Support Ronnie Lee Loy

Lee Loy Defense Fund

P.O. Box 244

Swampscott, Mass. 02197

The Lee Loy Defense Fund wishes to express its appreciation to Attorney Steve Kehoe of 10 Central Avenue, Lynn, for his strenuous efforts on Mr. Lee Loy's behalf. We find it very encouraging that there are lawyers like Atty. Kehoe and his associates who are seriously interested in helping workers at GE and other companies with problems arising from their employment by powerful corporations.

INTRODUCTION

The General Electric Company is the fourth largest industrial corporation in the United States and the second largest defense contractor. GE claims in many of its advertisements that it is an equal opportunity employer. In fact, as a major employer, it is required by both Massachusetts and federal law not to discriminate in its employment practices. The facts, however, say otherwise.

A typical example is the case of Ronnie Lee Loy. Lee Loy, a Jamaican citizen of Chinese descent, was repeatedly subjected to discriminatory treatment by GE, culminating in his being assaulted by a foreman and summarily fired. When a group of other GE workers tried to publicize this incident as well as other specific cases of GE's racial discrimination, GE responded by firing three union stewards in this group. GE has said that even if the charges made by this group of workers were true, they were defamatory and disloyal to the company and, as such, were just cause for discharge!

The International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE), Local 201, has supported the fired workers in grievance and arbitration proceedings with GE. In addition, charges against GE has been filed by the workers with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Preliminary investigations by both these commissions support the charges that GE is guilty of widespread discrimination against minority workers.

But GE has thus far remained adamant in its refusal to reinstate Lee Loy and the fired stewards, and can continue to hide behind various legal processes for many months. Public support at this time can do much to force GE to reinstate these men speedily and with a just settlement.

THE CASE OF RONNIE LEE LOY

Ronnie Lee Loy went to work for GE in August of 1970 as a rigger for a two hundred ton crane in the Turbine Department in Lynn, Massachusetts. His work had always been satisfactory; his foreman, Herman Higgins, called him a "good worker". But soon after Lee Loy went to work, another foreman, Arnold Barnes, began harrassing him. Barnes was well known in the Turbine Department as a foreman who did not like minority workers. In one case, a black worker quit his job at GE because of Barnes' harrassment. In another, a black worker transferred to a different department to get away from Barnes.

On numerous occasions, Barnes referred to Lee Loy as a "chink", both to his face and to other workers. Even though Barnes was not Lee Loy's foreman, he would consistently demand that Lee Loy do unauthorized work directly for him, in violation of procedures established by GE and the union.

GE: equal opportunity???

GE spends a lot of $$$ to tell us how overly fair they are to minority workers. They have gotten millions of tax dollars for minority "training" programs like ST/EP. They have posters all over the place saying that they are an "equal opportunity employer". But what are the real facts?

In this time of layoff, as the number of union cases against GE's harassment goes into the thousands, the worst of the layoff and Contract violations are against black and Spanish speaking workers. If GE gets away with it, you could be next!

1: RONNIE LEE LOY: An excellent worker (according to his foreman) who was fired 15 months ago after he was attacked and injured by management's Arnold Barnes (not Ronnie's foreman). Barnes fired Lee Loy to cover himself. Lee Loy is of Chinese and Jamaican descent. Barnes used to try to order him around, saying "Chink do this" and "Chink do that". (for more info. ask Bld. 64 stewards)

2: ARTHUR WRIGHT: Just fired for supposedly punching 2 clock cards. Witnesses say foreman Clough was nowhere near the clock, but made the charge because Wright and Wright's partner's card were both punched 6:51. But 2 other cards were also punched 6:51, and a white worker said he punched both of them & Clough wasn't anywhere near the clock. Clough has said to Wright "I want to get you so bad I can taste it." He was angry because Wright (black) wouldn't "supply" Clough with a black woman. He constantly insulted the worker by implying all black women are whores. He also thought Wright was leading a fight for better piece work prices. (for more--see Gear Plant stewards)

3: PABLO BETANCOURT: Fired FOR THE INTENT TO SLEEP. If you don't believe it, call the union hall & check 598-2760. This foreman, "Admiral" Rectenwald, has 26 union cases against him. He has broken almost every clause in the contract that gives workers any protection. He has especially harassed minority workers. He fired James Sanders for absenteeism. Sanders was rehired when the union proved discrimination--many white workers had worse records than Sanders. "Admiral" Rectenwald has also harassed Dennis Scott & Scott's partner Parker. He has often been heard talking about "these niggers". He has even marched into the ladies' room at will. Conditions and safety in his area are the worst--and workers are thinking about striking against him. (for more info. ask Bld. 63 workers)

4: JOHN REID: Called a "f-----g nigger" by building 67 foreman Casey. Management said Casey only called Reid a "nigger" so it was OK. Casey is still on the job.

5: CHARLES HARRIS: Union steward and leader of the Black Coalition for Equal Representation--fired for standing up for his rights (GE claims he swore at a foreman).

6: RALPH DOUGLAS: Another leader among minority workers who refused to sell out to GE. He quit in disgust over GE's open racist policies.

GE has more cases against it at the Mass. Commission Against Discrimination than any other company in the state and more than several companies put together. (If you want to check on this call the MCAD Research Dept. at 727-3990.) But minority workers have actually won very little at the MCAD because GE's long arm reaches into there also. When Charlie Harris and Ralph Douglas went to work at the MCAD they were barred from handling GE cases. (Maybe they know too much.) And the MCAD has sat on Ronnie Lee Loy's case for well over a year.

So GE gets the fat Federal Grants--brings in a few minority workers--makes them processors--and then lays off or fires almost every black or Latin worker hired in the last 2 years. For example, there are now less than 30 non-white production workers in AEG.

This leaflet comes to the point that we as Local 201 members must publicize grievances so we all can know what is going on in the plant. To force GE to rehire Lee Loy, Betancourt, and Wright will take unity. We can begin by all becoming active union members. Please come to the membership meetings Monday, March 20, at 9:00 AM and 8:00 PM. If you want your Union to change then you must come to the membership meetings.

Don't cop out ... join the fight to change 201 for the better ... Come to the union meetings. Fight to publicize grievances. Support Betancourt, Lee Loy, Wright, ...

Members Against Discrimination (MAD)

labor donated

GE'S REPRISALS

A few days after the flyer was distributed, GE agreed to settle one of the six cases cited in it by reinstating a black worker they had fired on a racist basis (He was fired for punching someone else's card by a foreman who was nowhere near the clock at the time). This was the only positive response by GE. But it was not their only response. GE also suspended and then fired Charles Murray, a union steward who had worked at GE for over 16 years, for distributing the leaflet. In its letter to Murray suspending him, GE dodged the issue of racism and stuck to accusing Murray of being "disloyal and defamatory". (see box)

GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY

1000 WESTERN AVENUE, WEST LYNN, MASSACHUSETTS 01905 . . . TELEPHONE 617 594-0100
TELEX NO. 710 334-0738

MARINE TURBINE AND GEAR DEPARTMENT

March 20, 1972

Mr. Charles F. Murray, Jr.
30 Haley Road
Marblehead, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Murray:

On Thursday, March 16th you were observed passing out a leaflet entitled "GE Equal Opportunity???" at the Gear Plant II gate prior to the start of the first shift. You have admitted that you engaged in this activity.

In our view, the handbill which you distributed is disloyal and defamatory not only of the Company and its efforts to provide equal opportunity employment, it also is defamatory, vile and abusive with respect to members of management.

We do not think any company must keep on its payroll any employee responsible for the distribution of statements intended to damage its reputation and the reputation of members of its management. Because of the seriousness with which we view this matter, you are immediately suspended as an employee of the General Electric Company. The suspension will last for a period ending at 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 29, 1972. At the end of the suspension period, you will be discharged for disloyalty to and defamation of the Company and for vile abusive and defamatory language concerning members of its management unless, prior to that time, you have provided us with proofs satisfactory to the Company in writing that the allegations contained in the handbill are true.

Other members of MAD immediately came to Murray's support. On March 30, the day after he was fired, another steward, Kevin Mahar, told his foreman that he too had passed out the leaflet. Two weeks later, Mahar was fired. When still another steward, Richie Gallo, also stepped forward in solidarity with Murray and Mahar, GE began to worry--so they told him they didn't believe he'd really handed out the leaflet! Therefore Gallo handed out the leaflet again on April 14. THIS time he gave one to a security guard, asking that he take down his name and the time and place. Gallo was fired one month later.

LEE LOY AND THE STEWARDS FIGHT FOR REINSTATEMENT

In April, 1972, fifteen months after Lee Loy had been fired and one month after MAD had distributed its flier, the MCAD announced the results of its preliminary investigation into Lee Loy's charges. It found that good reason existed to believe that his charges were true, and it suggested to GE that it reinstate Lee Loy with back pay. GE refused to reinstate Lee Loy to his old job. The MCAD is empowered to follow up this kind of refusal with formal hearings, but it has not done so in Lee Loy's case. In addition, the EEOC finally gave Lee Loy permission to bring a civil rights suit against GE in Federal Court.

Events moved somewhat more swiftly for Murray, Mahar and Gallo. On July 17, 1972, the MCAD suggested to GE that it rehire the three stewards, pay them back wages, and compensate them with an additional $1000 a piece. When GE refused, the MCAD initiated formal hearings in September. Over 75 people came to support the stewards at the first session of the hearings.

Fired shop stewards Murray, Gallo, and Mahar

These findings leave no doubt that Lee Loy should be reinstated to his old job with full back pay and with no loss of seniority, and that the three stewards were fired unjustly and should also be reinstated. Two different government agencies have reached the same conclusions: that the charges made in the "GE: Equal Opportunity???" leaflet are true. GE cannot be allowed to sweep well-documented charges of racism under the rug.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

The cases of Lee Loy and the fired stewards have aroused the interest and support of people throughout the Boston area. Newspapers from Boston to Lynn have told of Lee Loy's treatment at the hands of GE. A full page advertisement condemning GE's firing of Lee Loy was signed by university professors throughout New England and printed in the Lynn Daily Item. Most heartening of all has been the response of Lee Loy's fellow workers of all races. The Members Against Discrimination have reformed themselves into a broader group within Local 201, and publish a newsletter called "The Real News from 201". The group directly involves scores of workers in fighting for reforms within the local and in supporting minority workers such as Lee Loy.

What has created this encouraging situation has not been a reliance upon state and federal agencies. It has been workers and the public bringing pressure directly to bear upon GE and these commissions. The campaign in support of Lee Loy, Murray, Mahar, and Gallo is now shifting into high gear. But your support is needed; these men need their jobs back!

Three types of support are particularly needed:

1. Write--better yet, telegraph--the following people, to tell them you support reinstatement with full back pay and substantial damages for Lee Loy, Murray, Mahar and Gallo:

--R.C. Holland, Labor Relations
General Electric Co.
1100 Western Ave.
Lynn, Mass.

--The Real News from 201
P.O. Box 244
Swampscott, Mass.

--President Bert Farnham
Local 201
International Union of Electrical Workers
248 South Common
Lynn, Mass.

--Lee Loy Defense Fund
P.O. Box 244
Swampscott, Mass.

2. Get a local group--your union, church group, student or faculty organization, or simploy a group of friends--to endorse reinstatement and notify the above addresses of their endorsement, and to urge their members to write individually as well.

3. Support the legal efforts being made in Ronnie Lee Loy's behalf by contributing yourself and/or getting your organization to make a contribution to the Lee Loy Defense Fund. Checks should be made payable to the Lee Loy Defense Fund and sent to P.O. Box 244, Swampscott, Mass. 02197.

The Boston Globe Friday, July 28, 1972

DAVID DEITCH

State inaction on GE case

What about Ronnie Lee Loy?

It is now more than a year and a half since this worker of Chinese-Jamaican descent lost his job at General Electric in Lynn after he was attacked by a foreman who then fired Loy to cover himself.

When will this worker get the rights and protection against discrimination due him under the laws of Massachusetts as carried out by the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD)? Is the state agency afraid to take on General Electric, the biggest employer in Massachusetts and the company with the most discrimination cases filed against it?

The MCAD on July 17 informed GE that Charley Murray, Kevin Mahar and Richy Gallo shouldn't have been fired for handing out leaflets defending the rights of minority workers and otherwise charging the company with racist employment policies. Some of the material in the leaflets concerned the Ronnie Lee Loy situation in which Loy was ordered around by a foreman (not his own) as a "Chink."

Unfortunately, the MCAD's determination does not relate to the Loy case which was an instrumental factor in causing Murray, Mahar and Gallo to get fired.

The MCAD, through its legal consultant Michael J. Hoare, said that GE should reinstate the three men, give them back pay and medical benefits and compensate them $1000 each. The agency found that "probable cause exists to credit the allegations" of Murray, Mahar and Gallo, who claimed that firings took place because they attacked GE's reputation. In other words, the MCAD is defending the right of Murray, Mahar and Gallo to distribute their leaflets without prejudice against their jobs, but is in no way commenting on the content of the leaflets which specifically deal with GE's racism, a much more difficult issue.

A party charged by the MCAD is supposed to reply to the determination within 10 days. GE said its Manager of Union Relations, Raymond Holland, was on vacation and requested until August 4 to make its answer. If the corporation decides to ignore the determination, then the MCAD is empowered by statute to hold a public hearing, in effect a trial proceeding.

A public hearing would probably involve all aspects of GE's racism, drawing every sort of complainant into the battle, which is why the company would want to avoid provoking the situation. So far, GE has been very good at sidestepping a public hearing.

The MCAD, for instance, also found in favor of Ronnie Lee Loy and proposed a settlement with GE, which rejected it. But it took the MCAD well over a year to get moving on the Loy case and it wasn't until April 10 that GE was notified that, because no settlement was reached, a public hearing became necessary.

To this date, no public hearing has been scheduled to satisfy the rights of Ronnie Lee Loy. A hearing might be set for "early in the fall," a MCAD spokesman says. Failure to attend the hearing could lead to a contempt citation, which G.E. might be willing to face.

"My function," says MCAD attorney Hoare, "is to obtain GE's compliance with the law. My job is to advance the public interest rather than the interest of the three men. Of course, it may be that the public interest and that of the three men are parallel. I want to demonstrate that people have the right to complain about alleged discriminatory corporate policies But I'm not, however, the counsel for these men."

In their leaflet, Murray, Maher and Gallo have charged that "minority workers have actually won very little at the MCAD because GE's long arm reaches into there also." It does appear that the MCAD is more interested in the free speech issue than in racism on the shop floor and in the employment office which translates into dollars and cents.

Hoare promises that he "will tolerate no delay" in pushing the Murray, Maher and Gallo case. He admits, however, in the "possibility that my interpretation of the public interest may conflict with the interest of the three men" who got into this thing because of racism, not because of free speech.

"I believe that, across the table, we can convince GE to clean up its shop," Hoare said optimistically. Then why not take care of Ronnie Lee Loy?

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