

# Shop Steward Guide

## 1. Forward

One of the most satisfying tasks one can perform in life is represent our members at the job site in the capacity of steward.

The steward is one of the most important persons in the IAM. These individuals make working and bargaining collective with our employers click. They are the first line of defense in enforcing the negotiated rights and conditions of employment of our members. The steward breathes life into the collective bargaining agreement and shields their fellow workers from unscrupulous employers who might not want to live up to what they've agreed to do or who would try to operate the workplace in a discriminatory manner.

If you are a new steward you may have questions about your duties-and even a few doubts about your ability to do the job.

We do not pretend that job of steward is easy. But with this Pocket Guide we hope you can avoid many pitfalls. Based on the experience of others it tells you what to expect and how to proceed. It discusses problems most likely to arise. But most of all it assures you that you do not stand alone. Behind you in the never-ending fight for justice on the job stand your local lodge, your district, your International Union.

Congratulations upon becoming a steward of the IAM. I welcome and thank you for the service you will render for your brother and sister members.

Fraternally,

R. Thomas Buffenbarger  
International President

## 2. THE STEWARDS BIG JOB

Congratulations, Steward! You are the chief architect of the union in your plant, the protector of the union contract, the director of communications between each individual worker in your department and the management of your facility, and between the workers you represent and your union.

That's a big job! But don't let it scare you! If you are a new steward, you can't possibly know all the angles by magic. You can't possibly know all the angles by magic. You can't possibly know all the things this manual says you must know. Not right away, and not all at once. If you are a new steward, you will learn them, gradually, through experience. So don't get frightened, but take the job in your stride! But even if you're pretty confident and an old hand at the game, it won't hurt to refresh yourself a bit. Perhaps you'll get a new idea while reading this manual which will come in handy in a pinch. Reading a pamphlet or going to a stewards' class won't do the job for you, but it may help you to do it better.

## 3. NEED FOR STEWARDS

The steward system developed to meet the needs of unions as they grew in size and scope. Workers needed someone on the spot to whom they could take their grievances as they came up. A person was needed to make sure management was living up to its agreement day by day, for collective bargaining demands eternal vigilance.

The steward is to the union what the supervisor is to a company. Just as the supervisor is the company to the average worker, so the steward is the union to the average member. But whereas the supervisor represents the company and acts as its spokesman as part of his or her regular full-time job, the steward must take time off during

working hours to handle grievances. Naturally, the agreement should provide that the steward be paid for the time lost in handling grievances during working hours. The clause might read as follows:

*"The company will pay Stewards, members of the Shop Committee and aggrieved employees at their regular hourly rate, or average hourly earnings, whichever is greater, for time spent in processing grievances in accordance with the provisions of this agreement."*

Again in contrast to the supervisor, the steward is not at all sure of keeping his or her job when layoffs begin. He or she must also wait in turn to be rehired. This is in accordance with the usual seniority provisions. Many agreements try to overcome this disadvantage by providing the steward with top seniority in the workplace. This protects the steward to the extent that he or she is the last worker to be laid off and first to be recalled. But don't get it into your head that you can leave your place of work when you please because you are a steward. Under most contracts, stewards may leave their posts only to handle grievances and only after notice to the supervisor. If the supervisor refuses to grant such a request, it is subject to the normal grievance processes as explained in this manual. But the grievance should be filed at the first opportunity.

In some cases, the Union provides that before employees are eligible for the office of steward they should have at least one year's seniority with the company. This also affords some measure of protection to stewards and makes it possible for them to be of service any time grievances occur.

The supervisor is picked by superiors; the shop steward is elected by equals in the local lodge. Every good standing member is eligible to serve as a shop steward. But, in choosing a steward, it is highly desirable to choose one who has shown more than casual interest in the union and has been a member long enough to have obtained a knowledge of working conditions. This is particularly important since the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act under which a steward is treated as an "agent" of the union. Section 2 (13) of the laws reads:

*"In determining whether person is acting as an "agent" of another person so as to make the other person responsible for his act, the question of whether the specific acts performed were actually authorized or subsequently ratified shall not be controlling."*

This language is the broadest possible definition of the law of agency, and it is purposely designed to make the Union liable for all the acts of its officers, stewards, committeemen or any member who might act as a spokesman or leader of a group no matter how unauthorized or inconsistent with Union policy the act may be. The irresponsible action of any member who might be found to be an 'agent' by the National Labor Relations Board and also liable for money damages in suits by the employer.

However, the fact that you've been chosen to represent the worker in your department shows that they have faith in you and respect your judgment.

Every union contract and every industry is different. You may be the only steward in the plant or you may be only one of a great many stewards in a large factory. In large facilities with more than one department, a number of stewards and a system for coordinating the department stewards is necessary. Many large workplaces are set up by the company on the basis of sections, departments, floors, divisions, and outside operations. In these cases, the steward system should correspond as closely as possible to the way the company has set up the workplace. After the election of department stewards, they should meet promptly and select their chief steward and recording secretary. Many successful stewards have found it profitable to eat lunch together every day and exchange experiences.

## **4. TWO MAIN TASKS**

In general, you have two main jobs-first, building a strong union in you workplace; and, second, grievance handling.

## **5. BUILDING A STRONG UNION**

You must have a strong union behind you if you're going to be able to carry on your job of handling grievances effectively. Your attitude and the effort you put into your job is what counts. Make it a privilege for your fellow workers to be active union members who attend meetings regularly and willingly pay their dues. This isn't done by being a know-it-all or overbearing steward. A lot of it will come about by the example you set. Enthusiasm and sincerity are contagious. You can always sell better what you believe in yourself.

## **6. PUT LIFE INTO YOUR CONTRACT**

Your second main job is handling grievances. Without you and your fellow stewards, the best contract can be a dud. You give it life. You make it work. The smartest union officer cannot build the union alone. The most efficient union representative cannot make it run smoothly without your help.

Later we'll discuss the whole procedure of grievance handling and establishing good relations with your supervisors. But there's an important job related to this which is sometimes overlooked. Be on the lookout for bad conditions or situations that need remedying and do something about them before they become serious grievances. That is, nip grievances in the bud! Tense or unfair situations which affect work production may arise from some personal difficulty between the workers. (These are bound to arise as long as we're human beings without a private island for each of us.) Together you and the supervisor may be able to ease the situation and make for better understanding and cooperation among the workers involved.

By getting at these things before they become serious grievances you're apt to get better results. Psychologically it's easier to go to your supervisor and point out something that you can remedy together. It's not a question then of who wins the grievance case-management or labor. Rather, the issue is cooperative effort resulting in better working conditions, greater job security, fairer wages for the workers, and thus better production. Of course this same cooperative approach works in handling grievances, too!

If you can handle a situation outside the grievance procedure, do it. But do not horse trade or violate the contract.

## **7. KNOW YOUR CONTRACT**

Your fellow workers don't expect you to know everything, and they'll respect you a lot more if you don't try to bluff your way out of things. But they do expect you, as their leader, to be well informed. To educate workers so that they understand and cooperate with union policies, you must first educate yourself.

"Know your contract!" This is the first commandment for the steward.

To know if the company and the union are living up to their agreement, you must know what's in it. Unless you know what it says, you cannot tell a worker if he's right about it. You certainly can't discuss it intelligently with management.

Read over every word of it. Go over it at stewards' meetings. Discuss it with union officers. Become familiar with the provisions. Understand how they apply to special conditions in your department.

Keep up-to-date with arbitration decisions and new interpretations of the different clauses. When you know your contract as well as you do the alphabet you can begin to shine as a steward.

Remember the union is not a slot machine where a worker puts in his dues and gets the jackpot in the form of higher pay, shorter hours, better lighting, longer vacation-, it all takes work! But it's worth it. As steward, you have to do a lot of the day-to-day work. But if you are a good leader, you'll get cooperation from your fellow workers and your union officials as well as from management and this helps make the job easier.

You will have headaches, but you will also get breaks. Stewardship gives valuable experience. From adjusting plant grievances you may come to represent labor in industry-wide conferences, policy-making conventions or even government agencies. The keystone of the local union may be the stepping stone to greater union leadership.

## **8. HOW THE STEWARDS CAN HELP BUILD THEIR UNION**

The best steward in the world can't carry the union alone. You may be a whiz on preparing grievances. You may outtalk the supervisor with ease. But you still need the workers behind you. The support is strongest when every worker in the facility is a union member and knows why. Then each person can help you carry the ball to newcomers.

## **9. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Like most vitally important jobs, that of a steward is very difficult. In fact, it may seem like a steward is expected to be all things to all people at once. Of course that is impossible, but by understanding the various roles of a steward and doing your best at fulfilling them, the steward will contribute greatly to the strength of the union.

The roles of the steward can best be described as that of negotiator, educator, leader, organizer, communicator and political activist.

## **10. THE STEWARD AS A NEGOTIATOR**

The primary negotiating task of the steward is the handling of grievances. Listed below are the things that the steward should do and know to fulfill the role of negotiator and suggestions as to how to do them:

What You Do:

1. Settle Grievances
2. Screen gripes from grievances
3. Police the contract
4. Check working conditions
5. Enforce labor legislation
6. Check time studies
7. Check merit ratings
8. Keep written records

What You Need To Know:

1. Proper grievance handling
2. How to analyze a grievance
3. Meaning of contract clauses
4. Health and safety hazards
5. Federal and state labor laws
6. Time study principles
7. Job evaluation principles
8. All settlements reached

How You Go About It:

1. Check all available facts before taking an issue to management.
2. Prepare your case so that it is clear, complete and to the point.
3. Be careful to observe all contract requirements on grievance handling.
4. In dealing with your supervisor be business-like, polite and firm. (a) Don't bully or threaten. (b) Treat the other person with respect and demand that you be treated in the same manner.
5. Keep the grievant informed as to the status of the grievance.
6. Follow through all the way to final settlement.

## **11. THE STEWARD AS A LEADER**

The steward must take the leadership role in his/her department. He/She must set an example for other workers to follow. The steward must make decisions which uphold the terms of the collective bargaining agreement and the union constitution and bylaws. Listed below are the things the steward should do and know to fulfill the role of leader and suggestions as to how to do them:

What You Do:

1. Work for the group welfare
2. Fight for what is right
3. Act promptly and decisively
4. Establish friendly relations
5. Hold no grudges
6. Discourage factional bickering
7. Develop teamwork
8. Lead instead of drive

What You Need To Know:

1. Long-range aims of the union
2. The consequences of your actions
3. Actions speak louder than words
4. The other person also has a point
5. You can't win them all
6. Why people disagree
7. Cooperation means success
8. Adults respond to sound reasoning

How You Go About It:

1. Know the facts, write them down, and talk them over.
2. Keep the people who are being affected informed on the course of action.
3. Give credit where credit is due.
4. Ask for advice and help. You can't know everything.
5. Keep your word and deal fairly and impartially.

## **12. THE STEWARD AS AN EDUCATOR**

The steward has the responsibility of educating the members in his/her department, both the old and new, about the collective bargaining agreement, union policy, and why changes occurred. Listed below are some of the things that the steward should do and know to fulfill the role of educator and suggestions as to how to do them:

What You Do:

1. Keep members fully informed
2. Discuss and explain policies
3. Tell about union counseling
4. Clarify union objectives
5. Explain legislative program
6. Stress registering and voting
7. Interpret labor legislation
8. Tell economic "facts of life"

What You Need To Know:

1. Informed members are loyal members
2. What your union is doing
3. Social agencies and programs available in the community
4. Union history
5. How laws are made and their impact on unions
6. Responsibilities of citizenship
7. How labor laws operate
8. How our system functions

How You Go About It:

1. Make person-to-person contact daily - tell your story - ask for ideas.
2. Hold regular department meetings to tell your people what's going on.
3. Distribute union periodicals and literature - check mailing lists.
4. Enlarge your own knowledge by attending classes whenever available and share this knowledge with your fellow members.
5. Keep your communication lines open - invite criticism, suggestion and full discussion.

## **13. THE STEWARD AS A COMMUNICATOR**

The role of communicator runs throughout every other role of the steward. As a democratic institution, a breakdown in communications can seriously damage a union. Listed below are some of the things that the steward should do and know to fulfill the role of communicator, and suggestions as to how to do them:

What You Do:

1. Keep members informed on union policies and activities
2. Detect and stop rumors
3. Keep members informed on company proposals and policies
4. Direct problems through the proper channels
5. Use several different methods of communicating with the members
6. Encourage members to contribute to your local newsletter
7. Urge attendance and participation at union meetings

What You Need To Know:

1. Union policies and activities and their rationale
2. Where the rumor started and why
3. Members should look to you for their information
4. Who has responsibility over the area in question
5. Communications methods may differ according to the message
6. The newsletter is the voice of the members and the officers
7. The union meeting is democracy in action

## **14. THE STEWARD AS AN ORGANIZER**

Organizing the unorganized is the charge of all unionist, whether they be an international officer, or a steward. A major task of the steward is to organize the members in his/her department. Listed below are the things that the steward should do and know to fulfill the role of organizer and suggestions as to how to do them:

What You Do:

1. Organize unorganized-Goal 100%
2. Greet new employees
3. Collect dues
4. Collect check off authorizations
5. Urge attendance at meetings
6. Develop membership participation
7. Combat anti-union activities
8. Make daily contacts
9. Keep a list of non-union members

What You Need To Know:

1. Real objections of non-members
2. Who's who in your department
3. Dues standing of each member
4. Reasons for union security
5. Democratic nature of union
6. Various committee needs
7. Who is dissatisfied with the union and why
8. The union must be visible
9. Never give up on your goal of 100% organized

How You Go About It:

1. Respect the sincerity and opinions of every worker.
2. Treat all alike regardless of face, sex, color or political beliefs.
3. Protect the interest of the non-union worker as diligently as you may defend the union member.
4. Recognize that your union is a voluntary association of free men and women. Solid support can only be won through reason, persuasion and effective representation.
5. Keep everlastingly at it.

## **15. THE STEWARD AS A POLITICAL ACTIVIST**

The steward has the responsibility to make the members aware of political affairs that affect their livelihood and social well-being, including keeping them informed as to legislation that affects the collective bargaining process and climate. The steward should also become involved in politics by helping on campaigns of labor-endorsed candidates. Listed below are the things that the steward should do and know to fulfill the role of political activist and suggestions as to how to do them:

What To Do:

1. Keep members informed about political events
2. Register and vote in all elections
3. Encourage everyone in your department to vote
4. Write letters to your representatives and encourage others to do so
5. Work on campaigns of labor endorsed candidates
6. Promote the political action program of your

What You Need To Know :

1. Pending legislation that affects workers
2. Our nation cannot remain democratic without the participation of the people
3. Who is not registered, and who needs prodding to exercise their right to vote
4. Who your representatives are and current issues
5. Who has been endorsed and why
6. The political positions your union has taken

How You Go About It:

1. Read newspapers and union literature, such as the AFL-CIO News, The Legislative Alert, and your International paper, so that you understand the issues from a labor perspective.
2. Attend education programs that discuss the issues.
3. Volunteer to work on a phone bank, knock on doors, stuff envelopes or pass out fliers for a labor endorsed candidate.
4. Organize letter writing campaigns to your representatives on important labor issues.
5. Participate in "actions" organized by your union, such as rallies and marches.
6. Distribute union literature to all members.

## **16. MEET THE NEW HIRE ON THE FIRST DAY**

In Your Role As An Organizer, Be Sure To ***MEET THE NEW HIRE ON THE FIRST DAY***

What do you think the new hire wants and needs to know the first day on the job?  
Do you remember your "FIRST DAY" on the job?

Put yourself in the new hire's shoes! That plant or office, department, job, and everything about it is going to be NEW-STRANGE- and just a little bit UNREAL. Remember? The new hire is going to want to know, and will be thinking about many things. If you were the new hire, would you be thinking:

1. Should I really be here?
2. What's expected of me on the job?
3. How much "break-in" will I have before I'm on my own?
4. Can I make the production rate? Can I do the job?
5. How will the other workers accept me?
6. Where did they say the rest rooms and vending areas are?
7. What if I run out of stock or the job breaks down?
8. What should I remember about what the Boss told me? The Union rep?
9. By the way, I wonder what a union rep really looks like. After all, I don't know much about leaders.

That first day is so rough that most people remember it for the rest of their lives! The first day is when the new hire needs a friendly "welcome". Remember?

### ***IDEAS FOR GREETING THE NEW HIRE***

Many contracts have specific provisions for the Management to introduce the "new hire" to the Steward. However, if your contract is silent on this question, you can arrange to meet them before work, during lunch period, or after work. Here's how you do it...

#### **GET THERE EARLY**

Let them know that you would like to talk to them the next day, before they start to work-maybe have them come in a bit early. Use that time to get the union's message across to them.

#### **BEFORE THE SHIFT BEGINS**

There are always groups of workers who take advantage of this time to have a cup of coffee, "pass the time" with friends, or have a quick game of cards. Have a group of union members meet and greet the new hire!

#### **AT LUNCH TIME**

Maybe both you and the NEW HIRES arrive at work too late to permit you to talk to them about the union. How about lunch time? If you brown bag it, why not take your lunch over to where the NEW HIRES are and talk to them during lunch? Or ask the NEW HIRES to join you in the cafeteria.

#### **CONTACT DIFFERENT GROUPS**

Since there may be groups of NEW HIRES throughout your department or district, why not make it a point to use

your lunch periods to talk to as many of them as you can? This has been a long standing, time honored way for Stewards to keep members informed on issues acquainting them with their rights and duties and the union's accomplishment.

#### GIVE THE "NEW HIRE" A PACKET OF UNION MATERIALS

Your local union should prepare a special kit to give new hires that explain the union, its goals and achievements. The new hire should clearly understand that the wages, benefits, and working conditions were negotiated by the union.

### **17. BE PROFESSIONAL AND FAIR**

Talk and reason with people in a friendly, courteous manner. Use facts and reasons to clear up their mistaken points of view. Tell them the story of what the union has done in the workplace and how membership benefits all the workers in the plant.

Though the workers join the union automatically or are required to pay equivalent fees in a union shop, the steward should still speak to them, tell them what the union is all about, and welcome them into the ranks. Workers who join because they have to, without understanding the principles of unionism, are not likely to make good union members. They may be willing to pay dues for a while, under pressure, but they will not develop the thoughtful union-mindedness which holds them to the union through thick and thin. Their lack of belief and failure to build up a healthy steward-worker relationship may lead to grievances which are hard to settle.

Every so often, where you don't have a union shop, canvass older employees who are not union members. Talk over their problems and persuade them to join. Here's where loyal members in the department can work with you. Get them to talk to co-workers they know best. If the union has done or not done something which keeps some workers doubtful, try to correct the situation. Remember that the closer you come to a 100% union shop the more effective your local can be.

### **18. TALK UNION**

So talk with new workers, ask them to go to a union meeting or other activity with you, and introduce them to fellow workers who are enthusiastic union members.

If the worker has a grievance and/or you happen to know about it, offer your help and explain that is just why he or she needs the union. The worker will see the point. Of course, if your union is the sole bargaining agent for all employees in the plant, you are the representative of all the workers, regardless of whether they're union members or not.

### **19. MAKING MEMBERS 'ONE HUNDRED PER CENTERS'**

Building a strong union isn't only getting new members. It's seeing to it that each member is a 'one hundred per center'.

The same methods you used in getting new members apply here, too. They may have joined because most of the workers belonged and they were afraid not to, or because of a vague idea it was to their advantage. In a friendly way explain the union program and benefits, the operation of the shop steward system, and any recreational or social activities the union offers which will be an added incentive to belonging.

Remember, this all takes some self-education on your part. You've got to know all the arguments for unions in general and your union in particular. Workers are going to hear all the arguments against unions, outside over the radio, in the newspaper, and on the street corner. They've got to see for themselves that it pays to be a member and that the union is a democratic organization they're proud to belong to.

O.K. you're doing fine on this first step. All the workers who joined up really wanted to and knew why they did it. There are lots of little ways to make workers feel like real, contributing members of their union and of the labor movement. The more active each worker is, the less work you have to do alone- because you've got a team working toward the same goal.

### **20. DUES-LIFE BLOOD OF THE UNION**

Without dues a union could not exist. Dues support negotiating, organizing, research, legal, legislative, contract administration, arbitration, strike benefits and many other services of direct benefit to the member.

Almost 90% of all IAM members are covered by contracts which provide for dues check off. This means that each month the employer automatically deducts dues so that members do not become delinquent. Initially a new employer must authorize the check off. In some facilities it must be renewed each year. As steward you must be certain that new employees sign a dues checkoff authorization and also remind your members when it is time to renew.

In facilities where dues are not checked off, stewards may have to work a little harder to be certain that members do not fall behind. If you serve such a workplace, be sure to remind members to get their dues in before the 10th of the month. In some facilities stewards help the business representative or officers by collecting dues directly. If you have a dues-collecting responsibility, try to get members into the habit of coming to you to pay their dues at a certain specified time and day each month.

## **21. KNOW THE WORKERS IN YOUR DEPARTMENT**

You should know workers by name, what kind of people they are and how they get along with other workers, what type of operation they're doing, what their seniority rating is, and what the hourly rate or piece rate is for their job. You naturally can't keep all this in your head if you're in a large department, so it's a good idea to write it down. All this will help later when you're approached on the matter of a grievance and want to decide whether workers are justified in their complaints. You'll soon know the chronic kickers, the ones that don't kick enough-and sort them out. Know who they are and deal with them.

It all helps in your efforts to see to it that all the possible benefits authorized in the contract are put into effect. Keep pushing to get qualified workers the wage rate to which they are entitled, to get them into better jobs for which they are qualified.

## **22. KEEP THE MEMBERS INFORMED**

Keep the members informed, but not merely through the bulletin boards. Urge them to come to meetings. As the official closest to the people who make the union, you are responsible for keeping them informed of important union activities and policies.

You are the link between the workers and the union office. Many workers will never get to the office except for meetings. Many never see any union representative except yourself. So, they must rely on you to tell them what goes on between meetings. **YOUR ARE THE UNION TO THEM.**

Another service you can perform is to ask your members if they are receiving the monthly paper, "The Machinist". If they are not, report this to the financial secretary. Furnish him with the member's card number, latest address, and former address. The secretary has or can secure blanks of reporting this information.

## **23. MEET PROBLEMS BEFORE THEY BECOME GRIEVANCES**

Along this line of 'getting there first'-in seeing potential grievances before they arise-is the importance of keeping your department informed of changes in the shop which will affect them.

Say for instance, that some new machinery is going to be introduced and you've heard that management is planning to hire new workers to handle it. Because you know your workers and work, you realize that three or four of them have done similar operations before and that the new job carries a higher rate than the one they're now doing. If you're on your job you'll talk with the proper authorities about getting these employees into the job before new ones are hired for it. Otherwise you may have trouble on your hands with a few pretty mad workers.

At any rate, when any change is being made it's a good plan to have a department or union meeting and explain to your people beforehand what's going to happen, how it will affect them, and find out how they feel about it, and what they want to do about it. This applies to other things, too, like necessary layoffs because of cutting down on production or installation of automated equipment.

## **24. KEEP A UNITED UNION FRONT**

Another thing that makes for a stronger, more effective union in your workplace is presenting a united front in your relations with management. Make it understood how important it is for the workers to come to you with their complaints and grievances rather than 'griping' among themselves and so stirring up trouble, or going to the supervisor without your knowledge.

## **25. BE A GOOD LISTENER**

More important-you must be the kind of person to whom workers feel able to come to with any sort of problem. They must feel they'll always get a patient, understanding listener who's willing to try to work out something with them. You may have to show workers that they're in the wrong, or that they haven't the ground for a grievance. But there are firm and yet tactful ways of explaining this so that you still keep their confidence.

You may discover that workers have personal problems, seemingly unrelated to the workplace, except that it prevents them from doing their job well. You should know the agencies in your community which offer individual and family counseling services, medical care, etc., to which you can refer them for help in working out their problems.

You're the sounding board for these matters. Transportation, food and other inplant difficulties should be referred to whichever union or labor- management committee handles such questions. Unsafe work practices, unhealthy working conditions and inadequate sanitary facilities come to your eye and ear first. Take them up with the supervisor.

Another aspect of the Collective Bargaining relationship that must be taken into account is the existence of 'management rights'. As fair and responsible union members it is your obligation to live up to the terms of the negotiated agreement. In matters of discipline, looking into unnecessary cases of absenteeism, slow down on the job or wild-cat strikes, the shop steward can aid the union to find reasons and remedies for such situations. This can be done by simply trying to talk with the people involved.

Remember that once an understanding is arrived at, you and your members have an obligation to carry out your end of the bargain. A good rule to follow in dealing with management is to be sure all settlements are clearly understood by all parties.

## **26. GOOD RELATIONS WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR**

One of the best ways to have an effective Collective Bargaining agreements is to establish good relations with supervisors. Supervisors don't have to be the enemy, they're working for a living as well and share the workplace with the union members. Supervisors are only representing management as the steward represents the union. A steward must remember that they cannot be effective without being responsible and businesslike, stick to the facts. Good relations with supervisors can greatly aid the welfare of the shop. Problems throughout the workplace can be worked out; personality problems affecting production or the introduction of new machinery and its results. Good relations with supervisors can greatly influence the nature of labor relations within the workplace.

Sometimes you may have to work without a contract. For example, when the union has newly won recognition but has not yet negotiated a contract. Or, the old contract may expire before the union has had time to negotiate a new one. At such time, when union protection is lacking, good relations with your supervisors are especially important.

## **27. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES-TIPS ON RELATIONS WITH MANAGEMENT**

Good grievance produce is essential to all parties interested in sound labor relations. It is as important to management as to labor. The grievance machinery enables management with the help of the union to discover and correct the sore spots in working conditions and plant industrial relations before they are permitted to spread and cause trouble. It provides an effective communications system for bringing bad shop practices of lower supervisory help to management's attention. The general grievance procedure might be covered by a clause like this:

*"The Company recognizes and will deal with all of the accredited members of the committee and shop and departmental stewards in all matters relating to grievances, interpretations of the agreement or in any other matters which affect or may affect the relationship between the Company and the Union."*

To the individual worker, grievance procedure provides the means of enforcing the terms of the contract and with a democratic method of appeal against any one person's arbitrary decision affecting wages or working conditions. It protects the democratic rights of the individual in industry in the same way that our judicial system protects your democratic rights in civil life.

## **28. HANDLING GRIEVANCES**

Now we come to what makes up the bulk of your work-the handling of grievances.

It's probably a daily headache to you, but it's also the heart of the union's collective bargaining system with management. Your work has just begun when the negotiating committee has the new contract completed and signed.

As you know only too well, grievances arise almost every day on the job. Even in plants where the relationship between the employees and management is good, grievances may arise because of misunderstandings, incorrect application of policy by the supervisor or worker, faulty interpretation of the contract by either side, or some discriminatory act. Some so-called "grievances" occur because of personality conflicts; a couple of workers don't get along or a worker finds the supervisor's jokes annoying. These are not grievances technically, and you must learn to distinguish them from true grievances.

## **29. ABIDE BY CONTRACT RULES**

The machinery for handling grievances and your powers as shop steward are written into your contract. It might contain a definition of "grievance" such as the following:

*"For the purpose of this Agreement the term "Grievance" means any dispute between the Company and the Union, or between the Company and any employee concerning the effect, interpretation, application, claims of breach or violation of this agreement, or any other dispute which may arise between the parties."*

Most contracts follow either a three-, four-, or five-step grievance procedure. Some facilities, smaller in size or of a different type, omit one or more intermediate steps. Sometimes workers feel that they can get farther ahead by going straight to the boss or supervisor, that they have a right to take up their own grievance.

Set workers straight on this and explain that although they have the right to take up their own grievance, the steward also has the responsibility, by law, to be present. The law reads as follows:

*"Representatives designated or selected for the purposes of collective bargaining by the majority of the employees in a unit appropriate for such purposes, shall be the exclusive representatives of all the employees in such unit for the purposes of collective bargaining in respect to rates of pay, wages, hours of employment, or other conditions of employment: Provided, that any individual employee or a group of employees shall have the right at any time to present grievances to their employer and to have such grievances adjusted, with out the intervention of the bargaining representatives, as long as the adjustment is not inconsistent with terms of a collective-bargaining contract or agreement then in effect: Provided further, That the bargaining representative has been given opportunity to be present at such adjustment."*

The contract is not property of any one worker. It belongs to the union and should be handled by a representative of all the workers. There should be no private grievances.

But, knowing the machinery isn't everything; you must know what methods have proved most efficient and effective for handling a grievance successfully. You must also know how to be most effective in dealing with the supervisor.

## **30. GET ALL THE FACTS**

WHEN, WHERE, WHY, WHAT, AND WHO. In order to present a good case to the supervisor you must get all the facts. Of course, this really doesn't come second, because you have to know at least the basic facts in order to make your decision as to whether the complaint is an actual grievance or not. Be sure you have all the details and are not passing on rumors, opinion or half truths. Facts can't be argued against. It's true they can be ignored or manipulate, but it's your job to see to it that this doesn't happen. Stick to the facts in the case. When in doubt, consult the business representatives of your local or district lodge.

### **31. IS IT A JUST GRIEVANCE?**

All right-this is the first day in your new job as Steward. A worker comes to you with a complaint. You talk at length with the worker, listening patiently to his or her story. You must decide if it is a just grievance you can rightfully take up with management. Bear in mind two things in order to make your decision:

1. Does it violate the contract?
2. Has the worker been treated unfairly by some action of the Company?

In most cases a just grievance will come under a violation of the contract. However, you may have a grievance which seems entirely justified to you after you've looked into it, but which is not covered by any clause in the contract. In such cases you should consult with your chief steward, the plant grievance committee, or your business representative. This may show up an omission or indicate a change which should be made when the contract is renegotiated. It should be written down for use of next year's negotiating committee. Later we'll talk about the importance of written records for grievances.

You must also remember that every gripe is not a grievance. To be sure, you are the worker's representative and not an impartial judge, and you should always give the worker the benefit of the doubt in borderline cases. But the union is going to "lose face" with management if you're continually taking up gripes and groushings which are not justified grievances to be handled by the collective bargaining machinery.

Gripes over the work and difficulties workers have in adjusting to each other are going to arise. Lots of people occasionally have chips on their shoulders. Don't ignore them. Perhaps you may want to discuss the situation informally with the supervisor, as well as with the workers involved, in an effort to obtain harmony. But, stick to your ground and take time to explain fully to the complaining worker why he does not have a real grievance. In many workplaces the worker is protected against an unfair or unwise decision of the steward by being able to appeal to a workplace meeting or higher grievance committee. This is a protection for you, the steward, as well, because you will discover you're often accused of refusing to take up matters you don't feel are real grievances, but which the worker involved does. You, too, can refer the issue to the shop committee for final decision. But, don't pass the buck too often.

Once you have decided upon the worth of a grievance and have agreed to take it up with management, don't make rash promises about the results you're going to get for the worker. Tell workers you'll do your best and keep them informed of the progress of the grievance.

### **32. WRITE IT DOWN**

As a general rule it's a good idea to write down the grievance. Many contracts specify that this must be done in the first step of the machinery, but even if your contract doesn't you'll undoubtedly find you'll do a better job if you have a written record of the grievances you've handled.

One way in which the steward could keep records is to file a copy of the original grievance form. There are a lot of reasons for this:

1. Workers aren't as likely to come to you with unimportant or unfounded complaints if they know they have to sign a statement putting it "on the record".
2. It reduces disagreements over the facts in deciding the merits of the case to have them down clearly and simply in black and white.
3. Once the decision is made you have a written record which can be used as a precedent when similar grievances arise at a later date. This is very important.

4. The written record of these grievances is of invaluable help to the negotiating committee when the time to renew the contract rolls around.
5. The difference between winning and losing an appeal in a grievance case may depend on the completeness and accuracy of what's written on the form. As you write out a grievance, remember that it may be negotiated by union representatives who know only what you tell them. They must argue intelligently for a fair settlement with the company. Your facts are their ammunition. Don't send negotiators in with wet powder!
6. Written records are very useful to show unbelievers who say, "The union hasn't done anything."

Even when the beginning and end of a grievance are not far apart, it's worth a written record. So file a short report even when you settle it orally with the supervisor.

In writing up a grievance, check these points to make sure you've put in everything necessary:

1. Who was involved? list the name, lodge number, badge or clock numbers, department, jobs of all workers and management representative.
2. Why is it a grievance? Seniority by-pass? Pay shortage? Unjust treatment? Violation of past practices? Safety or health hazards, etc.?
3. When did it happen? Date, time-Show date the grievance began-not the date it is written
4. Where did it happen? Plant, department, section, etc.
5. What settlement is wanted? Enforce contract, be put on job, adjust seniority, retroactive pay, made whole, etc.
6. Signature of employee and steward.
7. Disposition?

Keep written records short and to the point. Supporting information can be brought into the spoken argument of the case.

### **33. GO TO THE SUPERVISOR**

Now, armed with your written grievance and accompanied by the aggrieved worker (unless there are special reasons why this should not be done) you're ready to go to the supervisor (in small facilities, the employer). When aggrieved workers are present they can see that the case is being presented in their best interest and thus if their case cannot be won, they can more easily accept an unfavorable decision without blaming you. When the outcome of a grievance may directly or indirectly involve or affect more than one worker, or may affect the contract, other union representatives should also be consulted to prevent the possibility of an individual settlement, which is contrary to the contract or union policy. The aggrieved workers also become a witness later if there is a dispute as to what went on in the conversation.

### **34. USE A POSITIVE FRIENDLY APPROACH**

Only people who are not sure of themselves feel the need of putting up a front and being overly aggressive, domineering, and belligerent. You have nothing to fear; you are fully protected by your contract in what you are doing. So, keep your head, your temper, and your sense of humor. Be positive and friendly in your approach, not

disagreeable and on the defensive.

You explain to the supervisor the grievance you want to discuss. Make sure he or she has a copy of the contract so you can point out the clause that had been violated in this case. It's a good idea to listen to the supervisor's side of the case first, particularly if you're not sure you have a full picture of the situation.

### **35. BE A GOOD LISTENER AND DISAGREE AMIABLY**

Being a good listener and not just making a speech in order to impress the supervisor is a pretty good rule to remember. Then present your side of the case, well supported by all the facts you've gathered and checked. If possible have in mind beforehand a definite plan of settlement. When you must disagree with what the supervisor maintains, do it with dignity. Remember, the grievance machinery is based on the principle of helping solve peacefully and fairly the problems that come up in order to produce a smooth running ship with the best possible working conditions.

### **36. NO EMPTY THREATS**

Don't get upset and make empty threats that both you and the supervisor know you can't carry out. Angrily saying that you'll call a strike immediately if the supervisor doesn't settle the grievance on your terms is absurd-and may be illegal according to the contract. If you and the supervisor can't come to an agreement there are further steps to be followed before the question of a strike even comes up. If the contract provides for arbitration, the question of a strike is out of the picture entirely.

### **37. TRY TO SETTLE AT FIRST STAGE**

You should exert every effort to come to an agreement at this first stage. It's better for all concerned and fewer hard feelings will result. Higher company officials are generally reluctant to overrule a decision made by a subordinate. Then too, you don't want to bog down your top union committee by passing on to it small grievances which could be better handled by you and the supervisor, who are in actual contact with the situation. The top committee should be left to devote more time to matters of greater importance.

However, be careful not to force the supervisor (or any other company official) to make a premature denial or snap judgment. It's human nature, once a person has committed himself, to go to great lengths to defend his/her position, regardless of later evidence to the contrary. Your attitude and the way you handle the matter has a lot to do with supervisor's keeping a fairly open mind until the question has been fully discussed and all the facts looked into.

If you definitely can't reach an agreement be sure to follow through on the matter immediately-don't stall-forward the grievance to your Chief Steward or Plant Grievance Committee to work on.

### **38. STICK TO THE FACTS AND STICK TO THE POINT**

Stick to the point in your discussion with the supervisor and don't get sidetracked. You should know your case well enough to know what applies to what you're talking about and what is irrelevant.

Fully as important as sticking to the point is sticking to the facts. Be sure you are presenting your case on the basis of facts, not opinions. If you and your supervisor can agree on the facts it is much easier to come to some conclusion.

### **39. INSIST ON RETROACTIVE AGREEMENTS**

If the result of your talk is a request by the supervisor to have management study the situation before a decision is made, make sure the workers concerned are protected by having the future decision applied retroactively to the date the question was first presented. This will also mean that management won't stall in coming to a decision.

Above all-remember-no horse-trading with the company, that is, giving up one grievance case in order to get a favorable decision on another. Grievances should be settled on the basis of their merits.

### **40. DON'T GLOAT**

If you do win your case, don't gloat and brag about your victories over management. Be gracious and allow the supervisor to "save face" as much as possible. You may want the same consideration at some later date. Shop steward diplomacy means that you will try to point out to management that actually it is to their advantage to have satisfied, alert workers. You're asking for justice and not favors, and you're expected to be as fair as you expect management to be. Creating hard feelings unnecessarily over a victory won may mean you'll have a harder time when you bring up your next case. Often a grievance settlement is to the mutual advantage of both labor and management if looked at with a long range point of view; for the resulting shop harmony means greater productivity along with satisfied workers.

## **41. GET TO THE ROOTS FROM WHICH GRIEVANCES GROW**

When a lot of grievances arise over one issue it's your responsibility to try to get to the root of the trouble. Discuss this with the supervisor, and if it is necessary, take the matter to your plant grievance committee. Too many grievances are a sign that there is something chronically wrong that needs to be corrected.

## **42. EDUCATE THE SUPERVISOR**

In some cases you may have a really unfair supervisor. Perhaps it's because he or she is new at the job, or unsure of self and his or her authority, or because the plant just recently has been organized and there is little precedent established for good relations between the supervisor and the union. In all these cases the purpose of collective bargaining and the machinery involved is not fully understood. You've got an educational job to do. You must make supervisors realize that whether or not they like unions, they are here to stay and legal procedure has been set up to govern working conditions and labor-management relations in the plant. It may take a lot of patience on your part, but if you are fair and reasonable and firm with the supervisor you are bound to get somewhere.

But, maybe the supervisor's unfair attitude and actions are due to being plain "ornery", or even to the fact that he or she is following out the policy set by top management which is trying to "break the union". In the first case, reports to top management may help, or perhaps some publicity in the local union papers or bulletins would ease the situation. However, if you feel that official policy is actually responsible for the attitude and actions of the supervisor, that is a very serious matter that requires the attention of top union officers.

## **43. THE CONTRACT IS YOUR CONSTITUTION**

In a way the contract is like a constitution, and the grievances settled under it are like the decisions of an industrial court. The decisions reached by you and the supervisor are the same as those of a lower court. You, then, have recourse to higher courts if necessary—the final decision, if the contract provides for arbitration, rests with the arbitrator, who might be compared to the Supreme Court.

The hard work of settling grievances satisfactorily from day to day may not make the headlines as picketing does. But, it is every bit as important, and it is a much sounder, more peaceful way of settling disputes for all concerned.

A final note: when handling a grievance be sure to follow every step of the grievance procedure as outlined in the agreement. Don't skip a step!

## **44. WHEN STRIKES OCCUR**

Do what we may to avoid them, there are times when every fighting union is faced with a strike situation. When the occasion arises, the steward plays an important role. On the steward falls the responsibility of success or failure. We realize the futility of trying to set down rules to govern each individual case but we believe the following simple rules will be helpful in most situations.

1. The steward during the pre-strike period must make every effort to see that every member of the union, as well as the non-members affected, are fully informed of all the issues which result in the deadlock. This is important. Strikes are wars on the economic front. The people you represent are your armies. If they don't want to fight you can't win. The outcome of the strike depends upon how well you inform them.
2. In instances where your members decide to act unwisely by walking off the job over some action of the employer, you must do everything to prevent them. This is very

important where you are working under an agreement. Never give your approval to unsanctioned strikes.

3. After the strike is in progress you will have to keep up your members' morale. Keep them pepped up and interested.
4. Keep members fully advised, through meetings and other methods, as to the actual facts. It is necessary to do this both before the actual strike begins, and during the strike. Keep down rumors, for they can be disastrous to the members' morale during the critical period of a strike.
5. Once the strike is settled, your job is to try to renew and maintain friendly relationship with management.

## **45. LABOR LEGISLATION A STEWARD SHOULD KNOW ABOUT**

It's up to you to see that the workers in your department get the protection to which they are entitled. Workers have often lost their legal rights because they were not informed, and failed to file claims as required. If you are not sure how to advise a worker to apply for workers' compensation or unemployment insurance, check with your local union office. If you think that a law is being violated in your department, report it to your union. Be certain that you are standing on firm ground before telling workers or taking up the matter as a grievance. You can't be expected to remember all the details of the provisions; but you are expected to know where to get such information quickly.

The Legal and Research Departments of the IAM as well as The Machinist, follow all federal labor legislation very closely. The United States Department of Labor and your own State Department of Labor issue pamphlets covering these laws. If you have a question on which you are not sure, find out before trying to answer. If you have a question regarding federal labor legislation, write to Grand Lodge headquarters. However, if you seek information regarding State Labor laws, discuss it with your Union Representative.

## **46. FEDERAL, STATE, COUNTY, AND MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES**

In the United States, with the issuance of the 1962 Presidential Executive Order 10988 which gave Federal employees the right to organize and secure written contracts, many IAM members worked under a written agreement for the first time. Executive order 11491 as amended made several changes in the rules and procedures governing labor relations in Federal service. As a Steward operating under negotiated agreements, you will have the responsibility for seeing that agreement is enforced. In addition, you must make sure that there is strict adherence to Federal laws on civil service, retirement, etc., that pertain to your particular situation.

Likewise, those of you who are stewards for other government employees, whether Federal, State, County, or Municipal, and whether you do or do not work under a signed agreement, need to know in detail the regulations under which you and your associates work. Know the wage schedule. Know the provisions for hiring and firing, seniority, pension, and retirement systems, and merit systems, if one exists.

## **47. NEGOTIATING WITH PUBLIC OFFICIALS**

Establish good relationships with department heads and with the director of personnel. Do not antagonize public officials if you can help if there is good will, many difficulties can be ironed out amicably. Do not assume without conclusive proof lack of good will or the existence of an unfriendly attitude.

## **48. GIVE THEM A CHANCE**

Conflicts between employees and public officials are likely to attract a lot of public attention. Opponents of public officials may be ready to seize an opportunity to get at their political enemies. It is, therefore, not always easy for public officials to give in, once they have taken a stand. So give them a chance. Be more concerned about the substance of an agreement than its form.

The welfare of public employees depends on a sympathetic attitude on the part of the public. Maintain friendly

relations within your community. Do not concern yourself exclusively with working conditions of public employees. The improvement of the public service must also be your concern.

## **49. MACHINISTS NON-PARTISAN POLITICAL LEAGUE**

The Machinists Non-Partisan Political League is the Political arm of the union in the United States. The MNPL needs your support as a steward.

You may wonder why the union is in politics. Laws passed by the state and federal governments can weaken the union and take away the gains we have won in our contracts. For example, the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, the Landrum-Griffin Act of 1959, and the state "right to work" laws have made it more difficult to organize and bargain effectively.

There are many other laws which also affect our members-the Social Security Act, tax laws, unemployment compensation laws, and similar legislation. We can't get good laws passed unless friendly candidates are elected to Congress and state offices.

The Machinists Non-Partisan Political League was founded in 1947 to aid the election of these friendly candidates. Local MNPL committees register voters, provide information on candidates' voting records, collect money for campaigns, and help get out the vote on Election Day.

MNPL is non-partisan. It supports friends in both Republican and Democratic parties when their voting records show that they have voted for laws in the public interest.

MNPL needs your help to reach the members. The first thing you must do is become fully informed about MNPL. Read The Machinist newspaper and ask your MNPL committee for literature.

When you have read up on MNPL, you will be ready to begin talking it up in the shop. Tell your members what their representatives in Congress and state legislators are doing about important legislation. Cooperate with lodge MNPL Committee to get members registered to vote. Help collect funds.

Each year MNPL conducts a fund-raising drive among IAM members. Usually it is the steward who is called upon to ask members to make voluntary contributions to help elect candidates who are friendly to labor.

As a leader, you may have to explain to members how political action benefits them. This means, also, that you must, yourself, be registered to vote and your name should be at the top of the MNPL contribution list. Where payroll "check-off" for political contributions is available, the steward should encourage members to "sign up".

## **50. ABOUT OUR NUMBER ONE JOB-ORGANIZING**

Now that you have secured some of the goals in your collective bargaining agreement and you have gotten your supervisor to live up to the contract with the aid of the 100% support of the workers in your area, you have just completed the first step toward full-job protection.

Throughout this Pocket Guide we have offered practical suggestions which should go a long way toward helping you perform your duties with dispatch and expertise-and with a great deal of personal satisfaction. We've also discussed how you could best organize yourself to meet the many challenges that you as a steward, must face on a daily basis.

ORGANIZING is a key word in our union movement. But organizing is more than a word-it's a vitally important tool for every part of a union member's daily life.

Unfortunately, more often than not we put our organizing tactics to rest and leave them at the time clock or work area. Each of us, when away from our place of employment-going to work, returning from work, on our night out at the bowling alley or banquet and even while on vacation-is actually in constant touch with, and even conversing with, one of the biggest threats to our job security, wages, fringe benefits and working conditions-the unorganized worker.

## **51. WHAT CAN WE DO?**

We are glad you asked, you can begin by talking wherever you go, about the many benefits you enjoy under your IAM Union-about your IAM contract, and about your functions in the union-thereby projecting a good positive picture of your union throughout your entire home community.

You can also see to it that your lodge sets up an organizing program. If you find someone who is interested in organizing his or her particular plant, you can play a very important part by making sure to have that person directed to an IAM representative. Spreading the benefits of our union to the many less fortunate unorganized workers in your community is the best way to insure that you and your fellow members keep on improving your own benefits.

## **52. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING**

### THE IAM AND THE LABOR MOVEMENT

**IAM Constitution.** This is easy to keep with you and to refer to. Available through your local lodge.

**Brief History of the American Labor Movement.** U.S. Department of Labor. Bulletin No. 1000. A pamphlet giving the major events and landmarks in the development of American unions. Illustrated. U.S. Government Printing Office. Washington D.C. 20402.

**The American Worker.** Prepared by the U.S. Department of Labor commemorating the two hundredth year of American independence. Dedicated to all American working people, past, present, and future. U.S. Department of Labor, Washington D.C. 20402.

**History of the IAM and Highlights of the Labor Movement.** Excerpts from the Machinists Leadership School Notebook on the history of the IAM. Available from IAM Placid Harbor Education Center.

**Profile.** A pocket-size outline description of the structure and government of the IAM. Useful for ready reference and hand-out. Available from your lodge or from IAM Communication Department and IAM Placid Harbor Education Center.

### COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT AND IAM PLACID HARBOR EDUCATION CENTER

**IAM Journal.** This Publication is mailed directly to your home. It keeps you abreast of IAM activities.

**AFL-CIO News.** To keep up with current developments in the labor movement. Weekly. AFL-CIO, 815 16th ST. N.W., Washington D.C. 20006. Perhaps your lodge or your library subscribes.

**Officers Guide.** How stewards and officers work together. What the stewards system means to the lodge. Duties of officers which stewards need to now. Available from your local lodge and the IAM Placid Harbor Education Center.

**The Steward.** An outline of steward's duties, and grievance handling. Available from IAM Placid Harbor Education Center.

**Unionize the New Member.** Tips to stewards on how to reach new members in the plant. Special Bulletin No.8, IAM Placid Harbor Education Center.

**Handy Guide to a Well Conducted Union Meeting.** A ready reference to the official IAM order of business and procedures in a lodge meeting. Available from IAM Placid Harbor Education Center through your local lodge.

**"We Are The IAM".** This Publication in its handsome magazine format serves as an introduction to the IAM and has become a popular organizing tool. Single copy available from IAM Communications Department or in quantities through the IAM Organizing Department.

### OTHER SUGGESTIONS

**Pamphlet List-**"Keys to Facts and Understanding." You may write IAM Placid Harbor Education Center for this pamphlet list, then order, by number, from the AFL-CIO single free copies of pamphlets which are of interest to you.

**Books on Labor.** The public library is the place to look, and the number of the labor book shelf is 331.8. If the library does not own the book you want, ask the librarian if it can be borrowed from a larger library, or purchased. The following titles are taken from the Labor Reading List of the Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups.

**Labor in America.** A history by Foster Rhea Dulles. Crowell, 1960. 439 pages. A history of labor from its craft beginning in Colonial America through the 1960's.

**American Labor: A Pictorial Social History.** by Morris B. Schnapper. Public affairs press, 1975. 574 pages. An outstanding pictorial history of working men and women as shown through many rare documents, cartoons, newspaper articles and other sources.

**A.F. of L. in the Time of Gompers.** by Philip Taft. Octagon, 1970. 508 pages. Basic book on American labor history.

**A.F. of L. from the death of Gompers to the Merger.** by Philip Taft. Octagon, 1970. 490 pages. Basic book on American Labor history.

**American Unions: Structure, Government, and Politics.** by Jack Barbash Random House, 1967. 183 pages. A brief description of trade-union structure and administration for the student.