New Local 1245 Executive Board sworn in

The officers and Executive Board members of Local 1245 were sworn in July 5 at union headquarters in Walnut Creek, Ca. to begin three-year terms in office.

Officers taking the oath were Business Manager/Financial Secretary Jack McNally, President Howard Stiefer, Vice President Jim McCauley, Recording Secretary Ed Mallory, and Treasurer Mike Davis.

Taking the oath for Executive Board were Northern Area representative Kathy Tindall, Central Area representative Debbie Mazzanti, Southern Area representative Chris Habecker, and Member-at-Large A.G. "Tube" Dudley.

Administering the oath of office was IBEW International Rep. Charles Silvernale.

Blakemore believes in union’s mission

Anybody who wants to know what good there is in having a union can ask Ron Blakemore. He can give you an answer in dollars and cents.

When Blakemore went to work for PG&E as a groundman in 1965, electric crew foremen were making about $220 a week. Blakemore made about half that amount as a groundman. But wage scales at PG&E grew steadily, and when Blakemore retired as an electric crew foreman in 1993 he was making over $1,000 a week.

Blakemore believes in his union, and as a member of the Local 1245 Executive Board for the last 15 years, he’s had an opportunity to help guide his union through good times and bad. But this year, Blakemore decided it was time to step aside. When the new Executive Board was sworn in last month, for the first time in a long time Ron Blakemore wasn’t one of the people taking the oath.

He leaves the E-Board as fervently pro-union as when he joined it.

"This local, in my opinion, is probably the most progressive local in the entire brotherhood. Everybody seems to be going the same direction," says Blakemore.

"And you have to give Jack McNally all the credit in the world for that. He surrounds himself with great people, people who do their jobs and do them well."

Blakemore said the recent skirmishes with PG&E over downsizing was strong evidence that the union was doing its job.

"I don’t think anybody thought we’d ever come out of that. But we did," says Blakemore. "I think you have to say that that’s Jack’s leadership."

Contenders for top post

AFL-CIO Sec.-Treas. Tom Donahue and Service Employees President John Sweeney are vying to replace Lane Kirkland as President of the AFL-CIO.

Donahue has pledged "vigorou leadership" in the fight to improve workers' lives. Sweeney has promised to "reinvigorate the labor movement at every level."

Delegates to the AFL-CIO convention in New York this October will decide the winner.
Workers here and abroad

Rolling the union on...

Postal Protest: More than 5,000 postal workers rallied in Washington in May to oppose Congressional attacks on postal and federal employees, and to protest the failure of the US Postal Service to negotiate a reasonable contract.

Cross Burning: White supervisors burned a cross near the Perdue poultry plant in Dothan, Ala. the night before about 1,000 employees—mostly African-Americans—to vote in a union representation election. According to a Laborers Union official, the cross was burned by an anti-union committee composed mainly of white supervisors. The union, which lost the vote, has filed unfair labor practice charges over numerous incidents of management lawbreaking, Labor Notes reported.

That's Cold: On Take Our Daughters to Work Day, the Structural Dynamics Research Corp. gave Bill Means’ eight-year-old daughter a lesson in workplace power. Without warning, it fired Means, part of a corporate downsizing, escorting him and his daughter out of the office at mid-day.

Put 'em Up: This time boxers will take on management rather than each other. Activist boxers, through the Boxing Organizing Committee, are trying to organize the nation's 1,200 professional boxers.

Dangerous Job: The most dangerous job in 1993 was fishing, Labor Notes reported. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 155 of every 100,000 commercial fishers were killed, while the average for the entire workforce that year was five of every 100,000.

Under Arrest: The International Labor Organization (ILO) strongly condemned Nigeria for gross violations of world labor standards on freedom of association and forced labor. Five union leaders are known to be under arrest, with other hijacking, John Joyce, president of the Bricklayers union in the US, said Nigeria’s military regime refuses to recognize the right to organize and replaces elected trade union leaders with hand-picked administrators.

Volunteers: Despite 30 years of prodding by the International Labor Organization, there still are no unions in the true sense of the term in Burma, where workers are forced to work on government projects without pay. The government amazingly claims these workers volunteered to work for nothing.

Unions’ Vital Role: Even that custodian of world capital, the World Bank, is now saying that unions have a vital role to play in helping countries achieve economic prosperity. “Free trade unions are a cornerstone of any effective system of industrial relations that seeks to balance the need for enterprises to remain competitive with the aspirations of workers for higher wages and better working conditions,” the Bank recently noted.

Helms’ Cuts: Vital role or not, Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) has proposed ending US participation in the International Labor Organization, which promotes union rights around the world. The US currently spends about $84 million annually to support the ILO.
What do high school students think of labor unions? Ask 'em!

(Editors note: The winner of this year's Al Sandoval Scholarship essay contest is Adrienne M. Chappelle, daughter of Sierra Pacific Power employee David Chappelle, a union member since 1968. Adrienne attended Portola High School. Contestants were asked to write on the topic: What do high school students think of labor unions? Adrienne's creative approach to this topic is reprinted below.)

By Adrienne M. Chappelle

What do high school students know about labor unions? What are their opinions regarding labor unions? Would high school students want to join one when entering the work force?

A search of this topic on the University Interlock Computer Network revealed no data existed in major publications. To understand how high school students view unions, I devised a questionnaire. All students at my high school took the survey in either a history or government class.

What do students think of labor unions? Twenty-three percent felt that they knew that unions protected labor rights and working conditions. They also knew about the existence of a grievance procedure in combating unfair treatment and labor disputes.

Students often cited worker protection clauses in labor contracts. Some responses were direct, such as "they don't let the boss take advantage of you." Students realize that situations in the workplace are not always fair and that union representation is an asset.

The majority of student responses involved wages, benefits, and collective bargaining. Students realize that union-negotiated wages and benefits are desirable. As one put it, "unions get you what you deserve."

Students are aware of the concept that there is strength in numbers. They expressed the advantage of having a voice and being a part of an organization that had representation and power. One student's answer could represent the majority when they said, "a union is like a family of workers who stick together."

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Labor Day began as a celebration of unity

Jack McNally, IBEW 1245 Business Manager

On September 5, 1882, more than 30,000 working people marched down New York's fashionable Fifth Avenue in a remarkable display of unity. It was the nation's first Labor Day parade. "There probably were no electrical workers on hand. The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers wasn't even organized until 1891. But there were bricklayers, printers, blacksmiths, seamstresses, cigar makers, railroad workers and many other trades. Why did they march? Many carried signs reading "Eight Hours for Work-Eight Hours for Rest-Eight Hours for What We Will." This was an era when people often worked 12 or 14 hours a day, six days a week. No overtime pay. No paid vacations. No paid holidays. No sick leave.

These workers knew that organizing to get the eight-hour workday was the first step toward creating a decent life, with time for family, for learning, for leisure. Other marchers on that historic day 113 years ago carried signs reading "Strike with the Ballot." This was an era when unions were often brutally crushed, when elected officials authorized state militias to break up strikes. The Labor Day marchers were urging their fellow workers to use the vote to get rid of anti-worker politicians--to "Strike with the Ballot."

But the sign that went to the heart of the matter read: "Labor Will Be United." In that era there was no AFL-CIO to unite all working people in common cause. Most unions were weak, and central labor councils were weaker still. They marched together to show--and to build--unity. By 1886, the year the American Federation of Labor was organized, some unions had begun to win eight-hour days for their members. In 1894, Congress made Labor Day an official national holiday. Some pro-labor candidates were winning elections.

But employers fought back, and prevented most industrial workers from organizing. Industrial organizing didn't take hold until the 1930s, and many major industries weren't organized until the 1940s or 1950s.

Local 1245, for example, did not achieve a union contract covering all of PG&E until 1953. Since then, employee unity has empowered our union to negotiate the wages, holidays, vacations, sick leave, medical benefits, grievance procedures and other protections we enjoy today at PG&E and our other employers.

All of it was made possible because workers a century ago vowed that "Labor Will Be United." The question today is, "Can Labor Stay United?" Every protection we have won, every wage gain, every benefit, can be taken away--at the bargaining table or by Congress.

We strive hard to maintain cooperative relations with employers. But good relations are made possible because of our union's strength. And our strength is made possible by our unity of purpose. It was true for unions a century ago. It's still true today.
Lining the main

PG&E crews have been at work on Irving Ave. in San Francisco this summer putting a new lining in the gas main. The project is designed to extend the life of the pipe.

Among those working on the project are Joe Kaiser, foreman; Frank Marenco, utility worker; Walt Lee, fieldman; and Wayne Lofing, backhoe operator.
Women have new presence on union’s Executive Board

The election of Debbie Mazzanti and Chris Habecker to the Local 1245 Executive Board in June has given the union’s governing body a new look.

While women hold many positions of influence in the union-as unit officers, as stewards, and on staff-the Executive Board has recently had a distinctly male cast. But not now.

Members elected Mazzanti to represent the union’s Central Area on the board. Habecker was elected to the Southern Area seat. Along with Northern Area incumbent Kathy Tindall, who won re-election, they give women new parity in top leadership posts.

Habecker and Mazzanti both bring substantial union credentials to their new positions.

Habecker hired on at PG&E in Bakersfield in 1975 as a meter reader—the first female meter reader there since World War II. In 1980 she became a customer service representative, and was recruited as a union steward in 1982.

She was elected chair of the Fresno unit in 1989 and has served on numerous union committees, including the general bargaining committee in 1990 and 1993.

Mazzanti, also a customer service representative, hired on in 1973 and worked in San Francisco in design drafting, the comptrollers department, and computer operations before taking a meter reading position in Berkeley. She went on to a customer service position in Oakland, served a stint in the warehouse, in the early 1990s, and came back to customer services in 1994.

“Having worked in both clerical and physical I think it gives me a better rounded view of operations out there,” said Mazzanti, who lives in Alameda. One of her goals as an Executive Board member is “to try to break down the walls between physical and clerical, Division and General Construction” and “to work on bringing all of the workforces together so that we can work on unity as a whole.”

Mazzanti and Habecker both think that their presence on the Executive Board will make clerical issues more visible.

“Love the physical dearly,” said Habecker, who last winter helped spearhead Fresno-area protests against reductions in the PG&E Customer Energy Services workforce. But she believes the time is right for increased clerical representation on the Executive Board.

“There’s always an advantage to having a better cross-section of the members represented,” added Mazzanti.

Habecker said she was excited at the prospect of being able to “make a difference.” Now she and Mazzanti will get the chance to do exactly that.

Outgoing Executive Board member believes in local union’s mission

Blakemore was first appointed to the Executive Board in 1980. Although he was defeated in his first election bid, he was again appointed to the board and then ran successfully for re-election several times, representing the union’s Central Area.

Hired in 1965

He started at PG&E in 1965 at the warehouse in Stockton, then took a groundsman job in Manteca. From there he progressed to truck driver, then to apprentice, lineman, and electric crew foreman. Along the way he was picking up union experience as a shop steward and as vice chairman of his unit.

He retired in November 1993 under the Voluntary Retirement Incentive negotiated by the union in the wake of PG&E’s downsizing. Blakemore calls the VR program “a real coup” for McNally and the union because it helped avert forced layoffs.

Blakemore has viewed a lot of treasurer reports during his years on the Executive Board, and he’s convinced the membership is getting its money’s worth.

And he only needs three words to explain why: “Wages and benefits.”

“A lot of the young members think the benefits are part of PG&E’s package,” Blakemore notes. But as they become more familiar with how things really work, they learn that “all the 401K, the dental, the vision, the medical, is all negotiated by this local.”

Blakemore said the recent skirmishes with PG&E over downsizing was strong evidence that the union was doing its job.

“I don’t think anybody thought we’d ever come out of that. But we did.”
SAN JOAQUIN

1111 FREMONT
Chairman: C. Habecker
Cedar Lane
Cedar & Shasta
2:30 p.m.
11 5 10 7 5

1112 BAKERSFIELD
Chairman: R. Telles
Labor Hall
200 W. Jeffery St.
Wednesday
12 19 12 11 18 13

1118 CRANE VALLEY
Chairman: M. Massey
The Kettle
4025 Hwy 41
Wednesday
8 2 6 4 16

1120 SELMA
Chairman: T. Moore
Waltz's Frost Street
Thursday
11 1 5 3 7 5

1122 MERCEDES
Chairman: W. Miller
Merced Square
Tuesday
11 1 5 3 7 5

1128 Lemoore
Chairman: M. Oleate
Cedar Lanes
5:00 p.m.
5 16 12 10 14 12

1129 AVENUE
Chairman: S. Calcusi
Tony's Avenue Road
Tuesday
11 1 5 3 7 5

COAST VALLEYS

1211 SALINAS
Chairman: S. Calcusi
Amer. Legion Hall
14 W. Laurel Dr.
Tuesday
11 1 5 3 7 5

1212 MONTPELIER
Chairman: P. Mackin
La Fontana
2303 N. Fremont
Wednesday
11 1 5 3 7 5

1213 KING CITY
Chairman: J. Vermilyer
Veteran's Bldg.
999 Bitterwater Rd.
Thursday
11 1 5 3 7 5

1215 SAN LUIS OBISPO
Chairman: F. Marshall
Veteran's Bldg.
1517 Calle Joaquin
Thursday
11 1 5 3 7 5

1218 SANTA MARIA
Chairman: B. Bell
Giovanni's Pizza
Tuesday
11 1 5 3 7 5

1218 TEMPLETON
Chairman: J. Verity
Amer. Legion Hall
1057 Calle Joaquin
Tuesday
11 1 5 3 7 5

1218 MYTT CABLE
Chairman: F. Teague
La Fontana
2303 N. Fremont
Tuesday
11 1 5 3 7 5

1219 HOLLISTER
Chairman: S. Calcusi
Paine's Restaurant
421 East Street
Tuesday
11 1 5 3 7 5

1220 DIABLO CANYON
Chairman: S. Calcusi
Marc's Diner
San Luis Obispo
Tuesday
11 1 5 3 7 5

PIPPLE

1121 KETTLEMAN CITY
Chairman: J. Verity
PEA Club
Kettleman Station
Tuesday
11 1 5 3 7 5

1311 HINKLEY
Chairman: S. Calcusi
PEA Rv. Room
Hinkley Station
Tuesday
11 1 5 3 7 5

1311 TOPPOCK
Chairman: K. Fell
Recreation Room
Kettleman Station
Tuesday
11 1 5 3 7 5

SANTA CLARA

1411 CITY OF SANTA CLARA
Chairman: A. Bayless
Vesuvio
3044 E. Camino
Monday
11 1 5 3 7 5

SAN JOSE

1501 SAN JOSE CLERICAL
Chairman: J. Vermilyer
San Jose Hyatt
1748 N. 1st Street
Tuesday
8 8 3 5 7 5

1511 SAN JOSE PHYSICAL
Chairman: J. Vermilyer
San Jose Hyatt
1748 N. 1st Street
Tuesday
8 8 3 5 7 5

1511 BELMONT
Chairman: S. Calcusi
T. M. U. Local 695
1521 Robinhood Rd.
Monday
11 1 5 3 7 5

1513 SANTA CRUZ
Chairman: A. Bayless
VFW Post #7283
2259 7th Avenue
Monday
11 1 5 3 7 5

CITY OF OAKLAND

2211 OAKLAND GENERAL
Chairman: J. Vermilyer
Francesca's
2300 30th Avenue
Tuesday
11 1 5 3 7 5

2211 EAST BAY CLERICAL
Chairman: J. Vermilyer
White Knight
3156 Pierce Street
Thursday
11 1 5 3 7 5

2211 OAKLAND ABERNATY'S
Chairman: J. Vermilyer
Haggenberger & Pardee
2300 30th Avenue
Tuesday
11 1 5 3 7 5

2211 HAYWARD/FREMONT
Chairman: J. Vermilyer
M. Woods
2827 Mission Fremont
Thursday
11 1 5 3 7 5

2211 CONCORD
Chairman: J. Vermilyer
IEW Local 1245
C. Jackson
Monday
11 1 5 3 7 5

2211 ANTIOCH
Chairman: J. Vermilyer
River Town Resource
301 W. 1st St.
Thursday
11 1 5 3 7 5

2211 RICHMOND
Chairman: J. Vermilyer
White Knight
3156 Pierce Street
Thursday
11 1 5 3 7 5

SAN FRANCISCO

2401 SAN FRANCISCO CLERICAL
Chairman: A. Bayless
Sherrill Palace
2 New Montgomery
Thursday
11 1 5 3 7 5

2412 SAN FRANCISCO
Chairman: A. Bayless
4 Terry Street
Thursday
11 1 5 3 7 5

STOCKTON

2511 STOCKTON
Chairman: C. Habecker
Ex Stewart Post
3110 N. West Lane
Thursday
11 1 5 3 7 5

2512 ANGEL'S CAMP
Chairman: J. Vermilyer
Mikey's Pizza
5th & 4th Street
Thursday
11 1 5 3 7 5

2513 JACKSON
Chairman: J. Vermilyer
Gold Country Pizza
525 E. Hwy 49
Thursday
11 1 5 3 7 5

2515 MODesto
Chairman: J. Vermilyer
Sundial Lodge
885 Melody
Thursday
11 1 5 3 7 5

2516 LODI
Chairman: J. Vermilyer
Angelina's
4th & H Street
Thursday
11 1 5 3 7 5

2518 MODesto HHR. DIST.
Chairman: J. Vermilyer
Sundial Lodge
500 Melody
Thursday
11 1 5 3 7 5

PACIFIC GAS TRANSMISSION

3021 SAND POINT
Chairman: S. Calcusi
PST Office
1050 New Montgomery
Thursday
11 1 5 3 7 5

3022 WALLA WALLA
Chairman: S. Calcusi
PST Office
1050 New Montgomery
Thursday
11 1 5 3 7 5

3024 REDMOND
Chairman: S. Calcusi
PST Office
1050 New Montgomery
Thursday
11 1 5 3 7 5

3025 SPokane
Chairman: S. Calcusi
PST Office
1050 New Montgomery
Thursday
11 1 5 3 7 5

HUMBOLDT

3111 EUREKA
Chairman: A. Bayless
Laker Temple
8th & "E" Street
Tuesday
11 1 5 3 7 5

SHASTA

3212 REDDING
Chairman: J. Vermilyer
Big League Pizza
3405 Meadowview
Wednesday
11 1 5 3 7 5

3213 HURRY
Chairman: J. Vermilyer
Sam's Pizza
2200 East
Tuesday
11 1 5 3 7 5

3214 RED BLUFF
Chairman: J. Vermilyer
The Green Barn
10th Avenue
Tuesday
11 1 5 3 7 5

CITY OF REDDING

3317 CITY OF REDDING
Chairman: J. Vermilyer
Best Western
2300 Hilltop
Thursday
11 1 5 3 7 5

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This list is being reprinted to show newly-elected Unit Chairs. Meeting dates, times and locations often change, so check this listing for the most current information.
$2.1 million goal for PG&E

**United Way pledge: ‘Together We Can’**

Local 1245 this year continues its support of the United Way campaign at Pacific Gas and Electric Co. Business Manager Jack McNally named Norma Ricker to represent Local 1245 on the employee steering committee for the campaign at PG&E.

The committee selected “Together We Can” as the theme for this year’s campaign, and set the campaign goal at $2.1 million.

Proceeds of the campaign are distributed among United Ways and nonprofit organizations throughout PG&E’s service territory.

McNally noted that Local 1245 has traditionally supported the United Way campaign at PG&E and encouraged union members to help make this year’s campaign a success.

**Be Generous!**

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March Across the Gold Gate Bridge with National Labor Leaders and the Rev. Jesse Jackson. Rally and Concert at Fort Scott (Presidio)

Work for a health care system that:

- Establishes consumer protection procedures
- Stops the decline in patient care
- Guards against a medical system that puts profits before healing
- Provides health care access for all

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**Health Care is a Human Right**

Mobilization for Health Care

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**LINEMAN'S RODEO**

August 26, 1995
Sacramento, Ca.

Above: Last year's Lineman's Rodeo champions Greg Smelser, Jim Clamp and Jim Baird of the Sacramento Municipal Utility District.
Don’t stay on sidelines in Medicare fight

By Orv Owen

Local 1245 retirees and older senior citizens cannot afford to stay on the sidelines regarding the future of Medicare. We need to communicate with our US Representatives and US Senators to protect Medicare, not to destroy it.

If Congress doesn’t hear from seniors now, Medicare as we know it is dead. Although Local 1245 retirees currently have negotiated health care benefits in addition to Medicare, we should all understand that Medicare is supplemental to our health care plans. Medicare offsets our current premium costs. If the current changes proposed by Congress are enacted, it could dramatically increase the premium payments required by our health care plans.

Many retirees believe that their pension plans and health plans are protected and secured by ERISA, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, which governs pensions and also protects health coverage. However, two recent US Supreme Court decisions have given companies carte blanche in cutting retiree benefits.

Many retirees believe that their pension plans and health plans are protected by ERISA, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, which governs pensions and also protects health coverage. However, two recent US Supreme Court decisions have given companies carte blanche in cutting retiree benefits.

By Timothy B. McCall, MD

When it comes to medical decisions, I believe it’s healthiest to think of your doctor in the same way you might think of an accountant, that is, as someone who works for you, makes recommendations, but doesn’t dictate what you do. You depend on an accountant’s expertise, especially when your situation is complex, but only you know your values and priorities and many decisions will hinge on these.

There’s one more similarity: if an accountant fails to live up to your expectations, you hire a replacement. Many patients agree to tests and therapies they don’t want. Some people find it difficult to go against the doctor’s advice, perhaps out of their desire to please the doctor or out of their respect for authority. As a competent adult, you have the legal right to refuse any therapy a doctor recommends, no matter how advisable the doctor or anyone else feels it is or how irrational they feel you’re being.

You should only consent to intervention when you favor it, not when you perceive your doctor favors it. Telling the doctor that you’re not sure and need time to think the decision over can be a non-threatening way to assert your preference.

Value Differences

Differences of opinion between doctors and patients often revolve around value differences. Competent physicians whose values differ from yours may make “medically correct” decisions that may nonetheless be wrong for you. If an operation offers you a chance at a few extra months of life, but you don’t think it’s worth it, it is not the doctor’s prerogative to overrule your decision.

A doctor may place more value on giving you a chance at a longer life and give less weight to your short-term risk of death or complications or to your comfort. You may not feel the same way. You may opt for a treatment that minimizes your pain, anxiety, and inconvenience even if it’s not the “medically correct” choice.

There are times when because of illness you may feel you can’t shoulder the burden of decision-making alone. Try to anticipate this possibility and find someone who knows you well who can help you make decisions. If you are more gravely ill and completely unable to make decisions, having filled out a living will or appointed a health care proxy makes it more likely your wishes will be respected. If you return to better health, you can resume control of decisions.

This article is excerpted from the concluding chapter of “Examining Your Doctor: A Patient’s Guide to Avoiding Harmful Medical Care,” by Timothy B. McCall, MD. To obtain a copy, check your local bookstores or call toll-free 1-800-447-BOOK.

Retirees tackle GE

Shouting “GE, share the wealth,” about 300 retirees and Electronic Workers rallied at the General Electric plant in Schenectady, NY, to demand that the company give bigger pensions from the over-funded pension funds. The Schenectady rally was one of many staged around the country June 15 by the 14 unions of the Coordinated Bargaining Committee of GE, headed by IUE President William Bywater.

“GE claims that if it makes an adjustment now for retirees there will not be enough for retirees in the future. That statement is ridiculous,” Bywater said.

The GE pension fund has a $6 billion surplus, he said, but retirees have not received a cost-of-living increase since 1991. Since then, inflation has seriously eroded the real value of the retirees’ benefits.
Corporate goals not always achieved
Exposing the myths about downsizing

Corporate downsizing is often portrayed as a way to streamline a company's operations and boost productivity. But a recent article in American Workplace, a publication of the US Department of Labor, says downsizing doesn't always achieve the intended goals, and exposes some current myths about downsizing. Sources of the information are listed in italics.

**MYTH:** Downsizing boosts profits.

**FACT:** Profitability does not necessarily follow downsizing. Between 1989 and 1994, operating profits increased in only 51% of companies reporting workforce reductions; 20% said operating profits declined (The Wyatt Company, 1993).

**MYTH:** Downsizing boosts productivity.

**FACT:** Productivity results after downsizing are mixed. A study of over 250,000 manufacturing plants by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that the productivity-enhancing role of downsizing has been exaggerated. While some plants did downsize and post healthy gains in productivity, even more (including many of the largest facilities) managed to raise output per worker while expanding employment, and they contributed about as much to overall productivity increases during the 1980s as did the successful downsizers (Business Week, July 1994).

**MYTH:** Downsizing is a last resort.

**FACT:** Data indicate that for many companies, downsizing is a first resort. Right Associates reported that before of companies that downsized tried to reduce costs by cutting pay, 9% tried unpaid holidays, 9% tried reduced workweeks, and 14% tried job sharing (Right Associates, 1992).

**MYTH:** Now that the recession is behind us, we can expect less downsizing of work.
A bill now making its way through Congress would lift the 60-year-old ban on company unions and undermine the opportunity of workers to be represented by unions of their own choosing.

The bill, introduced by Sen. Nancy Kassebaum (R-Kan.) in the Senate and Rep. Steve Gunderson (R-Wis.) in the House, would amend Section 8(a)(2) of the National Labor Relations Act, which currently bans company unions or company dominated employee committees. Both bills were introduced under the misleading title of "Teamwork for Employees and Managers Act of 1995."

The bill would allow management to create employee organizations, write their bylaws and then hand-pick the workers they wish to serve. These employer-picked committees could deal with collective bargaining issues.

The Clinton administration opposes the legislation and Labor Secretary Robert Reich said he would recommend a presidential veto if the legislation is passed.

Employee Power

Employee power in the workplace is the heart of this issue. Employers increasingly recognize that empowering employees can boost productivity, and thus revenues. However, if the employer's workers are united in a genuine union, they can use collective bargaining to try to convert some of that extra revenue into higher wages or better benefits.

The problem from the employers' perspective can be put like this: How can I get extra productivity out of my workers without having to pay them more?

Hand-Picked

The Republican-controlled Congress has now fashioned an answer to this question. The Teamwork Act of 1995 allows employers to set up employee organizations, which can be used to boost productivity. But unlike traditional unions, which are independent and thus free to fight for better wages and working conditions, these new employee organizations will consist of workers hand-picked by the employer.

"This legislation would give employees nothing in the way of power," said David Silberman, director of the AFL-CIO Task Force on Labor Law. "Rather the bill would take from workers the right to independent representation and give employers yet another means of maintaining their unilateral power over workers' terms and conditions of employment."

Current Law

Backers of the bill claim that current law prevents the formation of workplace committees and employee teams. In fact, it does not. More than 30,000 workplaces have some form of employee committees designed around the concept of cooperative labor-management relations and teamwork.

Local 1245, for example, currently participates with many of its employers in labor-management forums. Employees represented by Local 1245 generally recognize the importance of helping employers improve productivity. At the same time, these employees know that the union can help make sure that the benefits of improved productivity are shared with employees.

The Teamwork Act would apply to unionized as well as non-union shops. According to Silberman, the bill would permit employers to "bypass employees' chosen union and deal with other representatives, hand-picked by the employer, on subjects that lie at the heart of the collective bargaining process."

Newt Gingrich Wants to Muzzle Your Voice in the Workplace

Newt Gingrich and others in Congress want to trample your democratic rights by letting employers control worker organizations. That way employers would be free to cut wages, slash benefits, and reduce job safety and no one would be left to stand up for workers.

H.R. 743, the so-called TEAM Act, would let management create phony unions and fake employee committees. The bill would allow management to hand pick the leaders of these groups and then act as if these non-elected puppets were the voice for workers.

Protect Your Rights

Call 1-800-972-3524

Ask to Speak to your Member of Congress.

Tell Your Representative to Preserve Democratic Rights in the Workplace by Voting "No" on HR 743, the TEAM Act.
Ditchtenders say 'thanks'

Local 1245 ditchtenders at Modesto Irrigation District recently received a sizeable settlement in a grievance concerning overtime pay. At issue in the case, which stretched out over three years, was whether ditchtenders were covered by sections of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act dealing with overtime.

The ditchtenders sent the following letter of appreciation to Local 1245 staff attorney Tom Dalzell, who negotiated the settlement.

Dear Tom:

We the M.I.D. ditchtenders would like to express our thanks to you. Working with you over the past three years has been a pleasure. You’ve always demonstrated true professionalism, though we know that at times it hasn’t been easy. Your ethics, and patience never wavered throughout this case, no matter what the circumstances were. Your profession has received a lot of criticism in recent years; however, we have been very impressed with your diligence, and vast knowledge in bringing both sides to an amicable agreement. We feel that the Local 1245 union is very fortunate to have an attorney of your caliber.

Our Sincere Thanks,

M.I.D. Ditchtenders

Call Center turns '1' with Service Rep rock

G&E’s San Francisco Call Center celebrated its 1st anniversary on June 21 with a rooftop concert and picnic. While supervisors served up the eats, Customer Service Representatives Robert Bush and Cedric Dennis served up a diverse menu of rock ‘n roll. Joining Bush and Dennis for the concert was Bay Area drummer Chris Sandoval, who has played with such rock luminaries as Marie Muldaur and Tower of Power.

According to Bush the three musicians had never played together before. But clearly no rehearsal was needed as the trio glided easily through “Stand By Me,” Santana’s “Evil Ways,” and numerous standards by the Beatles and Stones.

Bush, who has played professionally in the Bay Area since high school, says he still performs for the occasional party or special event...when he’s not on the phones taking questions from PG&E customers.