

Indian Laborers Seek Own Voice

The idea of an Indian Labor Board has been gathering momentum among W.S.F.P.I. employees and has recently come to the attention of management and the Board of Directors in the form of a petition and position paper.

Petitioner Tony Suppah who is a purchasing agent and maintenance supervisor apprentice at the mill, explained that such a Labor Board would provide Indian employees at the mill with another method for bringing grievances to the attention of management.

According to Suppah, the Board would be a voice for the concerns, problems and suggestions of Indians on all shifts in all parts of the mill. The Board could grow to represent Indian employees of the Tribes and BIA, added Suppah.

The grievance mechanisms that currently exist are not adequately serving Indian employees, say the petitioners. About 12 per cent of the Indian employees belong to Local 2941 of the Lumber and Sawmill Workers Union, although the rest are entitled to all its benefits and services.

This opportunity is overlooked by many because of lack of confidence, fear or misunderstanding on the part of Indian employees, says Suppah. "We feel more at ease discussing problems with an individual we know," stated the Labor Board proponent. Suppah says he is already fulfilling on an informal basis the role of liaison between employees and management, proof to him that such a body is needed.

A Labor Board, as conceived by Suppah, would also work closely with the local police, alcohol and drug, family and children's services, and health and social services departments to provide whatever assistance might be needed for Indian employment.

Job bidding and the intensification of training opportunities for Indians would be other key activities of the Board, all in the context of individual problems or requests.

According to Persh Andrews, W.S.F.P.I. General Manager, Suppah brought his proposal to the Board of Directors at its last meeting. The Board referred it to management for consideration and presently Suppah and Andrews are working together on clarifying some of the issues.

"Working men often think that management doesn't have any problems," said Andrews,

and he is attempting to expose Suppah to some of these management dilemmas.

"After he gets acquainted with all the problems and the true facts and is exposed to everything we do, if he still thinks the group he has suggested can serve a purpose, then we'll work with him," explained Andrews.

The manager described the "grievance machinery" that already exists. When an employee has a problem, he may discuss it directly with his supervisor or if that fails, go to the president of the union. The president advises the employee on the legality of his complaint under the terms of the contract, then writes up the grievance, if it is sound, and sends it to Andrews. A meeting is then set up with the management, the issue is discussed and a solution worked out.

If the employee does not wish to go through the Union he may arrange a meeting directly with the personnel representative, operations manager or general manager. "My door is always open," says Andrews.

Andrews acknowledged that the union procedure breaks down for Indian employees because "they don't feel comfortable going to the union." Some grievances that have been handled by the union have been successful, he said, but Indians for the most part are not availing themselves of the service due to lack of trust.

Andrews indicates, however, that he personally spends "a great deal of time talking with Indian people" about their difficulties at the mill.

Ten-year union member Merris Wallulatum said that he had been well-represented by the union on at least one occasion and received extensive health and welfare benefits. However, he said the union "doesn't go all out to help you if you don't belong." He couldn't cite an instance when a non-member's request hadn't been honored, but pointed to many incidents during his 16 years at the mill when an Indian had felt discriminated against and felt he had nowhere to turn. Again, lack of trust in the union is responsible, said Wallulatum.

Although Wallulatum encourages Indian employees, especially younger ones, to join the union, he understands the need for an Indian Labor Board. He sees no conflict

between a labor board and the union.

Ever mindful of the successful operation of the business, Andrews remarked, "The thing we have to do is monitor production and quality control, adhere to a hiring and firing policy and conform to the union contract. If his (Suppah's) board can stay within those bounds, it won't bother us."

Widespread concerns that led to the petition and proposal were, according to Suppah, the low number of Indians being hired at W.S.F.P.I., the high number of terminations, apparent loss of seniority, the need for more intensive training and advancement, and needed safety improvements.

Suppah does not offer or ask for general solutions to such problems but envisions an Indian Labor Board as a means to deal with individual incidents in these areas.

Management points to some of the hiring and firing statistics for the first five months of 1977. Between January and May, 77 percent of those hired at the mill were Indians, for a total of 36 percent Indians on the rolls. But Suppah points out that the plywood plant in Madras only employs 1 or 2 percent Indians.

A companion figure to numbers hired is the termination rate. The percentage of terminated employees who were Indians (Jan-May 77) was 67 percent. Among the reasons for termination, failure to report for work was the most common—over half the terminated tribal members had this reason on their records.

Andrews and Suppah agree that absenteeism is a critical problem. Whether it be alcohol, family problems or cultural conflicts, Suppah feels that more on-the-job support of Indians' needs might help the problem.

Andrews explained that training opportunities are regularly offered to Indian workers who show the desire and initiative to advance. However attendance is crucial for supervisory level work and unpopular weekend hours are often required.

Suppah hopes that the dilemmas that lurk behind employment statistics at the mill can be addressed through the Indian Labor Board. His second report is due to the Board August 25. Already, the process of preparing this report has sparked communication between management and at least one employee.

Personnel representative Mark Massey said that transportation problems contribute to this situation.

FROM THE NEWSLETTER OF ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN INDIAN PHYSICIANS.

Freeze Hits Bureau Schools

The Presidential freeze on federal hiring is creating difficulties for B.I.A. schools. The federal bureaucracies have been instructed to leave one of every four vacancies unfilled, which seems to be generally an effective, efficient way to reduce continually expanding federal employment rolls. It doesn't work very well for school systems, however. Each classroom of children still needs a teacher - whether there is a hiring freeze or not.

AIPRC Report Advocates Indian Power

The final report of the American Indian Policy Review Commission, culminating a two-year study, recommended that tribes be given full legal power to run their own affairs, including the power to tax non Indians and control waterways, fishing and hunting on reservations. The more than 100 recommendations strongly support tribal sovereignty. Representative Lloyd Meeds, one of the six Congressional members of the Commission, filed a strong dissent to the report - objecting primarily to the exercise of tribal sovereignty over non-Indians on the reservation. The Commission severely criticized the BIA and recommended the removal of Indian Affairs from the Department of the Interior.

Toe Ness

"Well girls here I am"
Scream, yeeeeee, wow, yeah!
Yikes girls I'm only one guy,
have mercy on me. . . Yikes!

There was this guy who joined the marine corp, and arriving at boot camp he goes to the barber shop for the usual hair cut. The barber to recruit, "Would you like to keep your side burns?" Recruit, "I sure do." Barber, "Well here catch."

SS SS

There is this saying, "Two can live as cheaply as one, but it takes both of them to earn enough to do it."

SS SS

Uncoordinated life guard joke.
Q. Do you know how to drive a life guard crazy?

A. Take him to a round swimming pool and tell him to dive in from a corner.

SS SS

This guy goes rushing into the flower shop and asks the owner, "Do you have any Violets?" "No!" replied the owner, "but we do have some water lillies." "Oh no! My wife will return home from her vacation this evening and it was her violets I was to have watered while she was away."

SS SS

There was this first aid course and the instructor asked one of the students, "What would you do if you found out that you had rabies?" Without hesitation his reply was, "I'd rush right over and bite the Math teacher."

SS SS

While passing through Las Vegas I noticed the traffic lights there that read, "Stop, Go, and eight to five you don't make it."

SS SS

There were these two guys in school that handed in their papers at the same time. After reviewing them the teacher asked, "Hey Joe your paper is exactly the same as Tim's, even the misspelled words, can you explain to me how this happened?" "Oh, sure" said Joe, "I used his pencil....."

SS SS

"Hey! Hey! Now Girls Take It Easy!"

SS SS

OOPS! Just about forgot to say "YIKES."

SS SS

... About Your Social Security

Students who are returning to school after dropping out for a while should begin now to apply for reinstatement of their Social Security students benefits, according to John Fullerton, Social Security representative.

"Students are eligible for Social Security students benefits if they are between the ages of 18 and 22, unmarried, full-time students in an accredited school and a parent is getting retirement or disability payments from Social Security or a parent has died after working long enough under Social Security," Fullerton said.

Students are allowed a

four-month period of non-attendance during which payments continue to cover periods between school years.

"It is not these students who must re-apply," Fullerton said, "but those who have left school for longer periods who are planning to re-enter school. Because it takes the Social Security office about two to three months to process these applications, students should get started now so the checks can arrive as soon as possible after school starts."

The Social Security office is at 39 N.W. Louisiana Avenue in Bend. The phone number is 382-6922, extension 276.

A useful guide to Oregon's media has just been published by the Center for Urban Education (CUE), an agency of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. The 64 page CUE Oregon Media Guide lists the state's newspapers, radio and television stations with their addresses, deadlines and contact information for news and public service announcements.

An introductory section tells how to prepare information for print and broadcast media. The primary listings of 155 newspapers, 126 radio and 16 television stations are arranged by county and city

within six major regions: Portland Metropolitan Area, Willamette Valley, Southern Oregon, Oregon Coast, Central Oregon, Eastern Oregon. They are further cross-indexed by city and by medium: newspapers, radio, television.

Additionally, a special publications section lists 170 selected newsletters and little magazines arranged by: special interests, government affairs, human services, business-industry-farm-labor, environment, public affairs, history, the arts, women and men, seniors, church, and Indian press in Oregon. Fifteen Ore-

gon media groups and associations are also noted.

CUE published guides to Portland area media in 1972 and 1975. This expanded, statewide edition was compiled as a special project begun last fall by community information specialist, Rhoda Epstein. This statewide guide is believed to be the first of its kind in the nation.

Single copies of the CUE Oregon Media Guide 1977-78 are available for \$1.95 plus 25cents postage (bulk discount rates available) from the Center for Urban Education, 0245 SW Bancroft, Portland, Oregon 97201, (503) 221-0984.

Media Guide To Oregon Published