Executive Board Calls Three-Day Chicago Conference To Plan Major Organizing Drive

The OPEIU Executive Board as it met in January in Miami Beach, with President Howard Coughlin, right, presiding. Reading clockwise from him are Director of Organization Henderson Doughin, Vice Presidents J. E. Grimes, Sarah E. Keenan, John B. Kinzie, William J. Stud, Donald R. Billiker, George P. Firth, J. O. Bloodworth, Frank Morton, William A. Lowe, Gwenn Newton, Leo J. Wallace, John P. Cahill, Edward P. Springman, and Secretary-Treasurer J. Howard Hicks.

Full-time Local Union and International Union Representatives — some 75 in all — have been called to a three-day conference in Chicago March 4-6 to prepare for the organizing campaign which will be the OPEIU’s prime undertaking for many months.

Decided on by International Union’s Executive Board at its meeting in Miami January 8-12, the conference will discuss in detail ways of meeting the challenge which President Howard Coughlin thus summed up in his New Year column in WHITE COLLAR: “We must raise our sights to big companies.”

A highlight of the conference will be an address by William L. Kibbe, newly appointed Director of Organization of the AFL-CIO. An old friend of the OPEIU, Kibbe is thoroughly familiar with the problems of white collar organizing and is convinced that the time is ripe for a stepped-up effort.

Also on the agenda are reports by Joseph E. Finley, OPEIU General Counsel, and Raymond Nathan of Rader and Finn, public relations firm. Finley will give a rundown on recent court and National Labor Relations Board rulings affecting organizing, and Nathan will discuss the effective public relations activities that are an important part of organizing drives.

Such topics as organizing techniques and target selection will be talked over by the Representatives in round-table discussions.

In setting specific targets in the United States and Canada, the focus will be on companies employing large numbers of office and professional workers.

“We have reached a point in the life of our union where it becomes necessary to focus our attention on larger groups of organized white collar workers such as are employed in banks, insurance companies, and large companies engaged in manufacture.” Coughlin declared last month. “These larger companies have a great bearing on the wages we will receive in the future in organized establishments.

“Today, more than ever, wages are determined on the basis of surveys made in given industries or areas. Organized companies will fight to remain competitive. They would rather risk a strike than pay wages in excess of those paid by companies with which they are in competition. Other companies insist on not endangering the local labor market by paying wages which may be in excess of area wage rates.

“If we are, therefore, to guarantee to our members the reasonable opportunity for a renewed effort.

That came last September. Under the leadership of John Kelly, Director of Organization, and Business Representative John Ciaramella, a well-prepared campaign was launched. Leaflets, house calls and phone calls, and a succession of meetings brought results and it was apparent that success was at hand.

As it had done before, the company moved to quell the spirit of unionism, isolating members of the organizing committee and threatening to fire employees known to be for Local 153 representation.

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From the Desk of the President:

Is the Threat of Automation Exaggerated?

In a recent news article, the New York Times featured a story, "Federal Panel Discourages Job Peril in Automation."

If one glanced at the headline and read part of the 5-column story, the impression may be gained that technological change and automation present no serious threat to employment.

After studying the article, however, we gained exactly the reverse impression. In effect, the Majority Report of the Presidential Committee on Automation has found that automation is not a threat to employment providing there is enough demand for consumer goods to support an economic growth rate of about 4.5% a year to hold unemployment at present levels. It is also noted that the economy has never grown faster than 3.5% a year for any length of time.

The report also says that the challenge of automation can be met providing more tax cuts are enacted and more is spent on such public needs as housing, health and transportation.

The Commission further recommends that we meet our unemployment problem by direct government or institutional employment of all workers unable to find jobs and a negative income tax or some other "income maintenance" device be established. This would replace or supplement present welfare programs by paying families whose breadwinners are unemployed.

The Commission reported that in order to achieve a 3.5% unemployment rate by 1968, we require the addition of $10 billion a year in total federal outlays for goods and services and $7 billion a year in tax cuts. To reduce the jobless rate to 2% after that would require an additional government outlay of $4 billion a year.

The OPEIU delegation at the recent AFl-CIO convention from left, Secretary-Treasurer J. Howard Hicks, Vice-President John Klinnick, and President Howard Coughlin.

In effect, therefore, the Presidential Panel's report discounts the possibility of unemployment due to automation if Utopia is achieved in the way of federal outlays and continuous tax reductions.

Many of the recommendations of the Federal Panel are desirable. One of these included a federally supported nationwide system of free public education through 14 grades, which would include two post-high school years of vocational training or community college.

Another recommendation calls for the retraining of 750,000 workers a year through federal manpower programs. It should be noted that thus far only 150,000 workers have been retrained in three years.

While the unemployment rate in the United States has been reduced in the last few months to a five-year low of 4.2%, our economy still faces a year by year increase in the number of teenagers seeking employment due to the postwar baby boom.

We have been the beneficiaries in the last year of the economic results of two tax cuts and unforeseen heavy spending due to the Vietnam war.

There is a tendency on the part of some to hope that the military build-up will continue until the last American soldier has come home. In the meantime, we must continue to support the war effort.

It is noteworthy that the report forecasts that technological change is causing and will cause displacement of workers in many industries.

The report, however, is largely concerned with the overall impact of automation on the economy insofar as total employment is concerned and does not involve itself with the anguish caused individuals who have spent years in an occupation now eliminated because of automation or technological change.

We believe that in general the recommendations of the Presidential Committee are sound.

We would caution our membership, however, not to become complacent because of the unusual favorable economic factors of the past year and in the immediate projected future.

Automation is still a monumental problem facing the workers of our nation.

Charlotte Bachman, Local 212 V.P.

The OPEIU is gratified to report the death of Charlotte Bachman, Vice President of Local 212 in Buffalo, New York.

Sister Bachman had been employed in the accounting offices of the Systems Division of Remington Rand for 27 years.

A warm believer in the need of white collar employees for union representation, she played a major role in the successful organizing drive at the company.

We extend our condolences to her family and her host of friends.

OPEIU Director of Organization Henderson Douglas, seated at far right, watches Local 153 Business Representative George Rochiedieu sign a pact setting four-year contract with Sea-Land Services in the presence of shop stewards and Sea-Land personnel. In addition to Local 153 members at Sea-Land, settlement covered OPEIU employees in Houston, Texas; Oakland, California; and San Juan, Puerto Rico. Douglas and Rochiedieu led negotiations which won a package costing the employer $57.42 weekly in the final year of the contract.

Add to 'Don't Buy' List:
Tyson Poultry

OPEIU members can help a hardy group of Arkansas poultry workers win a bitter strike against an employer for whom this is the 19th century.

The man leading the picket line outside Tyson Poultry Company in Springdale, Arkansas, is a veteran employee who in 20 years has been given one five-cent raise. That's the situation in a sentence.

Rising up against grossly substandard working conditions, the Tyson employees voted in an NLRB election last May to join Food Handlers Local 425 of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters.

But the company, a major poultry producer, did not abandon the all-out anti-union policy which for years had kept the workers from organizing. It refused to yield an inch in bargaining, forcing a strike last August.

Under the Arkansas "right-to-work" law it is a simple matter for companies like Tyson to recruit strikebreakers, and it is such who are now plucking the poultry.

Tyson poultry is sold in major grocery chains nationwide under a variety of labels. But Tyson employees can help by getting the numbers and making sure poultry so designated does not grace their tables.
Local 219 Wins Contract, Honors Russell Harvey

International Representative Russell Harvey, second from left, accepts Local 219 gift of attache case. At left is W. W. Milne, past president of Local 219, and to right are Vice-President A. D. Skinner and President G. M. Heitlenn. Jottings on blackboard refer to new three-year contract negotiated with Marathon Corp.

Local 219 in Marathon, Ont., has signed a new contract with the Marathon Corporation of Canada, Ltd., providing for wage rates and pension and vacation improvements.

Rated at a recent meeting of the local, the contract runs for three years, expiring April 30, 1968. The wage increases won range from $86 to $109 a month.

At the ratification meeting Local 219 expressed its appreciation of International Representative Russell Harvey's devoted work in the field of white collar unionism by presenting him with an attache case big enough to hold dozens of union contracts.

Start of National Health Plan Made Labour's Priority Goal

The Canadian Labour Congress has made enactment of a national health care program by the 27th Parliament its foremost legislative goal.

The start of "a comprehensive program of health services for all Canadians would mark a fitting celebration of Canada's centennial," CLC President Claude Jodoin declared in a recent statement.

He said that the CLC "believes that the four principles—universality, public administration, transferability of coverage and full physicians' services—enunciated by the Prime Minister last July, must be enshrined in any medicare legislation."

Jodoin also voiced labor's demand that pending legislation on collective bargaining in public service not be unfairly restrictive. He said it ought to assure government employees of as much protection as is enjoyed by those in private industries and government-owned corporations.

Other issues before Parliament of vital concern to unions include improvement in the system of social assistance, amendment of the Unemployment Insurance Act, minimum wage advances, and work safety legislation, President Jodoin also pointed out.

Local 229 Wins Pact Expansion

Two annual wage increases totaling 6.9 per cent and the addition of two jobs to the unit were among the advances won by Local 229 in a new contract with the Emhart Corporation's Savage Arms Division in Chicopee Falls, Mass.

The issue that for a time was a stumbling block in the way of a settlement was the inclusion in the unit of a position being created by the installation of a new 440 IBM computer.

At one point International Vice President Leo J. Wallace, guiding the negotiations, filed a petition with the National Labor Relations Board asking the inclusion of the job of Computer Console Operator. A hearing date was set, but as the talks proceeded the company agreed to the inclusion of the job in the unit. The union withdrew its petition.

In addition to the Computer Console Operator, a secretary who had been excluded as "confidential" joined the unit. The union successfully showed that she had no access to confidential personnel-information.

For the Computer Console Operator job a new classification was created with a minimum of $16.50 and a maximum of $17.50 above the previous highest grade.

A wage increase of 3.6 per cent was won for the first year of the two-year contract. The second increase will be 3.3 per cent. Other gains include a four-week vacation of work after 25 years and company absorption of the increased costs of Blue Cross and Blue Shield protection of the employees.

The language in the contract pertaining to vacation qualification periods was clarified.

The negotiating committee working with Wallace consisted of Mrs. Margaret Gagnon, Lilian Benoit, Mrs. Dorothy Mruk, Mrs. Blanch Menard, and Dorothy Shanahan.

Montreal Local Membership At New Peak

Local 57 in Montreal has signed a first agreement with Expo-67, thus taking its membership beyond the 1,200 mark for the first time in its history. The membership now totals 1,217.

Pressing for further gains, Serge Beaucaues of Local 57 has filed a petition of certification covering 35 employees at Astexson.

Gilles Beauregard led the successful organizing campaign at Expo-67.
Labor and the Law

By Joseph H. Finley
OPEIU General Counsel

Arbitration Versus NLRB

Should you take your case to arbitration or take it to the National Labor Relations Board? This question has bothered many OPEIU members in recent years. The obvious answer is that it may depend upon the kind of case you have, what are some of the guidelines which will help you make a sound judgment?

A Texas employer, at the start of the second year of a contract with a union, gave pay increases which appeared to be in excess of the maximums under the contract. The contract contained a broad grievance procedure clause affecting "any dispute which may arise between the parties." The union filed a grievance, even though it was not promptly presented. The grievance was referred to arbitration. The union before the Board and the company vigorously defended the grievance. The company had assisted the union in presenting the grievance. The union, after the trial, was ordered to pay the company's attorneys fees. The union, even though it was victorious, was required to pay the attorneys fees of the company. The union was then called in by the boss, given a stern lecture, and fired.

Now, let's look at the contract proposals. In the first place, the company was given the right to dismiss employees. Having looked at the contract, the NLRB ruled that, in 112 NLRB [1000], it would follow an arbitration award and (1) the proceedings were fair and impartial, (2) the proceedings were fair and impartial, (3) the arbitrator's decision was not clearly repugnant to the policies of the Act.

In the Texas case, the Board did examine the contract, and admitted that it had nothing in it to support the charge that the company was not in good faith, and the union had a right to abandon the grievance procedure. The company was ordered to bargain with the union. Of course, the company's inaction was not taken away from the employees, and the union would negotiate any issues, there might be a retroactivity claim.

The case of the contentious complainant was also won. The employee had a right to go to the NLRB in the first instance, even if he was mistaken about what relief the Board could give him. The NLRB ruled that, since Section 8(b) of the Act makes it an unfair labor practice to discriminate against an employee because he may have filed charges or given testimony under the Act. It was a violation to fire him because he went to the NLRB to complain about a grievance. Even though the arbitrator had said his discharge was proper, the NLRB refused to follow it, saying it was repugnant to the policies of the Act. The employee had two full terms at bat and scored the second time around.

Now, what should you do? First, when you make your grievance under your contract, be as certain as you can that it is not also a violation of the National Labor Relations Act. If you think it may be both a violation of the contract and the law, you can get much quicker relief by going to arbitration, since appeals and long delays before the NLRB, plus the right of appeal, may prolong your remedy considerably. But the cost of arbitration is far greater, since the NLRB will fight your case if you file charges. Also, if you delay your grievance beyond time limits in your contract, and if the NLRB fails to issue a complaint, you will have lost both chances. In most cases, therefore, your best bet is to follow your grievance procedure since, if the arbitrator goes astray, you can still go back to the NLRB. But if you are certain you have an unfair labor practice charge, then the NLRB may be your best hope. If you are in a very tough one to decide, and many of these problems can be extremely difficult, don't hesitate to turn for help to untangle the problem.

Your friends and neighbors, even your wife and children, will be asking you what 14(b) is all about. Here are some of the questions you can expect—along with answers that may be helpful.

What's so important about the union shop, which "right-to-work" they ban?

A union shop—which requires every worker who is protected by the union contract to be a member of the union—protects the union and the employer from being undermined by the employer; assures it of enough income to do its job; and helps it be strong enough to live up to the terms of the contract.

That sounds all right for the union as an organization, but what do the workers get out of it?

The workers get better representation from a stronger, more secure union. And they have the satisfaction of knowing that everyone in the workplace is paying his fair share toward the costs.

Why can't unions just depend on workers to join because the union does a good job?

Lots of employers, where there is no union shop, actively discourage workers from joining. In anti-union communities, some workers who vote for the union in a secret ballot do not join because they are afraid, or because they are carrying favors and can't afford to lose them. Some don't join because they think it's smart to get something for nothing.

But isn't it un-American to force a worker to join if he doesn't want to?

It isn't anymore un-American than taxes. A home-owner may be opposed to a plan to build a new fire house in town. But if he is out-voted, he still has to pay his share of the taxes.

That's all right for government; but why should a union have that kind of authority?

Because the government has assigned a specific obligation to unions which they are legally bound to fulfill. A union that is the established bargaining agent for workers must provide equal protection to all workers, even those who are against the union. This obligation can be enforced through the labor board and the courts.

Isn't a lot of dues money spent on politics and other activities, besides just union affairs?

No. By far the greatest share of the dues dollar is spent on direct trade union activities. But beyond this, the labor movement has realized that it cannot live apart from the rest of the country. Education, social security, Medicare, unemployment insurance, housing, hospitals, highways, these are all as important to the well-being of workers as the terms of their contract. So politics and legislation are also "union affairs." Finally, no dues money at all is contributed to political candidates in federal elections; the law forbids it.

Just the same, won't repeal of 14(b) mean that this is how unions will grow?

Not at all. The only union shops that will go into effect automatically will be in companies where union and management had earlier agreed that they would have a union shop as soon as the law allowed it. Elsewhere in the 19 states that now have compulsory open-shop laws the issue will be the same as it is in the rest of the country—a matter of negotiation and agreement between the employer and the union.

If Section 14(b) is harmful and most people favor its repeal, then why is it that we want it kept in the federal law?

Support comes primarily from those self-interested persons who have utilized "right-to-work" laws as a means of keeping unions weak, wages and social conditions poor and as a lure to bring industry into their areas. These same persons who claim to seek "freedom" for the worker are, for the most part, the same persons and groups who have opposed all forward-looking legislation.

New York Baby "Signs Up"

(Continued from page 1)

This time such tactics failed. The organizing drive continued to gather momentum, and in mid-October Local 153 filed a petition for an election.

This company was organized and allowed to proceed. The company then resorted to the time-honored tactic of stalling. By failing to attend hearings and evading this or that excuse for rescheduling meetings, it managed to put off an election until January.

But as the 11-5 tally showed, the company's behavior only served to enhance the understanding among the employees of the need for representation.

With a solid shop behind it, Local 153 has submitted contract proposals to ABS Freightways and union-management meetings are now going on.

The ABC success is a good sendoff for an ambitious Local 153 organizing campaign now building up steam.

The half-dozen immediate targets include shipping lines and trucking firms.

John Hyland and John Gonzalez have been placed on the staff for a period of six months to work full-time under Kelly on the drive.