Crews display skills at Lineman's Rodeo
Members compete from PG&E, SMUD, Sierra Pacific Power, and City of Roseville

Union line crews demonstrated the human skills that go into the delivery of electrical power in the western United States last month at the Second Annual Lineman's Rodeo in Sacramento, Ca.

Local 1245 crews from Pacific Gas & Electric, Sacramento Municipal Utility District, Sierra Pacific Power and the City of Roseville were joined by IBEW crews from other utilities in friendly competition that pitted skilled worker against skilled worker. Contestants were judged not on speed but on demonstrated ability and safe work practices.

The rodeo, a regional event that helps determine which teams will go on to national competition in Kansas City, Mo., was sponsored this year by Local 1245, PG&E and SMUD.

Finishing with the highest score—a near-perfect 696 out of a possible 700—was the PG&E General Construction team of Scott Rose, Evan Slaydon and Rob Harty.

Coming in first among SMUD crews—and registering the second highest overall score of 693 were Max Fuentes, Gerald Mankins and Jerry Tittle.

Top honors among PG&E Distribution crews went to the team of Daniel Ramirez, Curtis Doty, Bryan Allen and Rick Truitt (alternate), who racked up 688 points.

Among the crews from non-hosting utilities, first place was captured by the Southern California Edison team, which finished in a dead heat with San Diego Gas and Electric at 693 points. (Given the tie, first place was awarded based on the fastest time.)

Contestants competed in seven events: hurt man rescue, rope splicing, fused disconnect change, underground dip termination, double deadend hot tap, cross arm change, and the "raw egg pole climb" in which linemen climbed a 45-foot pole with a raw egg in a bucket and then came down with the egg in their mouth.

In addition, there were competitions in line truck and backhoe operation. Line truck winners were Ray Horlacher (PG&E General Construction), Mike Serrac (SMUD) and Ernie Quinonez (PG&E Distribution).

Local 1245 considers new challenge
Judges question clerical drug testing at PG&E's Diablo Canyon power plant

A federal appeals court in June rejected Local 1245's plea to ban random drug testing of clerical, warehouse and maintenance employees at PG&E's Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant. However, the judges pointedly questioned whether all clerical and warehouse workers at Diablo Canyon were in "safety-sensitive" positions, appearing to open the door for new legal challenges by the union.

"This is one of the most substantial victories we've had in fighting drug testing," said Local 1245 attorney Tom Dalzell, who argued the union's case before the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. "Even though the court ruled against us, the judges expressed serious reservations about the need to drug test all clerical employees, and also expressed some doubts about testing warehouse personnel. We're definitely in a position to take another shot at this."

The issue first arose in 1989 when the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) required all commercial nuclear power plants to implement random drug testing of workers who have unescorted access to "protected areas" of nuclear plants.

In early 1990 Local 1245 requested that the NRC exempt its members from PG&E's random drug testing program at Diablo Canyon. When the NRC denied this request, Local 1245 appealed to the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Local 1245 attorneys argued that the union's objections were not related to "safety-sensitive" positions but to the improper use of random testing. The court ruled in favor of the union, but Local 1245 appealed to the US Supreme Court, which rejected the appeal.

The appeals court in June rejected Local 1245's request to ban drug testing in clerical, warehouse, and maintenance positions, ruling that the union had not shown that the testing was medically unnecessary or improperly conducted. However, the court expressed serious reservations about the need to drug test all clerical employees, and also expressed some doubts about testing warehouse personnel. The union is considering its options for appealing the decision.
Rolling the union on...

Still Out of Work: Unemployment in the US rose to 7.8% in June, the highest level since March 1984.

Union Victory: Striking health care workers at Summit Medical Center in Oakland, Ca. concluded their strike in victory last month when management agreed to a federal mediator’s proposal. Union workers had walked out when management tried to take away their right to engage in sympathy strikes. Under the settlement, sympathy strikes will be permitted.

APPOINTMENTS

CONFERENCES AND CONVENTIONS
Nevada AFL-CIO
COPE Convention
Sandra Reynolds
Marlene Powell
Mike Rimm
Kathy Tindall
John Stralla
9th District Progress Meeting and Women’s Conference
Jack McNally
Howard Stiefer
Jim McCauley
Barbara Symons
Ed Mallory
Ron Blakemore
A. G. Dudley
Dorothy Ford
Sam Tamimi
Women’s Cont. only: Sue Defoe
Jolene Highfield
California Labor Fed.
COPE Convention
Jack McNally
Howard Stiefer
Jim McCauley
Mike Davis
Ron Blakemore
Eric Wolfe
Mickey Harrington
Tom Riley
Don Hardie

Labor Day picnic
Merced-area Democrats will hold a Labor Day picnic on Sept. 7 at Yosemite Lake in Merced from 10 am to 5 pm. Admission is $5 per person. For more information call (209) 722-3036

Vanishing Pensions: The National Planning Association projects that the portion of American workers covered by pensions will drop to under 40% in 1993. As recently as 1980 over 50% of workers were covered.

Hands Off Our Dough: California workers helped qualify a pension protection initiative for the November ballot. The initiative is designed to stop politicians from looting public pensions to finance budget shortfalls. In 1991 Gov. Pete Wilson took $1.9 billion from the reserves of the California Public Employees Retirement System to balance the state’s 1991 budget.

Fair Tax Initiative: Working people have also succeeded in placing the Economic Recovery Tax Relief Act on the November ballot in California. The initiative would close tax loopholes available to corporations and the very rich.

General Strike planned: The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and its political allies have planned a general strike for early August in South Africa. The unionists’ goal is to get the white minority government to negotiate seriously for a transition to a democratic, non-racial government. Under the current government, non-whites are denied the right to vote.

Job Theft: Inmates at a prison near Chillicothe, Ohio are paid as little as 35 cents an hour to make car parts for a Honda plant in Ohio. Republican Gov. George Voinovich wants to expand the program to include more private companies, despite the threat this poses to the jobs of Ohio workers, according to the Label Letter.

Law-breaking: The California Department of Corrections appears to be violating state law by refusing to provide evidence that any hiring out of convicts labor has been approved by affected unions. Proposition 139—former Gov. Deukmejian’s 1990 convict labor initiative—says unions representing free workers must be consulted before the Department of Corrections makes deals to hire convicts out to private employers.

Workers Pay More: Of 250 employee-benefit officials polled recently, 98% plan to raise the employee share of health bills this year. Nearly half will expand use of preferred provider organizations.

Workers here and abroad

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Utility deregulation: higher costs disguised as ‘choice’

Jack McNally, IBEW 1245 Business Manager

De-regulation continues to be the “thing to do” in American business. The effects are being felt in transportation, communications and other utilities.

The natural gas industry has been quietly de-regulating. The effects may soon be directly felt by the membership of Local 1245.

The Mojave Pipeline Co., a small energy company in Bakersfield, is proposing to build a pipeline through half of PG&E’s service territory, from Bakersfield, through the San Joaquin Valley and into the Bay Area to deliver natural gas to Northern California industries.

Mojave Pipeline is soliciting commitments from large industrial gas users currently being served by PG&E to buy Mojave-delivered gas. Mojave has targeted about 30 large corporate customers, promising up to a 30% cut in their current delivery costs.

Under the old rules, Mojave would not have been allowed to build this pipeline as regulation provided PG&E to buy Mojave-delivered gas. Mojave has targeted about 30 large corporate customers, promising up to a 30% cut in their current delivery costs.

The door has clearly been opened for another challenge,” said Dalzell. “When the judges said, we probably can’t stop the testing of clerical workers.

Both Nelson and Fernandez said that more detailed information from the union might lead them to exclude some clerical workers from the testing.

“The door has clearly been opened for another challenge,” said Dalzell.

PG&E’s current gas business, the company purchases and transports natural gas to its customers, provides many services—like pilot lighting, appliance checks, and other maintenance programs—to households and others, and spreads this cost across all gas customers.

Mojave’s objective is to carve out the most profitable customers of PG&E by claiming that they can save these corporate customers up to $80 million a year starting in 1995.

If Mojave is successful, they (and PG&E) acknowledge that residential and small-business rates probably have to go up about 2.3% to make up for PG&E’s lost revenue.

Mojave, an energy company created by de-regulation, will make a nice profit on the transport of gas to about 30 of PG&E’s largest customers and will capture new customers who would have normally been PG&E’s. The 30 customers have normally been carved out the most profitable customers of PG&E’s.

The Mojave proposal is a pilot program. The effects may soon be felt across all gas customers.

Who benefits from cheaper prices, we hear the slogan “customers want choice.”

The Mojave proposal is a good study of what is to come. Who benefits from this proposed pipeline and who gets damaged?

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Anti-scab bill blocked by Republicans

Senate supporters of the Workplace Fairness Bill, S. 55, were defeated in their efforts to bring the bill to a vote when they failed to shut off a filibuster led by "right-to-work" Republican Senators.

AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland said the Senate's failure to act on the bill "continues a tragedy for workers who will lose their jobs because their employers have no incentive to compromise.

The Workplace Fairness Bill would have prevented employers from using scabs to permanently replace striking workers. The House passed the bill, 247-182, in 1991.

Although organized labor appeared close to having a majority in the Senate, the Republican filibuster prevented the measure from coming to a vote. Although it only takes 51 votes to pass a bill, it takes 60 votes to shut off debate and bring it to a vote.

Most Republicans, including John Seymour of California, and five Democrats voted against cutting off debate, effectively killing the bill. Democrats who deserted working people on this crucial issue were Terry Sanford, North Carolina; Ernest Hollings, South Carolina; Dale Bumpers and David Pryor, Arkansas; and David Boren, Oklahoma.

In recent years, employers have increasingly used permanent replacements to defeat strikes. This use of scab labor makes it difficult for unions to win strikes. Without a credible threat of a strike behind them, unions tend to have less clout at the bargaining table, which makes it more difficult for them to negotiate good wages and benefits for their members.

Local 1245 members lend support

Solidarity at Summit produces big victory

Striking health care workers won a big victory last month when Summit Medical Center in Oakland, Calif., finally gave up trying to take away the right of union members to honor picket lines.

Members of Local 1245 and other unions stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the strikers during the 45-day strike, providing a graphic example of how labor unity can produce real victories.

"This is the greatest union victory in the Bay Area in decades," said Julian Arron Marron, head of the Alameda County Central Labor Council.

The chief negotiator for the California Nurses Association, Rose Anna Demonte, called it a victory for unions everywhere. In attacking the right to honor picket lines, Summit was threatening to isolate and divide workers in multi-union work sites everywhere, she said.

On strike were members of SEIU Local 250, the California Nurses Association, Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Local 28, Office and Professional Employees Local 29 and Longshoremen's Local 6.

Many Local 1245 members and staff representatives joined the picket line in a show of solidarity with the strikers.

In addition to local trade union support, strikers won the backing of Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton, and were joined on the picket line by Jesse Jackson and then-presidential candidate Jerry Brown.

Economic pressures also played a big role in forcing Summit management to agree to a settlement on the strikers' terms. Hospital President Ken Jones acknowledged at a congressional hearing that Summit was losing a million dollars a week operating with scabs.

Fight Back!

The Workplace Fairness Bill (S. 55) would have outlawed the use of scabs to permanently replace workers like us during a strike. In June, S. 55 was killed by anti-worker Republicans in the U.S. Senate.

Too many elected officials have turned their backs on us. The time has come to elect candidates who will stand with us, rather than stand by while our jobs are taken away.

Fight back! Check off for POWER PAC.

Together We Can Do It!

(For Local 1245 members at Pacific Gas & Electric Co.)

Utility deregulation

From PAGE THREE

Little over 3 million residential customers will pay higher rates and have no choice.

In addition PG&E will probably eliminate jobs if Mojave prevails. One could argue that those PG&E jobs will be picked up at Mojave, but you can take it to the bank that the jobs created at Mojave will pay less wages and benefits than PG&E.

Government regulators and the Congress are in the process of deregulating the delivery of electricity as well.

The American public had better take a look at whose interests are being served here. You can bet the individual residential ratepayers are not.
Sierra Pacific Power Co. unveils plans for future

Sierra Pacific Power Co. will meet the future power needs of its customers through a combination of conservation programs and new power generating facilities.

A portion of the plant could be in service by 1994, the company said.

In addition to the coal-gas plant, Sierra Pacific plans to build a 90-megawatt combustion turbine facility in the mid-1990s.

Conservation will play a key role in meeting future energy needs, according to the company plan, which includes a water heater wrapping service, as well as energy-efficient lighting and weatherization programs.

Sierra Pacific's plan will be reviewed by the Nevada Public Service Commission, which will hold public hearings to solicit the views of interested parties this fall.

Local 1245 represents both physical and clerical classifications at Sierra Pacific.

City College of San Francisco Labor Studies Program

Fall Semester, 1992

Classes begin August 17, 1992

(415) 267-6550

Steward's role in grievance handling and building solidarity.

Instructor: Linda Gregory, AFSCE DC 57

Workers & Compensation

Update (1 unit, $5)

2 Saturdays, 10/10 & 10/17/92

Overview of employers' rights under Workers' Compensation laws and recent legal developments.

Instructor: Joseph Wavman, Workers' Comp. attorney

Labor Research Skills & Strategy

(3 units, $18)

6 Saturdays, 9/19-10/24/92, 9 am-noon, Southeast Campus, Oakland at Phillips St.

Overview to workers' rights, in both organized and unorganized jobs.

Instructor: Tanya Russell, labor attorney

Parliamentary Procedure

(3 units, $18)

Saturday, 10/24, 9 am-5 pm

How to conduct and participate in union and organizational meetings.

Instructor: Paul Chown, UCB Labor Center

Assertiveness Training

(3 units, $18)

Saturday, 10/10 & 10/17/92, 9 am-5 pm; Saturday, 11/17/92, 9 am-5 pm

How to be assertive in the workplace.

Instructor: Aliyah Stein, AFT 2121

Laney College Labor Studies Program

Fall Semester, 1992

(510) 464-3210

American Labor Movement:

History & Structure

(3 units, $18)

Tuesdays, 7-10 pm

History, struggles and structure of labor movement.

Instructor: Albert Lannon

Economics for Labor & Politics

(3 units, $18)

Mondays, 6-9 pm

Survey of labor's involvement in the political process.

Instructor: Aliyah Stein, AFT 2121

Grievance Handling & Arbitration

(3 units, $18)

Thursdays, 6-8:30 pm

Methods for solving problems of discrimination and harassment in the workplace.

Instructor: Joseph Wavman, Workers' Comp. attorney

Instructor: Tanya Russell, labor attorney

Instructor: Labor Studies staff
Local 1245 members in Outside Line Construction delivered power this spring to a new batch plant on 111th Street in Los Angeles.

On the day the Utility Reporter visited the site, two crews were working as a combined crew due to the illness of crew member Joe Manzo.

The men's task was to move the line over 50 feet so that the road could be widened to accommodate traffic to the batch plant.

Senior member on the combined crew was Leo Jensen, a foreman with 43 years in the union. Jensen has seen a lot of changes since he first performed line work in 1946 for a Nebraska power company.

"We didn't have bucket trucks in those days, no hydraulic lifts of any kind. None whatsoever," said Jensen.

The crews used A-frame trucks, boom trucks with 3-legs.

"It took longer to get the job done," Jensen recalls.

Work today is not only faster, it's safer. The union deserves a lot of the credit for that, according to Jensen.

"They have safety committees now that come around to discuss problems," he said. Back in the old days, "safety committees didn't amount to much," he added.

Other members of the combined crew on the 111th Street job were linemen Jim Woulfe, Mark Kizis, and Mike Winner, groundmen David Stadelhofer and Brian Gleed, and foreman Curt Peterson.
INEMAN’S Rodeo Showcases Skills

From PAGE ONE

Backhoe winners were Mike Alves (PG&E General Construction), Ron Monday (SMUD), and Ron Ruse (PG&E Distribution).

Of the 36 teams in the line competition, one was composed entirely of PG&E women: Geraldine Curtin, Meri Issel, and Lynn Rasmussen, all from General Construction, and Sue Longo from the Concord yard.

Longo, a shop steward and former unit recorder, said she decided to be part of the all-women team after receiving a phone call from Issel.

"We said, what the heck, let’s do it, be the first ones to do it and have a good time. And we did," said Longo.

At Longo’s suggestion the team adopted the name "Outsiders", an obvious reference to the fact that women are a tiny minority among linemen.

But Issel dismissed the suggestion that the women were making a “political statement” by their formation of an all-women team.

"Women don’t want to come in and change things. We want to come in and adapt," said Issel. "We’re not trying to change anybody’s lifestyle—we just want to have one for ourselves and be able to make a living."

Eric Slaydon said “a lot of hard work and a lot of luck” were responsible for his General Construction team’s top score. For their efforts, they are assured of a trip to Kansas City for the national Lineman’s Rodeo this fall.

His teammate Rob Harty had this prescription for success in Kansas City:

“We’ll do the same thing. Just working together. Do the same thing basically we do on the job. It’s the only thing there is to do.”

Business Manager Jack McNally and President Howard Stiefer present Lineman’s Rodeo T-shirts and suspenders to contestants.

City of Roseville team (Larry Layton, Terry Bakkie and Dave Bakkie) competes in the Crossarm Change.

Pete Henderson, Brian Perry and Tom Mullally of SMUD compete in the Rope Splicing event.

Sue Longo of the all-women PG&E team competes in the Double Deadend Hot Tap.

Groundman from the PG&E DBU team of Al White, David Dillon, Chris Rosenstrach and Greg Hart.

Groundman from the PG&E DBU team of Dan Smith, Emmett Hart, Steve Brown and Gary Heimlich.

The PG&E DBU team of Stephen Armstrong, Dennis Carpenter, Brian Carpenter and Rob Armer compete in the Fused Disconnect.

The SMUD team of Mark Raley, Aaron Rudi and Paul Coaxum compete in the Cross Arm Change.

August 1992
Lineman’s Rodeo

A heaping plate prepared by (from right) Business Reps. Lula Washington, Frank Hutchins and Joe Valentino.

Kids frolic in a little unofficial Rodeo activity.

Working the barbecue pit and chow line at the Rodeo are (above, from left) Business Reps. Frank Saxsenmeier, Mickey Harrington and Joel Elliot; (below, from left) Assistant Business Manager Perry Zimmerman, Executive Board members Mike Davis and Ron Blakemore, and Business Rep. Art Murray.

Linemen from the PG&E DBU team of Al White, David Dillon, Chris Rosenstrauch and Greg Hart compete in the Cross Arm Change.

Ron Shay of the Sierra Pacific Power team tests his skills in the Hurt Man Rescue.

Linemen from the PG&E DBU team of Dan Smith, Emmett Hart, Steve Brown and Gary Heimlich compete in the Double Deadend Hot Tap.

Business Manager Jack McNally with the f Isssel, Sue Longo, Geraldine Curtin and Lyn

The Rodeo also featured a Backhoe comp
Ron Shay of the Sierra Pacific Power team tests his skills in the Hurt Man Rescue.

Brian Perry of SMUD prepares to descend the pole with an egg in his mouth in the Pole Climb event.

Ken Kehr and Tom Cox of SMUD compete in the Fused Disconnect Change.

The Rodeo also featured a Backhoe competition.

Business Manager Jack McNally with the PG&E all-women team of Meri Issel, Sue Longo, Geraldine Curtin and Lynn Rasmussen.

The Sierra Pacific Power team of Marty Radekin, Ron Shay and Ken Meneal tests their skills in the Underground Dip Termination.

Line Truck Competition

First
PG&E GC: Ray Horlacher
SMUD: Mike Stemac
PG&E DBU: Ernie Quinonez

Second
PG&E GC: Ken Crumm
PG&E DBU: Richard Pariera

Third
PG&E GC: Terry Lawson

Backhoe Competition

First
PG&E GC: Mike Alves
SMUD: Ron Monday
PG&E DBU: Ron Ruse

Second
PG&E GC: Aaron Lester
SMUD: Tom DeVries
PG&E DBU: Ron Bullock

Third
PG&E GC: Charles Bumgarner
SMUD: Karen Tyler
PG&E DBU: Leon Rondeau

Rodeo Cham
PG&E General Construction
Scott Rose
Evan Slaydo
Rob Hart

First Place (PG&E GC): Ramirez, Curtis Dot;
Second Place (PG&E General Construction): Robert Sholler, Geo Soares, Eric Dau

Other Utility
First Place: S.Calif. Gas & Electric
Second Place: San Gas & Electric
Rodeo Champions

PG&E
General Construction
Scott Rose
Evan Slaydon
Rob Harty

First Place (PG&E DBU): Daniel Ramirez, Curtis Doty, Bryan Allen, Rick Truitt

Second Place (PG&E DBU): George McNeill, Tom Jones, Rick Bimson, Larry Galvez

Other Utilities

First Place (SMUD): Max Fuentes, Gerald Mankins, Jerry Tittle

Second Place (PG&E General Construction): Robert Sholler, George Soares, Eric Dau

Second Place (PG&E DBU): George McNeill, Tom Jones, Rick Bimson, Larry Galvez

Winning Teams

Line Truck Competition

First
PG&E GC: Ray Horlacher
SMUD: Mike Stemac
PG&E DBU: Ernie Quinonez

Second
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Third
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Third
PG&E GC: Charles Bumgarner
SMUD: Karen Tyler
PG&E DBU: Leon Rondeau

First Place: S. Calif. Edison

Second Place: San Diego Gas & Electric

First Place (SMUD): Max Fuentes, Gerald Mankins, Jerry Tittle

Second Place (PG&E DBU): George McNeill, Tom Jones, Rick Bimson, Larry Galvez

G&E all-women team of Meri Rasmussen.

Brian Perry of SMUD prepares to descend the pole with an egg in his mouth in the Pole Climb event.

Ken Kehrer and Tom Cox of SMUD compete in the Fused Disconnect Change.

The Sierra Pacific Power team of Marty Radekin, Ron Shay and Ken Meneal tests their skills in the Underground Dip Termination.
Now that Communism has been overthrown in Eastern Europe, the peoples of those nations face the monumental problem of restructuring their lifeless economies. As they look to a free market for solutions, who protects the rights of workers? Throughout Eastern Europe, workers distrust the old labor unions aligned with the Communist Party. In Bulgaria, workers have organized the independent Bulgarian Confederation of Labour (PODKREPA).

In May, the AFL-CIO Free Trade Union Institute provided funds for Local 1245 Business Manager Jack McNally and three other American trade union leaders to visit Bulgaria to assess the needs and offer assistance to PODKREPA. This is McNally's first-hand account.

At the time of our visit to Bulgaria the democratic, non-communist Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) was in power. PODKREPA, the non-communist labor federation, is an integral part of the UDF. However, PODKREPA is now making great effort to function more as a traditional free trade union.

In addition to PODKREPA, there is another labor confederation: the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Bulgaria (CITUB). Officials of PODKREPA claim CITUB is controlled or strongly influenced by leaders of the old Communist unions.

The staff members of PODKREPA put together a two-week schedule to take our American delegation to several cities in Bulgaria to visit plant sites and workers. Serving on the delegation, in addition to myself, were Cal McNeely, Business Representative, Sacramento Area District Council of Carpenters; Pat Thomas, Organizing Coordinator for Affiliations, Service Employees International Union; and Stephen Mares, Representative, Human Resources Development Institute.

Each day we met with the Section (Local Union) Leader(s) - the Regional Officers - at either lunch or dinner. When we visited a plant or facility, we would meet the PODKREPA leader in the facility and he or she would take us to meet with the director or manager of the plant. The manager would usually tell us a little about the facility, what it does and how it is doing. We usually toured the facility, followed by a question and answer session with PODKREPA members. Employees generally were PODKREPA members, CITUB members, or not members of either union. In some cases, PODKREPA has been

See NEXT PAGE
able to work cooperatively with CITUB at the facility to bargain or work out problems jointly. At other facilities, there is no cooperation and each goes its own way. The managers see this and in some cases use one union against the other.

Many of the managers or directors of the facility are relatively new, as old "Party" directors have resigned. In some cases, PODKREPA members at a plant, through petitions, have been able to get forced resignations of these old "Party" managers/directors. All of the facilities we visited are still owned by the State. There is much discussion and positioning going on, however, in anticipation of privatizing and the return of property to the original owners.

In several cases the union claims that the managers of a facility, in concert with other individuals, are purposely making the enterprise look like a losing business so that when it is privatized the value will be understated, enabling some of these old management types to buy the business.

Over the two week period, I estimate that we had discussion with over 300 members of PODKREPA on the job. Most all of them are intelligent and educated. We explained who we were, and they explained some of the problems they were having at the plant or facility. Usually they had many questions about the conditions and activities of labor unions in the United States.

Questions frequently asked by the workers included:
- Are unions in the US involved in politics? Should they be?
- Are all US workers in a particular facility paid the same?
- How do layoffs take place in the US and what does the union do about it?
- How do unemployment benefits work? How long do you receive them? Can they be extended? How much does one receive? What happens when the benefits run out?
- How much are union dues in the US?
- How does collective bargaining work?
- Who votes on a new contract?
- What happens if there's more than one union on the property?
- What is the management-to-workers ratio? (They expressed concern about top-heavy management.)

The number one concern of the workers was losing their jobs as a result of lack of work. Almost all the enterprises we visited have lost demand for their product. In some plants, there have been huge layoffs while others have had small reductions. However, all are threatened by layoffs.

The issue of wage increases is the number two concern, as inflation is eating away at their incomes.

Following are my daily accounts of our journey.

The first week we traveled with an interpreter, a driver, and a PODKREPA staff person, Todor Birindjiev, an impressive man in their Internal Relations Department, was the staff person. He knew what he was doing. The seven of us traveled in a Ford van and were comfortable enough.

May 19

Our meeting at PODKREPA headquarters in Sofia was with officers or representatives of most of the branches of PODKREPA. A branch of PODKREPA is similar to an international union in the US.

These representatives stated that a lack of funds made it difficult to operate, and in particular to communicate. All said they need fax machines but cannot afford them.

PODKREPA at the national level publishes a newspaper five days a week, and its main distribution is in Sofia. The PODKREPA Plovdiv Region also publishes a newspaper five days for their area, and the PODKREPA Razgrad Region just started to publish a newspaper the week we were there.

May 20

The manager at the pig farm arranged for lunch at the farm. Relations with this manager are not good and Todor had rather intense, long discussions with the manager during lunch over the problem of not having a signed collective bargaining agreement for the farm. Because of time constraints we were not able to tour the plant. I think the manager planned it that way.

We had the opportunity to see and talk to two or three members. They seemed to be intimidated and frightened. Todor said that they feared for their jobs because of their membership in the union. Production was down, there was no contract, and they feared losing their jobs.

We toured a fertilizer plant. Like most of the other facilities we visited, this plant was not well maintained inside or outside. Noise and air pollution were evident. They said that car protection was provided by management, but the workers would not wear them. The workers asked about paying more to workers in high pollution areas in the US. We said, "No, we make management clean up the plant." They expressed interest in that.

In another plant where dust was a big problem, they just paid the workers more money. Apparently this is how they deal with pollution problems.

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Church spire rising above the tree-tops in Sofia, Bulgaria.
May 21

The Post Office and telephone services were a combined operation. The biggest problems here were the old outdated telephone facilities and the need to upgrade, but no money.

We discussed with the Electric Utility members the issue of safety of nuclear power plants. They said they had concerns but had no problems so far. Also, they had concerns about the issue of Electric and Magnetic Fields, and in fact have discussed safety rules for working around high fields.

At the road construction/maintenance yard the discussion centered around how it is privatized in the US and how new roads are built and maintained.

At the Yogurt and Cheese Factory there was a problem with the management working two of the workers for 32 days straight without time off or any additional pay. Todor wanted me to accompany him to go and see the manager about this problem. So Todor, the interpreter, and I went to the manager's office and confronted him about this problem. His hands were shaking a little as this discussion took place. His defense was that the workers wanted to do this so that they could build up some paid time off for later use. So, as also happens in our union, the Section President would have to check with the workers and then get back to the manager. We didn't have time to see the outcome.

May 22

We did not tour the Balkan car plant because the union was engaged in collective bargaining at that very moment. The management was a joint team representing five different facilities. PODKREPA and CITUB negotiated jointly. We were allowed to sit in on the bargaining for awhile.

On the way to Velingrad we passed by a resort lake area where a seminar for PODKREPA members was in progress. We were asked to address the members. We did not have much time to take questions because we were running late.

In fact, it seemed like we always were running late and the itinerary was subject to change from moment to moment. However, it was no problem.

The garment factory was scheduled to be shut down, but got a reprieve by a Greek merchant who supplied the material. The workers assembled T-Shirts. The shirts looked like they would sell for $10-12 in the US; the label in the shirts did not say where they were made. There were only a few weeks of work left, and the plant would be closed unless the Greek or someone else came up with some work.

May 23

Yanko Kroumov, a PODKREPA General Secretary rode back to Sofia with us. We were supposed to visit a factory but it was closed. We met the Section President and the manager of the plant.

We visited Yanko Kroumov's father's home, then traveled to Sofia.

May 25

During the second week we traveled with a new driver, interpreter, and PODKREPA staff person.

We did not get to tour the pharmaceutical plant, but we talked to section officers. The union appeared very strong here. The plant has plenty of work and no layoffs are contemplated. A US pharmaceutical firm is the biggest competitor, and less than 20% of the production goes to the Soviet Union.

At the Education and Computer Center, there is a joint operation between the Education Center and PODKREPA to develop software programs. They had developed a language program to teach a second language with a desktop computer, which they intend to develop and market to the world through brokers.

May 26

Our experience in Bjala was probably the most interesting of the trip. First we had breakfast. The traditional breakfast in Bjala is soup. You have a choice of meat-
JOURNEY TO BULGARIA

The roof over the entire building looked like it was ready to cave in at any minute. The workers worked under it, putting bricks in the oven or taking them out, by hand.

The tile roof looked like it could cave in at any minute.

The roof over the entire building looked like it was ready to cave in at any minute. The workers worked under it, putting bricks in the oven or taking them out, by hand.

The union tells the story about how the plant had to borrow 40 million Leva in order to continue to operate. The previous “Party” director of the plant arranged the loan. The plant is State owned. The bank is also State owned. The previous director is now the director of the bank and is demanding the repayment of the loan. The monthly interest is 2 million Leva, and that is more than the monthly profit of the plant.

In Ruse, we visited a bakery which provides cookies and pastries to all the schools and hospitals in Ruse (100 schools and 26 hospitals). They employ 6 bakery workers and one delivery person.

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JOURNEY TO BULGARIA

From PAGE THIRTEEN

May 27

In Sitovo we visited a pig-breeding farm which currently houses over 84,000 pigs. The farm, started in 1973, breeds pigs to produce quality pork for export and for domestic use. It appeared to be an efficient operation, with approximately 180,000 pigs processed each year.

Efforts were made by other interests to break up the farm into smaller parts and privatize it with stockholders, plus there was a problem with the original owner of the land. PODKREPA intervened and stopped the breakup and saved the jobs. The employees observed this and all joined PODKREPA.

In Tulovo, which is primarily a Turkish community, we visited the home of a Turkish Section President. The Communist regime back in the mid-1980s attempted to change the names of all the Turkish Bulgarians. To say the least, this caused some serious uprisings among the Turks and some bad blood remains. PODKREPA has been a strong force to rebuild unity with the Turks, and they play a prominent role in PODKREPA.

May 28

In Pleven we visited a Professional School for Food Industry, which was basically a school for food processing. The school was established in 1903 and included 250 dorms. Until recently the school was free to the students, but now they are required to pay for their meals. The students are provided grants from the State based on grades and incomes. We met with about 18 of the instructors. Some belonged to PODKREPA members, some to CITUB. They asked how the US school system is structured and how salaries are established.

We visited a meat processing plant not far from the school. The plant is for red meat and the students at the school are rotated through the plant as part of the training.

We met with about 25 of the maintenance workers, who complained about no spare parts for the plant and no money to buy the spare parts. The equipment came from Poland and Germany. We presented the following comparison for purposes of discussion:

| In the U.S. | Avg. Monthly Salary = $2,100 |
| Cost of 1 Kilo of Meat = $8 |
| (less than 0.5%) |

| In Bulgaria | Avg. Monthly Salary = 1,500 Leva |
| Cost of 1 Kilo of Meat = 50 Leva |
| (almost 3.5%) |

May 29

We visited the kidney dialysis department of a hospital in Sofia. The doctor in charge, a PODKREPA member, explained that kidney failure was inherent in the Bulgarian society due to the culture and economic conditions. Very rarely do they take a kidney from a relative and transplant, and they only average 2 kidney transplants a year.

We visited with the president of PODKREPA, Dr. Trenchev, at PODKREPA headquarters in Sofia. The meeting was very short as he had several scheduled meetings that day. He asked for our impressions and thanked us for visiting and for providing assistance and support for PODKREPA.

On May 30 we left Bulgaria for Germany. The factory is managed by a woman.

Summary and Conclusions

We traveled extensively, covering over 900 miles of Bulgaria in a Ford van. We met with over 300 members of PODKREPA. Most of the time was spent with the members asking us questions about how things work in the U.S. Their general concerns centered around employment conditions; how collective bargaining works; characteristics of a business enterprise in a free market system; and how it operates with respect to employment conditions; workers being efficient and productive in the competitive business environment.

Another idea that might be considered would be some education on the Department of Labor's cooperative style of Industrial Relations. Also useful would be information and education on the pitfalls involved in privatizing industry.

In general, I got the feeling that many of the members of PODKREPA believed that the free market system was going to be the answer to all of their problems. Further, they had high hopes it was going to happen quickly. Generally, the PODKREPA leadership understood it would take some time.

One member we visited with, however, had it figured out. He wanted to start a war with the US, then Bulgaria would lose the war and the US would rebuild Bulgaria just like we did with Germany and Japan.

Bulgaria is a beautiful country. Its people are curious, friendly and fun-loving. I believe there is great potential with PODKREPA and that we should continue to assist them in their struggle with the conversion to a free society.
Clinton pledges to revive economy, restore hope

(Highlights of speech delivered by Democratic Presidential Nominee Bill Clinton to California AFL-CIO Convention in San Francisco, July 27, 1992.)

T
here is something very important and very good going on in our country today. The American people are daring to hope again that an election might make a difference. And they are sick and tired of what they've been put through the past 12 years.

Our opponents—they're going to say they represent change. They're going to try to get the American people to vote their fears instead of their hopes and vote against us. They'll play their old records they play every election, the one where the needle always sticks in the same place: tax and spend, tax and spend, tax and spend. Then they move the needle and it sticks again: liberal, liberal, liberal.

I've got news for them, this is not about tax and spend, it's not about liberals. It's about people working harder for less money than they were making 10 years ago. It's about America coming apart when it ought to be coming together. It's about people all over the world thinking our best days are behind us—not because we're under-educated, under-organized and under-led, and we're going to fix that in this election.

[The Bush Administration] has got the American people to go along with an idea that is absolutely failed and discredited. Their whole idea of national government is... to get taxes as low as possible on the wealthiest people and the biggest companies.

Everybody we're competing with, all the countries that are run by their conservative parties, know the way you run a country today is to get government, business, labor and education on the same side, organized for success work. Keep in mind: it is not let people get broken in the hard-work, low-wage jobs. And create new technologies, new jobs, new opportunities, and keep everybody working together by putting your people first.

The biggest explosion of poverty in America today is among the working poor. And I am here to tell you, I got into this race for president because I did not want my daughter to grow up and be part of the first generation of Americans who did worse than their parents.

And I was tired of seeing people work their finger to the bone and be punished instead of rewarded. And I believe the end of the Cold War presents us with an enormous opportunity to create new jobs and new opportunities—if only we had the wisdom and the will to seize it.

So I offer you a whole different approach to the government. This election is not about left and right, tax and spend, and trickle-down—it's about whether we're going to put the American people first by investing in jobs here at home.

I think you cannot be strong abroad unless you're strong at home. Because we don't have a strategy to control our health care costs and provide basic health care to everybody, but if they want to shut that plant down and move it overseas, we give them a tax deduction for the cost of shutting the plant down, loss-carryforward in the other years when the plant loses money, and as long as they leave their profits in a foreign bank they never have to pay one red cent in American income tax. What kind of country would do that? It makes no sense.

I say, more incentives for people who invest in jobs here at home and no more tax breaks to take them away.

This Administration said if you had an income of $10,000 you were too rich to get a scholarship from the federal government to go to college. I say we ought to open the doors of college to every family in America. Pay it back either as a percentage of income after they go to work, or even better by being in a domestic peace corps.

I want to make on other point. You're never going to rebuild the manufacturing base of America—never—until we get control of health care costs and provide a basic system of affordable health care for our people.

None of this stuff is going to happen unless we win this election. None of this is going to happen.

When I got involved, and I got into a bus and started riding across the country after the Democratic national convention, we went through the corn fields of Ohio and the soy bean fields of Illinois. We saw out there—in that farming country that used to vote Republican—little kids would come out at dusk and burn sparklers to light our way. The old folks would hold their flags up, a combine draped with a Clinton-Gore banner. We went to Vandalia, Illinois, and there were 12,000 people on the courthouse square waiting for us. In 1836, Abraham Lincoln was a state legislator in Illinois. I told that crowd that if Abraham Lincoln were alive today he'd quit the Republican Party.

And they cheered. I'm telling you, the American people know we've got to change. You've got to go out and make this a race between the past and the future, between new ideas and trickle-down economics that's bankrupt and failed and is going to break this country if we don't change.

We can revolutionize America. We can rebuild a high-wage, high-growth, high-opportunity society when we put our people first and make the government work for all the people. This is not a soak-the-rich campaign—I just want to stop drowning the middle class.

Go out there and tell people you can be pro-business and pro-labor as long as you don't want to drive people into the dirt. You can be for protecting the environment and still growing the economy—in fact you can grow the economy with environmental protection jobs.

Seventy percent of the American market in environmental technology [has been] absorbed by foreign companies because we aren't putting those people to work here at home, because we don't have a strategy to do it.

We're going to play by the rules that permit us to see our work rewarded. And if we're productive, and if we work hard, we're going to have a system which permits the American people to be rewarded and not punished. I am tired of what has happened. I know we can do better. I want a future that is opening up to your children instead of closing in on you. That's what's at stake.

Bill Clinton

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Bill Clinton acknowledges the cheers of California trade unionists. Local 1245 Business Manager Jack Mcnally, California Federation of Labor Executive Secretary Jack Henning, and California Building Trades Executive Secretary Jerry Cremins join in the ovation.

Tell me what kind of sense it makes, when we're trying to keep manufacturing jobs in this country, that your nation will not give an investment tax credit to an American manufacturer to put in a new piece of equipment. [Under Bush] we will not control their health care costs and provide basic health care to everybody, but if they want to shut that plant down and move it overseas, we give them a tax deduction for the cost of shutting the plant down, loss-carryforward in the other years when the plant loses money, and as long as they leave their profits in a foreign bank they never have to pay one red cent in American income tax. What kind of country would do that? It makes no sense.

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Grape harvesters stage work stoppages

Grape harvesters won pay raises and improved conditions on 12 ranches after staging work stoppages during California’s summer grape harvest.

It was the first pay raise that California farm workers have won in more than six years, according to Cesar Chavez, president of the United Farm Workers union. The UFW provided assistance to the grape harvesters in organizing the recent work stoppages.

Under California law enacted during the Jerry Brown administration in the 1970s, farm workers were given the right to organize for purposes of collective bargaining. The UFW is the certified bargaining agent on a number of ranches.

However, the UFW has been unable to negotiate contracts for years due to the anti-worker tilt of California’s Agriculture Labor Relations Board under the Republican administrations of Govs. Deukmejian and Wilson.

With the political deck stacked against them, the UFW turned in the 1980s to economic action: a boycott of California table grapes.

The aim of the boycott is to pressure the growers into good-faith bargaining with the union. Another aim of the boycott is to get growers to stop using toxic pesticides and herbicides that have been blamed for the deaths of workers and birth disorders and cancer in their children.