

# UTILITY REPORTER

CPUC Unbundles  
Meters & Billing  
See Page 6

## Depopulate

"You must cut costs ruthlessly by 50 or 60%. Depopulate. Get rid of people. They gum up the works."

*Jeffrey Skilling, President  
ENRON Corp., one of the new players  
in the deregulated electric industry*

## Priority One: job security

**P**op Quiz: What's the union's highest priority? Good wages, benefits and working conditions are vital, but most union members agree that Priority One is *preserving jobs*.

Utility deregulation poses grave threats to the job security of Local 1245 mem-

bers. At Pacific Gas and Electric, the evidence is everywhere. Generation jobs are going. Meter reader jobs are going. Billing, collection and customer service jobs may soon follow.

Where do these threats come from? What has the union done to protect job security? And what needs to be done next?

Union stewards at PG&E grappled with these fundamental questions at regional conferences throughout central and northern California on March 22. Here are some highlights.

### Deregulation Guinea Pig

The United States is trying a grand experiment in electric service competition and California has volunteered to be the guinea pig.

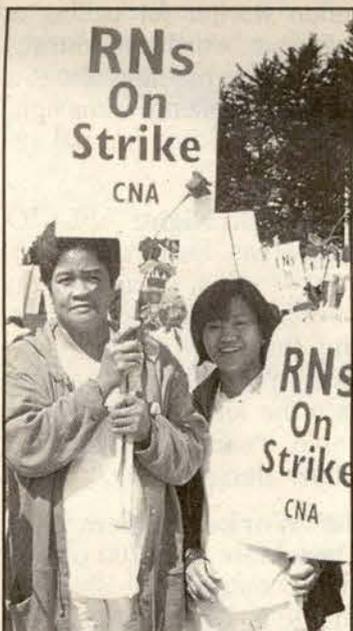
Those who favor competition claim that electric markets will bring better service, lower rates, and a more robust economy. Opponents claim the more likely result is a downsized workforce, lower service quality, higher rates for average customers, and possible economic decline.

The push for competition in California has come from large industrial consumers who want cheaper rates, from independent power producers and marketers hungry for a piece of the action, and from various public officials who think the marketplace is the solution to every problem.

Opposition to radical deregulation has come from

See PAGE SIX

## 'Bread & roses' for striking nurses



**L**ocal 1245 members at PG&E's Station J in San Francisco sent bread and roses to nurses walking the picketline at Kaiser last month.

Division crew leader Pete O'Driscoll, who spearheaded the show of solidarity, said nurses and utility workers had a lot in common.

"You only need them when your lights go out or your health goes out—but when you need them, you need them," said O'Driscoll.

The nurses, represented by the California Nurses Association, staged the one-

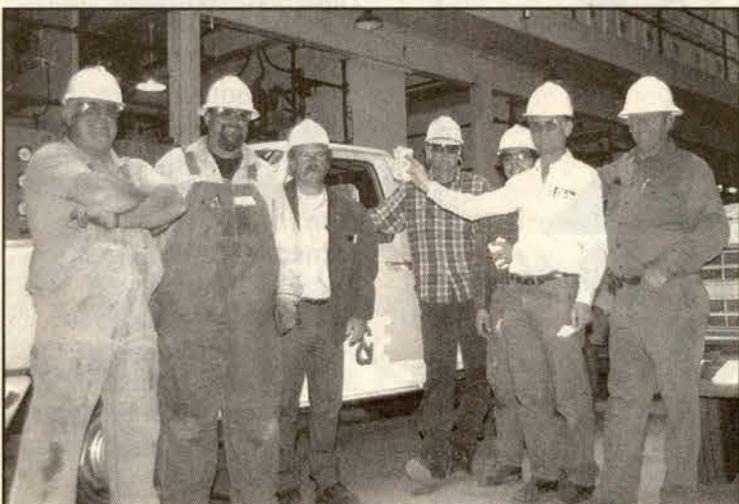
day strike on April 16 to protest Kaiser's attempt to slash their benefits and working conditions. The CNA claims that Kaiser is sacrificing the quality of patient care in the pursuit of bigger profits.

O'Driscoll chose bread and roses as a symbol of support in honor of the famous 1912 "Bread and Roses" strike by Massachusetts textile workers, most of whom were women.

"Today we're their well patients," said O'Driscoll. "If we ever get sick we want them to take good care of us."

### A FLOWERING OF SOLIDARITY

Striking nurses (above, left) pinned roses to their picket signs in front of a Kaiser facility in San Francisco. The roses were made possible by funds donated by Local 1245 members (at left) Don Fisher, Pete O'Driscoll, Rex Rechcygl, Bob Martinez, George Smith, Rudy Torres, and Bill Britton. About half the men are enrolled in Kaiser.



## INSIDE

Act to Save Overtime Pay  
Page 3

Huge Farmworker Rally  
Page 4

Battle to Save Overtime  
Page 5

Can Clones Climb?  
A Baaaaaad Situation  
Page 8

Retirees Corner  
Page 11

## CALENDAR

May 9  
Pin Dinner  
Santa Rosa, Ca.

May 16  
Pin Dinner  
Bakersfield, Ca.

May 17  
Pin Dinner  
Fresno, Ca.

June 6  
Pin Dinner  
Monterey, Ca.

June 7  
Pin Dinner  
Avila Beach, Ca.

June 13  
Pin Dinner  
San Bernardino, Ca.

June 20  
Pin Dinner  
Pacifica, Ca.



### UTILITY REPORTER

May 1997  
Volume XLVI  
Number 4  
Circulation: 26,800

(510) 933-6060

**Business Manager & Executive Editor**

Jack McNally

**President**

Howard Stiefer

**Executive Board**

Jim McCauley

E. L. "Ed" Mallory

Anna Bayless

Chris Habecker

Kathy F. Tindall

(One Vacancy)

**Treasurer**

Michael J. Davis

**Communications Director**

Eric Wolfe

Published monthly at 3063 Citrus Circle, Walnut Creek, California 94598. Official publication of Local Union 1245, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, AFL-CIO, P.O. Box 4790, Walnut Creek, CA 94596.

Second Class postage paid at Walnut Creek and at additional mailing offices. USPS No. 654640, ISSN No. 0190-4965.

**POSTMASTER:** Please send Form 3579, Change of Address, and all correspondence to Utility Reporter, P.O. Box 4790, Walnut Creek, CA 94596.

Single copies 10 cents, subscription \$1.20 annually.

Have you moved lately? If so, please send your complete new address and your social security number to the Utility Reporter, P.O. Box 4790, Walnut Creek, CA 94596.



**WIPA**



### Workers here and abroad

## Rolling the union on...

**Vegas Victory:** The 465 cooks, food servers, maids and porters at the Four Queens Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas won card check recognition by Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Local 226 and 165.

**Detroit Rally:** The AFL-CIO has endorsed a national rally to be held June 13-14 in Detroit in support of locked-out Detroit news-

paper workers. The locked-out workers offered to return to work after a lengthy strike, but the newspapers have refused to take most of them back and also refuse to discharge permanent replacement workers.

**Seattle Organizing:** Food and Commercial Workers Local 1001 scored five organizing wins in March. The two card check and three election victories came at Seattle area health care units and covered 367 workers.

**Picklers Pick Union:** More than 300 pickle workers with VEL-A-DA, Inc. in Old Fort, Ohio and those who work with the growers who supply the company, are now members of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee with a contract running through the year 2000. The April 15 FLOC win completes the unionization of the entire pickle industry in Northwest Ohio.

**GE Ready:** After being unionized for 50 years, the union-busting impulse is still strong at General Electric. "We don't need some third



"Your design has too many moving parts. It requires employees to run it."

party" at GE, CEO Jack Welch told a recent management meeting in Florida, according to Labor Notes. "We are the best-prepared company in the world to take a strike," he said. Contracts between GE and 14 unions expire June 29.

**Strippers Unite:** Exotic dancers at San Francisco's Lusty Lady Theater won a contract that will bump their pay from \$12 to \$21 an hour and improve working conditions. About 70 of the new SEIU Local 790 members are dancers and about 30 are support staff. They voted to join the union last year.

**Out of Control:** From the cover of Business Week, April 21, 1997: "Executive

Pay, It's Out of Control. By relying heavily on stock options, many companies make exorbitant payouts for so-so performances, dilute real shareholder return, and glorify CEOs at the expense of other employees. The bottom line: Don't confuse a bull market with managerial genius."

**Worthless Manager:** The Supreme Court upheld a National Labor Relations Board ruling that C&D Charter Power Systems Inc., a battery maker in Blue Bell, Pa., illegally fired a pro-union worker for calling a manager "worthless" during a company meeting about a union-organizing campaign, the Wall Street Journal reported.

**Dark Night:** AFL-CIO Sec.-Treas. Richard Trumka borrowed a phrase from poet Dylan Thomas in offering this view of deregulation: "We will not go gently into the long, dark night of rapid, radical, destructive utility deregulation."

**Workers Memorial Day:** More than 200 people rallied outside the Shell refinery in Martinez, Ca. on April 27, "Workers Memorial Day," to demand safer working conditions and an end to industrial accidents and chemical leaks in Contra Costa County. Union members and environmentalists carried picket signs with the names of 600 Contra Costa County employees who have died in the past 25 years either in a job-related accident or because of prolonged exposure to hazardous materials such as asbestos.

### APPOINTMENTS

#### CITY OF WILLITS

City of Willits Bargaining Committee  
J. C. England  
Dev Vel Caine Jr.

#### CITY OF GRIDLEY

City of Gridley Negotiations Committee  
Gary Andes  
Colleen Cotter  
Tim Hill

#### RESORT IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Resort Improvement District Bargaining Committee  
D. J. Miclette

#### YUBA CO. WATER AGENCY

Yuba Co. Water Agency Negotiating Committee  
Ron Knudson

#### CONFERENCES & CONVENTIONS

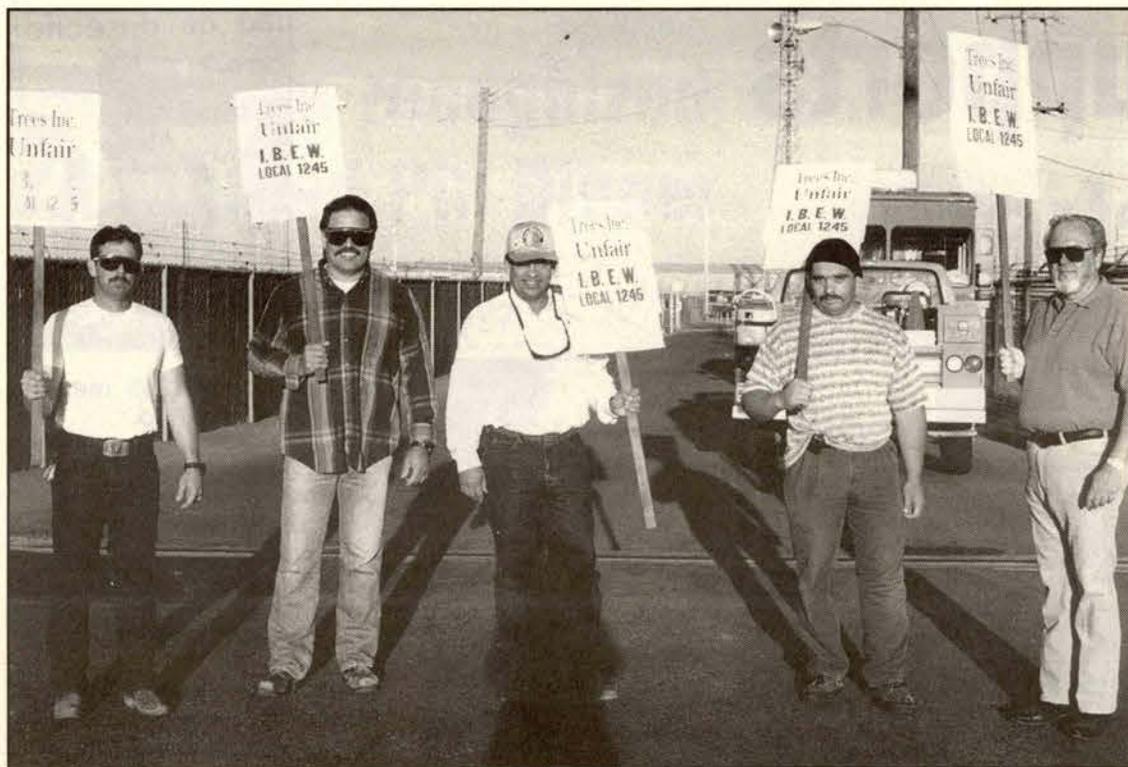
Nevada State AFL-CIO Legislative Conference  
Jack McNally  
John Stralla  
Kathy Tindall

National Safety Council Spring Labor Division Meeting  
Art Murray

A. Phillip Randolph Institute Statewide Conference  
Lula Washington  
Norma Ricker  
Tina Jones

YOUR MOTHER WANTS YOU

to REBUILD the LABOR MOVEMENT



**TREES INC. UNFAIR**

Manning the informational picketline protesting Trees Inc. in Fresno are (from left) Gary Hencel, Pete Sandoval, Arnold Sanchez, Angel Martinez and Business Rep. Ron Van Dyke.

## Union pickets Trees Inc. in Fresno

Local 1245 staff and members set up an informational picket line in Fresno to call attention to the failure of Trees Inc. to live up to a commitment to sign a union agreement.

Trees Inc., which now performs line clearance work for Pacific Gas and Electric in the Fresno area, is a Texas-based line clearance tree trimming company. Trees Inc. has signed union contracts in Washington and

Oregon, and in December of 1995 the company signed a letter with Local 1245 agreeing to negotiate a union contract at parity with Asplundh, Arbor and Davey, the three unionized contractors.

"Our understanding was that if they bid work on the PG&E system they would agree to the union package. They indicated that in writing and we communicated to PG&E that Trees Inc.

would be a union contractor," said Local 1245 Business Rep. Landis Marttila.

Trees Inc. currently has a one-year contract to supply 15 crews to PG&E in and around the Fresno area without signing a union agreement.

"Absent a signed union contract we will be actively opposing their continuing presence on the PG&E property," said Marttila.

## Action needed to save your overtime pay

Jack McNally, IBEW 1245 Business Manager

On April 11, Gov. Wilson's Industrial Welfare Commission voted to end daily overtime pay in California. The new regulations will go into effect on Jan. 1, 1997.

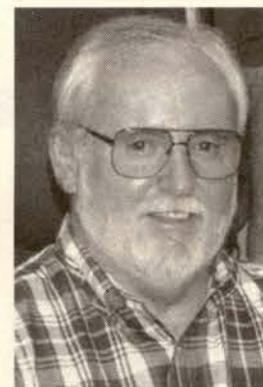
The existing regulation requires that for any hours worked in excess of eight hours, the employer is required to pay at the time-and-a-half rate. The new regulations basically eliminate the requirement and default to the federal Fair Labor Standards Act, which only requires time-and-a-half after 40 hours worked in a week.

Gov. Wilson has consistently made efforts to eliminate daily overtime in recent years. Last year, attempts were made to pass legislation to eliminate the requirement, but failed largely because of the support for labor in the state Senate.

California adopted the daily overtime rule in 1918 for women and children workers. It was extended to adult male workers in 1980.

While the present law provides for time and one-half after eight hours in a day, and the rate of double-time after working 12 hours in a day, it also provides for unions to negotiate alternative work schedules such as four 10-hour days and 12-hour shifts—as long as the workers effected vote to support it.

Effective in 1998, workers will have no choice in these alternative work schedules; the employer will dictate. It is esti-

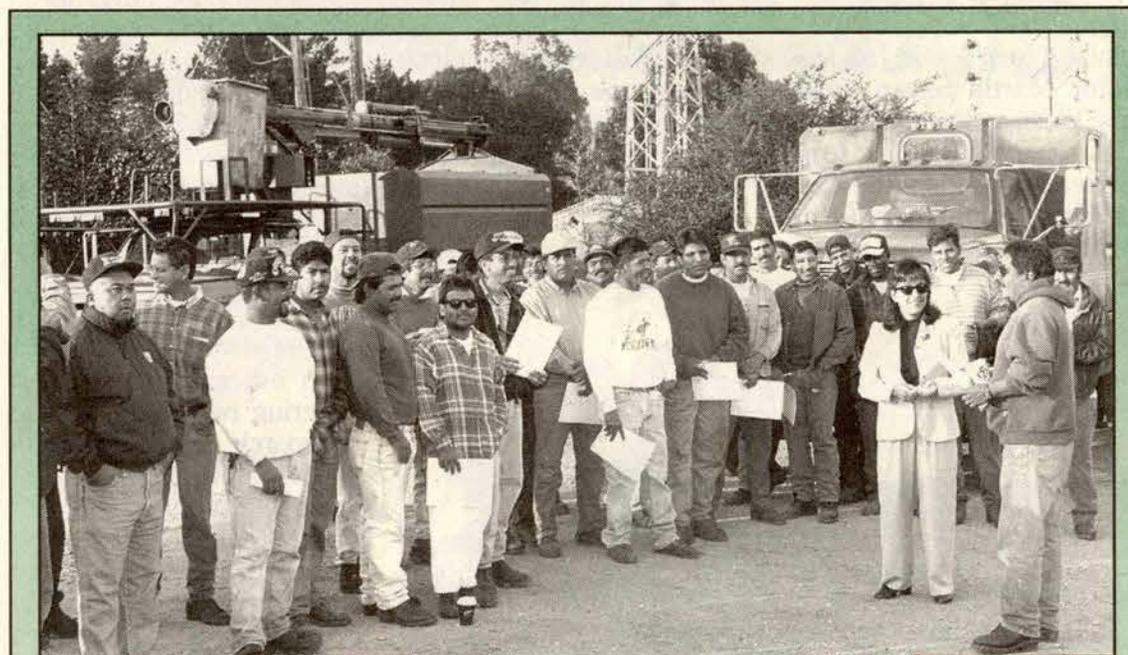


mated that almost a billion dollars will be transferred from the workers' pocket to the employers' pocket. Working families will be faced with increasing problems concerning adequate child care.

The California Labor Federation has sued the Industrial Welfare Commission challenging their authority to eliminate the daily overtime requirement. In addition, there are two bills in the California legislature, AB 15 and SB 680, which would restore daily overtime.

This issue is a very important one for all members of Local 1245. While daily overtime may be part of your current collective bargaining agreement, it doesn't mean the employers can't mount a drive to eliminate the provisions. This is especially a concern where some of our employers are competing with non-union competitors. In time, this change will take dollars from our members.

I urge you to contact your Assembly member and your state Senator and ask them to support AB 15 (Knox) and SB 680 (Solis).



Local 1245 members at Asplundh Tree in March ratified changes in their medical plan. Under the modified plan, members will be able to select coverage from Healthnet or Principal. Discussing the changes with members at a recent meeting at the San Mateo Asplundh yard are Shop Steward and Unit Chair David Sanchez (right) and Benefits Specialist Celia Salache, a medical plan consultant with Morris Garritano.

# Huge march supports strawberry pickers

**W**atsonville's population doubled on April 13 as people poured in from all over California and beyond to express support for efforts by strawberry workers to organize under the banner of the United Farm Workers union.

Strawberry workers themselves were a sizeable presence at the march, accounting for several thousand of the estimated 30,000 marchers. Several members of IBEW Local 1245 made the trip to Watsonville to express solidarity with the union organizing campaign.

"I heard about what they were trying to do down there and I thought it was a really good cause to support," said Maggie Wang, a Local 1245 steward and Service Representative at PG&E's San Francisco Call Center. "I was amazed at the turnout."

This year's march was designed to convince the growers of the union's strength—among the workers and in the supermarkets. Just before it got underway, organizers announced that over 1000 stores, including the Ralph's chain, had signed the union's "5 cents for Fair-

ness" pledge. The pledge makes a commitment of general support for better wages and conditions for farmworkers. Growers know the union can turn it into a strawberry boycott if class war breaks out in the fields.

And that's a real possibility. Already growers have refused to rehire workers this season who were active in organizing union committees. Last year, for example, Jose Rojas was written up for having included a few unripe berries among the ripe ones he picked. This year, when he went to get his job back at Gargiulo Company, which he's held for the past six years, he was told he wasn't being rehired because of that.

Last August workers from dozens of Pajaro Valley strawberry crews met in a cavernous hall in Watsonville's community center, and formed the UFW industry-wide strawberry workers organizing committee. After 10 years in which wages have fallen, taking inflation into account, the committee's main demand

is a \$7.50 minimum hourly wage, as well as a union-administered medical plan. Rojas, who has worked in the strawberry fields since 1979, says that "things haven't changed since I first went to work. Actually, my family lived better then."

Workers also want a guarantee that they can depend on regaining their jobs when the season begins, year after year. That means that the union will again have to challenge the power of the labor contractors, who hand jobs out each year with little respect for seniority, and insist on a union hiring hall.

After Sunday's march, big-name UFW supporters, including Rev. Jessie Jackson, actor Martin Sheen, feminist Eleanor Smeal and AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, called on the companies, especially the Monsanto Corp., which

owns Gargiulo, to stop blacklisting union supporters.

The Watsonville march marked one other historic step in California agriculture. UFW President Arturo Rodriguez and Teamsters President Ron Cary not only marched together, but

held a press conference the day before to announce a joint organizing effort in the strawberries.

For a decade in the late 60s and early 70s, the growers used the Teamsters as a tool to fight UFW organizing drives, and memories of that old history still make some workers uneasy. "Companies have a long history of dividing us against each other," Cary told a cheering rally at the end of the march, "and I pledge to you, that will never happen again."

The UFW is organizing workers in the fields, and the Teamsters, who already represent workers at a couple of strawberry processing coolers, are planning to organize the rest.

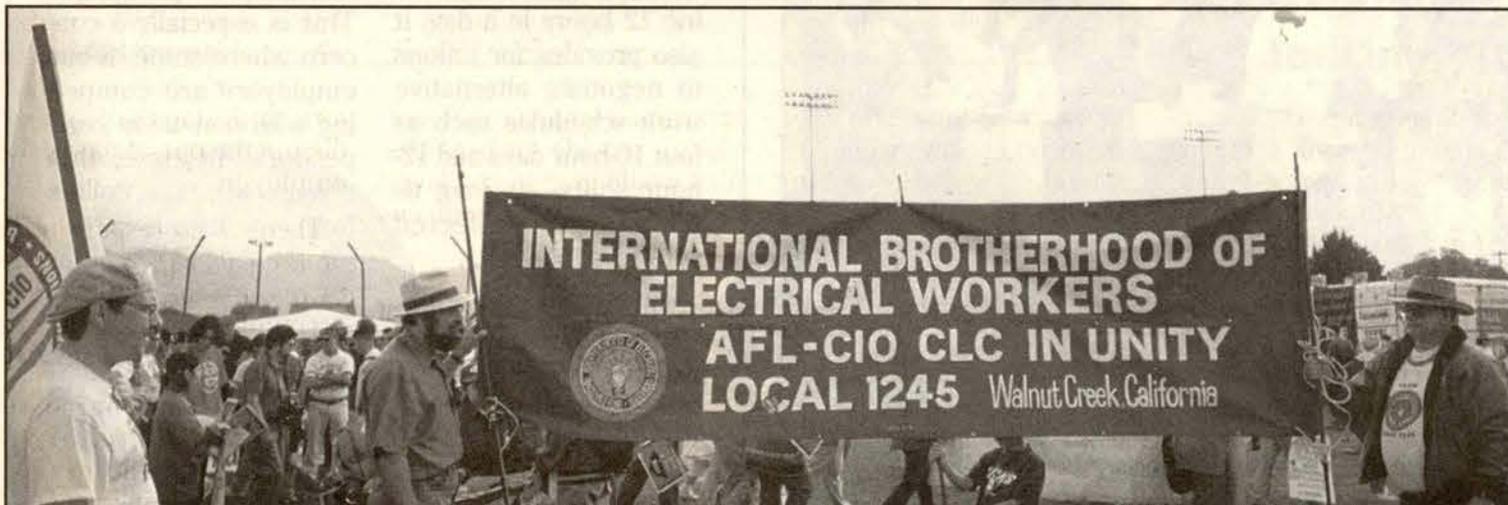
*(Labor writer David Bacon contributed to this report).*



Above: Local 1245 member Nagaraja (Dada) Rao.

At left: AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, UFW President Arturo Rodriguez, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, UFW co-founder Dolores Huerta, and AFL-CIO Exec. Vice President Linda Chavez Thompson.

Below: Rhonda Bourne, Assistant Business Manager Dorothy Fortier, Maggie Wang, Business Rep. Debbie Mazzanti, and Adele Moilanen.



Local 1245 Business Reps. Landis Marttila and Mickey Harrington hoist the union's banner at the march.

# Unions continue battle to save 8-hour day

**O**rganized labor has gone to court to fight Gov. Wilson's campaign to abolish overtime pay.

The California Labor Federation obtained a writ of mandate in San Francisco Superior Court that says the Industrial Welfare Commission must either rescind its vote to abolish overtime pay or appear in court on June 13 to respond to labor's suit.

The IWC voted by a 3-2 margin on April 11 to abolish the requirement that employers pay time-and-a-half for any work over eight hours in a single day. The eight-hour day has been mandated by California law since 1868.

All three commissioners voting to abolish overtime pay were appointed by Gov. Pete Wilson, who has pushed hard to ban overtime pay. If upheld by the courts, the ban on overtime pay could transfer more than a billion dollars a year from workers to employers.

Voting to preserve overtime pay were Chuck Center of the State Council of Laborers, one of two labor representatives on the IWC, and John McCarthy, a college professor who represents the general public.

Voting to abolish overtime pay were Syed Alam, the other labor representative, and the two employer representatives: Chair Robyn Black, an agribusiness executive, and Cynthia Neff, an IBM executive. Alam has voted consistently with the employer representatives since Wilson appointed him last year.

The California Senate later voted to reject the nomination of both Black and Alam, whose appointments require confirmation. The Senate voted April 24 to reject the two Wilson appointees.

Alam, an engineer who designs prisons for the California Department of Corrections, is a member of Professional Engineers in California Government, the

unaffiliated union that represents engineers in several state agencies. He withdrew from PECG after the union took a policy position opposed by Wilson, but reinstated his membership before the governor's office announced his appointment to the IWC.

In a deposition, Alam admitted he did not know what AFL-CIO stood for and said he thought George Meany was president of the California Labor Federation. (Meany, who was president of the AFL-CIO, has been dead for 18 years.) Alam was unable to identify a single union by its initials. Alam's own union has said he does not represent them.

Labor's suit argues that the IWC majority has no authority to overrule the legislature.

In 1980 legislators codified an IWC ruling supported by labor that gives workers the right to vote on alternative work schedules, such as a week consisting of four 10-hour days.

Last year, a Republican majority in the state Assembly voted to abolish the 8-hour day, but the bill was later killed by the Senate,

where labor-friendly Democrats held a narrow majority.

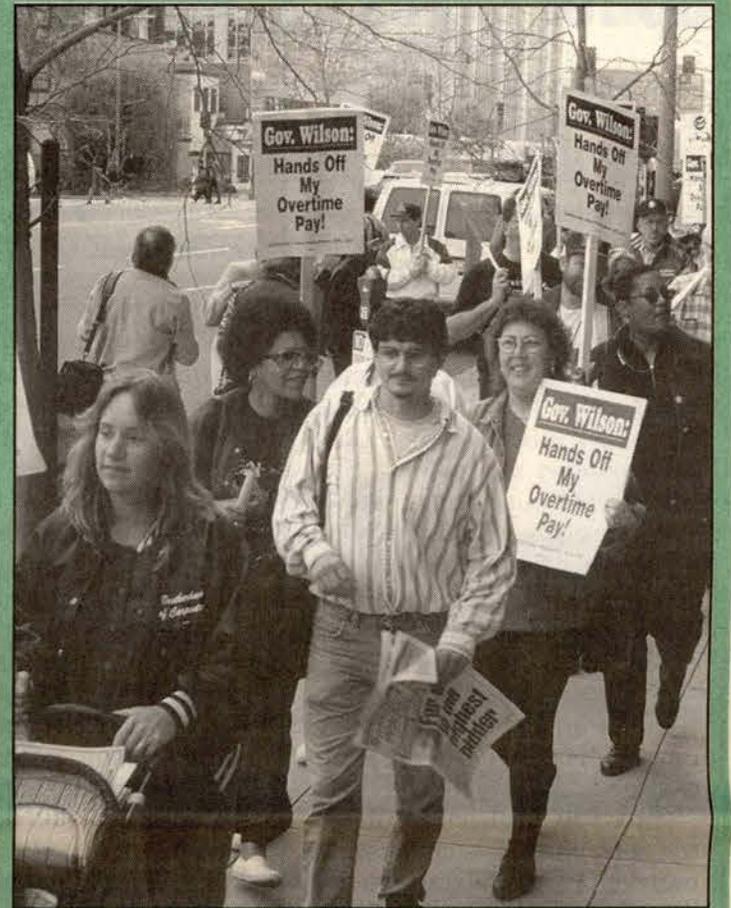
"Bureaucracy can't cancel democracy," said Art Pulaski, executive secretary-treasurer of the California Labor Federation. "A regulatory agency like the IWC has no authority to deny the will of the democratically elected legislature."

The California Labor Federation enacted a mock "Funeral for the 8-Hour Day" before the April 11 IWC meeting, complete with casket, tombstones and hearse. Hundreds of angry protesters filled the meeting room, and three were arrested by the California Highway Patrol.

Approximately eight million workers in California will lose the right to overtime pay if the courts permit the IWC rules to 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 Pulaski and other labor leaders warn that many unionized employers will demand concessions when union contracts are renegotiated.

## Hands Off Our Overtime!



**SAVE THE 8-HOUR DAY**  
Among those protesting Gov. Wilson's attack on overtime pay at a recent meeting of the California Industrial Welfare Commission were Local 1245 Assistant Business Manager Dorothy Fortier and Business Reps. Debbie Mazzanti and (not pictured) Lula Washington.

# US House votes to abolish 40-hour week

**E**ven as Gov. Wilson continues his campaign to abolish the 8-hour day in California, the Republican majority in Congress is moving ahead in its effort to abolish the 40-hour week.

H.R.1, the so-called Working Families Flexibility Act, would amend the Fair Labor Standards Act to erode the 40-hour week and allow employer-controlled compensatory time off to be substituted for paid overtime.

The US House passed the bill in March, but President Clinton has expressed opposition to some of its provisions and has threatened a veto.

While workers do need more flexibility to meet both workplace and family needs,

H.R.1 is about flexibility for employers, not employees, according to Peggy Taylor, director of the AFL-CIO's Department of Legislation. Employees would be vulnerable to pressure to have them "choose" comp time over paid overtime, and the employers control the use of the comp time. The bill, if it becomes law, would result in "workers losing much-needed income" and could also mean benefit reductions, she said.

### No Employee Choice

"H.R.1 does not assure that the decision to substitute comp time for cash overtime payments will be voluntary and left strictly up to the individual employee,"

said Taylor. "While the bill nominally makes it unlawful for an employer to coerce or intimidate an employee into accepting comp time, it does nothing to prevent an employer from discriminating—in hiring or in the award of overtime—against those employees who want paid overtime compensation, nor does it provide for penalties that would give an employer second thoughts about coercing employees."

She maintained that the Department of Labor does not have the resources to investigate violations of the current overtime laws, much less a new comp time authorization.

Further, the employer is given virtually complete con-

trol over when the overtime is used. Under H.R.1, after the employee makes a request to use the comp time, the employer's only responsibility is to permit the employee "to use such time within a reasonable period after making the request if the use of the compensatory time does not unduly disrupt the operations of the employer."

There is no responsibility on the part of the employer to respond in a timely and accommodating manner to an employee request.

"There should be no assumption made that this bill would allow parents to more easily meet family needs," Taylor said.

**May 6<sup>th</sup> decision**

**CPUC puts meters & bills up for grabs**

On May 6 the California Public Utilities Commission ruled that metering and billing functions in the electric utility industry will be open to competition.

The ruling was part of a landmark CPUC decision to approve competitive markets in electricity for all customers effective Jan. 1, 1998. The CPUC rejected alternative proposals that would have phased competitive markets in over a period of years.

The decision to open up metering and billing to competition could have a large impact on Local 1245 members at PG&E currently performing these functions. It could also have an impact on the work of customer service representatives.

The CPUC authorized all electric suppliers to install their own meters. Large customers will be billed from special meters capable of measuring usage by the hour or shorter periods. Residential and small business customers, most of whom lack these sophisticated meters, will be billed by "load profiling" if they switch to an alternative supplier.

Beginning Jan. 1, customers buying electricity or related services from a non-investor-owned California utility can pick one of three billing options: a consolidated bill from their major power supplier; a consolidated bill from their power distributor; or a separate bill from each.

The CPUC is still considering how best to break down customer bills for each aspect of electric service. Bills will need to somehow include itemized electric costs, distribution costs, a "public goods" charge to fund research and development and energy efficiency, financial assistance to low-income families, the "competition transition charge", and costs associated with meters, billing, and administration.

A more detailed analysis of the CPUC decision will appear in next month's Utility Reporter.

# Priority One: job security

*From PAGE ONE*

average ratepayers who worry about higher rates, utilities who worry about losing revenues, and utility unions who worry about the loss of jobs and deterioration of service. Opposition also comes from those worried about environmental impacts and the possible loss of service to people with low incomes.

When the California Public Utilities Commission proposed radical deregulation in 1994, Local 1245 helped organize the Coalition of California Utility Employees (CUE) to oppose it. CUE argued that radical deregulation would lead to utility downsizing, and ultimately harm the reliability of electric service in California.

Local 1245 voiced these same concerns to PG&E, but failed to prevent large workforce reductions in 1993 and 1994. In late 1994 and early 1995, the union organized fierce resistance to additional job losses, and persuaded PG&E to cancel some 800 layoffs. In April of 1995 PG&E and the union entered into a more cooperative relationship, often referred to as the partnership.

**Partnership: Process & Product**

Partnership has proven to be part process, part product.

Hundreds of management and bargaining unit employees have studied "mutual gains" bargaining

techniques in an effort to replace confrontation with a more creative process for resolving problems. Dozens of labor-management committees have been created to address many difficult issues, ranging from work procedures to automation to contracting out.

Both sides openly acknowledge that they are driven by different values. Earning a profit is the company's prime motive; defending jobs, wages and working conditions is the chief concern for the union.

However, both sides have decided they are more likely to achieve their respective goals through creative deliberation rather than hostile confrontation, that a constructive process can lead to a useful product.

Some of the products of labor-management cooperation, so far, have been:

- Cancellation of 800 layoffs.
- Creation of the union hiring hall for temporary additional workers, protecting regular employees against cycles of hiring and layoffs.
- Enhanced job security for Title 300 employees.
- Enhanced options for employees in threatened areas, such as generation and meter reading.
- Creation of electric maintenance protocols, which enhance system reliability and bolster job security.

These and other accomplishments have led to another product: a sense of trust—fragile but real—between labor and management. For PG&E, that could be the most significant achievement of all as the company heads into the uncharted waters of utility deregulation.

**Lobbying for Reliability and Jobs**

As early as 1993, Local 1245 Business Manager Jack McNally warned the state legislature that utility deregulation would put severe pressure on utilities like PG&E to downsize, thus impairing emergency response capability and overall reliability.

Local 1245 and its allies in CUE stressed the reliability issue in hearings before the CPUC, and took the same message to Sacramento when the state legislature began work on a massive electric restructuring bill. Three major electric outages in PG&E's system in 1995, and two regional blackouts in 1996, convinced legislators that the unions had a point.

When the legislature passed A.B. 1890 in August of 1996, the bill focused hard on reliability. A.B. 1890 required the CPUC to set standards



**Above and top: PG&E stewards focus on job security strategies at regional training conference in Sacramento on March 22.**  
(Photos: Wayne Greer)

## JOB SECURITY

for inspection, maintenance, repair and replacement for the distribution systems of investor-owned utilities like PG&E. And it mandated the creation of an Independent System Operator (ISO) to set the same sort of standards for transmission systems of all participating utilities, whether municipal or investor-owned.

A.B. 1890 also made the ISO responsible for securing adequate generating and transmission resources. In the event a generating plant is closed, the purchaser must contract with the seller for the seller to operate and maintain that plant for at least two years.

Taken together, these union-promoted provisions will help protect the reliability of electric service to California consumers, and virtually guarantees a continuing need for skilled utility workers.

In addition, A.B. 1890 authorized investor-owned and municipal utilities to collect "Competition Transition Charges"—to compensate utilities for "stranded assets"—and mandated that some of this revenue be used to provide assistance to displaced employees, including severance pay, retraining, early retirement packages, and job placement services. This provision, too, was a direct result of union lobbying.

The Competition Transition Charge gives PG&E breathing room to make itself more competitive. But can PG&E pull it off?

### The Big Question

PG&E is gambling that its partnership with Local 1245 will give it the edge it needs to succeed in the new market environment.

Last year the company and union negotiated a new contract in just one day—with no erosion of benefits and a 10% wage hike over three years. Rather than seeking to save money at the expense of employees, PG&E has asked its employees to help identify other ways of saving money. Dozens of labor-management "94-53" committees are now engaged in that work.

But even as these efforts proceed, the regulatory landscape continues to change with dizzying speed.

In February, a CPUC administrative law judge recommended that the CPUC "unbundle" billing beginning in January of next year, and start a process to unbundle metering and customer service inquiries during 1998, opening up this work to PG&E's competitors.

If the CPUC ultimately adopts this recommendation, thousands of

PG&E jobs in billing, collection, and customer service could be on the chopping block. (See update on Page 6.) Local 1245, along with its allies in CUE, is continuing its efforts to influence this process in order to minimize the threat to the job security of current utility employees.

Meanwhile, labor-management committees at PG&E continue to their efforts to identify ways to make the company more competitive in an open market. Can these efforts succeed?

For utility workers at PG&E, that is the great unanswered questions as California prepares to launch its grand experiment in electric competition in January of 1998. All other job security questions ultimately boil down to how this one gets answered.



Above and below: PG&E stewards focus on job security strategies at regional training conference in San Luis Obispo on March 22. (Photos: Mike Haentjens)



### Regional Training Conferences for PG&E Stewards: March 22, 1997

#### Eureka

Clark Fleming  
John Grube  
Barry Jensen  
Linda Jurado  
Nick Martin  
David Page

#### Burlingame

Al Calleros  
Dan Capwell  
Cesar Custodio  
Larry Darby  
Harry Hom  
Gary Magee  
Rennie Moniz  
Bob Olague  
Millie Phillips  
Bob Quinn  
Elaine Vargas  
John Vernatter  
Rick Wassmer  
Bernard Smallwood  
Mark Garner  
Anna Anderson  
Robert Smith  
Jerry Takeuchi  
Calary Blue

#### Sacramento

Rosetta Burnett  
Arlene Cook  
Arlene Edwards  
Marie Graham  
Danny Jackson  
Therese Johnson  
Mike Joy  
Felicia Mack  
John Martinez  
Darryl Norris  
Norma Ricker  
Bonnie Semas  
Alicia Smiley  
Kit Stice  
Robert Uschmann  
Billy Wallace  
Donna Lindsey

#### San Jose

Vida Anderson  
JoAnne Barnes  
Gail Coffin  
Joe Fradin  
Kevin Herd  
Mike McGinley  
Mark McLean  
Robin Charles Morrison  
Sue Wheeler  
Peter Mandon

#### Monterey

Art Freitas  
Richelle Gallegos  
Ken Garcia  
G. Hernandez  
Salvador Lozano Jr.  
Richard Manley  
Jim Martinez  
James Mauzey  
Mark Newman  
Michelle Pugh  
B. Saunders  
Pat Stoffey  
Mark Thomas  
James Vermilyer

#### East Bay

Ignacio Arquistan  
Alfonso Estes  
David Garrity  
Anna Gomez  
Clifton Jackson  
Tina Jones  
Marie Kizsee  
Carl Makarezyk  
Jerri Scaife  
Sherrick Slattery  
Ed Tavares  
Jeffrie Van Hook

#### San Luis Obispo

Fidela Barrios  
Bill Bell  
Richard Brown  
Bill Butkovich

Troy Castanon  
Bob Edie  
Debbie Encallado  
Allen Hamel  
Matthew Huszarik  
John Jacobson  
Dan Lockwood  
James Middlemist  
John Molette  
Chris Paris  
Ida Roam  
Charles Stone  
Mark Taylor  
Frank Willis  
Joe Johnson  
Joe Janowicz  
Marc LaCross

#### Pacifica

Ed Abriam  
Charles Adams  
Wayne Banks  
Shirley Henry  
Frank Marshall  
Gina Pongasi  
Aaron Reaven  
Andrew Santini  
Maggie Wang  
Jerry Totes  
Alton Halvorson

#### Concord

Steve Collins  
Rich Cowart  
Larry Magnoli  
John Mendoza  
Joe Osterlund  
Theodore Rios  
Frank Robertson  
Mike Saner  
Al White  
Tim Hennessy

#### Red Bluff

Kellie Bronson  
Rodney Dyer  
Dennis Goodman  
Jack Hall

Mike Hamm  
Harvey Iness  
Rich Jaster  
Stu Neblett  
Dale Noble  
Michael Oelrichs  
Michael Parsons  
Wil Rodriguez  
Janice Sciarrotta  
Rena Smoak  
Arnie Streetman  
L. Jewell  
Scott Mowry

#### Auburn

Ken Brown  
Ben Cox  
Jim Edwards  
David Garcia  
Jim Jurkiewicz  
Rebecca Kincade  
Nick Salvatorelli

#### Ukiah

Larry Bunte  
Sandi Damitz  
Corrine Dauer  
Bill Dawson  
William Hurt  
Jody Lutz  
Mike McBroom  
Mark McCrea  
Ken McNamara  
Gary Silver  
Norman Tkachenko  
Ken Wilson  
Gary Woodsen

#### Fresno

Cheryle Bradley  
Mike Brocchini  
Julie Cash  
Bill Eldridge  
Victor Flores  
Mike Grill  
Chris Habecker  
Debi Hall

Ward Hollesen  
Rex Lardner  
Ron Newton  
Anthony Norman  
David Paul  
Sal Perales  
Keith Rasmussen  
Kim Reed  
Greg Schmall  
Allen Simms  
Edward Smith  
Lisa Snelling  
Diane Tatu  
Katie Wagner  
Geary Weaver  
Art Wert  
Ernie Rodriguez

#### Bakersfield

Cathy Barber  
Sherry Barton  
John Bell  
Ellen Christensen  
Dee Fisher  
Kara Forsythe  
Arnold Garza  
Lee Haring  
Mitchell Jones  
Carol Kingsley  
Eddie Lopez  
Ed Mallory  
Steve Potter  
David Scott  
Rex Shoulet  
Bill Weilage  
Dennis Wilson

Note: If you attended but your name is not listed here, it is probably because you forgot to sign the sign-in sheet, or because your signature was illegible. Sorry.

# Can clones climb?

## Genetic engineering meets labor shortages in the Third Millennium

**P**acific Gas & Electric Co. announced this month it would establish a new corporate subsidiary to research and develop linemen clones.

"We have a tremendous amount of work for linemen at this time and traditional recruitment methods have proved insufficient for securing the needed workforce," said Customer Energy Services Manager Bob Haywood. "We believe that clones who are exact genetic replicas of actual linemen will enable PG&E to continue providing service that is safe, reliable and responsive."

The PG&E initiative follows close on the heels of recent revelations that scientists in Scotland had successfully cloned a sheep from a single cell taken from an adult sheep. Experts in the field of genetics said this cloning process could, in principle, be adapted for human subjects.

However, PG&E, in keeping with its reputation as a leader in its field, was the first utility to announce it would seek to augment its workforce through cloning.

Local 1245 Business Manager Jack McNally reacted to the announcement with caution.

"The union wants to work with PG&E to secure the workforce it needs to compete in the new environment," McNally said. "However, we do have a number of concerns that will need to be addressed. For example, will 'Lineman-Clone' be a separate classification? Will there be climbing clones and non-climbing clones? Will linemen who let themselves be cloned receive some kind of premium?"

The cloning issue appears to complicate existing procedures for securing the additional workers needed to perform pole replacements.

"We think the company needs to utilize any available clones through Local 1245 before seeking lineman clones from outside contractors," said Senior Assistant Business Manager Darrel Mitchell. "We encourage lineman clones to come in to the Hiring Hall and sign up on the books."

Reaction from rank and file union members to the news was mixed.

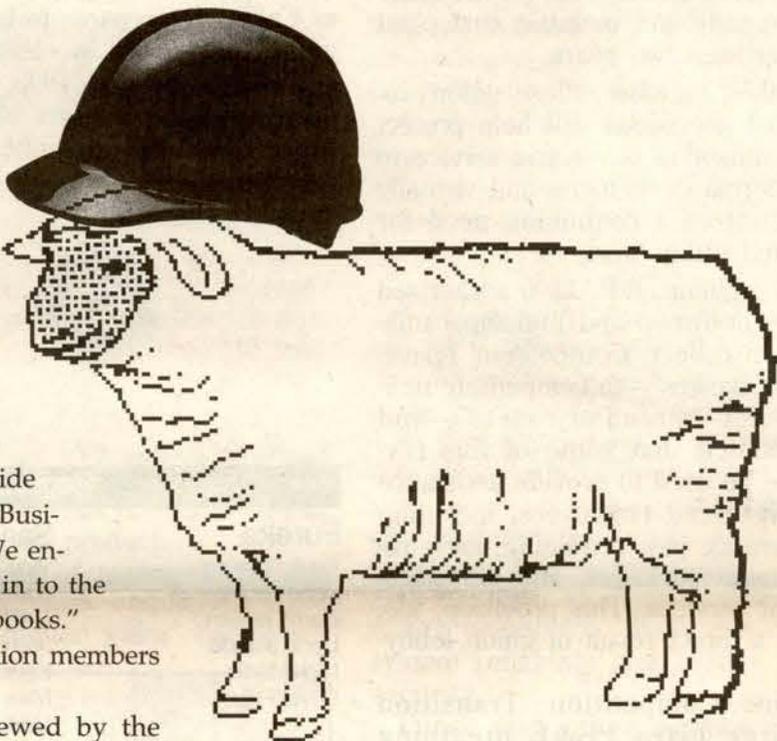
A number of linemen interviewed by the Utility Reporter said they had no objection to clones on the job as long as they pulled their own weight. Others seemed less enthusiastic about the prospect.

"Will they be eligible to sign the 212 list?" asked one lineman who requested anonymity.

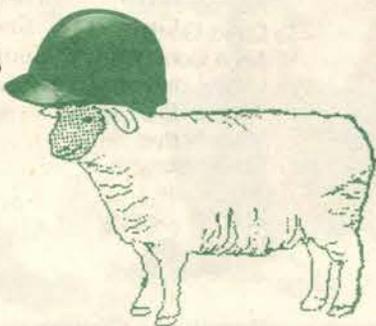
Another question sure to arise, according to Mitchell, is whether clones and regular linemen will be permitted to work on the same crew.

"Clone-mingling of crews is uncharted territory," said Mitchell, noting that the matter might ultimately have to be resolved through

How do you get to be a shop steward, anyway?



My rubber gloves don't fit.



the grievance procedure. While the contract is silent on the issue of clone-mingling, Assistant Business Manager Roger Stalcup said a search of the Review Committee archives might unearth some precedent-setting decisions.

Another issue troubling union officials was the rumor that a non-union tree trimming contractor performing work for PG&E might try to clone union tree trimmers in order to pirate their advanced skills and experience. However, an interview with a spokesman for the non-union contractor indicated the company wasn't entirely up to speed on the cloning concept.

"We looked at it, but we're not interested," said the spokesman. "Everybody knows sheep can't climb trees. What do you think we are, stupid or something?"

McNally and Heywood agreed that a new "94-53" labor-management committee would be established to study the cloning issue further. Both men indicated they are considering having themselves cloned in order to keep up with all their committee assignments.

Attention libel lawyers: the above story is pure fiction.

# Members recognized at Merced Pin Dinner

March 21, 1997



30 Years: David Bettis, Anthony Borba, Norman Covert, John Franco, James Hunziker, Joseph Lawrence, Clifford McGee, Larry Noceti, Jimmie Sneed, John Souza.

## 30 Years

25 Years: Daniel Agundez, Manuel Chavez, Edward Deldotto, Gary Foy, Richard Glover, Charles Herfurth, James Herrera, Ronald Hoffman, Jerry Huey, Cleo Johnson, Steve Landers, Robert Olivarez, Daniel Perez, Jim Rentfrow, John Rhoades, David Roza



## 25 Years



20 Years: Bill Barry, William Bonds, Antonio Gutierrez, Brian Haygood, George Marks, Minerva O'Hagan, James Petersen, Dennis Slocum, Robert Telles, Loren Unruh, Albert Vargas

## 20 Years

# Safety Matters

By the Local 1245 Safety Committee

## Some cutouts pose risk

In June of 1996 a troubleman had a liquid fuse cutout break. The broken portion of the cutout fell onto the primary neutral, causing a large flash.

Since this incident occurred, there have been several reports of failures, both in the S&C and Kearney bushing mounted cutouts. The failures have occurred on both current limiting and liquid fuse cutouts. The cutout will break at the top or bottom where the

sulphur type cement is imbedded in the porcelain.

S&C has developed a new cutout that can be recognized by the skirts on the cutout. The old style has equal size skirts over the whole length. The new style has smaller skirts at the top and bottom.

Beware! There are still many of the suspect cutouts in the field. If any cracks are observed, the cutout operation should not take place.

## Safe working distances

With the recent increase of various electrical contacts, it is important for members to take the time to review your safe working distance procedures.

Always be aware of the potential hazards that may be around your worksite. Electrical lines

should always be considered energized unless they are positively known to be de-energized.

While trimming or pruning trees around electrical lines, remember that trees are very conductive. Safe working distances are designed for your safety!





# 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!

# Fore!

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 \_\_\_\_\_

**Dinner and Awards  
Immediately Following:**

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

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*

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

# Attacks on Medicare need our attention!

**M**edicare consists of two parts:

**Part A-Hospital Insurance (HI)** pays for inpatient hospital care, certain inpatient care furnished in skilled nursing facilities, home health care and hospice care. It is financed through a 1.45% payroll tax (on both the employer and employee). To qualify, you must have paid in for 40 calendar quarters and be 65 or older. Disabled persons qualify after being on disability for two years. People suffering from kidney failure (ESRD) qualify immediately. Others can buy into Part A upon reaching age 65. There is a deductible equal to the cost of one day's stay in a hospital for practically every hospitalization.

**Part B-Supplementary Medical Insurance (SMI)** pays for medically necessary physician's services, outpatient hospital services, and certain other medical services. Part B is financed through premiums and from general tax revenues. The premiums are currently set to cover 25% of Part B program costs. There is a \$100 deductible and a 20% co-payment for all services received under Part B. Part B is a voluntary program, but 98% of those eligible have entered the program. Enrollees have their premiums deducted from their Social Security checks.

## Arguments for Changes

The argument is made that the Part A Trust Fund will run out of cash reserves in the year 2001. This means changes will have to

By Orv Owen

Medicare, the national health insurance program that covers approximately 38 million Americans, is in trouble.

Unfortunately, some members of Congress want to exploit these troubles to end Medicare as we know it, rather than seeking solutions that will continue protecting seniors' health care.

Everyone has a stake in the Medicare debate. This month's Retirees Corner, using information from the National Council of Senior Citizens, explains what's at stake in the Medicare debate.

Stay informed. And keep the faith!

be made. Short-term changes will maintain the Part A Trust Fund for about five more years. Other changes will then be necessary when the Baby Boomers begin to qualify for benefits.

Medicare spending is rapidly outpacing revenue. Without cutting back on either payments to those who provide health care or benefits or increasing out-of-pocket payments for beneficiaries, this growth will make it impossible to balance the federal budget.

## False Choices

In addition to wanting to cut payments to providers, proponents of changing Medicare put forth other solutions. *These structural changes would end Medicare as we know it.*

No longer would Medicare pay for services people need. Rather, it would pay an insurance company a set dollar amount per year to provide care. This would fundamentally change the Medicare program from a defined benefits plan (where Medicare will pay for all benefits in the plan) to a defined contribution plan (where Medicare will pay a flat amount per beneficiary regardless of the services received).

The proposed structural changes to Medicare are more dangerous than the possibility of lowering payment to doctors.

If necessary, additional funds could be found if cutting payments were found to be harmful. However, if a structural change were to lead to the fragmentation of Medicare, it could be years or decades before the damage could be repaired.

While it is unclear what changes may be proposed and accepted by the Congress, the debate of 1995 and 1996 gives clues as to the direction they may go in. It is clear that the Congressional leadership would like to have more Medicare beneficiaries enter managed care. The question is whether they will be enticed by better benefits or forced through the strangulation of traditional Medicare. Also likely to be offered is an elimination of the physician overcharges law for those in managed care networks. This law currently says that beneficiaries cannot pay more than 15% of the total bill. If this changes, doctors in a network could charge their patient whatever they wanted, and after Medicare paid its fee, the patient would pay the rest.

The Congressional leadership will also be likely to make an attempt to create Medical Savings Accounts (MSAs) for the Medicare program. MSAs will fragment the Medicare community. The current idea behind Medicare is that everyone pays in and shares the risk of getting sick equally with 38 million other people. With MSAs, healthy and wealthy people will be able to opt out of this pool,

taking their money with them. Only sick people will remain in traditional Medicare, causing these costs to increase even faster than they are now. Also, MSAs will discourage people from getting preventive care or early treatment, leading to an overall increase in health care expenditures.

## Real Solutions

- Reimbursements to providers can be reduced. However, these reductions need to be watched to make sure providers don't start turning away Medicare patients.

- Root out waste and fraud. The Inspector General's office is underfunded and could use more staff.

- Maintain the second-tier tax on Social Security benefits. Upper-income seniors help maintain the life of the Part A Trust Fund because the taxes on their Social Security benefits go into the Trust Fund.

- Increase managed care options while being careful to maintain high quality care standards. Medicare beneficiaries should not be forced to join a managed care plan because this is all they can afford or because their local doctors turn away traditional Medicare patients. Rather they should join because the plan offers better, high quality services.

- Create a payment schedule (like the one established for doctors in 1990) for skilled nursing facilities and home health care services. These are the two fastest areas of growth for the Medicare program and there are

IBEW  
Local  
1245



Retirees Corner

## Retiree Club dates

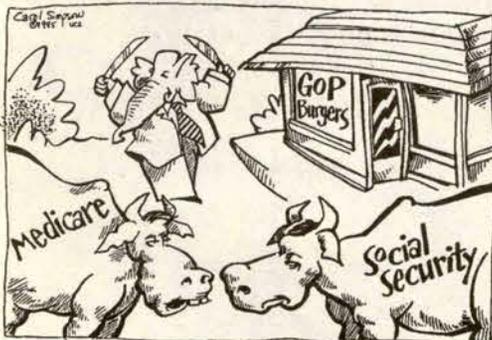
**East Bay Chapter:**  
Meets 2nd Thursday each month, 10 a.m., at Local 1245 headquarters, 3063 Citrus Circle, Walnut Creek, Ca.

**San Jose Chapter:**  
Meets 1st Thursday each month, 10 a.m. at Local 332, 1870 Stone Ave., San Jose.

no cost controls in place. These programs are ripe for fraud. It has been suggested that 25% of billed home health visits are fraudulent.

- Move the home health care payment mechanism out of Part A and into Part B. This will remove these payments from the Part A Trust Fund, helping to extend its life. This change can only happen if this accounting transfer does not increase costs for beneficiaries. This change must not increase the Part B premium, nor should the 20% co-payment apply to these services.

- Finally, all health care costs must be reined in. Medicare growth is caused in part by overall medical inflation. Examining Medicare costs without looking at all health care costs is shortsighted and will not provide a real long-term solution.



"If we're supposed to be sacred cows, why does he want us to use the kitchen entrance?"

**The idea behind Medicare is that everyone pays in and shares the risk of getting sick equally with 38 million other people. With "Medical Savings Accounts", healthy and wealthy people will be able to opt out of this pool, taking their money with them. Only sick people will remain in traditional Medicare, causing these costs to increase even faster than they are now.**



40 Years



35 Years

*Congratulations!*

# San Jose Pin Dinner honors longtime members

March 21, 1997



20 Years



30 Years



25 Years

40 Years: Robert Smethhurst

35 Years: Jim Hershman and Ray Johanson

30 Years: Robyn Boeder, James Burris, Pete Callaghan, Pete Coffin, Frank Courter, Jim Dingman, Tom Dunlavy, Joseph "Wally" Hanafin, Lon Hitchcock, David Irvin, Pete Mandon, Jack Najar, Lynne Rodriguez, Tom Ryall, Norbert Stanke

25 Years: Tom Bailey, Don Barnett, Roy Bax, Carlos Castillo, Susan Chase, Richard Cole, Sherman Coleman, Refugio Dominguez, Carolyn Dorsey, Richard Eckhart, Gerhard Freund, Robert Gonzales, Tony Guerrero, Otha Harris, Nerio Hernandez, Donald Johannsen, Mustafa Khalil, Ralph Lentz, Debra Lopez, Mario Martinez, Sammie McDaniel, Robert "Mark" Mclean, Dan Melanephy, Norm Mercer, Steven Mogensen, Sharon Ong, Billy Poe, Vincent Revino, Curtis Riley, Gary Van Horne

20 Years: Nancy Barthelmess, Rich Borba, Bella Chuck, Diana Dominguez, Gilbert Garcia, Ish hernandez, Jeanette Hering, Dennis Pentz, Jerome Retterath, Bill Wallace

