

Reuther Says Talks On Offer by Ford In 'Critical Stage'

Detroit—(U.P.)—CIO President Walter Reuther said today talks between Ford and his United Auto Workers over Ford's offer to set up a multi-million dollar fund to pay laid off workers have reached the "critical stage."

The offer which broke a solid industry front against the principle of paying idle workers appeared to have cleared the way for a possible settlement in the near future that would satisfactorily meet the union demand for a guaranteed annual wage.

The offer brightened prospects the key automobile industry would avoid long, crippling strikes this year.

Reuther told newsmen he had cancelled a nationwide television appearance set for Sunday because he felt public discussion of negotiations might "jeopardize the course of negotiations . . . at this critical stage."

Huddle Separately

He made his statement just moments before the two sides abruptly recessed their talks for four hours, just an hour and a half after resumption of talks today. The long recess was called to give both sides a chance to huddle separately on the annual wage demand.

The autoworkers have been seeking a plan under which they would receive "more adequate protection" against the layoffs which have long plagued the industry.

With only three days left in which to reach a settlement before Monday's strike deadline, however, it appeared likely the settlement might not be reached before that time.

But if a strike develops hopes were growing it would be a short one instead of a long crippling strike which many had feared would develop over the annual wage demand.

Union sources didn't agree on how the \$55,000,000 fund that

would be set up over three years would be meted out to workers. Some said the company proposed to give workers payments over and above unemployment compensation benefits. Others said funds would not be paid out until workers had exhausted these benefits.

Silence Pact
Top negotiators refused to discuss the matter under a silence pact. But the exact method under which payments would be made appeared less significant at this time than the fact Ford had agreed to the principle of paying workers during layoffs.

It appeared unlikely that the Ford offer, if it becomes a basis for settlement, would emerge unchanged from its original form in the final agreement.

Besides final agreement of the question of layoff pay, negotiators still had to settle the question of wages, pensions, insurance benefits and duration of contract.

Sporadic wildcat strikes at scattered plants continued to plague Ford operations. New walkouts were reported Thursday night at Atlanta, Ga., and St. Louis and the protest walk-out of 2,700 production workers at Metuchen, N.J., Mercury assembly plant went into its second day.

?? Offer Reported

A report that General Motors already has offered the union a bigger pay raise (higher annual improvement factor) and bigger pensions than Ford has offered added to hopes a settlement might be near.

Ford and the union still must settle those issues and Ford has said it will meet any General Motors offer. General Motors however hasn't budged on the guaranteed annual wage issue and still is sticking to its stock buying plan offered the union by Ford also.

California-Pacific Utilities Will Mark 25th Year Saturday

California-Pacific Utilities are located are served by the company will observe its 25th anniversary Saturday. The company operates utility service properties in five western states, and has a branch in Medford.

Company operations began in several California communities in 1930. In the intervening years, it has expanded its operations until it now provides gas, water, electric and telephone service to numerous communities in its various service areas.

Two Presidents

The founder of the firm, J. A. Ward, was president until his death in 1954. E. K. Albert, who succeeded Ward as president, served previously with the company for more than 15 years as chief engineer, vice-president, and executive vice-president.

A policy of bringing city conveniences into country life in its service area has earned for the company the nickname "The Grass-Roots Utility." In carrying out its grass-roots policies, the number of customers the firm serves has increased from approximately 6,000 to nearly 60,000 at present.

68 Communities

These people live in larger communities such as Medford, Baker, Henderson, Winnemucca and Susanville, and in small towns including Summerville, Riddle, Buntingville, and Paradise Valley. A total of 68 communities in the five western states in which its service areas

are located are served by the company.

As recently as 1943, California-Pacific's list of shareholders numbered less than 100 investors. Today the total has increased to more than 3,000.

During the post-war decade, California-Pacific Utilities has invested some \$13,000,000 in expanding and improving its plant facilities to keep pace with population increase in its territory and increased demand for the firm's gas, telephone and electric service.

Big Investment

In the company's southern Oregon division alone, post-war expenditures for expansion and improvements total approximately \$2,000,000.

Martin E. Sands, Medford, is vice-president and director of the firm and is operating manager for the Southern Oregon and Shasta divisions, which include southern Oregon and northern California counties. Sands has been with the organization for 25 years.

ALL-AMERICAN

Washington—(U.P.)—Chief Ben American Horse of South Dakota created more than the usual stir on a recent visit here. Dangling on the chief's chest, along with the traditional Indian beads, was a tiny silver football—memento of the days when he was a first-stringer at the old Carlisle Indian school.

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