

What Members Want

This issue contains two stories about two successful organizing efforts. One story welcomes 150 new members at 7-Up, and the other welcomes 37 members at USF Bestway at the company's terminal in Pomona and 112 members at the USF Bestway terminal in Los Angeles.

Organizing is the lifeblood of the union. By bringing in new members, we help protect the jobs, wages and benefits of our existing members.

The two successful organizing drives reported in this issue achieve our goals of leveling the playing field and protecting our members. Teamsters represent members in the bottling and freight industries. If we ignore non-union competition, we allow the non-union companies to gain a competitive advantage. The non-union company pays its employees less, provides fewer benefits, and by keeping its cost down it can underbid the union competitors. By organizing, therefore, we protect the jobs of our union members.

There is no doubt that labor unions offer members (and their families) improved job security and safety, higher wages, important health care and pension benefits and a voice in their workplace. In my meetings with our organizers, I have learned some of the important reasons why non-union workers wanted the Teamsters.

Having secure health care benefits was a high priority. Workers understand that there are 40 million Americans who have no health insurance coverage, and the majority of those 40 million are children of employed workers. With a Union contract, these workers and their families are



covered and protected. We consider medical benefits sacred. All Teamster contracts aim for good quality insurance coverage. Having this means that Teamster members can afford to spend their hard-earned wages in other ways, since their Union has negotiated quality insurance coverage for their families.

Wages are most important. The U.S. Department of Labor reported that union members earn far more in wages than non-union workers, an average of 34 percent more. Unionized workers have contracts that guarantee certain wages and benefits for them for the life of the contract.

Secure pensions are another important factor. The non-union employees learned that union representation means that you are better able to retire with financial security for you and your spouse. There is a tremendous advantage to having the union negotiate pension benefits for you. Of all union workers, 81% have Defined Benefit Pension Plans that are fully financed by the employer.

Defined Benefit Pension Plans are guaranteed by the Government, and they provide a guaranteed monthly pension amount. In non-union workplaces, only 48% of workers have Defined Benefit Pension Plans financed by the employer.

Security of the contract is very meaningful to new union members. They are naturally attracted to the advantages of a union-negotiated contract. They have learned that a labor agreement spells out the rights of union representation, hours of work, overtime, holidays, pay scales, job descriptions and grievance procedure.

Our new members understand that joining a union gives them the power to stand up for their families, their futures and themselves. Through a legal, binding contract, union membership gives them a strong, collective voice in their pursuit of decent working conditions with fair pay and benefits.

That's what the Teamsters are all about: decent working conditions, better pay, strong benefits, and dignity and respect on the job.

On The Cover

Top Left: Newly Organized Bestway Member.

Mercury Top Row: Francisco Romero, Rene Sanchez, Bernardo Romero, Miguel Eusebio, Cristian Barajas, Jose Castillo, Andres Fermin, Francisco Cornejo, David Mejia, Jose Guad. Gaspar, Baldomero Sandoval, Liborio Chan
Bottom Row: Juan Reyes, Guillermo Miranda, Gilberto Morales, Shop Steward Fred Lopez, BA Meline Juarez and Rafael Ferrera