



'ANGUS BARKS'

By Jeff Francis
AEG Executive Board

Vacation Time for New Hires

It's been 25 years since we've received an improvement in vacation time. Since 1940, vacation time improved gradually each decade. **From 1955 thru 1982, 8 out of 9 contracts contained improvements in vacation time for hourly workers.** But none since 1982.

General Electric is notoriously opposed to paid time off. It took the 1969 national strike to establish our 2-5 sick days, which haven't changed since. GE's negotiators repeatedly state they do not like paying for time not worked.

FAMILY ISSUE

Many of our short service members are young parents, struggling with responsibilities of childcare and home ownership. Longer service members remember those early hectic years in their own careers, when a sick day meant the kids were sick, and a vacation week meant working on the house. Today the economic and social pressure facing young families is greater than it was 25 years ago.

GE encourages employees to use GE Work/Life Connections for practical solutions and realistic answers to childcare and parenting issues. Unfortunately, the problems facing most young families will not all fit neatly into a 1-800 referral format. **The purpose for increasing vacation time for short service members is to give practical support to young families.**

OTHER REASONS

Many corporations GE's size, offer vacation benefits to new hires coming in the door. Under our current contract, union eligible salary workers receive 2 weeks vacation after 1 year's service. Hourly workers wait 2 years to get 2 weeks.

As local management enforces its attendance policies more stringently, work/life decisions are more often disputed. When the Union argues that an employee's occurrence is justified, because the employee was legitimately caring for a sick family member, the Company always responds *'that's why we give you sick and vacation days'*. The Company's argument is null and void when the employee has less than 1 year service, and their argument is pretty thin when the employee has less than 2 years service, given the current allotment of vacation and sick time.

AUTOMATION AND DIGITIZATION

When GE's negotiators complain about the expense of improving vacation time, the Union historically argues that the fruits of automation should be shared. The introduction of NC machinery in the 1960's, and the replacement of manual machinery in the 1970's, created astounding savings of labor time for GE. Work done by 5 operators on manual machines, could then be done by 1 operator on NC machinery. **The Union simply argues that by improving vacation time, GE transfers a small portion of that saved labor time to the worker.**

Automation did not end in 1982. In the last 2 decades, the march forward by automation has continued, as NC machinery, production processes and schedules became digitized. Now everything from the front of the line to the end, has a barcode, snumb number, or excel spreadsheet. As a result, US workers are the most productive in the world.

OLD DOGS WITH MEMORIES

80% of Local 201 members have 15 or more years service, with 4 or 5 or 6 weeks vacation. Some are "sandwiched" between caring for elderly parents and young grandchildren. They have vacation time to fall back on.

None of us has gotten too old to remember what it was like to have only 2 weeks, or 1 week, or no time. **This is one contract area where the majority of old dogs can support the minority of young dogs that would benefit from improved vacation time.**

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