The Anti-Union Battle: OPEIU 2, Busters 0

Everyone said the union busters can't be beaten, especially in the South. Everyone said that it was certainly impossible to defeat consultants of the caliber of Modern Management, Inc. or SESCO. And, of course, everyone knows that insurance companies are impregnable and Southern hospital workers are too represented to vote Union.

OPEIU proved “everyone” wrong twice. In spite of the odds and the doomsday predictions, OPEIU has defeated the union busters in a Southern hospital campaign and at a Southwestern insurance company.

OPEIU President John Kelly said that in spite of frantic, last-minute attempts and distribution of false and misleading anti-union propaganda by high-priced union-busting consultants, the health care and clinical workers at both locations picked OPEIU as their representative.
Kelly credited the successes to both the strength and courage of the Southern employees and to OPEIU and AFL-CIO education/research on the union-busting consultants.

The following stories provide the details, often shocking, in both of the campaigns. Both prove that despite incredible odds, the consultants can be beaten and that the South is ready to organize.

The Anti-Union Battle: OPEIU 2, Busters 0

Southern Baptist Hospital

The notorious anti-union consultants Modern Management, Inc. (also known as 2M) were decisively beaten by the LPNs and technicians at East Tennessee Baptist Hospital in 1979 when they voted to be represented by OPEIU.

After a vicious anti-union campaign and equally vicious negotiations, the newly formed Local 475 in Knoxville, Tennessee, believed the worst to be behind them.

Unfortunately that was not the case. According to OPEIU International Organizer Jon Heller, when 2M was replaced in October, 1980, by a new consultant—SESCO—the battle really began. SESCO, which used blatantly illegal tactics and outright terrorism to force the employees to leave their union, made 2M look like a kitten.

Against all possible odds, the employees voted by 131 to 80 to keep their OPEIU representation. And, for the second time, they defeated a supposedly unbeatable union buster.

The details of the story are amazing, sounding more like the campaigns of the 1930s than the 1980s. They are more amazing because they occurred in a hospital run by a religious organization, and because in spite of the terrorist tactics a small group of workers stood firm throughout. Those details follow, as reported by Jon Heller.

Modern Management

Following the first election victory, Southern Baptist retained 2M, who continued to harass the employees and to punish them for voting OPEIU. Immediately following negotiations non-union employees were given an additional holiday and 5 cents more per hour than the union negotiated. What 2M couldn't give the non-union employees, however, was the job security and other protections guaranteed by the union contract.

SESCO

Enter SESCO in October, 1980. Southern Baptist became disenfranchised with 2M. After all, even with 2M—one of the biggest and baddest union busters—on the scene, the employees had remained firm. They supported their union OPEIU through an election and negotiations. They had a contract. And, even following the bargaining and resulting general harassment, the members remained strong.

Southern Baptist Hospital could not tolerate that and the likelihood that the rest of its employees would vote union. They hired SESCO and the war escalated.

The hospital, following SESCO's advice, began firing pro-union supervisors, who refused to threaten and harass employees. They began “progressive discipline” against the Local President, P. J. Thompson. She was transferred, put on probation and written up 12 times in one week. Similar treatment (Continued on Page 2)

...and a Southwest Insurance Company

The office employees at Oklahoma Farmers Union voted 80 to 67 to be represented by OPEIU Local 381, according to International Representative Bill Kirby. A strong organizing committee, research and preparedness, and a great deal of courage and tenacity were reasons cited for OPEIU's organizing victory at the Oklahoma City insurance company.

The employees were committed to OPEIU from the start. Although 15 activists served as the core, 80 employees sent their names to the company as organizing committee members, Kirby said.

An election was scheduled for June 25, and the victory seemed assured. The company, however, immediately hired a notorious anti-union law firm from Oklahoma City—Lylle, Soule, Curlee, Harrington, Chandler and Van Dyke. According to Kirby, Edward Soule handled the company's campaign.

But, OPEIU kept two steps ahead of the union busters throughout the campaign. Working with the International Representative Kirby, the committee researched the consultant's tactics against other Oklahoma City unions. Using literature and tactics from those campaigns, the committee was able to forewarn the employees. They always knew what to expect.

Employees were angry that the company could spend thousands of dollars on the union busters, while they had never been able to find money for wage increases or benefits in the past. The consultants, as a result, became one of the main campaign issues, according to Kirby.

The Final Days

The busters stepped up their campaign against OPEIU in the final three weeks—a typical SESCO tactic—Kirby said. Employees received an average of three letters per week. Twice a week employees were forced to attend captive audience meetings where top management delivered speeches prepared by Soule. Kirby, however, briefed committee members, who were, therefore, well prepared. They embarrassed the company continually by anticipating their points and asking incisive questions management could not answer. "I believe the company made a big mistake in continuing those meetings because of the tenacity of our committee," Kirby said.

Although the company continued to put out false and misleading information on the Union up to the last hour, OPEIU and the committee kept the employees well educated about the facts. As a result, the employees were victorious in beating the consultants and gaining OPEIU representation.

This strong, tenacious committee deserves congratulations, as does Local 381 and International Representative Jack Langford, who assisted Kirby in the campaign.

See Details of a Third Victory, page 4
Southern Baptist
(Continued from Page 1)

was afforded to other union supporters. Finally, at SESCO's instigation, anti-union workers began signing a decertification petition on work time, in work areas—clearly in violation of the law. Although signers were told that the petition was for a "new union," no new union existed. The election was set for June 18, and according to Organizer Jon Heller, "The battle lines were thus drawn for the toughest campaign in this Organizer's career." That's something when you consider that Heller worked on both the Farmworkers and J. P. Stevens campaigns.

SESCO's Terrorism

The hospital and SESCO ran a total fear campaign, according to Heller. For over three weeks, they issued at least one scare letter a day. Supervisors met daily with the consultants, who told them outright that if the Local stayed in, they would be fired. . . . First, the meetings were with two or three employees at a time; but in the last week, they were often one-on-one. At the same time, each employee was called to meetings with the top management of the hospital. Here the climate changed. Management's theme was "What can we do for you to prove that we can represent you better than Local 4757?" Top management, then, came on as "big brother," while the floor supervisors were scaring the people to death.

As the propaganda shows, the main fear themes were strikes, violence and Union dictatorship. But, if the people weren't scared enough after the meetings, they were after the Hospital fired a Union supporter two days before the election.

Union Victory

Even so, the unit held together, supported constantly by a committee of 35 employees, including the registered nurses who belong to the Local. The committee was able to dispel the fear by openly exposing SESCO and their terrorist tactics.

Morale was kept up with Union buttons worn openly in the hospital; sign trucks with nurses riding, waving and exhibiting strong Union support the day before the election; demonstrations; a fried chicken picnic, but mostly through a lot of one-on-one contact between committee members and the rest of the unit. The support of the rest of the Knoxville labor movement was also a great boost to morale.

For two reasons the Local 4757 members were able to remain firm in the face of SESCO's terrorism—because they believed in their Union and in the collective bargaining process. But, also because of their anger—anger that resulted from SESCO's terrorism and from their divisive and disruptive tactics. Because of the fear and distrust instilled in the hospital employees, these dedicated health care workers could no longer perform their jobs as well as they had. The decline in hospital services, which was a direct result of SESCO's tactics, was what finally lost the campaign for the hospital and its consultant.
OPEIU Mourns Long-Time Activist
John F. Fitzmaurice

OPEIU deeply mourns the death of John F. Fitzmaurice. Fitzmaurice worked for years to protect the rights of office workers and the interests of the Office and Professional Employees International Union. It was only in 1979 that he retired as an OPEIU representative for the New England region, although he continued to give support to his Union and its members.

International President John Kelly said of Fitzmaurice: "He dedicated his life to the labor movement. He helped countless OPEIU members through the years—through the Union, his political activities, and personally. I am very proud to have had him as an OPEIU representative and as a close personal friend. He will be greatly missed."

Fitzmaurice, son of the late Michael J. and Mary McKernan Fitzmaurice, was born in New Haven on September 7, 1917. He began his long career in the labor movement as a union delegate for the Railway Clerks Union in New Haven during the 1940s. Following that, he represented the Hotel and Restaurant Union Local 217 in New Haven. He then joined the staff of the Office and Professional Employees, where he remained until his retirement.

Fitzmaurice, who died at 63, leaves a wife, Helen Sedralenko Fitzmaurice; a son John J. Fitzmaurice, both of Hamden, Connecticut; and a brother Thomas J. Fitzmaurice of West Haven. Additionally, he leaves many friends at OPEIU and the many members he has served throughout the years.

The family has asked that memorial donations be made to the American Cancer Society, 8 Lundar Drive, Woodbridge, CT, or to the Connecticut Hospice, Inc. in Branford, CT.

Social Security Cuts

(Continued from Page 4) could equate Social Security and going on welfare. People receiving Social Security should not be told that they must become welfare cases.

Workers who have contributed to the Social Security program and the growth of the country, should not have that contribution minimized and be told that after all these years they are to become welfare cases.

There is nothing prohibiting monies to be allocated from the General Funds of the Federal Government for the purpose of permitting our retired to live in frugal comfort. This is radical departure from what has happened in the past. When Highway Trust Funds are depleted, Congress votes monies from the general fund to keep them viable. I cannot believe that roads are more important than people.

The AFL-CIO Department of Social Security has informed us that the temporary fund shortfalls over the next five years will be $10 billion, but that Social Security would only have $2 billion. There is obviously no need—at least short-term—to make such far-reaching reductions.

Kirkland — Reasons for Solidarity Day

And why are all those people marching on Sept. 19 in Washington? Well, different workers have different waves in different programs—but with unemployment above 7 percent and the government threatening cutbacks in worker protections of virtually every kind, none of those American workers is doing very well. So on Sept. 19, they’re going to show that the three-million strong Solidarity Day will show those who have written off the labor movement that we have lost none of our driving force.

He said labor must resist "with all our strength and resolution the effort that is under way to bring back the days when our nation was a two-class society—with great wealth and privilege on one side, supported by all the largesse and solicitude of government, and insecurity, privation and neglect on the other."

A first priority, he said, is "to make sure that America’s working people understand the issues in the most real and human terms" and are not fooled "by right-wing economic fakers." It is workers whose lives and health are threatened by crippling police and protective regulations, Kirkland said.

It is workers whose children's schools will deteriorate and whose neighborhoods will lose police and fire protection "because of the strangulation of federal aid to the states and cities and the destruction of federal job programs." And retired and disabled workers "are the targets of the efforts to put the Social Security system on the budgetary chopping block."

The Reagan Administration is seeking to dismantle "the social programs that hold together the relatively humane society that the labor movement has helped to build in the last half-century," Kirkland warned.

Kirkland challenged the Administration’s philosophy of "deficit reduction" and spoke of his own recollection of growing up in the depression-era South where "the only Social Security system was the county poorhouse." And in "countless cities, clubs and guns were the tools of labor relations, backed up by the police and the National Guard."

It wasn’t until government "got on our backs" that conditions improved, he stressed. "In a just society, it is the business of government to look out for the interests of the poor and the weak," Kirkland insisted. "The rich and the powerful can and do look after themselves."

LOCAL BRIEFS

Local 32 Business Representative Pat Tully reports a 15-percent wage hike for the employees of Union College in Cranford, N.J. in their new two-year agreement. Additional gains included the reduction of penalties on Working Women workers, one year of service from three and improved Blue Cross coverage for the clerical staff.

The negotiating committee assisting Tully was composed of Rosaline Mace, Nancy Peltigero, Dorothy Walko and Charlotte Weber.

Herman W. Pope, who served as President of Local 174 in Los Angeles from 1957 to 1981, has retired. Pope, described by his members as “courageous in his beliefs and stalwart in his defense of them,” has been and is a dedicated serv- vant of the labor movement and of Local 174’s membership.

Both the International and Local 174 wish him health and prosperity in his retirement. He will be missed by all of us, but especially by those who have served for many years.

OPEIU welcomes our new Local 504 in Mt. Pleasant, MI. The new members are employed at Giantway Computer Center and have recently negotiated their first contract, reports the AFL-CIO Department of Industrial Relations. Briefs 1981, has retired. Pope, described by his members as “courageous in his beliefs and stalwart in his defense of them,” has been and is a dedicated serv- vant of the labor movement and of Local 174’s membership.

INT’L. BRIEFS

At the June OPEIU Executive Board meeting, the Board voted unanimously to support affiliation with the AFL-CIO Industrial Union Department (IUD). The vote was taken after a presentation on the department and its activities by IUD Secretary-Treasurer O. E. Bly. Reasons for affiliation were the IUD’s active organizing activities and assis- tance in unions’ campaigns, its recognized role as coordinator and developer of coordinated bargaining committees through the U.S., its pension plan which is available to all affiliates, plus other advantages.

On July 11, OPEIU Research Director Gwen Wells taught two classes on Collective Bargaining with an empha- sis on women’s issues to the participants of Working Wom- en’s Summer Institute. Working Women, if you will recall, is that organization that supports women’s rights in the workplace.

Following a presentation on the basics of bargaining (forming committees, drafting demands, and research), Wells spoke at length on issues of special concern to women workers. Although focusing on issues such as comparable worth, maternity and childcare leave, flextime and overtime hours, and promotional opportunities, she emphasized the largely unorganized nature of these that were equally bene- ficial to male employees.

International Representative Judy Burnick was a featured speaker at the University of Wisconsin’s 7th Annual Forum on "The Working Woman in A Crisis Economy" on June 25. Burnick explained the difficulties of organizing the "9 to 5" workers, the predominantly female clerical workforce. Some of those difficulties include gender responsibilities of women and their fear of losing their jobs.

Although women are largely uneducated to unions, they are coming to see that unions are effective advocates for women and their rights. While only 20 percent of working women are currently organized, OPEIU members and other organized women earn 30 percent more than non-union women, Bur- nick said.

Support V.O.T.E.
from the desk of

PRESIDENT

JOHN KELLY

Organizing Victory No. 3

Health Plan Employees Choose OPEIU

The more than 100 employees at Community Health Plan of Suffolk, Inc. (CHPS) in Suffolk County, NY voted overwhelmingly to be represented by Local 153, reports Local Organizer Pat Hoffman. Hoffman attributed the win to the use of organizing techniques taught by OPEIU full-time staff at the AFL-CIO Organization and Field Services Department. The 4-to-1 vote among the clericals and 2-to-1 in the medical unit proved the concepts work, she said.

The strategy, she admits is not a new one. It rests primarily on building a strong committee whose members represent the various departments at the office or plant. Hoffman says her committee could not have been stronger.

"They did everything, which is the way it should be. They talked to all the employees individually, answering all questions, right up to the last night of the campaign. If it had not been for the winning three leaders, who held everything together, we could not have won," she said.

Those committee leaders, who deserve congratulations, are Sharon Ackerly, Kathy Faley, Margaret Montgomery, Kathy Maroito, and Lorraine Marsoni.

Hoffman also asked that thanks be given to Local 153 members from other health facilities and Dowling College for their generous assistance to the campaign. These members, she says, met with CHPS employees to explain the benefits and protections they had gained with OPEIU contracts. "Their help was immeasurable," said Hoffman, "in a vicious anti-union campaign.

OPEIU Members Contribute to Political Education Funds

For the sixth consecutive year OPEIU reached 100 percent of its COPE quota. COPE is the AFL-CIO political action arm, known as Committee on Political Education. All contributions were made to COPE by OPEIU members who realize the importance of and necessity for political action and education.

The boost given to COPE's coffers was illustrated by the check from OPEIU presented by International Secretary William A. Lowe to COPE Director Al Barkan.

That, however, does not include all political contributions of OPEIU members, staff and officers. OPEIU also maintains its own political action fund, the Voice of the Electorate (VOTE). In the last issue of White Collar, we began to publish a list of those full-time staff and officers who contribute annually to the "President's 100 Club," that is, those who donate $100 per year to VOTE either through a contribution or checkoff. The following have signed up for this program since that issue: Vice President Bill D. Adams, Vice President W. Charles Harris, International Representative Richard W. Holober, and International Organizer Anna Oberer, and President Emeritus Howard Coughlin.

Many, many more OPEIU members have contributed as much or more to VOTE through checkoff. We would like to thank them as a group, since there are far too many for publication.

Canadian Educate on Technology and Arbitration

The Mid-Canada Council recently held its annual educational conference in Thunder Bay, Ontario. The more than 80 participants attended courses on Grievance Handling and Arbitration and Health and Automation in the Office, reports the Mid-Canada Public Relations Director John van Dyk.

Prior to the opening of the classes, locals met for a business session at which new Council officials and officers were elected. Pictured here are the newly installed officers.

Following the business session and Conference luncheon, participants were free to choose the topic in which they had the most interest or on which they desired more information. Ultimately almost 40 students attended each of the classes which are detailed below.

OPEIU International Research Director Gwen Wells led the one and one-half day discussions of office safety and health and the impact of technological change in the office.

Dr. Robbin, Director of Education for the Canadian Labour Council (CLC) instructed the course "The Protection of Grievances and Arbitration Cases," for one afternoon. This was followed by a one-day course entitled "Advanced Arbitration" conducted by Ralph Ottig, instructor for the CLC.

Van Dyk reports that the Council fully believes in keeping the locals up-to-date on all issues that affect their members and bargaining. Considering the turnout and level of expertise of the members, they have been doing that very well.

Pictured left to right are the new officers of the Mid-Canada Council: First Vice President Bill Dickerson, President Mary Kinato, Treasurer Gary Borets, and 2nd Vice President Bill Fiever.

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