After an extensive review of the Sector’s finances, the Conference Committee on Laws/Finance pronounced the state of the Sector as sound and healthy. They reviewed the positive report provided by the Sector’s independent auditors and found the financial figures in order.

The Committee voted to recommend continuation of the Sector’s special organizing incentive awards. “Your committee is convinced that organizing activities must continue to receive the highest priority in every local union,” the Committee reported.

Organizing incentive awards were first enacted by the 11th Sector Conference to provide $2,500 to the local that recruits the most new members, 50 or greater, between annual Sector Conferences. Locals which recruit 25 new members receive $250, and additional $250 for every 25 members beyond that to a maximum of $1,000.

The Committee congratulated Sector President Bill Boarman for “his excellent stewardship over the Sector’s funds and the positive returns on fund investments.”

The Committee recommended against a series of propositions submitted by Chicago Local 16 President Steve Berman and Delegate George Zaucha which would have effectively imposed “term limits” on delegates serving on Conference committees. The proposals would have imposed a requirement that delegates could not serve on a Conference committee two years in a row, and would have prohibited members of the NPP Board of Trustees—except the Sector President as an ex-officio member—from serving on committees issuing pension plan reports.

The full Conference voted overwhelmingly to reject the Berman/Zaucha proposals.

Serving on the 2001 Conference Laws/Finance Committee were Arthur Delaneri, chair; along with William F. Burgos, Robert C. Mauro, Kenneth W. Maxwell and Gordon D. Shields, Jr.

 Sector President Bill Boarman called on Delegates to the 15th Annual Sector Conference and Sector members and locals to increase their involvement in the CWA COPE operation as the union begins a program to reinvigorate its political action efforts. He described the CWA triangle—organizing, representation and political action—as the “blueprint” that the Sector has followed since 1987 when the ITU merged into CWA to become the Printing, Publishing and Media Workers Sector.

The strike began less than a week after Local President Jane Howald had returned triumphant from the CWA National Convention in Minneapolis where delegates had voted the union’s full support for the struggling workers in Derby and collected $5,000 in personal donations to support the strikers.

Reacting to calls from Howald and New York Mailers Local M-6 President Wayne Mitchell, CWA Convention delegates unanimously adopted a resolution to condemn the “greed” of New Era’s negotiators.

Howald described how New Era’s workers had gone from hopelessness before CWA organized there in 1997 to the solid group they are today, and how the company had planned impose wage cuts of more than $5 per hour.

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Recollecting how New Era’s workers had gone from hopelessness before CWA organized there in 1997 to the solid group they
New Era Strike

have become today. “We understand that we are part of an organization that belongs not to any employer, certainly not by New Era,” Howald said.

The resolution said CWA will expand publicity efforts to spotlight New Era for harassment of union activists. Among other things, the company has claimed that pay checks owed to several union leaders had been mysteriously "lost" in the mail. The company also threatened strikers with an implied threat contained in a bogus “survey” sent out to union members inquiring about their status with regard to workers’ compensation claims. Another union activist said a company official had driven into her neighborhood and, when he was spotted, claimed that he was “lost.” The judge suspected the local police reason he was there was to conduct surveillance on her at home.

In other strike-related developments:

✓ CWA President Morton Bahr has signed a request to the AFL-CIO to put New Era on its nationwide “Don’t Buy” list. That list is circulated throughout the labor movement to more than 14 million union households and to the general press.

✓ Students from United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) and the Workers’ Rights Coalition (WRC) are planning a nationwide support blitz for New Era strikers. They kicked off that effort at the USAS Conference in August where they distributed copies of scathing reports prepared by student teams from both USAS and WRC. The reports describe deplorable working conditions and hostile efforts by management to punish union activists in the plant.

The students plan to continue digging into New Era operations to document company practices that skirt rules governing the use of "Made in the USA" labels. Other student investigations will trace New Era’s practices in overseas plants.

Meanwhile, New Era workers continue to endure dangerous confrontations on the picket line and harassment from company officials as well as scalps working in the Derby Plant. Two union pickets were injured after they were struck by scab-driven cars. One of the injured pickets suffered a serious leg injury.

The union has filed a number of complaints with the National Labor Relations Board. Rank and file leaders have been told that their last paychecks had been lost and the company official had driven into her neighborhood and, when he was spotted, claimed that he was “lost.” The judge suspected the local police reason he was there was to conduct surveillance on her at home.

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Boarman said Sector locals “have always maintained a solid record on representation,” and since the merg- er the Sector has worked hard to make up ground in organizing, but in the area of political action, empha- sis has lagged. Citing current threats from the White House that confront all work- ing families—plans to privatize Social Security, to eliminate the trad- itional 40-hour week, and renewed possibilities that companies will be looking to raid pension plans—Boarman said Sector locals must be a part of CWA’s efforts to reinvigorate its COPE program. He pointed out that CWA will play a major role in ongoing AFL-CIO plans to strengthen its grass roots political action pro- gram nationwide and urged leaders of the Sector to be leaders in that effort.

“In our collective bargaining situ- ations, we feel justified in deriding free riders among us. Let’s not be free riders in the CWA COPE pro- gram,” Boarman said.

Noting that the “secret to organiz- ing success is persistence,” Boarman applauded those Sector locals that have made progress in organizing over the past year, singling out the locals with the two Washington, D.C. based locals, but he is also commit- ting frequently among the other par- ticipating locals to assist on their efforts as well.

Turning to the Negotiated Pen- sion Plan, Boarman credited the Board of Trustees and the Fund’s investment advisors for enduring a union, reporting a profit of nearly half a million dollars over the past year.

Boarman also noted that the NPP has continued its pro- gram of investor activism to serve difficult stock market roller coaster over the past year. He said the Fund had shifted some investments out of traditional stocks to avoid some of the massive losses that similar Funds had experienced with the stock market downturn. He pointed out that the Fund had grown by 4.3 percent despite heavy losses in the stock market.

The NPP has continued its pro- gram of investor activism to serve both participants and working fami- lies in general, Boarman said, citing NPP involvement in proxy fights with IBM to protect pension stan- dards for workers in that company. He also pointed to the Fund’s efforts in a legal suit against Sunbeam and its accounting firm which resulted in a large restitution to investors who were misled by shady accounting reports.

Boarman also noted that the Union Printers Home continued to thwart a plan by New Era employees. Calling the company a “domestic sweatshop and a run- away employer” Bahr vowed that CWA “won’t quit” until New Era employees get the contract that they need. He pointed out that, earlier, CWA had enlisted the help of Al Gore when he was vice president to thwart a plan by New Era to send work from its Derby plant to Bangladesh. A short time after Bahr explained the situation to Gore over the phone, New Era cancelled its plans.

Bahr said the situation at New Era is part of the bigger trade issue. He urged Sector locals to work with CWA to help block the so-called “fast track” legislation now pending in Congress.

Reflecting the distorted perspec- tives of “free traders” Bahr pointed out that the fast track authorization “contains no mention of workers rights, but I would defy anyone to find any corporate right not men- tioned in the bill.”

On politics, Bahr noted that although Labor 2000 didn’t prevail in the presidential race, yet “nobody could say we failed,” as labor once again broke its own turnout records and made the difference for Al Gore in several states that would have gone to Bush otherwise.

Bahr predicted that in the 2002 elections, labor will be involved in 36 governors races as well as one- third of the Senate and the entire House of Representatives. And, in 2004 “we’re going to send George W. Bush back to Kennebunkport with his mommy and his daddy.”

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CONFERENCE Speakers

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NPP Senior Employer Representa- tive Morton Dillen accepts the John Biskin Award honoring the 2001 Outstanding employer from Sector President Bill Boarman. Dillen, who has served for 16 years on the Board of Trustees, spoke briefly to the Conference on the NPP’s operations. He was selected based on his work with the Fund and his dedication to the principles of collective bargaining and fair treatment for workers.

When he joined the Board in 1985, the Fund totaled $400 million and the benefit formula was more than twice what it was. “Employer trustees have an excellent relationship with the union trustees,” Dillen told the delegates. “When we meet, it’s not us against them. Rather, when we meet, we have one objective: to do what is best for participants.”

The NPP has continued its pro- gram of investor activism to serve both participants and working fami- lies in general, Boarman said, citing NPP involvement in proxy fights with IBM to protect pension stan- dards for workers in that company. He also pointed to the Fund’s efforts in a legal suit against Sunbeam and its accounting firm which resulted in a large restitution to investors who were misled by shady accounting reports.

Boarman also noted that the Union Printers Home continued to perform as a prized asset for the industry. He defined tough organi-
Resolutions

Delegates to the Sector’s 15th Annual Conference in Milwaukee rallied to the side of their brothers and sisters at the New Era Company in Derby, New York, to pass a resolution blasting the company for its greed and anti-union behavior.

The resolution outlined the history of company attacks on its workforce since the 1996 affiliation vote that created Local 14177. While “New Era’s workers have proven themselves extraordinarily productive in helping this privately-held company to become the preeminent manufacturer of sports caps and casual headwear in the U.S.” New Era has “insisted upon unrealistic and unacceptable demands for wage cuts while refusing to agree with needed improvements in working conditions and has ignored union demands for improved health care coverage,” the resolution declared.

Delegates charged that New Era has failed to live up to assurances relative to working conditions in the plant and Made-in-America content of its products. The resolution “condemns the company for its greed and anti-union attitudes, for its attempts to destroy the jobs and lives of the hard working members of CWA Local 14177.” The resolution also puts the Sector on record in support of expanding publicity efforts about the dispute with New Era.

CWA COPE Delegates also voted unanimously to encourage stronger support among Sector locals and members for CWA’s enhanced COPE program. Conceding that COPE participation levels have not been as strong as they should be within the Sector, the resolution called for widespread distribution of information about the importance of political action “so that our locals will begin carrying our fair share of the burden of funding an effective political education program at the grass roots level.”

ORGANIZING

Citing a pattern of declining wages and benefits industry-wide, delegates approved a resolution establishing organizing as the Sector’s “number one priority.” Delegates urged local leaders to use the successful patterns of operation developed over the past three years under the I-95 program. The resolution blamed technology and shifting ownership patterns for both printing and mailing for sharp drops in employment levels in unionized shops.

The printing industry is made up of some 50,000 enterprises, employs more than 1.2 million workers and generates more than $163 billion annually in economic activity. “While the industry remains prosperous, its workers are not sharing in that prosperity,” delegates declared.

Employment patterns show that most commercial printing, operations employ fewer than 20 employees and are clustered in some 24 metropolitan areas, and remains largely non-union.

“Profit levels and printing demand are on a continuously expanding track, while the economic benefits of this growth have largely bypassed workers in the industry.” the resolution noted.

Also awarded organizing prizes were: Bill Burgess, Columbia Typographical Union No. 101-12 and Wayne Mitchell, New York Mailers Local M-6.

Delegates urged Sector locals to use the resolution calling for widespread distribution of information about the importance of political action “so that our locals will begin carrying our fair share of the burden of funding an effective political education program at the grass roots level.”

EASTERLING focused on politics. She described George W. Bush as “the kind where “we have to work at it for years. But organizing is not about one shot, sign up cards and have an election and the Board certifies you. It’s about sticking with a project, like I-95.”

He said primary responsibility for organizing rests with the locals, backed up by the Sector and CWA’s national office. Cohen also credited Sector President Bill Beaumun and the Sector for the work they have done in paving the way for CWA’s subsequent mergers.

“we’re all of us together,” Cohen said. He warned that working people are in trouble. “Corporate management throughout the world believes that free markets are the answer for the world economy,” Cohen explained, adding: That belief “means no collective bargaining.”

That’s why companies are willing to fight so hard to frustrate union organizing efforts. For instance, he said, New York Typographical No. 6 President Art DeIanni wasn’t surprised to see the Law Journal continue to battle his efforts to build a union there even after Local 6 won the election there. “The place is filled with lawyers,” Cohen said. However, he added, the Journal is no different than any of the other big companies that CWA fights everyday.

Cohen compared organizing to sports. Representation is defense, he said and “We’re all pretty good at that.” But, “locals need to be on the lookout for those folks who can move the ball down court and take those shots that will bring in new members.”

At times, “we worry too much about winning and not enough about how we do the job, and that’s important.”

Barbara Easterling

SECTOR CONFERENCE

“=The most effective organizers among us are often the most quiet. They let their accomplishments speak for them. Those of us who have worked with Art Delani in the I-95 project, have seen first-hand his distinctive grasp of organizing techniques and tactics. He will tell you that the heavy lifting in his local is done by the chairman, executive board members and activist members. But, is it the one who inspire the confidence and the loyalty and the hard work involved in several key organizing successes in the last year—=Sector President Bill Beaumun on Art Delani as Sector’s Top Organizer for 2001.”

In photo from left: Beaumun, Exc. Vice Pres. Larry Cohen and Delani.