CREATIVE DISORDER:

"Public workers walk a path from history"

From the poorest Chicano in a Los Angeles barrio, to the mightiest corporate executive in the boardrooms of New York, Americans are resistant to restrictions placed on them because of their status in life. The same is no less true of individuals who are employed in government. But a persistent sense of futility permeates activist public employees who are seeking full labor rights. Where this persistent sense of futility grows, militancy breeds... and that, unfortunately, is the current condition of public employees who are seeking full labor rights. Where this persistent sense of futility becomes unreasonable, when they are applied in a selective manner, or seem patently unfair in light of contemporary values, public employees will react with anger and hostility.

Oftentimes, this anger has expressed itself in direct action and, in the process, public employees have invoked a strategy rooted in the beginnings of this nation, and the trade union movement — civil disobedience.

Implicit in the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Thomas Jefferson, formulated by Mohandas Gandhi, practiced to perfection by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., civil disobedience has been characterized as the "technique of creative disorder."

Civil disobedience as a form of protest in this country has a tradition stretching back to before the American Revolution. Even today, school children are taught to

(Continued on page four)
The City also agreed to pay the taxes on dental plan. (Work is progressing in this matter). Recollections of people and incidents on the job by one, stirring the memory of another, and in the conversations the underlying theme was what change had occurred because of the union. It was apparent in this gathering, as it is with most service award socials, that the old timers still realize the need for the union. They have seen changes made over the past 25 to 30 years which, if available as a single package, would have seemed like attaining the millenium. However, they also recognize the need for defense of these hard fought gains and know these are not inalienable rights which cannot be altered. They also believe, along with the rest of labor, that we have not attained the ultimate goal and the only way to continue progress is through the process of collective bargaining.

I was pleased that these stalwarts with their display of unity are still ready to do whatever may be needed to advance the cause of labor. I am proud to say that come hell or high water the nucleus of unionism is solid and no matter what the policy decision, the solid core will support the majority will in seeing it will be carried out.

**Citizens Utilities Case goes to Arbitration**

An arbitration hearing was held on a case involving a Citizens Utilities employee who was injured on the job. The Union has processed the case to arbitration because the company wouldn’t allow the employee to return to work after he had been released by the doctor.

The arbitrator was Professor Joseph Grossman, who indicated he would render a decision in the near future. The membership will be notified when a decision has been reached.

**Local 1245 and City of Roseville Reach Agreement**

The agreement ratified by Local 1245 members employed by the City of Roseville provides for a 7½­% general wage increase effective January 1, 1977. Improvements were made in the Apprenticeship Program and the medical plan, and it was agreed to institute a dental plan. (Work is progressing in this area.) Reduced apprentice from a 5 year to a 3 year training period and an additional salary range of Apprentice Lineman by 10%. The City also agreed to pay the taxes on dental plan. (Work is progressing in this matter). Recollections of people and incidents on the job by one, stirring the memory of another, and in the conversations the underlying theme was what change had occurred because of the union. It was apparent in this gathering, as it is with most service award socials, that the old timers still realize the need for the union. They have seen changes made over the past 25 to 30 years which, if available as a single package, would have seemed like attaining the millenium. However, they also recognize the need for defense of these hard fought gains and know these are not inalienable rights which cannot be altered. They also believe, along with the rest of labor, that we have not attained the ultimate goal and the only way to continue progress is through the process of collective bargaining.

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**Bill Chambers Receives George Meany Scouting Award**

Local 1245 member Bill Chambers, Pumping Plant and Electric Substation Operator for the United States Bureau of Reclamation Region 2, has been awarded the George Meany Scouting Award.

The award was presented to Brother Chambers at the February meeting of the San Joaquin-Calaveras Central Labor Council.

Bill Chambers has been active in scouting for approximately 15 years and during this time has served as a Cub Scout Leader, Scoutmaster and District Officer. One of the things that make Bill unique is the fact that he has two daughters and no sons. He has dedicated his time to scouting because of his understanding of the need for adults to give of themselves so that our youth might find the right direction in life.

Editor’s Note: The Officers and members of Local 1245 congratulate Bill on receiving this award and for his activities in behalf of the youth in the community in which he lives.

**Bargaining Roundup**

**NOTICE TO NEGOTIATE:**

**CITY OF HEALDSBURG:** Union has notified City of its desire to meet and confer and has submitted written proposals. First meeting scheduled for April 6, 1977.

**CITY OF LODGE:** Following conclusion of interim negotiations and reaching a tentative agreement which is before the Council for approval, Unions notified the City of its desire to meet and confer on 1977 negotiations. Union also submitted its written proposals. No meeting date is scheduled at this time.

**MONTREY PENINSULA TV Cable:** Union has notified Company of its desire to bargain and submitted written proposals. No meeting dates are scheduled as yet.

**SONIC CABLE **: (Formerly Central California Communications Corporation Southern Division). First meetings are scheduled for April 19 and 20, 1977.

**CITY OF BERKELEY:** Union has submitted written proposals together with notification of its desire to meet and confer. Meeting dates not set.

**CITY OF OAKLAND:** Union has sent notification, together with its written proposals, to the City of Oakland. No meeting dates set.

**TELEPROMPTER OF UKIAH, WILLITS AND FT. BRAGG:** Union has notified Company of its desire to bargain and has notified Company of its desire to bargain and has submitted written proposals. No meeting dates scheduled at this time.

**IN NEGOTIATIONS:**

**CALIFORNIA-PACIFIC UTILITIES COMPANY — NEEDLES DISTRICT OF THE COLORADO RIVER DIVISION:** Negotiations have been concluded and tentative agreement reached. Will go to membership for ratification vote on April 11, 1977. Will report results in next issue.

**CITY OF LODE:** First package on interim negotiations (1976) is before the Council for approval. Details in next issue.

**CITY OF LOMPOC:** (Interim negotiations) The amounts the City would pay on Dental Plan was approved in general negotiations. The Dental Plan has now been selected and agreed upon. 50/50 copayment, City to pay up to $6.25 premium. Have also agreed upon language for automatic progression, but testing procedure is yet to be established.

**CENTRAL CALIFORNIA COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION:** Have had meetings to date. Tentative agreement has been reached in all areas except wages and terms of agreement. Next meeting is April 22, 1977.

**NEVADA IRRIGATION DISTRICT:** Agreement been reached on a salary package which would have provided an 8½% general wage increase effective January 1, 1977, and an additional 2½% in June, 1977; however, this offer had to be rescinded because of water problems. The District has no revenue. District and Union will, nevertheless, continue to negotiate on non-monetary items of the agreement.

**Ocean View Cable TV:** Have reached tentative agreement on wage opener, including job definitions and lines of progression. Will go to membership for ratification vote in the near future.

**PLACER COUNTY WATER AGENCY:** Negotiations are nearly concluded. The last offer was rejected by the membership.

**PACIFIC GAS TRANSMISSION:** Still in negotiations. No progress to report.

**STANDARD PACIFIC GAS LINE, INC.:** Still in negotiations. No progress to report.
The photos above and below show most of the ballot committee as they were counting the ballots for PG&E's first offer of settlement. The offer was rejected by the membership and the same committee was counting the ballots on the second offer at press time. Watch your bulletin boards for the results.
Local 1245 Shop Stewards employed by PG&E in the East Bay area, attended a Stewards Training session at the Local 1245 headquarters in Walnut Creek. The meeting began at 9:00 a.m. on March 5, 1977. A welcome was given by Bus. Rep. Manny Mederos and then each of the Stewards introduced themselves and gave their work locations. Dave Reese, Asst. Bus. Mgr., reported on safety items and stressed the importance of the accident report forms and the need for stewards to provide this information. Mr. Reese also reported on apprentice programs and allowed for a question and answer session on items involving safety and apprenticeship.

Assistant Business Manager Larry Foss reported on the grievance procedure. He explained the importance of the Shop Stewards' role in the procedure. Brother Foss explained the process of arbitration and how an arbitrator is selected.

In the afternoon, Sr. Asst. Bus. Mgr. Mert Waiters explained the status of negotiations and asked the Stewards to give what they felt were the reasons for rejection of the package. Many questions and items were raised.

**“Public workers walk a path from history”**

(Continued from page one)

So began, on February 1, 1960, the sit-in that sparked a wave of non-violent protest and a long period of civil disobedience against segregation. Like the GM strikers, the civil rights trespassers sought to restructure laws and institutions through “creative disorder.”

Public employees today are faced with the same dilemma — they are restricted by legal and political prohibitions unknown to other American citizens. Activist government workers view themselves as outsiders in a system which permits all other Americans the right to organize and bargain collectively, to reside where they may at any time, to engage fully in political activity and enjoy the benefits of protective federal legislation.

Are today's government workers really that different from the GM strikers of 1936, or the civil rights' trespassers of the 1960's? As leaders of public employee unions, we see the need for a restructuring of laws and institutions. We intend to seek change through all conventional methods available in the legal and political system.

What we are witnessing, however, is a fearful reaction from public managers, local and national political leaders to the unionization of public workers. They deliberately incite distrust and hostility.

For the past year, a governor in Virginia carried out a one-man vendetta to destroy public unionism in that state. A single court decision provided legal sanction to his effort, and, in the process, collective bargaining agreements covering over 30,000 workers were declared null and void. Four fire fighter union leaders last November in Springfield, Illinois, were arrested, booked and jailed because they attempted to assume the same right to strike granted other American workers. In August, 40,000 Massachusetts state employees conducted a 3-day strike after seven months of fruitless negotiation for a labor contract. As a result, the president of the Senate recently vowed a crusade to have the state's bargaining law repealed.

Like other minority groups, public employee unions realize nothing will be conceded until it is demanded. And when they demand, public workers merely follow the path used so successfully in the past by other organizations seeking change — protest, picket, petition. But direct action is the one common denominator which has forced advances in all social movements. For activist public employees, who are frustrated by the failures of conventional techniques, direct action can have only one meaning — strike.

Both the AFL-CIO and the Public Employee Department support the right to strike for public employees. We believe this right is necessary in order to bring equality to the bargaining table. But public employee unions have given up the right to strike in lie of alternative machinery to settle disputes or contract impasses. If this right is to be given up, it must be done so freely by the workers involved, at the negotiating table.

Public employees, however, are law abiding, tax-paying citizens. In many instances, they assume influential and important roles in our society. For these types of individuals to knowingly break the law, and accept the consequences for their actions, is an extreme situation. But when these circumstances arise, we should look not at the workers, but to the laws that create such a crisis.

Frederick Douglas once declared, "Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the roar of its many waters."

Until unionism is accepted in the public sector, however, we will continue to see violence, disruption and police arrest of otherwise law-abiding citizens. This is a waste, both in terms of human resources, and taxpayers’ money. Until the laws are enacted or restructured, we will continue to face ordeal and debate in pursuing a redefinition of the employer-employee relationship in the public sector.
Local 1245 Service Award Dinner

HUMBOLDT AREA

Shown above are those members who received 30 year pins.

This photo shows the members who received 25 year pins.

Business Manager Mitchell, right, is shown presenting a 35 year pin to Harry Hornbrook.

The members who received 20 year pins are shown in this photo.

LOCAL 1245 ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETS

Local 1245 President Howard Darington opened the meeting with an explanation of the order of business for the Advisory Council meeting. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Advisory Council member Jim Dietz. The Advisory Council members, Executive Board members, Officers and guests introduced themselves. The Business Manager-Financial Secretary, L. L. Mitchell, made a report on the status of Local 1245 and the events and activities which took place during 1976 and the first part of 1977 that affect the members of Local 1245. Brother Mitchell stressed the effect of politics, unemployment, court decisions, energy policy, etc. which adversely affect the membership and urged the Council to consider increased activity and development of programs to bring about needed changes in these areas.

The next order of business was a report from the PG&E negotiating committee on the tentative settlement between Local 1245 and P.G.&E. Sr. Asst. Bus. Mgr. Mert Walters explained the contract changes in both the physical and clerical agreements. Brother Walters answered questions from the Advisory Council on the proposed changes in the agreements.

Asst. Bus. Mgr. Jack McNally then went through the changes and improvements in the areas of Medical, Dental, Retirement, Life Insurance Ltd, and the Stock Purchase Plan. Brother McNally then answered questions of the Council and guests relative to the changes in the Benefit Agreement.

Following the report on negotiations, the Council went to the order of new business. The next order of business was reports from the Advisory Council members. The first item raised were reports on accidents involving members and employees in the Local's jurisdiction. The next item raised was "how to improve Unit attendance."

On Sunday, February 13, Department of Labor Representative William J. Jones was introduced and addressed the Council on the intricacies of the Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959. The salient points governing union elections were clarified and an extensive question and answer period followed the presentation. The Advisory Council meeting was held in San Jose to give the members in that area an opportunity to attend and observe the Council in action.

Scholarship Contest Winner Announced

Sheridan Downey Jr., retired Federal District Court Judge from Oakland and Judge for this year's Local 1245 scholarship contest, has notified Bus. Mgr. Mitchell that Lisa Ann Johnson is the winner of the scholarship. Lisa is the daughter of member Rodney Johnson, a Building Mechanic for the Sacramento Municipal Utility District at Fresh Pond.

The award will be presented at a future advisory council meeting.
**Homes: Who Profits?**

"Home prices are so high that they're out of sight.

That's the big message at the top of a 3-column ad in the real estate section of San Jose's daily newspaper, and it was put there not by the anti-union Associated Builders & Contractors (ABC), but by the Santa Clara Valley District Council of Carpenters.

The ad asks, "Where does all the money go?"

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**J.P. Stevens Boycott gets into full swing**

The AFL-CIO Convention of October 1975 unanimously adopted a resolution pledging full support to the union's efforts to secure a contract for J.P. Stevens workers at Roanoke Rapids, N.C.

This action not only demonstrated deep concern for Stevens 44,000 workers, but also recognized the implications of runaway shops that include employers in such highly organized industries as automobiles, electric, furniture, glass, rubber, paint and steel manufacturing.

Running from union wages and working conditions, they bitterly resist organizing efforts by their workers.

At stake may be the future balance of strength between all American labor and management in a period when most of the nation's economic growth is concentrated in the South and Southwest.

Between 1960 and 1975 the Great Lakes States grew only 3.2% in manufacturing employment while the New England States experienced a dramatic 9% during the same period.

However, manufacturing employment grew an amazing 43% in the Southeast and 67% in the Southwest.

The attitude of other employers to organizing efforts to solve the housing crisis. Send together, we can speed the day when families can build their homes.

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**Local 1245 Executive Board endorses boycott of J.P. Stevens Products**

**RESOLUTION**

ENDORISING THE CONSUMER BOYCOTT OF J.P. STEVENS PRODUCTS

WHEREAS employees have a basic human right to organize and bargain collectively for economic justice and safe and humane working conditions; and

WHEREAS over the last 13 years, the J.P. Stevens Company has been found guilty 15 times by the National Labor Relations Board of unfair labor practices and since these convictions have been upheld on appeal; and

WHEREAS the J. P. Stevens Company is consistent in its contempt for the law in general, representing the worst in corporate lawlessness and supports the boycott of Stevens products until those employees win their legal right to collective bargaining; THEN THEREFORE

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Executive Board of Local 1245, I.B.E.W., the Stevens employees' endeavor to achieve economic justice and humane and safe working conditions through collective bargaining, and supports the boycott of Stevens products.

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**I.B.E.W. Life Saving Awards**

I.B.E.W. Life Saving Awards were presented by Senior Assistant Business Manager M.A. Walters to Brothers Tom Smiley (Linemen - Sacramento Municipal Utility District) and a Shop Steward for Local Union 1245 Jerry Sanders (Clerk-Driver - Sacramento Municipal Utility District) at the regular meeting of Unit #3911 on March 6, 1977.

Brothers Smiley and Sanders saved the life of Mike Ratliff (Lineman), a co-worker and Union Brother, when he was working as a part of a crew assembling steel poles, and a 6" steel block broke under tension causing the steel cable to strike Brother Ratliff in the back of the head. He collapsed, unconscious and unbreathing, and appeared to be dead to his co-workers.

Brothers Smiley and Sanders immediately administered the life-saving CPR emergency technique and revived Brother Ratliff, who was in intensive care for three days, but is reported recovering and will soon be back on the job.

Resuscitations for J.P. Stevens workers by the Circulator Cardiac Resuscitation (CPR) received by Brothers Smiley and Sanders through a Red Cross training program, and their correct and immediate administration of the technique, with saving Brother Ratliff's life.

Our heartfelt thanks and congratulations to Brothers Tom Smiley and Jerry Sanders, and warm wishes for a speedy recovery to Brother Ratliff.
Back Pain and What you can do about it

(Continued from page eight)

5. Get support while driving and standing

Driving puts great strain on the back. In a recent Connecticut study, Dr. Jennifer Kelsey of Yale University found that drivers are more likely to suffer from an acute herniated lumbar disc than those who don’t drive. Men who spend at least half their working day driving are three times more likely to develop a herniated disc than those who don’t hold such jobs.

The drivers probably do not have adequate support for their lower backs,” Dr. Kelsey says. “They may also be affected by the continued vibration of the vehicle and the mechanical stress of starting and stopping. And their legs are extended to the pedals, instead of resting on the floor.”

Back experts recommend that you sit with the small of your back pressed against the back rest cushion. A firm, 1 1/2-inch-thick pillow behind the small of your back may help. Or you can buy an orthopedic back support for this purpose. The Air Force issues an air-inflated lumbar support for pilots that can be found in military surplus stores. It is excellent for driving.

Move the seat up so that you can reach the pedals and the steering wheel easily without straining forward. Keep your head and shoulders erect. If you lean forward, you will develop pains in your neck and back.

Never drive more than one hour or two hours at a stretch. Get out of the car and move around every chance you get. Shrug your shoulders to loosen cramped neck and shoulder muscles. Sit on something such as a picnic bench, grasp your ankles and pull your head and shoulders down between your knees.

Proper back support is just as important in bed, since you spend almost a third of your life there. Get a really good, firm mattress. A soft mattress can be murder on your back.

When sleeping, you want your back to assume a relaxed, natural position. Experts often advise against sleeping flat on the stomach, because it may promote swayback or lead to a stiff neck. If you sleep on your back, use a thin pillow (or none) under your head, and place a pillow or folded blanket under your knees to relieve the constant pull on your lower back muscles. When sleeping on your side, use a pillow thick enough to keep your head in line with your spine.

6. Relax

Tension is one of the most important causes of backache. A traffic jam, a blaring radio or TV, a crying baby, a tight schedule—your life is crowded with irritations that jangle your nerves and tighten your muscles. Emotional problems create tension, too—trouble at work or an unsatisfactory marital life.

Exercise can do wonders for tension. It’s hard to worry when you’re jogging or bicycling. And the physical exertion you breathe deeply, perks up circulation and loosens tight muscles.

Take a few minutes several times a day to practice relaxation exercises. Let your muscles go limp, with your head drooping forward. Lie down if possible and relax all the muscles of your body, starting at the feet and working up to the neck, the tongue and the forehead.

Creating the right mental attitude is important, too. Try to ignore petty aggravations, or look for humor in a situation. Concentrate your energies on one task at a time, and quit trying to do everything at once. Avoid situations that make you tense. If necessary, make changes in your life to root out major sources of tension. Not only will you have fewer backaches, you’ll also live longer.

Family Safety

Blood Bank available to 1,245 members

Editor’s Note: Printed below is the Constitution of the Central Labor Council of Alameda County Voluntary Blood Bank. We have also reprinted a copy of the application card. Should you desire to join the Blood Bank, fill in the application or get actual card from your Bus. Rep. and mail to: Central Labor Council Blood Plan, 150 Grand Ave., 2nd Floor, Oakland, California 94612

Article I Name and purpose

Sec. 1 The Blood Bank shall be called the Central Labor Council Voluntary Blood Bank Plan.

Sec. 2 The purpose of the Blood Bank shall be to assure that ample blood is available to all members of the Central Labor Council Blood Bank and their dependents at the lowest possible cost to the members.

Article II Blood Bank Committee

Sec. 1 The Central Blood Bank Committee shall be composed of a president, a secretary and members-at-large.

A. The Chairman of the Community Services Committee, by virtue of his office, shall serve as President of the Blood Bank Committee.

B. The Secretary of the Community Services Committee, by virtue of his office, shall serve as Secretary of the Blood Bank Committee.

C. Members-at-large shall be appointed to the Blood Bank Committee by the President of the Central Labor Council.

The number of members-at-large may vary.

Sec. 2 The term of office of Blood Bank Committee members shall be two years, which will follow the Central Labor Council elections.

Sec. 3 The affairs of the Blood Bank shall be administered by the Central Labor Council Blood Bank Committee. Committee members shall belong to the Blood Bank.

Sec. 4 The Blood Bank Committee shall meet at least quarterly.

Sec. 5 The President shall be responsible for the conduct of business at general or special meetings of the Blood Bank Committee.

Sec. 6 The Secretary shall be the Blood Bank Committee’s chief executive officer to carry out the instructions of the Committee.

Article III Members

Sec. 1 To be eligible for Blood Bank membership, one must be a member or retired member in good standing of a local union which is affiliated with the Central Labor Council.

Sec. 2 Members shall be eligible to receive blood as needed from available supply.

A. After sixty days membership in the Blood Bank, the sixty-days waiting period can be waived at the discretion of the Blood Bank Committee in cases where all members of a union and/or a unit join the Bank at the same time, and,

B. upon payment of $2.50 for the current Blood Bank year, which shall be January 1 through December 31. A thirty-day grace period will be granted members for renewing their membership.

Article IV Dependents

Sec. 1 Dependents of members who shall be covered at no additional cost are:

A. The member’s lawful spouse

B. Dependent children, including unmarried children between 19 and 23 years of age provided they have the same regular residence as the member, are attending an accredited school or university as full-time students and are dependent upon the member for support and maintenance.

C. Dependent children, regardless of age, who are totally dependent on the member, for medical reasons.

D. Stepchildren, foster children and adopted children if they depend upon the member for maintenance and support.

Sec. 2 Persons other than those listed in Sec. 1 above, living in the same household and having evidence of dependency on the members, shall be eligible for Blood Bank coverage at $2.50 per person per year.

Article V Exemptions

Sec. 1 In cases where a member or his dependents is provided medical benefits which supply blood free of charge, this plan shall supplement their plan.

Sec. 2 In cases of leukemia, hemophilia and carcinoma, the amount of blood donated shall be left up to the discretion of the Blood Bank Committee.

Article VI Financial obligations

Sec. 1 In cases where a member’s medical benefits do not pay blood processing fees, the Blood Bank shall pay the processing fees.

Sec. 2 Members who donate blood to the Bank, through the Central Labor Council Blood Bank shall receive for each donation the sum of $0.00 from the Central Blood Bank.

Sec. 3 In the event the cost of operating the Bank exceeds its revenues and resources, the Blood Bank Committee shall have the power to reduce the fees in accordance with its financial solvency.

Article VII Ratification

This constitution was approved by the Executive Board of the Central Labor Council on May 9, 1975, and ratified by the membership of the Central Labor Council on May 12, 1975.

LOCAL UNION NO._________ UNION NAME
NAME OF MEMBER ___________ AGE
ADDRESS OF MEMBER ___________ ___________ ___________ PHONENUMBER ___________ STREET ___________ CITY & STATE ZIP ___________ EMPLOYER

DEPENDENTS ___________ AGE

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Utility Reporter—April, 1977—Page Seven

Printed below is the Constitution of the Central Labor Council of Alameda County Voluntary Blood Bank. The letter praised Wood’s years of membership and the distinction of having earned the I.B.E.W. Life Saving Award. Brother John Bonejko took this photo.

**The Safety Scene**

**Back Pain and What to Do About It**

Have you suffered from a bad back? If not, count yourself lucky. Two out of three persons will suffer excruciating, often disabling back pain at some point in their lives. Even if you've escaped so far, you can't afford to get too smug. Only 7 per cent of the population can boast of a "normal" back.

Low back trouble isn't limited to senior citizens. In fact, older persons are less likely to suffer from back pain than those between 25 and 45. Early problems stabilize and discomfort often diminishes. Women have about the same incidence of back trouble but back workers are afflicted right along with manual laborers.

When back pain strikes, you may have to bite the bullet and learn to live with it. After decades of trial and failure, medical science has yet to find a sure cure for bad backs. Everything has been tried from manipulation to surgery to biofeedback to injections of papain, a papaya enzyme. But when no disease or skeletal defect can be discovered, doctors still rely most often on rest, exercise and the marvelous recuperative power of the human body.

Sure enough, most victims will be on their feet in a few days; more than 80 per cent will be able to carry out normal activity within three weeks. Unfortunately, many will suffer a recurrence of pain from time to time.

There is some evidence that back weakness runs in the family. But even though it's too late for you to choose new parents, there are six steps you can take to reduce the likelihood that low back pain will strike you down.

1. **Strengthen those flabby abdominals**

Dr. Hans Kraus, one of the leading experts on back problems, believes that 80 per cent of all back pain is caused by underexercising. Weak abdominal muscles are particularly common, he says. The abdominal muscles are important because they support the spine from the front, while the back muscles and ligaments do the same job from the rear. Unfortunately, most people don't give their abdominals the exercise they need. "I treated a famous tennis pro who was bothered by back pain," Dr. Kraus says. "He played tennis seven days a week, yet he had lousy abdominal and back muscles."

If you are healthy, you can test your abdominals by doing a few bent-knee sit-ups. (If your back hurts, don't attempt this or any exercise until you have consulted with your doctor.) Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Cross your toes under something if necessary. Pull your chin toward your chest, lift your head and slowly roll up into a sitting position.

If you can't do it, you need exercise. A daily program of bent-knee sit-ups will help you strengthen those abdominals. You can also do isometric exercises at your desk. Just suck in your belly and repeatedly tighten your abdominal muscles for half a minute.

**Warning:** Don't do sit-ups with straight legs and a straight back, like Dracula rising out of his coffin. Sit-ups done like that may hurt your back instead of helping it.

Your abdominals are not the only muscles that affect the condition of your back. Weak hip flexors are a common problem, and your upper and lower back muscles probably need work, too. Ask your doctor for a program of exercises, or check out the program at your local YMCA. In addition to preventive exercises, many Y's offer a special program for people who are already suffering from back pain.

2. **Lose weight**

"I wasn't carrying or lifting a thing," complains a back sufferer. "I just bent down to pick up a paper clip and wham, I felt this stabbing pain at the base of my back."

Not lifting a thing? To the contrary, the heaviest weight the average person lifts is his own torso. The vulnerable lumbosacral joint at the base of the spine must bear the weight of the entire upper body. For a 110-pound woman, that weight averages about 45 pounds. For a heavy person, it could be more than 100 pounds. You'd certainly think twice about lifting a 100-pound box, but what about a 100-pound torso?

That weight wouldn't be so bad if it were centered over the spine, but if it's collected in a pot belly in front of the spine it will exert a constant forward pull on those struggling back muscles.

For the sake of your back, trim off those extra pounds! 3. **Lift properly**

**Rule Number One for lifting is:** avoid it if you can. Hire a youngster to shovel the snow on your driveway; pay professional movers or a couple of husky high school kids to help you when you move. Use a wheelbarrow, dollies or other mechanical aid whenever possible. If you're determined to put your muscles to the test, get someone else to help you.

**Rule Number Two:** keep the load close to the center of your body. The farther the load is from the small of your back, the greater the strain will be. That's why a heavy, compact load can be easier to lift than a bulky, lighter load. You just can't get the bulky object close to your stomach.

The best way to handle a compact load is to squat down close to it, with one foot alongside the object and the other foot just behind it. Pull the load to you, then stand by pushing up with your legs, keeping your back straight. That doesn't mean vertical, just aligned from head to pelvis. Tucking in your chin helps do that.

No matter what size the load, get as close to it as you can, and carry it against your torso.

**Rule Number Three is:** move slowly. Jerking, twisting or slapping causes many lifting injuries. Instead of twisting your body, straighten up with the load, then shift your feet.

That rule should apply all the time — even when the only load you're carrying is your own body.

4. **Watch your posture**

You've probably heard that you should stand straight and rigid with shoulders thrown back and chest thrust out — the military bearing. That's all wrong. Standing as stiffly as a paratrooper at attention exhausts your back muscles and may overemphasize the forward curve of your lower back — the lumbar lordosis that everyone should learn to avoid.

Instead, pretend that you are a puppet, suspended from a string attached to the center of your breast bone. Keep your head up and pull your stomach in. The so-called "dynamic posture" recommended by back specialists calls for rolling the hips forward and standing or walking with as little 'sway' in the back as possible.

Don't slouch when sitting in a chair. Keep your vertebrae aligned, with your back muscles and seat muscles. The small of your back should touch the floor. Hold for five seconds, relax for five seconds. Repeat.

There are some rules for lifting. Hire a youngster to help you lift heavy objects. Follow the rules for lifting — even when the only load you're carrying is your own body.

**Lie on your back with knees bent, feet flat on the floor. Lift your head and press your forehead against your chest.**

**Lie on your side with knees bent, head resting on a pillow.**

**Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet flat on the floor.**

(Continued on page seven)