

COPY

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
741.5

Review Committee Files Nos. 437,
452, 453, 461 and 462

December 17, 1963

MR. D. K. STUART, Chairman
North Bay Division
Joint Grievance Committee

The Union has advised the Company members of the Review Committee that the following Review Committee cases have been withdrawn from the agenda of the Review Committee:

R.C. No. 437	(North Bay Division Grievance No. 4-66)
R.C. No. 452	{ " " " " No. 4-77)
R.C. No. 453	{ " " " " No. 4-75,
	No. 4-78, No. 4-83, and No. 4-85)
R.C. No. 461	{ " " " " No. 4-82)
R.C. No. 462	{ " " " " No. 4-89)

The minutes of your next Division Joint Grievance Committee meeting should note that these cases are closed.

We are attaching a copy of the Union's letter of withdrawal for your information. You will note that the letter is dated November 13, 1963; however, it was handed to me at the Review Committee meeting of December 10, 1963.

L. V. BROWN

L. V. BROWN, Chairman
Review Committee

LVB:RS
Attach.

cc: VJThompson
 RFSibley
 CLYager
 LIMitchell

cc: Fleming
 Fields
 Quadrax
 12/23/63
 do

INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS, AFL-CIO

1918 Grove Street

Oakland 12, California

LOCAL UNION 1245

November 13, 1963

Mr. L. V. Brown, Chairman
Review Committee
Pacific Gas & Electric Company
245 Market Street
San Francisco 6, California

Dear Mr. Brown:

This letter will advise that the Union is withdrawing the following Review Cases from the active Review Committee file:

R. C. #437	(North Bay Division Grievance	#4-66)
R. C. #452	{	" " "	" #4-77)
R. C. #453	{	" " "	" #4-75, #4-78, #4-83, #4-85)
R. C. #461	{	" " "	" #4-82)
R. C. #462	{	" " "	" #4-89)

The Union's members of the Committee have studied these grievances closely and conclude that, when viewed as a whole, these cases indicate a much more serious problem exists than the incidents which form the basis of the separate complaints. It is of real concern to us to observe issues being drawn in North Bay which, in the past, would have been resolved locally.

We believe that much of the problem can be traced to an apparent failure on the part of management to give due regard to the human relations factors involved in these grievances. We do not, at this time, attempt to place blame for the start of the problem but it is obvious to us that management, in answering certain of the grievances, cannot be held blameless for its continuation.

A union-management contract is far more than words on paper. It is also all the oral understandings, interpretations and mutually accepted habits of action which grow up around the contract over the course of time. To maintain harmonious relations requires a mutual trust which gives significance to the legal wording of a written agreement. Changes in habit or purely legalistic approaches to answering problems can only lead to strained relations and eventual destruction of trust and understanding.

We believe that management should not view the filing of grievances as a challenge of rights or authority but should view them as an aid in discovering and removing causes of discontent in the work force. The basic objective of the grievance procedure should be to achieve sound and fair settlements and not the "winning" of cases. By this, we mean that discussion, explanation and understanding are needed to educate as well as to provide the answer.

It appears that in the North Bay Division the situation has progressed to the point that the contract as well as rules are being read literally and answers given without regard to the effects on attitudes of those involved. This procedure creates a reaction from the other side which causes a similar attitude to be displayed and technicalities become the order of the day for all.

R. C. #437 is a case in point. The simple request by one employee for information on his sick leave record should not be the basis for invoking a rule designed to regulate mass requests creating increased research of office records. It would seem to us that no real principle was at stake and no real inconvenience would have been created had the request been honored.

R. C. #452 - the care and maintenance of tools is an important part of any safety program but the time and method of inspection is also important to the employees' understanding and acceptance of such a program. Hand tools, body belts and hooks, to a Lineman, are personal tools which are never borrowed or used without permission, even by fellow members of the crew. The management in North Bay should have taken this into consideration. The aim of an inspection should be to further safety. The savings in time created by after-hours inspections did nothing to further understanding and certainly reduced acceptance of the inspection program. When this was learned, we feel, management should have looked at objectives rather than to stand on what it viewed to be its rights.

R. C. #453 - As mentioned previously hooks are personal tools. Each person selects them on the basis of personal preference and each hook has distinctive differences which has appealed to the individual. Strict conformity to a universal sharpening gauge can change these distinctive features and quite naturally creates resistance to its use. No one quarrels with maintaining hooks in good condition and all Linemen have accepted the idea that a minimum gaff length and a reasonably sharp point are necessary to provide safety. However, there has been no evidence that the Fargo gauge has in any way provided a safer gaff than those conforming to the manufacturer's gauge nor, in fact, a safer hook than one sharpened without the use of any gauge. There has been no showing of relationship between non-conforming gaffs and cutting out on a pole. Thus, when a blanket order is issued with threats of discipline for non-conformance, it appears rather arbitrary to those who are affected, particularly when this type of application is not universal on the system and strict conformity does reduce the life of the hooks.

November 13, 1963

R. C. #461 - A rule to have meaning must be enforced equally to all. The Company cannot follow a policy of ignoring infractions of a rule and then, suddenly, bring it forth in one instance to discipline an employee. Where a rule has not been enforced it must be reinstated by notice to all so that it becomes a matter of general knowledge. The instance involved in this grievance was not the first time such an incident has occurred and warning letters had not been used before. The incident was not of such consequence that it called for singling out of these individuals. In view of the background of relationship this procedure certainly raises questions of propriety on the part of management in using a letter of warning to selected individuals before providing notice through communicating the intent to all in the work force.

R. C. #462 - Housekeeping of line trucks has long been accepted as part of the duties of line crews but washing and polishing them have not been considered as a requirement. It is also true that in many instances, line crews have voluntarily gone beyond the routine housekeeping duties in order to maintain the appearance of the trucks. We believe this to be proper but to demand that a crew do this as a matter of requirement seems to exceed the bounds of accepted custom and puts a different light on the matter. It would appear to us that a mutual understanding could have been reached without the use of authoritarian decree.

We have elaborated on these grievances because we believe the situation must be looked at in view of the relationship problems they create. We also know that when two sides are at loggerheads, some one must make the first move to stimulate a change. We are withdrawing these cases, without prejudice to the issues involved, in the hope that a better opportunity will be afforded to correct the situation without the issues at stake. As we previously stated, the "winning" of cases is not the objective of the grievance procedure. We sincerely urge that every effort be made to reverse the trend of technicalities which is apparent in the above-noted cases. We hope our action in withdrawing these cases will provide the means where future disagreements in the North Bay Division can be reviewed at the lower levels in a more objective manner and consideration given to the human relations problems involved.

Very truly yours,

L. L. Mitchell
L. L. Mitchell, Secretary
Review Committee

LLM:do

cc: WFlening
RFields
FAQuadros

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