

1997 Work Stoppages

BY FEHMIDA SLEEMI

Twenty-nine major work stoppages¹ began in 1997, a record low. Other measures of work stoppage activity—number of workers idled by stoppages, number of days workers were idled, and percentage of estimated work time lost—were also low by historical standards. (See table 1 and charts 1-3.)

The 29 stoppages kept 339,000 workers off their jobs and accounted for almost 4.5 million days of idleness, which resulted in a loss of 1 day out of every available 10,000 workdays.² Comparable figures for 1996 were 37 stoppages, 273,000 workers idled, 4.9 million days of idleness, and a loss of 2 out of every 10,000 available workdays.

Sectors and industries affected

Of the 29 major work stoppages beginning in 1997, 26 were in the private sector, and the remainder occurred in State and local government.

| Sector | Stoppages | Workers | Days idle ¹ |
|---------------|-----------|---------|------------------------|
| Total | 29 | 338,600 | 3,527,900 |
| Private | 26 | 329,300 | 3,503,800 |
| Public..... | 3 | 9,300 | 24,100 |

¹ Excludes days of idleness stemming from stoppages that began prior to 1997 and continued into 1997.

In the private sector, 14 stoppages were in manufacturing industries, including 7 at General Motors Corp. and Chrysler Corp. (idling 54,000 workers and accounting for 870,000 days of idleness), and 3 at tire manufacturers (16,000 workers and 250,000 days of idleness). Of the remaining 12 stoppages, 5 occurred at Kaiser Permanente (59,000 workers and 136,000 days of idleness) and 4 oc-

curred at various construction sites (8,000 workers and 71,000 days of idleness). Industries that experienced the most idleness during the year due to work stoppages were:

- Air courier services (2 million days)
- Transportation equipment manufacturing (905,000 days)
- Primary metals (803,000 days)
- Rubber and miscellaneous plastics products (250,000 days)
- Health care services (136,000 days)

Over three-fourths of the year's idleness (3.4 million days) stemmed from four disputes. The first was the United Parcel Service-Teamsters dispute (over 2 million days of idleness). The second involved Wheeling Pittsburgh Steel Corp. and the United Steelworkers (744,000 days of idleness). The third and fourth involved members of the United Automobile Workers at General Motors Corp. (360,000 days of idleness) and Chrysler Corp. (307,000 days of idleness).

Large stoppages

Two-thirds of the idleness in 1997 resulted from work stoppages involving 5,000 or more workers. (See table 2.) There were 11 such disputes that kept 298,000 workers off their jobs, contributing 3 million days of idleness. The tabulation below shows historical comparisons.

| Year | Number | Workers (thousands) | Days Idle (thousands) |
|------------|--------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1993 | 11 | 141 | 2,736 |
| 1994 | 12 | 254 | 3,566 |
| 1995 | 9 | 146 | 4,629 |
| 1996 | 9 | 215 | 3,144 |
| 1997 | 11 | 298 | 3,014 |

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The dispute between United Parcel Service and the Teamsters dominated the labor dispute scene in 1997. This stoppage idled 180,000 union members, most of whom were out for 15 days. The only other large stoppage involved the California Nurses Association and Kaiser Permanente, where 20,000 workers were off their jobs for 2 days.

Duration of work stoppages

Work stoppages that began in 1997 lasted, on average, about 20 days. A majority of them lasted for 2 weeks or less, and only three lasted 60 or more days. Work stoppage durations were concentrated in the 2-3 day and 15-29 day ranges. (See chart 4.)

The longest stoppage beginning in the year was at CF&I Steel Co., where 1,000 workers represented by the United Steelworkers were out for 89 days. The second longest was at General Motors Corp. in Pontiac, Michigan, where 5,900 workers represented by the United Automobile Workers were out for 88 days.

The longest stoppage in effect (including those that began before 1997 and carried over into the year) was at the Detroit Free Press and Detroit News, where 2,500 workers represented by various unions were out for 558 days; this stoppage began in 1995 and continued into 1997. The second longest was the Wheeling Pittsburgh Steel Corp.-Steelworkers' dispute, which began in 1996 and continued into 1997 (316 days).

—ENDNOTES—

¹ Major work stoppages are those involving 1,000 or more workers and lasting a full shift or longer, and include worker-initiated strikes, as well as lockouts by employers. A strike is defined as a temporary stoppage of work by a group of workers (not necessarily members of a union) to express a grievance or enforce a demand. A lockout is a temporary withholding or denial of employment during a labor dispute to enforce terms of employment upon a group of employees. Because of the complexity of disputes, the Bureau does

not attempt to distinguish between strikes and lockouts in its statistics; both are included in the term "work stoppages." See "Major Work Stoppages Technical Note," *Compensation and Working Conditions*, Summer 1998, p. 85.

² Five additional work stoppages began before 1997 and continued into the year. These disputes kept another 12,000 workers off their jobs and contributed over 969,000 days of idleness in 1997.

Table 1. Work stoppages involving 1,000 workers or more, 1947-97

| Period | Number of stoppages ¹ | Workers involved ¹ | Days idle | |
|--------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| | Beginning in period | Beginning in period (thousands) | Number (thousands) | Percent of estimated working time ² |
| 1947 | 270 | 1,629 | 25,720 | (3) |
| 1948 | 245 | 1,435 | 26,127 | 0.22 |
| 1949 | 262 | 2,537 | 43,420 | .38 |
| 1950 | 424 | 1,698 | 30,390 | .26 |
| 1951 | 415 | 1,462 | 15,070 | .12 |
| 1952 | 470 | 2,746 | 48,820 | .38 |
| 1953 | 437 | 1,623 | 18,130 | .14 |
| 1954 | 265 | 1,075 | 16,630 | .13 |
| 1955 | 363 | 2,055 | 21,180 | .16 |
| 1956 | 287 | 1,370 | 26,840 | .20 |
| 1957 | 279 | 887 | 10,340 | .07 |
| 1958 | 332 | 1,587 | 17,900 | .13 |
| 1959 | 245 | 1,381 | 60,850 | .43 |
| 1960 | 222 | 896 | 13,260 | .09 |
| 1961 | 195 | 1,031 | 10,140 | .07 |
| 1962 | 211 | 793 | 11,760 | .08 |
| 1963 | 181 | 512 | 10,020 | .07 |
| 1964 | 246 | 1,183 | 16,220 | .11 |
| 1965 | 268 | 999 | 15,140 | .10 |
| 1966 | 321 | 1,300 | 16,000 | .10 |
| 1967 | 381 | 2,192 | 31,320 | .18 |
| 1968 | 392 | 1,855 | 35,367 | .20 |
| 1969 | 412 | 1,576 | 29,397 | .16 |
| 1970 | 381 | 2,468 | 52,761 | .29 |
| 1971 | 298 | 2,516 | 35,538 | .19 |
| 1972 | 250 | 975 | 16,764 | .09 |
| 1973 | 317 | 1,400 | 16,260 | .08 |
| 1974 | 424 | 1,796 | 31,809 | .16 |
| 1975 | 235 | 965 | 17,563 | .09 |
| 1976 | 231 | 1,519 | 23,962 | .12 |
| 1977 | 298 | 1,212 | 21,258 | .10 |
| 1978 | 219 | 1,006 | 23,774 | .11 |
| 1979 | 235 | 1,021 | 20,409 | .09 |
| 1980 | 187 | 795 | 20,844 | .09 |
| 1981 | 145 | 729 | 16,908 | .07 |
| 1982 | 96 | 656 | 9,061 | .04 |
| 1983 | 81 | 909 | 17,461 | .08 |
| 1984 | 62 | 376 | 8,499 | .04 |
| 1985 | 54 | 324 | 7,079 | .03 |
| 1986 | 69 | 533 | 11,861 | .05 |
| 1987 | 46 | 174 | 4,481 | .02 |
| 1988 | 40 | 118 | 4,381 | .02 |
| 1989 | 51 | 452 | 16,996 | .07 |
| 1990 | 44 | 185 | 5,926 | .02 |
| 1991 | 40 | 392 | 4,584 | .02 |
| 1992 | 35 | 364 | 3,989 | .01 |
| 1993 | 35 | 182 | 3,981 | .01 |
| 1994 | 45 | 322 | 5,020 | .02 |
| 1995 | 31 | 192 | 5,771 | .02 |
| 1996 | 37 | 273 | 4,889 | .02 |
| 1997 | 29 | 339 | 4,497 | .01 |

¹ The number of stoppages and workers relate to stoppages that began in the year. Days of idleness include all stoppages in effect. Workers are counted more than once if they are involved in more than one stoppage during the year.

² Agricultural and government employees are included in the total employed and total working time; private households, forestry, and fishery employees are excluded.

³ Data not available.

Table 2. Work stoppages involving 5,000 or more workers beginning in 1997

| Employer, location, and union | Began | Ended | Workers involved ¹ | Estimated days idle in 1997 ¹ |
|---|----------|----------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Chrysler Corp. Interstate Automobile Workers | 4/10/97 | 5/9/97 | 15,100 ² | 306,800 |
| Kaiser Permanente Northern California California Nurses Association | 4/16/97 | 4/16/97 | 17,000 | 17,000 |
| Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. Interstate Steelworkers | 4/20/97 | 5/8/97 | 12,000 | 168,000 |
| General Motors Corp. Pontiac, MI Automobile Workers | 4/23/97 | 7/19/97 | 5,900 | 359,900 |
| General Motors Corp., Delphi Packard Electric Division Warren, OH Electrical Workers (IUE) | 5/13/97 | 5/14/97 | 8,000 | 16,000 |
| Kaiser Permanente Northern California California Nurses Association | 7/17/97 | 7/18/97 | 10,500 | 21,000 |
| General Motors Corp. Michigan Automobile Workers | 7/23/97 | 7/27/97 | 14,100 ³ | 25,200 |
| Shaw's Supermarkets, Inc. Southeast Massachusetts and Rhode Island Food and Commercial Workers | 7/28/97 | 7/30/97 | 6,200 | 18,600 |
| United Parcel Service Interstate Teamsters | 8/4/97 | 8/21/97 ⁴ | 180,000 | 2,032,500 |
| Kaiser Permanente Northern California California Nurses Association | 9/8/97 | 9/9/97 | 20,300 | 40,600 |
| Kaiser Permanente Northern California California Nurses Association | 11/10/97 | 11/10/97 | 8,900 | 8,900 |

¹ Workers and days idle are rounded to the nearest 100.

² Excludes workers in Canada and Mexico.

³ Excludes workers in Canada.

⁴ All workers went back to work on August 19, 1997, with the exception of members of two locals in Chicago.

Chart 1. Number of major work stoppages, 1947-97

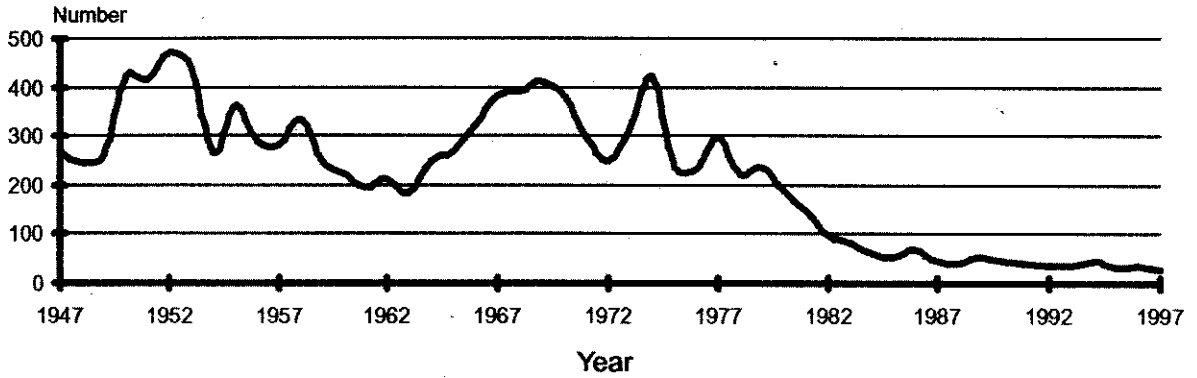


Chart 2. Workers involved in major work stoppages, 1947-97

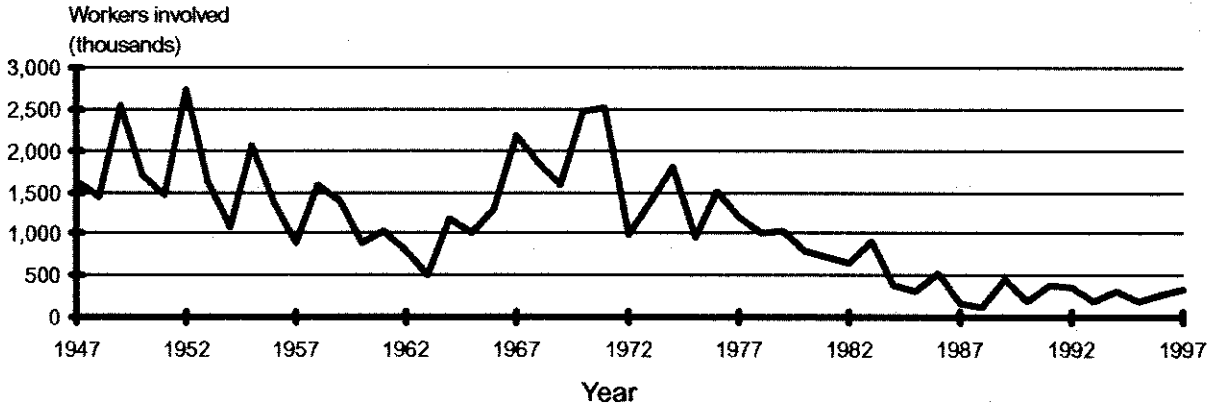


Chart 3. Days of idleness from major work stoppages, 1947-97

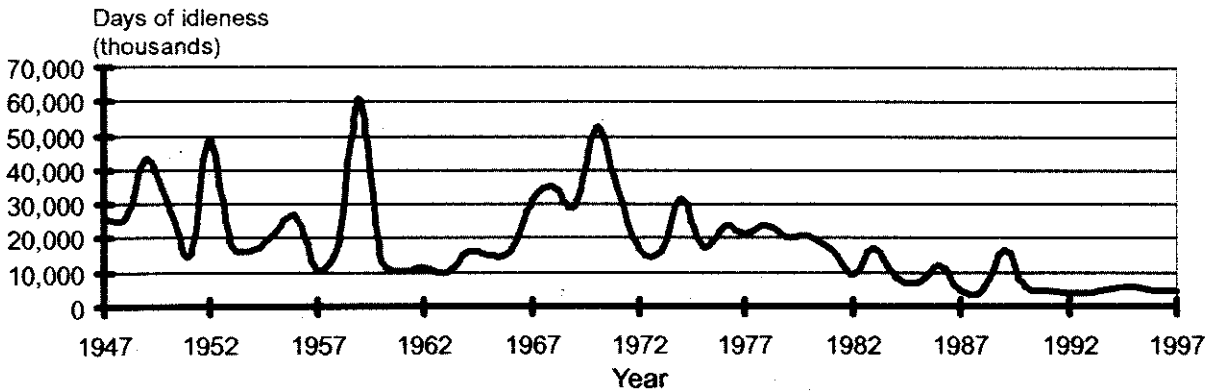


Chart 4. Duration of work stoppages beginning in 1997

