

Research and Education

# Labor Occupational Health Program

# MONITOR

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*In This Issue:*

- TANNERY WORKERS ORGANIZE FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY
- NEW TECHNOLOGY ON THE JOB: A SURVEY



# Labor Occupational Health Program MONITOR

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## On the Cover:

Although thousands of miles apart, leather tannery workers in Napa, California and Camden, Maine face similar hazards on the job. In both towns, tannery workers recently joined the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) and launched campaigns for health and safety.

Benzidine dyes, formaldehyde, perchloroethylene, and chromium are just a few of the toxic chemicals used in tanneries. Sometimes they threaten both workers and the community outside the plant. Other tannery hazards include unguarded machinery and excessive noise. "A Tale of Two Tanneries" on page 5 shows how health and safety can be the key to a successful union organizing drive.

Also in this issue: A survey of 20 California industries found that 1980s technology has had an impact on the jobs and health of workers in many different occupations. Some unions have led the way in developing new approaches to the changing workplace. See the story on page 8.

Cover photo: Workers picket at Sawyer's leather tannery in Napa, California. (Photo by Bob McKenzie, courtesy of *The Napa Register*.)

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## FIRST "WORKERS' MEMORIAL DAY" IS WIDELY OBSERVED

The U.S. labor movement designated April 28, 1989 as the first annual Workers' Memorial Day, and events were held in more than 80 cities to mark the occasion.

Using the theme "Fight for the Living! Mourn for the Dead," the day commemorated the 19th anniversary of the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act, passed in 1970. It also was intended to raise awareness of the continuing toll of injuries and deaths among workers. U.S. labor expects the day to become a regular annual occurrence. The same date has been observed by the Canadian labor movement for some time.

In New York City, bus drivers stopped during their routes for a minute of silence.

A labor rally was held in New York near the site of the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, in which 146 garment workers were killed. In Los Angeles, labor met in Pershing Square to honor a building engineer who died in a high-rise building fire and a social worker who was murdered on the job at a mental health clinic.

Labor marchers at a rally in Sacramento carried a banner with the names of more than 400 Californians killed on the job in a single year. There was also a memorial service at a meeting of the Southwest Labor Studies Association, held that day in San Francisco.

One of the largest rallies was in Harris-

burg, Pennsylvania, where union members placed a wreath of 268 carnations, one for each worker who died on the job in Pennsylvania last year, into the Susquehanna River.

"Workplace accidents continue to kill more than 10,000 Americans a year," said AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland, speaking in Kansas City. Margaret Seminario, the AFL-CIO's health and safety director, said an American worker is injured on the job every six seconds. Seminario also noted that "the first Workers' Memorial Day, coming at the beginning of the Bush Administration, points up the opportunity for OSHA to renew its commitment to workers."

## *Continuing Education Program*

### **1989 Safety and Health Institute on Santa Cruz Campus**

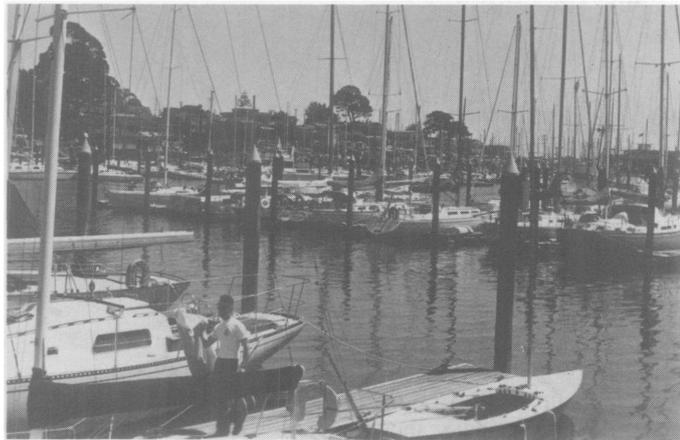
For the second year, the Northern California Occupational Health Center (NCOHC) will present a week-long summer Institute featuring more than a dozen courses on various aspects of occupational safety and health. NCOHC's **Second Annual Occupational Safety and Health Institute** will be held from Sunday, August 13 through Friday, August 18, 1989, on the campus of the University of California at Santa Cruz.

NCOHC, with which the Labor Occupational Health Program is affiliated, is an interdisciplinary partnership of several University of California departments on three campuses. It created the summer Institute to increase the number of relevant Continuing Education courses available to industrial hygienists, nurses, physicians, community health workers, union health and safety personnel, managers, supervisors, and others concerned about the work environment. The objective is to both to present practical information and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas among people with diverse backgrounds. Over 100 participants attended last summer's successful Institute at Lake Tahoe.

Designed and presented by NCOHC faculty from the University's Berkeley, Davis, and San Francisco campuses and by distinguished visiting instructors, this year's Institute will emphasize the most prominent work-related health and safety hazards, the risks in California's leading industries, and strategies for worker education and hazard prevention.

Courses will vary in length from one to five days. Participants may enroll in any number of courses provided that course schedules do not conflict. There is a separate registration fee for each course, ranging from \$100 to \$600 depending upon course length, but no additional fee for the Institute itself or for General Sessions which will be open to everyone attending.

This year, LOHP is making a special



*The Santa Cruz campus overlooks Monterey Bay and the Pacific Ocean.*

effort to encourage those involved in union health and safety programs to attend. The Institute offers labor an opportunity to gain both practical and technical information about health and safety issues. There are a limited number of labor scholarships available, offering substantial discounts on course registration fees.

The courses will include:

- **Agriculture: Health and Safety Issues**

- **Sampling and Evaluating Airborne Asbestos Dust (NIOSH Course #582)**
- **Chemical Risk Assessment**
- **Drug Testing in the Workplace**
- **Ergonomics: Identification and Control of Cumulative Trauma Disorders in the Workplace**
- **The Health and Safety of Healthcare Workers**
- **Medical Monitoring in the Workplace**

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***There was no Winter, 1989 (January–March) issue of MONITOR. All subscriptions will be extended so that subscribers receive the number of issues for which they paid.***

## SUMMER INSTITUTE

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- **Occupational Health Nursing: Current Concepts and Issues**
- **Occupational Toxicology**
- **Pesticide Contaminated Hazardous Waste Sites: Health and Safety Hazards and Precautions**
- **Reproductive Hazards in the Workplace**
- **Respiratory Protection**
- **Workers' Compensation: Healthcare, Rehabilitation, Legal and Reform Issues**

The campus of the University of California at Santa Cruz, where the Institute will be held, overlooks Monterey Bay and

the Pacific Ocean. It is 90 minutes south of San Francisco, and a short drive from Monterey and Carmel. The campus encompasses 2,000 acres of unusual contrasts—cool misty mornings and bright afternoons. Joggers, hikers, and cyclists can enjoy the natural beauty of unspoiled redwoods and meadows as well as keep fit exploring the miles of scenic trails and paths.

Institute participants may reserve University lodging at Kresge College on the campus in affordable apartment facilities. Several lodging packages, which include meals and parking, are available, ranging from two to five nights, at rates of approximately \$50 to \$70 per night per person. Most apartments have single rooms; a few have doubles. Those who wish to commute to the campus each day rather than

use University lodging may make arrangements for on-campus meals and parking.

Reduced air fares will be offered by American Airlines for those attending, and Airporter bus service is available between San Jose International Airport and Santa Cruz.

Registration begins on Sunday afternoon, August 13, and continues throughout the week. Continuing Education credit for physicians, nurses, and industrial hygienists will be offered for all courses.

Advance deposits are required to guarantee course enrollment and lodging; please act soon. For further information, or for a free brochure with complete details, call LOHP's Continuing Education Coordinator, Lela Morris, or her assistant Stephanie Cannizzo at (415) 642-5507.

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### *New LOHP Slide/Tape Show*

## Chemical Hazards in the Building Trades

Construction workers, foremen, and contractors are all potentially exposed to toxic chemicals. In late 1988, the Labor Occupational Health Program released an updated version of its popular slide/tape program **Chemical Hazards in the Building Trades**. The 20-minute show explores in detail specific chemicals found in construction, demolition, and remodeling work, including asbestos, fiberglass, cadmium, solvents, and roofing compounds. Also featured are "right to know" regulations, how hazardous substances may enter and affect the body, and protective measures.

The show consists of 103 slides, a synchronized tape, and a printed script. It is available for \$125. (including postage and handling). Orders require prepayment. Please make checks payable to "The Regents of U.C." and allow six weeks for delivery. For more information, call LOHP at (415) 642-5507.



*(Photo: California Division of Apprenticeship Standards.)*

***Order from: LOHP, 2521 Channing Way, Berkeley, CA 94720.***

## A Tale of Two Tanneries

by **Becky Plattus**

When the workers from Sawyer's of Napa, a tannery and coat factory in Napa, California, got together last year to discuss health and safety issues, there was plenty to talk about. Under the best of circumstances, tanneries can be dangerous places to work. But in non-union tanneries where no special attention has been paid to health and safety, the dangers can be deadly.

Many of the 200 Sawyer's workers have only recently come to this country from their homes in Mexico, and many do not speak much English. However, they have some problems in common with American-born tannery workers clear across the country in Camden, Maine. There, some 75 workers at Camden Tannery have also been raising questions about health and safety on the job.

This is a tale of two tanneries and the hazards which workers there confront. Both groups of workers contacted the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) to help them deal with health and safety as well as other work problems. Now, with the union's help, both are beginning to take action.

Hundreds of chemicals, many of them hazardous, are used in leather tanning. Workers are frequently exposed to tanning agents, finishes, and dyes as the animal hides are handled during various work processes. There are other hazards too. Improperly guarded machinery can cause serious accidents, and noise may result in hearing damage.

Both Sawyer's in California and Camden Tannery in Maine also pose environmental problems. State and local regulatory officials have recently grown concerned about pollution from both tanneries, since chromium and other toxic chemicals in tannery wastes can be a serious public health threat.

### THE SAWYER'S STORY

A publicity brochure for Sawyer's of Napa tells us that the company was founded in 1869 on the banks of the Napa River in Northern California, forty miles northeast of San Francisco. Originally, Sawyer's produced leathers which were used by other manufacturers in garments, shoes, and sporting goods. By the 1960s, the company began concentrating on sueded shearling (sheepskin) and finished products, mostly coats.

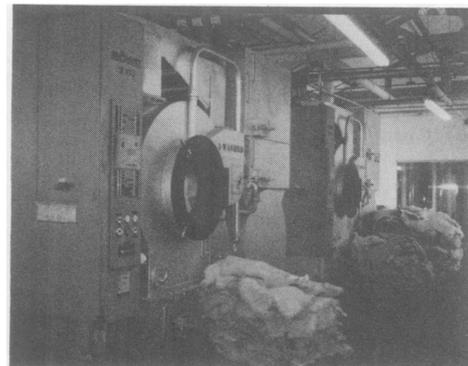
The brochure boasts: "There are many sides to the Sawyer story. There's the soft, sensuous side. The practical side. The luxurious fur side. And the sensible suede side." What the brochure doesn't say is that there's also another side—the workers' side.

On December 19, 1988, a majority of the workers at Sawyer's, in response to health and safety hazards and arbitrary management policies, voted for ILGWU union representation. The company filed objections to the election and refused to bargain with the union. In March, 1989, the National Labor Relations Board overruled the company's objections; however, Sawyer's still refuses to bargain.

### HAZARD SURVEY AT SAWYER'S

Early in their organizing campaign, at a meeting to discuss health and safety problems, Sawyer's workers formed a committee and mapped out hazards in the areas of the plant where they work. After first drawing large-scale floor plans, the workers then sketched in the machinery used in the tanning process. They indicated the hazards associated with each area, such as excessive noise, toxic chemicals, tendonitis, dust, and heat. Using this risk-mapping method, workers were able to visualize where the most serious problems were and which health hazards were affecting the most people.

The workers also took advantage of their rights under the federal and state Occupational Safety and Health Acts to get access to company-held information. It was especially important to get Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) for all the



*Dry cleaning machines at Sawyer's tannery in Napa, California.*

chemicals they worked with, since they had never received detailed information and training about chemical hazards as required by OSHA's Hazard Communication standard. (Serafin Ortiz and Alfred Martinez, workers with 14 and 12 years of service respectively, recall that much later, shortly before the union election, the company finally showed a video on chemicals and how to handle them. "But the sheet they handed out with the video was all in English, so I didn't understand it," said Ortiz.)

Peter Olney, Organizing Director of the ILGWU Pacific Northwest District Council, assisted the committee in drawing up a list of records they needed to get from the company. "We asked for safety sheets on all the chemicals, as well as records of any noise monitoring or air monitoring that had been done," Olney recalls. "We also asked for copies of the company's 'OSHA 200' Logs of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses for the past five years. Collecting this information was important so we could get an idea of what the most serious problems were."

The request letter was handed to the company with the names of the committee members on it. The company agreed to let the workers make copies of the information they wanted. Committee member Roberto Espinoza remembers that the group "spent hours in the company offices photocopying safety data sheets on the hundreds of chemicals that are being used in this place."

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*Becky Plattus, Health and Safety Director of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU), contributed this article to Monitor.*

## TWO TANNERIES

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From this information, the committee discovered that they were working with a lot of very dangerous chemicals. These included tanning agents and dyes containing chromium, which can cause cancer; several other cancer-causing substances; many hazardous solvents; and a host of irritant and corrosive chemicals. (See "A Guide to Hazardous Chemicals in Tanneries" on this page.)

Ruben Ortiz, who works in the dry cleaning room, knew he used a chemical called "perc." He complained about headaches at night "about two or three times a week," and he believed them to be related to the chemical. After consulting the ILGWU Health and Safety Department and getting an MSDS, he found out that he was using perchloroethylene, a hazardous solvent. Perchloroethylene can indeed cause headaches, which may be a symptom of overexposure to the chemical. Ruben discovered that "perc" could also cause cancer, liver and kidney damage, and irregular heartbeats.

Workers were alerted to the fact that one solvent sometimes used in tanneries, known as dimethylformamide (or DMF), has been associated with clusters of testicular cancer. The solvent is used with dye mixtures in the leather dying process. At one tannery in Gloversville, New York, three cases of testicular cancer were diagnosed in workers between 1982 and 1984. This is a rate 41 times higher than that found in the general population. Fortunately, there was no indication that workers at Sawyer's were using DMF.

The workers also discovered that noise monitoring had been conducted in the plant several years earlier, and that noise levels on some of the staking machines had been as high as 100 decibels. The OSHA standard for noise mandates that levels may not exceed 90 decibels averaged over an eight-hour day. A hearing conservation program must be established if noise levels rise to 85 decibels for eight hours. There was no indication that Sawyer's had instituted a comprehensive hearing conservation program.

Some people who worked around noisy machines complained of temporary hearing problems. The employer was not providing workers their choice of hearing protection. Some workers reported having to use the same dirty earplugs for days on end because they were not given replacements.

## A Guide to Hazardous Chemicals in Tanneries

### Acids

Many types are used; check the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for hazards. Acids are caustic, and they irritate the skin and respiratory system. Good ventilation and personal protective equipment are necessary.

Acids used in tanneries include acetic, hydrochloric, oxalic, carbolic, and formic.

### Benzidine dyes

Can cause cancer as well as kidney and liver damage. Should be replaced with less hazardous dyes.

### Chromium

Can cause cancer. Also causes skin irritation and damage to lungs, nose, and throat. Substitutes should be found for Chromium VI. Use good ventilation and avoid skin contact by wearing personal protective equipment.

### Dusts

Leather dust is created by many tannery processes, and the dust carries the tanning chemicals with it. Use good local exhaust ventilation and personal protective equipment if necessary.

### Formaldehyde

Can cause cancer. Can also irritate skin, nose, and throat. Can cause sensitization reactions and asthma-like conditions. Protect against exposure by personal protective equipment and good ventilation; try to substitute other products.

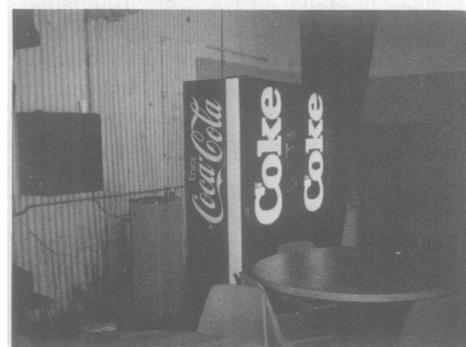
### Solvents

Many types are used; check the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for the health hazards associated with each solvent. Dangerous solvents, such as those that are carcinogens (cancer-causing), should be replaced with less harmful ones.

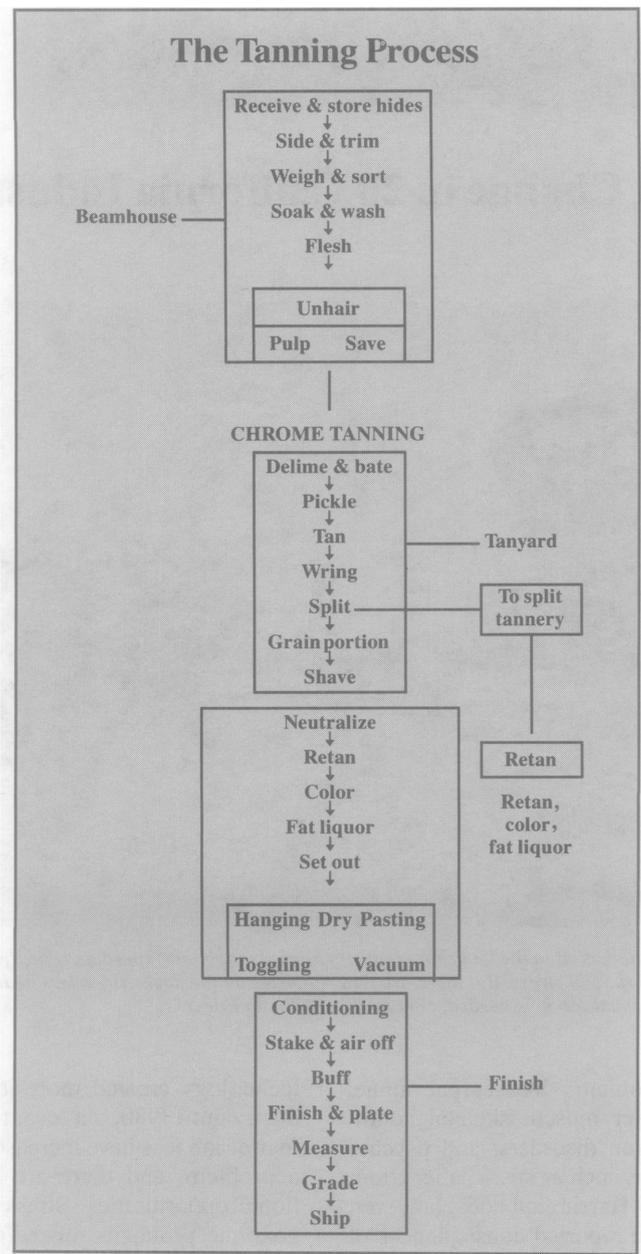
Solvents which may be used in tanneries include acetone, toluene, ethanol, methanol, perchloroethylene, 1,1,1-trichloroethane, benzene, butyl cellosolve, diethyl ether, dimethylformamide (DMF), isopropanol, and xylene.



Wheel stakers at Sawyer's.



The workers' lunchroom at Sawyer's.



## CAMDEN TANNERY

In 1986, when workers at the Camden Tannery in Camden, Maine voted for the ILGWU to represent them, health and safety was a big factor. Camden Tannery, a 35-year-old firm, is one of the few industrial operations left in Camden. In the last decade the town has experienced a tourism boom. Boston residents flood into the harbor resort on summer weekends.

One area that tourists never visit is the tannery. Despite a white, picture-perfect exterior, the tannery is less than a perfect place for its workers. At Camden Tannery, skins are tanned for use in garments made elsewhere. The hides are shipped in from New Zealand and Texas, and are tanned in a solution of chromium and other chemicals.

In addition to being a known cancer-

causing agent (a carcinogen), chromium is also a hazard to workers' skin. "At one time or another everyone has had chromium poisoning. Some people's fingers got so cracked with it that they had to stop working," says former worker Dale Winchenbaugh.

Skin contact with chromium can occur when workers handle hides that have been tanned with the chemical. Chromium is a corrosive which can cause skin irritation, burns, and allergic reactions. Many workers get "chrome holes," skin ulcerations which heal slowly and with difficulty. If workers are exposed to chromium through inhalation, their lungs, nose, and throat can also be affected. Such exposure can result from inhaling either the tanning solutions or the leather dust produced during buffing and shaving operations.

Other problems at Camden Tannery include excessive dust and noise. Camden workers complain that the staking machines are especially noisy. In fact, Camden was once cited by OSHA for not having a hearing conservation program for workers on the staking machines. There is also exposure to formaldehyde, another carcinogen, which is used in some of the lacquers and finishes.

Unlike the workers at Sawyer's, those at Camden Tannery have been able to negotiate with the company, and contract talks are currently underway.

## TANNING: HAZARDOUS FROM START TO FINISH

Although tanning processes vary from one tannery to another, there are some basic steps that can be outlined. (See the chart on this page.) Hides which come into the tannery often arrive pickled in brine (a solution of sodium chloride, which is simply salt). Hides are initially washed, sheared, and fleshed. Hair is then removed with a bath of lime, sometimes combined with other chemicals to accelerate the process. The skins are then delimed by soaking in a solution of acid.

Next the skins are graded. Then they are staked, a process which softens them. At some tanneries, like Sawyer's, skins are then passed through a large dry cleaner which uses perchloroethylene.

Sometimes the skins are then bleached before tanning. Next, tanning is done in tanning drums, using a chromium solution. In some cases, the skins will then be retanned.

After tanning there are a variety of finishing operations, depending upon the type of finished product desired. At this stage the skins are dyed, either in drums or through spray-finishing. Dyes are stored and mixed in a dye mixing area. Dye mixtures are often in powder form, which means they can be easily inhaled into the lungs. Some dyes contain chromium, benzidine, or cobalt.

Skins are then often put through a process called toggling, where they are stretched out on frames and sent through a dryer to shape them. They may next be buffed or glazed to give them different finishes.

In the finishing operation, sprayed-on lacquers or finishes may be used. Many types of solvents are used in the lacquers, and some of the finishes contain formaldehyde.

Several processes in the tannery cre-

*continued on page 15*

## LOHP Surveys Technological Change in 20 California Industries

*Editor's Note: The two previous issues of Monitor focused on the health and safety aspects of various new technologies which have been introduced into the 1980s workplace. Among the subjects examined were electronic monitoring of workers, video display terminal hazards, stress, homework, and the wrist disorder known as carpal tunnel syndrome. Additional copies of the Summer, 1988 and Fall, 1988 issues are still available from LOHP for \$2.50 apiece.*

*The accompanying report continues Monitor's ongoing coverage of the implications of new technology in the workplace.*

A survey of 20 California industries conducted in 1987 by the Labor Occupational Health Program found that many different kinds of jobs in the state have been affected by the extensive introduction of "new technology." New work processes and equipment have had an impact on occupations ranging from postal workers to retail clerks to machinists.

LOHP's survey also showed that:

- Technological change has spurred a variety of new worker fears and concerns; some involve health and safety while others center around more traditional economic issues.
- Some unions have led the way in developing new approaches to the changing workplace; they are meeting the challenge of technology with major new education and collective bargaining initiatives. But other unions have only recently become aware of the problems that new technology may cause.

Conducted by LOHP graduate student intern David Harrington, the study targeted the non-office workforce in California. Information was gathered in personal interviews and through a questionnaire completed by local and national trade unionists: union officials, staff, and health and safety committee members. Other questionnaire respondents were activists in organizations working on new technology projects.

According to Harrington, "The common threads were job loss and fear of job loss;



*Automation in the longshore industry has led to job loss, speedup, repetitive work, and stress. But there are fewer injuries on the docks since less heavy manual labor is needed. (Photo: LOHP Photo File.)*

ergonomic problems like carpal tunnel syndrome, other musculoskeletal conditions, and vision disorders; and psychosocial problems such as stress, alienation, and boredom." Harrington adds, however, that not all the reported consequences of new technology were negative. The survey, he says, also found that there has been "a decline in injuries in heavy blue-collar industries due to the introduction of automated equipment."

In the survey report, Harrington suggests that the impact of new technology can be described as a "third wave" of occupational health problems, following the early industrial revolution's "first wave" of silicosis and lead poisoning and the post-World War II "second wave" of chemical hazards. "The cost to society's health of the first two eras is still very much with us as we brace for the third," Harrington says.

Following are some of the highlights of the LOHP survey:

**Telephone operators** have been faced with new automatic switching equipment, VDTs, and employee monitoring devices. According to survey respondents, new

technology created more jobs in this industry until 1980, but recently job loss and fear of job loss have increased. Speedup is a problem, and there are fewer promotional opportunities. Stress and many ergonomic problems related to VDTs were cited as the primary health issues. The Communications Workers of America (CWA) has been involved with new technology hazards for many years; strong regional contracts allow negotiation on workstation design and other such questions. A NIOSH grant has enabled CWA to develop staff and member training on ergonomics.

**Electrical, gas, and water utility workers** have seen the introduction of robots and other automated devices. Respondents said job security has declined; repetitive work has increased; and there is more "contracting out." Piece rate systems are being introduced. While respondents reported less unsafe and heavy work, they also cited growing monotony and job stress. Northern California's International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 1245 has input into all stages of the introduction and installation of new tech-

nology. Contracts provide for training when new equipment is introduced, safe work rules, and retraining of workers in new skills as old jobs and processes are eliminated.

**Airline reservation agents** are subjected to computer monitoring and other productivity measurement systems. Respondents reported that skills have been downgraded; repetitive work has increased; and there is a loss of control over work decisions. Stress symptoms and carpal tunnel syndrome are appearing. Teamsters Air Transport Local 2707 (Oakland) said it uses contractual and legal rights related to health and safety, but often must fight on the defensive, taking action only *after* new equipment has been introduced.

**Airline machinists** work with new equipment such as robots and computer numerical controlled (CNC) machine tools. Respondents said that no major job loss has resulted and there has been no decline in the level of skill required. There have been some carpal tunnel syndrome cases. International Association of Machinists (IAM) Local 1781 at United Airlines in San Francisco has conducted workshops for members on carpal tunnel syndrome awareness. The national IAM has issued a "Bill of Rights" on new technology which is used as a guide in negotiating contract language.

**Electronics industry fabricators, assemblers, and technicians** face the hazards of exotic chemicals in "clean rooms" and other manufacturing facilities. Survey respondents said that wages are declining; there is a lack of job security; and promotional opportunities have decreased. Many entry-level workers are immigrants and young people. Work is repetitive and subject to speedup; productivity measurement has been introduced; and there is more "contracting out." Frequently cited health problems included chemicals which cause skin, reproductive, and other disorders; carpal tunnel syndrome; vision difficulties; and stress. The "Silicon Valley" area of Northern California is overwhelmingly non-union, but some unions have emphasized health and safety issues recently in organizing campaigns. Trade unionists, health professionals, and others in the area have organized advocacy groups like Injured Workers United, which includes many electronics workers with job-related injuries and illnesses.

**Retail clerks** have seen the introduction of laser-beam scanners at checkout counters. Some stores now use self-service checkouts, where customers run products

over the scanners themselves. Respondents said that although job loss is anticipated, it has not yet materialized. Carpal tunnel syndrome and backaches were the primary health complaints reported. The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) has provided Northern California locals with a slide show on carpal tunnel syndrome. UFCW maintains an active national health and safety program which offers training and bargaining assistance to locals; the AFL-CIO's Food and Allied Service Trades Department also has resources available.

**Longshore industry workers** now use computer-operated cranes and other automated equipment. Respondents mentioned a significant reduction in the number of jobs; increased workload; speedup; job fragmentation; more shiftwork; and an increase in repetitive work. They also said, however, that heavy work and injuries have decreased. Noise, stress, and carpal tunnel syndrome were cited as the primary health issues. Contracts signed by the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) generally have allowed employers the right to implement new technology unilaterally, but have placed strong restrictions on job displacement and layoffs.

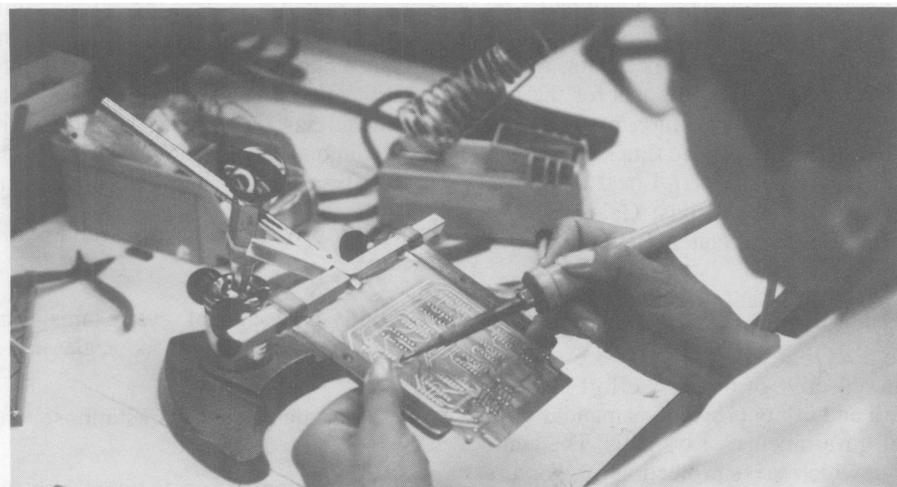
**Auto workers** at New United Motor Manufacturing, Incorporated (NUMMI) in Fremont, California, have seen the former General Motors plant reopen as a joint venture of GM and Toyota, with the extensive introduction of Japanese production methods and a new labor-management style. Respondents pointed to a "massive" use of robots and other computerized, automated production equipment as the chief

new technological development. The facility employs fewer workers than the old GM plant. The company emphasizes labor-management cooperation. Reported health complaints included carpal tunnel syndrome (stemming from rapid, repetitive motions) in the assembly department, as well as back injuries in the stamping and body department. The United Auto Workers (UAW) local at the plant has been working with management to redesign work processes and equipment; to set up a better rehabilitation program; and to institute job rotation so that workers will not face constant repetitive motion. The UAW has also conducted carpal tunnel syndrome training for members at the plant, and participates with GM on a national level in a joint ergonomics program.

**Postal workers** now use mail sorting equipment based on optical scanners and bar code readers. The older keypunch machines are still needed for some mail. Respondents said there has been a reduction in the workforce and speedup for those remaining; monitoring has also been instituted. The health problems mentioned were carpal tunnel syndrome, stress, noise, and a high accident rate in bulk mail facilities. The American Postal Workers Union in San Francisco has been participating in a State of California study of carpal tunnel syndrome.

Among the other industries surveyed (all of which have seen major introductions of new technology) were **steel, auto repair, glass bottle manufacturing, and refineries.**

For more information on the survey, please contact LOHP.



*Electronics assemblers, even if they are not directly involved in chip fabrication in sterile environments, still face exposure to hazardous chemicals. Carpal tunnel syndrome can also be a problem due to constant finger, hand, and wrist motions. (Photo: LOHP Photo File.)*

# VIDEO VIEWS

*Monitor* now features this regular section devoted to news and information about automation on the job. It replaces the formerly separate newsletter, *Video Views*, which was published until 1987 by LOHP and the VDT Coalition. The new section, to appear in each issue, will report

on the health and safety implications of video display terminals and other new technology, union responses, regulatory issues, and legislation. Former *Video Views* subscribers are invited to subscribe to *Monitor* for our future ongoing coverage of the "high tech" workplace.

## *A Video Views Survey*

### *From Coast to Coast: A New Push for VDT Laws*

#### *Working for Local Ordinances*

#### *Bay Area Unions Campaign for VDT Safety*

*Adapted from an article by Tim Reagan, SEIU Local 790 United Worker.*

During this year's National Office Workers Week (April 24-28, 1989), unions in the San Francisco Bay Area were pushing for a lot more than a pat on the back for secretaries and clerical workers. They launched an ambitious regional campaign to focus attention on the health hazards of video display terminals (VDTs) and the need for legislation to protect the people who work on them.

The campaign is being coordinated by the VDT Coalition, a network of unions and individuals who have been working on VDT health and safety issues for the last ten years. One major union participating in the campaign, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 790, has hired VDT health activist Galen Ellis to organize its own related Bay Area campaign activities.

Since 1984, California unions have been trying to get VDT legislation passed on the state level, but with limited success. "The main objective of this new effort is to get health and safety protections mandated by local governments," says Ellis. The campaign, which seeks protection for workers in both the public and private sectors, was inspired by a VDT law successfully passed last year in Suffolk County, New York. (See *Monitor*, Summer, 1988, page 14.)

Unions and the VDT Coalition kicked off the campaign during National Office Workers week with efforts to mobilize worker and community support and to identify key city and county elected officials around Northern California.

A model local ordinance has been developed which provides a number of protections for employees who work as public or private sector VDT operators over four hours a day. Those working on the campaign will attempt to have the ordinance introduced before City Councils and County Boards of Supervisors. A bill similar to the model has already been introduced in the Richmond City Council in Contra Costa County by a sympathetic council member.

Major provisions of the model bill include:

- Fully-paid annual eye exams, and corrective lenses (contacts or glasses) if needed;
- User-adjustable workstations and chairs;
- Elimination of glare, direct light on screens, and surface reflections;
- Noise reduction using printer covers and sound-absorbing material;

- Document holders with adjustable height and angle;
- Clean, clear video display screens with no perceptible flicker;
- Terminals placed at least five feet from other terminals;
- A 15-minute break (during which alternate work could be assigned) every two hours;
- Alternate work or leaves of absence for pregnant employees, and a guaranteed return to the same position with no reduction in wages or benefits;
- Employee right to oral and written information about potential VDT health hazards.

In addition, employees would be protected against discrimination for exercising their rights. Discrimination complaints would be investigated, with employers subject to judicial enforcement and a \$10,000 fine.

The campaign is a response to mounting evidence associating VDT use with health and safety problems. Research has shown that prolonged work on a VDT can cause muscle, tendon, and ligament dis-

orders, most frequently in the legs, neck, shoulders, upper and lower back. Repetitive motions from constant keyboard work can cause wrist, hand, forearm, and elbow

disorders. VDT operators are also subject to vision problems and stress. Finally, a number of studies have shown a possible correlation between VDT use and preg-

nancy or birth complications, particularly for women who use VDTs in their first trimester of pregnancy.

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## New York City Council Considers VDT Bill

Legislation to protect the health and safety of public sector VDT operators working in New York City was introduced in the City Council in the fall of 1988 by Councilwoman Miriam Friedlander.

If enacted, the bill would limit the hours per day a worker can be assigned to a VDT. It would also require employers to purchase ergonomically designed furniture, provide proper lighting, reduce glare, and train workers about VDT health risks. Another provision would allow pregnant women, upon request, to be transferred to jobs which do not require VDT work, at no loss of pay or seniority.

Labor and other interested New York City groups have formed a coalition in support of the bill. Organizations participating include the New York Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH); District Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County and

Municipal Employees (AFSCME); District 1 of the Communications Workers of America (CWA); the Professional and Clerical Employees of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU); the Service Employees International Union (SEIU); and several other unions.

Coalition members said that the bill was inspired by similar legislation passed in the spring of 1988 by Suffolk County (N.Y.). The new Suffolk County law was the first successful attempt in the U.S. to regulate VDTs on a local level. (*See Monitor, Summer, 1988, page 14.*) According to Diane Stein, health and safety specialist for NYCOSH, the New York City bill goes beyond the Suffolk County measure. Friedlander's proposal, she said, "provides better protection for pregnant workers by allowing them to transfer to other work, thereby avoiding possible increased risk of miscarriage."

Stein said that while there is still no definitive proof that VDT work can cause adverse pregnancy outcomes, the trend of scientific evidence indicates that non-ionizing emissions such as those from VDTs are biologically active and therefore a possible health hazard. "Until we know for sure what the effects of exposure are, NYCOSH believes it is a prudent public health policy to err on the side of safety," she said.

The coalition has met with Friedlander to express support for her efforts and to urge her to expand the scope of the bill to cover private sector workers. "There was a general feeling among the unions at the meeting that they would like to see the bill apply to both public and private sector workers," said Joel Shufro, executive director of NYCOSH.

—Adapted from NYCOSH Safety Rep

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### *California Would Follow ANSI Standard*

## New VDT Bill Introduced in Sacramento

Video display terminal guidelines recently recommended by the prestigious American National Standards Institute (ANSI) would be mandatory in California workplaces under a bill now being considered in the state legislature.

The bill, AB 955, was introduced in the spring of 1989 by California Assembly members Tom Hayden (D.-Santa Monica) and Tom Bates (D.-Berkeley). It would incorporate into state law the criteria for VDT workstations and VDT use specified in ANSI's "American National Standard on Human Factors Engineering of Visual Display Terminal Workstations," commonly known as the ANSI VDT Standard.

Issued in February, 1988, the ANSI

VDT Standard was developed over a six-year period by ergonomics specialists and industry representatives under the auspices of the Human Factors Society. It covers VDT characteristics, furniture design, and environmental issues such as lighting, glare, and noise. (*See Monitor, Summer, 1988, page 13.*) ANSI standards are voluntary and do not carry the force of law, but have often been incorporated into federal, state, and local legislation.

The Hayden/Bates bill would apply to any place of employment in California, both public and private sector. It would require that all VDTs and peripheral equipment be in conformance with the ANSI guidelines by July 1, 1991.

In another area, the bill would also establish a state advisory committee to review the current research on adverse pregnancy outcomes in VDT operators and to develop guidelines for employers on the use of VDTs by pregnant workers. The committee would consist of three labor representatives, three from management, and a representative from the Institute of Industrial Relations at the University of California at Berkeley.

AB 955 has been passed by the Assembly Labor and Employment Committee, and is expected to be heard by the Assembly Ways and Means Committee soon.

# Advisory Committee Urges California VDT Standards;

## Cal/OSHA Disagrees

by **Barbara Plog**

*LOHP Industrial Hygienist*

*Member, Cal/OSHA Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on VDTs*

After almost two years and some 1300 hours of work, Cal/OSHA's Ad Hoc Expert Advisory Committee on Video Display Terminals (VDTs) finished its job on May 11, 1989 and issued its final report. Although a key recommendation of the committee was that Cal/OSHA issue new California standards to deal with some of the health and safety problems experienced by VDT operators, it appears that Cal/OSHA disagrees.

Cal/OSHA, the state's job safety and health agency, created the committee in September, 1987, and instructed it to study the necessity for California VDT standards. Formation of the committee came in response to petitions submitted to the Cal/OSHA Standards Board by three unions representing VDT workers: the Communications Workers of America, the Bay Area Typographical Union, and the Northern California Newspaper Guild. The unions appealed to the Standards Board to regulate VDTs after attempts to obtain VDT legislation had failed for three consecutive years in the California Assembly.

The committee members, chosen by Cal/OSHA, included representatives from the computer industry, labor, and academia as well as other occupational health professionals. Despite this polarized composition, a majority of the committee recommended that Cal/OSHA issue standards to address such VDT concerns as vision problems, musculoskeletal disorders, and electronic monitoring.

But Cal/OSHA in effect ignored the work of its own committee when it sent a memorandum to the Standards Board later in May, transmitting the Ad Hoc Committee's report along with Cal/OSHA's own views on the various issues involved. Although Cal/OSHA claimed that its findings were based upon "an independent assessment of the evidence submitted and discussed by the committee," it rejected the committee's call for standards dealing specifically with VDTs.

Following are some of the committee's recommendations and Cal/OSHA's responses to them:

**Vision:** All committee members agreed that there are short term visual problems associated with VDT work. Twelve out of the 16 committee members (with only industry representatives dissenting) recommended the development of mandatory standards requiring employer-paid eye exams on request; employer-paid special glasses if needed for VDT work; rest breaks; improved lighting; glare reduction; and worker training. Cal/OSHA's memorandum to the Standards Board opposed issuing standards covering these subjects.

**Musculoskeletal complaints:** All committee members agreed that VDT work can be associated with increased rates of musculoskeletal discomfort and disorders. Again, 12 of the 16 committee members (with only industry representatives dissenting) recommended the development of standards dealing specifically with the ergonomics of VDT work. These would require, for example, adjustable VDT furniture and accessories which could alleviate hand, wrist, arm, shoulder, back, and other problems. Like the committee's proposed vision standard, a VDT ergonomics standard would also mandate rest breaks and worker training. But Cal/OSHA's memorandum to the Standards Board opposed issuing a specific standard on VDT ergonomics. Instead, the agency recommended the development of a new ergonomic standard which would apply to all workers—a recommendation so broad that it is meaningless in this context.

**Stress:** The entire committee agreed that there are features of VDT work that may be associated with stress. Eleven of the 16 members recommended that a standard be developed requiring that any electronic monitoring of workers' performance be accurate and non-discriminatory, and that workers have access to monitoring results. This standard, like the others the committee proposed, would also require rest breaks for all VDT workers. Cal/OSHA opposed a standard.

**Reproductive issues:** The committee agreed that there is significant concern among many VDT workers about adverse pregnancy outcomes (miscarriages, stillbirths, birth defects, etc.). It also agreed that there is no conclusive evidence at present as to whether there is or is not an association between VDTs and pregnancy problems, and that there is a need for additional research either to identify risks or to alleviate concerns. The committee was sharply divided on this issue. Five of the committee members recommended that Cal/OSHA develop regulations in this area, providing pregnant women with the option to transfer to non-VDT work without loss of pay or seniority, or with the option to take an unpaid leave with a guaranteed right of return. Such regulations would also require shielding of VDTs against non-ionizing radiation, and would mandate rest breaks and worker training. Nine of the 16 committee members considered that no standard was necessary. Cal/OSHA recommended against a standard on reproductive issues but suggested that the California Department of Health Services might develop a fact sheet on the subject.

**Training:** All committee members thought training to be extremely important. Eight of the 16 committee members recommended that Cal/OSHA develop new standards to provide VDT workers with basic health and safety training. These eight also endorsed a specific VDT health and safety training proposal submitted by committee member Mark Levin, M.P.H., C.I.H., of the UCLA Labor Center. Cal/OSHA recommended a training standard which would cover all types of workstations, not exclusively VDT workstations—once again, an overly broad, vague concept.

In June, both the Ad Hoc Expert Advisory Committee report and Cal/OSHA's own recommendations will be presented to a Cal/OSHA Standards Board meeting in San Francisco. Portions of that meeting will be open for public comment.

As this controversy unfolds, it will be covered in future issues of **Monitor**.

Service Sector Displacement

## Report Reveals "Massive" White Collar Job Loss

Job loss has been even greater in the U.S. service sector than in manufacturing during the last five years, according to a new report from "Nine to Five" (the National Association of Working Women).

The 110-page report, "White Collar Displacement: Job Erosion in the Service Sector," was released in February, 1989. It finds that, contrary to popular belief, almost half (47%) of displaced U.S. workers between 1983 and 1988 came from the service sector, while manufacturing accounted for only 39%. Because white collar job loss is hidden, the report says, there are no policies which specifically address this "massive dislocation."

The report focuses on white collar workers in such areas as retail, data entry, health, and insurance.

"Displacement in manufacturing jobs has been so brutal, we've wanted to see the service sector as a safe haven—but it isn't," said Karen Nussbaum, executive director of "Nine to Five," which is affiliated with the Service Employees International Union. "Policy makers and employers have not faced up to the serious consequences of the quiet erosion of clerical and other service jobs."

The report defines "displacement" as permanent loss of a job held for at least three years, through plant closing or relocation, slack work, or the elimination of a position or shift.

According to "Nine to Five," the U.S. economy created 13 million new jobs and the workforce expanded by 10 million between 1983 and 1988. But during this same period, 10 million people permanently lost their jobs. "This period of job growth, widely hailed as an economic recovery, masked a tremendous amount of hardship and upheaval," the group says.

The report notes that new workplace technology has been one factor in the loss of white collar jobs. Business is being radically transformed by electronic data interchange (EDI), a computerized method for transmitting transactions between companies. EDI is now used, for example, between hospitals and insurance companies for 90% of all claims. Since EDI transactions do not have to be rekeyed, employers can slash data entry departments.

"Nine to Five" also says that women, minorities, and older workers fare worse from displacement than others. The report cites figures showing that:

- Displaced women white collar workers average 16% less in pay once they are reemployed, compared to a drop of 9% for all service workers;
- Black men in white collar occupations suffer twice the earnings loss of white men when they are displaced;
- Displaced older workers suffer the longest durations of unemployment;
- Because of limited options for retraining or reemployment, more than 64% of women over 55 withdraw from the labor force entirely once they are displaced, compared to only 5% of men aged 22-54.

According to Nussbaum, measures such as expanded worker retraining programs and early layoff notification requirements would help prevent white collar dislocation and trauma.

Copies of the report are available for \$23. (including postage) from: Nine to Five, 614 Superior Avenue N.W., Cleveland, OH 44113. Phone: (216) 566-9308.



Bulbul, 1988

### MAYOR SUGGESTS VDT STUDY FOR SECRETARY'S WEEK

The people who answer phones and type letters for the mayor and City Council of Sacramento, California, received an unusual gift for 1989 National Secretary's Week. Instead of giving the workers flowers, the mayor and several City Council members have proposed a city study of VDT health hazards.

"While roses are traditional, we believe that the City Council can give a real gift to our clerical workers by addressing the hazards of VDT use during National Secretary's Week," wrote Mayor Anne Rudin and three female Council members in a memo to the Council.

—Adapted from *The Sacramento Bee*

# Clearinghouse



## *New Health and Safety Publications, Films, and Videos*

### NEW TECHNOLOGY

**A Price for Every Progress: The Health Hazards of VDTs** is a new 23-minute video from The Labor Institute in New York City. This amusing tape uses animation and music to describe VDT health hazards and suggest some solutions. The tape is available in several formats. It may be purchased for \$50, postpaid from: The Labor Institute, 853 Broadway, Room 2014, New York, NY 10003. Phone: (212) 674-3322.

### OTHER TOPICS

**The Global Factory: An Organizing Guide for a New Economic Era**, just released in March, 1989, is a 50-page guidebook for organizers and teachers about recent changes in the global economy, how they have affected workers and communities in the U.S. and the Third World, and what can be done. The book devotes special attention to women's issues.

In the U.S., many industrial jobs have disappeared, leaving behind unemployed workers and blighted communities. The new U.S. service jobs which have replaced them cannot lift families out of poverty. Meanwhile, workers in Third World countries are employed, at a tiny fraction of U.S. wages, by U.S. firms that have fled abroad. They face dire poverty, dangerous working conditions, and often violent repression when they organize to demand a change.

The authors analyze who benefits from this international movement of jobs, and who pays the price. There are closeups on U.S. plant shutdowns, the Mexican "Maquiladora" system, and labor in the Philippines. The book suggests strategies for movements that can hold multinational corporations accountable, and presents details on campaigns that are already underway involving community, labor, and women's groups throughout the U.S. and the world.

**The Global Factory** was developed by the Nationwide Women's Program and the Maquiladora Project of the American Friends Service Committee. The guidebook is available for \$7.50 (including postage) from: Maquiladora Project, Community Relations Division, 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102. Phone: (215) 241-7134. Discounts are offered for multiple copies.

**Locked Out!** is a new 53-minute videotape from the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union (OCAW) and the Organizing Media Project. It tells the story of the German chemical firm BASF, the world's second-largest chemical producer, which has kept 370 OCAW members locked out of their jobs at its plant in Geismar, Louisiana since 1984. These workers, resisting company demands for concessions, have waged an inspiring campaign to expose BASF's disregard of worker, community, and environmental health and safety in the U.S. and abroad. Despite personal sacrifices which have included the loss of homes and lives, the Geismar workers have begun to build a worldwide coalition in opposition to the company's practices. The coalition has grown to include unions, church groups, and environmentalists.

The company operates in many countries, including South Africa, and anti-apartheid activists have also become involved in the fight.

**Locked Out!** is available in VHS format for \$20. (individuals and non-profit organizations) or \$50. (all others). Other formats, such as Beta and 3/4 inch, are available by special request. Order from: **Locked Out!**, OCAW, P.O. Box 2812, Denver, Colorado 80201. Please call (303) 987-2229 for more information.

The Health and Safety Department of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers In-



*OCAW has issued several new posters on toxic substances.*

ternational Union (OCAW) has issued a new set of eight **posters on toxic substances**. Developed in connection with OCAW's training program for workers at hazardous waste sites, the full-color posters cover carcinogens, reproductive hazards, material safety data sheets, and many other concerns. Topics were chosen by workers who attended the OCAW classes.

Combining drawings and brief, understandable text, the posters are useful not only for hazardous waste workers, but also for anyone involved with chemicals at work. They can be posted in union halls and on plant bulletin boards.

Some of the posters are 19" x 26"; others are 26" x 38". Each poster is \$5. and the complete set of eight is \$30. Prices include postage. Order from: OCAW Health and Safety Department, P.O. Box 2812, Denver, CO 80201. Please call (303) 987-2229 for more information.

## TWO TANNERIES

*continued from page 7*

ate dust from the skins. These include machines which do buffing, cutting, staking, splitting, and shaving. Inhalation of leather dust can mean exposure to all the chemicals used to tan and treat the skins.

Among the chemicals used in the various tannery processes, perchloroethylene, chromium, benzidine, and formaldehyde are all recognized carcinogens.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES:

### SAWYER'S

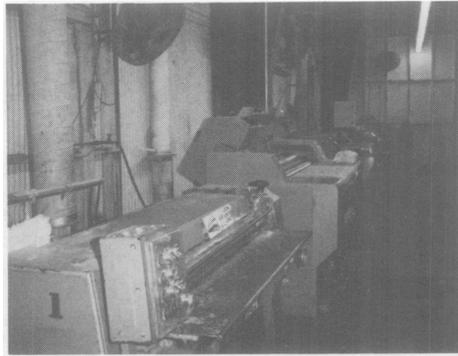
Both tanneries have had some environmental problems. In California, the state Department of Health Services investigated reports that the Napa River had high levels of contamination from Sawyer's tannery wastes. While the agency did not find any groundwater or river contamination, it did find violations of regulations governing hazardous waste storage and disposal. Three of these violations became the basis of a civil suit brought by the Napa County District Attorney against Sawyer's. There has been some talk of settlement, but no agreement has been reached so far. Each violation carries a \$10,000 to \$25,000 fine.

Chromium contamination is a particular environmental concern. Two types of chromium are regulated by the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)—chromium III, or trivalent chromium, and chromium VI, or hexavalent chromium. While both are considered hazardous waste materials, subject to regulation under the federal RCRA (Resource Conservation and Recovery Act), the tanning industry successfully lobbied to have trivalent chromium removed from coverage when it is in tanning scraps.

But individual states can still choose to regulate trivalent chromium from tanneries as hazardous waste, and California does. Thus, in California, chromium III sludge must be disposed of at special disposal sites using special procedures. So, instead, the chromium III sludge which is generated by Sawyer's is shipped across state lines to Arizona, where it is allegedly dumped at a landfill on a Navajo reservation.

### TANNERY WASTE AT MAINE LANDFILL

Those weekend tourists who visit the Camden, Maine area don't usually visit the tannery, and they seldom explore the landfill either. For years this landfill,



*Shearing machinery at Sawyer's.*

located in the adjoining town of Rockport, has been a receptacle for scraps and waste from Camden Tannery. But the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has never certified the landfill to receive this type of material. In 1985, state officials notified the town of Rockport that its landfill did not comply with state codes because tannery scraps were being dumped. The state DEP found there was a threat to public health because a quarry on the site drains into a nearby pond. It ordered the town to stop dumping all wastes into the quarry.

The town was also ordered to stop spreading treated wastewater sludge from the tannery at the landfill site because of its chromium content. Unlike California, Maine does not have state regulations defining trivalent chromium from tanneries as hazardous waste which must be taken to special disposal sites. But Maine does set maximum environmental levels for chromium. The chromium from the wastewater sludge spread at the landfill exceeded these state maximums.

After learning that it would be prohibited from dumping tannery sludge at the landfill, Camden Tannery was able to lower the chromium levels in the sludge. Nevertheless, the landfill remains uncertified by the DEP. As this article goes to press, the landfill still isn't closed down and the tannery continues to dump chromium-containing waste there.

### WORKERS TAKE ACTION

Since early in the organizing drive at Sawyer's, the union committee has followed a strategy of thoroughly documenting health and safety problems and confronting management about needed changes. Workers get help from the union and others in documenting hazards, and do some of the work on their own. For example, workers take noise dosimeters into the shop to measure noise exposure at some of their workstations.

A list of health and safety demands was compiled by committee members and circulated among the workers for their approval and signatures. The list, with 62 signatures, was presented to Sawyer's management on March 9, 1989. Workers personally took the document to their supervisor but were kicked out of the office.

Sawyer's workers have also been in contact with the occupational health clinic at San Francisco General Hospital. Some have been meeting with clinic physicians and industrial hygienists to set up medical screenings. They want to look for occupational diseases they may be developing as a result of their exposure to chemicals on the job. The workers believe that it is the responsibility of the company to pay for these screenings, since conditions on the job are the source of their risk. They intend to pressure the company to provide the medical attention they need.

At a rally held March 31, Sawyer's workers demonstrated in front of the factory for a contract. Health and safety questions were a main focus of the rally. Organizing Director Peter Olney recognizes that "only with a union contract will the workers have the health and safety protections that they need. They can't rely on OSHA or on the good graces of the company to clean up the tannery. Good contract language and a strong health and safety committee are the only things that will do it."

At Camden Tannery in Maine, where contract negotiations are in progress, it has also become clear to the workers that OSHA is not enough. Despite the fact that OSHA and the state occupational safety and health consultation program have found numerous violations over the last decade, many of the violations persist because of lack of follow-up.

A new OSHA complaint was filed by the union at Camden in the summer of 1988, alleging violations of several standards. The complaint included noise, failure to institute a hearing conservation program, and overexposure to formaldehyde. It was clear that the employer was aware of these problems; it had been cited for some of them before and others had been found by its own workplace monitoring. Results of a recent OSHA inspection reveal that these violations have not been abated, despite the history of citations.

We'll keep you posted with updates on the progress of these health and safety campaigns. Now that the workers at Sawyer's and Camden Tannery know that they have a right to a safe and healthy workplace, they will continue to move toward achieving working conditions they can live with. It's every worker's right.

## *New Push for Reform*

# “Worksafe” Coalition Calls for Stronger Cal/OSHA

On the eve of the rebirth of California's job safety and health program, Cal/OSHA, a broad coalition of labor, environmental, and other groups held a Sacramento press conference to call for a renewed state commitment to fighting workplace hazards.

Cal/OSHA, which had been responsible for setting and enforcing state safety and health standards since 1974, was virtually eliminated by Republican Governor George Deukmejian in mid-1987 in a budget-cutting move. Most Cal/OSHA functions were transferred to the federal government. In the November, 1988 state election, however, voters approved a labor-supported ballot measure to restore the agency. (*See Monitor, Summer, 1988, page 2.*)

Earlier this year, the state government announced that Cal/OSHA would resume full operation on May 1, 1989. On April 27, a statewide coalition known as Worksafe, which played a key role in the campaign to restore Cal/OSHA, called a press conference in Sacramento to unveil a “white paper” on the future of occupational safety and health in California. The document has been sent to the Governor and several key members of the state legislature. Worksafe said the goal is to “re-establish California as the national leader in protecting the health and safety of its workers.”

In the “white paper,” Worksafe proposes a 25% increase in Cal/OSHA staff, which the

group considers necessary since California's working population has increased 22% since 1982, while the Cal/OSHA staff is actually smaller. Worksafe also urges higher civil and criminal penalties on employers who violate standards; improved targeting of high-hazard industries for inspection; better protection for employees who refuse unsafe work; and mandatory joint labor-management safety committees in all workplaces with 25 or more employees. The group also calls for a better process for setting California safety and health standards, and a ban on awarding state contracts to employers with poor safety records.

Some recommendations in the “white paper” go beyond the traditional jurisdiction of Cal/OSHA. For example, Worksafe says that the state should create a registry to improve surveillance of lead poisoning cases, as well as a new Workplace Hazard Prevention Fund to strengthen labor and management education on health and safety.

After attending the April 27 press conference, Sen. Nicholas Petris (D.-Oakland), chair of a state Senate subcommittee on hazards in the workplace, held a committee hearing on improving worker safety. Members of Worksafe and others testified. One witness, Dr. Robert Spear, director of the University of California's Northern California Occupational Health Center (with which LOHP is affiliated), told the committee that

“California spends far too little of its toxic dollar on hazards to workers.” While he supports cleaning up the environment, air, and water, Spear said, not enough resources are allocated to workers' problems. Yet in many instances, he pointed out, workers are exposed to toxic hazards before the general public, and greater spending on workplace hazards would benefit society as a whole.

Worksafe, which is chaired by Los Angeles District Attorney Ira Reiner, is composed of individuals and groups statewide, including such organizations as the Sierra Club, the Toxics Coordinating Project, the California Trial Lawyers Association, and the California Conference of Machinists. For more information, contact Worksafe, 8400 Enterprise Way, Suite 104, Oakland, CA 94621. Phone: (415) 638-1174.

### **WORKSAFE CONFERENCE**

**“Setting a Worker Safety and Health Agenda for the 1990s”**

*sponsored by Worksafe and LOHP*

Friday, Oct. 6 and Saturday, Oct. 7, 1989  
University of California, Berkeley Campus

**Call Worksafe or LOHP for Details**

**Labor Occupational Health Program  
Institute of Industrial Relations  
University of California  
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