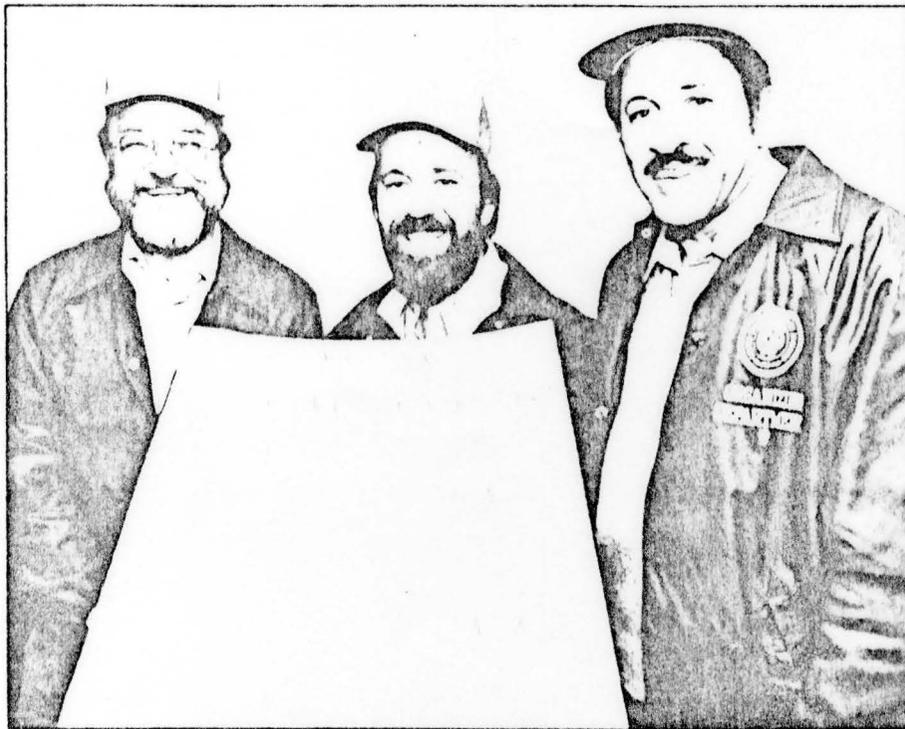

Union organizers: savvy strategists



Jack Hower's Monte Carlo cruises quietly past the sprawling shipyard, then swings onto a narrow one-way street lined by small homes and lunchettes.

"We called this 'Damnation Alley' during the campaign," remarks the trim, bearded organizer for the United Steelworkers of America (USWA). "One day, a thousand of our people massed on this street, and they [mem-

Jack Hower, flanked by fellow organizers John Kitchen (left) and Roosevelt Robinson, flashes a victory smile in Newport News.

bers of another union] came out to meet us. I thought sure we were going to see some fireworks."

This day, there are no visible signs that an emotionally charged confrontation took place on the same cement a

By Daniel D. Cook

When a union trains its organizing guns on a plant, management faces a skillful foe who relies on planning, perseverance, public relations, and proven tactics.

few short months ago. As Mr. Hower's auto creeps down the byway, he studies the workers striding toward the plant entrance, waving to some, calling out greetings to others. Pulling curbside next to the entrance to the Newport News Shipbuilding & Drydock Co., he points out "the opposition": a group of white-helmeted men distributing anti-Steelworker leaflets to the incoming crew.

"They don't go away," he says with a hint of admiration for their perseverance. "They're certain the election's going to be overturned, and they're already campaigning again. But if they do set aside the vote, we'll go out and beat 'em again."

Though Jack Hower is a busy man, he doesn't mind showing visitors around the perimeter of the single biggest employer in the shipping town of Newport News, Va. He spent a year and a half living in the nearby Holiday Inn ("The Steelworkers spent enough money there to own the place," quips one local newsman), working out of a small office a short drive from the shipyard's many gates.

There, along with fellow USWA organizers Roosevelt Robinson and John Kitchen, he mapped out and implemented the strategy that led to what may prove to be one of labor's most significant southern organizing victories. By a hefty 1,500-vote margin, the company's 19,000 workers chose the Steelworkers as their bargaining agent, ousting their longtime representative, the independent Peninsula Shipbuilders Assn. (PSA). This despite a withering counter-campaign by both PSA and the Tenneco Inc.-owned shipyard in a community that has traditionally had little love for big northern-based unions.

Justifiably proud of his achievement, Mr. Hower says, "I feel like we've become part of Steelworker history with this victory. The night of the victory was one of the greatest moments of my life. We assured these people they'd have a better future. And that's what any organizer wants to accomplish."

Restless. Though both PSA and the company have challenged the election results, Mr. Hower isn't afraid of a second balloting. He points to the victory margin as evidence that the workforce is determined to stay Steelworker. But he would like to get on to his next assignment. "I'm an organizer, and I get restless if I'm in one place too long."

One thing is certain about Jack Hower: his reputation as an effective organizer is assured. When he shows up at his next plant gate, the management team will soon enough hear: "He's the guy who won in Newport News!"

Of course, there are those on the other side of the plant gate with similar reputations. Companies that have resisted a union's best-laid plans for adding duespayers to its ranks. Companies that masterminded the decertification of a strong union. Companies that won.

How do the winners do it? Almost inevitably, the losers will charge they

employed "dirty" tactics. And the winners will respond with a like allegation. They'll both claim the other's campaign was rife with threats, harassment, pie-in-the-sky promises, and outright lies.

And it appears that, in many cases both sides may be right.

The organizing war for workers is battle fought—in theory—within the confines of a set of rules laid down by the federal government. But in fact, it's often fought in a hazy border strip at the edge of those rules, or even outside them. It is not a game that the participants are playing.

Buying time

Speedy representation elections are almost universally considered to be advantageous to a union. So management, facing a union assault, seeks to buy time.

"What usually happens is an episode occurs at the plant," says Richard O'Brecht, attorney with Thompson, Mann & Hutson, a Washington law firm specializing in management's problems with labor. "It's something that bothers the workers, and one or two of them say, 'If we had a union, this wouldn't have happened.' Management needs at least a month before an election to explain what the union is, and get its side of the story across to the workers."

Many union organizers, says Mr. O'Brecht, will come to plants with union authorization cards that they tell workers are just cards to bring about an election. (There are two types of cards that may be circulated: a card that only calls for an election, and the more commonly used union authorization card, which, when signed, means the worker has joined the union. However, such members don't pay dues till after a contract has been ratified.) "They don't understand that once they've signed that card, they've joined the union. And up to this point, no one has explained to them what that union is."

When Mr. O'Brecht is called in by management, the first step is to talk to the plant manager to find out what the issues are. "Then you, the management, must address those issues. You don't make

promises—that's illegal. You must convince your people that you will understand their problems and do something about them. And we tell [the workers] that what the union probably didn't mention was that they'll have to go on strike if they want that union contract."

In many cases, the consultant finds he's been summoned to do the impossible. The company hasn't treated its employees with respect; the union organizer knows this, and no amount of time-buying is going to change the outcome of the election, asserts Mr. O'Brecht.

"Any company that gets a union deserves it," he says. "You must continuously treat your people as real people who understand the company and its problems. You must give them dignity. We always advise clients to meet with small groups of employees to find out their problems—long before any union organizer has showed up. The primary goal is to set up a communications line from the lowest-level employee to the top so that that is where complaints are handled and resolved."

The company that adheres to such principles stands a better chance of enjoying a more productive labor-management bond. But just as important, it's a good bet that when the Jack Howers, Norman Goldsteins, and Carlton Horners of the labor movement appear at that firm's plant gates, the "war" in the plant is less likely to be a one-sided rout.

Everyone "expected much more violence than there was."

Money and power are the stakes. And most in labor and management find those stakes worth fighting for.

Naturally, not every organizing campaign is an anything-goes affair. Many times, employers are simply unaware that some of their actions prior to an election are illegal. And unions are just as regularly embarrassed by overzealous supporters in the shop who, through ignorance or lack of discipline, go too far in promoting the union.

But typically, there are heated words, pressures from the community, an occasional broken nose, divided loyalties, and carefully filtered information designed to mislead or intimidate.

On the 'inside.' The "territory" belonging to Tenneco's Newport News Shipbuilding & Drydock Co. extends seemingly without end along the city's waterfront and railroad tracks. Gates to the yards are carefully policed. "No one gets in who doesn't work there," observes Mr. Hower. "I've been here a year and a half and I've never been inside."

"Inside" is where the 19,000-plus employees work, around the clock, at an assortment of jobs related to building ships. These workers had stuck loyally to the PSA for more than 30 years, resisting several attempts by large industrial unions to nestle them under their wings. But when Jack Hower, Roosevelt Robinson, and John Kitchen set up shop to try to win over the shipbuilders, important groundwork had already been laid.

Some 1,200 designers for the company, all professional and technical people, affiliated with USWA in 1975. Their support for the union was confirmed last year, when they chose the Steelworkers as their representative by a wide margin in an election supervised by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

Unable to agree on contract terms with Tenneco's shipbuilding management, they struck in April 1977. Mr. Hower confides that the strike had the potential to scuttle his effort to organize the other shipbuilders; the international union neither recommended nor opposed the strike. But he says, if the

company sought to discourage other workers by forcing the strike, its strategy backfired. "The other workers saw a group stand up to Tenneco, and it impressed upon them the idea that the Steelworkers would back them," he says. "No one had ever done that before."

By working with the designers, the union became familiar with—though perhaps still suspect by—the rest of the workforce. It was a base for the trio of strategists to work from. Their first goal: establish a strong "volunteer committee" of workers to promote the union. In July 1977, the union recruited its 500th volunteer.

"We hadn't put out a union authorization card yet," says Mr. Hower. "It doesn't do any good to put the cards out unless the people understand the union and its goals first." To accomplish that end, the organizers had been meeting with groups of workers at their homes and in local communities. The schedule was a grueling one, often requiring the three to put in 20-hour days, but it paid off.

In August, authorization cards were released. To ensure that no one circulating the cards would toss out signed cards—a tactic commonly used by "plants" within organizing committees that wish to thwart the card campaign—each worker was given 20 cards and had to be able to account for them at all times. "This way, we had total control over the cards," says Mr. Hower. "And as far as we know, there were no abuses."

They stayed. Tension built rapidly as Steelworker volunteers manned the plant gates at 6 each morning to sign up workers. The PSA sent its people, too; verbal harassment of the volunteers became a regular feature of the sign-up periods, and the Steelworkers' opponents took pains to photograph the union "sympathizers," Mr. Hower says—a psychological measure often employed to let organizing committees know the company is aware of individual efforts contrary to the employer's desires.

"In the past, the PSA had been able to scare outside unions away from the

gates. But we didn't leave. We proved we weren't afraid of the PSA." Instructed to ignore PSA taunts, the volunteers kept their tempers in check. Some fighting broke out, but the discipline displayed by the union backers won a grudging respect from many corners in the community—as well as the workplace.

"I fully expected much more violence than there was," says a local reporter. "Everybody did. There was a super amount of tension generated. But the Steelworkers kept their people under control. They got a lot of deserved credit for that."

Meanwhile, the PSA was busily cranking out anti-Steelworker literature. The company and the business community embarked on a program to discourage support for USWA's drive. Several sources report that the local newspapers imposed a partial blackout on coverage of the campaign, allegedly due to pressures exerted by business interests in Newport News.

But the community in general was strangely silent. "No one, outside of the company and the business coalition, took as active a role as I thought they would," notes one observer. "This is a town with a non-union background, one that traditionally resisted unions. But they didn't seem to get too excited about the Steelworkers coming in."

One reason, he believes, is that the Steelworker organizers comported themselves in an exemplary fashion, in contrast to organizers from some previous campaigns—who were often seen drinking and pursuing local women when not circulating literature. "These guys just worked like crazy. They weren't out boozing it up and raising hell, and it surprised a lot of people here. You had to be impressed with their integrity and dedication. The big-time union boss image that PSA tried to give them just didn't stick."

Even the local churches, which in the past had been vocally opposed to outside unions, did not get involved. With half of the shipyard's workforce made up of blacks, the community's black churches had exerted considerable influence over the outcome of previous

"They had everybody in their back pocket down here, and we still beat 'em."

elections, almost as a block opposing the unions. But this time, several key ministers remained neutral—which to many seemed to indicate their support for the union's efforts.

By December, the union organizers felt they had enough backing (well over half the workers had signed cards) to go for an election. The NLRB set it for Jan. 31 of this year. Last-ditch campaigning began in deadly earnest.

Up to this point, the steel union had yet to pass out any literature at the plant gates. All work at the jobsite had been done via the volunteer committee. But now the pace was stepped up. Steelworker literature began appearing—to refute charges made by Tenneco and PSA and to herald the many benefits a Steelworker could expect once a contract was negotiated. Often, the handbills addressed issues that the company and PSA hadn't made public yet—and this had a devastating effect on Mr. Hower's opponents, he relates with a smile.

Spies. "We had sources within PSA who were telling us what was going on in their planning meetings," he says. Such "insiders," who literally were risking their necks for the USWA cause, permitted Mr. Hower's organizers to know what the independent union's next move would be, so that there could be an almost instant rebuttal to PSA/Tenneco claims about the Steelworkers.

The battle of words boiled down to several key issues. The Steelworkers' strategy called for "exposing" the PSA as a "company union" which capitulated whenever Tenneco wanted concessions. And Tenneco itself was portrayed by USWA as the "outsider"—a big, insensitive conglomerate from Houston that had taken over the shipyard as a profit center and now ran it from afar, with no concern for the well-being of the workers. This tactic apparently worked very well, since numerous shipyard workers and Newport News residents commented to IW that Tenneco's 1968 takeover of the yard had exerted a negative impact on the community.

The irony of this successful Steelworker strategy was that the USWA

was able to accomplish exactly what the PSA and Tenneco couldn't: it persuaded people that its opponent was an outsider to be regarded with suspicion and contempt. "The company had been privately owned before," explains one veteran Newport News newspaper man. "It was very paternalistic. The workers believed in the company and the product, especially the middle managers. They kind of set the pace for the rest of the workers. But when Tenneco came in, they manhandled the middle managers. They chipped away at the people's belief about the company."

As the union exploited the "company union" and "outsider" angles, continuing to hammer home the need for the protection of a strong labor organization, PSA and Tenneco fought back. They ominously warned that the Steelworkers were a "strike-happy" group that would cost workers their jobs and hurt the area's economy. They pointed to the designers—still unable to get a pact with the company—as a grim example of what could happen to the entire workforce, once it went Steelworker.

By Steelworker estimates, the company and PSA outspent them by a 10-to-1 margin during the heated campaign. Pro-PSA advertisements could be found in all manner of media; new PSA literature appeared daily.

No letup. As the election drew nearer, the union's representatives could smell victory. But they didn't slow their efforts. Instead, they increased their workload, arranging more evening meetings and rallies. "That last couple of weeks, they were operating on nervous energy alone," a source says of Messrs. Hower, Kitchen, and Robinson. One ploy almost backfired. In an attempt to solidify black support for the union, USWA invited the Rev. Martin Luther King Sr., father of the late civil rights leader, to speak at a Jan. 29 rally. But, charges Mr. Hower, several local black ministers asked Rev. King not to attend "because it was a local issue that should be decided without outside influences." Rev. King eventually compromised, sending his top aide to address the group.

On election day, more than 16,000 votes were cast. Excitement peaked when word was received at USWA campaign headquarters that PSA had been defeated by a 9,093 to 7,548 decision.

Mr. Hower recalls his reaction: "I was overwhelmed. I'd said I was gonna go out and get drunk if we won, but I only had one drink that night—and couldn't finish it. I was elated, but the full force of the victory didn't hit for two or three days."

Not so elated were PSA and Tenneco officials who were suddenly looking at a whole new ball game in Newport News. While Mr. Hower and his crew were trying to recover from the grueling ordeal, the vanquished weren't quite ready to be counted out. They challenged the election results, alleging more than 20 violations of labor law both before the election and on the day of the vote. Most of the company's charges (considered stronger than PSA's challenges) alleged sloppy election supervision by the 60-plus NLRB staffers at the shipyard; Tenneco also listed numerous incidents of alleged harassment and campaign violations by the Steelworkers—typical, even expected, charges levied by combatants under such explosive organizing circumstances.

Although Mr. Hower says the company's allegations are "ridiculous" and that the NLRB representatives performed admirably under the pressures of one of the largest elections ever held, no one in Newport News is certain when the NLRB will rule on the challenges. Mr. Hower doesn't think there will be another election; the PSA does. Its officers can still be seen outside the plant gates handing out new anti-Steelworker literature every day, hoping that a second election will allow them to keep their PSA positions.

The Steelworkers' ability to go south of the Mason-Dixon line and organize a town's major employer speaks for the effectiveness of the strategy the organizers plotted out and adhered to. "We beat the system," says Mr. Hower proudly. "We went out and beat city hall. We beat a company and a company

union. They had *everybody* in their back pocket down here, and we still beat 'em. It's not often workers can do that. That's why this victory is so important to me personally, and to the labor movement in general. We proved you can win in the South."

When the Steelworker triumph is analyzed, it's not hard to find the bottom-line elements that led to victory: perseverance, image-building, sticking to a plan, meeting individually with workers, refusing to be goaded into violent retribution.

But every uprising needs a rallying cry. What was the Steelworkers'? Perhaps more than any other issue, it was the 20-minute paid lunch that the company and the PSA agreed to take away from the workers several years ago. "It was a crazy issue, something that never should have been allowed to happen," relates a Newport News source. "The workers had had an unpaid hour lunch previously, and when the company instituted the paid 20-minute lunch break, it became immensely popular. The revolt against PSA and the company started when the decision was made to eliminate the paid lunch."

To many workers, the lunch controversy symbolized PSA's essential lack of bargaining clout, and the company's insensitivity to what was important to its employees. Some in Newport News argue that the Steelworkers never would have got to first base without the unrest created by the lunch decision.

Back to normal? In the election's aftermath, emotions were mingled. Pattie Shelton speaks for many workers when she says, "I'm just glad it's over. There was so much tension. Everyone was taking sides. Now we can get back to normal."

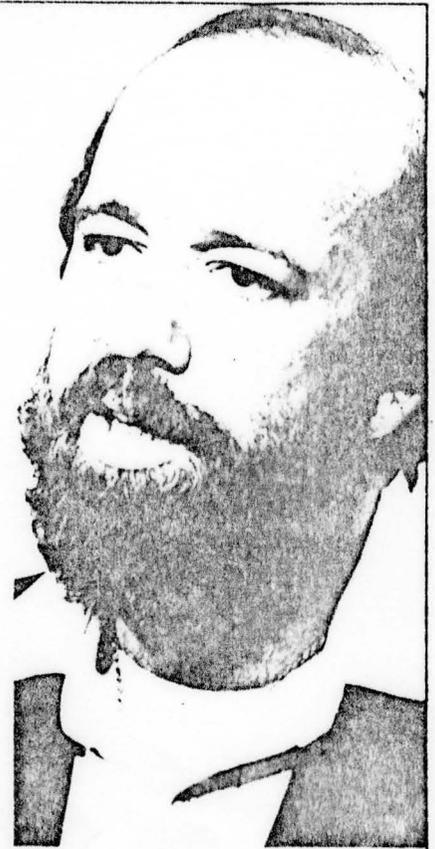
But like some others, she is also still bitter about the company's performance during the campaign. She herself was fired in February—for union activities, she claims—and many complained of a Tenneco campaign laden with thinly veiled threats that turned them hostilely against their employer.

Mr. Hower's initial response was also one of relief. But later it turned to restlessness as he impatiently awaited a ruling from the NLRB on the challenges. "After all that work, we have to keep going, keep meeting with people, processing grievances [like Pattie Shelton's], keeping spirits up until we're cer-

Organizers: nomads of the labor movement

It's a 1,650-mile trek from Wyoming's jagged landscape to Virginia's Atlantic shoreline. And that's how far Jack Hower's affiliation with the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) has taken him in the last five years. As a miner at an FMC Corp. underground mine in his native Wyoming, the soft-spoken Mr. Hower (who might easily be mistaken for a liberal arts college professor) rose through the ranks of his local union. By age 30, he'd attracted the attention of the Steelworker hierarchy by organizing plants in Wyoming and Kansas, and was drafted by USWA's fledgling organizing department (founded on a formal, structured basis in 1968).

That's when his odyssey began in earnest. "You live out of a suitcase when you're an organizer," the 35-year-old Mr. Hower says as he rattles off his assignments: Michigan, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, and now Virginia. Though his home, wife, and two youngsters are in Roanoke, some 200 miles away, he hasn't spent much time there since he "relocated" almost two years ago to Newport News, Va., to work on his shipyard campaign. "Sometimes it gets real lonely away from the family so much," he admits. He's able to see his family most weekends, but when a campaign heats up, he can ill-afford to desert the job. He and his wife were able to get away by themselves for their last anniversary, but such respites have been few and far between. To complicate the home situation, he never knows where his next stop will be. "I have no idea where I'll be going next," he says. "I guess I'll find out when this one's wrapped



up—whenever that might be."

He'd like to see his old stamping grounds in Wyoming more often, too. It's a part of the country he grew to love, with its wilderness, craggy peaks, and all-engulfing stretches of land devoid of the scars of humanity. "I keep promising myself to take a vacation, to get back there. I think I'm gonna do it this summer," he says determinedly. But then: "Of course, that depends on how things go here. I have to get this local functioning first, and that may take a while."

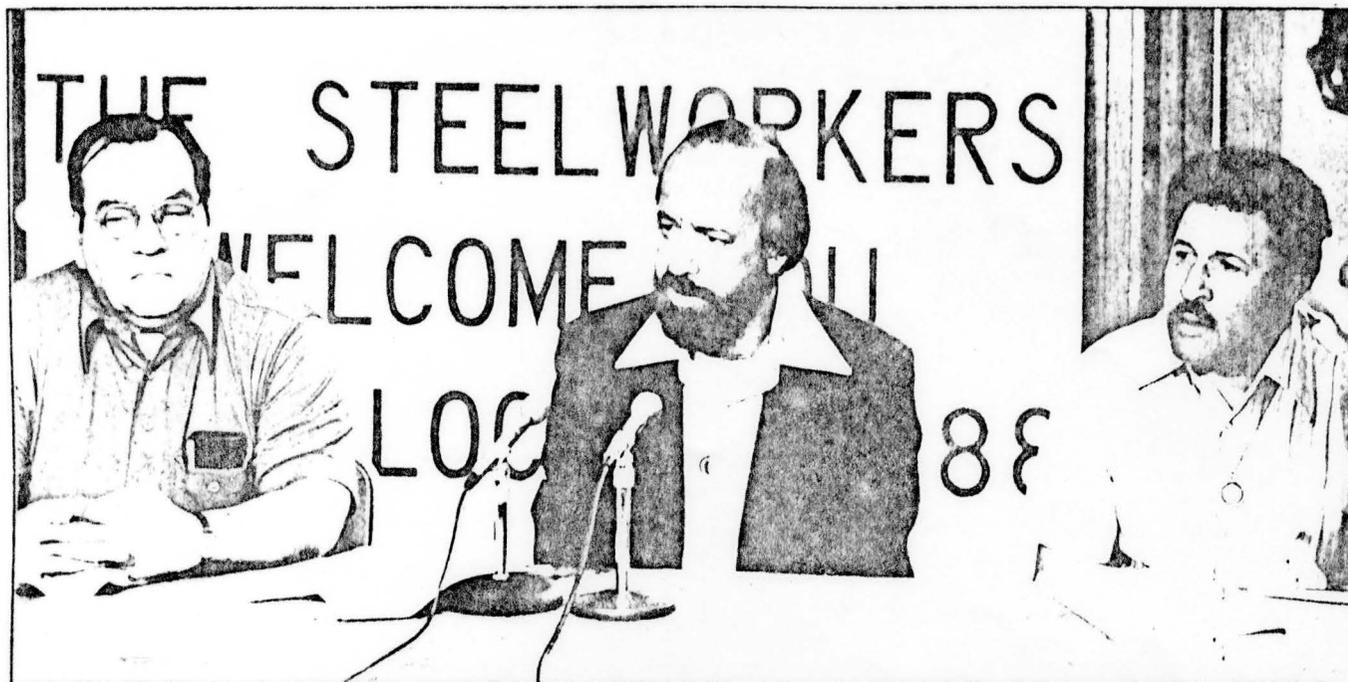
He hasn't had a real vacation in several years, and confesses that he needs one. "When you take a job like this, you get wedded to it. You have to believe pretty strongly in what you're doing, or you couldn't survive it sometimes. But the rewards—seeing people able to live better because of what you did—are worth it for me."

tified. And who knows when that will be?"

The response from PSA and the company can only be guessed at. Key officials from both declined IW's invitation to discuss their experience with the

Steelworkers. D. T. Savas, the company's senior vice president for corporate relations and top campaign strategist, referred calls to a Tenneco attorney, Andy Kramer, in Washington. He in turn refused to comment on any-

"The theory that you can't fight the non-union background of the South is bull."



thing but the pending challenges to the election results. PSA's president, Bob Bryant, channeled requests for information to his executive assistant, Andrew Harris. Mr. Harris reports that the campaign was a fair one, but charges that there were voting irregularities that brought on the PSA and company objections. He adds that he doesn't think the Steelworkers will be able to sign a contract with the company without first overcoming some opposition. "They never did get a contract for the designers," he points out. "They've been out since last April Fool's Day [1977]. That tells you something."

Two salesmen. To be consistently effective as an organizer requires more than just good fortune. And to be successful in southern plants, an organizer has to have a very attractive package to sell—and know how to sell it properly.

Norman Goldstein and Carlton Horner are two such men. They reject the idea that southern plants are impenetrable anti-union bastions. They're men that management must reckon with when they show up.

Mr. Goldstein is assistant director of organizing for the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. He has a law degree from St. John's University, he's

worked for construction and metals trades unions, and he's organized workers in the South since the 1950s. He says: "The theory that you can't fight the non-union background of the South is bull. Most unions shy away from it. We don't—and it pays dividends."

Mr. Horner, international representative for the United Auto Workers' (UAW) national organizing department, has been in the union's service for 18 years. In that time, he's organized some important southern shops—and lost some big battles, too. "Employers in the North certainly don't roll over and play dead," he observes caustically. "But the campaign there is on a higher level than in the South. Down here, they get into every *imaginable* subject."

Mr. Goldstein's latest project is typical of the assignments the Teamsters entrust to his care. The target: Overnite Transportation Co., a Richmond, Va.-based trucking firm. The challenge: simultaneously organize all 62 terminals the company owns in 20 states.

The solidly non-union employer of some 5,300 workers has successfully thwarted past Teamster attempts to unionize its haulers. The approach Mr. Goldstein devised to try to overcome the company's opposition this time calls

Frank McDaniels, Jack Hower, and Roosevelt Robinson meet the press after the USWA victory.

for intensive organizing work at each of the terminals. By mid-March, Mr. Goldstein reported, the union had cards from more than 30% of the workforce, which the National Labor Relations Act requires for an election.

"But we want more," he says. To get them, Mr. Goldstein is depending on Teamster locals at the 62 terminal locations to do the bulk of the legwork. Union organizers are meeting with workers in their homes and churches, distributing Teamster T-shirts and literature, trying to convince the drivers—who are compensated nearly as well as Teamsters—that they are missing out on many extra benefits by not joining the union.

Just how effective Mr. Goldstein's system-wide approach to organizing Overnite has been won't be known until elections are held at the terminals (probably in late summer). If the Teamsters prevail in the Overnite effort, Mr. Goldstein believes, it will be because of the union's largely autonomous locals. "Our very structure is much different from that of other unions," he

Without a union, "you're like a man on his death bed if they decide to lay you off."

explains. "We want strong locals, so they can do most of the organizing."

Keep in touch. But the locals can expect some heavy backing from Teamster headquarters in Washington. The union uses a computer to gather information and send it along to the locals, and the planning done by Mr. Goldstein's staff gives them directional support. For the Overnite fight, for instance, the union has installed a WATS line from its headquarters to each state where an Overnite terminal is located.

The Teamster name itself is a powerful aid to organizing. "We're the image of clout," states Mr. Goldstein matter-of-factly. "When we go in to organize a plant, we get more respect than most other unions, both from the workers and management."

If the Teamsters have the respect of Overnite's managers, it's a grudging one. "By and large, they've been above board in their campaign—about as above board as they can be, anyway," comments one Overnite executive. "They have run afoul of the police [in early April, several Teamsters were arrested in Columbus, Ohio, after a scuffle with Overnite employees], but generally they've just been contacting our people at their homes and sending out literature. It's just another organizing effort. We've had others here."

While Mr. Goldstein charges that the company has used harassment to instill fear into workers to discourage them from signing up, the executive disagrees. "We just don't yield to them. Our people are well-paid and have good benefits and working conditions, and they simply haven't seen fit to join the union, thank the Lord."

Good and bad news. The UAW's Mr. Horner has a problem. It's one a lot of union organizers might like to have—at first blush: Mr. Horner has been too good at what he does.

The year Mr. Horner was too successful was 1976. He had single-handedly engineered three pro-union elections in the Texas-Louisiana region that year when his next job came along: organize the General Motors Corp. Guide Headlamp Div. at Monroe, La.

"I was shot by the time I got to Monroe," Mr. Horner confesses. "You take on a plant with a three-shift operation and you have to meet with all of them five days a week, prepare for the meetings, get handbills printed up, and still leave some time to think and sleep—I *had* to have help, for my own survival! So the union sent me assistance from Detroit."

The engaging Nashville native moved into Monroe May 1, 1976, scarcely a day after he'd won an election in Shreveport, La. His handpicked staff began coordinating their campaign, meeting with workers, steadily working toward their goal. "We played it by ear down there," he recalls, "and we knew when it would reach the point where we could call for the election."

Then, in late fall, as the drive was gaining momentum, the international union signed a new three-year contract with GM that contained an important shot in the arm for Mr. Horner's crew. The company agreed to cease resisting organizing drives at its southern plants—the celebrated "neutrality clause." The headlamp plant's management backed off, and when the vote came in on Dec. 22, the 603 employees chose the Auto Workers by a 328 to 280 edge.

While Mr. Horner was still celebrating the victory, he got some good news and some bad news—with a single piece of information. "When the Monroe plant was organized, the workers immediately got a \$2.16 increase," he says. "Then GM turned around and gave the same raise to all their workers at their new southern plants."

He had mixed feelings about the move. "On the one hand, I was glad that our efforts helped other people get raises. But it didn't do a damn thing to help our organizing efforts elsewhere in the South."

New approach. He's since had to revise his approach to non-union workers. "We've had southern workers at GM plants tell us to our face, 'Hey, we got the same money at the same time the organized plants did. What in the hell do we need you for?' All I can say is it's a matter of good conscience on their part

to join up. We got them the raises. Sure, they've got all the same benefits except supplemental unemployment benefits. . . . But you need a union to protect your job. Otherwise, we say to them, you're like a man on his death bed if they decide to lay you off."

Mr. Horner is currently engaged in organizing a new GM assembly facility in Oklahoma City—where GM has already announced that the 5,000 workers will receive full UAW contract coverage. "My biggest problem here is that workers in Oklahoma City are the most oppressed and underpaid workers of any metropolitan area anywhere in the U. S. for its size," he says ruefully. "They'll hire 5,000 workers—who've been working for \$4 or \$5 an hour all their lives—at \$8 an hour."

"It's our job to convince these people they need the union, right after they got a \$4 an hour raise. I know it won't be too easy."

Making it less easy is the political atmosphere of the city, where unions are anathema to the traditional way of doing business. Soon after Mr. Horner announced his intentions to organize the plant, *The Daily Oklahoman*, the city's major paper, lashed out at the UAW editorially: ". . . Union bosses are not so dumb as to let the potential of 5,000 new dues-paying members pass them by," read a Mar. 27 editorial, "especially when they already have a stranglehold on virtually all domestic operations of the American auto industry." The editorial went on to criticize the union for alleged excessive pay demands and charged that "neither . . . quality control nor pride of craftsmanship [have] been among the UAW's notable accomplishments."

But Mr. Horner, a man familiar with life's adversities, says he's prepared to dig in at the GM-Oklahoma plant. "It may take a while," he says, "but the GM department of the UAW is highly specialized and experienced. Our union's organizing record may not be as good as we'd like it to be—but it's still better than any other union's. Just being a part of the UAW is a big plus to an organizer. We *will* get that GM plant and its 5,000 people." ■