

Contact:

Barbara Wesener
(414)-786-6700

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING SLOWDOWN DUE TO ECONOMY
SAYS PRESIDENT OF TEACHERS' UNION

Monterey, Dec. 8 . . . "This country is in the midst of major changes in collective bargaining," said Albert Shanker, president of the United Federation of Teachers, New York. Speaking to over 250 public employee benefits managers and trustees at a conference in Monterey sponsored by the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans, Shanker said that public sector collective bargaining experienced a slowdown in the late 70s that continues in to the early 80s, primarily because of the nature of the economy.

"It's difficult to see a successful outcome of collective bargaining, if the economy is in a shambles," said Shanker. Public employees and their leaders, he said, tend to forget that there is a relationship between the public sector and the private economy. The economic environment, said Shanker, "is a brand new ballgame. Energy is a real and permanent crisis, more money must be spent on the military and on re-industrialization. Either we become a nation that can not compete," said Shanker, "or we must deprive ourselves of some services."

The public sector had previously been financed by a growth in the economy, he said, but in an economic slowdown, people spend less on themselves and will not spend more in the public sector for services that they perceive can be supplied more cheaply by

Public Employee Conference

Shanker add 2

the private sector, even if that is not necessarily so. The attitude seems to be, said Shanker, one of "we (the people) are hurting and you (the government) are going to hurt too."

In the 60s, said Shanker, "it was true that if the unions were loud enough and militant enough, the other side would find enough money. But now we operate on a different assumption that there is not money to be bargained for unless we can find it and prove that it is there. The burden of the proof is on us."

An educational association based in Wisconsin, the International Foundation has 22,000 members who are involved in the employee benefits field. They represent approximately 3,900 trust funds, companies and professional firms in North America..