



WHITE COLLAR

Office and Professional Employees International Union, AFL-CIO and CLC

No. 328

JANUARY, 1974



Pre-holiday organizing brings in 130 members

Organizing successes at a Cleveland hospital, a credit union in Toledo, Ohio, and among the office employees of the American Cancer Society in New York City brought approximately 130 recruits into OPEIU bargaining units in the weeks just before Christmas.

Local 153 Sec.-Treas. John Kelly announced that in a State Labor Relations Board election, the Cancer Society's 60-member office staff voted by a margin of 3-to-1 for OPEIU representation. The unit includes employees at the main office in Manhattan and at three branches in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Staten Island.

The strong pro-union majority was built in a difficult three-month organizing drive which overcame stiff anti-union bias by management. Although the non-profit organization often seeks the cooperation of the labor movement in its fundraising drives, it has shown a marked distaste for union representation for its own employees.

When Local 153 had gained a majority, it vainly sought unit recognition through a card count. After management op-

position became clear, the union petitioned for a SLRB election, got it, and won handily. Balloting was conducted simultaneously at the four offices. Contract proposals are now being formulated.

Organizer Gerry Fromm led the campaign at the main Manhattan office, assisted by Business Representatives John McKeon, Gladys Lee and Mike Goodwin who conducted the campaigns in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Staten Island, respectively.

Vice President John B. Kinnick reports that Local 17 in Cleveland gains a 65-member accretion through the acquisition by Kaiser Medical Center of St. Ann's Hospital in that city. He said the Medical Center contract with Local 17 is being amended to apply the same benefits, working conditions and job classifications to office employees added to the bargaining unit at St. Ann's Hospital.

Toledo Local 19 reports gaining a small unit of office employees by a 2-to-1 margin in a National Labor Relations Board election at the Toledo Edison Credit Union.

Ron Bone is named to B.C. labour board post

Ronald Bone, OPEIU Vice President and Canadian spokesman, has been named registrar of the British Columbia Labour Relations Board, a key position in the operation of the board. The appointment was announced recently by Board Vice Chairman and Chief Administrative Officer Ed Peck.

Known as Ron to his many OPEIU friends, Bone was born in England, served in the British army for six years, and came to Canada with his wife and family in 1957. He joined the office staff of the British Colum-

bia Hydro Power & Authority and became a member of Local 378 in Vancouver, which bargains for the office employees.

He was elected a member of Local 378's Executive Board in 1960 and was elected president in 1962, a post he has filled since then. He has also served as an International Vice President, and in 1972 was appointed as Canadian Spokesman for the OPEIU.

He has also served as a member of the Executive Council of the B.C. Federation of Labour. In addition, he has been Secretary-Treasurer of the B.C. Hydro Joint Council of Unions, representing some 8,000 employees of the power authority.

In 1970, Bone accompanied President Howard Coughlin as OPEIU delegate to the 16th Congress of the International Federation of Commercial, Clerical and Technical Employees (FIET), held in Dublin, Ireland. Again in October, 1973, they served as delegates at FIET's 17th worldwide convention held in London, England.

FIET demands control of multinational firms

Resolutions calling for full governmental control of multinational firms, including the imposition of proper taxation by nations of their origin, were overwhelmingly adopted by the 17th Congress of the International Federation of Commercial, Clerical and Technical Employees, known as FIET, held in London.

FIET is the second largest worldwide labor organization, representing seven-million white-collar employees in more than 30 countries.

OPEIU delegates to the five-day Congress were President Howard Coughlin and Vice President Ron Bone, Canadian spokesman. Upon their return they reported that problems created by multinational concerns were the overriding topic.

Unions representing other industrialized nations reported that they were experiencing the same problems with multinationals as unions in the U.S. and Canada. They declared that such concerns are taking advantage of cheap labor in underdeveloped countries to produce goods at minimum wages and costs. These goods are later sold at the highest prices and profits in the industrialized nations, thus creating unemployment.

On the other hand, unions representing underdeveloped and developing nations felt that multinational concerns were a "mixed blessing," providing employment opportunities in those countries.



Representing the OPEIU at the FIET Congress in London, Vice President Ron Bone (center), and President Howard Coughlin follow the discussion intently.

Despite these differing views, however, the overwhelming majority of the delegates agreed that the multinational firms, regardless of their bases, had no feeling of social obligation or loyalty to any nation, and existed solely to make profits.

FIET General Secretary Erich Kissel gave the delegates an excellent and detailed report on the organization's international activities, particularly in South America, Asia and Africa. He said that without the efforts of FIET, supplemented by the AFL-CIO, it was doubtful that the numerous white collar unions in many emerging nations would be in existence today.

He reported that these unions are rapidly learning the art of collective bargaining and are beginning to negotiate more effectively.

The congress also dealt with numerous other subjects of general interest to all white collar workers including job classifications, temporary work agencies, paid educational leaves, and equal pay for women doing the same work as men.

Kissel also announced that he was retiring as General Secretary after serving in that FIET post for 15 years. Herbert Maier was named to succeed him.

Actions of OPEIU executive board

The Executive Board of the Office and Professional Employees International Union met in Fort Lauderdale, Florida recently and acted on numerous items of business, including the following:

- Approved a financial report prepared by Secretary-Treasurer William A. Lowe.
- Approved a comprehensive organizational report submitted by President Howard Coughlin.
- Approved the termination of a trusteeship which was imposed on Local 443, San Diego, at the request of the membership. Local 443 has now reached a position of financial responsibility.
- Discussed numerous proposals for changes in the OPEIU Health & Welfare Plan. A number of these have been referred to the executive officers for possible implementation after a study of the costs involved.
- Heard Fred K. Hochler, Jr., executive director of the AFL-CIO Labor Studies Center, give a most interesting description of the center and the opportunity to obtain a Bachelor of Arts Degree through a combination of examinations and studies.

- Heard a report from delegates to the recent AFL-CIO Convention.
- Heard and approved a comprehensive report given by Vice President Bone and Coughlin on the recent FIET Congress in London.
- Recommends to the next convention that the educational conference held the day before the convention take the place of educational conferences usually held in the fall of convention years. The Board took into consideration the increased costs which confront local unions during convention years.
- Approved a plan to charge a registration fee of \$15 for each delegate to the coming convention to help defray the cost of social events held in conjunction with the convention.
- Instructed Coughlin to invite Vice President Emeritus George Firth to be a guest of the OPEIU at the convention.
- Went on record that the OPEIU reiterate its position with respect to the four-day work week, taking into consideration the energy crisis, and publicize our position accordingly.

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Bank machines threaten 75% of teller jobs

"Machines—The New Bank Tellers:" This headline in the *New York Times* adds emphasis to the warning the OPEIU has been sounding for bank employees in the U.S. and Canada to unionize now before they are displaced by automation.

The *Times* article points out that to an enthusiastic banker the machines, used today to provide emergency cash are considered the forerunner of the bank branch of the future, perhaps replacing up to 75% of the human tellers, numbering approximately 250,000. About eight of 10 are women, many of whom work part-time.

The new machines about to devour jobs are cash dispensers and automated tellers—the Model T of automated banking, the article says.

Taking the long view, the article asserts that some experts feel the cash dispensers may have a more jarring effect on the nation's spending habits than the credit card, although the proportion of banking transactions now being handled by machines is still very small—only about a

million a month on some 1,700 machines.

The cash dispenser does just that, dispensing cash to holders of especially encoded cards. The automatic teller, also activated by a magnetic card, is quickly becoming the favorite of bankers. The 2,500 automated tellers installed or on order so far outnumber the cash dispensers by about three to one.

Most banks prefer the automated teller because it enables customers to transact any of a dozen banking functions, including deposits to or withdrawals from savings or checking accounts, transfers between accounts or loan repayments.

While banks are looking to the automated teller as the branch of the future, the article reports, the customer also obtains some immediate benefits. The average transaction time is under 30 seconds, compared with several minutes for a traditional teller transaction.

Lines are virtually non-existent, so customers get instant banking day and night, seven days a week. Moreover, the machines seldom break down—less

than 2 percent of the time—and never get pregnant.

Cash dispensing devices were introduced into the U.S. only four years ago (England had them first) and are still in their infancy. Unlike the U.S., bank employees in England have long been highly unionized.

However, the effect of the machines is already noticeable, particularly the impact they are making on the younger and mobile white collar population. A population already firmly indebted to the credit card responds naturally to the automated banking machine. On the other hand, older people seem to have a basic mistrust of machines that banks are finding difficult to overcome.

During the last year 800 cash dispensing devices were installed, making the total 2,000 units to date. That number is expected to double again during the current year. By 1980, some experts predict that there may be some 40,000 cash dispensing devices in operation with a yearly transaction total in the tens of millions.

The future of automated banking machines, the article notes, is up to customers and state regulators. While some states consider automated tellers to be a branch of the bank and permit them to be installed only in the bank or on its immediate premises, other states—those that allow branching—permit banks to operate remote units.

Down the road lie more sophisticated configurations of automated tellers and vending equipment in completely unmanned convenience centers.

Wage increases of 23% gained in Milwaukee

Wage gains totaling 23% over three years plus a cost-of-living escalator were won by Milwaukee Local 500's Chapter 9 for its members at Teledyne Corp., in Elkhart, Vice President Billie D. Adams reports.

The agreement calls for a 20¢ across-the-board wage boost in each of the three years, supplemented by a cost-of-living allowance of 1¢ per hour for each five point increase in the Consumer Price Index.

An additional paid holiday brings the annual total to 11. Employees with more than six months of service are now entitled to 4% of annual salary in vacation pay (was 3½%), while those with eight years but less than 10 get 6%, with three

weeks vacation (was two).

Major Medical coverage was increased to \$10,000 for employees and each dependent. Pensions were improved to \$6 per month times years of service. Retirement at age 55 with ten years of service is now permitted.

Pay raises, fringe gains achieved in twin cities

Gains totaling 14.2% over two years (11% in wages and 3.2% in fringe benefits), plus an additional holiday in the second year, were negotiated by Twin Cities Local 12 for its 254-member unit at Minneapolis Gas Company, Business

Manager H. R. Markusen reports.

The pact is retroactive to June 1 and runs to May 31, 1975. It shortens the progression time to maximum rates for those in Grades 3, 5 and 7. An employee's birthday becomes a paid holiday in the second year.

The company agreed for the first to allow doctor-dental appointments up to 12 hours per year to be charged against sick leave, and to furnish the union with an annual EDP listing of information on employees.

It also agreed to increase health-welfare coverage for dependents to \$17.03 per month from the previous \$13.84, and to boost by 17.7% benefits under the pension plan for early retirement. A new insertion was also made increasing widows' pre-retirement disability benefits.

The OPEIU team assisting Markusen during the negotiations was headed by Chief Steward Mike Beckey and included John Dziedzic, Dennis Harty, Lowell Larson and Bob Yentsch.

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Official Organ of
OFFICE AND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION
affiliated with the AFL-CIO, CLC

HOWARD COUGHLIN

President

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POSTMASTERS, ATTENTION. Change of address Form 3579 should be addressed to Office and Professional Employees International Union, 1012 14th St., N.W., Washington, D. C. 20005.



Published monthly at 810 Rhode Island Ave., N.E., Washington, D. C. 20018.
Second class postage paid at Washington, D. C.
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Subscription Price \$1 a Year

Second chance in Chillicothe

As a result of the OPEIU's efforts in their behalf, 32 employees at The Savings Bank Company in Chillicothe, Ohio, get an opportunity to rectify a mistake some made last year when a majority who had signed union designation cards became a minority in an NLRB election (*story on page 3*).

The NLRB has upheld unfair labor practice charges against the bank and has ordered a new election. The hearing exposed how the bank had cynically used illegal methods to intimidate and coerce the employees, thus undermining the union majority.

The hearing uncovered the fact that at the height of the organizing drive the bank handed out unprecedented 15% wage raises, although the scales it had paid previously were sub-standard in the area. The raises clearly were the direct result of union activity; they were not a reflection of "paternalistic generosity" as the bank would like the employees to believe.

The employees must now be asking themselves when they can expect another raise. They should realize that as long as they remain unorganized, management is free to give or withhold raises. We have heard nothing of enlarged fringe benefits and, what is even more important to bank employees these days—job security.

Perhaps some of those who voted against the union forgot that a union contract, arrived at through collective bargaining, delivers an entire package which includes more liberal vacations, employer-paid health-welfare and pension plans, plus grievance procedures and job protection in event of automation.

Employers as a general rule are primarily interested in profits; the interests of their employees are secondary. Consequently, the only recourse the latter has is to unionize and bargain collectively.

This bank's management was extremely short-sighted in believing that it could run roughshod over its employees with threats and cajolery. Happily, in the new election these employees now have nothing to fear. Moreover, they can lose nothing but stand to gain much more by voting decisively for collective bargaining.

Safety first should be a white-collar slogan

Four hundred white-collar workers died on the job last year and thousands were injured in accidents, according to the Prentiss Hall Publishing Company, which reports that the white-collar worker is more apt to have an accident while working in the office than is the person working in industry.

Statistics for 1972 show that 46.5% of all job-related accidents occurred in the office while 36.4% occurred in blue-collar settings, the report said. The office worker is most likely to fall over something, slip on waxed or wet floors, or get a shock from ungrounded water coolers.

Credit unions report growth

Membership in union-sponsored credit unions in 1972 jumped by more than 100,000 to almost 917,000, according to the Credit Union Year Book 1973, published by the Credit Union National Association, Inc. (CUNA), based in Madison, Wisc. Its office force is represented by Local 39 and works under an OPEIU contract.

Total assets of the labor credit unions increased to more than \$660 millions, up from \$500 millions. Loans outstanding also increased to \$535 millions. The more than 23,000 credit unions in the U.S. serve employee groups numbering more than 26 million individuals today.

Overall, U.S. credit unions grew by the largest dollar amounts in history during 1972 reporting a record saving spurt by members of \$3.2 billions to an all-time high record of \$21.6 billions. Loans outstanding grew to \$18.6 billions and assets to \$24.6 billions.

The assets growth of more than \$3 billions during the year was greater than the total assets of all U.S. credit unions in 1956.



GALVESTON NEGOTIATORS: The Local 27 team which achieved a fine new contract with American National Insurance Company in Galveston, Texas (reported earlier in *White Collar*), consisted of President Joyce Douglas (seated at left), Business Representative Lucile Davenport, and Steward Bryan Klibert. Standing from left are Stewards Sallie Turner, Betty Brooks, and Katherine Castleschouldt, unit chairman and Local 27 Trustee.

NLRB upholds Local 442, orders second election

An NLRB panel affirms the findings of Administrative Law Judge Benjamin A. Theeman that The Savings Bank Company in Chillicothe, Ohio was guilty of unfair labor practices and orders a new representation election among its employees.

Local 422 was defeated in an election held in September, 1972 by a vote of 17-to-13. Thereafter, the union filed charges against the bank contending that it illegally granted pay increases to unit members during the organizing drive and interrogated employees about their union activities.

Theeman rejected the bank's contention that the pay raises were inspired by a salary survey that indicated it wasn't meeting wage standards of others in the area. The employer claimed that it intended to implement 15% raises in early 1971 but was limited to 5.5% increases by the wage control program.

The bank claimed further that in June 1972, when organizing began, it learned it wasn't subject to wage controls because of its size. It proceeded to implement the increases until advised by an attorney to delay them because of the OPEIU campaign. The bank subsequently changed

its legal counsel and the new attorney said the pay increase plan could be continued. Theeman commented:

"The only thing that is consistent about the increases is that in July, August and September, 1972, they were larger than any made before, and were made after the petition was filed and before the election, during the time of greatest union activity. It is reasonable to assume that under these circumstances the bank seized upon the opportunity of giving anniversary increases in unusually large amounts in order to induce the employees to vote against the union."

He also found that on various occasions management representatives spoke to employees to determine their feelings on union representation. During some of these conversations, he found, employees were promised benefits if the union was defeated, or warned of drastic measures that would be instituted by the bank if the union was successful in its organizing drive.

Adopting Theeman's recommendations, the Board panel ordered the employer to cease its illegal activity and instructed the NLRB regional director to conduct a second election.

\$2,850 is 3 year score at trucking firm in Ohio

Wage gains and fringe benefits totaling \$2,850 per individual were obtained in a three-year contract negotiated by Cincinnati Local 388 for its unit at the Mason & Dixon Lines, Inc., trucking terminal at Sharonville, Ohio.

Business Representative Bob Pierce reports that the agreement calls for a 35¢ an hour wage hike in the first year and 30¢ in each of the following two years. In the final year, the starting salary will be \$157.60 in the lowest office grade, rising to a \$210 rate in the top classification.

The contract provides a cost-of-living escalator clause in the second and third years. It provides a minimum of 8¢ an hour to a maximum of 11¢ in each of the two years. Other gains are an additional paid holiday in the third year, and an improved vacation schedule providing five weeks after 20 years of service.

The employer also agreed to improve the health-welfare plan, and to increase weekly contributions per employee to \$7 in the first year (was \$4); \$9.50 in the second, and \$12 in the third. The pact runs from last August 13 to May 15, 1976.



The 1973 North Central Educational Conference, in Galesburg, Illinois, was well attended and productive.

Perot computers brought cost surge, snafus to N.Y. Blue Shield

When Texas billionaire H. Ross Perot's Electronic Data Systems subcontracted New York's Blue Shield EDP work three years ago, the OPEIU sounded a warning to all Blue Cross/Blue Shield employees across the nation to unionize for their own self-protection.

Now it develops that in New York, as soon as Perot's EDS took over, snafus resulted, services to subscribers deteriorated, and expenses climbed inexorably.

As a result, health coverage for 140,000 New York City municipal employees was recently transferred to Group Health Insurance (GHI) with an option to change to Health Insurance Plan (HIP). Both agencies are unionized and hold OPEIU contracts with Local 153. The switch was made when Blue Shield demanded a 36.9% raise in premiums for the municipal employees, who comprise more than 10% of all Blue Shield subscribers in New York City.

After Perot's computers took over, New York's Blue Shield was flooded with phone calls and letters from angry subscribers. Claims were lost. Payments were delayed for months, or were lower than they should have been—if they were paid

at all. But what finally turned off the municipal employees was the "take-it-or-leave-it" demand for the 36.9% hike in premiums.

The major reason for this demand, pried from close-mouthed Blue Shield officials, was a claimed 50% increase in its "retention" rate. "Retention" rate is insurance company jargon for administrative costs, and administrative costs are what inevitably increase when Perot's EDS gets involved.

As a non-profit organization, New York Blue Shield doesn't have to pay the 2% state premium tax that private companies must pay. But when pressed to explain how EDS was chosen to do Blue Shield's EDP work, all the company

would say was that "in accordance with established practice, (it) does not provide its customers" with detailed explanations on its rising costs.

Meanwhile, the House Inter-governmental Relations Subcommittee investigating Perot's subcontracting of Blue Shield data processing in other states finds that dramatic jumps in administrative costs result from the day the plans subcontract data processing to EDS.

In California, Blue Shield administrative costs leaped nearly 60%; in Indiana, 25%; and in Massachusetts by 16%. By comparison, Blue Shield plans using other data processing companies showed much smaller cost increases, according to the House study.

Minneapolis settlement yields \$4,700 package

Across-the-board wage increases of more than \$4,700 per individual were won in a three-year contract negotiated by Twin Cities Local 12 for its members at Pacific Intermountain Express in Minneapolis, Minn.

Business Manager H. R. Markusen says the pact provides for a 35¢ per hour wage boost in the first year, plus 41¢ in each of the following years. In the final contract year, it sets a starting weekly minimum of \$160.64 in the lowest office grade, rising to a \$232.40 maximum, and \$190.40 in the top classification rising to a \$261.60 maximum.

It calls for five weeks of va-

tion after 20 years, and in the third year an additional holiday bringing the annual total to nine. The employer also agreed to boost the pension plan contribution by 3¢ per hour to 25¢ per individual.

Employees also won group insurance on the same basis as that provided for management personnel. Other improvements establish terminal security on layoff bumping rights, and now include mother and father-in-law in the bereavement leave clause.

The OPEIU negotiating team assisting Markusen comprised Chief Steward Charles Rees and Lorraine Cornell. The pact runs to September 30, 1976.

Starting minimum to rise to \$742 at chemical firm

Wage gains over three years ranging from \$3,240 for those in the lowest office bracket to \$4,440 in the top classification highlight a contract negotiated by Local 80 for its members at Arizona Chemical Company, in Panama City, Florida.

Vice President J. Oscar Bloodworth reports that the new pact calls for a 30¢ hourly across-the-board hike in the

first year, with a 6.50% increase in the second and 6.25% in the third.

In the final year the starting monthly minimum will be \$742 for clerk-typists and keypunch operators, the lowest office grade, rising to an \$810 monthly maximum. In the top office classification, a \$1,227 monthly minimum will rise to a maximum of \$1,343.



NEW LOUISIANA LOCAL: International Representative Jack Langford (seated left) presents charter to President David Fletcher of new Local 465 in Alexandria, Louisiana, representing office employees at Dresser Industries, Inc. To right, seated, are Vice President Lowell Humphries and Secretary-Treasurer L. C. Vance. Standing from left are Lovell White, trustee; Pat Faircloth, trustee; Shirley Beaulieu, recording secretary, and Eddie O'Bannon, trustee.

U.S. Price Index

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
New Base 1967=100

1972	
November	126.9
December	127.3
1973	
January	127.7
February	128.6
March	129.8
April	130.7
May	131.5
June	132.4
July	132.7
August	135.1
September	135.5
October	136.8
November	137.6

Canadian Price Index

Dominion Bureau of Statistics

November	142.8
December	143.3
1973	
January	144.5
February	145.8
March	145.7
April	147.3
May	148.4
June	149.7
July	151.0
August	153.0
September	153.9
October	154.3
November	155.5

Dewey Deavers, Local 469

We regret to announce the death of Dewey Deavers, Pittsburgh, Pa., who laid the foundation for a union of professional hypnotists, formally chartered in January 1973 as Hypnotists Local Union 469, an OPEIU affiliate.

Born in Paducah, Kentucky, in 1900, he first began to hypnotize animals at age eight. As an adult he learned boxing, wrestling, karate and ju jitsu, becoming so proficient that in the 1940s he opened his own Pittsburgh studio and became an instructor in these arts in addition to his work in hypnotism and psychology.

His colorful career included appearances in theatres as an entertainer known as Van Zander the Great. During his act, he let cars run over him, broke marble blocks with his hand, and drove nails through boards with his bare fist.

At his Pittsburgh studio, Deavers' clients included firemen, policemen, and postal employees seeking to pass tests for higher ratings, as well as college students, boxers and wrestlers who came to him to develop their will to win. He was the recipient during his lifetime of some dozen certificates and plaques in recognition of his work in varied fields.

Deavers estimated that there were more than 2,000 hypnotists in Pennsylvania, ranging from amateurs to full-time professionals. He started them on the road to unionism, feeling this was needed to stabilize fees



Dewey Deavers

and other charges made for their services, as well as raising professional standards.

He found hypnotists also were becoming accepted by the medical profession as aides in certain treatments under a doctor's prescription, helping patients to overcome neurosis, high blood pressure, ulcers, and even quit smoking.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Mattie Deavers of Pittsburgh, and a daughter, Mrs. Rose Whitaker of Richlandtown, Pa. In a message of sympathy to his family, Hypnotists Local 469 President Edward S. Hays, a former pupil, said:

"He never ceased trying to gain more knowledge, regardless of time or expense. His knowledge of hypnosis and psychology was so extensive that he was sought by many for advice. The wisdom that he possessed earned him the appreciation and love of everyone who knew him."

Four day week in sight for 160 in Vancouver

A four-day 34-hour work week becoming effective on January 7, 1974, together with across-the-board wage boosts ranging from 8% to 9.7% were gained by Local 15 in a one-year contract negotiated for its 160-member unit at C. U. & C. Health Services Society in Vancouver, B.C.

Described as an "exciting breakthrough" in collective bargaining in Vancouver, the settlement received wide publicity on radio and news media in

the area, according to Business Representative Bill Swanson. The society is an insurance carrier of medical and dental plans.

The new pact establishes a starting monthly minimum of \$426 in the lowest office grade for the 34-hour week, rising to a \$496 maximum. In the top classification it sets a starting \$905 monthly minimum rising to a \$1,023 maximum.

Other gains are an additional 10 days' pay for 10 statutory holidays and improved sick leave and welfare plan benefits.

Wages, fringes improved at Olin

General wage increases totaling more than \$1,450 per individual over two years were won by Local 87 for its 150 members at the Olin Corporation's chemical plant at Lake Charles, La., Business Manager Gloria Abshire reports.

The pact is retroactive to June 18. It calls for a minimum starting weekly wage of \$144.50 in the lowest office grade and a

\$154.50 scale in the second year. In the top classification, the first year range runs from a starting minimum of \$189.50, to a \$206.50 maximum. In the second year, starting July 1, 1974, it sets a starting \$199.50 minimum and a \$216.50 maximum.

Health-welfare benefits were improved to \$35 per day for hospital room and board to a

From the desk of the President

The four-day week a bargaining goal for all our local unions

By Howard Coughlin

The Office and Professional Employees International Union for a decade has led the fight for the establishment of the four-day work week in the United States and Canada. Slowly but surely a large number of firms, both organized and unorganized, have established the four-day work week.

Unfortunately, however, a large number of firms did not reduce the working hours but rather insisted that workers perform their work within four 10-hour days. This is not the goal of the OPEIU. It is our feeling that the four-day work week should be established with a maximum of 32 hours per week. We believe it can be accomplished in the white collar field in the usual 7-hour work day or 28 hours per week.

It is interesting to note that the whole concept of a four-day work week has received renewed attention as a result of the energy crisis. There is no question that the usual arguments for a four-day work week have been enhanced by our need to cut down on the consumption of gasoline, fuel oil and energy.

It has been proven that white collar workers in particular can produce as much, if not more, in the way of service in the shorter work week. This has been particularly borne out in the insurance field. Some unorganized insurance companies which have established the four-day week while asking employees to work longer hours each day have reported increased productivity, improved morale, a decrease in absenteeism and numerous other tangible results.

Gains to \$3,200 achieved at two Utah truck lines

Wage gains ranging from \$2,800 to \$3,200 per member, supplemented by two cost-of-living increments, were achieved by Local 31 in a 33-month contract for office employees at two truck lines in Salt Lake City, Utah. The lines are Pacific Intermountain Express and Consolidated Freightways.

Vice President John Kinnick, who assisted the Local 31 negotiating team, says that in the final year of the new pact a file

120-day maximum, plus reimbursement for hospital special services to a \$600 maximum. Maternity benefits are 14 days at \$35 a day, plus the \$600 for special services.

The retirement plan, subject to approval, will be amended to provide \$8 per month times years of service after July 1, 1973, rising to \$9 per month, effective July 1, 1974.

In those companies where the OPEIU has established a shorter work week, with no increase in hours in the usual work day, results have been even more startling. Last summer, more than 800 members of the Office & Professional Employees International Union employed by Group Health, Inc. in New York, initiated what the press called a "significant test" of the four-day work week. Dr. George W. Melcher, Jr., President of GHI, told reporters that productivity increased considerably and absenteeism declined drastically.

As a result, the four-day work week, which was originally placed on a trial basis, was made permanent. In Dr. Melcher's report, he emphasized that in addition to gains in productivity and a decline in absenteeism, the average worker saved about 100 hours a year in travel time and \$150 to \$240 in lunches, carfare and clothing costs. The problems of child care were also reduced.

OPEIU's basic plan is simply the use of three, four-day shifts within a six-day work week. One group of employees works on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Another group works on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. A third group, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Business thus operates six full days each week without overtime, while each employee enjoys three days of consecutive leisure time.

In other applications, the four-day schedule also offers significant advantages to both employer and employee. More

profitable use can be made of equipment and facilities, reducing the time they are left idle. Seriously increasing bottlenecks in service fields can be reversed since everyone won't have to get laundry, shopping, automobile repairs and dentistry done on Saturday. New leisure-time industries can develop to fill the added free time of millions of people, thereby creating additional jobs. Traffic jams and the overcrowding of public transportation will diminish.

Local 27 in Galveston, Texas, recently negotiated a compressed work week with the American National Life Insurance Company employing 680 workers. The work week in that company has been modified to allow employees to put in their hours in less than five days if they so desire. Any work performed over 37½ hours in the compressed work week will be paid at the rate of 1½ times, and work in excess of 45 hours at double-time. The employee has the sole right to opt for the compressed work week. The company also allows employees to choose their own starting and quitting time each day. This last feature is now popularly

known as the "flexi" work week. We will see more and more of the flexi work week in future collective bargaining negotiations.

In Quebec, OPEIU Local 57 established a four-day work week for 500 members employed by the Quebec Construction Industry Commission.

Despite statements to the contrary, white collar workers are organizing in greater numbers than ever before. At the present time, five million white collar workers now belong to unions in the United States. Pressure is building up on these unions to negotiate the shorter work week. The four-day work week and the flexi work week will gain the favor of millions of white collar workers. The energy crisis will accelerate the demand for the four-day work week. It is imperative that OPEIU Local Unions, both in the United States and Canada, make the four-day work week a prime goal to be achieved in the next round of collective bargaining negotiations.

The Local 31 negotiating team included Jan Peterson, Shirley Hardy, Dean Betenes and Norman Olson.