



'ANGUS BARKS'

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LOCAL 201 HISTORY:

1969 Strike Remembered

On October 27, 1969, IUE members throughout the nation struck the GE because they were sick and tired of the take-it or leave-it attitude of GE's negotiators towards our Union's contract demands. The strike lasted 101 days and was the last time GE workers went on nation-wide contract strike.

Today, 85% of the 201 membership has been hired since 1969. Some of our middle-aged members remember walking the picket lines with their parents. The 'story' promoted by the Company for the past 37 years is that the '69 strike gained nothing. Did the sacrifice and hardship endured by our members amount to nothing? A review of the actual terms of the contract shows THE TRUTH:

WHAT WAS WON

WAGES: The settlement was 20¢/15¢/15¢ plus a 3¢ immediate COL increase. For the average 201 member, this amounted to raises of 6-1/2%-4%-4%.

COLA: In a major breakthrough, a consistent formula based on consumer prices was established. It provided basic protection against the high inflation of the 1970's and 1980's.

SKILLED TRADES: 10¢/hr for R19, 25¢/hr for R22 - no subsequent skilled trades adjustment has been so good.

SICK PAY: It took a strike to win the measly sick & personal time we now have (2-5 days). GE complained to the Lynn Item these were unneeded "to-hell-with-it" days.

VACATION: 4 weeks for 15 years won.

RATE PROGRESSION: Abolished the merit raise system based on foreman's favoritism. Established automatic rate progression in its place.

RIGHT TO STRIKE: GE wanted to eliminate our ability to fight. The Union kept our right to strike over grievances, but agreed to a 24-hour provision.

CONTRACT EXPIRATION: Moved from end of October in the beginning of winter, to warmer months.

MEDICAL COVERAGE: Family benefits improved, because back then, medical cutbacks were morally unthinkable.

In addition to defeating some of GE's more outlandish proposals, the Union won important contract language concerning service credits, transfers and information. The contract was a victory for coordinated bargaining, as all thirteen CBC unions maintained unity throughout the long strike, and the national AFL-CIO conducted a boycott of GE products. Later in 1970, the Supreme Court ruled that GE was guilty of bargaining in bad faith, and 'Boulwarism' take-it or leave-it bargaining violated the Taft-Hartley Act.

It is no accident that the 1969 contract settlement was a stronger one than any that followed, more sacrifice went into making it. While those 201 members who went through the 1969 strike did not recover the wages lost very quickly, they won a stronger contract for themselves and better working conditions for future generations, including those of us working today.

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