Twelve Hundred Vote for OEIU in British Columbia

Affiliation by Two Groups

Climaxes Sustained Campaign

William Lowe, President, and Everett King, Business Manager of the British Columbia Office Employees Association, No. 378, jointly announced that the membership of that organization on April 20, voted overwhelmingly to affiliate with the OEIU.

Mr. Lowe and Mr. King, along with the Executive Council members of the Association, were directly responsible for this very important step. Gene Corum, organizer of the Pacific NorthWestern Organizational Conference, worked very closely with the officers and Council members of the Association prior to the April 20 meeting which dictated the affiliation.

The action of the Vancouver mainland group followed closely on the heels of similar action by the Victoria Branch of the B. C. Electric Office Employees Association.

As a result of the action of both the Island and mainland groups, close to 1,500 members will affiliate with the Office Employees International Union. Charters will be granted by the OEIU in the near future.

Much credit is given to the OEIU Organizers Gene Corum who did a great deal toward bringing about the final result. Corum met and worked with the President and officers of the Victoria Branch prior to affiliation action. Director of Organization Douglas traveled to Victoria and addressed that branch on November 23, 1954. Thenceforth, on January 25, 1955, the Island Branch voted to affiliate. After the affirmative action of the Victoria Branch, Corum had many meetings with the officers and Executive Council members of the mainland group.

President Howard Coughlin addressed the mainland B. C. Electric office employes at their regular March meeting. Brother Gervin of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada also addressed the meeting and urged affiliation. Prior to and after the meeting President Coughlin, Vice President Al O'Brien and Organizer Gene Corum discussed affiliation with individual members and officers of this group. On April 20, 1955, the employes of the Vancouver mainland B. C. Electric voted overwhelmingly to affiliate with the OEIU.

The action of the B. C. Electric Office Employees Association to affiliate with the OEIU is the culmination of two years of correspondence, meetings and many discussions between the officers and representatives of the OEIU and representatives of the B. C. Electric Employes.

The officers and Executive Board members of the Office Employees International Union extend a sincere and hearty welcome to the officers and members of the B. C. Electric Office Employees Association.

OEIU Joins Florida Hotel Campaign

The OEIU has joined the Hotel and Restaurant Bartenders International Union, the Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators and Paperhangers, and the Operating Engineers in an effort to organize the employes of the Miami Beach hotels.

During the month of April, the Labor Relations Board. This time the Board denied the claims of the company and the independent union and ordered an election, which was won overwhelmingly by the OEIU.

Organizer Eugene Dwyer led this organizational campaign. In its later stages he was assisted by Organizer Art Lewandowski. Both Dwyer and Lewandowski are North Central Organizational Conference organizers.

Joseph Finley, OEIU counsel, represented the OEIU through the NLRB proceedings.

A little more than a year ago, an OEIU petition was dismissed by the NLRA as premature, after the company and an independent union produced a contract which still had a year to go. Our petition was dismissed despite the fact that the Kankakee unit was acknowledged to be a separate bargaining unit, and the independent union admitted that it didn't have any members left to represent.

After waiting an additional year, we again petitioned. The company and the union then took the position that they had agreed to allow the existing contract to renew itself, and, as a result of this claim, we were forced to go through formal hearings before the National

OEIU Wins Election at A. O. Smith Co.

The Office Employees International Union had to overcome what seemed to be insurmountable obstacles to win a National Labor Relations Board election conducted among the clerical employes of A. O. Smith Corporation at Kankakee, III. The employes of that company chose Office Employees International Union, Local No. 311 by a majority of 44 to 25.

Officers of B. C. Electric Office Employees Association, Vancouver mainland branch, arc, left to right: Business Manager E. King, President W. A. Lowe, Secretary Kay Impay and Treasurer Hugh Langton.

Officers of B. C. Electric Office Employees Association, Victoria, Island branch, are, left to right: Vice President W. B. Freethy, treasurer, D. Stewart, president, A. A. Playfair, recording secretary, E. M. Banks, corresponding secretary, D. M. Strengell.
OEIU President Raps 'Coolie' Overtime

The following is a statement submitted by Howard Coughlin, President of the Office Employees International Union, AFL, to the Subcommittee on Labor of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, on Revision of the Fair Labor Standards Act:

"I again want to call the attention of Congress to one of the most serious loopholes in the Fair Labor Standards Act. The law presently permits an employer who works his employees on a weekly salary with no fixed number of hours to pay them overtime at a diminishing rate—a system of overtime payment that is commonly known as 'coolie' overtime.

"This is how 'coolie' overtime works:

To compute an hourly rate for the purpose of overtime payments for employees who are on a salary, that salary must be reduced to hourly terms. The Fair Labor Standards Act requires that time and one-half must be paid for all hours worked in a week in excess of 40. But the difficulty arises when we start to compute the hourly rate. The law speaks in terms of a 'regular' rate of pay. If an employee agrees to work 40 hours in a week for $40, then his regular rate can be computed at $1 per hour. His employer insists that the employee work at a salary of $40 a week for as many hours as are needed to do the job and that when the employer himself puts in the work, he is entitled in some form to 'coolie' overtime.

Now, thousands of employees in America today still have their weekly salary without any agreed number of hours. Let us see how this works under the present standards of the law when they are required to work more than 40 hours in any one week.

"Let us assume that you take a job in a large bank, or in any other large concern, at a weekly salary of $40 a week. There is no set number of hours you are required to work for this salary, but the understanding is that you will work until the job is performed. Your first week you work 40 hours and receive your $40 salary, your regular rate is then $1 an hour.

"The next week you are required to work 60 hours. If you are really getting paid the $1 an hour you thought you earned the week before, you'll have a rather nice paycheck to take home. You might think you would receive $1 for each of the 60 hours worked, plus an extra 50 cents per hour for the 20 hours of overtime, which would give you $70 for your week's effort. But this is where 'coolie' overtime comes in to play to put you into the squeezed position of the more you work, the lesser rate of pay you receive.

Because the present state of the law allows an employer to calculate your regular rate by dividing the salary you are to receive by the number of hours actually worked, he will divide your $40 salary by the 60 hours you have worked to produce a regular hourly rate for that week of 66 2/3 cents per hour. You get an additional one-half of that rate for your 20 hours overtime, or no more than $6.67 for the 20 extra hours of overtime. Your total pay for the week is then $66.67, instead of the $70 you may think you are entitled to.

"The next week you work under the same conditions, you are entitled to overtime for all hours worked in excess of 40. But again, the fast pencil comes into play, you get your 'coolie' overtime, and the rate is cut down even further. Your $40 salary you have worked 70 hours, and your regular rate of pay is then reduced by 57 cents an hour. For the 30 hours overtime you get one-half of your regular rate in addition, or $8.55 for those 30 hours. Your total pay is $48.55 instead of the $85 you think you ought to have.

"To carry the extension one step further, if you are required to work 80 hours on your $40 salary, your regular rate is then figured at 30 cents per hour. For the 40 extra hours overtime, you get 25 cents an hour extra, or a total of $10 for the week. When you consider that you have put in one entire week in overtime at a rate of 25 cents per hour, you can readily understand how this method of overtime payment has been called 'coolie' overtime. And if it were humanly possible to work even more hours in the week on your salary, you'd find your rate going even lower.

"Then, why does the law tolerate such an arrangement? How is this possible?

"Surprisingly enough, it has been permitted since the first days of the Fair Labor Standards Act. The Administrator of the Act, back in April 1934 issued an Interpretative Bulletin in which he permitted the regular rate of pay for salaried workers with no fixed number of hours to be calculated by dividing the salary by the number of hours worked. He was argued that the employer was entitled to any overtime pay at all, since the total amount of money received above the minimum wages standards prevailing at that time.

"The Court upheld the employer's claim for overtime, and to determine how his overtime be computed, the Court turned to the Interpretation placed upon the law by the Administrator and specifically approved the use of the 'coolie' overtime system. That the Court recognized the path it was taking is shown by the language it used in disposing of this matter, as follows:

"Where the employment contract is for a weekly wage with variable fluctuating hours, the same method of computation produces the regular rate for each week. As that rate is in an hourly basis, it is regular in the statutory sense as equal as the rate per hour does not vary for the entire week, though by week the regular rate varies with the number of hours worked. It is true that the longer the hours the less the rate and the pay per hour.

"This ruling was made in the case of Overseas Motor Transfer Co. v. Missel, 316 U. S. 572, and is still in effect today.

"The American Federation of Labor and our constituent organizations have long opposed this discriminatory type of overtime pay system. The Office Employees International Union has repeatedly insisted that the law ought to be amended to do away with 'coolie' overtime.

"Unbelievable as it may sound, there are many employees in America today working their employers on a weekly salary with no set number of hours to be worked. Every one of these employers is wide open for 'coolie' overtime. In fact, one of our best-known and largest banking enterprises in this country, the Bank of America, still works its employees on a salary basis without fixed hours, and pays overtime on a diminishing rate—'coolie' overtime.

"As long as there is a single employer in America who pays 'coolie' overtime to his employees, there is need to amend the law and do away with this unfair prac-

The agreement raises the new minimum rate to $1.38 per hour and the new maximum to $4.95 per hour.

Union members ratified the agreement, effective April 18. It runs through April 26, 1956.

The agreement calls for more benefits and increased company contributions to the company's group insurance program.

"The white collar worker who would be most affected by this change in the law needs the assistance of all of us. Office and clerical workers are still the largest group of American working men and women who are not protected by the benefits of trade unionism, and a condition we hope to correct in the near future. But in the meantime, Congress ought to lend its aid and protection to these people, many of whom work long, faithful hours without adequate compensation. We ask that a provision similar to the one contained in H. R. 3190, 81st Congress, be written into the Fair Labor Standards Act as the law of the land.

"There is no good reason any longer to deny these people decent protection under the law. On the other hand, there are many good reasons why they should not be subjected to the strange practices of a system of hours at a shrinking rate of pay. 'Coolie' overtime should be done away with and, therefore, we urgently request that the Fair Labor Standards Act be amended in accordance with our proposal so that our wage hour laws might be made to apply fairly to every American worker.
Colorado "Wreck" Bill Defeated

A so-called "Right-to-Work" bill submitted by the Colorado Chamber of Commerce, was killed in that State's legislature.

The National "Right-to-Work" Committee, headed by former Representative Fred A. Hartley, one of the authors of the Taft-Hartley Act, worked hard to pass the "wreck" bill through the Colorado legislature. Labor won out. Governor Edward C. Johnson indicated that he would veto the bill if it passed the legislature.

Labor's efforts against these anti-union measures have been successful in every state that such legislation has been introduced this year, with one exception.

Canadian Labor's Fight

The seventh annual convention of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada is vitally concerned with the need for improved unemployment insurance benefits in the face of a continuing high level of joblessness.

This is only another indication of the fact that Canadian and American workers have the same common aims and purposes.

Organizing Fund

The CIO Automobile Workers at their recent convention, voted one and one-half million dollars for a nation-wide organizational fund under the banner of the merged labor movement. They also called upon the A. F. of L. and the CIO to build this fund to five or ten million dollars.

Walter Reuther, UAW and CIO President, said that the united organizing drive would aid consumers to boost their purchasing power. We in the Office Employees International Union are also vitally aware of the need of funds for the important job of organizing the nation's unorganized white collar workers. We heartily endorse Mr. Reuther's organizing aims and objectives.

Wirtz' Accusations

W. Willard Wirtz, former Dean of Northwestern University Law School, who served as a member of the Wage Stabilization Board and the War Labor Board, accused the Eisenhower-appointed majority of the National Labor Relations Board of favoring the employer's point of view.

Mr. Wirtz stated that the NLRB favors the employer by restoring broad license to employers to oppose union organizing activities, cutting back the employer's duty to bargain, reducing the kinds of employer activities previously protected against discharge and giving employer lockouts a degree of legitimacy.

We agree with everything Professor Wirtz has to say, and would add many additional indictments of the present pro-business Board.

Asks Equality in Polio Vaccine Program

No American child should go without the Salk polio vaccine because his parents have low income or live in a place with few doctors, AFL President George Meany declared.

Hailing the "great discovery" that puts "in our hands an effective weapon against polio," Meany called for rationing the vaccine according to priorities of medical need as long as the supply is limited. "Children in the poorest sections of this country should have the opportunity to benefit equally with those in more fortunate areas," he said.

To achieve this end, Meany noted, "a substantial part of the supply of the Salk vaccine must be purchased and distributed through public health agencies."

He called on Congress to appropriate funds "to assure the people of the United States that this preventive against a dreaded disease shall be administered with fairness to all, with privilege for none."
Democracy in Action

As this edition of "White Collar" is published, we are approximately one month away from the opening of the sixth convention of the Office Employees International Union. Delegates from local unions throughout the United States and Canada will assemble in the Hotel Statler in New York City on June 13 to participate in this important convention. We are proud of our union and its democratic processes. We are certain that the vast majority of our local unions will be represented and will take part in the business of this convention.

The Office Employees International Union is one of 113 international unions which comprise the American Federation of Labor. We are the 48th union in point of size in the A. F. of L. However, we are second to none insofar as democratic conception of trade unionism is concerned.

Our constitution establishes the policy under which our union is run between conventions. Our Executive Board follows out the directions of each convention to the letter. The business of the convention is accomplished by the resolution method. All local unions are invited to present resolutions to the convention 21 days before that body convenes. Resolutions can also, under certain conditions, be presented immediately before and during the convention. These resolutions are submitted to the appropriate committees for study and recommendations. Prior to these recommendations delegates are given an opportunity to appear before the appropriate committees in order to voice their arguments pro and con and a particular resolution in which they are interested. After debate, the recommendation of the committee is submitted to the convention. Convention delegates thereupon discuss the committee's recommendation pro and con.

The chairman then calls for a voice vote for adoption or rejection of the committee's recommendation. In the event that any delegate is dissatisfied with the results of a voice vote, he can demand and obtain a roll call vote on any question, providing that one-tenth of the delegates present agree with the demand for a roll call vote.

The actions of the Executive Board and executive officers are reviewed by the Committee on Officers' Reports. This committee reports back to the convention and action is taken by the convention on the recommendations of the committee.

At the appropriate time during the convention, nominations are declared open for the office of President, Secretary-Treasurer, and Vice Presidents. After nominations have been made from the floor, a committee is appointed for the purpose of insuring the fair conduct of the election. All candidates for office are given an opportunity to elect observers during the voting and counting periods.

Our International Union is proud of the fact that our elections are conducted by secret ballot. This secret ballot insures true democracy.

LLPE Campaign for Funds Is Under Way

The $55 campaign of Labor's League for Political Education to raise funds with which to elect good candidates to public office is under way.

LLPE membership books have been sent to all participating unions. Local officers handling the books will accept voluntary contributions of $1 or more, from individuals only, and will give a membership card to each contributor. They will forward completed stubs and book covers to the league's national headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Every dollar collected will be reported monthly to the respective international unions and state leagues. A complete report of collections and expenditures will be made to Congress periodically, required by law.

At least 50 cents of every dollar collected will go back in cash automatically to state leagues. The remainder will be kept separate in a national reserve fund for use in the most critical political campaigns throughout the country where AFL membership is small.

The research and the political arm of the AFL is nonpartisan. It supports candidates on the basis of their records—not their party label.

"The Taft-Hartley Act forbids using one penny of union money in support of political candidates," LLPE Director James L. McDevitt pointed out. "Yet it costs thousands of dollars to run a campaign. Friends of trade unionism don't receive contributions from big businesses. They can look only to us.

Wall Street Journal Headlines OEU Drive

The Wall Street Journal of Tuesday, April 19, in an article signed by A. E. Inefficent, gave much emphasis to the organizational drive of Local 153 of the OEU in the banking field in New York City. The article called attention to the fact that employees of big Manhattan banks are receiving pamphlets which contain a picture of union member Marilyn Monroe happily posing with airline pilot, musicians, and other workers. Over the picture they will find this close-to-what-it-is-all-about: "Practically everybody else belongs to his or her union."

The article refers to the fact that organizers of the OEU are distributing these and other pamphlets to banking employees. It stresses the fact that organizers visit bank employees' homes, circulate among them at lunch hour and during coffee breaks, and invite them to mass meetings. Local 153 reports an enthusiastic response to its organizational efforts.

Bank employees, who a few years ago would sprit organization, are signing up in large numbers. In one particular instance, as a result of a merger, the group of employees concerned lost a 7 per cent annual bonus, and hospital and surgical coverage for their dependents. Immediately after OEU evidence interest in helping these employees, the bank concerned announced a 5 per cent wage increase in order to offset the organizational efforts of Local 153.

It is the opinion of representatives of the OEU that bank employees are evidencing much more interest in unionization than ever before. This can be attributed to many reasons, including the recent mergers, loss of seniority, and a general awakening of white collar workers to their lack of security.

Local 39 Celebrates Anniversary

Madison, Wis.—OEU Local 39 celebrated its 10th anniversary at its April meeting with a party honoring its first president and charter members.

W. A. Toellner, first president of the local, now retired, was presented an honorary life membership card by Henry A. Wilson, current president.

Toellner was president of the local from its founding in 1928, when it operated as a federal AFL union, and through its first year under the OEU charter, 1938.

Local 39 was one of the first charters issued by the OEU. The local's charters included a facsimile of the OEU's international seal.

At the 10th anniversary party, past charter members and Brother Toellner were guests of honor. They were entertained by a special joint dinner.

At a brief business session prior to the party, two delegates were elected to attend the OEU convention in New York in June.

$25 Pay Hike Won at Albers Milling Co.

Oakland, Calif.—Wage increases averaging $25 per month were negotiated for office employees at Albers Milling Co. by Local 29, Business Representative John Kinick reports. In addition to the wage increase, the contract provides three weeks' vacation after 10 years of service; two weeks vacation after one year and group insurance and a pension plan.

Renewal of the Alameda County Trade Union and Welfare contract provides salary increases of $2.50 per week. Three-week vacations after five years of service were also won.

A health and welfare plan has been negotiated in the renewed contract covering office employees in the furniture and appliance company.

$25 Pay hike won at Albers Milling Co.