

THE ELECTION: What It's All About

Published By

The Rank-and-File Committee
To Elect Rufus Burke
President Of Local 1299



Tracing the history of Local 1299 -- a heart-breaking task -- we backtrack on a trail forever dotted with broken promises. For the rank-and-file segment of the membership (those who yet are forced to *work* for a living!), it has been an unpopular history of broken dreams, nightmares, and betrayal.

Simply put: Local 1299 has been too long in the hands of those who refuse to relate to the very real needs of working people. This very negative and extremely cruel condition has been allowed to live and flourish for such a long time until . . . it is now taken for granted by working people that "Local Union Leadership" means, quite simply, "What are we going to have to give up this time?"

As a matter of truth -- should we lift our fogged glasses -- our leadership (?) has been permitted to operate as they have so chosen for so long that, not only have they become smugly comfortable, but they are also reckless beyond the limits of intelligent reason.

(But did they think for one moment that we, the working people, would NEVER awaken from our slumber??)

Apparently, for they continue to become more and more brash every day and more and more the disciples of audacity.

Disregarding the desires of those they are elected to represent, they have historically (and presently) appointed to positions of responsibility anyone who will join them in their irresponsible sell-out tactics, anyone who follows their risky lead irrespective of where it takes us, the workers, who must always and everywhere suffer the consequences from an insolent and uncaring leadership. And even the fact that, in a dark secrecy, away from the eyes of the unsuspecting membership, they dispose of our monies in a direction that gains for the membership **PRECISELY NOTHING**.

And still again, *nowhere* does this blatant irresponsibility assert itself more than in the lack of protection accorded workers in the Grievance procedure. Wherever we look, the scenario is one and the same: at the International level, in the District area, on the local scene, it is all the same: *we are without voice*. No one speaks in *our best interests*; we are seldom even spoken to, whereas often we are spoken of -- most often to our detriment.

*This, however, is the year of change
A new dawn breaks, and with the new sun-*

rise -- signifying the new dawn as it does -- a penetrating light of togetherness, of workers' unity, bathes us in the floodlights of new direction, a new epoch of history. A warming light that compels our collective wills to map out and set out on the new course, the "right" course.

With the entire working force as our conscience and in harmony with other candidates who cry out in our, the workers', behalf, we must -- all of us -- resolutely commit ourselves to effect the kind of meaningful change wherein we as workers will be proud to belong to Local 1299; wherein, in fact, we as workers will conduct the business of Local 1299.

A model Union, a Union representative of working people, a **TRUE UNION** -- this is what we are in pursuit of.

A True Union is a Union that lives up to its published ideals, its pre-announced objectives. Such objectives for Local 1299 may be found on page 1, Article II, of the Bylaws of Local 1299:

ARTICLE II OBJECTIVES

Section 1. **TO UNITE** in this Local Union, regardless of race, creed, color or nationality, all working men and working women who are members of The United Steelworkers of America (hereinafter referred to as the "International Union") and who are within the jurisdiction of this Local Union.

Section 2. **TO ESTABLISH** through collective bargaining adequate wage standards, shorter hours of

work, and improvements in the conditions of employment for workers in our industry.

Section 3. **TO ENGAGE** in educational, legislative, political, civic, social welfare, community and other activities; to advance and safeguard the economic security and social welfare of workers in industry, the International Union, its Local Unions, and the free labor movements of the United States, Canada and the world; to protect and extend our democratic institutions and civil rights and liberties, and to perpetuate and extend the cherished traditions of democracy and social and economic justice in the United States, Canada and the world community.

Section 4. **TO TAKE** all steps and actions consistent with the Constitution and policies of the International Union and these Bylaws to implement and carry out the objects, rights, activities and responsibilities of this organization and the International Union.

Such are the lofty ideals inherent in the objectives for this organization. Our task, at this juncture in time, is to insist upon a constant struggle towards the realization of these objectives. Bearing this in mind, with your approval and active participation, we will steer our ship onto these rough waters.

Rough because, according to the undeniable evidence, our present "Leadership" -- Local, District and International -- remain indifferent to any objective that does not reap for them personal rewards. Therefore we must shift for ourselves.

VOTE!

Wednesday June 27

6am-6pm

Local 1299 Union Hall

11424 W. Jefferson, River Rouge

THE REAL

We pledge ourselves to inform, educate and organize the rank-and-file membership of Local 1299 so that through our concerted efforts we can achieve the following goals. We maintain that these goals are the minimum conditions that must exist in our Union if the Union is really serving the interests of all the workers. We understand further that the struggle to achieve these goals will require the maximum effort of a united rank-and-file at the Local level, which is the only basis upon which such changes can be realized:

Right to Strike

The only REAL power that workers have to enforce their needs is the power to halt production when necessary. This power is no longer ours: it has been sold out to the companies for a song.

In fact, there is little basis to even DISCUSS the fight for ANY of our REAL needs until the Basic Steel Industry Conference (600 Local officials) has REPUDIATED the recent No-Strike Pledge. The conference and our International, District and Local "leaders" IMPOSED this treachery on us without ONE word of discussion among the membership or ONE VOTE being taken.

The whole affair makes a mockery of our Union. If our needs were never met through the horse-trading of the "grievance procedure" -- in which all the cards are stacked against us -- how can they now POSSIBLY be met by entrusting our fate, completely and legally, to five wealthy lawyers (Arbitrators) who have never experienced working in a steel mill?!

The right to strike should not be used indiscriminately, but there is absolutely no reason that a local cannot decide intelligently, by majority vote of all members, when a strike is worthwhile.

We understand that under present conditions, the right of any local to call strikes cannot be established by that one local alone. Therefore we understand that electing us is only the beginning of the struggle to regain the right to strike, and we pledge ourselves and the resources of Local 1299 to an intensive campaign to unite with all locals across the continent towards this end.

Union Democracy

A Union is only effective to the extent that all of its members can democratically and equally participate in and identify with its decisionmaking processes. A Union that is run from the top by a small clique can never mobilize the full support of its members -- and will never even be on the right course, since only the membership can determine what they need and what they're willing to do for it.

Therefore we will work to bring before the membership of our own local and other locals proposals to establish the following basic democratic rights:

-- Return to the membership the right to ratify all contractual agreements, and fight for the right of divisions, departments and units to ratify any lower-level agreements applying to these areas.

-- Establish the right of locals to strike without International approval.

-- Full accounting of all monies deposited by the United Steelworkers locals in the International Strike & Defense Fund since the last time this Union had a strike (1959). Since the International has gone on record, without membership approval, to say that there cannot be a strike until August, 1977 (and what's to keep them from doing the same thing for 1980, 1983, 1986, etc., etc?), we pledge our local resources, in order to protect the powers we must have over our own situation, to re-establish the principle of DEMOCRATIC DECISIONMAKING on this issue. In addition, we will fight to compel the International to turn over to any locals calling their own strikes, sufficient funds from the International Strike and Defense Fund to ensure the success of these actions. Currently there is over \$44,000,000 in our Strike Fund; it has not been used and may never be used, so it's high time the membership had an opportunity to decide how best to use these monies.

-- Establish a clear procedure under our Bylaws for electing and removing all departmental stewards and safetymen, and proceed immediately to hold such elections in all departments, all turns.

-- Return to local members the power to determine the exact amounts of all local officers' salaries and any increases in these salaries.

-- All full-time Union officials' salaries should not exceed the gross wages of the lowest-paid Union member.

-- Eliminate the initiation fee.

-- Full disclosure of all Local financial affairs, including investments, expenditures, expense accounts, and conflicts of interest at Local and International levels.

-- Morning sessions of the monthly General Membership Meetings, so that workers on afternoons can participate in Local affairs.

-- Regular monthly divisional meetings, without fail.

-- No Union funds or Union endorsement to go to candidates running for offices outside the Union (e.g., School Board, Council, etc.) without membership approval.

-- FORCEFUL Union action against discrimination, favoritism, and racism WHEREVER they exist. Choice of job assignments and opportunities for job upgrading, training, move-ups, and transfers should be based strictly on seniority and qualifications. No more favoritism or discrimination should be allowed at work on ANY basis whatsoever. All workers must be educated to the fact that discrimination makes fools of us all. We're all WORKERS, and we cannot afford to let management or the Union or ANYONE divide us.

Women's Rights

Our new sister steelworkers are out here for exactly the same reasons as the men. At the same time, we recognize our sisters have their own special needs.

Therefore we pledge to work with our sisters to guarantee:

-- Fully-paid maternity leaves for one year from the date of verified pregnancy.

-- Quality day care facilities for women with children. These facilities will be provided free by the Union until such time as the Union has compelled the Company to provide all or part of the funding.

-- Strict discipline against any brother who subjects a sister to any form of sexual coercion.

-- Women to establish their own Women's Department within the Local to deal with their special problems and needs.

-- Adequate locker room facilities for women.

Safety and Health

We see every day that the Company will not undertake any of the projects that would REALLY make this plant safe and healthy for the workers. Therefore the workers have the right and the duty to themselves to do WHATEVER IS NECESSARY to fight for safe and healthful working conditions.

Union officers must back these efforts or else they aren't worth one penny of their salaries. In order to establish and maintain safe and healthful working conditions, we shall have to act vigorously against the so-called "rights" of management to ignore our safety and health. We pledge to use aggressively every existing law pertaining to decent human standards in the mill, but we also know that the whole rank-and-file shall have to unite in a struggle on higher levels.

Certain areas of the plant must be cleaned up IMMEDIATELY, including especially the Sinter Plant, the Coke Ovens, the Blast Furnaces, the Cold Mill -- and any other areas where we, the workers, know there are imminent dangers to life or health.

A mandatory, paid, extensive safety and first-aid school should be established for all elected safety committeemen.

Once ONE worker refuses a job for safety reasons, the Company should never be able to compel or ask another worker to perform the same job. No one refusing work for safety reasons should have to accept reassignment if he or she doesn't want the other job. After all, the safety of our machinery and plant is the COMPANY'S responsibility.

In certain departments (e.g., Coke Ovens), workers should be able to retire after 15 years with full pension plus an additional "Unsafe Job" or "Unhealthy Job" premium.

Management Control

The history of our Union over the past 15 years is a history of the steady erosion of our rights and powers to determine the conditions under which we must work -- crew sizes, speed of work, job definitions, scheduling, overtime and down time, maintenance and repair of machinery, testing and upgrading, lay-offs, etc., etc. This

WANTED:

BADGE NO.: 29384

AGE: 35

HEIGHT: 5' 7"

WEIGHT: 140 lbs.

SENIORITY: 14 years

DEPARTMENT: Transportation

CRIME: Suspect dares to challenge the overall insensitivity by present Union leadership to the NEEDS of the workers. Should be considered extremely dangerous by all persons who wish to retain the present rip-off methods of our Union.



... Also WANTED by Rank-and-File Workers for PRESIDENT, Local 1299

RUFUS E. BURKE FOR PRESIDENT. BEWARE, OPPONENTS OF GOOD UNIONISM: THIS MAN IS DDT TO UNION "LICE."

As a result of a close association with Union procedures during the past few years, Brother Burke -- disliking totally the lack of recognition, respect, and even representation rendered to the membership in general -- has found it necessary to involve himself (usually in the role of Devil's advocate) in not only the parliamentary struggles that often occur at the Hall, but also the numerous practical struggles that have evolved because of Management infringements on the rights of the workers.

The exercising of such initiatives, one would like to think, should have done much to gather praise from an elected leadership chosen to pursue precisely those same ends. Alas! Such was not the case at all! Nay -- to tell the truth, Brother Burke has been much maligned by that leadership; in fact, he has been slandered by deed and by inference.

There is no sight more common, if judgment is to be fair, than our representative from the Chair shamelessly and pointedly ignoring the upraised hand of Brother Burke, or, in other instances, mouthing such insults as, "For Christ's sake, sit down and shut up, Burke!" And the likes of this on the most crucial occasions, at those times when a game (con game) is being run, at those times when "all" sides of an important issue deserve to be aired.

Brothers and Sisters! At this point in our mutual struggle to return our Union to the capable and sincere hands of the membership, it is indeed important that we examine very closely the reason for ostracizing those Brothers who think only of the common good. The rights of the total membership are ignored when one brother is victimized by parliamentary persecution. Much more so when that brother is dedicated to the principle of non-partisan unionism.

But we have faith in your ability to determine what and who is best for you: for on more than one occasion during the past few years you have righteously shocked a leadership who places your intelligence somewhere between the level of idiot and imbecile.

Twice you have responded to a negation of your rights by overwhelmingly demonstrating a workers' solidarity that factually gives rise to the sentiment of WORKERS' CONTROL for our Union.

Remember the unprecedented rally of support for Brother Burke to reverse the much-discredited decision to deny a righteous protest? You, the membership, won that protest by deluging District and International with a thunderstorm of signatures. Your just petition was wind-swept into the stern faces of International leadership to the tune of over 4,000 signatures. It was a good moment -- an incident of which to be proud.

And just recently when, in the dreadful wake of death and serious injury, the question of Health and of Safety leapt forth at Zug Island -- once again your concerted effort was beyond reproach. For it was your united voice that set into helter-skelter motion hurried arrangements for meetings between your Union leadership and certain top-level company officials. Therefore we know for sure that among you are many beautiful brothers.

But politically? Politically, as well, you are to be commended. The astonishing and unexpected showing of Brother Burke in the special election that came about because of your unflinching steadfastness in the face of local-leadership-power, that unparalleled attempt to introduce a new format for struggle in a heroic bid to neutralize total power of unsanitary local union politics by going after a top elective position (Financial Secretary), signalled a new and profound political awareness on the part of our membership.

Moreover, with the election of Brother Earl Covington, a Union brother with no prior experience, a brother with only a meaningful platform -- but a heart overfilled with sincerity -- it must duly be noted that the members'

political maturity has advanced by leaps and bounds. Again: you are beautiful brothers.

Now, once again, we are confronted with a seemingly insurmountable task. The job that stares us in the face demands not only unity and dedication and commitment, but also our total participation in the Mill and at the ballot box. More than anything, however, it demands an understanding on our parts that this election, historic by its very nature, zeroes in not so much on Brother Burke but, more, on what it is that Brother Burke is attempting to do.

It must be made very clear that the election of candidates who join us in fighting our battles is the means, and not the end. So it is that on election day we must find ourselves in the front ranks, expressing not only our historic dissatisfaction with what we live under, but also, more deeply, must we express our commitment and our workers' solidarity in the prodigious task of liberating our Union.

Brother Burke is running as an independent. That is, he is not part nor parcel of any slate. And we think that's Right On! We think so because, after his election to the Presidency, his loyalties will necessarily lie with those who support the just cause of worker representation: that is, with YOU, with the TOTAL MEMBERSHIP. So we can be sure, for a change, that we don't have a president who, from the very jump, is saddled with political debts. Isn't that in and of itself worth the price of admission? And the price is only the vote -- a righteous vote for a righteous dude.

Of course we anticipate the question (the position, really) that alone little can be done against the team -- and indeed, that position should be presented, presented to be destroyed. For notwithstanding the fact that the "team" is responsible for our present very negative situation, overbalancing (and underlying) that position is the principle, the concept, the constitutional reality, that the membership is the final voice in the affairs of the Union.

So it becomes easy to see that with a member (or members) sitting on the Executive Board who are as one with you, what happens, really, is that a new dimension has been added to the struggle for Union liberation.

Now there will be a real difference, in that there will be those who have a different tale to tell from the podium, the TRUTH. Thus the membership will be allowed to intelligently use their powers to bring about the things that will allow the Union to relate to the needs of workers, their families and the community.

Now to speak of those "others" we hinted about. There are two slates of candidates, some your working friends, others who have vacationed at the Hall for different periods of time. In most instances, we can only say to you, "Use your own judgment in selecting who you want as your representatives."

Here and there, however, we do note the presence of those who we think represent the highest potential in union leadership, leadership meaning, more than anything, COOPERATIONAL DEDICATION. Already we have, you're sure to remember, alluded to Brother Earl Covington: a good Union man.

We would also like to invite your attention to a young Union brother who has worked for about three years at GLS and has been dead on business for that entire period. It has been many years indeed since we've witnessed the likes of one Brother Jeff Goodman. A young man with a college background that has decided to find his lot with labor, Jeff, from the moment of his arrival, proceeded to get down with that piece of machinery that controls the lives of all workers in the steel industry: the United Steelworkers of America.

With his sharp insight and keen wit, it did not take Jeff long to understand that how things were and how things should have been were locked in a contradiction of monumental proportions. Upon attending a few Union meetings, it soon became very clear to him that the answer to that contradiction could be found in the fact that the Union itself was a nest of very antagonistic contradictions. Contradictions that exposed themselves through the exercise of parliamentary exclusion: dissidents were not allowed a voice.

And so Jeff became involved, to the extent that the present administration takes note that on the other slate, standing out like a golden blade of wheat amongst so much chaff, glares the name of Jeff Goodman for Recording Secretary.

When you go to exert power, to flex your political muscle, to vote, remember the name of JEFF GOODMAN. He, too, will give you a good ride for your money.

Come, Sisters and Brothers! Let us be about the business of looking out for our own best interests!

Together we make the sacred vow to regain that which once, at least in principle, belonged to us: the right to help decide under what conditions we would enter into contracts of employment with management; the right, in the final analysis, to have a say in the construction of our own lives.

And upon obtaining this sacred right, we must stand firm and resolute in the fact of any and all adversity -- affirming never to relinquish that authority, NEVER!

We begin at the polls: we begin with Burke and Covington and Goodman and brothers cut from that cloth. We'll get our first victory at the polls. Your vote is crucial.

THE REAL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

has happened through successive contracts and the selling-out of our rights under the types of agreements called "past practices," "management prerogatives," and "local working conditions."

The most recent and serious inroad upon our powers was the Productivity Committees established in August, 1971, under the last contract, without membership knowledge or approval, for the sole purpose of gaining Union cooperation in the Company's drive for more production from fewer workers at less cost and with fewer "interruptions" in production. This clause has already cost steelworkers over 40,000 jobs, has worn all of us down physically through having to work harder to survive, has led to a 25% increase in on-the-job accidents -- and has provided skyrocketing profits for the corporations.

A TRUE Union must constantly fight to LIMIT so-called "management prerogatives," not to allow the Companies to continuously EXTEND these powers. Therefore we pledge our Local to begin a long-term struggle by whatever means necessary and in concert with other locals to repudiate the "Productivity" agreements of 1971.

Furthermore, we will work to establish, in actual fact, the principle that the people who do the work, the people whose lives and health are jeopardized, cannot be treated as mere tools, but should have an adequate range of control over their situation at work to ensure personal and community health and happiness.

(For instance, any proposed reduction of crews, speed-up, re-scheduling or forced overtime, job changes, etc., should meet with the approval of the workers involved.)

We are also compelled to take note of the following: that in recent months, some workers have had their rights under the United States Constitution violated, and have lost their jobs, because of management's intrusion into areas of "worker conduct" in which there have been no previous contractual agreements. We are thinking especially of the areas of freedom of speech and press and the protection against illegal search and seizure.

Therefore we pledge ourselves to fight to implement the principle that management has NO right to unilaterally and arbitrarily introduce and enforce regulations that have not been fully negotiated over with the workers.

Community

Our Union can no longer afford to operate on the shortsighted view that it is important to its members for only 8 hours a day. A Union is based upon, and reflects upon, families and community, because it brings together the PEOPLE who compose these institutions.

Therefore we will work to implement the idea that the Union is a COMMUNITY RESOURCE, through the following programs:

- Public affairs and other educational programs by and for all Union members and their families, including a well-stocked reading room or library.
- Sports and other recreational activities to be expanded and updated to include women and families.
- Expanded and improved programs for workers and their relatives to deal with the REAL problems involved in drug and alcohol abuse.
- Competent, honest and free legal assistance for workers and their families on any problems they confront.
- Adequate orientation for all new employees and their families.

Incentives

Incentive plans are a backward step, returning us to the old piece-rate system under which the worker busts his ass to produce more and more, but never is paid a fraction of the value he produces and never is GUARANTEED a living wage.

We all know from experience that "incentive rates" are easily manipulated by the Company under formulas no one is allowed to understand. Wage raises are taken back by lowered incentives, and as time goes by the Companies are pushing -- with Union cooperation -- to have more and more of our wages depend on incentives.

Incentive plans lead the men to put undue pressures to work fast and/or unsafely upon each other. They are an easy basis on which the Company can discriminate against workers in one area while goading others into becoming "Company men." This generates hostilities and destructive competition. Incentives ALWAYS lead to speed-up and reduced crews.

Therefore we pledge full and continuing investigation into the incentive system, education of the membership on its real nature, and efforts to unite with other locals to eliminate the incentive system and to GUARANTEE all workers the kind of hourly wages they need and deserve.

Benefits

There should be no conditions whatsoever on a workers's eligibility for medical coverage or for Sickness & Accident insurance for himself and his family. The word of the worker and his OWN doctor is enough authority to prove that the individual is or is not able to work. We must fight on toward the day when we can win full and unconditional health coverage.

Workers should be able to retire after 20 years with full pay and all other benefits, inclusive of future contracts, and mandatory retirement after 30 years.

The Company should pay to the survivors of the immediate family of any worker killed on the job his full pay, inclusive of all future contracts and all benefits, until the youngest surviving family member reaches adulthood.

And, the Company should provide full pay, inclusive of future contracts, and full benefits for the rest of his life to any worker permanently disabled on the job.

Why Not Join Us In Joining Him

The following is a partial list of rank-and-file Union members who endorse Brother Rufus Burke's program, as well as his candidacy for Local 1299 President

Richard Castano
Sam Mitchell
Herman Davis
John Riehl
Shanti Singham
Tony Tiberia
Joe Moore
Kenneth Henderson
Clyde Moore
Al Treska
Russ Bellant
Peter Haapaniemi
Pat Borros
Donnie Gaines
Billy James
Bernard Harrington
Earl Justice
Alton Paramore
Titus Bell
Mark Thiesan
Sam Bosewell
Roscoe Reese
Earl Covington
James Gray
Bill Molten
Robert Wilson
Dave Darling
Richard Perez
Renard Coleman
Floyd Smith
Hank Fulton
Al Turner
William Chisolm
Alfonso Minor
Freeman Andrew
Jerry Wright
John Walker
Willie Germany
Donald Benardini
Stick McGee
Roger Hurd
Robert (Skit) Jackson



Willie Jackson
Billy Gray
Benny Berry
Steve Szalka
W. C. Carten
Bill Nellam
Shelly Carr
George Frazier
Oliver Burns
Jessie Soria
Alfred Rojo
Nate Smith
Hezekiah McDonald

Willie Middlebrook
Peter Long
Curtie Studemire
Ebony Stitt
Harold Farris
George Dennis
Guy Mesi
E. J. Coleman
Chuck Dickinson
Jim Dyson
Booker T. Moon
Hector Trevino
Billy Gale
Charles Woolfork
Leon Mitchell
Oscar Burkeen
James Paige
Joe Tiberia
Larry Rink
Clinton Bethune
Fred Jones
Neal Henry
Pete Hardy
Jose Herrero
Ted Seelof
John Smith
Clarence Todd
Johnny Green
Raymond Jefferson
Larry Norris
Jim Yakes
Joe Johnson
Bill Jackson
Robin Downham
Huey Hudson
Eddie Moore
Orv Allen
Jerry Cleveland
Charlie Dalton
Ed Ross
Clifford Swett
Jeff Goodman