Remembering a life of service and dedication to the labor movement

Gwen Wells’ contribution to OPEIU was “remarkable”

Beloved White Collar editor, director of research & education dies at age 53

A lifelong activist and leader, Gwenwynn Wells spent her life doing what was most important to her — helping working people realize their personal and professional dreams. As the Director of Research & Education for the OPEIU and the editor of the official union publication, White Collar — Wells ensured that thousands of men and women were able to reach their potential for the betterment of themselves, their families and their Union.

Wells' service tragically ended on Friday, January 15, 1999 as she lost her long battle with pancreatic cancer. She was 53.

Interest in Union Representation Began Early

Born and raised in Dallas, Texas, Wells moved to New York specifically to work for the labor movement, by way of Cornell University where she acquired a Masters of Industrial and Labor Relations.

Her interest in workers' representation began at the University of Texas in Austin, where she worked and helped to organize for the American Federation of Teachers. Quickly demonstrating her special blend of skills, Wells soon became a local union vice president. Wells also was an elementary school teacher for a few years, teaching the fifth grade.

Since joining the OPEIU staff in 1979, Wells revamped the Research & Education Departments, increased resources, redesigned education programs, produced new publications (for example, Research News, the daily convention newsletter and Welcome to OPEIU), and improved and expanded the newspaper, White Collar.

Wells was also deeply involved with other union organizations, serving as a National Vice President of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) — see CLUW resolution later in this article, member of the Board of Directors of the National Committee on Pay Equity, Executive Board, Metro Labor Press Association, Advocacy Board, New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University; and Member, AFL-CIO Standing Commission on Education.

News of her death was difficult for her friends and family at the OPEIU — both at the Local Union and International level — and for all those who had known and worked with her.

"Gwen’s dedication to working people and her contribution to the OPEIU was remarkable," said OPEIU International President Michael Goodwin. "Gwen saw to it that countless OPEIU members were trained and educated to be better trade unionists. Her work within the labor movement will long be remembered, and she will be deeply missed by all who had the privilege to know her," Goodwin continued.

Illness Couldn't Dampen Spirit

Despite her difficult illness, Wells' spirit remained high. Her uplifting words were included in the convention issues of White Collar, where Wells said, "I want to take this opportunity to thank all of my OPEIU brothers and sisters who have generously and lovingly sent me cards, flowers and gifts during my illness. Just knowing I am in your thoughts and prayers has lifted my spirits and provided me with a healing strength," she continued.

"It's times like this when the importance of 'solidarity' becomes clear. In the name of solidarity, too, I hope you have a progressive and successful convention. I wish I could join you there because I miss you all . . . your prayers and best wishes mean so much to me."

Wells is survived by her mother, Rose Wells, her sister Mrs. Patty Warren and brother-in-law Harry Warren, all of San Antonio, Texas.

A memorial service was held in San Antonio, Texas, and another in New York City on March 7.

The family has established a memorial fund in Ms. Wells' name through the American Cancer Society, 19 West 56th Street, N.Y. 10019. A memorial fund has also been established in San Antonio, Texas.

CLUW Resolution

In recognition of all her work on behalf of women in labor, the Coalition of Labor Union Women passed the following resolution at its National Executive Board meeting in February:

Gwen Wells

WHEREAS, the Coalition of Labor Union Women and the entire labor movement lost a strong advocate, a devoted trade unionist and a warm and courageous individual with the passing of Sister Gwen Wells; and

WHEREAS, her history of trade union activities goes back to the State of Texas where she was born and raised; where she worked to organize at the University of Texas and served as Vice President of the local American Federation of Teachers before moving to New York where she received a Masters Degree in Industrial and Labor Relations from Cornell University; and

WHEREAS, in 1979 she joined the staff of the Office & Professional Employees International Union, AFL-CIO, CLC, and went on to become their Director of Research and Education, Editor of the OPEIU publication White Collar and, among others, to serve on the National AFL-CIO Standing Committee on Education, as Board Member of the National Committee on Pay Equity and on the Advisory Board of the New York State School of Industrial Labor Relations, Cornell University, and in her own community she was an active Big Sister; and

WHEREAS, throughout her life she fought for and was dedicated to the issues

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Letters to the Editor

Again, we reprint letters from our members on various issues. We invite our readers to continue to share their opinions with us, whether in support of or in opposition to our own. Debate is healthy and welcome in this union. Letters are edited for length only, not content. Remember: anonymous letters will not be printed.

You can also reach us on the Web: http://www.opeiu.org

T
effects of public sector strikes are often a major inconvenience to the general public, and if such strikes are well organized, the effects can be crippling. As such, the most common reaction from the everyday person is one of annoyance, and if the strike lasts longer than a person first expects, annoyance turns to anger.

This response can be attributed to several factors, including ignorance of the issues surrounding the strike, media blackouts, governmental misinformation [colloquial word is "lies, lies and more lies"] and the apparent private-sector prejudice towards the average public-sector employee. The common person on the street wants to hear nothing of the issues leading to the strike or the dispute. Each one thinks only of himself/herself and feels this is not a venue to air one's differences. "Don't inconvenience the because of your programs, take your issues somewhere else," they tend to say. Commoners on the street, whether white collar or blue-collar workers, feel "I'm embarrassed with so much less, these public sector workers are fatted."

Members of the public don't seem to be concerned with the fact that it has taken many, many years for workers to get where they are. Since our sisters and brothers in the private sector have no recourse to air their problems and difficulties, rather than accept or tolerate minimal inconvenience, in support of their sisters and brothers, they key into what the media sells them and turn around and proclaim that "unionized workers are very well paid, enjoy many fringe benefits and are never satisfied."

Who, then, has the responsibility to educate the masses, and bring them on-side? You, me and my brother sister. Each of us must work hard in our own little circle of influence — the family, the school council, the community, the baseball club, etc. to educate the masses, make them understand what the struggle is all about and encourage their support and understanding.

One major stumbling block in attempting to tell our story, is our inability to reach the community because of a blatant lack of even-handed media coverage. The local activists are often interviewed by reporters and television crews only to find a .002 second coverage at 11 p.m. versus central stage coverage for the Miners who are out there telling lie after lie to the gullible public. Question: Why is the media so interested in being honest and up-front? Answer: Because, although the reporter may be uninterested and promise you objective coverage, we know who owns the station, or the newspaper, and they make the final cut. They are all part of the Corporate Agenda, and their head office is at Bay Street.

Our one targeted response, in my opinion, is true solidarity. If we boast of a 400,000 public sector membership, have we stopped to think what political clout we have? And do we realize how inactive we have been in the past, and how much good we can do if each of the 400,000 unionized workers speaks to three people or moves three people to action? True solidarity is the Bible of trade unions. Yet, so many activists pay lip-service to this word, thinking, in their hearts, for example, "this is a school board problem, it's got nothing to do with me, I'm in the Utilities sector. What's the use of going out there to picket with them, when my turf comes and we're out there on the picket lines, the teachers will not be there with us."

It is essential that the community understand that "the public sector is comprised of simple people, you and me, trying to make a living and working hard to put food on the table for our families." It is only when this happens that the anger, frustration and rage will fade away and be replaced with support, cooperation and true solidarity for the common good.

Solidarity Forever.

Denise D'Souza
Recording Secretary
OPEIU Local 491
Scarbrough, Ontario

Local 3 takes political process by storm

The year 1998 proved to be a challenging political year for labor in California. Our Local decided to make it a priority. We would use it both as a way to be more involved in our Labor Council's Labor Neighbor Program and as a tool to internally organize and activate our members.

The June primary contained an initiative, placed on the ballad by out-of-state extremists, which wasn't about union dues or campaign reform as it claimed, but instead, was a partisan attempt to silence working people's voice. The entire labor movement, including our local, rose to the challenge to defeat the notorious Proposition 226.

At a steward's training meeting held in April and attended by 40 of our members, we began to organize ourselves to win the political challenges ahead. Using commitment cards, we asked people to commit to educating themselves about Prop. 226, to sell raffle tickets, to volunteer at their job sites, in their community and/or church groups to help expose the vicious nature of this proposition; to help register new voters; to man phone banks; and, finally, to help get out the vote. These efforts helped us raise enough money to enable one in our members to spend three days calling all of our members, educating, agitating and encouraging them to vote in the primary and to vote against Prop. 226.

We turned out enough of our members at the San Francisco Labor/Neighbor phone banking, precinct walking, and get-out-the-vote activities so that, in the end, we were picked fifth of all the locals in terms of dollars donated during this election period. The key to our ability to activate more than twice as many members as we had in the past was in providing many different ways in which each member could participate.

The defeat of Prop. 226 was a major victory. All of the pundits right up until Election Day said it would pass. This victory for all working people in California was particularly important to our newly activated union members. Our local sent out thank you notes to the members who participated, thanking them a good summer and letting them know that the November election was right around the corner and that we would be calling on them again soon for help.

In August, the activities began again. This time, however, we didn't start from the beginning, as we already had a list of activated members. After we received the list from the State Federation of Labor indicating that only ball of our members were registered to vote, we decided to make voter registration a priority. We began by including a voter registration form in all of the packets that we sent to our new members. We picked several of our largest shops and set up voter registration tables. These tables proved very important — not only for registering people to vote, but also for giving the union more visibility at these work sites.

In October, we once again conducted phone banks, walked precincts and visited many of our work sites, encouraging people to not only vote, but to post yard signs, talk to their neighbors and family members — always emphasizing that each and every vote counted.

On November 3, 1998, our efforts paid off. We won! The blue-collar and white-collar movement (i.e., the labor movement) were able to elect pro-worker, pro-family majorities in both California's assemblies, a pro-labor governor and a pro-labor U.S. senator. That is only part of the story. The most exciting chapter is what we are developing in our local. We have a new contingent of active members who have worked together and who better realize the strength of their union. They now know that by working together, we can be a powerful force — both at the polling booth and in our union.

In 1999, our local will again face the challenges of obtaining good contracts, as well as representing our members on the shop floor. But this time we will have something new on our side — we will have a more positive, worker-friendly environment in Sacramento, our state's capitol, for the first time in 16 years, and we will have a more activated membership. 1999 looks good for Local 3.

Connie Ford
Union Representative
Local 3
San Francisco, California

For the latest information about the OPEIU, check out our website at www.OPEIU.com
You'd think doing something we've been doing every day of our lives would make us pretty good at it, right?

Wrong! At least for millions of Americans who, for various reasons, aren't able to get the hang of getting a good night's sleep. As many as 40 million people in this country are afflicted with more than 70 different types of sleep-related problems. That's according to the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research. The center is part of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, a unit of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Why are we such a nation of sleepyheads?

"It's a two-part problem," says James P. Kelley, Ph.D., director of the sleep research group. "First we have a society that's on a 24-hour cycle — with multiple jobs in many cases and multiple responsibilities both at work and home. When you're pushed for time, as many people are, the first thing that usually goes is sleep."

But paying with sleep hours is not a bargain. You often end up paying for it in decreased productivity and an increased risk for errors in judgment and accidents.

Lack of sleep and its link to accidents — automobile and on-the-job — appears to be a problem of far greater magnitude than previously believed. Fatigue leads to diminished mental alertness and concentration.

Kelley says there could be as many as 1,500 fatalities and 100,000 sleep-related automobile accidents annually in the United States.

Shift workers are especially prone to the problem. Their biological clock is ticking at the wrong time. The human body is set up to feel sleepy during the nighttime hours and to be active during the daylight hours.

People who work night shift and try to sleep during the day are constantly fighting their biological clocks. They run the risks of accidents at work or on the road.

The second part of the problem relates to actual sleep disorders. Insomnia — the inability to fall asleep or remain asleep — affects millions. Sleep apnea — frequent long pauses in breathing during sleep, followed by choking and gasping for breath — affects at least 10 million.

Narcolepsy — falling asleep uncontrollably during the day — affects perhaps a quarter of a million people, and nobody really knows how many are affected by restless leg syndrome (RLS).

The crux, tingling, pulling sensation of RLS in the legs, typically just before falling asleep, often leads to periodic jerking movements during sleep. It's disturbing to both the afflicted and his or her bed partner.

The cause is unknown.

Masturbing the legs or a warm bath before retiring sometimes helps. But symptoms almost always return, often during periods of stress.

Sleep experts believe most people should be getting somewhere in the range of seven to eight hours of restful shuteye a night. If you're getting less than six hours regularly, chances are you're piling up a "sleep debt" that may be compromising your health and well-being.

### Gwen Wells

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And concerns of working women in her union, the labor movement and her community. She was devoted to the goals of the Coalition of Labor Union Women and in 1991 was elected to the CLUW Officers Council as a vice president. She was officer liaison to the CLUW Media Committee and continually worked to promote the objectives and interests of CLUW in innumerable projects over the years; she helped organize and increase the activities of OPEIU members in CLUW and advance the image of CLUW throughout the women's movement and organized labor as a whole.

Therefore, she is

RESOLVED, that we rededicate ourselves to carry on her work with the same fervor and commitment to organizing, affirmative action, political action and union participation, with a special emphasis on education which she considered a vital part of every activity she pursued on behalf of all of us.
Federation of Catholic Teachers demonstrate union power

3-year agreement brings 10 percent wage increase, huge pension jump

Months of picketing and demonstrations have brought victory for The Federation of Catholic Teachers (FCT) - an affiliate of OPEIU Local 153 - as they reached an agreement with the Association of Catholic Schools that will mean a 10 percent wage increase and unprecedented pension enhancements for the group’s more than 3,000 employees in the bargaining unit.

“We are very happy with this agreement,” said FCT President Michele Cody. “We’ve achieved what we set out for - increased wages, a livable pension and job security. One of the most outstanding aspects of the negotiations is that the Archdiocese finally realized the need for parity between elementary and high school teachers. And now this will be accomplished over time.”

“It was a long road, but our efforts paid off,” said OPEIU International President Michael Goodwin. “We’ve made tremendous progress in solving the parity issue. Over time, elementary school teachers can expect to be paid the same as the secondary school teachers.”

Contract provisions include:
- Percentage raises of 3%, 3% and 4%,
- Parity increases to begin this year and continue for the next 12 years, bringing the elementary school salary up to the high school salary;
- Pension enhancements in two forms:
  - Voluntary Retirement Plan & 5-year average;
  - One step added to each column of High School Salary Scale;
- Coverage payment raised from $100 to $125 for high school teachers;
- A maximum of sick days in bank;
- 4 more steps added to non-degreed salary column;
- Part-time salary increases: from $50 to $75/day for non-degreed; from $75 to $100/day for degree;
- Incorporation of two new schools (St. Peter’s in Liberty, N.Y. and St. Joseph’s in Florida, N.Y.);
- Security regarding bumping for tenured teachers;
- An agency fee for all teachers newly hired, not joining the Union, or all non-union teachers who voluntarily transfer from one school to another;
- In order to achieve the above, the FCT agreed to no demonstrations 15 minutes prior to and 15 minutes after any Mass and, that all elementary school teachers must make appropriate progress to achieve certification in the Catholic Certification Program.

The contract was ratified on January 28 with 91 percent approval of the membership.

Demonstrations led to contract

The FCT and Local 153 staged numerous demonstrations as contract negotiations repeatedly stalled for a renewal of the collective bargaining agreement covering the FCT elementary and high school teachers employed in the schools of the Archdiocese of New York. The contract expired August 31, 1998. Demonstrations were held at St. Patrick’s Cathedral during the annual Labor Day Mass held Sunday, September 13 at Cardinal Spellman High School in the

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**Federation of Catholic Teachers**

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Bronx, at John F. Kennedy High School in Somers, N.Y., outside the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in Manhattan during the annual Alfred E. Smith dinner; and a prayer vigil was conducted at the Archdiocese of New York Cathedral in St. Patrick's pro-Cathedral.

"We were frustrated," Cody continued. "Thousands of Catholic teachers came together and sent a message to the Archdiocese that we were not going to work without substantial improvements in our wages and benefits."

"And it worked," Goodwin added. "We kept hoping that the Archdiocese and John Cardinal O'Connor would deal with us fairly, and although we were disheartened by their initial offers, the FCT kept going until they won a fair agreement."

"Special thanks go to the OPEIU, specifically Michael Goodwin and Richard Lanigan, and to the FCT staff," Cody said, including FCT Secretary Edwina Durnin, Treasurer Pat Gabriel, Erika Miklos, Eileen Sweetney, Deane O'Donnell, Robert DiNardo, Brian Maher, Maryann Perry, John McEnilley, and Michael McComiskey."}
Doctors bring medical care to remote lands

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missions per year, some of which are partially funded through grants from local Lions and Rotary clubs, churches and other community groups. VOSH has conducted 15 missions since its inception in 1990.

VOSH now has a permanent destination at an orphanage in Guatemala in the Peten, one of the largest rainforests in the world. Approximately 50,000 people live in the remote area — a place so rural, there are no paved roads; visitors must travel by bus.

McPhillips has been on fifteen missions, most recently traveling to the Dominican Republic in February 1998, and to the Peten in early December 1998. The student organization, VOSH, is also planning to visit the Peten on its next trip — as the work it was conducting in Haiti has been suspended due to political instability in that country.

Eyglasses available for those who need them

In the past nine years, VOSH optometrists have examined thousands of patients for eyeglass prescriptions, glaucoma and cataracts. They have also referred patients to local surgeons, and dispensed thousands of pairs of eyeglasses and bottles of medications. Whenever the VOSH team travels, thousands of people come to receive the free eye examination and, if necessary, eyeglasses.

"We see about 600 people each day," Dr. McPhillips says. "The exams are not done in offices. They are usually performed in just a room or a community center."

Patients who need them are provided with eyeglasses, all of which have been donated. When an individual or organization donates used eyeglasses to VOSH, a volunteer picks up the glasses and delivers them to another VOSH volunteer to be inspected and have their prescriptions determined. The eyeglasses are then prepared for the next mission. They are cataloged according to prescription and style, cleaned and packed in boxes.

"We can usually match up prescriptions perfectly," Dr. McPhillips says. "If an unusual prescription is needed, we then have them made and sent to the person at our own expense." Dr. McPhillips says that being able to provide eyecare to children, in particular, in these impoverished provinces makes all the effort worthwhile.

"The gratitude these people show is often quite touching," McPhillips says.

"This is a great example of the exceptional people we have involved in the OPEIU," says Director of Organization Jay Porcaro. "David is one of the many dedicated health care professionals — each doing wonderful work — that we're so proud to count among our membership."

New educational scholarships established

The Executive Board has enthusiastically passed a motion endorsing President Michael Goodwin's recommendation to establish educational scholarships for officers and staff of Local Unions.

The new scholarships will provide a one-time $1,000 subsidy to each Local Union over a three-year period to send any one or more of its officer or staff for training in the labor relations field.

"This training will enable Local Union representatives to more effectively represent OPEIU members," Goodwin said. "We all need our representatives to be as sharp as they can be at the bargaining table and in grievance procedures, and this training will give them the knowledge they need to make informed decisions." As with all new programs, Goodwin said, the Union sees an expansion of the initial benefits at a later date.

This plan follows on the heels of the $1,000 per local technology initiative established in 1998. (See story this issue for more details about the technology program, and to learn which Locals have already taken advantage of the subsidy.)

More specific information about the union representative training has been sent out to Local Unions. Questions about the program should be addressed to Director of Field Services, Kevin Kielie at (212) 675-3210 or your Regional Vice President.

Boston supports unions' right to unionize

On October 21, 1998, Boston's city council passed a crucial resolution supporting the rights of unions to organize, free of any coercion or pressure from employers.

Signed by City Council President James M. Kelly and Councilors "Mickey" Roche and Thomas M. Kean Jr., the resolution recognizes that while federal law protects employees' right to join a union, there is often illegal interference by employers seeking to derail the union and possible organization. The resolution then calls upon employers in Boston to "stay out of their employees' decision" to unionize, and to "provide their employees the opportunity to choose whether to unionize or not free from intimidation or coercion."

Finally, the resolution asks employers to abide by the employee's decision to be represented by the union "by engaging in card-check elections and thereby avoiding the delays and legal maneuverings that accompany NLRA election processes."

Following is the entire text of the Boston resolution:

WHEREAS: Federal law protects employees' rights to form or join a union; and
WHEREAS: Employers often stall or delay the proceedings before the National Labor Relations Board which are intended to allow employees an expedient means of selecting a union to represent them; and
WHEREAS: Union representatives hold a right to unionize by threatening to close their facilities, to fire union activists, or to otherwise retaliate against them, or in some cases by carrying out these threats; and
WHEREAS: Many employers engage in vigorous campaigns against their employees' efforts to unionize when the decision is properly one for the workers to make themselves; and
WHEREAS: At a result of employers' intrusion into the employees' decision, employees are often deprived of an opportunity to choose a union free from intimidation or coercion; and
WHEREAS: Employees often stall or delay the proceedings before the National Labor Relations Board which are intended to allow employees an expedient means of selecting a union to represent them; and
WHEREAS: Unions provide employees with a voice on the job, encourage job motivation, and productivity growth; and

OPEIU calls for passage of antitrust relief measure

The OPEIU is lobbying for passage of legislation that would ensure patient safety and quality of care while protecting our nation's medical workers by revising antitrust laws to give doctors the ability to bargain collectively with HMOs and other health insurers. This freedom to negotiate will enable healthcare professionals to negotiate for the next mission. They will next go to Guatemala to further their efforts to bring healthcare to those in need.

Introduced last session by Representative Tom Campbell (R-Calif.), "The Quality Health-Care Coalition Act" (HR 4277) would allow negotiations between a coalition of health-care professionals and a health-care service plan regarding the terms and conditions of a contract, and to carry out such terms and conditions.

"It's the best way I can see to let the market deal with the complaints so many health-care professionals have raised with HMOs," says Rep. Campbell. "Medical professionals should be allowed to form their own professional associations and bargain with the HMOs and other organizations in their area rather than have the federal government establish rules that specify the HMO's medical professional relationship."

"By allowing health care professionals, including physicians, nurses, pharmacists and midwives, to form their own professional associations and bargain with the HMOs and other organizations in their area rather than have the federal government establish rules that specify the HMO's medical professional relationship, we're able to provide a much more effective way to address the concerns raised by health-care professionals," said Campbell. "This measure will make the health-care system more efficient and affordable for all Americans."
Boston supports
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WHEREAS: Unionized employees generally earn more than their non-union counterparts, and contribute to the economic vitality of our communities; and

WHEREAS: Unions have contributed to the growth of democracy, the well being of America’s working families, and our communities generally, therefore, be it

RESOLVED: To that end, we call on all employers to stay out of their employees’ decision by clearly communicating to their employees that the employer is neutral on their choice, and will deal fairly with any union that they may select; and, be it further

RESOLVED: We call on all employers to provide their employees the opportunity to choose whether to unionize or not free from intimidation or coercion; and, be it further

RESOLVED: We call on all employers to abide by their employees’ decision to be represented by a union by engaging in card-check elections and thereby avoiding the delays and legal maneuverings that accompany NLRB election processes.

Berthina Palmer, charter member of Local 1794, dies at 71

In her 52 years of service to the labor movement and to the Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor, Berthina Palmer proved she was a tireless fighter on behalf of working men and women. So diligent about her work, it was highly unusual when she called in sick in early January. It was with great sadness that her brothers and sisters at OPEIU Local 1794 learned a few days later that Palmer had died in her sleep at age 71.

Born in Cleveland, Berthina Palmer went to work for the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) office the day after her high school graduation in 1947. While working, she attended Cleveland College of Western Reserve University, where she joined Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, and then went on to Cleveland Marshall Law School. She passed the bar examination in 1954.

Her heart was with the labor movement and political activism, and she spent the next five decades helping to organize workers throughout the Cleveland area. She was an integral part of the CIO’s efforts to organize the Local Industrial Union (LIU) Number 1794 (United Office and Clerical Workers) in the late 1940s. In the ’50s, she was present when 1794 became the Directly Affiliated Local Union (DALU) 1794, AFL-CIO, after the merger of the CIO and the American Federation of Labor. In 1980, when DALU 1794 was chartered by the OPEIU and become OPEIU Local 1794, Palmer was listed as a charter member.

Palmer also attended founding conventions of the Coalition of Labor Unions Women and of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, a forum for black union members. She was a founder of the Junior Women’s Civic League and active with the NAACP. She also served on the Cleveland school board for ten years, arriving at the onset of the desegregation movement. While many of her colleagues on the board were unable to deal with the changes ordered by a federal court, Palmer was a staunch supporter of the desegregation law and worked diligently to enforce it.

Berthina Palmer generously donated her legal earnings to the educational fund, and helped administer local scholarships and legal funds. According to Local 1794 President Tom Frishie and Executive Secretary John Ryan, Palmer unselfishly shared her experience, knowledge, and compassion. Palmer’s dedication to the labor movement was indispensable; she was the consummate “good union member.”

Donations can be made to the Berthina Palmer Scholarship Fund, c/o Mr. Darvy R. Palmer, Trustee, P.O. Box 2221, Ashtabula, OH 44005. The fund will contribute equally to the A. Philip Randolph Institute and the AKA Sorority Scholarship Funds.

Greater representation of women

The OPEIU has one of the highest representations of women on its board among AFL-CIO unions, with 11 women serving on the 24-member International Executive Board. The women gathered in January at the first meeting of this newly elected board. Pictured from left to right: (Back row) Anita Roy (Local 12), Julie Weir (Local 502), Theresa Horner (Local 42), Kathleen Kinnick (Local 3), Janice Best (Local 343), Claude Grenier (Local 434), and Millie Hall (Local 494). (Front row) Maureen Bo (Local 6), Patricia Polish (Local 457), and Judy Solkovitz (Local 140). Elizabeth Alonso (Local 29) was not present at the time the photo was taken.
5th Annual
John Kelly Labor Studies Scholarship
Deadline: May 31, 1999

In memory of John Kelly, OPEIU International President since 1979 who died on March 10, 1994, the International Union Executive Board established a new scholarship fund in his name. “John Kelly was totally committed to education and training for working people, most particularly our own members,” said his successor President Michael Goodwin. “It was during John’s presidency that the union began the Howard Coughlin Scholarship Fund, added and expanded union training programs for members, officers and staff,” Goodwin said.

However, whereas that fund is open to members and their children for any university or college study, the John Kelly Labor Studies Scholarship Fund is dedicated strictly to OPEIU members who desire to pursue studies and a career in labor relations. This is the fifth year it will be awarded.

“We owe so much to John Kelly and are very pleased to memorialize him in this way,” said Goodwin. “The rules for that scholarship follow:

Rules

Ten (10) scholarships per year will be awarded on the basis of at least one (1) per region and not to exceed one (1) per family. Applications are open to members or associate members in good standing for at least two (2) years. All applicants must meet the eligibility requirements and comply with the Rules and Procedures as established by the OPEIU Executive Board. Each scholarship has a total maximum value of $2,000.

Eligibility

The applicant must be:

- a member of OPEIU in good standing or an associate member; and
- The applicant must be either an undergraduate or graduate in one of the areas of study below:
  - Labor Studies
  - Industrial Relations
  - Social Science or a related field

Procedures

Each applicant must file an official John Kelly Labor Studies Scholarship Program application. Application forms must be endorsed by the local union president or secretary-treasurer attesting that the member or associate member is in good standing and has been a member for at least two (2) years. Such endorsement must be obtained before the application is submitted.

Forms

Application forms may be obtained at your local union office or at the Secretary-Treasurer’s office of the International Union.

Applications

All applications must be received at the Secretary-Treasurer’s office of the International Union, 1660 L Street, NW, Suite 801, Washington, DC 20036, no later than May 31, 1999.

Requirements

High School Transcript — All applicants are required to submit their high school transcripts. High school transcript must show rank in class or rank in class must be provided.

College Transcript — If presently enrolled in a college, university or a recognized technical or vocational post-secondary school as a full-time student, applicant is required to submit transcript, along with their high school transcript.

Essay — All applicants are required to submit an essay on their occupational goals (300 to 500 words).

Statement of Intent — All applicants shall be required to submit a statement of intent to remain within the OPEIU for a period of two (2) years.

All requirements are due at the Secretary-Treasurer’s office no later than May 31, 1999.

Selection of Scholarship

The selections shall be based on recommendations of an academic scholarship committee. Announcements of the winners will be made during the month of August of each year.

Address all inquiries to:
Office and Professional Employees International Union
John Kelly Labor Studies Scholarship Fund
1660 L Street, NW, Suite 801
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 393-4464, Fax: (202) 347-0649
OPEIU Announces 12th Annual Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship

Twelve (12) full-time and six (6) part-time scholarships will be awarded. Applications are open to members in good standing, or associate members, or their children, all of whom must meet the eligibility requirements and comply with the rules and procedures as established by the Executive Board. Each full-time scholarship has a total maximum value of $4,000, each part-time up to $2,000.

Those scholarships for members in the United States (Canada has its own scholarship program) are limited to at least one per region in the U.S. and one per family.

New Part-Time Scholarship Created

The Executive Board at its June 1996 meeting approved converting two (3) full-time scholarships into four (4) part-time scholarships and to add two (2) additional part-time scholarships for a total of six (6) part-time scholarships. One of such part-time scholarships will be awarded in each region in order to reach a greater number of members. Full-time scholarships are generally awarded to children of members.

The following rules shall apply to part-time scholarships:

- Part-time scholarship is defined as a minimum of three (3) credits and no more than two (2) courses.
- Part-time scholarship award shall be up to $500 per year for a maximum value of $2,000.
- In the event that the student does not attend a college/university each semester, they have two (2) years maximum to use the part-time scholarship.
- If the student becomes a full-time student, while receiving a part-time student status scholarship, the scholarship will be revoked, and they will be able to apply for a full-time scholarship.
- Part-time scholarship awards shall be subject to all other eligibility rules under the Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship Fund.

The Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship Awards, therefore, shall consist of twelve (12) full-time awards and six (6) part-time awards.

Eligibility

An applicant must be either:

- a member of OPEIU in good standing or an associate member;
- the son, daughter, stepchild or legally adopted child of an OPEIU member in good standing or an associate member; and

An applicant must be either:

- a high school student or high school graduate entering college, university or a recognized technical or vocational post-secondary school as a full-time student;
- presently in college, university or a recognized technical or vocational post-secondary school as a full-time student.

Procedures

Each applicant must file an official OPEIU scholarship program application. Applications must be endorsed by the Local Union president or secretary-treasurer attesting that the member or parent of an applicant is in good standing or an associate member. Such endorsement must be obtained before the application is submitted.

Forms

Application forms may be obtained at your local union office or at the Secretary-Treasurer's office of the International Union.

Applications

All applications must be received at the Secretary-Treasurer's office of the International Union, 1660 L Street, NW, Suite 801, Washington, DC 20036, no later than May 31, 1999.

Requirements

High School Transcript — All applicants are required to submit their high school transcript. High school transcript must show rank in class or rank in class must be provided.

1. College Transcripts — If presently enrolled in a College, University or a recognized Technical or Vocational Post-Secondary School as a full-time student, applicant is required to submit transcript, along with their High School Transcript.
2. Test — All applicants are required to take a Scholarship Aptitude Test — SAT — (the Admissions Testing Program Examination of the College Entrance Examination Board), American College Testing Program — ACT — or equivalent examination by a recognized Technical or Vocational Post-Secondary School. If you have already taken the above tests, you should request your school to forward the results of your test to the Secretary-Treasurer's office of the International Union.

All requirements are due at the Secretary-Treasurer's office no later than May 31, 1999.

SEND FOR OPEIU SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

Application deadline — May 31, 1999

Please send me the application for the 1999 Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship.

Name:

Address:

City: State: Zip:

OPEIU Local Union

Send to: OPEIU Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship Fund 1660 L Street, NW, Suite 801 Washington, DC 20036

Call for Canadian Address at (514) 522-6511.

Selection of Scholarship

The selections shall be based on recommendations of an academic scholarship committee. Announcement of the winners will be made during the month of June each year.

Address all inquiries to: Office of Professional Employees International Union, Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship Fund, 1660 L Street, NW, Suite 801, Washington, DC 20036.

Phone (202) 393-4464, Fax: (202) 347-0649.
Opal Skilling retires from Local 15, named Secretary-Treasurer Emeritus

The Executive Board of Local 15, Coquitlam, British Columbia, hosted a retirement party in September for Sister Opal Skilling, a member and representative for thirty-eight years and duly elected Secretary-Treasurer — Skilling served from 1962 to 1997, the longest serving Secretary-Treasurer in the OPEIU's Canadian history. In recognition of these many years of service, it was unanimously decided at the Local 15 General Council Meeting in October that Skilling be conferred the title of Secretary-Treasurer Emeritus.

Honored guests included OPEIU's President Michael Goodwin, Secretary-Treasurer Gilles Beauregard, and Canadian Director Michel Lajeunesse (pictured at left). The Premier of British Columbia, Glen Clark, also took time out of his busy schedule to join in wishing Skilling a well-deserved retirement.

As master of ceremonies, Doug Gibson, a long-time member and dear friend of Skilling — introduced the Head Table and other long-time labor leaders, including: Jim Dugan of the Plumbers; Bill Kesel, Floorlayers; Kay Haynes, retired B.C. Federation of Labour; John Fitzpatrick, Marine Workers and Vancouver Districts Labour Council; Jean (Mohart) Scott, Past President; Terry Smith, IWA and others addressed the crowd. Local 15 President Barry Hoden then introduced Skilling who said, "It is awesome, not a complete surprise, but awesome. To think that our OPEIU officers would fly in from New York, Washington, D.C., and Montreal and that our Premier would be available to spend the evening."

After recognizing the more than two hundred friends, family, union members and guests, Skilling gave a special thank you to "my Delores, Vicks and Adele, and our office staff and our Business Representatives, Paul and Nao, and, of course, my Barry!" She also gave a special thanks that her family — sons, grandchildren and great grandchildren — were included in this touching and memorable event.

Local 463 — Montreal, Québec

Local 463 celebrates 40th anniversary

More than 140 delegates from Local Union 463, which represents members working at Gaz Métropolitain in Montreal, Quebec, convened on November 7, 1998 for the Local’s convention. This was also the 40th anniversary celebration for the Local.

With the theme, “40 years of solidarity to be proud of,” the convention’s topics included work reorganization, bargaining demands, pension and internal organizing. Festivities surrounding the anniversary were hosted by Local 463 President François Bisson, who took place at the convention adjournment in the presence of International Secretary-Treasurer Gilles Beauregard, Canadian Director Michel Lajeunesse and Eastern Canada Council President and International Vice President Claude Grenier. Also present were Local 463 past president and current E.C.C. Representative Denis Fréchette, current union representatives Simon Berlin, and Local 463 Honorary President Phil Lamoureux.

Prairies get a new ROC organizer

Longtime activist Judy Booher has recently been hired as the new ROC organizer for Region 9, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta. Booher has been with Local Union 397 since 1980 where she held union offices such as steward, council member, trustee, recording secretary, and first place and second place president of the Local. She also was regional member representing the Prairies on the Canadian Consultative Committee. This young grandmother of nine has also represented OPEIU for a member of years on the Women’s Committee of the Canadian Labour Congress.

Local 57 — Montreal, Québec

Fighting for first contract

Eighteen employees from Caisses populaires St-Agapit, in a small town outside Québec City, have joined OPEIU Local 57. The new Local 57 members went on strike on October 15, 1998 when bargaining talks for their first contract broke off. The Quebec Labour Department has appointed a conciliator in the ongoing dispute. OPEIU Local 57 currently represents 3,000 members in 110 caisses populaires across the province of Québec.

OPEIU member chosen as NDP candidate

Nathalie Galesloot, an administrative assistant with the Mid-Canada Council in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada, won the nomination to serve as the New Democratic Party’s candidate in the next provincial election for Thunder Bay-Superior North. The election is expected to be held in the spring of 1999. Galesloot, who was trained as a registered practical nurse, says her top priority if elected is to stop cuts to health care and education. "I am grateful and proud to be part of the Office and Professional Employees International Union," wrote Galesloot in a letter to International President Michael Goodwin. "I thank you sincerely for your support and encouragement and will work diligently to achieve success for the New Democratic Party and the OPEIU."
Local News

Local 35/NML ratifies new 4-year contract

Joe Burbach, President of Local 35, takes part in the informational picket.

"We won a contract we can all be proud of," said Frotine Billups, Local 35 Chief Steward at Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company.

For six months, union members at Northwestern Mutual fought back against company proposals to create new part-time positions without benefits, assign work schedules, including Saturdays, and other events were held to demonstrate their determination to fight for a fair contract. Through the support of the Milwaukee County Labor Council, union members from across the community joined with OPEIU Local 35 to let management know that NML workers had the support of their union brothers and sisters.

They reaped the benefit of their hard work and determination when the membership ratified a new contract on August 26, 1998. The new contract calls for wage increases totaling 16.4 percent over the four-year agreement. Management withdrew their proposal to force employees to work Saturday at straight time and employees the right to refuse assignment to evening schedules. In addition, management withdrew their proposal to create new part-time positions without benefits. Increases to employee health care contributions were held to a minimum with a 1.3 percent increase taking effect in the year 2000 and another 1 percent in the year 2001.

“We received outstanding support from our International Union. Without their help and support, we wouldn’t have been successful," said Judy Buntick, Business Manager Local 35. According to Joe Burbach, President of Local 35, “International Representative, Bonnie Strauss, did a great job in building and keeping the internal solidarity we needed.”


The candlelight vigil.

Local 277 congratulates its Howard Coughlin Scholarship winner

Local 277 President Ronnie Jones presents the Howard Coughlin Scholarship to Amber Gentry, daughter of Local 277’s Production Operations Chief Steward Debbie Gentry. The proud mother has been a member of Local 277 for 21 years. Amber graduated from Springtown High School, Springtown, Texas in the spring of 1998, and currently attends Tarleton University at Stephenville, Texas.
The 1998 Scholarship Award Winners

The OPEIU is proud to help make the goal of higher education a reality for many of its members and their families. Congratulations and best wishes to all the 1998 winners of the OPEIU’s various scholarship programs.

Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship

The following were selected for the 1998 Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship full-time and part-time scholarship awards:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region II</th>
<th>Region III</th>
<th>Region VII</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Margaret L. Hartmann, daughter of Grace L. Hartmann, Local 32, Newark, New Jersey.</td>
<td>Ms. Amber L. Gentry, daughter of Deborah A. Gentry, Local 277, Fort Worth, Texas.</td>
<td>Mr. Brian L. Kienitz, son of Bonnie A. Kienitz, Local 12, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota.</td>
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</table>
Part-Time Winners

Region II
Ms. Rosanna M. Farley, Local 2, Washington, DC.

Region V
Ms. Rose M. Varela, Local 30, Los Angeles, California.

Region VI
Ms. Jean McQuiggin, Local 11, Portland, Oregon.

Region VII
Ms. Adrienne L. Beckham, Local 95, Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin.

Region VII continued
Ms. Sandra L. House, Local 459, Lansing, Michigan.

Ms. Jody M. Hanftman, Local 95, Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin.

Ms. Nancy J. Weeks, Local 12, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota.

The John Kelly Labor Studies Scholarship Fund

The following were selected for the 1998 John Kelly Labor Studies Scholarship Fund awards:

Region II
Ms. Rosanna M. Farley, Local 2, Washington, DC.
Ms. Cynthia M. Price, Local 2, Washington, DC.
Mr. Sean C. Saford, Local 2, Washington, DC.

Region V
Ms. Rose M. Varela, Local 30, Los Angeles, California.

Region VII
Ms. Adrienne L. Beckham, Local 95, Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin.
Mr. Raymond F. Przybelski, Local 95, Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin.

Ms. Karen M. Genior, Local 95, Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin.
Ms. Nancy J. Weeks, Local 12, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota.
Tennessee Valley Authority Employees Fund Scholarship

The following were selected for the 1998 Tennessee Valley Authority Employees Fund Scholarship Program awards:


Ms. Shane L. Sykes, son of Freddie L. Sykes, Local 119, Chattanooga, Tennessee.


Mr. Kyle M. Barnes, son of Barry W. Granstaff, Local 119, Chattanooga, Tennessee.


Ms. Heather M. Jones, daughter of Pamela M. Jones, Local 119, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Mr. Wesley D. Sherer, son of Carol A. Sherer, Local 119, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Mr. Chad A. Follett, son of Carol D. Tollett, Local 266, Knoxville, Tennessee.

Announcing the 1999 Office and Professional Employees International Union Romeo Corbeil Scholarship Fund

Summer Camp

Ten (10) scholarships will be awarded on the basis of at least one (1) per region and not to exceed one (1) per family for a lifetime. Applications are open to children (between ages 13 and 16 ONLY) of OPEIU members in good standing or associate members, all of whom must meet the eligibility requirements and comply with the Rules and Procedures as established by the OPEIU Executive Board. Each scholarship has a total maximum value of $2,000.

ELIBILITY

An applicant must be either, the son, daughter, stepchild or legally adopted child (between ages 13 and 16 ONLY) of an OPEIU member in good standing or an associate member.

PROCEDURES

Each applicant must file an official OPEIU scholarship program application. Application forms must be endorsed by the Local Union President or Secretary-Treasurer attesting that a parent of the applicant is a member or an associate member in good standing on the date of award. Such endorsement must be obtained before the application is submitted.

FORMS

Application forms may be obtained at your Local Union office or at the Secretary-Treasurer’s office of the International Union.

APPLICATIONS

All applications must be received at the Secretary-Treasurer’s office of the International Union, 1660 L Street, NW, Suite 801. Washington, DC 20036, no later than May 31st of each year.

SELECTION OF SCHOLARSHIPS

Announcement of the winners will be made during the month of June of each year.

ADDRESS ALL INQUIRIES TO:
Office and Professional Employees International Union
Romeo Corbeil Scholarship Fund "Summer Camp"
1660 L Street, NW, Suite 801
Washington, DC 20036
PHONE: (202) 393-4464 FAX: (202) 347-0649
Call for Canadian Address at (514) 522-6511.
Notice to Employees Subject to Union Security Clauses

The Notice is for all employees working in the United States under an OPEIU contract containing a union security clause which requires, as a condition of employment, that an employee pay dues or fees to the Union. This is the only option for you, regardless of where you reside.

The wording of your individual collective bargaining process, and thereby the collective bargaining process, may be non-chargeable or chargeable expenditures. The International Union's Voice of the Electorate fund ("VOTE"), which is independent, segregated from the Union's subordinate funds, is not included in the calculation of the percentage of expenditures that is spent on non-chargeable or chargeable expenditures.

Individuals who choose to file an objection through this arbitration procedure. This challenge shall be filed within thirty (30) days of the date of receipt of the Notice.

In order for an objection to be recognized at this time, it must be postmarked during the month of June, 1999. This objection will be effective September 1, 1999 through August 31, 2000. All objections must be renewed each year in writing. In all years thereafter, future objections or renewed objections must be postmarked during the month of June. All timely future or renewed objections will be effective September 1, 1999 through August 31 of each year thereafter, for which an objection is filed.

Want the hottest news?

Sign up for the OPEIU MemberGram

Sometimes the news is too important. There's legislation coming up for a vote that will affect you and your families, and you have to contact your legislator quickly. There's a rally or march scheduled to fight an abusive employer. Or, a new court decision or governmental regulation that will have immediate effects on your job.

International President Michael Goodwin will express the MemberGram to interested local union activists whenever important issues arise. Just sign the forms below, which duplicate the MemberGram Design, and watch the mail!

"It's important to improve our communications with you, the members, to involve you more actively in decision-making and in actions of the union. And communications should never be one-way. I, therefore, look forward to your responses on the effectiveness of the MemberGram as well as the subjects we cover," President Goodwin says, as he urges members to sign up.

From the desk of President Michael Goodwin

Yes, sign me up to receive the MemberGram whenever hot topics come up. I want to be kept informed on issues, activities, and decisions that affect me, my family and my local union.

Name:

Local Union:

Social Security #

Address:

Phone (Daytime) (Evening)

FAX:

Complete and send to:

MemberGram, OPEIU, 1660 L Street, N.W., Suite 801, Washington, DC 20036

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Someone once said, "What is the first part of politics? Education. The second? Education. And the third? Education." Never was this more plainly seen than in the 1998 election cycle, when organized labor undertook a full-fledged political education campaign aimed at reaching the 13 million AFL-CIO union members in this country. This grassroots campaign encouraged union members to vote for candidates who supported labor's agenda, while increasing overall awareness of the issues affecting working families.

Labor '98 was a massive, multi-million dollar political operation spearheaded by the AFL-CIO — of which the Office and Professional Employees International Union played an integral part.

And the results were staggering.

Due to our grassroots get-out-the-vote efforts, union members turned out in droves on Election Day — 49 percent, versus just 34 percent in non-union households. The numbers were even more impressive in regions such as California where union turnout was 59 percent, versus just 32 percent in non-union households.

This means that nationwide, union households cast one-third of the total vote, while we are just 17 percent of the voting age population.

The campaign's reach was unprecedented. Seventy percent of union members reported that they received information from their unions. That is an overwhelming majority of union households who were contacted in one way or another — either through phone banks, direct mailings, or personal contact on a job site or at their home.

Labor votes ensured that we picked up several labor-friendly House seats in November. It has proved crucial in many ballot initiatives, including the defeat in Oregon of Measure 59 by a vote of 51 percent to 49 percent. Union members opposed this initiative — which would have greatly restricted union participation in the political process — by 63 percent. Twelve percent of union members indicated that Measure 59 was the number one reason they voted in the election.

Members were not urged to vote along party lines, but instead to choose candidates whose track records proved that they would protect the interests of working families — despite party affiliation.

Thirty OPEIU members were assigned as Labor '98 coordinators — union officers, international staff and rank-and-file members from Local Unions across the country. These coordinators reached out to AFL-CIO members in a concerted effort to get out-the-vote, particularly in districts where the races were close.

And the campaign was a non-partisan effort. Members were not urged to vote along party lines, but instead to choose candidates whose track records proved that they would protect the interests of working families — despite party affiliation.

President Clinton recognized our efforts in a teleconference between the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO — of which I proudly serve as a Vice President — and the White House, wherein President Clinton thanked organized labor for its role in the political campaign.

The results of this campaign certainly proved the importance of knowledge. Armed with this information, working people were able to go to the polls on November 3 and use their vote effectively — defeating both candidates and initiatives aimed at silencing organized labor.

Once again, labor showed that, together, we have power — and we know how to use it. Labor '98 was an all-out effort to reach union members and impress upon them the importance of participating in the free election process at a local, regional and national level. All those who attempted to silence working families learned a valuable lesson last November — we have a strong and powerful voice, and we intend to use it to further and protect the interests of working people everywhere.