

UTILITY REPORTER

State Axes Overtime
See Story Below



Mike Brocchini
1958-1997

Union Mourns
Loss of Activist,
Brother, Officer
and Good Friend



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Maintenance of electric system: It's now the law

Good news for utility workers and the customers they serve: The maintenance of electric distribution is now governed by law.

After hearing recommendations from an advisory committee that included representatives from utilities, citizens groups, and Local 1245, the California Public Utilities Commission has finalized the rules governing the maintenance of electric distribution systems in the state. These rules, which became effective March 31, will help assure that high standards of electric service are maintained as California lurches into an era of deregulation, restructuring, and uncer-

tainty in the electric industry.

"We wanted to make sure there was a level playing field for all the players in the new competitive environment, and that no one could receive short term advantage by deferring maintenance expenses," said Local 1245 Business Manager Jack McNally. "Without some standard, customer service would be in real jeopardy."

Traditionally utilities have been able to defer maintenance at will. Under the new CPUC rules (General Order 165) all five investor-owned utilities in California will be required to perform an annual patrol of equipment, poles and lines in urban ar-

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Goodbye 8-hour day

Gov. Wilson's board abolishes overtime

After years of effort, California Gov. Pete Wilson has succeeded in abolishing the 8-hour day.

On April 11, the state Industrial Welfare Commission, at Wilson's urging, voted to eliminate California's rules requiring overtime pay after eight hours of work.

Approximately eight million workers in California will lose the right to overtime pay when the IWC rules take effect later this year.

Union workers are not immediately affected by the IWC ruling, which does not apply to employees covered by labor agreements. But labor leaders warned that many unionized employers may demand concessions when union contracts are renegotiated.

"We already have one major aerospace contractor at the bargaining table, who has said that in order to stay competitive they need to get rid of the eight-hour day,"

said Art Pulaski, executive secretary of the California Labor Federation. "The domino effect has already hit."

Labor officials said they will file suit in an effort to overturn the IWC action.

Union members showed up in force to protest the

See PAGE FIVE

Fitz: tenacious defender of workers

A long-time voice for Local 1245 and its members was silenced last month with the death of former Assistant Business Manager Ron Fitzsimmons.

From his days as a cable-splicer and union steward at PG&E in the 1970s, to his service on the union staff in the 1980s and early 1990s, Fitzsimmons earned a reputation for tenacity. Not your normal tenacity, but the kind that never lets go. The kind that union people respect and long remember.

"He was a leader," recalled L.L. Mitchell, who was Lo-

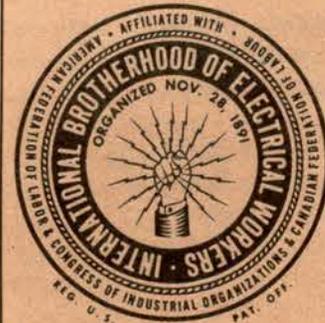
"Whatever he
did, he did it to
the full extent."

cal 1245 business manager when Fitzsimmons was a steward in the Underground Department at PG&E. "He didn't back up from anything. He was very aggressive in seeing things were followed according to the book."

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Ron Fitzsimmons
1943-1997



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CALENDAR

April 18
Pin Dinner
Redding, Ca.

April 25
Pin Dinner
Concord, Ca.

May 3-4
Advisory Council
Concord, Ca.

May 9
Pin Dinner
Santa Rosa, Ca.

May 16
Pin Dinner
Bakersfield, Ca.

May 17
Pin Dinner
Fresno, Ca.



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& Executive Editor**

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Eric Wolfe

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Workers here and abroad

Rolling the union on...

Got a Minute?: Five New York city police officers discussed their own union's contract problems while stranded for 45 minutes in January in an elevator at the Rockefeller Foundation with ten striking Detroit newspaper workers and their supporters, Labor Notes reported. When the elevator finally reached the ground floor, the officers handcuffed the strikers and led them off to jail. The strikers had gone to the foundation to confront its president, Peter Goldmark J., a member of the Knight-Ridder board of directors.

Union Wheel of Fortune: Labor Day week will be union-made and union-members' week on the popular Wheel of Fortune TV quiz show this year. All prizes on the shows broadcast that week will be union-made, and all the shows will feature contestant teams made up of two union-family members, Label Letter reported.

Jumping Ship: Guess, Inc., the company that sells its jeans as "Made in USA, an American Tradition," is moving most of its manufacturing to Mexico, Peru and

Chile. "This is about profit, pure and simple," said Steve Nutter of UNITE, a garment workers union. "Guess wants to be free to run its sweatshops." The company was cited for sweatshop and labor violations in Los Angeles, Nutter said. Instead of cleaning up their act, said Nutter, Guess is "jumping ship to bypass fair labor laws."

Pope on Respect: "An effective economy is one which respects employment and is not motivated purely by profit," Pope John Paul II told trade union leaders in a recent meeting, Free Labour World reported. He encouraged the trade unions to continue their work of "building a fair and democratic world."

That's Severance: Hundreds of ABC technicians represented by NABET-CWA held a lunchtime rally recently to protest the \$140 million severance package paid to former Disney executive Michael Ovitz, Labor Notes reported. Disney is ABC's parent company. Ovitz got the lucrative package after only 14 months on the job, even

though most outside observers call his performance a failure.

Code of Ethics: The National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice has released a Code of Ethics for Poultry Companies that calls for safe line speeds, living wages and fair benefits, better health and safety conditions, assistance for immigrant workers, and fair contracts for farmers who grow poultry for the processors, Labor Notes reported.

Cambodians Organize: State employees have formed a free trade union in Cambodia, the first in two decades, Free Labour World reported. The ceremony to mark the founding of the trade union ended with a demonstration outside the government headquarters in support of pay demands.

Pepsi Leaves Burma: PepsiCo, Inc., the giant US-based soft drink firm, is pulling all its brands and business out of Burma in response to a campaign by labor activists and others who oppose Burma's extremely repressive dictatorship, La-

Unit change

Unit 2316, Concord, has a new meeting time. Instead of 5 p.m., the unit will now meet at 7 p.m., effective as of April. Meeting location is still union headquarters, 3063 Citrus Circle, Walnut Creek, Ca.

bel Letter reported. A boycott of Pepsi on US college campuses, sparked by a Burmese-born graduate student at the University of Wisconsin, had spread to at least 100 schools. Legislation prohibiting governmental purchases from companies that do business in Burma has been passed by eight US cities and the state of Massachusetts.

Border Protest: For over a year, the Ontario, Canada unions have been holding a series of one-day general strikes against social service cutbacks and anti-union legislation. On June 13-14, the Ontario unionists intend to shut down the busiest border crossing between the United States and Canada in Windsor, Labor Notes reported.

Free, Sort of: A Chinese court rejected the appeal introduced by Liu Nianchun, a human rights activist sentenced to three months in a labor camp for writing petitions to the Chinese government to release political prisoners. "Freedom of expression must not jeopardize the security of the State," the tribunal ruled.

Fighting Forced Labor: The Chinese Slave Labor Act, recently introduced in the US House of Representatives, would ban the import of "items produced, grown or manufactured... with the use of forced labor" in China, Label Letter reported. The bill would require the US to seek permission from China's government for such groups as the International Labor Organization and the International Red Cross to inspect "all camps, prisons and other facilities holding detainees" in China for forced labor.

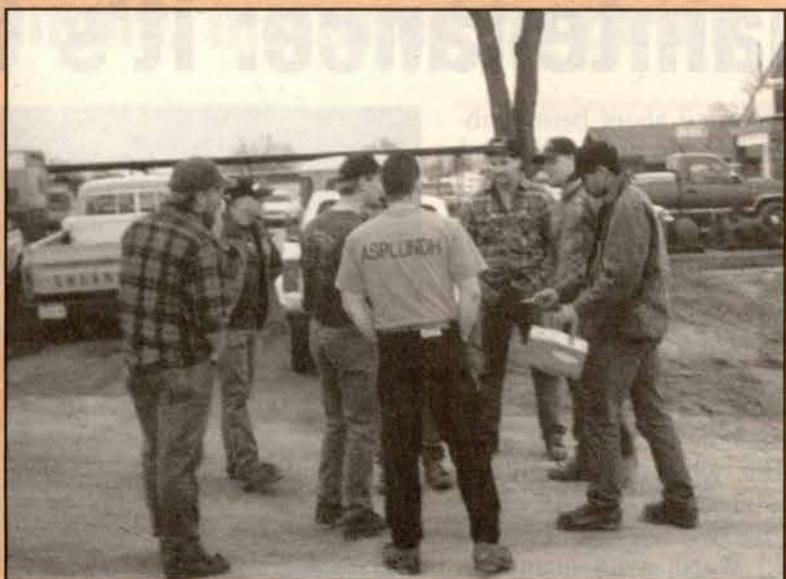


DIVESTITURE AGREEMENT

Local 1245 last month reached agreement with Pacific Gas & Electric regarding conditions for the company's proposed divestiture of power generating facilities. The agreement applies to Title 200 employees in the IBEW bargaining unit at all PG&E generating facilities except Diablo Canyon Power Plant. For more information on the agreement, contact the union hall. Representing the union on the bargaining committee were: Bill Butkovich, Robin David, Wayne Fippin, Dan Lockwood, Al MacLean, Larry Magnoli, Jim Martinez, Mike McBroom, Wayne Pacheco, Business Rep. Ken Ball, Assistant Business Manager Sam Tamimi, and Senior Assistant Business Manager Darrel Mitchell. Business Manager Jack McNally (not pictured) also served on the committee. (Photo: Austin Lea II)

ORGANIZING

Local 1245 members Jeff Palm (in Asplundh T-shirt) and Tony Taber (on Jeff's left) talk union with Utility Tree employees in Marysville. Local 1245 is attempting to bring all line clearance tree trimming contractors under a union contract. Union tree contractors are Asplundh, Davey and Arbor.



Cross our picketline, nurses say

In a curious twist on the usual picketline protocol, California nurses are asking people to cross their picketlines if their negotiations with Kaiser Permanente result in a strike.

The nurses are mobilizing for action because Kaiser, California's largest Health Maintenance Organization (HMO), has proposed draconian concessions. Kaiser is insisting on 2.5% wage cuts each year for six years for Sacramento Valley and Santa Rosa hospitals and all northern California clinics (except for "hospital-like RNs). A wage freeze would apply to all Bay Area and South Bay hospitals.

Kaiser also wants to institute "merit" pay, where any increases would be based on patient satisfaction perception surveys. A Paid Time Off scheme would force RNs to use vacation and holidays for illnesses of less than

eight days, effectively eliminating a significant portion of RN time off.

Other concessionary demands include pro-rated medical benefits, severely restricted seniority rights, and deep cuts in post-retirement medical benefits.

Nurses want you to cross their picket lines because increased use of Kaiser facilities costs Kaiser money and puts pressure on the health care giant to negotiate an end to the dispute with the California Nurses Association.

In memoriam: Sam Galindo

PG&E Lineman Sam Galindo was fatally injured during a pole removal job in an unincorporated area southwest of Livermore. The accident occurred Jan. 17, and Brother Galindo died on Feb. 27.

At the time of the accident the crew was in the process of cutting a 40-foot pole off approximately three feet above ground. The pole was in muddy ground and not accessible to a line truck. The crew had attached a fall line to the pole and was attempting to guide the pole away from a structure nearby. Brother Galindo was operating a chain saw at the base of the pole. As the pole fell, crew members yelled a warning because the pole was not falling precisely in the expected direction. He was struck by the falling pole and suffered extensive injuries, which proved fatal.

Local 1245 extends its condolences to friends and family of Sam Galindo.

In memoriam: Terry Roenfeldt

General Construction Lineman Terry Roenfeldt was fatally injured by electrical contact on March 10 in Rocklin, Ca.

The crew was attempting to free up a secondary neutral wire snagged in a tree when the accident occurred. The conductor contacted a 12kv primary line during this process. Brother Roenfeldt received entrance wounds on both hands and exit wounds to his shoulder. The accident is being investigated by the company, the union, and Cal-OSHA.

Local 1245 extends its condolences to friends and family of Terry Roenfeldt.

APPOINTMENTS

CITY OF SANTA CLARA

Santa Clara Ballot Committee
Pat O'Malley
Steve Suess

CITY OF BERKELEY

City of Berkeley Negotiations Committee
Rich Chan
James Milstead

Deregulation rhetoric doesn't match reality

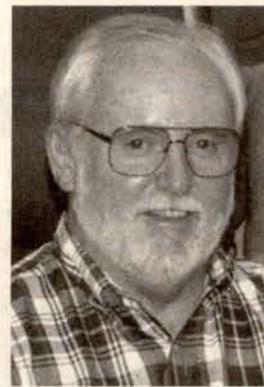
Jack McNally, IBEW 1245 Business Manager

We all know that rhetoric doesn't always match reality, and that's certainly proving to be true in the utility restructuring process.

When the restructuring of California's electric industry got underway in the early 1990s, the California economy was at the center of the debate. A popular argument for restructuring was that California's electric service cost too much and that businesses were threatening to move out of California. We heard over and over how the regulated utility monopolies needed to be dismantled, that competition would bring lower prices, and that lower prices would encourage businesses to stay in (or come to) California.

As the process began, the free marketeers pushed for generation unbundling. They extolled the virtues of capitalism, stating that a profit could be made in generating electricity, while at the same time producing prices that would be lower than the current regulated prices.

As the restructuring process continued, the free marketeers succeeded in gaining support for the idea that generation ought to be opened up to the free market. But now we find they have moved on to a new issue: They want to unbundle the "revenue cycling" process, which includes metering, billing, collecting, and customer inquiry functions. The free marketeers are now complaining that there really isn't any profit in generation—they need to get into the revenue cycle to make money.



Despite the rhetoric about keeping jobs in California, the reality is that utility restructuring is mainly about money and who can grab the most the fastest.

When you begin to look at who the possible new generators are, who the established marketers and aggregators are, you find most are companies who are established in other states. This includes utilities with cheap generation, like those in the northwest, and so-called energy service companies located outside of California, such as ENRON and Duke/Louis Dreyfus.

The new scenario of the restructured electric service industry is that electricity could be generated in other states, even in Mexico, and wheeled over transmission and distribution lines to customers in California. The scenario continues with automatic meter reading with the possibility of customers having to buy their meters and the energy service providers doing the billing and collecting, with the likelihood that this work will be performed outside of California.

The irony here is that utility industry jobs in California could be lost to other states. In a recent

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Electric system maintenance: it's the law

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eas and a biennial patrol in rural areas. The order requires a detailed inspection of underground equipment every three years, and overhead and pad-mounted equipment every five years. Wood poles over 15 years old which have not been subject to an intrusive inspection must have an intrusive inspection within 10

years. Those that have passed an intrusive inspection must be inspected every 20 years.

Public Will Benefit

The recommendations followed two years of intense debate within the advisory committee over what a maintenance standard should contain.

"The utilities were very

concerned about being submissive to an organized maintenance program," said Local 1245 member Steve Ward, who represented the union on the advisory committee. The utilities were concerned that maintenance standards could jeopardize their position in the new competitive market, he said.

But while other utilities resisted, PG&E became "proactive" on maintenance, said Ward, a lineman with 24 years of experience at PG&E. Thanks to the Facility Assessment and Condition Tracking System (FACTS) developed jointly by PG&E and Local 1245 nearly two years ago, the company is already in substantial compliance with the new CPUC order.

"The standard is by far the best thing for the state to have happen as far as the safety and security of the public and the (utility) employees," said Ward. "The public will benefit because service will be protected even as the regulated utility is disappearing. The public is a winner, and the working folk are winners."

The new order requires utilities to keep records that identify the inspector, the date of inspection, any problems identified, and the scheduled date of corrective action, according to Marc Joseph, an attorney representing Local 1245 and other utility unions in the CPUC's deliberations.

For detailed and intrusive inspections, the utilities must also rate the condition of the inspected equipment. When corrective action is completed, the records must show the nature of the work, the date the work was done and the identity of the people performing the work, Joseph said.

The utilities must submit annual reports, under penalty of perjury, which identify the number of facilities of each type inspected, why any scheduled inspections were not conducted, and a date certain when those inspections will occur. The annual report also must



CPUC MANDATES MAINTENANCE

Poles that were rotten, like the one above, or inadequately supported like the one below, were all too common before PG&E undertook its massive maintenance program in April of 1995 in cooperation with Local 1245. CPUC General Order 165 now requires all five California investor-owned utilities to adhere to rigorous maintenance practices. (The poles pictured here were photographed in March of 1995 in Merced. The tape measure showed the pole above was rotten above the bottom stubbing band.) (Photo: Dan Mayo)

"The public will benefit because service will be protected even as the regulated utility is disappearing. The public is a winner, and the working folk are winners."

Steve Ward, lineman & Advisory Committee member

POINT OF VIEW

Restructuring: rhetoric & reality

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Assembly hearing on unbundling the revenue cycle process, a firm that specializes in automated meter reading touted how they have created 500 new jobs in California. But over 1500 meter reader jobs will be lost. That is a net 1000 jobs lost to the California economy.

At that same hearing, energy service companies that promote unbundling of the "revenue cycle" stated that they will create hundreds of jobs if given the chance. However, most service companies are located outside of California. In fact, one such firm is now establishing a billing and collection facility in Ohio. This puts thousands of jobs at

risk, jobs that could disappear from the California economy.

Electric restructuring is about money and the desire by big energy users to get lower rates at everyone else's expense. The same functions and work processes now in use will still be needed to deliver electricity to ratepayers.

But with restructuring, it will likely be a different set of folk who perform those same functions—for a lesser rate of pay and benefits—to deliver electricity in the new restructured industry.

No matter what kind of rhetoric you dress it up with, there will be more losers than winners in the restructured world.



present the total and percentage of equipment rated at each condition rating level, the total and percentage of equipment which was and was not corrected, among other information.

Union members at PG&E and the other affected utilities clearly had a lot to gain from the creation of General Order 165. The maintenance requirements will help insure that utilities recruit and retain enough qualified workers to get the job done.

"This major achievement would not have been possible

without the help of Steve Ward and Landis Marttila," said Joseph. "They provided the technical expertise and perspective which allowed us to evaluate statements by the utilities and respond appropriately. They also provided us with tremendous credibility before the commission."

General Order 165 does not yet apply to municipal or publicly-owned utilities. The CPUC has asked for comments on whether the General Order should apply to these utilities.

Wilson kills 8-hour day

From PAGE ONE

IWC's attack on overtime. About 300 union members held a "funeral for the eight-hour day" outside the room where the IWC met, and many union members shouted angry protests at the commissioners during the course of the meeting.

Three people were removed from the meeting room and received misdemeanor citations from the California Highway Patrol for disrupting a public meeting. The three were later released.

Los Angeles Assemblyman Wally Knox, author of bills that would reinstate the eight-hour day, predicted an enormous backlash when workers around the state feel the actual effect of the change.

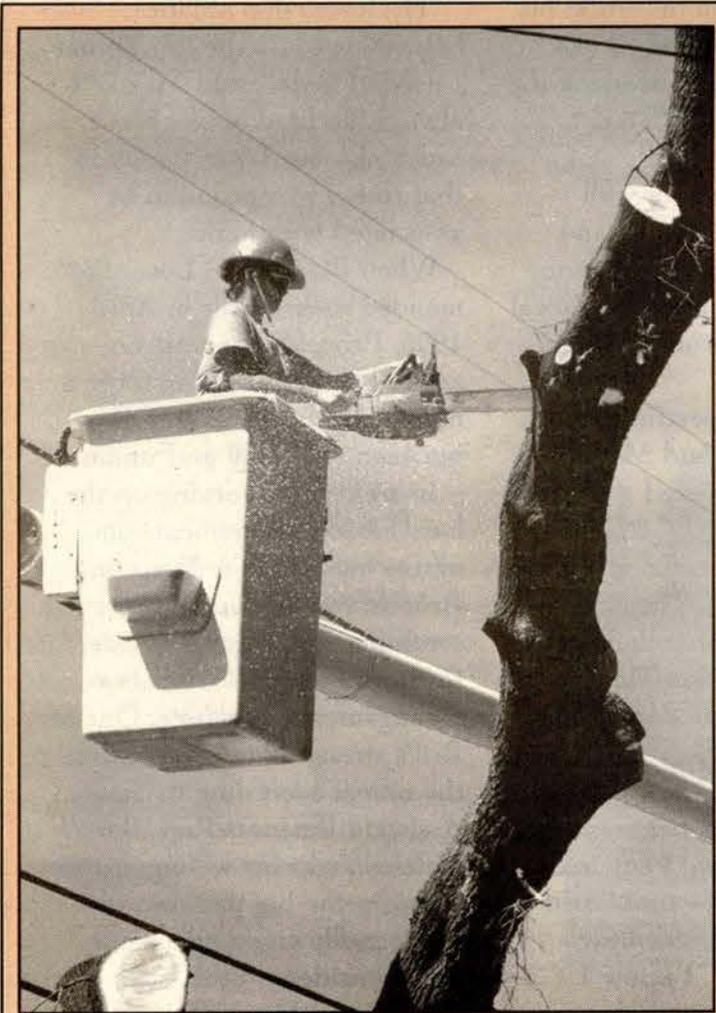
"There will be a movement to save the eight-hour day," Knox said. "It won't begin today, but the day that 8 million Californians bring home their paychecks and put them on the kitchen table and say, 'I was just given a

cut in pay by my own government.'"

Business groups lobbied strongly for the abolition of the 8-hour overtime rule, and argued that employees would now benefit from more flexible work schedules.

But those arguments were hotly contested by union officials, who pointed out that schedule flexibility could be achieved without abolishing overtime pay. Current law already permits employees in a given workgroup to vote for exemptions to the 8-hour day. In this manner, many workgroups around the state, have voted to create "alternative" schedules such as four 10-hour days.

Once the IWC rules take effect, employers will not be required to pay any overtime until the employee has put in 40 hours in a week. Thus it would be legal to pay straight time to a worker putting in 12, 16 (or even more) consecutive hours of work.



Local 1245 member Diana Palm on a recent tree removal job for Asplundh Tree in Auburn. (Photo courtesy of Bob Irwin)

We Do The Work: The Documentary Series

Issues Facing workers Profiled On Public Television

For the last six years, the public television series, *We Do the Work*, has served as the only national public television series dedicated to examining the lives, issues and history of working people in America. Starting in May, public television stations around the nation will present encore presentations of eight *We Do The Work* documentaries that have won awards and generated the greatest viewer response. (Contact your public television affiliate or check local listings for airdates.) Shows in the documentary series include:

Ties That Bind

Examines workers' efforts to gain union representation in the workplace. The stories of two organizing drives are told, at a shipyard in New Orleans, La. and at a textile factory in Martinsville, Va. where workers and management express their points of view, with surprising results. (Includes update).

Navajo Medicine

This special follows Native American health care workers struggling to meet the health care needs of isolated rural communities on the Navajo Nation. Explores the cultural influences affecting delivery of health care and highlights this unique hybrid of traditional and western medicines.

State of the Unions

The first contested election in the history of the AFL-CIO resulted in big changes for organized labor. In profiles of the new leadership, we'll hear their views on the challenges facing labor unions. The program also examines public attitudes about unions and the obstacles facing young organizers in the field.

Taking Off

Global competition in the airline industry has resulted in more and more US carriers going offshore for aircraft maintenance and how it affects jobs, wages and the safety of the flying public. Includes exclusive footage of a Costa Rican aircraft maintenance facility. This program examines the Federal Aviation Administration's oversight of foreign repair stations and the increasing number of cases of bogus parts found on aircraft. (Updated to report on the ValuJet tragedy).

Workplace Beat: Covering the Bottom Line

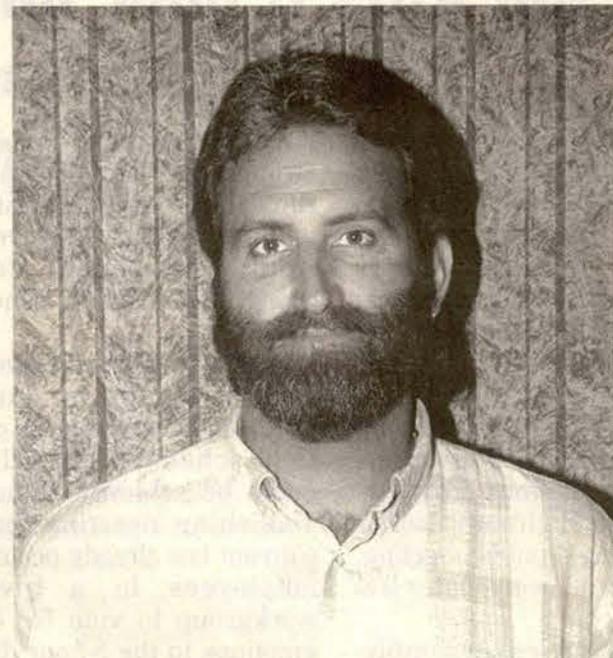
In July of 1995, 2,500 Detroit Free Press and Detroit News workers went on strike. Newspaper executives say that in order to stay competitive in an era when newspaper circulation is declining, they need a smaller workforce and more flexibility. This documentary goes behind the scenes to talk to strikers, management and workers who crossed the picket line. (Includes update.)

Prison Labor, Prison Blues

this award winning investigative report goes behind penitentiary walls to look at the growing controversy over the increasing use of prison labor in the US. We hear from prison officials, inmates, and business and labor leaders. Does prison labor provide rehabilitation and a way to finance prisons, or is it just a cheap source of labor for private companies? What is the impact on people competing for the same jobs outside the prison system?

Silver Hugo Award, Chicago International Video Festival

Proud to Call Him 'Bro'



Mike Brocchini
1958-1997

Michael Brocchini didn't do things halfway.

His devotion to his two children, Nicholas and Brienne, was evident to all. His ability to light up any gathering with wit and good will was legendary.

There was nothing halfway about Brocchini's unionism, either. When Pacific Gas & Electric was recklessly downsizing, Brocchini was an adamant and vocal adversary. When the company changed course and opened the door to cooperation with the union, Brocchini was an energetic and talented ally.

No, there was nothing halfway about Mike Brocchini. And there was nothing halfway about the shock and sorrow experienced by his friends and co-workers when they learned that Brocchini, 38, had died suddenly and unexpectedly on April 1 after a brief bout with flu-like symptoms. Brocchini's connection with his community was evident on April 8 when several hundred people filled St. Patrick's Church in Merced to pay their final respects to a man affectionately known as "Bro."

"Mike had a keen interest

and desire to improve the working conditions for his fellow workers," said Local 1245 Business Manager Jack McNally in a eulogy given at the church. "He was very serious about his responsibilities and did an exceptional job in representing Local 1245 members. He also was very serious about his responsibilities for his children and they always came first."

Brocchini, who hired on at PG&E in 1979 in Madera and subsequently became a lineman in Merced, was appointed shop steward in 1987 on the recommendation of Local 1245 Business Representative Frank Hutchins, who remembered Brocchini as "the most active steward in the world."

His knowledge of workplace issues and his skills in dealing with people won Brocchini an appointment to the General Bargaining Committee for negotiations with PG&E in 1990 and again in 1994. He was elected as the San Joaquin delegate to the Local 1245 Advisory Council in 1989, winning reelection in 1992 and 1995. In 1996 he was appointed Treasurer for Local 1245.

He also represented Local

1245 on the area's Central Labor Council.

But perhaps more important than his official positions with the union and with the company, Brocchini was a force to be reckoned with at PG&E by virtue of his personal integrity, his fierce pride in his work, his genuine affection for people, and his willingness to speak the truth as he saw it. PG&E learned this aspect of Brocchini's character well when, in early 1995, he and fellow Merced lineman Danny Mayo appeared before the local city council to protest PG&E downsizing.

Polite and respectful to a fault, Brocchini and Mayo nonetheless delivered a devastating critique of PG&E job cuts and the potential affect on customer service. They did so despite the fact that their boss, the PG&E Division Manager, was in the audience listening to their every word.

"Mike covered the overall consequences for the entire PG&E system and I covered more of the local issues," said Mayo in recalling the now-famous episode. "I know I couldn't have gone it alone without Mike being there."

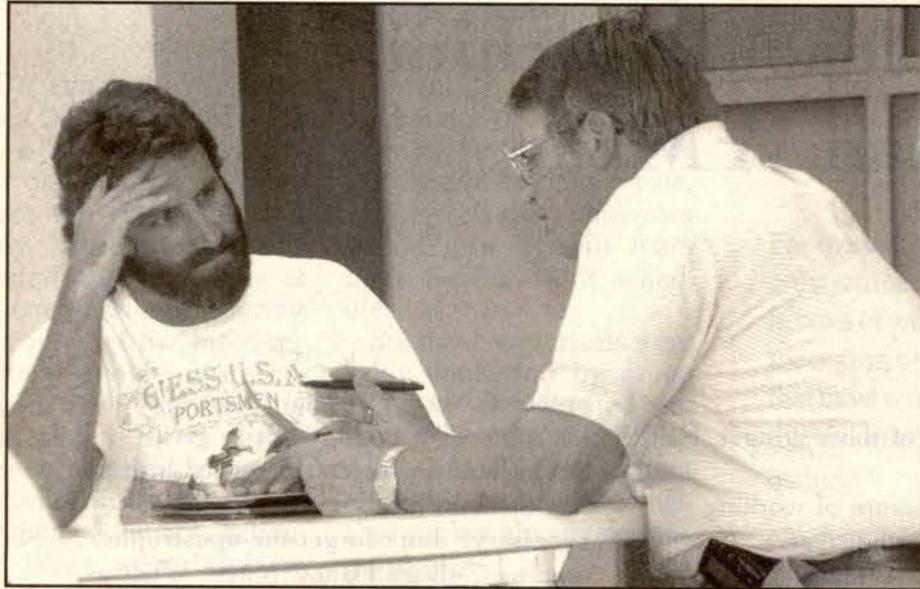
Mayo, also a steward and lineman in Merced, called Brocchini a "natural leader" who possessed a great sense of humor, an ability to listen, and "a willingness to fight for something he truly believed in."

"His leadership abilities helped me to do the things that I needed to do," said Mayo. "I always felt kind of like his 'sidekick', but I was happy in that role. I was proud to be associated with him."

When PG&E and Local 1245 mended their fences in April 1995, Brocchini became an active player in helping forge a new, cooperative relationship between company and union.

In addition to serving on the local labor-management committee for Yosemite Division, Brocchini was a union representative on the system-wide Gas and Electric T&D labor-management committee. One of Bro's strengths in representing the union, according to Senior Assistant Business Rep. Darrel Mitchell, was his willingness to consider the big picture.

"He really analyzed a situation, considered both sides of issues," said Mitchell. He was proud of being a Division



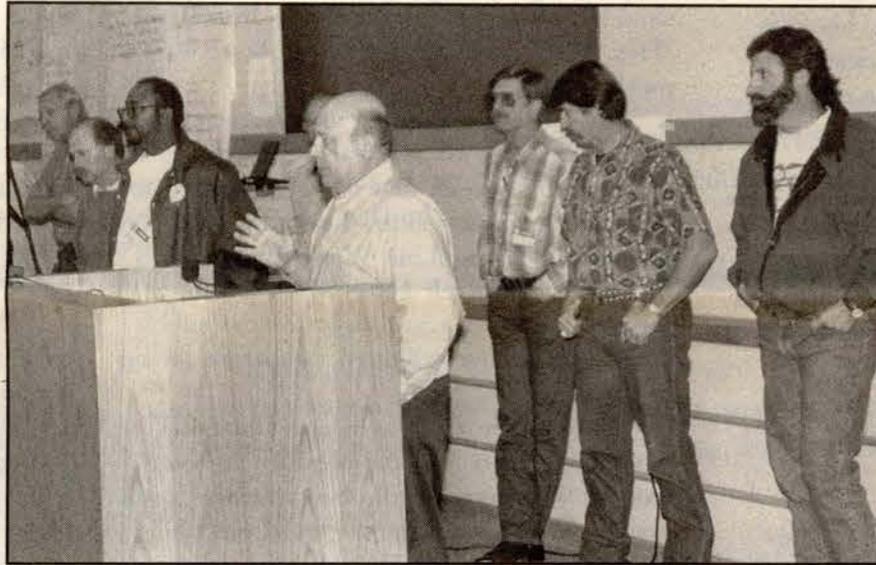
lineman, but he tried to understand the viewpoints of other departments and of General Construction. "He was very compassionate, very unselfish," said Mitchell, adding that Brocchini's sense of humor helped defuse stressful situations.

"He was a very influential person," said Ron van Dyke, who was Brocchini's union business representative following the retirement of Frank Hutchins. "He was always looking to do something for somebody else—not for himself, for somebody else."

In a message to all Yosemite Division employees, Division Manager Steve Rath called Brocchini's death "truly a great loss personally, and to the entire Yosemite Division team."

"Mike was a true leader in every sense of the word and his presence will be greatly missed," said Rath, who also spoke at the funeral.

In Bro's honor, the flag at PG&E's "M" Street office in Merced was flown at half-staff.



Left: Mike (far right) and other union and management members of the Gas and Electric T&D labor-management committee are recognized during a December 1995 "summit" meeting at PG&E's Learning Center in San Ramon.

Below left: Mike participates in the general bargaining that led to the 1994 Labor Agreement with PG&E. Also shown are fellow negotiators Jeff Knisley (left) and Robert Olsen (right).

Top left: Mike and PG&E's Wayne Peterson roleplay a bargaining situation during a "Mutual Gains" training session in San Ramon, Ca. in 1995.

Top right: Mike and Local 1245 Executive Board member Chris Habecker share a light-hearted moment with Willie Brown, then Speaker of the California Assembly, now Mayor of San Francisco.



My Remembrances of Michael Brocchini: A Son, A Father, A Lineman, A Man, And My Friend

A Son

...of George and Vy Brocchini. Youngest of three boys of Pacific Bell parents. As I remember Mike, he must have been around six or seven years old, rough housing around the lawns with his older brothers at the Pacific Bell and CWA union picnics and parties, and racing for the food tables. Mike loved to eat. When Mike talked about his mom's cooking, his eyes twinkled. His heart told the stories of her fantastic baking. He could make champ slobber talking about her sweet rolls and pies.

Mike always said, "Around supper time I played pretty close to the back door, I didn't want to be last to the table."

Mike, in true Italian culture, loved and revered his mother, father, and brothers.

A Father

Nicholas and Brea, Mike loved you more with every beat of his heart. He was as proud of each of you as a father could be. Brea, as his beautiful, graceful china doll, in dance classes as well as in sports. Nick, as Mike told us many times, "Nick took after his old man. The kid can eat." If ever either of you need a reminder of just how much your father loved you, you need only ask me, Stu, Wayne, or Petey, we listened each morning to his talk of you kids. Remember this always, Brea and Nick, your father loved you with all his heart and was devoted to you forever.

A Lineman

An old subforeman who had a definition for just about every position at PG&E and an anecdote for every situation told me 31 years ago when I was a groundman, when asked what it took to be a lineman, Ray Moore said: "You have to be six feet tall, a size 12 boot, size 5 hat, and a set of eyes a fence staple could poke out both eyes. I surmised without stating out loud a lineman

must be pretty thick.

Mike only fit one of those criteria. He was over six feet tall.

I have had the pleasure of working with Mike for PG&E on earthquakes, windstorms, snowstorms, floods and just damn hard, tough jobs. Never, and I repeat, never did Mike take a step backwards. First to grab his hooks or a shovel, Mike, when we pulled up to a job that made us all shudder, always had a little quip to add: "Hey, We'll probably get a rest, or at least a meal or two."

Mike never weakened as a lineman. He got tired like us all, he bent a little on occasion, like us all. But if I ever needed to press the lineman a little, I relied on old Ray Moore's book on "Line Work Made Simple." I'd just tell Mike, if it's too tough for the lineman it's just right for the subbie. Mike would have whipped me before giving in then.

I guess then I can sum up with this. I have in 31 years had the pleasure to have worked with some of the best linemen in the system. We worked hard, played hard, and made PG&E money. Thanks Mike for your safe, hard work. Mike was a damn good lineman.

Mike the Man and Friend

This for me is both the easiest and the hardest to put to words. I am at this moment, late Tuesday night into the first drink of the second bottle, remembering, remembering, and reliving our past friendship, my observations, and listenings of work, of friendship, and family. Tears are starting with an occasional start of a smile when I think of the fun we had.

Each morning Mike usually got to work around 6:45. We all used to get there earlier, but recent times with PG&E, attitudes changed, and so have we, so most come in a little later. But true to form, Mike got there a little earlier—being a shop steward maybe someone wanted to discuss a

problem. Not a problem to Mike. He had the solution or had the gift to get it resolved. If he couldn't he called in his sidekick: dot-every-i, commas-when-necessary, don't-forget-the-apostrophe, send-me-7-slugs Danny Mayo. What a combination for Yosemite District.

Mike was a happy person. he greeted everyone as we sombered in to work in the morning. Some hung over, some grumbling, some mumbling, some mad at the world.

Mike's last morning, he and I stood outside with a cup as people wandered in. He greeted me each and every morning, "Hey old man, how's it going?" It seems I inherited Kirk Jones' moniker when he retired. Mike greeted someone, I don't recall who, and I said, "What do you talk to that S.O.B. for?"

The big grin came on his face and he once again stated, "Norman, I don't think it's all Lois."

Michael personified all the quirks of the young PG&E lineman, with some of the habits of the old ones. As a friend and fellow lineman, I knew Mike to have:

*That quick tongue—sharp and to the point

*The heart of a saint—giving, caring, and loving

*The business sense of both caring for the customer and caring for the welfare of the company

*And the ability to take the most awful six spans of two solid wire down in the fog, on a double dead-end line and buck pole with an oil spill and four irate dairymen, look at me and say, "Norm, I'll talk to them, you don't handle irate customers well, and 10 minutes later have them walk away thanking us for being there.

Mike was better than good in all walks of life. Michael, we're all better people having known you.

You're wrong Mike. I don't always have to be right. I know you didn't stick the truck on purpose.

Your Friend Always,
Norm Covert

Ron Fitzsimmons mourned by union

From PAGE ONE

"Fitz was very tenacious, a bull dog in pursuing the interests of the membership," said Senior Assistant Business Manager Darrel Mitchell. "Whether it was Golden Gloves boxing or scuba diving, whatever he did, he did it to the full extent. And he brought that same energy to the union."

"He was tenacious. He was zealous, an aggressive negotiator," said Business Rep. Frank Saxsenmeier. "He was just a ball of energy, union all the way. Almost any means to attain a goal. He had a real firm sense of what he thought was right."

Business Manager Jack McNally, who hired Fitzsimmons onto the union staff in 1980, remembered him as a dedicated union representative who worked hard on behalf of the members.

"He was a hard worker. He worked hard to complete whatever task he was assigned. If he was assigned to bargaining, he would work hard at that. When he was responsible for safety and training, he worked hard at that," said McNally. "He was a pretty

tenacious person."

Fitzsimmons, who was initiated into Local 1245 in 1969, won admiration for his willingness to tackle new issues, and tackle them hard.

"He'd actively volunteer," recalled Darrel Mitchell. When Fitzsimmons was assigned to deal with safety issues at PG&E, "he spent a lot of time, a lot of hours, and plowed a lot of new ground." In addition to reviewing safety rules and reviewing accidents, Fitzsimmons deserved major credit for the establishment and implementation of local safety committees at PG&E, Mitchell said. He also was a driving force in the joint apprenticeship committee for many years.

Prior to serving on the union staff, Fitzsimmons was elected vice president in 1977, and assumed the post of president shortly thereafter.

A body-builder in his spare time, Fitzsimmons was a powerful physical presence in any gathering.

"He wasn't afraid of anything," recalled L.L. Mitchell. "He worked out a lot. He was strong as a bull. He could lift a car." And,

"He wasn't afraid of anything ... He was strong as a bull. He could lift a car. He didn't take manure from anybody."

L.L. Mitchell

Mitchell added, Fitzsimmons "didn't take manure from anybody."

Nevertheless, Fitzsimmons was able to build constructive relations with management.

"They knew him for what he was and they respect him very much. And they listened to him when he talked, so he was very effective," said L.L. Mitchell. "He was a nice guy. He was a true friend."

Donations in Ron Fitzsimmons's memory can be made to the American Heart Association, P.O. Box 6181, Concord, CA 94524.

Oakland General Strike Exhibit Extended to May 17

The Oakland Museum of California announced that due to flourishing attendance, it is extending "We Called it a Work Holiday: The 1946 Oakland General Strike" exhibit to May 18. The exhibit had originally been set to close on Feb. 23. In addition, the final day of the exhibit will offer half-price admission to union members.

The exhibit opened on Nov. 22, 1996 to a huge crowd and featured the premiere of an 18-minute video on the General Strike, "Smashing the Tower."

This is the first major museum exhibit in the US ever devoted to commemorating a city-wide general strike. "We Called it a Work Holiday" features photos and graphics with text, union and anti-union propaganda and memorabilia, oral histories, a video, and reconstructions of actual events. Together they bring to life the streets of downtown Oakland, when workers decided to say "enough is enough" to anti-union employers and their allies in city government. Much of the material, including the video, is drawn from research conducted for the California Federation of Teachers' labor history project for high school students, Golden Lands, Working Hands.

Free book on EMFs

The US Department of Energy's Research and Public Information Dissemination Program (RAPID) has produced a booklet called "EMF in the Workplace." You can get a free copy of this booklet by calling 1-800-363-2383. The Local 1245/PG&E Joint EMF Committee highly recommends the booklet.

RAPID is a national program which combines government and private resources to study and provide answers to questions about electric and magnetic fields.

Safety Matters

Strains and sprains

Does this sound familiar? You bend over to lift an object and suddenly you feel a sharp pain in your back.

Strains and sprains were the most common injuries reported to the Safety Committee in 1996. There are things you can do to avoid getting strains and sprains. Take the time to stretch out before taking on any physical demands. Never lift anything that is too heavy by yourself. Get help.

Always lift with your knees and not your back.

Make sure you have a clear path to avoid tripping hazards.

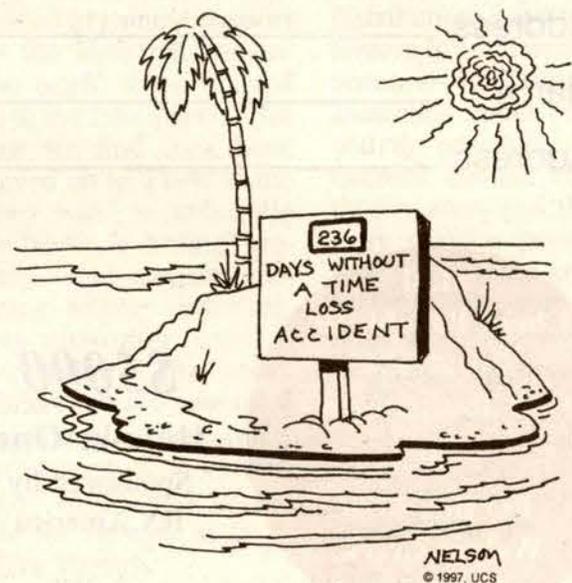
There are a variety of things to help prevent strains and sprains. Proper footwear can provide ankle support and prevent slipping. Back support braces can be used if you do a lot of lifting. The use of ergonomically correct tools also prevent repetitive motion injuries. Remember to take the time to plan your work to prevent injuries to yourself as well as others.

Safe driving

Before you operate any vehicle, familiarize yourself with all state vehicle codes and local traffic rules. Always wear your seat belt. Being thrown from a moving vehicle is the number one cause of death in a vehicle accident.

Never operate a vehicle with faulty brakes or me-

chanical defects. Stay focused on your surroundings. Take extra care around schools and playgrounds. Remember that the risk of an accident goes up after the sun goes down. Two-thirds of all traffic accidents occur at night, even though there are only half as many vehicles on the road.





Twelfth Annual IBEW Local 1245 Golf Tournament

Barbecue Chicken
or New York Steak

Drawing Prizes!
Long Drive Prizes!

Saturday, June 7, 1997

Indian Valley Golf Club

Novato, California

First Tee Time: 10:00 a.m.*

Guests Are Welcome!
4-Man Best Ball Scramble
Limited Tee Spaces
Entry Deadline: May 15

\$80 Entry Fee
(Includes Cart & Dinner)

\$70 Entry Fee
(Cart & Green Fee Only, No Dinner)

\$5000

Hole-in-One Prize!

Don't Miss Out--Register Now! Deadline is May 15!

1. Name _____ Chicken Steak

Address _____

2. Name _____ Chicken Steak

Address _____

3. Name _____ Chicken Steak

Address _____

4. Name _____ Chicken Steak

Address _____

Mail
Check Payable to:
"Local 1245
Golf Tournament"
to:
PO Box 4790
Walnut Creek,
CA 94596

\$5000
Hole-in-One
Sponsored by
RX America

For Further
Information Call:
Frank Saxsenmeier
510-933-6060 Ext. 338
or 415-898-1141

Foursomes are not necessary

Fore!

**Dinner and Awards
Immediately Following:**

**Indian Valley Golf Club
3035 Novato Blvd.
Novato, California 94948
(415) 897-1118**

*First T-Time is 10:00 a.m. If there are fewer than 75 players, first tee time is 11:00 a.m.

Meddling with CPI would harm seniors

Now that the immediate threat of the balanced budget amendment is abated, senior activists are now turning their attention to efforts to tamper with the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan told the House Budget Committee that he supports the creation of a commission to study the issue, despite the fact that he is "100%" sure that the index overstate inflation by at least 1%. A cut of 1% would mean lawmakers would have easy access to billions of dollars with which to balance the budget. Such a move, however, would mean drastically lower cost-of-living increases for low-middle-income seniors—those who can least afford the cut. A lower CPI would also raise taxes for many Americans because of its impact on tax brackets. Some Republicans oppose a CPI reduction for this reason.

As the issue heated up, it was widely reported that President Clinton was close to considering the creation of a commission—an idea also supported by Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss. House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt, D-Mo., wrote a letter to the president opposing the establishment of a commission to study the issue. Any adjustments to the CPI

What issues should California seniors care about?

By Orv Owen

Over the next few months, fellow Local 1245 retiree Don Hardie and I would like to share with you some of the extremely important information we received at the 20th Annual Convention of the Congress of California Seniors in San Diego on March 25-27.

Since this tremendous amount of information cannot be reported in one single article and because of its importance to retirees and seniors, our brothers and sisters in the workplace and their families, we will focus on a different subject

each month. Among the topics we hope to cover are: Medicare, Medicaid, Medicare and Managed Care, Long Term Care, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Older Americans Act, Balanced Budget Constitutional Amendment, Scams and Frauds that Target Seniors, California Seniors Legislative Agenda, Communicating with and Organizing Seniors and Activists at all Levels to Return Our Country to its Citizens.

This month we look at the Consumer Price Index, which is currently under review in Congress.

should be determined scientifically and accurately by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), not by a politically motivated commission interested only in finding ways to painlessly reduce the deficit, he says.

Mr. Greenspan claims a commission is needed because it takes the BLS too long to gather the information needed to make CPI changes. However, quicker is not better when it comes to calculating an accurate CPI, claim senior advocates.

President Clinton had not agreed to a commission as this update went to press. Supporters of a commission are merely using it as political cover, say opponents. Should a panel agree that CPI changes are necessary, it old take

the heat off lawmakers who support the reduction. Uping the ante, Lott and other Republican lawmakers have hinted that they see no chance of agreement on a budget plan this year if the president does not support another CPI commission.

Some supporters, as well as opponents, of arbitrarily cropping the CPI for political benefit claim a commis-

sion is simply redundant. The Boskin Commission—a group of economists led by Stanford University economist Michael Boskin appointed in 1995 by members of the Senate Finance Committee—recommended a reduction in the index of 1.1% only last December.

Meanwhile, a block of conservative House Democrats, nicknamed the "blue dogs," are calling for a 0.8% CPI reduction through 2002 as part of their own budget plan. They have been very busy over the past few weeks trying to persuade other lawmakers to go along with their plan.

Concerned citizens should contact their lawmakers and tell them to oppose arbitrary, politically-motivated cuts to the CPI.



IBEW
Local
1245



Retirees Corner

Fed protection for pensions

After years of running multi-billion-dollar deficits that sparked fears of a costly government bailout, the federal program that insures corporate pension plans has bounced back so strongly that it posted the first surplus in its history last year, President Clinton announced March 31.

Clinton used the new report to renew his call to Congress for further controls on the pension industry.

"Our people deserve to know that if they work hard throughout their lives, the money they worked for and that they saved is not being squandered or left unprotected," the Washington Post quoted the president as saying.

The Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp. protects the pensions of 42 million workers. Since its creation in 1974, the agency had never reported more assets than liabilities in its centerpiece program, which takes over single-employer plans that fail.

What is the CPI?

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure of the average change in prices over time in a fixed market basket of goods and services. Two CPIs are published: 1) the CPI for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) which covers about 80% of the total population and 2) the CPI for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) which covers 32% of the total population.

The CPI based on prices of food, clothing, shelter, transportation, medical care, and other goods and services that people buy for day-to-day living. In calculating the index, price changes for the various items in 35 locations are averaged together with weights which represent their importance in the spending of the appropriate population group. Indexes for different months are usually compared in relative terms. Thus, an index of 133.5 is 1.053 times higher than an index of 125.5 (133.5/125.5=1.053); in other words, prices increased 5.3%. The CPI is used as an indicator of inflation, a deflator of other economic series, and as an escalator for income payments.

Retiree Club meeting dates: Come join us!

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 to the newly-retired!

The Local 1245 Retirees Club extends its congratulations to these recently-retired members of the union. We invited you to participate in a Retirees Club chapter in your area, or to start one in your area if there is none! Call Julie Rodriguez at 510-933-6060 Ext. 208.

Name	Residence	Yrs/Srvc.
Paul Domeniconi	S. San Francisco, Ca.	34
Myrick Gafford Jr.	Suisun City, Ca.	32
Vernon Gard	Burney, Ca.	27
Bobby Hagerman	Hayfork, Ca.	41
Don Mydland	Bakersfield, Ca.	40
Douglas Spreng	Lake Havasu City, Az.	12



New journeyman certificate acknowledges credentials

Local 1245 and Pacific Gas & Electric have agreed to establish a journeyman certificate for a variety of classifications to officially recognize the journeyman status of employees not eligible for state certification.

Many of PG&E's apprenticeships are certified by the California Division of Apprenticeship Standards. But some PG&E training programs are not state certified, such as Water System Repairman in Hydro Generation and Building Mechanic in General Office. Workers in these classifications have journey-level skills, but their journeyman status is not recognized in any official way.

The Local 1245/PG&E

certificate will accord these employees the recognition they deserve.

Also benefiting from the new certificate are two other groups of PG&E employees: those who achieved journeyman status on an accelerated basis and those who completed an apprenticeship program before it was certified by the state. Most of PG&E's programs were not state certified until 1973.

Under the authority of the Local 1245/PG&E Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee, provisionally appointed employees have been placed in journeyman positions and received accelerated training and wage increases. The state will not certify such individuals, regardless of their proven skills.

"Historically the company has needed certain individuals, such as Division Operators, and have needed those folks trained and able to achieve journeyman status as quickly as possible," said Local 1245 Business Manager Jack McNally. "In the union's view, these people are journeymen even though they got there faster than the state apprenticeship standards allow."

Union and company members of the Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee decided it was important to acknowledge the journeymen status of these individuals with an official certificate. If these employees ever leave PG&E, the certificate would enable them to prove their qualifications to a future employer.

"In the union's view, these people are journeymen even though they got there faster than the state apprenticeship standards allow."

Jack McNally

"I routinely receive calls from employers on the West Coast to verify the work history of individuals who were formerly PG&E journeymen," said Business Rep. Landis Marttila, who represents Local 1245 on the Apprenticeship Committee. "My impression is that, particularly in states adjoining California, PG&E journeymen in all classifications are highly regarded."

To acquire a certificate, PG&E employees should contact their school representative or training coordinator and request the journeyman certificate. Requests will be reviewed and processed by the JATC.

Representing Local 1245 on the JATC, along with Marttila, are Business Representatives Frank Saxsenmeier, Joel Ellihoff, and Ed Caruso.

PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY AND IBEW LOCAL 1245
JOINT APPRENTICESHIP & TRAINING COMMITTEE

Journeyman Certificate

Electrician

Power Generation Department

Your Name

Is awarded this certificate, having demonstrated the skills and knowledge required to obtain Journeyman status.

March 12, 1996

Manager

Training Representative



Chairman

Secretary