Bills curbing bargaining threaten, AFL-CIO warns

Passage of compulsory arbitration legislation has now become a threat in the U.S. Senate, AFL-CIO Director of Legislation Andrew J. Biemiller warns in a letter to all International Presidents. He reports that the Administration is pushing very hard for a so-called “Gripping Strikes Prevention Act,” and that U.S. Labor Secretary Hodgson has circulated every Senator and member of the House of Representatives urging enactment of the measure. The Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare will hold executive sessions on this legislation in the near future, and “it is imperative that not only our leaders, but our membership as a whole, let the Congress understand that we are unalterably opposed to any form of compulsory arbitration,” Biemiller’s letter says.

In an effort to stimulate action by rank-and-file OPEIU members, President Howard Coughlin urges all Locals to Back up organized labor’s opposition by writing to their Senators and Representatives. The AFL-CIO has prepared a “Fact Sheet On Compulsory Arbitration” which is available from any Local and in any quantity that Locals can use to good advantage. Write to:

Department of Legislation
AFL-CIO Headquarters
815 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006.

Proof is in the bargaining Board of Ed employees learn

Concrete negotiating experience has proved to 43 secretaries and office employees at the Timmins Board of Education in Ontario, Canada, that it pays to belong to the Office & Professional Employees International Union, International Representative Wilfred L. Peel reports.

More than a year ago the group organized an uncertified “employees association” and began to bargain with the board for an initial contract. However, after 11 months of negotiating, they seemed to be making no progress and decided that the best they could obtain was a two-year contract providing an 8½% wage increase in the first year and 6% in the second.

Dissatisfied, they then decided to join the OPEIU.

After five days of bargaining, the OPEIU’s expertise in negotiating white-collar contracts came up with a 20-month pact calling for a 16½% across-the-board wage boost in the first year, retroactive to July 1, 1971, with a further 6% boost on July 1, 1972.

By the time the initial contract expires on Feb. 28, 1973, wage boosts total 29½% and will range from $650 to $2,054 annually per individual—double the amount originally offered by the board.

Improvements were also made in vacation schedules, statutory holidays, overtime, sick leave and welfare benefits. Contract language guarantees increased rights, privileges and job security.

Assisting Peel in the negotiations were Bonnie Prevost, Sharon Hillgren and Sharon Kearas.

Unions gained 8.1% in 1971

Wage increases in major union contract settlements during 1971, covering nearly 3½ million workers, averaged 8.1% over the life of the contract, down from 8.9% in 1970, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Gains in contracts with cost-of-living escalator clauses averaged 7.1% against 7.3% in 1970. Contracts without such clauses showed somewhat larger increases, 9.2% in 1971, against 10.1% in 1970.

250 welcomed into OPEIU

With new organizing efforts at peak levels in Canada and the U.S., another 250 office employees joined OPEIU ranks as a result of certifications and National Labor Relations Board elections. The new bargaining units include a copper mining company in Canada’s Far North, a warehousing concern, a medical firm, a publishing house, a hospital and a credit union.

The biggest victory was scored by Vancouver’s Local 15, certified as bargaining agent for a 75-member office unit at the Granduc Operating Co., Ltd., a $200-million copper mining complex in British Columbia near the Alaskan border.

The company is jointly owned by American Smelting & Refining Co. and Newmont Mining Corp.

Business Representative Bill Swanson’s report says that certification was granted after more than 80% of the employees signed OPEIU designation cards. They reside in two locations 28 miles apart, near the mining camp. The new unit elected Denise Cothrons as Chief Steward to assist the negotiating team now engaged in bargaining for an initial contract.

Local 15 also was certified as bargaining agent for a 23-member office unit at Johnston Terminals & Storage Ltd., in Vancouver, B.C. It has launched a new campaign for another 200 employees at the firm’s headquarters there and has high hopes of gaining this much larger unit.

In New York, Sec-Treas. John Kelly reports Local 153 won a 25-member office unit at the headquarters of G. Schermir, the well-known Manhattan musical firm. In another NLRB (Continued on page 2)

Pace-setting Local 205 signs Stock Exchange

Local 205 and the New York Stock Exchange have agreed on a two-year contract after delays caused by an adamant attitude on the part of the employer and fussy wage freeze rulings from Washington. The agreement also covers the employees of the Exchange’s Stock Clearing Corporation.

The settlement raises wages by 11% across-the-board, advances by seven months all progression hikes for those below their top scale, and provides more liberal fringe benefits in paid holidays, vacations and health and welfare.

In announcing the pact, which runs to Feb. 1, 1974 and covers 2,200 employees, Local 205 President John R. Kret said the deadlock was broken by Federal Mediator John Wilson and International Representative Gene Dwyer whose efforts brought both sides together.

The agreement won the unanimous approval of the Local 205 negotiating committee which urged acceptance by the members. In a record turnout, 1,115 bargaining unit members ratified the contract by a 2-to-1 margin.

The terms make N.Y. Stock Exchange floor employees “the highest paid in Wall Street,” Kret reported, estimating that Local 205 pays scales now average at least $40 a week more than those offered for comparable jobs in non-union brokerage houses. He gave as an example the $140 to $170 being offered to newly hired brokerage employees with experience, while the same jobs command $215 under the new Exchange contract.

The first year increase of 5½% is retroactive to November 15, the second takes effect on the same date this year. Of course those at the top of their progression scales get the increase too.

Floor pages (now mostly girls), start at $99 for a 30 and 5½ hour week, rising to $118. In the top category, a $223 a week wage is set for a reserve employee who operates the pneumatic tubes and reports the stock transactions that appear on the tape.

The settlement also brings an additional personal holiday, making the annual total 13.

An improved vacation schedule calls for three weeks after four years of service, four weeks after 14, and five after 29 years beginning next year.

The employer also agreed to pay all costs for Medical Major, which were increased to $25,000 from $15,000, and to doable maternity benefits. Tuition reimbursements for employees wishing to further their education were increased from $200 to $300 per semester to $300 to $500.

Kret paid tribute to the negotiating team for its patience and concentration during the prolonged contract talks, which were made unusually complex by the ambiguity of Pay Board rulings.
Pay Board eases ruling on fringe improvements

The Pay Board has set up a special exemption with a 10% ceiling to encourage formation of fringe benefit plans by companies that now give few or none, allowing a total increase of up to 3% pointage percentage outside its general pay increase guideline.

For example, an employer who currently devotes only 1% of his total compensation outlays to fringes could raise his expenditures on benefits to 3% of over-all compensation. If an employer is spending 7% of total compensation on fringes, this special provision could be used only to raise the benefit outlays to 10% of total compensation.

The 10% ceiling was established on the basis of a survey of large manufacturing concerns' expenditures on fringe benefits showing this figure as the national average. The Pay Board stressed that its ruling applies only to the fringe benefits specifically exempted by Congress in the Economic Stabilization Act, which include most pension, profit-sharing and annuity plans, group-insurance policies and disability and health plans.

Newly insurted plans, however, must be reported to the board 30 days before they are to take effect, so they could be voided if a majority believes it was being used as a loophole to the guidelines.

The board also spelled out the extent to which existing fringe benefits increase are exempt from wage controls. This ruling allows annual increases in fringe benefits equal to 0.7% of total compensation without counting the board's standard wage guidelines. In addition, where fringe benefits have not been improved during the past three years, catch-up increases totaling as much as 1.5% also could be given outside the guideline.

The board's general wage guidelines allow new pay increases of 5.5% a year, and in some cases up to 11.5% annually. Thus, under the new ruling many employees could get wage boosts totaling either 6.2%, or 7.7%, as long as at least 0.7% of the increase was in fringes. Some catch-up situations could run as high as 9.2%.

Under the catch-up provision, where employers have boosted fringes by less than 1.5% during the past three years, they may improve them to the rate allowed in the general wage guideline.

Typing without tipysts—voice machine patented

The 700,000 non-union tipysts throughout the nation, who feel they are immune to technological change and therefore secure in their jobs, have something to worry about. Dr. D. Thurston Griggs of the University of Maryland faculty, in Baltimore, has been granted a patent for a speech-controlled typewriter. It is designed to recognize vocal sounds instantaneously and to draw on a stored vocabulary of 12,000 words.

The machine will not be capable of typewriting all kinds of talk, but can be adapted for industrial or other special technology. Although Dr. Griggs says he has a feeler from one manufacturer, his Talkwriter has not yet been built and remains a concept. However, he has two more patents pending and looks for a year or more of further development work.

CANDIDATE Wayne Burt, member of Local 277 in Fort Worth, Texas and mayor of White Settlement for seven years, is running for county clerk in Tarrant County in the Democratic primary. He is a photographic technician at General Dynamics and proud of his OPEIU membership.

Local 3 pact brings 4-day week to 800

A three-year master agreement calling for a four-day, 32-hour workweek in the second year with no reduction in pay, has been reached by San Francisco's Local 3 for some 800 employees in 192 trade union offices in three California counties—San Francisco, Marin and Sonoma.

In the first year, the pact calls for a 7% across-the-board wage boost, retroactive to Nov. 1, 1971, with employer contributions to health-welfare and pension plans increased by 11/4%. Local 3 Sec.-Treas. Phyllis Mitchell reports.

Twin Cities Local wins 111/2% for professionals

Across-the-board wage raises totaling 111/2% and 2 1/2 additional paid holidays are included in a two-year contract negotiated by Twin Cities Local 12 for its all-professional bargaining unit at the Bureau of Engraving, Inc. (School Division), in Minneapolis.

The unit includes art and writing instructors and working supervisors at the correspondence school, according to Business Manager H. R. Markesan, who headed the OPEIU negotiating team.

The first-year pay increase of 51/4% is retroactive to Oct. 21, with another 6% raise scheduled for the same 1972 date. Advancement to the maximum rate in higher classifications was reduced to three from five years.


Christian Eve, formerly a half-holiday, now becomes a full holiday. This year, July 3 also becomes a paid holiday, and next year the day after Thanksgiving.

The gains bring the holiday total to 10.

Other improvements include a rewrite of job requirement standards, clarification of working rules for instructors, and a maternity leave clause meeting Human Rights Commission requirements.

Members of the bargaining team assisting Markesan were Frances Miller, Dan Brennan, Ray Dowsett and Herb Okins, all Stewards.

250 brought into union

(Continued from page 1)

Local 131 scored a second victory last November in winning a 50-member office unit at King's Highway Hospital, Inc., in Brookline, N.Y., by a substantial margin. Business Representatives John McKeon and John Gonzalez headed the hospital's bargaining team.

Philadelphia's Local 14 won a 20-member unit by almost a three-to-one margin in an NLRB election among the business office employees at Triangle Publishing Co., according to Business Representative John McCooker. The firm turns out such nationally-known publications as TV Guide and Seventeen.

In a Detroit NLRB election Local 10 won a unit at Cooperative Credit Union by a two-to-one margin, President Thelma O'Dell reports.
As mediators see it

Unions will seek short contracts, more fringe

The shape of collective bargaining, but not its vitality, will be affected by governmental wage controls in the opinion of some of the nation's most experienced federal mediators.

Shop talk at the Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service staff seminar in Washington, D.C., included trend-spotting and predictions by men who have helped settle hundreds of contract disputes. These are some of the educated guesses percolating through the conference:

Controls will not inhibit unions from seeking higher wages, and getting them whenever possible. But to the extent that pay raises are limited, the expectation is that unions will seek shorter-term contracts or at least wage reopeners in longer contracts. In the industrial sector, this would reverse a trend to longer agreements and would be resisted by management.

Some pension and health-welfare benefits are not subject to as stringent controls as direct wages, they will get more emphasis at the bargaining table. Furthermore, if Congress should pass a national pension law of some sort, the problem of meshing pension plans into federal standards would become a major negotiating issue.

In another fringe area, dental care and prescription drug coverage plans are likely to become more common.

Despite a Supreme Court ruling that companies cannot be required to bargain on pension improvements for retired employees, provisions that may allow them to continue with their unions on this issue. And unions will continue to try to persuade management to agree to such negotiations.

Employees who don't already have at least 10 paid holidays are likely to seek and get them. There will be more contracts providing a higher vacation bonus for employees who agree to take their vacations at less popular times of the year—a feature that would ease management problems of work scheduling.

A continued trend is anticipated to reduce geographical differentials, for compression of salaries is required for vacancy eligibility and for preservation of skilled craft differentials through percentage raises rather than flat percentage-per-hour increases.

And unless the Pay Board chooses to act on the issue, companies may find it difficult to "buy out" work force skills by productivity in exchange for higher pay, according to the mediators.

State Dept. moves for diplomatic relations with its secretaries

The U.S. State Department has opened an intramural diplomatic campaign to raise the status of its secretaries and persuade their supervisors (mostly male) not to regard them as housekeepers, office wives or "go-fers."

Says the current issue of the State Department's monthly newsletter: "Secretaries have long suffered from what one might call the 'reliable old shoe' syndrome—too often considered the indispensable workhorse of the office while somehow never gaining the status career specialists deserve."

A list of do's and don'ts also said secretaries should not be required to go-go for coffee, cigarettes, newspapers, breakfast, lunch, etc. If a secretary volunteer, the supervisors were told, "treat it as a favor to be returned sometime."

Most of the flap over secretaries has emanated from Mrs. Gladys P. Rogers, head of the Department's Office of Women's Affairs, who has the backing of Secretary of State William P. Rogers. They are not related.

Her guidelines to help secretaries include the following:

"Encourage their independent thought, decision-making, and activity. Do not condense or otherwise assume them into having intellectual limitations. Be aware of their role as colleagues who desire to improve their status via promotion and recognition of performance, the same as officers."

"If you are a supervisor who duffs everything, try dictating instead. Secretaries learn this skill for your benefit and, like a go-fer, a secretary can't be maintained at a professional level unless practiced."

"Secretaries are individuals with private lives outside the office. Distribute work—particularly that of routine nature—equally. The state of the office which precludes overtime every evening."

"Be certain the work for which you have called in the duty of the secretary is truly of an emergency nature— or could it wait until the next day?"

"Use the area in order. Secretaries should not have to assume the role of unoccupied office workers."

"Secretaries are no-nonsense minded. When dictating, organize what you want to say in advance. Don't waste her time and yours by skipping from one disjointed thought to another."

"Enunciate! A secretary can't interpret mumbles resulting from talking with a cigar, cigarette, pipe, or pencil in your mouth—or even more disconcerting, with your back to her while writing with the adding machine."

A handbook describing how union locals can set up a retirement planning program is being distributed by the AFL-CIO. The Social Security Administration has distributed copies to its 850 local offices which offer to assist unions in setting up such programs. Information may be obtained by writing to Bert Seidman, Director Department of Social Security, AFL-CIO, Headquarters, 815—Sixteenth St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006

Tell Congress where you stand on compulsory arbitration bills

At this moment Congress is considering several bills which would deny workers the right to strike and force them to work under conditions dictated by the government (story on page 1).

The immediate target of the Administration and some short-sighted unions in Congress are workers in the transportation industry—railroads, tugs, airlines, maritime and trucking. Unions don't like strikes. No one does. But free workers—if they are to maintain their independence—must have the right to strike.

Write your Congressmen and Senators TODAY. Tell them that under the terms of any of the pending compulsory arbitration bills, the free worker will be denied. For all an employer has to do is say "no" and the government will settle the terms of your contract and prohibit you from striking.

Tell your representatives that if America is to remain a free country, then the worker must be free.

As a union member, protect your freedom. Write immediately. The challenge now is not in the form of a high school topic, as it was in 1965-66. This time the threat is real.

More than ever— the unorganized need unions

Some non-union office workers probably believe they have little to gain by unionizing during the wage-freeze. But others in growing numbers are joining the white-collar union movement, reasoning correctly that collective bargaining is their only hope of solving the perplexing problem of frozen wages and escalating prices.

A new Pay Board ruling should now convince the doubters. This allows wage boosts plus fringe benefits and "catch-up" situations to run as high as 10% of an employer's total compensation costs. In fact, the ruling must have the effect of reducing fringe benefit plans where few, or none, now exist. (See story on Page 5.)

Certainly, a non-union office employee today can't cope as an individual with the complex rules and regulations, their interpretations and re-interpretations, governing labor-management relations at the present time.

Despite soaring living costs over the past three years, we regularly hear of cases in unorganized offices where employees bitterly complain that they haven't had even a single raise.

But the weakness of the position of non-union employees, and if their unhappy reliance on employer "paternalism," should by now be evident to all. If no raises were given to these unorganized employees before the wage-freeze, isn't it most unlikely that they can expect any now?

Employers can be expected to stall their unorganized employees by telling them that "times are bad," and if all indications are that corporate profits are head for record levels.

In view of the prevailing economic climate, non-union office employees have everything to gain and nothing to lose by joining the OPEIU and negotiating a living wage through collective bargaining. Unorganized, they'll get far less than the 10% in annual wage gains and fringe benefits now legally available to them. Above all, they need the help of experienced OPEIU specialists in collective bargaining to negotiate for them in these frustrating times.
from the desk of the PRESIDENT

Private pension reform

Private pension plans have been under scrutiny by the Senate Committee on Labor and Welfare for the past several years. Recently that Committee issued a statement indicating that it has become evident that private pension plans are subject to financial abuses and are failing in many cases to fulfill the retirement expectations of employees.

Senator Harrison A. Williams, Jr., chairman of the Senate Labor Committee, will introduce a reform bill that will require vesting, funding, termination insurance, fiduciary responsibility and improved disclosure for private pension plans, in addition to the establishment of centralized federal regulations and portability.

Senators Jacob K. Javits of New York and co-sponsor the bill.

In the House, the General Labor Subcommittee's Pension Study Task Force is working on proposed legislation that would require every employer to provide a minimum guaranteed pension. There is no question that legislation is needed to control private pension plans. Union-management pension plans have long since been covered by Taft-Hartley legislation. The subject matter of pension plan reform requires a great deal of discussion and study before reform proposals are enacted.

There is no question of the fact that reform is long overdue. There are numerous private pension plans in effect which disallow pensions for numerous years of service when a worker is severed before he reaches his 65th birthday. Thousands of pension plans provide no vesting whatsoever.

Many plans are tied in to the general funds of the employer and pension payments depend entirely on the health of the company involved. The law should protect the pension rights of employees and insure the fact that all pensions are funded. The only way we are in agreement with Senator Williams' reform proposals which will require vesting, funding, termination insurance, disclosure and portability, we know that these proposals require major changes in current pension plans. The question immediately arises as to the competitive position of the union employer who is forced to make these additional payments as opposed to his non-union competitor who has no pension plan with his employees. Obviously, the most competitive advantage for the non-union employer could well result in the complete annihilation of the union company.

Therefore, we are well disposed not only to the proposals of the Senate Labor Committee, but completely favor those on the House side which would insist that all employers provide a minimum private pension plan embodying all of the guarantees proposed in the reform bill sponsored by the Senate Labor Committee. Only in this way will proposed legislation affect all employees equally. Only in this way will all workers be protected against loss of pension because of inadequate safeguards, the dissolution of companies, or poorly worded plans which provide no vesting or funding.

Reform of existing private pension plans is a must. However, it is also imperative that employers who do provide adequate pension plans be not placed in the position of being forced to increase pension payments with the resultant competitive advantage to employers who provide no pension coverage whatsoever. It is imperative, therefore, that the labor movement get behind legislation which will not only result in reform but provide much needed additional pension coverage to all workers.

$1,729 in wage raises won for Dallas unit

An 11% across-the-board wage hike, an additional holiday, and improved seniority and vacation plans were gained in an agreement recently reached with the United Auto Workers Local 277 for its new unit at Braswell Motor Freight Lines, Inc., in Dallas.

Local 277 President-Business Manager J. B. Moss says the first scheduled vacation day of 1973 will be a two-day period, Aug. 16 and 17, during the convention week. The new vacation schedule provides one week after one year; two weeks for two-to-ten years; three for 11-to-15 years, and four for more than 15 years.

Chairmen of the OPEIU Bargaining Committee for the OPEIU members in the United Auto Workers were Moss and former International Vice President Frank E. Morton.

Office women 'are getting fed up'

The climate for unionizing office women existing in Canada is changing rapidly now because "the women are getting fed up, they're not sitting still for anything anymore," the Toronto Star declares in a full-page illustrated feature story entitled "Why the Women are Taking the Air for Higher Wages."

The OPEIU sparked a new movement among the office women two years ago when Regional Director Robert L. Correll announced in Montreal that the union would pay donations of $100 a week minimum to start the organizing drive.

In a recent interview, Margaret Daly's story in the Toronto Star points out that there are now 2.9 million working women in Canada, a million more than 10 years ago. They comprise one-third of the total labor force, compared with one-quarter a decade ago.

She observes that more than half of Canada's working women are in jobs called "clerical" or "service," the two fields where they make up large majorities of total employees. But the jobs they fill in offices, banks, insurance and travel companies are invariably low in status and prestige (although not necessarily in responsibility and difficulty); dead-ends as far as advancement is concerned, and above all "poor paid," she noted.

Up to now, there has been no real demand for higher pay, her interviews with Canadian office women revealed. "But that's changing," she adds. "Single girls leave home, support themselves—and one can't do that in the city on $80 a week. Then they come back to work after they get married, even while their children are still small, because today they find two incomes are needed to maintain any kind of standard of living."

The idea of pin money doesn't apply any more; there's pressure on young married women to deliver a real pay check since, as they quickly learn, they can't get decent infant care for less than $55 a week."

The Star story indicated that unions in the New York area will now be able to arbitrate a grievance within 45 weeks at a faster time than previously. The costs, under an optional arbitration plan, will be "swept" by the union employer who will pay only a token amount. Only in this way will the total cost of a full day of hearing be reduced from $4,000 for the union company to $1,800 for the AAA.

Unions will offer $434 monthly minimum in the lowest office grade to a maximum of $650 in the top classification.

There are 300 full-time arbitrators who require substantial additional time in the prehearing phase. The payroll for the fall and winter quarters reached $6,000,000 for the New York area.

A 10 paid holiday and a 15% across-the-board wage hike were won for OPEIU members in another two-year contract negotiated by Local 15 with Boston Paint Ltd.

The first 8% wage hike became effective Jan. 1, with a further 4% boost set for the same 1973 date. It sets minimum wages of $11.50 per month in the lowest income grade, rising to $16.47 in the top classification.

The Boston agreement was reached with the aid of Media- tion Officer Clive McKee.

U.S. Price Index

April, 1972

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