

Negro Rights Report Approved by UE-301

The report of Shop Steward Robert Wimberly of Building 68 on the National Trade Union Conference for Negro Rights at Chicago June 10 and 11 was unanimously approved by the 301 membership meeting last week.

The meeting also approved the action of the Shop Stewards' Council in sending Brother Wimberly as a delegate to the conference.

The conference was called for the purpose of "putting a stop to the employers efforts to remove the Negro people from industry," Brother Wimberly reported.

He said he was happy to learn that Local 301 is rated "very close to the top as far as fighting to break down the barriers that are between the Negro and the better jobs."

The percentage of unemployed Negro workers throughout the country is much higher than unemployed white workers, he pointed out, and Negroes have less chance of getting skilled jobs. This is a dangerous situation, he declared, not only for the Negro worker but for the white worker as well, "because the employer will use the Negro as a means to lower the wage scale of all labor, both Negro and white."

The conference adopted a program calling for:

Breaking down the discrimina-

Anti-Discrimination Committee Appointed

The UE 301 Executive Board Monday night named the following Anti-Discrimination Committee: Board Member Floyd Thomas, Shop Steward Sadie Iovinella of Building 81, Arthur Owens of Bldg. 273, Board Member Helen Quirini, Board Member Larry Geho, Board Member Rossiter Light-hall, Shop Steward Michael Rakvica of Bldg. 52 and Board Member Walter Kniffen.

tion against Negroes in hiring and in promoting and upgrading.

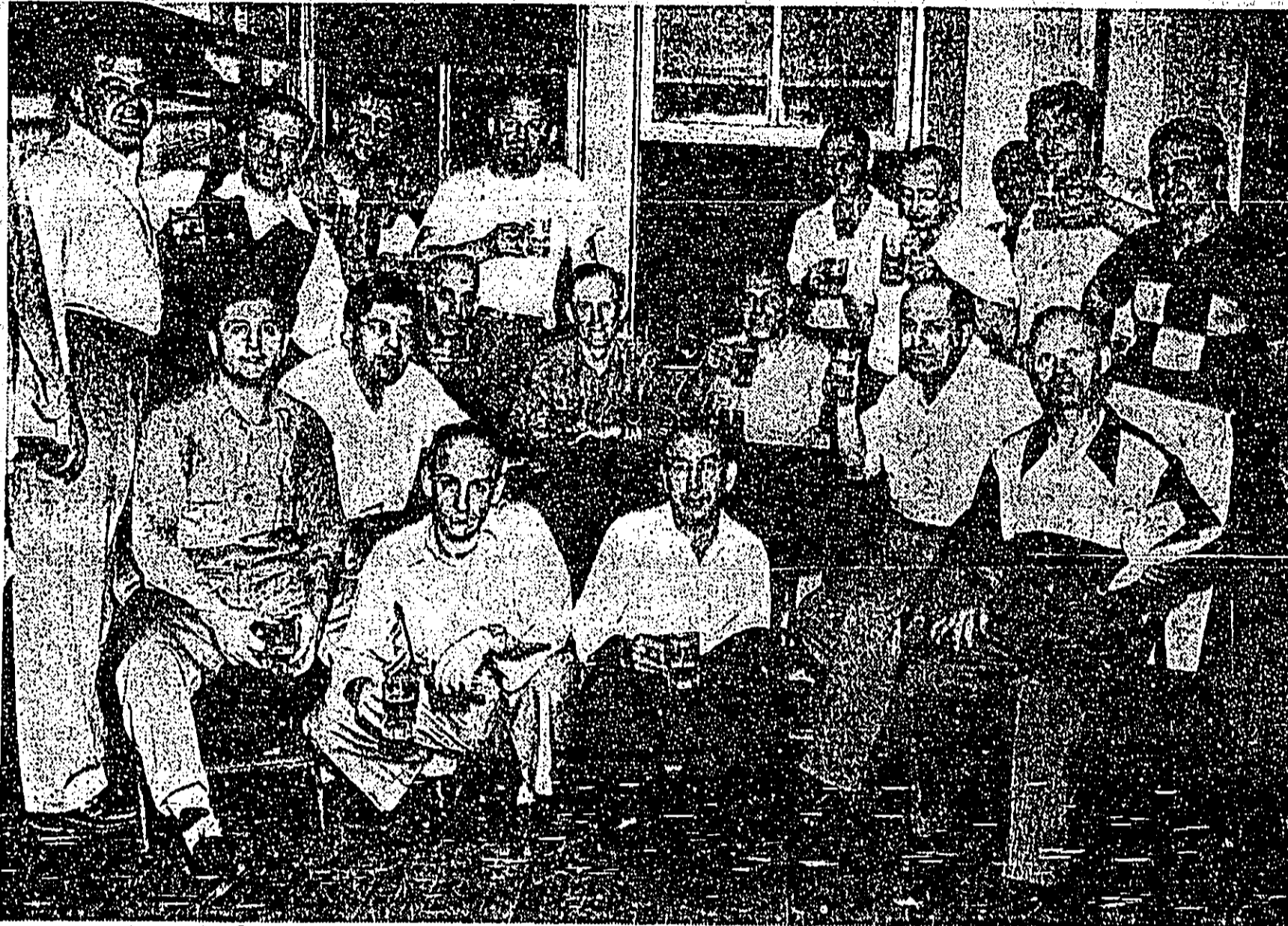
A continuing campaign to enact a national Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) law.

Making use of state FEPC laws to open up job opportunities for Negroes.

Support of court actions to protect the job and seniority rights of Negro workers.

Brother Wimberly's report in-

Section Night Party,—a Good Way to Spend a Summer Evening



Some of the boys from Buildings 52, 60, 64 and 66 at their section night party at 301 hall last week.

No Date Is Set Yet For Toolmakers' Vote

The National Labor Relations Board was supposedly still considering protests filed over elections at a number of GE plants, including Schenectady, when this week's EU News went to press.

The delay in acting on the protests is holding up the Board's decision on the date for the run-off election for toolmakers in Schenectady.

GE is using the fact that UE hasn't yet been certified here to claim that it cannot recognize UE shop stewards except on the individual word of the worker involved in a grievance.

cluded his following recommendations to UE 301:

That the union press for an anti-discrimination clause in the GE contract. (This is being done).

That UE 301 urge town, city and county governing bodies to enact local FEPC acts.

That 301 cooperate in the establishment of a labor council for Negro rights in the Capital District.

That an effective, functioning 301 Anti-Discrimination Committee be established. The 301 membership, earlier in the meeting, voted to establish such a committee.

MBA Will Continue Disability Payments

As a result of widespread protests by workers throughout the plant, backed by official action of UE 301, the Mutual Benefit Association on Monday dropped its plan to eliminate disability benefits. It decided to continue these benefits pending negotiations of the national UE contract. Suspension of MBA dues will continue.

For the present, starting July 1, when the company's new plan under the state disability benefits law goes into effect, a worker can be eligible to both MBA disability payments and the payments under the GE plan.

In accordance with instructions of the UE 301 membership meeting, 301 officers met Thursday of last week with GE representatives to make objections to bad features of the GE plan. 301 spokesmen were Vice-President Joseph Mangino, Chief Shop Steward James Cognetta, Treasurer Henry Kaminisky, and Victor Pasche, assistant to the business agent. Representing the company were A. C. Stevens, assistant to the works manager, and R. O. Schermehorn, assistant supervisor of personnel.

The chief issue discussed was that under the GE plan people on

workmen's compensation cannot get disability pay. Stevens and Schermehorn admitted that this limitation exists. But they said that since the GE plan is a temporary one, to be superseded by whatever is worked out in national UE negotiations, no change will be made.

The union pointed out that disability pay may be cut as much as \$5 a week if weekly doctor's certificates are required. Schermehorn said he believes there is no danger that the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, which is handling the GE plan, would insist on weekly certificates.

The action taken four days later by MBA means that people getting workmen's compensation will still get MBA disability pay.

Pensioners' Meeting

A report on contract negotiations will be made to the meeting of the UE 301 Pension Organization at 2 p.m. Thursday, July 6, at the union hall. There will be an entertainment program also.

He Means Speed-up

Charles E. Wilson, GE president, told the April, 1950, stockholders' meeting that the company's record profit was due to the "more effective utilization of our human resources." That's another way to say speed-up of employees.

ELECTRICAL UNION NEWS

THE VOICE OF LOCAL 301 - - - U. E. R. & M. W. A.

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July 7, 1950

UE to Demand Better Offer from GE

Joint Meeting to Hear Negotiations Report

Contract negotiations will be the chief subject of the joint shop stewards' and membership meeting of UE 301 next Tuesday, July 11, at the union hall.

Second shift stewards and members will meet after work Monday night July 10 (12:45 a.m. Tuesday, July 11).

First and third shift stewards and members will meet at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 11.

All members attending will be required to show their dues books with stamps showing they are in good standing.

Westinghouse Workers Strike at Essington

The entire big Turbine works of Westinghouse at Essington (South Philadelphia) was still shut down by a strike of UE Local 107 when this week's EU News went to press Wednesday. It is the only Turbine-plant in the Westinghouse chain.

The workers walked out June 29 over the company's attempt to destroy the grievance procedure and limit the activities of the UE shop stewards. On Wednesday negotiations were still in progress between Local 107 and management for a local supplement to the national Westinghouse contract. Under the Westinghouse practice local supplements can be worked out to govern the local application of the general grievance procedures and the general lay-off and seniority provisions and some other matters.

Westinghouse Backs Down

Westinghouse at first tried to seize on the Essington strike to call off national contract negotiations. The day of the walk-out Westinghouse cancelled the contract sessions scheduled for July 6 and 7. UE at once protested this direct violation of the law, the company's refusal to bargain with the certified agent. Westinghouse backed down and contract negotiations were to be resumed yesterday (Thursday) in New York City.

When the contract negotiations began in June, for Westinghouse plants won by UE, the company proposed scrapping the shop steward system and having a shop plant committee of three members at each plant. In exchange for this it offered the check-off of union dues.

UE Plants Resist

UE at once attacked the proposal as an effort to cripple the union. The workers in UE shops resisted when the company tried to put the system into effect.

Word was spread from the UE plants to rank-and-file workers at IUE-plants, and the workers there also started to resist the company move. Slowdowns developed

Cash Prizes

Awarding of cash prizes to UE 301 members will start next Tuesday night, July 11, at the combined membership and shop stewards' meeting at the union hall.

To be eligible for a prize at that time, a member must be credited on the 301 office records with payment of his June dues. It is important therefore that shop stewards immediately turn in June dues collected. A member does not have to be present when the drawing by lot takes place to be eligible.

The first prize will be \$50; second prize, \$25; third prize, \$15, and fourth prize, \$10.

Will Resume Negotiations Next Monday

UE national negotiators will begin Monday the job of trying to convince the General Electric Company peacefully that it will have to improve its offer on economic issues and drop its plan to destroy major parts of the old contract.

Bargaining sessions, recessed for this week because of the holiday, have been scheduled for Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of next week.

Seniority and Lay-off

On Thursday of last week George Pfeif, head company negotiator, completed giving the UE committee the company's idea of changed contract language. It was as summarized in last Friday's issue of this paper, except that Pfeif refrained from putting in writing all that said he wanted in the way of whittling down and narrowing down the application of seniority. Evidently the strong resentment voiced in the plants caused a change in company tactics on this one point.

Instead of writing out his proposal to require a laid-off worker to take a job three steps lower in his own division before bumping outside the division, Pfeif proposed a clause providing for local negotiation of lay-off procedure under the national contract provision. Apparently GE feels that through local negotiation in some plants it will be able to whittle

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Jandreau Radio Talk On GE Negotiations

Business Agent Leo Jandreau will discuss the GE contract negotiations in a radio broadcast from 5:30 to 5:45 p. m., Monday, July 10; over WPTR, Albany.

Have You Paid Your UE-301 Dues?

General Pay Raise

A general pay raise of 6½ cents an hour, retroactive to Jan. 15, was won by UE at Anchor Cap and Closure Corporation, Toronto, Canada.

What GE Offer Means in \$\$\$\$

Under the heading "What GE Offers to UE," last Friday's Electrical Union News gave a factual summary of the company's offer on economic issues. The following is an analysis of what that offer means in terms of money, and in terms of the workers' present problems.

The breakdown follows:

Wages

The 3 percent wage offer ranges from 4 cents to about 6 cents an hour. This is extremely small in view of two major facts: (1) that production per worker has gone up so much that GE made new record-breaking profits in both 1949 and 1950 on a much smaller number of workers; (2) that through IUE disruption GE was able to avoid one cent of increased wage costs in 1949.

In the light of these facts the UE's proposal for a 10-cent general raise and a shorter work week with 40 hours' pay is a very reasonable proposal. The company has made no proposal on the shorter work week. It refuses to work out the correction of women's rates, skilled craft rates, and geographical differentials.

GE refuses to agree to a provision against discrimination in employment, or to remove the overtime discrimination against continuous operations employees.

On other clauses, such as seniority, piece work, holidays, grievance procedure, transfers, etc., on which UE seeks improvements, GE has proposed on the contrary to weaken all these clauses, some very seriously. And it would freeze everything other than wages for five years.

Pension and Insurance Proposals

The pension and insurance offer would improve the present plans. But the benefits are inadequate; the plans would be controlled completely by the company, and the plans would require substantial payments by the workers.

The following would be the monthly cost of the proposed pension and insurance plans to workers earning \$3,000 and \$4,000 a year (straight time) respectively:

Workers' Payments (Monthly)

	On \$3,000 Annual Earnings	On \$4,000 Annual Earnings
Employee's Insurance costs	\$2.30	\$3.20
Dependents Insurance Costs (MBA)	2.80	2.80
Pension Costs	5.00	7.66
Total up to age 55	\$10.10	\$13.66
Added insurance payments after age 55	1.80	2.70
Total monthly payments after 55	\$11.90	\$16.36

Generally speaking the cost to the worker would be lower than at present, for a better plan. But the cost to the worker would still be considerable.

Cost to the Company

The cost of the insurance plan to the company, on its claims, is probably less than 2½ cents an hour.

The cost of the improvements in the pension plan to the company should not be more than from 1 cent to 2 cents an hour, and would go down as workers' contributions accumulate over the years.

Limitations and Trick Clauses

The company would have complete control of the plan, with the worker having no right to take any dispute up through the union. The company would have the right to modify the insurance as it sees fit, to meet requirements of state disability laws. Obviously the company could make arbitrary conditions depriving the workers of benefits, as it did on the 9-week period of the 1946 strike.

And the company would have the right to cancel the whole pension plan if there were changes in the Social Security law other than those now pending in Congress.

The actual minimum pension after 25 years' service would be \$100

Union Fights to Save Job Rights of Worker

In violation of his seniority rights, a laid-off Building 85 material handler who is within a few months of being eligible for a pension has been refused work by the General Electric Company. The union is pressing for a job for him and for full protection of his rights.

R. O. Schermehorn, assistant supervisor of personnel, told the union recently the man is "unemployable" and that there is only a "very, very slim chance of him getting back to work."

The company has been hiring men off the street for common laborer jobs which he could fill.

The union charged there is no basis for calling him "unemployable" and stated he can still do the same work he used to do, or similar work. If the company considered him "unemployable" at the time he was laid off, then it should have fired him for so-called unsatisfactory work, the union pointed out, and let the case be fought as a grievance. Instead the company tried to evade the lay-off and seniority provisions of the contract in order to violate his job rights.

The 59-year old worker will be eligible in November for a pension and wants to retire then. When he was laid off in May, 1949, for lack of work, he had six and a half years of service. The only job the company offered him since then was washroom attendant. He turned this down because of transportation difficulties. No offer has been made to him for over a year.

a month, not \$125 as announced by the company. To qualify for the \$125 minimum, a worker would have to average \$3,000 in earnings for the last 10 years before retirement.

The company announcement said that in most cases the life insurance amounts to 1½ times straight time annual earnings. This is the case only for earnings of \$5,000 or more. It ranges down to as low as 100 per cent of annual earnings for lower incomes.

There are other trick clauses limiting the usefulness of various parts of the sickness and hospitalization benefits.

Comparison With Other Plans

In contrast with the heavy payments which would be required of GE workers for insurance, the Westinghouse Airbrake plan won by UE provides for complete payment of insurance and hospitalization, including families, by the company.

Also, at Westinghouse Airbrake the minimum pension is really \$125, and rights in the pension become vested after 10 years. GE's offer has improved its vested rights clause, but it still requires years' service.

The GE offer is better than the Steel and Auto plans, but the Steel and Auto plans are better on two specific points:

1. The Steel and Auto pension plans do not require employee contributions.

2. In Steel there is a guaranteed minimum disability pension of \$50 a month after 15 years' service. There is no minimum for disability payments in the GE offer.

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GE Negotiations

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down seniority in its actual application.

The proposed clause on lay-offs (now in Art. XII) was also changed by Pfeif so that the language, taken together with changes in the transfer provision, indicates that GE now wants the right to transfer workers from one job to another without any reason, without seniority protection, even if there is no lack of work. The changes proposed are technical and are not too clear, but would undoubtedly open the door to tampering with job security.

In its complete form, the company's position adds up to a wage, pension and insurance offer that is much too low and is hedged in all kinds of trick clauses, in return for which GE wants contract changes which would enable it to take away from the employees in the future several times the cost of its present offer.

The company's economic offer and the changes it wants in the contract are analyzed in separate stories in this issue.

Money GE Wants to Take Away

Last Friday's issue of this paper gave a factual summary of contract changes proposed by the General Electric Company to UE negotiators. The following is a breakdown of what these changes, submitted by the company, would mean to GE workers in money and protection.

Piece Work

The company would open the door to cut prices on the claim of change of method, and would remove entirely the guarantee of equal earnings upon a change of method.

The intent of the change is clear—to drive earnings from the average earning rate established by a piece worker, down to the AER or anticipated earned rate. This could mean cutting piece workers' earnings by 10 cents, 20 cents, or 50 cents an hour, or even more.

The company also wants to limit the payment of average earnings so as to do away with it under almost any condition, and to remove entirely the clause providing for paying waiting time in case of machine breakdown, faulty material, long waits, etc.

Wage Rates

The company wants the sole right to fix wage rates on jobs. It proposes to take away the union's right to negotiate changes in rates. This means that the many workers whose rates are out of line could not bargain for adjustments.

The company further wants to specify that job descriptions are not "all-inclusive." This is a round-about way of saying that a man can be forced to do work outside his classification. The job descriptions would become meaningless.

Seniority

Instead of the old clause making seniority apply to "all cases of layoff or transfer due to lack of work," the company would limit it to "a reduction in the working force." At the same time, GE wants to do away with the provision that every effort will be made to place laid-off workers on equal or better jobs. Apparently the aim of the changes is to give the company a free hand to transfer an employee at any time for any reason.

And the company proposes local negotiation of layoff procedures, in the hope of weakening seniority. The company has said that it feels a worker should take a job three steps lower in his division before bumping outside the division. This might mean a 16-cent wage cut.

Overtime

While pretending to keep time-and-a-half for Saturday and double time for Sunday, the company proposal opens the way to doing away with it, by providing for deciding in local negotiations what hours shall make up "the work week, Saturdays, Sundays and holidays." In other words, if a man worked regularly from Friday to Tuesday, the company would argue that he was not entitled to overtime pay on the weekend, because his Saturday and Sunday are really Wednesday and Thursday, when he does not work.

The company also asks for a clause that "the company may require overtime work," whenever it sees fit.

Holidays

The company wants the right to take away a worker's holiday pay if he asks him to work on a holiday and he refuses.

Local Understandings

The company wants a provision that local understandings would be recognized only if they are put into writing by January 1, 1951. In Schenectady UE 301 has a large number of local understandings, some of them of considerable importance. The proposed new provision would

Swearing in Two New Shop Stewards



Chief Shop Steward James Cognetta, with back to camera, administers the oath of office to a pair of new shop stewards at the UE 301 meeting June 20. Herbert Acker of Building 28 is at the left and Charles J. Renus, Bldg. 13, right.

Spears Again Serving On 301 Executive Board

Albert J. Spears, who has been seriously ill, has returned to his job at the plant and has resumed his duties as UE-301 Executive Board member for grounds and buildings-workers.

Hereafter Spears will act as Board member for grounds and buildings workers throughout the

works, excluding millwrights, riggers and crane repair men. Vincent Palazek will act as Board member for millwrights, riggers and crane repair men.

During Brother Spears' absence Shop Steward Philip Bubbs substituted for him as Board member, by vote of the Bldg. 107 stewards.

open the door to destroying these understandings by failing to reach agreement on the language.

Grievance Procedure

All the above proposals open the way for the company to take away some important money right or protection of the workers. But the biggest opportunity for the company to chop down wage standards and working conditions would come through the changes proposed in the steward and grievance set-up.

A contract depends on the shop steward and grievance procedure for its enforcement.

The company wants to forbid all union activities during working hours, "except such activities as are necessary for the processing of grievances." This would almost certainly mean only the discussion of grievances with the foreman, so that an individual worker would have to discuss his problems with the steward outside of hours.

Then the company would limit the number of stewards to one per foreman or 50 workers, and establish rigid time limits on the filing of grievances. It would require the individual worker to sign a grievance taken to Bldg. 41, which would be a serious hindrance to the general enforcement of contract conditions. And if anyone failed to follow the exact red tape at every step, the grievance would automatically be decided in favor of the company.

Finally, a case could go to arbitration only if the company agreed that it was properly subject to arbitration. Otherwise the question could be dragged endlessly through the courts and to appeals, instead of letting the arbitrator decide whether or not the case is properly in arbitration.

Length of Contract

The company wants a 5-year contract tying down all provisions, except that the question of a general wage revision could be opened by either side once a year beginning July 1, 1951. But the company would have the right to cancel the contract if the workers go on strike over wages.