Members at G.H.I. settle strike, ratify new contract

Current employees never have to pay out-of-pocket for health coverage

The 26-day walkout of 1,200 OPEIU, Local 153, New York, N.Y., members at Group Health Incorporated (G.H.I.) ended with a new contract that includes a guarantee that the employer will never again ask current employees to pay premium sharing or co-pays for office visits and prescription drugs.

“Congratulations to Local 153 Secretary-Treasurer Richard Lanigan, Chief Steward and President of Local 153 Neysa Griffith, and the Local 153 field staff and bargaining committee members,” said International President Michael Goodwin. “They all did a terrific job throughout the strike and negotiations, standing their ground to ensure that our goals were met.”

The four-year agreement includes wage increases of slightly more than 17 percent. Employees will receive 4 percent in each of the contract’s first two years and 4.5 percent in each of the last two years. The use of “Ratty the Rat” was very effective,” said Goodwin. “Ratty” is a 15-foot inflatable rat that can be legally placed on public property in connection with strikes. The Supreme Court has ruled that the display of the rat is a constitutionally protected first amendment right of freedom of speech. And we definitely saw its effectiveness in this strike, both in raising our visibility and in embarrassing the employer, thus forcing them to negotiate with the union fairly,” Goodwin continued.

G.H.I. specializes in providing insurance for unionized workers and administrators and provides health coverage to 2.5 million people.

Senior Representative Michael Thompson joined Chief Steward Neysa Griffith and a committee consisting of Diane Shuler, Linda Hughes, Devora Moss, Steven Weissman, Sandra Monroe, Paris Price, Robbin Roberts, Larry Spern, Anthony Walters, Willie Faillo, Barbara LaGoff in reaching the successful agreement.

Representatives from the New York labor movement join NYSE Chairman Dick Grasso (front row, third from left) in ringing the opening bell at the Exchange on Friday, April 26. New York City Central Labor Council President Brian McLaughlin rings the bell to start the day. CLC Secretary Ted Jacobsen is to the right of McLaughlin. OPEIU International President Michael Goodwin is pictured (back row, third from right).

For more information, please contact J.B. Moss, 718-939-0926, jbross@opeiu.org.
OPEIU is mourning the loss of one of its most dedicated leaders, Senior Vice President J.B. Moss. Moss died in April at age 66.

"J.B. is gone . . . but what will never be gone is the memories of him and what he stood for," said International President Michael Goodwin at a memorial service on April 15, 2002. "What will never be gone is the precious time he spent with us. Those memories and those times will be in our hearts and minds forever," Goodwin said.

"J.B. was a strong voice on the Executive Board," Goodwin continued. "He helped guide the Board through many problems and was looked up to by his peers for his knowledge and experience. He served on the finance and VOTE committees for many years and chaired the important committees at each convention. When J.B. took the microphone and explained the program, everyone understood and the audience was always impressed by his knowledge and experience. He served on the finance and VOTE committees for many years and chaired the important committees at each convention. When J.B. took the microphone and explained the program, everyone understood and the audience was always impressed by his knowledge and experience."

Moss was employed at General Dynamics Corporation when he joined OPEIU, Local 277 in May 1958. He served two years on the Grievance Committee at General Dynamics, and was elected President and Business Manager of Local 277 in 1960. He served as

The following is International President Goodwin's eulogy for J.B. Moss, April 15, 2002:

in behalf of all of the officers and members of OPEIU, we extend our sincere sympathy to J.B.'s wife Martha, his par-

fathers Hazel and L.B., his brothers Jack and Freddie, children Scott, Shelly, Kelly and Carla Cridier and his four grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

We have lost a good man – and we lost him sooner than anyone expected. Just a short time ago he was with us – his J.B. at his best – as we all knew him. We thought he was invinci-

ble – that his life would go on long into the future – but our creator had a different plan. He called J.B. home early. No one knows why, nor will we ever be given an explanation – we don't ask God's plan – we accept it. But if one could speculate about a reason it could be that God wanted J.B. with him, to enjoy his won-

derful company, his great sense of humor, his

love and his unforgettable pranks. For whatev-

er reason, J.B. is gone, his physical body is gone, and his unmistakable presence is gone. But what will never be gone is the memories of him and what he stood for. What will never be gone is the precious time he spent with us. Those memories and those times will be in our hearts and minds forever.

No one spent more time with J.B. or knew him better than his wife, Martha. J.B. was so

fortunate to have her as a life partner. Martha, J.B. loved you so much, with all his heart and soul, and I know you loved him in the same way. You were there for each other and for every special event of a wonderful life. I know that while you will always mourn his loss — you will also look back and cherish the time you spent together as a source of comfort and joy. Thank God you had the

area while organizing and negotiating contracts with the MISHOD facility in the early '60s. He successfully organized one of the first women's units of the American Income Life Insurance Company and CSC computer center.

In the summer of 1976, Moss was appoint-

ed International Vice President of Region IV. Moss served a variety of community service programs for the Tarrant County Central Labor Council and his local union, as well as taught labor-oriented classes at Tarrant County Junior College.

Prior to his union service, Moss served in the U.S. Army in the 1950s. He graduated from Texas Christian University in 1960 with degrees in Personnel Management and Labor Relations. He is survived by his wife, Martha and children Scott, Shelly, Kelly and Carla Cridier.

As we go through life we meet many people who we call our friends. But the truth is that there are really only a few people in our lives that we can call "true blue" friends. People that will stay with us in good times and bad — whether we are right or wrong, they will be on our side. A "true blue" friend is a loyal friend no matter what happens. J.B. was that kind of friend. You could count on his friendship and put it in the bank. If he was your friend he was there for you.

And so we close this wonderful chapter in the life of a man we all loved — a man we will all miss who gave us the memories that we will savor forever. So many of his family and friends agree that there will never be anyone again just like J.B.

In some ways, our need to grieve and mourn is outweighed by our need to celebrate his

life and be grateful that all of us have been granted the gift of knowing him. J.B., we all gather here today, not only to say goodbye but also to say that we all love you and will miss you very much. Thank you for your presence, your friendship, your loyalty and your love. You will never be forgotten.

Goodbye Governor, and may you rest in peace.
T

he Industrial, Technical and Professional Employees (ITPE) Convention highlighted the many successes and changes of the past four years since the last convention, as well as outlined the union’s ambitious goals for the future.

Speaking before the conference, ITPE President John Conley said of much needed renovations recently made to ITPE’s headquarters, including the relocation of the union’s accounting and membership maintenance departments from Washington, D.C. to Savannah, Ga. providing huge savings. The union has taken other measures to reduce operating costs, such as signing an agreement with Sprint for all long distance and cellular telephone services, thus eliminating calling cards for officers and representatives, and reducing long distance telephone costs by more than $40,000 in the first year.

ITPE has also made technological advances in the past few years, and has developed its own website at www.itpe.org. From that site, members can link to all three ITPE benefit plan websites and all participating Choice Brand Hotels.

In January and February of 2002 ITPE members approved — by a 76 percent majority vote — a dues increase. “These are some of the changes made during the last four years since our last convention that have had a profound impact on our organization and its members,” Conley said. “However, the major event having the greatest impact was during the months of May and June of 2001 when the ITPE membership once again had the foresight in voting unanimously to disaffiliate from MEBA, and approve an affiliation of the ITPE with the Office and Professional Employees International Union, which became effective July 1, 2001,” Conley said.

“It is my pleasure to report to you today this new affiliation is right on track,” Conley continued. “The working relationship between OPEIU and ITPE couldn’t be better. We are equally committed to the labor movement and its mission, which is to unite into one organization — regardless of race, creed, color, sex, nationality, religion or political affiliation — all workers eligible for membership in a trade union,” Conley said.

A political battle lies ahead

“We have laid the groundwork to do just that,” Conley said. “Now we must roll up our sleeves and get to work. Each of us, making a commitment to our brothers and sisters, and to our community.” Conley then spoke of the Enron situation, wherein more than 6,000 workers have lost their jobs, health care and retirement savings as a result of unscrupulous management and “because the folks in the corporate suites didn’t frankly care how many workers and shareholders they stepped on,” Conley observed.

“We all need to be careful not to miss the point, because at the end of the day, Enron really isn’t about money,” Conley said. “It’s about values. It’s about whether employers will treat their employees fairly and with respect. It’s about whether companies understand the responsibility they have to their workers and to local communities, and not to speculators and traders on Wall Street,” Conley said.

“The AFL-CIO is hard at work on behalf of Enron’s workers — not necessarily because they are union members, most of them aren’t — but simply because they are working families. Unfortunately, the Enron experience is a culture that is being accepted by too many of our government leaders and being practiced to the max by this administration — favoring the corporate boardrooms and putting the wants of CEO’s and big business ahead of the basic needs of working families,” Conley said.

Conley then spoke of the urgent need for the passage of an unemployment extension bill in the wake of September 11. Instead, Conley noted, the administration has issued a federal budget that “sacrifices the essential initiatives and services that help working families and supports our senior citizens… that raids the Social Security and Medicare trust funds, and slashes job training for dislocated workers, seasonal farm workers and at-risk youth… slices into OSHA funding and staffing, cuts non-discrimination efforts and drives the government back into deficit spending.

“Of course, we have a war on and it’s a war we have to win and we support the president in his efforts,” Conley said, “but we expect more than just a war on terrorism overseas. We expect a leader and a government that will fight hard and relentlessly for working families on the economic battlefields here at home.

“Whatever it takes to get that leadership for working men and women, we have this year to get it,” Conley said. “Because we have local and state, as well as federal elections coming up and we have to get ready for them even as we are fighting for our lives in the halls of the United States Congress and in state capitals and city halls around our nation. Our issues are the same — good jobs, strong families, retirement security, health care and education for all Americans. Our values are the same — we believe in opportunity, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, the right to dissent, the right to privacy, the right to form and join unions, and we believe the new global economy should work not just for the big shots and privileged few, but for the people who do the work,” Conley said.

“Unfortunately, our numbers aren’t the same — despite our increased organizing, we’re still barely holding our own as a percentage of the American workforce,” Conley said. “Yes, we can, we must and we will do an even better job, but the truth is we need bigger numbers if we’re going to help workers speak with a strong voice,” Conley urged.

“As much as you are doing, I challenge you to do more and help the labor movement as we work to organize ourselves into a bigger and better position of strength. We have the power because our cause is right, because the facts support our issues, because the debate...
Local 32 won a big victory for its members during a thirteen-day strike against the Philadelphia Federal Credit Union (PFCU) in April. The unfair labor practice strike led to a three-year contract that includes several improvements over the employer’s previous offers.

Local 32 filed unfair labor practice charges against the PFCU with the National Labor Relations Board because the employer began harassing employees shortly after the membership rejected a second contract offer. The offers would have forced the employees that Local 32 represents to contribute up to several hundred dollars a month for health care.

The hard-fought effort resulted in a three-year contract that was unanimously ratified by the membership. The new contract calls for substantial pay increases in each year of the contract, several health care options that previously were not available to employees that would require no contribution, a three-year freeze on the flat dollar amount employees would be required to contribute for the traditional health insurance plan for dependent coverage; and a signing bonus in the first year of the contract.

“I think the employer underestimated the resolve of our membership and their willingness to strike over the issue of health care contributions,” said Local 32 Business Manager Steven Tully. “Essentially, the employer wanted our members to accept ridiculously high contributions on a percentage basis without any knowledge of how much it would cost them from year to year and with no other plan options available to them.”

Tully also said that Local 32’s preparation and strategy prior to the strike led to a coordinated effort that caught the employer off guard. “I think they were surprised at the amount of pressure that we were able to bring on them, and how strongly the labor community in Philadelphia supported us. A large portion of the PFCU’s business comes from labor unions, and the unions supported our strike enthusiastically.”

“Now our members know what it will cost them for health care each month for the next three years if they stay with the traditional plan, and they now have the ability to decide if the other health care plan options that don’t have a contribution are right for them and their families,” Eastwick said.

She also praised the Philadelphia labor community saying, “All of the unions in the area were wonderful to us during the strike. They helped us in any way they could and our members who were on the picket line have a better understanding of why we call each other brothers and sisters in the labor movement. They treated us like family.”

Tully and Eastwick also commended negotiating committee members Heather Malloy and Gwen Mitchell for their efforts. “They did a great job under very difficult circumstances and really helped keep morale up on the picket lines,” Eastwick said.

Local 32 President Ed Andrysyczky, with Philadelphia Federal Credit Union (PFCU)/Local 32 members Marari Rodriguez, Kathy Mills, Theresia Bailey (PFCU)/Local 32 members Patty Lyster and Tracey Harrison on the picket line.

Local 32 member Kathy Mills, Theresa Bailey and Tracey Harrison on the picket line.

Local 32 president Ed Andrysyczky, with Philadelphia Federal Credit Union (PFCU)/Local 32 members Marari Rodriguez, Kathy Mills, Theresia Bailey and Tracey Harrison.

Local 32 member Patty Lyster walks the picket line against the PFCU.

Negotiating committee member Gwen Mitchell on the picket line.

Local 32 wins strike at Philadelphia Federal Credit Union

Local 35 ratified contract with Northwestern Mutual

Local 35 settled its contract for 1,700 Northwestern Mutual employees that includes significant wage increases, increases in tuition reimbursement and a deferment of the employer’s demand for increased health contributions. The three-year agreement, ratified by an overwhelming majority, was effective May 1, 2002.

The contract was the result of intense negotiations and a “member-to-member” organizer and communications campaign carried out by Local 35 members and staff. The campaign, which produced 60 new members, involved leaflets and newsletters that carefully framed the issues viewed important by union members, said Local 35 Business Manager Judy Burnick. As the employer intensified its communications campaign, Burnick said, the local union met the challenge by calling all unit members and leaving them weekend updates on work phones.

The bargaining team included Burnick; Cindy Oleson, Local 35 Business Representative; Steve Curyep, Business Representative/Organizer; and Northwestern employees Gloria Tetting, Jim Becker, Cindy Trapp-Dietz, Tom Schalk, Joan Reuter, Mary Rothe, LuAnn Hurley and Denise White.

Burnick noted that the bargaining committee sacrificed many evenings and weekends to obtain this agreement. “Their dedication, passion and leadership was an important factor in securing the excellent wage and benefit improvements contained in this new contract,” Burnick said.

“Our members ultimately made the difference in this campaign,” Olson added. “Our organizer coworkers around our issues and made it clear to the employer that we would be an important force to reckon with if an agreement was not reached.”

After sometimes-tense negotiations, the parties did reach an amicable agreement. “The people spoke with one voice and the employer listened,” Burnick said.

The new agreement includes the adoption of Local 35’s goals:
• A balanced pay package including a cost of living base, merit and variable pay (the company sought to eliminate the cost of living base);
• Pay increases that average 3.75 percent over the first 10 months, 4 percent in the second year, and 4 percent in the third year and are likely to result in real salary gains when measured against projected inflation;
• Variable pay that pays out in year three to be another .75 percent of the average 4 percent merit, which if paid would boost average compensation increases to 7 percent in year three;
• Maximum increases by 2.5-4.5 percent in year one and 3 percent each year thereafter — more than ever achieved in prior contracts;
• Pay increases for levels of performance that beat the last Northwestern Mutual agreement;
• A deferral of the employer’s demand for increased employee health contributions, holding the maximum to 14 percent (versus the 15 percent demanded by the employer) and making the 14 percent effective after this contract expires;
• The payment to employees who do not take health insurance was increased from $480 to $1,000;
• Electricians were moved to Market Rate allowing them to obtain increases above the average contract increase;
• Housekeepers won PH2 pay for cleaning bathrooms and 30 cent per hour premium for floating duties. The PH2 pay will provide them with immediate pay increases of 20 cents per hour and a hike in their pay range of 85 cents per hour (the employer’s initial proposal would have lowered all housekeepers to PH1’s); and
• The employer dropped its proposal to diminish seniority as a mechanism to obtain vacation preference and agreed to retain the current vacation scheduling procedure;
• Sick leave eligibility was improved to include absences due to physician prescribed anesthetics;
• Significant increases in the yearly amount of tuition reimbursement for employees for full-time (13.3 percent graduate courses and 56.25 percent undergraduate) and part-time employees (12.2 percent graduate and .56.25 percent undergraduate);
• Employees required to wear ANSI rated safety shoes had employer reimbursements increased from full payment for the first $30 to full payment for the first $75.

The pay-out for such shoes was doubled from $60 to $120;
• Parking rates held to no increase until January of 2004;
• Adoption assistance doubled from $5,000 to $10,000;
• Funeral leave benefits enhanced to permit three days off for an expanded defined group and need for three days to be determined by the employer and not their manager; and
• Reforms that streamline and expedite the grievance process. The gains under this contract were substantial and enhanced protections against abuses of so-called “last chance agreements.”

Members of Local 35’s bargaining team. Pictured left to right are Business Representative Cindy Oleson; Northwestern employees Gloria Tetting, Joan Reuter, Cindy Trapp-Dietz, Tom Schalk, and Jim Becker; and Business Manager Judy Burnick.
A delegation from OPEIU’s new Professional Helicopter Pilot Association (PHPA) was invited to attend this year’s 57th annual International Federation of Airline Pilot’s Association’s (IFALPA) Conference in Stavanger, Norway. In attendance were Kevin Kistler, OPEIU’s Director of Organization and Field Services; Butch Grafton, PHPA President; Jack Bower, PHPA Treasurer; and Tony Fonze, Managing Editor of PHPA’s magazine, Autorotate.

The IFALPA serves as the global voice of airline pilots, promoting uncompromised levels of aviation safety while providing a broad range of services and support to its member associations. Hundreds of pilots from all over the globe, representing every major airline and pilot’s union, were present.

Members of the IFALPA helicopter committee welcomed PHPA’s attendance and no participation on this prestigious committee was unanimously approved by all of the attending committee members in a surprising turn of events when PHPA President Butch Grafton was nominated and elected to the position of committee Vice Chairman. Congratulations to PHPA and Brother Grafton.

John Conley, Michael Goodwin, ITPE Vice Presidents Elwood Hampton and T. Ruthie Jones.

ITPE affiliated with OPEIU on July 1, 2001, and recently received a charter for the newly formed Local 4873 in Savannah, Ga. ITPE has 10,000 members, a staff of 28 employees and maintains its headquarters in Savannah, Ga. with offices around the country. The ITPE affiliated with OPEIU to benefit from its organizing expertise and staff support in order to build ITPE to an even bigger and stronger union.

Local 12 pension fund merges with Local 153 fund

The Board of Trustees of Local 12, Minneapolis, Minnesota, has approved a merger of its pension fund with the Local 153, New York, N.Y., pension fund. The merger, which was also approved unanimously by the Local 153 Board of Trustees, will be effective in the fall of 2002. “We are now working out due diligence related to the merger,” said Local 153 Secretary-Treasurer Richard Lanigan.

Tony Fonze, PHPA Treasurer, PHPA President Butch Grafton, ALPA First Vice President Denise J. Dolan, Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin Kistler, and Tony Fonze, Autorotate magazine Managing Editor.

Local 3 expands Catastrophic Leave Bank

An employee who retires after five or more years of continuous service with the employer may cash out accrued sick leave up to a maximum of two weeks. All unused or uncompensated sick leave held by an employee upon their termination or retirement is now placed in the Catastrophic Leave Bank. Transfer is in daily increments.

OPEIU, Local 3, Berkeley, California, has negotiated to expand their Catastrophic Leave Bank, a fund that can be utilized by workers suffering from catastrophic illness who have exhausted their own paid leave, reported OPEIU Vice President and Local 3 Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Wohlforth.

Goodwin reelected as officer of Hotel Trades Council

OPEIU International President Michael Goodwin was reelected as Secretary-Treasurer of the New York Hotel and Motel Trades Council, ATU-GIO, on May 1, 2002.

The Hotel and Motel Trades Council represents approximately 25,000 members and consists of nine local unions from International Unions including: OPEIU, HERE, SEIU, IUOE, IBEW, IUPAT and USWA.

Sheila Morrison was elected by the OPEIU Canadian National Committee (CNC) to serve as Vice President in the seat reserved for women. Morrison, who was elected at the CNC’s fall meeting in 2001, replaces Claude Grenier on the Executive Board. The Board thanks Grenier for her many years of service to OPEIU and wishes her well in her future endeavors. Vice President Nick Kapell also resigned from the Executive Board effective at the conclusion of the April 2002 CNC meeting. The Board also thanks Kapell for his dedicated service to OPEIU and wishes him well.

Also elected to the Executive Board was Ruthie Jones. From left to right, Jack Bower, PHPA Treasurer, PHPA President Butch Grafton, ALPA First Vice President Denise J. Dolan, Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin Kistler, and Tony Fonze, Autorotate magazine Managing Editor.
OPEU/FCT organizing via the Web!

AFL-CIO rules in OPEU’s favor in Article XX case

OPEU commemorates Workers Memorial Day

Continued from page 1

members and all those personally affected by Sept. 11,” Goodwin said. “The financial

industry was one of the direct targets of the terrorist attacks. By ringing the stock

exchange opening bell in honor of these lost brothers and sisters we’re demonstrating the

true spirit of Workers Memorial Day — we mourn for those lost but renew our commit-

ment to fight for the rights and safety of all workers,” Goodwin concluded.

A special memorial service held at Trinity

Church, just blocks away from the World Trade Center site, honored the 2,800 workers.

The service, which included victims’ sur-

vivors, World Trade Center workers who

escaped and religious and union leaders,

was followed by a bagpipe-led procession to the World Trade Center site at Ground Zero.

Spokesmen noted that while nothing could have

saved the workers from the terrorist attacks,

fighting for safer workplaces and helping

workers improve their lives through unions is a

fitting way to honor the victims.

“We have come together to mourn the

lives of the men and women who were trag-

ically killed on September 11 as they began

their workday,” said AFL-CIO President John

Sweeney. “We mourn the heroes who gave

their lives rescuing others. And we also

promise to honor all the other workers who

died or were injured on the job last year —

not just in terrorist attacks, but in workplace

accidents and as a result of dangerous con-

ditions. We renew our promise to keep fight-

ing for safe workplaces in your memory,”

Sweeney concluded.

New York City union members also dis-

tributed approximately 100,000 leaflets at

subway stations, bus stops and on street cor-

ners that asked New Yorkers to observe a

minute of silence at noon to honor the work-

ers killed at the World Trade Center and on

the job elsewhere in 2001. Participants at the

Ground Zero ceremony and New Yorkers

around the city paid tribute to the dead with

their noon-time silence.

According to the most recent Bureau of

Labor Statistics figures, 5,915 workers died

from traumatic on-the-job injuries last year,

while another 50,000 to 60,000 die each year

from occupation-related diseases.

T he OPEU and its affiliate, the

Federation of Catholic Teachers

(FCT), OPEU, Local 153, are uti-

lizing the Internet to organize teachers in the

Brooklyn Catholic school system.

The FCT has set up the website to pro-

vide information to teachers in the 159

schools in the Brooklyn Diocese about the

FCT and how it can help the teachers fight

against proposed increases in their health

insurance premiums. The teachers in three other schools have also filed for an

election — St. Andrew Avellino, Holy Name and St. Gregory the Great.

The Brooklyn Diocese has proposed

increases in health insurance premiums to

$40 per month for single coverage, $100

per month for a couple, and $160 per month for families. In its most recent contract

talks, the FCT noted the Archdiocese of

New York from imposing similar increas-

es in health insurance premiums, and

achieved a guaranteed continuation of rates

of $20 per month for single coverage, $25

per month for a couple, and $30 per month for a family.

The FCT represents more than 3,000

Catholic School teachers in 236 schools

in the Archdiocese of New York.

For more information about the FCT and

their organizing campaign with the

Brooklyn Diocese, visit their website at

www.fct.org.

Building a strong political voice for working families

AFL-CIO approves per capita increase

for member mobilization program

A t its February 2002 meeting in New Orleans, La., the AFL-CIO Executive Council

overwhelmingly supported an additional 4-cent-per-month capita payment

to ensure continuing, stable funding for the labor movement’s member mобi-

lization program. The General Board then approved the recommendation.

According to the AFL-CIO, in the past three election cycles, the AFL-CIO has used a

combination of dedicated per capita funding and discretionary funds contributed by unions

on a voluntary basis to lead an increasingly successful unified, cooperative program of grass-

roots political action among all its member unions to build a strong political voice for

working families.

The Executive Council took the critical but difficult stand to seek dedicated, supple-

mentary per capita funding for this now-proven program after almost a year of consider-

ation. Per capita funding, the council decided, is the best way for unions to anticipate and

budget on an ongoing basis for the program, and more fair than voluntary contributions

to spread the expenses among all unions.

The working families agenda calls for:

• Creating and maintaining good jobs;

• Rebuilding America;

• Safeguarding retirement security;

• Ensuring health care security;

• Holding corporations accountable;

• Improving and protecting public education; and

• Laying the crucial foundations for reform of America’s inadequate labor

laws.

AFL-CIO rules in OPEU’s favor in Article XX case

A n AFL-CIO Executive Council

Appeals Committee has ruled in

OPEU’s favor, overturning a recent

Article XX ruling. The decision states, “In

sum, we find that SCPEA (Local 90) 

substantially conformed with the fundamen-

tal rules governing affiliation in its constitu-

tion, and we therefore reverse the determi-

nation of the Umpire.”

The Southern California Professional

Engineering Association (SCPEA/OPEU)

Local 90, under the auspices of the Inter-

national Union, had filed an Article XX case against The Society of Professional

Engineers in Aerospace (SPEEA), alleging that SPEEA, “supported, and has now

intervened on, a decertification petition presently pending before the NLRB, and

has supported a campaign to elect SCPEA officers who are committed to disaffiliating

from OPEU.” An AFL-CIO impartial umpire had cleared SPEEA, but OPEU protested

that ruling.

Article XX of the AFL-CIO Constitution

deals with the settlement of internal disputes

between unions in the Federation. SPEEA is an affiliate of the International Federation

of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE). In a related story, SCPEA/OPEU Local 90

recently asked OPEU to place them in a voluntary trusteeship to preserve the union.

The International has assumed control over the affairs and assets of SCPEA, appointing

Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin Kisler as Trustee. Kisler has appoint-

ed Unit Chairs and Group Representatives in order to continue membership representation.
OPEIU hosts exhibit at 2002 Union Industries Show

OPEIU once again participated in the AFL-CIO Union Industries Show held in Minneapolis, Minn., April 5-8, 2002. This was the fourth time that Minneapolis has hosted the exhibition (1953, 1973, 1991 and 2002) since it began in 1938. The Union Industries Show is organized and produced by the Union Label & Service Trades Department (ULSTD), AFL-CIO.

On hand to represent the OPEIU were International Vice Presidents Judy Solkovits and Anita Roy, as well as OPEIU Purchasing Agent Geoffrey J. Palmer, M.A., and to field questions, provide informative insight and add to the already family fun atmosphere with raffles and giveaways.

The purpose of the Union Industries Show is to showcase and promote union-made American products and union services. The exhibitors include AFL-CIO national and international unions, government agencies, community service affiliations, and union-organized companies represented by union employees. The Union Industry Show gives the public an up-close look at organized labor through live demonstrations of skills of union workers, discussions of labor/management relations and giveaways of union-made products.

The Union Industries Show admission was free and open to the general public. Schools, clubs, and a variety of other organizations were encouraged to attend. The exhibition catered to these special groups by hosting early hours on opening day in order for students to benefit from the learning experience that the show has to offer. School students as well as general fair-goers visited exhibits from the aviation industry, culinary field, energy conservation, health care, technical and clerical workers, and theatrical arts. There were plenty of daily demonstrations presenting skilled industries of textiles, printing, glassblowing, bricklaying, operating engineers and more. Due to the vast eclectic group of companies and skilled workers in attendance, the Union Industries Show is considered the nation’s largest and most unique job fair.

The 2002 AFL-CIO Union Industries Show suffered a loss when long-time show manager Dennis K. Kivikko passed away on December 6, 2001. Kivikko was Secretary-Treasurer of the Union Label & Service Trades Department. This year’s Union Industries Show was dedicated to Kivikko and his life-long efforts and achievements.

There was another dedication made to all the union members who lost their lives during the terrorist attacks of September 11. A display was erected that included a list of all lost union members and their union affiliations. Exhibitors and visitors alike were deeply moved.

Even with these losses, the exhibitors were able to find joy though their annual solidarity at the Union Industries Show. More than 300 exhibitors are expected at the next show to be held in Pittsburgh, Pa., May 2-5, 2003.

OPEIU mourns the loss of Dee A. Musgrove, office manager and secretary in the OPEIU International Secretary-Treasurer’s office from 1982 to 1995. Musgrove was 62.

Musgrove and her daughter, Deborah L. Scruggs, 43, were crushed to death when a truck hauling more than nine tons of concrete toppled onto their minivan and then collided with two bicyclists in Ocean View, Del. The bicyclists suffered fractures and multiple cuts. The cause of the accident was undetermined at press time.

OPEIU extends its deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Dee Musgrove and Ms. Scruggs.
Eye Surgery Not For Everybody

By Phillip L. Polakoff, M.D.

T here are plenty of reasons workers who wear glasses wish they didn’t have to. They can be troublesome when your job requires you to wear protective goggles or a face shield. They can fog up in cold weather. They keep sliding down your nose when it’s hot and your face is sweaty. If you drop them, or have them jarred off, they can break.

Contact lenses have been the answer for many. While contacts solve some of the problems associated with glasses, they are still delicate things you have to take care of. They are not as comfortable as glasses. But eye surgery is not the answer for everyone.

Throw away those pesky glasses. Forget the hassle of holding for lost contacts or soaking them and inserting them. Freedom at last!

Hold on! That may sound like the promise. But eye surgery is not the answer for everybody with a vision problem, according to a leading group of eye care professionals.

After a comprehensive review of the popular LASIK procedure, researchers from the American Academy of Ophthalmology issued a cautionary report in a recent issue of the organization’s official journal. Dr. Christopher Rapuano, chairman of the committee, which drafted the report, said, “LASIK is an excellent procedure for many, although pricey. The procedure has become widely popular.

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Eye surgery is not for everybody. Those who are not good candidates should not have the surgery.”

The best candidates, according to the report, are adults whose vision is stable, whose sight is only moderately distorted, and who have no other eye problems.

Patients who have mild to moderate nearsightedness — objects that are closer appear clearer than those farther away — tend to have consistently positive results.

But LASIK also helps correct astigmatism, an irregular curve of the cornea that causes objects to be blurry at any distance. The report does not address the effectiveness of the surgery on farsightedness.

Now the downside: Undercorrection is common. So is overcorrection, which can leave a nearsighted patient farsighted.

There can be bothersome side effects — seeing glares, halos or nighttime starbursts with itchy, dry eyes.

Catastrophic outcomes such as loss of an eye or severe loss of vision are extremely rare, according to the report. However, a very small minority of patients has been left with persistent, even partially disabling problems. Unlike their original myopia, these cannot always be corrected by vision aids.

If you’ve been thinking about eye surgery, take time to make sure you are a good candidate. Choose a conservative physician — based on the advice of your internist or an eye doctor who does not do the surgery — who would be alert to any possible problems that could lead to an unsatisfactory outcome.
The 2002 Southeast/Southwest Educational Conference offered the many delegates in attendance comprehensive training on Effective Communication and Negotiation, conducted by Professor of Law Charles B. Wiggins of the University of San Diego School of Law. The conference was held in Memphis, Tennessee on May 17-19, 2002.

In addition to local union officers and members, also in attendance were OPEIU International President Michael Goodwin and Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin Kistler. An orientation segment was also presented on the benefits available to members through the Union Privilege Benefits Program, along with a segment on what local leaders can do to effectively participate in the political process.

As usual at OPEIU Educational Conferences, participants also had the opportunity to meet with President Goodwin to discuss local needs and concerns. Local unions are encouraged to participate in these valuable educational conferences; to that end, the International Union provides a $600 subsidy to participating local unions.

Region III Vice President Philip Pope awarded two different state license plates, “OPEIU-1,” to two happy participants.

Delegates listen to Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin Kistler as he details conference agenda.

Region III Vice President Philip Pope and International President Michael Goodwin discuss the conference with International Representative Paul Bohelski.

Goodwin meets with Local 73, Jacksonville, Fla. President/Business Representative Paul Mari and Vice President Kathy Baker.

Local 367, Memphis, Tenn. delegate Christine Booker participates in the discussion.

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Lobbyist Corner

Second verse, same as the first:
Issues affecting workers again pushed to backburner during Congress’ second session

Submitted by OPEIU Lobbyist Robert McGlotten of McGlotten & Jarvis

The second session of the 107th Congress has begun its countdown to the November elections. In the first three months of the session, both the House and Senate failed to pass many of the legislative programs to assist workers, such as prescription drugs, a patients’ bill of rights and the minimum wage.

Patients’ Bill of Rights
The House and Senate passed different versions of a patients’ bill of rights. The main disparity in the bills is the ability for a patient to sue HMOs. OPEIU supports the Senate version.

Prescription Drug Benefits
Similarly to a patients’ bill of rights, legislators could not agree on a prescription drug plan for seniors. Again, like the patients’ bill of rights, Congress hopes to take this up this session. OPEIU supports giving relief to our seniors by supporting a prescription drug plan.

Trade
The Administration is seeking a presidential trade negotiating authority package. The labor movement, including OPEIU, is seeking an expanded trade adjustment assistance (TAA) provision that would provide a healthcare benefit through the COBRA program.

Immigration Reform
Immigration reform and improving relations with Mexico have not been acted upon. OPEIU supports immigration reform.

Minimum Wage Increase
The Senate Democrats planned to push for a $1.50 increase to the federal hourly minimum wage, but got sidetracked by other legislation. OPEIU supports a minimum wage increase.

Campaign Finance Reform
Passed by the Senate and signed into law by President Bush. However, Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has indicated that he will mount a constitutional challenge to the legislation and has formed a legal team headed by former Independent Counsel, Ken Starr.

Extended Unemployment Compensation
Legislation authorizing 13 additional weeks of unemployment compensation was passed by both Houses and signed into law by the president.

Pension Reform
In the wake of Enron, both the House and the Senate have crafted versions of pension protections for workers. OPEIU supports the bill authored by Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA).

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 and the pension reform 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.

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.

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 can also access this information at your local library.

Canadian News

Eastern Canada Council holds triennial meeting
Laplante replaces Grenier as ECC President

The Eastern Canada Council (ECC) of the OPEIU held their triennial meeting on May 3-5 at the Sheraton Laval in Laval, Québec. About 60 delegates attended the meeting.

Maurice Laplante was elected new President of the Eastern Canada Council. Laplante replaces Claude Grenier, who stepped down after serving six years in that position.

Michel Lajeunesse, OPEIU Canadian Director, and Secretary General of Local 57 was re-elected Coordinator of the ECC. Chantal Dumoulin was elected Secretary and Daniel Larose was elected Treasurer.

Guest speakers at the meeting included former Canadian Ambassador Kimm Valaskakis, one of the founding members of the Athens Club. Valaskakis addressed the delegates about globalization and governance. Professor Frederic Lesemann of the Université du Québec a Montréal spoke about the dynamics of the new workplace.

New ECC President Laplante is also an International Vice President of OPEIU, representing Region I. He has served as President of SEPB 57 for more than 20 years.

ECC Coordinator and Canadian Director Michel Lajeunesse (left), OPEIU International Secretary-Treasurer Carol Dupuis (center) and SEPB 463 President Chantal Dumoulin.

Claude Grenier (center), SEPB 434 President Daniel Larose (left) and SEPB 434 Treasurer François Leduc at the Eastern Canada Council farewell banquet dinner in honor of Grenier.
Local 378 has won a United Way Exceptional Service Spirit Award for outstanding contribution to the UW campaign. This is the first year the award has been presented in the labor category. Local 378 was recognized for its extensive membership participation, ongoing support for the labor loan representative program as well as its initiative to contact CEOs at the various companies whose workers are represented by Local 378 and suggest working together to promote the United Way.

"Labor and management can cooperate in helping people in our communities," noted Local 378 President Jerri New.

Local 378 newspaper wins three awards

OPEIU Local 378 News won three communications awards from the International Labor Communications Association (ILCA) AFL-CIO for work published in 2000. ILCA, based with the AFL-CIO offices in Washington, DC, was delayed in distributing the awards by the tragic events of September 11, 2001. The Local 378 newspaper, produced by Local 378 Communications Director Paula Stromberg, garnered the prestigious Max Steinbock Award for the story "Racism - It Hurts." The ILCA judges commented, "Among the many excellent submissions for the Max Steinbock Award, this story stands out in dealing with 'an issue of concern to working families with particular sensitivity and insight into the human spirit.' It personalizes the devastating and permanent effects of racism in a way that forces readers to inspect their own outward behavior as well as their internal judgments and biases. [OPEIU member] Frances Powless, the subject of the piece, is a brave woman who did a great service for working families by telling her story. "The local deserves lots of credit for its gutsiness in taking on an issue that few unions even acknowledge," the judges continued.

Other communications awards were for "General Excellence" of the OPEIU 378 newspaper and "Unique Performance." Stromberg has won national and international communications awards every year since joining the OPEIU office in 1986.

Sheila Morrison elected International Vice President

In British Columbia, Jerri New was re-elected as acclamation as President of Local 378 on March 18, 2002. She ran unopposed for her second three-year term in the 2002 triennial elections for Local 378. All candidates who ran for the 378 Executive Board were also acclaimed. One BC Hydro Board position remains vacant.

Local 378 President Jerri New (center), along with Vice Presidents Karen Rockwell and Doug Hill, accepted a United Way Exceptional Service Spirit Award for outstanding contribution to the UW campaign at a celebration breakfast on January 30, 2002.

Job security threat worsens

Local 378 members are dealing with unprecedented threats to their job security. The provincial government is clearly cutting public services and crown corporations, and members of BC Hydro and ICBC are under scrutiny. So far, the government has made no announcements about ICBC and BC Hydro, leaving more than 8,000 OPEIU members at the two crown corporations uncertain about their future.

At BC Hydro, the company has been restructured and plans are proceeding to sell off parts of the business. Last year, 600 Local 378 members at ICBC accepted voluntary separation packages. The remaining ICBC employees struggle with increased workload and stress.

In the meantime, Local 378 continues to publicize its message, "Hands off Hydro" and "Don’t Wreck ICBC!" through print and broadcast ads, rallies, buttons, t-shirts and protest postcards.

Local 378, representing more than 3,000 BC Hydro workers, wants to stop the BC Liberal government’s plans to privatize, deregulate and break up the crown corporates.

Using the local’s two consumer information websites, www.handsoffhydro.com and www.saveicbc.com, the public is e-mailing messages to elected government representatives.

Also as part of the campaign, Local 378 is asking all city councils around the province to endorse resolutions opposing the privatization of ICBC and BC Hydro.

For up-to-date information on fight-back campaigns in British Columbia, visit the BC Federation of Labour website www.campaignbc.ca.

Local 378 members are dealing with unprecedented threats to their job security.
Forty-three hundred engineers at The Boeing Company in Southern California are fighting for their lives to save their contract and, in fact, their representation rights in a National Labor Board election scheduled for July 9 and 11.

It all started more than two years ago when the engineers, represented by an independent union for more than fifty years, sought the strength of the AFL-CIO through affiliation with one of its sixty national or international unions. The independent union’s name is the Southern California Professional Engineers Association (SCPEA). The Executive Council of SCPEA chose OPEIU and that decision was approved by the membership. Another AFL-CIO union, IFPTE, disagreed, however, and launched a campaign to overturn the vote and provide a new election with IFPTE on the ballot.

The OPEIU believed that IFPTE was interfering with OPEIU’s Article XX rights under the AFL-CIO Constitution and filed charges. An AFL-CIO arbitration found the OPEIU affiliation deficient and OPEIU appealed. OPEIU’s appeal was sustained by the AFL-CIO and IFPTE was directed out.

In the meantime, a member of the dissident SCPEA faction calling itself a “Voice and a Vision has saved the jobs of many engineers who were falsely accused. With regard to the adverse effects of working without a contract, an example was used concerning vacation provisions for unrepresented employees that states: “This procedure does not constitute a contractual obligation, and the company reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to amend, notify, or discontinue its use with or without notice, notwithstanding any provisions for unrepresented employees to “employees at will.” The Boeing Company reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to try and get the petition withdrawn and hold an internal election or second, win a majority vote in the NLRB election.

The contract was overwhelmingly ratified by the members. The problem here is that SCPEA has always been an open shop and a majority of the engineers, although covered by the contract, never joined. They are, however, eligible to vote in either election.

At an AFL-CIO compliance hearing, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka offered his assistance to bring about unity and avoid the “No Union” option provided in the NLRB election. With his assistance, a meeting was called between OPEIU and IFPTE and an agreement was reached to conduct an internal election. The election to be conducted by the American Arbitration Association is subject to withdrawal by the petitioner of the NLRB, the OPEIU, or a return to independent status. It would not provide a “No Union” option and it would not threaten 50 years of representation rights. Any union is better than no union.

The OPEIU wants to eliminate any possibility of SCPEA losing representation rights. The OPEIU wants to eliminate any possibility of SCPEA losing representation rights after 50 years and wants the remaining years of the contract to remain in place. Even if such an internal election means IFPTE or SCPEA is chosen, OPEIU believes that would be much more preferable than “No Union.”

Without union representation and a contract, the engineers will be reclassified as “employees at will” and The Boeing Company will have the legal right to end the employment of any employee at any time, for any reason, without notice, notwithstanding any provisions for unrepresented employees to “employees at will.”

Any union is better than no union.

Editors at Boeing fight to retain representation rights

By Michael Goodwin, International President