House Speaker Gets OPEIU Thanks

LABOR LAW REFORM—On behalf of OPEIU members, President Howard Coughlin (right) thanks Speaker of the House “Tip” O’Neill (left) who helped the bill to victory in the House of Representatives, when they exchanged greetings during recess at the recent AFL-CIO Convention in San Francisco. OPEIU Secretary-Treasurer William A. Lowe (center) looks on.

Gas Unit Hits $1,200 Monthly Scale

A unit of 550 clerical and technical employees represented by Local 2 won a general pay increase of 6\%\% plus a cost-of-living adjustment in addition to more liberal vacations and greatly improved health-welfare coverage, in a new one-year agreement renegotiated with the Washington, D.C., Gas Light Company.

President-Business Manager Jim Sheridan reports that the pay boost, effective June 1, raises top monthly pay to $1,004 for clerks and messengers and to $1,057 for accountants and fuel application engineers. The new average monthly pay for the entire bargaining unit is $1,202.

He says a COLA of at least 0.5 percent is guaranteed on January 1, 1979.

Insurance coverage for surgical procedures is increased from 80 percent of the usual and customary charges to 90 percent, and a new “catastrophic insurance factor” is added to the major medical plan.

The new factor provides payment for 90 percent of the cost of medical treatments incurred over a one-year period, and 100 percent of the cost in excess of $5,000. Sheridan explains that the new benefit is designed to cover such major incidents as “massive heart attacks.”

The vacation schedule is improved to provide three weeks after six years (was seven), four after 14 years (was 15), and five after 30 years (was 35). The new agreement runs to May 31, 1979.

OPEIU Wins $1,250 Each for Farm Office Employees

Office employees at Santa Rita, outside the town of Guarnica, Puerto Rico, who joined OPEIU Local 406 in October, 1975, are glad they did so because each is $1,250 richer as a result, according to International Representative Jimmy Diaz.

He says they were the first group he organized for Local 406 at the farm which also operates a sugar mill there. Before unionizing, office employees were unhappy because they had been discriminated against in being paid lower wages.

A Puerto Rico law provides that if the price of sugar rises, farm workers are entitled to increased pay. In 1974, sugar prices rose substantially and the farm workers, as well as the sugar mill clericals, got their increase in pay the office clericals did not.

The employer argued that they were not farm workers, but office clericals employed on a farm and, therefore, were not entitled to the incentive pay although they thought otherwise.

Even though the grievance existed before they unionized, Diaz nevertheless promised that the OPEIU would take up their case. He asked the island’s Proc.usrator of Labor for his interpretation of the law. This official agreed with the Union, with the result that the Office and the Union filed a joint stipulation for a court decree. Management then agreed to pay the $27,500 withheld from the office employees group.

Fall Educational Meetings Scheduled for 3 Regions

Director of Organization Art Lewandowski has announced the schedule for the Fall series of OPEIU Educational Conferences for the Western, North Central, and Northeast regions.

The Western Conference, hosted by Local 3, will be held at Quality Inn, 2775 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco, Calif., 94109, on September 13 and 16.

The North Central Conference will be held October 6 and 7 at Holiday Inn, No. 1, 4402 East Washington Ave., in Madison, Wis., 53704.

The last in the series for the Northeast region will be held November 3 and 4, at the Sheraton-Boston Hotel, Prudential Center, Boston, Mass. Local 453 will act as host.
Why Women Push Law Reform

A coalition of working women's organizations, calling labor law reform a working women's issue, strongly urged the Senate to pass President Carter's Administration's proposed legislation to guarantee justice on the job.

"As long as women are entering the labor market at the lowest rungs of the economic ladder," they said, "they must have a mechanism to better their economic condition. Clearly, women have a better chance at improving their lot if they have the opportunity to join a union. That's why we support S. 2647," the Labor Law Reform bill.

With long delays at each step of the organizing process, illegal dismissals for union activity, and a general lack of effective enforcement of the NLRA, "it is not surprising that women, who have potentially the most to gain from union organization and collective bargaining, are the most fearful of taking the risk of speaking out for what they believe in, or even signing up with a union," the women's statement said.

Pointing to inadequacies in the NLRA as it now stands, the women's rights advocates declared that "women workers must not be denied their best chance for upward mobility and economic progress—a job covered by a union contract."

Signing the statement were: Esther Peterson, President Carter's special assistant for consumer affairs; Alexis Herman, director of the Labor Dept.'s Women's Bureau; Eleanor Smidt, president of the National Organization of Women; Carin Clair, the Labor Dept.'s solicitor; Mildred Jeffrey, head of the National Women's Political Caucus; and Harry Shapiro, president of the Women's Equity Action League, and Joyce Miller, president of the Coalition of Labor Union Women, in which many OPEIU members are actively engaged.

The growing interest of women in the labor union movement is reflected in the increasing numbers now serving as delegates to the 1978 OPEIU Educational Conferences, and this is important for their future progress toward equity and freedom in the world of work.

Have Best of Both Worlds

As a result of a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision, corporations are now free to spend unlimited funds from their treasuries to purchase all the public opinion money can buy. For example, under the ruling they can finance a campaign for a 17-year-old's proposal, or "Women's House." Or they can choose, whether or not their interests are directly concerned.

Thus, corporations now have the best of both worlds. They can pump massive amounts of corporate treasury funds into advertising for a candidate they favor, while their corporate political action committees can contribute directly to the candidate himself. (There are now about 570 such corporate PACs).

This multiplies by a factor beyond calculation, by any slide rule or computer, the potential impact of corporate executives' private viewpoints on American public life, and the amount of money they are able to put into opinion-shaping through buying time on TV or radio, advertising space in magazines and newspapers, and direct mail to voters.

The 5-4 court decision reflects how some presidential actions reverberate through the years long after a President has left office.

The decision was put across by a cadre of Nixon court appointees who struck down a Massachusetts state law prohibiting such corporate use of treasury funds. The decision prompted Prest Assocs. to point out:

"What every citizen should realize is that every time he buys cereal or soup or gasoline or gets a loan, he may well be financing a propaganda campaign against himself.

"Before long, the agtropic departments of the corporations may be persuading us that less government is the most that, sales taxes are the way to get involved, that we may make ends meet if we try harder, that a walk a day can keep government health insurance away. It will be 1984 six years early."

It's one more reason why every OPEIU member should feel a personal obligation to make a contribution to VOTE (Voice of the Electorate), this year.

School Unit Scores in Minnesota

Gains $1,500 to $2,400 Pay Boosts; Better Fringe Benefits

Pay raises ranging from approximately $1,500 for those in the lowest grade to roughly $2,400 in the top classification over a two-year period, were gained in a new contract renegotiated by Twin Cities Local 12 for its 89-member school clerical unit at the St. Washington County Schools District # 833 in Cottage Grove, Minn.

Business Manager H. R. Markusen reports that for the first time, longevity pay of 10¢ an hour will be added for all employees with 10 or more years of service. An additional paid holiday was won, bringing the annual total to 11. Another gain was early retirement and severance pay up to $2,500.

The school board agreed to increase by $29.49 per individual its premium contribution for health-wealth coverage in the first year, and another $10 in the second. The plan covers group life and disability insurance, dental and hospital-surgical coverage.

It was also agreed to set up a joint union-school board committee to evaluate jobs for possible upgrading in the future. The clause for lay-off protection, based on seniority, was completely rewritten.

The negotiating team assisting Markusen included Chief Steward Jeanette Wilwert with Stewards Bobbie Leopold, Phyllis Barrylla, Kathleen Martin, Martha Jette and Judy Kaase. The agreement is retroactive to July 1, 1977, and runs to June 30, 1979.

29% Packet Won in U.S. Pipe Pact

Boosts Pay 20.56%, Also Pensions and Health Coverage

A packet of pay gains and fringe benefits totaling more than $1,000 was won in a new three-year agreement renegotiated by Local 179 for its office unit at U.S. Pipe & Foundry in Chattanooga, Tenn., Business Representative Charlie Harris reports.

He says it calls for a 7.06% pay increase in the first year; 7.23% in the second, and 6.27% in the third year. In the final contract year, it sets a minimum starting rate of $753 per month in the lowest grade, rising to a $964 maximum. In the top classification, it sets a rate of $1,040 rising to a $1,138 maximum.

A major gain, according to Harris, was the elimination of a mid-to-max. merit plan that had troubled the unit for more than 30 years. After July 1, 1980, several unit members will go to the maximum which, in some instances, will mean a $1,200 pay increase.

Before the contract expires, he notes, the majority of the bargaining unit will get raises under the new system and these will escalate until the members reach their maximum rates.

In 1979, the day after Christmas becomes a paid holiday bringing the annual total to 11.

The company also agreed to increase its monthly payments to the hospital-surgical plan to $95.72 in the first year; $105.29 in the second, and $115.82 in the third.

Life insurance coverage was increased to $7,000 per individual, and the weekly ADD benefit was increased in the new agreement which is retroactive to May 1 and expires on April 30, 1980.

The pension plan was amended to comply with the new federal retirement law. The normal retirement plan calls for one month's pay for each year of service, to 25 years.

The unit negotiating team comprised Dewitt Slatton, Gentry Perry, Russell Scribner, Tom Hill and Robert Short.
EDP Group Wins $3,750 Each

New Computer Center Pact Gains Many Other Benefits

Wage gains totaling some $3,750 per individual over three years, plus greatly improved fringe benefits, were gained by Detroit Local 10 for its 36-member data processing unit at the Giant-Giantway Computer Center in Mt. Pleasant, Mich.

Business Manager Arnold L. Shamis reports that the new agreement calls for a 30c an hour across-the-board wage boost in each year, setting general office scales of $4.70 an hour and keypunch rates of $5.02 in the final year.

The Friday after Thanksgiving was added to the holiday schedule, and the vacation plan was improved to provide three weeks after six years (was 8) with employees allowed to split their vacation weeks.

New clauses negotiated provide for health-welfare coverage and a pension plan at no cost to the employees.

Other improvements provide that new employees join the OPEIU 31 days after hiring (was 60), and for the first time the contract calls for a promotion, demotion and transfer clause.

The new agreement also calls for overtime pay over eight hours. Assisting Shamis in the negotiations was a unit team comprising Steward Albertina Gershon, Asst. Steward Linda Nevills, Maxine Carmeross and Connie Kross. The agreement runs to Feb. 14, 1981.

22½% Pay Hike Won at Texas Ammco. Plant

Wage boosts totaling 22½% over three years, a more liberal vacation schedule and greatly improved medical and pension benefits, were gained by Local 303 for its 112-member unit at Day & Zimmerman, government contractors at the Loan Star Ammunition Plant in Texarkana, Texas.

International Representative Billy D. Kirby reports that the new agreement calls for an 8% across-the-board wage boost in the first year, 7½% in the second, and 7% in the final year. These rates will be applied to each employee's current hourly rate instead of the bottom rate in each grade as in previous contracts.

Benefits were improved generously in the health-welfare area. Major medical was changed to $100 deductible per year rather than per illness or injury, deductible not to exceed $200 per family. Lab and x-ray insurance was raised to $100 per year from the previous $50.

Hospital benefits for maternity care increased to $500 (was $350), and child delivery to $225 (was $125).

A new AD&D plan will provide 50% of an employee's straight-time pay for 40 hours, against the previous $75 per week. In future, the minimum cannot be less than $75 and the maximum not more than $150 per week.

After 20 years' service, employees will in future be entitled to four weeks of vacation.

Pension plan benefits were increased to $5 per month times years of service from the previous $6.

R.C.A. Services in Detroit Yield $49 a Week Pay Hike

Wage gains totaling $49 a week, and improved fringe benefits, were gained by Local 10 in a three-year contract negotiated for its office unit at R.C.A. Services Corporation in Detroit.

Business Representative Arnold L. Shamis reports that it calls for an $18 a week general increase on January 30, 1979; a further $3 on July 31, plus $8 and $6 weekly increases on the same dates in each of the following two years.

In the final contract year, it sets a minimum weekly starting rate of $197.55 for file clerks and typists who enter at a pension plan maximum of $245 where they earn merit increases. In the top classification, the rates will run from $202.55 to a $251 maximum with merit increases.

Regional Library Signs Initial OPEIU Contract

A 7% general salary boost, modified hours of work and two additional paid holidays were among gains made in an initial one-year contract negotiated by Portland Local 11 for its new 45-member bargaining unit at the Fort Vancouver Regional Library in Vancouver, Wash.

Business Representative Wayne Shelton, who headed the negotiating team, reports that it sets a minimum starting salary in the lowest grade of $493 per month, rising to a $574 maximum. In the top grade the starting rate is $798, rising to $925.

Two floating holidays were obtained, bringing the annual total to 12. Vacations range from two weeks after one year to five after 16 years. Sick leave of one day per month is provided and may accumulate without limit. It was also agreed to provide a five-day bereavement leave for death in the immediate family.

The employer will pay full premiums for employee and dependents health-welfare coverage, which includes hospital-surgical costs, group life insurance and a dental plan. They are given a choice between two plans.

The present Public Employee Retirement Pension Plan is continued.

The unit negotiating team assisting Shelton included Stewards Diana Meyer, Rose Brown and Eleanor Grosse.

Give to VOTE!

Big Business is now out to destroy all Unions. Don't forget to give to our VOTE appeal. This election year will be crucial for the Labor Movement.
from the desk of the PRESIDENT

Foes of Labor Law Reform Make Strange Bedfellows

As this column is written, the Labor Reform Act of 1978 is being debated by the Senate. I should say that a number of conservative Senators, headed by Orrin Hatch, John Tower and Jesse Helms, are pushing the process on a filibuster in order to defeat a rather simple proposal to make the Wagner Act more balanced and to establish more meaningful penalties for employers who repeatedly violate the Act.

Senator Patrick Moynihan, during the debate, said, "It is with great respect that I address myself to this issue. In a spirit of irony, I call attention to certain continuities in opposition to this legislation from the extreme left, from the totalitarianist left. One can learn something of the true import of liberal legislation when one sees how it is feared and dreaded by the totalitarianists, either of the left or of the right."

"It was a distinct fact of the Wagner Act of 1935 that no group opposed it with such vehemence, with such disregard for truth, with such utter intention to destroy, and with a desperate fear of what might be constructed, as did the Communist Party of the United States."

"A Communist Party statement in 1935 said: '... The Wagner Act stands to be established by this bill will be a weapon to destroy the power which the workers have gained through their economic organization by outlawing strikes, establishing compulsory arbitration and increasing company unionism.'"

It is in this same right in the Senate finds itself in the same boat with the Communist Party in opposing the Labor Law Reform Act of 1978.

The Workers' Advocate, which is the newspaper of the Central Organization of the U.S. Marxists-Leninists, published in Chicago, headlined a recent article as follows: "Combat the Growing Fascism of the Carter Administration! Down with 'Labor Reform Act of 1978!'" In this article published by this Communist organ, George Moynihan, leader of the AFL-CIO, and Douglas Frasch, President of the UAW, are referred to as labor traitors.

The Washington Post, the Baltimore Sun, the New York Times, the Cleveland Plain Dealer, and the Minneapolis Star voiced editorial support for S.2467 or the Labor Law Reform Act of 1978.

In its endorsement, the Cleveland Plain Dealer said: "Employer groups bitterly opposed to the changes are fond of referring to those who come down on the side of reform as labor dupes." The Senate's right-wingers are falling over each other trying to top each other in their attempts to destroy the labor law reform bill. The National Labor Relations Board, is overworked. The new legislation would enlarge the NLRB, streamline its operations and set time-limits on representation elections."

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The agreement runs to December 31, 1979.

Southern Union Gas Unit Agrees on 15% Pay Pact

Across-the-board pay boosts totaling 15% over two years, on top of upgrading of job classifications, was included in a new agreement renegotiated by Local 27 for its office unit at Southern Union Gas Company, in Galveston, Tex., which distributes natural gas in Galveston and the surrounding area.

Business Representative Lu-Cille Davenport reports that it calls for a general increase of 8% in the first year, and 7% in the second. Before the pay boosts, meter readers, cashiers and the PWR operator won $4 per week raise and general clerks were upgraded with a $9.20 per week raise.

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An initial two-year contract boosting pay and other fringe benefits has been negotiated by Portland Local 11 for a new 60-member bargaining unit in the Road Department of Skamania County in the State of Washington.

Sec.-Treas Gary D. Kirkland reports that it sets a monthly starting salary of $717 in the lowest job, $8.54 per hour, rising to $862 maximum. In the top grade, the starting mini-
mum is $1,252 rising to a $1,513 maximum. The second year will bring an approximate 8% across-the-board increase.

The agreement provides a 3% differential for those working the second shift, and 5% for the third shift.

It calls for 11 paid holidays annually, 12 days vacation from one to five years, with one day added for each additional year of service. Thus, employees will enjoy four weeks after 13 years, six weeks after 23 years, and nine after 38 years.

The county agreed to pay $117.70 per month for each employee to cover premium costs for medical, optical and dental insurance, including dependents, as well as life insurance for the employees.

Sick leave of one day per year was agreed upon, with no maximum accumulative limit. At retirement or death, up to 100 days of accrued sick leave will be paid to the designated beneficiary at the salary level prevailing at that time.

Business Representative Wayne Shelton led the unit bargaining team which included Stewards John Carlton, Ted Van Kirk and Randy Ranken. The agreement runs to December 31, 1979.

OPEIU Scores for County Road Unit

Initial Contract Wins Large Gains for 60 on West Coast

An initial two-year contract boosting pay and other fringe benefits has been negotiated by Portland Local 11 for a new 60-member bargaining unit in the Road Department of Skamania County in the State of Washington.

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U.S. Price Index

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

William A. Lowe, Sec.-Treas. 815 16th Street N.W., Suite 686 Washington, D.C. 20006