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Talking Union

CWA PUBLIC, HEALTHCARE & EDUCATION WORKERS



2003 Sector Conference

Public, Healthcare & Education Workers Focus on Building CWA's Future

At our June conference in Tucson, Arizona, CWA public, healthcare, and education members looked at ways to build CWA by strengthening our sector.

Nearly 140 participants discussed organizing strategies, union building, and current issues affecting members, including privatization, the healthcare crisis, state budget problems, and key legislative issues.

Public, healthcare, and education sector V.P. Brooks Sunkett stressed that all CWA locals "can bring something to the table and use their expertise" to build CWA's effectiveness.

CWA Executive Vice President Larry Cohen expanded on the theme of partnership, encouraging CWA locals to work together in organizing, political, community, and legislative actions and other campaigns that will help build CWA power.

Panel Discussions, Workshops Cover Major Issues

A panel discussion led by Local 7037 President Ron Scott, Local 1040 President Carolyn Wade, and Local 3570 President

Brenda Scott outlined ways political action in their locals made a difference for their members. Ron Scott explained how public workers in New Mexico were instrumental in electing new Democratic Gov. Bill Richardson, who quickly made good on a campaign promise to push through an organizing rights bill for public workers (see story, page 6). Facing a serious budget crisis in Mississippi, MASE-CWA members rallied and lobbied their legislators and succeeded in holding down insurance deductibles and reinstating a donated leave bill for all workers. Local 1040 joined other New Jersey CWA locals to win a new contract that avoids deficit-related layoffs and

boosts pay over the life of the contract (see story, page 6).

Another panel featured a discussion of how telecom and other private sector locals, by participating in public sector organizing, succeeded in strengthening their own locals.

Universal healthcare was the topic of a luncheon speech, a panel discussion,



Above: Vice Pres. Brooks Sunkett welcomes conference participants. **Left:** CWA District 7 Vice Pres. John Thompson speaks at CWA's public sector conference in Tucson. Seated from left are Mike McGrath, President, Arizona AFL-CIO, Public Sector Vice Pres. Brooks Sunkett, CWA Exec. Vice Pres. Larry Cohen, and Linda Hatfield, President of CWA Local 7026, the host local.

and a workshop. Healthcare consultant Dr. Mary Feldblum presented the possibility that New Mexico might soon pass universal healthcare legislation, due to the support of the Democratic governor and legislature as well as the Chamber of Commerce and the AFL-CIO.

Possibly the most successful

session focused on strategic planning organizing, legislative, and issue campaigns. Participants received a CD program that walked through the political strategy used by TSEU/CWA Local 6186 in Texas to defeat then Gov. George W. Bush's plan to privatize state services, and by UPTC-CWA Local 9119 to win a

first contract at the University of California. (See page 2 for more on the "Principles of Union Political Strategy" CD-ROM.)

Guest speakers at the conference included Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano, Congressman Raul Grijalva of New Mexico, and Congressman Neil Abercrombie of Hawaii.



Windfall for the Rich; Fallout for the States

by Brooks Sunkett, V.P., Public, Healthcare & Education Workers Department

When George W. Bush took office in January 2001, he inherited a \$5.6 trillion federal budget surplus from the Clinton Administration. Today that surplus is gone... and deepening federal deficits are projected.



What caused this turnaround? It was created by drastic cuts in tax revenues to the federal government—revenues that have been used in the past to fund the important social programs that are carried out by workers we represent.

Bush administration policies of large tax cuts for the rich have wrecked the economy. The budget cuts mean only one thing—cuts in human services, healthcare, daycare, and education for the people who need them most.

As the Bush federal budget freefalls from a surplus to a huge deficit, states and municipalities have been forced into major financial crises:

- NJ is dealing with a \$5.3 billion budget shortfall.
- Texas' deficit is about \$10 billion.
- Illinois has a \$5 billion deficit.
- New York is facing a deficit of \$13 billion.
- California's deficit is almost \$40 billion.
- North Carolina has a projected \$400 million shortfall.

The budget deficits now looming over state governments will likely reach \$60 billion to \$85 billion in fiscal year 2004 and constitute the largest state budget gaps in half a century, according to the Center of Budget and Policy Priorities, a Washington research and policy group. These state fiscal woes could force deep cuts in programs for low-income working families, especially in healthcare coverage.

Some of the basic services being cut include education (both elementary and secondary), childcare, aid to veterans, hospital funding, and law enforcement. State colleges and universities are forced to raise tuition for students. Nothing is sacred—even programs like aid to needy children are being severely cut.

These massive budget cuts have affected every level of government—federal, state, county and local. Reduced revenues to state and local governments have resulted in increased layoffs and

understaffing in the public and healthcare sector as well as privatization and hiring freezes.

Even if the economy improves, many states and local governments will still experience decreased revenues for years to come because of actions they're taking now to make up for the

budget shortfall, such as borrowing money and shifting expenses to future years.

We Must Support Each Other

This economic downturn has affected our Union as well. As CWA continues to lose members from every sector, revenues are also lost. It is now more important than ever that we work together to strengthen our union.

Earlier this spring, a group of presidents from public, healthcare, and education locals across the country began to talk about the importance of reaching out to help one another, to share experiences and expertise with one another,

and to offer support and resources in their respective struggles: fight-back campaigns, organizing campaigns, political work, mobilization, and education.

They are looking for ways that locals can work together more easily to have a voice in setting the direction and priorities for our sector.

I welcomed it because workers joining together to support one another is what unionism is all about. That's why we organize in our workplaces... why we build our locals. That's why we are all in the labor movement today.

Right now, for example, our sector is under siege like never before from the most outrageously pro-business, viciously anti-worker U.S. President in American history. Workers in our sector are bearing the brunt of the impact of the budget crisis, facing layoffs, salary freezes, and understaffing. It is your jobs and the services you provide to the people that are in peril. And nobody in our union understands this like you do!

It is locals getting involved and supporting each other that is going to make the difference for our Union. We all must take on the responsibility to get more involved and make a difference. Our slogan, "an injury to one is an injury to all," needs to be revived and be given real meaning as we go forth in our struggles for better and more secure jobs.

Locals Are Stepping Up to the Challenge!

A real example of this recently occurred in our sector. Local 1037 from New Jersey organized a bus full of its members and rode all night to Akron, Ohio, in order to support Local 4546, a small public sector local of social workers who were locked out when contract negotiations broke down. Local 1037 also represented social workers, so they immediately understood the issues. Even though they didn't know the local, they wanted to help out.

"Having 1037 at the rally and participating in the demonstration had a big impact, and it was also a tremendous morale booster for our members," says Local 4546 President Robin Schenault.

Can you imagine the impact this type of action could have if it were multiplied by many other locals also reaching out to help? Local 1037 did more than just join Local 4546 at the lockout rally; they shared their many years of experience working with social workers in their own local.

The concept is a lot like Jobs with Justice. The idea of pledging to be there for our brothers and sisters from other unions in their struggles helped to build JwJ into one of the most effective organizations in the country for labor. It is this concept of being there for one another that can help build our sector in CWA at a time we need it the most.

■ SOLIDARITY IN ACTION

Ohio Lockout Puts Vulnerable Clients at Risk

Local 1037 members travel to support Ohio social workers

CWA is calling on Summit County, Ohio, management to take seriously the life-and-death crisis in child protective services and the work stoppage that they have caused involving 300 members of CWA Local 4546.

"The employees at Summit County Children Services aren't fighting for higher wages or better benefits," CWA President Morton Bahr says. "They are fighting for the very lives of the county's most vulnerable children. Their dangerously high caseloads threaten the safety and health of boys and girls they are charged with protecting. Tragically, 11 have died over the past three years and others have been victims of abuse. But the county won't even acknowledge that caseloads are the problem."

Management refused to continue to bargain in mid-July. "Our members were prepared to keep bargaining and continue working, but management refused to extend the contract and continue talks," says CWA Vice President Brooks Sunkett. "It is outrageous that they made this work stoppage inevitable."

Management further refuses to adequately address the extraordinarily high caseload the child pro-

tection workers are struggling to handle. Some workers have been assigned more than 70 cases in a single month and all are charged with far more cases than recommended by the Child Welfare League of America. The League says caseworkers should have no more than 12 cases at any one time.

"The county's claim that our members handle only 20 cases a month on average is simply not true," Sunkett says. "We are gratified that the public understands this, and that the community has thrown its full support behind our members. It makes the county's refusal to change its tune all the more mystifying and appalling."

Sunkett, Bahr, and CWA District 4

Vice President Jeff Rechenbach strongly praised Local 4546 members and President Robin Schenault for being open and honest with the public about the problems in their agency and the devastating consequences to children and families. Schenault's honesty cost her a three-day suspension without pay the week before the lockout, when she angered county leaders by speaking out about the county's failure to protect children in abusive homes.

"President Schenault's suspension was reprehensible and we cannot condemn management strongly enough for its shameful and illegal response to her forthright comments," Rechenbach says.

"She not only has a First Amendment right to free speech, she feels a personal responsibility to her community to make sure people understand how critical this situation is."

The Summit County caseworkers' struggle, sadly, isn't unique. CWA Local 1037 represents 1,700 child protective caseworkers in New Jersey. About 25 of them took a vacation day on July 15 and spent all night on a bus to join the Ohio local on the picket line.

"Nothing will change without caseload caps," says Local 1037 President Hetty Rosenstein. "It's a great thing that they're doing, for the children, for the families and for the community, in making this a contract issue, and we wanted to show our support for them."



CWA PUBLIC, HEALTHCARE, & EDUCATION WORKERS Talking Union

Brooks Sunkett
Vice President

Calvin Money
Assistant to the Vice President

Fran Morrall
Administrative Secretary

Terry Henry
Secretary

Communications Workers of America
501 Third Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001
202/434-1255



Carolyn Wade, Local 1040



Art Cheliotas, Local 1180



Linda Hatfield, Local 7026



Steve Sarnoff, Local 3179



Brenda Scott, Local 3550



John Vasko, Local 81381



Jelger Kalmijn, Local 9119



Ron Scott,
Local 7037



Duncan Harrington,
Local 7777

Not pictured:
Kathleen Sims, Local 1104
Joan Tapia, Local 1080

Advisory Committee Formed to Support Locals, Suggest Priorities for Sector

This spring, after meeting together and discussing the issues that confronted us as local presidents, we decided with the sector vice president's approval to form an Advisory Committee. The purpose of the Committee is to provide support to each other in our local campaigns and to advise our sector vice president about issues that affect us. As a result of our meeting, we held workshops and had many discussions at the recent Public, Healthcare & Education Workers Conference. The mission statement below was adopted at the sector conference.

Our Mission Statement

"The Public, Healthcare and Education Workers Advisory Committee will encourage and facilitate mutual support between locals representing or seeking to represent workers in our sector in all matters benefiting the welfare of our members or potential members."

"The Public, Healthcare & Education Workers Advisory Committee will provide input to the sector vice president on policies and priorities for the sector."

"This Committee is important to us for many reasons," says Carolyn Wade, president of Local 1040. "Public, healthcare, and education locals need to have input into the direction the Department will take because we are the ones who will be affected. We also need to have an organized system of sharing information and experiences among ourselves."

"Many of us have been around for many years and have a wealth of information that we can share with other sector locals," she continues.

For example, Art Cheliotas has been president of CWA Local 1180 in New York City for over 24 years. Wade has been president of 1040 for over 13 years. Both of these locals have a membership of over 8,000. There are some fairly new locals that could benefit from the additional support and expertise that an advisory committee of locals can bring.

"I have not been around as long as people like Art and Carolyn, but my local has been through a number of very difficult struggles," says Local 9119 president Jelger Kalmijn. "Other locals in District 9, staff, and the PH&E Department made the difference for us over the years." Local 9119 represents 10,000 workers at the University of California and is currently in an organizing drive for 12,000 more members.

"We would like to reach out to other struggling locals just like other locals reached out to support us. My local is grateful and we would love to reciprocate the support," Kalmijn concludes.

An example of information sharing: Because there's no bargaining law in Texas, TSEU/CWA Local 6186 couldn't collect dues from payroll deductions. So the local pioneered the "bank draft," a system that allows the dues to be deducted directly from an individual's credit union or bank account. Thus the local's work could be supported by the membership. After learning about the bank draft idea, Mississippi and Oklahoma state workers instituted the same system.

"It's almost impossible to build campaigns in these states without the ability to collect dues," says Brenda Scott, president of MASE/CWA Local 3550. "We

hope to emulate this type of information sharing with our sector brothers and sisters all across the country."

Setting Priorities, Sharing the Workload

"The public sector department can be more effective in serving the locals if it understands clearly what we want and need and what our priorities are," says Art Cheliotas. "The Advisory Committee can have direct input into the department's decision-making. With this grassroots approach we can help our Union grow and develop more vital support to the locals."

"Many of our locals have felt the pinch of cuts in professional staff support in the sector Department," adds Steve Sarnoff, president of Local 3179. "The capacity to do work from that office is extremely limited compared to what it was just one year ago. But with so much at stake, we can't afford to get mired in negatives about this. We have locals that need support—workers to organize and a movement to build. We must find positive and constructive solutions to the problems we face. We feel strongly that the locals should play a role in helping to ease the burden of the Department," Sarnoff continues.

Walking the Walk

Many of the Bell System union members have a national contract; therefore, local-to-local support is built into the battle. In the PH&E sector this is not the case. We have many different employees and contracts, and many times we are fighting a battle that only affects one or two locals.

In New Jersey, over 12 locals represent welfare workers and each one has a different contract and different employer. As a result of this, they formed a Welfare

Local Council where they can share information, give needed advice and support to each other, and even lobby for legislation together.

"The same is true in New York, where we represent many healthcare locals," states Kathleen Sims of Local 1104. "They too have formed a Council because of common issues, needs and goals. Each committee has a different model, but they serve the same purpose—to support each other when they can," she says.

Our goal is to build on these models and expand them to the entire sector. There are many welfare and healthcare workers outside of New Jersey and New York that could benefit from their information and experience. One recent demonstration of this is the support the locked-out social workers in Ohio received from NJ Local 1037 members.

Building Our Whole Union

Our Advisory Committee can be an important factor in renewing strength and growth in beleaguered telecommunications locals. There are many private sector locals in telecommunications that are losing members at an alarming rate. If these locals are going to survive, they must organize.

The best growth potential for our Union is in the public, healthcare, and education sector. The PH&E Department has an impressive track record supporting the efforts of locals that would like to diversify in our sector.

There are many successful amalgamated locals around the country. Many were faced with obstacles—from getting recognition to trying to negotiate a contract after the elections. In most public sector agreements there is no right to

strike. Strategic campaigns, mobilization and political action are vital if a local is to succeed in the public sector.

Local 7026 is a good example of the power of mobilization. "Several years ago we organized over 1,500 Tucson, Arizona, city workers," comments Linda Hatfield, Local 7026 Presi-

dent. "Arizona is a right-to-work state, but the local, the district and the Public Workers Department were able to develop a joint strategy to allow the local to succeed in Tucson. Today Local 7026 is out organizing other public sector units around the state. Just a few weeks ago, they successfully organized Nogales city workers," Hatfield reports.

CWA Local 2252 is another case in point. This was a primarily AT&T local whose membership dropped from over a thousand to a few hundred members due to downsizing. Even merging with another local didn't stop the erosion of membership. They had a strong desire to organize, gain new members, and make the local stronger.

The Public, Healthcare & Education Workers Department developed a lead at INOVA Hospital, the largest healthcare facility in Northern Virginia. An independent group of 200 home/healthcare professionals were looking to affiliate with a large international union. Through the cooperation of the District, the experience of the sector, and the hard work of the local, this group was brought into CWA Local 2252. There are about 10,000 more workers at the hospital who could be organized. This is just one of many examples of amalgamated locals growing with membership from our sector.

With the involvement of locals on the Advisory Committee, the public sector department can be more effective in servicing the locals. If the Department understands clearly what we want and need and what our priorities are, the sector VP can articulate our concerns to the CWA national Executive Board. This grassroots approach can only serve to help strengthen our Union and enable it to grow and develop more vital support to each of our locals.

Texas State Workers Revive Campaign to Derail Privatization

In a battle similar to one waged in the mid-1990s, members of TSEU/CWA Local 6186 are fighting to save thousands of jobs and protect badly needed human services that are targeted for cuts and privatization under legislation passed earlier this year.

The plan could eliminate services to 250,000 or more Texans and cut 10,000 or more state jobs. H.B. 2292, passed in the recent session of the Texas Legislature, calls for reorganizing 11 state human services agencies into 5 departments, controlled by a single commissioner appointed by the governor. Eligibility services for most programs would be combined and moved to a privatized call center.

CWA members rallied and lobbied extensively against the bill. TSEU actions included the 2000-strong Lobby Day march

and rally on April 9, a series of smaller "Mini Lobby Days" that brought over 100 members in to meet with legislators at the Capitol, hundreds of phone calls, thousands of postcards, and other mobilization actions. Despite the mobilization, the bill passed by a single vote in the state Senate.

Although the bill passed and the Governor has signed it, the fight has just begun. TSEU stopped similar efforts to privatize human services in 1995-1997 after the enabling legislation was passed. Now TSEU intends to do it again, by opposing every step of the process to implement the legislation. Plans call for TSEU members and retirees to be at every meeting and hearing concerning the changes.

TSEU Vice President Mike Gross says whether it's simply attending to take notes, testify-



Texas state workers march on the state capitol to lobby their legislators against privatization legislation.

ing or rallying, the union will be there. "We're going to find ways to take them on every step of the way," he says. "We refuse to be defeated just because a bill has been passed and the governor has signed it."

About 3,000 TSEU members work in 460 state human services offices throughout Texas, serving as caseworkers for people receiving welfare, food stamps, Medicaid, children's health insurance and programs that provide visiting nurses and nursing home care.

Under the Texas scheme, the administrative functions for the services would be handled by a private call center instead of face-to-face contact. Further, the Texas bill calls for reducing the number of people who qualify for aid. "The people who need assistance the most aren't going to get it," Gross says.

Federal law doesn't allow states to contract out work for food stamps and Medicaid, but the state plans to seek a waiver from the Bush administration. Needless to say, the Bush administration is unlikely to stand in the way. The Clinton administration refused to give the state a waiver in its last attempt to privatize services.

Missouri State Workers Lobby for Fair Pay, Job Security

State workers in Missouri, like their colleagues in many other states, are underpaid and overworked. For the past three years, they have been denied a fair wage increase, and have suffered from understaffing, the threat of privatization, and possible layoffs. In a recent survey by *Governor's* magazine, Missouri ranked 48th out of 50 states in level of pay for state employees.

MSWU members are fighting back. More than 180 members and supporters turned out for the annual Lobby Day on April 2 at the state capitol in Jefferson City. They rallied on the capitol steps and then lobbied legislators on issues ranging from pay raises to keeping the lid on healthcare premiums to privatization of the state's foster care program.

Pay Raise

Obtaining a pay raise was MSWU's primary goal this legislative session.

They began by meeting with SEIU and AFSCME, unions that also repre-



Missouri state workers mass outside the state capitol on April 2 for the annual Lobby Day.

sent state workers in Missouri, and agreeing on pushing for a \$2,000 increase. Many were pessimistic about achieving any increase, given the budget crisis facing Missouri.

After being pressured, both the governor and legislators agreed to a \$600 increase for all state workers earning \$40,000 or less. This increase survived a fierce budget battle between the Democratic governor and Republican-dominated legislature. After a showdown, resulting in two special sessions called by the governor over a balanced state budget, Gov. Bob Holden finally signed a budget that contained cuts in education and services while including a wage increase.

Children Services

The state's foster care program came under fire last year following the

death of a child in the system. Young Dominic was killed by his foster father.

During this period the judicial system also pointed an accusatory finger at Children Services. As the legislative session began, freshman Republican Speaker of the House Catherine Hanaway introduced H.B. 369, legislation that threatened to completely overhaul DFS. While some of the provisions made some sense, other sections, such as sovereign immunity and privatization, were extremely harmful to our members. Removing sovereign immunity would allow state workers to be sued for malpractice, financial disaster for already underpaid workers.

On March 12, 2003, MSWU conducted a caucus of Children Services members from across the state to assemble and prioritize what they, as professionals, believe to be the issues affecting their work. This report was then presented to the governor and members of the legislature.

H.B. 369, Speaker Hanaway's bill, was on a fast track through the House. Privatization and

removal of sovereign immunity were still intact when the bill reached the Senate. After intense lobbying, MSWU members were able to salvage sovereign immunity but privatization remained. The bill, as it sits on the Governor's desk, provides for 50% of the Children Services cases to be privatized by 2005.

(This article contributed by Tom Newport, District 6 Organizing Coordinator)



MSWU members walk the halls of the statehouse to present their case to their legislators.

"Fight Forward!" District 1 Stewards Galvanize an Angry Membership in Budget Fight



The mayor of New York City has spent much of this year pressing for \$600 million in concessions from municipal unions to help solve the budget crisis. He threatened layoffs if the unions did not give in and hand over the money. Again and again, City Hall demanded that the people who make this city run be the ones that pay for its fiscal crisis—despite the fact that the crisis was caused almost entirely by irresponsible tax cuts that benefited the rich.

Meanwhile, Local 1180 members' last contract expired a year ago, on June 30, 2002. Amidst a climate in which the mayor was already trying to solve the city's problems on the backs of the working class, it was clear to 1180 leaders that winning a decent and fair new contract would take an extraordinary effort. It would take more than the usual fight against cutbacks, layoffs and concessions. That's why the union decided to call this contract campaign Fight Forward. "We're calling the campaign

'Fight Forward' because we need to do more than just fight back," says 1180 President Arthur Cheliotis. "We need to build a pro-active movement that defines a positive vision

That question was at the center of the union's mobilization around the budget process this spring. Local 1180 was part of a chorus of voices that fought for more progressive

Hundreds of 1180 members rally for fair taxes on April 15

Local 1180 members worked hard for the victory. On April 15, hundreds turned out for a rowdy rally at the General Post Office as droves of last-minute tax filers walked by. Members also signed pledge cards vowing to fight for a fair budget, and distributed the union's booklet *The Seven Deadly Budget Sins*. The booklet was mailed to the entire City Council. Local 1180 also aired four television commercials that called for progressive taxation.

Support for stewards grows

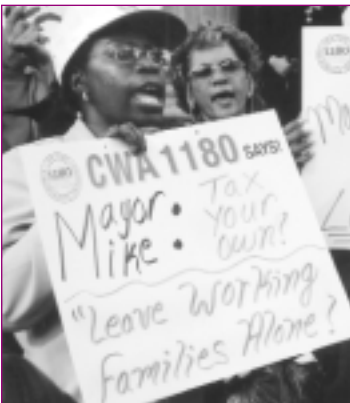
Shop stewards have been the key to galvanizing the membership. Throughout the spring, they went into high gear to get members involved. In April, stewards spent an entire Saturday in a training workshop designed to hone their skills. "We shared skills, but it was more than that," says one steward about the April 26 steward

assembly. "It was reinforcing how to organize our co-workers. How to make ourselves more powerful in the workplace. Power in a positive sense—knowing who we are, what our rights are, what we can and cannot do."

We've only just begun

This spring's mobilization around the budget and an initial contract survey were just the beginning of what will be a long and difficult campaign to win a new contract. "There's an old union saying, 'we win what we are strong enough to take,'" says Cheliotis. "The Fight Forward campaign is all about being strong enough to win what we need at the bargaining table. And the key to that strength is participation by every Local 1180 member.

"We're in this for the long haul. It may be months before we even begin formal bargaining, and this year's budget battles will be repeated in the fall and spring. But as long as 1180 members stay the course and come out and fight, we can prevail," he continues. (Article adapted from Local 1180 website: www.cwa1180.org)



for our city: a city in which the people have adequate services, the workers that provide those services are fairly compensated, and the rich do their fair share."

The unfair nature of who is paying for the budget crisis has motivated people. Why should working people pay more taxes but not the rich? If property taxes, cigarette taxes, recreation fees, parking fines, subway fare and CUNY and SUNY tuition are all going up, why aren't the wealthy also paying more?

taxation this year. In the end, 1180 and others did win a small increase in income taxes on individuals making \$100,000 or more (\$150,000 or more for couples). The income tax surcharge helped close the budget gap, though the brunt of the burden was still borne by working families. Nevertheless, it was a huge victory for workers, because it was the first time that the rhetoric of shared sacrifice actually resulted in the rich contributing to solving the problem.

"Cuts Hurt Families" Campaign Saves Jobs in Rochester, NY

In early 2002, the 775 social service caseworkers, examiners, and other workers in the Rochester, NY, area represented by the Monroe County Federation of Social Workers, IUE-CWA 81381, were hit with a hiring freeze and threats of structural reorganization and layoffs due to a county budget crisis. With support from IUE and CWA, the Federation developed a mobilization and media campaign to fight back.

The theme they developed, "Cuts Hurt Families," used a logo of a teddy bear with an arm in a sling. This image proved to resonate with the community and media.

The county offered an early retirement incentive with the hope that enough employees would retire to minimize the number of layoffs, but by mid-August it became clear that an additional 32 people would be involuntarily laid off. Also by this same time the company hired to do the reorganization started to emerge as the real threat to the union, with poten-

tial title changes, duty changes and talk of privatization.

A bad situation became worse. The Federation had to come up with a number of strategies to face the layoffs, reorganization, and a likely county budget battle in November.

Public education was the strategy for facing the budget battle. The focus of the campaign was the impact on the children, the elderly, and the poor. Letter writing drives, signatures on teddy bear cutouts, monthly rallies at the county legislature with singers, religious leaders, labor leaders and social service agency executives pushed this idea of the impact on the vulnerable into the minds of the average citizen.

In October, the county executive released a budget slashing aid to human service agencies across the county and significantly decreasing staffing levels for the Department of Social Services in an effort to keep a pledge of no tax increase. This budget helped

rally the coalition of partners the Federation had been building over the preceding months. Rallies intensified and speakers numbering 30 and more jammed the public sessions of the legislature meetings.

With the support of the CWA Defense Fund, the Federation was able to print teddy bear cutouts, teddy bear buttons, postcards to legislators, and air two key radio ads...one after Labor Day and one the week before the budget vote. Staff from CWA headquarters helped produce a publication that attacked the reorganization and raised community awareness of the issues. Additionally, coalition partners increased calls to key legislators and encouraged participation at the rallies.

When budget night came, there was a sense of impending victory. The legislature was packed. Some of the majority Republicans were joining the Democrats to turn down the county executive's budget and submit one of their own.



Members of the Federation of Social Workers demonstrate outside the Rochester county executive's office, holding hundreds of teddy bear cutouts signed by supporters.

The amended budget included a modest tax increase, restoration of most of the human service cuts, and an additional 13 caseworker positions for IUE-CWA 81381. The County Executive promptly vetoed this budget. Within minutes enough Republicans joined the majority to override the veto and the budget was passed.

While this was clearly a victory for the Federation, the struggle is not over. The workforce has been reduced by 25 percent and retraining has been insufficient. Much of the reorganization has come to pass. Clients are suffering through this time as well, even

though workers are going out of their way to ease the burden for them.

Fortunately, the coalition partners are still meeting and planning strategies for this year's budget fight. We're working to elect a Democratic County Executive this fall.

While never a pleasant experience, this struggle has done much to energize and mobilize the members of the Federation. The process was a huge educational experience which is crucial to the fight ahead.

(This article was contributed by John Vasko, President, Federation of Social Workers, IUE-CWA 81381.)



New Mexico public workers with CWA V.P. Brooks Sunkett (third from left) and CWA Secretary-Treasurer Barbara Easterling (second from right) at signing of the state's collective bargaining bill.

New Mexico Governor Signs Bill Public Workers Win Right to Organize

As of July 1, 2003, public workers in New Mexico have the right to organize. Governor Bill Richardson, keeping a campaign promise after only three months in office, signed a collective bargaining bill into law on March 7, 2003. CWA locals were instrumental in getting the law passed. "Today is a great victory for our public workers across New Mexico. Many of you were denied rights under the previous administration," Gov. Richardson said in a ceremony recognizing employees and the hard work they did to redeem their rights.

"I have long believed that all workers

have earned the right to negotiate," he continued. "There are thousands of public employees who keep our state and local governments running and working for the people of New Mexico every day. All of those valued employees deserve a fair shake when it comes to negotiating salaries, workplace safety and ... the jobs they perform."

CWA Regaining Lost Ground, Signing New Members

Locals 7037 and 7011 are working to regain members lost when the old law sunset in '99. In addition, CWA organiz-

ers are organizing thousands of workers who did not previously have a union.

The joint campaign to organize state workers is called SEA@CWA (State Employee Alliance @ CWA). The locals are organizing under the theme of "Raise New Mexico." CWA could gain more than 6,000 members in this campaign.

Currently the locals are close to majority status for the 2,000 previous CWA members. The bargaining law provides for card check recognition. Even though no majority has been established yet, bargaining is scheduled to begin this summer. CWA hopes to gain a strong, active majority that will work to influence policies and budgets at the state legislature.

State workers who were represented under the previous law saw such things as a multi-step grievance procedure, binding arbitration and contractual enforcement of personnel policies wiped away with the stroke of a pen. Since the loss of contracts, the state has implemented various anti-worker policies such as H.R. 2001, the state's classification system, which misclassified thousands of employees and cut the pay for thousands of others.

"It is the desire of SEA@CWA to bring state workers together again to create positive change for all public employees in New Mexico," says Ron Scott, president of Local 7037. "We hope that this campaign will serve as a model illustrating to other governmental organizations throughout the nation the value added when workers have a voice on the job and a say in how services are provided to citizens."

(This article was contributed by Rolando Figueroa, District 7 coordinator.)

Victory for CWA Local 7026 in Nogales, Arizona

The Nogales, Arizona, city council voted 6-1 on June 14, 2003, in favor of recognizing CWA as the exclusive bargaining representative for 166 non-supervisory blue and white collar workers.

Last August, City of Nogales employees contacted Local 7026 to seek union representation by CWA. Workers had long been without representation, resulting in the City using them, the only unrepresented unit, to balance their budget.

Utilizing the "CWA Triangle," the Local was able to get close to a hundred workers to sign membership cards, and gained recognition through political pressure to the city council.

Through hard work and meetings with new members, coupled with a strong community and worker campaign, the city council listened to the workers' demand for a voice at work.

Members of 7026 who work and live in Nogales were crucial to the campaign. Their knowledge of Nogales' local politics, local power structure, and Spanish were key elements to the success of the campaign.

"These workers really want to make the City of Nogales run better for the employees, citizens, and those in charge," says Linda Hatfield, President of CWA Local 7026. "When these workers have a real voice in the jobs that they know best how to do, everyone benefits."

No Layoffs, Fair Wage Increase, New 10th Step Tough Negotiations Pay Off for NJ State Workers

State workers in New Jersey have approved a contract that emphasizes job protection while also boosting pay by 11.5% over four years and upgrading hundreds of job titles.

Bargained against the backdrop of a state budget crisis, the contract covering 35,000 state employees includes no pay hikes in 2003 but provides four across-the-board raises in subsequent years, ranging from 2% to 2.9%. It also includes a long-sought 10th step on the salary scale effective July 1, 2006, for workers with more than nine years on the job. Approximately 60% of the membership will benefit from this improvement.

"This is a fair settlement that protects our members' jobs and improves their standard of living, despite the worst fiscal crisis in the state's history," says CWA District 1 Vice President Larry Mancino. "We've avoided layoffs and negotiated a substantial raise over the life of the agreement. The negotiations were tough, but the administration worked with us to reach an agreement that meets the needs of our members."

Members of CWA Locals 1031, 1032, 1033, 1034, 1037, 1039, and 1040 met with union leaders to review the contract and vote over the last two weeks in June.

Among economic improvements is a

25-cent hourly differential for all second- and third-shift work beginning July 1, 2005. Presently an employee has to work nearly 200 swing or night shifts in a calendar year to be eligible for a bonus, which works out to about 18 cents an hour. Workers will also get an increase in their clothing allowance.

The agreement also provides employer-paid health benefits for more than 400 intermittent workers, such as seasonal employees in the departments of Taxation and Revenue, if they work at least 750 hours in a year.



CWA public worker locals in New Jersey took to the streets many times to fight for a fair contract. Above, members of Local 1037 march into Newark's Military Park on May 29.

Other contract gains include title upgrades for hundreds of bargaining unit members, significant language changes to make it harder for the state to privatize state jobs, and a requirement for independent arbitration in cases of disciplinary action.

Employees' copayments for health-care increase under the contract, rising from \$5 to \$10 for office visits and brand-name drugs. The cost for generic drugs, now \$1, will rise to \$3.

New Jersey Gov. James McGreevey praised CWA's hard work through months of negotiations, stating, "In these difficult economic times, our priority in the negotiations was to protect jobs." McGreevey said CWA members' "professionalism and the commitment they display on the job is essential to our ability to provide quality programs and services for New Jersey citizens."

The new contract took effect July 1, 2003, and will run until June 30, 2007.

(Reprinted from CWA News, July 2003.)

UPTE Ratifies Contract for Close to 9,000 Employees

UPTE-CWA members in the research and technical units voted overwhelmingly in June to ratify a 2-year agreement with the University of California. The contract covers nearly 9,000 UC employees at 10 campuses, 5 medical centers and 1 national lab.

The contract features:

- Moving more than 4,000 employees to a step-based merit system from an arbitrary open-range.

- First-ever severance pay at employee option. No forfeiture of rehire rights.

- Abolition of UC temporary employment pool category of floaters who are second-class workers.

- New leaves for union business that will allow UPTE-CWA activists to come off the job to build the union.

- The best raises of any campus employees.

- Best contract language available at UC on countless other articles.

For more information, see the UPTE-CWA website at www.upte.org.

(This article was contributed by Jelger Kalmijn, President, UPTE-CWA 9119.)

'It's the focal point for our bargaining'

Most states face ever-increasing budget deficits due to the Bush administration's cuts in funding and the demands of Homeland Security. At the same time, healthcare costs are soaring to unprecedented levels. CWA bargainers have noted that employers often try to pass the increased costs on to employees when negotiating new contracts. We asked several CWA local leaders how rising healthcare costs have affected their bargaining. Here's what they told us.



**Bill Henning,
Executive V.P.
Local 1180**

For those of us in the public sector, that question looms over all our bargaining tables. Forget that we know our employers pay for our health insurance out of money that would otherwise go into our pockets as wages. No one thinks twice about the auto worker's health insurance costs being folded into the price of a new car. But our employers get the money to fund our healthcare from taxpayers.

So when public workers get premiere health insurance, howls of protest erupt. That's because we are seen as enjoying benefits not widely available in the largely non-union private workplaces. And those

"In order to protect our health benefits at the bargaining table, we need to do a few things away from that table."

benefits are expensive. To maintain good healthcare is profoundly expensive, wasteful, and inefficient. That stems from our market system of healthcare, where we spend 13-15% just deciding how to spend the available dollars. We have to determine who is eligible for what care, and then providers wind up spending a big chunk on advertising, to compete for the best (paying) customers.

Despite what we may think of our respective plans, compared to the general populace, we have extremely good benefits. That is why the business community constantly demands that government cut our benefits or shift more of the cost burden onto our shoulders. We set a bad example for their employees and so they even try to enlist those employees in opposing our seemingly generous benefits.

The notion that our healthcare system is private is largely a myth, though. When you total up the amount of money spent by all payers, you quickly realize that the public sector plays a major role in funding health-

care. Adding up Medicare, Medicaid (and its variants), and government employees' health insurance will bring you quickly to the conclusion that much of healthcare is financed by public dollars. So if it is driven by these public dollars, why don't we have a more equitable system? Why are nearly 70 million Americans going to have some gap in coverage this year?

In order to protect our health benefits at the bargaining table, we need to do a few things away from that table. First, we need to take an active part in the fight against Medicare and Medicaid cuts. Pulling any more money out of the system will only exacerbate the existing crisis. We must join together with coalitions of patients and other unions to fight for real universal coverage with fair public financing, and get away from employment-based benefits. We also need to talk with our colleagues in the labor movement about this need, and to fashion a plan that organized labor can embrace. There will be no universal system in this country until and unless labor buys into it.

"Iowa healthcare units have some of the worst healthcare coverage for themselves."



**Midge Slater,
CWA Rep
District 7**

The rising cost of healthcare is only one of many issues we face during bargaining. Others include resident care, lack of safety in nursing homes, overtime, and quality of patient care.

I did a round of contracts last fall and will do another round this time next year. Right now I'm working on a first contract with LPNs. We're not getting anywhere with the first contract. The company is not willing to spend any money. Inspections have shown deficiencies (electrical problems, missing doors, defective wheelchairs, etc.) but the company expects the LPNs to cover them up.

The biggest issue is that this is clearly a "for profit" industry. The situation is made worse because the company has lost its certification for Title 19 and Medicare. Overtime is also a huge issue. If the new overtime law is passed, the LPNs will be seriously affected.

Iowa healthcare units have some of the worst healthcare coverage for themselves. What they have is self-funded healthcare programs; employers will not guarantee anything to do with healthcare.

Something has to be done nationwide to address the issue of rising healthcare costs, which will escalate to the point where companies will not be able to afford it. There will come a time when we will be negotiating wage cuts because most of the money will be going towards healthcare costs.

"Healthcare cost affects our pay demands directly. We view these increases in shared healthcare as a shrinkage of pay dollars."



Richard Murray, President, Local 4501

Our local consists of four bargaining entities: a higher education unit (Ohio State University), a healthcare unit (Ohio State Medical University Centers), a state agency (Ohio Secretary of State's office), and a welfare unit (Pickaway County Jobs & Family Services).

Healthcare cost has affected bargaining in all of our units. In great part, it's the strategic focal point for most of our bargaining, as it pertains to cost-of-living—or what we call cost-of-working—adjustments (COWA).

It was in the '80s, when cost shifting of benefits to employees became popular, that healthcare issues developed as a major issue for bargaining. Healthcare cost affects our pay demands directly. At this local, we view these increases in shared healthcare as a cost or shrinkage of pay dollars, impacting our personal economics. Therefore, we must request monies to replenish that deficit per member.

We have created language in our current agreement at OSU to explore cost-per-member percentages that represent equal sacrifice of member wages with the wages of employees who are paid much more, e.g., managerial, administrative, and executive levels. In short, "not equal giving, but equal sacrifice." For example, if an employee earning \$55,000 a year pays 4% of the earnings for healthcare premiums, we feel an employee or member earning \$20,000 or \$30,000 a year should pay that same 4%, not 5%, 6% or higher. (Our University of Toledo CWA local has this system in place presently.)

In summary, healthcare cost is an issue of national crisis where there is no one answer or resolution. Our bargaining strategy is an attempt to put a band-aid on the hemorrhaging of our members' wages.

"I anticipate that bargaining will be a lot more difficult."



Clifford Thrasher, President, Local 2911

We are in the third year of a three-year contract with the county. The county is claiming that there is no money due to the increased cost of healthcare and the effects of Homeland Security on the economy. It wants our members to pick up a greater share of the healthcare costs.

We used to have a 90/10 split. Basically, the county does not want to put out any more for healthcare and wants the workers to pick up the difference or some of the costs for the increase. Consequently, I anticipate that bargaining will be a lot more difficult.

Follow the Money

By Patty DeVinney,
President,
Nurses United CWA Local 1168



- Outlandish hospital administrative salaries.
- 30% bureaucratic waste.
- And the list goes on....

There Is A Solution

We all need proper healthcare as children, adults, and senior citizens. We should promote a vision that healthcare can and must be effective, efficient and, most importantly, humane. There is no defense for the present system; therefore no one ever needs to be apologetic about promoting a national health plan.

We can promote one by:

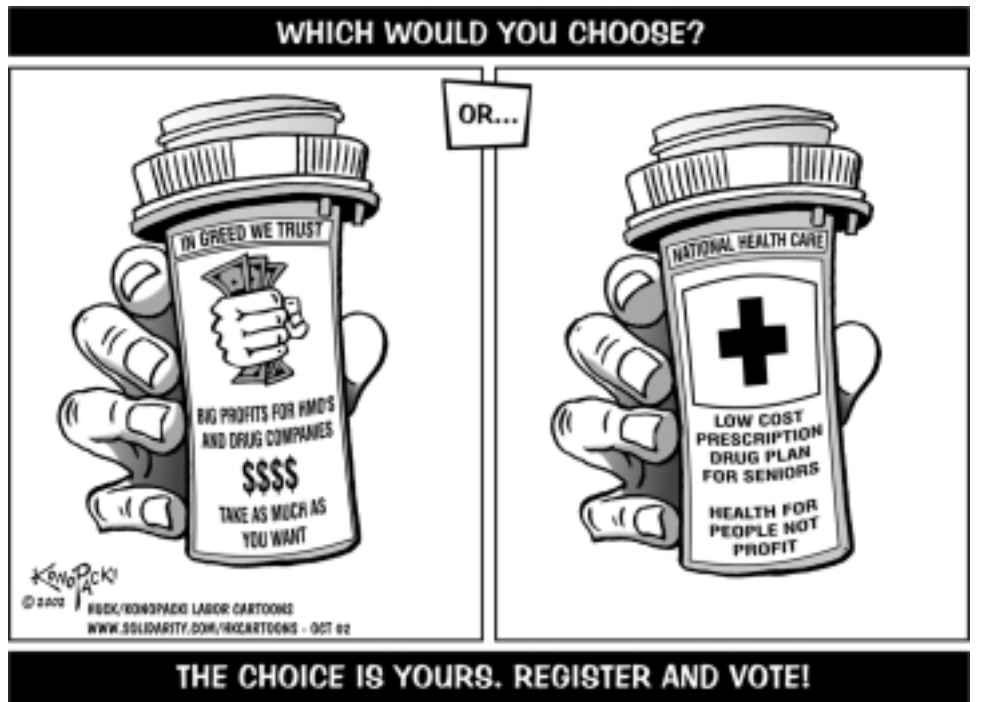
- Freely supporting the Conyers' Bill—the U.S. Health Insurance Act for a National Health Plan.
- Supporting the healthcare principles of the Health Care Access Resolution (House concurrent resolution 99).
- Fighting any privatizations, for-profit conversions, or cuts in Medicaid or Medicare.
- Insisting that prescription Medicare packages must not be gimmicks taking us all in the wrong direction.
- Understanding there is much more than what we are being told regarding the Canadian health system.
- Listening to healthcare workers, public and private sector workers, retirees, those with disabilities, and any-

For almost 10 years, we have been living with an ever-expanding corporate profit model of healthcare. I used to describe these years as a failed experiment, but experiments have findings which should lead to improvement and advancement in the quality of our lives, and this one doesn't. The reality is that our government has consciously decided not to analyze the results and to further degrade the quality of our healthcare, allowing one segment of our society to profit at our expense. This is the case in New York State and across the country.

Behind all the complexity and illogical fragmentation of the healthcare system is money, money, money. It is about money going everywhere but to the healthcare workers who provide the care.

It's about:

- The pharmaceutical industry and out-of-control pricing.
- The health insurance industry and for-profit conversions.
- The hospital supply industry.
- The for-profit dialysis industry.
- For-profit and greedy proprietary nursing home operators.



one who has had significant contacts with the workings of the healthcare system.

Please understand that without real campaign finance reform, our elected officials will never speak out and create the necessary balance with the profit model. Administrators of hospitals and health insurance corporations will never advocate for their workers because the status quo pays them big bucks.

Unions are quickly coming to the conclusion that they can no longer protect their members solely through the bargaining process. The movement for honest healthcare reform requires

grassroots organizing and activity. Flexible, respectful coalitions will build our success. There is more than enough ground to cover. Let's all be leaders in this movement.

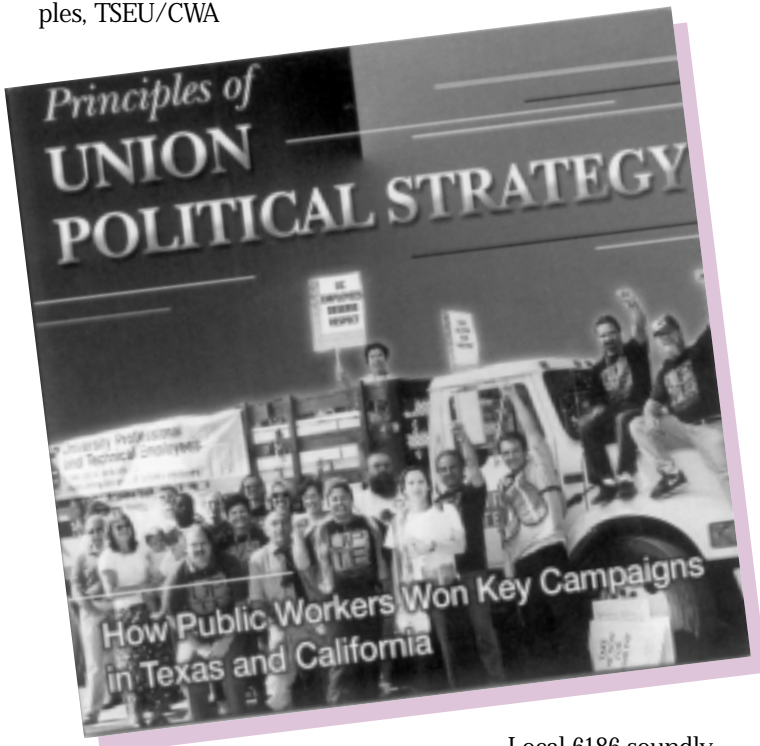
When you choose your project, be analytical: does the project create an infrastructure for an eventual national health plan? And always remember, gimmicks for short-term fixes or for power plays hurt healthcare workers, which hurts us all in the end.

Finally, in any healthcare advocacy, make it your litmus test to follow the money. Make sure that the money gets to the provision of effective, efficient, and humane healthcare.

DEPARTMENT NEWS

CD Program Helps Locals Plan Campaigns

A new CD-ROM, "Principles of Union Political Strategy," is a step-by-step guide to winning organizing, legislative, and issue campaigns. By applying these principles, TSEU/CWA



Local 6186 soundly defeated then-Governor George W. Bush's plan to privatize Texas State Human Services. UPTE/CWA Local 9119 applied the same strategic principles and won a groundbreaking victory in its first contract campaign at the Univ. of California.

The program is divided into four main sections:

- **Forming Your Strategic Plan**—defining the issues and objectives, building a campaign team, identifying the decision-makers and their vulnerabilities, building political influence, drawing on CWA support, identifying external support, and executing the plan;
- **Winning Legislative Support**—forming a legislative strategy with the CWA district, PH&E Department, and local leadership;
- **Organizing Your Membership**—understanding why building a local's membership is especially important during a campaign; and
- **Mobilizing for Victory**—educating the membership on the issues, developing and executing collective actions.

At any point, you can hear UPTE/CWA or TSEU/CWA members talk about how they applied each step of the process. The final section summarizes the results of the campaigns these locals waged.

The CD is available from the CWA Public, Healthcare & Education Workers Department, 202-434-1255.

2003 Bargaining Institute Scheduled

Learn how to be successful in contract negotiations at the LCWA Public, Healthcare & Education Workers Bargaining Institute. The Institute, scheduled for Sept. 29–Oct. 1, 2003, is designed to assist CWA district and local staff and members with the bargaining procedures and strategies of public, healthcare, and education units.

CWA instructors provide a comprehensive, hands-on training program using CWA contracts for case studies and examples.

The training has proven to be very effective in helping new staff negotiate first contracts. Even veteran staff who lacked experience negotiating contracts in public, healthcare, and education sectors have benefited.

Recent participants said the techniques they learned at the Bargaining Institute have helped them win successful contracts at the bargaining table.

"The workshop was incredibly useful in illustrating how to leverage language, people, and resources to achieve what you want at the table," says Robin Gould, former Local 7037 President.

"This was the best class I've attended in my career with CWA," adds Mike Crowell, President of Local 9588. "It expanded my understanding of public sector power."



Participants at the 2002 Bargaining Institute.

NEWSWATCH

California Cities Join CWA in Push for Telecom Jobs

Council members in 23 California cities have joined CWA, state legislators, and the state Public Utilities Commission in expressing concern about the telecom industry's failure to create jobs and invest in capital projects.

"Infrastructure investment and job creation in the telecommunications industry are crucial to the future of the California economy," says CWA District 9 Vice President Tony Bixler. "CWA commends these cities for taking a stand to bring new jobs and investment to their communities."

In May 2002, the California PUC granted long distance giants AT&T and MCI WorldCom a large subsidy to encourage them to offer local telephone service. In exchange, the companies promised to add jobs and make investments in the state.

"Over a year after being granted an unprecedented subsidy, AT&T and MCI WorldCom have yet to fulfill their promise to invest in California," Bixler says. "Instead, they have been pocketing their enormous subsidy."

More than 2 million people live in the 23 cities where city councils have passed resolutions supporting CWA's position. "It is time for regulators and elected officials to heed these calls and take action," Bixler adds.

Nationwide, capital spending by the telecom industry fell by 40 percent in 2001 and 2002, according to investment analysts. In the same period, telecom employers cut nearly 600,000 jobs.