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United Stanford Employees, 1969-1974

In 1969 a group of workers at Stanford formed the Stanford Employees Association (SEA) and affiliated with the California Schools Employees Association to become CSEA-SEA, which was essentially a company union that invited Stanford president Kenneth Pitzer to be an "honorary member."¹ The first goal in the CSEA-SEA constitution was to "promote the efficiency and raise the standards of service of all Stanford employees" while its last objective was to "promote the good and welfare of its members."² CSEA-SEA soon became involved in the controversy over the Vietnam War, however. On April 3, 1969 a group of students, faculty, and staff had a meeting and called for the Stanford Research Institute to end "destructive research," including contracts with the Department of Defense.³ The group, which later became known as the April 3rd Movement, continued to protest until April 30 when five trustees refused to answer questions about research contracts at an open meeting. The anti-war protesters walked out of the meeting and the next day the group seized Encina Hall.⁴ The University President, Kenneth Pitzer temporarily suspended the students occupying Encina and called 125 police to evict them.⁵ Although CSEA-SEA membership had voted to take no stand on the war, its president, Mike Fineo, wrote a letter on behalf of the union to Campus Report praising Pitzer's actions. Fourteen members of SEA wrote a counter-letter to Campus Report saying that Fineo did not speak for the union. In a closed meeting, Fineo expelled the group from CSEA-SEA, and the fourteen subsequently formed The United Stanford Employees (USE).⁶

Despite the radical background of many in the group, they were not protesting because Fineo took a pro-war stance; instead they claimed they were primarily protesting against the fact that Fineo undemocratically chose to go against the will of the group. The history of USE reflects this mixed legacy of progressive politics and staunch support for its labor constituency. While some USE leaders remember the union as incredibly political, others maintain that it was just a labor movement. Nevertheless, as USE was quick to point out to its opponents who called it too political, everything is political: and since the leaders had mostly radical beliefs, the union

incorporated those ideals into a progressive platform that organized against racism, sexism, and political silencing in the workplace and organized for the lowest paid worker first.⁷

In June of 1973 USE won a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election to become the largest union ever to represent employees in contract negotiations with Stanford University, and almost exactly a year later they won their first contract. I want to explore the ways that a loose association of activists, many of whom had ties to other leftist movements, built power for the union and created, at least for a short period of time, a dominant and successful union at Stanford. USE appears to have been successful by focusing on the elements of progressivism that can unite large numbers of people. In other words, the union addressed larger social issues that traditional trade unions had often ignored, such as sexism and racism while at the same time keeping their ideals grounded in the struggle against injustice in the workplace to keep a united constituency.⁸

From 1969 until it won the NLRB certification election, USE built support for itself by winning concrete gains for the employees. This was accomplished despite the organization's inability to represent the employees in collective bargaining. One major campaign started in February of 1971, when 12 workers were laid off at Tressider Memorial Union due to budget cuts. USE orchestrated a boycott at Tressider, but on February 12, the Superior Court in Palo Alto issued a temporary restraining order making it illegal to block entrances and exits or disrupt business or activity on campus. The Board of Trustees at Stanford also planned to try to implement two clauses in the restraining order which would have made it illegal to hold meetings discussing disruptive activities and banned Venceremos (a radical group of students and staff) from campus.⁹ Despite organizers' fears, however, the boycott resumed on March 29, and the NLRB rejected USE's unfair labor practice suit on the grounds that Stanford never actually used the restraining order to halt the boycott.¹⁰ Of course, Stanford may have unsuccessfully tried to use it: Sue Frey, one of the organizers, remembers that Stanford called the police, but they were in a union, and refused to stop the pickets.¹¹ The police's refusal to act was only one of many acts of solidarity during the boycott. The University called the health inspector to try to shut down the alternative food service, but the health inspector was in a union too, and simply told the organizers

to keep the sandwiches wrapped.¹² ILWU Local 6 also voted not to make deliveries, and the UFW decided to protest Tressider's use of non-union lettuce.¹³ The boycott and the alternative food service that USE organized were extremely successful: they reduced lunch time business at Tressider by 50%¹⁴ and earned \$1,862.50 which USE donated to the laid off workers.¹⁵ By September, Tressider rehired 13 workers, giving priority to the workers who had been laid off.¹⁶

USE also built support by helping employees with grievances and publishing pay scales and classifications. Although Campus Report published a list of job classifications and wage scales, it did not specify that employees had the right to know their particular classification and wage range, what the next higher job description and wage range was, or how the administration decided the content of different classifications.¹⁷ Publishing and analyzing the job classifications and wage scales meant that employees knew how Stanford was treating them relative to other employees and could more easily identify when they had been underpaid.

When employees recognized that they were being underpaid, even according to Stanford's own criteria, they could come to USE to get help filing a grievance against the University. Helping employees with grievance procedures was a particularly important tactic for USE because it produced concrete results. Although the University had a procedure before the union, very few people knew about it or used it.¹⁸ Moreover, the grievance procedure included binding arbitration at the latest stages, so the union could win valid complaints relatively easily.

Not only did winning complaints allow the union to build support through many small, concrete victories, but USE also often hyped certain cases to rally people by calling attention to issues like racism, sexism, or suppression of political activism. This is not to say that USE manipulatively used race and gender to win people to the union, but that these issues appear to have been places where radical ideas were important workplace issues.¹⁹ As a result, left leaning union activists could exercise their politics without jeopardizing consensus by straying into extraneous political issues. For example, Jim Berk explained that the union "sought out grievances of Afro-American and third world people;" because racism and sexism were prevalent in working conditions. Not only did this mean that grievances from people of color were usually

legitimate, but it was also easy to create publicity and outrage over grievances. For example, in 1970 Florence Moore Hall custodian, Rio Balcita, was fired due to "slow and unsatisfactory work."²⁰ Employees Organize!, USE's newspaper, wrote that "Stanford must begin to combat the institutional racism it harbors," and called for minority supervisors and cultural programs to both help assimilate minority workers and make supervisors sensitive to workers' concerns. Balcita was eventually rehired after lengthy grievance proceedings and publicity.²¹ Similarly, when a librarian named John Keilch was suspended from his job for three months and given a year's probation for anti-war protesting at Stanford (on his own time), USE accused Stanford of trying to prevent employees from being political.²²

Although attempts to get USE to take a stance on issues such as immigration and the War by the Revolutionary Union, an extremely radical campus group, generally failed²³, the USE's rhetoric and progressive stance on workplace issues was enough to create opposition. Many of the more conservative employees thought of USE as a communist organization and in 1970 members of the by then nearly defunct CSEA-SEA forced USE to organize against other unions by calling in The Teamsters to organize on campus. The Teamsters collected enough authorization cards to demand that the NLRB hold hearings to determine which employees would be in the bargaining unit so that an election could be held to certify a union to represent the employees in collective bargaining. The main intervenors in the NLRB hearings to determine the bargaining unit were Stanford, The Teamsters, CSEA-SEA, and USE. The Teamsters wanted to unionize only the physical plant, while CSEA-SEA argued for a unit consisting of the technical, maintenance, and service workers. Surprisingly, Stanford and USE's positions were remarkably similar to each other. Both wanted a large unit: Stanford was probably trying to dilute the pro-union vote and called for a unit consisting of all legally eligible, non previously unionized employees except for hospital workers, students, part-time, and "casual" workers. USE hoped for an even larger unit including "all nonprofessional full-time and part-time permanent and seasonal employees."²⁴ USE wanted the large unit both because its base of support came from all over the staff and because its organizers believed that only a large unit would be able to shut down the University.

The NLRB held hearings in San Francisco from September 15, 1970 to November 20, 1970. One of the problems was that due to the Teamsters' interference, the NLRB had called an election before USE had enough time to build itself: it did not have the requisite signatures of 30% of the bargaining unit it wanted.²⁵ Nevertheless, USE fliers accused the NLRB of fixing the hearings when on Thursday, October 1, hearing officer Walter Kinitz announced that there was no point in wasting any more time: the University should just "work something out" with CSEA-SEA.²⁶ Moreover, while NLRB records indicate that the University continued to advocate a large unit, a press release says that Stanford President Lyman endorsed a compromise plan to exclude the clerical workers from their bargaining unit proposal.²⁷ To make matters worse, USE was angry because the hearings were held during normal business hours in San Francisco, making it impossible for most workers to attend. Eventually Kinitz was removed from the hearings as a result of bad press in The Stanford Daily²⁸, but on January 20, 1972 the NLRB finally accepted the technical, maintenance, and service unit that SEA had suggested. The text of the decision says that there is "no merit to Stanford University's contention that it should have been permitted to demonstrate that the sentiment among the office clericals was in favor of their inclusion in any broad grouping of university employees." Moreover, Glenda Jones' testimony that the clerical workers wanted to be in the unit was struck from the record.²⁹ The NLRB claimed that it did not consider employees' wishes until after constituting the unit, yet it was clearly evaluating the employees' wishes, for it also claimed that while the unit that Stanford/USE wanted "might also be appropriate there is no labor organization eligible to proceed to an election in this unit" because USE did not have the requisite membership cards of 30% of the bargaining unit that it would have needed to be a petitioner.³⁰

In any case, the bargaining unit's composition resulted in a diverse unit that included both white collar and blue collar workers, which created a lot of tension over whether higher wage minimums or just increased wages all around would be the priority.³¹ Most ex-CSEA-SEA members were mostly male "skilled" laborers who saw themselves as above the cooks and gardeners who were also in the bargaining unit while at the same time they distrusted the radicals

who wanted to make pay scales more equal and take care of those at the bottom of the pay scale first. Although most of them did join USE either after it affiliated with the Service Employees' International Union or after it won the election, they were always pushing for it to be a more official union. For example, they wanted a union label on everything that the union printed, but the nearest union printing shop was all the way in San Jose and extremely expensive, making it difficult for an all volunteer and low budget union to use.³²

Despite its diversity, the bargaining unit was a small proportion of University employees. For example, in 1972 the university employed 5900 non-supervisory, non-professional workers but only approximately 1600, or 24%, were in the bargaining unit.³³ The unit's makeup meant that the union would have to waste time and energy trying to win separate elections among the hospital and clerical workers to add to their membership: in fact, that is exactly what has happened as the union lost certification elections with both groups in the 1980s.³⁴

Finally, the fact that the clerical workers were not in the unit also excluded most of Stanford's women workers. According to a flier produced by the Workers' Action Caucus, 57% of Stanford workers were women and 46% of the women are clerical workers; in other words, almost half of Stanford's significant proportion of women workers would not be represented by a union.³⁵ USE used the issues of women clerical workers, as they did with other issues of racism and sexism at Stanford, to win support in future elections.

After the NLRB decided the bargaining unit, it declared an election for March of 1972. The employees could choose between no union, the Teamsters, CSEA-SEA, and the Teamsters. USE meeting notes indicate that the main campaign was against SEA, although organizers today remember that it was not much of a threat.³⁶ USE's strategy was "to say nothing about the Teamsters, to imply that they can't win at Stanford" and fight SEA on the grounds that "by voting for CSEA you're choosing 'no union,' but then why pay dues?"³⁷ Stanford's campaign may have created the necessity to fight particularly hard against SEA. For example, Robert Nelson, the director of Personnel and Employee Relations, wrote a memo saying that federal law prohibited the University from recognizing any particular union, so no union could use office phones or

interdepartmental mail systems,³⁸ yet CSEA-SEA was allowed to use these systems.³⁹ Another memo from Robert Nelson informed faculty and staff that CSEA would be organizing on campus and that they would not interfere with employees' work;⁴⁰ he never wrote a similar memo to introduce and excuse either USE or the Teamsters.

Of course, Stanford's top choice would have been for a "no union" vote. A third memo from Nelson to managers and supervisors outlined two principles of union campaigns, and one of them was that supervisors could express their opinions about unions as long as employees would not be punished or rewarded for their union activity. In other words, the memo appears to have encouraged managers to express their opinions about unions and goes on to say that if a union shop agreement is reached, employees have to pay dues, that a union would preclude individual bargaining, that employees may have to go on strike, and that strikers may lose their jobs by being replaced during the strike.⁴¹ As Berk explains, the university's stance was that it "took care of its own," but in reality supervisors and administrators had no real motive to treat powerless employees well. Both employees and unions also reported that employees were being harassed. A letter from Alf E. Brandin, Stanford's Vice President for Business Affairs, responds to "reports charging that employees have felt administration influence or intimidation against their joining" unions.⁴² It is hardly surprising that employees did feel influence considering Nelson's memos mixing anti-union propaganda with encouragement to supervisors to share their opinions about unions.

The election took place March 7, 1972, and there was no clear majority. Voters cast 1303 valid ballots: 483 of them were for no union, 354 were for the Teamsters, 268 were for USE, 197 were for CSEA-SEA, and 1 for the Workers' Action Caucus, a small and radical splinter group of USE.⁴³ Since no-one won a majority, the NLRB scheduled a run-off election between the two top vote getters (Teamsters Union 856 and no union) for April 17, 1972.⁴⁴

According to meeting notes, USE considered three options. First, they could pursue the challenged ballots. In the first election USE had encouraged its members in classifications that did not make it into the bargaining unit (including several of the initial organizers), and classifications

that were questionably in the unit, to vote. So there had been 180 challenged ballots.⁴⁵ If USE could win the argument that most of the voters were from classifications that should count under the NLRB's definition of the bargaining unit, they might have had more votes than the Teamsters. This outcome would have taken months, and was unlikely, however, so USE ceded the challenged votes. Another option was to try to bargain with the Teamsters for an autonomous unit or democracy within the Teamsters unit. The workers at the University of Michigan had actually bargained for some autonomy for their Teamsters' local, but USE opted to campaign against the Teamsters instead.

This time, the Teamsters had the support of the radicals, including Venceremos, a militant group on campus. As Linda Crouse, a Venceremos member and future president of USE, wrote, radicals believed that trade unions were limited because they could not fight for the workers to own the means of production. So Venceremos supported the Teamsters in the runoff election because they "think the interests of the workers are primary, and [they] are practical," in other words, the radicals would have supported any union because unions can help improve workers' standard of living, but they did not want to put off unionization in hopes of a more progressive union because all unions are limited.⁴⁶ Moreover, the people in The Revolutionary Union thought they could control the Teamsters', but were attracted the Teamsters' violent reputation.⁴⁷

Many workers feared the Teamsters' reputation for violence, however, and the radicals' support probably augmented people's fear.⁴⁸ Aside from fear of the Teamsters and USE's campaign against bureaucratic control, Rafael Verbera, a cook and union steward, believes that many people rejected the Teamsters in favor of USE because the Teamsters did not have the "language to deal with injustice." He recalls that "the Teamsters' representative would tell people, 'we give you this, we give you that,' but they never helped us with grievances. They never tried to give us a voice or a vote. Just having a good salary is not the same as having justice."⁴⁹ The Teamsters wanted to raise everybody's wages. USE not only wanted to raise the employees' wages, they also wanted to ensure that workers were being treated with dignity and fairness. With an 80% turnout, the bargaining unit voted 894-372 against the Teamsters.⁵⁰

In the meantime, USE continued to organize as an outsider union, leading protests and assisting with grievance procedures because the NLRB requires a minimum one year waiting period before calling a new certification election after employees vote no union. In the spring of 1973 USE filed for another election.⁵¹ The other union that filed to be in the election was The Joint Council, which was composed of the Associated of Federated State, County, and Municipal Employees Local 101 and The Operating Engineers Local 3,⁵² but the Joint Council had not spent much time organizing on the Stanford campus previously, and soon withdrew. The election between USE and no union took place on Wednesday, June 6, 1973⁵³: with a 71% voter turnout, Stanford workers voted 660 to 494 for USE, giving the union a 57% majority.⁵⁴

Part of USE's strategy for the new election had been to affiliate with the Service Employees' International Union (SEIU) because the International had a reputation for allowing its locals a high level of autonomy⁵⁵. In April of 1973 USE negotiated an affiliation agreement with SEIU which went into effect on April 15. Affiliating with SEIU helped win support of more moderate employees in two ways: first, the old line trade unionists wanted a real union with an International. Second, SEIU enabled USE to have a paid staff. The leftists were extremely active as volunteers, so having a paid staff diminished the radical faction that wanted USE to take stances on non-labor issues.⁵⁶

After the election, the fact that several of the early organizers had not made it into the bargaining unit, including Jim Berk, Glenda Jones, and Roland Finston, began to be more of a problem. The organizers tried to offset the fact that they did not make it into the bargaining unit by educating key leaders among the technical, service, and maintenance workers.⁵⁷ USE had already divided its membership into groups based on geographic and occupational classifications. The groups elected group representatives,⁵⁸ which made attempts to foster leadership within the unit easier. Immediately after the election the initial organizers pulled back to let employees in the unit run their own union. This may have been a mistake, however, because more conservative ex-SEA'ers who had jointed USE when it won the certification election insisted that the union engage in a long process of collective bargaining before the strike, which gave the University some time to

prepare. According to Jim Berk, a University insider believed the union should have gone on strike immediately because the administration was badly prepared to handle a union, let alone a strike: it did not even hire a professional union breaker until the strike was underway.⁵⁹

USE's first set of contract demands were published on Monday, November 11, 1973.⁶⁰ Stanford made its counter-offer a month later: it offered pay increases of 6.5-7% with a three year contract, compared to USE's demand for a one year contract with pay increases of 20-40%.⁶¹ On April 11, 600 USE members voted on the proposed contract; 92% voted no⁶² but collective bargaining⁶³ continued until May of 1974. The two parties had barely agreed on anything; by the time USE went on strike, they had only agreed on a grievance procedure, unpaid vacation time, and one additional holiday. USE's demands still included minimum pay of \$600 a month, a cost of living escalator that would increase wages \$6 a month per percentage point increase in the CPI, a community standards clause that said that each job classification should earn in the 75 percentile others of that job description made in the area, a rule that discipline could be job-related only, a pension, layoffs based on seniority and with severance pay, a medical plan covering all workers and their dependents, and unlimited sick time after the first year.⁶⁴ USE had also originally been pushing for a union shop but reduced their demands to an agency shop; the University countered by offering a modified union shop.⁶⁵ On May 6, 1974 USE held a membership meeting at which Jim Berk assured the members that the strike would not last longer than two weeks⁶⁶, and the members voted 618 to 218 for a strike committee to call and run the strike.⁶⁷ The strike began on Sunday, May 13, and lasted for three weeks: it was longer than the union had expected, but is considered to be the most successful strike that has ever been staged at Stanford.

Although the strike was eventually successful, the union did not have enough people to shut down the University. As Martin Eichner, a member of the law commune that did pro bono work for USE recalls, the "strike demonstrated the inherent unworkability of the bargaining unit."⁶⁸ Although on the first day of the strike 970 people walked out, including 80% of bargaining unit workers at SLAC and over half of bargaining unit workers on the main campus, the strike still only involved one sixth of Stanford's 5900 employees.⁶⁹ And of course, strike

participation inevitably declined as the strike dragged on, although most continued to strike: by the nineteenth day the number of strikers was down to 812, reducing the previous number by 160.⁷⁰ On the first day of the strike, there were over 200 pickets, but by the second day there were only 100.⁷¹

Pickets were also restricted by the temporary restraining order against physically obstructing movement at the Medical Center that Santa Clara County Superior Court Judge, Homer B. Thompson issued on Friday, May 17.⁷² Four days later, on May 21, Thompson amended the restraining order to prohibit obstructive picketing anywhere on campus; the restraining order mandated that all but two pickets had to be 50 yards away from entrances and exits.⁷³

Solidarity efforts, especially attempts to work in coalition with the students, had mixed results as well. A flier boasted that students had worked at least ten hours a week for USE, picketed for 1300 hours collectively, prepared food for the picket lines, wrote leaflets, and raised money for the strike fund. A rally in White Plaza also drew an estimated crowd of 250 and the TAs staged a one day walkout. Yet the same flier also said that more than half the hashers stayed away from work,⁷⁴ while dining services reported that 19 out of 20 student hashers showed up for work at Wilbur and Stern dining halls. Moreover, 1250 of 3056 eligible students got dining services refunds despite USE's request that they overcrowd the dining halls instead of getting refunds.⁷⁵ According to freshman Peter Bennett, "most of the kids[weren't] really concerned about the strike except as it affects them," and many of the students feared that increased wages would increase tuition.⁷⁶ And although the employees found creative ways to get information to the students, communication remained problematic. For example, the audio-visual operators said that they would only show movies if they could give a presentation about the union beforehand. When the administration said no, the toilets all overflowed during the first movie and after that, they were allowed to give presentations.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Glenda Jones recalls that press coverage in The Stanford Daily was often discouragingly garbled.⁷⁸

The two biggest barriers to students working with the labor movement stemmed from the students' own fragmentation and the way students tended to overlook the employees. Jim Berk

made an analogy between the way students related to workers and the way white people relate to people of color: white people are socialized not to notice people of color, and students, especially at elite universities, tend to be the same way about workers.⁷⁹ Although it would be difficult to let students take strong roles in the labor movement, students could have worked in coalition with the workers better if the students themselves had been more united. At a meeting with the student senate, USE president Jim Berk told the students, "it's wrong to ask what students can do to help the union. Organize to help yourselves; then we'll have strong allies."⁸⁰ Although the words sound harsh, Berk meant that the student movements were not unified enough to truly work in coalition with the union. Radicals within the student movements were often trying hard to "separate themselves from the mainstream."⁸¹ Berk wanted them to unify themselves so they could find common ground with the union.

Student-employee alliances were in fact most successful when they were based on common concerns. For example, Lennie Siegel, a student who was involved with USE, and a leader in the anti-war movement remembers the union as coming out of the anti-war movement⁸² and Glenda Jones also remembers that the most successful coalition work happened when USE and graduate students with children from Escondido Village mobilized to win a joint child care center.⁸³

Solidarity between unions was, of course, much easier than solidarity between the union and the students, although even strike support from other unions was tenuous. SEIU gave USE strike sanction, so there were no janitorial services from the American Building Maintenance Crews, who were in another SEIU Local.⁸⁴ Iron workers at the hospital construction site, too, voted to leave work.⁸⁵ Although the Strike News Briefs #1 said that the Santa Clara Building Trades Council gave USE strike sanction, which would have affected 225 construction workers,⁸⁶ Gene Withdrew, the spokesman for the Building Trades Council announced that there actually was no strike sanction and that picketing at construction sites would be a secondary boycott, and illegal.⁸⁷ With such a small bargaining unit and little strike support, then, how was the strike so successful?

First, creative strike tactics and good timing helped a small number of strikers to be effective. For example, four construction inspectors refused to approve any construction at the hospital; as a result, the University still had to pay the subcontracted construction workers which cost a lot of money⁸⁸ and stopped the Hospital expansion project; striking construction workers delayed plans for a new law school as well.⁸⁹

The organizers also remember the strike as being an example of a good relationship between the Local and its International, SEIU. SEIU not only provided financial support, but it also provided Bob Anderson, a professional organizer who gave logistical advice, such as how to set up strike headquarters and how to sign people in for pickets and keep track of them. Without him, recalls Glenda Jones, the USE'ers "would have been lost." The International provided more than just logistical and financial support, however; it also helped devise and carry out a strategy for a triangular relationship with the University that would trick the inexperienced administration into bargaining less aggressively. The strategy was to take advantage of Berk's history as a member of the Black Panthers and paint him as an out of control, violent radical. Then the SEIU representatives would have "secret" meetings with Stanford vice president and confess that they were scared that they could not control Berk, and that they feared that his radicalism would spread to their other locals. A representative from the Santa Clara Trades Council, the umbrella organization for all Santa Clara AFL-CIO locals mediated the meetings and also expressed his concern about containing the radicals.⁹⁰ The strategy had two goals. First, Berk, Anderson, and the Santa Clara Trades Council hoped to pressure Stanford into settling the strike quickly. They also wanted Stanford to feel like they were in alliance with SEIU against Local 680, and as a result, do what the International advised in bargaining sessions.

The union deliberately hyped up the vandalism that occurred during the strike to validate SEIU's pretense at fear about radicalism and violence. Some of the petty vandalism was indeed fomented by the union's organizers. For example, Glenda Jones remembers that it was Bob Anderson's idea to use water balloons to stop up toilets in the dorms, and Jim Berk remembers gluing shut locks on lockers, rooms, and buildings. Jim Berk was also arrested for blocking the

road in front of the Medical Center on Wednesday, May 15.⁹¹ Other petty acts of vandalism included two water main breaks, two small fires at the Medical Center, tire slashings and flattening, tampering with movie projector parts and fire sprinkler control, a stink bomb at the personnel office, and two jammed valves in a distilled water system at the hospital. Some of the vandalism was violent. For example, on Friday May 31, Alfredo D. Castro, an on-strike mail carrier, threw a rock through a non-striking employee's truck window, claiming that the non-striking employee had flashed a knife at him.⁹² Moreover, two University trucks had their brakes cut and there was a bomb threat at the Clinical Sciences Building.⁹³ There was more costly vandalism as well: the closing of steam lines caused an estimated \$3,000-10,000 in damage to laser research and the removal of 400-500 fuses closed the Instructional TV network, costing an additional \$500-1,000.⁹⁴

Thus, it appears that a combination of good timing and strategizing, cooperation between the International and the Local, and the naivete of the University helped end the strike quickly. It ended exactly three weeks after it started: the employees went back to work at midnight on Sunday June 2.⁹⁵ The strike was certainly the most successful to ever take place at Stanford. The final agreement was scheduled for June 24, 1974 and yielded a three year contract. The first year package increased the base salary of the unit by 10%, the second year it increased 7.8%, and the third year it increased 5.6% with up to 3% more in cost of living.⁹⁶ While this package might not sound like much of an improvement over Stanford's initial offer of 6.5-7%, this initial offer included 2.5-3% raises that had already been promised to a third of the bargaining unit.⁹⁷ The specific benefits written into the contract were especially useful. The union won overtime, compensation for Saturday and Sunday work, an extra twelve days of sick leave with accrual, compensation for working in a higher classification, and bereavement leave.⁹⁸

As Jim Berk explained, the contract, as representative of official union policy, had very little contract language specifically tied to other progressive movements. The union tried to maintain consensus by only taking a stance on workplace issues; for example, if the union had taken an official stance against the war it would have betrayed its constituency. Instead USE was

progressive because it used "the language of idealism" in that it called not only for economic gains, but for justice in the workplace.⁹⁹ As a result, it did win gains for workers in ways that were progressive, such as benefiting the workers at the bottom the most, a program of apprenticeships for minority food service workers at SLAC,¹⁰⁰ and the contract language stipulating that employees could not be fired for their political activity. While these were tied to broader social issues they were extremely relevant to the workplace.

The union remained strong for a few years after it won the contract, but then declined for several reasons. First, Stanford had become more experienced in dealing with the union. It learned to drag out grievance procedures because the employer and union must settle grievances before negotiating on the contract. If they do not settle the grievances, the government sends in an arbitrator, which is expensive for both parties. The expense, however, is to Stanford's benefit since it can afford the expenses, whereas the union cannot.¹⁰¹ The union, which changed its name to United Stanford Workers, went on strike for the second time in 1982, and this time there were widespread reports that the University engaged in both strike breaking and union busting tactics to ensure a "no union" vote at upcoming elections among the hospital and clerical workers. The 1982 strike was "settled largely on Stanford's terms, for roughly what had been the University's final salary position before the strike began."¹⁰² The University appears to have been willing to suffer short term financial losses in other areas, however, to break the union; for example, in the three years prior to the strike the clerical workers received 30% raises while USW employees got only 27% raises.¹⁰³ As a result, the union lost elections at both the hospital among the office workers shortly after the strike, making it even harder for the union to shut down the University.

The political climate in the late 1970s and 1980s was also different, and unionism as a whole began to decline. For example, the total number of worker days on strike in the United States declined from 48,000 in 1974 to 33,000 in 1980 and the number of decertification elections rose from 293 in 1969 to 777 in 1979.¹⁰⁴ Sue Frey believes that because of the political climate in the 1960s and '70s the University cared more about its image as a liberal institution, so negative

media had more of an effect.¹⁰⁵ Finally, internal factions were destroying the union's cohesion; according to Jim Berk, being an established gave the union power and people wanted to manipulate that power; instead of representing the people they were working for, they began to represent their own interests. Rafael Verbera explained it a different way: he argued that the union became too successful; people stopped coming to meetings because they assumed that the union was powerful enough to win on its own.¹⁰⁶ I hope that Verbera's interpretation is correct, because then the decline in the union's power may begin to motivate people to mobilize again.

United Stanford Workers, the current incarnation of USE, is continuing to fight. Last summer USW finally won a contract with newly unionized Bon Appetit, a Stanford food services subcontractor. Bon Appetit had counted on delay tactics in bargaining, assuming that their quick employee turnover would prevent a strike. However, creative tactics, such as protesting at other Bon Appetit locations and leafleting at Bon Appetit catered graduation events, combined with student and faculty support, allowed USW to win a contract last June.¹⁰⁷

Currently their main focus is a unionization drive at the Stanford Medical Center. Although the union tried to organize at the Medical Center in both the '80s and early '90s but it has not gotten an election since the failed attempt in 1984. According to organizer Danielle Mahones, however, there will probably be an election this time. Although Stanford will not start its offensive until USW files for an election, this time Mahones says that the union has learned to focus on internal leadership development. Unlike in earlier campaigns at the hospital, in which the focus was on paid staff and the University could plausibly argue that the union was an "outside" force, this time the organizing committee will be more similar to the unpaid, internal leadership that made up the first leaders when USE started in 1969. And if they are successful, USW's strength will grow immensely, because a successful drive at the hospital would add 2,000-2,200 workers, or more than double the bargaining unit that USW now represents.¹⁰⁸

END MAIN TEXT

¹Employees Organize! September 8, 1969; p.1

²United Stanford Employees Flier, September 1969, Stanford Archives, Box 1283

³The Stanford Daily, April 7, 1969; p.2

⁴The Stanford Daily, May 1, 1969; p.1

⁵The Stanford Daily, May 2, 1969; p.1

⁶Employees Organize! February, 1972; p.3

⁷I will probably be overemphasizing the politicization of USE; foremost, it attempted to represent the interests of all the employees. At the same time, however, I chose to emphasize the political connections because the rhetoric that surrounded USE, in both its own newspaper and other print sources, point to its radicalism, or at least a common perception that it was radical.

⁸Unfortunately, I was only able to contact union leaders, so the voices of the rank and file members are not represented here to explain whether USE's progressive stance truly helped make the union vibrant for its members. Nevertheless, I believe USE's success speaks may speak for itself.

⁹Employees Organize! March, 1971; p.4

¹⁰Employees Organize! April, 1971

¹¹Sue Frey, Interview, 4/28/98

¹²Ibid

¹³Employees Organize! April, 1971 p.1

¹⁴Employees Organize! April, 1971

¹⁵Employees Organize! June, 1971; p.1

¹⁶Employees Organize! September, 1971; p.1

¹⁷Employees Organize! December, 1969; p.1

¹⁸Glenda Jones, Interview, 5/22/98

¹⁹Rafael Verbera, a cook and union steward for USE testifies, "I was never discriminated against, but I could see that other people were not fairly treated." For example, a cook who was his instructor told him this story: the cook was concerned about medical insurance for the food service workers. So he took a petition to personnel asking them to just find a plan for the workers to pay for out of their own salaries. The administrator in personnel called the cook ignorant and told him to go learn English.

²⁰Employees Organize! March 30, 1970; p.4

²¹Ibid.

²²Employees Organize! January 1971; p.1

²³Jim Berk, Interview, 5/23/98

²⁴Text of the NLRB Decision, rection of Elections, January 20, 1972:194, NLRB Number 187 in The Stanford Daily, January 27, 1972, Personal Collection of Roland Finston

²⁶Workers' Action Caucus Flier, Personal Collection of Roland Finston

²⁷Stanford University Press Release 10/2/70, Personal Collection of Roland Finston

²⁸USE meeting notes; archives of Roland Finston

²⁹Employees Organize! July, 1971; p.1

³⁰Text of the NLRB Decision, Order, and Direction of Elections, January 20, 1972 194, NLRB Number 187 in The Stanford Daily, January 27, 1972, Personal Collection of Roland Finston

³¹Sue Frey, Interview, 4/28/98

³²Glenda Jones, Interview, 5/22/98

- 33 Letter from Robert Augsburger to all Supervisory Personnel, May 22, 1974, Stanford Archives, Box 1283
- 34 According to Glenda Jones in an interview on 5/22/98, while some of the union's strongest support was from the library and clerical workers, an election in a purely clerical unit would be difficult to win because of their physical isolation in comparison to the workers at the physical plant, for example.
- 35 Flier from the USE Women's Caucus, Stanford Archives, Box 1283
- 36 Jim Berk, Interview, 5/23/98 and Glenda Jones, Interview, 5/22/98
- 37 Strategy write-up, USE meeting notes; Personal Collection of Roland Finston
- 38 Memo from Robert Nelson to All Staff, April 19, 1971, Personal Collection of Roland Finston
- 39 The California School Employee, "Stanford Chapter 510," November, 1969; p.13, Personal Collection of Roland Finston
- 40 Memo from Robert Nelson to Deans, Department Heads, and Principal Investigators, March 2, 1970, Personal Collection of Roland Finston
- 41 Memo from Robert Nelson to Deans, Department Heads, Administrative Officers, and Principal Investigators, July 1, 1971, Personal Collection of Roland Finston
- 42 Letter from Alf E. Brandin to Deans, Department Heads, Administrative Officers, and Principal Investigators, Personal Collection of Roland Finston
- 43 The Stanford Daily, March 9, 1972
- 44 Union Gazette, April 14, 1972, Personal Collection of Roland Finston
- 45 Stanford University Press Release, 3/9/72, Stanford Archives 0184 "University Administration: Court Actions to which the University has been a party: NLRB hearings"
- 46 The Stanford Daily, April 10, 1972; p.2
- 47 Jim Berk, Interview, 5/23/98
- 48 Jim Berk, Interview, 5/23/98 and Sue Frey, Interview, 4/28/98
- 49 Rafael Verbera, Interview 6/5/98
- 50 Stanford University Press Release, 6/4/73, Stanford Archives, Box 1283
- 51 Stanford University Press Release, 6/4/73
- 52 Informational Bulletin from Local 680, April 23, 1972, Stanford Archives, Box 1283
- 53 Stanford University Press Release 6/4/73
- 54 Stanford University Press Release, 6/7/73, Stanford Archives, Box 1283
- 55 SEIU-USE affiliation agreement, April 3, 1973. Pacific Studies Archives
- 56 Jim Berk, Interview, 5/23/98
- 57 Rafael Verbera, Interview, 6/5/98
- 58 Glenda Jones, Interview, 5/22/98
- 59 Jim Berk, Interview, 5/23/98
- 60 Stanford University Press Release, 11/13/73, Stanford Archives, Box 1283
- 61 Stanford University Press Release, 12/17/73, Stanford Archives, Box 1283
- 62 Stanford University Press Release, 4/12/74, Stanford Archives, Box 1283
- 63 The University's bargaining team consisted of Doug Barton, University counsel on labor relations (previously a hearing officer at the NLRB hearings to determine the bargaining unit), Emil Sarpa, director of personnel and employee relations, Doug Dupen, head of SLAC personnel, Earl Cilly, director of research administration, and Janet Sweet, manager of government cost and rate studies, according to a Stanford

- University Press Release, 11/13/73, Stanford Archives, Box 1283. Jim Berk led USE's bargaining team.
- ⁶⁴The Stanford Daily, May 14, 1974, Stanford Archives, Box 1283
- ⁶⁵Different sources had different definitions, but generally in an agency shop, all employees in the bargaining unit have to pay dues but they only have to join if they were members before the contract or if they were hired after the contract was signed.
- ⁶⁶Jim Berk, Interview, 5/23/98
- ⁶⁷Contract News #1 Flier, May 6, 1974, Box 1283
- ⁶⁸Martin Eichner, Interview, 4/18/98
- ⁶⁹Campus Report, May 15, 1974; p.1
- ⁷⁰Stanford University Press Release, 5/31/74, Stanford Archives, Box 1283
- ⁷¹Letter from Robert Augsburger to All Supervisory Personnel, May 22, 1974, Stanford Archives, Box 1283
- ⁷²Stanford University STRIKE News Brief #4, May 17, 1974, Stanford Archives, SC 122, Box 215
- ⁷³Campus Report, May 22, 1974
- ⁷⁴Flier by the Student Faculty Strike Support Committee, Stanford Archives, Box 1283
- ⁷⁵Stanford University Press Release, May 14, 1974 Stanford Archives, Box 1283
- ⁷⁶Stanford University Press Release 5/14/74
- ⁷⁷Sue Frey, Interview, 4/28/98
- ⁷⁸Glenda Jones, Interview, 5/22/98
- ⁷⁹Jim Berk, Interview, 5/23/98
- ⁸⁰Stanford University Press Release, Stanford Archives, Box 1283
- ⁸¹Jim Berk, Interview 5/23/98
- ⁸²Lennie Siegel, Interview, 4/29/98
- ⁸³Glenda Jones, Interview, 5/22/98
- ⁸⁴Stanford University Strike News brief #1, Prepared by the Stanford University News Service, Stanford Special Collections 122, Box 215
- ⁸⁵Stanford University Strike News Brief #4, Prepared by the Stanford University News Service, Friday May 17, 1974, Stanford Special Collections 122, Box 215
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- ⁸⁷Memo to Bob Buyers, The Stanford Daily, and KZSU, 5/14/74, Stanford Special Collections 122, Box 215
- ⁸⁸Sue Frey, Interview, 4/28/98
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- 99 Rafael Verbera, Interview, 6/5/98
- 100 Sue Frey, Interview, 4/28/98
- 101 Rafael Verbera, Interview, 6/5/98
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- 104 Fortune, November 2, 1981
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