Year-end reports from many locals highlight organizing of new units

Some 350 white-collar workers in the United States and Canada have chosen the Office and Professional Employees as their collective bargaining agent, ending in success most of the sort of organizing efforts that are making the union grow. The new members are represented by a chemical company, a paper mill, two trucking firms, a shipping line and a cable-television operation.

In Detroit a representation election conducted by the National Labor Relations Board capped Local 10's organizing campaign at Pennsalt Corporation. The 62 employees voted 3-to-1 for the union. Negotiation of a first contract got under way immediately under the direction of President Thelma O'Dell. Factors behind the success included the threat of job losses arising from current merger talks between Pennsalt and a New Jersey chemical company. The first successfully organized Pennsalt unit is represented by New York Local 153.

That local was among those registering a gain. Salesmen employed by Teleprompter Manhattan CATV Corporation in New York voted 16 to 2 to join Local 153. The company sells cable television hookups. Business Representative Charles Ponti led the organizing campaign, which exploited a move by management to reduce the earnings of the sales force.

The OPEIU representation at International Paper expanded further when management recognized new units at mills in Bastrop, Louisiana and Vicksburg, Mississippi. Vice president Oscar I. Bloodworth obtained recognition for the 81-member Louisiana unit, which is covered by the master agreement with International Paper's Southern Kraft Division. The Vicksburg mill has 22 office employees now in the union.

Also in South, office employees of Gulf Puerto Rico Steamship Line in New Orleans and Mobile, Alabama have been organized by OPEIU Representative Jack Langford. Recognized by management after a card check, the new units have a total of 20 workers. A contract covering the New Orleans office has been signed.

From Canada, OPEIU Representative Brian James reports that Local 15 was certified to bargain for a 46-member unit at National Data Center in Vancouver, B.C., as well as an 84-member unit at Canadian Freightways. It is also negotiating a first contract for a new unit in that city at Cannon Truck Lines.

On the West Coast, Local 29 reports stepped up organizing drives in Santa Clara County while OPEIU members in Sacramento have requested a par- tisan organizer.

Season's Greetings
As we come toward the end of the old year and prepare to start another, I would like to extend to the tens of thousands of our OPEIU members—particularly those who have joined our fast-growing union family in 1968—my heartfelt wishes for a very Merry Christmas and a joyous and prosperous New Year.

Howard Coughlin

Professionals sign up, win three big increases

An all-professional unit has won wage gains averaging $18 per week in the first year, 6% in the second year, and 7% in the third year under a first contract concluded by Local 12 with the Bureau of Engraving, Inc. (School Division), in Minneapolis.

The 47-member unit, 100% unionized, comprises student counselors, writing and art instructors and other professionals in the creative department conducting correspondence courses for the school. First-year wage increases are retroactive to July 1. The third increase will bring the top scale for Grade 4 investigators to $233 a week.

Good Friday becomes a full holiday and the second half of the last working day preceding Christmas becomes a half-holiday. Vacations are extended to four weeks after 20 years.

Part-time employees working 50% or more of the regular week get one half of all holidays, half paid sick leave, pro-rated vacations and coverage in health insurance and pension program.

The labor movement "is in a better position to step up its organizing than at any time in history," even though there are tough challenges to "making the union grow." That was the report given by AFL-CIO Director of Organization William L. Kircher to a luncheon meeting sponsored by the AFL-CIO Maritime Trades Dept.

The success of recent organizing drives, Kircher said, is there for everyone to see—in rising membership figures. As for the future, he continued, it is bright because unions are leading from strength and are "increasingly emphasizing organizing and training organizers in the skills they need."

Kircher spoke also of the problems that must be overcome if the labor movement is to continue to increase its numbers. He posed difficulties that may result from the election of Richard Nixon "if he becomes dominated by business groups" who have previously announced plans to seek new repressive measures against unions.

He recalled that the Eisenhower Administration rehired the National Labor Relations Board until the percent of unfair labor practice cases brought against unions increased from 17 to 57 percent.

However, he pointed out that "I only emphasize this to show the possibility of an obstacle to organizing. What's ahead of us? No one really knows," Kircher declared.

"While we are disturbed about what happened Nov. 5," he added, "it still wouldn't be any milk and honey for organizing."

(Continued on page 4)
Do yourself a favor—help the union grow

Although many may not realize it, every OPEIU member has a direct and selfish interest in organizing the unorganized. Without a union, today's white collar worker has no voice in implementing legislation beneficial to all workers. He cannot participate in the quest for higher living standards. He is a net factor hampering the light by organized labor to win a better life for every citizen.

Unorganized white collar workers fail to realize that they stand alone and, as a result, can be largely ignored by their employers. The enlightened OPEIU must be able to persuade the non-union worker that this is so and that it is his or her advantage to join the union.

Living wages and poor working conditions, synonymous with non-union areas, pose a continual threat and are a hurdle in the path of greater improvements for unionized office workers. It should be obvious that the union would improve the working conditions of its members at the same time.

One basic reason for organizing the unorganized is the protection of hard-won union conditions since even the presence of the union in a community helps boost wage levels and prevents deterioration in prevailing working conditions.

Organization of a non-union office may permit an industry to yield new contract gains by collective bargaining because it eliminates cut-throat competition based on low-wage levels. Successful organizing may have even as great an effect upon an industry's wage levels as collective bargaining.

Enlightened management in unionized offices is just as anxious as the union to see non-union offices organized. It makes for sounder competition with non-union rivals by equalizing this important economic factor.

New word from Wall St.—wages chase prices

"It’s more accurate to say that rising consumer prices cause rising wage demands than it is to state the reverse."

The Wall Street Journal editorial on the causes of inflation which we hope employers spoken everywhere will heed.

The editorial is headed, "The Unions Aren’t to Blame." And the business newspaper cites its own survey of wage and price increases in organized and unorganized industries which, it noted, showed that "many of the largest price increases have come in areas where workers are weakly organized or are not organized at all. A number of price declines have occurred in areas that are firmly unionized."

The Wall Street Journal terms inflation "a clear and present danger." But it warns that "it won’t be diminished one wisp by efforts to put the blame solely on the labor unions."

Still needed—redress for consumer grievances

The following is excerpted from testimony by Betty Furness, special consultant to the President for Consumer Affairs, before the Federal Trade Commission hearings on national consumer protection.

Historians who probe this period will find one of its significant characteristics to have been its increased emphasis on the consumer. We have come a long way from the day—and it was not so long ago—when anybody who spoke out for the consumer was eyed suspiciously as a "bleeding heart," dubbed a "professional consumer," or dismissed as a finicky housewife fretting over fractional cents or "cuts off." Analysts will find that this new emphasis is not a "class war" nor an attempt by power-hungry bureaucrats to undermine business or the free enterprise system. It is really a maturing of our national thinking. It’s the growing realization that we must concern ourselves not only with the growth of our economy, but with its quality and its equality in serving all segments of our society.

The consumer deserves to be satisfied in products and services. The consumer deserves to be protected, not just vicariously. The consumer deserves equal rights in the marketplace. The consumer, as a consumer, deserves an effective voice in government.

The textbook concept of the free enterprise system assumes an open, competitive marketplace of informed buyers and sellers. But we know today that in our fast changing, complex and impersonal marketplace, the consumer is not the equal of the producer. The consumer does not enjoy a genuine bargaining position. Too often he is dissatisfied with the quality. Too often he is misinformationed, or not fully informed about product characteristics. In other words, these marketplaces, these multifaceted pressures prevent the consumer from fulfilling his proper role in the free enterprise system.

And to add insult to injury the consumer is too often denied redress. We have yet to provide adequate means for the voices and arbitration of grievances. Needless to add, the system which poses such problems for the more affluent, works much greater hardship on the poor.

Perhaps most significant in all that we’ve done is the historic shift in economic philosophy which now clearly recognizes the importance of consumer concerns in the total fabric of the marketplace. Such a basic change provides the necessary climate for specific consumer action.

I think what we need is comprehensive one-stop consumer service where the consumer can get answers to his questions and remedies for his problems and can also be informed on how to avoid problems in the marketplace.

As it stands now, we’ve got the consumer on a merry-go-round of referrals. And why should a housewife have to write the federal government to find out how to get her toaster fixed?

She buys what she buys and rents what she rents in her own neighborhood and she should be able to find out all she needs to know and have the problems worked out in her own neighborhood, too.

If that can’t be done through the businesses involved, then it should be done through expanded state and local consumer protection programs.

What’s lacking is legislation to fulfill two broad and unsatisfied needs: First, a system that will provide effective and economical redress for consumer grievances; and second, stronger deterrents and penalties to include financial reimbursement for losses sustained.

8 to 41% raises won at American Exchange

American Exchange workers, members of Local 205, have approved a new two-year contract calling for wage increases ranging from 8% to 41%, depending on job categories, plus a single payment equal to 10% of current salary. Local 205 President John R. Kret says the new package is "the best ever negotiated between the union and the American Exchange." It won, among other things, improved vacations and health benefits, a shorter workweek for many employees (37½ hours reduced from 40½) and differential pay for late work shifts.

Under the new pact, top scale
Renewals in Brief

Scott Paper
A 1½% general wage increase this year and another of 1 6c an hour in 1969 were obtained by Local 260 in a new two-year pact covering some 50 office workers of Scott Paper Company, Winslow, Maine.

Three weeks' vacation after eight years were secured, and next year those with 30 years of service will be entitled to six weeks, according to Marcus Spaulding, secretary. Another highlight is a new non-contributory Retirement Plan providing $6 a month per year of service.

Hospitalization coverage was increased to 365 days per year (was 121). The company agreed to pay $3 a month toward dependents' coverage the first year and $6 the second year.

OPEIU Representative John Fitzmaurice assisted the unit's negotiating committee.

States Marine-Isthmian
A $37 a month across-the-board hike plus fringe gains were won in a new one-year contract signed by Local 3 in San Francisco with States Marine-Isthmian Agency. Some 50 office workers at the shipping agency are covered.

The employer's contribution to the Pension Fund was boosted another $3 a month to $33.40. Other gains include half-holidays before Christmas and New Year's Day.

For office workers required to travel on company business the monthly allowance was raised to $10 a day from $8.80, and the mileage rate boosted from 10½ to 12¢. Agreement was also reached on a more liberalized Medical Plan.

The unit's bargaining committee comprised Elmer A. Speer, Hans J. Lange and Virginia Schneider. They were assisted by Local 3 Business Manager Phyllis Mitchell.

Oakland Sheet Metal
Wage gains totaling $35 a month over a two-year period have been negotiated by Local 29 for office workers at Oakland Sheet Metal Supply Company, in Oakland, California. The first $20 a month boost is retroactive to August 1, with the other $15 across-the-board taking effect on August 1, 1969, according to Local 29 Business Representative Bob Hips.

Hoague-Sprague
Wage gains averaging $6.75 a week per employee were won in a new one-year contract negotiated by Local 6 for 26 office employees of the Hoague-Sprague Company in Lynn, Mass.

Increases range from $4 to $14, depending on the employee's classification. An additional one-half holiday was also gained, bringing the annual total to 9½ paid holidays.

The unit bargaining committee included Jeanette Donavan, Fred Ernst and Wanda Kasprzyk. They were assisted by Local 6 Business Manager Cyril O'Brien and OPEIU Representative Bud Manning.

Auto Transit
Wage gains ranging from $1,248 in the lower grades to almost $1,650 in the top ones were nailed down in a new three-year contract negotiated by Local 13 for office workers at Complete Auto Transit, Inc., St. Louis, a trucking company delivering automobiles.

The wage gains are topped by periodic cost-of-living adjustments plus 3¢ an hour increase for each five years of service up to a 15-year maximum. The days before Christmas and New Year, formerly half-holidays, now become full holidays, bringing the total to eight.

The unit's negotiating committee was headed by Local 12 President Julia A. Riggie and included Roland Keeling, William H. Schneider and Alden H. Litle.

Brown Paper raise is 'best yet'

What Local 247's negotiating committee at Brown Paper Company in Holyoke, Massachusetts, describes as the "our best wage increase ever" was secured in a new two-year contract covering some 130 office workers.

The pact calls for wage boosts ranging from $3 to $7.50 this year and an across-the-board $4.50 raise next year.

Other improvements include one and one-half additional paid holidays, bringing the total to nine; four weeks' vacation after 17 years and five after 25; and an extra $1,000 in life insurance. The Pension Plan becomes non-contributory in the second year.

Agreement was also reached on setting up a labor-management committee to install a new classification system, on giving the union the right to gripe on all matters affecting the contract.

Benefits retroactive to Sept. 1. Local 247 Vice-President Dick Courbeau headed the unit's negotiating committee which included Chief Steward Rita Saraf and Secretary-Treasurer Helen McDonnell. They were assisted by OPEIU Representative Bud Manning.

Soaring profits outpace gains in take-home pay

Although business executives and economists had predicted that a "severe" profits squeeze would begin in the third quarter, a Wall Street Journal survey of 438 companies, early reporting in the period, finds that their profits instead totaled a whopping $4,910,238,000. That's a jump of 13.6% over 1967 earnings for the biggest gains in the year to date. Similar surveys showed that gains have been "profiteering on wage increases" while they were blaming unions for price hikes.

Goldfinger points out that per unit labor costs actually fell between 1960 and 1966, but both wages and profits on the second quarter increased significantly over year-earlier figures.

The latest survey confirms charges by the AFL-CIO's top economist, Nathaniel Goldfinger, that many industries have been "price-trimming on wage increases" while they were blaming unions for price hikes.

Goldfinger notes that out of the labor market's "crucial factors" in the current economic imbalance are "profits inflation and the attempts of the companies to push prices up to increase the profits on each item of goods sold—to charge as much as the traffic will bear."

"The entire country would benefit from better relationships between profits and wages, a more or less equal upward movement of workers' wages and buying power of consumers on the one hand, and business profits on the other," he declared.

He emphasized that unless consumer buying power moves at an equal pace, "consumers will not have enough purchasing power to buy what the economy can produce."

A previous study of profits and wages between 1960 and 1966 showed that profits had gone up 84% in the period, with dividends soaring 71%. Meanwhile, workers' wages rose only 27% and buying power only 10%.

Left photo: This year's Northwest Education Conference, held in Washington, D.C. October 19-20.

Photo below: The Southwest Southeast Education Conference held in New Orleans.
NAM, Chamber of Commerce plan to dismantle NLRB

The nation’s most powerful propaganda and lobbying drive that had weakened trade unions, Nixon and Labor

Throughout our history, the OPEIU has been dedicated to the promotion of the dignity and economic betterment of white-collar workers. We have experienced that economic growth and social progress go hand-in-hand, and that one of the conditions for this growth and progress is the existence of a flexible system of labor-management relations.

With the current change in the political climate, I sincerely hope that the new Nixon administration will do nothing to reverse the hard-won gains of organized labor over the past four decades, or to undermine our present labor-management relations system or procedures. Any movement backwards could easily jeopardize social and economic development programs, setting the clock back.

History proves that mutual progressive relations between labor and management are vital for economic growth. On the other hand, if reaction takes over the result can be political instability which becomes an obstacle to the improvement of our living standards. Consequently, the new Nixon administration’s primary objective should be to develop a still more progressive labor-management relations system that can fully mobilize all our national energies to promote greater economic development. Such improved relations could instill the strains of structural and technical changes and, at the same time, could contribute to the social advancement and economic well-being of the whole population. Mr. Nixon’s victory needs箱 for national unity is encouraging.

At the moment, reactionary employer elements—represented by the National Association of Manufacturers and U.S. Chamber of Commerce—are laying the groundwork to undermine the powers of the National Labor Relations Board when new Congress meets. Needless to say, organized labor must close ranks as never before to defeat this challenge. Should it succeed, we could face an era of unlimited economic strife. (See story to right.)

There are two essential elements in all forms of constructive labor-management relations—the development of an adequate bargaining framework, and the education of both labor and management in social responsibilities.

Institutionally, labor-management relations function best when both parties are free to form and join organizations of their own choosing and to present to the appropriate bargaining table. This orderly procedure some reactionary employers in the NAM and Chamber of Commerce would now like to destroy.

It should be obvious that no sound system of labor-management relations can ever develop where these fundamental rights of workers are denied.

Improvement of working conditions and the living standard of American workers and the rights of the individual worker to organize and negotiate with their employer will be a vital factor in the change of the labor market.

Alma Herring, vice president of Local 27, the guest of honor of the Wheat and Gulf Ports Council Dinner and Dance in Houston, Texas, was presented with a plaque for her outstanding service to the labor movement extending over 25 years. With her are OPEIU Vice President Frank E. Morton (left), and Paul Druke, business agent of the Seafarers International Union and the Council’s executive secretary-treasurer. Her dedicated contributions to the cause of labor were hailed by U.S. Senator Ralph W. Yarbrough and Congresswoman Bob Eckhart.

Kircher (Continued from page 1) just an election in the election the election turned out the opposite way. This is so, he stressed, because of the most difficult problems to be overcome are outside the political and legislative area. He cited:

- The mounting opposition to unions coming from employers who are constantly developing new techniques "to get around the law" in denying workers their rights to unionize.
- The need for increasing liaison between the labor movement and minority groups, the poorest workers who are not organized, and women and youth who are steadily increasing in the labor force.

Union-won increases up in '68, report shows

About 3.4 million workers have won immediate wage increases averaging 7.5 percent under major union settlements so far this year, according to a report by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The increases were the highest since the Labor Department started keeping records 15 years ago. The report on wages followed another report showing that union militancy, as reflected in strike activity, set a 10-year high in 1968.

The 7.5 percent figure represented first-year wage increases. It did not include fringe benefits. Some of the contracts had the largest increase in the first year and lesser increases in the succeeding years of the agreement.

In some of the contracts, the total value of wages and fringe benefits averaged 6.6 percent a year, the report said. The 7.5 and 6.6 percentages were two points higher than last year's corresponding figures.