OPEIU Joins National Coalition of Unions
Seeks Safety and Health Study on Exposure to VDTs

OPEIU has joined a national coalition of AFL-CIO unions requesting the National Institute on Safety and Health to study health effects of exposure to cathode ray tubes (CRTs), also known as video display terminals.

VDTs—which look like television screens—are used in banks, newrooms, computer operations, and offices. Tied to computers, VDTs are built around cathode ray tubes. They emit extremely bright lights and, some fear, radiation. Although NIOSH reports, that in all cases evaluated, no excessive levels of radiation were found.

Many locals, including OPEIU's Bay Area Local 3 and New York's 153, report worker complaints of headaches, tension, malaise, neck and shoulder pain, eye strain, distortion of visual focus, and color blindness.

A union-run study of Blue Shield of California's VDT operators revealed similar complaints. George Davis, OPEIU western regional director, said: "We have cases of workers who come in the morning alert and astute and by the mid-afternoon are complaining of back pains and eye pains or stomach aches. You can compare that to workers who are doing the same job and they're having more loss of time on the job and more complaints."

Although NIOSH has not yet responded to the coalition request for a radiation study, the Institute will conduct (at the request of the University of Wisconsin) an 18-month exploratory study to determine if VDT work regimens are stress-producing.

The study's statement of purpose reads, in part: "Machine pacing with little operator control, high information processing demands, and few opportunities for social interaction loom as significant potential stress factors for VDT operators based on previous research in other types of job situations."

If the stress factor is significant, NIOSH promises to recommend additional research into the VDT stress/syrain problem.

OPEIU Takes Action
OPEIU, however, has already taken steps to alleviate VDT-related health problems. The Union is working with several companies, including Blue Shield of California to cut down work complaints. Among the solutions are additional coffee breaks and an extra half-hour break away from the screens to lessen pressure.

The new electronic machinery has also prompted OPEIU to push harder for flextime scheduling—under which employees choose their own work time to fill a 35-hour work week—or a four-day week.

The Union, however, remains concerned about VDT health problems. According to Gwen Wells, Director of Research. "Even if no excessive levels of radiation exist," Ms. Wells said, "we are questioning the potential health hazard of continued exposure to low level radiation."

Ms. Wells said that she plans to attend a conference for VDT operators sponsored by the New York Committee on Occupational Safety and Health to gain additional information and to strengthen ties with other unions investigating VDTs.

Local Settles
"Colorful" Strike

Employees of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art have returned to work after a brief strike and report significant contract gains in pay, hours, and sick leave.

The agreement was made by George Davis, Secretary-Treasurer of Local 3.

The strike was described as both colorful and fun by participants and observers. Strikers gave new meanings to modern art by creating aesthetically pleasing picket signs reading "On Strike for Dollars and Dignity" and "Our Demands Are Not Abstract."

And, pop art reportedly reached new heights when one striker tied a doughnut to a picket sign and wrote in large letters: "We Ask for More Dough, They Offer Us Doughnuts." The occasion was an offering of doughnuts by the museum's deputy director.

The picket line even recruited two German shepherds, who carried their own signs, to the union cause.

Although fun, the strike was both serious and successful, Davis said. The 34 employees who walked out on July 2 won across the board pay boosts of $110 monthly with another hike—7 percent—July 1, 1980.

Employees also achieved an immediate lump sum payment of $180, demanded by the strikers as a small recognition of their role in making the past year one of the best at the growing, privately-run operation.

In addition to pay improvements, employees won changes in work scheduling. Under a flextime system employees can choose to perform 10 days work in 9 days, allowing three-day weekends.

Also included in the contract gains were improvements in sick-day accumulation. Under the previous agreement, employees could accumulate a maximum of 24 days. The new contract contains no limit. In addition, six days of the annual sick leave can be used as personal leave to tend sick relatives. And, in the future, employees leaving the job will receive payment for 50 percent of accumulated sick leave.

Secretary-Treasurer George Davis assisted Representative Reeva Olson in the settlement negotiations. Stewards Toby Kahn and Genio Candelou took an active part in negotiations, while Debra Neese and Lee Loomis coordinated the picketing.

Local 14 Scores
Two Election Victories

Pennsylvania

Frustrated over an administration which turned a deaf ear to employee complaints, Lafayette College's 120 office, clerical and technical employees made "A Voice, Not an Echo" the battle cry in their recently successful organizing campaign.

According to OPEIU Vice President Gerald D. Iuszwitcz, key issues in the campaign were lack of a voice in the workplace, wages, and the fact that employees must pay for their own medical coverage. But, the employees' voice was loud and clear in the decisive vote for OPEIU representation.

Iuszwitcz praised the work of a strong, 15-member organizing committee. He said that the effortless workers signed their names to all leaflets which they then distributed, in addition to signing up members.

Mark Roderer, OPEIU representative, was actively involved throughout the campaign: while Sheila Baker, vice president, and Bill Martello, organizer, from Local 153 provided added support in the final weeks.

Vice President
Retires

Oscar Bloodworth, OPEIU's longest-serving vice president, retired on September 1.

Bloodworth was among the first 10 OPEIU Vice Presidents elected at the initial 1945 convention.

He served in that capacity for 34 years, longer than any other person.

Since 1968 Bloodworth has also served as Southern Regional Director of OPEIU.

He became active in Federal Labor Union, Local 22222 ("Five Dueses")—now OPEIU Local 26—shortly after being hired by the Tampa Shipbuilding Company in 1941. He was elected vice president of Local 22222 in 1944 and Business Manager in 1945. He was also elected President of the Tampa Central Labor Union.

In White Collar Union, the story of the OPEIU, Joseph Finley described Bloodworth as a union organizer with "an articulate awareness of reality and a dedication to the grind that would crush lesser men."

He is known for his quiet effective manner and his persistence in working for the union.

Bloodworth also was active in civic affairs, working for the Methodist Human Relations Committee and the Tampa Urban League. During World War II he was appointed to the Gasoline Rating Board, the Rent Control Board, and the Hoover Commission on Government Reorganization.

Bloodworth makes his home with his wife, the former Carol Karris, in Tampa, Florida.
Local 106 Ratifies General Dynamics Agreement

OPEIU Local 106, along with 9 unions comprising the Metal Trades Council, have reached agreement on a three-year contract with General Dynamics Corporation's Electric Boat Division, Groton, Connecticut.

The contract covers 11,000 employees, including approximately 800 clerical and technical employees represented by Local 106. The collective bargaining agreement provides pay increases ranging from 20 to 70 cents per hour, with accident and health protection. Local 106 President R. Markusen, OPEIU AFL-CIO, said that the agreement is the result of a joint effort on the part of both parties.

Two-Year Agreement Yields 26% Benefits Increase

OPEIU Local 475 and the East Tennessee Baptist Hospital in Knoxville, Tennessee reached agreement on July 2, in a two-year agreement that will yield a 26% benefits increase. The announcement was made by International Representative W. Charles Harris.

The 204 LPNs and technicans won a wage increase of $1.00 per hour over the life of the contract, with additional increases in the shift differentials and pay improvements for on-call status.

Improved Wages and COLA Highlight Local 12 Contract

Local 12 has achieved a favorable three-year agreement with Pacific Intermountain Express, an over-the-road trucking firm in Minneapolis, according to H. R. Markuton, OPEIU Business Manager.

Local 12 made wage gains of 80 cents per hour as of July 1, 1979; 35c per hour to be awarded in July 1, 1980, and 35c on July 1, 1981, an average hourly increase of $1.15. The agreement provides for an increased benefit coverage in case of injuries, accident or illness, and paid time for union officers and stewards investigating grievances.

New Research Director at the OPEIU

Gwen Wells, a graduate of Cornell University's Industrial and Labor Relations program and a former vice president of an AFT non-teaching local, has joined the staff of OPEIU as Research Director.

The announcement was made by President John Kelly. "Gwen Wells' appointment is part of our effort to work more closely with the locals during the coming year. She has substantial expertise in labor relations and an excellent academic background in labor relations. We expect that she will add a new dimension to this vital staff position in the OPEIU."

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Kathleen Kinnick, OPEIU Vice President and California Labor Federation's Director of Women's Activities, said that the major aims of the conference will be:

- To provide background and up-dated information on key issues for unionists representing women workers:
- To alert participants' skills as advocates and negotiators.

Speakers at the conference will include John F. Henning, the executive officer of the California AFL-CIO; John F. Crowley, the executive editor of the San Francisco Labor Council, and Sum Y. Grace, a member of the Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board.

OPEIU Vice President Addresses Japanese Visitors

Kathleen Kinnick, OPEIU Vice President, addressed a group of 85 visiting Japanese trade union leaders and management personnel in San Francisco on September 17, 1979.

The visitors, said Ms. Kinnick, were participants of the 5th Pacific Region Productivity Seminar and will meet with representatives of labor, management, and state and federal government during their two-week stay on the West Coast.

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The Impact of Technological Change

This is the second part of an Interface article on how unions and employees can cope with technological change. Interface is published by the Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO.

While older employees must grapple with drastic changes in the way their jobs are performed, those entering the workforce from high school or college are generally well prepared to cope with the "computer language" that now governs many work functions.

Computer math concepts are new taught in most schools and today's students have grown up with the computer and its related devices. Thus, younger employees often have a distinct advantage over those who have acquired their skills on the job.

The importance of the need for training is highlighted in the revised "National Apprenticeship and Training Standards for Drafters," which has been developed by the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, in cooperation with the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training, U.S. Department Labor.

Progress on the job, from entry level to highly responsible positions, will no doubt be accelerated. Combining the built-in capabilities of the computerized machine will eliminate much of the drudgery and tedious calculation previously required.

Obviously, the advantages enjoyed by these younger employees will be reflected in competition with older workers for those jobs which evolve out of the new work processes. In many cases, the new technologies will enhance the employee's ability to take on more work than before, thus assuring jobs for all. But in other situations, large number of jobs may be eliminated by computerization.

Employees covered by collective bargaining agreements ought to be aware that the problems generated by automation are going to be as critical in contract negotiations as any economic proposals that may be on the table. There is no sense in negotiating only on wages, pensions, and insurance benefits for members whose jobs are about to become obsolete. The emphasis must be placed where it will do the most good—providing job protections and readjustment opportunities for those affected.

Unfortunately, people have a tendency to avoid unpleasant issues until they recognize that there is no escape. Like the proverbial ostrich putting its head in the sand, those feeling secure on their present jobs will avoid facing the present reality that demands immediate action to secure a job three to five years from now. After one has spent a good portion of his lifetime developing expertise in a particular field, facing suddenly the prospects of an accelerated reeducation and retraining program in a somewhat unrelated field may be very difficult.

While most realize that in many cases the long-term effects of technological advances will prove to be beneficial for mankind, it must also be recognized that the short-term effects on individuals can be devastating if those individuals are caught totally unprepared.

Unfortunately, much of what is said regarding technological change falls on deaf ears. Many white collar workers feel that the words automation and technological changes apply to, and are the worry of, only the blue collar workers. And therein lies the problem, because competency and aptitude on the part of the white collar worker could very well be a much bigger threat to his job security than technological change will ever be.

In terms of laying the groundwork for educating members, getting grievances ready, getting information from the employer, negotiating good contract language, starting yesterday would not have been too early; today may not be too late—although tomorrow may very well be.

(To Be Continued)

Boston Interview

'Flexi-time' Aids Working Moms

The following is an excerpt from an interview between OPEIU President John Kelly and Richard Lawrence of the Boston Herald American, published on Sunday, August 19, 1979.

Flexi-time clauses permitting working mothers to tailor their work hours to better meet their responsibilities to their children at home are being negotiated by the Office and Professional Workers Union.

John P. Kelly of New York, newly-elected president of the 110,000-member union, the 33rd largest in the AFL-CIO, said in an interview in Boston that "Flexi-time is a coming trend and we're beginning to put it into our contracts across the country and in Canada."

Under flexi-time clauses, employees are asked to allow married women workers to start work earlier than other employees, for instance, at 7 a.m., so they can be home when their young ones get out of school in the early afternoon.

"Allowing women to come to work early and go home early is becoming more popular and it certainly helps in the overall supervision of the kids at home. Often women come to their jobs at 7 a.m., leaving it to dad to get the youngsters off to school. Then the mother is home in the afternoon when the children arrive," according to Kelly.

With gasoline costing $1 a gallon and inflation accelerating, Kelly said his union's surveys show that most working mothers are working from necessity.

"It's no longer for pin money," he said. "It's to buy food, to put meat and potatoes on the table and to help pay school tuition bills for the kids."

Kelly also said the OPEIU is ignoring the Carter Administration's 7 percent voluntary wage guideline.

"I'd be for the guidelines if they applied to profits, executive bonuses and interest rates," he said.

Inflation Causes Early Contract Opening

"A new contract has been negotiated as a result of the mutual agreement to reopen one year early," according to J. B. Moss, President-Business Manager of Local 277 in Fort Worth, Texas. The local had requested an early reopening with American Income Life Insurance due to rising inflation.

As a result, Local 277's 250 members at the Waco company have achieved up to $1.43 per hour in wage increases over the life of the contract.

Additional improvements were also made in the COLA, maternity leave, seniority, grievance procedure, and job posting provisions.

In Memoriam: Bill Reidy

Bill served with distinction in the U.S. Army during World War II, rising through the ranks from private to Captain. He was awarded two decorations—the Bronze Star and N.Y. State Meritorious Service Medal and received a field promotion for leadership during the Korean War. Reidy was a career member of the U.S. Army and a career employee of the Department of Defense.

Bill was a highly-regarded publication. He was a born story teller and a man of ready wit and humor. Bill had an inexhaustible fund of tales about growing up in Ireland during the "days of the troubles," his World War II adventures, and the demands of covering New York City's politics and Wall Street before and after the Stock Market crash.

Bill Reidy was an extremely competent, first-rate newspaperman who turned the WHITE COLLAR into a highly-regarded publication. The stories he developed about the OPEIU and the union movement were often reproduced by other newspapers and used as source material by both labor and governmental agencies.

He was a kind, considerate gentleman who was loved and respected by all who knew him. His passing will be mourned by everyone, but most keenly by those in the International office who will miss him terribly.

He is survived by his brothers Michael and John in Ireland, two nephews Jerry and the Reverend Raymond; and other relatives to whom we extend our deepest sympathies.
What Does Labor Want?

During the past month, my first as President of OPEIU, I have been asked one question many times: "What does labor want?"

I have been questioned by newspaper reporters, by government officials, by your international reps, and by union members from every part of the country. The words, of course, have varied. But the spirit behind the question has been the same — a desire to know where I stand as your president, a desire to know in what direction the OPEIU will head.

More than 60 years ago — just after the labor movement achieved its first gains — Samuel Gompers was asked the same question.

I like to think that Gompers had been waiting for that question and its challenge. Gompers was a man with a vision. He knew that the labor movement was at a crossroads. To come into being, the unions had to pass through a tornado of violent social upheaval. But to prosper the movement had to work to change society positively, for the good of all citizens.

Since then, the unions have grown in strength and members, what labor wanted would be felt in homes, schools, churches, and government, far beyond the headline-getting picket lines. His answer included that vision. Labor would not only improve the way men and women worked but would also change what they expected from life.

Those of you who already know me — know that I am dedicated to Gompers’ philosophy. What labor wants has been foremost in my mind since I began as an organizer with the retail clerks in 1946. For me, working in the labor movement started as a way to help people.

During the 30 years I have been a union organizer and contract negotiator, labor has firmly established a middle class in this country. We have worked ceaselessly to give the worker a fair return on his investment.

But, despite our many achievements, I believe we are once again at a crossroads, and there is a strong need to think again about what labor wants and needs.

Over the past twenty years, the game plan of organizing and negotiating has changed slowly but surely. During the 1930s and ’40s, labor was able to finance their drive for union power to limit union growth. Today, management hires high-priced legal talent who set up new barriers to achieving our goals. The fight for what labor wants has been as vital but not as volatile. The struggle is still intense.

I believe the time has come, as we enter the middle decades of the 1970s, to seek a renewed commitment, new ideas, and new members to strengthen the labor movement and the OPEIU. During my term as President, I look forward to leading a union committed —

Two Members Serving the Community

Two members of Local 221, Yvonne Anderson and Ron Searl, spent eight weeks studying the community service organizations in the Galesburg, Illinois region with the purpose of serving the needs of their fellow citizens. Both union members received graduation certificates and are now qualified to counsel and advise their local.

Community Service is a non-political and completely voluntary organization that serves and supports community organizations, such as the Red Cross.

Certificates were awarded to the graduates of the Galesburg Trades and Labor Assembly community services school by Robert Gibson, President of the Illinois State AFL-CIO.

(As pictured are Yvonne Anderson, President of Local 221, OPEIU, and Robert Gibson.)

Members Wins Speech Contest

Eleanor Deprest, member of OPEIU Local 353, has received the Walter Campbell Award for her outstanding speech “What Community Service Means to Me.”

Ms. Deprest, along with many union members, entered a speech contest at the Michigan State AFL-CIO Community Services School held at the UAW Education Center at Black Lake, Michigan. The school is a two-week, state-wide program sponsored by the AFL-CIO, Steel-workers, UAW, and Teamsters, and trains over 600 union leaders in community service activities.

(Pictured above from left to right are Walter Campbell, former Secretary-Treasurer of the Michigan AFL-CIO; Eleanor Deprest; and George Watts, current Secretary-Treasurer, Michigan State AFL-CIO.)

1979 White Collar Organizing Gains

White collar unions won bargaining rights for 10,520 previously unrepresented employees in 308 units in the first six months of 1979, according to a White Collar Report, a publication of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The gains were well above the 7,555 employees in 275 units reported for the same period in 1978.

Among these 10,520 employees, OPEIU won bargaining rights for 625 white collar employees in 13 elections.

Elections won by OPEIU included the American National Red Cross in Lansing, MI; East Tennessee Baptist Hospital in Knoxville; Electric Apparatus Co. in Howell, MI; SEIU Local 33 in Pittsburgh; Teacher’s Federation Credit Union in Minneapolis; UAW-CIO Fede-

ral Credit Union in Kansas City; William L. Meyers Inc. in Detroit; and Agency Records Control of Houston, TX.

Since the BLS study was released OPEIU has won representation rights for 120 employees in Easton, PA at Lafayette College and 26 employees of Ocean County, NJ.

Lastly, Pat O’Toole, Business Agent for Local 13 in St. Louis, announced victory for 30 employees at St. Louis Telephone Employees Credit Union.

Study Shows Unionists Receive 20% More In Wages

According to a report published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, unionized clerical workers registered the largest earnings benefit, averaging $223 per week. Unrepresented workers averaged 25 percent less — $172.

The report revealed that white collar women represented by unions average weekly wages that are a dramatic 30 percent higher than non-union white collar women. Black women and men in the white collar category who are represented by unions were reported to average 26 percent and 11 percent higher weekly wages.

During my term as President, I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible. I welcome your ideas and seek your energetic commitment to the growth and progress of this union. You are the OPEIU.

My election as President of OPEIU has been a great honor. But more important, it is a great challenge. I cannot think of a better way of pledging to meet that challenge than by quoting Samuel Gompers and his answer to “What does labor want?”

"We want more school houses and less jails — more books and less arsenals. More learning and less vice — more leisure and less greed. More justice and less revenge. In fact, more of the opportunities to cultivate our better nature, to make mankind more noble, womanhood more beautiful and childhood more happy and bright.”