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”—served 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.

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 “min” 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.

(Continued on page 6)
**White Collar**

**President:** John Kelly
**President Secretary-Treasurer:** Romeo Correll

**Postmasters, Attention: Change of address Form 3579 should be addressed to: Office and Professional Employees International Union, 815 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006. Second class postage paid at Washington, D.C.**

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**Editorial**

**Saskatchewan Under Attack**

W. P. Wittall, International Vice-President and analysed in this issue, April 1983, is President of Local 397 in Regina, Saskatchewan, and President of a Local 85 at the Cudahy, Wisconsin, plant of Racine, Wisconsin, and Waukesha counties. It is a non-profit worker-owned company that assists jobless workers by providing food, clothing, and other necessities.

**The Saskatchewan Government Insurance Corporation (SGI) is a public corporation that operates under the control of the Saskatchewan Government. Its mission is to provide insurance to Saskatchewan residents and businesses. The Saskatchewan Government Insurance Corporation (SGI) is a public corporation that operates under the control of the Saskatchewan Government. Its mission is to provide insurance to Saskatchewan residents and businesses.**

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**Wisconsin Local Assists Jobless**

**UNIONS of Ladish Co. FOOd DRIVE**

Blacksmiths 1509 I.P.F.E. 92 O.P.E.U. 85

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

Of course, it is only as a result of the inhuman economic policies of the current U.S. Administration which have caused widespread unemployment and cutbacks in benefits, that our local and province are faced 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 terrific," said Local 85 President John Schilit.

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**Those Who Care, Give to VOTE**

Local 85 President John Schilit leads packages of food for jobless.
**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 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 sides. 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 exer-

cition 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"—can lessen 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 workplace to find out who has symptoms or sprains and strains, and get people's 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.)

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**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 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 repealing withholding, an effort to the body that muscles to relax raw nerves of many hard-working taxpayers.

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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.

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, minority, and consumer rights.

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 Tennessean 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 in 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 monitorium on foreclosures by the Federal Housing Authority 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.

Secretary's Week: OPEIU Focuses On Automation

Florists and candy manufacturers originally established National Secretaries' Day and Week in an attempt to honor secretaries and make it more important to raise profits. Bosses across the country have responded with poison 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 thus 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 employees 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 fast-coming 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. 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 1970s, they have been introduced into the office beginning in the 1960s. This technological revolution is cutting across all industries, government 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—it 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, harems, fatigue, headaches, neckaches, backaches, and joints, and other complaints have continued unabated. Many more and more members report frequent eye strain, visual fatigue, headaches, neckaches, backaches, and pains, and those complaints have continued unabated. Many more and more members report frequent eye strain, visual fatigue, headaches, neckaches, backaches, and pains, and those complaints have continued unabated.

VDT Complaints

Approximately five years ago our members who operate video display terminals began to complain of eye strain, visual fatigue, headaches, neckaches, backaches, and pains, and those complaints have continued unabated. Many more and more members report frequent eye strain, visual fatigue, headaches, neckaches, backaches, and pains, and those complaints have continued unabated.

Many report difficulty focusing and, therefore, driving after working hours.

(Continued on page 5)
The New York State Assembly Committee on Labor's leaders listen to testimony on the health hazards of VDTs.

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 redesign the machines so that they are less extraneous stress which cumulatively contributes to fatigue. There appear to be certain fundamental points which stand out in the literature as vitally to the development of more ergonomically satisfactory work environment:

1) All workers employed in the manufacture of display terminals should be subject to regular eye exams. These eye exams should occur prior to work, on a regular basis (let's say) every six months. These eye exams should be done at the place of work, during the normal work day, so as to reflect the effects of the work load. NIOSH has shown that they can be at employer expense.

2) Ordinary glasses for private use are often inadequate to the visual distance occurring in display screen work. Traditional bifocal lenses are unsuitable in many cases. The need is for special lenses worn only when used for display screen reading.

3) If an employer has a reflexive eye 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 provide the employee with special glasses which have been tested for display screen work.

4) VDT operators should be provided with a regular, fixed work breaks away from the display unit. The committe recommends 15 minutes every hour on the terminal or 30 minutes every two hours. This is the position of the British Medical Association and on the machine daily. All operators should be allowed work other than VDT work 30 minutes prior to quitting time.

5) Eye tests should be provided to ascertain glare and refraction on the display. Operators must be removed from this glare by either moving the workstation or installing anti-glare screens in sufficient quantity to remove it. These eyes tests should be provided. It should be pointed out however, that some anti-glare screens reduce glare but at the same time reduce the ability of the operator to read the characters. Since this produces another problem, it should be avoided.

6) Anti-glare screens should be applied to the screen during the manufacturing process, since it produces a minimal adverse effect.

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

8) Flicker is that phenomenon which occurs when the phosphor that produces the characters is not refreshed frequently enough, causing the characters to shimmer. The vast majority of operators find it unacceptable to have their aliased 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.

9) 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.

10) Excessive difference of luminance in the field of view produces what is termed contrast glare. The work place 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 any low or any other glaring luminances. Bright reflections 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.

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. We 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 two hours each day at the machines, many members reported recurrent red eyes, headaches, neck aches, shoulder and limb pain, 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 problem. 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-
Organizing Business Manager Patricia Anderson promised that the merger 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 Adelie White-Butzey, Treasurer William H. Taylor, and Chief Steward Terry Gregory.

On behalf of Local 32, Business Manager Pat Tully, President Frank Siposito, and Chief Steward Joyce 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 Local 2 President J. J. Sheridan as woefully inadequate.

OEPEIU and other labor groups had recommended a $4.45 per hour compromise from the $3.90 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 election 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.

This Chapter also elected OPEIU Local 2 member Rosie Winge as 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.
Activities in Canada and the U.S.

Local 21 Sponsors Rape Crisis Seminar: Would You Know What to Do?

Suppose you were raped. Do you know what you should do? After the daughters of two members of OPEIU Local 21 were raped, the local decided to sponsor an open discussion on rape crisis, reported Local 21 President Ruth Stanley.

Union members from around the metro area attended the lecture on February 21 by Rape Crisis Counselor Aurelia Sands and Atlanta Police Lt. J. L. Griffen, who is in charge of the city's sex crimes squad. The statistics are alarming: One out of 12 women will be assaulted this year, and 60 percent of these women will be attacked by men that they know or are aware of in some way.

The public perception of rape is that of sexual attack that leaves the victim bruised and battered. Yet, Sands stated 85 percent of the women that the Rape Crisis Center sees are victims of power rapes—an attack in which the rapist uses a weapon to gain control, but does not actually use the weapon on the victim.

Another 10 percent are battered rapes and 5 percent are sadistic rapes. Since there is no way to tell if the rapist actually will hurt you, she advises women to "do what you have to do to live to tell me about it." Indeed, many of the sex crime homicides are the result of women defending themselves against their attackers, angering the man so much that he becomes violent. Griffen cited one case history of a rapist who had killed about half of his victims while letting the others live, because they talked nice to him and assured him they would not report the incident.

Sands emphasized that rape victims are in no way at fault for the attack. She said the Rape Crisis Center has treated victims ranging in age from two months to 97 years old. As such, she added, while much of the public perceives rape as an act of sexual passion, in reality it is an act of violence motivated by anger.

No, she advised, she should feel safe from rape. Approximately 50 percent of all rapes occur in the victim's home. "After being violated in your home, the temptation is to want to move. But, if you move from your home it costs you, and it is not always easy to do," she said.

Children, who are victims of rapes, most often are attacked at home by a member of the family. "Don't abuse your children by not telling them about sex. Watch your children and let them know about sex, so they can report anything who tries to touch them," she cautioned.

It is important to report the rape and get medical attention immediately so that the rapist is caught and a conviction can be obtained. In the Atlanta area there is about a 68 percent conviction rate, while nationwide the rate is about 48 percent.

Griffen stated that the first thing a victim should do is call the police, who in turn brings the victim to a hospital for treatment of all physical problems that are involved in the attack, including providing care against the possibility of venereal disease or pregnancy.

The hospital also collects evidence. In that vein it is important that the victim not bathe or douche, since you might be literally washing away evidence. He also advised victims to keep clothing they were wearing intact. It is all right to change, but don't alter the clothing. In cases of concealed clothing, both Sands and Griffen emphasized that rape is not a case of the victim asking for it. That does not, however, mean that people cannot take precautions against rape.

Some safety tips offered by Griffen are:

- Be aware of your surroundings.
- When socializing at a singles' bar, don't freely give out information.
- Approach your car from behind—never walk directly to the automobile. This way if someone is hiding in the car, you will see the person and can keep walking as if it isn't your car. Then, report it to the police.
- Don't list your first name in the telephone book.
- Walk in well-like areas and at night walk near the curb so you can see in-between buildings.
- Travel in groups or with a friend, if possible, and if you think you are being followed, change directions and head for a crowd or an open business.

Griffen also advised against carrying a gun, especially for women. Women usually carry weapons in their purses and in time of crisis have trouble getting to them. If you must carry a weapon, be sure you know how to use it, he added.

"Try to remember it may be to your advantage not to fight," he said.

Finally, Sands talked about the victim's reaction to the attack. She said when the Center first sees a victim, she is usually in a state of shock. The victim is told about going-on counseling and that it is important to work through the feelings.

The victim has a stage of denial and crisis to resume her life as if nothing happened. She may maintain this posture for several months, but eventually depression sets in, Sands said. The Center's counselors try to help victims work through this period and any anger they feel helps victims to the final stage—resolution of the crisis.

She noted that negative anger can be very destructive, while positive anger usually can work to help the victim. In positive anger a victim may make up her mind not to let the attacker wreck her life.

Topics such as this that affect our members lives are important issues with which locals should be concerned. Educating and assisting our members and the community-at-large does not stop with the contract.
When No Others Cared, We Were There
by John Kelly
International President

Political Action

"When no others cared, we were there" is also an appropriate theme in the political arena, where OPEIU and the other new unions have set the right to 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 who have representation in the workplace, to accept or reject a contract, for their officers, for constitutional amendments, for or against dues increases, etc. There is 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

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If you move, send your old and new address, including zip code and social security number and Local Union number to

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815 36th Street, N.W., Suite 606
Washington, D.C. 20005

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 canvas 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.