

## **RETIREE CLUB LEADERSHIP MEETS TO DISCUSS PG&E BARGAINING**

**Editor's note:** This story is based on the reporting of Mike Silva, president of the East Bay Chapter of the Local 1245 Retirees Club.

Leaders of the five chapters of the IBEW Local 1245 Retirees Club met at Weakley Hall on Jan. 18 to discuss strategy for raising retiree issues at upcoming negotiations between Local 1245 and Pacific Gas & Electric.

Jack Hill, president of the South Bay Chapter of the Retirees Club, and former Business Manager Perry Zimmerman served as co-conveners of the meeting. About three delegates from each chapter were in attendance.

The retirees discussed various possible tactics in furthering their cause. One suggestion was that retirees visit local unit meetings and make a case for why pension improvements should be a top priority in bargaining. Unresolved is the question of whether unit meeting rules permit retirees to speak at unit meetings.



**Above: Retiree Club leaders discuss how to make their concerns heard during upcoming bargaining with PG&E.**

**At left: Leading the meeting were Jack Hill (gesturing) and Perry Zimmerman.**

Photos by Leslie Asher

The retiree leaders speculated on what the company's goals would be with respect to pension and medical plans.

"We also discussed what the rank and file can expect if they don't start protecting their pension rights," said Mike Silva, president of the East Bay Chapter.

Retirees speculated that this could be their last chance to make pension improvements for many years because young workers are rapidly replacing baby boomers in the workforce. Historically, younger workers have been more concerned about wages, while older workers have a greater appreciation for the importance of good pensions.

At times the discussion grew technical as the retiree leaders discussed whether proposals from Retiree Club chapters should be sent directly to retiree representatives, or should be sent instead directly from the chapters to the Local 1245 negotiating committee.

The retiree leaders prioritized their concerns as follows:

1. Get rid of the medical cap, and if that isn't possible at least get the company to pay the premium at a percentage.
2. Get a COLA on the pension amount.

3. Get dental and vision plans.
4. Get back the fully-paid medical plan for retirees who retired prior to 2001.
5. Get the 25% discount on PG&E utility bills for "surviving spouse" until their death, not for just 6 months.
6. Allow spouses who were not in the plan at the beginning of their spouses' retirement to get in at a later date.
7. Increase the death benefit.
8. Eliminate the co-payments on the medical plans that use Medicare as the primary insurance carrier.
9. Increase Medical Plan choices to include more "Senior Advantage Programs."
10. Grant a sum of money to retirees that opted out of the company-offered plans.
11. Allow the ROPA balance to carry over to "surviving spouse" wherever this is not currently the case.

Another meeting has been scheduled for Feb. 29 at Weakley Hall.