



California AFL-CIO News

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Executive Secretary-Treasurer

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Firms Ordered To Bargain on Cardcheck Basis

The National Labor Relations Board, backed up by a landmark decision of the U.S. Supreme Court earlier this year, has reaffirmed previous orders requiring two southern firms to bargain with unions on the basis of majority representation determined by authorization cards.

The orders direct the Gissel Packing Company plant at Huntington, W.Va., to bargain with Meat Cutters' Local 347 and General Steel Products, Inc., to bargain with the Upholsterers' Union at High Point, N.C.

Last June the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the right
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Reagan Brags About Eating More Grapes

Governor Ronald Reagan, who boasted of his prowess as a union president and labor leader during his election campaign three years ago, bared his contempt for the efforts of California farm workers—among the nation's most sorely exploited workers—to win union recognition and full collective

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AFL-CIO President Spells Out Goals for the 1970's

BY GEORGE MEANY
President, AFL-CIO

The American labor movement moves into the Seventies fully aware of the complex problems that face America, fully determined to do everything in our power to help solve them and fully convinced that America can successfully meet all challenges.

As America enters this new decade, it is well to take stock of what has been accomplished

Hike Sugar Beet Workers' Pay Floor to \$2.25: Pitts

"A nation that can subsidize a wealthy industry can certainly assure the workers of that industry a living wage," the State AFL-CIO declared late last week in calling for a boost in the pay floor for sugar beet workers from \$1.65 to \$2.25.

Asserting that the "dreadfully low wages" of workers in the heavily subsidized

sugar industry is "a matter of scandal," a statement submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service last Friday by Thos. L. Pitts, secretary-treasurer of the California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, pointed out that the average farm worker

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GE Admits It's Failed In Move To Lure Workers

The multi-billion dollar General Electric Company has conceded that its elaborate propaganda barrage designed to effect a back-to-work movement among 147,000 striking trade unionists has failed.

An Associated Press report out of New York last Friday quoted a company spokesman as saying:

"There has been no great return."

The company's spokesman conceded that the bulk of its production employees are still on strike, the AP reported.

The AP report also said that "the company had sought to lure strikers back by next Monday (December 22) on grounds that their families should not suffer a dreary Christmas. The strategy appears to have backfired."

The propaganda barrage in-
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Barbers' Local Is Keeping GE Strikers Trim

Members of Barbers' Union Local 253 of San Bernardino have gone all out to keep trade unionists on strike at two GE plants in Ontario, California, well groomed.

Through extraordinary procedure, Local 253 has opened
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Poor Win As Congress Nixes Murphy Plan

An attempt by California's senior Senator George Murphy to torpedo legal services to the poor funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity by giving governors absolute veto power over them has been rejected by House-Senate conferees.

The action killing the Murphy amendment to the OEO authorization bill represents "a significant victory for the poor in California and throughout the nation who have long lacked adequate legal representation," Thos. L. Pitts, secretary-treasurer of the California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, said.

Pitts wrote California's entire Congressional delegation last month to urge them to oppose the Murphy amendment, which he described as "a destructive measure."

In California, the Murphy amendment was aimed at such legal services as the California
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And Yours
a Very
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Hike Sugar Beet Workers Pay Floor to \$2.25, Pitts Urges

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in California works about 1100 hours a year.

"At \$1.65 this means an income of \$1,815 a year," Pitts statement said, noting that this is far below the minimum of \$3,000 a year needed by a farm family of four to avoid poverty according to U.S. Labor Department figures announced just last month.

"The present sugar beet minimum ignores the poverty issue that is the disgrace of America," Pitts said.

"An income of \$1,815 a year is not at all related to the survival needs of the American farm worker," he asserted, adding that:

"A nation knowing the poverty difficulties that America is now experiencing should not base a minimum wage structure on survival needs. It should at

least look toward a 'moderate' standard of living for the workers who labor in the unmatched riches of our agricultural fields."

Calling attention to Labor Department figures last year that estimated that the income necessary to sustain a "moderate" standard of living in U.S. urban areas was \$9,076 a year, Pitts asked:

"How far distant can farm workers fall from the mainstream of U.S. life?"

By any number of analyses of U.S. workers it is quite clear that "farm workers are simply not sharing in the American system," he declared.

Pitts deplored the fact that customarily minimum farm wages are determined by making wage comparisons with the lowest economic denominators,

notably the federal minimum for farm workers or the pay floors established in the 11 states that provide some form of state coverage.

All this does is to confine farm labor "to a wage ghetto," Pitts pointed out.

This custom simply condemns farm workers and their families "to lives of poverty," the state AFL-CIO leader said.

The enormous subsidies paid to the sugar beet industry is indicated by the fact that the price of sugar on the world market is 3.2 cents a pound while on the Pacific Coast the going price is more than 10 cents a pound, Pitts pointed out.

"Everyone but the farm worker gets his piece of the public subsidy. Industrial users get their share, processors get theirs, growers get theirs.

"But the sugar workers still get the ghetto wage that confines them and their families to lives of poverty. The lid of order and civilized relationships cannot long remain on this kind of exploitation," Pitts declared.

Moreover, he suggested, the social and economic fabric of the nation is sorely strained by the perpetuation of such ghetto wages because "group hatred, distrust of private enterprise and cynicism about government are the inevitable prices society pays by tolerating such a situation."

In calling for a boost in the sugar beet minimum wage to \$2.25 an hour, the Federation emphasized that the same minimum must be assured piece workers.

Pitts said that while even a \$2.25 an hour floor could not be termed adequate, it would at least be a "first step out of a wage ghetto that should be the shame of all who benefit by this kind of a system."

In conclusion, he said:

"If those subsidized by public money argue that they cannot economically survive such a wage, we must then ask if their survival requires the exploitation of human beings. We don't believe that it does. We do believe that it is time they shared some of their wealth with the workers."

The pay floor for sugar beet workers was boosted from \$1.50 to \$1.65 last April 7. That 10 percent hike was the largest increase ever afforded in the hourly pay floor for these workers and was attributed in part to the California Labor Federation's earlier success in winning a boost in the state minimum wage for workers covered by wage orders issued by the state Industrial Welfare Commission from \$1.40 to \$1.65.

Action by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to establish a higher minimum for sugar beet workers may be taken at any time during the next several months. Last year, however, it was nearly four months between the December, 1968 hearings in San Francisco and the announcement boosting the minimum to \$1.65 on April 7, 1969.

Gov. Reagan Brags of Eating More Grapes

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bargaining rights last week.

Responding to a claim made by Allan Grant, president of the State Board of Agriculture, ~~that the farm workers' consumer boycott of California table grapes "has failed,"~~ Reagan declared:

"I'm delighted."

And, apparently just to assure the state's wealthy grower interests of his complete support, Reagan bragged:

"I've probably eaten more grapes during the past year than ever."

Beyond a doubt, such comments will stimulate the flow of contributions to Governor Reagan's reelection campaign next year from selfish special interest groups but they should be disquieting to all California citizens who believe that all workers should receive a fair day's pay for a fair day's work and that the rights of all workers or citizens are diminished when the rights of any worker or citizen are compromised or denied.

Farm workers' rights have been compromised and denied for generations. But Governor Reagan, a rancher and horse-breeder himself, clearly prefers to ignore this and to charge—erroneously—that the farm workers' boycott is "illegal" or to suggest that it's immoral.

But what's moral about a \$4 billion industry in one of the nation's wealthiest states that affords its workers an average hourly wage nearly 50 percent less than the average hourly wage of the state's factory workers?

Impartial statistics available from state and federal agencies indicate that the California farm worker's average hourly earnings are less than \$1.85 an hour and that they are able to find less than 1300 hours of work a year, including non-farm employment.

This means that even though the farm workers take every job they can get, their average annual earnings are below \$2,400.

Isn't there something immoral about that? Particularly when California's general taxpayers are obliged to subsidize the multi-billion dollar agricultural industry not only by picking up the tab for much of the industry's research and development projects but also by shouldering the welfare bill that results from the agri-business interests' gross underpayment of their workers?

Significantly, although Grant told Reagan that "I can say unequivocally, the boycott has failed," he allowed that "the boycott has been a costly nuisance." But he refused to put

any dollar figure on the amount of the loss.

It's also significant that Grant's claim came just two days after Cesar Chavez, Director of the AFL-CIO United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, told reporters at a news conference at the University of Oregon that the union was winning the boycott against the growers in the San Joaquin Valley.

Viewed in that sequence of events, Grant's claim looks more like wishful thinking than fact since at the same time, Grant, who is also president of the hardy impartial California Farm Bureau Federation, got the State Board of Agriculture to agree to wage a privately financed propaganda campaign to try to counteract the union's international boycott of California table grapes.

Members of the state board disclosed that their propaganda campaign will be aimed primarily at drumming up support for a bill authored by Senator George Murphy that would outlaw strikes by farm workers at harvest time and at other periods "critical" to agriculture. It would also prohibit boycotts of farm crops.

Hearings on the Murphy bill, which is strongly opposed by the UFWOC, are expected to be held in mid-January.

Barbers' Local Is Keeping GE Strikers Trim

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a five-chair barber shop in Ontario on Mondays to keep the strikers in top tonsorial trim as only union barbers can—but at no cost.

The operation, dubbed "Free Hair Cuts for GE Strikers," has been operating since Dec. 8 and will continue for the duration of the strike, according to Alvin L. Holt, regional director of the Barbers' Union in San Francisco.

Other locals throughout the state are contemplating similar action to help the GE strikers win a just settlement from this huge multi-billion corporation that has repeatedly rejected union offers to submit the issues in dispute to impartial binding arbitration.

Premo Valle, an international representative of the Barbers' Union, is serving as coordinator for the Barbers Union in this operation directed at helping the GE workers win the strike, Holt said.

Firms Ordered To Bargain On Cardcheck Basis

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of the NLRB to order an employer to bargain on the basis of a cardcheck where he has unlawfully destroyed a union's majority.

The high court's ruling, which involved the two southern firms, struck down findings by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals which had held earlier that NLRB orders to bargain were invalid because there was no certification election.

The AFL-CIO filed a brief supporting the NLRB during the proceedings before the Supreme Court and urged the court to decide in its favor.

AFL-CIO Director of Organization William L. Kircher said that the high court's decision vindicated labor's position that authorization cards are a "substantive part of the organizing process."

GE Admits It's Failed In Move To Lure Workers

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cluded radio and newspaper ads, direct calls to striking workers' homes and even offers of a bounty on the head of "any person or organization" who harasses any GE worker who wants to go back to work.

Meanwhile, AFL-CIO President George Meany pointed to the unprecedented labor solidarity both on and behind the GE picket lines and urged GE "to do some serious thinking and come up with a realistic offer."

Asserting that "GE can't break the unions," Meany said that since the nation's largest, and wealthiest electrical corporation is not producing, it is merely "hurting its stockholders and customers with its intransigence."

In California, the "Don't Buy GE" boycott activities picked up substantially during the past week.

Hundreds of union members passed out thousands of leaflets to Christmas shoppers at the May Company Department

Store in Los Angeles urging consumers not to buy GE products, including Hotpoint and Universal brands, until GE settles the strike it forced on 147,000 production workers at more than 280 GE plants and facilities in 33 states.

Similar rallies were also in progress elsewhere throughout the state. Just last Tuesday scores of Alameda County trade unionists turned out to spread the word of the boycott at the Oakland White Front Store at 633 Hegenberger Road.

Further evidence of the solidarity of the strike was demonstrated last Tuesday when the IBEW Local 2131 in San Leandro struck the GE plant there. When the chips were down, even the non-union members joined up and the whole unit went on the picket line.

Although negotiations with GE have been in progress during the past week no progress was reported. GE management repeatedly rejected union offers to submit the issues in dispute to binding arbitration.

Poor Win As Congress Nixes Murphy Plan

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Rural Legal Assistance which blocked Governor Reagan's attempt to slash Medi-Cal services to the poor and has also gone into court to protect low income workers on such issues as family welfare rights, school lunch programs, pesticides, unemployment insurance and the exploitation of domestic and foreign field workers.

Rejection of the Murphy amendment was not even close. It was nearly unanimously opposed by the House conferees as well as by a majority of the Senate conferees.

The Murphy amendment had also been strongly criticized and opposed by the American Bar Association, the National Association of Legal Aid Defenders, and the U.S. Judicial Conference which is headed by U.S. Chief Justice Warren Burger, President Nixon's first appointee to the Supreme Court.

In defending the CRLA last month, Pitts described it as an "incorruptible defense (for the poor) that has already written significant social history."

On December 18 when it was clear that the Conference Committee was likely to reject his amendment, Murphy claimed that the press had distorted the meaning of his amendment and said:

"It was made to look like I'm against the poor, and I'm not."

Coming from a senator who in just the past month has voted initially against a 15 percent increase in social security benefits and in favor of a move to protect the oil moguls' 27½ percent depletion allowance as well as in favor of a move to virtually prohibit unions from engaging in essential political activity, that may be a little hard for thinking citizens to believe, eh?

nation's course for the entire decade. They will determine whether men and women who believe in progress will back their beliefs with their ballots.

Those are goals which demand the best from all Americans. We in the AFL-CIO are determined to do our share—and more—to achieve them.

Meany Spells Out Goals for 1970's

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group Americans in fact and in law.

It isn't necessary to itemize the long list of legislative measures which advanced these causes and promoted prosperity, security and human dignity. All have long been goals of the American trade union movement and we are proud of the role the AFL-CIO played in their enactment...

But being pleased with those victories is not to say that we are satisfied...

The dimensions of the domestic problems are well known: hunger, poor schools, deteriorating cities, de facto segregation, dirty air and dirty water; medical and health care that is denied to too many, an unbelievable housing gap, slums that grow instead of dwindle.

Not one of these is beyond solution...

The recent convention of the AFL-CIO set forth the goals for which we intend to strive:

- A just and honorable peace in Vietnam;
- The total abolition of poverty;
- National health insurance—a program long overdue;
- The transformation of the cities into citadels of commerce, culture and civilization;
- Unlimited free public education through the college level for any young person who has the ability and the desire;
- Technical and vocational education for those young people who will be entering a working world increasingly dominated by technology.

We are convinced that the democratic process of America will endure and that through it full and equal opportunity for all will become a matter of fact as well as a matter of law.

In the final analysis, the way to achieve these goals is through adequately financed programs at all levels of government...

So 1970 is a crucial year, for its elections will, in fact, set the

A Message from the Families of GE's Striking Employees...

PLEASE, DON'T BUY GE PRODUCTS

...Until Our Strike is Over

On behalf of the boys and girls, the women and men who make up the families of nearly 150,000 GE workers now on strike, we ask you:

Please, Don't Buy GE Products—including Hotpoint and Universal-GE—until our strike is over.

That way, you'll help us get an early agreement with General Electric—America's fourth richest industrial corporation.

We're on strike to get a fair settlement... decent wages and improved working conditions... so that we can all go back to work.

Although our strike is going into its third month, GE still hasn't come close to making a realistic offer on pay and other issues. GE talks a lot about "bargaining" in its newspaper ads, but at the negotiating table GE has not made any significant attempt to meet the needs of its workers.

GE also talks a lot about inflation but it has just raised prices again even though its 1969 third-quarter profits were 11% ahead of last year.

So the trade unions of America have come to our support by putting products bearing the GE label on their "unfair list."

We need your help... and the help of every American who believes in fair play. That's why we're asking that during this Christmas season and until the strike is settled:

Please, Don't Buy GE Products.

We want to get back to work and we will—as soon as GE proposes the kind of contract terms we can live with, terms that will give us the wages and safeguards that we and our families need.

Until then, we ask: the next time you're in a department store, appliance store, supermarket or drug store, remember:

GE products are on the "unfair list." Please, don't buy them until we've been able to negotiate a fair settlement.

Thank you very much...it's the way you can help us reach a sound settlement so we can all get back to work soon.

On behalf of

150,000 GENERAL ELECTRIC WORKERS

Coordinated Bargaining Committee
1126 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

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