Conduct of Bargaining

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At the initial meeting, the employers should insist on a complete list of the union’s demands and should also present the union with the employer’s demands soon after receiving the union demands. Be sure to feel out the union during the opening rounds to determine the issues that the union is serious about.

Do not hesitate to reject each union demand and give your reasons at the opening session even if you ultimately intend to agree with their position.

As a general rule management negotiators should refrain from making an offer unless they have a good reason to believe that it will be acceptable to the union or at least produce a counterproposal. Remember, it is a rare case when anyone can force acceptance of an offer that is already rejected by the local union, so the management negotiators obviously should not lead in with their final offer and have it initially rejected by the union at the early stages of bargaining.

Negotiators should be firm but give appearances of wanting to reach a satisfactory agreement. Be sure to remind the union at frequent intervals of your demands. Do not be dominated by only discussing the union’s demands and do not be forced into fighting a defensive battle and bargaining over only the union’s demands.

At the outset, the negotiators should emphatically state their opinions as to conditions in the industry. Among the topics which may be raised are the volume of work on hand, work on the drawing board, nonunion competition, and the inability of the market to absorb increased prices which would result from increased wages and fringes.

Management should learn a lesson from the unions by asking for more than they expect to get. This may be used for trading purposes. In the compromising process management may even get more than expected.

Employers should not make a demand for something that is not of any value to the employers because the union may agree and demand something valuable in return. The management committee should al-

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ways hesitate to concede anything without getting a concession in return.

Management should never be unnecessarily candid until at least a crisis impends and should never lay all of its cards on the table early in negotiations. The employers should not make an offer on wages until the union comes in with a realistic figure.

Remember, bargaining is give and take by both sides, so be flexible and prepared to shift your position a bit and never under even the most trying circumstances lose control. Emotional explosions will merely lower the management negotiators’ prestige and usually make negotiations more difficult. Don’t get scared into making concessions by such common union tactics as walking out of the meeting or threats to strike.