



WHITE COLLAR

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

No. 483

Issue 2, Summer 2003

Canadian convention stresses importance of organizing *Lajeunesse reelected as Canadian Director*

The Office and Professional Employees International Union's ninth triennial Canadian Convention revealed its theme early, one that is at the very heart of the labor movement—organizing. The two-day convention, held April 26-27 at the Marriott Chateau Champlain Hotel in Montreal, Quebec opened to an address by International President Michael Goodwin (see page 8 for full text of speech), followed by a report on OPEIU activities by Canadian Director Michel Lajeunesse, who was also reelected as Canadian Director.

The approximately 150 delegates and alternates who attended the conference heard a rousing speech by Lajeunesse. He spoke of the many accomplishments of Canadian local unions, such as Local 527's strike against the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board and the Harris government; Local 26's successful recruiting efforts at the Northern Credit Union; Local 378's strength in resisting the repressive tactics of the Campbell government, which wants to privatize

ICBC and BC Hydro; and Local 434's tough stance against the Laurentian Bank, in forcing the bank to stand down in the threat of a strike. He spoke eloquently of the power of being a partner in an international union, and the benefits that this solidarity brings to the Canadian union. His speech hinged on the importance of bringing Canadian unorganized workers who want to be in a union into OPEIU and other unions, proclaiming that "union organizing is fundamental to our central commitment: to enable all women and men to have a say in their destiny and to make their voices heard."

Kimon Valaskakis, Ph.D., former Ambassador of Canada to the OECD, addressed the delegates on Saturday afternoon. Valaskakis was Canada's ambassador to the OECD from 1995 to 1999, and is currently president of Club Athens, an international initiative involving world leaders interested in improving the state of global governance. He spoke to the delegates about the three steps of becoming a global village, and

how societies of the world need to think of a system of governing that will take into account the need to help other societies to get out of poverty. Valaskakis' words served as a powerful reminder of the poverty that exists in the world, and OPEIU's need, as an international union, to do its part to help bring an end to it.

The delegates learned a unique lesson about academic research on Canadian unions through a keynote address by Dr. Charlotte Yates, Professor of Labour Studies and Political Science and Director of the Labour Studies Program at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada. *White Collar* interviewed Dr. Yates to bring some of the elements of her speech to the convention to the readers of *White Collar*. (See page 10 for the full interview.) The Secretary-Treasurer of the Canadian Labour Congress, Hassan Yussuff, rounded out the speakers on Sunday.

The convention closed with the election of new officers for Ontario, Region X, to the



Michel Lajeunesse

Canadian National Committee. The new officers are: Maureen O'Halloran, former ROC organizer and now staff representative for the Central Ontario Council; Patsy Clancy, staff representative for the COC; and Judith Suraski, President of Local 550 in Toronto.

Canadian coverage continued on page 8

First collective bargaining agreement for RNs in Little Rock ratified

After three years of negotiating and deflecting stalling tactics, the nurses of United Healthcare Workers (UHW), OPEIU Local 22, Little Rock, Arkansas prevailed and the first-ever collective bargaining agreement for registered nurses (RNs) in Little Rock was ratified on March 6. The RNs are employed by St. Vincent's Hospital.

In September 2000, OPEIU representatives Paul Bohelski and Shelia Peacock, along with four RNs serving as negotiating committee members, Cheryle Coleman, Paige Yates, Sue Randall and Phil Winters, began what turned out to be three years of intense negotiations. OPEIU attorney Mel Schwarzwald joined the negotiating team late last year to fight off anti-union RNs who filed for decertification. The National Labor Relations Board rejected the decertification bid.

"This contract provides a solid foundation to build upon, by giving RNs a voice to address patient care issues and to improve nurses' working conditions," said Cheryle Coleman, who served as acting president during the negotiation. "We now have a united

voice that will be heard and considered in the decisions that affect patients and us. Because of our united voice, we were able to negotiate a fair contract that protects us, our families, our futures and our patients."

One of the highlights of the contract is the new collaborative council that has been instituted. Representatives from management and the Union will sit together to discuss and resolve patient care issues. The president of the union has equal power with the nursing director, resulting in a real partnership on patient care issues.

Other highlights include:

- Improved grievance procedure;
- The right to have a union representative present during disciplinary meetings;
- Ability to cash out 50 percent of EID's at retirement;
- Absences on minor holidays to be counted as one occurrence;
- Increased tuition reimbursement; and
- Increased time to report to work (45 minutes) when on call.

On April 4, UHW, Local 22 elected its

officers. They are Ann Marchand, President; Marianne Flammang, Vice President; Joyce Roberts, Secretary-Treasurer; Sue Randall, Recording Secretary; Trustees: Barney

Treanor, Janet Diaz and Karon Maddux. The Executive Board Member/Chief Stewards are Cheryle Coleman (Infirmery), Paige Yates (Doctors) and Lisa Lafferty (Sherwood).



Pictured left to right are: (Standing) Joyce Roberts, Secretary-Treasurer; Cheryle Coleman, Executive Board Member/Chief Steward (Infirmery); Sue Randall, Recording Secretary; Shelia Peacock, International Representative; (Sitting) Ann Marchand, President; and Lisa Lafferty, Executive Board Member/Chief Steward (Sherwood).

ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE

I N S I D E

2 Appraisers partners with AMCO

3 OPEIU organizes!

4 Local 2 organizes ADT Security

13 CareLite Pilots ratify contract

Local 40 wins landmark decision in U.S. Court of Appeals

In a landmark decision, Local 40 and the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) prevailed against Mt. Clemens General Hospital on May 15, 2003, after a four-year battle. The U.S. Court of Appeals upheld the original decision of the NLRB that the hospital's prohibition of the "No F.O.T." buttons constituted an unfair labor practice.

In 1999, Local 40 distributed "No F.O.T." buttons to registered nurses (RNs) at Mt. Clemens in support of its opposition to forced overtime. After the buttons were distributed, management at Mt. Clemens confiscated them, taking them out of RN mailboxes and away from nurses who were wearing them.

When Local 40 grieved the Mt. Clemens' decision, the administrative law judge concluded that the prohibition was an unfair labor practice in violation of the National Labor Relations Act. Once the NLRB reviewed that decision, they affirmed the administrative law judge's decision. Mt. Clemens then filed a petition for review of the NLRB's decision and order and the NLRB filed a cross application for enforcement of its order. After reviewing the substantial evidence in Local 40 and the NLRB's favor, the U.S. Court of Appeals denied Mt. Clemens' review, and granted NLRB's cross-application to enforce its order.

Mt. Clemens will now be required to follow through with the NLRB's orders to post a notice to employees stating that they will not discriminatorily require employees to remove union insignia or buttons from their uniforms or confiscate the insignia; nor will they maintain an overly broad policy concerning the wearing of union buttons; nor will they interfere with, restrain or coerce RNs in the exercise of the rights guaranteed by Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act.

"Local 40 is very pleased. We were pretty sure we were going to win, as this was really a freedom of speech issue," said Local 40 President Vickie Kasper. "Cases like this cost the hospital a lot of money in attorney fees. The cost to the employer to fight nurses over a button makes me bring into question how they can say they don't have any money."



A "No F.O.T." button.

Local 1794 certified to represent District 1199, SEIU staff

Local 1794 in Cleveland, Ohio was certified on March 17, 2003 to represent the staff of District 1199 of the Healthcare and Social Service Union, SEIU, AFL-CIO.

District 1199 staff, which includes SEIU staff in Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky, were eager to become a part of OPEIU. They had previously made two attempts to unionize, but were unsuccessful. In January 2003, they began their third attempt and contacted OPEIU Local 1794, which was originally created by clerical and secretarial staff that worked for unions. Local 1794 now also includes the staffs of credit unions as well as one unit for public employees, but the backbone of the Local remains the staffs of unions.

Although, as employees of SEIU, the staff paid dues, they had no rights as a part of the union. They were without a contract, could be fired at will, had no just cause termination clause, and had no grievance procedure. As employees of a union, the SEIU employees wanted the rights that union members enjoy, and so when they came to Local 1794, they were well organized and ready to become part of OPEIU.

"The SEIU employees tried to organize an independent staff union in the past and their efforts fizzled," said Vivian Grubbs, President of Local 1794. "We followed through, had a hearing with the National Labor Relations Board, and were certified to represent them. We are glad to have them and will begin working to get the first negotiating session for a contract with SEIU shortly."

American Guild of Appraisers partners with AMCO

The American Guild of Appraisers, OPEIU Guild 44 has forged a partnership with AMCO, a leading appraisal management company, designed to enhance the way appraisers and lenders do business during these trying economic times.

Although for months many financial sources have repeatedly observed that the U.S. housing market is one of the few pillars maintaining the integrity of the economy, there is doubt that it could withstand a continued economic downturn. To remain proactive, the AGA Guild 44 began evaluating potential partners in the appraisal business to determine which relationships promised opportune ways to bring innovative appraisal products to bear on the double problem of investor skepticism and actual investment value.

The decision to partner with AMCO was based on shared principles, as well as the potential of work for AGA members. AMCO manages a nationwide network of 11,000 active certified independent appraisers, and AMCO has agreed to promote AGA membership within its network. The network offers a vast pool from which to draw strength to the Guild, and will have a real impact on the professionalism of practicing appraisers.

The AGA and AMCO will take affirmative

steps toward better training and licensing practices that satisfy regulators and further enhance the quality of the valuations that support union investment. The result will be more members, better quality appraisals and therefore, better quality investments for unions and members.

"With the relationships cultivated among AMCO appraisers and our continued attention to appraisers' concerns, together we could extend our principles further into the nation's large community of appraisers," said Guild 44 President William Sentner. "And while we enhance our membership and member benefits, we will contribute to a safer, sounder housing market and improve the quality of our investments."

According to the Guild, throughout its 20 year history, AMCO's ability to deliver a full spectrum of high-quality, technologically innovative property valuation solutions has earned it a reputation as an industry leader committed to excellence. AMCO has strong management and ownership, for which maintaining excellent relationships with appraisers is of paramount importance. AMCO management recognizes the importance of a quality appraisal and the role it plays in the safety and soundness of investment value.

King County Housing Authority workers win election with Local 8

Workers at the King County Housing Authority (KCHA) voted on April 8 to join Local 8, Seattle, Washington in a mail ballot election conducted by the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC), announced Business Manager Suzanne Mode. This was a real victory for this group of 65 housing assistants, housing specialists, office assistants and inspectors, who organized to have a say in promotion and hiring practices and to establish a fair pay system.

Key to winning the election were the efforts of workers who were willing to speak out, talk to one another, learn about the union and counteract misinformation. Seattle Housing Authority members who organized with Local 8 several years ago played a key role in informing the KCHA workers how much difference a union can make in their lives. Many thanks to Bill Francis, Shannon Salinas, Tony Jamerson, Sylvia Trepp, Jamie Martinez and Brenda Kendrix.

"I was on the Organizing Committee from the beginning, and we have a long road ahead of us, but the future is bright now that we are union," Loren Sisley, a 12-year employee, said. "Our next step is to get to the bargaining table as soon as possible to win a first contract!" For more information, log on to Local 8's website at www.opeiu8.org.



Looking very happy after the ballots were counted are Vicki Jordon and Dawn Hayes of the King County Housing Authority with Local 8's Organizer Shelby Mooney (middle).

SPECIAL FEATURE: OPEIU ORGANIZES!

Organizers develop strategies at AFL-CIO Organizing Summit

Reaffirm commitment to organizing, growth

Several OPEIU representatives joined more than 250 top organizers from dozens of unions at the first-ever AFL-CIO Organizing Summit in Washington, D.C., January 10-11, 2003, held as part of labor's effort to "reverse the decline in union density and begin growing again."

"OPEIU is one of the few unions that experienced growth in 2002," OPEIU Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin Kistler said. "We already have strong organizing programs in place, and are dedicated to continuing to reach out to the unorganized in OPEIU traditional industries, as well as to continue our push to expand into new industries. The organizing summit was an excellent way to share ideas with other organizers from other unions and to reaffirm that commitment," Kistler said.

Kistler, International Vice President

Richard Lanigan, Region II, Senior Organizer Patricia Hoffman (Local 153), ROC Organizer Myra Hepburn, International Representative John Lynch, Organizer Lupe Salazar (Local 174), Senior International Representative Jeff Rusich, Local 4873 President John Conley and Director of Organizing Dennis Arrington attended the summit. They shared strategies on how to best help workers gain a voice on the job and strengthen the union movement so workers have a say in their workplaces, communities, nation and the global economy. Workshop topics included: Strategies and Approaches to Reduce Employer Opposition; Central Labor Councils, State Feds, and Alliances with Unions in Organizing Partnerships; and Building a Union Movement.

"What we face ... is the most central moral challenge of our time: The challenge

of helping working women and men come together to improve their lives," AFL-CIO President John Sweeney told the summit.

"For working families, forming and joining unions ... [is] the only way they can fight back against the political thugs who are stealing the worker's chance at a better life and the corporate criminals who are mugging them in their workplaces," Sweeney continued. "The challenge is to find ways to organize despite the obstacles that have been placed in our way by the corporate forces that have seized control of our workplaces, our capital markets and our government."

Organizers at the summit also created higher standards for holding elected officials accountable, calling for them to support union organizing campaigns as well as worker-friendly legislation. The summit also presented the AFL-CIO's inaugural Wellstone

Awards to two elected officials who exceed that standard. The award, named in honor of the late Senator Paul Wellstone of Minnesota, was presented to former Vermont Governor Howard Dean and California State Senator and former U.S. Congressman John Burton.

Summit participants also discussed ways to shift additional resources to organizing activities, to educate existing union members about the obstacles they might face when trying to form a union, to mobilize community support for organizing and to train a new generation of union organizers.

"Workers and their families are fed up and ready to fight back," Sweeney said. "More workers than ever say they'd like the chance to vote for a union ... [union activists] must escalate our effort to build a bigger, stronger labor movement and do it faster than we ever contemplated."

OPEIU makes organizing a top priority

International Organizing Conference planned for September 2003

OPEIU is committing its financial resources, energy and manpower to organizing the unorganized in OPEIU's traditional industries and to increasing its share of new and emerging industries.

The International Union has called for an International Organizing Conference, to be held in mid-September 2003 in Chicago, Illinois. The conference, which will be open to all full-time officers and staff dedicated to organizing activities, will focus OPEIU's organizing efforts to specific economic sectors and teach research techniques to help identify potential organizing opportunities. More information about this conference will be sent to local unions in the coming months.

Kevin Kistler, OPEIU Director of Organization and Field Services, has been leading a number of local organizing conferences to gear up for the international conference. One such conference was held in Las Vegas, Nevada with staff of OPEIU Local

4873, Industrial, Technical and Professional Employees (ITPE), attended by President Michael Goodwin. ITPE President John Conley convened the conference and Kistler led the discussion assisted by International Organizer Donna Schaffer and ROC Organizer Myra Hepburn. The ITPE affiliated with OPEIU in July 2001.

A similar conference was held with the Central Ontario Council in April, and a nationwide Canadian organizing conference was held in Montreal. Approximately 50 full-time organizers and officers from various locals throughout the provinces attended, and again the discussion was led by Kistler and assisted by Schaffer, Hepburn and International Representative John Lynch. Canadian Director Michel Lajeunesse convened the conference, and International Vice President Jerri New served as conference coordinator. The conference featured a panel discussion by three Canadian officers, new International Vice

President Elizabeth Fong, Organizer Kathleen Madden and ROC Organizer Francois Champoux.

"These conferences are an excellent

opportunity for our full-time organizers to learn the latest organizing techniques, and to help shape the International's organizing plan for the coming years," Kistler said.



Organizers learn new techniques at OPEIU/ITPE, Local 4873 organizing conference.

MAGE benefits from OPEIU affiliation as Michigan faces budget crisis

The Michigan Association of Governmental Employees (MAGE) affiliation with OPEIU came at a critical time for MAGE. Governor Granholm's 2003-2004 budget has been released, and the news for state employees is worse than predicted. Governor Granholm has designated \$250 million of the \$1 billion budget deficit to be shouldered by state workers. The expected three percent raise for state government employees is clearly in jeopardy, and comes after the base rate wage of state workers had been decimated during Governor Engler's twelve-year term.

"What we as state workers need to understand is that we do face a genuine crisis. No governor in Michigan has ever been forced to cut over a billion dollars in state spending," said John DeTizio, MAGE/OPEIU Local 2002's Labor Relations Director. "What the Governor needs to understand is that we are already working harder than ever due to the early retirements. What the Governor needs to understand is that all state employees are still licking their wounds received during a 12-year battering under Governor Engler. What the Governor needs to understand is that we know she is on our side. We know that she does not want to harm state workers. We understand that we will have to accept some of the responsibility to resolve this crisis...but \$250 million is not acceptable. It's not fair and it's just not right," he said.

MAGE is working hard on behalf of its members to minimize the effects of this budget crisis on its members. They have already met twice with the Director of the Office of the State Employer, David Fink, and have reminded him of all the concessions that state workers have made in the last decade. They have made it clear that although state workers are willing to do more to help offset the budget crisis, any proposals which further erode base rate wages will be deemed unacceptable and fought fiercely.

During this crisis, MAGE will now be able to stand shoulder to shoulder in solidarity with OPEIU, and will have access to all of the resources that OPEIU can offer. MAGE affiliated with OPEIU in October 2002.

Despite the dire budget news, MAGE has continued to push forward on resolutions passed at the MAGE General Council meeting in May 2002.

The MAGE Compensation Committee was directed to negotiate with the Office of the State Employer to increase RN Supervisor hourly wages by 20 to 40 percent to achieve parity with the private sector, to provide alternatives for flexible work schedules, and to get RN Supervisors the ability to accrue comp time in lieu of holiday overtime. The MAGE Compensation Committee succeeded in convincing the State Employer to perform a recruitment and retention study of Registered Nurse Managers in the Department of Community Health, Corrections, and Military and Veterans offices. The results of this study will provide the facts necessary to secure the issues contained in the resolution.

The 2003 General Council meeting was held May 17-18, and delegates discussed and voted on MAGE Resolutions and Nominations for State Offices on behalf of their district/council members. Highlights of this meeting will appear in the next issue of *White Collar*.

President Goodwin also met with Mark Gaffney, President of the Michigan State AFL-CIO, to discuss the situation and to ask for his support during the Michigan state budgeting process. Goodwin also sent a letter to Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm stating OPEIU's position as follows:

Dear Governor Granholm:

Let me begin by providing my condolences for having inherited a \$1.8 billion deficit.

I am writing to you to share OPEIU's concern about plans for state employees to shoulder \$250 million of the \$1.8 billion. Our concern is for the morale of your managers and supervisors who have already endured a very difficult period under your predecessor's administration.

Allow me to recall some of the issues that have fostered this morale problem. During the last five years state employees have been subject to two early retirements. The latest one ended just a few short months ago. In both retirements, Departments were limited to re-filling only a fraction of the positions lost. This has resulted in increased workloads for all managers, jeopardizing the quality of work. This increased workload has made it increasingly more difficult to motivate their subordinates who are also subject to increased workloads.

During the last ten years of your predecessor's administration, state employees lost 13 percent in wages when measured against the Consumer Price Index, contributing to the serious morale problem.

The Michigan Association of Governmental Employees and OPEIU understand that the budget crisis is not of your making. We understand that you respect and support state workers. State managers and supervisors believe that they have already done their part, they've given enough, and they just can't give any more.

We ask you to take the contributions that State managers and supervisors have already made into consideration in the new budget. Please don't support a budget proposal that would add to the current level of pain. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Michael Goodwin
President



OPEIU/MAGE Local 2002 participates in Michigan State AFL-CIO conference with public employee unions to discuss strategies on how to deal with the state budget.

Local 2 organizes ADT Security Services

OPEIU Local 2 won an important organizing campaign for workers at ADT Security Services, Inc., in Gaithersburg, Maryland on February 14, 2003, reports Region II Vice President and Local 2 President Dan Dyer. The victory for the technicians and installers of ADT was the result of a 32 to 20 vote for representation. The employees will join 250 ADT workers in Chantilly and Springfield, Virginia, and in Lanham, Maryland, which has grown into a major technological hub in Prince Georges County.

The organizing drive began in early January 2003 and culminated about a month

later with a solid win for Local 2. ADT employees Michael Ross and John Brennan quickly energized their co-workers. The focus surrounded a message of better working conditions through a voice on the job. Local 2 Organizer Lou Wolf provided tireless direction for the technicians and installers, while maintaining solidarity in the face of an anti-union campaign that included threats and the firing of one employee. Local 2 is challenging the termination.

This win strengthens the bargaining power for ADT employees in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. Local 2, which services

Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia, has entered into bargaining for increased wages and better working conditions.

Local 2 supports Rally for Peace

On January 17, 2003, with war only weeks away, a Rally for Peace was held in the nation's capital. A large contingent of Labor for Peace participated, among them OPEIU Local 2. The rally assembled on the Mall and marched to the Washington, D.C. Navy Yard. Once at their destination, the supporters conducted a People's Inspection for Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Earlier in the month, the Metropolitan

Washington Council issued a resolution opposing a unilateral attack against Iraq. The resolution also condemned President Bush's policies that are interpreted as anti-union and argued that the nation would be more secure if the attention was shifted to education, health care, and employment.

Local 2 was one of many unions that supported the Metropolitan Washington Council's resolution and participated in the march. The Rally for Peace saw union banners from across the country being proudly flown in a mass demonstration of more than 250,000 strong.



Local 2 members (pictured from left to right) Bruce Wolf, Sara Young, Myron Sharp, and Eric Starin carry the Local 2 banner during the Rally for Peace.



Bruce Wolf (left) and Eric Starin march on Washington.

Inspiring tomorrow's success at Local 29

Officers enter new term unopposed

In its 65-year history, no one can recall such a resounding show of support for the leadership of Local 29, Oakland, California, than that demonstrated at their January 15, 2003 General Membership meeting. That evening, "29ers" nominated without opposition incumbent President/Business Manager Tamara R. Rubyn, Secretary-Treasurer Patricia G. Sanchez and their entire leadership team for another three-year term, and all elective seats were filled by acclamation, avoiding the Local's need for the usual balloted election.

Rubyn, Sanchez and all officers were installed on April 16, sworn in by International Vice President Judy Solkovits, and at that meeting Rubyn announced the theme for the Local's upcoming term: "Inspiring Tomorrow's Success."

"Every day our members inspire us," Rubyn said, "and this term, our officers, staff and shop stewards will actively work together to reach our goals and dreams. We have demonstrated to the labor community that we are a force to be reckoned with, and when called upon, we stand for what we believe in

— at the same time, respecting the differences of our membership points of view."

Since the Local's 2000 election, which placed the governance of the union in the hands of the President/Business Manager position, Local 29 has experienced a period of unparalleled unity, leadership and peace. Members have seen themselves honored for their service in Local 29 through a "Member Recognition Program," which presented longevity pins to members with ten years of service or more. This program will continue into the new term, to thank each long-term member for their ongoing service and support.

Since 2000, every General Membership and Executive Board meeting has achieved a quorum, and the business of the Local has run smoothly, according to Rubyn. She reports that since 2000, the Local has seen an explosion in participation of shop stewards and activists, and grievances have been processed and resolved with greater care, diligence and alacrity. Arbitrations, when necessary, have yielded supportive outcomes

for the members who have been wronged. And contracts have been bargained successfully, with improvements in wages, benefits and protections, even in the face of increasing health care costs and a stalling economy.

"Our 'white ballot' election is a definite

sign that our members support what we're doing," Secretary-Treasurer Sanchez echoed. "We have our dedicated members, officers, and staff to thank for making our Local a success. We all look forward to continuing to work together over the next three years."



Local 29's newly elected officers take the oath of office, administered by Region V Vice President Judy Solkovits.



Vice President Solkovits and Local 29 Secretary-Treasurer Patricia Sanchez.



Local 29 President/Business Manager Tamara Rubyn announces the officers' theme for the upcoming term, "Inspiring Tomorrow's Success."

Hotel damaged in September 11 attack reopens

OPEIU members return to work

After 18 months of renovation, the Millennium Hilton Hotel reopened its doors to most of the 360 former employees, including two OPEIU Local 153, New York, N.Y. members. Local 153 members Motahar Hussain and Jeffrey Schloss returned along with 90 percent of the former workforce on May 5. Although the structure of the hotel was not damaged in the attacks, there were extensive damages ranging from broken or damaged glass fronts to smoke damage to toxic contaminants. The hotel reopened after receiving \$30 million in grants to renovate and repair the damages it sustained.

Although most of the workers at the hotel remained out of work for the 18 months after the attacks due to the economy, all of the employees were able to keep their health benefits because of an agreement between labor and management to alternate paying the cost, month by month. The New York Hotel Trades Council, the umbrella organization representing more than 20,000 hotel work-

ers in New York City, arranged for this protection of the hotel employees.

Prior to the attacks on 9/11, Hussain and Schloss were food and beverage cashiers in the restaurant outlets; the hotel has since combined the food and beverage cashiers with room service order takers, creating two more job openings for Local 153 members.

"We are so pleased to see Motahar and Jeffrey return to their jobs at the Millennium Hilton," Local 153 Secretary-Treasurer Richard Lanigan said. "The terrorist attacks were meant to permanently destroy us, but their return to work defeats the terrorists' mission. The agreement between management and labor to support their employees while they were out of work due to this tragedy highlights the good that comes from labor-management cooperation."

"I'm happy that the long wait for Local 153 members is finally over," said Rebecca Pomares, Local 153 Business Agent. "They're back to work with all seniority and the fringe benefits they enjoyed prior to 9/11."

Area Educational Conferences continue to expose

OPEIU Area Educational Conferences are helping members throughout the United States to gain valuable information to help them in their organizing, negotiation and overall communication activities on behalf of their local unions.

The West/Northwest Area Educational Conference was held May 16-18 in Anaheim, California and offered the latest training in grievance handling and effective contract language by arbitrator and mediator Michael H. LeRoy. Sessions also includ-

ed a discussion of offensive bargaining by attorney David A. Rosenfeld.

The Southeast/Southwest Area Educational Conference was held May 30 - June 1 in Tunica, Mississippi and offered training by AFL-CIO Representative There-

Boeey in building union strength through internal organizing. The weekend also included training in effective negotiation and communication skills by attorney Bryan Johnston.

As always, members at both conferences took advantage of the opportunity to meet with



Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin Kistler reviews conference program with members.



Members participate in the West/Northwest Area Educational Conference held in Anaheim, California, May 16-18.

members to latest organizing, negotiating techniques

President Michael Goodwin to discuss local issues and concerns. "I always enjoy these conferences, and the chance to get to sit down with

local unions and talk about what's going on in their area," Goodwin said. "It's very encouraging to hear about their efforts, and to see the

dedication and commitment they have to the Union and the labor movement."

Local Unions are encouraged to attend

these area educational conferences. The International provides a \$600 subsidy to each local union that participates in the conference.



Southeast/Southwest Area Educational Conference members in Tunica, Mississippi, May 30-June 1.

Canadian convention coverage, continued

Following is the address of International President Michael Goodwin to the Ninth Triennial Canadian Convention on Saturday, April 26, 2003.

Canadian Director Michel Lajeunesse, OPEIU Vice Presidents, CNC delegates, sisters and brothers, members and friends. Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

I bring you greetings from the OPEIU Executive Board, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney and the members of the Executive Council.

We meet at a tenuous time in our world history. As the U.S. declares victory in its war on terrorism in Iraq, it finds that relations with countries around the globe are not what they once were.

Nowhere is this more evident than here in Canada.

Despite the fact that Canada is the United States' neighbor and largest trading partner — accounting for 25 percent of its exports — relations between our two countries are greatly strained due to differing opinions on the war in Iraq. The cancellation of the planned May 5th summit between President Bush and Prime Minister Jean Chretien is an example of the breakdown of the once united alliance.

The same cannot be said of the relationship between union members in our two countries. That bond has never been stronger, and serves as a fine example on what working together for a common goal truly means.

I'm very proud of the many accomplishments of our union, many of which are a direct result of the solidarity among union members. It's a privilege for all of us who sit together on this dais to be serving as one to meet our common goal — of furthering the interests of all working people in North America. I'm honored to serve with individuals on the OPEIU Executive Board who have the dedication, the talent and the vision to take this union where it needs to go in the 21st century.

Leaders like Michel Lajeunesse, Jerri New, Maurice Laplante, Ruth Workewich, Sheila Morrison, Colleen Malley and all the other sisters and brothers of the CNC are all working together in common cause.

As I look around this room, I see the faces of dedicated and committed activists... who swell with pride over their union's accomplishments... whose determination and dedication to the cause fill me with optimism about our future.

Since the last Canadian convention in 2000, this union has not only survived difficult times, it has grown and gained more respect. And much of that credit goes to individuals who guided our organization through good times and bad, but are now no longer with us.

We cannot talk about great leaders without taking a moment to remember Romeo Corbeil, Gilles Beaugard and Carol Dupuis. In the course of one year, our union suffered a tremendous loss — the force of which was felt particularly hard here in Canada.

First we lost our Secretary- Treasurer Gilles Beaugard. And then, at the tender age of 42, Secretary-Treasurer Carol Dupuis

was tragically taken from us, from her family and young son, Alexander.

It's impossible for me to describe the loss to OPEIU, their dedication to working people and our union, the vast knowledge, experience, wisdom and empathy that these two exemplary people brought.

Thanks in great part to them, to their tenacity, their courage and wisdom, OPEIU has become more aggressive, more progressive, and more respected in all of North America. Though they are no longer with us, their indelible spirit lives on in all we say and do as OPEIU members.

Let's not forget the kind of people they were... Strong and committed... Undaunted... Uncompromising in integrity... Incomparable in courage ... Sharing an unshakable belief that their work was vital ... That their purpose was good... And their cause was just.

They were true labor leaders, leaving our organization better off than the way they found it. We now have a solemn obligation to continue their work, to continue the fight for justice and equality.

We meet here today united, as union activists, banded together with one goal in mind - to achieve a better life for our mem-

ing poor to fend for themselves.

The U.S. Internal Revenue Service announced yesterday its plan to ask more than 4 million of the working poor who now claim a special tax credit to provide the most exhaustive proof of eligibility ever demanded of any class of taxpayers while corporations, business owners, investors and partnerships face no such demands to prove the validity of their claims. The new rules will set a standard of proof so high that it will be difficult if not impossible for honest taxpayers to meet. As a result many working poor entitled to a tax credit will no longer receive it.

The U.S. Government also issued new rules for truck drivers permitting them to drive more hours in one stretch in the first major revision of hours-of-service rules in 64 years. The new rule will allow employers to assign truck drivers to spend up to 11 straight hours behind the wheel and three additional hours loading and unloading, making it a 14-hour day. All of this the government says is necessary to reduce accidents.

And of course we've all heard of the cover-up at American Airlines. While demanding \$1.62 billion in concessions from its unions it was recently discovered that the



Michael Goodwin

about concerns of workers.

On the global front, the economies of many of the countries of the world continue to struggle, including the United States. On the other hand, Canada's economy continues to do better.

In a subdued global economy, Canada's economic growth continues to lead the world's other major industrial countries. In the semi-annual World Economic Outlook, the IMF said it expects Canada's economy to grow at an annual rate of 2.8 percent this year before accelerating to 3.2 percent in 2004, compared to a slow U.S. growth of 1.9 percent this year and 2.9 percent next year.

Despite the differences in the economic outlook, working people of Canada and the U.S. share another threat — rising healthcare costs.

Canadians have long enjoyed superior healthcare coverage, but its continuation is now coming into question due to the rising cost of health care, propelled mainly by escalating prescription drug costs. Canadian employers are raising worker co-payments, cutting benefits or adjusting wage increases to offset higher costs. The Canadian government is facilitating these rising healthcare costs through extended patent protection laws, which prevent less expensive generic drugs from coming to market. In addition, as a result of funding cuts, provinces have cut back on healthcare programs as well.

The good news is that the labor movement in Canada is not taking this laying down. They're fighting back with the full strength of the CLC-mobilizing activists to protest, picket and rally against these outrages.

Let us recommit ourselves today to continue to grow and strengthen our union over the next three years and position it to do great things in the years that follow.

Let us utilize the infrastructure we already have in place. Let us commit to organizing in every province, let us commit to educating ourselves on how to organize more effectively, let us commit ourselves to train more and more of our members on the techniques of organizing and let us commit ourselves to represent our members even more aggressively, more progressively, and more militantly than ever before.

Our legacy and our survival as an orga-

Continued on next page

***Let us recommit ourselves today to
continue to grow and strengthen our union
over the next three years and position it to
do great things in the years that follow.***

bers and their families. To build a strong foundation for a brighter future. We are united by our shared experiences and beliefs.

We are driven by a common goal of securing a better quality of life for all working women and men. Day after day, our members put everything on the line to improve the working conditions for all OPEIU members. We take our fight to the streets so that our members, and the next generation of members, can have it a little easier... live a little better. We fight not only for ourselves and our families, but also for those who follow in our footsteps, for those who will carry on the struggle after we are gone.

As I said earlier, we meet at a tenuous time in world history. While the United States continues its war on terrorism abroad, threats continue to mount against working people at home. An ever-worsening economy coupled with a never-ending stream of layoffs has left many Americans disheartened and disillusioned. Tragically, many now find themselves unable to support their families and without any real prospects for the future. Unemployment is rising, 41 million people continue to be without health insurance while our nation's leaders continue to support \$350 billion to \$550 billion in tax cuts for the rich leaving the working poor and the non-work-

company granted seven executives cash bonuses of up to twice their base salaries if they stayed employed until January 2005. The company's president would have received a \$1.6 million bonus. It was also discovered that the company paid a \$41 million payment into a trust fund set up to protect the pensions of 45 executives — that's nearly \$1 million per executive. When the unions discovered these abuses and made them public, the company president resigned.

These are just a few examples of why no individual can go it alone in today's society. We all need protection both from government and employers.

With the wrong people in power, decisions are made that adversely affect working people. With the election of George Bush (or should I say the selection of George Bush by the U.S. Supreme Court), all social programs have been set aside. It's incredible that just 27 months ago the U.S. enjoyed a \$3 trillion budget surplus. That surplus has now been squandered by the Bush administration's program of tax cuts for the rich. They want to bankrupt the Treasury so that there will be no money left for social programs. The Bush appointed Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao is the worst anti-worker, anti-labor Secretary in history. She cares more about jailing union leaders than she does

Delegates approve new structure in Quebec

On Saturday, May 24, 2003 more than 300 members in Quebec attended a province-wide meeting that resulted in a complete restructuring of the province, including new Local Union charters.

With a wide range of membership in the Local Unions of Quebec, some Locals have been facing tough employers without the means to defend their rights. Large Local Unions have been getting larger, as they have the means to organize, whereas small Locals without those resources have been getting smaller. In order to represent the Local Unions more fairly, the Local Unions voted to reorganize into new Local Unions, which are structured by who they represent, not where they are located. These new Local Unions are all under the umbrella of SEPB Quebec, which replaces the Eastern Canada Council as a body that will provide all representational services for Local Unions affected. SEPB Quebec gives the Local Unions access to office support staff, staff representatives, lawyers, and educational

materials—all elements that will make the Locals more successful in representing the membership.

The new Local Unions remain autonomous, and will pay per capita to SEPB Quebec that entitles them to access to all SEPB Quebec resources. The fourteen new Local Unions are: Local 571, representing essential bargaining units comprised of professional employees; Local 573, representing essentially salaried workers working for the Quebec Construction Board; Local 574, representing essentially salaried workers in Industrial and Service sectors; Local 575, representing essentially salaried workers working for the Mouvement Desjardins; Local 576, representing essentially salaried workers working for New Frontiers and Riverside School Boards; Local 577, representing essentially salaried workers working for Sir Wilfred Laurier School Board; Local 578, representing essentially salaried workers working for Marie-Victorin School Board; Local 579, representing essentially salaried workers working for Marguerite-

Bourgeois School Board; Local 434, representing salaried employees of the Laurentian Bank and the CIBC-VISA; Local 463, representing four units of the salaried employees of the Gaz Métropolitain; Local 526, representing eight units in the Industrial Sector in the North and East of Quebec City; and dissident Locals Local 110 Gatneau,

Local 480 Buckingham, and Local 447 Portage due Fair.

The new executive committee that will govern SEPB Quebec was elected on Saturday, and includes: Michel Lajeunesse, SEPB Quebec Director; Maurice Laplante, President; Chantal Dumoulin, Secretary; and Francine Hebert, Treasurer.



The new executive committee takes the oath of office.



Pictured from right to left are: Maurice Laplante, International Vice President for Region I, who was also elected President of SEPB Quebec; newly elected SEPB Quebec Secretary Chantal Dumoulin (also President of Local 463 in Montreal, PQ and CNC Regional Officer for Region I) and Canadian Legal Counsel Pierre Gingras.



Five of the eight new SEPB Quebec Local Union charters.

Address, continued

Continued from previous page
nization depend on how aggressively we move forward and how we organize new members.

We know that the entire labor movement, both in Canada and the United States, is battling for its very existence. Despite obstacles, some of which we've never seen before, and declining union membership throughout North America, your union has continued to grow, adding new members at a rate that outpaces most other unions.

But we can't afford to become complacent. Yes, we've had organizing success, but if we are to continue to grow — to grow stronger — and be the most powerful organization we can be, then we must accelerate our efforts. We must have a renewed call to

arms — a renewed commitment to organizing and educational programs.

That's why I'm happy to see the addition of an organizing program following this convention. And that's why I have called for an international conference on organizing in the fall. Once the date is set, I hope your Local Union will be able to send organizers to the conference.

We must also increase our involvement in political action. Canadian and American workers have reaped enormous benefits through the involvement of organized labor in the political process. This involvement is more critical now than ever before.

We will soon be facing new challenges on this front — Quebecers face a new unknown with the election of Liberal Party member Jean

Charest as prime minister, ending the nine-year reign of the Parti Quebecois. Only time will tell how Charest will deal with the interests of working people — but one thing is clear — we must remind all politicians in every province that we are watching them carefully, and that they are answerable to workers. Let them know that our members are more united, that they will do everything possible to ensure that our allies — those politicians who are truly concerned about working people — are elected and reelected, and that those who are not will be soundly defeated.

We are indeed a united union. As we meet here this weekend, let us renew our commitment to stand shoulder to shoulder — not separately as Canadians or Americans — but as union sisters and brothers united in com-

mon cause across North America to effect change in our workplaces — change in our communities — and change in the world in which we work and live.

We have the resources — we have the activists — and we have the leadership necessary to propel this union forward, into a new day for our members, future members and all working people in Canada and the United States.

I'm excited about the future — I'm excited about new ideas and how we can work together to bring about a higher quality of life for all North American workers.

May the discussions that you have and the decisions that you make at this convention help you to achieve these goals.

Thank you and God bless.

Canadian convention coverage, continued

Research shows Canadian unions are doing good job of organizing the unorganized

Dr. Charlotte Yates, Professor of Labour Studies and Political Science and Director of the Labour Studies Program at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario addressed the ninth triennial Canadian Convention of the OPEIU to discuss her research on Canadian labor, as well as strategies that the conference attendees can use in formulating organizing strategies.

White Collar interviewed Dr. Yates to bring some of that important research to our readers.

How would you characterize the state of union organizing in Canada today?

In the last ten years, individual unions as well as labor federations have invested considerable time and resources into organizing the unorganized. Despite the election in many provinces of hard-line conservative governments and their introduction of anti-union legislation, unions have done fairly well at continuing to organize the unorganized. Take Ontario for example. After a couple of years of union disarray following the introduction of labor laws that created a hostile environment for union organizing, unions have overcome many of these obstacles such that in 2000-2001 the number of workers organized in Ontario reached near record levels for the decade. Unions are also continuing to innovate in terms of the organizing strategies they use, which is a sign of continued commitment to organizing.

Your research has shown that it is not just anti-union legislation that has impeded union activity; it is also a political environment that accentuates these differences by emboldening employers in their fights to stay union free. How can unions organize better and smarter in a negative political atmosphere?

The first lesson unions need to take to heart is that while supportive labor laws and political parties in power make the job of union organizing a heck of a lot easier, the history of unions tells us that they can win the hearts and minds of workers under adverse conditions. But to win in today's environment, unions need to engage in some serious reform. This means a number of things: 1) Unions need to take seriously the challenge of forging alliances with social movements and community organizations both to lend their hand to community fight back campaigns but also to increase their credibility with groups such as youth, who have very low levels of unionization. 2) Unions need to take dramatic action to increase their responsiveness to and representation of women and people of color. According to my research these groups are more likely to want and support unioniza-

tion. For example, for every 1 percent increase in the number of women in a workplace, there is a 1 percent increase in a union's chances of winning an organizing campaign. Yet unions have a very uneven record of commitment to these groups. They need to invest serious resources and energy towards making the organizational and cultural reforms necessary to make these workers feel a part of the union movement. 3) Organizing workers is not the biggest hurdle faced by unions. Negotiating first contracts and building ongoing and active union support amongst new members is a much greater challenge. To be successful, unions need to think seriously about how they can meet these challenges. Fortunately, unions are experimenting with all kinds of strategies that seem to be working. 4) Unions need to renew and reaffirm their commitment to changing the political landscape in which they operate. This means actively supporting political parties that support labor issues. But it also means mobilizing members to become centers of resistance to the corporate agenda.

According to your research, what union sectors are suffering the most from this decline?

The economic sectors that have suffered the most in the last twenty years of restruc-

ture. Women's membership in unions has grown at a much greater pace than membership amongst men. While this is in part the effect of women catching up to men, it is also the case that women demonstrate significantly higher levels of support for unionization than men.

The fact that women are a major source of future membership growth is not lost on a number of unions. They recognize that in order to appeal to women workers, unions need to address issues that have relevance to women, take women seriously and promote them within their ranks. Yet unions still remain slow to change. In spite of paying lip service to the importance of organizing women and empowering them, the bulk of union organizers operating in Ontario, for example, are white men and union leaderships continue to be dominated by men. So, there are many changes that unions need to make if they are serious about appealing to women.

As employment levels have shifted from the public sector to the private sector, unions in Ontario have increased their organizing efforts in the private service sector while reducing their efforts in the manufacturing and construction sector. What are the success rates, and what do these rates indicate?

Many analysts would have us believe that unions have been unsuccessful in organizing

service sector workers and the levels of success suggest that unions have been successful in overcoming many barriers to organizing the private service sector. Yet, to break through with even greater successes in the service sector, the union movement needs to figure out how to service small workplaces once they are organized, how to efficiently and effectively organize private service sector employers who tend to fight hard against unionization and, in many cases, how to provide benefits to employees that are not so expensive to employers that they drive them into bankruptcy or closure.

What are the most common anti-union tactics that employers use? How successful are these strategies? Has your research shown anything that unions can do to counteract these strategies?

Employers in the public sector tend to use anti-union tactics less often than private sector employers. In the public sector a little less than half reported having no employer anti-union tactics used compared to around 30 percent in the private sector.

When employers do use anti-union tactics, they tend to use a whole range of tactics together. For example, in the period leading up to the certification application, employers that mail anti-union letters to workers' homes are also more likely to hold captive audience meetings, distribute anti-union leaflets at work, form anti-union employee committees, promise improvements in wages, benefits, etc. (although rarely do employers actually improve wages) and threaten to contract out work or close the workplace. In other words, once an employer decides to take on the union, the employer engages in a concerted opposition campaign to the union.

Tactics used most often by employers are hiring a management consultant, holding captive audience meetings, forming an anti-union employee committee and mailing out anti-union material. Employer tactics have an enormous effect on the outcome of an organizing campaign. Each employer tactic used considerably reduces the likelihood of a union winning a campaign. Having said this, unions can and do fight back effectively. Overall, if unions respond to employer campaigns with very active campaigns, they neutralize the employers' effect and in some cases succeed in improving their chances of success. The single most important tactic correlated with union success is the use of inside organizing committees. Unions in Ontario that make first contact with workers through other rank and file members also increase their chances of success. There is no single bullet for union success, no checklist of what works and what doesn't. Rather unions need to be strategic, responsive and mobilize.

The level of organizing amongst private service sector workers and the levels of success suggest that unions have been successful in overcoming many barriers to organizing the private service sector.

turing are the manufacturing and resource extraction (e.g. mining) sectors. Images of rusting steel mills and idle factories are imprinted in workers minds, just as the scars of job loss and union membership decline. Yet, in the last ten years of government cutbacks and restructuring of welfare programs, the public sector has begun to see steady losses of union jobs, and with this, a decline in union members. Public sector jobs that were once good union jobs are becoming the bad jobs of independent contractors and casual employees.

How has the number of women in the paid labor force affected union organizing? And how can unions shift their organizing strategy to reflect the changing workforce?

As women's participation in the paid labor force has increased, so has their membership

workers in the private service sector. In Canada this is not the case. Unions have invested resources and energy into organizing the private service sector with surprising success. This is supported by statistics on the proportion of total organizing drives that are undertaken in the manufacturing and construction sectors versus the private service sector. Success rates for organizing in the private service sector in Ontario, for example, have been comparable to success rates in other sectors – ranging from a high of 78 percent in 1994-95 to 64 percent in 1998/99. If we compare numbers of workers organized in these three sectors, we find that unions organized approximately 4,600 workers in manufacturing, 874 in construction and approximately 4,000 in the private service sector in 1998-99 in Ontario.

The level of organizing amongst private

Although the non-governmental, volunteer and/or charity sector represents only a small portion of organizing drives, the success rate in your study is 94 percent. What are the reasons for these high success rates?

This high success rate may in part be a statistical artifact of the low number of cases of union organizing in this sector in my study. However, I think there are other reasons for the success. First, employers in this sector do not tend to use the arsenal of anti-union measures used by private sector employers. Second, unions tend to have greater strategic capacity and experience than many volunteer organizations and this gives them an edge during organizing campaigns. Finally, workers in these workplaces often work under incredibly difficult conditions being paid poor wages and this means that they have strong interest and desire for unionization. The problem in organizing these workplaces is that very often they are very small workplaces and unions are unwilling to organize them because of the expense of servicing these units.

According to your research, and contrary to popular literature, public sector employers are opposing union organizing campaigns. How can unions shift their organizing tactics to reflect this?

To some extent public sector unions need to be convinced that organizing in the present environment is very different than it was ten or more years ago. Many public sector unions continue to insist that they are different from private sector unions and do not need to engage in the type of organizing seen in private sector. Public sector unions need to begin to adopt and adapt strategies used

by other unions to organize. But public sector unions also need to work on organizing the organized, in other words, working to rebuild the commitment of existing members to their union and build an activism that can sustain the union. This becomes especially important as public sector unions are forced to chase their members as they lose their union jobs to subcontracting, privatization, and so on.

As unions shift their organizing strategies to draw in new members, what changes must unions consider as they look forward to renewal?

Shift resources into organizing;

Establish structures that facilitate organizing. For example, unions are experimenting with assigning a special staff person with strong communication skills amongst others to negotiate first contracts for newly organized units;

Establish and follow through with organizing strategies. Organizing is often done according to the whims and contacts of individual organizers. To make sure resources are used effectively, unions need to be more strategic and systematic in how they approach organizing;

Evaluate, and change where necessary, internal representative structures to ensure that they offer ample opportunity for new members and workplaces to play an active role in their new union; and

Invest in education of both old and new members. Old members need to be taught not to fear the changes associated with organizing, and new members need to understand why joining a union benefits them and their community.

In "Making it Your Economy: Unions and Economic Justice," you make the case that despite the claims of many from the left and right that unions have outlived their usefulness, workers still need unions. What is your most compelling argument to support this?

Workers continue to need unions for a whole host of reasons. The only protection offered to workers against unfair dismissal is a good union. Unions continue to deliver to workers much better wages and benefits than those received by non-union workers. This 'union premium' is even greater for women, people of color and part-time workers. Unions give workers some control over the shifts they work, the hours they work and are more likely to uphold legislative rights such as holiday premiums, occupational

health and safety laws and so on. Unions offer workers a much-needed voice in their workplace – through the grievance procedure, collective bargaining and regular union meetings. Employers, even good employers who establish ways for workers to have a say in their workplace, can take back what they give to workers. Employers cannot take back what unions negotiate – only unions and their members can do this. Many of these benefits are ones that unions have always offered. What makes unions so important today is that work is changing, as is the world in which we work. Workers need some control over how these changes affect them and the terms and conditions under which they work. Collective organizations such as unions offer workers such control.

Fong elected as Region X International Vice President

Elizabeth Fong was elected as International Vice President for Region X at the ninth triennial OPEIU Canadian convention. She replaces Ruth Workewich, who decided not to run for reelection.

Fong has been a union activist since 1975, originally with the Union of Bank Employees who are now members of the United Steel Workers of America. In 1987, Fong became an OPEIU member and activist. She has served as a Delegate to the Labour Council of Toronto and York Region; as an Executive Board member representing labor on the Toronto Training Board for the past ten years; and as President of Local 343 from 1990 until September 2002. She is currently a member of the Unemployment Insurance Review Committee of the Labour Council; a member of the Ontario Federation of Labour's Education and Training Committee and Training and Adjustment Committee; an Executive Board member of the Central Ontario Council since 1990; and serves on the Canadian National Committee. Fong is also a ROC organizer for Region X.

"I am very proud to be a member of OPEIU and to have had the opportunity afforded me by Local 343 to become and remain an activist in the labor movement," Fong said. "I have always been committed to serving the best interests of our membership, and it is in the capacity of International Vice President that I feel I can best continue working toward achieving the goals of OPEIU."

Fong joins with Canadian Director Michel Lajeunesse, Region I Vice President Maurice Laplante, Region VIII Vice President Jerri New, Region IX Vice President Colleen Malley and Sheila Morrison, Vice President in the seat reserved for women, serving on the OPEIU International Union Executive Board.



Elizabeth Fong

Local 378's ICBC contract in jeopardy

Local 378's long-standing contract with ICBC, the public auto insurance company for British Columbians, is in serious jeopardy.

Certified since November of 1974, the contract for 4,500 members is due to expire at the end of June. The negotiations are going very poorly, sparking the strong potential for a lockout and strike. ICBC is demanding some of the worst concessions seen in Local 378 history. These concessions include:

- Unfettered right to contract out work;
- Elimination of any guarantee for full-time employment;
- Substantive changes in work hours;
- Only 24 hour notice will be given to any employee to change days and/or hours;
- Negation of seniority for job selection;
- Canceling current union policy of 5 days notice for time off, and changing it to 30 days notice;
- Management pre-approval of anything on union bulletin board; and
- Change in sick day provision from 525 hours to 150 hours.

In this instance, ICBC is not fully controlling this agenda, according to Local 378 President Jerri New. As a public sector employer, ICBC is under the auspices of the new anti-union Liberal government. The concessions that are being force-fed to Local 378 are just a sample of the anti-union tactics

in which this government is engaging.

"It's quite incredible," said New. "We're dealing with massive takeaways, including removing an entire section that prevents contracting work out."

In another setback, Dave McPherson, who was Local 378's chief negotiator in the negotiations with ICBC, had to go on emergency sick leave. Bill Farrall, however, who had worked for Local 378 in the past as Senior Representative on the BC/Hydro Utilities unit, has been able to step in as the chief negotiator. Now that Farrall is on the team, Local 378 has been able to move ahead to meet with ICBC in the negotiations, and have scheduled a meeting with ICBC's Vice President.

"We have a very competent chief spokesperson and a solid committee," New said. "But our members aren't used to seeing massive concessions on this scale."

New and the committee members will be spending considerable time meeting and mobilizing members, to ensure they are ready for the possibility that ICBC may lock them out entirely.

"We had a six month strike back in the '70s that got us this contract," New said. "To have so much damage done by a very anti-union government is incredible. This serves as a powerful reminder to our members on how important it is to be informed and involved in the political process."

Canadians learn new techniques at organizing summit

Approximately 40 participants from across Canada participated in the two-day 2003 Canadian Organizing Summit, which took place immediately following the Canadian convention.

The purpose of the organizing conference was to raise activists' awareness of the impor-

tance of continued organizing, and give them the tools to initiate organizing activities within the workplace.

Workshops held include: Change to Organize...Organize to Change with Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin Kistler; One-on-One Communications with

Organizers Donna Shaffer and John Lynch, ROC Organizer Myra Hepburn and International Vice President Jerri New, Region VIII; Charting and the 5-Point Rating System & Evaluating a Campaign with Donna Shaffer, Myra Hepburn, John Lynch, and International Vice Presidents Elizabeth

Fong and Jerri New.

The participants also enjoyed a panel discussion on Organizing Initiatives by Kathleen Madden, Liz Fong and ROC Organizer Francois Champoux, as well as a presentation on Researching Organizing Leads by Mark Anderson, FAST.



Members participate in workshops at the 2003 OPEIU Canadian Organizing Summit.

Local 32 honors heroic member

At its April 2003 Executive Board meeting Local 32 honored one of its members, Darnell Ross, for an extraordinary act of bravery that he performed while assisting a New Jersey State police officer with an arrest and in the process saving the officer's life. President Michael Goodwin was invited as a special guest and joined the Local 32 Executive Board in honoring Ross.

Ross, employed by the City of Rahway, was presented with the Law Enforcement Valor Commendation by the New Jersey State Police last year. Ross assisted a New Jersey State police officer while he was struggling with a suspect in his vehicle on the New Jersey Turnpike. Ross did this while working at his second job as a tow truck operator.

While the struggle between the officer and the suspect was going on, Ross reached into the vehicle, grabbed the free arm of the suspect and pulled him through the driver's side

window. He then assisted the officer in subduing and handcuffing the suspect. It was later discovered that the suspect had a loaded handgun with hollow point bullets under the front seat of the car.

At the meeting, both Goodwin and the Local 32 Executive Board expressed their admiration and pride at having such a brave and public-spirited individual like Ross as a member. Local 32 Business Manager Steven Tully and the International Union presented Ross with tokens of respect for his act of bravery.

"At first I was surprised when I learned about this, but then I realized, for him to do anything other than what he did would be out of character for Darnell," Tully said. "For as long as I have known him he has carried himself with courage and integrity. We are all extremely proud of him."

Ross also serves as a shop steward for Local 32, and will be honored by the local at its Steward's Conference later this year.



Steven M. Tully, Secretary-Treasurer/Business Manager of Local 32; Mary Short, Recording Secretary, Local 32; Michael Goodwin, International President of OPEIU; Darnell Ross, Local 32 member, City of Rahway; Juanita Ray, Vice President, Local 32; Edward Andryszczyk, President, Local 32.

Vice President Horner jailed



Region VII Vice President Theresa Horner was jailed recently in support of the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) fundraising efforts in Detroit, Michigan. *White Collar* has been informed that bail was set at \$1,200 and that friends and supporters came to her aid and bailed her out with a contribution of more than \$2,000. The International Union contributed \$500.

CareFlite pilots ratify first contract

Local 108 President Steve Ragin announced on March 29, 2003, that the CareFlite helicopter pilot members of Local 108 won a hard-fought battle to provide air ambulance service for North Central Texas, and overwhelmingly approved the union's first contract with CareFlite.

This contract, which became effective April 6 and will be amendable on April 6, 2006, was the end result of a long negotiation. The negotiation began in December 2001, and the organizers spent a great deal of time establishing themselves and getting management to take the pilots seriously. After management and the Union reached an impasse, they were able to complete the contract through mediation sessions.

"It's a good contract with important benefits for our pilots," said Paul Bohelski, the OPEIU International Representative who negotiated the contract and organized the pilots. "More than 50 percent of the pilots received substantial wage increases with others catching up on their employment anniversary date. Wage improvement and seniority rights were also major goals. We look forward to a harmonious and responsible rela-

tionship with CareFlite management," he said.

Highlights of the new three-year contract include:

- Overtime and work over (work on time-off) will be paid at time and a half;
- Guaranteed annual salary increase of up to 6.2 percent;
- Comprehensive benefits including long-term disability and three choices of health insurance plans;
- 6 percent matching funds for 401(k); and
- Average starting salary of \$47,561 up to \$66,000 annually during first year of contract.

"The company is extremely pleased with this agreement," said Ed Majors, President of CareFlite. "We look forward to a continued good relationship, and redirecting our energy and focus to our mission of taking care of patients."

CareFlite is a not-for-profit 501(c) 3 entity providing emergency medical and non-emergency air and ground transportation services within a 150 nautical mile radius in the North Central Texas area, including Dallas, Fort Worth, Denton and Tyler. The CareFlite crew includes a specially trained medical crew, consisting of a registered nurse and a paramedic.

Local 30 member dedicates herself to people with cancer

My daily dose of inspiration

By Annie Watson

People often ask me if it's hard to work at City of Hope. 'Doesn't it get depressing having to see people so sick with cancer every day,' they ask. Not everyone understands my answer, but hopefully it gives them a glimpse of what it's like here at City of Hope.

I love my job. I can't imagine myself working anywhere else. What makes my job so special for me is the very same patients that others often wonder about. The City of Hope patients are a daily inspiration to me.

For ten years now, I have watched them walk through those doors, each with their own story to tell of loved ones at home, lives put on hold, some even making the long journey alone. Every story is different but with one thing in common: Their lives have been interrupted and redirected to this unknown place to fight a battle they didn't choose — a battle for their lives.

They come not knowing what to expect and find a routine of endless waiting and uncertainty and sometimes pain. But they also find a team of doctors like nowhere else

that give them hope when no one else could. They are angels in lab coats.

They also find something they may not have ever dreamed they possessed. They find the strength, courage and dignity of their own human spirit. And it is in this strength, courage and dignity that I am constantly amazed and inspired every day.

They smile, make jokes and sometimes share their hearts with me. It's amazing to see them develop their own creative response to their struggle. I hold each one of them in my heart and remember them in my prayers.

Annie Watson is a long-time member of OPEIU Local 30, San Diego, California. She is a member of the Local 30 Executive Board, and a long-time Steward. Watson works in a bargaining unit position at the City of Hope medical center near Los Angeles.

The City of Hope is a world renowned cancer treatment and research center. People from all over the globe come to the City of Hope to receive the most advanced cancer treatments available.

Work and Health

The Value of Colon Cancer Screening as a Preventive Health Measure

Submitted by Jeffrey S. Freed

Medical Director, OPEIU Local 153 Health Fund

Since Hippocrates first taught preventive medicine more than 2,500 years ago, the public and medical community have dreamed of ways not just to successfully treat disease, but also ways to maintain patients in a state of health before they are struck by illness.

This dream continues to occupy the efforts of physicians and scientists, but the goals have not been completely achieved. One area that research has resulted in great strides is in the diagnosis and prevention of colorectal cancer. This is one disease where the advances in medicine and the desires of patients have coincided to decrease the incidence of, and mortality from colorectal cancer.

Over the past three decades colorectal screening has finally decreased the rapid rise in the incidence of colorectal cancer. This year there will be almost 147,500 cases of this disease diagnosed in the United States alone. Approximately 57,000 people will die as a result of this cancer. It appears, however, we may be starting to slow the development of the disease and increase the cure rate. And this can be attributed to the fact that colorectal cancer screening has been a routine part of our medical armamentarium. This includes screening stool for blood that cannot be seen (Hemoccult testing), flexible sigmoidoscopy in people who have reached 40 years of age, and colonoscopy for people who have reached age 50. Screening should be started earlier if there is a strong family history of colorectal cancer. There also should be screening in anyone of any age who has rectal bleeding or has a change in bowel habits. And remember, there will be as many women as men who develop colorectal tumors.

If everyone in this country who had

reached age 40 started in a colorectal cancer-screening program, it is estimated that the incidence of colorectal cancer would decrease by 50-85 percent. The problems that interfere with obtaining this survival advantage include patients not seeking screening, the cost of the screening program, the lack of qualified physicians to complete the tests, and the lack of patient education regarding the value of the tests. All these are solvable problems that we will overcome.

The future holds great hope for new technologies that will identify people who should be screened without putting everyone through tests on a regular basis. These include looking for premalignant and malignant cells and genetic markers of cancer in the stool, and testing for colon cancer markers in the blood. All these techniques are in different stages of development. There is also virtual colonoscopy, a technique similar to a CT scan to look at the colon and rectum without having to do an invasive procedure, like a colonoscopy. This x-ray is not as yet perfected but has the potential to be a good screening method for those people who refuse to have a colonoscopy.

The most common reason people do not approach their physicians to arrange screening for colorectal cancer is that they are afraid that something will be found. In fact, when something is found, in approximately 6-10 percent of patients, it is usually a benign polyp. And when this polyp is removed during the colonoscopy, the chance that you will develop a colorectal cancer is decreased by up to 85 percent. This is truly preventive medicine. In fact, colonoscopy is actually one of the few procedures that diagnoses a potential life-threatening illness (colorectal cancer) and treats the precursor of that illness (a polyp) before there is a risk to your life.

It is not only to your benefit, but your obligation to yourself and your family to address the issue of colorectal cancer screening if you have reached the age of 40. It is even more important if you have a family history of colorectal cancer to address the issue and be certain that you are in a continuing program of colorectal screening. No one is exempt, no one is too old, and unfortunately no one is too young if there is a family history or if they have symptoms of colorectal cancer.

Jeffrey S. Freed, M.D., P.C. specializes in general surgery/proctology. He can be reached at (212) 396-0050.



Washington Window Evaluating the Presidential Contenders

It's approximately 18 months until the next presidential election, but union members have a presidential task before them right now. They must evaluate the contenders.

There are ten candidates in the race for the White House next year, including one Republican, the present occupant, Supreme Court-selected George W. Bush.

Democratic contenders are former Senator Carol Moseley Braun (D-Ill.), former Governor Howard Dean (D-Vt.), Senator John Edwards (D-N.C.), Representative Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.), Senator Robert Graham (D-Fla.), Senator John Kerry (D-Mass.), Representative Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio), Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), and the Rev. Al Sharpton of New York.

Leaving Bush out for the moment, since his nomination is guaranteed, workers must ask themselves some questions as they evaluate the Democrats. Some of those questions were answered, at least on issues, when all the Democrats but Graham spoke at a recent labor gathering:

All the Democrats endorsed the right to organize, labor law reform to make the playing field equal for workers, or both;

Gephardt, Kerry, Sharpton, Edwards and Dean denounced Bush's proposed \$726 billion 10-year tax cut for the rich. Dean, Gephardt and Edwards went farther, proposing to repeal Bush's prior \$1.3 trillion tax cut. And Dean and Gephardt would use the money from that to create and fund universal health care;

Gephardt bases his health care plan on the present (shoddy?) employer-based system, and would force employers to provide health insurance for workers in return for tax credits. Dean was not specific, but as Vermont Governor and an M.D., he created a method to cover every child in the state;

Kerry and Kucinich also backed universal health care. Kerry was not specific, but Kucinich called for "universal fully paid health care, and getting the private sector out," a slam at what we call rapacious health insurers and killer HMOs;

Kucinich opposed changing Social Security, especially Bush's privatization plan for one-sixth of its revenues. Gephardt called for portable pensions;

Kucinich and Sharpton opposed eliminating overtime pay, as congressional

Republicans propose; and

Edwards linked civil rights and labor rights, through judgeships. Bush's right-wing judicial nominees not only oppose civil rights, but they oppose labor rights, Edwards pointed out. He also backed affirmative action.

Bush wasn't there, though he was invited.

He also has a labor record. It features vitriolic, violent attacks on unions, a backdoor administration conspiracy to send troops to West Coast ports to man them after port managers locked out union longshore workers, and anti-worker executive orders.

And it includes letting states opt out of the minimum wage, cutting wages for construction workers on federal projects and janitors in federal buildings, and banning unions for hundreds of thousands of workers in the name of "national security." And do we need to mention budget deficits at historic highs, Bush's threat to Social Security, the anti-worker judges, and on and on?

Workers must evaluate the stands of the Democrats and the Republican in communicating their choice, EARLY, to union leaders.

In evaluating the Democrats, there's one more factor to consider: Toughness.

Past campaigns proved Bush and his Machiavelli, Karl Rove, will stop at nothing to win. That includes intimidation, accusations of treason, vote-rigging, fraud, and manipulating government agencies. And Bush and Rove will have hundreds of millions of big business dollars to work with for those efforts.

And you know Bush will wrap himself in the flag of the war, and even of union Fire Fighters who died, after opposing their collective bargaining rights. It's no coincidence that next year's GOP convention in New York ends just before September 11.

Whoever the opposing nominee will be must be ready to effectively counter all that. And that means he or she must be extraordinarily tough. As you evaluate the candidates and make your choices, ask yourselves this question: Who's tough enough to beat George W. Bush? That may be the biggest question of all, as workers and their allies evaluate the hopefuls for 2004.

WHITE COLLAR

Official Organ of
OFFICE AND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION
affiliated with the AFL-CIO, CLC
<http://www.opeciu.org>

MICHAEL GOODWIN
President

NANCY WOHLFORTH
Secretary-Treasurer



CALM
ACPS

WHITE COLLAR (ISSN 0043-4876) is published quarterly by Office and Professional Employees International Union, 1660 L St., N.W., Suite 801, Washington, D.C. 20036. Periodical postage paid at Washington, D.C. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Office and Professional Employees International Union, 1660 L St., N.W., Suite 801, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Reproduction by the Labor Press of any or all material herein contained is not only permitted, but wholly desirable in the interest of workers' education.

Subscription Price \$1 a Year

Lobbyist Corner

Members of Congress need to hear from you

Submitted by OPEIU Lobbyist Robert McGlotten of McGlotten & Jarvis

OPEIU believes in the collective power of working women and men exercising their voting rights. We need to elect public servants who remember who they serve by passing legislation that protects those same citizens' rights to a healthy, safe and prosperous lifestyle. It is only by educating ourselves on the issues that our elected officials are deciding for us that we can truly make our voices heard.

As you read this article, the Bush administration and the Republican leadership in the U.S. Congress have once again forgotten the working families of America on a myriad of issues. Our economy continues its downward spiral, and millions of workers are without employment, health care and pension benefits. OPEIU joins the national AFL-CIO efforts to lobby both Democrats and Republicans to address the needs of working families.

While OPEIU and the AFL-CIO continue to lobby on behalf of their members and all working families, you can work alongside us and make a difference. Remember, members of Congress work directly for you. Your vote can make a difference, as politicians learned in the extremely tight election of 2000. Contact your Representatives and Senators (details on how to do this are below), and find out where they stand on the issues that matter to you. Join OPEIU as we urge Congress to pass legislation that will:

Provide a true economic recovery plan: Unemployment reached 8.8 million last month, up more than 3 million from October of 2000. Yet instead of reaching out a hand to those jobless Americans, the Bush Administration's "solution" is a whopping \$350 billion tax cut targeted to the rich recently passed by Congress.

Extend emergency unemployment benefits: Unemployment insurance protects laid off workers and their families. And despite the declining economy, most states have enough in reserves to provide for unemployed workers. More than 60 percent of workers, however, are unable to collect these wages because of outdated eligibility rules.

Increase the U.S. manufacturing base: Since 1998, the United States has lost 2.5 million manufacturing jobs, resulting in only 16.5 million employed, the lowest level in 41 years. Many of these lost jobs have moved abroad, primarily to Mexico and East Asia.

Protect Social Security: For all the rhetoric on strengthening Social Security, little has been actually done. Some political leaders and special interest groups are deliberately undermining support for the system—and pushing for individual investment accounts in place of Social Security's guaranteed, defined benefits.

Provide private pension plans security: Many employers are replacing traditional pension plans with cash-balance plans, which are supported by many Members of Congress. However, because they accrue benefits at rates different from those of traditional defined-benefit plans, cash-balance plans threaten the retirement security of millions of working families.

Invest in infrastructure (building and repairing schools, roads, and bridges): The Bush budget calls for major funding cuts for the nation's transportation infrastructure, which affects highway, rail and air transport. Instead of providing for improvements or enhancing services, these cuts will actually worsen the national infrastructure.

Provide affordable health care: In 2001, 41.2 million Americans went without health care. And increasingly, workers are bearing more of the brunt of co-pays, deductibles and premiums, as employers struggle to keep afloat.

Provide for prescription drug benefits: President Bush's current proposal to reform and add prescription drug coverage to Medicare offers a framework upon which Congress can build legislation next year, but no real details as to how it will be accomplished.

Provide financial help to all states: In 2001, the president pushed and won a \$1.6 trillion tax cut that gave the vast majority of the money to the wealthiest Americans while nearly wiping out the expected federal budget surplus. The recession, the war in Iraq and the recent Bush Administration tax cut of \$350 billion erased the rest of the surplus. States are struggling with increased homeland security costs, unemployment, hunger and more, and are in dire need of federal assistance.

Increase the minimum wage: About 3.5 million workers worked full-time in 2001, yet they and their families lived in poverty. Congress should act now to raise the minimum wage of \$5.15 by \$1.50 to \$6.65 an hour.

Provide for fair collective bargaining rights: Tens of millions of workers have no legal right to form unions. In September 2002, the General Accounting Office found that one-quarter of the entire civilian workforce doesn't have the right to form unions.

Provide funds for Homeland Security: Homeland security needs include funds for fire-fighters, secure ports and borders, emergency medical personnel, customs agents, and many more first responders to confront the critical risks we face. The budget for Homeland Security remains severely underfunded.

Enact a Patients' Bill of Rights: When it comes to quality, affordable health care, working families and their doctors need to be guaranteed a say in their health care and an equal footing with big HMOs and powerful insurance companies. Working families and their physicians must make medical decisions, not insurance companies and HMO bureaucrats.

Getting involved

Grassroots involvement significantly amplifies our Union's lobbying efforts. Phone calls and personal letters encouraging your congressional representatives to back labor-friendly measures are invaluable. Elected officials need direct feedback from our members, urging them to sponsor and support OPEIU-endorsed legislation. Every letter counts. Every phone call can make a difference. If you prefer to make written contact, OPEIU strongly advises you to mail all correspondence, as opposed to sending an e-mail. With your support, we can press for more immediate action on key bills awaiting hearings in both the House and Senate, such as the Minimum Wage Bill.

If you know who your House representative is, the Clerk of the House maintains addresses and phone numbers of all Members and Committees: Clerk of the House, U.S. Capitol, Room H154, Washington, DC 20515; phone (202) 225-7000; hours 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Please direct your questions about communication with your Senators to the specific office(s) in question, using the following format: Office of Senator (Name), United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510.

You may also phone the United States Capitol's switchboard at (202) 224-3121. An operator will connect you directly with the House or Senate office you request.

If you are not sure who your representative is, the following Web sites contain links to congressional directories: <http://www.house.gov/writerep> and http://www.senate.gov/learn/learn_faqs.html. You can also access this information at your local library.

OPEIU will also provide a directory of all members of the 108th Congress. If you would like a copy, please call Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Wohlforth at (202) 393-4464, ext. 11.

Daughter of OPEIU member to pursue academic goals through Union Plus Scholarship

Maya Garza, daughter of OPEIU Local 2 member Carlos Garza, has been selected to receive a 2003 Union Plus Scholarship award. Garza, a graduating high school senior who maintained a 3.6 grade point average, will receive a \$1,000 award.

Garza is among 105 students from forty-two AFL-CIO unions that have been awarded \$150,000 in scholarships from the Union Plus Scholarship program. "We're so proud of Maya," said Dan Dyer, President of Local 2 in Washington, D.C. "She's a terrific student and we're so happy that she'll have this help in fulfilling her educational goals," Dyer said.

In her essay, Garza, the daughter of a one-

time migrant farm worker, traces the most important experiences in her young life to her early years growing up in California, when her parents were entrenched in the struggle of the United Farm Workers. "My parents were taking part in the fight for the rights of the farm workers, rights my father did not have when he was a child working in the field with his family," Garza said. "As the daughter of a migrant farm worker, the plight of the farm workers has been a very important issue in my life and my family's ... The fight for *la causa* is a never-ending struggle sometimes overlooked by the masses, but never forgotten by those whose lives

are tied to the field," Garza continued.

Imagine growing up having to move from place to place, never having a home to call your own. Imagine toiling for long hours in 100-degree days, struggling to breathe because of the dust and pesticides collecting in the lungs. Imagine not being able to see a doctor when sick, or when spending days in a classroom is considered a luxury. Garza speaks of such an existence when she describes the life her father knew when he was young, and of the millions of young children still having to endure such conditions.

And so it is that Garza has found her calling. And while her father has grown to

become his own advocate, and that of so many others in need, she plans to follow in his footsteps, and those of other leaders such as Cesar Chavez. An honor student who was profiled in Who's Who Among American High School Students and was selected to the National Honor Society, Garza expects to attend Johns Hopkins University in the fall, and plans to study biology in pursuit of her dream of practicing medicine.



Maya Garza

Editorial



There are no guarantees working conditions will last forever

By Michael Goodwin, International President

Now that two and one-half years of the Bush administration have passed, we all have a good idea of how they care about working families. The sad truth is they don't care. So many actions this administration takes trivializes working families and focuses on the well-to-do — particularly the top one percent — who have increased control of the wealth in the United States to a staggering 40 percent!

We all complained in 2000 that it was a bad idea to put two corporate oilmen in charge. Of course, the American people listened and elected Al Gore as our president, but the Supreme Court decided to select George Bush anyway. That's history, and we are all living with the results. As I travel to meetings and conferences in the United States

There's no doubt in my mind that once organized labor is out of the way, it will be hunting season on working families.

and Canada, I always try to point out the attacks on worker rights and working families. There have been many. The one I want to emphasize, however, is the recent attempt to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to allow employers to offer compensation time off in lieu of overtime. Overtime would be required to be paid only after 80 hours in a two-week period. This means an employee could work 50 hours in one week and 30 hours the next without any additional pay. What is the U.S. coming to?

Can you imagine the difficulties in trying to monitor such a condition? The Department of Labor can't even administer the current law — as we see employers caught cheating

thousands of workers every day out of millions of dollars in overtime pay over 40 hours. Think about the worker in your community, let's say working at a pizzeria, and try to picture him or her testifying against their employer about what hours were worked, when and in what timeframe. Forget about it. The proposed new law represents nothing more than a continuous strategy to transfer wealth to the already wealthy. I remember the "Robin Hood" episodes on TV when I was a kid that presented Robin Hood as a man who "stole from the rich and gave to the poor." Today, we have a reverse Robin Hood in our leadership "who steals from the poor and gives to the rich!" So far, organized labor has been able to put pressure on Congress to take the bill off the agenda for the moment — but we are told Republicans vow to reschedule the vote after they regroup and develop a more offensive strategy.

The other outrage was the recently passed tax bill that left out poorer working families from receiving the \$400 per child refund because they didn't earn enough money to pay taxes. The administration said the measure was a tax bill, not a welfare bill. It's hard to believe people as rich as Bush and Cheney would deny a poor working family a small part of the tax bill money that represents less than one percent of the total. But that is how it's been over these last two and one-half years, time and time again, with this administration. The administration's plan is to weaken, if not eliminate, organized labor altogether.

That's why we desperately need a change in Congress and the White House before all of the basic rights workers have taken for granted for years are eliminated. Please understand working conditions may not always remain the same, as we are witnessing right now with the attack on the overtime bill. Things do change and there are no guarantees that any working condition will last forever. Workers have improved their conditions through organization and the passage of the National Labor Relations Act in 1935. But all of these improved working conditions and, in fact the Act itself, could be changed or eliminated. The United States worker could be reduced to the level of the workers in Third World countries. It's within the realm of possibility, depending on who our leaders are. Who is to say it won't happen?

The only chance workers have, and getting close to the last chance, is to continue to organize to protect themselves. There's no doubt in my mind that once organized labor is out of the way, it will be hunting season on working families. We all have a responsibility to ensure this doesn't happen. But you can't stand on the sidelines as an observer — you

must do your part to advocate organizing among unorganized workers in your com-

munity. By helping them, you are surely helping yourself survive!



President Michael Goodwin and actress Susan Sarandon receive an award from The Working Theater for their role in bridging the gap between the arts, labor and the community at a dinner held in their honor on June 2, 2003. Also honored were NYC Council Deputy Majority Leader Bill Perkins and Local 1199 SEIU National Benefit and Pension Fund Executive Director Eleanor Tilson.

Local 509 settles strike at Dynamic Metal Forming

After more than six months on strike, the 31 members of OPEIU Local 509 returned to work at Dynamic Metal Forming, Inc. on May 19, 2003. The strike, which began on November 5, 2002, was resolved after it was agreed that all replacement workers would be terminated upon ratification of the contract.

Local 509 President Jeff Ulrey reports that Local 509's solidarity held fast throughout the course of the strike, and not one member crossed the picket line. "In fact, the long and difficult struggle has only increased the Local's unity and cohesion," Ulrey said.

"Our solidarity and ability to stay the course for more than six months was greatly enhanced by the tremendous support of our International Union and sister locals," Ulrey said. "In our time of enormous need, the assistance we received was overwhelming, and as a result we ultimately discovered the true meaning of being a Union. As one member put it, 'we belong to one heck of an International Union!'" He offered special thanks to the Region VII Vice Presidents — Anita Roy, Millie Hall, Theresa Horner and Julie Weir — and to Local 153 Secretary-Treasurer Richard Lanigan for their help and support throughout the strike.

The membership also voted to ratify the agreement in an attempt to ensure the company would survive. "The membership knew that they had to save the company from itself," Ulrey said. He explains that poor management and the inability of replacement workers to produce a sufficient quality and quantity of work had placed the company on the brink of bankruptcy. The membership determined they needed to return to the plant to protect against any further erosion in the company's customer base. As Dynamic Metal Forming is currently for sale, it is hoped the strike settlement will make the plant more attractive to prospective buyers, Ulrey concluded. International Representative Gary Nuber worked closely with the group during the strike.



Printed in USA