PG&E bargaining to start July 9

General bargaining will take center stage next month as Local 1245 and Pacific Gas and Electric sit down for the first full-fledged contract negotiations since 1993. The negotiations, scheduled to begin July 9, will include proposals to modify the three major agreements between the parties: Physical, Clerical and Benefits.

The union’s soon-to-be-named bargaining committee will begin meeting in early June to review proposals submitted by the units and to prepare an opening “package.” Additional members will be appointed to subcommittees to explore modifications to specific parts of the labor agreements.

“Those negotiations will establish future wages, benefits and working conditions at PG&E—something we take very seriously,” said Business Manager Jack McNally, who will head the union delegation at the bargaining table. “I am confident that

Historic pact saves jobs at Sierra Pacific

Power generation employees overwhelmingly approved a labor agreement with Sierra Pacific Power that preserves their job security when the company sells off its power plants next year.

The agreement, approved 123-23 in a mail-ballot vote called May 25, was praised by union staff as an historic achievement by rank-and-file negotiators.

“This agreement was an outstanding achievement by a committee that worked endless hours looking at every possible way to protect the wages and benefits that our members have enjoyed for decades,” said Local 1245 Business Rep. Bob Choate.

The agreement guarantees that the plants’ new owners will retain current employees with their union status and benefits largely intact. The agreement covers about 185 employees at the Valmy, Ft. Churchill, and Tracy power plants. A key provision of the agreement preserves the seniority dates of the employees who go to work for the new owners of the plants.

The pact also requires, as a condition of sale, that the pension plan be preserved as a “defined benefit” plan, rather than being “cashed out.” As a defined benefit plan, the pension guarantees payments to retirees for life, while cashing out the plan would have left employees with no such guarantee.

Union negotiators had calculated...
The California Public Utilities Commission last month got slapped down again for its outrageous report on last December's power outage in San Francisco.

That's the report that accused PG&E of having an "error-prone work culture."

After the CPUC report was released to the public, I wrote to the governor, the media, the chair of the CPUC, and every legislator in this union's jurisdiction to express our disgust with the CPUC's so-called investigation. I pointed out that the CPUC has neither the legal authority nor the expertise to conduct such an investigation of the transmission grid. A month later, in hearings at the state capitol, Senator Steve Peace echoed our concerns that the CPUC had overstipped its authority, and had essentially wasted $400,000 of the taxpayers’ money by performing work that was already being performed by another agency, the Independent System Operator.

Now the California State Auditor has released a 17-page report that details the CPUC's incompetent handling of the outage investigation.

Says the auditor:

"[T]he consultant’s report states that PG&E has an 'error-prone work culture' that tends to bypass procedures and work practice requirements. The report lists four examples of inconsistencies in procedural use and adherence occurring shortly before the Dec. 8, 1998, power failure. However, based on these examples, we had difficulty arriving at the same conclusion that the report presents. Specifically, it appears that the consultant based the conclusion that PG&E’s entire workforce is error prone on a few examples related to one instance—the Bay Area power outage."

The auditor also charges that the CPUC "inadequately monitored its consultant’s contract and failed to ensure that the consultant’s expenditures were reasonable and remained within budgeted amounts."

Here are some of the auditor’s other conclusions about the CPUC report:

- The CPUC poorly monitored its contract and cannot substantiate the cost of the investigation into the power failure.
- The CPUC cannot show that it reviewed its experts’ qualifications.
- The consultant’s report offered inadequate support for some conclusions (notably, the "error-prone work culture").
- The peer reviewer of the consultant’s report may not have been independent.
- The CPUC hasn’t verified the consultant’s costs were reasonable.
- The CPUC cannot substantiate the contract amount.
- The absence of invoices has prevented the Commission from monitoring its consultant's costs.

The California State Auditor's report confirms that the CPUC is an agency gone astray, an agency out of control and one that needs to be monitored.

Serving in a regulatory agency is a public trust. The people need and deserve honest regulators of judicious temperament whose first interest is the truth—not publicity-seeking regulatory cowboys who shoot first and ask questions later.
Q: What issues, if any, do you think your union should focus on in the 2000 election?

“I’d like to see the union focus on safety enforcement—making sure Cal-OSHA stays funded. Maybe even try to get someone on the OSHA Standards Board. I remember reading the Governor appoints these people to the OSHA Board—that has some powerful repercussions. The law is one thing, but enforcement of the law is another thing.”

George Lindsey
Electric Crew Foreman
PG&E

“The majority of us are busy a lot of the time, so we don’t have a lot of time to address political issues. If the union can represent what your values are in this area that’s great. I have young kids just becoming adults—I want them to have opportunities for jobs that pay good and have health care. I want politicians who are in line with the working person’s values.”

Steve Manfre
Electric Crew Foreman
PG&E

“I’ve been a GC lineman all my life so job safety is always important to me. The company likes to talk about safety first, but cost cutting can become more important than safety. I’d like to see safety stay as a main concern for the workforce.”

Dave McCall
Subforeman A
PG&E GC

“I think we should be looking at principles and moral values, like being God-fearing. It’s a roadmap for us.”

Willie McClendon
Plant Assistant
PG&E Fremont

Have a union issue you’d like to see addressed in Speaking Out? Send your suggested topic to: Speaking Out, IBEW 1245, P.O. Box 4790, Walnut Creek, CA 94596. Opinions expressed are those of the individual, and do not necessarily reflect official Local 1245 policy.
Michael Eisner hauled in $287,000 last year. Not for the year, not for a month, a week or a day. Eisner collected $287,000 an hour. Eisner comes by his riches the good old-fashioned way—greed. Eisner exploits sweatshop labor abroad and he has moved to cut healthcare benefits for the low-wage workers he dresses up as Pluto to cut healthcare benefits for the low-income workers. Eisner has moved to cut healthcare benefits for the low-income workers.

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Spies, fire hydrants & crime fighting stewards

More than $200 billion in citizens’ tax dollars are given away every year in the form of “corporate welfare,” including free land, subsidies, grants, tax breaks, low-interest loans, and other forms of special-interest largesse, according to Public Citizen, a group founded by Ralph Nader.

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Historic pact saves jobs at Sierra Pacific Power

From Page 1

the value of the defined benefit plan at $19 million, while cashing out the benefit would have been worth only about $11 million.

Post-retirement medical benefits will also be preserved as a condition of the plants’ sale.

In addition, employees will receive six weeks of base pay as a “transition incentive” at close of sale of their particular plant. Employees will also receive a 3% general wage increase when their plant is sold and another 3% one year after the close of sale.

The agreement provides that medical, dental and vision coverage under the new employers must be “comparable” to existing plans.

‘Job Well Done’

Local 1245 Business Rep. Ray Thomas, who led the day-to-day negotiations, called the agreement “a job well done” by the rank and file committee members who bargained the agreement and the union members who gave it their overwhelming approval.

“The generation employees of Sierra Pacific stood as one. They created an agreement that will keep their benefits and working conditions intact during this transition period. That’s a huge achievement,” said Thomas.

Local 1245 Assistant Business Manager Perry Zimmerman said the committee “did a tremendous job in grasping the issues” confronting them, and praised the committee members for being able “to put together an agreement that benefits the employees in generation.”

The plant sales were mandated by the Public Utilities Commission of Nevada as a condition of the recently-approved merger between Sierra Pacific Power and Nevada Power. However, as pointed out by Business Rep. Bob Choate, neither the PUC nor the Nevada Legislature took any steps to cushion employees from the impact of the divestitures.

“This agreement came strictly from the hard work of the committee members themselves,” said Choate, “and the union is extremely proud of what they accomplished.”

Good News

The agreement is good news for the employees whose jobs were put at risk by the state-mandated sale of Sierra Pacific Power’s generating plants. For members of the bargaining committee, the successful conclusion of the agreement brought a sense of satisfaction—mingled with relief.

“I’ve got a lot of peace of mind in what we accomplished,” said union negotiator John Mauldin, a Scrubber Foreman at the Valmy plant. "Good Lord, we kept everything we could.”

“The company who buys (one of the plants) has to be signatory, so we will negotiate from the contract we have rather than having to start over with zip,” noted Grant Garrison, a union negotiator employed at the Tracy plant.

Union negotiator Mark Chidwick, a Control Room Operator at Ft. Churchill station, cited job security and “the rollover of the medical and retirement plan” as key accomplishments of the agreement.

“I think it’s great,” said negotiator Randy Osborn, a Mechanic Welder at Valmy. “I would like to have seen a bigger cash settlement, but you have to be realistic.”

Osborn said that preserving retirement benefits, preserving the post-retirement medical benefit and “just having a contract” were high points of the agreement.

“Going into a new employer without a contract would be the scariest thing in the world. They could do just about anything to you,” said Osborn.

“I’m 42 years old,” said union negotiator John East, a Control Room Operator at Tracy, “and I didn’t want to have to start over brand new again. If we didn’t have union we wouldn’t have any of what we have now. We would have just been handed over without any protection at all.”

Other Provisions

The agreement contains other protections for generation employees in Nevada’s new “competitive market”:

♦ Generation employees who go to a new employer will be entitled to the enhanced severance benefits bargained in 1997.

♦ The current labor agreement will “travel” with the employees in the event that Sierra Pacific Power spins off the plants to an affiliate rather than selling them outright.

♦ Generation employees who go to the new employer of a plant will be entitled to enhanced severance for any future layoff other than “for cause.”

Serving on the negotiating committee, along with Chidwick, Garri-son, East, Osborn and Mauldin were Lee Soukup, Mechanic Welder, Ft. Churchill; Steve Dobyns, Traveling Diesel Turbin Mechanic, and Tom Cornell, Apprentice SCAT Electrician, along with Thomas, Choate and Zimmerman from the union staff.
Big bucks at stake in overtime battle

The labor-sponsored bill to restore the state's daily overtime premium passed the California Assembly May 27.

If the bill is approved by the California Senate and signed by Gov. Gray Davis, it will be a major victory for California's working people.

Big bucks are involved in this epic confrontation between employers and employees. Elimination of daily overtime in 1998 reduced California workers' pay by an estimated $1 billion a year. Part-time and casual workers, who don't work a 40-hour week, took the biggest cut in overtime pay.

Overtime wasn't abolished for some important public policy reason. It was abolished because ex-Gov. Pete Wilson and his corporate allies saw an opportunity to take money away from workers and transform it into corporate profits.

Before 1998, Industrial Welfare Commission wage orders required time-and-a-half pay for work exceeding eight hours per day and double time for work over 12 hours. These wage orders covered most non-agricultural private sector workers.

Most wage orders allowed for four 10-hour days in a workweek without overtime pay, upon approval by two-thirds of the affected workers in a secret ballot vote. In a few industries, the IWC permitted a 12-hour day after a vote. IWC wage orders included a collective bargaining exception to these regulations.

In 1997, Gov. Wilson's appointees to the IWC ended daily overtime protection for eight million workers, effective Jan. 1, 1998. Today the only overtime law covering these workers is the less protective federal 40-hour week. As a result, many California businesses have switched to a 12-hour or longer day.

Why is the overtime premium so important?

Daily overtime pay protects workers from extremely long shifts that are exhausting and unsafe. It helps working parents who cannot leave their children unsupervised during long shifts and commutes. It spurs job creation because employers facing increased labor costs after eight hours substitute additional hires at straight-time wages for longer hours at premium pay.

For Local 1245 members and other workers covered by collective bargaining agreements, the daily overtime law provides important protection against efforts by employers to bargain away overtime premium pay. Without legislative protection, overtime premium pay would be a prime candidate for "take aways" at the bargaining table in this era of utility restructuring.

AB 60/SB 1000 would restore to California's workers their historic right to daily overtime premium pay.

When the daily overtime premium was abolished in California by the Wilson Administration in 1998, it became legal (and profitable) for companies to work employees for long hours at straight-time pay, then send them home until the start of a new week.

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The law that made daily overtime pay illegal, AB 60/SB 1000, would have cost the state's daily overtime premium $1 billion a year. Part-time and casual workers, who don't work a 40-hour week, took the biggest cut in overtime pay.

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PG&E talks start July 9

From Page 1

On April 24, the union conducted steward training conferences at ten locations throughout PG&E’s jurisdiction, with a heavy emphasis on the economic forces that will frame the contract talks.

Hundreds of proposals were approved by unit meetings in March and April and forwarded to the bargaining committee for consideration. The bargaining committee will review all properly-submitted unit recommendations as it puts together its opening package of proposals to present to company negotiators. Likewise, the company will offer its own opening package.

The union will keep members informed on the general progress of the negotiations. Any final proposal agreed to by the company and union will be published in the Utility Reporter before it is submitted to the members in a secret mail-ballot ratification vote.

In the previous round of general bargaining, in 1996, the company and union agreed to extend the existing agreement through 1999, with general wage increases of 10% spread over three years. The union strongly considered the possibility of pursuing another contract exten-
PG&E talks

From Page 7

sion, but now believes that the most prudent course is to enter into full-scale negotiations.

Preparations for negotiations have been underway for several months. On April 24, the union conducted steward training conferences at 11 locations throughout PG&E’s jurisdiction, with a heavy emphasis on the economic forces that will frame the contract talks.

Chief among these forces are the PG&E General Rate Case (GRC) now pending before the California Public Utilities Commission, PG&E’s economic performance as measured by the company’s Rate of Return, and the continuing impact of utility restructuring.

A decision in the GRC is now expected some time in July or August, although the CPUC has allowed previous deadlines to slip by. The CPUC’s ultimate decision in this matter will have a large effect on how much revenue will be available to the company in coming years.

The revenue picture, in turn, will influence how the company allocates the available funds. Although the company is required to meet state-mandated performance requirements in terms of reliability and emergency response, the company makes the final decision on how to deploy its resources.

Since the creation of the labor-management partnership in 1995, the company has worked cooperatively with the union on issues concerning workforce size and methods for getting the work done, including the creation of dozens of labor-management committees to study specific issues.

General Bargaining gives union members the opportunity to focus on the bread and butter issues of wages, benefits, and working conditions.

The union and company hope to have new agreements in place by the time the old agreements expire on Dec. 31. To meet this deadline, the union wants to wrap up bargaining in September to allow plenty of time for the ratification process, including extensive communications with the members.
Records worth keeping

Two hundred eight days since the last lost time accident. Is this a record worth keeping?

Some union members who are accident prone or short-sighted might feel safety records are a waste of time to keep, and certainly shouldn’t be posted for all to see.

Where do you stand on safety record keeping? Your answer will provide insight as to your priorities for life.

A workplace injury or illness occurs in the United States every five seconds, 24 hours a day. A workplace death occurs every nine minutes, 24 hours a day.

These are alarming statistics when you think of how much time you spend on the job.

The records of an employer’s accident history might seem to be a clear indication of the emphasis the employer places on the safety of its employees. But remember: insurance companies rate companies on the claims they submit, and insurance rates are a direct result of accidents claimed.

IBEW keeps track of accidents for trending purposes and to keep workers aware of events or equipment that could lead to an accident at their workplace.

Through your safety committee, make sure accidents are reported to the IBEW, so that these records are kept up to date. Prizes and awards have been given to employees to encourage a good safety record and to continue safety vigilance—indirectly the employer wants you to forget about accident reporting. Don’t fall into this trap!

Employees should fill out accident reports even for minor accidents, as even minor cuts can lead to infection. Your good health is a matter of your concern; lost time injuries are the concern of all.

Two hundred eight days without a lost time accident is a good record, a record that should be kept track of!

Your undivided attention, please

Let’s imagine for a moment that you are in a hospital undergoing surgery. It’s important—life or death! You’re under a local so you’re wide awake. Suddenly your surgeon’s cell phone rings and he starts having a casual conversation.

Sure, the surgeon has done this operation a thousand times before. But don’t you think you deserve the surgeon’s undivided attention?

OK, a little far-fetched. But not so different than driving a car while talking on a cell phone.

Your undivided attention; lost time injuries are a matter of your concern. Your good health is a matter of your concern; lost time injuries are the concern of all. Two hundred eight days without a lost time accident is a good record, a record that should be kept track of!

Davis earmarks funds for Cal-OSHA enforcement

Responding to labor’s long-standing complaint that job safety laws are not adequately enforced, Gov. Gray Davis has directed new funds to Cal-OSHA, the agency responsible for enforcing occupational safety and health.

News of the extra job safety funds came when Davis released an updated state budget last month, which included his plans for the extra $4 billion in unanticipated state tax revenue. Davis earmarked $3 million toward funding 52 positions at Cal-OSHA to put more inspectors on the street.

Davis’s action complements an initiative by the California Labor Federation to strengthen penalties against employers who operate unsafe worksites. That initiative, AB 1127, authored by Darrell Steinberg, is currently awaiting action in the California Assembly.

SMUD pilot: going astray?

From Page 1

Ritchie, a SMUD electrician. “A lot of times that means stepping on a union brother’s toes, and the District tacitly encourages that.”

Local 1245 Business Rep. Dennis Seyfer says it may appear to “the bean counters” that the process is working, “but it’s only because people in the field are scrambling to find solutions.”

“Line crews are driven, they’re professionals,” says Ritchie. “They want to do whatever they have to do to get the job done.”

Ritchie stresses that the union doesn’t want to stand in the way of getting the job done—it just wants the job done right.

“Create your process and make it work,” he advises.

“We want processes to work because they work, not because we have people fitting square pegs into round holes,” says Seyfer. “We want people to find solutions, but they need to be real solutions so the problems don’t arise again.”

Because the process is in a pilot phase, “there’s no better time than now to look at these problems and resolve them before you implement the whole thing,” says Seyfer.
Consider plight of ‘earliest’ retirees
By Ory Owen
Local 1245 retirees from PG&E met with Senior Assistant Business Manager Darrel Mitchell last month at union headquarters to discuss retirees’ concerns and to make suggestions for the union’s forthcoming bargaining with the company on the Benefit Agreement covering the pension plan.
Retiree representatives expressed the plight of the earliest and most elderly retirees that receive monthly pension benefits that are considered below the current poverty level and who need food stamps to supplement their daily basic living needs.
These early retirees helped build the company and were some of the founders of our union and are in real need. The healthy financial status of the PG&E Pension Plan should allow meaningful consideration to the original retirees.
Local 1245 retirees’ current political agenda covers many important issues at both the state and federal level.
- At the federal level:
  - Social Security—remove the cap on high income taxes. No other changes would be necessary to retain and secure Social Security.
  - Medicare—extend current benefits.
  - The Older Americans Act should be reaffirmed.
  - Housing—fund the Housing & Urban Development agency (HUD) to build more housing.
  - Capital Gains income—should be taxed at the same rate as income from wages.
- In California:
  - Pass the Patients Bill of Rights.
  - Raise state minimum wage rate and restore the 8-hour day.
  - Increase funding for state infrastructure: schools, roads and parks.
  - Enact Single-Payer health care plan.
  - Corporate taxes—should be reinstated to former levels.
- It is clear to Local 1245 retirees that the struggle still goes on. The battlefield is still the same, only the issues have changed. Keep the faith!

Senate Bill 26 targets age discrimination
In the last five years, nearly 15,000 claims of age discrimination have been filed in California, and these claims continue to grow.
Senate Bill 26, passed last month by the California Senate and now under consideration by the California Assembly, seeks to strengthen the law by making it easier for older workers to prove cases of age discrimination.
Here’s the background:
The California Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) is the landmark legislation which prohibits discrimination based upon sex, race, age and other protected categories.
Employees may use one of two legal theories to prove their employer has discriminated against them. They may prove that their employer intentionally discriminated against them ("intentional discrimination") or that their employer’s policies and/or practices disproportionately impacted a group of persons ("disparate impact discrimination"). The use of disparate impact analysis may be used to prove race and gender discrimination.
In a 1998 case, Marks v. Loral, the California Court of Appeals held that disparate impact analysis may not be used in age discrimination cases. The court held that an employer may choose to hire or retain employees with lower salaries, even though this may result in choosing younger employees. The Marks decision is binding on all trial courts statewide.
Unfortunately, the Marks case gives employers a green light to replace older, higher paid workers with younger, lower-paid workers. Without guidance from the Legislature, older workers will lack the legal right to stand up to their employers’ acts of age discrimination.
SB 26, authored by Senator Marthaescutis, would permit the use of disparate impact analysis in age discrimination cases and would declare the Legislature’s intent that discrimination against older workers can be fought with the same tools and vigor as other forms of discrimination.
If you want to help this bill become law, contact your Assembly Member and ask him or her to please support SB 26 when it comes to the Assembly floor. You may want to mention that this bill had Republican as well as Democratic support in the Senate.

Make a Date...
The Local 1245 Retiree Club invites you to join us for companionship, discussion and projects. Current meeting locations are:
East Bay Chapter: meets 2nd Thursday each month, 10 a.m., at Local 1245 headquarters, 3063 Citrus Circle, Walnut Creek, CA.
San Jose Chapter: meets 1st Thursday each month, 10 a.m., at Local 332, 1870 Stone Ave., San Jose.

Congratulations!
The Local 1245 Retirees Club congratulates these recently-retired members of the union. We invite you to participate in—or start!—a Retirees Club chapter in your area.

Angela Messner, 17 years
Grass Valley, CA
Charles Messner Jr., 36 years
Grass Valley, CA
Dennis Porter, 36 years
Santa Rosa, CA
Arlen Rasmussen, 36 years
Hayward, CA
George Bulum, 36 years
Stockton, CA
William Dilbeck, 16 years
Atascadero, CA
James Godley, 33 years
Redding, CA
James Knowl, 20 years
Cobb, CA
Arlene Lee, 22 years
Antioch, CA
David Oliver, 18 years
Apple Valley, CA
Phyllis Webb, 24 years
Antioch, CA

June 1999
IN TIMES GONE BY

Semi-Tropic Substation
circa 1953

Preserve your memories, they’re all that’s left you,’ Simon and Garfunkle advised in their 1960s' hit "Old Friends.”

Fortunately, our memories on occasion get a little help from the camera lens.

When Walter Rhinehart hired on at Pacific Gas & Electric in 1951, he kept his camera close at hand. Over the next few years he documented worklife at numerous locations, including Eureka, Redding, the Cottonwood area, the San Joaquin Valley, and the now-gone Old Melones Dam and Stanislaus Dam out of Jamestown and Sonora.

Time’s swift passage carries us forward to new landscapes, new technologies, new ways of doing the work. But thanks to Rhinehart, we can get a little glimpse of how things looked in times gone by.

Watch future issues for additional photos from The Rhinehart Collection.

The photographer, Walter Rhinehart, above, as an Apprentice Electrician at Semi-Tropic Substation in Wasco, CA. Occasionally he must have handed his camera off to a co-worker.

Moving 110 KM breaker. Man on right in bib overalls is Hop Meyers, Truck Driver.

Gus Douty, laborer.

Moving 115 KV breakers at Semi-Tropic substation in Wasco, CA, are Gus Douty, Laborer; Jerry Wells, Mechanic; Rodger Hughes, Apprentice Electrician; Larry Hightower, Field Clerk; and an unidentified field clerk trainee.

Ready to roll out a retired 100 KV OCB at Semi-Tropic Substation are Jerry Wells, Relas Powell, and Rodger Hughes.
Moving 115 KV breakers at Semi-Tropic substation in Wasco, CA, are (from left) Jerry Wells, Rodger Hughes, and Larry Hightower.

Working on a 12 kv structure at Semi-Tropic Sub are (in foreground) a Mechanic named Doc and Chuck Rafferty, also a Mechanic. In the distance is Field Clerk Larry Hightower.

Jerry Wells, Mechanic.

Moving 115 KV breakers at Semi-Tropic substation in Wasco, CA, are Rodger Hughes, Jerry Wells, and Larry Hightower.
Your Union, Your Voice—
Attend Your Unit Meetings!
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<td>SACRAMENTO</td>
<td>3811</td>
<td>City Council Chairman:</td>
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<td>VACAVILLE</td>
<td>3912</td>
<td>56 Grand Chairman:</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
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**CITIZENS COMMUNICATIONS**

| 4012 | SUSAVILLE | Main Gate Chairman: | Thursday | 1 5 2 7 4 2 |
| 4013 | ALTURAS | The Brass Rail Chairman: | Thursday | 14 15 10 13 10 15 |
| 4014 | ELKHORN | Lagata Town Hall Chairman: | Thursday | 7 4 1 6 3 1 |
| 4015 | BUNNY | Sam's Pizza Chairman: | Tuesday | 7 4 1 6 3 1 |

**TREE TRIMMERS**

| 4061 | DAVEN TREE ORLAND | Francis's Hegenberger & Pardee Chairman: | Tuesday | 7 4 1 6 3 1 |
| 4062 | DAVEN TREE EUREKA | Redline Pizza Chairman: | Thursday | 7 4 1 6 3 1 |
| 4063 | DAVEN TREE REDWOOD | Lagata Town Hall Chairman: | Thursday | 7 4 1 6 3 1 |
| 4064 | DAVEN TREE REDWOOD | 9th & E. St. Chairman: | Thursday | 7 4 1 6 3 1 |
| 4065 | DAVEN TREE REDWOOD | 1st St. Chairman: | Thursday | 7 4 1 6 3 1 |

**OUTSIDE LINE - SACRAMENTO**

| 4011 | OUTSIDE LINE SACRAMENTO | 2400 El Centro Chairman: | Saturday | 17 18 15 20 18 |

| SACRAMENTO | 3511 | SACRAMENTO TRANS | Thursday | 17 18 15 20 18 |

**OUTSIDE LINE - DECEMBER 1999**

**UNIT MEETING - JULY - DECEMBER 1999**

Make Your Voice Heard-- Attend Your Unit Meetings!
States explore financing for family leave

Efforts are underway to make family and medical leave affordable for workers who want, but cannot afford, to take this leave, according to the National Partnership for Women and Families.

It is an irony of modern political life that politicians can bemoan the deteriorating state of the family and then turn right around and oppose legislation that would make it easier for parents to spend time with their children during those first few impressionable months of a baby's life.

Currently, the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) guarantees covered employees 12 weeks of unpaid leave each year to care for a newborn or newly adopted child or seriously ill family member, or to recover from their own serious health condition.

While the Act was a valuable step forward, FMLA leave is unpaid. Because of this, many employees cannot afford to use it. Two-thirds of employees who needed but did not take family or medical leave cited lost wages as the reason, according to a 1996 study by the bipartisan Family Leave Commission.

To make family leave more affordable for more working families, advocates are mobilizing behind a range of innovative financing proposals. Current efforts include:

**California**: A bill has been introduced to study the cost of extending the state's Temporary Disability Insurance program to include employees taking family leave. The bill is sponsored by the California Labor Federation and supported by a coalition of labor, women and children's advocates.

**Iowa**: A bill introduced during the 1998 legislative session aimed to establish a fund for providing benefits to employees who took family leave and proposed to create a work and family task force to examine the impact of this program.

**Maryland**: A bill has been introduced to expand unemployment insurance to include employees who voluntarily leave work immediately following the birth or adoption of a child and are the child's primary care provider.

**Massachusetts**: Bills have been introduced to extend unemployment benefits to employees taking family leave and to create a "family and employment security trust fund." The estimated cost of providing unemployment benefits for family and medical leave is less than $1.25 per week per employee. Rallying support for these bills is a diverse and active Family Leave Coalition, spearheaded by the Women's Statewide Legislative Network.

**Minnesota**: As of July 1998, a state-funded, at-home infant child care program has allowed working parents who fulfill income eligibility requirements to receive subsidies for caring for infants under the age of one.

**New Jersey**: A bill was introduced in the 1998 legislative session to extend New Jersey's statewide Temporary Disability Insurance system to cover family leave. The bill would also establish a task force to study the impact of family leave benefits on workers, their families, employers, and the public. Advocates plan to reintroduce similar legislation in the 1999 legislative session.

**New York**: A bill has been introduced to amend New York's Temporary Disability Insurance law to cover employees taking family leave. A coalition of New York labor unions and child care advocates has made passage of this bill a priority in the 1999 legislative session.

**Vermont**: A bill has been introduced to authorize unemployment benefits for employees who take family or medical leave.

**Washington**: A bill has been introduced to extend unemployment compensation benefits to employees who voluntarily leave work to care for newborn children.

Poverty solution

If women received the same pay as men, the poverty rate in the United States would be just half its present rate, according to a study by the AFL-CIO and the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

Currently, women in the US receive just 74 cents on the dollar compared to what men receive.

Frances Wright had inherited her parents' radicalism and their wealth as well. When she came to the US in 1825, she spent half her fortune freeing slaves and establishing a community for them. She lectured widely on the evils of slavery.

In her lectures Frances Wright proclaimed that women should enjoy the same legal rights as men. Women, she said, should be freed from all "political and economic handicaps." She endorsed equal education for women, birth control and liberalized divorce.

Speaking up for an early labor party in 1833, she described it as "labor rising up against idleness, industry, against money and privilege." It has long been clear to me that in every country, the best feeling and best sense are found with the laboring classes." Frances Wright wrote her sympathies led to the recognition that unions were the best hope of working people!