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 3040 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 telecomm and other private sector locals, by participating in public sector organizing, succeeded in strengthening their own locals.

Universal health care was the topic of a luncheon speech, a panel discussion, 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 UPTE-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 $5.5 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:

- North Carolina has a projected $400 million shortfall.
- California’s deficit is almost $40 billion.
- New York is facing a deficit of $13 billion.
- Illinois has a $5 billion deficit.
- Texas’ deficit is about $10 billion.

This economic downturn has affected our Union as well. As CWA continues to lose members from every sector, we are playing catch-up to save those jobs and to prevent future cuts.

The budget cuts have also affected every level of government—federal, state, county and local. Reduced revenues are 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 the 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 their 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 forward in our struggles for better and more secure jobs.

Ohio Lockout Puts Vulnerable Clients at Risk

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’s Services are 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 continuing work, 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 protection 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, that the community has thrown its full support behind us. Our members are fighting 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 before the lockout. Yet, when angrier county leaders by speaking out about the county’s failure to protect children in abusive situations.

“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 case-workers 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 case-worker action,” says Local 1037 President Betty 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.”
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 Cheliotes 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 5,000 and are some fairly new locals that could benefit from the additional support and expertise that an advisory committee of locals can bring. “I have 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 our local reached out to support us. My local is grateful and we would love to reciprocate the support,” concludes Ron Scott, president of Local 7026.

In New Jersey, over 12 locals represented by NJ Local 1037 members.

“A good example of the power of mobilization,” according to Linda Hatfield, Local 7026 President. “We have mobilized the statewide chapter to organize approximately 1,500 Tu氡o, Arizona, city workers,” comments Linda Hatfield. 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 is a good example of the power of mobilization.

One recent demonstration of this is the support that镜锁ed-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, healthcare, and education sectors. 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.

As part of our work together, the advisory committee has been working on organizing other public sector units around the state. Just a few weeks ago, they successfully organized Noble’s city workers, Hatfield reports.

CWA Local 2252 is another case in point. This was a primarily AT&T local whose membership dropped from over 1,000 to about 100 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 consolidated by 2005. Privatization of the state’s foster care program, called by the governor over a balanced budget crisis facing Missouri, is 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.

The bill, as it sits on the Governor’s desk, provides for 30% of the Children Services cases to be privatized by 2005.

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

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-
The mayor of New York City has spent much of this year pressuring $600 million in concessions from city agencies to help solve the budget crisis. He threatened layoffs if the unions did not give in and pay their share of 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 working people, 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 for cuts—the rhetoric of shared sacrifice, though the brunt of the gap, though the brunt of the increase in income taxes on individuals making $150,000 or more ($150,000 or more for couples). The income tax surcharge helped close the budget gap, but the burden 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.

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 is 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 Cheliotes. “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.”

“Their voices were almost nonexistent in the actual process. Their voices were being heard in the community and media.”

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 8381, 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 campaign 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 time the company hired to do the reorganization started to emerge as the real threat to the union, with potential 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 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 intended to speak to voters 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.

“Cuts Hurt Families” Campaign saves jobs in Rochester, NY
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New Mexico Governor Signs Bill
Public Workers Win Right to Organize

A s 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 able to negotiate after a long campaign to organize state workers, keeping a campaign promise. "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 re-deem their rights. "I have long believed that all workers have 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 7012 are working to regain members lost when the old law sunset in '99. In addition, CWA organizers are organizing thousands of workers who did not previously have a union. The joint campaign to organize state workers is called SEAJ/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 misclassify thousands of employees and cut the pay for thousands of others. "It is the desire of SEAJ/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 new bargaining law 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.

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

“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.

“It’s the focal point for our bargaining.”

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. 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 premium hikes, it’s the populace who is paying for the increased cost of healthcare.

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 healthcare. Adding up Medicare, Medicaid (and its variants), and government employees’ healthcare 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 employer-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.

“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.

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

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 Job and Family Services).

Healthcare cost has affected bargaining in all of our units. It was in the 1980s, 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 bargaining tables.

We have created language in our current agreement at OSU to explore cost-per-member percentage reductions 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.
Follow the Money

By Patty D’Whinney, President, Nurses United CWA Local 1168

For almost 30 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-pocket costs.
• The health insurance industry and for-profit conversions.
• The self-funded industry supply.
• 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 a 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 creative, in your efforts, you can create an infrastructure for an eventual national health plan? And always remember, gimmicks for short-term fixes or for-profit providers 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.

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, UPTE/CWA, and 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 CWA 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.”

At any point, you can hear UPTE/CWA or TSEU/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.

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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.”

Califoria 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 lower telephone service rates. “Instead, they have been pocketing the savings,” Bixler says.

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

Nationally, 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.