

American Labor

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AMERICA'S ENGINEERS
AND SCIENTISTS-
MIGRATORY WORKERS

THE PAPER INDUSTRY
GROWING GIANT

LETTER CARRIERS
TALK STRIKE



Jesse M. Calhoon, President,
Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association



The forgotten people—America's scientists and engineers

Fed up with "professionalism" that does not relate to a commensurate standard of living, the nation's 900,000-man pool of scientists and engineers are taking a new look at trade unionism and at one union in particular which, through a special set of circumstances, indicates a greater sympathy for their special needs.

"In the United States, the average engineer and scientist of today is little better than a migratory worker. Add all the imposing college degrees you want to after his name, he still has to hop from job to job and by the time he reaches

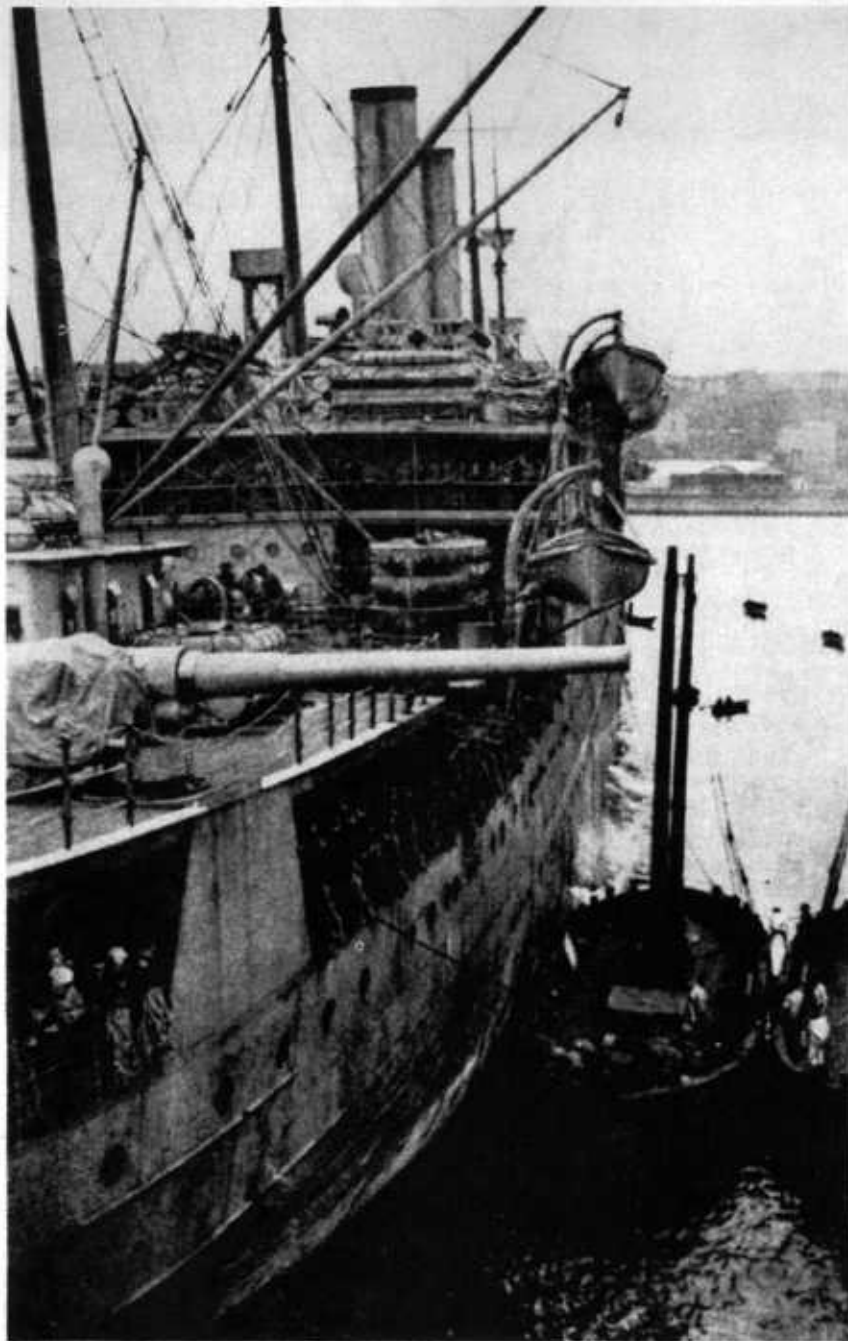
40 he might just as well have been picking lettuce for all the future he has."

The words were uttered in dead earnest recently by Jesse M. Calhoun, president of the National Marine Engineers' Beneficial Asso-

ciation in an exclusive interview with ALM, opening a hitherto unexplored line of discussion that not only needs public airing but—in Mr. Calhoun's opinion—massive and immediate corrective programs if the pool of scientific intelligence

OFFICERS OF ENGINEERS AND SCIENTISTS OF CALIFORNIA—MICHAEL FELSO, PRES., GERRY CUPP, SEC., WALTER JACKSON, TREAS., HERBERT COLEMAN, V.P.





EARLY 20TH CENTURY WARSHIP—THE U.S.S. AMERICA READY TO DISEMBARK TROOPS OF WW 1'S FAMOUS RAINBOW DIVISION

that has brought American technology to its present eminence is to survive.

As MEBA's top officer, seated in his executive offices at 17 Battery Place in Manhattan, quietly outlined the situation, it's a sobering one. With a work-life expectancy that rarely reaches two decades, a vast proportion of the nation's very best technological minds find themselves—at an age when most individuals are entering their best productive years—stranded and on the shelf. The parade, for all of their intelligence, has passed them by.

Few have any pensions to look forward to because the very nature

of their sporadic and ever changing assignments with constantly different contractors have never kept them long enough with any single company to attain one. Nor are there any portability plans that presently cover them as they move from job to job.

Their salaries, instead of going up with experience, take the very opposite position of this normal graph because the fantastic strides in technological development often obsolete their special learnings almost as rapidly as they have mastered them. And the greater this acceleration (which has moved with almost unbelievable speed

during the 60's) the greater has become the obsolescent factor and the salary decline.

"Considering their essentiality," said the 47-year-old soft spoken head of the Marine Engineers," and reserving any discussion of the human factors for the moment, the lack of foresight that has been exhibited in the personnel handling of so precious a manpower cargo is almost incomprehensible."

What brought the matter to the surface in the first place was an accidental conversational by-product engendered by an exploratory talk for a cover story with this tall, slightly graying North Carolinian—one of nine children born to a fisherman father on April 4, 1923 in Belhaven, a stone's throw from Cape Hatteras.

It came as a result of an oblique comparative analysis of Calhoon's own unionized engineers (he was elected president of MEBA in 1963 and in that short span has chalked up the greatest gains for its members in the union's 93-year history) as against the vast bulk of scientists and engineers who, as yet, are outside any union umbrella and who have become victims of their own hesitancy to associate.

"No other nation on earth," he said, referring to the conditions under discussion, "has so careless . . . so callous . . . and in the end what might very well turn out to be . . . so disastrous a policy. It destroys every fibre of incentive in a man."

Re-examination Imperative

At stake in this need for re-evaluation and change, as Calhoon sees it, are not only the immediate destinies of the country's very finest scientific and engineering talents presently blueprinting and overseeing every area of the nation's technological projects, but—even more importantly—the maintenance and growth of this pool of intelligence so vitally needed in the competitive world of tomorrow.

"If the present system is not altered," stated Calhoon flatly, "we may wind up with a massive shortage of the very key creative brains America needs to survive."

The example of the "present system" he offered by way of illustration was a simple one which he stated could be multiplied "by as

many digits as there are scientists and engineers." In essence, it works as follows:

Much as building contractors, most technological organizations have minimum staffs, expanding only as the need requires. With the nature of government contracts, their short life expectancy and the competitive bidding aspects involved, good business sense must dictate this procedure.

When a specific company receives a specific contract which may call for some 50 engineers with "solid state" experience (or whatever) the company that has won the contract goes out into the marketplace and gathers its special talent utilizing hiring techniques not appreciably different from that of a tomato farmer. Once hired, these men and their families are then moved to the job site where they normally remain until the specific contract is terminated. When it is over—that is that.

The heads of households bundle up their families and possessions, put their homes up for sale (generally at a loss when all the cost factors are collated) and begin all over again, moving to another town in another state that could be clear across the country if that's where the next openings are.

"The irony here," said Calhoon, "is that a tomato picker—and Lord knows I'm not trying to downgrade anybody—can always pick tomatoes. But an engineer who's been out of college for 15 years often can no longer find work in his special area of technical competence because science has passed him by.

"When he's on a job he never has time to attend the extra classes that might keep him up to date—even if a post graduate school were nearby. And when he's out of work, he's just much too concerned with the immediate effort of seeking employment to be able to afford that luxury. It's a vicious circle and—as it shapes up now—there's no way out."

The provisions presently made by either management or government to help supply this type of technical upgrading are conspicuous by their absence, noted Calhoon.

"Billions are being spent on training unemployables and underemployables," he said, "but when it

comes to investing dollars on the very best minds we have—the amount isn't even worth talking about."

As Engineers See It

"It's a dead-end street," said one 42-year-old engineer echoing Calhoon's statements in an off-the-cuff interview with ALM. "Over the past 15 years I've had some seven or eight different jobs for different companies. The few times that I bought a home, I lost money when it came to selling it because the need for immediate cash was so pressing. When I rented, I was rarely compensated sufficiently for the new move. In the last analysis—as I see it—I really can't blame anybody but myself.

"But I'll tell you this much," he continued, "If I have anything to say about it, my kids are not going to be engineers."

Said another: "I've gone from Texas, to Los Angeles, to Maryland and back to Texas again since 1961. It's like living out of a trunk. You don't have roots anywhere. Your wife's either packing or unpacking or repacking all the time. No sooner do my sons make friends than they have to say good bye to them. Every once in a while I ask myself 'What have I done to my family?' and I don't like what I see."

Typical, too, was a third reaction: "I don't want to sound like some long-haired yippee, because I'm not the type at all. But when you live in growing fear that your

HELEN DELICH BENTLEY, CHAIRMAN OF THE FEDERAL MARITIME COMMISSION, WITH MEBA PRESIDENT JESSE M. CALHOON AT RECENT MEETING IN WASHINGTON



present spot may be your last because you've had no opportunity to keep up with the times, it does something to your morale. Most of us certainly have the background, the intelligence and the *willingness* to take any refresher courses necessary. But the problem is—how does one live in that interim?"

The present shortsighted policies, he observed bitterly, "made no sense at all." To be washed up at 40 was not an indictment of the technical and scientific fraternity, "but of a system that passively permits it to happen," he said.

MEBA's First Involvement

MEBA's first involvement with this problem came as a result of an incident that occurred late in 1968. A maritime union since its founding almost a century ago—actually the oldest maritime union in the world and the second oldest in the country—its membership had consisted of the marine engineers on the Atlantic, the Pacific, the Gulf, the Lakes, the Rivers and Harbors. And during all of that century (the National Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association was formally born under that name in 1875 though its origins under other names can be traced back to pre Civil War days) it had remained within its own baliwick, serving its very specialized type of membership.

But late in 1968 a telephone call made by the Port Engineers of New York City to MEBA's Jesse Calhoon was to open up a whole new line of thinking and a hitherto uncharted area of both opportunity and service.

The port engineers supervise the ordering and operations of construction and repairs and had always been considered to be a part of management.

"They came to us," said Calhoon, "with some very basic trade union problems:

"They had no job security . . . there were no standard wage scales . . . raises were solely at the caprice of the company (U.S. Lines) . . . their pension plan was a privately funded one which—translated into dollars—means that if management goes out of business, so does the fund. There was no machinery for grievances . . . and more of the same . . ."

Calhoon went to work immediately, got a consent decree from the U.S. Lines, organized the New York group and within the space of a year—expanding this initial effort—had organized the preponderant majority of the port engineers in America.

The result of these drives apparently reached some of the key officers of an independent union—the Engineers and Scientists of California—comprising some 1,200 members, who initiated talks of possible affiliation. Involved were three west-coast based companies:

neers and naval architects at Gibbs & Cox (one of the nation's leading marine design engineering firms) also were merged into this labor organization.

Potential Examined

With this behind it, sometime in the middle of last year, MEBA's Executive Committee met and undertook the first truly serious consideration of the potential of this new and hitherto untapped area it had opened.

Analyzed were: the problems inherent in terms of labor educa-



H. P. DOOLEY (L) V.P., POIU-MEBA, WITH JOS. KUCZLER, PRES., BAY AREA UNIT, ESC, DAN CHATFIELD, PRES., WESTERN UNIT, ESC AND CLIFFORD SMITH, PRES., PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC UNIT.

Pacific Gas & Electric, Bay Area Unit of Engineers & Scientists of California and the Western Association of Engineers and Land Surveyors, Inc. All were organized in 1969 and all came under the MBEA umbrella—The Professional, Office & Industrial Union—which MEBA organized in 1967 and which is allied with District I., Pacific Coast District.

Some few months later, the engi-

tion and orientation of a professional group hitherto non-union by both character and training; the size of the universe that might be organized; the regional demographic break-outs; manpower and collateral requirements, and costs.

Out of it came some revealing facts:

- In terms of numbers, the potential universe was between 800,000 and 900,000, paralleling a figure

attained only by perhaps four or five of the very largest internationals in the nation.

- In terms of annual income, the median structure was in the neighborhood of \$10,000 a year, (as of June 1969, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics).

- In terms of competitive factors (from an organizing standpoint) they seemed, on the face of it, to be non-existent. Most of the industrial unions did not speak the language of the scientist or engineer, nor did there appear to be an empathy of interests. As for the craft unions, which have always stayed within their own special trades, there seemed little reason to believe they would change their patterns of behavior.

By every measurement—physical, economic and psychological—MEBA shaped up as the most logical labor organization to tackle the job.

"Trade unionism," said Calhoon in this context, "has performed very well for our own engineers. Why then—by extension—could not MEBA perform as satisfactorily for every other type of scientist and engineer? Their problems are parallel and we've faced them and solved them all before."

Most to the point, as Calhoon summed it up, the professional man, himself, was coming round to the view that "professionalism—that does not relate to a decent standard of living" was nothing but a meaningless and hollow form of pride.

"We're perhaps the only ones who can talk to them at their own level," he said.

The Changes Needed

Among the principal immediate changes required, Calhoon feels, is the restructuring of the present methods of hiring and firing; the development of extensive re-educational programs completely financed by management and/or government, or both; the establishment of fully funded portable pension plans and the creation of collective bargaining machinery to make it all possible.

Some of the basics as he saw them:

- A nationwide, interchangeable portable pension plan for every scientist and engineer.

- Ample severance pay on a per contract basis to cover all losses concomitant with moving, plus reasonable allowances for average time periods of unemployment as indicated by some mutually acceptable data service.

- Specified time segments for sabbatical leaves to provide adequate retraining and refresher courses to be funded by the employer via a monthly check-off system, with the monies to be deposited in escrow.

"The government is perhaps the worst offender in this area," said Calhoon. "They spend billions on research but nothing on the researcher. He's as expendable as a dead lamp."

As far as management was concerned, "engineers are generally put in the officer's pension plan, which is very good—for management. The dollars accrued are figured in as part of each contractual budget, but with the rapid turnover of scientific personnel, it all actually winds up being split among the top echelon who are the only ones that stay on. So they're not only getting the benefits of their own pension plan but a piece of everybody else's," said Calhoon.

The remark was uttered, one felt, as Calhoon leaned back in his chair, *not* as an angry reflection of some Machiavellian machination on the part of management, but rather as an open appraisal of a set of circumstances which somehow had been permitted to grow. The cool, trim, top officer of MEBA is a pragmatist who has spent too much of his working hours at the bargaining table not to know that what may appear to be a proper grievance often may be as much a part of accident as design; that management cannot be held solely responsible for a way of doing business if the very nature of this business is dictated by another controlling factor (the government) which by its particular contractual arrangements has created the present hiring techniques and has done nothing to rectify its inequities.

But regardless of where the responsibilities lay, these accumulative policies of neglect directly affected the destinies of the very kind of people a nation can least afford to lose.

On Calhoon Himself

If anyone can move into this difficult area with intelligence and direction, it's the soft-spoken, tough-fibered, beautifully disciplined chief executive of the National Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association who got his first taste of the sea when he signed on as a coal passer in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1939, at the age of 16 . . . as a member of the National Maritime Union.

Within four years this wiry youngster went from coal passer to fireman to oiler and early in 1943, entered the United States Merchant Marine Officers' Candidate School in New London, Connecticut.

Norfolk was a large coal port at the time Calhoon first helped fire a ship, delivering much of its cargo to New England power plants, still largely dependent, then, on this source of fuel. America had not yet come out of its great depression and those who were part of it remember what the salary structures were. It was a comparatively active port, moving—as it did—a basic necessity. But with the war clouds gathering, the growing demands of friendly nations struggling to defeat Hitlerism turned it—about 1940—into one of America's principal sea lanes for export of munitions and young Calhoon was part of a number of crews who delivered the materials of war to the British, to the Red Sea and even as far as to the Persian Gulf—one of the supply depots of the Russians.

They were adventurous days for a kid of 17. And dangerous ones, too. The boy from Belhaven did not miss his share of near-deaths. A ship that he was on during that period was torpedoed in the Gulf of Mexico. Luckily, he was one of the survivors picked up by a fishing boat and brought safely to shore in Louisiana. Memories were there, too, of action in the Mediterranean during the invasion of North Africa as part of the manpower shuttling supply ships back and forth and of similar duties during the invasion of Sicily as well.

"It's difficult to put into words," said Calhoon looking out of his windows that offered a magnificent view of the New York harbor, "but you get to know a little bit more about the meaning of life when

you're facing death."

Joins MEBA

In 1943 (as noted previously) Calhoon entered the Officers' Candidate School in New London, securing his 3rd Engineers license in February of 1944. It was at this point in his history that he severed his membership with the National Maritime Union and joined his present labor organization, MEBA. He was then one month short of being 21.

For the next several years the sibling officer served on a variety of vessels, initially delivering military cargo until the war's end, then moving over to the more mundane sea-going occupations which took him—before it was over—all over the world.

"If a country has a shore line," smiled Calhoon, "I guess I've been there."

The 1946-47 year was particularly significant for a number of reasons. First, it found Calhoon—of all places—in Shanghai, China; not as a seaman but as an instructor. The "professorial" assignment was for the Chung Shing Coal Mining Company and the subject he had gone there to teach was refrigeration engineering, hardly known there at the time.

"I really don't know why I took the job now," Calhoon's face broke into a grin, "except maybe that I was 25, I'd recently gotten married and we thought it might be a nice place for an extended honeymoon."

The extended oriental honeymoon never materialized. By the time he was able to clear the necessary papers for his wife she had become pregnant and the decision was made that it would be best for her to remain home.

Thus—what might have been a meaningful move was reshuffled in retrospect by biology and Calhoon remained in Shanghai only until shortly before the birth of his son (Richard) and that was the end of his teaching career.

Stands For Office

He returned to the sea once more (by now he was a chief engineer) shipping out for a number of companies until 1954. At that point he had made a decision that was to take him ashore for good. He had

decided to stand for Business Manager of Norfolk's Local 11.

After that, his rise in the union's hierarchy was rapid. In 1959 he was elected National Secretary-Treasurer and—at the next election—succeeded to the Presidency in 1963.

Actually, through a series of un-



CHARLES A. BLACK
Nat'l Sec.-Treas.

anticipated events, he wound up being the acting president almost from the time he had been elected secretary-treasurer. This time the transference was caused by politics.

The real president, the person who had run for that top spot with Calhoon as the second man on the ticket, went on a leave of absence shortly after taking office to work as the late John F. Kennedy's labor liaison during his presidential campaign—and just never returned. To this reporter's knowledge, it's a "first" of its kind.

He moved over to industry after his stint with Kennedy (a number of MEBA members make this change annually, but never a top officer before) and is presently vice-president of West Coast Air-

lines. Calhoon, therefore, who was the chief executive officer—in fact if not in name—during his first term, was elected in a breeze the next time around.

Sticky Problems

As Chairman of the Negotiating Committee (a job he has held since 1958) he faced a number of sticky bargaining problems during those early years.

"A lot of it was created by the Maritime Unions' own short sighted thinking," he said.

During the war, as he related it, the officialdom of all Maritime



LEON SHAPIRO
Sec.-Treas., Dist. 1

Unions—instead of bargaining for wage increases, took the route of "war bonus pay" instead. As it worked back then, since most every price quoted to the government for goods and services was predicated on some cost-plus formula and since management merely added this to its cost and passed it along, the plan seemed simpler to work

with and the gains seemed more easily procurable.

"What they didn't realize," stated Calhoon, "was that a wage structure has a factor of permanence but a 'bonus' doesn't. When the war was over, so were the bonuses and the wage scale went right back to the 1940 levels."

When collective bargaining began in earnest, as Calhoon reviewed it, the industry was so far behind that it really couldn't ask for all it needed and hadn't even the slightest hope of receiving it. The concentration on the attainment of immediate wage increases was so urgent that it almost precluded the introduction of other benefits as part of the package as well.

"They could have gotten more if they had taken a more hard-nosed



CLAYTON E. DeFRIES
Gulf Coast V-P

attitude in '46," said Calhoon. "We were half-a-dozen years behind the labor movement and had a lot of catching up to do.

"As a sailing engineer—speaking for myself—I was getting the same amount of vacation in 1956 as I got



RAYMOND T. McKay
Pres.—Dist. 2

when I started as a coal passer in 1939."

On MEBA Gains

On vacation improvements, Calhoon's record since taking over as chairman of the Negotiating Committee speaks for itself. In the first go-round in 1958, the following advances were incorporated into the MEBA contract:

(a) 60 day vacations for all MEBA personnel working in "Dry Cargo," (those vessels carrying freight and/or passengers).

(b) 90 day vacations for those working tankers.

(For those wondering about the discrepancy in the number of vacation days between the two types of jobs, the answer actually relates to the number of days a man can come ashore. Traditionally, tankers will come into port and pump out their cargo in from 16 to 36 hours, giving a man no time ashore. Dry Cargo vessels, on the other hand have had—until very recently—a normal ten-day turnaround period permitting the engineer greater time to visit his family. The new

ECONOMIC AND PROGRESS REPORT

A capsulization of MEBA's progress in salaries, and pension and welfare benefits since 1965 underscores how well the present leadership has handled these negotiations for its members:

In the area of wages, the basic pay which averaged \$28.50 per man-hour day for the men on the tankers in 1965—will go to \$52.79 by the expiration of the present contract in 1971. For engineers on Dry Cargo vessels, salary structures will rise from the 1965 level of \$25.68 to \$41.24 per man-hour day.

In life insurance—coverage will go from \$5,000 in 1965 to \$20,000 by '71. Maternity allowances will be boosted from \$175 to \$600; vacations will be upped (on tankers) from 10 days on 30 days of employment to 15 days; on Dry Cargo, the ratio will increase from 5 days on 30 days employment to 10 days, with 4 more days added on the faster turn-around Dry Cargo ships.

Pensions—securely financed—will rise from the \$300 a month minimum established in 1965 to \$325 per month or 37.5 percent of base pay (whichever is higher) after 20 years of service, regardless of age. It will go from the \$425 per month minimum of '65 to a formula based on 50 percent of basic wages up to a maximum of \$1,239.28 per month . . . regardless of age, after 25 years of service.

The guarantees for the funding of these pensions were negotiated with the ship owners via a formula that stipulates sufficient dollars are to be paid into the fund—irrespective of employment fluctuations. The arithmetic is evolved by taking as the base, the average of man-days of work for which pension credits were paid in the years 1966-68. If there is a drop in employment below that average, the amount per day paid into the fund goes up. What remains steady, therefore, is the amount of total payments into the pension fund. As far as ALM knows, this pension guarantee provision is unique in labor-management history.

Health and welfare programs now include diagnostic centers in a number of major cities, dental plan coverage for members and dependents, hospital care in semi-private rooms, greatly improved major medical protection . . . and much more.



THE CALHOON-MEBA ENGINEERING SCHOOL—OCCUPIES 14-STORY BUILDING NEAR THE BALTIMORE, MARYLAND, HARBOR

containerized vessels presently coming to the fore have cut this turnaround time considerably, and there is presently a very serious re-evaluation of vacation schedules in this area).

Today, vacation benefits stand at:

- (a) 108 days for Dry Cargo
- (b) 144 days for tankers

In the area of pensions, the results are equally impressive. In 1956, MEBA's minimum pension at age 65 stood at \$100 a month. Today, the figure is \$425 a month with a sliding scale that can come to as much as \$1,240 a month. And that's after 25 years of service regardless of age.

MEBA's welfare program is among the best in the country, covering every member of the family in the fields of insurance and medical and dental care. The national organization has diagnostic clinics in New York, Baltimore, New Orleans and San Francisco.

Some Firsts

In its collective bargaining operations, MEBA has created one of the most intelligent short and long-range formulas for the handling of grievances that might well be utilized by other unions for study.

The machinery operates on an industry-wide rather than a local level basis and follows pretty specific patterns.

When a grievance comes to a port agent, if he cannot handle the situation immediately he sends it to the national office where it is put on the agenda. Every month, all of these unsettled grievances are brought to arbitration before a five-man board composed of two from management, two from labor and an impartial arbitrator. Settlement time for each of these grievances must be accomplished in 15 days. And there's a special provision for immediate arbitration in case of an emergency.

The formula cuts out all intermediary time consuming stages and leaves both union and management with no grievances that are over 45 days old.

"At bargaining time," said Calhoon, "there are no grievances to bog anyone down and we can all get to the immediate business at hand."

Inaugurated in 1961, the formula has now been adopted by some of the maritime unions, according to Calhoon, who "believes it could be adopted for most industries."

1961 marked still another "first" in collective bargaining for the Marine Engineers. It's a "schedule" that does not arise in general national labor-management negotiations, but it is mentioned here, in passing, to indicate how far more complex MEBA's contracts are than many others in the labor movement and how many items (little known to the public at large) are subjects of negotiations.

The specific item referred to is a "Minimum Food Schedule" which sets down the minimum quality and minimum content of the meat, eggs, milk, vegetables and other edibles that must be maintained on ship and served at each meal to the engineers. It even includes the kind of dishes on which that food must be served and the quality of "linen" on the table.

Words recalled written by such master tellers of sea stories as Conrad and Melville of the food that used to be meted out to the devils that manned the ships, brings into focus the realization that this is not some incidental or capricious part of the MEBA contract, but a very vital adjunct that oversees the dietary needs of its membership.

A collateral codicil in this health aspect is the agreement MEBA also negotiates covering the size of the bed an engineer will sleep in, the square footage of the room, the soap, towels and hot water that must be supplied and a baker's dozen of other subjects—all designed to make living conditions at sea as comfortable and pleasant as possible.

Early History

The Marine Engineer's Beneficial Association—as a recognized continuously functioning union—dates

back to 1875, but history records abortive efforts to organize marine engineers as far back as 1854 when the first group that rates a text mention banded together as the Steamboat Engineers Association. The burial was rapid with few in attendance.

During the next couple of decades a number of other associations struggled to the surface, remained a moment in the sun and wilted at the first cold draft of adversity. The reasons were varied: the antipathetic climate of the times, the inability of the membership to achieve unity among themselves, no real direction, money—or more to the point—the constant lack of it, little organizational know-how and more of the same.

The early history of the marine unions, thus, is pretty much a carbon copy of the story line of hundreds of other prematurely conceived labor organizations that came before their hour had come. They had their day of enthusiasm and what appeared to be cohesiveness, then in rapid order—followed the terminal triad of poverty, apathy and extinction.

Under the leadership of Garrett Duow, however, (MEBA's first president and a very able man from what little records are extant) the disorganized pool of marine engineers on both coasts, the Gulf, the Great Lakes and the rivers and harbors was finally merged into a viable organization the chemistry of which was to remain stable. For statisticians, MEBA is the second oldest surviving union in the United States, with a membership established 11 years before the birth of the American Federation of Labor.

The complete history of its initial attempts to walk, of its rising strength and importance during World War I, of its subsequent decline and later resurrection after the Wagner Act are all there for the dedicated chronicler at MEBA's headquarters at 17 Battery Place in New York City.

It's a fascinating bunch of yesterdays all of which have gone into the character of the union that is "now." . . . a union which, as ALM's brief compilation of facts concerning merely its wage and pension and welfare structure, is

unique in many ways.

Calhoon-MEBA School

One of its more recent projects that can certainly qualify in this category is the Calhoon-MEBA Engineering School.

It's simple enough to explain what it is: an institution of learning designed to develop fully qualified and accredited marine engineers for job opportunities on America's merchant fleet.

What makes it unique, however, is that it is the only such engineering school in the world exclusively sponsored by the industry itself. It made maritime history in 1968 when it graduated its first class of fully qualified marine engineering students at a commencement exercise in Baltimore, Maryland, attended by the nation's top leaders in labor, management and government, all of whom viewed it as a milestone in creative industrial-procurement planning.

For how it all came into being, one must go back to a survey undertaken by MEBA on the job pattern shifts of the graduates of U.S. Maritime Academies. Something, in its opinion, was very wrong.

The survey revealed several facts in specifics: U.S. Maritime Academy graduates were receiving Bachelor of Science degrees and—after a five year period—had left the service at a ratio factor of 91 percent. Placing this statistic in juxtaposition with MEBA's own approximately 6 percent loss of membership every year through retirement, attrition and death, the picture became disturbingly significant.

"The whole thing was brought into even sharper focus," said Leon Shapiro, MEBA's secretary-treasurer of District One, "when we discovered—while in the midst of the survey—that many of our ships destined to carry cargo, including defense supplies for Vietnam, had developed serious manpower shortages which made for delays in sailing, and that much of these critical goods were not being delivered on time. Putting it simply, the Academies were not supplying the needed reserve labor pool to properly man the merchant fleet."

What was happening was that



MACHINE SHOP TYRO LEARNING INTRICACIES OF DRILL PRESS



STUDENTS DISCUSSING A PROJECT

the graduates of the Academies had received a free education, had served their terms and—in almost overwhelming numbers—had gone ashore.

"We just had to do something about it," said Shapiro.

Exploratory talks with management revealed that they, too, were cognizant of the problem and of the urgency of the need. Thus was started the initial machinery that eventuated into the present Calhoon-MEBA Engineering School . . . a government approved two year course designed to supply the industry with its changeable manpower requirements.

Students need a high school diploma or its equivalency to enter. They must be between the ages of 18 and 27. The curriculum has provisions for upgrading the skills of older engineers as well; they can come back for advanced courses in the more sophisticated machinery areas permitting them to upgrade their licenses.

Administered by a joint labor-management board of trustees, with Roy A. Luebbe as its Director, it is entirely privately financed by MEBA and the maritime industry. Its curriculum is set by the United States Coast Guard which issues the final examinations and licenses.

"And the amount of students is completely controlled," said Calhoon. "When our analysis indicates that jobs may be more plentiful, we raise the number of undergraduates. When it looks like they're going to be less plentiful, we lower

the number. That way we can pretty generally guarantee a graduate a job and keep him in the maritime industry for a much longer period of time."

How well the school is regarded may be found in a letter recently sent to MEBA's president by the Navy Department's Naval Systems Command which, noting that it presently "has no capability of its own for the training of the operation and maintenance personnel . . ." (on a modified Central Operations Systems product), requested that "consideration be given to making available . . . suitable classroom space for this Command on a non-interfering reimbursable basis . . ." (at the Calhoon-MEBA Engineering School.)

As Mundell Sees MEBA

This concern for engineers; for the development of their jobs and their security and—from a practical standpoint—for the dollars to make it all possible, is certainly among the reasons for the Marine Technician's Guild (an independent union) to have recently affiliated with MEBA.

Robert G. Mundell, a design engineer at Gibbs & Cox, perhaps the top marine design engineering firm in the country (they created the S.S. United States and many of the Navy's fighting ships) and president of MTC-MEBA, summed up the reasons for his organization's affiliation this way:

"Our basic thrust came as a result of long drawn out negotiations we



ROBERT G. MUNDELL

had with the company (G&C) in 1968-1969. We really went the gamut . . . had better than 50 hearings at the NLRB. This colossal litigation is an extremely costly procedure for a small independent just to bring a company to the bargaining table . . ."

The difficulty with independents, as Mundell says he has learned from bitter experience, is that the company treats them more as a little brother than as a responsible entity; that their philosophy is principally "a benevolent manana one," and that the dissipation of energies are routed into so many tangential issues that the real ones very rarely even get to the table—much less wind up being solved.

"It's never a really serious bargainer," he said, "because it just doesn't think you're important enough."

The decision to affiliate with a stronger group, Mundell stated, had been discussed and agreed upon for some time. The only thing that had not been finalized was "who."

"We chose MEBA," said Mundell, "because it is composed of professional people and because we relate to each other. They run the ships; we design them. In a sense we're part of the same family."

"More than that, we got a package that included complete autonomy and continuance of operation."

The major benefits to his Guild, as Mundell laid them out, were MEBA's continuous efforts to promote legislation beneficial to the maritime industry, which, he felt, would stimulate action on impending work.

FIELD TRIP—TOMORROW'S ENGINEERS EXAMINING ENGINE CONTROL CONSOLE ABOARD SHIP



"We have a normal die-curve after every war," he said. "We're the only nation in the world that absolutely disavows its fleet when the shooting is over; like some unwanted infant, that winds up in the garbage can. Don't ask me to explain why we think this way, but we're in that cycle right now."

He stressed, too, that the "statute" of MEBA was bringing infinitely better and faster response in many areas than his own former independent had ever been able to achieve.

"We're in the process of coming out of difficult times," Mundel summed up conditions in his own industry, "and are now—as far as professional people are concerned—in the very infancy of meaningful organizing."

"For us, there's mandatory need for MEBA. It represents a labor organization of professionals which lets the engineer keep his independent professionalism, yet combines it with the necessary power of unionism to give him the benefits he could not otherwise obtain."

Felso's Analysis

Reached in his California offices, Michael J. Felso, formerly an engineer with the Pacific Gas & Electric Company and now working president of the Engineers and Scientists of California, cited a number of different reasons for his Independent's affiliation:

"We were like lightweights fighting a heavyweight. They (Pacific Gas & Electric) had more money, more savvy, more time for delaying actions, more hands to put to work on any project designed to knock us down."

"We had no full time staff. Hell, we had *no* staff. The officers of our association were part time people who gave what hours they could. How can you really negotiate effectively that way—with *anybody*, let alone PGE."

Representing some 1,800 members at PGE, Felso felt the odds against him were just too great.

"We affiliated for MEBA's expertise, for its backing, for its complete financial assistance and for its AFL-CIO charter which would protect us against raiding. And they didn't try to absorb us as some other unions did. We're affiliated

but we're separate. We run our own show completely."

Asked to explore some visible changes as a result of the affiliation, Felso stated that his organization had gone from a second story two-room office with one in help to a complete full-time staff "of organizer, attorney . . . you name it); that their financial problems were over ("We couldn't even go to arbitration before.") and that they have not only gained greater respect but more membership as well.

On the mood of the membership; "the spirit is one of renewed confidence. On the dehumanization factor: "We're not as much a number as we were before. But I imagine that in our highly technical ambient, some of that dehumanization rubs off on everybody."

On security: "I think that's going to get a whole lot better. Engineers are the greatest vagabonds in the world. Portable pension plans are their only answer for retirement and security. Our people here are very optimistic that this will come to pass."

From MEBA's Bridge

Said Henry Dooley, vice president of POIU and organizer for MEBA on the west coast, when contacted in his office in San Francisco:

"Almost universally, they contact us. They've read or heard about MEBA someplace and put us on their shopping list. We don't want some—we're looking for a union of professional people—and some don't want us. But our average is far better than average."

He said that about 7,000 new members had come into POIU and MEBA within the last 18 months and that that figure could very well be doubled in the next 90 days.

"We've signed contracts with the largest steamship company on the west coast (American President Lines)," he said, "for their office and clerical workers. We've got Consolidated Marine Industries. And we're now in the Labor Board (NLRB) for election at the North American Rockwell Autonetics Plant in Anaheim, California."

The association at North American—Aerospace, Professional and Technical Association—is now affiliated with MEBA. It has a member-

ship of some 3,000 engineers.

APTA-MEBA President Robert Hunter feels that "through affiliation with a strong national organization attuned to the specialized problems and needs of the professional, technical and salaried employe, very considerably progress can be achieved."

George Bean, APTA's executive director, was a little less formal. "This affiliation marks a new era not only for us at Autonetics, but throughout the aerospace industry. We're happy to enter into association with our brother professionals of MEBA for we know they have much to offer . . . in bargaining strength and other benefits."

What these benefits are, as MEBA's secretary-treasurer of District I pointed out, can be summed up in a few major categories. Said Leon Shapiro:

"I'd say they're the availability of our research facilities with respect to contract negotiations and pension and welfare; with respect to studies on work problems and our experience to organize them into meaningful benefits. These are the top priority considerations of any professional man."

View From The Top

MEBA's President Calhoon summed it up with equal pragmatism but from a little different side of the hill.

"If America wants to stay on top, we'll need all the brains we can get," he said. "The best way *not* to get them is to do what we're doing now—throwing them away. You can't have a modern world without engineers, but we're not going to have too many engineers unless we do something about setting the situation straight—and very soon."

The next step lies—apparently—in the lap of these very engineers themselves. And just as apparently—something seems to be happening: a loosening of the adhesive of aloofness towards the concept that they . . . somehow are or should be above the labor movement.

If this professionalism can—at long last—be tied into unionism; if *this is an idea whose hour has finally come*, America is in for a tide of mergers or affiliations that could well make MEBA one of the largest unions in the world. ▲