

# NEWS NOTES ABOUT THE AMERICAN WORKER

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INFO

## MAJOR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING SETTLEMENTS IN PRIVATE INDUSTRY, FIRST 6 MONTHS 1990

Statistics provided by the U.S. government's Bureau of Labor Statistics show that major collective bargaining agreements reached in private industry during the first 6 months of 1990 show that these settlements provide for higher wages than the agreements they replaced.

The Bureau consider major agreements as those covering 1,000 or more workers.

Settlements during the first 6 months covered 810,000 workers under major agreements. Such settlements provided for wage increases averaging 4.2% in the first year of the contract and an average of 3.8% over the life of the contract. Most U.S. contracts run for 3 years. These settlements do not include one-time payments (lump-sums), nor do they include cost-of-living adjustments. The average increases of the previous contract, usually negotiated in 1987 or 1988, averaged 2.3% in the first year and 2.5% over the term of the contract.

In transportation equipment, manufacturing, petroleum refining, food stores, and health service the increases were significantly higher than previous agreements. Many increases in the manufacturing sector (particularly steel) are the first in almost a decade where the standard for the 1980's included wage cuts or wage freezes.

The 810,000 workers covered by first-half 1990 settlements represented 40% of the 2,022,000 workers under settlements reached in the 12 months ending June 30. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, wage adjustments averaged 3.6% annually over the contract life, compared to the 2.4% when the previous contracts were renegotiated. This 4-quarter period had seen an increasing trend since 1986 when the average contract settlement bottomed out at 1.7% in the third quarter of that year.

One-time lump-sum payments (not built into the job rate) were included in 17% of all contracts covering some 136,000 workers. The Bureau of Labor Statistics finds that 43% of the 5.3 million workers covered under major contracts have received some form of lump-sum payment in lieu of or in addition to a wage rate adjustment.

During this same time period only 12% (95,000) of the workers under settlements in the first 6 months of 1990 had cost-of-living adjustment clauses. Despite the fact that the cost-of-living has risen an average of 5% annually.

Settlements in non-manufacturing provided wage increases of 4.0% over the life of the contract, compared to 2.9% the last time bargaining took place. These



covered 562,000 workers or about 69% of all workers covered by contracts during this period. More than half or 302,000 workers were employed in the construction industry. Construction settlements averaged 4.2% over the life of the contract. Settlements in other nonmanufacturing industries averaged 3.8% annually and were concentrated in food stores, hotels, and utilities.

Settlements in manufacturing, covering 248,000 workers, averaged 3.3% annually over the term of the contract. The Bureau reports that previous settlements average wage rates were 1.7% annually over the term of the agreement. About 48% of the manufacturing workers continued to see one-time lump-sum payments, a trend that continues to occur in manufacturing.

For 47,000 workers wage freezes were part of their settlements. Another 2,500 workers took pay cuts.

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#### FIRE PITTSTON COAL MINERS RETURN TO WORK

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Well not quite all, but 10 of the 13 miners who were fired for alleged "picket line violence" were returned to work with full seniority either through agreement between the United Mine Workers and the company or through (as in the case of one miner) arbitration. The remaining miners are having their cases heard before an arbitrator.

Pittston miners in Kentucky, it should be mentioned, specifically voted down the contract settlement because it did not contain amnesty and the return to work of all miners fired for alleged picket line violence.

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#### NOT SO STUPID

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In our last issue we reported on the wage concessions granted to the Whirlpool corporation by 2,000 members of Local 808, International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE). In this article ("Sheer Stupidity") we mentioned the fight of Allied Industrial Workers (AIW) Local 370 whose members are employed by Whirlpool. These members have chosen to fight rather than to accept wage cuts at this profitable manufacturer.

The more than 4,000 member local has been engaged in a 11 month fight with the company. The members have been without a contract since September 1989. Since September of 1989 the company has instituted a wage cut of 58¢ per hour and did away with all cost-of-living protections. The company has also implemented a "two-tier" wage scale, with new workers earning only 60% of the wage that longer term workers are making. The company has also reduced the benefits for new workers and has attempted to do away with other contract provisions.

In an effort to smash the corporations' drive to lower the workers wages, union protection and other conditions of employment the membership has chosen to take the company on.

The workers conduct various in-plant activities in an effort to "run the plant



backwards", stage weekly solidarity marches after the shift change on Tuesdays, hold Thursday solidarity meetings, publish a weekly newsletter, "Solidarity Voice", and conduct other activities.

In an effort to assist Local 370, the leadership of their national union has declared a corporate boycott against Whirlpool appliances, including those with the brand names of Whirlpool, Roper, KitchenAid, and those Kenmore (Sears) brands made by Whirlpool.

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### DIRECT ACTION GETS THE GOODS

In a rare victory in the paper industry, United Paperworkers International Union Local 1303 beat back management's demands for concessions to win wage increases in each year of the contract.

UPIU members voted down the company's "final" offer three times after the contract expired January 16, 1990. Rather than striking (which has led to some serious defeats in the paper industry this past decade), Local 1303 members demonstrated in town after each offer was rejected and used designated T-shirt days and buttons to show their solidarity. The workers also participated in a "workers' safety" campaign, avoiding short-cuts and other actions that would have been hazardous to the workers.

What also helped the workers is the fact that the owners of the T.H. Glatfelter Co. live in the same town, Spring Grove, Pennsylvania, as the workers and where the three mills are located. The bad publicity from the public demonstrations didn't sit well with the owners. This helped to aid the workers in defeating the company's drive for wage and holiday concessions.

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### SURE WE'RE A DEMOCRATIC UNION. AND WHO SAYS WE'RE NOT ?

Well, if democracy means that a local union can be placed under the direct control of the national union that sure doesn't seem democratic to us.

Despite our argument that most, if not all, American unions are undemocratic (and surely not run by the members from the bottom up) let some fact speak for themselves.

Last year it was reported that the United Steel Workers of America national union headquarters directly controlled 182 local unions. The USWA was followed up by the International Chemical Workers with 26 locals under direct control followed by the American Federation of Government Workers with 20, the Iron Workers with 15, the Boilermakers with 13, the Hotel Workers with 12 and the Laborers with 11 (with one Laborers local, the National Mailhandlers Division, with a membership of 40,000), the Teamsters with 8 and the same for the Marble Workers and Air Line Pilots. The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, according to the Association for Union Democracy, has only 2 locals under direct control. But the IBEW "have simpler methods for dealing with recalcitrant local [s]..."

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FELLOW WORKERS, PLEASE MAKE ME RICH

That's what the two top officers of the of Marine Engineers Beneficial Association (MEBA) and the National Maritime Union (NMU) did when they merged their two unions.

By merging their two unions, through unfair proceddures and methods, the president of MEBA collected \$936,593 and the president of NMU collected \$409,192 in severence pay.

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RIGHT TO STRIKE ?

In what is becoming organized labor's biggest political push since the failed "Labor Law Reform" movement of the late 1970's, the AFL-CIO and affiliated and unaffiliated unions are making a big push for "right to strike" legislation.

The Senate and House of Representative pieces of legislation call for the restoration of workers' rights and an even "playing field" between labor and management "to ban the use of permanent replacement workers in a labor dispute and bar employers from offering preferential benefits to scabs who cross the picket line..."

While we surely take a strong stand against the use of scab labor during and after strikes, we do not believe that merely enacting legislation to prevent the use of scab labor is the answer. The courts will keep finding ways to punish workers for striking and the bosses will continue to find ways to circumvent any laws passed that will favor the workers' right to strike. The answer, we believe, is in building a mass workers' movement that will change the balance of power once and for all. We would suggest that another cure for this problem is a mass workers' movement capable of calling a series of one-day national strikes that will send the proper message to all bosses telling them that the use of scab labor just will not be tolerated any longer. Such strike action will send a greater message then any form of legislation ever could.

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