Cables Cut As Strike Hits General Telephone

By Tribune Staff

More than 2,000 General Telephone Company of Florida employees went on strike yesterday and shortly afterwards cable slashing was reported in four counties.

The strike by members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers cut manpower to a minimum. The switchboards, operated by management employees, were able to handle only emergency long distance calls. Repair service was also restricted to emergency cases.

An estimated 65 picket lines patrolled the telephone company's buildings in a six-county area. General Telephone serves 200,000 customers.

No Break Seen

No break in the strike is seen in the near future, as both management and union officials said that they will make no more proposals.

Robert T. Mount, business agent for the IBEW Local 824,

Police Break Up Strike Crowd

Demonstrators across from strike-bound phone company on Morgan get word to move on from riot-helmeted police last night.

Police Break Up Demonstration

Story And Photos On Page 1-B

Wearing "On Strike" placards, phone pickets pound pavement yesterday in front of General Telephone's downtown Tampa building.

Repairs Speeded

Richard Buckingham, director of public relations for General Telephone, said the cables were being repaired as fast as possible.

Only other report of violence was in Bradenton, where a picket was allegedly struck by a company truck. He was not seriously injured.

Of General's 4,300 employees, only 798 are management people, Buckingham said.
Phone Strike Vandalism Spreads to Tampa Electric

Cable Cuts Black Out 2 Communities

BY WARD SINCLAIR
Times Staff Writer

Widespread vandalism began taking a heavy toll around the bay area this morning and at least two communities were cut off from the outside world at the strike against General Telephone Co. moved into its second day.

Vandalism was not confined to General Telephone Co. facilities. Tampa Electric Co. reported four of its own communications cables cut today and the company warned that a serious loss of electrical power could eventually result.

A federal mediator was working behind the scenes in an attempt to get the contending union and company back to the bargaining table.

There was no sign that either Local 824 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers or the company was ready to ask the other to reopen the scuttled contract talks.

PICKETS ROLLING UP THE MILEAGE — Staff Photo by Dan J. papers

...in their second day of strike picket duty, Tampa workers of General Telephone Company of Florida were still smiling today as they pounded the pavement outside company offices.
Strike Vandalism Hits Key Lines, Fire Alarms

30,000 Phones Out of Service

By BILL BLALOCK JR.
Times Staff Writer

Cutting of a city fire alarm cable and three high priority military phone cables marked vandalism that left 30,000 Tampa phones dead at the General Telephone Company strike went into its third day.

The fire alarm cable, which serves the area west of the Hillsborough River and south of Grand Central Avenue, left the area without a fire alarm system most of the night.

Also cut were three government SAGE warning system cables crossing county lines, bringing local FBI agents into an extensive investigation.

CABLE CUTTING and smashing of terminal boxes that cut off 25 per cent of all Tampa phones, left Town and Country Park without service and isolated Venice from outside contact, Dick Buckingham, public relations man for GenTel, said today.

Vandalism throughout the six county area served by the phone company has resulted in the cutting of 34 major cables as well as many smaller ones.

Efforts by Gov. Patric Bryan, the Florida Public Utilities Commission and local union leaders to arbitrate the strike met with no success today.

A MEETING this morning of local union leaders at the Florida Motor Hotel drafted a telegram to Public Utilities Commission member Edwin L. Mason, stating Local 824 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers was ready to arbitrate all issues.

The telegram was in answer to an earlier one from Mason requesting an early strike settlement.

AN AGREEMENT to arbitrate was sent by Robert Mount, business manager for the union, to Bryant last night.

The proposal was turned down by Fred Leuney, president of the telephone company. Leuney said the company was "not interested in arbitration as long as the normal channels of collective bargaining are still open.

Union officials this morning announced a $10,000 reward for the arrest and conviction of any telephone company personnel apprehended damaging telephone equipment.

The reward came as an answer to a $5,000 reward offered by the telephone company for information leading to the arrest of anyone caught damaging the phone lines.
WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

Since negotiations began between General Telephone Company and the IBEW Union on May 13, both have presented a number of contract proposals. The company has presented 21 specific proposals which it considers desirable to provide the type of telephone service our customers expect and at reasonable rates.

As a result of collective bargaining, from May 13 until the strike was called by the Union on July 11, the company withdrew over half of its proposals and agreed to some major Union proposals. Several company proposals, which the management feels are necessary to manage this business both with respect to the quality of service and rates, remain in dispute.

ONE ISSUE IS WAGES

Present wages paid by the company are comparable or better than those paid for similar work in this area. For example, General of Florida pays its Installer-Repairman $2.97 per hour as compared to Southern Bell's $2.92½ for the same job. Even so, the company has offered to raise this wage rate to $3.04½ per hour.

The company offered wage increases totalling nearly $350,000 per year. The Union, however, has demanded wage increases which would nearly double this amount to almost $700,000 per year. It should be reemphasized...the customer pays the bill!

A SECOND ISSUE:

The Right of the Company to Hire Regular Part-Time Employees Without Union Approval

One of the examples of the need for regular part-time employees involves long distance operators. Effective last April 4, long distance rates were reduced on calls placed after 9 P.M. Because of this, the company has experienced a tremendous increase in the volume of long distance calls between 9 P.M. and midnight. This has increased the need for additional help during those hours.

Under the requirements of the expired contract and continued Union demands, the company could be forced to hire extra help and pay for eight hours work...even though only three hours work was needed.

The company proposes to hire regular part-time employees to supplement the present work force in order to serve the public more effectively. It does not intend to replace full-time people presently employed.
THE TAMPA TRIBUNE
Published by THE TRIBUNE COMPANY, Lafayette and Morgan Sts., Tampa, Fla.

J. C. COUNCIL, President and Publisher
General Manager  Editor  Managing Editor

Page 10-B  Friday, August 9, 1963

BIBLE THOUGHT—By love serve one another.—Galatians 5:13

Editorials

Loud and Clear

Tampa's Mayor Julian Lane, a public official who doesn't speak just for sound effects, delivered a timely message across the table to General Telephone and its striking union yesterday. The gist of it: Get the phones working again.

Mayor Lane proposed that the union agree to go back to work and the company agree to enter into new negotiations for a "cooling-off" period of 90 days. If negotiations bog down, the differences on wage scales, at least, can be submitted to arbitration, he said.

In any case, the Mayor served notice that the widespread sabotage of telephone lines and equipment has got to stop. He announced that he will use auxiliary police to help regular officers patrol the lines and, if that measure isn't sufficient, he'll call on Governor Bryant to order out National Guardsmen for service. And he challenged the union—which denied responsibility for the sabotage—to assign some of its members to help the police protect strategic spots in the phone system.

Mayor Lane asked General Tel president Fred Learey and officials of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers to give him an answer on his back-to-work proposal by next Tuesday. Tampa's City Council will meet in special session that day "to authorize additional action if necessary."

The answer from both the company and union ought to be "yes." Mayor Lane's proposals are fair to both sides and they are certainly in the public interest.

In the four weeks that the strike has dragged on the public has been the forgotten party. Union and company have been locked together like two wrestlers in a grueling, straining effort to force the other to the mat while a large part of the phone service was wrecked.

Mayor Lane  People First

If the company were engaged in selling groceries or pants or cement the public wouldn't care how long the tussle continued or who eventually won it. But General Tel is a public utility, holding a franchise for providing the only phone service available in six counties. Its rate of return on invested capital is regulated, the prices it charges subscribers are regulated, the conditions of service are regulated. Such an enterprise is in no way comparable to an ordinary private business, where labor and management are free to match muscle on the contract line as long as they choose. The phone strike never should have occurred; and it has now passed the point of public tolerance.

"The interests of the people," Mayor Lane told the City Hall conference yesterday, "are greater than the interests of the telephone company or the union."

Right. And if company and union have any regard for public opinion they won't ignore the Mayor's message. It spoke for the people's interests in terms loud and clear.
Violence Doesn't Count?

All that apparently prevents an end to the eight-week General Telephone strike is the issue of putting back to work the strikers charged with sabotage and other criminal actions.

The union insists that the accused strikers be re-hired.

The company says it will take back only those who are acquitted, except that in cases involving minor offenses—such as egg-throwing and picket-line pushing—it would be willing to re-hire the workers, even if they are convicted, after a period of disciplinary suspension.

We consider the union's position untenable.

If we interpret correctly the statements attributed to Robert Mount, president of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers local, he contends that in effect General Telephone should ignore all the cable-cutting, dynamiting, assault on non-striking workers and similar acts of violence. Just routine strike troubles. Why make a fuss?

Under this theory General Tel should welcome back, among others, Miss Kathryn Prather, a switchboard operator, arrested on three separate charges: (1) firing a rifle at microwave equipment atop the company's downtown building, (2) carrying a homemade bomb in her car, and (3) possessing a submachine gun in her apartment.

General Tel also, presumably, should extend a warm greeting to the two strikers charged with attempting to hire an undercover Tampa city detective to beat up and maim non-strikers, at $100 per beating, and to a dozen others accused of assault on company workers and supervisors.

And President Fred Learey, we suppose, should try to forget that 26 of the returning workers have been charged with various acts of sabotage which have made the maintenance of service enormously difficult for the company.

What kind of reasoning is this? Bombs and submachine guns aren't toys in a game of freeze-out. The hiring of goons for physical assault is not a boyish prank. The destruction of hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of equipment, thereby cutting the life-and-death communications of innocent citizens, businesses and defense plants, can hardly be dismissed as a misguided protest against company policies.

Either union leaders oppose this kind of lawlessness or condone it. If they oppose it, then they ought to be as concerned as the company that any union member who may be guilty is punished and that, if accused, he stand trial before being allowed to return to a job where he would have further opportunity to damage both his employer and the public.

The calculated violence accompanying the telephone strike has cost the union much public sympathy. If its leaders now insist on a back-to-work agreement which appears to defend and condone these actions, they will permanently damage not only the reputation of the IBEW but the cause of all organized labor in the Tampa area.
IT IS WELCOME news to the people of the Tampa Bay area that today, the 61st day of the General Telephone strike, a proposed settlement will be submitted to the striking workers for a vote.

The agreement to let the strikers decide whether to accept the new contract and back-to-work proposals came after four days of almost continuous labor-management conferences, with Chairman Ed Johnson of the State Utilities Commission and Tampa Mayor Julian Lane acting as principal mediators.

There is every reason to hope the proposed settlement will be approved. The company has made a number of concessions; the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers has made some. A fair compromise appears to have been reached on the sticky issues of job security and seniority privileges. There was never any major disagreement on wage scales; the company offered increases which it said would amount to more than $1,000,000 over a two-year period.

On one point General Tel held firm and, in doing so, had overwhelming public support. It refused to put back to work 26 strikers who have been accused or convicted of serious criminal actions, ranging from possessing a submachine gun to chopping telephone cables. It did agree to rehire any who may be acquitted and to give them pay for the time lost. Surely, no reasonable man could ask for fairer treatment.

This strike has been an expensive demonstration of how not to handle labor-management disputes.

It has been especially hard on the decent, law-abiding men and women who constitute the great body of the strikers. They not only have lost two months’ income which will take years to recover; they also have been hurt by the inexcusable lawlessness which has smudged the reputation of the union and rubbed off on everyone connected with it. True, only a small number of the 2,800 strikers were involved. But some of them stood high in union councils and, in insisting that General Tel re-employ both accused and convicted violators, the union’s official spokesmen put themselves in the position of defending or condoning violence as a strike weapon.

General Tel has suffered extensive equipment damage which President Fred Learey at one time estimated would amount to a million dollars or more. The company also has lost a substantial amount of revenue from out-of-service telephones, which at the height of the sabotage campaign numbered more than 50,000.

Many businesses — especially small ones — have been starved financially by lack of phone service. Thousands of householders have been put to inconvenience and hardship.

And the whole Tampa Bay community has been harmed by nationwide publicity about the strike and the accompanying disorders. There are, we’re afraid, many potential voters and investors who’ll retain the mental picture of a phoneless, lawless community long after normal conditions have been restored.

The pity of it all is that the strike was never necessary. Nothing has been agreed to now that couldn’t more easily have been agreed to before July 11.

The strike has lasted 60 days too long. The strikers will help themselves, their families and their communities by making certain, in today’s vote, that it lasts no longer.
Box Score
On Phone Strike
Settlement

By JERRY WALLACE
Tribune Staff Writer

Here, at a glance, are proposals made—and won or lost—by General Telephone Company of Florida and Local 824, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, as things stood at the conclusion this week of the union's two-month strike against the company.

The company and union proposals are based on negotiations as of July 10, the day before the strike began.

### UNION PROPOSALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASKED</th>
<th>GOT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unlimited leave policy for union officers</td>
<td>One-year extension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clause to prohibit management from doing productive work</td>
<td>No clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in scheduling of plant forces</td>
<td>Withdrawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe transportation for female employees getting off at 10:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business representative title in clerical schedule</td>
<td>No such title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12½, 10, 7½ cent pay increases</td>
<td>8, 5, 4 cent raises</td>
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</table>

### COMPANY PROPOSALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASKED</th>
<th>GOT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hiring regular part-time employees without union approval</td>
<td>Will hire these employees at own discretion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping employees on job past quitting time, rather than shuffling senior employees into overtime work</td>
<td>Clause permitting man to stay on job he has started</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bumping to be restricted to work classification and by division area</td>
<td>Restricted to work classification, but left on company-wide basis rather than division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deleting foremen classification</td>
<td>Classification deleted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in scheduling of plant forces</td>
<td>Withdrawn</td>
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