There must be another way—a Blue Cross success story

White balloons and the warm glow of candles at twilight. Voices raised, harmonizing and unifying, in “We Shall Overcome.” These were the images at a candlelight vigil held by members of OPEIU Local 212. The vigil was part of their corporate campaign against Blue Cross in Buffalo, New York. The campaign was waged in lieu of striking what became a hard-nosed, union-busting employer. It was fought with courage and dignity and with a great deal of creativity. The union fought to win the hearts and minds of the general public—community, religious, political and labor groups, who in turn would pressure Blue Cross to settle their labor contract with Local 212. As the minister at the candlelight vigil prayed: it was fought to instill creativity. These were the images of a long, hard-fought struggle.

We Want to Work

“We want to work. We want to work,” was chanted repeatedly by the hundreds of Blue Cross employees who amassed at the doors of their employer’s headquarters. They insisted they be allowed to go back to work, following a lockout by Blue Cross that morning. Blue Cross had presented totally unacceptable contract demands, said Local 212 President Gerald Skrzecskowski (also known as Ski). “When our members rejected the agreement, management locked them out of the building,” he said. But, the union set the stage immediately for the upcoming campaign, not by striking, but by insisting—in front of television camera crews and newspaper reporters from the area—that they be allowed to work. Twenty minutes after the lockout began, it ended. The President of Blue Cross Charles Rath asked if OPEIU members were ready to return to work, to which they replied with a rousing “yes.” Looking confused, President Rath offered to hold open the door as the employees filed past him.

New York Stock Exchange, SIAC and Futures win Local 153 contract

Following a lengthy negotiation process—22 meetings in all—Local 153 members at the New York Stock Exchange, the New York Futures Exchange and Securities Industry Automation Corp. have won a collective bargaining agreement. Bargaining was difficult, said Local 153 Secretary-Treasurer and OPEIU International Vice President Michael Goodwin.

But, the final result is one in which the members can take pride—thanks primarily to a dedicated negotiating committee: Local 153 Business Representative Paul Greenspan; Fred Deal, Tom Genovese; Abe Goldstein (153 executive board member); Ken Habercorn, Debbie Johnson, Barbara Krause, Frank Liccione, Carl Micalle, Tom Palese, and Jimmy Saccardo from the Stock Exchange; Colleen Coor from the Futures Exchange; and Sam Brotman, Mike Kohan, Shirley Pires (153 executive board member) and Ron Widerhold from SIAC.

RNs at Lansing General Hospital negotiate a model contract

There is a shortage of registered nurses throughout the United States. This fact was a crucial part of the recent negotiations for a new three-year contract for the RNs at Lansing General Hospital (LGH), said Local 459 President Neal Wilensky.

This past summer, he said, the hospital often ran short-staffed, and employees were forced to work faster and harder and to take more risks to make up for the vacant positions. At the same time, other hospitals were raising wages for RNs to compensate for the shortage. After the give and take of negotiations the hospital agreed to an acuity system by which staffing levels would be determined. If, following a particular formula and time period, the hospital does not meet staff projections, it must pay a $250 penalty for each unit and each shift where the staffing is not met. In addition, a $250 penalty is paid anytime a probationary graduate nurse or an RN who is still in orientation is the only RN on a unit. The hospital can pay up to a max—

Solidarity Day II—August 31, 1991

Join us in Washington, DC, to celebrate Labor Day and to urge Congress and the President to support striker replacement legislation, to enact a national health care program, to provide for family and medical leave, and more. Stand up and be counted.

Watch for more details.
Local 367 member saves child's life
by Faye Orr, International Representative

Gloria Fisher, vice president of Local 367 in Memphis, Tennessee, accompanied her husband Doug Fisher to an IBEW district progress meeting in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. He is business manager for IBEW Local 474. Fisher expected the trip to provide rest and recreation. So, she wasn't expecting to hear someone screaming, "A child is drowning," as she walked near the swimming pool. Instinctively Fisher dove in, rescuing an unconscious seven-year-old who had sunk to the bottom.

Working with others, including President of IBEW Local 379 Jim Grant, she administered CPR. We are happy to report that the younger, Samuel Matthew Redman, was revived. We also are confident that this family, on vacation from Baltimore, Maryland, is happy as well.

When not serving as a hero, Fisher works as secretary for the Memphis Labor Council. She joined Local 367 in October 1984 and has been vice president since May 1985. She has worked on contract negotiating and grievance handling for the local.

She is also a delegate to the Memphis Labor Council and is a member of the Shelby County Democratic Committee. She is a board member of Family Services, an agency of the United Way. And she is also active in religious and community organizations.

OPEIU joins Local 367 and the child's family in applauding Gloria Fisher's courageous act and her quick reaction to others in need.

OPEIU presents grievances and bargaining at 1991 regional conferences

It has been some time since we have offered basic collective bargaining and grievance handling at an OPEIU regional conference. Many of our local unions train stewards and bargaining committee members on these topics regularly, but there always seems to be more room for such education. Considering the turnover rate among stewards and officers, we find a continual need to train new people.

We can reach those stewards and committee members who might not ordinarily receive training. And, we can give a break to those locals who usually find themselves hard pressed to work additional training into their already busy schedules.

Collective bargaining: We will provide a thorough overview to the collective bargaining process: the legal background for bargaining, goal-setting (contract proposals), selecting and working in a committee, bargaining skills and techniques. In the case of at least two conferences, advanced negotiations techniques will be addressed (see schedule for details).

Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West/Northwest</td>
<td>April 19 to 21</td>
<td>San Francisco, California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest/Southeast</td>
<td>May 3 to 5</td>
<td>Albuquerque, New Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Canada</td>
<td>May 31 to June 2</td>
<td>Vancouver, British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>September 6 to 8</td>
<td>Boston, Massachusetts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erie</td>
<td>September 20 to 22</td>
<td>Detroit, Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>October 18 to 20</td>
<td>Milwaukee, Wisconsin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Canada</td>
<td>October 31 to November 2</td>
<td>Thunder Bay, Ontario</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How to become a bounty hunter:

OPEIU is offering a reward to members who serve as bounty hunters. To collect, you must turn in another OPEIU rank-and-file member—a friend.

That is, we want photos (black and white film only) and stories of OPEIU members who are involved in interesting work or interesting hobbies or excel in some way. For example, we know that there are outstanding members out there who serve their communities (as big brothers and sisters, on community boards, in homeless shelters, etc.) who are terrific golfers, tennis players, gardeners; who win awards and trophies for many things; who teach or write in their spare time. Or, there are members who have unique jobs, like animal trainers.

We (as well as you) are interested in reading about such members and seeing photos of them at their jobs, performing their hobbies or other areas of involvement.

We will print the photo and story you submit, you will immediately be sent $25, as well as receiving credit in White Collar, just as we will to Faye Orr for the article submitted here.

Orr, however, has asked that the $25 be donated to the Union’s political action fund—Voice of the Electorate.

Happy hunting, bounty hunters.

Grievance handling: Shop stewards are the backbone of the union. They are the ones who administer the contract on a day-to-day basis. This program will help them to more effectively defend the rights of our members they represent. They will receive a general overview of the grievance process: the steps, recognizing a grievance versus a complaint, investigating a grievance, presenting the grievance, and more.

Where and when: We have arranged locations, hotels and times to help defray the costs—travel, housing, food and lost time—for our local unions. In addition, the International’s education subsidy program will pay $1800 this year to each local union to assist on finances. As a result, each local should now be able to participate or to send additional delegates to the regional conference.

Please mark your calendars and make arrangements to attend these very important training sessions.
O
ne of the major challenges facing occupational med
icine in the 1980s does not concern a specific disease
or condition related to work.
Rather, it is to maintain—better yet, speed up—the
momentum generated by and for this clinical specialty in the
unprecedented decade of the '80s.
The past decade saw tremendous strides made in re-
searching occupationally related diseases. But much more
work needs to be done to safeguard the health of American
workers.
Still heading the list is the ongoing tragedy of asbestos-
related diseases. It was the ravages of asbestos that gave
much of the impetus to the resurgence of interest in occupa-
tional medicine during the last decade.
There are also a host of other diseases and physical con-
tions that still need to be vigorously addressed. Among them:
industrial asthma and bronchitis; upper respiratory and eye
irritation; the whole spectrum of organic solvent intoxication;
noise-induced hearing loss; and repetitive motion disorders,
notably carpal tunnel syndrome.
There are still problems caused by heavy metals; silicosis,
hepatitis, and the adverse psychological responses to work-
place toxic exposures and accidents.
The 1990s will almost certainly see a continuing and
heightened public concern about chemical degradation of the
environment (typified in the '80s by dioxin and the ongoing
controversy over Agent Orange).
There is the puzzling phenomenon (also a holdover from
the last decade of multiple chemical sensitivities). This is an
illness in which previously healthy people experience recur-
rent and intensified symptoms to progressively smaller toxic
exposure, often in trace amounts of the original substance.
New technologies have created a whole new range of
problems around video display terminals (VDTs), particularly as
they may affect women and the reproductive process.
The medical challenges of the coming decade are not made
easier by a hobbling lack of reliable data. Reliable
surveillance of occupational disease began in earnest only in
the late 1980s.
Development of data is farther along in regions domin-
ated by manufacturing, general construction an shipbuilding.
It lags in regions dominated by mining, and is scarcest in
agricultural areas. The last two areas are especially worri-
some because mining and agriculture are the two most
dangerous U.S. occupations, according to the National Safety
Council.
One of the largest health-related issues that will affect
millions of working men and women over the next few years
is that of parental leave and child care in the workplace.
How we handle this issue will touch Americans in several
important ways: How people work. How they are compen-
sated. How they—or someone else—will take care of their
children.
It will change the way family assistance and health care
dollars and resources are allocated.
It will test the leadership of governments at all levels, the
health care industry, unions and corporations, and com-
nunities at large throughout the remaining decade of this
century.

Winter 1991
WHITE COLLAR
Page Three

What's Ahead
For Medicine
By Dr. Phillip L.
Polakoff, M.D.
Director, Western Institute for
Occupational/Environmental Sciences

Washington Window
Long-term jobless running low on hope
There was a time when a laid-off com-
puter operator or a logger could find
a new job or even a new profession.
This is not that time. The U.S., engulfed by a
recession, has entered an era marked by
together joblessness often resulting in
poverty.
Unlike past recessions, most of the long-
term jobless are not getting UI benefits.
Control over potential unemploy-
ment insurance are in the early stages. But
as House Human Resources Subcommittee
Chairman Thomas Downey (D-NY) com-
plained, such efforts aren't getting support from
the White House.
When Gloria Sneed was laid off from her
job at a New York City bank, she began
working part-time as a recreation leader at
the Willoughby Nursing Home in Brooklyn.
On March 12, 1990, she lost that job as well.
And this time, when she went searching for
work, there was not a job to be found.
Sneed, 52, has been unemployed for a
year now. She lives alone, and spends much
of her time either looking for work or caring
for her 33-year-old son. A father of five,
Sned's son recently contracted full-blown
Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. He
has been continually denied public assistance.
"Even though I believe my benefit check
of $64 a week is woefully inadequate, I
wouldn't know what to do without the
money," she said. "I am now two months
behind in my rent in the room apartment
that I call my home. I am now paying rent on
a weekly basis. I have no medical insurance
and very little food in my refrigerator."
Unfortunately, in the weeks to come,
Gloria Sneed will have to learn what to do
without that $64. According to Isaac Shapiro,
senior research analyst for the Center on
Budget and Policy Priorities, she will join the
23 million people who were still jobless in
1990 when their 26 weeks of employment
benefits ran out. As permanently replaced
New York Daily News striker Joan Shepard
said, "Twenty-six weeks roll by very quickly."
Margaret Jenkins has less than a month
before her benefits are exhausted. A member
of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees, she
was laid off last September from her job as a
chamber maid after 6 years. A new hotel
owner wanted a low-wage, non-union staff.
At 52 years of age, Jenkins was forced to go
on unemployment for the first time in her life. She
receives only $105 a week, but Jenkins knows that
her story is not unique. Unemployed loggers could sit out
on the stumps and wait 50 years for a new crop
before they can work again." McDermott said
the discussion about extending unemployment in-
surance should include providing job retraining for
UI benefits recipients.
Advocates for the unemployed said the federal
government has an $8 billion fund for extended
benefits. During the 1980s, however, laws were
rewritten to make it more difficult for states to
become eligible to receive those funds. Despite to-
day's growing lines at unemployment offices, only
two states now qualify. Congress is considering
easing such restrictions.
Rep. Sander Levin (D-Mich.) said, "Why in the
world are we in this situation? What sense is it to
have a system that doesn't help most of those who
have been laid off?"
William Buckheit, representing Baltimore
unemployed workers, said that "the people who
have run out of benefits or never qualified for
benefits will and are becoming another statistic—
that of the homeless, many of them with families".
Immanuel Ness of the New York Labor
Community Coalition to Extend Unemployment Benefits
said, "The White House ignores the
problem of unemployment and paints a rosy pic-
ture for the future of the national economy while
the jobless in our communities are quickly running
out of their 26 weeks of unemployment benefits
and facing the threat of foreclosures, evictions and
utility turnoffs."
"The time to extend a hand is now."

Protecti Strikers' Rights...
STOP
Job-Robbing
By Replacements!
Help elect candidates who care.
who'll protect strikers' rights...
who'll stop job-robbing by scabs...
who'll make it illegal for employers to hire
scabs as permanent replacements for
strikers. (More than 50,000 strikers' jobs
have been stolen in recent years.)
Together We Can Do It...
Check Off For Our Vote
Local 71 defeats paper company's attempt to oust union

Faye Orr, OPEIU International Representative, reports from Mobile, Alabama, that the members of OPEIU Local 71 beat back an employer attempt to have the union ousted.

International Paper Company tried to persuade bargaining unit employees to vote in favor of getting rid of its duly elected representative OPEIU. It promised them salaried positions, merit pay increases and improved pension benefits.

The vast majority of employees, however, recognized that their interests were best served by a labor union and collective bargaining agreement. The members agree that "America works best, when we say union yes," Orr said.

Local 71 appreciates the help and letters of support it received during the campaign from sister locals 420 in Pine Bluff, Arkansas; 478 in Texarkana, Arkansas; and 209 in Moss Point, Mississippi.

Following the union's election victory, negotiations got underway. All are hopeful of reaching an equitable resolution of all contract issues, Orr said.

International Organizer Ron Hutson, as well as Orr, helped the local union during this struggle. It was the second attempt in four years that the company has tried to rid itself of the union, and the second time OPEIU and the members were victorious.

Local 337 wins right to decide its committees

OPEIU Local 337 in Palatka, Florida, refused to allow an employer to tell it who could or could not serve on its negotiating committee. It has since been supported by the National Labor Relations Board.

The local, says former International Representative Don Wright, found its negotiations with Georgia Pacific Credit Union stalemated when the employer tried to dictate who could be on the union's negotiating committee. Since we were unable to work out an amicable resolution, we filed charges against the employer with the Labor Board, he said.

It was such a blatant failure-to-bargain violation that even the present NLRB in Washington was forced to uphold the union position that Local 337 had the right to decide members of its own committee, Wright said.

A settlement between Local 337 and the employer was the result, and negotiations resumed. The credit union recognized that Local 337 could have whomever it chose at the bargaining table.

Local 18 organizes without an election

OPEIU Local 18, reports International Representative Faye Orr, has successfully organized Union Publishing House in Tupelo, Mississippi.

She says that the employer granted voluntary recognition—something unheard of these days. That is, she explains, the employer recognized Local 18 as the bargaining representative after the Local demonstrated that it had support of the majority of employees. While the Publishing House could have demanded an NLRB sponsored election, it did not do so.

Negotiations have already been concluded on the first contract as this paper went to press.

Local 420 wins wages at International Paper Co.

Local 420 bucks the trend in new contracts with International Paper Company. After five years of no general wage increases and several strikes by other unions, Local 420 in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, gained a major victory with their new collective bargaining agreement that includes improvements in monthly wages, as well as bonuses.

The new three-year contract, reports International Representative Fay Orr, also provides increased shift differentials, increased employer contributions to health insurance and the establishment of a 401(k) savings plan.

In addition, union and management will work jointly to address the issues of VDT safety and health, payroll deductions for life insurance and establishment of a child care program—all of concern to Local 420 members.

The successful negotiating committee for Local 420 was President Cathy Smith, Vice President Gwen Davis, Recording Secretary Octavia Benton, Board Member Frances McGraw and Faye Orr.

Local 106 bowls for Big Brothers/Big Sisters

Two bowling teams from Local 106 in Groton, Connecticut, participated in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Bowlathon, March 3, 1991. The event took place at the Holiday Bowl, reports Local 106 President Paul Bruno, where they raised more than $663 through pledges and donations.

Local 106 member Tammie Cunnian, a mailroom clerk at Electric Boat Division of General Dynamics, was the most successful fundraiser with $262.40. Her fellow team-mates are pictured with her here. They are (left-to-right) Sara Chaney (recording secretary), Rick Coco, John Duarte, Steve Hancock (vice president), Ed Fox, Mary Maynard, Dennis Maynard, Ida Rowley, Tammie Cunnian and Laura Brown.

Local 3 plays pivotal role in winning San Francisco VDT law

OPEIU Local 3 in San Francisco was one of the first local unions in the country to recognize the potential health and safety hazards of video display terminals, and one of the first to organize to seek worker protections.

Back in the 1970s, Local 3 organized with locals of the Service Employees International Union, the Communications Workers of America, the Newspaper Guild and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees to form the Bay Area VDT Coalition.

From that time Local 3 has won OPEIU contract language to protect workers from the VDT hazards. It also petitioned for a government study of VDT workers which indicted serious eye and musculoskeletal stresses for workers on VDTs. And, the local has consistently lobbied for state and local legislative protections.

Now Local 3 has played an important role in the recent adoption of a ground-breaking ordinance on VDTs in the City of San Francisco. OPEIU International Vice President and Local 3 President Kathleen Kinnick testified at a press conference in favor of the protections when the bill was first introduced.

Kinnick also was interviewed twice by local media on the ordinance and its importance. In addition, Local 3 and its members contacted the Mayor and all of the city supervisors urging adoption.

The San Francisco law

The law calls for Wrights to provide adjustable computer screens with anti-glare shield, detachable keyboards, wrist rests and other equipment designed to avoid VDT-related injuries.

Employers must also provide alternate work breaks to employees who routinely perform “repetitive keyboard motions” for four hours or more per shift.

Enforcement of the ordinance will be carried out by the San Francisco Department of Public Health. And, a seven-member advisory committee will be established to issue recommendations for protecting VDT workers from possible radiation emissions. The committee will issue an annual report to the Board of Supervisors.

With this ordinance San Francisco becomes the first major American city to protect its workers from the health and safety risks associated with VDTs.

State Legislation

Vice President Kinnick reports that the California Labor Federation is sponsoring statewide legislation modeled after the San Francisco ordinance.

The Federation had sponsored similar legislation, which was enacted but vetoed by the Governor. With the help of Local 3 and other California unions it is hoped that this year the labor movement will successfully see statewide protections become law.
OPEIU attends inter-union gas conference: A report by Local 2 Representative Dan Dyer

The 1990 inter-union gas conference was attended by more than 300 union members from OPEIU, the Energy, Chemical Workers Union; the IBEW; the International Chemical Workers Union; the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union; Service Employees International Union; the Transport Workers; the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters; the United Steelworkers; and the Utility Workers.

The purpose of the conference is the exchange of information on changes and problems that unionized employees have experienced at gas utility companies across the U.S. and Canada. It is an opportunity for various unions to identify trends in the gas industry and to share their attempts at problem solving, grievances and arbitration.

Several of the international unions provided surveys of their negotiated agreements in the gas industry, as well as arbitration awards.

Workshops

The conference was divided into four workshops: clerical, distribution, service and field operations. OPEIU Local 2 participants attended the clerical workshops, which was divided into three parts over three days.

The first day the workshop covered the following topics:

1) Company attempts to control absenteeism through discipline and incentives and a review of arbitration decisions. One interesting aspect was the trend toward "positive discipline" as a perceived threat to the union's ability to grow.

2) Bargaining unit work and its assignment to lower-graded employees, management and exempt employees.

3) Attirion and the changing composition of the workforce and its impact on the workforce and its work environment.

4) Automation of jobs, such as computerized dispatching, and computer monitoring of employees.

5) Child care in those unions having negotiated this benefit on premises, that is, those that have agreed to pay all or part of the cost, and the general climate for child care legislation at the state and local level.

6) Recent trends in clerical negotiations.

7) Comparable worth attempts and the Canadian experience with legislation.

8) Improvements in ergonomics (workplace design). The second day of the workshop covered:

1) Forced overtime and how some locals have dealt with the problem.

2) Flexible work schedules and compressed work weeks, Saturday as a regularly scheduled workday, shifts and changes, and the effect on home life and outside responsibilities.

3) Management attempts to merge and combine jobs to reduce the workforce and blur distinctions between classifications.

4) A comparison of job evaluation systems and the basis of writing job descriptions.

5) Maternity leaves of absence, absence length and the benefits.

6) Changes in meter reading, such as computerized (inscan) reading and reading in inclement weather.

7) Office safety.


9) Personal computers and word processors and their effect on job classification, wage rates and the potential for at-home work via telecommunications. Also, the use of suburban offices to decentralize the workforce and to inhibit organizing and contract enforcement.

The final day was spent discussing:

1) Layoffs and their effects on employees and on negotiations.

2) Temporary workers under union contract versus temporary agency hires.

3) Qualifications and psychological testing.

4) Two-tier wage and benefit systems.


6) Video display terminals and the potential health hazards.

7) Those needing additional information on any of these topics is welcome to contact Dan Dyer at OPEIU Local 2.

Local 153 contract

(Continued from page 1)

The settlement

Goodyear reported that the members have won 4 percent wage increases in each of the contract years. The first is retroactive to October 28, 1990, whereas other increases will take effect October 27, 1991, and November 1, 1992. In addition, all the progression increases are adjusted by 4 percent yearly. SIAC members will gain an equity adjustment as well.

Other benefits were made. Pension provisions were improved, including a new accrual formula, according to Goodwin. Spousal dependent coverage will now be available at the death of the retiree. And, normal retirement was improved.

Severance allowances were changed to reflect improvements:

1 to 9 years of service 1 week pay/year of service
10 to 14 years of service 1.25 weeks/year
15 or more years of service 1.50 weeks/year

These and other improvements in their new Local 153 contract will greatly improve the worklives of our members at NYSE, Futures and SIAC.

TVA employees earn $8.9 million health plan rebate

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)—which provides affordable energy to seven Southern states—and the Salary Policy Employee Panel agreed to changes in 1989 negotiations which included a three-year basic medical plan design and cost-sharing arrangement through September 1992, said International Representative Paye Orr.

The Salary Policy Employee Panel is composed of OPEIU, TVA Engineering Association, Service Employees International Union, TVA Association of Professional Chemist and Chemical Engineers and Public Safety Service Employees Union. The Panel bargains for thousands of clerical and professional employees throughout the TVA system.

Under the new agreement, TVA and the employees covered by the plan pay 80 and 20 percent respectively for the plan's monthly cost (individual or family). Should the plan have a deficit, it will be the responsibility of TVA. However, if during the year the plan incurs a surplus, the surplus monies will be rebated to the employees and retirees, as determined by TVA and the Panel, Orr explained.

In the plan year 1990 a surplus of $8.9 million resulted, and the monies were rebated to employees during December 1990. Employees enrolled in the family plan received $650, while those in individual plans received $245 before taxes.

The surplus resulted from lower anticipated expenses. The lower costs, in turn, have been attributed to employees seeking quality medical care in a cost-effective manner, Orr said. She added that other factors were: (1) savings to the plan of more than $4 million due to the use of the preferred provider network; (2) significant reduction in the percentage of in-patient hospital care for the plan year; and (3) a decrease in out-patient use of the plan year.

Employees were justly rewarded for their efforts.

Local 153 members who work at the New York Stock Exchange, Securities Industry Automation Corp. and the New York Futures Exchange attend a recent contract ratification meeting in New York City. Business Representative Paul Greenspan led the meeting.
There must be another way—a Blue Cross success story

(Continued from page 1)

International Assistance

The International Union sent Internal- 

tional Vice President Michael Walker and 

Representative Jay Porcaro. Walker took 

charge of the media/public relations cam-

paign, while Porcaro concentrated on 

negotiations with Blue Cross. 

This latter proved a major challenge when 

the notorious union-busting law firm 

Jackman, Lewis, Schnitzer were brought 

in as company spokesmen at the bargain-

ning table. 

Ski said that he was impressed with 

Porcaro’s expertise at the table against 

the hatchetmen, as well as extremely 

grateful to the International for its moral 

and financial support during the crisis. He 

thanked specifically President John Kelly 

for his guidance and Gwen Wells, research 

director, for her technical assistance. 

Corporate Campaign Heats Up 

Walker organized numerous media 

events to focus public attention on the 

struggle and to demonstrate members’ 

solidarity. 

One day employees would all wear red 

as a symbol of unity, another arm bands. 

One day they would hold informational 

pickets at the worksite, another they 

would distribute bumper stickers. Buttons 

appeared and reappeared continually. All 

employees would apply for a particular 

posted position, adding administrative 

nightmares to the company’s mounting 

problems. 

Mike Walker, who had created this 

style of corporate campaign during 

OPEIU negotiations with Blue Cross in 

Milwaukee, developed a task force of 

employees to mobilize the members and 

coordinate these activities. He says it is 

the key element in the campaign. At least 

one member for each 10 employees served 

on the task force, keeping members in-

volved and informed. 

They developed union newsletters, 

held rallies, and set up a 24-hour hot line 

to give employees the latest update. They 

contacted politicians, as well as Blue 

Cross subscribers, and members of 

organized labor. 

The Issue

Although the members had several 

contract issues outstanding, the campaign 

focused on subcontracting. Blue Cross 

had established a company called Ap-

palachian Computer Services in Kentucky. 

Much of Blue Cross’ claims processing 

was transferred from Buffalo to this non-

union company. They had literally taken 

work away from members of OPEIU and 

threatened their job security. 

In radio spots aired daily in the Buf-

falo area, Local 212 depicted Blue Cross 

as the runaway shop it was becoming. 

Community groups and local politicians 

united behind OPEIU to save jobs for 

Buffalo. 

The Buffalo City Council passed a 

resolution stating that if Blue Cross con-

tinued to ship work outside the City, it 

would cost them city insurance business. 

Numerous labor unions wrote to Blue 

Cross’ President that they would look to 

other insurance carriers for their coverage 

if Blue Cross did not settle their contract 

with OPEIU. 

Scoring Touchdowns 

Yellow headbills were everywhere, as 

Local 212 and its task forceleafleted 

the 80,000 spectators at a Buffalo Bills 

and Denver Broncos football game. Blue Cross 

cosponsored the game for its salaried 

employees. The company was caught com-

pletely off guard by the union’s handbili-

ng, and by the sympathetic response from 

the crowd. 

They were more than surprised, even 

appalled, when later in the game an 

airplane flew overhead trailing a banner 

that read, “Blue Cross Unfair to Union 

Employees.” 

The courting of support from politi-

cians and citizens of Buffalo following the 

game was a morale boost to the 

employees of Blue Cross. 

But, the biggest boost of all occurred 

in early November when President Rath 

resigned. As one employee described it, 

“They were dancing and clapping in the 

halls of Blue Cross. Even the salaried 

employees and managers were cheering.” 

“Immediately we began to see pro-

gress at the bargaining table,” President 

Ski said. This was true to the conclusion 

of the negotiations on December 12, 1990. 

On December 15 with a 390-to-2-vote, 

the contract overwhelmingly was ratified. 

The new Blue Cross contract 

At the top of the list, the company 

guaranteed that no jobs would be lost due 

to subcontracting. Although unable to win 

a total halt to all subcontracting, the 

members were delighted with the improv-

ed job security guarantees. 

Employees immediately won a 3% 

across-the-board wage raise, retroactive 

to April 25, 1990, with another 5% due 

in April 1991. They will also receive a 2% 

lump sum payment based on 12-months 

earnings December 31, 1991, a 5% wage 

hike in April 1992, and another 2% lump 

sum payment on December 15, 1992. 

RNs at Lansing General 

(Continued from page 1) 

imum of $50,000 in penalties per year. 

The penalty monies will be put into a 

fund to be distributed to the RNs at the 

end of each year. Since the union team 

believes that any short staffing has a rip-

ple effect throughout the entire hospital, 

the fund will be divided among all RNs 

not just those in the short-staffed units. 

Wilkensky said that these penalties pre-

sent an unprecedented obligation to the 

hospital. The union team could not find 

similar contractual language in the State 

of Michigan. 

In attempting to iron out the final set-

tlement on wages, tied to staffing levels, 

the members and LGHI came perilously 

close to a strike. But in the final hours on 

December 26, a tentative agreement was 

reached. The union team had won a 7% 

increase in base wages, effective February 

3, with some employees receiving as much 

as 12%. In addition, a weekend differenti-

tial was added (equaling a 3% raise for all 

weekend hours). The evening shift diff-

ferential was also increased. 

The four-hour bonus, which approxi-

mately 50% of the nurses received, was 

capped at a maximum of $60 per week. 

The health care co-pay (the employee’s 

share of health care premiums) was charg-

ed from the current flat dollar amount to 

5¼% of the premium. Personal leave, 

bereavement leave and on-call pay were 

also increased. 

The new contract has a wage 

reopener, effective July 1, 1992. The 

reopener is for the negotiations of wages 

and shift differentials only. 

The tentative agreement was over-

whelmingly ratified by the membership 

on January 8. A record 85% of the member-

ship voted, Wilkersky said, and the tally 

was 96-21 to approve. 

The union negotiating team was com-

posed of Ginger Kyer, Judy Tubbs, 

Katrina Malick, Marge Gregory, Ellen 

Weaver, Ginny Smith, Sherri Gregurek 

and Joseph Marziale.
Executive Board fetes VP Gwen Newton for 30 years of service

Vice President Gwen Newton celebrates 30 years of service with OPEIU this year. To honor her dedication, hard work, and continual caring for members and workers, the OPEIU executive board honored her with an anniversary dinner as well as a commemorative plaque.

The executive board, said International President John Kelly, also passed a resolution in her honor which read:

WHEREAS Gwen Newton was elected Vice President of Office and Professional Employees International Union in 1966 to serve on its Executive Board, and

WHEREAS she has been re-elected Vice President at eight consecutive conventions of the OPEIU, and

WHEREAS Gwen Newton has served with distinction for these past twenty-five years, making her the most senior member of the Board, and

WHEREAS the officers and members of the OPEIU wish to express their appreciation to her for her outstanding service to the membership of the OPEIU and to the labor movement, and

WHEREAS a resolution will be introduced at the next OPEIU convention detailing Gwen Newton’s lifetime efforts on behalf of working women and men with a unanimous recommendation of the Executive Board for its passage, now therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Executive Board of the OPEIU commend Gwen Newton for her twenty-five years of distinguished service on behalf of the members of this Organization, and be it further

RESOLVED that the OPEIU expresses its gratitude and appreciation to Gwen Newton for her dedication to the cause of trade unionism.

Just as she was the first OPEIU female executive board member, she has always stood head and shoulders above most labor union leaders. She has a remarkable history of "firsts" and is responsible for the growth and success of OPEIU Local 30, based in Los Angeles and San Diego.

The official history of the union White Collar Union describes her background and rise within the union this way:

She came to Los Angeles in 1960 in search of a job, forced to withdraw from San Diego State College because she had no money. A friend told her that the Office Employees Union might help, and Gwen Newton "wandered in off the street," as she said, with no training or skills and little knowledge of the business or trade union world. Karl Shoes, a Los Angeles company headed by Harry Karl, who had a well-known affinity for glamorous movie star wives, was expressing its social concern for job opportunities for black people. Local 30 had a contract with Karl; word was passed to the union that there might be openings for qualified black clericals. Anne Sweet, who was then the Local 30 business representative, interviewed Gwen Newton and sent her immediately to Karl Shoes, where she was hired. When she was asked if she could operate a comptometer, her answer was no, but she wanted to learn. She took a week at a comptometer school and came back to Karl Shoes to work for five years.

As a new member of Local 30, Gwen Newton started attending meetings, learning about how a union operated, serving on committees, and almost immediately became shop steward and negotiator for the Karl Shoes unit. She aspired to a supervisory job at Karl, for which she believed she was eminently qualified; when a man was hired ahead of her, she resigned. She soon found a job with the Sheet Metal Apprenticeship Committee in Los Angeles helping train young sheet metal workers; she took the course herself and became a qualified sheet metal worker, too, although she never worked at the trade.

When in 1961 a vacancy on the Local 30 staff for a business agent's job arose, Gwen Newton applied for it and was hired. In 1964 she decided to run for the local's top position of secretary-treasurer and business representative. She endured an ugly racist campaign to win handily and oust the incumbent; she has never been opposed thereafter. In 1965, she was elected an International vice-president, to become for several years both the only woman and the only black holding high office in the Union.

But the presence of Gwen Newton on the Executive Board was far from tokenism toward either women or blacks. She had fought her internal trade union battles...defeating entrenched male leadership in her own local union. She demonstrated strong executive ability, directing a staff of three full-time representatives and working devotedly to build her local union. Local 30 had approximately 1100 members when she became its head; despite several losses of units, the local grew to approximately 2500 members by 1974. Local 30 now has 5,300 members in hospitals, law firms, colleges, credit unions and trust fund offices. Today, she stands secure as one of the most able and highly regarded leaders of the OPEIU.

Newton is recognized outside of OPEIU as well for her outstanding abilities. She has served many years on the National Board as vice president of the Coalition of Labor Union Women, a national women's organization within the labor movement.

"Gwen Newton has made an indelible impression on OPEIU, as an organizer, negotiator, administrator, fighter for minority and women's rights. We could not have come so far, so fast without her," said International President John Kelly.

Newton was also honored recently for giving "unselfishness of herself in the service of others," at a dinner sponsored by the Los Angeles Federation of Labor. The dinner was a fund-raising event for the Los Angeles Labor Community Services Food and Emergency Program and Food Bank, which assists in alleviating the hardships and suffering of needy families, especially during strikes, layoffs and plant closings.

"Gwen's compassion, leadership ability and dedication has long been recognized by OPEIU, but also by the entire labor movement. We are proud of her accomplishments. I am pleased to call her my colleague and friend," President Kelly said.

In memoriam

He was an active member of the men's club and the Bible Study Group, as well as an usher, in his church St. Andrew's.

He leaves his son Phillip, his daughter Merriel, and his former wife Clara Gibson Brown.

Elenore Palyu

Dolores Jablonski, retired member of OPEIU Local 1 in Detroit, reports the death of Sister Palyu. She said that Palyu had been a "staunch believer in the labor movement from a young girl to the time of her passing. Her mother Thelma O'Dell was her mentor—her positions in the union consisting of executive board, secretary-treasurer and business agent. Her knowledge of the union was something to behold."

She held her position in the Pattern Makers until her illness in 1988.

Buena D. Brady

Buena D. Brady, former trustee of OPEIU 53 in Omaha, Nebraska, passed away in January of 1991, reports Local 53 Recording Secretary Jody Monahan.

According to her obituary, published by Local 53, "she was a past worthy matron of the Order of Eastern Star and a retired executive secretary and office manager of the Omaha Construction Industry Health and Welfare Plan."

All three—Brown, Palyu and Brady—will be greatly missed by their families, coworkers, unionists and friends. We will hold them in our thoughts and prayers.

Wallace Brown

We are sad to announce the death of former OPEIU Local 375 Vice President Wallace Brown (known as Wally). He passed away suddenly February 23, 1991, at his home in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Brown was born in Cincinnati. He was a 2nd lieutenant with the U.S. Army and served during World War II. His employment at the U.S. Postal Service lasted until his retirement in 1971. He had been a member of Toastmasters International. He was active with OPEIU Ushears Local 375, as an usher, steward and ultimately vice president, when he worked for the Cincinnati Reds, Cincinnati Bengals and the Cincinnati Gardens. Recently he served on the Minority Recruitment Committee for the Ohio National Guard.
Connecticut members rally for U.S. troops

Workers at the General Dynamics Electric Boat Division rallied in support of the troops in the Persian Gulf on a cold, blustery day. In spite of the weather, members of OPEIU Local 106 gave up their lunch hours to demonstrate their support, as did all of the unions that comprise the Metal Trades Council at Electric Boat in Groton, Connecticut. All are glad that hostilities have now ceased and those serving will soon be reunited with their families.

U.S. Price Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics</th>
<th>Statistics Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Base 1982-84 = 100</td>
<td>New Base 1986 = 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>December</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Canadian Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Base 1982-84 = 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The old CPI-W (U.S.) figures are being replaced with a new series (New base 1982-84 = 100). We will continue to publish the old while everyone converts it.

If you move, send your old and new address, including zip code and social security or social insurance number and Local Union number to: Gilles Beauregard, Sec.-Treas., 815 16th Street, N.W., Suite 606, Washington, D.C. 20006.