

1245

International Brotherhood
Of Electrical Workers
Local 1245, AFL-CIO
November 1989 XXXVIII No. 10

UTILITY REPORTER

CLERICAL JOB
EVALUATION SYSTEM, p10

Local Union members respond to quake

The earthquake that struck Northern California at 5:04 p.m. on the evening of Tuesday, October 17th, wreaked havoc in several counties, and posed a unique challenge to the skilled workers who took it upon them-

selves to repair the damage and ensure the public safety. IBEW Local 1245 members were in the thick of this effort.

"The vast majority of members," according to San Francisco Business Rep Ed Caruso, "returned to work as soon as the quake hit, without being called. They worked round the clock,



Lineman George Beere restringing line on Seventh Street in San Francisco.



Photo: Kua Patten

GC carpenters working to keep the damaged wall at the Martin Materials Facility from collapsing on the gas distribution system. Left to right: John Duda, Rodrigo Vargas, Fred Vervucci, Rob Toto, Skip Plover, Nate Lorejo, Willie Ballard, Alan Markarian.

spelled each other, and slept as they could."

Caruso and Local 1245 photographer Kua Patten made a tour of affected worksites and neighborhoods the next evening. "The city had gone black," Caruso recalls. "It was an eerie sight — right out of a movie. Even where there was no damage, the streets were vacant, and there were

remnants of flares at every intersection."

The dramatic photos taken that evening and in the ensuing days — showing Local Union members restoring gas and electricity to the damaged neighborhoods are the subject of a special report in this issue of the *Utility Reporter*.

See PAGE FIVE

PG&E negotiations, this year and next

After five days of intensive bargaining, Local 1245 and Pacific Gas and Electric seem to be on the verge of concluding negotiations about the 1990 wage opener. A remarkable amount of progress has been registered since the first bargaining session was held on October 10, and it seems likely that a settlement will be reached before this issue of the *Utility Reporter* reaches the membership.

The next bargaining ses-

sion is scheduled for November 21st.

Why has so much happened so quickly? And what exactly has happened?

The *Utility Reporter* spoke to Senior Assistant Business Manager Darrel Mitchell to learn the answer to these questions. His explanations follow.

Utility Reporter: What did the Local hope to achieve in the negotiations this year?

Darrel Mitchell: We had two main goals, which emerged from the proposals sent in by the units. In

all, more than a hundred proposals were submitted, and they painted a very clear picture: the membership as a whole wanted substantially higher wages, and the clerical members wanted an across-the-board increase.

This differs from last time.

When the contract was open two years ago, there were only a few proposals about wages. Most of our members at that time were concerned about preserving their benefits. This time, though, with a one-year wage opener on the table, every-

one is paying attention to wages. And people are in a different mood.

In 1987 we were fairly flexible, because PG&E's economic recovery from the construction of Diablo Canyon seemed uncertain and the cost of living was rising at less than 3% per year. But this year the increase in the cost of living is 4.3% and the company's economic picture is bright. So the Local's members are looking for a healthy wage increase.

Two years ago, the mem-

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CALENDAR

- December**
- 1 - Shasta Division Pin Dinner
 - 1 - IBEW-PG&E Clerical Job Evaluation Implementation (Operations and Customer Services Department)
 - 2 - Redwood Region Shop Stewards' Conference
 - 9 - Humboldt Division Shop Stewards' Conference
 - 16 - Sacramento Region Shop Stewards' Conference
 - 16 - San Joaquin Region Shop Stewards' Conference

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bers of the physical bargain-
ing unit received more than
the clerical members did. In
the first year, the physical
members got a 2.75% in-
crease, while the clerical
members got a 2.75% bonus
but no permanent wage in-
crease. The second year the
physical members got an-
other 2.75% raise while the
clerical members got a 1.75%
bonus and a 1% pay raise.

Although this was consid-
erably better than the com-
pany's original offer, our
clerical members were very
upset about this. This time,
we were determined to get a
raise and we were also deter-
mined to get equal treat-
ment.

We suspected that PG&E
would oppose us on both
counts.

It seemed likely that they
would offer different rates to
the clerical and physical
members, and also to mem-
bers in different regions (of-
fering more to members in
the Bay Area, for example,
than in outlying areas). We
also expected them to draw
the line on wages at about 3%
or lower, saying that this is
the prevailing rate else-
where.

Utility Reporter: What did
the bargaining committee
plan to do if PG&E did take
these positions?

Mitchell: After talking it
over, we decided that we'd
concentrate on getting an
equal general wage increase
for everyone, since the alter-
native is just not fair.

And we'd push to get sub-
stantially more than we did in
1987.

Controlling Health Costs
from PAGE THREE

The shifting of costs really
does nothing to solve the
problem of high costs,
it just changes who
pays.

In addition to what has
been the normal approach to
cost containment, we should
look strongly at what it takes
to keep employees healthy.

Healthy people generally
do not require health care
services.

Changing life styles, what
we eat, and exercise can have
a significant impact on the
cost of health care.

It is also time for Congress
to take an interest in the
problem and look for ways to
address the issue.

While over \$550 billion is
spent annually on health



Danny Jackson

Photo: Kua Patten



Debbie Mazzanti

Photo: Kua Patten

Utility Reporter: What hap-
pened?

Mitchell: The committee's
perceptions were right on
the mark, which isn't always
the case.

PG&E did propose pay dis-
parity, and they also pro-
posed to keep us below 3%.
Their initial offer was 2.5%
for the physical members
and 2% for the clerical mem-
bers.

On the parity issue we
started out with a success,
convincing the company that
inequality between clerical
and physical members is un-
acceptable to us. At this point
we shifted to the wage issue
as the main focus. Our guess
was that they'd try to hold
the line around 3% and that
we'd try to push them up to

5% if possible.

We started with a 9.7% pro-
posal. When the company fi-
nally raised its offer to 3.3%
across the board, we eventu-
ally proposed a general wage
increase of 5.0%—3.5%
to become effective on
January 1, 1990, with a
second increase of 1.4%
to become effective on
July 1, 1990.

They replied with a flat of-
fer of 3.5%, which they say is
fair, reasonable, and appro-
priate.

It's true that PG&E is of-
fering a higher GWI than the
other major western utilities.
But we're saying that given
the changes the company is
making, the traditional com-
parisons aren't valid. PG&E
employees are being asked

to do more and we feel
we can prove that they
are doing more. PG&E
employees are doing
more work than they've
ever done before, and
the total number of employ-
ees has decreased — not just
remained stable, but de-
creased.

Danny Jackson, a bargain-
ing committee member from
the gas department, pointed
out that in Sacramento there
are fewer gas servicemen,
and yet they install more gas
services every year.

Russ Rylee reminded the
company that the line depart-
ment in Redding is being
asked to do some of the work
that management has tradi-
tionally handled. They're ex-

NEXT PAGE

APPOINTMENTS**CONFERENCES AND
CONVENTIONS****CALIFORNIA LABOR FED-
ERATION WOMEN-IN-
THE-WORKFORCE CON-
FERENCE**

Natalie Brewer
Judy Szostak
Anna Bayless
Wilma Arjona
Cynthia Jorissen
Linda Norris
Jane Carpignano
Bonny Lee Grimes
Enid Bidou
Gary Hughes

**PACIFIC GAS AND
ELECTRIC COMPANY
1989 GEYSERS
COMMUTE
COMMITTEE**

Ray Gallagher

**GENERAL CONSTRUC-
TION JOINT GRIEVANCE
COMMITTEE**

Lynda Holloway (Alter.)

**PACIFIC GAS TRANSMIS-
SION COMPANY
WAGE NEGOTIATING
COMMITTEE**

Frank Locati
Mark Latta
George Stavros
Sue Defoe

PG&E NEGOTIATIONS

from PAGE TWO



Russ Rylee

pected to develop the tool budget for the yard and arrange the purchase of line trucks.

And Customer Service is offering seven-day-a-week, round-the-clock services despite the fact that the number of employees has fallen, as Debbie Mazzanti from Oakland pointed out.

The bottom line is that productivity is up. We pointed out that PG&E's annual report shows that the number of customers per employee has risen steadily since the start of 1988. And the employees feel that now is the time to be rewarded for that.

It's true that 3.5% is better than the wage increases which were negotiated recently at Southern California Edison and San Diego Gas & Electric, but it's still



Darrel Mitchell

less than we want.

We'll see what happens next.

Utility Reporter: Why have the negotiations moved so fast?

Mitchell: There are two main reasons. First, we're discussing just one issue - wages. And second, PG&E made a realistic offer early on.

Utility Reporter: Can you make any predictions about next year's bargaining based on the experience with this year's wage opener?

Mitchell: Yes, a few things seem to be clear. The company wants to say that benefits and clerical wage rates should be based on market comparisons, that area differentials are appropriate, and that some kind of pay for perform-

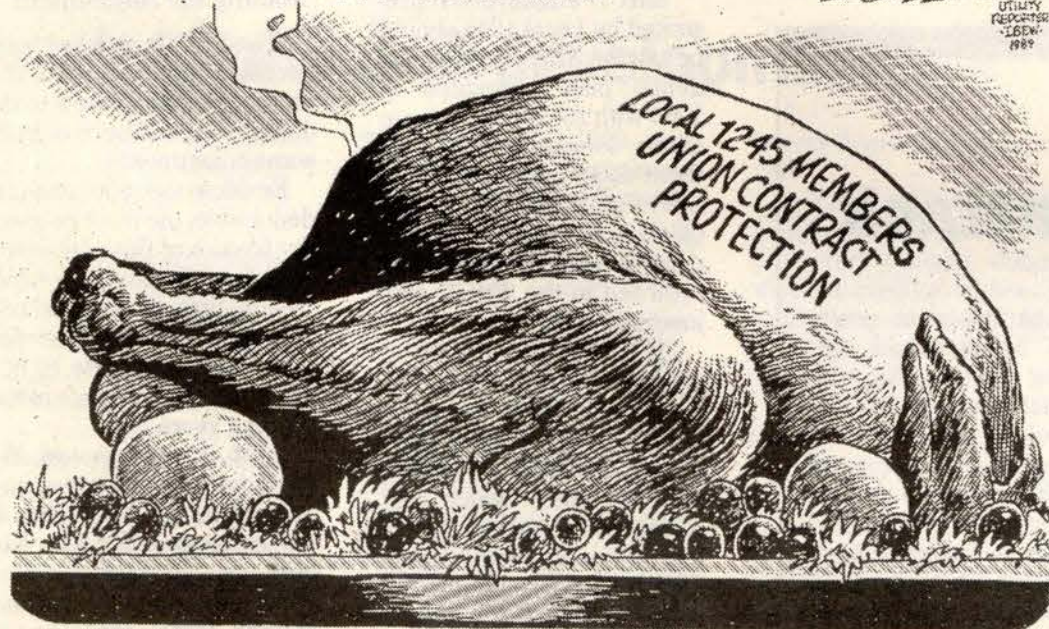
ance system should be used.

We disagree on all counts.

We strongly feel that any wage gains that are pegged to productivity should be shared by the bargaining unit as a whole. Equity hits for workers who take on new responsibilities are one thing. But wage increases should be general and across-the-board.

Our contention is that pay should be based on the degree of difficulty, training, and responsibility that a position entails, and that it should be the same for everyone who does comparable work - no matter where they live or whether they do clerical or physical labor. ■

ON THE DAY WE GIVE THANKS...

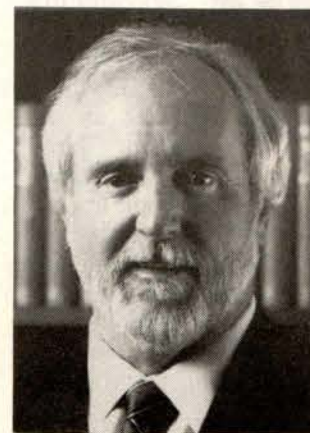


Thanksgiving Day
1989

POINT OF VIEW

Controlling Health Costs

By Jack McNally, IBEW 1245 Business Manager



Local 1245 and PG&E just recently agreed to participate in a joint study on the problem of the high cost of health care.

The intent is to explore the strategies and possibilities surrounding the continuing escalating cost of providing health care for PG&E employees and their families with the hope some common ground can be found in an attempt to avoid a confrontation in our general negotiations in the latter half of 1990.

The high cost of health care is a nationwide problem affecting almost every employer who provides health care plans and almost all unions who negotiate over health care.

Health care is becoming the number one issue at the bargaining table these days for most unions and employers.

The issue is the high cost and what is to be done about it.

There have been strikes and near-strikes over the issue, with the parties searching for ways to address the issue.

While it might be simple for the unions to say to the employers that they must continue to shoulder the burden, that would have a direct effect on the ability of the union to achieve gains in other areas of concern.

The Consumer Price Index for Medical Care has risen by 83% over the last ten years.

However, some plans in some years have risen by as much as 30%.

The 1990 Blue Cross plan premiums for bargaining unit employees are \$144.05 per month for each employee, \$311.05 per month for each employee and spouse, and \$420.07 per month for each employee and his or her family.

On the average, health care premiums equal 10-12% of payroll.

The Blue Cross plan, by the way, is a self-funded plan, which means that PG&E pays the submitted claims and pays an administrative fee to Blue Cross to process the claims and perform cost containment procedures.

The self-funded method is less expensive than a regular insurance type plan as it saves the expense of reserves.

The Blue Cross plan runs approximately 38-40% higher than the Kaiser Plan, with the other HMO plans coming in at rates between Blue Cross and Kaiser.

As one can see, providing health care coverage is not cheap and if the costs continue to rise at the rates they have been, there will be big, big problems in the future.

Generally speaking, there are two approaches to the issue.

One would be to increase the deductibles and/or require co-payments of the premiums, which basically means the employee picks up more of the cost; the other is to put restraints on the health care provider through utilization review, preferred provider organizations, and other forms of managed care that have less impact on the employees and more on the health care providers.

It is Local 1245's desire to have this joint review and study look at all conceivable ideas to find ways of controlling costs.

See PAGE TWO

The board ponders further cuts

When Local 1245 enters into bargaining with the Sacramento Municipal Utility District next fall, there will be an unusually large number of items on the table. SMUD, as everyone knows, is a troubled organization. When the public voted last June to shut down the Rancho Seco nuclear power plant, the District was already suffering from a variety of ills.

The SMUD Board has reacted with a penny-wise policy that threatens to seriously worsen its problems. This was the subject of a debate which arose during a recently-completed budget review carried out by the Board's Finance Committee. According to a Special Employee Bulletin published by the SMUD Public Affairs Department on October 27, several Board members "commented about possibly reducing salaries and/or benefits." General Manager David Boggs replied that this would be bad business:

"My job is to manage and lead the District, and we must have the resources to do our job. Our most important asset is our employees..."

"We have lost many good

employees, and continued comments about reducing employees' salaries will continue to compound our problems. If we lose more good people, the level of service for our customers will drop. SMUD's service has always been excellent and you're

buys power from other companies, which it sells at a mark-up. This mark-up makes SMUD relatively less competitive, and is the main source of its cash flow problems."

SMUD's managers have a choice. They can either ex-

were cut in the past year alone. Close to 600 SMUD employees accepted "voluntary separation" from the District, and an additional 400 vacant positions were permanently eliminated.

The consequences have been predictable.

"There have been all kinds of irrationalities," Mai notes. "In the Line Department they've cut and laid off many people in the semi-skilled job classifications — but that hasn't made the work disappear. So we see higher-paid journeymen linemen doing the work that laborers used to do. What kind of economic sense does that make?"

The Grievance Backlog

SMUD achieved another false economy by sharply reducing the number of personnel analysts in the Labor Relations section of the Human Resources Department. Three out of five analysts were eliminated, making it impossible to devote enough time and energy to grievances. As a result, unresolved grievances have piled up at an alarming rate. "They cut their staff," Gary Mai says, "to the point that they don't have enough people to do fact finding. This is forcing them to bring in outside temporary help to try to keep

up. But it just isn't working."

There are now about 50 pending grievances. "The District hasn't violated the letter of the law in terms of time delays," according to Assistant Business Manager Ron Fitzsimmons. "But they are dragging their feet. We know that people are concerned, and we're doing everything we can to expedite all grievances."

Last year, the grievance backlog was even worse.

"Thanks to the new grievance procedure that Darrel Mitchell helped me negotiate," Gary Mai recalls, "we were able to resolve 33 cases last year. The previous procedure was unworkable, and now we have a much better one that's modeled on the PG&E system. But we still need management to make fact finding a priority, or we'll fall even further behind."

Take Action!

Ron Fitzsimmons says that any SMUD employee represented by IBEW Local 1245 who wishes to expedite a grievance should contact his or her shop steward.

"The majority of grievances are settled in favor of the employees, and we need to push as hard as we can to get the company moving on this." ■

.....

"The majority of grievances

are settled in favor of the em-

ployees, and we need to push

as hard as we can to get the

company moving on this."

.....

flirting with disaster."

A Giant Step Backward

"The essence of the problem," reports Local 1245 Business Representative Gary Mai, "is that SMUD has never been able to generate enough power to meet the demand for energy in the peak summer months when people use air conditioning. The result is that SMUD

pand production to meet the demand, or cut back to cut their losses.

So far they have chosen the latter. "They took a giant step backward," Gary Mai says. "They chose to cut personnel and sacrifice service quality, just when the public was saying that it wanted more energy and improved service."

Nearly 1,000 positions

OUTSIDE LINE

Peterson suffers heart attack



Curt Peterson

Photo: Kua Patten

Curt Peterson suffered a heart attack on the evening of October 31st. "Curt's in good spirits," Darrel Mitchell reports, "but his health remains delicate." An exceedingly well-liked Business Rep, Curt has been on sick leave since August 14 while receiving treatment for a rare blood disorder.

"We hope that Curt can re-

turn to his post pretty soon," Mitchell said after visiting Peterson in the hospital, "but we'll just have to see about that. He seems to be recuperating well, but his condition has made it impossible for the doctors at Lancaster General Hospital to perform surgery. We wish him all the best." ■

Dental plan fails

SMUD employees represented by Local 1245 should be aware that the special dental plan negotiated in 1984 with the DOHM group is no longer available to them as an option. All 73 of the roughly 800 SMUD employees in the IBEW bargaining unit have now been returned to the SMUD self-insurance plan.

This change is the result of a legal battle which broke out between the insurance carrier, Dental Optical Health Maintenance (DOHM), and the clinic which had served as its exclusive service provider, River Rock Dental Clinic. Continued reliance on DOHM would be impossible — while this legal battle lasts and the end is not in sight.

Making the Adjustment

The SMUD plan has some peculiarities, so Local 1245 members who are new to this dental plan will have to make some adjustments.

Besides the \$50 one-time deductible, the most noteworthy feature of this plan is that it is "progressive" — which means that you enter with 70% coverage (in the first year) and then move to 80%, 90% and 100% coverage in succeeding years.

Keep in mind, though, that this passage to full coverage is not automatic. To qualify for full coverage after you have been on the plan for three years, you have to schedule regular dental appointments. So take full advantage of your benefits. That's the best way to protect yourself financially as well as medically. ■

AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE

The October 17th earthquake, which shook the San Andreas fault from Santa Cruz to Santa Rosa, registered 7.1 on the Richter scale and caused a phenomenal amount of damage. The financial cost of the quake has been estimated at \$7 billion. The human cost — in lives and homes and trauma — has been far greater.

The response to the quake has also been phenomenal.

Few communities have rallied together so quickly in the face of a crisis, and organized labor has played an indispensable role in returning the region to its feet. Just as in South Carolina, where unions helped in countless ways in the wake of Hurricane Hugo, labor has been in the forefront of the local relief effort.

In Charleston, an IBEW Local opened its hall to hurricane victims. Now, a great many similar stories can be told about the San Francisco Bay Area as well.



Photo: PG&E

Power Workers respond:



GC crew members working in a manhole.

Photo: Ed Caruso

Cutting the old cast-iron gas main in preparation for the insertion of a new plastic main.



Photo: Ed Caruso



R. Jackson and R. Rogers of Belmont Gas T&D in the M

Cash Contributions

Substantial gifts have been contributed to the California AFL-CIO Earthquake Fund. IBEW Local 1245 donated \$20,000; IBEW Local 595 gave \$10,000; the national AFL-CIO gave \$10,000; Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 467 contributed \$7,500; and many other unions have been similarly generous.

Additional gifts have come from rank & file union members. Local 1245 groups from San Francisco and Santa Cruz, for example, each donated more than a thousand dollars in meal money — and this is just one of many examples that could be cited.

Volunteers

A vast outpouring of volunteerism has been one of the most heartening and impressive features of the public response to the crisis. Here, too, organized labor has come through with flying colors.

In Santa Cruz, according to Business Rep Larry Pierce, the normal complement of 15 gas servicemen swelled to a total of more than 300 at the peak of the crisis. "We had people from all over the map — from Washington, Utah, Idaho, Southern California, and all kinds of other places."

San Francisco saw something similar, according to Business Rep Ed Caruso.

"We had people pouring in from other companies, including Southern California Edison, San Diego Gas & Electric, and Sierra Pacific — and from PG&E headquarters in other areas, such as Colma and Daly City."

"The Local 1245 office in Walnut Creek was inundated with calls from IBEW Locals in other states, offering to send Outside Line people in to help," Caruso recalls. "I personally got calls from Denver and Chicago, and Dean Gurke and Joe Valentino handled a lot of other calls. And it wasn't just calls. Something like 40 people came from Spokane alone."

"Without outside help, the recovery would have been murder, especially in the first 72 hours. And people from outside stayed with us for eight full days."

Major League Response

Perhaps the most memorable feature of labor's response to the quake was that it demonstrated a high level of rank & file professionalism and "employee involvement". "The full complement of PG&E workers showed up voluntarily," Business Rep Dean Gurke emphasizes, "without being called."

"Of course, since the phones weren't working, they pretty well had to come in on their own."

The technical problems



Reconnecting residential service.

Photo: Ed Caruso

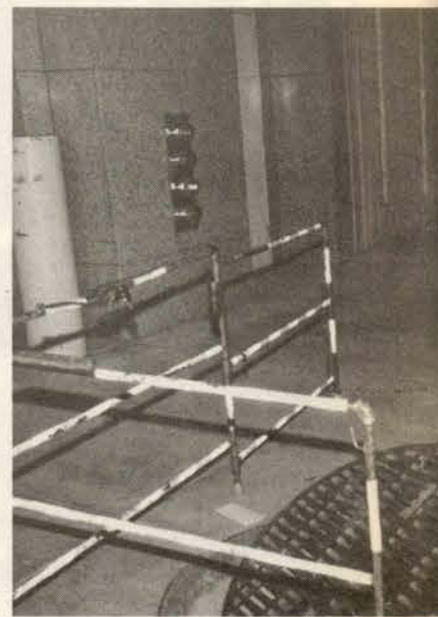


Charles E. Williams at the new command center for San Francisco electric division operators.

Photo: Kua Patten



Fissure near the quake's epicenter in th



Electric underground crew members R. and Cindy Britton in the Financial Distr

rs respond: every picture te

gas main in preparation
n of a new plastic main.



Photo: Ed Caruso

R. Jackson and R. Rogers of Belmont Gas T&D in the Marina installing plastic gas mains.

Plastic gas mains being "sleeved" into the damaged cast-iron mains. Instead of digging the old mains out, the new ones were simply inserted into them.



Photo: Kua Patten

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The technical problems



Photo: PG&E

Fissure near the quake's epicenter in the Santa Cruz mountains.



Photo: Kua Patten

Electric underground crew members Randy Meek and Cindy Britton in the Financial District.

that workers faced were formidable, to put it mildly. Just days earlier, PG&E's Central Division Manager Bob Harris had reported confidently that PG&E was fully prepared for the World Series game scheduled to be held at Candlestick Park the evening of the quake.

"We're ready for just about any contingency," PG&E Week quoted Harris as saying.

Well, not quite.

Disaster Area

As Ed Caruso reports, "San Francisco was out of power. The city went black for the first time since 1906. The Hunters Point and Potrero power plants — San Francisco's *only* power plants — tripped off the line due to seismic relays on the transmission lines coming up from down south."

"Right after the quake, calls were coming in about gas blowing in the street, gas leaks in houses, ladders coming out of manholes. Our members had to disconnect gas and electric service to damaged houses and take care of an amazing range of problems."

"It took eight days to get the gas back on throughout San Francisco, and that still hasn't happened in the Marina District. Damage to the Marina was so extensive that the old cast-iron gas mains had to be replaced. The en-

tire old gas system is gone, and a new one is being installed using hard plastic gas mains instead of the old iron ones."

In Santa Cruz, Oakland, and elsewhere the problems were equally serious, if not more so. One example of the trouble that power workers encountered was the experience of PG&E's Pacific Garden Mall Customer Service office in Santa Cruz. "This was next to the coffee roasting company," Larry Pierce recalls, "where two people were crushed to death."

"The whole Customer Service staff was ordered out by the city, since the adjacent buildings had to be demolished."

Shining Example

On balance, the response to the crisis was very positive. "Leaving aside the Marina's special problems," Ed Caruso says, "the level of cooperation and efficiency shown by all parties was at such a level that services were restored at a remarkable rate. People just could not believe that it worked so well."

The photos that accompany this story indicate the vast impact of the earthquake and the complexity of the gas and electrical work that followed. ■

every picture tells a story



Plastic gas mains being "sleeved" into the damaged cast-iron mains. Instead of digging the old mains out, the new ones were simply inserted into them.

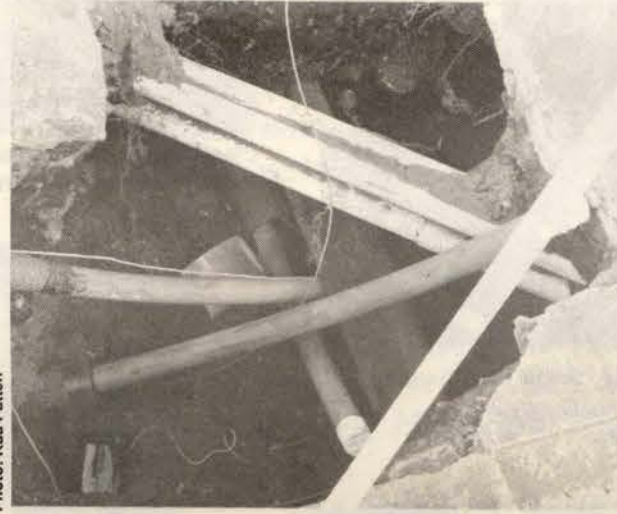


Photo: Kua Patten

Photo: Ed Caruso

Marina installing plastic gas mains.



Photo: PG&E

Santa Cruz mountains.



Photo: Kua Patten

Andy Meek
t.

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Workers surveying the damage at the Moss Landing 500-kv switchyard.

Photo: PG&E

Damaged buildings in the Marina District



Photo: Ed Caruso



Photo: Ed Caruso

EARTHQUAKE



Martin Service Center troublemen donating more than \$1100 in meal money to the Red Cross for earthquake relief. Left to right: Cliff Smethurst, Carl Jackson, Bob Goodwin, Gypsy Jake Jacobson, Jeff Smethurst.

Photo: Ed Caruso



Dave Maffei and Darrell Griffith at the Shotwell Garage, working during the outage to keep the fleet going.

Photo: Kua Patten



Linemen repairing a power line in the Santa Cruz mountains.

Photo: PG&E

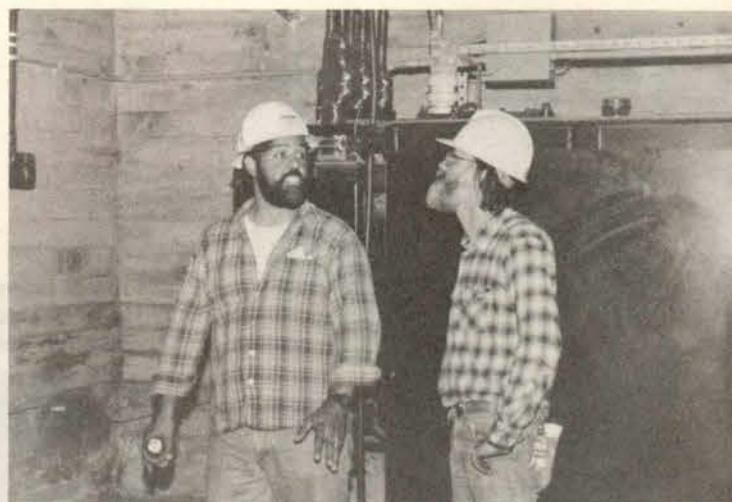


Photo: Kua Patten

Electric underground crew members Richard Landa and E. Taylor III working inside the vaults to get the Financial District up and running.



Photo: Kua Patten

Val Rogers at the Martin Materials Facility.



Photo: Kua Patten

GC crew member Nate Lorejo working to protect gas valves at the Martin Materials Facility.



Photo: Kua Patten

Martin Service Center troubleman and Local 1245 shop steward Cliff Smethurst troubleshooting during the power outage.

Progress and success in local organizing

Important gains have been registered in several organizing efforts.

- At **Oxford Operating Company** in Westley certification was won after a long period of hearings. "The company tried to bust the union," Business Rep Corb Wheeler says, "by contending that we made false promises which the NLRB ruled we did not. So we'll be going to bargaining with Oxford soon. The company is handing over a proposal, and we'll form a committee and respond."

Oxford burns tires to generate energy and has never been unionized. In all, 47 full-time and regular part-time production employees now belong to Local 1245, including tire handlers, ash handlers, and operation and maintenance workers.

- "It was quite a meeting," Corb Wheeler recalled, speaking of a meeting of **Turlock Irrigation District** employees which drew more than 300 people who wanted to discuss setting up Local 1245 organizing teams.

Until now the District has

been represented by the Turlock Irrigation District Association (TIDA), but the entire Executive Board of that association now agrees that Local 1245 should take its place.

"They want representation that can enforce the contract," Wheeler explains, "which they don't have now. That's the biggest single issue."

The TIDA memo of understanding with the District runs until November 1, 1990. at that time Local 1245 can pursue certification.

- "We've requested certifi-

cation at the **Port of Oakland**, where most of the 25 people in the engineering department filled out Local 1245 sign-up cards," Wheeler reports. "This department has never been organized before."

- Sign-up cards are also being collected at communications repair sites operated by **Aerospace Incorporated**. This is a firm which employs 39 people at Mare Island and Skaggs Island (near Vallejo) and has never been organized before.

After all cards are collected a request for certification will be filed with the NLRB.

- All eight of the traveling maintenance workers employed by **CAPCO** in the Chowchilla and Firebaugh area have completed sign-up cards, and NLRB certification has been requested.

- The ice seems to be melting in the **Chowchilla Water District**, where a productive meeting between the

Local Union and the District Board was held on October 19th. "We made excellent progress," reports Assistant Business Manager Ron Fitzsimmons. "We're confident that we can get a bargaining table settlement at our next meeting, on December 6th, and then get that settlement out to our members for a vote."

As soon as an agreement is ratified, the current layoffs will be over. These layoffs were originally scheduled to last until February. "The Board has agreed to a retroactive eight percent pay increase for bargaining unit members," Fitzsimmons notes, "which they had refused to do earlier. Previously, they had given non-bargaining unit employees an eight percent increase but gave the bargaining unit only a four percent increase. That was unacceptable to us and they've now changed their position."

Citizens Utilities

"Vote no," committee urges

An offer by the company that the Negotiating Committee says "falls way short" of the union's goals will be voted on by the bargaining unit during the month of November.

Citizens Utilities "demands that their offer be put to your vote," the Committee reports, "which we are required to do."

All votes will be counted and reported by November 28.

The Negotiating Committee calls for a decisive "No" vote, saying that the company offer is unacceptable for many reasons, including the following.

Citizens Utilities:

- uses temporary employees at substandard wages in place of bargaining unit members, in violation of the work agreement;

- disregards seniority in transfers and promotions;

- reneged on previous benefit and holiday agreements;

- continues to downgrade job definitions;

- refuses to offer a 401K plan; and

- offers inadequate wage increases.

"It is important," the Committee says, "for our members to note: The Company has raided the pension plan and returned the monies to its stockholders. In addition, they have enjoyed a great rate of return for 1989 and have boasted about their financial stability, but have failed to extend a fair share of the profits to you."

"Don't be fooled by their threats. The offer is not worthy of your approval." ■

Pacific cancels the contract

Pacific Tree sent Local 1245 a letter cancelling the current contract. "This will change the atmosphere of bargaining when we meet with Pacific in early December," Assistant Business Manager Orv Owen observes. Pacific, a division of Asplundh, "has jumped on the bandwagon, saying that the union's not competitive with non-union contractors."

"That's not true, and we're going to make that clear." ■

Settlements and developments

Several settlements have been reached with cable television firms represented by Local 1245.

- A three-year settlement was reached with **Sonic Cable TV**, which employs 21 people in San Luis Obispo and eight people in Watsonville. This settlement, according to Business Rep Mike Haentjens, calls for compensation increases of 5%, 5%, and 4.5%, to be divided between benefits, wages, and so on as the members choose.

This year the entire increase will take the form of wages.

- An agreement retroac-

tive to August 1, 1989, was ratified by the bargaining unit at **United Artists/Santa Cruz Cable TV**. This is a two-year package stipulating a 3.2% average wage increase with a 2.5% bonus each year and many inequity adjustments. The health plan has been improved and a dental plan has been established for the first time.

The vote was 36-11 YES, after an earlier offer had been rejected 40-0.

This is the Local's first contract with **United Artists/Santa Cruz Cable**, which has been owned by five different firms in the past five years. The current

parent firm is based in Denver.

- Local 1245 and **State Cable TV** have agreed to extend the current contract with six months, with wages to be opened for negotiations in April, retroactive to November 1, 1989.

This postponement was needed because State has recently been purchased from Cook Cable by Chambers Cable of Medford, Oregon, and Chambers will have to be involved in any future negotiations.

State Cable employs Local 1245 members in Chico and Orland. ■

SIERRA PACIFIC

More Restructuring

On November 28th, the Board of Directors of the Sierra Pacific Power Company will announce the specifics of a reorganization plan that has been under discussion by a special officer task force for more than a year. "This plan does not appear to have any immediate consequences for the Local 1245 bargaining unit," according to Orv Owen, Assistant Business Manager. "But it will have a major effect on management. Sierra Pacific has been top-heavy for a long time, and this reorganization will remedy that a bit."

"The likelihood is that many of our members will be reporting to new people before long."

Streamlining at the Top

Sierra Pacific has historically had an exceptionally large number of management, professional, and administrative employees. "At one point they outnumbered our bargaining unit," Owen recalls. "Now it's down to about fifty/fifty."

Earlier in 1989 the company used an early retirement program to eliminate 52 staff positions. The new plan is likely to bring more of the same. "They'll end up with something like seven vice-presidents, which is quite a bit fewer than they have currently. Sierra Pacific is following in the footsteps of companies like PG&E, which have made streamlining fashionable." ■

Implementation Begins

The new system for clerical job evaluation

by David Smith

How valuable is your job?

Until 1980, that question was answered unilaterally by the company. "Now, with the implementation of the new position evaluation system, clerical employees and Local 1245 will have an equal voice in this decision," says Assistant Business Manager Roger Stalcup.

"After many years of suffering under the old cross-hatch system, and after a decade of struggling to replace it, we finally have a fair and viable system in place."

Start-up of the new system begins on December 1 for customer service and operating lines of progression. The accounting line of progression follows suit on May 1, 1990.

Why Change?

The old system was a source of constant frustration for PG&E's clerical employees. "It was imposed by the company in the early 1960's," reports Assistant Business Manager Dorothy Fortier, "and led to a vast number of grievances, many of which were not won — because the system permitted the company to downgrade clerical job classifications."

The cross-hatch system was invented by PG&E executives who wanted to "evaluate" clerical positions rather than "define" them. The difference here is important. Physical employees have always been classified in terms of job definitions, so that gas mechanics or crane operators, for example, perform clearly defined jobs and

are paid accordingly. Clerical workers, by contrast, are given a wide variety of assignments; they are then placed in pay categories based on the total assessed value of the assignments they perform.

"This was a big problem, bigger than it may sound, since many of the most vital clerical activities — the ones that require the most skill, judgement, and knowledge — take less than 15% of your time, or can be divided up so

"In the cross-hatch system the employees had no say whatever. Now they do."

Clerical wages thus depend on the job evaluation and on who performs it. Under the cross-hatch system, jobs were evaluated by PG&E — and were continually downgraded.

Jobs Undercut

"It was awful," Stalcup recalls. "The main factor in valuing a position was the percentage of time devoted to a specific duty. If you did something that took less than 15% of your time, you were given limited credit for that activity. If it took less than five percent of your time, you were given no credit at all."

that no one does more than that. The result is that people were not being paid for many of their most crucial assignments."

"Over the years we saw this happen a lot. Under cross-hatch, jobs were downgraded. Increasing numbers of people were placed in C and D jobs, and A and B jobs became scarce. And wages fell."

A Vigorous Response

A decade ago, when the Clerical Agreement expired on December 31, 1979, the officers of Local 1245 took a dramatic step. Rather than serving notice of intent to

amend the agreement, as they had always done before, they notified PG&E that the union planned to cancel the agreement altogether.

This remains the first and only time that the Local has cancelled an agreement outright. "The reason we cancelled it," Roger Stalcup says, "was that we had a sincere and strong desire to do away with cross-hatch. The implied threat was that we would hit the bricks. We felt that a strike by clericals could choke the company to death by the purse strings, since the vast majority of PG&E income passes through the hands of the clerical staff."

"If the clerical work is disrupted, the income stream is disrupted, too."

Victory

"We would have preferred job definition," Stalcup explains, "but PG&E wouldn't agree. We studied the problem and determined that an employer does have the right to unilaterally institute a sys-

tem of evaluating work and ranking jobs. That's what PG&E did in the early 1960's."

"Recognizing that PG&E could institute a job evaluation plan without input from the affected employees or the union," Stalcup says, "we decided that a jointly developed system for evaluating clerical bargaining unit positions would much better represent the interests of the members. So, following the 1980 negotiations, cross-hatch was thrown out and we

Employee Input

"In the cross-hatch system the employees had no say whatever. Now they do."

Clerical employees who signed on with PG&E after 1979 may not fully understand how odd the classification system has been for the past ten years. "Essentially," Dorothy Fortier observes, "there has been no system since cross-hatch was scrapped. The status quo from 1980 has been frozen in time. Old desks have been kept at their assessed values, and new desks have been pegged to comparable work



At the conference in Walnut Creek. L to R: Dorothy Fortier, Business Rep. Perry Zimmerman, unidentified, Business Rep. Joe Valentino



Assistant Business Manager Roger Stalcup



Assistant Business Manager Dorothy Fortier

tem of evaluating work and ranking jobs. That's what PG&E did in the early 1960's."

"Although some people might feel comfortable in this kind of limbo," Fortier adds, "it isn't healthy. For one thing, it's been nearly impossible to settle grievances on clerical classifications, because there have been no agreed-to rules."

"The new system is mutually agreed-to between the union and the company. It's fair. And it mandates employee input." ■

Your Rights

How the new evaluation system works

The most important feature of the new clerical job evaluation system is that it gives clerical workers a major role in assessing the value of their jobs. The technical details of this system are inevitably a bit dry, since job evaluation is far less simple and clear-cut than job definition; but these details are also crucial, since they let you know how you can make the system work for you.

Benchmark Duties

In the new system each clerical position is given a value equal to the combined values of as many as ten "benchmark duties." These benchmark duties include all the normal clerical assignments: payment processing, data entry, filing, customer service research, etc. Each such duty has been carefully defined by a joint company-union committee.

The first step in the evaluation system is for all employees in the clerical bargaining

unit (except for workers like machine operators, collectors, and meter readers) to review a list of these duties

and write a brief explanation of that additional duty.

The value of any particular clerical job will depend on

"In this system, you get paid for the work you really do at the rate it really warrants."

write a brief explanation of that additional duty.

If they perform a duty not listed in the Benchmark Duty Statement, they will

the specific duties performed and on the relative priority each duty is assigned for that position. "In other words," explains Roger Stalcup, "if your job entails doing x, y, and z, your job is worth the combined value of x, y, and z — where x has a higher value if it's your main responsibility, and a lower value if it's a lower responsibility."

"It only sounds complicated," Stalcup adds. "Actually it's all very clearly worked out."

"Every benchmark duty has a value which was negotiated by the company and the union. The main consideration we used in determining this value is the degree of difficulty that the duty requires,

which we measure in terms of several factors, including training, knowledge, judgment, and communication skills."

"The virtue of this system is that it keeps the value of your job up. If you're assigned to do something that takes exceptional knowledge or skill, you get credit for your work, even if it takes you only a few hours each pay period. And the company can't cut the value of your job artificially by throwing a low-level duty in with your other work, as they sometimes did in the past, since the new assignment would have to be one of your main responsibilities to have a big impact on the value of your job."

"In this system," Stalcup concludes, "you get paid for the work you really do at the rate it really warrants."

Protect Yourself

Once employees complete the forms on which they list their duties, they submit these forms to their supervisors for review. The supervisors may disagree with the employees' lists, but they cannot simply reject or change these lists. Instead, they record their comments in the supervisor's section of the form.

After both the employee and supervisor sign the completed form, the employee should request a copy. If a problem arises, there is a formal review process to resolve evaluation disputes.

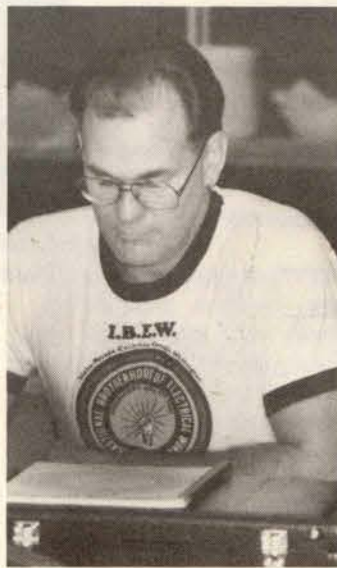
"Initially," Dorothy Fortier says, "if an employee dis-

agrees with the evaluation, he or she should contact the shop steward and discuss the issue with the supervisor. If no agreement is reached, the shop steward will notify the Business Representative, at which time a formal grievance may be filed. And the grievance must be filed," Fortier cautions, "within 30 days from the date that you're first notified about how the job in question was graded."

"Grievances go to the company analyst first, who will prepare a response and send it to Roger and me, as the union analysts. If we feel the evaluation is wrong and that additional information is needed, the case will go to a Local Investigating Committee made up of the Business Rep, a region shop steward, the supervisor, and a representative from Human Resources. The information they gather will come back to the union and company analysts, and either we'll reach a joint analyst agreement or we'll refer the case to the Clerical Position Evaluation Committee."

"There are a lot of built-in safeguards in this system," Fortier says, "and our grievance procedure is a powerful tool which people shouldn't hesitate to use. And remember, a grievance must be filed no more than 30 days after you are notified of the results of the evaluation. That's the only way to ensure retroactive pay if you're later ruled to be in a higher job classification." ■

Shop Stewards at the Fresno Conference



The final training will be November 18

Five job evaluation training sessions for clerical shop stewards were planned for October, but thanks to the earthquake only four were convened. The fifth and final training session has been rescheduled. It will be held on Saturday, November 18, at the Le Baron Hotel in San Jose from 10:00 until 4:00.

"Any clerical stewards from other regions," Dorothy Fortier says, "who would like to attend this session are welcome to do so with approval from their Business Rep." ■

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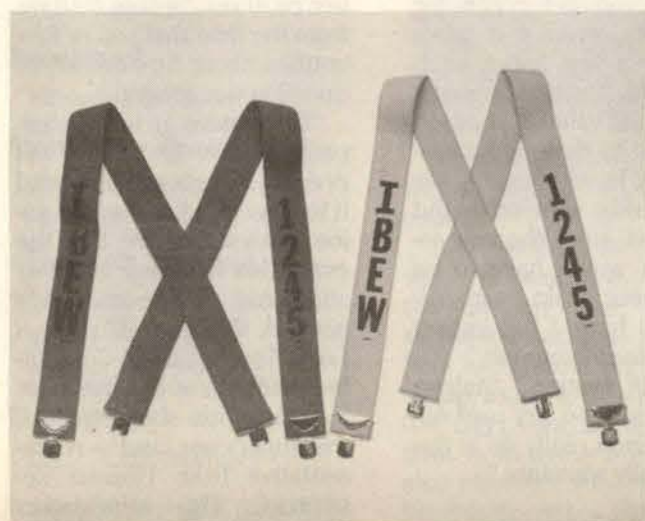
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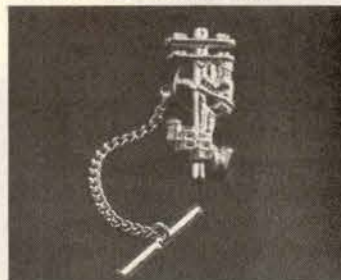
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