

OFFICERS' REPORT



to the
91st INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
of the
American Flint Glass
Workers Union
AFL-CIO

Hollywood, Florida

June 1977

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REPORT OF
INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT
GEORGE M. PARKER

The American Flint Glass Workers Union organized on July 1, 1878 in the city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania is now in its 99th year of existence. It is recognized not only as one of the oldest, but one of the most respected trade unions within the labor movement of the world. Approximately 400 Delegates, representing 190 local unions have assembled here in Hollywood, Florida in the 91st International Convention.

Through 1959, the Union met annually. Conventions held in the early years, and through the 1920's had little resemblance to present convention arrangements. The organization for more than forty years was comprised of an exclusively male membership of skilled glassworkers and mold makers. There were no women among the membership. The number of Delegates in the Convention varied from the 31 men who were in attendance at the first Convention to 133 Delegates that were in the 1930 Convention held in Wildwood, New Jersey. In those early days, Conventions were held during the summer months; usually in the month of July when the glass furnaces were down for repair. Convention sessions were usually held in the auditorium of a local high school and the delegates found room accommodations with the residents of the town where the Convention was held. Large hotels, motels and meeting complexes now available did not exist in those days. The major hotels that did exist in these early days that could accommodate large groups were located in major cities. Rates were usually such that they could not be afforded by plant workers who made up the delegation. The records and library of the International Union are full of memorabilia of those bygone days.

It is always difficult to satisfy everyone concerning the site of a Union Convention. Back in those days, however, Conventions were held in such cities as Steubenville, Ohio; Evansville, Indiana; Sandusky, Ohio; Cumberland, Maryland; Egg Harbor, New Jersey; Marion, Indiana; Cambridge and Tiffin, Ohio, and other small towns that were then the center of major glass production facilities. With the passage of the Wagner Act, under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, an entire new era of unionism burst on the American scene. Workers for the first time obtained the full right of franchise to select by secret ballot a collective bargaining agent of their own choosing, and managers and plant owners were forbidden by law from taking action against workers which had long prevented them from joining Unions without harassment and fear. The yearning for a voice in their working

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glass industry. Where in the past the summer months have been times of curtailment we may find that our plants will be busy preparing orders for winter; as gas may be available in the summer months that will not be available in the colder months when millions of homes must be heated by gas in addition to meeting the necessities of industry.

The Carter administration has a comprehensive program before Congress on the entire energy question. There is wide debate concerning all aspects of the issue, but while the debate rages the problem will continue and if answers are not found it will be the glass workers and others who labor in the nation's factories who will have their livelihoods affected as a result of plant shutdowns. Answers must be found to this complex problem.

Health Problem at Port Allegany

We attempt to keep the membership abreast of the major activities of the International Union through the trade circular. It is impossible and sometimes inadvisable to reproduce in the trade circular everything that transpires. We believe, however, that our membership should know of the tremendous amount of work we have been doing over the past few years to be helpful to our membership employed in the Port Allegany, Pennsylvania plant of the Pittsburgh Corning Corporation.

In 1964 Pittsburgh Corning introduced into the Port Allegany plant a manufacturing operation that required the use of amosite asbestos. The product manufactured of this material was used for insulation and sold under the trade name "Unibestos." It was manufactured in the plant from 1964 until 1972 when it was stopped.

It was discontinued as a result of revelations coming out of other plants where asbestos was used to the effect that asbestos was a serious health hazard subjecting those exposed to it to mesothelioma (cancer of the lining of the lungs or abdomen) and in addition cancer of the colon and rectum. Over a period of time it was estimated that more than 800 workers affiliated with our Local 1019 were exposed to the danger. The symptoms of the illness do not show up immediately, but begin to appear from fifteen to twenty years after exposure. It has been estimated that approximately one third of those exposed die of asbestos related diseases.

We are sure that many have seen on television or read in the press of instances in recent times where workers have been exposed unknowingly to various cancer causing agents and chemicals used in industrial processes throughout the nation.

We were first alerted to the Port Allegany situation by Dr. W. M. Johnson who was previously affiliated with the United States Department of Health. Later we contacted Drs. Irving Selikoff and Edwin Holstein affiliated with the Mount Sinai School of Medicine of the City University of New York. These two doctors and particularly Dr. Selikoff are recognized as world authorities on diseases caused by asbestos and other exposures to toxic chemicals and materials.

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In conjunction with the International Union the doctors have drawn up a program to be put in place in Port Allegany in the near future that would monitor the health of all those exposed so that remedial treatment might be instituted at the earliest state that a malignancy might occur, or an indication be given that infection is beginning. This program would cost in excess of \$100,000 a year to implement. We are awaiting the reply of the company. We are hopeful that we will receive a favorable answer, but if we do not we do not intend to allow the matter to rest. We believe it is the responsibility of the company, under whose direction and within whose premises the men were exposed, to do everything possible to preserve their health in the years ahead. We are certain that we can save many lives by early detection.

We also included in conjunction with the program an educational campaign urging those who smoke to discontinue their use of tobacco. Research has demonstrated that those who use tobacco and also been exposed to asbestos have a greater risk of contracting mesothelioma than non-smokers.

Contract Negotiations for 1977

The last major contracts of the American Flint Glass Workers Union were of three years duration and were negotiated in the second half of 1974 and the first half of 1975. All of these major contracts are expiring in the months ahead.

These contracts are applicable to mold makers employed in the glass container and commercial mold industry, which cover approximately 4,000 journeymen mold makers and apprentices, in addition to automatic machine plant contracts with companies such as the Libbey Glass Division of Owens-Illinois, Anchor Hocking Corporation, Federal Glass Company, Brockway Glass Company, Jeannette Corporation, and Indiana Glass must be agreed upon. Two contracts must also be negotiated with the Kimble Division of Owens-Illinois located at Vineland, New Jersey and Warsaw, Indiana. About 10,000 members of our union are employed in these automatic machine plant factories producing pressed and blown glass tableware, baking ware, and other glass products.

Contracts will also be expiring applicable to more than 11,000 or more workers employed in twenty-four plants throughout the United States and Canada of the Corning Glass Works. The negotiations with Corning usually begin with the lead contract being consummated in Corning, New York following which each of the branch plant contracts are negotiated. With twenty-four plants involved contract talks usually begin early in November and continue until all contracts are negotiated in the twenty-four plants. Usually negotiations with Corning do not end until the month of June. This, of course, is a tremendous task and requires the full attention of the International President.

On several occasions local unions have requested that I should head their particular contract negotiations. It is just impossible for me to do so. The major pattern of glass industry settlements usually emerges from the contract negotiations con-

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