



# 'ANGUS BARKS'

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## ***1969 Strike Remembered***

Forty years ago today, huge picketlines ringed the Riverworks. Inside the plant, production lines lay silent. Outside on Western Ave, blazing firebarrels lit up the night. Union members who spent a lifetime punching the clock, were instead, pounding the pavement.

This was the middle of the famous 1969 strike. It started in October '69, stretched thru Thanksgiving, went past Christmas, continued deep into winter, and wasn't settled until Feb '70. Local 201 members survived 101 days on \$25/wk strike benefits, side jobs, and the generosity of neighbors.

Only 100 current members remain from the membership who participated in that strike. Their history is your history. No other single battle with GE has more influence on the living and working conditions GE workers enjoy today.

Do you believe you get good pay, affordable benefits and dignity on the job because the boss likes you? If so, you don't know your own history. How did those members in 1969 endure that long winter? Why did they choose to fight such a powerful employer? Are you tough enough to have walked in their shoes?

### **UNIONS UNITED**

In the 1969 strike all unions in the GE chain struck GE at the same time. It was a co-ordinated effort. UE picketers from Erie PA visited picketlines in Schenectady NY. IUE picketers from Lynn visited UE picketlines in Lowell MA, and IUE picketlines in Burlington VT. Everyone was sick and tired of GE's take-it or leave-it attitude at the bargaining table, called Boulwarism. Under Boulwarism at GE, unions were uninvited third parties. Workers were second-class citizens.

Unity between unions defeated Boulwarism in the 1969 strike.

### **RESOURCEFUL MEMBERSHIP**

A committee of spouses sponsored Local 201's children's Christmas party at St. Mike's. Dial-a-Santa started at the Union Hall in 1969. Both traditions continue in 2009. In thousands of ways, friends, relatives and community organizations helped friends, relatives and organizations on strike. When GE started a back-to-work movement in January, it failed miserably. The AFL-CIO launched a nationwide consumer boycott of GE products.

### **WHAT WAS WON**

WAGES: equaled 6.5%-4%-4% for average 201 member. COLA: For first time, a consistent formula based on consumer prices. SKILLED TRADES: Best adjustment ever won. SICK PAY: It took a strike to win 2-5 measly sick and personal days. GE complained to the Lynn Item these were unneeded 'to-hell-with-it' days. Never improved since. VACATION: 4 weeks for 15 years. RATE PROGRESSION: Established automatic progression. In the past 2 years, the majority of grievance payments to our members were based on this language. MEDICAL COVERAGE: made in-hospital expenses covered 100%. Exactly what GE is now trying to change.

When you count your blessings this holiday season, remember the brave unions and their members who conducted the 1969 strike.

