

PG&E Clerical Bargaining



Stewards pump it up during a Clerical caucus at the Sacramento PG&E Stewards Conference in January.

What's a good clerk worth?

What's a good Clerical employee worth?

You might as well ask what's a soldier on the front line worth.

When a panicked customer calls in to report the smell of gas, a Clerical employee is the first responder, taking the call and assessing the threat. When the power goes off, it is the Clerical employee who handles the mad-as-hell customer on the other end of the phone and provides the information and as-

urance they need.

What's a good Clerical employee worth? Clerical employees are the face PG&E presents to the public, the experts who process material orders, take deliveries, order permits, handle temporary power orders, close jobs out.

"A good clerk," says Operating Clerk Karen Russell, "is worth their weight in gold. There are thousands and thousands of tasks that they perform

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Eileen Purcell passes some material to Anna Bayless-Martinez during an education meeting with PG&E in the run-up to bargaining.

Clerks *continued from page 1*

that nobody particularly pays attention to until they're not done."

Or, as Debra Montanez, a 13-year IBEW member working in Safety Health and Claims puts it, "We're the worker bees."

The negotiations now getting underway between PG&E and IBEW have many Clerical members wondering if their hard work will be recognized—and what they can do to make sure that it is.

"I know the largest topic right now is wages," says Graciela Nunez, a Customer Service Representative at the Fresno Contact Center and a member of the union's bargaining committee. "We feel we work very hard for our money."

CLERICAL VOICES

The bargaining committee is going the extra mile to make sure that Clerical voices are heard. Starting in late February, the union began a series of "Drop In" sessions where Clerical members can meet with bargaining committee members during breaks, at lunch, or after work.

"The turn-out has been amazing," says Eileen Purcell, an IBEW Local 1245 orga-

nizer who has attended several of the sessions so far. "People know there's a lot on the line and they are asking how they can get involved."

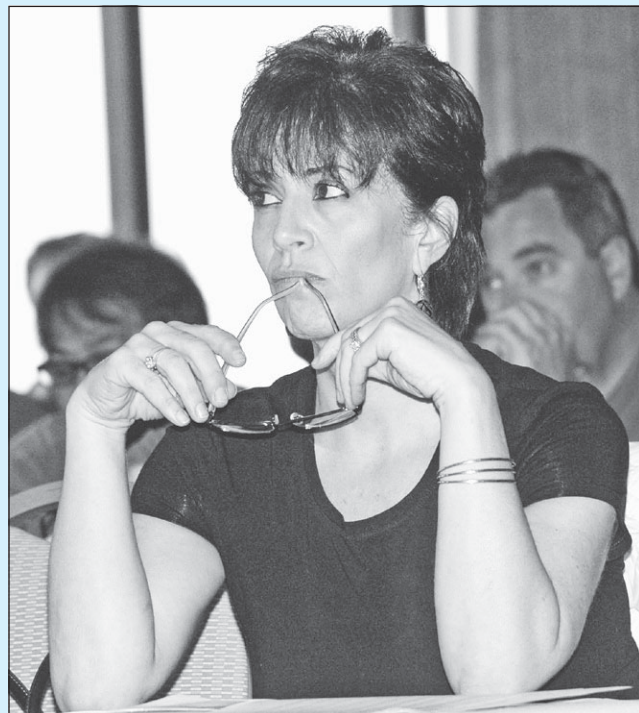
Traditionally, the chief way members at PG&E could influence negotiations was to submit a proposal at their unit meeting in March. And many members are using that process this year as well.

But the union is also accepting proposals at the Drop In sessions, and is expanding the unit meeting schedule to include "special" meetings to give Clerical members more opportunities to participate.

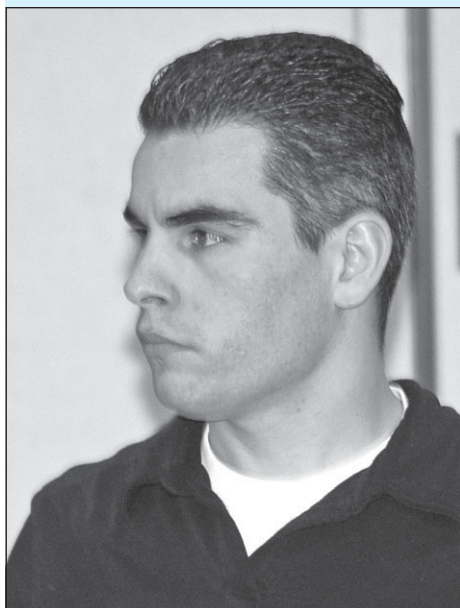
And, for the first time, proposals are being accepted on-line via the union's website at www.ibew1245.com (click the computer monitor icon on the home page).

"We're stronger as a whole versus as an individual," says Lorenzo Arciniega, a Customer Service Representative at the San Jose Contact Center and a member of the bargaining committee, "so I think it's important to be involved with it."

Members can be involved at many levels, he says—from going on-line for the most recent information, to speaking with bargaining committee members at



Dena Marchini, a member of the PSEA group recently organized at PG&E, participates in the stewards meeting in Emeryville on March 4.



Tim Ramirez listens to a company presentation.



Adrianne Franks studies a company hand-out during an education committee meeting.



Tom Dalzell discusses upcoming negotiations with Clerical stewards in Sacramento.



Diane Tatu, left, and Cecelia De La Torre discuss a company hand-out.



Arlene Edwards has her binder ready for the flood of materials that are part of the education process.



Graciela Nunez at an Education Committee meeting.

Drop-In sessions, to meeting with their local shop stewards, to speaking with their IBEW business representative at the monthly unit meetings.

“The purpose of collective bargaining is for employees to have a voice,” says Jennifer Gray, a customer Service Representative at the Sacramento Contact Center and a member of the bargaining committee. “I think it’s important that we’re all united and the employer doesn’t take advantage of us.”

To Joe Estrada Jr., a timekeeper at the San Jose Contact Center, the union is an investment in “job protection.”

“The wages that I make, vacation, sick time—it’s all negotiated by the union,” says Estrada, who has been an IBEW shop steward for nearly his entire eight years at PG&E.

A LOT AT STAKE

“We have a lot at stake here,” says Tim Ramirez, a Utility Machine Operator in West Sacramento and a member of the bargaining committee. “So I’m really hoping we get the support we need from the members, and to not back down.”

“It’s definitely going to be a challenge

for us,” says Gray, the bargaining committee member from Sacramento. “This is the first time we’ll be bargaining without our Physical members.”

But members of the Physical bargaining unit will be closely watching the Clerical negotiations, and helping where they can, says Business Manager Tom Dalzell, who will lead the Clerical negotiations for the union.

“The Physical Agreement comes up right after the Clerical. We have to be vigilant in the Clerical negotiations because anything the company tries here could show up the following year in Physical bargaining,” Dalzell said.

This is the year, then, that Clerical must hold the line and defend what the union has achieved in the nearly 60 years of bargaining that fashioned the current Clerical agreement.

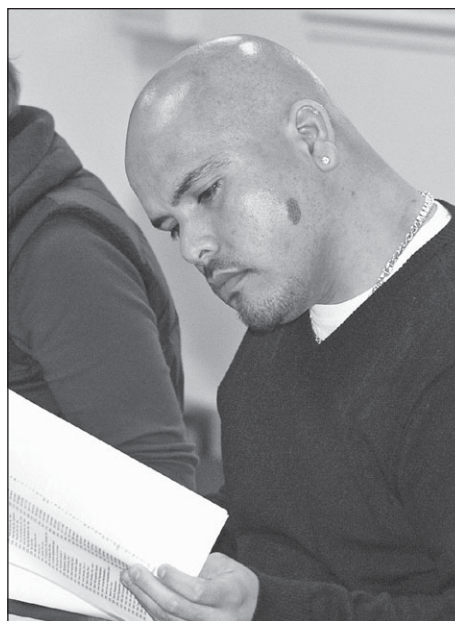
“I feel like we really will get a lot of involvement from our members because there’s a lot going on,” says Ramirez. “We have the San Jose Contact Center closing down so you have people who never went to unit meetings who are all of a sudden starting to show up to unit meetings. They want their voices to be heard.”



Jennifer Gray, Donna Ambeau and Dorothy Fortier review materials.



Serving on the PG&E Clerical Bargaining Committee are, standing from left: Anna Bayless-Martinez, Jennifer Gray, Dorothy Fortier, Donna Ambeau, Tim Ramirez, Arlene Edwards, Cecelia De La Torre, Lorenzo Arciniega, Eileen Purcell. Kneeling, from left: Adrianne Franks, Diane Tatu, and Graciela Nunez.



[ABOVE] Lorenzo Arciniega reviews a company hand-out.



Anna Bayless-Martinez pores over some data.



Advisory Council member Thelma Dixon at the stewards meeting in Sacramento in January.

Bargaining timeline

January: Union and company negotiators begin meeting together in four education committees. The committees share information and try to jointly establish facts that both sides can agree on before bargaining begins. The four committees are: **Wages, Training, Workforce Issues, and Non-Productive Time.**

February-March: Union hosts “drop-in” sessions for Clerical members to meet with bargaining committee members before work, at lunch, during breaks, or after work.

March: Proposals accepted at regular unit meetings. Special unit meetings are also scheduled to provide additional opportunities for Clerical members to participate. Proposals are also accepted on-line at www.ibew1245.com.

April-May: Local 1245 Clerical Bargaining Committee assembles and studies all proposals, and uses them as a basis for crafting the union’s opening contract proposal.

June: Local 1245 and PG&E negotiators exchange opening proposals.

July-August: Local 1245 Clerical Bargaining Committee analyzes company proposal, conducts further research.

September: Local 1245 and PG&E begin formal negotiations right after the Labor Day weekend.

October: The union and company reach a table agreement (hopefully).

November-December: The union explains the table agreement to members at unit meetings, on the union website, etc. Ballots are mailed out. Members return ballots to union by a designated date, and the ballots are counted.

January 1, 2011: New agreement takes effect.



Debra Montanez, left, and Jennifer Bates participated in the stewards meeting in San Jose on Feb. 17.



Renee Cederquist, left, and Traci Nawahine participate in the stewards meeting in Emeryville on March 4.