

# 1245

International Brotherhood  
Of Electrical Workers  
Local 1245, AFL-CIO  
February 1991  
Vol. XL No. 2

# UTILITY REPORTER

VDT hazards  
Pages 8-9

## Union, PG&E tackle host of old problems in New Year

**G**eneral negotiations have come and gone at Pacific Gas & Electric Co., but that doesn't mean there are no issues left to discuss or problems to resolve.

Far from it. As 1991 got underway, Local 1245 and PG&E were engaged in a variety of talks through a multitude of committees.

In some cases those discussions were mandated by the general negotiations themselves.

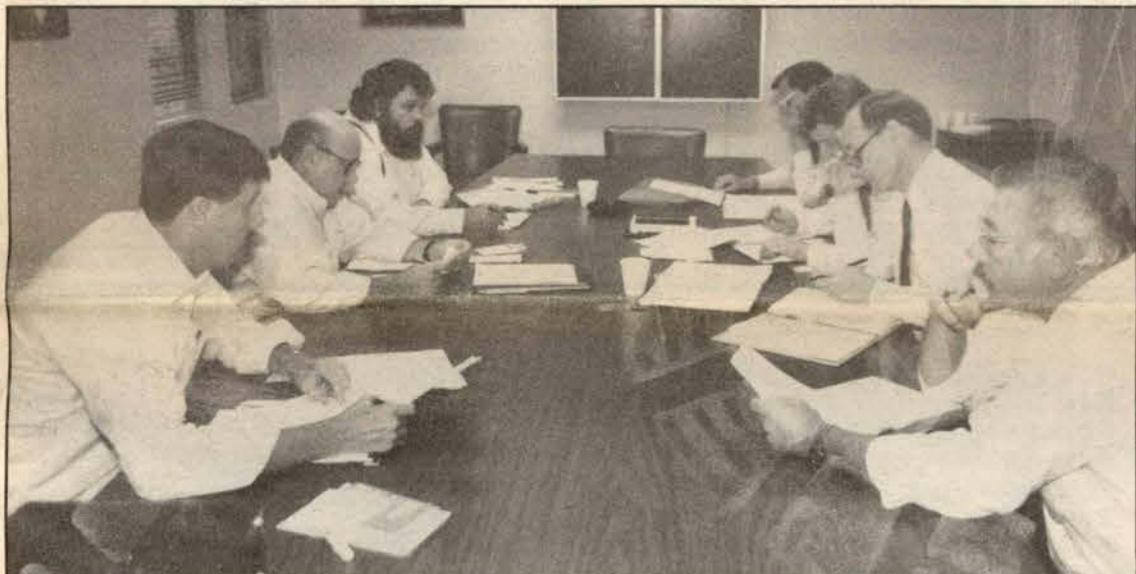
The Family Issues Committee, which met on Jan. 3, continues to explore ways to assist PG&E employees with their child care needs. The Combination Crew Training Committee, another outgrowth of general negotiations, met in January to dis-

cuss the cross-training of journeymen as provided for in the new contract. And joint meetings on health care costs, a major topic during general negotiations, continued in January as the union and company begin to lay the groundwork for the implementation of program changes mandated for 1993.

Other talks were set in motion by last year's negotiations over rubber gloving and barehanding. The rubber gloving Overview Committee met on January 9 to continue discussions on the implementation of rubber gloving and barehanding in the PG&E system.

A second committee spawned by the rubber gloving issue is the Joint Committee on EMF (electric and magnetic fields). This committee, which most recently met on Jan. 18, is tackling the difficult issue of measuring EMF exposure levels that

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Representing Local 1245 members on the PG&E Water Department Interim Committee are (from left) Mike Vrooman, Assistant Business Manager Darrel Mitchell and Lance Massenge. (Photo: Eric Wolfe)



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### CALENDAR

February 2  
Local 1245  
50th Anniversary  
Reception  
Fresno

February 23-24  
Local 1245 Union  
Women Conference  
Concord, Ca.

March 2  
Sacramento Valley Shop  
Stewards Conference



## Local 1245



1941 - 1991

Celebrating 50 years  
of union

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### Local 1245 scores organizing victory

## Paradigm workers vote 'Union Yes'

**C**apping a long struggle to organize a union, employees of Video Satellite Corp., formerly Paradigm, voted overwhelmingly on Dec. 21 for representation by Local 1245.

Workers faced stiff company opposition throughout the year-long effort to gain a union. Early in the union campaign the company laid off 33 workers. Local 1245, accusing the company of attempting to punish the workers for union activity, filed unfair labor practice charges with the National Labor Relations Board.

When it became clear that

the union would probably prevail at the NLRB, the company switched tactics. It agreed to pay back-wages to two laid-off union activists (the company had already rehired most of the laid-off workers) and pledged to expedite a union representation election.

But this tactical retreat did not signal a change of heart. As the Dec. 21 election date drew near, the company bombarded its employees with anti-union propaganda.

In some cases the company resorted to outright lies. In a letter to employees dated Dec. 14, the company asserted that it was the union's "general practice" to assess fines for "missed meetings",

"refusing to walk a picket line", and "many other things."

While the union *can* bring charges against a member for crossing a picket line, Local 1245 by-laws do not permit fines to be imposed for refusing to walk a picket line. Nor do they permit fines to be levied against members for missing meetings.

The company said "a lot of nasty things" trying to discredit the union, noted Local 1245 Business Rep. Corb Wheeler. "It didn't do them any good."

"And you know what?" Wheeler added. "We ran a perfectly clean campaign. We

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# UTILITY REPORTER

February 1991  
Volume XL  
Number 2  
Circulation: 27,000

**(415) 933-6060**

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Published monthly at 3063 Citrus Circle, Walnut Creek, California 94598. Official publication of Local Union 1245, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, AFL-CIO, P.O. Box 4790, Walnut Creek, CA 94596.

Second Class 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 4790, Walnut Creek, CA 94596.

Single copies 10 cents, subscription \$1.20 annually.

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**WIPA**



## Workers here and abroad

# Rolling the union on...

**Big day:** The American Postal Workers Union in Philadelphia won 3,000 grievances in one day, Labor Notes reported, when a Labor Board administrative law judge ruled that the Postal Service had demonstrated an "adamant attitude" in disregarding its obligation to settle grievances in a timely manner. The grievances dated back as far as 1983.

**Breathe easier...then die:** The Longshoremen's union awarded Rockwell Chemical Co. a 1990 Golden Turkey Award for developing "Mask-It," a compound that conceals the smell of toxic pesticides. Boasts Rockwell: "Mask-It converts a pesticide odor into a pleasant fragrance... Experience has shown that inefficiency and absenteeism is greater when disagreeable-smelling pesticides are used." Injury toll: Work-related accidents took the lives of 10,400 US workers in 1989, while an estimated 1.7 million workers suffered disabling work-related injuries. The deaths and injuries cost the nation an estimated \$48.5 billion in 1989, including lost wages, medical costs, insurance administrative costs, and various indirect costs.

**Details, details:** American Airlines took out newspaper ads across the nation in January blaming route cancellations on a "sick-out" by the "Airline Pilots Association." Only problem is, American Airlines pilots are represented by the Allied Pilots Association (APA), not the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA). Gary Staggs, deputy chairman of APA's national strike-preparedness committee, accused American Airlines of having "corporate Alzheimer's." Said the ALPA: "We extend our fullest sympathies to our brethren at APA, who are attempting to negotiate with a company that apparently does not even know which union it is dealing with."

**Work that satisfies:** Workers in companies with shared decision-making tend

to be more satisfied with their wages that employees of companies without team efforts, even if they aren't paid any more, according to a survey conducted in Indiana. Among the more satisfied workers are those who feel they have some autonomy, older workers, union members and women.

**Behind the times:** Fathers in Australia are now entitled to one year of unpaid leave after the birth of their child, thanks to recent efforts by Australia's union movement. America has no national legislation for maternity leave. Countries that do provide parental leave include Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, New Zealand,

Norway, Portugal, Poland, Spain, Sweden, the USSR and Yugoslavia.

**Inflation outpaces wages:** Median weekly earnings for US workers in the third quarter of 1990 were up 3.3 percent from the third quarter of 1989. But the cost of living, as measured by the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers (CPI-U), rose 5.5 percent over the same period.

**Flag tags:** According to the AFL-CIO's Label Letter, two flags—one USA and one USSR—were displayed at a San Diego press conference called to promote a visit by the Moscow circus. A label on the Soviet flag identified it as "Made in the USA." A tag on the American flag said: "Made in Hong Kong."

**PGT AGREEMENT**  
New Clerical and Physical agreements were ratified by Local 1245 members at PGT. Both agreements provided 12.25 percent increases over the life of the three-year agreements. Serving on the Ballot Committee were members Dick Poole (left) and Richard Stavros (right), along with Business Rep. Sam Tamimi.



## Pacific Gas & Electric Company 1991 Shift Premiums

See Section 110.2 and 110.7 of the Physical Contract and Sections 11.2 and 11.7 of the Clerical Contract. Premiums are based on a 1991 weighted average straight-time hourly rate of \$18.77.

Second Shift Premium  
\$.84

Third Shift and Sunday Premium  
\$1.69

Sunday Second Shift Premium  
\$2.53

Sunday Third Shift Premium  
\$3.38

Relief Premium  
\$18.52

### Nuclear Premiums are as follows:

Nuclear Auxiliary Operator Premium  
\$1.86

Certified Fuel Handler Premium  
\$1.80

Reactor Operator License Premium  
\$2.70

Senior Reactor Operator License Premium  
\$3.38

Senior Reactor Operator License Premium for Senior Control Operator at DCPD  
\$4.39

1990 Remote Reporting Expense Allowance Section 202.21(c) of the Physical Contract

Less than 15 miles: \$11.25

## Meeting changes

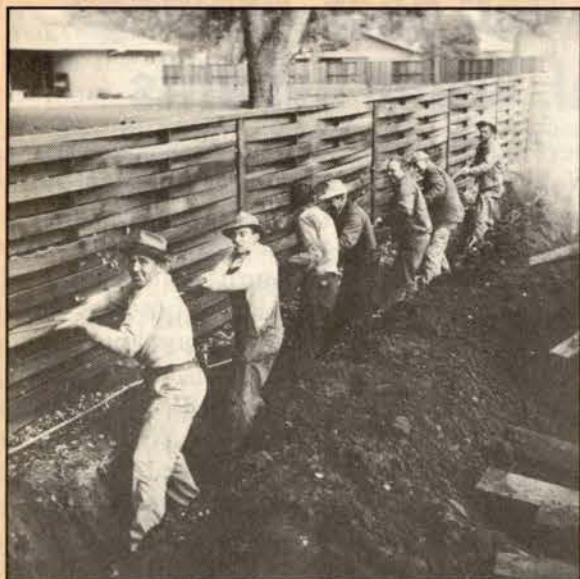
Please note the following changes in unit meeting schedules:

**Unit 1111 (Fresno):** The May 7 meeting has been changed to May 15. The meeting will still be at Cedar Lanes at Cedar and Shields in Fresno and will begin at 5:30 p.m.

**Unit 2211 (City of Oakland):** Meeting dates have been changed from the first Thursday of every month to the *third* Thursday of every month. Location and time remain the same.

**Unit 2317 (Antioch):** Meetings are on the first *Tuesday* at 6:00 p.m. (The Utility Reporter incorrectly reported them to be on Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m.)





### The early days. . .

Exhibits at Local 1245's 50th Anniversary receptions during 1991 will include many historical photos, like the two featured here. At left, performing underground work in Atherton, California, in 1953, from left, are: Les Blum, Lloyd Carman, Charley (last name unknown), Les (last name unknown), Jim Dickey, John (last name unknown), and Elmer Ellsworth. (Courtesy Lloyd Carman)

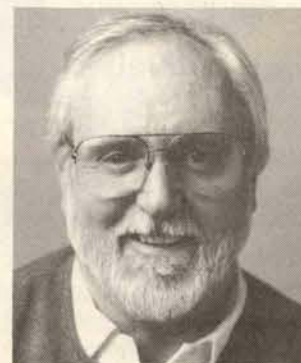
At right, Local 1245 members of Joint Grievance Committee, meeting in San Francisco in the 1960s, are, from left: Larry Foss, business representative; Chris O'Grady, gas serviceman; John Pickens, troubleman; Rocco Fera, control operator, steam generation; Jim (last name unknown), clerical. (Local 1245 archives)



## Workers' dedication gave rise to union

Jack McNally, IBEW 1245 Business Manager

This month Local 1245 holds the first of four anniversary receptions scheduled for 1991. The first one will be in Fresno on Feb. 2, followed by receptions in Reno, Nev., in May, Chico in August, and Concord in November.



We're hosting these receptions for our members and retirees to help all of remember the historic role this union has played in improving all of our lives individually and our communities as well.

It's clear from reading old union documents that Local 1245 wasn't always the strong presence at PG&E and other employers that it is today. Far from it.

When IBEW 9th District Vice President Scott Milne secured a charter to organize PG&E in April of 1941, this local had just 68 members. These 68 charter members, who had been scattered among several small craft locals at PG&E, became the nucleus for what was to follow. It was a small beginning, but they had big things in mind.

It's hard for us today to picture what it was like 50 years ago at PG&E. But some things we do know: wages were low, benefits were almost nonexistent, and employees had little say over their conditions of work.

In addition to these problems, the union had another obstacle: PG&E, like many employers of that era, was deadset against having an industrial-style union on its property.

To make matters worse, union-minded employees were divided among themselves. Some

wanted to organize under the banner of the IBEW, which was affiliated with the old AF of L, while others wanted to go with the Utility Workers Union of America, a CIO union.

At our anniversary receptions this year, historical exhibits will document how Local 1245 grew from 68 charter members to the 20,000 members we have today. Thanks to Local 1245 retirees we have also been able to assemble many interesting photographs of workers on the job in the 1940s, 1950s, and later decades as well.

We've come a long way from the days when linemen wore fedoras on the job instead of hardhats, when medical and retirement benefits were hardly even dreamed of, and when PG&E and other utilities fought unions tooth and nail. Those brothers and sisters of long ago knew a better life was possible through a union. Despite company resistance, they persevered in pursuing their dream.

Of course, the job of building a strong union is never done. In facing today's challenges, we can draw strength from knowing that we're building on a strong foundation that was laid down so many years ago.

## Local 1245 Election Notice

The election process will begin in March of this year for Delegates to the International Convention with balloting in June.

The convention will be held October 7-11, 1991, in St. Louis, Mo.

Complete information on nominations, elections, and qualifications are found in the Local Union Bylaws and the International Union Constitution. If you do not have copies of these documents, they may be obtained by writing to IBEW Local Union No. 1245, PO Box 4790, Walnut Creek, CA 94596.

To qualify as a candidate for Delegate to the International Convention, a member must have at least two years' continuous good standing in the Local Union immediately prior to March 1, 1991, and must have tendered his or her dues for January 1991.

### Nominations

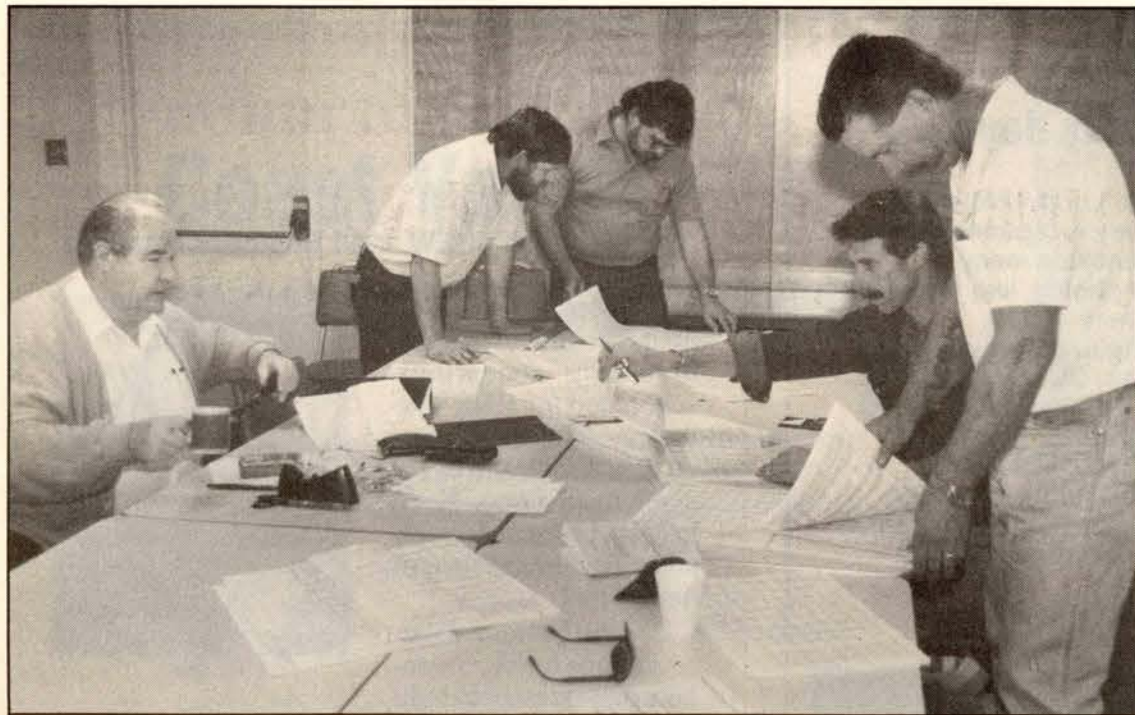
Nomination of Delegates to International Convention shall be made under "New Business" at the first meeting of the Units in March 1991. (L.U. Bylaws Article III, Section 6c).

In order to be a candidate for Delegate to the International Convention, a member must be present at the Unit meeting where he or she is nominated, or notify the Local Union Recording Secretary, Barbara Symons, in writing on or before March 1, 1991, that he or she will run for a specific Local Union office if nominated. (L.U. Bylaws Article III, Section 12).

### Further information

In addition to the Local 1245 Bylaws and the IBEW Constitution, the conduct of labor union elections is also covered by Title IV of the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959 (LMRDA). The US Department of Labor publishes two relevant booklets: *Rights and Responsibilities Under the LMRDA and CSRA* and *Electing Union Officers*. These booklets are available by writing the US Department of Labor, Office of Elections, 200 Constitution Avenue NW, Room No. North 5619, Washington, DC 20210.





## Tree trimmers ratify pact with Pacific Tree

Tree trimmers represented by Local 1245 have approved a new agreement with Pacific Tree.

The new one-year contract provides a 4.2 percent general wage increase effective Feb. 1.

The contract also makes improvements in

the medical plan without any changes in current costs to employees.

"It provides more service for the money, in essence," said Assistant Business Manager Orv Owen.

Local 1245 represents 198 Pacific Tree employees. Among them are the

bargaining committee members pictured above preparing for negotiations. From left: Local 1245 Assistant Business Manager Orv Owen, Dennis Mitchell, Gary Colbert, Bill Colbert, and Jim Travis. Not pictured: Steve Montgomery.

## Wells REC pact provides dental, vision benefits

Members of Local 1245 at Wells Rural Electric Cooperative in Wells, Nev., approved a new one-year contract providing a general wage increase of 4.65 percent.

Wells REC workers gained new dental and vision care benefits in the agreement. Like previously existing medical benefits, which remain unchanged, the new benefits are fully paid by the employer.

Wells REC and the union agreed to establish a new drug awareness program. Accord-

ing to Assistant Business Manager Orv Owen, the new program is designed to create a drug-free workplace through education. The agreement provides for discipline for employees engaging in the use or sale of drugs.

Local 1245 represents 25 workers at Wells, covering the line department, meter readers and warehouse workers.

Serving on the bargaining committee, in addition to Owen, were Mike Cromie, Clint Mills, Brad Merl and Business Rep. Art Murray.

## City of Santa Clara talks produce wage increases

Linemen, foremen, estimators and electricians ratified a new Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Santa Clara that provides a wage increase of about 5.8 percent in the first year.

With improvements in

benefits added in, the total package comes to a 6.9 percent increase in total compensation, according to Local 1245 Business Rep. Dennis Seyfer. Wage gains in the second and third years of the agreement will be equal to the Consumer Price Index for urban wage earners and clerical workers.

Among the new provisions in the MOU is a voluntary longterm disability plan and a \$75 boot allowance. The agreement also provides improvements to the rest period.

In addition, the agreement provided improvements to pre-arranged overtime at the double-time rate.

The agreement, which is effective retroactively to Jan. 1, was ratified on Jan. 14 and approved by the city council on the following day. It covers about 50 City of Santa Clara employees.

Seyfer said negotiations began on Oct. 17 and continued through January, requiring 15 sessions in all. Jim Parker and Chris McKernan served along with Seyfer on the bargaining committee. Bob Keeler and Doug Baldanzi participated in the opening session.

## Members OK new pact with Richvale ID

Employees of the Richvale Irrigation District will receive a 5 percent general wage increase in a new one-year contract negotiated by Local 1245.

The new agreement also provides for an increase in the employer's contribution to the vision and dental plans, from \$500 per year in the previous contract to \$600 per year in the new contract.

The new agreement took effect January 1.

Negotiating for the union were Tom Edwards and Business Rep. Jack Osburn.

The union represents five employees at Richvale Irrigation District.

## Union, City of Gridley reach agreement

The City of Gridley and Local 1245 have reached agreement on a new one-year Memorandum of Understanding.

In place of the 5.23 percent wage increase offered by the City, union negotiators elected to take an equivalent increase in benefits.

Under the new agreement, medical benefits will be fully paid by the employer. Previously, workers were required to make co-payments.

The employer also will now be responsible for making all payments to the Public Employees Retirement System for most city employees. In the previous contract the employees' share of the PERS payment was 1-1/2 percent, while the employer's share stood at 12-1/2 percent. The employer will now pick up the full 14 percent.

In addition to the medical and PERS improvements, employees received a small one-time wage adjustment.

"It's a good deal," said Local 1245 Business Rep. Jack Osburn, noting that employees will receive a tax advantage by taking the benefits' gains in lieu of wage gains.

Local 1245 represents about 20 City of Gridley employees, including electrici-

cal, fire, administrative and public works.

Serving as negotiators for the union were Barbara Roberts, Tim Hill, Vance Moulton, Thomas Wiles, and Business Rep. Jack Osburn. Gary Andes served as alternate.

## Members ratify new contract with Mount Wheeler Power

Employees of Mount Wheeler Power Co. in Ely, Nev., have approved a new one-year contract that provides a 4 percent general wage increase.

The agreement includes new dental and vision care, establishes a joint safety committee, and amends sick leave policy to provide for pay back of unused sick leave.

Improvements were also made in the meal allowance. The new meal allowance provides \$6 for breakfast, \$7 for lunch, and \$14 for dinner.

In addition to the general wage increase, all employees in the line department and equipment operators received a 1-1/2 percent equity adjustment.

Local 1245 represents 25 employees at Mount Wheeler, including the line department, meter department, clerical and warehouse.

Serving on the bargaining committee were Sue Gully, Bill Beager, Bill Ricci, Business Rep. Art Murray, and Assistant Business Manager Orv Owen.

**Boycott California  
table grapes**



## Sierra Pacific bargaining slated to begin this month

Seeking improvements in wages and expense allowances will be on the union's agenda when Local 1245 enters into negotiations with Sierra Pacific Power Co.

Union negotiators met during the second week of January to prepare for bargaining. The company and union agreed to exchange initial proposals on Jan. 28, with actual bargaining slated to begin in February.

The union will also be seeking to make improvements in 401K and pension plans. The company is expected to seek changes in

the medical plan.

The current three-year agreement between Local 1245 and Sierra Pacific expires April 30. Local 1245 represents Physical and Clerical employees at the company, which is based in Reno, Nev.

Serving on the union's negotiating team are: Gino Aramini, Jack Ellington, Zenobia Foster, Louis Johnson, Kenneth Lutzow, Bill Retzer, Keith Smith, Kurt Vanderbundt, Valerie Wiems, Business Rep. John Stralla and Assistant Business Manager Orv Owen.

## Line Construction Benefit Fund raises rate to \$1.75 per hour

The Line Construction Benefit Fund (Lineco) has announced it is increasing the contribution rate to \$1.75 per hour.

The new rate, which becomes effective Jan. 1, 1992, is needed "to continue to maintain the fund on a sound financial basis," according to

a Dec. 17 memo sent to all participating unions by Lineco.

The memo cited "the rapidly increasing cost of providing medical care and the effect these costs have on the financial condition of the Fund" as the reason for the increase.



OUTSIDE LINE CONSTRUCTION

At work in Cathedral City last year on a reconductoring job for Henkels & McCoy are Outside Line Construction workers (from left) John Daniel, 6-years union member, Mark Ellis, 13 years, Duane LaFountain, 14 years, and Al O'Neal, 30 years.

### 'We Do the Work'

The monthly public television series about workplace issue feature highlights of Nelson Mandela's visit to Detroit.

KQED, San Francisco: Feb. 14, 7:30 p.m.

KPBS, San Diego: Feb. 4, 11 p.m. and Feb. 10, 3:30 p.m.

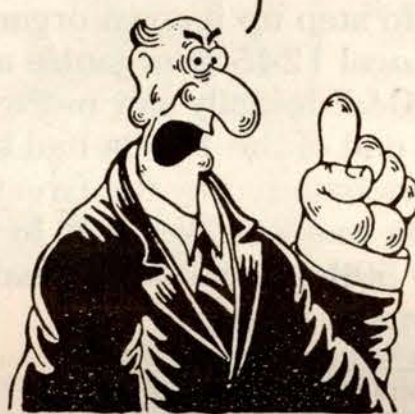
KCET, Los Angeles: Feb. 23, 6 p.m.

KCSM, San Mateo: Feb. 5, 8:30 p.m.

KRCB, Santa Rosa: check local listing

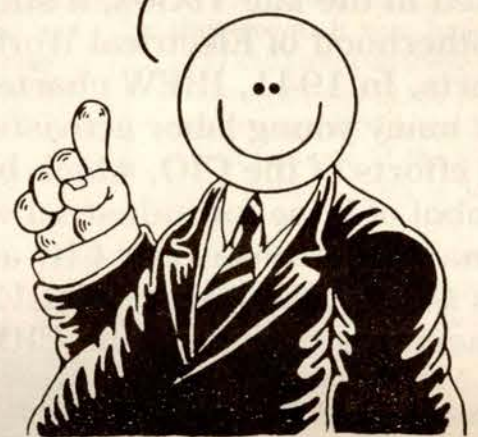
MANAGEMENT  
BEFORE A  
UNION ORGANIZING  
CAMPAIGN...

G!!★!



MANAGEMENT  
DURING A  
UNION ORGANIZING  
CAMPAIGN...

HAVE A NICE DAY!!



## Paradigm workers vote 'Union Yes'

From PAGE ONE

said nothing derogatory about that company."

In addition to playing fast and loose with the truth, the company attempted to intimidate workers into believing that unionizing could jeopardize their jobs.

"The only way a union can try to force this Company to do anything that we are unwilling to do would be to pull you out on strike," the company declared in a letter to employees dated December 17.

In the event of a strike, the company threatened in another letter, the company would have a right to hire permanent replacements, "and this is what we would have to do."

What are the actual facts concerning strikes?

Current US law, it is true, permits the hiring of permanent replacements for striking workers. A major legislative goal for organized labor in the current session of the US Congress is passage of HR 3936, which would prohibit the hiring of permanent replacements for strikers. (The companion bill in the Senate is S. 2112.)

However, what the company fails to mention is that calling a strike is always the employees' decision. The union cannot "pull" any bargaining unit out on strike. Before any strike can be undertaken, the employees themselves at that location must vote for a strike.

The company implies that striking is the only way the union can "force" the company to do anything. This is patently absurd. Well over 90 percent of all negotiations are conducted without strikes. Unions achieve better wages, benefits, and working conditions for employees primarily through the art of persuasion and bargaining.

What's more, in a variety of situations the union can enlist the aid of the National Labor Relations Board and other regulatory agencies to make an employer comply with regulations and to bargain in good faith.

The union's willingness to press NLRB charges early in the organizing drive demonstrated to employees that the union would stand up on their behalf, according to Wheeler.

"We proved that we'd represent them. We proved that through [filing] all the

unfair labor practice charges," Wheeler said.

Video Satellite Corp. clearly hoped that threatening its employees with the spectre of "permanent replacements" would frighten them away from the union. But the workers didn't fall for it.

In the closing stages of the campaign the company attempted to convince its employees that the boss's door was always open. In a classic case of "sweet talk", the company wrote to employees in a letter three days before the election:

"Don't let your questions go unasked; they are too important to rely on shop talk. Stop Kevin or me in the shop, call us out or come in and ask. We are available to you any time or any place."

But talk is one thing; actual bargaining for concrete gains is another. One employee standing alone can talk. Employees standing together can bargain.

Clearly this is a distinction that the employees understood when they voted for union representation. The "Union Yes" vote was Local 1245's 13th consecutive organizing victory.



# In 1940s, CIO spurs hope for one union on PG&E

**M**odern industrial unionism in the United States was born in the Great Depression of the 1930s, when the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) under John L. Lewis began to organize industrial workers long ignored by the AFL. Pacific Gas and Electric was a major West Coast target of the CIO's organizing efforts. Although the first CIO drive to organize a single large union on all of PG&E was defeated in the late 1930s, it stimulated an AFL union--the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers--to step up its own organizing efforts. In 1941, IBEW chartered Local 1245 to organize at PG&E. But many young labor activists at PG&E initially saw more promise in the efforts of the CIO, which by the end of the 1930s had become a symbol of hope for industrial workers battered by the Great Depression. One of those early CIO activists was Ron Weakley. In Part II of this series celebrating Local 1245's 50th anniversary, Weakley remembers the rise of the CIO unions at PG&E.

Second in a series



Ron Weakley at Local 1245 headquarters, 1990

**Utility Reporter: You were in the service from 1934 until late 1938. What happened when you came back to the Bay Area?**

**Ron Weakley:** I worked during the 1939 Fair for the Key system, which was the transit company here. It's now AC Transit. I worked in the marine department and also over on Treasure Island during the Fair, in 1939 and part of 1940. At the same time I did some work in construction as a steamfitter's helper, off and on, so I had some experience in that, too. But I had enough experience from the Navy and here and there in diesel and steam that I took a job with PG&E in 1940 for 50-cents an hour as a

laborer in the steam generation department in San Francisco.

**UR: The old Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) had already lost an organizing drive at PG&E in the 1930s, hadn't it?**

**RW:** That's right, the United Electrical Workers-CIO made a stab at it but they were defeated. The company was very anti-union, and they attempted to sidetrack organizing efforts by forming a quasi-company union. But the people were not satisfied and by the time I got there they were beginning to make noises about organizing. I got active right away, opposing management, trying to improve things for working people, including myself.

**UR: The original charter for Local 1245 was issued in 1941 at the request of Scott Milne, wasn't it?**

**RW:** Yes. He had been vice president of the IBEW for the 9th District. He later became International secretary and then president.

**UR: Was this 1941 charter an attempt to organize everybody under one union?**

**RW:** Well, it was reactive. The CIO got active in the

'30s, while the IBEW hadn't done anything because they had lost out on the properties twice, once in 1913 and once in 1921, I think it was. The company broke them in '21 and they committed hari-kari among themselves in 1913. The CIO, on the other hand, started to really move in the '30s. They were on the move on the industrial scene all over the country. They moved in where the American Federation of Labor failed to organize, because the AF of L was not inclined to organize on an industrial basis--it was all organized by craft. The IBEW, which was part of the AFL, was reacting to the CIO when it chartered Local 1245.

**UR: So at least in theory, when Local 1245 was chartered in 1941, it was with an eye toward getting the union system-wide.**

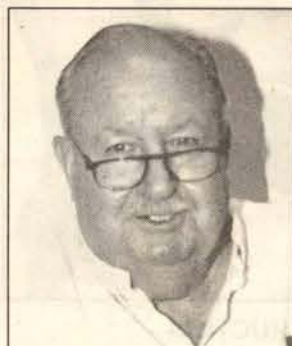
**RW:** But in reality they only could organize in the outlying districts. The Bay Area people were more militant and more knowledgeable of the history, of IBEW's reluctance to organize on an industrial basis. They wouldn't buy it. They went CIO. When I first was there, PG&E started to set up a company union, which I opposed. We were pro-CIO. We got a CIO char-

ter for the Utility Workers Organizing Committee (UWOC) under the head of the CIO, Phil Murray.

**UR: What accounts for this emphasis on achieving a single union at the company?**

**RW:** It was the philosophy of the CIO, started by John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers: organize them all. Industrial union. One union

for everybody working for the big enterprise, rather than this fractionalized craft concept they had back at the beginning of the labor movement. When it came to the big outfits, like the Bell system, the big utilities, United States Steel, General Motors, the CIO was the only one that had the foresight and the capability to do it on a big basis. And they weren't helped by the AF of L, which



**"The CIO started to really move in the '30s. They were on the move on the industrial scene all over the country. They moved in**

**where the American Federation of Labor failed to organize, because the AF of L was not inclined to organize on an industrial basis--it was all organized by craft. The IBEW, which was part of the AFL, was reacting to the CIO when it chartered Local 1245."**

Local 1245



1941 - 1991

Celebrating 50 years  
of union



had a tendency to just wait around to pick up the pieces or even work against CIO organizing efforts.

**UR:** The seeds of the industrial union concept were present back when your father first joined the IBEW in 1905--that was the same year the Industrial Workers of the World first got organized. Their slogan was "One Big Union for All the Workers."

**RW:** My real father was a hard rock miner and a member of the IWW. I was raised by my step-father who was in the IBEW and my loyalties go to him. But my blood father was a trade unionist and an IWW member. In fact he was blackballed. When I was born, he was working in the mines under a phony name. In order to hold a job he couldn't use his name.

**UR:** By the time you were becoming a working man in the 1930s the Wobblies had pretty much disintegrated.

**RW:** Yeah, but they started a lot of things. But they were anarchists. That was their problem. They were so angry at the boss they'd blow the place up or burn it down and then wouldn't have any place to work.

**UR:** The CIO and IWW both professed to be for industrial organizing, although the CIO succeeded to a far greater extent. What made the difference for the CIO? Was it because Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and the passage of the Wagner Act in the 1930s provided legitimacy for their activities?

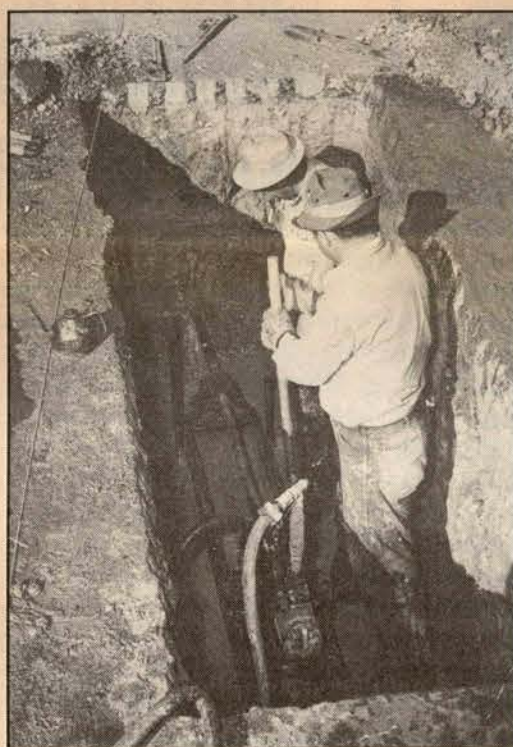
**RW:** I think Roosevelt, the Wagner Act, the New Deal, the establishment of the National Labor Relations Board, gave the CIO big opportunities. And they worked through the system. I think that's the biggest difference. They would use the law where fundamentally the IWW did it without the law: anarchy. They just didn't conform to the law.

**UR:** Getting back to CIO activities at PG&E, records indicate it was in April of 1942 that UWOC petitioned for an election of

## Scenes from the early days



Working on 230KV line from Tesla sub in Tracy to Buttonwillow. 1947. (Courtesy George Perrin)



Merry Smalley (left) and Sam Cooper auger across main Highway 101 by-road that leads into San Quentin prison. 1947. (Courtesy Sam Cooper)



Einar Selberg in San Jose. 1949. (Courtesy Einar Selberg)

the physical employees in the East Bay Division.

**RW:** Well, we were organized before that. I forget exactly when it started. The UWOC had eight local unions, and I was pretty much the head of the one in Contra Costa County. I moved from one steam plant to another and I became a watch engineer supervisor and ended up in Contra Costa County, at Avon Steam Plant. It's now shut down. It was built in 1940 and I went up there late in the year, and in the process we organized Local 169, which was one of the eight local unions (with a joint council system) under the Utility Workers Organizing Committee, which became the Utility Workers Union of America in 1946. They finally got a charter as a full-blown union. Before that it was a subsidized organizing committee.

**UR:** So you were one of the "young turks" of the labor movement coming out of the depression.

**RW:** I came out angry. Some people came out frightened to death, but not me, I was angry at everything that happened. I guess it was a reactive thing. I had been through some abuse.

**UR:** At the hands of employers?

**RW:** Yeah, bosses. Of course, maybe I engendered some of that because I was always a strong union person. And they didn't like that, particularly in those days.

**UR:** What was your attitude toward the national political scene in that era?

**RW:** When I first went to PG&E they gave me a form letter and told me to sign it and send it to all my friends. The letter said, "Support Wendell Wilkie for President." [Wilkie was the Republican who ran against Roosevelt in the 1940 presidential election.] And I refused to do it. I told them, "I'm a Roosevelt Democrat and I won't send it out." They didn't like that. I was a Democrat right through, in particular a Roosevelt Democrat.

(Next: Unionists sour on the Utility Workers Union-CIO)



By Eric Wolfe

**O**ffice work: it seemed so safe. No heavy lifting. No dangerous chemicals. No heights, no roaring machinery, no live wires, no explosives.

Just a desk, a telephone, and a video display terminal. Hardly a formula for catastrophe.

But onto this rather sunny view of office work, some years ago, a little rain began to fall.

In 1979, four out of seven pregnant VDT operators at a Toronto newspaper gave birth to infants with defects within the space of a year.

About the same time, eight out of 12 pregnancies in a VDT department at a Sears, Roebuck's office in Dallas ended either in miscarriage or in neonatal death.

Among VDT operators at a British hospital in the early 1980s, seven pregnancies produced three miscarriages, a premature birth, and a child born with a birth defect, while in Renton, Washington, three out of five pregnancies ended badly for VDT operators at the Pacific Northwest Bell Telephone Co.

During the 1980s, this list of problem pregnancy "clusters" among VDT operators continued to grow. In 1988 researchers at the Kaiser Permanente Medical Care Program in Oakland announced that a significantly increased rate of miscarriages was found among a group of 1600 pregnant female administrative and clerical workers who worked more than 20 hours per week on VDTs during the first trimester of pregnancy.

One possible culprit is stress, which has been linked to problem pregnancies. VDT operators, many of whom are subjected to electronic monitoring and other forms of speed-up, probably experience more job-related stress than other clerical workers.

Work station design is another possible source of the problem. Workers who must sit for long periods at VDTs, often leaning forward to read poor quality documents or blurry screens, may put stress on internal organs—or on a fetus if they're pregnant.

These and other muscular-skeletal problems that beset VDT operators, like repetitive motion injuries, will be discussed in future issues of the Utility Reporter.

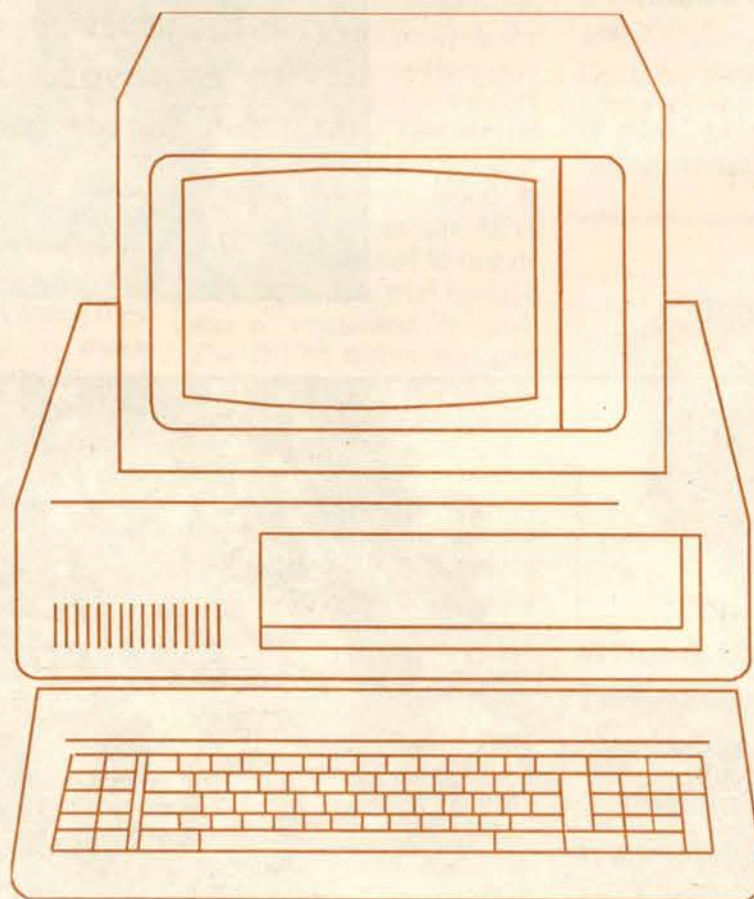
However, a growing body of research suggests another possible cause of these recurring clusters of miscarriages and birth defects among VDT operators: radiation from electric and magnetic fields.

VDTs emit several kinds of radiation. Very low frequency radiation (VLF) of approximately 15,000 hertz is produced as the computer monitor's flyback transformer sweeps electric pulses from

# Hazard in our midst?

## Electric and Magnetic Fields may threaten health of VDT operators ... and their offspring

Third in a series



side to side across the screen to create the image. Extra low frequency radiation (ELF) of 60 hertz is the typical product of the vertical deflection system, which moves the pulses from top to bottom of the screen.

### 60 hertz fields arouse suspicion

Such low levels of radiation traditionally have been considered harmless to humans. But in the 1970s, a Colorado epidemiologist, Nancy Wertheimer, discovered that increased rates of cancer in children appeared to be linked to exposure to 60 hertz magnetic fields.

The utility industry, which routinely exposes power line workers and power station operators to such fields, was understandably reluctant to acknowledge that extra low frequency radiation could be a health hazard. The industry's financial liability could be staggering.

But utilities weren't the only segment of society who found Wertheimer's pill too bitter to swallow. Her research struck at the heart of any enterprise with an investment in VDTs. And those enterprises proved to be plentiful indeed.

Rather than launch a full-scale investigation into the possible health threat to millions of workers, the VDT "industry" chose to stonewall.

By 1981, according to Paul Brodeur, writing in the June 26, 1989 issue of *The New Yorker*, industry was falling all over itself in its rush to trumpet the safety of VDTs. Those who were happy to give VDTs a clean bill of health, despite the near-total absence of responsible research, included:

The medical directors of Air Canada and IBM. The president of the Computer and Business Equipment Manufacturers Association. An official of the American Newspaper Publishers Association. Representatives of major newspapers in the US and Canada. And virtually every VDT-manufacturing corporation in the United States.

The government's health bureaucracy joined the stampede to assure the American public that VDTs posed no health threat. Among those giving VDTs a clean bill of health were:

The chiefs of two key departments at the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). The head of the Federal Drug Administration's Bureau of Radiological Health. Officials of OSHA and the Environmental Protection Agency. Not to mention hygienists and scientists at Harvard University, Duke University, and other leading academic institutions.

With this many voices announcing that there is no problem, you have to assume there isn't any problem. Or that there is a very big problem that



someone hopes to bury.

With approximately 36 million VDTs in use around the country, with more corporations growing dependent on VDTs every day, it's easy to understand why many in industry would like to see the VDT issue just go away.

The American government did its part to help bury the issue in 1986 when Reagan Administration budget cuts shut down a major EPA investigation into ELF. A prominent study designed by scientists at the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine in New York City was denied funding by major federal government sources for three years, finally getting underway in the fall of 1989.

The Bush Administration did its part to downplay the potential threat from VDTs in May of last year when the White House Office of Policy Development persuaded the EPA to back away from an EPA staff report that recommended classifying exposure to 60 hertz fields as a "probable" risk factor for cancer.

Despite years of official footdragging, research on electric and magnetic field effects progressed during the 1980s. Epidemiological data revealed elevated cancer rates among power line workers, power station operators, and pregnancy problems among VDT operators. Experimental research began to uncover some of the biological mechanisms by which electric and magnetic fields could promote the proliferation of cancer cells. (See the January 1991 issue of *Utility Reporter*.)

#### **'A causal link'**

In December of 1990, an EPA "review draft" entitled "Evaluation of the Potential Carcinogenicity of Electromagnetic Fields" appeared to bring the EPA one step closer to acknowledging that a problem exists. The review draft concluded that childhood leukemia studies and occupational exposure studies show a "consistent pattern of response which suggests a causal link" between exposures and cancers.

However, the EPA cautioned that the report was still in draft form and should not be cited as an official position of the agency.

One argument commonly trotted out by industry representatives is that we shouldn't worry because studies on electric and magnetic fields have produced conflicting results. But studies that show no relation between field exposures and harmful health effects must be taken with a grain of salt: they do not establish that there is no harmful effect, only that that particular study failed to find a harm-

ful effect.

On the other hand, scientific studies that demonstrate harmful effects, particularly if they can be duplicated, are a good indication of a real problem.

If, in fact, there is a genuine threat to human health from the electric and/or magnetic fields emitted by VDTs, what can be done to reduce that threat?

A number of steps can be taken at a practical level to reduce VDT operators' exposure.

First, existing VDTs can be altered to reduce emissions. The VDT's electric field can, with current technology, be completely shielded by lining the outer case of the VDT with copper foil which is attached to a ground by a wire. Commercially-available filters can be placed over the screen to absorb energy and drain it off to a ground.

However, magnetic fields, which may pose the greater danger, cannot be effectively shielded.

A second step readily available to businesses today is to redesign the workplace so that computers are not

placed so closely together. There is considerable evidence that operators working close together get exposure from more than one monitor.

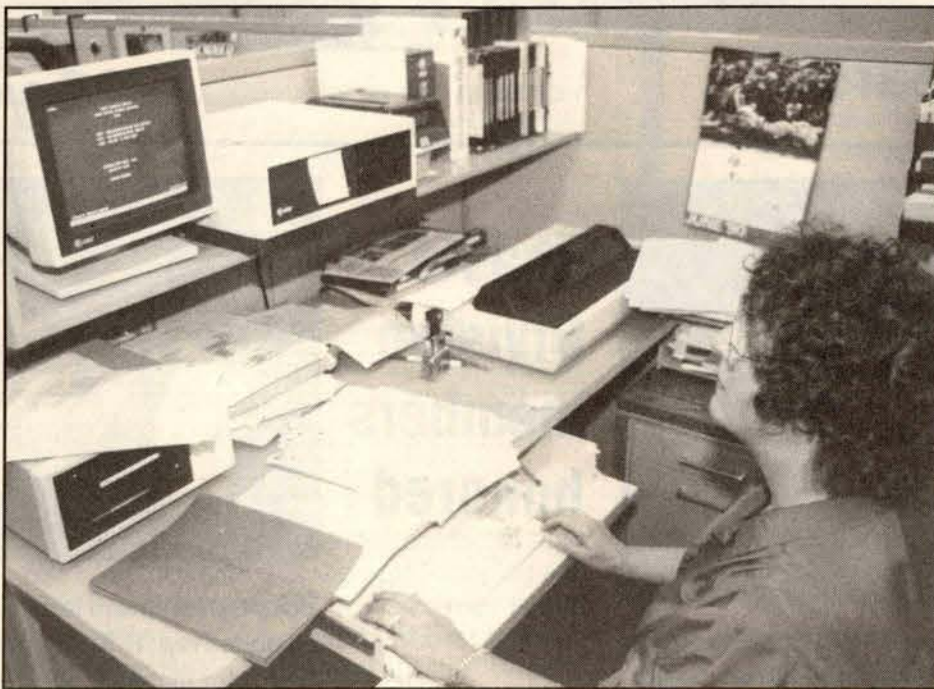
A third approach, probably more costly than the first two, would be to design VDTs that produce much less VLF and ELF radiation. Liquid crystal displays, commonly used today only in laptop computers, are an example of low-emission monitors.

#### **Job rotation**

Job rotation would be a fourth solution to the exposure problem. Many VDT operators spend eight or more hours a day bathed in electric and magnetic fields. Training workers in tasks not involving VDTs would not only reduce the workers' exposure, it would provide more variety on the job and could contribute to greater job satisfaction.

As most workers realize, envisioning these solutions is not the same as achieving them. Unionized workers have a leg up on the rest of the workforce because they can incorporate VDT safety into their bargaining demands.

**The Bush Administration did its part to downplay the potential threat from VDTs in May of last year when the White House Office of Policy Development persuaded the EPA to back away from an EPA staff report that recommended classifying exposure to 60 hertz fields as a "probable" risk factor for cancer.**



Thousands of Local 1245 members routinely use VDTs in their work.

In recently-concluded general negotiations with Pacific Gas and Electric, Local 1245 gained extensive new protections for VDT operators. The contract outlines a series of measures which should reduce eye strain and muscle fatigue. However, the contract language does not address the issue of electric and magnetic field effects.

City and state legislation provide another avenue to achieve protection for VDT operators. San Francisco last month—in response to a strong push by local unions—became the first city in the nation to successfully legislate safety standards for VDT operators. The ordinance mandates that workstations be redesigned to reduce muscular-skeletal injuries and eye strain. In addition, it establishes an advisory committee from business, labor and the scientific community to monitor new research on electromagnetic radiation.

Efforts at the state level to win protections for VDT workers were vigorously opposed by the Deukmejian Administration. As of yet there is no indication that Pete Wilson will support state-mandated protections for VDT workers.

However, the California Public Utilities Commission has shown increasing interest in the potential risks associated with electric and magnetic fields. Last month the PUC began an inquiry into the issue and announced that it would summon a conference later this year to determine if the commission should schedule public hearings on possible regulations.

It is ironic that Local 1245's Clerical and Physical workers—operating in such fundamentally different work environments—have come to face an identical workplace hazard. And through their union, they have a vehicle for expressing their concern about the potentially harmful effects of exposure to electric and magnetic fields, as illustrated by the formation last spring of a joint committee at PG&E to study electric and magnetic fields.

But in the final analysis a union's effectiveness is a direct reflection of member involvement. The first step in achieving any workplace protections is for members to expect—and to demand—action from their employers.

Government, industry and academia have long attempted to hide their heads in the sand when confronted with evidence about health risks from electric and magnetic field exposure. But the time for hiding from the problem has passed; the time for finding solutions has arrived.



## Coast Valley members honored

A recent pin award ceremony and dinner honored Local 1245 members in the Coast Valley division. Among those recognized for their years of service were:

35 years: L. Spitoni, Bob Cowger  
30 years: R. C. Kennada, Jim Schneider  
25 years: Bruce Ingels, Joe Lerma, P.W. Hoffman, T.R. Wilber  
20 years: F.L. Cruz, Sharon Davidson, Joe Duarte, Robert Kuwatani, David Miller, Mike Myrick



35 years



30 years



20 years



25 years



**25 years:** (from left) Ross McFate, WAPA; Don Severson, PG&E GC; John Trunnell, City of Redding; Karen Carter, Citizens Utilities; Max Corbell, PG&E; Robert Layne, PG&E GC; John Harper, PG&E. (Photos: Rich Hafner)

## Shasta Division members honored



**20 years:** (from left) Will Rodriguez, PG&E; Gene Wallace, business rep; R.B. Blankenship, PG&E GC; John Hagins, Pac Tree. (Not pictured: Blair Noel, City of Redding; Randy Trafton, PG&E.)



# San Jose, Coast & De Anza members honored

A recent pin award ceremony and dinner honored Local 1245 members in the San Jose, Coast, and De Anza divisions. Among those recognized for their years of service were:

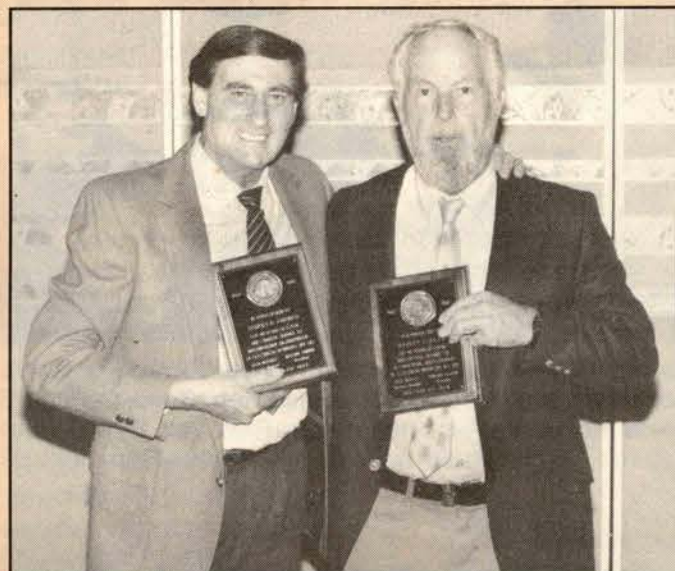
40 years: A.D. Amodeo, H.L. Riley

35 years: H.F. Costa

30 years: S.D. Cramer, A.E. Davis, J.J. Hassett, Ron Shiels

25 years: Duane Mayberry, W.J. McKinley, R. Mendez, H.A. Mendez, Warren Mercer, Dean Montero, R.M. Morris, C.L. Napolitano, Edward Fabela, Tom Hutchinson, Kooresh Khanbabian, Peter Mandon, James Anderson, Richard Barrow, H.R. Barey, Lewis Cirillo, Arthur Davison, James Dingman, Allen Ehlman, Michael Thompson, T.Z. Turner, Tony Vriethoff, Richard Pospishek, R.E. Sharp, Robert Standley

20 years: Steven Moore, C.D. Ohlson, James Parker, Donald Poulsen, Kenneth Resop, Thomas Rivera Jr., Harold Mehrer, Daniel Melanephy, Norman Mercer, Wilton Mixon, Lonnie Moseley, Steve Mogensen, Buzz Lenaham, David Davis, A.F. Duarte, Joseph Flores, Joe Gaeta, A.S. Guerrero, Lawrence Bruce, Tom Mintun, Chleo Sexton, John Weininger (Photos: Gary Hughes)



40 years



25 years



35 years



20 years



30 years





General Construction Joint Grievance Committee holds a prep meeting. Clockwise, from bottom: Business Rep. Gene Wallace, Barry Humphrey, Lynda Holloway, Business Rep. Ron Van Dyke, John Meyers, Alfred Calleros, Daniel Robertson, and Business Rep. Joel Ellioff.

## Union, PG&E tackle host of old problems as New Year begins



Local 1245 members meeting with PG&E on Diablo Canyon Power Plant interim negotiations are (starting at far right) Business Rep. Mike Haentjens, Senior Assistant Business Manager Darrel Mitchell, Jeff Knisley, Hari Nam Elliott, Dan Lockwood, Brad Solso, and Chet Bartlett.

From PAGE ONE

Local 1245 members at PG&E experience on the job. The extreme complexity of the EMF issue, and the importance of assessing the hazard to members, virtually guarantees that this committee's mission will continue for a long time to come.

The Water Department Interim Committee wrapped up discussions in January on job duties, pay rates and training programs.

The Diablo Canyon Power Plant Interim Negotiations Committee concluded its work this month without reaching an agreement. This committee spent 18 months in preparing for and engaging in these discussions.

In other bargaining, the Rerate Committee wrapped up talks that reviewed the rating system and produced adjustment of station ratings.

The Clerical Joint Evaluation Committee, which met Jan. 7-8, is

continuing its efforts to evaluate clerical positions in terms of their complexity and amount of work.

Also held on Jan. 7 were Steam Department talks regarding job security provisions. The Joint Apprenticeship Committee met Jan. 11.

The union is currently conducting on-going discussions with the company over the Performance Incentive Program, following the company's recent announcement that it intends to initiate an incentive program that would include bargaining unit members.

Local 1245 also conducted discus-

sions with PG&E last month on "Survey Guided Development," the program in which the company surveys employees for their input on development issues.

In addition to all the committees mentioned above, the union hall also provided the meeting place in January for various committees dealing with grievances, including fact finding, review, and arbitration committees.

If it sounds like January was a busy month down at the union hall, that's because it was. But then, it usually is.



Combination Crew Training Committee members Steven H. Moore (center) and Tom Bohannon (right) meet with Assistant Business Manager Darrel Mitchell in preparation for talks with PG&E.



Members of the PG&E Review Committee meeting at the Local 1245 union hall recently are (from left) Fred Pedersen, G. C. Station-Hydro Subforeman A; Roger Stalcup, assistant business manager; Pat Nickeson, gas serviceman-Stockton; Arlis "Len" Watson, electric crew foreman, Santa Rosa. (Photos: Eric Wolfe)



Members of the San Francisco Fact Finding Committee, meeting recently at the Local 1245 union hall, are (clockwise, from lower left) Enid Bidou, business rep.; Ed Caruso, business rep.; Ken Ball, business rep.; Nancy Peterson, H.R. rep.; Sandy Cooper, H.R. rep.; Charlotte Harper, manager H.R., San Francisco Division; and Rob Towle.