

CONVENTION CONVENES



WHITE COLLAR

Office and Professional Employees International Union, AFL-CIO and CLC

No. 409

April-June 1983

OPEIU Lines Up Convention Speakers

Numerous well-known and progressive speakers will address the delegates at the 16th Triennial OPEIU Convention. Because of the impact of the U.S. and Canadian Administrations and their economic policies on the lives of our members, politicians head the list of those speakers.

It is expected that these guests will analyze current and upcoming legislation, and will offer delegates advice on strategies to protect their members.

Here we present in alphabetical order the profiles and upcoming legislation and will offer delegates addressing the Convention. It is expected that others might be added closer to the Convention opening.



Lindy Boggs

Corrine Claiborne Boggs — universally known as "Lindy"—is serving her sixth term as the U.S. Representative for Louisiana's Second Congressional District. Boggs was elected to Congress on March 20, 1973.

She is a member of the influential House Appropriations Committee, which helps to determine spending levels for all federal departments and agencies, and a member of the Appropriations Subcommittees on Energy & Water Development and on HUD/Independent Agencies.

During her political career, Boggs has achieved a

number of "firsts." She is the first woman to have been elected to Congress from the State of Louisiana. By chairing the Democratic National Convention in New York City in 1976, she became the first woman to chair the national convention of a major American political party. She is also the first woman to have been named a Congressional Regent of the Smithsonian Institution, and was further honored in 1980 when the Smithsonian gave her a lifetime appointment as "Regent Emeritus."

The AFL-CIO rates legislators on their votes in the House or Senate. The legislator is given a percentage score, based on whether they voted "correctly," i.e., voted a pro-people position. Boggs received a 70 percent "correct" score both cumulatively and in 1982.



Thomas R. Donahue

Thomas R. Donahue has served the trade union movement in a wide variety of positions ranging from part-time organizer and business agent to first vice president of a major AFL-CIO affiliate and executive assistant to the AFL-CIO President George Meany. He served in the government as Assistant Secretary of Labor for Labor-Management Relations during the Johnson Administration.

A native New Yorker, he served in a number of staff positions with the Service Employees Interna-

tional Union Local 32B. He later served as Executive Secretary of the International Union and twice won election as first vice president of SEIU.

He was elected Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL-CIO in November 1979, and was reelected in 1981.

He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Carnegie Corporation, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, the National Urban League, National Institute for Dispute Resolution, the Institute for Civil Justice and the Brookings Institution.

As a good friend who has addressed OPEIU delegates many times, Tom Donahue needs no further introductions.



Dennis McDermott

Dennis McDermott, President of the Canadian Labour Congress, was elected to his post in 1978 and reelected in 1980 and 1982.

His life in the trade union movement began in 1948 when he started working as an assembler and welder at the Massey-Ferguson plant in Toronto. He joined UAW Local 439 and quickly became a union activist. He quickly rose to Local Chief Steward, Recording Secretary, Local News Editor, the Organizing Staff of the International Union, the position of Service Staff Representative, Sub-regional Director of the Toronto Area, and finally UAW Canadian Director. In the same year he became Director, he was elected General Vice President of the Canadian Labour Congress.

McDermott was instrumental in the foundation of the Commonwealth Trade Union Council of which he is the Chairman, and he is a member of the Executive Board of the Inter-American Regional Organization of Workers. He is also an active participant in the affairs of the 60-million member International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, of which he is Vice-President.

He is best known to this Union for his close work with President John Kelly, Secretary-Treasurer Roméo Corbeil, and our Canadian International Vice Presidents on the legislative agenda of the CLC. Together we have worked toward a program for economic and social reform and for mobilizing the resources of the Canadian labour movement in combatting wage controls and wage concessions in the public and private sectors. This has also meant close work with and support of the New Democratic Party.

McDermott is also no stranger to OPEIU Convention delegates.

OPEIU Wins Model Federal Contract at Department of Energy

The more than 500 OPEIU Local 268 members working at the Department of Energy (DOE) in Tennessee have gained a new, revolutionary federal sector agreement, said Local President Dalton Cooper, who assured us the members were thrilled with their new contract.

In outlining the new agreement, International Representative Jon Heller said the initial contract falls into three categories: grievance procedure, information, and protection from change.

Grievance Procedure

For the first time DOE employees have recourse to final and binding arbitration of grievances. In addition, disciplinary actions up to suspensions of five days will be processed under "expedited" or "mini" arbitration, insuring quick and speedy relief. "We think," said

Cooper, "that the grievance and arbitration articles are among the best in existence in the federal sector."

Grievance and arbitration procedures, as most trade unionists know, are the only means to protect employees from arbitrary and discriminatory management treatment.

Information

The contract provides for a vast array of information services, which are all new. Included are "the employees' right to know" new federal legislation, regulations or management decisions affecting them; disclosure of information on merit selections, performance appraisal results, contracting out and many other topics which are critical to the existence of a union in the federal sector.

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OFFICE AND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION
affiliated with the AFL-CIO, CLC

JOHN KELLY
President

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Secretary-Treasurer

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GWEN WELLS
Managing Editor



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Vote 100 Club

OPEIU members continue to respond to requests for contributions to the Union's political action fund. This fund—Voice of the Electorate—enables OPEIU to fight for legislation, or against legislation, to protect the interests of our members. It also allows us to contribute to the campaigns of political candidates who share our common goals and concerns. With 1984 elections around the bend, raising VOTE contributions should be a major priority for all locals.

The President's 100 Club, composed of those who contribute at least \$100 annually, indicates the level of involvement and commitment of our members. This Club has grown enormously and continues to grow. As is our tradition, we print here the names of the new and committed Club members.

A recent member is International Vice President Bill Wittal. Full-time employees of local unions who have joined include Helen Bowden, Molly Carlberg, JoAnne Lawrence, Joseph L. McGee, Darlene Sobieck, and Judy Zenk.

New contributors who are not full-time employees of the International or local unions include Richard Ballenger; Rick Bender; Eric Buckley; Charles D. Caldwell, Jr.; Linda Card; William Clardy; Esther Clark; Dalton Cooper; Dalton Daves; Charles E. Davis; Robert Day; Thomas Donovan; Larry Essex; Debbie Farmer; Frank Fennerty; Charles R. Ferguson; Michael Ferrone;

David Geneser; Larry Geneser; Rhonda Gray; Frederick Heitman; James Horton; Ken Howard; Riley and Rebecca Huckabee; Randy Hutson; Victor Jacobs; Jerry Jarvis; David Klar; Ronnie Lawson; Florence McCamy; Doris McClark; Justilian Martin; Katherine C. Mays; Robert Melton; Ronald Miller; Peggy Nolen; David Pecquet; Kenneth C. Presley; James H. Price, Jr.;

Manuel Ramirez; Don Robertson; Elmoore Roux; Jenny Sample; Jim Sharp; Ann Shepard; Mary Smith; Sandra Smith; Spencer Smith; Thomas Spitzig; Donald Spohn, III; Ruth E. Stanley; Alan D. Stephenson; James Sullivan; Lois Swanstrom; Stanley Tang; James Tharp; Tom Thompson; C. Victor; and Sylvia Woods.

Pooling resources for membership include the following groups: Local 33 Executive Board, Local 475 Executive Board, and Local 179 President S. Smith and Representative Earl Brown.

We should all be grateful to these new members, who share our commitment to the fight for justice, equality and dignity—whether it is on the shop floor or in the political arena.

**Those Who Care,
Give to VOTE**



Local 85 President John Schiltz loads packages of food for jobless.

Editorial

Saskatchewan Under Attack

W. P. Wittal, International Vice-President and President of Local 397 in Regina, Saskatchewan, analyzed the effects of the April, 1982, change of government on his Local and the working people of Saskatchewan. His editorial appears below.

After 11 years of the most progressive and humane Government on this continent, led by Premier Allan Blakeney, a misguided electorate—bribed by lower taxes without reduction of services—decided to support and elect a Progressive Conservative Government on April 28, 1982. The Conservatives replace the New Democratic Party Government which was reduced to a small, but effective, opposition. Every liberal candidate was defeated at the polls, including the leader of the Liberal Party.

The cost of having a P.C. Government will be astronomical. Saskatchewan is experiencing Reaganomics at its worst. The price the working people of this Province will pay is incalculable. This Government, a champion of free enterprise, is waging an all-out attack on our public sector, which has already resulted in mass layoffs of employees of Crown Corporations and the Public Service.

Reduction in funding of programs, assisting the elderly, handicapped, unemployed, and other groups of disadvantaged people, together with the abolishment of entire programs, like the Women's Division of the Department of Labour, will play havoc with our social services and have a profound effect on our local economy.

My own Local has had nothing but problems since the change in Government. The new Minister, New President, and the new Board of Directors of Saskatchewan Government Insurance, a Crown Corporation, where Local 397 has the bulk of its membership, collectively have displayed a callous approach, culminating in the layoffs of 120 SGI employees. Resulting from these layoffs were the closures of SGI, MVD offices in four different cities. They began contracting the work out to private agents, which is in violation of our collective agreement.

The normal grievance procedure did not generate a timely solution. We, therefore, had to initiate court proceedings against SGI. The judge who heard our case made a monumental decision and ordered SGI to:

- (1) maintain the status quo in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement and to keep these four offices open;
- (2) refrain from transferring or contracting out services or functions now being performed by employees of SGI at those MVD offices; and
- (3) refrain from displacing any of these employees from their employment in these Motor Vehicle Offices by layoff, termination or any

other means, or to reclassify or transfer any of them until the trial of this action or other disposition thereof.

This is a "landmark" decision because it is the first time in British jurisprudence that a judge allowed the Crown to be challenged in Court on this kind of charge, was prepared to hear the case, and subsequently ordered what amounts to an "injunction." It is a feather-in-the-cap of Local 397 as well as OPEIU, since our case is a milestone of the Queens Bench Court and will forever be referred to as:

Q.B. 1132 of 1983

William Wittal et al.

Plaintiff

- and -

The Saskatchewan Government Insurance

Defendant

In the interim, we are establishing an Arbitration Board on this grievance.

No matter how significant and gratifying the Court's decision, a major battle has been won, but the war is not over. I have every reason to believe that we are in for a long and bitter fight.

It appears that this Progressive Conservative Government is bent on the destruction of the labour movement in Saskatchewan, and through privatization and other means reducing our Crown Corporations to ineffective and unprofitable entities. This is evidenced by some feasibility studies conducted by SGI to determine whether or not the Corporation should continue to operate its very profitable Salvage Division. This Division made nearly \$4 million net profit in the last 5 years and paid over \$13 million into the Automobile Accident Insurance Fund to keep the insurance rates down.

This Government is yielding to pressure from the Chamber of Commerce, employers' associations and other vested interest groups. The Minister of Labour is on record that he is considering introduction of "Right-to-Work" legislation and that his Department is working on the revision (weakening) of the "Labour Relations Act," "Labour Standards Act," "Occupational Health and Safety Act," and other acts which deal with the rights and protection of working people.

It is obvious that Local 397 is under attack and with contract negotiations coming up, we must recruit the assistance and available manpower in order to protect our members' jobs and prevent the erosion of their collective agreement.

Wisconsin Local Assists Jobless



Hundreds of bags and boxes of food were collected in a food drive to aid the unemployed and needy. The drive was conducted by OPEIU Local 85 and two other unions at the Ladish Co. in Cudahy, Wisconsin, reported International Representative Michael Walker.

Of course, it is only as a result of the inhuman economic policies of the present U.S. Administration which have caused widespread unemployment and cutbacks in benefits, that our locals are forced to take such measures. But, thank goodness, they have.

Food was brought to the Ladish Co. garage all day March 25. "And, the response was ter-

rific," said Local 85 President Joan Schiltz.

Robert Volsich, the coordinator of the food drive, said, "One old man walked here from Pick N' Save and gave us a bag of groceries. Another man brought in 30 bags of baby food."

The Milwaukee Bucks and Brewers contributed items such as jackets, socks, caps and novelties to be given with the food bags and to those making contributions.

The drive raised eight tons of food and \$3,500. The food was to be distributed to low income and unemployed persons in Milwaukee, Racine and Waukesha counties in the State of Wisconsin.

Work and Health
by Press Associates, Inc.

Making Jobs Fit People

by Phillip L. Polakoff

"Ergonomics" is a funny looking word with a serious meaning for your comfort and health.

In everyday language, the word simply means making jobs fit people—not people fit jobs. It comes from the Greek "ergon" (work) and "nomos" (law).

A lot of aches and pains, sprains and strains, could be eliminated if workplace design followed the principles of ergonomics. A well-designed workplace takes into account the varying sizes and strengths of the entire workforce, including the handicapped.

Here are a few ideas from just one part of ergonomics—"Biomechanics"—dealing mostly with the way you use (or misuse) your arms, legs and back where many problems arise.

Tools and equipment should be designed so that your hands and wrists are in the same position as if they were hanging relaxed at your side. If the tool, or the position you are required to use it in, bends your wrists, that's bad design.

Where possible, jobs should be designed so that the arms don't have to be raised above the shoulder height on a regular basis. Good design tries to follow two principles:

- Keep your arms low, and/or,
- Keep your elbows close to your body.

Holding the muscles tense in a fixed position is more tiring than using moving muscles. The movement allows the muscles to relax momentarily. An example of this "dynamic" versus "static" work would be holding a board steady with one hand while you sawed with the other. In general, static work should be designed for using tools or clamping devices instead of holding by hand.

Work tasks should be designed to take the best mechanical advantage of the muscles used. This avoids overloading the muscles. For instance, where jobs require arm strength, the exertion should be in and out—not across the body.

Back injuries are one of the leading—if not THE leading—causes of job-related disabilities. And a major share of the blame lies with workplace design that makes people work with a bent spine. Jobs should be designed to allow workers to work with their backs straight.

Improper lifting probably causes as much back misery as any single cause. Remember: Keep the back straight and lift with the legs, keeping the load as close to the body as possible. Don't twist or turn the spine while carrying the load.

Standing still for too long can put excessive stress on the spine and back muscles, causing pain and even permanent damage to the body tissue. A foot rest—like the old saloon "brass rail"—lessens stress on the back. You should change leg positions often.

Poorly designed or mismatched chairs and work benches can cause fatigue and circulation problems, especially at such critical points as the knees and waist.

Proper height of the work surface depends on the nature of the work. Precision work, where you have to see closely, should be high; low if the work requires heavy manipulation, pressure or lifting.

- Survey the workforce to find out who has symptoms or sprains and strains, and get workers' ideas about how to correct problems;
- Document medical problems by reviewing OSHA injury records, workers' compensation records, sickness and accident records, and visits to the company medical department;
- Evaluate all jobs and operations for poor set-up and design;
- Establish a system of communications so that all affected parties—management, engineers, union representatives, skilled trades and production workers—have input into decisions;
- Set up priorities and a systematic method of correcting problems.

Workers are not interchangeable parts you can reach in a bin for. They are flesh and blood, old and young, short and tall, weak and strong, male and female. All of these variables have to be taken into account in good job and workplace design.

(Dr. Polakoff is the director of the Western Institute for Occupational/Environmental Sciences.)



Washington Window

Who Pays How Much Taxes?

By Press Associates, Inc.

As income tax time rolled around again, some things being said and done in Washington, D.C. rubbed against the raw nerves of many hard-working taxpayers.

A few weeks ago, President Reagan startled his aides and reporters alike with an off-the-cuff attack on the corporate income tax. Saying there "really isn't a justification" for this tax on business profits, he suggested its abolition.

Taxpayers received a second jolt from events on Capitol Hill, where first a jobs bill and then Social Security reform and jobless benefits extension legislation were held hostage to an unrelated tax amendment backed by the banking industry.

Banks and other financial institutions waged a multimillion dollar lobbying blitz aimed at repeal of a 1982 law requiring them to withhold 10 percent of interest and dividend income beginning this July. The law aims at recapturing more than \$3 billion lost to the Treasury each year due to tax evasion by affluent recipients of stock dividend and interest income. The banks, of course, prefer to hold on to that money and make more money on it.

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Robert Dole (R-Kan.) warned the banks that if they prevailed on the issue, he would retaliate by seeking to make them pay a fairer share of taxes. Dole also arranged for a quick study and a Senate hearing to publicize how much banks pay in taxes.

That study, by the Congressional Joint Committee on Taxation, revealed some interesting facts.

The nation's largest bank paid into the Treasury only 2.7 percent of their domestic income in 1981, the study showed.

Six of the banks studied actually collected tax refunds or credits against future liabilities. For example, Bank of America, the nation's second largest bank, had U.S. income of \$154 million, but got a refund or tax credit of \$18 million.

Senator Dole said he was "sure the average taxpayer, who pays about 20 percent of his income in federal taxes, will welcome" the study about "this privileged, tax-exempt status" of the banks.

The AFL-CIO urging Congress to reject "the banks' self-serving efforts to repeal withholding,"

noted that banks "pay a smaller percentage of income tax than does a working family of four that earns only \$10,000 yearly."

But banks aren't the only corporations which manage to avoid paying their fair share by using complicated but legal loopholes written into the tax code.

The Study showed that while banks had the third-lowest tax rate among major industries, they were almost matched by crude oil producers, who paid \$31 million on \$966 million of domestic income in 1981.

It's worth noting that banks and oil companies regularly saturate congressional elections with campaign contributions.

When Reagan raised the idea of doing away with the corporate income tax, he may not have realized how far the tax system has moved in that direction in the past 30 years.

The corporate tax rate, 52 percent in 1953, now stands at 46 percent. But tax loopholes gradually have whittled that down to 35 percent for the average business. For the top Fortune 100 companies, it's down to 15 percent. And a few of these giants paid no taxes at all in some recent years.

The corporate share of the total tax burden has been plunging—from 30 percent in 1953 to 12.5 percent in 1980. Since Reagan took office, it has dropped to just over 6 percent despite last year's repeal of some of the tax giveaways to business enacted in 1981.

While corporations will pay more than \$35 billion in taxes this year, an array of corporate tax preferences will excuse them from paying about \$64 billion.

Thus a recent Library of Congress study concluded that "the present set of tax rules is not much different from the effects of having no corporate tax at all."

Instead of being wiped off the books, the corporate tax needs to be strengthened. Loopholes should be plugged, especially for favored industries like banking and oil.

Tax breaks should be geared not to tax avoidance by the rich, but rather carefully targeted to help the nation's industrial base and to bolster the nation's ability to compete with other nations.

Convention Speakers Scheduled

(Continued from page 1)



Joyce Miller

Joyce Miller is the current President of the Coalition of Labor Union Women, Vice President of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Unions, and a member of the AFL-CIO Executive Council. Miller, in fact, was the first woman member of that Council.

She has long been committed to the trade union movement, and especially to the encouragement and development of women trade unionists to assume activist and leadership positions within the movement.

She also serves as Executive Director of the Sidney Hillman Foundation, Director of the Amalgamated Trust & Savings Bank, Trustee of numerous groups including the German Marshall Fund and the George Meany Center for Labor Studies, and Executive Board member of many others like the A. Philip Randolph Institute and the National Consumer League.

She continues to be a champion of women's, minorities', and consumer rights.



Claude Pepper

Claude Denson Pepper, U.S. Representative, is well-known to all of our delegates as a defender of senior-citizen rights. A senior citizen himself, he has one of the longest records of service to that constituency and the public of any other officeholder. It is obviously impossible for us to list all of his achievements and offices here.

However, he began his political career in 1929, when he assumed the office of Representative in the Florida Legislature. From 1936 to 1951 he served as U.S. Senator from Florida.

On November 6, 1962, he was elected to the United States House of Representatives, an office he holds today. He serves in that body as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Health and Long-Term Care, Member of the Rules Committee, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Rules of the House, Member of the House Democratic Steering and Policy Committee, and is the

Democratic appointee to the National Commission on Social Security Reform.

Pepper is a long-time friend of OPEIU and the labor movement. His voting record is indicative of that friendship. He has one of the best records in both Houses of Congress for his support of progressive, pro-people legislation.

The AFL-CIO gives him a cumulative "correct" score of 93 percent. In 1982, his votes were rated "right" 100 percent of the time.



Jim Sasser

U.S. Senator Jim Sasser serves on some of the most important and influential committees in the U.S. Senate, including the Senate Appropriations Committee. He is the first Tennessee Senator to serve on that Committee since 1963. He also serves on the Budget Committee and the Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee.

He is best known to the labor movement as the only Senator from the South to defend and vote in favor of Labor Law Reform. In addition, he has shown his commitment to American workers continually. Examples include his programs to create jobs and his sponsorship of a bill to grant tax credits to businesses who now hire the unemployed. In addition, he fought to protect Social Security beneficiaries, and has fought for a moratorium on foreclosures by the Farmers Home Administration and other measures to protect the nation's farmers from financial ruin.

Cumulatively Sasser scored 73 percent on the AFL-CIO scorecard; but voted "correct" in 1982, 85 percent of the time. That's progress.

Secretaries Week: OPEIU Focuses On Automation

Florists and candy manufacturers originally established National Secretaries' Day and Week in an attempt to honor secretaries and more important, to raise profits. Bosses across the country have responded with posies and sweets for their employees. It didn't hurt the bosses who could purchase once yearly a small token, while neglecting their employees the rest of the year.

Certainly the price of a box of candy or bouquet of flowers was more cost effective than paying the secretaries or clerical workers what they were worth, providing them with promotional opportunities, or protecting their health and safety on the job. OPEIU doesn't think so.

While bosses were distributing their gifts, OPEIU was bringing to the attention of the general public and the New York State legislature in particular the health and safety concerns of clerical workers in the new electronic offices.

Testimony on VDT Legislation

In New York State OPEIU and other unions have mounted a drive for legislation to protect office em-

Speaker Schedule

The speakers will address the Convention delegates on the following days:

Sunday evening, June 5

Claude Pepper

Monday, June 6

Lindy Boggs

Tom Donahue

Jim Sasser

Tuesday, June 7

Dennis McDermott

Wednesday, June 8

Joyce Miller

Thursday, June 9

Paul Burnsky, Metal Trades Dept.

The exact order and times for speaking have not yet been arranged. As indicated, other speakers will likely be added to this schedule.

ployees from the health hazards of video display terminals. OPEIU is seeking legislation for regulation of the machines on which millions of workers spend their working days.

In a fact-finding hearing on April 14, 1983, OPEIU Research Director Gwen Wells testified on the hazards of VDTs. Speaking before the New York State Assembly Committee on Labor and the Legislative Commission on Science and Technology she made the following address:

I am Gwen Wells, Research and Education Director of the Office and Professional Employees International Union, AFL-CIO, CLC. The OPEIU represents some 140,000 white collar workers throughout private industry—insurance, banking, universities, utility companies, shipping companies, manufacturing, hospitals, hotels, etc.—in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico.

We represent approximately 25,000 white collar employees in New York State at companies like the New York Stock Exchange, Fordham University, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, General Health Insurance, and Amalgamated Bank.

OPEIU has represented white collar workers for nearly 50 years. During that time and especially within the last 15 to 20 years, we have watched the office undergo an incredible change. Just as automation and technological changes were introduced into the industrial workplace in the 1930s, they have been introduced into the office beginning in the 1960s. This technological revolution is cutting across all industries, governments and occupations, and has caused a rapid and massive redesign of work and the work environment.

The widespread application of computers and video display terminals, and the speed with which these and similar technological advances are being developed, portend even further changes in all segments of the workplace.

This new technology has the potential for providing improved living standards, increased leisure time, and better working conditions. Unfortunately, because of the means with which it is applied—and with little or no consideration for the human factor and consideration instead for only increased production and lowered costs—this is not happening.

Many white collar and professional jobs are being transformed. Both quality and quantity of these jobs is changing—and not necessarily for the better.

Instead, the office is appearing to look more and more like assembly-line operations and is beginning to experience the same problems—high production standards, boredom, fatigue, deskilled jobs, fewer promotion opportunities. Last, but not least, safety and health hazards have entered the office.

VDT Complaints

Approximately five years ago our members who operate video display terminals began to complain of eye-strain, visual fatigue, headaches, dizziness, nausea, body aches and pains, and those complaints have continued unabated. More and more members report frequent eye-glass prescription changes or initial purchases of glasses. Many report difficulty focusing and, therefore, driving after working hours.

(Continued on page 5)

OPEIU Focuses on Automation

(Continued from page 4)

We became concerned with the number of complaints and, therefore, with the Newspaper Guild requested that the National Institute on Occupational Safety and Health conduct a survey of VDT operators in San Francisco to confirm or refute the problems. NIOSH, in fact, confirmed high levels of visual, musculoskeletal and mental stress. In all likelihood, you have heard in detail today about these findings. I will not go into them again now, although I have attached copies of the study's findings at our Blue Shield facility.

In a survey we later conducted among our members who work more than 2 hours each day at the machines, more than 50 percent reported visual problems, frequent headaches and neck aches, shoulder and leg pains, tension and fatigue. The survey confirmed the NIOSH report. Other unions have conducted their own surveys, and the answer is always the same.

We have not been alone in researching the health effects of the VDTs. Academics, scientists, and trade unions throughout the United States, Canada and Europe have repeatedly investigated the problems. A number of countries, most notably Sweden, Britain and Germany, have recognized the hazards and adopted regulations on break time, lighting levels, work area design and the like.

There are few responsible individuals that argue any longer about the hazards to the eyes and the musculo-



OPEIU Research Director Gwen Wells testifies on the hazards experienced by OPEIU members and urges VDT regulations.

skeletal system. There is, in fact, general agreement on the elements of an ergonomically sound VDT. None of these conflict with efficient operation. By reducing stress and strain, in fact, they enhance it.

3) All VDT operators should have regular, fixed work breaks away from the display unit. We recommend 15 minutes every hour on the terminal or 30 minutes every two hours. And, we recommend a maximum of five hours on the machine daily. All operators should be allowed work other than VDT work 30 minutes prior to quitting time.

The provision for break time is probably the number one best way of alleviating the stress and strain problems—visual, musculoskeletal and mental. The more breaks or pauses the less chance that fatigue will develop. This is a very important point for video display terminal operators. During the course of their operation of display units there are frequent pauses or breaks as the computer searches for and retrieves material for display. Although it would seem that these breaks would be restful and give relief, research has shown that the opposite is true. These delays act as stressors rather than as a relief because the operators do not know exactly when and for how long the pauses will occur. They cannot shift over to rest and relief activities. Instead they are waiting and preparing for the computer response. This creates more rather than less fatigue.

We are not suggesting that the proposed breaks away from the machine be spent as coffee breaks. They could be spent doing other work which is less demanding and taxing on the visual and musculoskeletal systems.

The 30-minute break time at the end of the day should be provided in order to allow the workers' eyes to readjust before they attempt activities such as driving home.

4) Tests should be made to ascertain glare and reflection on the display screen and to remove this glare or reflection by either moving the work station or installing anti-glare screens in sufficient quantity as to remove these stressors. It should be pointed out, however, that some anti-glare screens reduce glare but at the same time reduce the brightness or resolution of the characters. Since this produces another problem, it should be avoided. Ideally, an anti-glare coating should be applied to the screen during the manufacturing process, since it produces a minimal adverse effect.

5) Levels of flicker below 60 Hertz are unacceptable and, as new terminals are introduced into the workplace, they must be required to have a regeneration rate over this figure.

Flicker is that phenomenon which occurs when the phosphor that produces the characters is not refreshed frequently enough, causing the letters/characters to shimmer. The vast majority of operators find it uncomfortable to have their all-round visual field flicker with a frequency of 60 Hertz. In human terms, the larger the frequency of image regeneration, the less flicker is perceived. In other words 60 Hertz is less noticeable than 50 Hertz.

6) Ambient lighting in areas in which video display terminals are used should not exceed 300 lux. If additional work tasks are to be conducted at the work station, sufficient local lighting of 500 lux should be provided to be turned on when the tasks demand. Such supplementary lighting must be adjustable and fitted with glare control arrangements.

7) Excessive difference of luminance in the field of vision produce what is termed contrast glare. The workplace should therefore be organized in such a way that the background display screen is of suitable luminance and the employee's field of vision does not include a window or any other glaring luminances. Bright reflectors in the display screen are to be avoided.

The eye's pupil adjusts to the dramatic and frequent changes of light, but the retinal accommodation takes

longer. The continuous changes and adaptations merely produce greater strain and fatigue.

In short, the entire work environment should be such as to avoid contrast glare.

8) The visual distance to the display screen and the angle of inclination of the screen should be individually adjustable with due regard being paid to other ergonomic requirements. In the case of employees who wear glasses, it is important that the optical correction is well adjusted to the visual distance, and vice versa (as mentioned in point 2).

9) The design of the work station should be sufficiently large so as to give the worker adequate room to spread out materials necessary for work and to develop a comfortable work posture in the different modes of activity.

To acquire this "comfortable work posture," and avoid any muscle stress or strain, additionally requires adjustable chairs and detachable keyboards.

10) The equipment on which the display is shown should be kept in a good state of repair as should the data displayed. A frequent complaint is worn tubes getting blurry at the edges. Clearly a regular maintenance program is to the employer's advantage as well as the employee's.

11) Up to this point I have not mentioned the potential radiation hazards from the machines. Clearly the evidence is in that the vast majority do not emit radiation above the U.S. standards, although many emit low levels of radiation. Scientists disagree over the long-term effects of exposure to low-level radiation.

We take the position that it is far better to protect workers from potential or perceived risks until science clearly proves there are no hazards, rather than the reverse. We, therefore, propose that pregnant workers, at their request, be transferred to jobs away from the terminals for the period of their pregnancies at no loss in pay.

Each of these proposals has been adopted in countries like Sweden, Germany, Britain, Canada—either through contract negotiations or through legislation. Our own State of Wisconsin has adopted a few of them for the state government. VDT regulations are now being sponsored and investigated in Connecticut, Massachusetts,



Director of Organization Mark Reader describes OPEIU contract and legislative efforts to protect office workers from the adverse impact of automation.

Oregon and Missouri as well. OPEIU and other trade unions have negotiated them into contracts across the country.

In general, we are only asking that the fundamentals of good ergonomic principles be applied. And, many machines are on the market which contain the design features I have outlined. Ergonomically sound furniture and lighting is available as well. Bear in mind that the rising tide of complaints of VDT operators is likely to continue and to increase as that workforce increases. The banking, insurance and similar industries are increasingly less pleasant places to work.

Through collective bargaining we will continue to strive to make new breakthroughs in the health and safety of our members in these industries. But, the fact is that no worker in this country should be forced to trade wages and fringe benefits for a safe and healthy work environment. Safety and health should be guaranteed by the law and by their employers.

And, the brutal fact remains: we can do nothing to protect the health and safety of the unorganized workers of this state. That, therefore, is your job.

On May 10, 1983 (which followed this paper's press date), Wells was asked to lead a delegation of New York Unions to the state capitol in Albany. As spokesperson for the group, she was asked to present the slideshow, "Tomorrow's Technology, Today's Headache," produced by OPEIU with several other unions, to the full Labor Committee. Following pre-

(Continued on page 8)



The New York State Assembly Committee on Labor's leaders listen to testimony on the health hazards of VDTs.

Because my ten minutes are quickly running out, I cannot possibly go into all of the reasons that this is so. Instead, I have attached several documents for your future reading, including a report by Seybold Publications—a consultant to the manufacturers and companies that use the equipment, which supports our arguments.

What is important here is the legislation that will potentially be drafted and proposed to the New York State Assembly.

Proposals

There are no panaceas for removing the causes of worker alienation for VDT operators any more than such panaceas may be easily developed for other workers. The type of work frequently involved is inherently monotonous, boring and thus stressful. What can be done is to rearrange the work environment and design the machines so as to reduce the extraneous stress which cumulatively contributes to fatigue. There appear to be certain fundamental points which stand out in the literature as vital to the development of a more ergonomically satisfactory work environment:

1) All workers employed in manning video display terminals should be subject to regular eye exams. These eye exams should occur prior to work on the terminal and on a regular basis (yearly) thereafter. These eye tests should be done at the place of work during the normal work day, so as to reflect the effects of the normal workload on the eye. And, they should be at employer expense.

2) Ordinary glasses for private use are often unadjusted to the visual distance occurring in display screen work. Traditional bifocal lenses are unsuitable in many cases, because they often entail a strenuous work posture when used for display screen reading.

If an employee has a refractive error and incurs visual discomfort in connection with display screen work when using glasses intended for normal purposes, the display screen must be moved to a position where the discomfort is eliminated. If this is not possible, the employer is to

OPEIU Local Union Gains and Local 268 Gains Model Contract at Energy Department

(Continued from page 1)



The Department of Energy contract is signed by OPEIU and management negotiating teams. Seated here from left-to-right are Chief Management Negotiator Karen Edwards, President OPEIU Local 268 Dalton Cooper, and OPEIU International Representative Jon Heller. Standing from left-to-right are Bill Burgess, Deputy Division Director, Safeguards and Security Division, Oak Ridge Operations; Irene Keller, Division Director, Publishing Division, Technical Information Center; Local 268 Shop Committee Person Claudine Norris; Local Chief Steward Polly Blackburn; and the Local's Assistant Chief Steward James Hutton.

Protection from Change

"We think," said Cooper, "that our language on past practices, health services and successors is as good as any that has been negotiated for federal employees, and better than most in the private sector."

In addition to these gains, Heller said, "we negotiated some excellent, and in some cases pioneering, provisions on union rights. For instance, union officials will be guaranteed time for arbitration, negotiations and counseling potential grievants."

"Additionally," he continued, "our adverse action articles make it extremely difficult if not impossible, to discharge an employee for anything except the grossest misconduct."

And, finally, it was reported that the safety and health language in this agreement was held up at an Office of Personnel Management seminar in Colorado last year as a model of what a strong, militant union can attain, if management is not careful.

All-in-all, Cooper and Heller reported an outstanding new OPEIU contract, which provides security and protection for DOE employees. It is a remarkable new federal agreement, likely to be a model for many others. We congratulate Local 268, President Cooper, International Representative Jon Heller, and all the OPEIU members at DOE.

**White Collar
Needs more Local
news and photos.
Please send.**

AEA Merges with Local 32, Newark



AEA members vote on merger of the Association with OPEIU Local 32.

On Friday, April 15, 1983, the members of the Administrative Employees Association (AEA) voted to merge with OPEIU Local 32, reports Local 32 Business Manager Pat Tully. The vote, he said, was three-to-one in favor of the merger.

The AEA represents over 100 middle management employees of the Board of Education in Newark, New Jersey.

Those who helped to bring about the merger for AEA were: Chairperson Elizabeth King, Vice President Adele White-Eutsey, Treasurer William H. Taylor, and Chief Steward Terry Gregory.

On behalf of Local 32, Business Manager Pat Tully, President Frank Esposito, and Chief Steward Jonice Allen, with the assistance of International Director of Organizing Mark Reader, worked toward the merger.

Tully said, "We are sure that the above representatives will help to bring about a smooth transition for all concerned. And, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all of the AEA members into OPEIU Local 32."

Local 2 Fights for Clerical Minimum Wage in Washington

The Washington, D.C. Wage-Hour Board's decision to raise to \$3.90 an hour the minimum wage for an estimated 100,000 secretaries, typists and other clerical and semitechnical workers employed in Washington was criticized by OPEIU Vice President and Local 2 President L. J. Sheridan as woefully inadequate.

OPEIU and other labor groups had recommended a \$4.45 per hour compromise from the \$4.90 minimum unionists first proposed.

"The \$3.90 minimum is not sufficient to sustain an individual," Sheridan said. "The action taken is a move in the right direction, but it does not go far enough."

"Of course," he said, "our contracts far surpass these figures. But, the unorganized white collar workers remain unprotected. OPEIU has always been in the forefront to gain protections, like minimum wage, for the unorganized."

The Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO, said the 55-cent increase, from \$3.35 to \$3.90, was a "poor decision" and was well under the \$4.45-an-hour minimum the labor council supported.

Labor unions were also "very disappointed" that the Board did not agree to speed up reviews of the minimum wage, which now occur every three to five years. The last time the clerical rate was changed was in 1977. "At this rate, office workers will be stuck at \$3.90 for the next three to five years," Sheridan said.

Over business officials protests that the raise was too high, city officials said the vast majority of the District's 100,000 clerical and semitechnical workers are already making well above the new \$3.90-an-hour minimum. The change, which takes effect June 4, will increase salaries for only about 15,000 workers.

Local 2 President Sheridan and Vice President John Hazel served as labor representatives on the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on D.C. Minimum Wage, which

made minimum wage recommendations to the Wage-Hour Board.

"Even though we pressed for more," Sheridan said, "we were able to see that clerical workers in the District received some relief. And, at \$3.90 per hour, D.C. will now have the highest minimum wage for clerical employees in the nation."

Local 2's Anderson—CLUW Chapter President for D.C.

Carol A. Anderson, a member of OPEIU Local 2, was reelected by acclamation as president of the D.C. Chapter of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW).

Anderson promised that her administration will assist the hundreds of women who have been adversely affected by layoffs and downgradings in the metropolitan area. "Our 1983 agenda will focus on helping women to develop additional job skills, redirect their careers, and survive this economic slump," she announced.

A member of CLUW since May, 1979, Anderson was first elected president in 1981. She also served as secretary, alternate delegate to the National Executive Board, and Convention delegate. She has been an OPEIU member for many years.

The Chapter also elected OPEIU Local 2 member Kris Montague to the Executive Board.

The Coalition of Labor Union Women is a national organization of women and men trade unionists, founded in 1974 with a program to ensure women's participation and growth within their local unions.





When No Others Cared, We Were There

by John Kelly
International President

“When no others cared, we were there” is the theme of our 16th Triennial Convention. That theme can be taken any of several ways.

Organizing

We were organizing white collar and clerical workers when no other union was interested. Obviously it is only because of a decline in the industrial sector, with its resulting loss in membership for many blue-collar unions, that other unions have turned to organizing white collar workers.

The service sector is the growth sector of the economy. More and more white collar jobs are being added to the economy yearly. Clearly the temptation for these unions is great.

And, we welcome these new competitors, since it means hopefully an increase in the number of white collar and clerical workers who will be organized and brought the benefits of unionization.

What we do object to is the spurious claims to being the only union interested in helping white collar workers or the only union with women organizing women. We especially object to it when those same unions then turn to us for advice on how to organize white collar.

But, we know how difficult this segment of the workforce is to organize. We are willing to work with other unions on joint campaigns or to give advice. But, we are not willing to give up the fight for these white collar workers who deserve the benefit of representation by the only union with an AFL-CIO charter for office workers and that has 38 years experience representing clerical, technical and professional employees.

OPEIU Attends CLC Women's Conference

More than 500 women trade unionists gathered in Quebec City, March 5 to 8, for the Fourth Canadian Labour Congress Women's Conference “Equality Now.”

Seventeen OPEIU members represented the Union at that event. They were Local 57 (Montreal) Members Lis Breton, Michelle Goyette, and Dominique Lannoie; Local 225 (Ottawa) Members June Cassey, Kathy Leger, Louise Laporte and Evonne Damalphas; Local 397 (Regina) Members Marie Drabit and Marg Steverson; Local 434 (Montreal) Members Glaude Grenier, Manon Malinosky, Ginette Roy and Susan Van Uytfaeck; Local 343 (Toronto) Members Joyce Rosenthal, Joan Tingley and Shelley Acheson; and Local 491 (Ottawa) Member Judith Wegren.

The Conference was opened by Grace Hartman, who chairs the CLC Standing Committee on Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Women Workers. She said that it was most appropriate that the Conference encompass International Women's Day. In her remarks she also pointed out that “10 of the 11 governments in Canada are hostile to legislation to help workers, particularly women.”

“Wage controls again hurt women in the public sector and low percentage increases are particularly harmful to people at the bottom of the wage scale, mostly women,” she said.

Keynote speaker CLC President Dennis McDermott spoke about the economic situation in Canada and stressed the importance of an economic recovery based on the right to a secure job, a decent income, needed public services, and the right to free and fair collective bargaining.

Political Action

“When no others cared, we were there” is also an appropriate theme in the political arena, where OPEIU and the labor movement have defended the rights of U.S. and Canadian working people, children, women, minorities, consumers, the elderly and the poor when no others were willing to wage that fight.

I have said it again and again, without the trade union movement today we would not enjoy Social Security, consumer rights legislation, environmental protection laws, unemployment insurance, child protection laws, safety and health legislation, Medicare, food stamps and public education. I could go on and on.

When no others were willing to take on the popular U.S. Administration, in spite of its insane economic policies, the labor movement staged Solidarity Day. Since then a coalition of labor, women's, senior citizen, consumer and environmental groups have aligned to elect progressive candidates and to defeat reactionary legislation. Our success was evident in the 1982 elections. And, our coalition is growing—enough we hope to have an overwhelming victory in November 1984.

Leadership and the Convention

Our organizing, bargaining and political goals are set by delegates to the International Convention. These delegates are all elected by rank-and-file members, just as those same workers vote for representation in the workplace, to accept or reject a contract, for their officers, for constitutional amendments, for or against dues increases, etc. There is a no more democratic organization than an OPEIU Local Union or our

International Union.

That same democratic process continues at the Convention. There the delegates accept or reject constitutional amendments, resolutions, officers. There is always lively debate, but eventually a consensus.

All of the delegates have been elected as leaders. Their purpose, therefore, is “to lead”—to lead the International Union and all of its locals through the next three years to the next Convention. Policies and goals must be set that will continue to be in the best interests of our membership.

They must be pragmatic, realistic goals. They must be explained later to the membership of the locals. And, they must be worked toward.

We cannot come to Convention after Convention and pass resolutions, only to return to our local areas and “rest on our laurels.” We are a movement with the purpose of moving our members toward a better life. And, that's exactly what our resolutions are meant to do.

Where members are opposed to the stands taken by delegates on issues, it is the responsibility of every one of us to explain and reexplain that position. After all we are leaders. Some of us have accepted the post, because “no others cared.” But, once accepted, it is our obligation to assume the responsibilities that accompany the position of leader. Even if that means taking unpopular positions that are in our members' best interests.

I look forward to working with each of our delegates at this 16th Triennial Convention to achieve those ends—to set the policies and the goals of this Union, to work toward an improved life for all working Americans, to take on the hard questions and difficult solutions even where “no others care” to do so.

U.S. Price Index

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
New Base 1967 = 100

1981	
October	279.7
November	280.4
December	281.1
1982	
January	282.1
February	282.9
March	282.5
April	284.3
May	287.1
June	290.6
July	291.8
August	292.4
September	292.8
October	293.6
November	293.2
December	292.0
1983	
January	292.1
February	292.3
March	293.0

* Effective with the release of the January 1983 index, the official time base for the Canadian CPI has been converted from 1971 = 100 to 1981 = 100. All figures — 1981 through 1983 — have been converted to this new base, for your information.

Canadian Index

Statistics Canada
New Base 1981 = 100

1981	
November	104.2
December	104.7
1982	
January	105.4
February	106.7
March	108.0
April	108.6
May	110.1
June	111.2
July	111.8
August	112.3
September	112.9
October	113.6
November	114.4
December	114.4
1983	
January	114.1
February	114.6
March	115.8

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Romeo Corbeil, Sec.-Treas.
815 16th Street, N.W., Suite 606
Washington, D.C. 20006

Following two days of workshops delegates recommended that women's issues be “fully integrated into the CLC's Economic Recovery Alternative campaign, that a booklet be prepared to address women's issues in the planned depression, that all actions launched by the CLC as part of this program “have an identifiable component on women,” and that a separate on-the-job canvass be developed dealing with the economic impact of the depression on women. On technological change, delegates called for job protection, with retraining rights, in addition to monitoring of the health hazards of continual exposure to video display terminals and other new equipment.

Hartman encouraged the women to become more active and to take the Conference's program back to their unions. “You have to know the rules to play the game . . . learn the structure of your unions . . . know how to present a motion and how to develop a resolution. It might sound like dull stuff, but persevere and stay in there,” she concluded.