

News

MOBILIZATION ALERT

**Hold the Date:
CBC Contract Rally
June 2, Erie, Pa.**

Screw That Bulb!

The CBC has launched a drive asking workers and consumers to tell General Electric to invest money in U.S. plants.

The drive focuses on what's happening in the lighting industry where GE is forcing consumers to choose between saving the environment — being “green” — or saving their neighbor's job.

That's because GE is promoting energy saving light bulbs known as compact fluorescents, or CFLs. These bulbs last longer and use less energy than the typical incandescent bulbs found in most U.S. homes — but can cost up to 10 times the price.

Even worse, GE is asking workers in lighting plants to pledge to put

themselves out of a job by buying these CFL bulbs, which are imported from China. As a company, Gen-

longer manufacture light bulbs in the United States. Since 1980, employment in GE lighting has dropped by

nology” was supposed to stimulate the U.S. economy, not lead to further de-industrialization.

Cutting-edge products like the CFLs should lead to more jobs *and* profits. GE is making the profits ... but it is sending the jobs to China, a country known for exploiting workers and polluting the environment.

GE is refusing to invest in this advanced technology for its U.S. plants so workers here can have a future too. If you haven't signed a green pledge card at work, you can join the fight. Go to **www.ScrewThatBulb.org** and sign the pledge online. Ask GE to manufacture green in U.S. plants, so everyone can benefit.

We shouldn't be forced to choose between a clean environment or a pink slip for American workers.

eral Electric is synonymous with the light bulb: Thomas Edison's incandescent bulbs built GE into the global corporation it is today. But if GE has its way, it will no

68%. If everyone switched to the Chinese-made CFL bulbs, all U.S. plants would close.

The growth of “environmentally sustainable tech-



Just a Click Away: 2007 Contract Campaign activities at geworkersunited.org.

Solidarity = Power

The History of Coordinated Bargaining at General Electric

While General Electric has been an extremely profitable company for more than a century, unionism at GE is not nearly as old. This was not because GE workers did not need or desire a union in the early part of the 20th Century. Rather, GE recognized labor unions only

after it was forced to do so and frequently after violent struggle. The first national collective bargaining agreement at GE was reached with the United Electrical Workers (UE) in 1938.

From the 1940s through the 1960s, various national unions organized many GE manufacturing plants in the United States and Canada. All of these unions bar-

gained separately with the company.

General Electric fostered and promoted divisions among the unions representing its employees, and developed its unique approach to bargaining within this historical context. The architect of this strategy was Lemuel R. Boulware, who was hired by GE in 1947, and became vice president for employee and union relations shortly thereafter.

Under Boulware's "take-it-or-leave-it" approach, GE would wait until near the end of negotiations to present its first and final offer, along with the threat that it had nothing more to offer and was prepared to take a strike if it was rejected. Boulwarism consisted of making one offer, refusing to budge from it and conducting an all-out propaganda barrage aimed at employees and the public to promote that offer.

If IUE, the union with the most members at GE, refused the offer and sought to negotiate it upward, GE put added pressure on smaller unions. As soon as one union accepted the offer, the pressure on the others was turned up. The acceptance was cited as evidence the offer was a good

one. As long as the unions were divided, and isolated from one another, Boulwarism was difficult to defeat. In fact, with its powerful internal communications network, GE could get away with telling different things to different unions in different locations.

In order to address this imbalance of power at the bargaining table, several unions began to explore ways to coordinate the activities of all the unions at General Electric. At the suggestion of AFL-CIO President George Meany, the presidents of six international unions met on September 20, 1965, in Washington, D.C., to discuss greater coordination around pension and insurance issues in the 1966 round of negotiations. The following month, the unions decided to broaden the scope of the group, known as the Coordinated Bargaining Committee of GE unions or CBC, to include the full range of bargaining issues.

When the IUE negotiating committee met with GE in New York City on May 4, 1966, to discuss the ground rules for national bargaining, GE management immediately walked out, refusing

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The Unions of the CBC

- International Union of Electronic, Electrical, Salaried, Machine and Furniture Workers-Communications Workers of America (IUE-CWA)
- United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE)
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)
- National Association of Broadcast Employees & Technicians- Communications Workers of America (NABET-CWA)
- International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM)
- United Auto Workers (UAW)
- International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT)
- United Steel Workers (USW)
- International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE)
- Sheet Metal Workers International Association (SMWIA)
- United Association of Journeyman and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada (UA)
- Service Employees International Union/Fireman & Oilers Division (SEIU)
- American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA)



Retiree leaders from CBC unions hold first ever meeting to coordinate efforts to win COLA for GE pensioners.

AFTRA Fights for Pacts at NBC

AFTRA members at GE-owned NBC stations in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago are currently in negotiations with NBC News.

The 100 AFTRA TV broadcast members with open contracts are negotiating for better health and pension benefits and for more of a voice in management's proposals to use newly emerging technology.

The remaining 250 AFTRA NBC members have joined the campaign in solidarity despite having closed their contracts.

These members also are interested in initiating discussions with NBC on how sweeping changes and consolidations in the news room affect existing terms and conditions of employment.

AFTRA represents on-air news anchors and reporters at NBC in the markets mentioned above, as well as those in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and Hartford, Conn. AFTRA members also include writers, producers and freelancers.

AFTRA is working closely with the CBC unions to obtain information on GE benefits.

CBC Retiree Leaders Hold Historic Meeting

For the first time ever, retiree leaders from CBC unions met to coordinate mobilization efforts among GE's pensioners.

The March meeting brought together leaders from across the country to meet face-to-face and share what is happening locally, as well as to plan for national initiatives.

CBC retirees are outspoken in their clamor for a permanent solution to a growing problem: pensions being eaten away by inflation and medical costs.

With no cost-of-living adjustment in the pension plan, GE's older retirees are struggling to make ends meet. Not only does GE refuse to add a COLA feature, the company even refuses to negotiate for retir-

ees at the bargaining table. But that hasn't stopped the CBC from making it an issue year after year.

"You don't win anything by quitting," said Owen Humphress, of IUE-CWA Local 761. "It may not be in my lifetime, but we will keep fighting for a COLA."

The last time GE adjusted pensions was in 2000, under a great deal of pressure from CBC mobilization and media accounts of the plight of its pensioners.

Only those who retired prior to 1997 received any adjustment.

In the last round of bargaining, the CBC won a 13th check for retirees: a welcome bonus but not something that added to their permanent pension.

GE can afford to give retirees an increase. The

pension plan was \$11.5 billion overfunded in 2006.

"We're ready to make a lot of noise so GE hears us," proclaimed Ron Flowers from UE Local 506, who outlined plans to bring a busload of his members to protest at the April 25 GE shareholders meeting.

Three of the four CBC-supported shareholder proposals are from retirees.

Several other locals also are making plans to picket at the meeting or in rallies in their hometowns.

"I believe you can beat City Hall," says IUE-CWA Local 301's Helen Quirini. "We should be telling people what we have accomplished."

"It's going to be tough," said Dennis Fitzmaurice from IUE-CWA Local 707. "It gets tougher every year."

GE By the Numbers

The pension plan

- The GE pension fund is funded to **126%** of its liabilities.
- The GE pension fund is overfunded by **\$11.5 billion**.
- GE has paid **\$0** into the fund since 1987.
- Retirees have had a **\$0** increase in their pension since 2000. Those who retired in 1997 have had no raise at all.
- The average pension check replaces just **32%** of a retiring worker's annual wages.

The company

- In 2006, GE's revenues were **\$163.4 billion**, greater than the GDP of 80% of member states in the United Nations.

How the CBC Was Won

Continued from page 2 to meet with the IUE in the presence of representatives from the other unions. IUE filed charges with the NLRB, asking that GE be required to bargain.

The NLRB issued a complaint that GE was committing "flagrant unfair labor practices" by refusing to bargain with the expanded IUE negotiating committee. GE appealed and the case was eventually heard by a United States District Court in New York.

On August 18, 1966, Judge Marvin Frankel issued an order directing the company to begin bargaining with the IUE and its outside

representatives. Negotiations began five days later.

The new approach worked. In 1966, 11 unions stood together, forcing GE to engage in genuine bargaining for the first time in more than a decade.

Facing the possibility of a strike at a vital defense supplier during the Vietnam War, the Johnson administration intervened and assisted the parties in reaching a satisfactory three-year contract that was substantially better than GE's initial take-it-or-leave-it offer.

Three years later, GE took a 101-day strike in an effort to crack the CBC unity. It failed miserably.

- GE's after-tax profits last year were **\$20.8 billion**.
- GE made **\$65,090** in profits per employee in 2006.
- If ranked separately, **100%** of GE segments would appear on the Fortune 500.

The CEO

- Jeff Immelt received **\$17.8 million** in compensation in 2006.
- Immelt got a **16%** raise, or an additional \$2.5 million, in 1996 over his 2005 package.
- The average U.S. worker would have to work **357 years** to make what Immelt makes in one year.
- The average Chinese worker would have to work **5,954 years** to make what Immelt makes in one year.



Leaders from IUE and the UE announce the end of the '69 strike.

The entire AFL-CIO backed the strikers from 15 unions, contributing money and joining in a boycott of GE products. A negotiated settlement was reached with IUE and quickly extended to each of the other unions.

Around the same time, the IUE won important court victories that undergirded coordinated bargaining. An NLRB finding that GE's Boulwarism was illegal as

practiced in the 1960 negotiations was upheld by the Supreme Court. And a Court of Appeals decision, which found legal the presence of members of other CBC unions on IUE's negotiating committee, also was allowed to stand.

Thus, more than four decades ago, the CBC recognized that it needed to fashion new tools for building worker power at GE.