



# WHITE COLLAR

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

No. 379

SEPTEMBER, 1978

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## OPEIU Organizing Adds 165 to Rolls in Four Units

Two health maintenance units (HMO's), one in Washington, D.C., and the other in Minnesota, voted solidly for OPEIU representation in recent National Labor Relations Board elections.

A unit of 105 office clericals and licensed practical nurses at Georgetown University Community Health Plan, Inc., voted to have Washington, D.C. Local 2 represent them in collective bargaining, according to President-Business Manager Jim Sheridan.

Major issues during the campaign were sick leave accumulation, promotion policies, and restructuring of salary schedules. Negotiations for an initial contract already have started.

The health plan operates an administrative center and four clinics in Washington, and

suburban Maryland and Virginia.

Twin Cities Local 12 Business Manager H. R. Markusen reports that a 30-member unit of office employees and nurses at the Group Health Association of Northeast Minnesota, Inc. voted overwhelmingly for OPEIU representation by a margin of better than 5-to-1 in another NLRB election. The HMO operates a number of clinics in that part of the state.

He also reports that two other new Local 12 units were recognized by employers after designation card counts. One was a unit of 20 employees in two dental clinics operated in St. Paul and Minneapolis by R. A. Heiser & Associates.

The other was a unit of 10 employees at the M.S.F. Teachers' Credit Union in St. Paul.

## OPEIU Executive Board Spurs Congress on ERA Action

Extension of the ratification deadline for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was considered so important that the OPEIU Executive Board at its recent meeting in Vancouver, B.C., unanimously endorsed a request to Congress urging immediate action on extending the deadline date.

Later, the House voted 233-to-189 a 39-month extension to June 30, 1982, for ERA ratification. The proposal now goes to the Senate where it faces a possible filibuster similar to that which defeated the Labor Law Reform bill for this session. Other board actions were:

- Named Local 29 Union Manager Dick Delaney and Business Representative Alice Bartley as winners of the Henderson B. Douglas 1977 Award for new organizing. Both, with the help of Local 29's staff, were successful in unionizing some 1300 employees of Blue Cross in Oakland.

- Voted to hold the 1980 OPEIU Convention in New York City where the hotel site will be determined by host Local 153 from among several under consideration.

- Based on the success of the full-time staff representatives' meeting in Atlanta, the board agreed with President Coughlin that such meetings should be held annually in future, with no exception for Convention years. Conventions are held each three years and may be scheduled in May, June

or July, so the board recommended that a staff meeting should also be held in the Fall of a Convention year.

- The board dealt with numerous other matters including appeals lodged with it against actions taken by OPEIU Local Unions.

## 3 Unions Join Forces to Protect Jobs General Dynamics Anti-Union Tactics Pose Threat

Leaders of three major unions representing office and production employees at the General Dynamics plant in Fort Worth, Texas, for this first time in history met with the bargaining committees of all unions there, and agreed to make joint concerted action in forthcoming contract negotiations to guarantee job security for all their members.

The three unions were the OPEIU, the IBEW and the International Association of Machinists. The historic meeting was called to study vitally important collective bargaining problems which have emerged in recent years as a result of the company's growing anti-union attitude.

This is reflected in the opening of a new submarine facility at Quonset Point, Rhode Island, where much of the work formerly done at the unionized Electric Boat plant in New London, Conn., has been transferred. The Quonset Point facility is now non-union and the

# Union Wins 18½% Gain for 950 in Bank Unit



Militant members of OPEIU Local 434 turned out en masse at meeting in Montreal to voice their support for demands in new contract to meet the inflationary spiral. Before unionizing, they were the lowest-paid in Canada; today they're tops, proving to all bank employees that collective bargaining is the solution for their problems.

## Mrs. H.H. Humphrey Thanks OPEIU For Institute Gift

U.S. Senator Muriel Humphrey in a letter to President Howard Coughlin thanked him for a \$1,000 OPEIU contribution to the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. Her letter added:

"The University of Minnesota has set a high purpose and goal for this project and it is one in which Hubert was deeply

interested. I heard him say many times: 'No finer tribute could be paid to a man in public life than to have his work and ideals encompassed in an institution of learning for our young people.'

"You have honored him by your contribution."

(Signed)  
Muriel Humphrey



**HISTORIC MEETING:** For the first time, leaders of three International Unions met at Fort Worth, Tex., with their unit bargaining committees at the General Dynamics plant to plan joint action to protect member jobs menaced by the company's anti-union stance. From left (standing) are Rog Spencer, Vice President, International Assn. of Machinists; (seated from left: General President Bill Wimpisinger, IAM; IBEW International Vice President Ray Duke; OPEIU International President Howard Coughlin, and J. B. Moss, OPEIU International Vice President.

company is continuing its efforts to keep it that way.

General Dynamics has also opened other plants at Camden, Ark., and Abilene, Tex., and continues to transfer union work to all three non-union plants where wage rates and working conditions are inferior to those

at the unionized facilities.

More recently, the company leased another building in Fort Worth, capable of housing 35,000 workers in a so-called "right-to-work" area outside the federal enclave in that city, where it is producing F-16 fighter planes and where present em-

A shorter workweek, a new dental plan, more liberal vacations and increased paid holidays—gains estimated at 18.5% alone in the first year—were won in a new two-year agreement reached by Local 434, representing 950 bank employees, with the Montreal District & City Savings Bank.

Canadian OPEIU Director Romeo Corbeil reports that effective August 14 the workweek was reduced to 35 hours from 37½ with no loss in pay, the new agreement also providing across-the-board salary increases of 6% in the first year with an additional 1% adjustment in pay scales, retroactive to January 1, 1978.

He says the contract calls for a wage reopener next January 1 to readjust salaries for the second year. The agreement came after management learned of the militancy of the unit in pressing their demands. For example, he pointed out, cashiers are now earning between \$175 and \$264 a week.

Moreover, higher classifications were won for 350 members of the unit, and salary scales readjusted for these promotions were also made in automatic progression rates from minimum to maximum scales.

The new contract calls for three floating holidays with pay to be added to the 10 statutory holidays during the 1978 year. The floating holidays will be increased to seven effective January 1, 1979, when the new dental plan also becomes effective.

Vacations were improved to three weeks after three years (was five); four after 12 years (was 15), and five after 20 years. Previously, the five-week vacation was available only in the off season.

The unit negotiating committee comprised Local 434 President Yvon C. Rivard, Vice President Michel Longre, and Treasurer Serge Bombardier. Other members were Director Gay D. Lalonde, Monique Giroux, Raymond Bosse, and Jean Paquet. They were assisted throughout by Corbeil.

ployees are unionized.

This new Fort Worth plant now has less than one-half the 35,000 it is capable of housing. Because the company's anti-union attitude is plain for all to see, the unionized employees in the federal enclave are deeply concerned with the possible loss of their jobs to the three non-union General Dynamics plants.

WHITE COLLAR

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

HOWARD COUGHLIN President

WILLIAM A. LOVE Secretary-Treasurer

POSTMASTERS, ATTENTION — Change of address Form 3579 should be addressed to: Office and Professional Employees International Union, 815 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006.



PRINTED IN U.S.A.

Published monthly, except for combined July-August issue, by Office and Professional Employees International Union, 815 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006. Second class postage paid at Washington, D.C.

Reproduction by the Labor Press of any or all material herein contained is not only permitted, but wholly desirable in the interest of workers' education.

Subscription Price \$1 a Year

Wake Up-Bank Employees!

From time to time we ask our members to pass along their copies of White Collar to friends or acquaintances who work in banks. For several years the OPEIU has been warning bank employees of the danger to their jobs from automation and technological changes.

During the coming decade—probably sooner—it is estimated that 400,000 bank jobs will be lost as a result of new technology, methods and procedure. Until now bank employees felt they had solid careers as professionals with guaranteed lifetime jobs.

Living in this illusion, they felt they didn't need unionism but relied on the "paternalism" of management to dictate pay scales and other working conditions. But technology is also giving "paternalism" a death-blow.

No less an authority than the American Banker, "only daily banking newspaper," shatters the former complacency of bank managements and employees alike. It discreetly cautions managements "to be candid" with employees by telling them that "bank employment is no longer a lifetime appointment." In other words, that their jobs are no longer secure.

The editorial then offers suggestions to managements on how they may meet the resulting threat of unionism among their staffs, once they realize that they don't have an annuity any more in a lifetime sinecure. We regard these one-sided suggestions as superficial.

On the other hand, we do not claim that unionism can halt the advance of bank automation or the loss of jobs, but it can through collective bargaining negotiate retraining programs and severance pay for veteran bank employees who lose their jobs, and thus ease the blow.

But more important for those who survive the coming changes, it can transform future bank employment into a satisfactory professional career comparable in pay and fringe benefits with those in other industries. Moreover, these will be guaranteed in a mutually agreed upon binding contract signed by both parties.

Unionization of bank employees is no longer an academic question. It has taken on an immediate urgency to which everyone now in bank employment must give long and serious thought.

Anti-Union Tide Rising

Our current news columns give two striking illustrations of the urgent need for every office or production employee to belong to a union, especially in the so-called "right-to-work" (for less) states where the anti-union movement is becoming more virulent day by day.

One concerns the anti-union tactics being pursued by the giant General Dynamics Corporation, which builds submarines up North and F-16 fighter planes down South. Fortunately, much of its present work force is unionized and is presenting a united front against company tactics.

The other concerns an Atlanta airline where no union exists. Recently Southern Airways Inc. announced plans to fire 14% of its work force so that it can "afford" \$65 million in new aircraft. The employees comprise 300 office employees, maintenance workers, and middle-management personnel, as well as 200 temporary and part-time employees.

When the firings were completed, Southern had a work force of 3,100 employees compared with 2,688 a year earlier. About 40% of the laid-off employees worked in Atlanta, with the rest scattered in 68 other cities.

"One of the quickest ways to reduce expense," said Redmond Taylor, Southern's director of public relations, "is to reduce people. I myself lost a very fine person in the public relations office," adding that the company "doesn't expect labor trouble because the fired workers weren't members of a union."

A prepared statement by the company said that the firings would save an estimated \$7.5 million over the next twelve months, and that year-to-date profits hadn't been high enough "to finance needed aircraft for which contracts have been signed."

In other words, people don't matter where the profit greed of employers is concerned. The lesson here is that employers Don't want Unions around so that they can hire and fire employees at will. But employees DO need Unions desperately as a force to counteract this corporate greed which has no conception of any human values.

N.W. Gas Co. Yields 8 1/2% Pay Hike

Portland Local 11 Wins 100% COLA for 750 in 2d Year

An 8 1/2% general wage increase in the first year retroactive to April 1, and a COLA adjustment to take effect on April 1, 1979, were gained by Local 11 for its 284-member office employee unit and 487 members in the Gas Division, in a new two-year contract renegotiated in Portland, Ore., with the Northwest Natural Gas Company.

Local 11 Sec.-Treas. Gary D. Kirkland, who participated in the negotiations for both units, says the 1979 COLA adjustment will be based on the All Urban Consumers Index for the U.S., and that of the Portland area, reported next March for the year ending February 28. This increase will be applied 100% to all salary and wage rates on April 1, 1979.

The company agreed to increase monthly contributions by \$16.02 per individual to improve the dental plan on April 1, 1979, with other increases to maintain the pension plan in good standing.

It was also agreed to set up a Retirement Plan Joint Council, on which the field workers will be represented by two members and the office employees by two. The other members will represent management and supervisory personnel.

The council will review all developments in the field of pension plans and disseminate all such information to the employees.

The company offered two choices to the office employees whereby their retirement benefits will be improved by 1% effective April 1, 1979. If the choices are rejected, the 1% will be applied to their monthly salaries on that date.

New language was inserted that both bargaining units may observe each other's picket lines in the event either engages in a lawful strike at the expiration of its contract.

The Gas Division unit negotiating team was headed by Ted Gilbo as chairman, and Archie Jamison as vice-chairman. Team

members were Chief Stewards Jim Sullivan, Allan O'Brien and John Braaten. They were assisted by Business Representative Wayne Shelton.

The office unit team com-

prised Chief Steward Earl Reinertson, and Stewards Pat Coxeff, Nick DuBravac, Loren Nordlund and Dennis Winder. They were assisted by Business Representative Lance A. Maier.

Warning Letter to Nurse Unjustified, Arbiter Rules

A warning letter by her employer, the Community Health Care Plan in New Haven, that her work was unsatisfactory was ordered removed from the personnel file of Susan Weiss, a licensed practical nurse and Local 466 member, by Arbiter John C. Mallon, of the Connecticut State Board of Arbitration, after hearing testimony on a grievance filed by Local 466 in her behalf.

"In disciplinary matters," the arbiter noted, "the burden of

proof lies with the employer who must demonstrate by a preponderance of the evidence that the warning . . . is justified. It is the opinion of the arbitrator that the employer failed to sustain its burden that the performance of the grievant was of such a nature as to warrant a warning."

The arbiter ruled that the warning letter "was not for just cause," and therefore ordered that it be expunged from her personnel records.

Local 30 Member Gets Post At AID-United Givers

Mrs. Mitzi Rodriguez, a Los Angeles Local 30 member, has been named Director of Labor Relations for AID-United Givers, a major charitable fundraising organization in Southern California. The funds are used by the agency to assist hundreds of health, youth and social service agencies throughout California and the nation.

Born in El Paso, Texas, she moved to Los Angeles with her family in 1954 where she majored in Business Administration at L.A. Metropolitan and Rio Hondo Colleges. She has been actively involved in the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) and the labor



Mitzi Rodriguez

movement for several years. She resides in Glendale with her husband and two children.

Texaco Credit Union Wins 9% Pay Raise; More Benefits

A 9% across-the-board pay boost, more liberal vacations and improved arrangements on overtime were gained by Local

66 in a one-year contract renegotiated for its bargaining unit at the Texaco Credit Union, in Port Arthur, Texas.

Sec. Treas. Jimmy Adams says that the new contract calls for three weeks' vacation after five years (was six), and four after 10 years (was 12). It provides for three lines of promotions instead of two.

It also provides retroactive pay for 13 days worked without a contract, overtime for the extra 15 minute lunch break, and time-and-one-half for over eight hours during any one day. "In other words, a worker doesn't have to complete a 40-hour week for 1 1/2-times pay as the time off is considered productive time," he explains.

Assisting him in the negotiations were Clyde Wing, Sandra Nettles and Bertha Lauve as committee members.

A REMINDER!

Don't forget to give to OPEIU's VOTE campaign this year.

Marie MacLaughlin, Local 329

We deeply regret to announce the recent death of Marie MacLaughlin in New Haven, Conn., a staunch OPEIU member for 23 years and a pioneer in the organization of Local 329 in 1955.

At her death, Marie was serving her twelfth consecutive term as a member of Local 329's Executive Board. She was a delegate to two International Conventions, to numerous Northeastern Educational Conferences, and a delegate to the Greater New Haven Central Labor Council.

She was also active in community affairs, representing the OPEIU on the New Haven



Marie MacLaughlin

Board of Directors of the Salvation Army and the Travelers Aid Society.

## Second Annual Educational Conference Brings Large Turnout



Delegates attending the second Spring Educational Conference at the Galvez Hotel, in Galveston, Texas, posed for the above picture during a break between sessions. Women again formed a majority of the delegates reflecting, as in the initial conference held in Franklin, Pa., their growing interest in the white-collar union movement.

## Bank Jobs Are Now Insecure, Banker Organ Bluntly Warns

The *American Banker*, mouthpiece of the banking industry, now confirms what the OPEIU has been telling bank employees for several years: that bank jobs are no longer lifetime careers because of automation and technological changes which are revolutionizing the entire structure of the banking industry.

The banking organ asked in a recent editorial: "Can banks gain the efficiency they need to meet changing conditions without having to fire people and risking the wrath of the displaced employees?"

As previously reported, banks are closing down unprofitable branches in many cities; they are shifting employees from one place to another; they are urging early retirement on older executives, and hiring no new employees to replace those who leave for one reason or another.

But the editorial points out that as employees recognize that their jobs are no longer secure, banking institutions will have to anticipate that organizers will appear, and warns bankers that they must plan ahead to "confront the problem of unionism."

The editorial suggests that one way to "avoid layoffs in the future" is to have a smaller core of employees now; supplement the core staff with part-timers or with overtime work, or sub-contract out some of the work, if possible.

The OPEIU points out that these suggestions are no solution for the problem.

They're fine from the banker's viewpoint, but inhumane from the employee's standpoint. Smaller core staffs mean a bigger work-load and greater responsibilities for surviving employees on the job. They will have to train and supervise a continuous turnover of part-timers.

Besides, these part-timers—working at minimum pay levels—will hold a lid on all bank salaries. Moreover in most cases they will receive no paid holidays, no vacations, no sick leave, no health-welfare coverage, and no pension benefits.

Shifting employees from one location to another may suit the employers, but not the employees, especially if married with children going to school. This creates a new dilemma for career employees who may seek early retirement but find this no solution either.

In the past, bank employees—assured of lifetime employment—were willing to accept pay scales much below prevailing rates in other industries. This is now no longer true.

Since pension and Social Security benefits are based on lifetime earnings, the older bank employee has no choice. Early retirement incomes would prove totally inadequate to make ends meet in these inflationary times because of previous low earnings. And future new employees will fare no better.

In recruiting new employees, the *American Banker* editorial suggests that these be given aptitude tests, as

in other high technology industries, to make sure that they "can fill different slots as bank needs change." With this in mind, it adds that some banks thus may be enabled "to help and process work for other banks and institutions," if they in turn become redundant.

Finally, the editorial concedes that job security is a basic demand of many employees; that bank managements must recognize this and develop its responses early to discourage unionism. But it also warns that bank managements must be candid with employees by pointing out that "bank employment is no longer a lifetime appointment, and that talents needed may shift over time."

Previous *White Collar* articles have stressed that in the coming decade, total bank employment is likely to dwindle from its present level of around one-million to between 500,000 and 600,000—a loss of some 400,000 jobs.

Without a union, bank employees now have no voice whatever over their futures, their pay, working conditions or security of employment. Management decide all these unilaterally because without collective bargaining there is no opportunity for any dialogue between employers and employees.

Being adamantly anti-union, bank managements' attitudes will not change until bank employees themselves decide the time has come to enforce their legal right to collective bargaining by unionizing—now not later.

Time is running out for them. Their industry is in the throes of a technological revolution, jeopardizing their careers and the welfare of their families.

## Tacoma Medical Unit Ups Pay 15% 2-Year Pact Improves Many Fringe Benefits

A 15% wage boost—7½% in each year—improved fringe benefits and the introduction of flexitime on a trial basis, were gained by Local 23 for its 141-member office unit at Pierce County Medical Bureau in Tacoma, Wash., in a new two-year contract renewal, Business Representative Frank E. Fennerty, Jr., reports.

He says the unit also gained wage increments at five-year intervals to 20 years, in addition to the annual step raises for the first four years.

Health-welfare coverage was broadened, and dental and vision coverage were improved. The 25-year minimum age for pension coverage was dropped, making all employees eligible immediately. It was agreed that sick leave in future will be accrued during vacations, holidays and paid sick leave days.

The vacation schedule was liberalized by providing for 17 days for 10 to 14 years of employment.

Other improvements were recognition of seniority in the

event of layoffs, recall or promotions, and in new language giving employees greater protection in the event of technological changes, with more opportunity to receive training to qualify for new jobs thus created.

For leaves-of-absence or maternity leaves of two months or

less, employees are guaranteed the same or comparable jobs on their return to work.

The unit negotiating team was chaired by Keri Lambert. It included Nancy Craig, Charlotte DeVivo, Chris Schramm, Kathy Wardlow and Jeri Ziegler.

## Center for Labor Studies Lists 1978-79 Courses

The George Meany Center for Labor Studies at Silver Spring, Md., has announced its new schedule of classes for 1978-79. The Center will offer 43 institutes, workshops and programs for trade union leaders during the coming academic year.

Enrollment at the Center is open to any full-time officer, representative of staff employee of any labor organization affiliated with the AFL-CIO, its departments, State Federations and Local Central Bodies. Classes

are held at the 47-acre campus at Silver Spring, Md., just outside Washington, D.C.

Tuition is free for those attending classes, but out-of-town participants are expected to live on campus. Room and board cost \$40 a day, single occupancy; \$30 a day for double occupancy which includes three meals.

Copies of the 1978-79 catalogue are available through the Center at 10000 New Hampshire Ave., Silver Spring, Md. 20903. Tel. (301) 431-6400.

## Pension Fund Unit Gains \$1 Per Hour in 2-Year Pact

Across-the-board wage boosts of 50¢ an hour in each year and a new health-welfare plan were gained by Local 12 for its office unit in a new two-year agreement renegotiated with the St. Paul Chapter of the National Contractors Assn.

Formerly known as the Electrical Industry Board of St. Paul, the group administers health, welfare and pension funds, according to Business Representative Vern Paul who renegotiated the agreement.

In the second year, it sets a minimum starting weekly salary of \$154.50 for junior clerk typists in the lowest grade, rising to a \$214.60 maximum. In the top grade, which includes senior stenographers, bookkeepers and claims clerks, the minimum weekly rate will be \$205 per week, rising to a \$265 maximum.

A new employer-paid hospi-

tal, medical, surgical, dental and disability plan will cover all employees, except part-timers and temporaries who work less than a standard work week.

## San Diego Member Wins Certificate

Faustene M. Rae, a member of Local 139 in San Diego, Calif., has been awarded a Certified Professional Secretary designation by the Institute for Certifying Secretaries, a department of the National Secretaries Association.

The rating evidences fulfillment of a prescribed period of education, satisfactory secretarial experience, and the successful completion of a two-day comprehensive examination in numerous subjects connected with office procedures.



from the desk  
of the  
**PRESIDENT**

## Urges New Law By Congress On Pension Plan Guarantee

Those of us in the trade union movement who fought for legislation offering protection for prospective and current pensioners are deeply troubled with ERISA interpretations, particularly as they relate to the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation. It now appears that the PBGC, which was designed to offer protection against pension loss to workers who have earned pensions, does very little to effectuate such guarantees.

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation guarantees bank deposits up to a maximum of \$40,000 per bank deposit. The F.D.I.C. has operated in a salutary fashion, and does everything it was intended to do.

On the contrary, the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation, to which all pension plans must contribute, is not only failing to fulfill its commitment, it is also working in a fashion that may lead to the dissolution of numerous multiemployer plans. Anyone doubting the truthfulness of the above statement need only refer to PBGC's Executive Director, Matthew M. Lind, who in PBGC's 2nd Quarter Bulletin (Jan. 1-Mar. 31, 1978) stated:

"The termination insurance program was created to enhance the retirement income security of American workers. However, there is concern that some aspects of the program might be working at cross-purposes to ERISA's stated objective of promoting the continued growth and soundness of the private pension system.

"Perhaps the best example of this is the apparently disruptive effect which Title IV is having on multiemployer plans. Instead of encouraging the well-being of these plans, the law—through its employer liability and withdrawal provisions—may be contributing to the breakup of multiemployer plans. This is to the detriment of both workers and employers."

In effect, ERISA's PBGC is taking the position that it has no responsibility for guaranteeing the pensions of workers in multiemployer plans who are adversely affected through the dissolution or bankruptcy of the firms for which they are employed, despite the fact that these plans made regular insurance payments to the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation.

PBGC takes the position that it may decide to intervene only after the multiemployer plan fails. This was never the stated purpose of ERISA. As a result, numerous failing companies which may have caused the plan failure will have disappeared from the scene or be beyond the legal time limit of a recovery action by PBGC.

Worse still, surviving companies in the multiemployer plan will be liable for 30 percent of their net worth not only for their own employees' pensions but for the pension obligations of other companies as well.

Further, ERISA's PBGC admits its pension insurance liability in certain "defined benefit plans" but denies its obligation in certain "defined contribution plans."

Most Taft-Hartley plans are multiemployer types. In most of these plans, employers had no previous experience with private pensions for their employees and were receptive to the numerous benefits available to them through multiemployer plans. In many of these cases, employers would not have been able to provide plans of their own for numerous reasons.

In some cases, the number of employees was too small and in others the past service liability was far too costly. In combination with other groups however, some of which had more favorable actuarial factors, these companies were able to participate in multiemployer plans and, along with other employers, offer a reasonably good pension plan.

It was always the intention of the organized labor movement, and those who drafted ERISA, to protect all employees whether their employers conducted single employer plans or were participants in a multiemployer plan. Much to our surprise, however, the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation is perfectly willing to take over the liability of an employer who is no longer able to contribute to a single employer plan and protect the benefits of the employees accordingly.

Conversely, the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation is not willing to offer the same protection to the workers of failing employers or even to the workers of employers who refuse to remain contributors to a multi-employer plan. In practicality, the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation is, in effect, stating that it cannot afford to guarantee the liability of employers in multiemployer plans.

## Discharge at Sea-Land Misfires

### Seattle Arbiter Rules For Discharged OPEIU Member

A Sea-Land employee in Seattle, discharged when she was under psychiatric treatment for depression, was ordered restored to her job without loss of seniority, and with compensation for any benefits to which she was entitled under the employer's long-term disability plan.

This was the ruling by Arbitrator R. A. Sutermeister after hearing evidence by both sides in the grievance of an employee, brought to arbitration by Local 8. Business Representative Don E. Olson, Jr., presented the case in behalf of the grievant.

Company witnesses testified

that grievant knew, according to her doctors, that she had been cleared to return to work on March 7 last but did not do so. Moreover, its Seattle personnel manager contended that the company's home office in New Jersey had advised that termination was proper under its OPEIU contract.

However, the union argued that the preamble to this agreement clearly expressed a "spirit" by the company to deal "fairly and with humanity" toward its employees in applying the terms of the contract. The arbitrator agreed with the union argument, adding:

"This would seem to require advising the employee of the anticipated discharge, and listening to any comments of the employee which might reveal any misunderstanding and clear up any ambiguities, he observed.

"A thorough investigation prior to discharge would have required a contact with her to find out why she had not returned to work immediately after March 7, 1978, when her doctor felt it would be all right for her to return to some job at Sea-Land. Under 'progress,' he marked the item 'improved,' not the item 'recovered.'

"In view of the seriousness of the action contemplated, the (company) investigation, prior to the decision to terminate, was not sufficiently thorough," the arbitrator concluded in handing down his decision.

## Women Awarded Labor Leadership Certificates



Local 391 President Carrie Brown (far right) warmly congratulates four OPEIU co-workers at Roosevelt University in Chicago on being awarded labor leadership certificates following completion of courses at the university's Labor Education Division. From left are Nancy Burrows, Jennifer Young, Dora Hunter, and Robin Crescenzi, the proud recipients of the certificates.

On the other hand, it is very unrealistically saying that it is perfectly willing to guarantee the single employer plans of the giant corporations of the nation. This is paradoxical, if not contradictory. If the pension plan of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company was in default, or that of General Motors, the financial obligations of such a default would bankrupt the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation.

Employers who participate in multiemployer plans are, for the most part, small employers whose liability the PBGC could very easily assume. From a practical viewpoint, guaranteeing the liability of smaller companies which default in their payments to multiemployer plans makes much greater sense than PBGC's position that it may only be liable when the entire multiemployer plan defaults.

Obviously, a default of a multiemployer plan, representing hundreds of employers and tens of thousands of employees, would be a far greater liability to digest than some of the smaller employers who default from time to time. In taking over the liability of smaller defaulting employers, the PBGC could very well be guaranteeing the safety and stability of the much larger multiemployer plan.

While the National Coordinating Committee for Multi-Employer Plans, composed of AFL-CIO unions, is proposing legislation designed to resolve these particular problems, the PBGC is also in the process of making recommendations diametrically opposed to the interests of multiemployer plans.

The Courts are having trouble with a provision of the law which holds that all companies participating in pension plans are liable up to 30 percent of the net worth of such companies if they should default in their pension benefit payments. In several cases, the Courts have absolved companies from such liability probably because of the contradictory positions taken by the PBGC.

It is essential that the recommendations of the National Coordinating Committee for Multiemployer Plans, designed to protect such plans from individual employer default, be adopted into law by the Congress of the United States at the earliest possible date.

## U.S. Price Index

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

1977		
July	182.6	
August	183.3	
September	184.0	
October	184.5	
November	185.4	
December	186.1	
1978	Old	Revised
January	186.9	187.1
February	188.3	188.4
April	191.3	191.4
May	191.2	193.3
June	195.1	195.3
(Old Index discontinued after June)		
July		196.7

## Canadian Price Index

Statistics Canada  
\* New Base 1971=100

1977		
July	161.8	
August	162.5	
September	163.4	
October	165.0	
November	166.1	
December	167.2	
1978		
January	167.8	
February	168.9	
March	170.8	
April	171.2	
May	173.6	
June	175.1	
July	177.7	

If you move, send your old and new address, including zip code and social security or social insurance number to:

William A. Lowe, Sec.-Treas.  
815 16th Street, N.W., Suite 606  
Washington, D.C. 20006