unemployment: Americans are facing the longest spells of unemployment in two decades, according to a report by the Economic Policy Institute. The percentage of unemployed workers who have been out of work for six months or more has doubled since 2000, to more than 20% this year. The national unemployment rate of 6.1% is up 2 percentage points since President Bush took office. With the exception of a brief spike in the early 1990s, the rates of long-term unemployment haven't reached such heights since June 1983. In April, 43% of the nation's jobless had run out of their state-funded unemployment benefits, the highest percentage since August 1983, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

New Yacht Economics: "Can someone tell me how giving tax cuts to rich folks right at the roll out of new yacht season is supposed to create jobs outside of the burgeoning deck swabbing industry?" –Will Durst, humorist

Unions Irreplaceable: A new poll shows that teachers see unions as an irreplaceable defender of their professional rights, the American Federation of Teachers reported. More than eight out of 10 teachers say that, without the union, they would be vulnerable to school politics or administrators who abuse their power. A similar percentage of teachers say that, without collective bargaining, the working conditions and salaries of teachers would be much worse. More than 1,300 K-12 public school teachers were polled.

I Got Mine: Australia's multinational shopping mall king, Frank Lowy, gave away his $11 million annual salary last year to celebrate the 50th anniversary of his arrival as an immigrant worker in Australia 50 years ago, LaborNet reported. But his generous feeling for immigrant workers apparently doesn't extend to the many immigrant workers who work at low wages to clean his buildings. Last month SEIU members in the US and LHMU union members in Australia protested Lowy's low-wage policies in coordinated actions at Lowy properties in the US and Australia.

Strikes Banned: Electrical workers–classified as "essential" workers–have already been banned from striking by Zimbabwe's repressive government, but as protests mount against the 23-year reign of President Robert Mugabe, the government recently found that some other workers were also too essential to be allowed to strike: veterinarians and pharmacists. Other sectors where workers have been barred from striking include clinics, fire brigades, telecommunications, civil aviation, broadcasting, public transport and state railway services, MSNBC reported.

Dispute settled with Outside Line contractors

The Council on Industrial Relations for the Electrical Contracting Industry has settled a contract dispute between the Western Line Constructors Chapter of the National Electrical Contractors Association and IBEW Local 1245, which represents electrical workers employed by NECA-affiliated contractors.

Under the terms of the decision, which is binding on both parties, wages will increase by 2.56% effective June 1, 2003, 2.94% on June 1, 2004, and 4.28% on June 1, 2005.

On the same dates, contributions to the benefits fund will be increased by $.20, $.20, and $.10 respectively.

Contractors will be required to make a $.30 contribution to LINECO for health insurance effective June 1, replacing the wage deduction. In addition, contractors will pick up the full cost of LINECO increases that have already been announced for 2003 and 2004, as well as contributing $.75 toward possible LINECO increases in 2005 and 2006. If LINECO does not require the full amount, the difference may be applied to wages or benefits, at IBEW's discretion.

PAR CREW
Ready to call it a day after working in San Francisco's Sunset District a few months back is a PAR crew consisting of (from left): Casey Kelley, Lineman; Ken Fields, Lineman; Trevor Feleti, Apprentice Lineman; and Jim Harkless, Foreman. PAR is one of the contractors covered by last month's Council on Industrial Relatons settlement covering IBEW linemen.

Unit updates

Unit 1111, Fresno, meets at 5:00 pm. The time was stated incorrectly in the Unit Schedule in last month's Utility Reporter.

Mike Grill
Business Rep.

Unit 1122, Merced Irrigation District, will meet July 9 instead of July 3, a one-time-only change.

Mike Grill
Business Rep.

Unit 4912, Riverside, has a new unit chair: Bobby Van Noy.

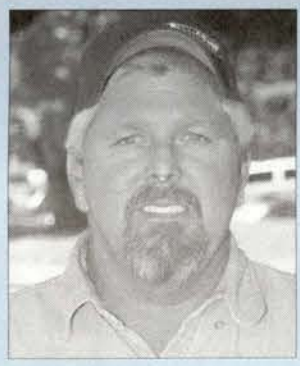
Jeff Johnstone
Business Rep.

New Outside Rep in San Diego

Local 1245 has hired Roy Dunkin to represent members in Outside Construction.

Dunkin was initiated into the IBEW in 1985 and made lineman in 1994. After many years working for Outside contractors, Dunkin went to work for Pacific Gas & Electric General Construction out of Cloverdale in 1997.

In 1999, Dunkin went to work for San Diego Gas & Electric, then recently returned to Outside Construction.



Roy Dunkin

McMULLEN RETIRES
Jim McMullen, right, is presented an IBEW watch on the occasion of his retirement by Assistant Business Manager Jim McCauley. McMullen, a former Local 1245 Business Representative, served as administrator for the union's pension plan and performed other record-keeping services.

PG&E, union resume talks

From Page 1

worked calculated by adding 4% to the gross earnings of each Physical employee on the payroll on January 1, 2003.

♦ Pension formula increased to 1.6 on the bands for all years effective January 1, 2004.

♦ Establishment of a Joint Committee to address issues on the application and administration of the current LTD program.

♦ Union accepts company proposal on the estimated medical premium contributions of March 28, 2003, and proposes that the rates be frozen at the Jan. 1, 2004 level for the term of the agreement.

♦ All other agreements in the March 28, 2003 table offer are agreed to by the union.

♦ Any improvements to the Physical Agreement would be applied to the Clerical Agreement.

Utility Reporter captures awards

The Utility Reporter took a half-dozen awards in the annual labor journalism contest sponsored by the Western Labor Communications Association.

"The Future is Now," a story by Eric Wolfe about the union's efforts to train a new generation of union leaders took top honors in the Best News Story competition. Wolfe's story, "Deregulation's Utter Failure," won first for Best In-Depth Analysis.

The Utility Reporter won second place in the competition for Best Overall Newspaper.

Wolfe's photograph of City of Redding linemen working from a bucket at night won third place in Best Photograph competition, and Wolfe's profile of Outside Lineman Bernie Mulcahy won third for Best Feature Story.

Business Manager Perry Zimmerman received an Honorable Mention for his column, "Be an Informed Electorate," which encouraged members at PG&E to be fully informed before voting on a contract proposal.

The awards were presented in Pasadena, Ca. on June 7.

Pacific Gas & Electric Company

California Gas Transmission

When natural gas from Canada travels south through California, Local 1245 members at California Gas Transmission's Delevan Compressor Station give it a boost along the way.

"It's suck and blow. We take in gas at one side and push it out the other," says Transmission Mechanic Welder Sam Burton, who also serves as a union steward.

On May 13, Delevan was receiving gas at 770 pounds per square inch and blowing it out at 1020 pounds, just short of its maximum discharge pressure of 1040 pounds.

Local 1245 members employed by PG&E Gas Transmission Northwest in Oregon and Washington get PG&E's gas to California, but CGT employees take over once the gas crosses the border. CGT operates some 6,200 miles of pipeline, three underground storage fields, numerous meter and regulator stations, and nine compressor stations: three in Delevan, two in Burney, two in Betheny, one in Gerber and one in Tionesta.

CGT, which has operated under a variety of names through the years, remains a part of PG&E Co., the distribution utility. Continued industry restructuring could mean a new name and new arrangements in the future.

But Local 1245 members in Delevan aren't sweating it too much.

"Names don't mean much to us," says Burton, noting that Delevan Station has been in operation since 1965. "We're California Gas Transmission right now. We move product, we don't care about the politics."

Bob Ballew (left) and Frank Rutledge findin
center so the combustion piping can be r

Behind Sam Burton is a compressor in its operational state.

Frank Rutledge (left) and Bob Ballew installl combustion piping on t

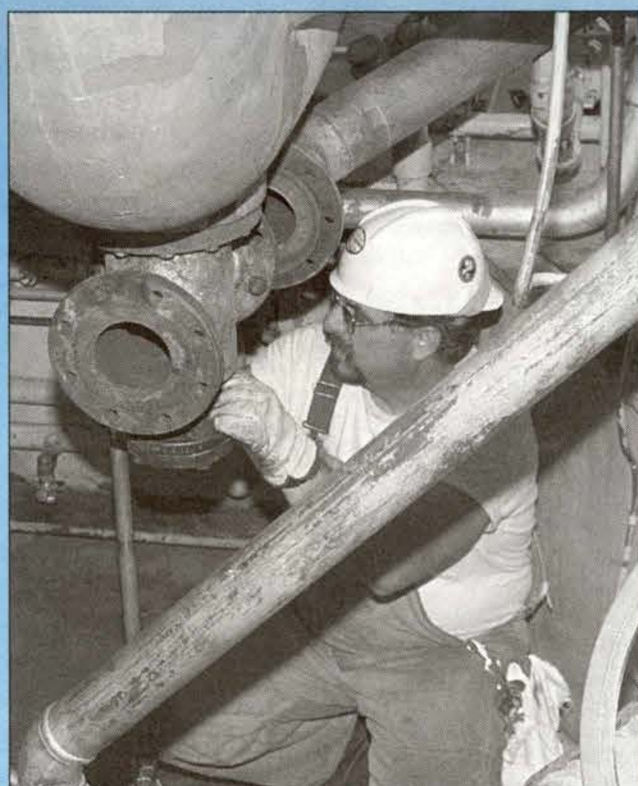
the top dead
built.

e turbine.

Working at Delevan Compressor Station are, back row, from left: Transmission Mechanics Frank Rutledge, Jeff Wilson, Dave MacLean and Bob Ballew; front row, from left: Mechanic-Welder Sam Burton, Gas Control Tech Charles Eglian and Gas Transmission Tech Gary Bodoh.

Jeff Wilson changes out rubber boots on a frame 3 lube oil drain on a GE turbine.

Story & Photos by Eric Wolfe



Dave MacLean replaces hot air piping under the turbine after the borescope inspection.

Court sides with worker in discrimination suit

The Supreme Court ruled unanimously that circumstantial evidence can be used in lawsuits accusing companies of discrimination.

The ruling, which came in the case of female forklift operator, could make discrimination cases easier to prove in the future.

Catharina Costa claimed she was fired from an all-male warehouse because of her gender, along with other reasons. A jury ordered her employer, Caesars Palace of Las Vegas, to pay her more than $364,000.

The Bush administration, hoping to make it more difficult to sue under federal anti-discrimination law, urged the court to support the casino.

The case, *Desert Palace Inc. v. Costa*, raised the issue of so-called "mixed motives," where an employer may have multiple motives–some legitimate and some discriminatory–for taking an action against an employee.

"We'd better implement a non-sexist hiring policy, Bob. You know how women are."

The employer urged the justices to require direct evidence of discrimination–proof based on personal knowledge or observation.

An employee "need only present sufficient evidence for a reasonable jury to conclude, by a preponderance of the evidence, that 'race, color, religion, sex or national origin was a motivating factor for any employment practice,'" Justice Clarence Thomas wrote in siding with Costa.

Eric Schnapper, a University of Washington law school professor who represented Costa, said companies may pay more attention to discrimination complaints in light of the Court's decision.

Costa claimed she was stalked and treated differently because of her gender before she was fired in 1994.

Women target Wal-Mart

Wal-Mart has been targeted by the National Organization for Women for the company's discriminatory practices.

NOW, which last year named Wal-Mart a "merchant of shame" for its unfair labor practices, is putting the heat on the giant retailer with the slogan: "Wal-Mart ALWAYS discriminates."

Wal-Mart is the largest employer in the United States and has been charged in the largest employment discrimination lawsuit in history.

"Wal-Mart may have the lowest prices in town, but who pays for those low prices? How does the company make a profit with such cut rates?" asked NOW President Kim Gandy. "The answer is women. Women hold most of the low-paying jobs in Wal-Marts across the country and the corporation's abuse of women employees helped it net $8 billion last year, and allows it to continue opening stores at the rate of one per day."

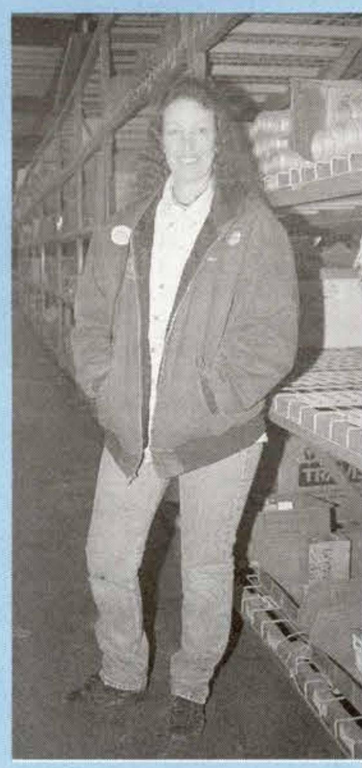
Complaints cited by NOW in its campaign against Wal-Mart include:

- Women employed at Wal-Mart make an average of $1.16 per hour less than men, and are promoted at a much slower rate than men.
- Women sales associates make an average of $15,000 per year—at least $1.00 per hour less than the retail industry average.
- More than three out of five Wal-Mart workers cannot afford the company's health insurance.

As part of the "Adopt a Wal-Mart Store" initiative, activists will distribute flyers, notecards and buttons inside and outside of stores in an effort to get the facts directly to customers. Activists will also request meetings with store managers to discuss issues concerning women employees and customers.

Participating in the campaign with NOW are the United Food and Commercial Workers and the Coalition of Labor Union Women.

At Work in Reno



Theresa Martin, UMS, Sierra Pacific Power Warehouse, Reno, Nev.

WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

Trouble in Spindles

Priding itself as the "South's City of Spindles," Gastonia, NC in the 1920s was the region's leading textile center—and the first to be controlled by Northern capital. The Manville-Jenckes mills were also the first to impose "stretch-out"—more production with fewer workers. A majority of the workers were women.

In early 1929, Gastonia workers decided to join the militant National Textile Workers Union (NTWU). Firings of union supporters provoked a walkout of some 1,700 of the 2,200 mill workers. Strikers drew up demands that included a five-day week, $20 minimum weekly wage, equal pay for equal work, and lower rent and electricity charges in the company-owned housing.

The mill superintendent took only three minutes to reject the strikers' demands. Four days later, National Guardsmen patrolled the mills, with guns. Court injunctions made picketing illegal. Arrest meant a $50 fine and 30 days on the chain gang.

"The strikers were clubbed and beaten in the streets and carted off to jail en masse," wrote observer Tom Tippettt. "Their parades were broken up by force every day, and just as consistently the strikers would form again the following day to march, with full knowledge of what they were doing, into the clubs and rifles."

On the night of April 18, armed and masked men demolished the union headquarters and then broke into the Workers' International Relief store. They dumped food into the street and torched the building. When the troops finally showed up, they arrested Amy Schechter of Workers' International Relief and some of the strikers.

To be continued...

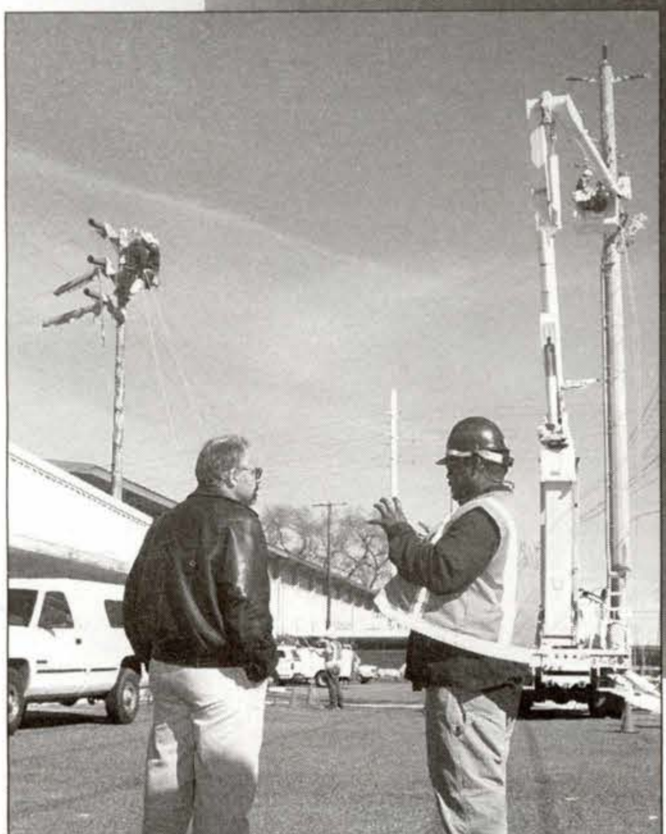
Wood to Steel

SMUD crews upgraded poles from wood to steel along Power Inn Road this spring, part of a road widening project in Sacramento. There's little room for error on this sort of job because the poles are set in concrete. "You gotta do it right because you're not moving it," notes Foreman Don Hurdle. On this particular day the linemen on the wood pole were getting ready to extend a tap line to provide service for the transformer bank and three-phase underground service. "That will allow us to remove a temporary line that was built to service those customers," says Hurdle. Linemen on the steel pole were terminating a riser. Working on the job with Hurdle were Jesse McCoy, Apprentice Lineman; Nathan Prince, Apprentice Lineman; Greg Baird, Apprentice Lineman; Elton Lamborn, Lineman; Jerry Natad, Lineman; and Brian Welch, Lineman.

Photos by Eric Wolfe

Elton Lamborn and Greg Baird

Brian Welch



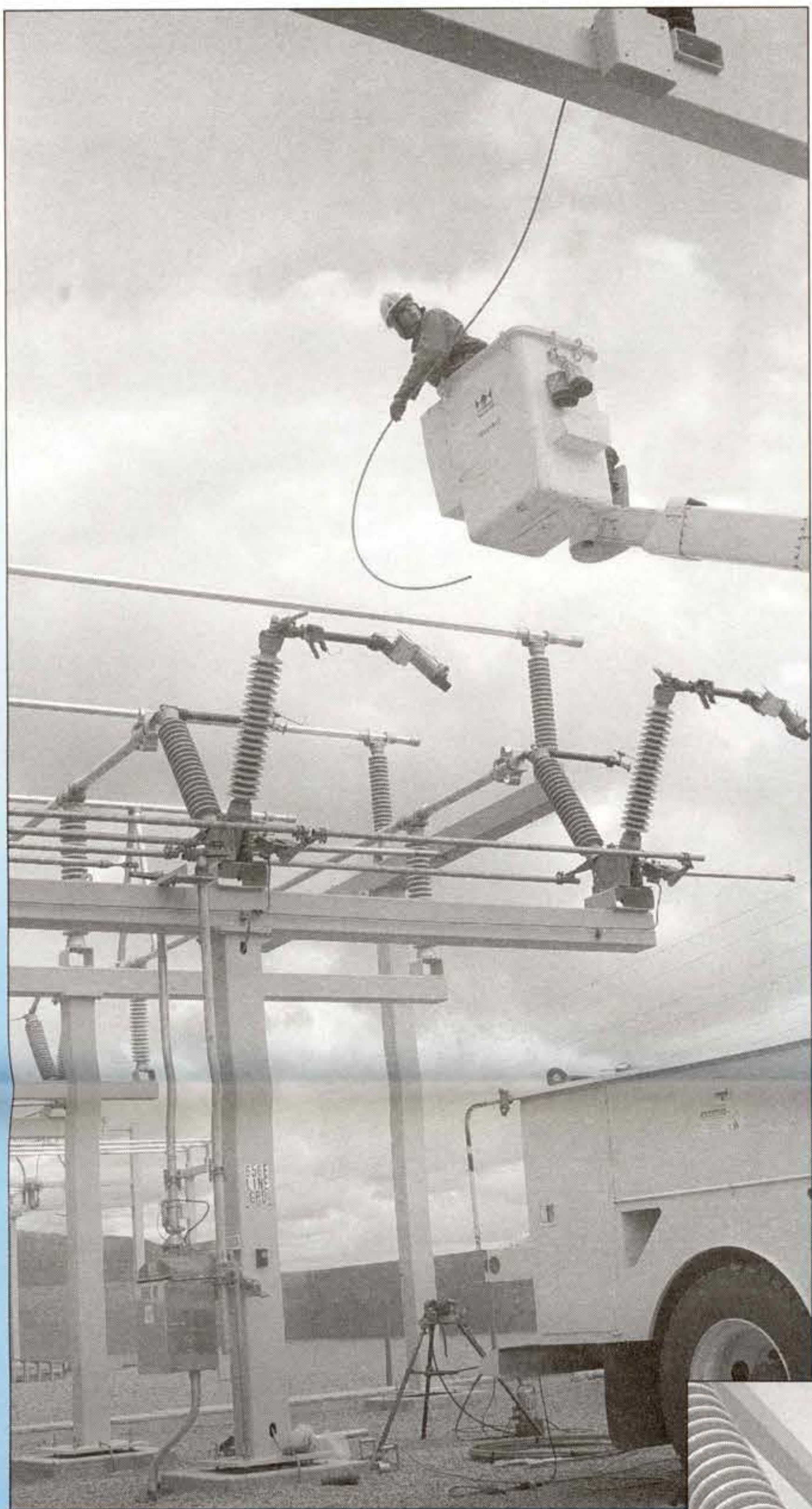
Business Rep. Sam Glero (left) and Foreman Don Hurdle.

Jerry Natad

SACRAMENTO MUNICIPAL UTILITY DISTRICT

Lonely Sub

Lyon County, Nevada is the fastest growing county in the fastest growing state in the nation. New residents and new businesses are putting new demands on the electric system, and Local 1245 members at Sierra Pacific Power are making sure the juice gets to the folks who need it. In April, a crew under Foreman Miles Webb was putting the finishing touches on "Lonely Substation" to accommodate new customers in the area. Among the recent newcomers to the neighborhood: an Amazon.com warehouse. With all the growth, things probably aren't going to stay lonely around Lonely Sub much longer.



Randy Brunelli installs jumpers.

From left: Steve Slagle, Electrician; Noble Gabrielson, SCAT Apprentice; Miles Webb, Foreman; Tom Cornell, Electrician; and Randy Brunelli, Apprentice Electrician.

Tom Cornell puts final adjustments on switch.

Randy Brunelli (left) and Noble Gabrielson

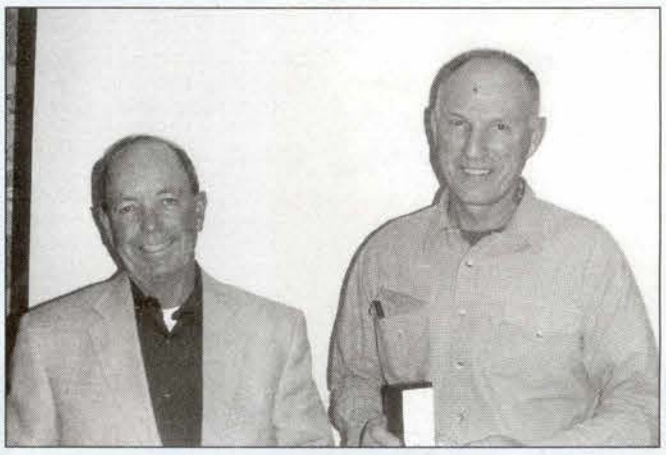
Photos by Eric Wolfe

I.B.E.W. 1245 SERVICE AWARDS

Reno, NV
April 26, 2003

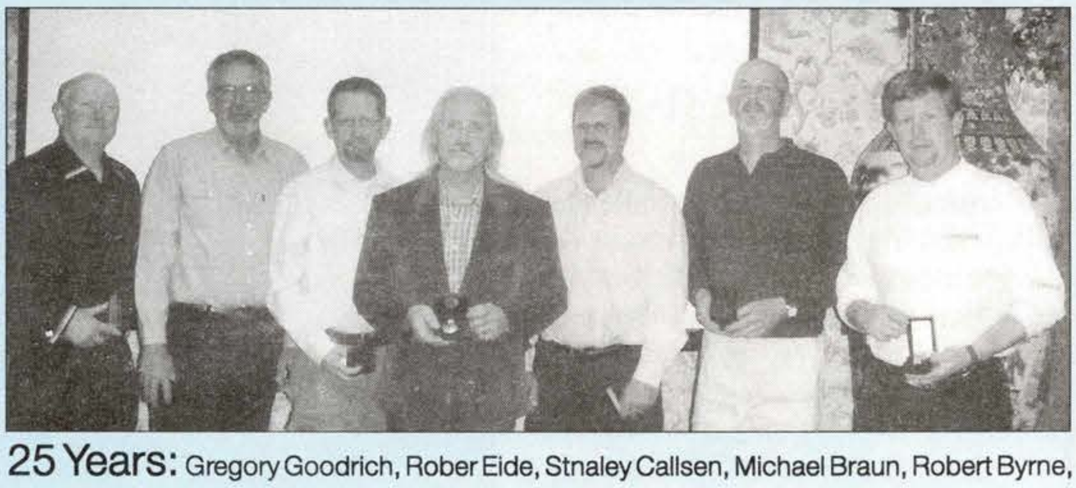
50 Years: Nick Garcia (left) receives 50-year award from Assistant Business Manager Dennis Seyfer.

40 Years: Charles Appleton



35 Years: John Arla, right, and Dave Chappelle

30 Years: James Wines, Martin Radekin, Lewis Robinson, Kathryn Stephens



25 Years: Gregory Goodrich, Rober Eide, Stnaley Callsen, Michael Braun, Robert Byrne,

The Honorees

60 YEARS
Schue, Clarence E.

55 YEARS
Kelley, Sylvester E.
Lercari, Charley C.

50 YEARS
Garcia, Nick G.

40 YEARS
Appleton, Charles

35 YEARS
Arla, John A.
Chappelle, David
Horton, Dennis R.

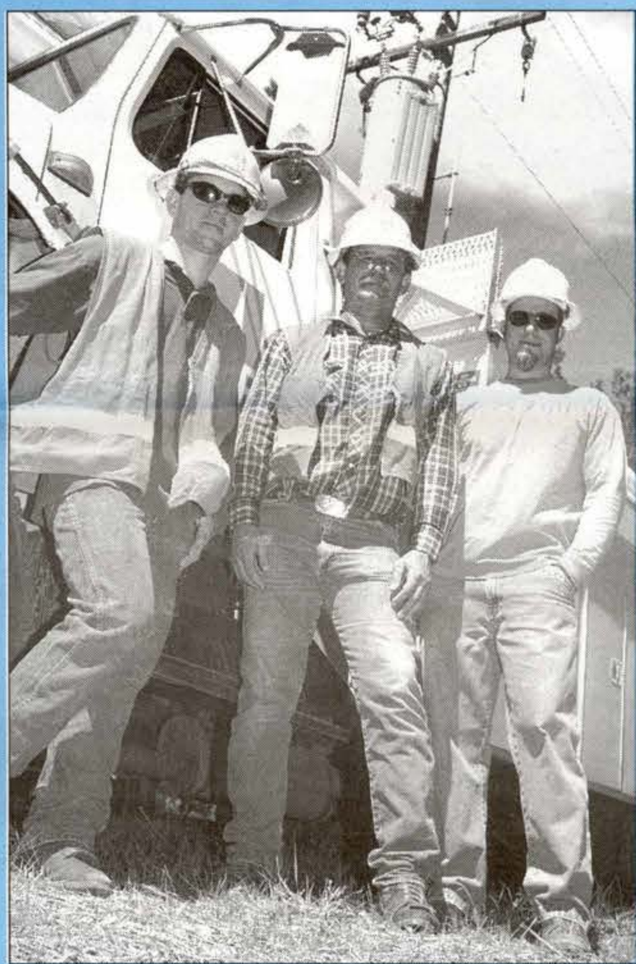
30 YEARS
Connell, Michael
Curl, Steve
Foster, Don
Greenwood, James R.
Lamberti, Alfred L. III
Lantis, Patrick J.
McElroy, Robert M.
Radekin, Martin
Robinson, Lewis W.
Round, Joseph
Stephens, Kathryn
Surrett, Randy L.
Tindall, Kathy
Wines, James

25 YEARS
Braun, Michael
Byrne, Robert E.
Coulson, Stanley K.
Daniel, Darris S.
Eide, Robert S.
Etcheberry, Michael A.
Goodrich, Gregory
Jones, Chris D.
Kellogg, Robert
Lewis, Tom H.
Matheus, Duane P.
Merrill, Kevin S.
O'Neill, Linda
Paterson, Wayne A.
Springer, William R.
Tracy, Richard
Waters, Nancy
Webb, Miles E.

Apprentice Shawn Andrade


Subforeman Michael McTeer

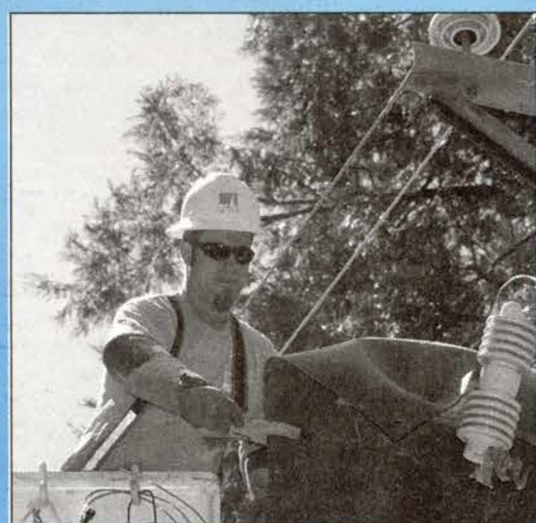
Photos by
Eric Wolfe


Shawn Andrade, Michael McTeer and Gregg Kerr

Pacific
Gas
&
Electric

Shingletown

Changing regulators on Pegnan Road in the foothills of Mount Lassen near Shingletown, Ca. is the Pacific Gas & Electric Crew of Subforeman Michael McTeer, Lineman Gregg Kerr and Apprentice Lineman Shawn Andrade.


Lineman Gregg Kerr

Senate drug plan offers little relief to seniors

The US Senate in late June voted down key amendments to a Medicare prescription drug plan (S. 1) that would have resulted in a more equitable and stable drug benefit for seniors and persons with disabilities, the AFL-CIO reported.

Without the amendments, the bill, which the Senate was getting ready to pass as the Utility Reporter went to press, does not offer coverage for Medicare recipients who exceed a drug spending limit. Worse, the bill moves toward privatization of Medicare and could cause employers to drop coverage for 4.4 million retirees.

On June 25, the Senate killed an amendment that would remove the "assets test" for low-income beneficiaries. Assets tests for Medicare assistance programs prevent nearly half of Medicare beneficiaries from qualifying even though they meet the income eligibility requirements.

Trick Definition

On June 24 the Senate defeated two amendments proposed and backed by Senate Democrats that would have helped preserve employer-provided drug benefits for retirees. Without amendments, S. 1 does not count employer contributions toward out-of-pocket costs needed to trigger benefit coverage—and this trick definition could cause employers to drop coverage for approximately 4.4 million retirees, according to Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates.

By 52–43, the Senate defeated an amendment that would have counted both beneficiary and employer contributions toward out-of-pocket costs. And by 55–41, it defeated an amendment that would have increased subsidies to employers and lowered the cost of their ongoing contributions to retirees' drug costs.

'$1300 Penalty for Sickness'

Without amendments, S. 1 "will not provide seniors with the predictable and affordable drug coverage they need and deserve," said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney.

Under the Senate plan, seniors in both traditional and managed-care Medicare would purchase commercial insurance coverage for a drugs-only plan, which they would pay an average monthly $35 drug premium, meet a $275 annual deductible and get help with 50% of their out-of-pocket drug costs up to $4,500. But even while continuing to pay monthly premiums, seniors would hit a gap after the $4,500 mark—and pay full price for medication until they spent $5,800 annually on drugs.

Senator Barbara Boxer offered an amendment to eliminate this lapse in coverage, calling it a "$1300 penalty for sickness." But the Republican-majority Senate rejected Boxer's amendment 54–42.

After reaching $5,800, seniors would pay 10% of prescription costs.

Medicare recipients are at the mercy of private insurers under an S. 1 without amendments. If fewer than two insurers offer drug policies in a region, the federal government would make coverage available through Medicare, but just for one year.

This plan would provide no stability for seniors, who could wind up bouncing between insurers. Commercial solutions are notoriously unreliable for Medicare recipients. Since private managed-care plans became available to Medicare beneficiaries in 1997, they have dropped more than 2 million enrollees, while those who remain in plans are paying more for fewer services.

After reaching $4,500 in drug expenses – and before they hit $5,800 each year – seniors would pay the full price of drug costs as well as monthly Medicare premiums. Senator Barbara Boxer called this annual gap a "$1,300 penalty for sickness."

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 IBEW Local 332, 2125 Canoas Garden, 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.

Joseph Barrera, Jr., 33 years
Nevada City, CA

Richard Becker, 37 years
Pleasant Hill, CA

Ralph Erwin, 35 years
Placerville, CA

David Fosse, 17 yaers
San Luis Obispo, CA

Earl Haynes, 31 years
oroville, CA

Elizabeth Justice, 17 yaers
Foresthill, CA

Christobal Lopez, 32 years
Nipomo, CA

William Mondragon, 37 years
San Jose, CA

Keith Peirson, 33 years
Hayward, CA

Thomas Robinson, 25
Manteca, CA

Linda Rodriguez, 38 years
Sunnyvale, CA

Joseph Rodriguez 31 years
San Jose, CA

John Salazar, 33 years
Albany, Ca

Theodore Samford, 36 years
Newcastle, CA

Elena Stokes, 18 years
Arroyo Grande, CA

Judith Szostak, 25 years
Modesto, CA

Kaye Swanson, 25 yaers
Eureka, CA

Allen Weber, 32 years
Garberville, CA

Andrew Wedel, 35 years
Wasco, Ca

Diane Williams, 28 years
Smith River, CA

Marlayne Young, 21 years
Campbell, CA

Bill requires all employers to provide health coverage

California families face a health care crisis. It's not in the future—it has arrived.

Over six million Californians have no health care insurance. Of these six million, 80% are members of working families.

Even those who currently enjoy health care insurance through their employer are feeling the affects of the health care crisis. Escalating medical costs are prompting employers to shift more of the cost onto the backs of workers.

Finally there is hope for a solution. California Senate Bill 2 would assure that all workers have health coverage.

Coverage Required

SB 2, the Health Care for Working Families bill, would assure that all workers and their families have health coverage by requiring employers either to provide that coverage or pay a fee to a state fund that would purchase coverage for workers and their families. The bill is sponsored by the California Labor Federation, along with the California Medical Association.

Even though members of Local 1245 enjoy relatively good benefits, the problem of the uninsured still affects us. Everyone pays the cost of the health care crisis. Our emergency rooms are overcrowded, soaking up tax dollars. There is constant pressure on our insurance premiums, co-pays and deductibles because hospitals shift onto our insurance the cost of those who can't pay.

Large corporations that don't provide health coverage are particularly to blame, as they clearly have the resources to do so. For instance, at Wal-Mart, the country's largest retailer, nearly two-thirds of workers don't have health insurance because they can't afford or don't qualify for Wal-Mart's plan.

Help for Small Employers

SB 2 addresses the health crisis head-on. Employers who provide decent and affordable health insurance could continue to do so without any change. Small employers would get the purchasing power of being part of a large pool and employers already providing coverage would no longer have to pick up the bill for workers' spouses whose employer doesn't provide coverage.

Every worker who earns $1300 in a three-month period would be eligible for coverage for themselves and their families, even if they work part-time, or as a temporary or contract worker.

A Floor for Negotiations

Stronger health care legislation enacted with the backing of the labor movement helps our unions in contract negotiations, raising the benefits' baseline when we bargain.

While the crisis is multifaceted and will require political and legislative action on a variety of fronts for years to come, getting all employers to provide for their workers is a critical first step in health care reform. With the number of uninsured rising by 14,000 every week and the cost of health insurance going up every year, California families cannot afford to wait any longer.

You can help. Call the California Labor Federation at 510-663-4000.

Safety Tailboard

Receive an IBEW cup and cap for submitting a safety question selected for publication in the Utility Reporter's Safety Tailboard. Safety Tailboard is an open forum for discussion and learning about safety issues. Submit your question, along with your name and phone number, to:

Safety Tailboard,
c/o Jim McCauley, IBEW 1245, PO Box 2547, Vacaville, CA 95696

By the Local 1245 Safety Committee

Safe operation of equipment

Knowing how to work safely with a piece of equipment requires more than just knowing which levers, switches, gauges, and dials to watch or move.

Workers should strive to understand how to work safely around equipment they use and know the correct settings for the safe operation of the equipment and tools.

On machines with moving parts, never reach over or around guards; they were put there for your protection.

Clothing and loose articles can get caught very easily. If you drop something in the machine, make sure it is turned off and has a lockout/tagout tag in place before you remove any guards to clear the machine.

Be sure all guards are properly reinstalled before removing the lockout/tagout tag to put the machine back in operation.

Stony Burk

Stop the work if necessary

In a situation where a serious injury or death has occurred, who has become the victim? Who has paid the price?

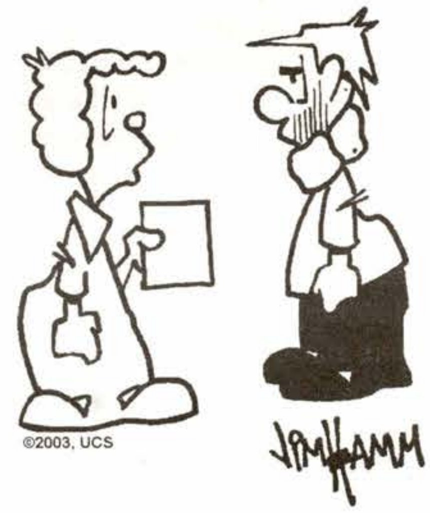
Lapses in safety can affect the lives of those we know, those we work with, and their families.

Safety isn't the responsibility of just one worker, it is the responsibility of all workers on the job.

Work as a team. Take care of each other. Remember: It is always better to stop the work and discuss a safety issue and/or a work practice than to have an accident stop us.

Art Torres

"Your boss wants to know when you're coming back to work. They need the neck brace."



Current members of the Local 1245 Safety Committee: Stoney Burk, Alameda Power & Telecomm.; Keith Hopp, Pacific Gas & Electric; Al White, Pacific Gas & Electric; David Vipond, Citizens Communications; Rich Lane, Turlock Irrigation District; Art Torres, Sacramento Municipal Utility District; Gil Suarez, Davey Tree; Bob Burkle, City of Santa Clara; and Assistant Business Manager Jim McCauley.