



## Proposals due for PG&E bargaining

Members of Local 1245 employed by PG&E will have the chance to put their ideas into action this spring when unit meetings accept proposals for bargaining.

Negotiations with PG&E for Physical, Clerical, and Benefits agreements are tentatively set to begin in mid-June. Members employed by PG&E may submit contract proposals to their March and April unit meetings. Any proposal receiving a majority vote by the unit will be forwarded to the bargaining committee.

Members can suggest changes to the current agreements, propose entirely new language, or recommend that the union seek to extend the current agreements.

Unit recommendations provide valuable guidance to the bargaining committee. The committee may choose to adopt, revise, or combine various unit proposals as it prepares a unified strategy for negotiations with the company.

The current agreements with PG&E expire on Dec. 31, 1999.

The union's bargaining committee, to be appointed by Business Manager Jack McNally, is traditionally composed of a broad cross-section of rank and file members from both the Physical and Clerical bargaining units. McNally heads the bargaining committee for the union, with Senior Assistant Business Manager Darrel Mitchell leading the day-to-day negotiations.

## Employees hold key to Citizens' success

By Eric Wolfe

As it continues to carve out a profitable niche in the newly-competitive local phone service market, Citizens Communications is re-discovering an age-old lesson: to be your best, you need a motivated workforce.

Citizens' employees in northern California, long represented by IBEW Local 1245, install new phone services, make repairs, maintain networks, and answer customer inquiries. Until the mid-1990s, Citizens could pride itself in having established a modest but stable business enterprise based on providing good local telephone service in mostly rural areas on both coasts.

Then along came the Telecommunications Reform Act of 1996. Suddenly, providing good local service was no longer enough. The Act makes

it possible for other companies (Competing Local Exchange Carriers) to come into the Incumbent Local Exchange Carrier's service territory and compete for customers. As with competition in the electric industry, new arrivals will almost certainly seek out the biggest, most profitable customers.

In this competitive environment, many smaller phone companies could find themselves left to wither on the vine, or absorbed by larger communications companies.

Citizens doesn't intend to be one of them. The company is pursuing an aggressive strategy that includes competing in other companies' territories, acquiring rival companies, and increasing sales of "core" products to their



Photo: Eric Wolfe

Local 1245 Steward Kathey Silas is a Service Representative for Business Customers, one of 140 union Service Reps at Citizens Communications' Call Center outside Sacramento. Marketing products and services is now a big part of the Service Reps' job.

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## Portrait of a near-tragedy

Mark Rose, a foreman with Davey Tree, had just moved the lift truck and was going to help his climber stack some brush when he heard a long gust of wind coming from the valley.

"I saw the acacia blow up into the power line. I knew in the back of my mind I needed to get out of there," Rose recalled.

He heard the line arc as he reached a nearby fence. "It was a heavy arc. Then the line broke...I saw the line dancing on the ground where I had been standing a second earlier."

Hugging the fence, Rose hightailed it away from the line. The fire burned the tires on his truck before a PG&E crew arrived.

Said Rose, an 18-year veteran of the industry: "The old man can move when motivated."



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**EVENTS**

- March 20**  
 Citizens Communications  
 Stewards Conference  
 Sacramento, CA
- April 10**  
 Unit Leadership Conference  
 Concord, CA
- April 10**  
 Service Awards  
 Bakersfield, CA
- April 24**  
 Service Awards  
 Chico, CA
- April 24**  
 PG&E Steward Conferences  
 Bakersfield, CA  
 Belmont, CA  
 Chico, CA  
 Concord, CA  
 Eureka, CA  
 Fresno, CA  
 Sacramento, CA  
 Salinas, CA  
 San Luis Obispo, CA  
 Santa Rosa, CA  
 Stockton, CA

**APPOINTMENTS**

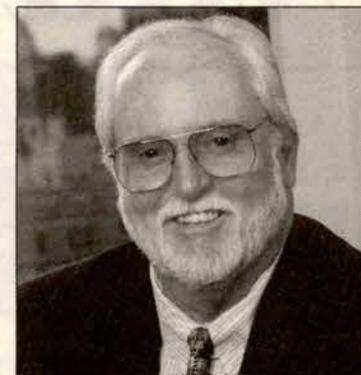
**CONFERENCES, COUNCILS & CONVENTIONS**

- Local 1245 Safety Committee  
 Mark Rose
- Congress of California Seniors  
 Annual State Convention  
 Don Hardie  
 Robert Sherbourne  
 Jack Hill  
 Watie Anthony
- Central Labor Council  
 Napa & Solano Counties  
 Junior Ornelas
- Central Labor Council  
 Butte/Glenn Counties  
 Kit Stice
- IBEW 9th District Progress Meeting  
 Jack McNally  
 Howard Stiefer  
 Sam Tamimi  
 Darrel Mitchell  
 Jim McCauley  
 Chris Habecker  
 Anna Bayless-Martinez  
 Ken Ball
- IBEW Utility Conference  
 Jack McNally  
 Howard Stiefer  
 Ed Mallory  
 Kathy Tindall  
 Jim McCauley  
 John Mendoza  
 Darrel Mitchell  
 Bob Choate  
 Dorothy Fortier  
 Gary Mai

**POINT OF VIEW**

# Union must anticipate and prepare for change

By Jack McNally, Business Manager



If you haven't noticed any change in your job situation during the first 12 months of electric utility restructuring in California, don't assume you've dodged the bullet.

Maybe the flood waters haven't reached you yet, but they're on the way. Electric restructuring--one year old in California and on the launch pad in Nevada-- will touch virtually every member represented by Local 1245. It doesn't matter whether you work for an investor-owned utility, a municipal utility district, a rural electric cooperative, or some other public agency: there are significant forces of change sweeping down upon all of us.

When the National Energy Policy Act was passed in 1992, this union could have adopted a "wait and see"

attitude. But we didn't. Instead, we closely monitored developments in the state legislatures and regulatory agencies and lobbied aggressively for the interests of our members. While others have argued abstract free market theory, we have insisted that policy makers examine the impact of restructuring on *people*. Our goal has been stability--for our members and the customers they serve.

The effects of restructuring are most clearly seen in the investor-owned utilities, which are being forced to give up generation and perhaps downsize other portions of their business as well. Those actions, in turn, could threaten the job security of our members at line clearance tree trimming companies, whose revenue is dependent on the utilities'

tree trimming budgets.

Local 1245 foresaw these problems and worked hard to make sure they were addressed in AB 1890, the electric restructuring law. We secured a funding mechanism for voluntary severance benefits, retraining, and other protections for utility employees displaced by restructuring. And we fought successfully for inspection and maintenance standards that help stabilize employment at the utilities and their tree trimming contractors.

Rural electric associations are also at risk. Historically, REAs have been able to get cheap electricity from federal power projects. But with electric restructuring, federal agencies may begin to sell more of their supply on the free market, which could jack up the price that REAs must pay. The same threat holds true for other public agencies that rely on federal power.

Competitive markets threaten to seriously destabilize the public agencies. Our union continues to believe that cut-throat competition would hurt utility employees at all public agencies, and that incumbent providers ought to have the first right of refusal when it comes to serving customers in their existing service territory.

As electric restructuring continues to trigger change, I ask myself: What is the union's role? What is our responsibility to our diverse membership?

I believe we have an obligation to do more than just blindly resist change. We have an on-going responsibility to anticipate change, and to look for ways to increase stability in an industry that provides vital gas and electric services to the public. In doing that, we increase economic stability for our members as well.



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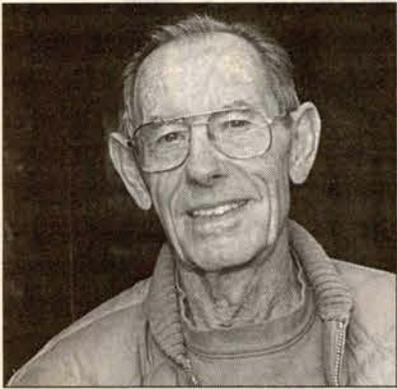
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# Q: Should Social Security be privatized?



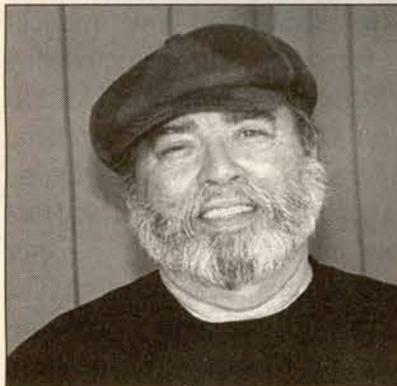
▶ “Privatization is just a way to make some brokers richer. These risks aren’t necessary to make the system solvent. I think it can be done in a lot simpler way. One would be to increase the cap so that people in the higher income levels are paying more. Pinochet privatized Social Security in Chile and now it’s a mess.”

**Don Hardie**  
Retirees Club  
East Bay Chapter



▶ “No, I don’t. I’ve had stocks--they’re up and down. In the long run you lose out. It’s a real gamble--there’s a risk to it. My folks suffered quite severely during the stock market crash of 1929. That’s the problem--the bottom could fall out and there goes everybody’s money.”

**Ralph Weidling**  
Retirees Club  
East Bay Chapter



▶ “I don’t really know if it’s good or bad. Our pension is privatized and has done very well from being in the stock market. Maybe some portion of Social Security should be privatized, but the Republicans want individuals to be handling some portion of the money and I don’t think that’s a good idea. Some people wouldn’t know how to handle it and they might gamble it away and end up on the welfare rolls and we’d end up paying for it anyway.”

**Mike Silva**  
Retirees Club  
East Bay Chapter



▶ “If you just give [investment responsibility] to the average person, they’re just going to lose it. The average individual doesn’t know that much about investment houses. Probably 75% of the people would lose.”

**Bob Sherbourne**  
Retirees Club  
East Bay Chapter

Have a union issue you’d like to see addressed in **Speaking Out**? Send your suggested topic to: Speaking Out, IBEW 1245, P.O. Box 4790, Walnut Creek, CA 94596. Opinions expressed are those of the individual, and do not necessarily reflect official Local 1245 policy.



## Workers, enviros stand together

Steelworkers and the environmental group Earth First! have forged an alliance to fight unfair labor practices by Kaiser Aluminum.

In early December, Earth First! vessels blockaded an Australian cargo ship bound for Kaiser's Tacoma smelter with 650,000 tons of alumina ore. A Garberville environmentalist, Mike Jakubal, went undercover for the union at Kaiser's Tacoma smelter to document conditions there.

The environmentalists and steelworkers have a common enemy: the owner of Kaiser Aluminum is Maxxam Corp., the company responsible for decimating ancient redwood forests in California.

As reported by Christine Keyser in the Feb. 21 issue of *In These Times*, Kaiser was acquired by Maxxam in 1988 with \$1 billion in junk bonds. Maxxam then sold \$700 million of Kaiser's assets to pay off the junk bond debt and moved some operations to right-to-work states.

Last September, 3,100 Steelworkers in four states walked off their jobs over the company's plan to lay off more than 700 union employees and outsource their jobs.

The Steelworkers repaid the environmentalists by showing up at their rallies and submitting 1,000 written comments to the US Fish and Wildlife Service last fall against Pacific Lumber's habitat conservation plan.

"This is a very critical alliance for the entire country," said Darryl Cherney of Earth First! "Unions and environmentalists are basically branches off the same tree. That tree is united against corporate greed."

## Crocodile tears, crashing planes, & ice cream

**F**our workers died and a fifth was badly injured when they were engulfed by flames while repairing a leaky pipe at the Tosco refinery in Martinez on Feb. 23. According to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, supervisors knew of the potential danger but took no steps to avert the disaster. Contra Costa County labor officials have repeatedly complained that workforce reductions at the refinery have jeopardized safety. The plant has shed 150 employees in the past three years. In response to community protests over the accident, Tosco CEO Thomas O'Malley ordered the plant's temporary closure pending safety investigations, and expressed sorrow over the loss of life. The *Chronicle* quoted one worker as saying: "Do you believe his crocodile tears? Not me for an instant. I think he's intending to shut down the Tosco plant, or at least leave it closed long enough to get more concessions from the union, and he doesn't care how safe the place is as long as it makes money." O'Malley owns a 27,000-square-foot house on a private island off the coast of Connecticut. In 1997 he collected \$5.6 million in pay. According to the *Chronicle* story, O'Malley "has a reputation for slicing things to the bone to maximize profits."

► **Scab Disaster:** When the United Auto Workers union was forced to strike Textron-Lycoming Co., management used replacement workers to build helicopter engines, *WorkingUSA* reported. Now the manufacturer has admitted that striker replacements--many of them office workers--assembled the engine in a Baltimore city police helicopter that crashed last November, killing the veteran pilot. The National Transportation Safety Board said engine failure was responsible for the crash.

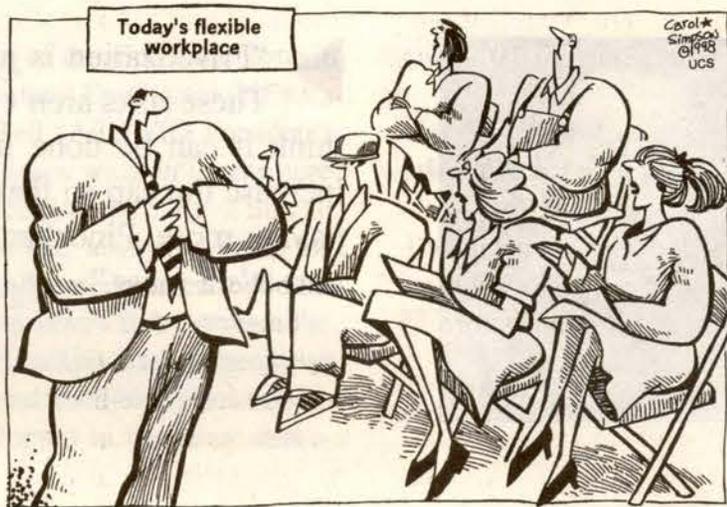
► **Phone Strike Near:** Contract talks between Canada's largest tele-

phone company, Bell Canada, and the union representing its 9,600 operators and technicians broke off March 5, raising the possibility of a strike, a union official told Reuters. The labor dispute centers largely on Bell Canada's plan to form a new joint venture with Arizona-based call center operator Excell Global Services Inc. to handle much of its operator-assistance business. The union says the joint venture would result in significant job losses and wage cuts for the operators. The strike deadline was March 10.

► **Defiance in China:** Defying authorities, workers in China have protested lay-offs and the failure of state-run firms to pay back wages and pensions. Labor and human rights monitoring groups have reported hundred of small-scale protests. Meanwhile, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions has issued a complaint that independent labor activists are being singled out for particular harsh treatment in Chinese detention. This includes direct physical violence inflicted by prison staff as well as organized collective beatings by fellow-inmates, who are rewarded with special favors by the authorities.

► **Ukrainian Atomic Workers:** Workers at Chernobyl, and Ukraine's four other nuclear power stations, threatened to strike in early March over unpaid wages. Unions nationally and globally are warning that the crisis could have implications for safety. The wage backlog now amounts to more than \$15 million in US dollars. The workers, members of the Atom Trade Union (ATU), have repeatedly warned that serious underfunding of the sector poses a threat to nuclear safety. The ATU is affiliated with the 20-million-strong International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM).

► **Too Close to Home:** Ben & Jerry's, the Vermont ice cream firm that prides itself on sponsoring progressive causes, has recently fought efforts by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers to organize maintenance workers at the company's St. Alban plant. Apparently progressive causes are fine, unless they're too close to home.



"Our stock is down a bit...so today's wages will be 70% of yesterday's."

Let's Get Organized!

## Bella Vista Water District wins improvements

Local 1245 members at the Bella Vista Water District recently ratified a new agreement that provides wage increases of 10% over three years.

The pact, which took effect on Jan. 22 and terms out on June 30, 2001, provides that employees working on upgrade will receive the upgraded wage rate. Previously there was a two-hour minimum before the upgrade rate applied.

In other improvements, time worked on upgrade will now apply toward step progression in the tem-

porary classification, enabling employees working for an extended amount of time in an upgraded classification to receive appropriate step increases.

The agreement also provides that District employees, who work 9-80 schedules, will now receive nine hours pay for the previously-negotiated bonus vacation days.

Likewise, three days of previously-negotiated family leave will now pay at the nine-hour rate, unless the leave is taken on the one eight-hour day in the nine-day schedule, in

which case the pay will remain at eight hours.

The agreement also provides five weeks of vacation after 24 years of service, and establishes joint labor-management meetings.



Negotiating for the union were Philip Osburn Alleman, Jeff Tuchalski, and Debbie Pollard, along with Local 1245 Business Rep. Jack Osburn.

## Unit updates

Unit 3714, Ukiah, will now meet at 5:30 p.m. The meetings will continue to be on the first Wednesday, except June, when the meeting will be on June 9. Meeting locations remain the Discovery Inn, 1340 N. State St. in Ukiah.

Roy Runnings, Business Rep.

Unit 3713, East Geysers, has been reestablished. Meetings will be held at American Legion post 850, Starview Lodge, Cobb Mountain, on Thursday of the first full week at 5:30 p.m.

Roy Runnings, Business Rep.

Unit 4912, Outside Construction (Southern), will begin meeting on the second Saturday of each month starting April 10. The meeting location remains 1074 LaCadena Dr. #5, Riverside, CA.

Richard Dunkin, Business Rep.

## Ron Garcia, union brother

PG&E lineman Ron Garcia, 42, died last month after a long battle with kidney disease.

Garcia, who worked out of Templeton, played a unique role in the union's battle against PG&E's downsizing in early 1995 by picketing on horseback through Paso Robles, Cambria, Morro Bay, and Atascadero. His unusual form of protest helped contribute to the widespread media coverage of PG&E's workforce reductions. The layoffs



were later cancelled.

In 1997, several of Garcia's co-workers and friends volunteered to donate a kidney to help Garcia, whose own kidneys no longer functioned. But in the end, Garcia lost the battle.

Garcia is survived by his son, Christopher, among many other relatives. Local 1245 extends its condolences.

Contributions can be made to The Kidney Foundation. Call toll-free: 1-800-706-2277.



"Why do I have to honor the contract if I had my fingers crossed?"

### TREE MEET

Union members from four unionized tree contractors gathered at the union's Walnut Creek headquarters for a strategy session. Seated, clockwise from left, are: Robert Salas, Asplundh; Jesus Gonzales, Davey; Mark Rose, Davey; Mike Tsieer, Asplundh; Advisory Council member Bob Irwin, Davey. Standing, clockwise from left, are: Dan Quisenbury, Provco EPA; Juan Carillo Asplundh; Senior Business Rep. Landis Marttila; and Alan Danvers, Arbor.



# Democracy in action:

## Advisory Council tackles hydro issues, GRC, 8-h

The Local 1245 Advisory Council showed union democracy at its best during last month's quarterly meeting, where union members discussed local issues and gave the union the benefit of their ideas on some of the broad challenges facing workers in general and utility workers in particular.

Business Manager Jack McNally reported on the controversy now brewing over the fate of PG&E's hydro electric generation facilities. PG&E, which fears these facilities could give regulators an excuse to lower the company's rate of return, wants to sell its hydro capacity, or spin it off to the company's free-market affiliate, US Generating.

The union, McNally said, opposes the sale of PG&E's hydro facilities, believing it would unnecessarily disrupt the lives of hydro employees without any significant benefit for consumers or the public at large.

Terry Andreucci, who represents the Plumas Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative, the City of Roseville, and PG&E's old Drum Division on the Advisory Council, said the proposed sale is sparking controversy in his area. County officials have warned the California Public Utilities Commission that the sale of the facilities could drastically affect the environmental and economic vitality of the rural counties, Andreucci reported.

As a regulated utility, PG&E must answer to a variety of economic interests associated with its hydro facilities, including water, fishing and recreation. A new owner would be free of such strict regulatory oversight and could concentrate on simply maximizing profits from electric generation.

While the union opposes the outright sale of the facilities, McNally said the union might support a spin-off to US Generating if PG&E made ad-

equated guarantees concerning union recognition and employee retention.

### Overtime Protection

McNally reported that business interests were fighting labor's effort to restore the daily overtime premium, which was abolished Jan. 1, 1998 by Gov. Pete Wilson's administration. Corporations say the restoration of overtime will drive business from the state, a charge ridiculed by McNally.

"Business took millions from workers during the past year," McNally said. "To say they'll leave California because they've improved their profits for the past 13 months at the expense of working people is nonsense."

Advisory Council member Bob Lovett, who represents union members in PG&E's Desabla Division, asked if there was any evidence that businesses had lowered their prices as a result of savings on overtime pay. McNally said there was no such evidence.

"They just lined their pockets at the workers' expense," McNally said.

A bill to restore the overtime premium has been introduced in the state legislature, although the problem could also be fixed by the Industrial Welfare Commission.

McNally also reported on current efforts by the union to influence legislation pertaining to utility restructuring in both California and Nevada. (See story, page 11.)

### General Rate Case

Lee Thomas Jr., who represents union members in the Humboldt area, asked about the two seats currently vacant at the California Public Utilities Commission, and whether the appointments could have an impact on PG&E's posture in negotiations.

McNally said it wasn't clear what impact the appointments might have, if any, on negotiations. However, McNally pointed out another area in which the CPUC will have a major

Terry Andreucci (right) discussed concerns in his area over possible sale of PG&E's hydro facilities. Lee Thomas (shown below right with Harvey Iness) asked about the possible impact of upcoming CPUC appointments on PG&E contract talks.

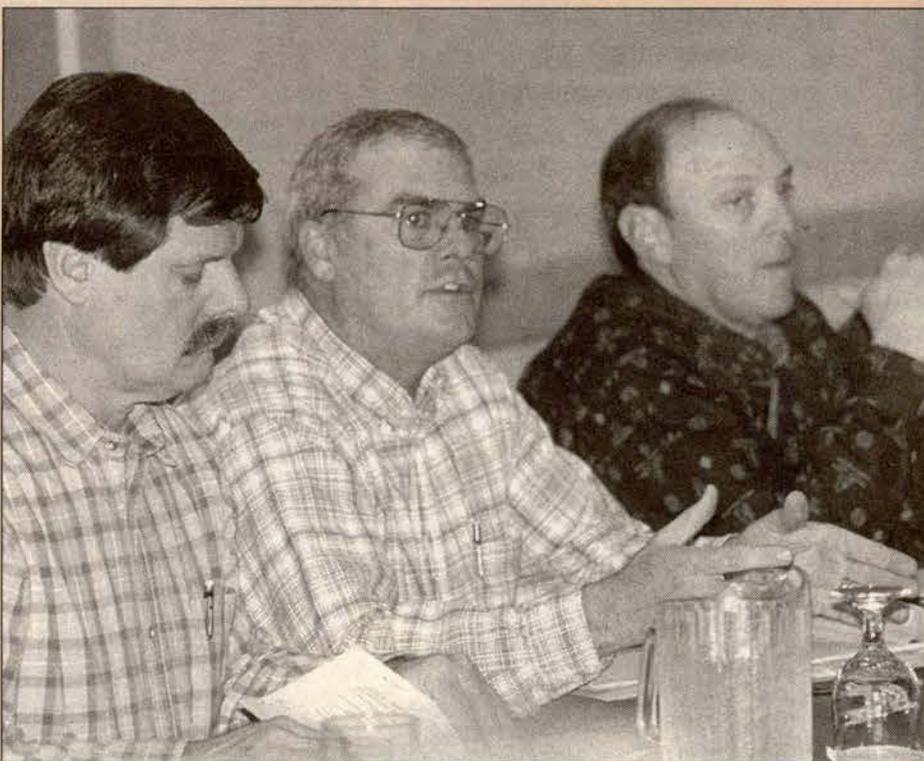


influence: the upcoming decision in PG&E's General Rate Case.

It is not known whether the vacancies will be filled in time for the new commissioners to participate in the GRC decision. The administrative law judge is now expected to issue an opinion around the first of April, with a final decision by the CPUC probably coming sometime in early June.

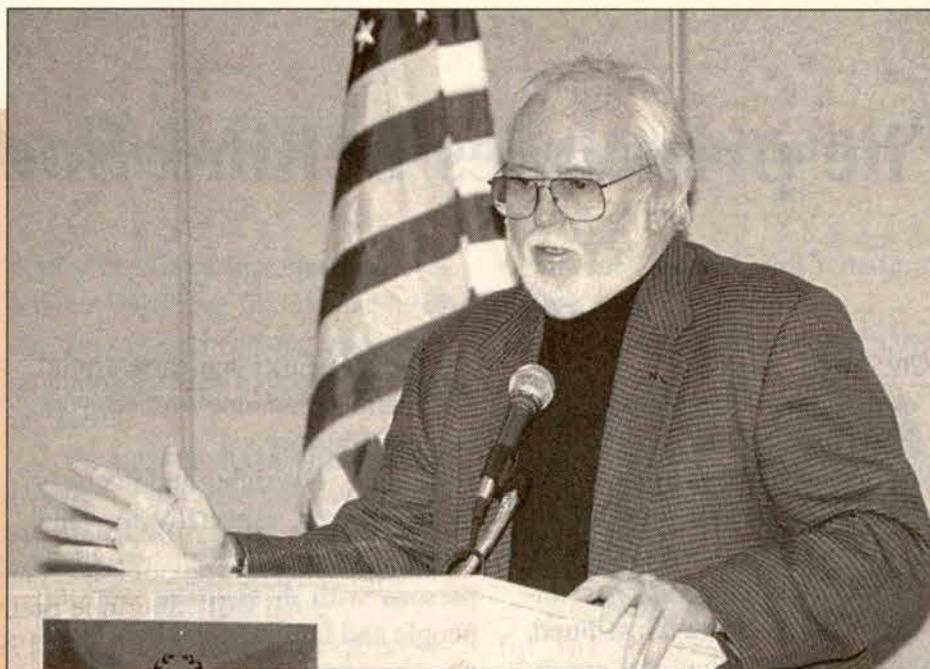
### Focus On Organizing

Senior Assistant Business Manager Darrel Mitchell announced that general bargaining with PG&E was tentatively slated to begin around June

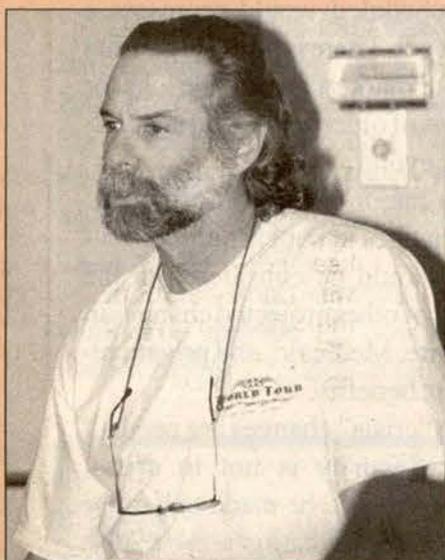


Bob Lovett, flanked by Bob Veiera (left) and Rich Perry, asked if California businesses were passing on to consumers any of the savings they made during the 13 months since California's daily overtime premium was repealed by the administration of former Gov. Pete Wilson.

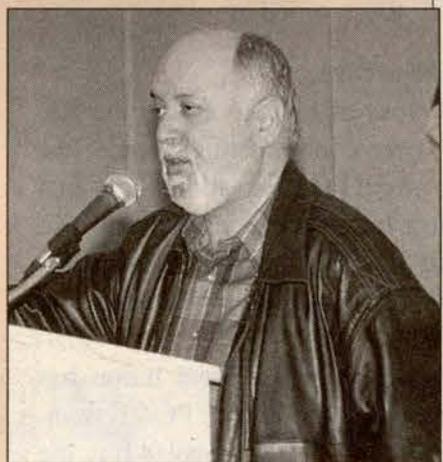
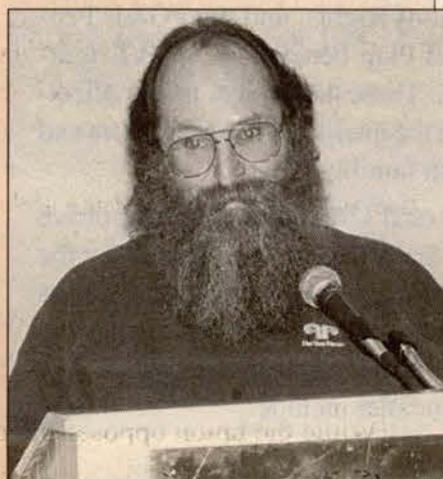
# our day



Business Manager Jack McNally (above) briefed Advisory Council members on the major issues facing the union in coming months. President Howard Stiefer (right) chaired the meeting. Assistant Business Manager Sam Tamimi (below right) reported on efforts to maintain or win union status at various power plants. Senior Assistant Business Manager Darrel Mitchell (bottom right) reported on the tentative date for the start of General Bargaining with PG&E.



Photos: Eric Wolfe



## About your union dues



By Archie Taylor

I have heard the question several times lately, "Why are my union dues so high and what do I get for them?"

Here is my answer:

Our union dues are based on wages. Our union dues are roughly 1% of our straight time wages. The more we make the more the union makes. Sounds fair to me.

As for what do we get for our union dues, I now make 135% more in one day than I first made in a week when I joined the union.

I used to pay for part of my bare bones major medical insurance. No dental, no vision, no prescriptions, no maternity leave. In fact, my 18-year-old daughter was the first child born in the company that was paid for by our insurance. I don't pay a dime for insurance, thanks to 1245.

I used to pay part of my retirement. Thanks to the union, I don't have to anymore. I can also retire earlier and with more money.

I get matching money on a higher percentage on my 401K. I also now have a 401K thanks to 1245.

In 1975 I was injured on the job and the company started termination procedures. The union put a stop to it. Twenty-four years later I'm still here.

Every once in a while I like to say to Local 1245: Thank you.

(Archie Taylor is the Advisory Council representative for members at PG&E Gas Transmission N.W.)

1, a date that was subsequently pushed back to mid-June.

Mitchell noted that outside forces, such as legislation mandating divestment of power plants by PG&E and Sierra Pacific Power, necessitate a new emphasis on organizing by the union. He said that organizing would be a component of the training offered to PG&E stewards in regional conferences scheduled for April 24.

Other members of McNally's staff reported to the Advisory Council on a variety of recent developments, including the status of power plants recently sold by PG&E, upcoming

arbitration decisions, possible records consolidation at PG&E, the status of negotiations at Sacramento Municipal Utility District and other employers, and recent on-the-job injuries, among other topics.

Advisory Council members then reported on activities in their respective areas. Excerpts from the report given by Archie Taylor, who represents members at PG&E Gas Transmission NW, appear at right.

The next Advisory Council meeting will be held in Sacramento on May 1-2.



# The principles behind Social Security

## Make a Date...

The Local 1245 Retiree Club invites you to join us for companionship, discussion and projects. Current meeting locations are:

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

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

## Congratulations!

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

Guthrie Crutchfield Redding, CA 27 years of service	Carol Kingsley Hunting Beach, CA 15 years
Kenneth Douglas Salier, CA 36 years	Edward O'Brien Santa Rosa, CA 38 years
Larry Fine Cottonwood, CA 30 years	Albert Pitetti El Dorado, CA 37 years
George Fowler Wishon, CA 32 years	Eldred Slyh Orland, CA 32 years
Sherman Fox Shasta, CA 35 years	Ken Stephens Garberville, CA 21 years
Wavel Hale Los Olivos, CA 40 years	Bobby Wilson Hominy, OK 38 years
Betty Harris Madera, CA 21 years	Dale Wood Vacaville, CA 35 years
Michael Johnson Oakland, CA 26 years	Jose Pinzon Woodland, CA 24 years

By Orv Owen

Local union retirees from the San Jose chapter, East Bay chapter, and the Manteca area gathered in Walnut Creek on Feb. 6 to discuss the position of our Retirees Club on several important issues. These include: Social Security Trust Fund, Medicare preservation and expansion, HMO reform and the Patient Bill of Rights, and the PG&E Pension Plan benefits for PG&E retirees. These are critical issues affecting the quality of life for seniors and their families.

Local 1245 retirees are supportive of the principles formulated by the National Council of Senior Citizens regarding any proposed changes in the Social Security trust fund. The principles include:

- Social Security is an earned right: Benefits must continue to reflect work and wage history.
- Equity: The rights and interests of all citizens, especially low- and moderate-income persons, women, persons with disabilities, working people and families, and minorities must be protected.
- Maintaining benefit levels: In the future, Social Security will provide a larger proportion of retirement income as pension coverage and savings decline for many persons.
- Full exploration of new revenue sources: Income caps, taxation of unearned income, payroll taxes and the use of general revenues should all be examined.
- Normal retirement age must not be changed. Advancing the age of

retirement or setting age 67 as the age of full benefits status sooner than now scheduled would represent a benefit cut. There is no evidence that the labor market can provide jobs for millions of older workers at ages 62-67 or beyond.

- No major changes in isolation: Any changes in benefits and/or revenues should be considered in the context of other projected changes in Medicare, Medicaid, and private retirement benefits.

- No "crisis" changes are needed: Social Security is not in crisis. Changes should be made only after full public information and debate.

Keep the faith!

Former Assistant Business Manager Orv Owen is active in the South Bay chapter of the Retirees Club.

# Get involved to make a difference!

By Mike Silva

Those of us who attend the Retiree Club meetings would like to get PG&E to address the fact that a lot of retirees have outlived their benefits and are now hardly making it on Social Security and pension.

In the past, our local union has been able to influence PG&E to increase our benefit levels. But the union needs our help to get the company's attention on this issue.

One thing we can do is write PG&E about our concerns, and about the problems retirees have living on a fixed income. Another thing we can do is show up once a month at our Retiree Club meetings and generate some energy for our cause.

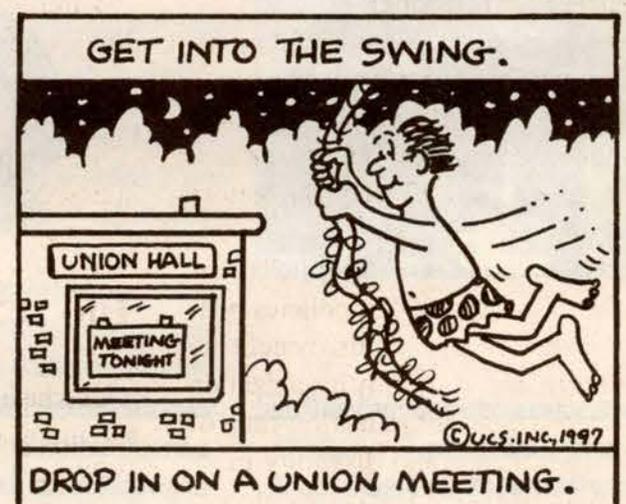
We need people who are willing to help set up Retiree Club chapters in Redding, Marysville, Bakersfield, Fresno, and elsewhere. Your local union Business Representative can help you do this.

We need people to attend regular unit meetings to ask for the help of the working people and to let them know what living on a fixed income really means.

Help us increase our numbers. Please consider giving up about three hours a month to become one of us. Bring your ideas to our meetings and put a voice to them.

If the Walnut Creek and San Jose meetings are too far away for you to attend, please form your own group, which you can do by attending the nearest Local 1245 monthly unit meeting and asking the union Business Rep. to help you get started.

Don't sit and wait for someone else—too many people are already doing that. We need people to get involved and become a force.



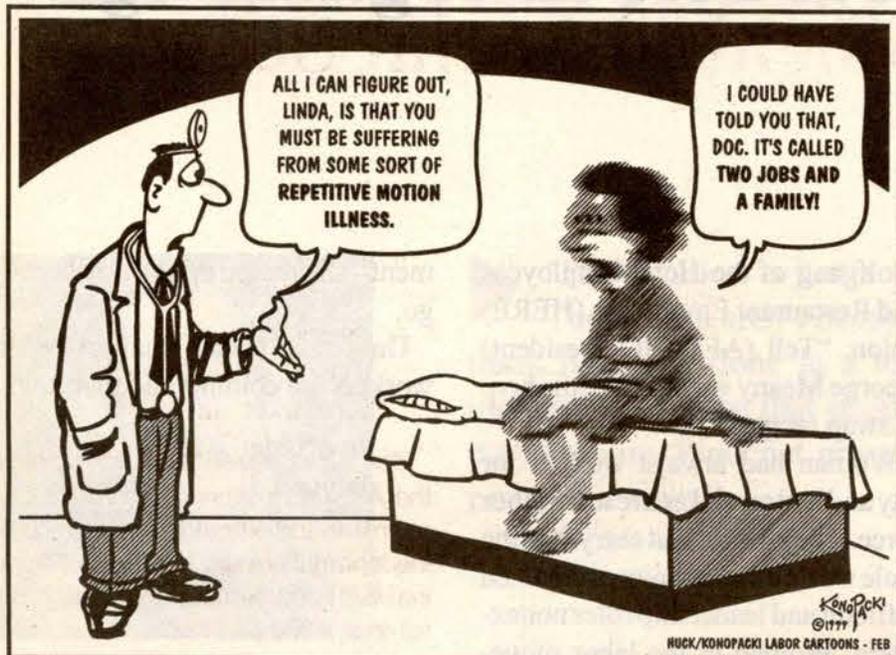
Please help us help you! If you're still not sure how to get started, try this: call the union hall at (925) 933-6060, ext. 240, and ask for Austin Lea. He will put you in touch with someone you can talk to about starting a Retiree Club chapter in your area.

Don't be surprised if you end up enjoying yourself!

Mike Silva is a retired PG&E underground crew foreman.



By the Local 1245  
Safety Committee



## Tell it to someone who cares!

**H**ave an idea? Well, let's hear it! Don't dismiss it--share your ideas with your fellow employees or your boss.

Take the time to be heard, and make yourself part of the crew. Many changes have been brought about by just a single thought, and that change

might make a difference in safety, productivity or higher morale. Even more important, it might save someone from injury or death.

Speaking up now is far better than going up to a coworker or their loved one and saying, "Oh, I should have said something. Sorry."

## Stress can lower productivity

**S**ome employers may assume that stressful working conditions are a necessary evil--that companies must turn up the pressure on workers and set aside health concerns to remain productive in a highly-competitive economy.

But the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) reports that recent research challenges this belief.

Studies show that stressful working conditions are associated with increased absenteeism, tardiness, and the desire to quit the job--all of which have a negative effect on the bottom line.

Recent studies of "healthy" organizations suggest that policies benefiting worker health also benefit the bottom line. A healthy organization is defined as one that has low rates of illness, injury, and disability in its workforce and is also competitive in the marketplace. NIOSH research has identified organizational characteristics associated with both healthy, low-stress work and high levels of productivity. Examples of these characteristics include:

- ◆ Recognition of employees for good work performance.
- ◆ Opportunities for career development.
- ◆ An organizational culture that values the individual worker.
- ◆ Work schedules that are com-

patible with demands and responsibilities outside the job.

- ◆ Ensure workload is in line with workers' capabilities and resources.
- ◆ Design jobs to provide meaning, stimulation, and opportunities for workers to use their skills.
- ◆ Give workers opportunities to participate in decisions and actions affecting their jobs.
- ◆ Improve communications--reduce uncertainty about career development and future employment prospects.
- ◆ Provide opportunities for social interaction among workers.

## Too stressed to work

Unscheduled absences are on the rise and reached a seven-year high in 1998, according to a survey by CCH Inc. reported in the Los Angeles Times.

"Only about a quarter of the people who were taking off were really sick," CCH Human Resource Analyst Paul Gibson told the Times. The study covered 401 companies.

The survey found that stress was among the leading reasons for the non-illness absences. Unscheduled absenteeism is costing US companies millions of dollars each year, and most sick-leave policies do not address the problems that are causing the no-shows, Gibson said.

## Share your knowledge

**P**rofessional electrical workers know that when you have electrical conductors down, you secure the area and keep unqualified persons from entering the area. Likewise people in this industry know that in case of fire you do your best to extinguish it.

But to the public at large, these common sense reactions may not be immediately obvious. Just because *you* would know what to do doesn't mean that your friends, family, or neighbors are equally well-informed.

You can help the people you know understand the importance of staying away from power lines--or any other line for that matter. Phone and cable lines could be energized by an unseen hazard.

Help others understand that contact with an energized line could be fatal.

The best thing for people to do when they see a downed line is to stay clear, call 911 to report the problem, and go on to live a long happy life!



"The boss wants you to get well soon. He had to hire five temps to do your job!"



## Women's central role in organizing

The importance of women to the future of labor has become inescapable. Two in five union members are women. With 5.5 million women members, the AFL-CIO is the largest working women's organization in the country.

Contrary to the stereotype, women always have been key to union organizing in this country. Women textile workers unionized and went on a series of strikes throughout the 1880s. The 1884 strikes of women textile workers and hatmakers in New York led the head of the Knights of Labor to dub them "the best men in the order."

The first union of African-American women workers was the "Washer Women of Jackson," formed by women laundry workers in 1886 in Mississippi. In the new century, women cannery workers, bookbinders, cracker packers, waitresses, packinghouse workers, sales clerks, teachers, and telephone operators organized.

A pay cut for women and children textile workers in Massachusetts sparked the Lawrence Strike of 1912. Strikers created the tactic of mass picketing, with 5,000 to 20,000 textile workers forming a human chain, weaving around the mills to keep out scabs.

The militancy of women workers didn't stop in the olden days. Waitresses organized throughout the 1930s, and by the late 1940s more than 200,000 women culinary workers were unionized, with close to a quarter of those in separate, women-only waitress organizations.

In 1946, the walkout of women department store workers in Oakland, Ca., sparked a general strike involving more than 120,000 workers. Two-thirds of the 350,000 telephone workers who went on strike in 1947 were women. And in the 1960s and early 1970s, teachers'

unions tripled in membership to more than 2 million, the vast majority of whom were women.

In 1974, women in unions demanded an organized voice for themselves across unions and created the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW). Thirty-five hundred women crammed into a Chicago hotel, far exceeding all expectations.

In the famous words of Myra

Wolfgang of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) union, "Tell (AFL-CIO President) George Meany we didn't come here to swap recipes."

Women had always worked for pay and had served as a reserve labor force at key times. But entry into the male world of labor unions remained difficult and leadership roles nonexistent. Women in the labor move-

ment—all dressed up and nowhere to go.

Until now. Today, finally, women workers are coming into their own.

The author, Karen Nussbaum, directs the AFL-CIO's Working Women's Department. Excerpted from an article in the January-February 1999 issue of Working USA. For subscription information, call toll-free: 1-800-541-6563.

## 'Granny D' hits the road for reform

Keep an eye out for Doris Haddock, otherwise known as "Granny D."

This 89-year-old great-grandmother is determined to get the corrupting power of big campaign money out of politics. To rally support for her cause, Haddock is walking across America.

"Call me crazy, call me God-sent," she says, "I am on a crusade to create a ground swell for campaign finance reform to eliminate the cancer [of big money]."

She flew from her New Hampshire home to California and hit the road on New Year's Day, according to the Hightower Lowdown, a new political newsletter edited by populist agitator Jim Hightower.

Haddock plans to average 10 miles a day through California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, West Virginia, Virginia. Sometime next November she plans to cross the Potomac and walk straight to the halls of Congress, where she'll

deliver the petitions that she plans to circulate along the way.

She's asking people for a meal, a warm place to sleep, and, of course, to sign and spread her petitions. To find out more about Granny D's crusade and how you can help, contact her at [www.grannyd.com](http://www.grannyd.com) or call 1-800-298-2182.

For a year's subscription to The Hightower Lowdown, send name and address with \$15 (\$12 seniors and students) to: The Hightower Lowdown, POB 20596, New York, NY 10011.

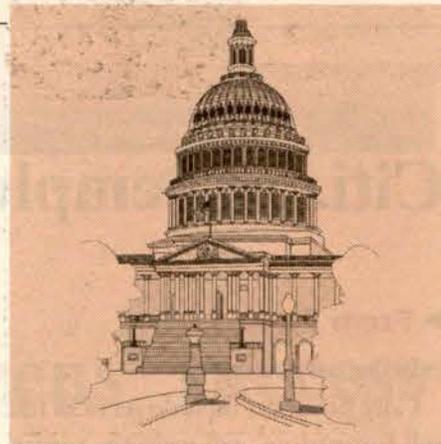
### NEW PRESIDENT

Local 1245 Assistant Business Manager Dorothy Fortier (right) was elected president of the Alameda Central Labor Council last month. Fortier, right, accepted the president's gavel from Judy Goff, the Council's new executive secretary-treasurer. Fortier has been Local 1245's delegate to the Alameda Central Labor Council since 1979.



Photo: Landis Martilla

# Local 1245 presses legislation to protect utility workers, consumers



In the on-going battle over utility restructuring, Local 1245 continues its role as an advocate for ordinary consumers and the workers who provide their service.

In California, Local 1245 is helping to craft The Basic Utility Service Protection Act, while in Nevada the union is pressuring legislators to prohibit the "slamming" of electric consumers.

The Basic Utility Service Protection Act, still being drafted at Utility Reporter press time, seeks to protect universal access to gas and electric service. The bill would ensure that California consumers get natural gas and electricity without having to shop around.

The union believes most customers lack the interest or the expertise to

shop for a provider. The Basic Utility Service Protection Act make electricity available to all customers at the wholesale prices established by the independent Power Exchange. Customers would also be assured of access to natural gas at wholesale prices.

## Customers Benefit

"This bill provides ordinary customers the benefits of competition without having to shop for a new provider," said Business Manager Jack McNally at last month's Advisory Council meeting in Concord, Ca.

Under the terms of the bill, the incumbent utilities would be the default provider for both gas and electric service. Customers who choose to do nothing would still receive the benefits of wholesale pricing.

"Under our bill, there would be no slamming," said McNally, referring to the practice whereby an outside party switches a consumer's service

provider without the consumer's consent.

## Electric Slamming in Nevada

Local 1245 is pursuing a similar strategy in Nevada, where state regulators have drafted a plan to forcibly switch electric customers who do not voluntarily leave the incumbent utility.

Nevada Assembly Bill 366, enacted in 1997, authorized the Public Utilities Commission of Nevada to draft regulations for electric competition. The PUCN subsequently drafted rules that would force electric customers to switch providers, prompting a media campaign by Local 1245 to inform Nevada citizens of the proposed action.

The Nevada legislature, which meets only in odd-numbered years, will be confronted this year with demands to protect Nevada consumers from slamming, and to make incumbent utilities the default provider of electric service.

Local 1245 will also seek to enact legislation to classify as "stranded assets" any Nevada utility employee who is displaced as a result of electric restructuring. Similar language in California's AB 1890 provided a funding mechanism to finance voluntary severance program, retraining and job placement services for utility employees displaced by electric restructuring.

## Natural Gas Slamming

Nevada isn't the only place where slamming has become an issue.

In California, state regulators want to remove incumbent utilities from the business of buying natural gas for core customers. A CPUC proposal to prohibit utilities from participating in natural gas meter reading, billing, and collecting would force customers to go elsewhere for these services.

The Basic Utility Service Protection Act would halt this attempt to slam California's natural gas users.

## Legislation would boost Cal-OSHA

Assembly Bill 1127 seeks to restore the strength and credibility of Cal-OSHA after years of neglect and declining budgets under the previous two governors.

Introduced by Darrell Steinberg, chair of the Assembly Labor Committee, AB 1127 would establish stronger penalties for violators of occupational health and safety laws, increase enforcement staffing, and limit the ability of the Appeals Board to reduce penalties.

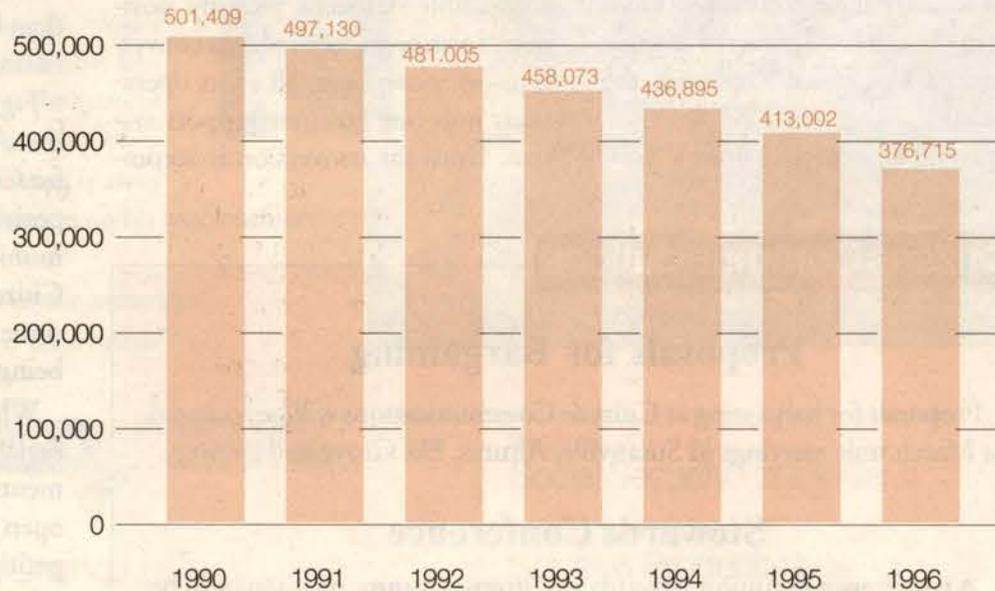
Under two Republican governors, there was a cutback in Cal-OSHA inspections and the Appeals Board frequently reduced fines and penalties. It took a court order to get Cal-OSHA to comply with legislation directing it to develop an ergonomics standard, and the standard it ultimately developed was inadequate, according to labor health and safety experts.

Local 1245 supports AB 1127.

## What Happens to Service?

Major U.S. Investor-Owned Electric Utilities  
Total Electric Department Employees

These numbers have a significant story to tell. Between 1990 and 1996 there has been a 25% reduction in electric department employees at major (top 182) investor-owned utilities. As utilities cut costs in order to compete, utility workforces continue to be in jeopardy of downsizing, raising serious questions as to who will assure future service reliability around the nation.



Source: FERC Form 1. Information supplied by IBEW Local 2304

## Citizens' employees are key to success

### ► From Page 1

existing customers.

Core products include services like call forwarding, call waiting, conference calling, and speed dialing. They aren't "core" in the sense of being services that are all bundled up into the basic service package. Instead, they are add-on products and services for which customers pay a premium.

Citizens Communications, once known as Citizens Utilities, believes there is a significant market among its existing customers for these additional products and services. And the company knows that its Service Representatives are the key to convincing customers to pony up the cash.

The western staging ground for this operation is the Citizens Communications Call Center located just off Interstate-5 a few miles south of Sacramento. In office space leased from sometimes-rival GTE, about 140 Service Reps field calls from Citizens' customers in eight states: California, Oregon, Nevada, Montana, Idaho, Arizona, Utah and New Mexico. About 30 Service Reps handle business customers, while the rest field calls from residential customers.

### Sales Emphasized

These jobs have changed significantly since the coming of competition. Gone are the days when it was sufficient to track down the cause of a service disruption and fix it. Today Service Reps are expected to sell features. Charts hanging on the wall highlight in exact dollar figures the revenue generated by Service Reps with the most sales.

As could be expected from a com-

pany trying to redefine itself in changing circumstances, Citizens doesn't seem altogether certain how to inspire its workers to achieve greater productivity.

"Supervisors need to understand what it's like to be a Rep on the phone, doing your job, and having somebody look over your shoulder," said one Service Representative. "They're not treating us like adults. It cuts morale."

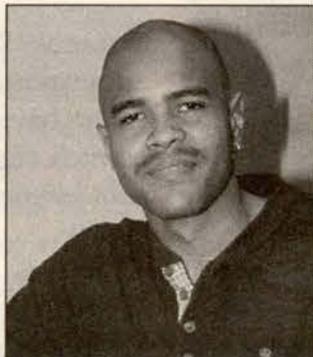
"It's like working under a microscope," said another Service Rep.

These pressures are probably a factor in the decision by several employees to move over to jobs at Citizens' plant service center in nearby Elk Grove. These transfers, combined with the workers who quit the company altogether, produced an astonishing turnover rate of 31% in 1997 and 21% in 1998, according to Local 1245 Business Rep. Jack Osburn.

Management knows that good training is an important factor in reducing employee frustration.

"We encourage them to tell us about any roadblocks," said Cris Young, manager for Reps serving business customers. "It is a very open relationship."

But sometimes it must seem like an uphill battle. As Citizens acquires other companies, it has inherited computerized systems that are not mutually compatible. Citizens recently postponed a project--referred to as conversion--to incorporate all of its operations into one business support system. Until the conversion is accom-



Beverly Greene (above), a Service Clerk at Citizens Communications, has been a member of Local 1245 for eight years. John Dotson (left), is a recently-hired Service Representative.

plished, the company is stuck in a sort of electronic Tower of Babel where its computers cannot understand one another.

Service Reps' jobs are further complicated by the company's geographic spread. Being a small, mostly-rural provider, Citizens must range far and wide to grow. As a result, Service Reps must be prepared to field calls from eight different western states, each with its own product offerings, tariffs, and regulatory framework.

For new employees, this could be a bit daunting. But John Dotson, a Service Rep with just three months at Citizens, is impressed with the training he has received so far.

"They have a good management staff to help me out with the answers I need. We always get the answer for the customer, one way or the other."

Dotson says he likes the work better than his previous job at a warehouse, noting: "You don't have to lift things."

Figuratively speaking, however, there's still some heavy lifting ahead for Citizens. As companies jockey for position in the wake of the Telecommunications Reform Act of 1996, Citizens Communications will continue to remake itself in the hope of being one of the survivors.

Whether the public will ultimately benefit from these massive realignments of corporate power remains an open question. It appears that competitive pressures could speed the development and commercialization of new communications technologies, which may eventually consolidate a

variety of services, including cable TV, telephone service, and Internet access.

### Serious Public Policy Issues

On the other hand, as with electric deregulation, competitive markets in essential telecommunications services raise serious public policy issues:

- ◆ Will powerful business customers benefit at the expense of small residential customers?
- ◆ Will service quality be maintained across the board, or will customers have to pay premiums for anything beyond bare-bones service?
- ◆ Will universal access to telecommunications continue to be recognized as a basic right, backed up by public regulatory authority?
- ◆ Will competitive pressures lead to workforce reductions, over-reliance on automation, and growing customer frustration?

These concerns will continue to challenge legislators, regulators, consumer advocates and labor unions as the industry redefines itself in the coming decade. More change is on the way. And workers at Citizens recognize this as much as anyone.

As Beverly Greene, a service clerk with eight years of service at Citizens, expressed it: "A lot of jobs we used to do we're not doing anymore. Then new things come along and you have to learn something new."

Meanwhile, the industry remains a source of good, skilled jobs. And the union remains a source of strength for employees who want to make sure they share in their company's future prosperity.

## Citizens Communications

### Proposals for Bargaining

Proposals for bargaining at Citizens Communications will be accepted at March unit meetings in Susanville, Alturas, Elk Grove and Burney.

### Stewards Conference

A conference for union stewards at Citizens Communications will be held March 20 in Sacramento. Contact Business Rep. Jack Osburn at (530) 742-6119 for further information.