

The Plot Against the Skilled Craftsmen

Space in abundance is devoted in newspapers and magazines these days to the "problem" of tool and die makers and other skilled workers.

The stories tell how hard it is to get additional people for this work. Columns of space give all kinds of reasons as to why this is so.

They miss out on only one thing: The real reason. The reason is: Not enough money for the work.

Employers and their newspaper mouthpieces don't want to admit this. It might expose the behind-the-scenes plotting they've conducted to destroy the traditional high pay standards of these workers — even though such skilled workers are essential to their multi-billion dollar war contracts.

The problem of the tool and die makers isn't their problem alone. It affects every worker.

In GE, as elsewhere, tool and die rates have always been the highest skilled job in the wage structure. Rates paid to skilled craftsmen are reflected in the rates paid in the entire rate structure.

By holding down skilled craftsmen's rates—the basis is set for holding everyone's rates down—down to the bottom of the rate range—the common laborer.

While such rates are held down, industry's efforts to get more work in less time from the rest of its workers also affects the workers in the tool rooms, where job requirements have increased. More knowledge is needed and a higher quality of production is demanded for closer tolerances.

Really terrific inequalities are created when companies like GE speed-up production by putting more and more jobs on piece work and incentive — where rates then equal or go higher than those made by skilled craftsmen.

It also has a devastating effect far beyond skilled craftsmen. It affects every day work job rate, of which there are 1,800 such rates in lesser grades and classifications



RANGE OF MACHINE TOOLS—(Above) A battery of which several operations are performed simultaneously; (at four machines used in manufacturing automobile engines on right) a jig boring machine designed for precision work.

Bottleneck No. 1—Machine Tools

They are the indispensables in our expanding production and their strength and precision must be tailor-made.

Two recent stories in the *The New York Times Magazine* that echoed ourselves, crocodile tears about tool and die "problem." They don't mention that employers plotted to create the problem.

By BURNHAM FINNEY

Why are machine tools so important? People are inclined to think of industry in terms of raw steel being poured into huge ladles and being rolled into sheets and bars in spectacular mills, or of refrigerators and automobiles flowing in off the end of a conveyor belt. The importance of machine tools is obvious, but the laymen puzzled about why they are so indispensable.

than skilled rates in the GE Schenectady Works alone.

The result is that many apprentices who've finished their apprenticeship, and are qualified as tool makers, decide to take production jobs on large tool operations such as boring mills, large lathes and other incentive jobs that pay far in excess of tool and die rates.

When the wage freeze threatened to make permanent the narrowing differential between skilled and others rates, skilled workers throughout the country protested vigorously to the Wage Stabilization Board.

The protest was so widespread that the WSB set up a special Tool & Die Committee to study rates and make recommendations. UE participated, along with other unions, in the lengthy hearings that were held on the problem.

This Committee found: "... There is no question but that the percentage differential between unskilled rates and skilled tool and die

rates has narrowed appreciably since about 1940.

"There is general agreement that skill requirements of a competent journeyman in manufacturing are higher than those for most building journeymen and that wage rates are substantially lower.

"Numerous instances were cited to the committee of production incentive jobs of semi-skilled character on which earnings substantially equal or exceed hourly rates for journeymen toolmakers and die-makers."

The Committee recommended on the basis of the facts it found that ceiling rates be set in various areas ranging from \$2.40 to \$2.65 for these jobs.

Here's how the recommendations would have affected ceiling rates in various cities:

Toledo, up 73 cents; Chicago, 44; Dayton, 39; Los Angeles, 54; New York City, 65; Syracuse, 77 and Detroit, 28.

In Schenectady, it would have meant a ceiling of over 50 cents more than is now paid in GE. Top rate as frozen by the WSB is \$2.13.

Just as it looked like action would be taken to end the inequality of tool and die makers—the employers stepped in.

A top GE spokesman predicted to an UE officer that the Tool & Die Committee's recommendations would never be passed.

All segments of American industry, including GE, (the same GE that won't move to get the 3.58

Acute Shortage Of Tool and Die Makers Cited

Murrer Deplores Sending Apt Boys to College

America's critical shortage of skilled tool and die makers is directly traceable to the "mistaken notion" that every boy with mechanical aptitude should go to college, Herbert Murrer, president of Murrer Tool & Die Co., Cincinnati, said yesterday.

This has resulted in a falling behind of the industry's apprenticeship training programs and has caused the contract tool and die shops to "seek futilely" for 20,000 additional toolmakers, Mr. Murrer said. These men are urgently needed to produce the heavy volume of special tooling currently ordered by the Defense Department and the Atomic Energy Commission, he said.

percent increase approved) combined to compel the WSB not to recommend higher rates for skilled workers. Even though it would be the one step that would end the "bottle-neck" on tool and die makers—industry exerted every effort to halt it.

The result was that industry members (representing GE on the WSB) exerted pressure on the public members and the recommendation was voted down last fall by an 8 to 4 vote.

The vote meant that present rates shall be frozen. The employers, including GE, would prefer miles of space in the papers crying about the problem—while nothing is done to solve the problem — and to pocket super-profits from war contracts.

The job for labor is to win adoption of the Tool & Die Committee recommendations.

UE will be conducting that fight when it raises this question as a major demand in negotiations that began this week with GE.

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Louisville, Ky.—Members of UE Local 236 ended a week's strike at the International Harvester Works here after the company agreed to meet with the Union on the firing of six Union leaders and suspension of 170 other Union men. The firings and suspensions followed attempts to cut wages. Local 236 is demanding reinstatement of all fired and suspended workers and settlement of all wage grievances.

Honolulu—AFL Hotel & Restaurant Employees union members in three luxury hotels owned by the Matson Navigation Co. have won a two week strike for a new contract. Negotiations were resumed after the AFL union threatened to call for help from the International Longshoremen's & Warehousemen's Union.

San Francisco—AFL and CIO railway employees won their strike for a revision of schedules to provide eight hours work with a 10 hour spread. Municipal railway platform men followed it up by winning a raise from \$1.64 to \$1.79 an hour on July 1.

Washington, D. C.—Less than five percent of the workers in plants of the Aluminum Co. of America earn enough to meet the "modest" weekly budget which the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has found is necessary to maintain a decent standard of living, CIO Steel Union spokesman told a panel of the Wage Stabilization Board.

Louisville, Ky.—A three year agreement providing a 37 cent hourly increase over three years, with 19 cents now, 8 cents next year and 10 cents in 1954—was won by 1,100 striking AFL cartage and dock workers. Over 600 over-the-road drivers refused to cross picketlines.

Long Beach, Cal. — Patiently spent CIO aircraft workers, members of the CIO Auto Workers Local 148, voted here to call off a four month recess of their 43 day strike against Douglas Aircraft and return to the picketlines unless the company and Wage Stabilization Board come up with a satisfactory settlement of their demands.



REPORT. Local 301 executive board members heard first-hand reports on GE negotiations last Monday from (l. to r.) UE Genl. Secy.-Treas. Julius Emspak and '301' Business Agent Leo Jandreau, a member of the national GE negotiating committee. Both stressed the need of a vigorous and united fight to get a decent offer from GE.

Payment of the 3.58% Due March 21, 28

Information that the Union was able to obtain from the GE payroll department last week indicated that the 3.58 percent increase will be added to the wage rates for the payroll of March 21, with the back money to be paid on March 28.

What It Took to Win the 3.58% Approval

Word got around last week that GE was ordering its supervisory force to tell workers that UE shouldn't get credit for getting the 2.50 percent increase approved. It got a horse-laugh inside the Works, as workers recalled recent events.

It was GE that in December put out smooth words that the whole 3.58 percent should be approved by the wage freeze board by Christmas.

By January, it was pretty evident that GE's industry members on the WSB were just "sitting" on the case and GE wasn't pushing them to get off it.

UE Local 301 members rolled up their sleeves, signed thousands of petitions to the WSB, hired a bus and a delegation went to see the WSB personally. All Washington became aware that GE workers were tired of the stall.

When the '301' delegation returned, they recommended that GE top officials, if sincere in wanting the increase approved,

GE's 1.36% 'Cheap' Offer Gets Angry Reception

The "cheap" offer of a 1.36 percent increase, made by GE in new wage negotiations, was getting raked over the coals all last week by '301' members inside the Schenectady Works.

The workers' anger and resentment at the miserable offer was pouring out at building and division meetings called by '301' executive board members to report on the first talks under the wage re-opener.

The executive board on Monday, March 10, recommended that the offer be turned down as "one that does not meet the needs of our people and does not consider in anyway our other demands that affect skilled help, day workers, women's rates and elimination of geographical differentials."

Union leaders termed the offer as an attempt by GE to set the basis for trying to weaken the agreement when contract renewal talks open in September.

Even IUE-CIO leaders, who at first said the offer met their cost-of-living demand, have been forced to indicate disapproval as their rank and file erupted with a demand that a real fight be put up to get a decent offer out of GE — in line with UE's proposal that a

Continued on page 4

Use of Govt. Hit In Rail Strike

Engineers, firemen and conductors tried this week to end a situation where their employers have hidden behind the skirts of government to avoid giving conditions that a million other rail workers have obtained.

Workers throughout the country were in sympathy with the N. Y. Central walkout—because they, too, are more and more confronted by employers who hide behind the government's skirts by saying: "We can't give you an increase because the government won't approve it."

On August 27, 1950, the government "took over" the railroads to avoid a strike by these workers, who haven't had a negotiated increase since 1948. What happened was that seven railroad presidents were given the rank of army colonel and told to run the roads for the government.

The same roads made profits—run by the same magnates—only in army uniforms.

Boulware Gets An Invitation

A personal invitation was extended last week to L. R. Boulware to spend a week working in the big lathe section of Bldg. 273.

It was extended by the first shift. In return, these '301' members asked that Boulware extend them an invitation to join him on one of his "rigorous" week ends.

The invite was tendered after these turbine workers read a quote by the GE vice president in a national magazine, which said: "It is not company policy to have people go home on Friday night after a week's work anything like as tired as they come in on Monday morning after the rigors of our American week-ends."

The big lathe workers said they are willing to make the "sacrifice" of enduring the "rigors" of a Boulware week-end.

Bldg. Meetings Discuss New Wage Negotiations

Three well attended meetings inside the Works, held after the 3.58 percent increase was approved, set the record straight on how it was won and what's needed to win new demands that have been placed before GE.

Bldg. 73A met on Friday, March 7. Bldgs. 73 and 69 met in 69 on Monday, March 10 and Bldgs. 77, 67, 71, 79 and 75 met on Tuesday, March 11.

Main speaker at all three meetings was '301' Chief Steward William Mastrianni, who ridiculed the attempts of GE to have its supervisory force try to tell the workers that the company was responsible for the lack of action by GE for months until its workers throughout the chain walked out.

Mastrianni explained how UE's proposal that 16 unions wage a joint fight in negotiations would be the strongest combination to compel GE to make an offer that would meet its workers' needs. He said lack of unity, such as UE proposes, makes it possible for GE to propose "cheap" offers.

He said UE's proposal, warmly approved by the meetings, of having the rank and file united on wages is the only course to break the wage freeze and get AFL and CIO labor leaders to stop participating on the Wage Stabilization Board and get down to the business of attending to the economic needs of their members.

News of GE's new 1.36 percent offer was regarded as an insult by members at the building meetings.

Overtime Protest Won

A group in Bldg. 69 protested when John Paolucci, a washroom attendant, was not called in for Saturday work when they were, charging that it was a case of discrimination by the foreman. Their protest resulted in Paolucci's being called in. Steward V. Di Lorenzo handled the grievance.



... and this product has a distinct advantage over sirloin steak... You can still afford it...

Elevator Mechanic Secures A Rating

Lewis J. Di Caterino, an elevator mechanic on cranes in Bldg. 60, who does the same work as others in his group, now has an A job rate of \$1.92 an hour as a result of grievance action at the management level.

Di Caterino pointed out he was giving normal performance for the job and was entitled to the job rate. Steward E. Johnson handled the grievance.

Pensioners' Club Elects Officers

The Local 301 Pensioner's Club at its March membership meeting elected officers for the coming year.

Elected to office were Albert Vanderzee, president; Fred Helmdoldt, vice president and H. J. Warner, secretary. William MacNaughton and B. Kuserler were elected to serve with the officers as the executive committee.

Formed about four years ago, the Pensioner's Club meets the first Wednesday of each month at 2 p.m. in the Union Hall. Any '301' member on pension is eligible to join.

The Club discusses and makes proposals for securing more adequate pension and social security and brings to the attention of Local 301 for action any problems under the UE-GE Pension Plan.

Committees to Meet

Four committees appointed by the '301' executive board for 1952 will hold their first meeting on Monday, March 17 at 7:30 p.m. The committees are Fair Employment Practices, House, Activities and Constitution.

Campbell Turns Back on Voters

State Sen. Thomas F. Campbell has frankly admitted that what his voters want isn't nearly as important as what Republican Party bosses tell him do.

He made this admission last week when Dewey Brashear, '301' legislative chairman, called him from the senate floor in Albany and asked him what he was going to do about his commitments to secure modifications to the Hughes-Brees unemployment insurance amendments — which 12,000 UE members had signed petitions for, the AFL had demanded, as well as over 60 Republican committeemen in the County of Schenectady.

Said Campbell: "Why do you fellows try to embarrass me? The decisions are made by the top leaders, Ossie Heck (majority assembly leader), Tom Dewey and Walt Mahoney (senator from Buffalo). They meet every Sunday and I have to do what they tell me to do."

A few days later Campbell complained to UE's district legislative representative, Clifford MacAvoy, that labor hadn't treated him right and was ungrateful and asked: "Didn't I arrange a meeting to discuss Hughes-Brees?" MacAvoy retorted that labor didn't come just to talk at a meeting but wanted some action.



AMMUNITION. Local 301 members who came to the Union Hall after the March 4 demonstration are seen above studying UE's proposal for the big battle ahead with GE—joint action by members of 16 unions in the chain. They liked the approach.

Employers Changed Tune On Skilled Job Rates

Employers certainly don't believe what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander when it comes to their workers. This was strikingly revealed in their argumentation which re-

sulted in the Wage Stabilization Board turning down a recommendation that would have boosted ceilings on tool and die makers rates in various localities from 30 to 77 cents.

The employers on the WSB argued that if such ceilings were established "the pressure would be on for adoption by the employer of such rates."

However, the employers have no objections on "ceilings" on prices. The so-called ceilings are really floors, set on the average of five to ten percent above what goods are selling for. Instead of ceilings, which they aren't, the so-called ceilings serve as an incentive for manufacturers to boost prices up to what government regulations permit.

To this the employers don't object, but when a government agency made a recommendation that would establish ceilings above prevailing rates for skilled workers, which would aid in boosting the rates of these workers to a level they should reach, the employers exerted every influence in their power to see that the recommendation was killed — as happened last fall.

It's clear that's what sauce for the goose isn't sauce for the gander when it comes to wages for workers. UE negotiations will seek to get some of that "sauce" for skilled workers by boosting these rates to levels that will help day workers on all jobs achieve higher rates of pay.

Punchin' It Out

Bucks for the '301' Fighting Fund are piling up in Bldgs. 15, 17 and 19 among the punch press and tool and die workers. Total reached at the beginning of this week was \$365, according to Sidney Friedlander, executive board member.

The fine record being chalked up in these buildings was attributed to the work of stewards. Incomplete totals collected by various stewards include: J. Harrington, \$69; F. Barba, \$42; S. Friedlander, \$40; A. Glover, \$34; E. Caleo, \$33; A. Bufano, \$25; L. Brown, \$20; D. Tiscione, \$14; F. Gauvreau, \$14; C. Butkus, \$10; J. Mangino, \$11 and W. Cummings, \$7.

GE's Assets Prove Ability To Pay Healthy Increase

GE's cheap offer of a 1.36 percent increase to its workers looks all the shabbier when one looks at the assets this giant corporation has accumulated in recent years. Here are a few facts UE members should keep in mind to counteract GE's pious propaganda.

The amount of profits GE has taken out of each employee per year has increased from \$752 in 1939 to \$1,130 in 1944 to the annual rate of \$1,554 in the first half of 1950 to an annual rate of \$2,084 in the first six months of last year.

GE stands seventh on the list of 10 top corporations which received 40 percent of the dollar volume of government war contracts placed between July 1, 1950 and June 1, 1951. GE Pres. Ralph J. Cordiner stated at the end of 1951 that 20 to 25 percent of GE's billings were for military contracts, and the share would be increased to between 30 and 35 percent in 1952.

"In fact," said Cordiner, "I know of no other company that will devote as much as 30 per-



That's the boss up to his usual tricks just before contract negotiations begin...

cent of total output to defense, except for air-craft makers."

GE gets special tax concessions to build new plants in low wage areas. These concessions permit new plants and equipment to depreciate in five years instead of 20

UE ON THE JOB

Bldg. 5: William Delos, general engineering lab, an apprentice graduate working in lab since 1947, is doing class A work on a B rate and demands reclassification to A rate.

Yolanda Stankiewicz, general engineering lab, paid \$1.26 while rest of cleaners in group are paid \$1.38, demands the same rate.

Bldg. 18: A group in S&M motor protests that repair of machine breakdowns is done on first shift, causing that shift to lose more time than the other shift. An investigation is demanded.

A group demands an investigation of fact that on Feb. 17 a piece worker on lathe did work they normally perform. Since it's their normal work, they feel they should perform overtime when it's required.

Bldg. 29: Full opportunity to break in on a job is demanded for Grace Ryan, mica. It's charged that Forelady Doberneck has tried to get rid of Ryan and continually threatened her with dismissal and expects the same amount of work as an employee who has broken in after eight weeks, or in some cases for a longer period. Ryan has been on job two weeks and does good work.

It's charged that Forelady Doberneck intimidated and discriminated against Josephine Strenka. Doberneck is not her supervisor and if any reprimand is given only authorized foremen should give it. An immediate halt is demanded to Doberneck's activities.

Bldg. 40B: Restoration of 10 years service is demanded for Irene Swiergiel, S&M motor. On Jan.

8, 1951, she presented doctor's certificate dated Jan. 5, 1951 showing she was able to return to work after an absence since Oct. 23, 1950. Since there was lack of suitable work, she was not reengaged until May 28, 1951.

Bldg. 46: A special price or average earnings is demanded for five hours repair work performed by Robert M. Ostrovsky, who charges the foreman penalized him by paying only P. W. D. W.

R. Denton, who on Jan. 28 was promised by management that he would be transferred to former job in Bldg 285 is held up because his replacement couldn't get clearance and new replacement must be found. An investigation is demanded.

Elbridge Elmore, A&O, requested transfer to day work job. Instead, a new worker was hired for days. Demand that he be given next opportunity to work on days.

Keith W. Kniskern, paid only for three hours make up for a lathe job with no method card issued, demands total time be paid for the 25 hours of work actually involved.

Full 12 hours pay is demanded by Louis D. Leone at his proper rate for work he performed on a lathe job on which no method card was issued.

Bldg. 60: Two hours payment for time lost on Feb. 20 by V. Criscifulli, John Neapolitan, Clifford Brooks and Roy Brages on lining up a job because a hole did not have proper alignment is demanded. The foreman paid for only one hour.

Thousands of grievances are handled by UE Local 301 each year at all levels from the steward up to final appeal in New York City. To keep members posted, we shall each week list some of the grievances that have not been settled at the steward-foreman level and have been referred to the executive board-management level.

Bldg. 69: H. Tompkins charges discrimination because on Feb. 23 he did not work although the group he services for 40 hours a week did work.

D. Testardo demands payment at average earnings for an hour and a half he lost because there were no proper tools to do a job he was assigned.

Bld. 89: Dorothy Spencer, out ill since Oct. 29, 1951 was certified as still unable to work by her physician on Feb. 28, but her weekly benefits were halted on orders of Dr. Newman of Metropolitan Insurance Co. Continuance of benefits is demanded.

Bldg. 107: A group of painters demand a one step increase corresponding to increase on job rate to \$1.86% approved by WSB. Failure to grant this would in effect be a downgrade, they claim. In addition, George Perruzzi demands increase to job rate for normal performance.

Bldg. 273: W. Thomas and E. Chapman demand reclassification to AA because duties and responsibilities involved in final inspection of hoods, outer shells, etc. warrant such.

Richard J. Payette demands reclassification to A with a one step increase. Since he received top B rate on Jan. 14 he has been performing A work assigned to him.

Richard Cann requests increase in job rate for boring mill vertical-stator frames for the skills involved as compared with similar jobs with same AER.

Allan T. Claypool demands premium payment for change of shift from 3 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. in week ending Feb. 24 to 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. during week ending March 2.

E. Uebele, G. Doyle, H. Hoyt and T. W. Prevencki, who are responsible for activities of others, including A and give instructions to others coming in their group and operate lathes, shapers and grinders, demand a change in class commensurate with duties and performance beyond the duties of A class.

A. C. Sheppard protests cut on standard price from \$2 to \$1.15.

A group of inspectors demands a reevaluation with a four step increase to bring their rates in line with A inspection they're now doing on final inspection of buckets which pays C rate.

Mancel Vrooman charges he has not been given proper consideration for upgrading and demands investigation.

A group of internal, surface and cylindrical grinders demand a job rate increase since they feel the skills required on their jobs warrants it.

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