

# WHITE COLLAR

OFFICE AND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION, AFL-CIO AND CLC

NO. 459

ISSUE 2, 1996

## Locals Commit to Organizing; Attend 3-Day Training Program

**H**ow to organize and bring the benefits of OPEIU representation to unorganized workers is what the nearly 50 local union organizers came to find out from International Union staff and faculty from the George Meany Center for Labor Studies.

OPEIU held its first-ever volunteer organizing training at the Silver Spring, Maryland facility, March 23 to 25, 1996. This is just one of many scheduled training sessions designed to further the recently passed convention policy on increased organizing, partially through the greater use of volunteer, rank-and-file organizers.



Members work in charting and assessment class.

Upcoming regional conferences (see box) will also contain an organizing component for volunteer organizers. In some ways the Meany Center program was a pilot, said Director of Organization Jay Porcaro. We will take the best of that training and use it at our regionals.

After International President Michael Goodwin kicked off the program by emphasizing the union's mission to protect working people through collective bargaining and the need to grow to protect our current members, OPEIU General Counsel Mel Schwarzwald gave the partici-

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Michigan Nurses Win With Card Check

**D**ecember 8 was Union Victory Day for the RNs from the Greenlawn Campus of Michigan Capital Medical Center (MCMC). On that date an independent, neutral third party confirmed that the RNs

had achieved majority status for voluntary recognition by MCMC.

One month earlier, reported International Representative Bonnie Strauss, OPEIU Local 459 negotiated *(Continued on page 8)*



## Clinton Endorsed for Reelection

### AFL-CIO Votes \$35 Million Campaign "We're Going to Take Back Our Country"

**A**iming to rebuild labor's role in American life, an AFL-CIO special convention overwhelmingly endorsed President Clinton for reelection and voted to raise \$35 million to promote grassroots political action campaigns.

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney declared to nearly 600 cheering delegates, "We're going to restore our family budgets while we restore respect for working people and the jobs we do. We're going to take back our jobs, we're going to take back the Congress and we're going to take back our country."

Sweeney warned the delegates that one response to the labor movement's unprecedented new activism will be "the biggest smear campaign, the biggest disinformation campaign

in the history of American politics."

Sweeney said the "Republican Party and its big business and billionaire backers will try to convince the public that election laws permit corporations, right-wing zealots and their organizations to engage in politics and lobbying, but don't permit unions to do likewise."

In accepting the political endorsement, Vice President Al Gore said he and Clinton "will speak up loudly, boldly and clearly for hard-working families."

Sweeney said workers from the AFL-CIO's 78 unions would be briefed on how Republican leaders of Congress are "trying to destroy Medicare, Medicaid, education and

*(Continued on page 12)*

# AMERICA NEEDS A RAISE

**2** Union Summer

**6** America Needs A Raise

**7** Stand for Children Rally

**11** Northwest Flood Relief

## Union MasterCard Rate Drops to 13.25%

The annual percentage rate (APR) on the OPEIU MasterCard has dropped to 13.25 percent, down from 13.5, effective April 15 through June 14, 1996. This is the second consecutive percentage point drop this year. The APR also dropped .25 percent last quarter on January 15.

## Union Family \$avers Adds Six Flags Theme Park Discount

Six Flags theme park discounts have been added to the list of Union Family \$avers benefits. The discount varies by park and is available at the following theme park locations:

- Six Flags Over Texas — Arlington, Texas
- Six Flags Over Georgia — Atlanta
- Six Flags Over Mid-America — St. Louis
- Six Flags AstroWorld — Houston
- Six Flags WaterWorld — Houston
- Six Flags Great Adventure — Jackson, NJ
- Six Flags Safari — Jackson, NJ
- Six Flags Magic Mountain — Los Angeles
- Six Flags Hurricane Harbor — Los Angeles
- Six Flags Great America — Gurnee, IL
- Six Flags Fiesta Texas — San Antonio

Members can receive discount coupons by writing to Theme Park Discounts, c/o Union Privilege, AFL-CIO, Suite 300, 1125 15th St., NW, Washington, DC 20005.

## Now You Can Send Flowers — The Union Way

Sending flowers is the time-honored way of observing births, deaths, anniversaries, holidays and a variety of special occasions. And flowers for centuries have been a symbol of love and affection. Hence the expression, "Say it with flowers."

Now, thanks to a new union benefit, money-saving floral deliveries are yet another reason it pays to be a member of OPEIU.

With the new Union Member Flower Service, you don't have to pay the expensive commissions or handling fees charged by most other flower delivery networks. Instead you talk directly with the local delivering florist. Each order is backed by an unconditional 100 percent satisfaction (or your money back). Plus your order is

guaranteed by only the best from the services select group of award-winning FloraGift florists nationwide.

Sending flowers with the Union Member Flower Service has never been easier. Here's all you have to do:

1. Have a major credit card ready.
2. Call (800) 823-5246.
3. Enter the zipcode of the delivery area.
4. Place your order directly with the florist where you want the flowers delivered.

So don't wait. To have flowers or gift baskets delivered by the Union Member Flower Service — anywhere in the country — just call (800) 823-5246.

## New Union Dental Program Adds Up to Huge Savings for Members

*Free oral exams and bitewing x-rays offered, as well as up to one-third off on routine teeth cleaning*

These days, routine dental care can be expensive. Especially for families with children. That's why Union Privilege has developed the Union Member Dental Program: to help you and your immediate family save money when you go to the dentist — whether you already have dental insurance coverage or not.\*

For the special union-member price of just \$29.95 per year (the general public price is \$72.95), you and your family can choose from a list of participating dentists in your area — and receive instant discounts with every visit.

Among key program benefits:

- No charge on routine oral exams or bitewing x-rays.\*\*
- Up to one-third off on routine teeth cleaning.
- Instant discounts on every dentist visit. Discounts apply to fillings, root canal therapy, crowns, caps, dentures — 170 different dental procedures in all — including braces.
- A free nationwide dentist locator service.
- Access to 24-hour emergency care.
- a 100 percent money-back guarantee for the first year.

This new union-tailored benefit is not an insurance plan; instead it offers predetermined discount fees for dental services and procedures that

have been agreed upon by a panel of participating dentists throughout the country. These fees are much lower than the national average and are automatically applied. For example, program members pay only \$210 on a dental bill that would otherwise total \$300.

Why is the Union Member Dental Program of particular benefit to many union members? Because a lot of them don't have dental coverage as part of their contract benefits. And even members who already have dental insurance coverage can benefit from this plan because it helps lower out-of-pocket costs.

Another highlight of the new dental program is that it is easy to use. You'll never have to fill out a claim form or pay a deductible. And there are no limits on covered pre-existing conditions or annual benefit caps to worry about. Plus, the program comes with a risk-free money-back guarantee.

So don't waste any time. Call 1-800-257-8352 today to find out more about this convenient, money-saving program.

(The Union Member Dental Program is not available in the following states: Alaska, Maine, Mississippi, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Washington and Wyoming).

\*Union Members already enrolled in dental HMO plans are not eligible to participate.

\*\*Members in Colorado are charged \$1.00 for these services.

Ever wonder why wages keep falling? Because companies like Gannett are busting unions!

Make no mistake about it, Gannett and KnightRidder, the top media giants that own the Detroit News and Free Press, forced 2,500 workers out on strike because they want more for lower wages, and no unions.

By refusing to bargain in good faith, hiring permanent replacement workers, and demanding that the Detroit newspaper unions surrender, Gannett is sending a message to workers everywhere: Give up or you will be next!

The UAW and the AFL-CIO urge workers to stand up for the Detroit strikers, by refusing to buy Gannett's flagship paper, USA Today. AFL-CIO unions are urging distributors to stop selling USA Today, and businesses are being asked to stop advertising in USA Today.

Lal's send Gannett a message!

**BOYCOTT USA TODAY**

## OPEIU Assists Northwest Flood Victims

**J**im Dreiling, Ken Huston, Glenn Mathis and Bill Siebert — members of Local 11 affected by last year's floods — received checks from Gary Kirkland, executive officer/secretary-treasurer for Local 11 and International Vice President. The money was donated by the International Union.

Kirkland, who is celebrating 21 years as an International officer, was fully aware of the OPEIU disaster relief fund and applied for benefits for Local 11 members. Donations for the fund comes from volunteer contributions, not from member dues. Because of the extent of the damage sustained, he was able to get \$5,000 for the Northwest region.

Jim Dreiling, who works for Leland James Service Corporation, and Ken Huston, Clark County, suffered the greatest losses when the floodwaters claimed their homes and furnishings.

Glenn Mathis from Northwest Natural Gas, was in mid-construction of a new home when the water rose just short of the eaves. All the Mathis' furnishings were in a pole barn next to the house; they were lost as well.

Bill Siebert, Northwest Natural Gas, had damage to his house and the equipment he had stored in outbuildings.

Neither Mathis nor Siebert had flood insurance. Mathis applied for help from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and received a check for \$1,240 to replace a lifetime of belongings.

While all the recipients of the OPEIU checks were very appreciative of Kirkland's efforts, his only comment was, "The need is so great for so many, I wish we could do more."

Local 11 is headquartered in Portland, Oregon.



International Vice President Gary Kirkland (center) hands flood relief checks to Local 11 Members Glenn Mathis and Bill Siebert.

## Dubin Award Goes to Local 6's Mahoney

**M**ary Mahoney, OPEIU Local 6 President, was the proud recipient of the 1995 Arnold M. Dubin Award, presented by the University of Massachusetts Labor Education Center.

The University recognized Mahoney for her dedication to, and outstanding achievements in, the labor community.

"The significance of the award is that it recognizes the individual sacrifice and dedication that union members make on behalf of their union," said Jose Soler, Director of the Labor Education Center. "Local 6 members should be very proud of their president," he said.

The Dubin Awards are given each year to labor leaders who are not paid union representatives or staff. Mahoney works in the Office

of the Commission of Probation at the Massachusetts Trial Courts and has been involved in Local 6 since the trial court group joined Local 6 nearly 16 years ago. She served first as shop steward, then as an executive board member, vice president, and now president of the 4,000 member local.

"I'd like to market the union differently," she said. "Members get benefits like dental and eye care and take them for granted. Before the union came in, we didn't have these benefits. I'd like more members to understand and appreciate the contributions the OPEIU has made in their lives."

[Article written in part by Paula Stromberg, OTEU Local 378.]

## Luma Native Housing Society Organizes



**W**orkers at Luma Native Housing Society signed their first OPEIU Local 15 contract March 4, 1996. In the photo above, new members appear with Opal Skilling, secretary-treasurer for Local

15 (seated left). "This brings 28 new members into the rolls of Local 15," Skilling said. "We are pleased to call them a part of our OPEIU family." (Local 15 is located in Vancouver, British Columbia.)

## New Jersey Court Workers Win 1st Contract

**T**he long-awaited statewide contract for 1,000 OPEIU judicial workers in New Jersey at press time was being ratified in a mail ballot by the OPEIU members.

Negotiators from Locals 32 and 153 have been bargaining as part of the joint AFL-CIO Council which represents 4,500 court workers throughout the state. Local 32 members are in Essex, Camden, Warren, Ocean, Bergen, Hudson, Union and Morris Counties; while Local 153 represents Passaic County employees.

Talks began in November 1995, following elections certifying the New Jersey AFL-CIO Judiciary Council of Affiliated Unions (JCAU) as the majority representative. The JCAU combines the strength of six major AFL-CIO unions working on behalf of judicial employees in New Jersey. As a result of this summer's PERC elections, the JCAU is now the official representative of employees in support staff, administrative and administrative/support staff supervisory units.

As part of the JCAU, each affiliated union has jurisdiction over certain counties or areas. Union members belong to both the JCAU at-large, as well as the union.

More than 30 union representatives and committee members attended the negotiations sessions. The chief negotiators are Joe Yeoman (Teamsters), Pat Wallace (CWA), Lois Cuccinello (OPEIU), Don Dileo (AFSCME), Dolores Gorczyca (NJCSA-IFPTE) and Bob Witkowski (SEIU). John Hefferman served as the Local 153 negotiator.

Judicial employees have waited patiently, said Cuccinello, for their first statewide contract — even since the state takeover of the courts on January 1, 1995, when some 7,800 county judicial employees were transferred to the state. Existing contracts for the

transferred workers expired on December 31, 1994.

The new contract includes a 3 percent wage increase, retroactive to January 1, 1995, based on average salary in each unit, plus a wage increase on January 1, 1996, based on a formula that averages 1 percent. These increases were negotiated despite a two-year wage freeze facing non-judicial state employees in New Jersey.

The unions also negotiated pay for out-of-title work, as well as binding arbitration for grievances. The latter was a hard-won victory, Cuccinello said, from an employer who had in previous years refused to give up the right to have the assignment judge in each county be the final arbiter for any employee grievances.

The JCAU and the State Judiciary agreed to address priority issues such as salary increases, union rights, discipline and the grievance procedure in the first phase of negotiations. Once the basic contract is ratified — approved by the members — the Judiciary and JCAU will work out the remaining items. Subjects yet to be addressed include:

- wage increments
- layoff and recall language
- special payments
- leaves of absence
- out-of-title work

OPEIU Region II Vice President Pat Tully congratulated OPEIU participants, praising their efforts in the year-long struggle to unify the county court employees, create a joint union bargaining council and negotiate the statewide contracts.

OPEIU negotiating committee members were Brenda O'Neal, Angela Benedetto and Kyle Steward from Essex County; Valerie Lee and Jim Lawson from Warren; Joan Cahill from Camden; and Chris Quartucci, Passaic County.



## The Case for The Minimum Wage

by Michael Goodwin, International President

**T**he OPEIU and organized labor are pressing hard to raise the federal minimum wage to a modest \$5.15 an hour over two years. Full-time workers earning the minimum wage have an approximate annual salary of \$8,500. How can anyone live on this amount when you consider the official poverty line for a family of four in the United States is \$16,902 a year? The fact is they can't and they shouldn't have to.

We're not talking about people who don't want to work; we're talking about people who are out there holding down a job, staying off welfare and caring for their children. The meager \$1,800 per year increase that the minimum wage would yield is equal to the amount the average working family spends on groceries alone in seven months or on utility bills in nine months.

Hard working Americans deserve a raise after more than 20 years of stagnant wages. The real value of the minimum wage has fallen 27 percent over the last 15 years.

Nearly 10 million Americans earn less than \$5.15 an hour. That's a lot of people and something must be done to help them now.

Who are they? The vast majority of these workers are 69 percent

adult and 59 percent women. Of all minimum wage workers, 39 percent are the sole breadwinners in their household.

Opponents argue that increasing the minimum wage will result in a loss of jobs. Nearly two dozen studies have concluded that moderate increases in the minimum wage do not cost jobs. More than 100 noted economists, including three Nobel prize winners, have endorsed increasing the minimum wage.

The last increase was passed seven years ago in 1989 with over 90 percent votes in both the House and the Senate. So what's the problem now?

It appears that a key leader in the House of Representatives said the House will pass a minimum wage increase "over my dead body." None of us hope to see that, but we do need the bill to pass. If he knew anything at all about the very real challenges facing working families in making ends meet, I'm sure he'd feel differently.

Despite the "dead body" stance in the House, the Senate, which has blocked several measures on the issue seems to be coming around. Recently, 20 Senators who were previously opposed have said they now favor an increase to \$5.25, 10 cents higher than the plan on the table! So the logjam is breaking up in the Senate and we need to see the same turnaround in the House.

Why is it turning around? Because recent polls show that 80 percent of all Americans support the minimum wage increase.

In light of all these facts, how can anyone defend keeping the minimum wage at \$4.25 an hour? If you agree, write a brief note to the leadership in Congress and let them know how you feel. Their names and addresses are:

Senator Trent Lott  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Newt Gingrich  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Richard Armey  
301 Cannon HOB  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Remember, helping the lowest paid of our sisters and brothers eventually helps us all!

AMERICA  
NEEDS  
RAISE

## Clinton Endorsed

(Continued from page 1)

college loans in order to finance another tax cut for the rich."

Sweeney noted the House Oversight Committee fired the first shot in March by holding sham hearings on Capitol Hill to denounce labor's legitimate interests.

To fund labor's plans, the special convention approved a one-year assessment of 15 cents per member per month. The assessment is not an increase in individual member dues, but an additional share of union funds to go towards education, training and mobilization around issues identified as most important.

It is estimated this assessment would raise about \$25 million. The federation and its largest unions would raise additional funds to reach the goal of \$35 million. Most of the funding would go for television and radio.

By surveying a random sampling of union members, the federation discovered that Clinton "has broad and growing support" — 69 percent of them approve of the job he is doing

and 60 percent say they support him for reelection (while only 28 percent do not).

Senator Bob Dole, the Republican presidential nominee, by contrast "fares poorly with our members. Only 22 percent say they will support him, and in a head-to-head contest with President Clinton, Clinton gets 67 percent of their votes."

The convention reviewed stark differences between the candidates. Clinton spent a major part of his first term fighting for national health care reform and he sent Congress a fair, comprehensive health plan that would have guaranteed quality, affordable care for all Americans. "Senator Dole helped shoot it down," the convention said.

Dole voted for a plan to finance tax cuts for the wealthy and big corporations through cuts of \$270 billion in Medicare and \$170 billion in Medicaid, a proposal calling for increased costs for beneficiaries, and turning over Medicaid to the states with no strings attached. Clinton vetoed it.

On preserving wage standards, there is no comparison between the two candidates. Clinton proposed an increase in the minimum wage to \$5.15 an hour. Dole is against increasing the minimum wage and voted against even considering the issue.

Clinton promised to veto any legislation that would inhibit or cripple the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the convention said. "Dole wants to dismantle OSHA," it added.

Clinton has pledged to fight to protect Social Security and prevent employers from being able to dip into employee pension funds. Dole voted against the guarantee that Social Security funds not be raided to balance the budget.

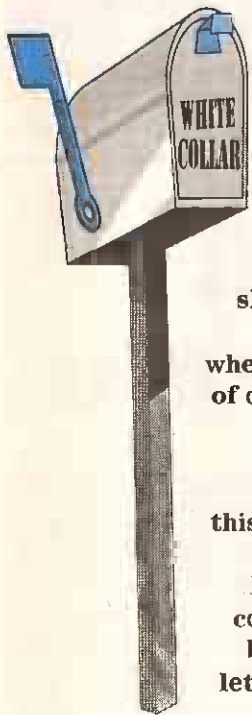
Clinton has promised to veto any bill that materially impacts Davis-Bacon or the Service Contract Act. Dole voted to weaken Davis-Bacon and to exempt certain communities from prevailing wage requirements.

The AFL-CIO special convention took place February 25, 1996, in Washington, DC.

[adapted from an article by Robert B. Cooney for PAI]



# Letters to the Editor



Again, we reprint letters from our members on various issues. We invite our readers to continue to share their opinions with us, whether in support of or in opposition to our own. Debate is healthy and welcome in this union. Letters are edited for length only, not content. Remember: anonymous letters will not be printed.

## Do We Need a Labor Party?

*(write us your ideas)*

I welcome and am very encouraged by the election of Mr. John J. Sweeney to office of AFL-CIO President. He is the right man at the right time for a renewed labor spirit.

Now more than ever there is a growing worker militancy. AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney acknowledges that. His speech, however, revealed two troubling ideas.

First, that the corporations are going to cut the unions in on the deal of profits. He said, "To our employers we say, if you are wise, labor's victories can be your victories. With decent paychecks we can buy your products and your services. We prefer cooperation to confrontation, but we are prepared for both."

After decades of being unscrupulously and deliberately "cut out of the deal," by corporate America, does Sweeney still believe labor will be cut in? And at what cost? Screwing workers in other regions of the nation or workers in other countries?

Second, he proposes to help "reelect a President and Democratic Congress." Why? So we can get humiliated again? Labor has lost respect in Congress. This country has had NO major labor legislation passed in 15 YEARS. This while Democrats have controlled both Houses of Congress.

According to the Washington Post, the Chamber of Commerce and the AFL-CIO, which rarely agree on anything, came to the same conclusion about the 103rd Congress (Clinton's first two years). Chamber official: "While we didn't get everything we wanted by any means, the unions got nothing they really wanted."

The Labor Movement must work to build a political movement to support an agenda developed by working class people for working class people. We must not be locked into a one dimensional electoral strategy but rather to

focus on developing a comprehensive action agency around which workers can build an aggressive Movement to achieve their objectives.

A Labor Party is necessary. Now more than ever. There are obvious signs that union members are willing to fight back far more aggressively than in the recent past.

The purpose of a Labor Party is to educate the American public about the need for a Labor Party in the United States. To belong is to affirm one's belief in an idea: that the labor movement in the United States needs its own political party.

Our objectives must be: striker replacement legislation, health care, repeal of the Taft-Hartley bill which for-

bids strikes and a stronger NLRB.

Mr. Sweeney, in his appeal to the organized and especially the unorganized, must draw the line. He says he will not meekly accept the terms of corporate demands. Good. Surveys have demonstrated for some time that most working class people are prepared to entertain a new, aggressive, militant multidimensional political strategy that offers them some hope that the future can be better than the recent past. If America is to "get a raise" we must inspire people...

A Labor Party would create a real correction in course for the nation. Think about it.

Louis Wolf  
Baltimore, MD

## Accolades for Training Program

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to attend the recent staff conference in Maryland. It was a great experience! Your International Staff did an excellent job of organizing and presenting the sessions. Special mention must be made of the exceptional job done by Ron Hutson and Vince Menditto in their class. They had the most meaningful of all the sessions. Ron reminded us of all the reasons why we do what we do. He rekindled the love we all have for the labor movement.

I am looking forward to being with my OPEIU brothers and sisters again at the upcoming regional conference in Birmingham.

Marty Schmoker  
Ft. Worth, TX

# MAKE HISTORY

For the first time in memory, a generation of Americans faces a lower standard of living than their parents.

The gap between rich and poor has hit Depression-era levels. And if corporate America has its way, big business will continue posting record profits while laying off workers by the thousands.

This summer, join hundreds of workers and students making history. Spend three weeks in the streets and neighborhoods, organizing for workplace rights and social justice. Make this a summer America will never forget!

Call 1-800-952-2550  
For Further Information



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Washington Window

# Downsizing the Middle Class

**T**ramping the campaign trail, politicians bandy statistics about stagnant incomes. But the numbers don't tell the real story. America is downsizing its middle class.

The downsizing is apparent in the faces of people seeking work month after month, and not getting it. It's apparent in the divorces and problems at school. It's apparent in workers' stories at a House Progressive Caucus hearing:

- Single mother Susan Cassavant works at Peerless Clothing's distribution center in St. Alban's, VT. Not so long ago, such a job would have paid her enough money to raise a family. Peerless pays her \$5 an hour — less than the poverty level — to ship out \$200 suits. State aid supplements her income.

- Robert O'Boyle is a 20-year-old worker for AT&T in New Jersey. He's going to college at night, part-time, to improve his job skills. That's what politicians say workers need to do to keep ahead in the changing national economy.

O'Boyle has his doubts. He sees AT&T splitting into three corporations and "leaving 13 percent of its workers behind."

"It is absolutely obvious to me as an employee that 40,000 people worldwide are not needed in the new companies. What they're doing is eliminating 40,000 management and union positions. Yet, through the formation of three new companies, they've created three CEO's and countless presidents, vice presidents, directors, etc., and widened the ever increasing gap between the rich and the vanishing middle class," he adds.

- Beverly Buester of Castle Rock, CO, worked for Martin Marietta for 13 and one-half years. She was "downsized" in 1992, despite outstanding commendations and a security clearance to work on top secret defense projects. Buester was fired just as she was looking forward to her retirement. She now earns \$10,000 a year in a series of temporary jobs as a paralegal — one-third of what she earned at Martin Marietta.

- Mike Buester, Beverly's husband, is still with the aerospace firm, now Lockheed Martin. "This past year I put in over 400 hours of overtime and worked at a part-time job just to make ends meet. We are going further into debt trying to pay our bills on time at the same time while working longer hours with less pay," he says.

Meanwhile, the board of directors of Martin Marietta and Lockheed, which merged, received millions of taxpayer dollars to help their merger.

They pocketed the money, while firing Beverly Buester and thousands of other workers.

- Pat Lehman is a second-generation aerospace engineer for Boeing in Wichita, KS, and Secretary-Treasurer of Machinists Lodge 70 there. In past years, Boeing had a common pattern: if business boomed, everyone worked; if it slumped, there were some layoffs, with the understanding that when new contracts came in, the workers would return. Not any more.

Now, even when business soars, Boeing moves jobs to low-wage countries, such as China or Mexico. To stay in the U.S., it demands tax breaks from state, local and federal government — but doesn't create it promises. Other companies act the same way.

And now Boeing trains Chinese aircraft workers in Wichita, Lehman says. A top corporate executive "announced 'Boeing has a moral obligation to help China build their infrastructure.' But no one discussed the moral obligation to the thousands of laid off Boeing workers in Wichita," Lehman said.

So what's happening to the middle class? It's being fired. It's being downsized. It's being laid off. And it's being told: Work for slave wages or we don't want you.

Workers told the lawmakers that's a recipe for national disaster. And they noted the disaster is not just financial, as families struggle to keep their heads above water. They said that with parents jobless, kids see no point in education and training for a world of work that won't employ them. The kids drift into gangs and crime.

And when workers like Susan Cassavant can't earn enough to lift themselves out of poverty, society pays twice: in direct subsidies and in lost buying power, which would create more jobs.

Those are real impacts of downsizing the middle class, and that's the real problem politicians need to address.

Work and Health

## Warning Signs for Kidney Disease

By Phillip L. Polakoff, M.D.

**K**idney and urinary tract diseases are a major health problem in the United States, affecting more than 20 million people. Each year, these diseases directly cause more than 96,000 deaths and are associated causes of death for more than a quarter of a million individuals.

Kidney and urinary tract diseases come in many different types. These range from mild urinary tract infections treatable with antibiotics to total kidney failure. The last mentioned requires kidney transplantation or treatment on an artificial kidney machine (dialysis) to stay alive.

Fortunately, if one kidney is lost, or if both kidneys are partly damaged, the remaining tissue is usually strong enough to do the job of keeping the body healthy.

Diabetes is the single most frequent cause of kidney failure in the United States. It accounts for about 30 percent of the new cases of chronic kidney failure each year.

High blood pressure, which affects at least 60 million Americans, is the second risk factor for development of chronic kidney failure. Kidney damage resulting from uncontrolled high blood pressure is responsible for between 20 and 30 percent of chronic kidney failure in the United States.

Although many forms of kidney disease do not produce symptoms until late in the course of the disease, there usually are warning signs. It is important to be familiar with these signs so these diseases can be treated and prevented from progressing to kidney failure.

Here are the early warning signs of kidney and urinary tract failure:

- Burning or difficulty during urination.
- The need to urinate frequently, particularly at night.
- Passage of bloody-appearing urine.
- Puffiness around eyes, swelling of hands and feet, especially in children.
- Pain in the small of the back below the ribs.
- High blood pressure.

If you have one or more of these symptoms, make an appointment with your physician.

Heavy use of pain-killing drugs can cause kidney damage and even kidney failure. Many of these drugs can be obtained without a prescription.

Abuse of illegal drugs, such as crack, cocaine, and heroin, may also lead to kidney failure.

Kidney stones — another kidney problem — are common but treatable. One of every 20 people may experience this problem during his or her lifetime.

Many advances have been made in the treatment of this disorder. Easier stone

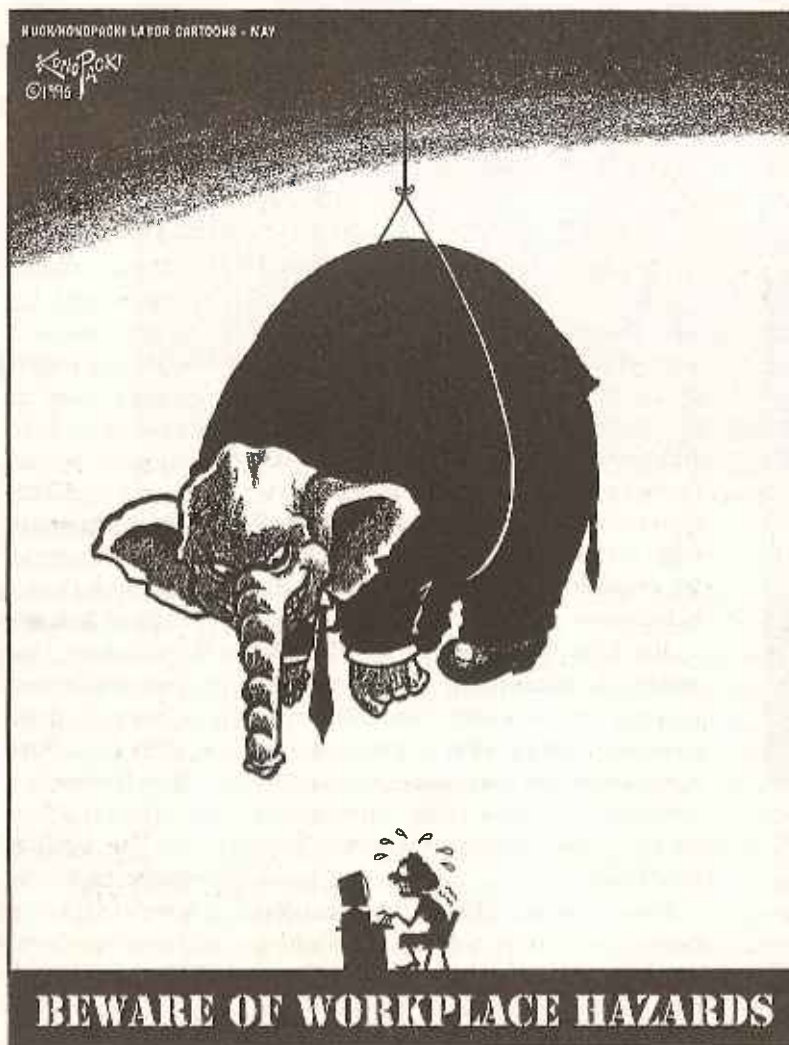
removal is possible by new techniques, especially one which applies shock waves outside the body to shatter the stones into small particles which can then be passed with the urine.

In addition, special blood and urine tests are available to determine the exact cause of stone formation so that specific medical treatments can be used to prevent recurrences of stone disease.

Urinary tract infections require about eight million physician office visits and nearly two million hospitalizations each year.

Many women suffer from recurring infections of the urinary tract, particularly the bladder. Antibiotics help, but researchers are seeking a better understanding of the way bacteria causes these infections so that the problem can be eliminated.

If you have any questions, or suggestions for future articles, write to me at IHMA, 220 Powell St., Watergate Tower II, Suite 395, Emeryville, CA 94608.



## Organizing Conference

(Continued from page 1)

pants a clear and thorough history of the rights of employees under federal and state laws.

Participants over the two days attended four workshops each:

The workshop on the need for Volunteer Organizing Councils and successful strategies was led by International Representatives Ron Hutson and Vince Menditto.

Valerie Erwin from the Meany Center staff with OPEIU Representatives Robert Garvin and Howard Turberville led the training in One-on-One Communications.

Developing Leads and Community and Task Force Structure training was given by International Representatives Donna Shaffer and Pat Priloh.

Representatives Bonnie Strauss and Jeff Rusich, with Meany Center staffer Jeff Zack, taught Charting, Assessments and Leaflets.

In addition, Michelle King presented to participants how they could use Union Privilege Program benefits for organizing, what had worked for others. And Jay Porcaro explained to the group the Use of Internet as an organizing tool.

A special evening presentation on

the employer's campaign was led by Richard Sanders — to round out a well-developed and thorough overview of the organizing campaign and tactics.

The reviews of the two and one-half day of training were excellent. But said Education Director Gwen Wells, "We hope to fine tune some of the training to make it even better. Our participants, however, seemed to be especially pleased to receive training from our own International staff and to get to know each other a little better — share experiences and future plans. We look forward to offering similar education at our regional conferences."

### Participants

The following local unions committed themselves to the union's organizing program and growth for their locals. They sent one or more participants to the volunteer or-



International Organizer Donna Shaffer works with members at task force development.

ganizing training at the Meany Center:

Locals 1 (Indianapolis, IN); 2 (Washington, DC); 3 (San Francisco, CA); 6 (Boston, MA); 32 (Newark, NJ); 39 (Madison, WI); 40 (Mt. Clemens, MI); 42 (Detroit, MI); 153 (New York, NY); 212 (Buffalo, NY); 277 (Ft.

Worth, TX); 339 (Akron, OH); 391 (Chicago, IL); 457 (Centerville, PA); 494 (Detroit, MI); 502 (Oberlin, OH); 512 (State of Michigan); 513 (Elyria, OH); 1057 (North Andover, MA); and 1794 (Cleveland, OH).

## Locals Meet in Alabama to Train in Organizing and Bargaining

Organizing continues to be the focus of the union following the unanimous mandate and policy setting at the recent International Convention. Therefore, the regional conferences for 1996 have also taken up the theme of training rank-and-file OPEIU members to assist in organizing unorganized workers. The first of these proved to be a great success!

Following a victorious organizing campaign, however, the union is faced

with the often-difficult task of negotiating a first contract. Whether a contract can be achieved, the tactics an employer is likely to use to delay or prevent concluding negotiations, what to do when facing a union buster across the table — are all issues officers and staff need to address. At each conference, therefore, a collective bargaining segment is offered for those officials and members responsible for negotiations.

### UAB Campaign

April 12 to 14, 1996, the union held the Southeast/Southwest Regional Conference in Birmingham, Alabama. The union chose Birmingham as the site since we have an on-going organizing campaign at the University of Alabama. Participants in the Volunteer Organizing program could use some of the knowledge and skills acquired in workshops by engaging in hands-on organizing activities.

Jim Ellis, president of Local 4, described to conference participants the history of the campaign. Ellis said over the last several years they had maintained the core of approximately 300 members and been represented by two other unions previous to joining OPEIU.

Since joining OPEIU the local has made great strides toward establishing a grievance procedure at the university — an achievement once thought impossible, Ellis said. (As soon as de-

tails of that impending victory are available, we will report them here.)

### Organizing Training

International Union staff conducted the training for volunteer organizers. All delegates were impressed, according to the evaluations, by their expertise, dedication and enthusiasm. "I was energized and now want to organize," was a typical comment.

General Counsel Mel Schwarzwald kicked off the training with an outline of employee rights under state and federal labor laws. This was followed by workshops, such as Volunteer Organizing Strategies conducted by Ron Hutson and Vince Menditto, and One-On-One Communications, led by Don Wright and Ron Hutson. Other workshops included Leads and Task Force Development, taught by Howard Turberville and Don Wright; as well as Charting, Assessments and Leaflets, with Faye Orr, Vince Menditto and Ron Hutson.

Howard Turberville, the organizer on the UAB campaign, led participants in a home phone calling exercise to UAB members and potential members. Not only were the students given a chance to test their training, the results of the survey were helpful to the campaign itself.



Delegates are pictured here in the organizing class on one-on-one communications.

### Collective Bargaining

In the meantime, half the attendees were being put through their paces in the collective bargaining training. Ralph Johnson, Director of UAB's Center for Labor Education and Research, and Associate Professor Judi King taught the program.

Members trained in strategies and tactics, preparing for bargaining (building the committees and developing proposals), contract language and costing. They then acted out collective bargaining simulations to practice the skills they had learned.

High marks were given all around for this program, too.

### President Goodwin

Local unions were especially pleased to spend an entire weekend

(Continued on next page)



Jim Ellis, president of Local 4, spearheads the organizing drive at the University of Alabama with assistance from International Representative Howard Turberville. Here Ellis explains to delegates the recent victories on developing a grievance procedure. Later he had delegates phone call UAB union supporters for updates.

# Union Looks Forward to Regional Conferences — Organizing and Bargaining Training

In addition to training for volunteer rank-and-file organizers, the International Union will also offer a one and one-half-day program for service representatives on the more difficult bargaining — first contracts and against union busters — a well needed training program.

Remember: the union reimburses each local union \$400 for attendance. It pays to attend.



Howard Turberville, International Representative, leads discussion in one-on-one communications.

## West/Northwest Regional Conference

Best Western Executive Inn  
Seattle, Washington  
(800) 351-9444 or (206) 441-7929  
\$92 single (\$10 per additional person)

June 7 to 9, 1996

Program will end early afternoon  
June 9. Training  
conducted by International  
Union staff and the  
labor college faculty.

Deadline:  
May 7, 1996

## Northeast Regional Conference

Rutgers University  
Continuing Education  
Conference Center  
New Brunswick, New  
Jersey  
\$69/single; \$41/double

October 4 to 6, 1996



Bonnie Strauss, International Organizer, answers questions on charting a campaign.

Reservations will be made by the International Union Office: You must send us a \$50 deposit on each room reserved, made out to Rutgers Continuing Education Center. The Center will also take credit cards for the balance (MasterCard and Visa).

We will make your reservations.

Hotel deadline: September 4, 1996

## Erie Regional Conference

The Westin Hotel, Renaissance Center  
Detroit, Michigan  
(313) 568-8000

\$89/single or double;  
\$99/triple or quad

October 18 to 20, 1996

Hotel deadline: September 18, 1996

## North Central Regional Conference

School for Workers,  
University of Wisconsin  
Madison, Wisconsin  
(608) 262-2122

November 1 to 3, 1996

Prices are for the entire weekend  
(room and board):

\$164 double; \$198 single;  
\$102 commuter

In this case you need to send your check for the full amount, made out to University of Wisconsin-Extension, to the OPEIU Education Department.

We will make your reservations.

Hotel deadline: October 1, 1996

## Locals Meet in Alabama

(Continued from previous page)



Delegates pay special attention during collective bargaining training.

with the International President and to exchange ideas and work through solutions to common problems.

Over lunch President Michael Goodwin explained to them the necessity to organize to protect current members and to survive politically. "Without keeping up and increasing our members, we will become increasingly irrelevant on the political scene. Our need to affect legislation on behalf of our members makes it imperative that we have an influence in Washington and the various statehouses," he said.

He also discussed with participants the need to be involved in the upcoming elections. "If we have Republican Houses of Congress and a Republican President, we can kiss good-bye all progressive social legislation and our protections under current labor laws. We can look forward to regressive, perhaps repressive, legislation in the

future," Goodwin said.

### Participants

Local unions from across the region attended: Locals 4 and 18 (both from Birmingham, AL); 21 (Atlanta, GA); 27 (Galveston, TX); 46 (Tampa, FL); 48 (Tuscaloosa, MS); 73 (Jacksonville, FL); 87 (Baton Rouge, LA); 119 (Chattanooga, TN); 144 (Knoxville, TN); 179 (Chattanooga, TN); 268 (Knoxville, TN); 277 (Ft. Worth, TX); 298 (Austin, TX); 303 (Texarkana, TX); 306 (Amarillo, TX); 320 (Kansas City, MO); 381 (Oklahoma City, OK); and 437 (Ponca City, OK).

From the International Union: President Michael Goodwin, Vice President Tom Babb, Director of Education and Research Gwen Wells; as well as International Representatives Ron Hutson, Vince Menditto, Faye Orr, Howard Turberville, and Don Wright.

## 1996 Summer & Fall Conference Schedule

# First Contract Bargaining and Volunteer Organizing

The Spring 1996 conferences have proved to be highly successful and well praised. Local unions have been energized by the new emphasis on organizing and the use of volunteers from their ranks. Locals have also been pleased and impressed by the quality training provided by International Union staff. We plan to continue this success through the summer and the fall.

At each regional conference participants will choose a course of training — either First Contract Bargaining or Volunteer Organizing — for the entire day and one-half.

### First Contract Bargaining

This course will address those special issues that arise when negotiating a first contract: How do you insure that you can get a first contract, before you begin an organizing campaign? What particular issues and tactics is the union likely to encounter? What if a union busting consultant sits across the bargaining table? These are just a few of the questions participants will have answered.

University faculty and staff will primarily provide this training.

### Volunteer Organizing

Volunteer organizing — rank-and-file union members — make the best organizers. This course will provide

them with some of the expertise to assist union staff on organizing campaigns in their locals and regions. Just a few of the topics to be addressed will be: one-on-one communications techniques, charting and assessments, leads and developing a task force, research and leaflet writing.

International and local union staff will provide this training.

### Schedule

We will begin with a reception at 6:00 pm Friday evening. The program will begin at 9:00 am each morning, with lunch and dinner on Saturday. Both training tracks will end at approximately 1:00 pm on Sunday.

## It Pays to Attend: \$400 Subsidy

Remember: There is a \$50 registration fee (made out to OPEIU) for each participant. However, each local union receives a \$400 subsidy upon completion of the program. You can't afford not to attend and take advantage of this training opportunity.



# America Needs a Raise

## Congress Must Increase the Minimum Wage to Help Working Families

**It's Time for a Raise** — If Congress does not pass the Democratic proposal to increase the minimum wage, the purchasing power of that wage will soon be the lowest it has been in 40 years. The value of the minimum wage has dropped 29% since 1979. It has dropped by 50 cents in constant value since it last went up in 1991. America's families are working hard to get ahead, but it's tough to get by when working full time or more doesn't pay enough to pay the bills or put food on the table.

**Raise Helps Families Get By** — A 90 cent increase means \$1,800 a year for a full-time worker. For an average family, that's seven months of groceries, four months' rent or mortgage payments, a full year of health care (including prescription drugs), nine months utility bills, three months total transportation costs, or more than a year's tuition at a community college.

**Raise Rewards Work** — Raising the minimum wage will help get people off of wel-

fare and onto payrolls. Right now, a family of four is below the poverty line on minimum wage. The President's raise will lift them into the middle class.

**Raise Is Good For Families** — The average minimum wage worker earns half of his fam-

ily's income. More than a third are the sole breadwinner in their household. Contrary to Republican myth, nearly two thirds of minimum wage earners are adults (see box of myths).

**Raise Is Good For the Economy** — More than 10 million hourly workers earn

between \$4.25 and \$5.14 an hour, meaning they would get a raise directly from this plan. Economists believe that giving them a raise would also help another 3 million who make within 60 cents of that, and that the ripple effects would be good for our whole country.

**The GOP Congress Just Doesn't Get It** — The extremist Republican leaders who are trying to kill the minimum wage increase are the same ones who insisted that Congress would keep getting paid when they shut down the federal government. Well, they made more during that shut-down than a minimum wage worker makes all year. These Republicans make a minimum wage worker's annual salary every 16 days. Congress has gotten three raises since the last time the minimum wage went up. It's time for working families to get their turn.



### The Minimum Wage — By the Numbers . . .

- \$4.25 The minimum wage today
- \$8,500 Approximate annual salary of a full-time minimum wage worker
- \$16,092 Official poverty line for a family of four
- 27% Decrease in minimum wage's real value over the last 15 years
- 16 Number of days it takes for a member of Congress to make more than a full-time minimum wage worker earns in a year
- 90¢ President Clinton's proposed increase in the minimum wage, phased in over two years
- \$1800 Annual pay raise for full-time minimum wage workers resulting from President Clinton's proposal
- Amount an average family spends on groceries in seven months
- Amount an average family spends on basic housing costs (rent or mortgage) in almost four months
- Amount an average family spends on health care (insurance premiums, prescriptions and out-of-pocket costs) in one year
- Amount an average family spends on utility bills in nine months
- 50% Average share of household income earned by a minimum wage worker
- 36% Proportion of minimum wage workers who are sole breadwinners for their households
- 72% Proportion of all Americans who support an increase in the minimum wage
- 382-37 and 89-8 Overwhelming bi-partisan Congressional votes in favor of the last minimum wage increase

Members of Congress each earned more during the recent government shutdown than a full-time minimum wage worker earns in an entire year.

### Minimum Wage:

### Fact vs. Fiction

<b>REPUBLICAN FICTION</b> Increasing the minimum wage will only help teenagers, "black teenagers," according to Senator Bob Dole [New York Times, 3/27/96]	<b>FACT</b> • Nearly 10 million Americans earn an hourly wage less than the President's proposed \$5.15 per hour. • The vast majority of these workers — 69% — are adults. • Most of these workers — 59% — are working women. Nearly three-quarters of these women are adults. • 39% of all minimum wage workers are the sole breadwinners in their household.
<b>REPUBLICAN FICTION</b> Increasing the minimum wage will result in a loss of jobs.	<b>FACT</b> • This is hogwash. According to Nobel Prize winning economist Robert Solow, "the evidence of job loss is weak . . . the impact on jobs is small." • Nearly two dozen empirical studies have concluded that moderate increases in the minimum wage do not cost jobs. • More than 100 noted economists, including three Nobel prize winners, have endorsed the President's plan to raise the minimum wage.
<b>REPUBLICAN FICTION</b> According to Bob Dole, raising the minimum wage is not one of the "issues the American people are really concerned about." [New York Times, 3/27/96]	<b>FACT</b> • Tell that to hard-working Americans who deserve a raise after two decades of stagnant wages. • The real value of the minimum wage has fallen by 27% over the past 15 years. • 10-13 million Americans will directly benefit from an increase. • 79% of Americans support increasing the minimum wage.
<b>REPUBLICAN FICTION</b> Increasing the minimum wage has always been a bitter, partisan issue.	<b>FACT</b> • The last time Congress raised the minimum wage, Republican George Bush was President — and he signed the bill. • The last increase was 90 cents over two years, exactly what President Clinton is now proposing. • The 1989 vote in the Senate was 89-8 and the vote in the House was 382-37. • Both Senator Bob Dole and Speaker Newt Gingrich voted for the last minimum wage increase.
<b>BOB DOLE "FICTION," 1989</b> "I never thought the Republican party should stand for squeezing every last nickel from the minimum wage."	<b>BOB DOLE FACT, 1996</b> My how time flies! Now it's Beltway Bob stonewalling on a vote on the minimum wage. According to Senator Bob Dole, "sooner or later the issue will be voted on, directly or indirectly, but not today, not tomorrow, and not next week." [New York Times, 3/27/96]
<b>REPUBLICAN FICTION</b> The Republican Party cares (or knows) about working families.	<b>FACT</b> If they knew anything at all about the very real challenges Americans face making ends meet, they'd raise the minimum wage. The President's proposed minimum wage increase will mean \$1800 more per year in the pockets of working families — or how much the average working family spends on: • groceries in seven months; • basic housing costs (rent or mortgage) in almost four months; • health care (insurance premiums, prescriptions and out of pocket costs) in one year; • or utility bills in nine months.

# Union Buses Headed For STAND FOR CHILDREN Rally

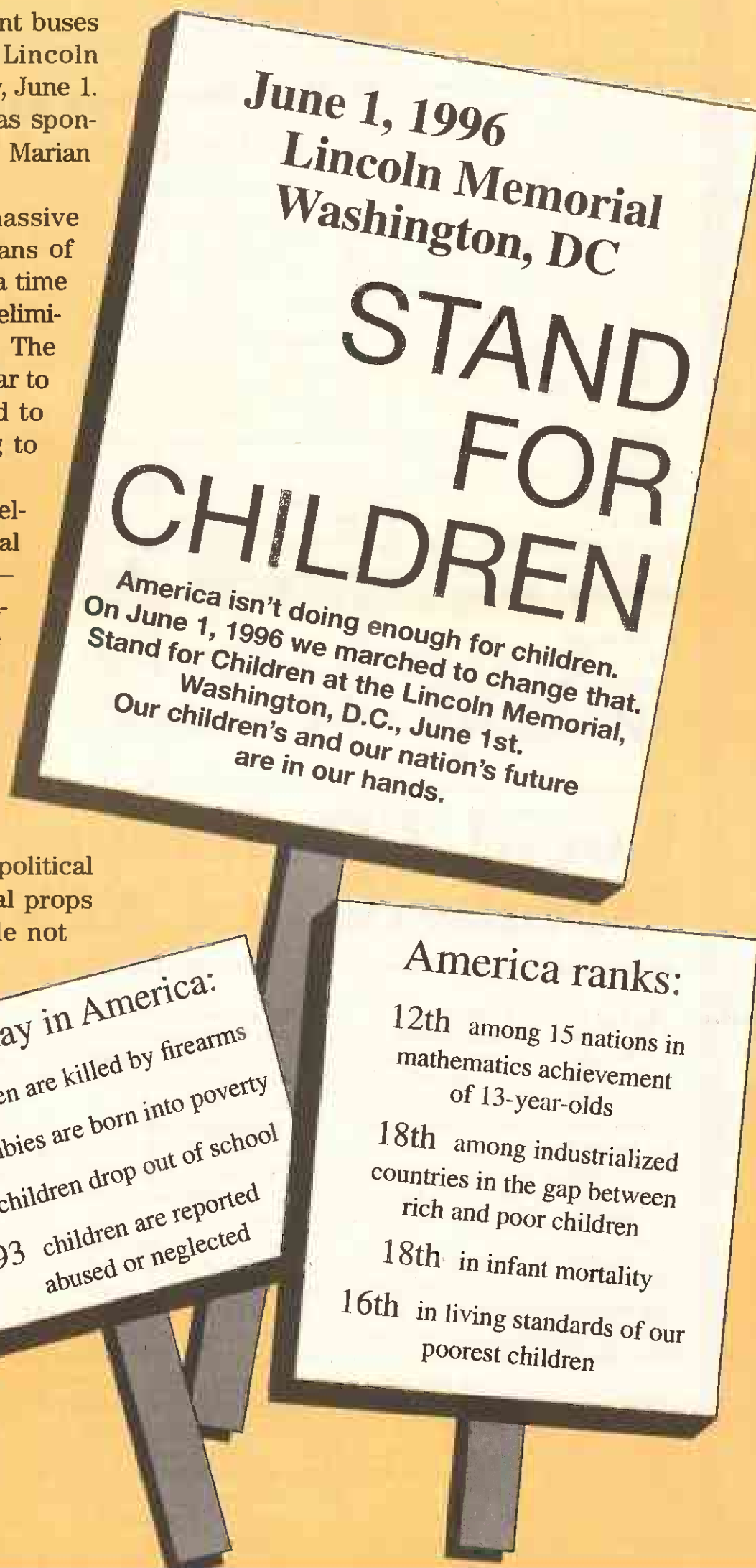
**O**PEIU local unions throughout the U.S. sent buses to the Stand For Children rally at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. on Saturday, June 1. This national day of commitment to children was sponsored by the Children's Defense Fund, headed by Marian Wright Edelman.

The purpose of the action was to mount a massive moral witness for and with children by Americans of every race, region, income and faith. It comes at a time when the Republican right is trying to cut and/or eliminate a number of programs that benefit children. The official call states that this action will "make it clear to every candidate and officeholder that they need to help and not hinder families who are struggling to raise moral, healthy, and educated children."

In an open letter inviting people to join her, Edelman stated: "We are living in an incredible moral moment in history. What you and I stand for now — on the eve of a new millennium, in this the last national election year of the century — will shape our nation's fate and our children's fate. If you are struggling to raise a child but know you could do better, come stand with us . . . If you are lying awake nights concerned about your child's safety in a country where 211 million guns are in circulation and random violence is pervasive, come stand with us . . . If you've had enough of political leaders from all parties using children as political props and pawns and talking about family values while not supporting what families need to raise healthy, safe, moral and educated children, come stand with us."

The hundreds of OPEIU members participating was coordinated by Education Director Gwen Wells who had urged all OPEIU members to participate in this action in some way, either in Washington or in their communities. "The cuts in these valuable programs will impact on the workers in this union in many ways," she said. "It will make it more difficult for us to do our jobs and it will lessen the quality of services that we provide."

Look for photos of the event in the next issue.



# Local 100 Member Mark Pallans To Carry the Olympic Torch

**M**ark Pallans, OPEIU Local 100, member is one of 5,500 community heroes chosen to carry the 1996 Olympic Torch. Tens of thousands were nominated for the honor.

On April 27, the Olympic Flame will arrive in Los Angeles to ignite the Olympic Torch Relay, blazing an 84-day trail across the United States to Atlanta, Georgia — site of the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games. Pallans will be handed the torch in Miami and carry it approximately one-half mile to 1 kilometer on-route to Ft. Lauderdale.

Pallans was nominated as a torchbearer by United Way and was selected because of his outstanding work as a volunteer and community leader, as well as acts of generosity and kindness. Specifically he has spent 12 years as the volunteer coordinator for Broward County's Emergency Management Department, supervising over 200 volunteer communications operators.

He also worked six years as the volunteer chairman of the Federal Communication's Florida Region, "where I oversee licensing of all public safety agency radio communications."

He has also been a member of the City of Coral Springs' Construction Review Committee that provides oversight on

all municipal construction projects. And, he was the Operations Chairman for the Fort Lauderdale Winterfest Boat Parade for five years.

"All this and much more has been done just for the personal satisfaction, and not any great glory," Pallans said.

He is an OPEIU Local 100 member, working for Dade County as a telecommunications engineer.

At the current time he is in training to carry the torch, and generally getting in shape.

We expect to be able to print a photo of Mark Pallans making his run in the next issue of *White Collar*.

## The Consumer Price Index for Canada and the U.S.

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
<b>1995 Canada CPI</b>	132.1	132.7	133.0	133.4	133.7	133.7	134.0	133.8	133.9	133.8	134.1	133.9
% Change from Prior Month	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.2	-0.1	0.1	-0.1	0.2	-0.1
% Change from Year Earlier	0.6	1.8	2.2	2.5	2.9	2.7	2.5	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.1	1.7
<b>1996 Canada CPI</b>	134.2	134.4	134.9									
% Change from Prior Month	0.2	0.1	0.4									
% Change from Year Earlier	1.6	1.3	1.4									
<b>1995 U.S. CPI-W</b>	*440.2 **147.8	441.7 148.3	443.0 148.7	444.6 149.3	445.6 149.6	446.5 149.9	446.5 149.9	447.4 150.2	448.5 150.6	449.6 151.0	449.5 150.9	449.5 150.9
% Change from Prior Month	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.3	-0.1	0.0
% Change from Year Earlier	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.2	3.2	3.1	2.8	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.4	2.5
<small>*CPI-W figured on a 1967 base ** CPI-W figured on a 1982-84 base</small>												
<b>1996 U.S. CPI-W</b>	451.9 151.7	453.2 152.2	455.6 152.9	457.6 153.6								
% Change from Prior Month	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.5								
% Change from Year Earlier	2.6	2.6	2.8	2.9								

# Local 3 Welcomes New Members at CATS

by Business Manager Nancy Wohlforth for the Local 3 Reporter

**N**o, they don't work at the longest running musical in town. CATS stands for Chemical Awareness and Treatment Services, Inc. CATS has several programs located in San Francisco and San Mateo Counties focused on providing services for people affected by substance abuse and/or homelessness. Some of the places our new members work include:

- **Mobile Assistance Patrol.** This is a van transportation program that operates 24 hours a day. MAP vans receive requests for rides from individuals who need assistance to get to hospitals, doctors and other service providers or who are under the influence and need help. Two of our bargaining committee members, Doyle Goodwin and Rene Celiz, are MAP drivers.

- **McMillian Drop-In Center.** This facility is open 24 hours a day and provides a safe, clean space for homeless substance abusers. Our

members provide substance abuse treatment referrals, education and case management and individual and peer group counseling. Showers and a lounge are also provided.

- **A Woman's Place.** This is a 24-hour housing facility for women with special needs stemming from mental disabilities, substance abuse and HIV-related issues.

Unfortunately, it took us over a year to negotiate the first collective bargaining agreement, but we believe that our efforts paid off in a very good first contract that, although not signed until January 1996, provides wage increases retroactive to July 1995. We obtained excellent seniority, training language, equity pay adjustments, a grievance procedure, union security, program closure language and excellent benefits. Members ratified the agreement unanimously.

Members also elected stewards in almost every program. The new

stewards are planning to attend the union's new steward training program on March 30. Doyle Goodwin, our MAP steward, explained why CATS' employees wanted a union:

*The union was vitally necessary so employees didn't have to deal with difficult management alone. We needed someone to help us because most of us had no idea of the empowerment we had together. Now we know that we can assert ourselves in asking for what we need. This contract is just the beginning for us to exercise our assertiveness. I'm very happy with the agreement, especially because of the employee protections provided with the grievance procedures.*

We at Local 3 welcome all our new CATS members and look forward to seeing you often at our meetings, training sessions, as members of committees and at your work sites.

# Michigan Nurses

(Continued from page 1)

an agreement for voluntary recognition by card check for the 299 RNs at the Greenlawn Campus. "It is extremely rare these days," Strauss said, "for an employer to agree to voluntary recognition. It's thanks to the expertise and experience of Local 459 staff that it was achieved."

This unprecedented agreement with MCMC was the culmination of three years of union organizing activity with the RNs. In February 1995, Local 459 narrowly lost an election for union representation. Prior to that election, the organizing campaign was hampered by legal challenges and union-bashing consultants. This included a legal battle where MCMC contended that "all RNs are supervisors." Local 459 persevered through all the legal maneuvering and union busting. "I can't believe that they have finally organized," said Joe Marutiak, President of Local 459. "It's been a long, tough road."

The RN organizing committee repeated those sentiments. "I've been involved in the union organizing campaign since 1993, and this win makes the effort worthwhile. Now I have a choice and a voice," said Mary Jo Biggs, Emergency Room RN. Karen Denovich, another RN in ER, said, "This is a very special time for me. I've seen many injustices to this profession in the last ten years and I'm grateful that we will finally be a unified voice."

The RN organizing committee is looking forward to negotiations with MCMC. As Janet Pool, a critical care RN, put it: "This card check means that we have a true collaborative relationship that can only result in a better MCMC."

The RNs join the Greenlawn Paraprofessionals in being the first units to organize at the Greenlawn campus, Strauss said. The paraprofessionals organized through an NLRB election in August of 1995 and are currently in negotiations. Local 459 has represented the MCMC Pennsylvania campus RNs and clerical, maintenance and service units for many years. The two campuses became part of MCMC after a merger of the old Lansing General Hospital (Pennsylvania campus) and the old Ingham Medical Center (Greenlawn campus) in 1992.

The Pennsylvania campus RNs assisted in organizing the RNs at Greenlawn. Also instrumental in obtaining this victory were Local 459 staff members Joe Marutiak, Rick Ransom, Ann Flescher and Melanie Dalrymple, plus International Representative Bonnie Strauss.



