

METRO NEW YORK LABOR COMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL

**2006 Contest Winners**  
for work done in 2005



**Journalism Awards**

# 2006 Annual Contest

In this journal are winners in the Metro New York Labor Communications Council's annual contest. The entries, for work in 2005, were wide-ranging in subject matter, including contract struggles, acts of heroism and solidarity by union members, organizing the unorganized, the cost of health care, the fight for equality, political activism, workers rights, security in retirement, and human rights.

This year we added an award "for Special Topic of the Year," an issue that assumed particular relevance for labor communicators during the year. This year's topic was the war in Iraq.

We hope that showcasing our members' best work will encourage others to try new approaches and techniques. Our goal is to promote the highest standards of labor journalism and media work. In this journal, we are proud to present some of the talented writers, editors, photographers, graphic artists, Web masters, and radio producers who make labor's story come alive for millions of New York workers and retirees and their families.

## BEST PHOTOGRAPH

*(FRONT COVER)*

*The Union Mail*  
APWU, AFL-CIO

## Judges Comments

Gary Schoichet — *Hurricane Katrina: Metro Lends a Hand*

We liked this photo because, even though it was clearly staged, it reflected the determination of the members to assist the victims of the hurricane in their own way: by moving packages. The angle and dynamism of the composition contrasted with, but also complemented, the determined expressions of the members.

## Mary Heaton Vorse

*Sylvia Saunders, Banned from the classroom for a library field trip, New York Teacher, NYSUT/AFT*

## Matt Doherty & Gwen Wells Award for Excellence in Non-Periodical Communications

*1180 Radio Show, CWA Local 1180*

## SPECIAL TOPIC OF THE YEAR

*The Iraq War – Public Employee Press, DC 37, AFSCME*

## General Excellence

- Class A: 1st Place: *Momentum, Local 3882 NYSUT/AFT*
- Class B: 1st Place: *Communique, CWA Local 1180*
- Class C: 1st Place: *CIR News, CIR/SEIU*  
2nd Place: *The Clarion, NYSUT/AFT*
- Class D: 1st Place: *Public Employee Press, DC 37, AFSCME*

## Unique Performance

- Class A: 1st Place: *The Eagle, CWA, Local 1103*
- Class B: 1st Place: *Retiree News & Views, IBT Local 237*
- Class C: 1st Place: *The Clarion, NYSUT/AFT*  
2nd Place: *The Unionist, SSEU, Local 371*  
3rd Place: *The Carpenter, New York District Council of Carpenters*
- Class D: 1st Place: *New York Teacher, UFT*  
2nd Place: *Public Employee Press, DC 37, AFSCME*

## Graphic Design

- Class B: 1st Place: *The Union Mail, APWU, AFL-CIO*
- Class C: 1st Place: *The Carpenter, New York District Council of Carpenters*  
2nd Place: *CIR News, CIR/SEIU*  
3rd Place: *The Clarion, NYSUT/AFT*
- Class D: 1st Place: *Our Life & Times, 1199SEIU*  
2nd Place: *New York Teacher, UFT*

## Best Photograph

- CLASS A: Honorable Mention: *Momentum, Local 3882 NYSUT/AFT*
- Class B: 1st Place: *The Union Mail, APWU, AFL-CIO*
- Class C: 1st Place: *The Clarion, NYSUT/AFT*  
2nd Place: *The Carpenter, New York District Council of Carpenters*
- Class D: 1st Place: *Public Employee Press, DC 37, AFSCME*

## Best Feature Writing

- Class B: 1st Place: *Communique, CWA 1180*  
2nd Place: *Retiree News & Views, IBT Local 237*
- Class C: 1st Place: *The Unionist, SSEU, Local 371*  
2nd Place: *Newline, IBT, Local 237*  
3rd Place: *CIR News, CIR/SEIU*
- Class D: 1st Place: *Public Employee Press, DC 37, AFSCME*  
2nd Place: *TWU Express, TWU*  
3rd Place: *Our Life & Times, 1199SEIU*

## Best News Writing

- Class B: 1st Place: *Communique, CWA 1180*  
2nd Place: *The Union Mail, APWU, AFL-CIO*
- Class C: 1st Place: *CIR News, CIR/SEIU*  
2nd Place: *The Clarion, NYSUT/AFT*
- Class D: 1st Place: *Public Employee Press, DC 37, AFSCME*  
2nd Place: *New York Teacher, UFT*  
3rd Place: *Work Force, CSEA Local 1000, AFSCME*

## Best Labor Web Sites

- 1st Place: <http://www.dc37.net> DC 37, AFSCME
- 2nd Place: <http://psc-cuny.org> PSC, NYSUT/AFT
- 3rd Place: <http://local237.org> IBT Local 237

# Banned from the classroom ...

## Anti-union administrators in Greenburgh 11 are at it again

Imagine getting thrown out of your classroom for accompanying your students to the public library.

That's what's happened to Greenburgh 11 teacher Jennifer Cole, who awoke to a 6:30 a.m. phone call March 15 telling her not to report to work. An administrator told her she was suspended immediately — exiled to write lesson plans off campus, pending the outcome of a lengthy 3020-a disciplinary hearing. As if that wasn't enough, the administration callously prohibited Cole from dropping off and picking up her two daughters, 4-year-old Kayla and 1-year-old Sophie, from the Little Village Day Care, an on-campus center where they have been since infancy.

"Jennifer's horror story is just the latest in a series of union-busting activities," said Greenburgh 11 Federation of Teachers President John Goetschius, who was one of 17 teachers suspended by the administration in 1994 and 1995 for protesting contract and disciplinary disputes. "When Jen started to shake things up — to try to bring the union back to life on campus — that's when they came at her with the hammer."

Greenburgh 11 is a public school district created by a special act of the state Legislature to serve emotionally disturbed boys who live at a non-profit child care agency, Children's Village. Formerly an orphanage, the 150-acre campus overlooking the Hudson River is a residential treatment center serving mostly inner city kids sent there by the courts.

Union leaders say the administration's decision to file disciplinary charges has nothing to do with Cole's professionalism or educational expertise — she's had seven years of exemplary evaluations and worked magic with a number of hard-core kids. Her real crime? Union activism.

"They've wasted millions of taxpayer dollars trying to crush the union over the last decade," said New York State United Teachers President Dick Iannuzzi. "They should be investing in students' education, not lawyers and litigation."

### Idealism

Until her suspension, Jennifer Cole worked for seven years as a teacher at Greenburgh 11, arriving at the Dobbs Ferry campus years after the labor dispute began — an idealistic young teacher eager to make a difference. For her first couple of years, she taught social studies at the

2002.

That fall, she began writing articles in the union newsletter, *Unity*, calling attention to practices she felt were unfair: a new teacher who was thrown into a classroom with too many kids; a principal who failed to back up a teacher on sick-day issues; how the federation didn't have a contract while administrators received 6 percent raises.

The articles so infuriated the administration that the principal and deputy superintendent

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**"Incredibly, they're trying to fire a teacher over a library field trip initiated by the program's directors."**

— NYSUT attorney John H. Jurgens

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started writing "rebuttal" letters that were distributed in staff mailboxes.

In spring 2003, union leaders, most of them still stuck in area libraries for years pending the outcome of their disciplinary cases, approached Cole about becoming a union building rep. She believed she could make a difference and agreed. The job included initiating several grievances on class size and compensation issues.

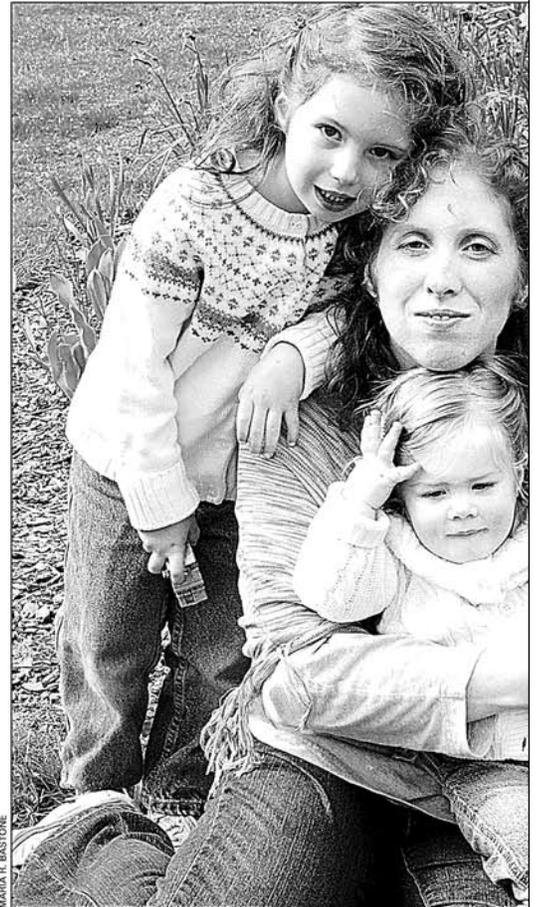
In June 2003, on a day Cole voluntarily stayed after school to help grade Regents Exams, her principal told her she was being reassigned to Wolfe Cottage, a self-contained unit with 12 boys in grades 6-10.

"I felt betrayed because I really enjoyed the high school kids and felt I was doing a good job," Cole said. "But they wanted to get me out of the main building. They like to isolate anyone who might be a troublemaker."

Determined to meet the challenge, Cole didn't fight the reassignment to Wolfe Cottage — which she soon realized was understaffed and lacking a program. Within a few months, a new program supervisor changed everything. "He hired staff, instituted behavior management and we started having team meetings including cottage staff, program experts and other educators," Cole said.

"He turned the place around: he was even named 'supervisor of the year.'"

One ingredient for the turnaround was a stu-



Jennifer Cole with 4-year-old Kayla and 1-year-old Sophie.

behavioral and academic success ranged from where you were seated to who gets dessert first to trips to the movies. The boys wore uniforms and expectations were clear.

"Once the program started working, my whole job changed," Cole said. "These kids became like a second family. I'd make them birthday cakes for their birthday — and for many of these kids, that was a big deal." On Thanksgiving, she, her husband and two daughters joined the boys and some of their families for a turkey dinner.

Mary Heaton Vorse

Sylvia Saunders  
New York Teacher  
UFT

## Judges Comments

This piece tells the chilling story of a teacher, Jennifer Cole, who was removed from her classroom for taking her students to the library. No one disputes her talents — or her dedication — as a teacher. In truth, Cole was, and is, being punished for her union activism.

Right out of a Kafka novel, this article describes an impenetrable, inscrutable bureaucracy that has ripped a gifted teacher out of a classroom of needy children because she dared to speak out on union issues. Mary Heaton Vorse would be proud. Hopefully, Saunders' article will help Cole to get her job back. She needs it, and so do her students.

# ... for a library field trip



case. "With a demanding job and difficult family responsibilities ... she voluntarily takes on a leadership role made dangerous by the practices of our employer."

## Field trip

In the summer of 2004, the Children's Village staff of Wolfe Cottage initiated a Friday afternoon visit to the Dobbs Ferry Public Library for boys who earned the privilege. When the Wolfe Cottage social worker asked Cole to help the boys pick out books and do research, she thought nothing of it.

When librarians initially questioned the boys' residency, Children's Village provided an explanatory note on Children's Village letterhead so that each boy could obtain a library card. Cole viewed the program as a key part of the cottage's behavior management system. In lesson plans submitted to the administration, she called the program DEAR, short for Drop Everything and Read.

Cottage staff discussed the program at weekly meetings, deciding which boys would go. Those left behind were tutored or made up work they had missed.

"At first, the librarians were wary, but after a few visits the boys really worked on their social skills and proved themselves," Cole said. "They learned how to use the Internet, how to find books and had opportunities to research careers" — something that wasn't available on campus. "It worked on so many levels," said Cole. "They learned to read for pleasure."

Cole never had an inkling there was a problem with the library visits. In fact, the social worker who helped create the program has since been promoted.

Suddenly in February, seven months into the program, principal Sandy Strang phoned Cole and ordered her to stop going on the library visits. Cole immediately complied. Strang's objection was that she never knew about the program — a claim union leaders dispute.

Then, on March 15 (the "Ides of March," Cole can't help calling it)

came the phone call at dawn telling her the district was seeking to fire her for failing to get permission for the trips.

She was suspended immediately. After a dispute with the district over access to campus to drop off and pick up her daughters at day care, the administration and union agreed to let her work out of home instead of a library. "It was worth it to settle the dispute without more complications," Cole said. "But this takes my daughters away from wonderful caregivers and the place they have grown to love. My 4-year-old has been going there since she was 14 weeks old."

Cole is being represented by NYSUT attorney John H. Jurgens in her 3020-a case (named for a section of state education law). She is charged with misconduct constituting incompetence, neglect of duty and insubordination. She is also charged with changing the "educational program" for the students without permission.

"Incredibly, they're trying to fire a teacher over a library field trip initiated by the program's directors," said Jurgens.

The union has filed a notice of claim with the Public Employment Relations Board, charging the

administration with union animus — something the union says is par for the course there.

In 2002, after a jury verdict and settlement, Greenburgh 11 agreed that it would pay \$1.5 million to seven union members to compensate them for pain and suffering, and to the union for the district's attempts to undermine its representation. (See *timeline below*.)

Meanwhile, supporters have started a letter-writing campaign to the new CEO of Children's Village and state lawmakers to fight Cole's dismissal via a Web site, [www.wesupportjencole.com](http://www.wesupportjencole.com).

At NYSUT's Representative Assembly last month, hundreds of delegates signed postcards urging state Education Commissioner Richard Mills to step in.

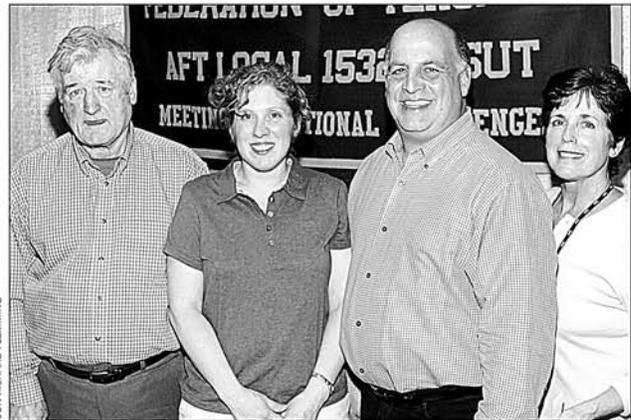
Cole joins a roster of five other union activists who remain exiled from campus for the past 11 years at a cost of more than \$17 million. Visits to the public library, meanwhile, are over for the boys.

"Stop the waste of taxpayer dollars at Greenburgh 11," the postcard says. "This money would be better spent providing the children with the quality education they deserve."

— Sylvia Saunders

monthly meetings and participating in social events and service such as the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walk and a regional food drive. The negotiating team increased to nine members; 12 people volunteered for the Health and Safety Committee.

"I have always stood in slack-jawed awe of Jennifer Cole," wrote David Demnitz, editor of the newsletter, a former music teacher whose work days are spent in a library awaiting his disciplinary



Union leaders, from left, John Goetschius, Cole, Jim Carforo and Deb Kiely at NYSUT's convention. Carforo and Kiely have been exiled 11 years from their workplaces while awaiting hearings.

### October 1997

PERB rules that teachers who gathered outside superintendent's office in June 1994 were engaged in peaceful activities, not an "unruly mob" as the superintendent had charged.

### February 1999

Appeals court upholds decision that discipline for the June 1994 gathering was illegal.

### March 1999

State Supreme Court annuls actions taken at a series of closed school board meetings (including disciplinary charges) that violated the state Open Meetings Law.

### June 1999

State's highest court rejects school board's appeal of PERB decision.

### December 1999

GFT and school board reach agreement on a seven-year contract, ending one of the longest stalemates in state history.

ing one of the longest stalemates in state history.

### January 2001

School board agrees in state Supreme Court to allow picketing at off-campus school events and outside the gates.

State Ed Department orders district to provide monthly status report on long-pending disciplinary hearings and more detailed accounting of ongoing legal and security costs.

### May 2001

A federal court jury awards \$3.9 million to seven GFT teachers and aides, saying their constitutional rights had been violated by the school district because of their union activism.

### April 2002

NYSUT wins \$1.5 million settlement for seven members, and their local union, to compensate for years of pain of suffering.

### April 2004

Children's Village School Board agrees to pay \$200,000 in back pay to teaching associate Tyrone Galimore. He and four others still have a lawsuit pending for damages.

### November 2004

Governor signs union-backed law effective September 2005 to require the state education commissioner to appoint at least two public board members to Special Act school boards.



**Doherty/Wells**

*1180 Radio Show*  
**Local 1180 CWA**

## **J**udges Comments

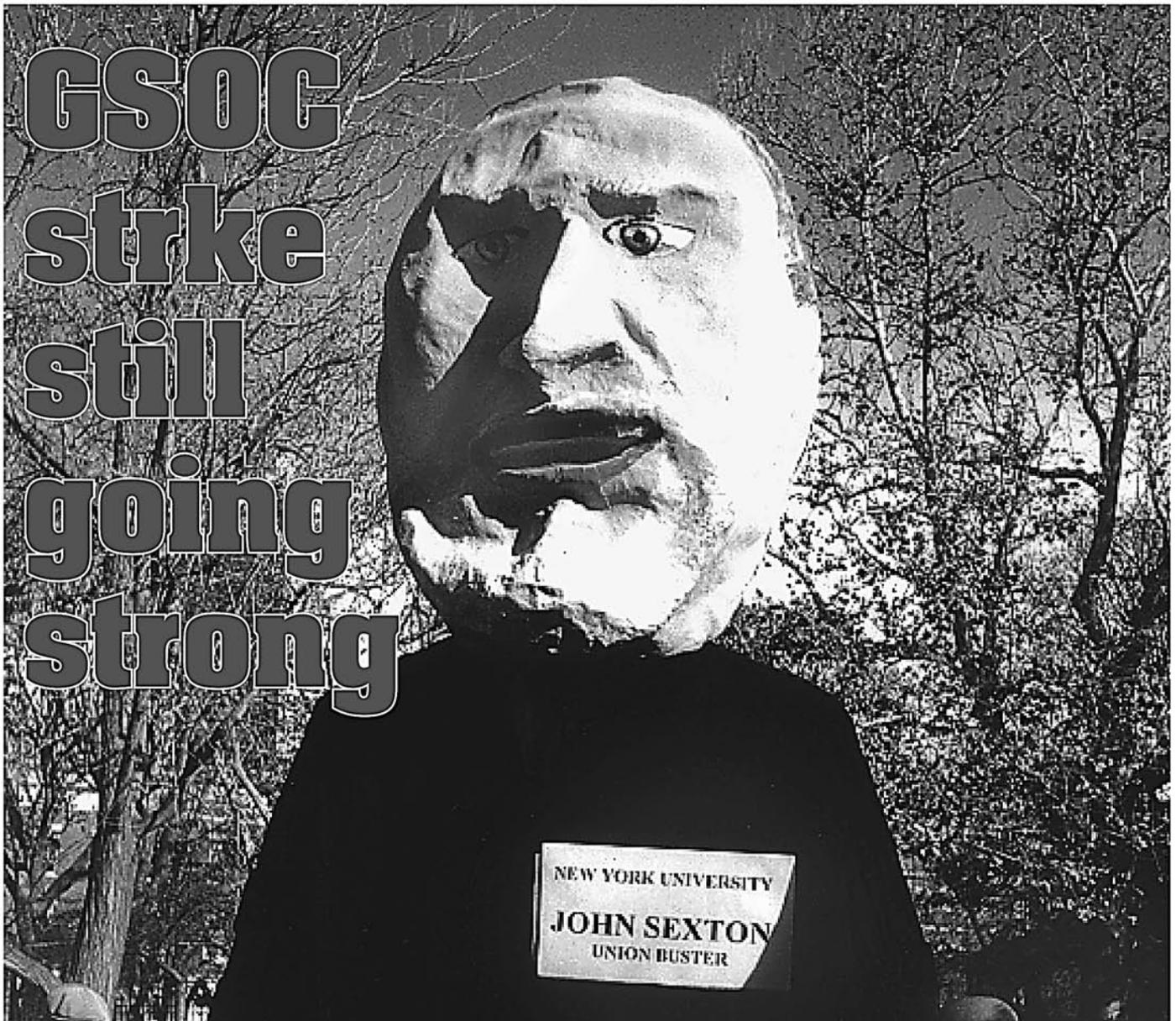
*1180 Radio Show on public sector cuts.*

We really liked the relaxed, conversational nature of this show, and the way it clearly linked issues of community interest to the disastrous cuts in public sector services and attacks on public sector union workers. The listener didn't have to have a union background to understand the relevance to the whole local community.

# UCATS *Momentum*

Union of Clerical, Administrative & Technical Staff at NYU, Local 3882, NYSUT, AFT, AFL-CIO

Volume 26 Number 3 | Fall 2005



**General Excellence**  
*Momentum*  
**Local 3882, NYSUT**

## Judges Comments

Cleanly designed and very readable. Judges feel this publication represents a good example of communication by a small local — with a good mix of issues, “know your rights” features, and members voices — we liked the consistent, responsible coverage of the graduate students’ strike.

## Iraq veterans speak out

# The weight of

By JANE LaTOUR

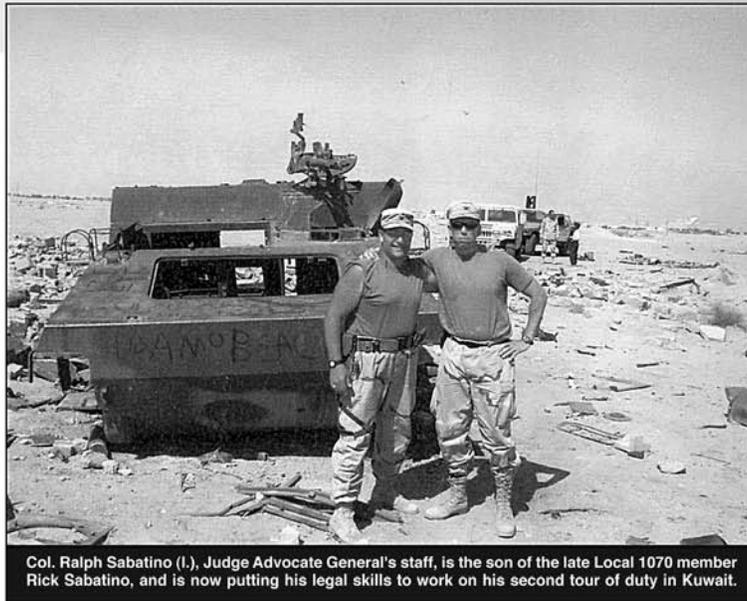
"War is hell," but coming home has been tough for some of the DC 37 members returning from military duty in Iraq. Frontline service has injured many physically and changed the minds of some about their nation's mission.

The members who answered the call to serve and made the sacrifices came from every ethnic group. They were men and women, young recruits and old warriors. Their city jobs range from repairing road signs to clerical work and computer operation.

District Council 37 has opposed the war from the beginning, and many locals and members join antiwar demonstrations. But the union and PEP have nothing but respect for the sacrifices and opinions of the brave men and women who face death daily for their country.

The union soldiers whose stories PEP has told over the last two years are all alive. Those who have returned to the States are buying new homes and having babies, but others are under medical care.

Back from the combat zone, three 911 dispatchers, Iraida Velasquez, Nichole Santos and Robyn Clay have been honored with Community Service Awards from the Police Dept. and commendations from their union. Clerical-Administrative Employees Local 1549. But others have been treated contemptibly, despite the patriotic rhetoric that always flourishes during a war. Master Sgt. John Nicotra, a long-term



Col. Ralph Sabatino (l.), Judge Advocate General's staff, is the son of the late Local 1070 member Rick Sabatino, and is now putting his legal skills to work on his second tour of duty in Kuwait.

Local 2627 shop steward, was among the first to ship out for Iraq. He returned home with an injury that still requires treatment, but his employer, the Human Resources Administration, has refused to accommodate his special needs.

Sgt. Deborah Simon, a truck driver in Iraq, injured her shoulder while staging supplies for transport. She returned from the war Sept. 20, and after surgery at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, she was welcomed home by her two sons and her 11-year-old grandson. "Iraq was a great experience, but it was also stressful, lonely and depressing," she said. "It's such an impoverished country. The children have so little."

The stress on some of the families has started to recede. Sgt. Santos's son Julius, 9, is now doing well in school. "It took a long time for me to get things back on track," she said. "Things went haywire, even with my son. It took him a while to get adjusted."

### Stress on families

After only eight months at home, Col. Ralph Sabatino was recalled to the Judge Advocate General's staff in Kuwait. His father, Local 1070's Rick Sabatino, suffered a fatal heart attack July 8, and Col. Sabatino was able to return home for the funeral. In January 2004, Rick Sabatino spoke lovingly of his son. "I'm very proud of him," he said. "All we can

duty and the nature of this war. Some fear to express judgments on the war while they are subject to military recall.

Nicotra accepts the arguments of the Bush administration, but at home, he feels dissension on the issue within his family. "My military friends and I — we're behind the president 100 percent. Mistakes were made. To me there were not enough boots on the ground," he said.



Special Topic  
(Iraq War)

Public Employee Press  
DC 37, AFSCME

Judges  
Comments

This was an excellent series with varied, creative pieces, including sensitive human interest, incisive policy analysis, historical perspectives, and coverage of the war reflecting the lives and voices of the union's members.

# war

## PART 4 OF A SERIES ON DC 37 MEMBERS IN IRAQ

The Rev. Wilfredo Rodriguez, a Navy chaplain, is committed to public neutrality. He wants to minister to his soldiers without feeling compromised by expressing his own opinions on the war.

On the other hand, Sgt. Matthew Zephyr feels at times "that the government is clueless as to why we are out there." And Staff Sgt. Iraida Velasquez



Staff Sgt. Anthony Hernández trained for months before shipping out to Iraq as a combat medic with New York's famed 69th Infantry Division.

believes, "The war is out of control and the president doesn't seem to have any idea as to how to get out of there."

Other soldiers have voted with their feet, opting not to re-enlist. Local 1070 member Hawa Barkon's son, Army Specialist Jukue Sieh, "got out last year after he returned home," said Barkon. "He had wanted to stay in the military and make a career of it, but with the war, he decided not to re-enlist."

Staff Sgt. Anthony Hernandez served as a combat medic with the 69th Infantry Division until he was injured and flown out. The Local 371 member offers a troubling portrait of problems in the military. After serving for 17 years, he was "surprised and shocked" to experience a high level of racism in the famed "Fighting 69th." He described instances such as black soldiers forced to work excessive hours without breaks and punishments imposed on soldiers of color for small offenses, while white soldiers were treated differently.

### Haunting memories

"Most of the soldiers were ready to fight the war," he said. "They were *not* ready for the racism." Anti-Arab bias is also part of his indictment of the mili-

tary. "Many soldiers have a negative attitude toward the Iraqi people. Here we are walking into other people's country with a bad attitude! There was an accidental shooting and it was covered up," he added. "They didn't even offer any aid to the injured. Two innocent people killed, and it was just covered up," he said in disgust.

Although he initially opposed the war, Sgt. Hernandez now believes that the United States cannot simply pull out. "The Iraqi people have had democracy pushed down their throats. I believe we can educate them about democracy and elections," he offered.

Every soldier PEP spoke with is intensely aware of the death toll. "We lost a lot of people out there and they're not coming back to their families," said Zephyr. As the Rev. Rodriguez prepares to return to Iraq, this time with a Seabee unit, he recalls the highly emotional funeral last November of a young Marine — Lance Cpl. Jeffrey Lam, a 22-year-old Chinese-American from Queens, with a wife and young child.

Nicotra tears up as he talks about a lone coffin he saw in Iraq on its way to a solitary flight to Dover Air Force Base. Hernandez, who began his duties by cleaning up the human remnants of a blown up convoy, is still haunted by his memories.

"When I'm asleep, dreaming and drowsed and warm, they come, the homeless ones, the noiseless dead," wrote poet Siegfried Sassoon, a decorated World War I hero.



Master Sgt. John Nicotra, Local 2627 member, was injured during a sandstorm while in Iraq.

Navy Chaplain the Rev. Wilfredo Rodriguez (l.), with his assistant, Religious Programmer Edward Correa, who also served as a body-guard. The Rev. Rodriguez is on standby now to return to Iraq.



Staff Sgt. Iraida Velasquez, Local 1549 member, receives her Community Service Award from the Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly.

**Inside:**

*Stories from Northern to Southern California, pps. 3, 12*

*New Massachusetts Resident Work Hours Bill, p. 5*

## Harvard Study Finds Preventable Medical Errors Increase When Residents Work 24+ Hours

- Recommends 16-Hour Maximum Schedules
- How will the ACGME respond?

See  
*Centerspread*  
*Pages 6-8*



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### General Excellence

*CIR News*  
CIR/SEIU

### Judges Comments

The publication shows a consistent and thoughtful emphasis on the issues that affect the lives of its members. At the same time, it links union issues to larger public issues. It has personality and spunk.

# Public Employee **PRESS**

District Council

**37** AFSCME  
AFL-CIO

February 2005  
Volume 46, No. 2  
www.dc37.net

PEP photo by George Cohen



see Page 7

## Celebrating King

### General Excellence

Public Employee Press  
DC 37, AFSCME

### Judges Comments

This paper provides a good mix of union issues, larger issues, and members' voices.

There is a lot of concrete information to encourage member involvement.

# Organizing against the odds

*When 311 workers at King Teleservices decided to form a union, the idea caught on fast. But shoddy labor law opened the door for management to conduct a campaign of intimidation.*

**I**t all started with a phone call. Last fall, Denzil Wallace, who was working the night shift answering 311 calls at King Teleservices, decided that he had complaints of his own: no sick days, few vacation days, chintzy wages, and, above all, disrespect from the managers. He found Local 1180 on the web and called up to say that he and some of his co-workers had decided it was time for a union.

When the city launched the 311 help line in March 2003, it hired some 200 workers to answer questions and complaints related to heat problems, parking rules, snow days, and more at a city call center on Maiden Lane. Many of them, given the new job title of Associate Call Center Representative, soon affiliated with Local 1180. The city contracted with King to handle the “overflow” calls—and before long King had hired so many employees that its Long Island City facility was fielding half of the escalating volume of calls. And while the city workers started at \$30,500 a year with full benefits, workers at King like Wallace were earning only about \$11 an hour, with no guaranteed work hours, no health coverage, and no vacation time until after a year. “There was no consistency in how people were treated,” says Claudia Sanchez (not her real name), who works the swing shift at King. “You might get the schedule, and instead of five days, you’d have three. Or you’d be two minutes late and get suspended for a week. There was constant public humiliation, where we’d be treated like children. And there was no recourse—no way for people to protect themselves.”

## **The union catches fire**

The conditions were so bad that, at first, the idea of a union caught on quickly. At the first meeting in

October, four people came; at the next, 14. Then 25 King employees signed a public statement saying that they had formed a union organizing committee, and inviting their colleagues to join them. By Thanksgiving, 67 of the approximately 110 help-line workers at King had signed union authorization cards and Local 1180 filed an election petition with the NLRB. “If we were in Canada,” says Local 1180 organizer Chris Aikin, “that’s where it would have ended. Local 1180 would have immediately been authorized as the bargaining agent, and we could have moved straight to negotiating a contract.” But New York is no Canada.

## **A campaign of intimidation**

In the United States, an employer is not obliged to honor “card check”—when a majority of employees sign union authorization cards. Instead, management can insist on an election and issue legal challenges about whether the workers constitute an “appropriate bargaining unit.” These processes slow down unionization enough to allow management to begin a campaign of intimidation—which is exactly what happened at King.

First, there were the fliers: “We strongly urge you NOT to sign or return any union petition or card provided to you by the CWA or anyone else.” Then, says Aikin, came private one-on-one meetings where management scared workers who supported the union. Pro-management spies showed up at union meetings to identify union ringleaders. Finally, two staunch union supporters were fired, ostensibly over minor infractions. “It was like a script,” says Sanchez. “Everything Chris said they were going to do, they did.”

But the script worked: soon several 311 workers who had signed union cards showed up at Local 1180 and demanded to get their cards back. The writing was on the wall when King hired some 25 to 30 trainees, who were

*(Continued on facing page)*

**Feature Writing**  
*Communique*  
**Local 1180 CWA**

## **J**udges Comments

The author used a compelling personal story to make a larger point about labor law and the importance of unions fighting to regain the right to organize. The style was lively, accessible, and easy to read.

*(Continued from facing page)*

kept isolated from the floor — and from any information about the union. Their role, according to Aikin, was to dilute the pro-union vote come election time. By December 22, the union supporters at King were so demoralized and outnumbered that 1180 withdrew the NLRB petition, and the organizing drive was over.

“The employer did what companies usually do, which is hire a union-busting law firm” says Atul Talwar, an attorney for CWA District 1, which includes Local 1180. “These highly paid consultants run a campaign of fear and inducement, based on private information about employees.” If a manager knows that one worker has a son with a medical problem, explains Talwar, all he has to do is put his arm around that employee and say, “You don’t want to jeopardize your health benefits, do you?” and that’s the end of that worker supporting the union. And free speech wasn’t as free for the 311 workers as it was for King management. Employers can hold a “captive audience” meeting, where management can fire workers for not attending—and use that meeting to spread anti-union propaganda. Unions, on the other hand, don’t even have the guaranteed right to distribute union literature on the premises or get a list of employees to call outside of work hours.

Talwar says conducting a union election in this kind of high-pressure environment would be like telling a political candidate that her election will be held in her opponent’s office, that her opponent can call mandatory meetings with all of the voters and she can’t, and that only her opponent has access to all the names and numbers of the voters until just before the vote. “It’s not what we’d call a free and fair election,” says Talwar.

### **Few rights worth respecting**

The 1935 National Labor Relations Act guarantees “full freedom of association,” including the right to join a union and to bargain collectively. The law also makes it illegal for employers to “interfere with, restrain, or coerce” workers as they try to exercise these rights. But the penalties for violating this law are so weak that most employers consider them a routine cost of doing business. If the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) finds that a company has intimidated workers trying to organize, the company is only required to post a notice stating that it violated the law and explaining workers’ right to organize. “That’s it,” says Talwar. “No fines, no penalties.” And if a worker is fired for his or her union activities, it can take up to three years for an NLRB verdict, and then all a company has to do is pay the worker back pay—minus whatever that worker has earned from other sources in the meantime.

## **Fighting for a law with teeth**

THE AFL-CIO WORKED with 38 senators and 210 representatives to introduce the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) last year, and it was just reintroduced April 19. If more members of Congress sign on, and if Republican leaders let the bill to the floor for a vote, it could mean a revolution in workers rights. The bill would:

- ▶ Allow workers to form a union as soon as a majority sign authorization cards. With no delays, management would have less time to use union-busting tactics.
- ▶ Provide arbitration for any disputes surrounding a first contract that aren’t resolved within 90 days. This would protect workers when management refuses to bargain.
- ▶ Establish meaningful penalties when management intimidates or fires workers for trying to form a union, including triple back pay and a \$20,000 fine per violation.

For more information about the Employee Free Choice Act, go to: [www.americanrightsatwork.org/takeaction/efca](http://www.americanrightsatwork.org/takeaction/efca)

Because of these minor consequences for violating the law, workers who try to form unions in the United States are often spied on, harassed, pressured, threatened, suspended, fired, or even deported in reprisal, according to a 2000 report from Human Rights Watch. NLRB data shows that at least 23,320 workers were victims of these anti-union tactics in 2003. The Human Rights Watch report concluded that “workers’ freedom of association is under sustained attack in the United States, and the government is often failing in its responsibility [to] protect workers’ rights.” Stewart Acuff, the AFL-CIO’s director of organizing, calls this state of affairs “a moral outrage.”

Despite his company’s campaign of intimidation and firings, Peter Harkins, chairman of King Teleservices, told the New York Sun in January, “The fact is that we haven’t violated any rules. It’s that the employees here don’t want [the union].” Claudia Sanchez, the swing shift worker, disagrees. “Almost across the board, people got on with it. Not just the 311 people but the rest of the people on the floor got interested,” she says. “It was a pretty significant statement to get almost 70 out of 110 workers to sign cards.

*(Continued on page 21)*

# Trapped in Katrina's wake

## Union Member's Vacation Turns Into Nightmare

By Martin Fishgold

**W**hen 30-year-old Adzua Opare and her mother and 78 year old grandmother flew to New Orleans at the end of August for five days of music, food, sightseeing, and fun, the last thing they expected was to be thrust into a nightmare they'd never forget. But when Hurricane Katrina hit with 160-mile-per-hour winds on Monday, August 29, the day they planned to leave, and the levees gave way a day later, they found themselves trapped in a situation that was out of their control. "I saw people dying in front of me," says Adzua, "and the police would come by and leave a plastic bag to put them in. I saw babies pass out. People were having seizures and they gave them a blanket. But through it all, everyone was orderly and tried to help each other out."

While the rest of us watched the devastation on television and while George W. Bush played golf and waited three days to make a TV appearance and five days to visit the disaster site, the three women were forced to leave the French Quarter hotel they were staying in and join thousands of other men, women, and children at the Convention Center where they were promised food and transportation, and received nothing. "Thirteen empty buses on their way out passed us by, and we saw army trucks filled with supplies going back and forth at night," says Adzua. "We were told to stand in line to wait for buses to take us out, but none came. We sat around in the hot sun waiting. I'd fan the elderly and bring them water and juice."

About 95 percent of the people herded together at the Convention Center were black. When Katrina hit, the black and the poor had no means of escape. A system designed to protect the haves left the have-nots to fend for themselves. "I didn't feel like I was in America at all, not

the America I grew up in," said Adzua, who has worked for three years as a Congregate Care, Child Welfare Specialist in Queens. "I felt like I was back in the days of slavery."

### Sleeping on luggage

Adzua and her mother and grandmother slept on their luggage outside the Convention Center for two nights. They ate chips and cookies and bread they took from the hotel. "On the first night, there was a stampede and we almost got trampled. Someone had a problem with the cops, and people started running. Someone was running through and saying that more water was coming."

On the third night after they fled their hotel, they left the Convention Center and slept on chairs on a bridge between New Orleans and Baton Rouge that they tried to cross, only to be turned back by police officers and soldiers with drawn rifles. "I stayed up most of the night watching over my mother and grandmother," said Adzua of her experience on the bridge. "My mother has a neurological problem in her legs, and she has trouble walking. She has to walk with a cane. Those nights I realized the strength I had inside me, going through that ordeal and keeping the faith and believing we'd get out of it. Because we were three generations, we all took care of each other."

### Door of no return

Adzua grew up in Manhattan and Queens where her mother is a public school history teacher at Richmond Hill High School. She had a sheltered childhood and attended a private, African-based school, where she dressed in African clothes, ate African food, learned African proverbs, and studied African culture and how it related to her American experience. "My mother follows the Ghanaian religion, Akan," she says. "I never thought the things I learned in that school would be relevant, but they are,

*(Continued on facing page)*

Feature Writing

The Unionist  
Local 371, SSEU

Judges  
Comments

This category had a number of very strong entries, but we felt the strongest was this affecting story of three generations trapped in the hurricane. The story speaks for itself — it was well written, heartfelt, and captured the details of a personal ordeal by a member that most of us experienced only through the media. The pictures and graphics were very compelling and added to the emotional immediacy of the story.

*(Continued from facing page)*

especially the history about slavery and how we were brought to the new world." We finally left on Wednesday when the generators stopped working and the lights went out. Passes were issued to Adzua Opore, her mother and grandmother at Fort Chaffee.

Her experience in New Orleans, she says, reminds her of a movie she saw about ten years ago, *Sankofa*, in which a famous black model goes to a former slave center, Elmina Castle, in Ghana for a fashion shoot. While there, she passes out and when she wakes up she is a slave waiting to be transported by ship to another country. Eventually, the model comes to and finds herself back in the modern world. "I had a chance to go to Elmina Castle in 1999 with my mother. I remember seeing what they called The Door of No Return. Once they were there they were either killed or transported by slave ship to a foreign country. Adzua says she's most angry at the government, and well she should be. Federal and local governments had more than ample warning that hurricanes could destroy New Orleans, but instead of heeding those warnings, the Bush administration weakened FEMA and appointed a political crony to run it, cut the Army Corps of Engineers budget for levee construction in New Orleans by \$71.2 million, and sent nearly half our National Guard troops and high water Humvees to fight in Iraq in a war and occupation that has already cost nearly \$200 billion.

We were in a safe hotel. We were supposed to leave for home on Monday, the day the storm hit. The owner abandoned the hotel on Tuesday. He wanted everyone to leave, but people had nowhere to go. We finally left on Wednesday when the generators stopped working and the lights went out. We got a ride to the Convention Center."

Adzua says she's most angry at the government, and well she should be. Federal and local governments had more than ample warning that hurricanes could destroy New Orleans, but instead of heeding those warnings, the Bush administration weakened FEMA and appointed a political crony to run it, cut the Army Corps of Engineers budget for levee construction in New Orleans by \$71.2 million, and sent nearly half our National Guard troops and high water Humvees to fight in Iraq in a war and occupation that has already cost nearly \$200 billion.

"No one knew anything," said Adzua. "There was total confusion. The police opened places like Wal-Mart and Winn Dixie and told us to go in and take food and clothing that we needed. Then they called us looters and savages. When we left the bridge, we walked over to the Superdome instead of going back to the Convention Center. At the Superdome we received services and were finally transported by helicopter to Louis Armstrong Airport

in New Orleans where they said buses would take us to Texas, but they weren't there. We stayed overnight, then stood on a line of more than a thousand people waiting to get on an airplane. After three hours of waiting, they let us get on a plane because my mother and grandmother were in wheelchairs. "We boarded the plane and then found out we were going to Arkansas. There were about five marshalls on the plane, which was used to transport convicts. We flew to Fort Smith, Arkansas, and we were taken to Fort Chaffee, a facility where they train soldiers. We were treated well there."

### **The kindness of strangers**

"We were there from Saturday to Monday. On Monday night we were picked up by a volunteer, JoAnne Gedosh, who took us to her house. We washed, we ate, and we were treated like family. On Tuesday morning, some of her friends drove us to the airport in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and we flew to Chicago, and then to LaGuardia. When we got to New York, I felt good but somewhat displaced."

Adzua says that this experience really opened her eyes to life in America. "I had the opportunity to meet such great people. I took care of the children and the elderly. Older people came up to me and told me I was there for a reason and that I had a story to tell. Everyone was very spiritual. It didn't matter what faith you were."

Adzua says she's cried all she can. "I can't cry anymore. I'm alive." But the experience has left her scarred. She still has threatening dreams, one about swimming with alligators and another about covering dead people with plastic. She's getting counseling, but she hasn't returned to work yet. "I need time to heal. I'm on medical leave until December, but they told me after that I'll have to resign from ACS if I don't go back. I have a five-year old son to support. He has some emotional damage from being separated from me during this experience. We're very close. It's just me and him. I knew he was safe, but I didn't know when I would see him again

Adzua wants to continue speaking and writing about her experience and her sense of overwhelming faith that wherever God was he would see her through. Her story is one of tens of thousands that came out of New Orleans. Hurricane Katrina couldn't have been stopped, but the severity of the crisis — the chaos, the suffering, the death — should have been prevented. It's not just an accident or bad luck that black people and poor people in general were hit the hardest with no food or water or medical supplies or hope for several days. Over 100,000 people were left behind in New Orleans, most because they didn't have a car, gas or cash, and no one can say the authorities didn't see it coming. ❖

# Storm sweeps away lives

## *Katrina Exposes Best and Worst of America*

By Jane LaTour

**B**efore Katrina, America's greatest natural disaster hit in 1927, when the mighty Mississippi River broke its levees and spread death and destruction across a six-state area. Conservative President Calvin Coolidge believed so strongly in small government that his administration took no action to feed or shelter the thousands of devastated evacuees.

Over 10,000 people, mainly African Americans, were stranded atop a levee at Greenville, Miss., with no food or drinkable water for several days. Finally, enough boats to rescue them all arrived — but only whites were allowed to board.

In the current disaster, the body count was approaching 1,000 as PEP went to press. Untold thousands of people have lost everything they own to the storm. Lives have been uprooted. Whole cities, towns and communities are submerged under water.

In the weeks since the hurricane hit land August 29 its devastation has exposed many ugly facets of American life. The whole country got a crash course on the class and racial divide that determined who was evacuated and who was left to drown — a split that exists nationwide but is seldom revealed so starkly.

Horrible headlines and photos depicted a depth of human misery and staggering poverty that many thought was unimaginable in the United States.

The importance of protecting coastal wetlands and upgrading the levees and underwater pumps is getting attention that's been lacking for years. The gross mismanagement of the Federal Emergency Management Agency is now out in the open. The inability of the Dept. of Homeland Security to deal with a natural catastrophe is calling into

question the ability of the behemoth bureaucracy to deal with acts of terrorism.

### **Generous response**

The hurricane also brought forth a magnificent human response to the suffering. Americans across the country are coming to the aid of the victims, collecting unprecedented sums of relief funds and organizing caravans of donated food and clothing. Unions nationwide have rallied to provide aid to their brothers and sisters in the stricken states of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

AFSCME, the parent union of DC 37, immediately organized relief efforts that included donations of money, supplies, and an "Adopt a Family" program (see page 3). AFSCME kicked in the first \$100,000 and DC 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts urged members and locals to contribute to the AFSCME effort through DC 37. Hundreds of public sector employees have made the trip south to offer assistance, including Police Officers, Firefighters, Public Health Nurses and Emergency Medical Service workers.

Joseph Hudak, a Paramedic Instructor at the Fire Department's EMS Training Academy, is a 17-year veteran member of Local 2507, the Uniformed EMTs and Paramedics. He serves with an Urban Search and Rescue team that was flown to a military base outside New Orleans on a C-130 transport plane. For one week, Hudak and his team braved armed looters and toxic water to carry out rescue missions on the flooded streets of New Orleans. They guided their Zodiac boats to the roofs of submerged buildings and picked up survivors.

"It was a phenomenal experience," said Hudak. "I enjoy rescue work. There are eight of us in our unit and we are a very tight group."

*(Continued on facing page)*

### **News Writing**

*Public Employee Press*  
**DC 37, AFSCME**

### **J**udges Comments

This is an extremely thoughtful, well written piece on Katrina using both historical and local references. It has a clean, yet dramatic layout, with good use of quotes.

*(Continued from facing page)*

Sarah Chiarini, a Firefighter from Rhode Island fresh from paramedic training, joined up with Hudak's team. "The devastation was incredible," she explained. "Basically, we were traveling through these neighborhoods past bodies floating in the water. It was surreal. I was struck by how quiet it was, how silent."

The team saved over 50 people. "We rescued a 74-year-old man on our first day," said Chiarini. "He was delusional, dehydrated and combative. We had to get into the water to get him into the boat. That made the day worthwhile," she said. Both the veteran and the novice described the conditions in the same way — hot, humid and nasty. "A lot of people are going to get sick," Hudak predicted. "There is so much waste and bacteria in the water. We saw so many people who were homeless."

#### **Local efforts**

Other New York City employees are offering their services to the evacuees on the home front. On Sept. 15, the city opened a welcoming center for victims of the storm. Clerical Division Representative Wendell Reid attended the opening. "People were coming in off the buses to get help," he said. "They looked distraught." By Friday evening, more than 300 people had arrived at the center, which is based on a model developed to help bereaved families after 9/11. Many agencies are contributing expert staff, mainly members of DC 37 locals, to help the traumatized victims. Public Health Nurses in Local 436 were among the first on the scene.

Other members of DC 37 have been directly touched by the hurricane. Some have taken displaced family

members into their homes. Some DC 37 staff and members are still looking for missing kin. Social Service Employees Union Local 371 member Adzua Opare, a Child Welfare Specialist, experienced the devastation firsthand. She was vacationing in New Orleans when Katrina struck. Accompanied by her elderly grandmother, she slogged for miles through the streets to seek shelter at the Superdome. After arriving back in New York City, she was still shaken by the ordeal. "Mentally, I'm still going through this stuff. I kept wanting to ask for the American Embassy," she said.

Three weeks after the hurricane hit, FEMA was still offering a feeble response. On Sept. 17, the New York Times blasted the inept agency in a page one headline: "FEMA, Slow to the Rescue, Now Stumbles in Aid Effort."

In moves that are eerily reminiscent of its policies in Iraq, the Bush administration touts its omnibus aid package, as the same jumbo private contractors (such as Halliburton) that walked off with no-bid contracts in the war zone are now being used to rebuild. The president is still in denial on the causal relation between global warming, the erosion of the coastal wetlands, the cut in levee repair funds and the extreme devastation wrought by Katrina. Bush has pledged billions of dollars to repair and rebuild the areas demolished by the storm, but his conservative supporters want to generate the funds through deep cuts in other social programs. Apparently, they have learned little since the days of Calvin Coolidge. ❖



## Medicare Part D Q & A



Many retirees have been calling the union with questions about the new Medicare Part D prescription drug plan that goes into effect January 1. Following are some typical questions, answered by the Local 237 Retirees' Benefit Fund director, Paul Juergensen. "I welcome these questions," Juergensen said. "It's absolutely important that retirees move carefully and not rush into anything. For most of our retirees, it is cost effective to do nothing, and their prescription drug coverage will continue unchanged. I want to emphasize once again: ask before you act." Juergensen also stressed that coverage is for the retiree and the spouse individually.

**My niece handles my affairs. She thinks I should sign up for Part D. What should I do?**

Ask your niece what her reasons are. Keep in mind that you cannot receive prescription drugs through both plans. If you enroll in Part D, you will not receive drug coverage from our plan. You (and your niece) must determine whether your particular prescription drug needs would be met better by the union's Retirees' Benefit Fund or by a Medicare Part D plan. If your prescription drug costs are less than \$5,100 per year, Local 237 coverage might be a better option for you. This is because under Part D, you would

be responsible for all costs between \$2,250 and \$5,100.

Remember, because you are enrolled in a "creditable plan," there will be no penalty if you decide to enroll in Part D later on. I would advise you (and your niece) to wait and see what your true needs are.

**I retired as a part-timer. Is my prescription coverage through the union considered "better than or equal to" (creditable) Medicare Part D?**

No. A special certificate was mailed to all part-time retirees on November 12 advising them that the union's plan for part-timers is not "creditable" because the cap for part-time retirees is \$1,100. Part-timers may be enrolled in both plans. If you want to enroll in Part D, you should do so before May 15, 2006, to avoid penalties.

**My friend belongs to another union, and she told me I need to enroll in Part D. Is that true?**

No. First, if you are currently covered by a plan that is equal to or better than Medicare Part D, you do not have to enroll in

Part D. If you should decide to enroll later, after the May 15 deadline, you may do so without penalty. Second, everyone's situation is different, every union has different benefit levels. If your friend tells you again that you "need" to enroll in Part D, tell her that what's good for her may not be good for you, that what you "need" to do is examine your own situation before taking any action.

**I haven't received a letter about the union's retiree prescription drug plan stating that it has been deemed "creditable" by CMS. What should I do?**

Call the Retirees' Benefit Fund office at 212-924-7220 and request a copy of the Cer-

*continued on page 3*

### Where to Find Help

- The *Medicare & You 2006* booklet that you received in October
- Medicare, 800-MEDICARE (800-633-4227), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) (for fact sheets and an online Prescription Drug Plan finder tool)
- Medicare Rights Center, 800-333-4114; [www.medicareinteractive.org](http://www.medicareinteractive.org)
- Local 237 Retiree Division, 212-807-0555

Local 237 retirees should have received a "Certificate of Creditable Coverage" from the Teamsters Local 237 Retirees' Benefit Fund in the mail. The certificate, which is in a letter format, confirms that the fund's prescription drug plan has been found to be "equal to or greater than" the new Medicare Part D Prescription Drug plan for full-time retirees. That means that Local 237 retirees and their spouses who receive their prescription drugs through the Retirees' Benefit Fund may continue to do so, with no action on their part.

Retiree Division Director Nancy True stressed that it is important for retirees to

## Save Your Rx Certificate of Creditability

Enclosed in the mailing with the certificate were a letter from Retirees' Benefit Fund Director Paul Juergensen, a notice from the Fund explaining Local 237 retirees' prescription drug coverage and Medicare, and a list of Frequently Asked Questions prepared by the Centers for Medicare Services.

Juergensen emphasized that retirees

including what drugs are covered, with the coverage and cost of the plans offering Medicare prescription drug coverage in their area," the fund notice says. "The prescription drug coverage offered by the Fund is, on average for all plan participants, expected to pay out as much as the standard Medicare prescription drug coverage will pay."

Medicare-eligible retirees who receive their prescription drugs through a Medicare HMO do not need to do anything. They will be automatically enrolled in Medicare Part D through their HMO.

"Medicare Part D is difficult to understand, and people are confused and con-

**Unique Performance**  
Retiree News & Views  
Local 237, IBT

## Judges Comments

This ambitious 3-part series uses personal testimony to focus attention on the larger debate about the future of Social Security. Its varied articles include critical facts, news coverage of events and useful policy analysis. Judges feel this publication hits the mark with the intended audience, retirees.

## Labor's shrinking pains

# Debate on AFL-CIO future

By DANIA RAJENDRA

This year, the AFL-CIO will turn 50, and it's not a happy birthday. When the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations merged in 1955, one-third of all U.S. workers belonged to a union. Today, union membership stands at just 12.5% - and less than 8% in the private sector.

The drop in union representation has had broad consequences for all Americans. Health insurance and a guaranteed pension, since WWII seen as cornerstones of any decent job, are now described as luxuries. This decline in security and benefits pressures unionized workers to compete for less. When CUNY management tells PSC contract negotiators that they should accept benefit

cuts because "many employers don't provide any health insurance," then it is all too clear how PSC members are affected by declining unionization.

SEIU (Service Employees International Union) called this "the crisis facing working people," and launched a public debate on its proposed solution: a near-total overhaul of the AFL-CIO. If the AFL-CIO won't reorganize, SEIU - the nation's fastest-growing and largest union - threatened to leave the federation.

## INDUSTRIAL STRENGTH

By January, SEIU seemed less likely to walk, but the debate remained intense. SEIU President Andy Stern welcomed the controversy, posting both SEIU's proposal and responses at [www.unitetown.org](http://www.unitetown.org).

Other unions began to put forward plans of their own, and the AFL-CIO set up a discussion site in January, [www.aflcio.org/ourfuture](http://www.aflcio.org/ourfuture). Nearly two dozen proposals are now posted, with uncensored commentary.

To win improvements, SEIU said, unions need to fight large corporations on an equally large scale. For example, it called for a nationwide campaign to organize Wal-Mart. The key to building union power, argued SEIU, is "union density" - the proportion of unionized workers within an industry or market. If unions organize just a small part of an industry, winning a significant wage increase may mean only that non-union competition puts the union companies out of business. SEIU's solution is massive, industry-wide campaigns.

Such campaigns, it argued, require two things: more money for organizing and fewer, larger unions. SEIU's proposal would mean a drastic shift of financial resources into organizing, and would give the AFL-CIO the power to compel mergers among its affiliates. Today the AFL-

## How to solve the crisis for working people

CIO operates by building consensus - not by telling affiliated unions what to do. But SEIU contended that this process is too slow to respond to the urgency of the current situation.

Since it's unions, not the federation, that organize workers, SEIU said that unions that shift their own budgets toward organizing should keep more of the money that they tithe to the AFL-CIO (called "per-

caps," currently 57 cents per member per month). That would mean cuts to the AFL-CIO's programs and services. On the merger front, SEIU wanted the federation's current 58 national unions reorganized into a much smaller number, organized on clearer industrial lines.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Unions also need more political power, SEIU conceded, and in fact its plan included a national push to win universal health insurance. But it pointed to the last election to argue that to succeed in politics, unions must first have more members.

In 2003, SEIU formed an alliance with four other unions around a shared emphasis on organizing, dubbed the New Unity Partnership (NUP). It consisted of SEIU, hotel

## Labor roundtable looks forward

On January 26, Clarion hosted a discussion about the current debate over the future of the AFL-CIO. The participants were:

**Dorothee Benz**, a long-time labor strategist and writer who has worked for CWA, SEIU and UNITE; she now works for NYU's Brennan Center for Justice. A former member of the PSC, Benz earned her doctorate at CUNY with a study of union organizing.

**Bhairavi Desai**, director of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, an independent union of 5,525 taxi drivers that has successfully fought for higher fares and capped leases. In 1998, the NYTWA organized a 24-hour strike of 40,000 licensed drivers over their sweatshop conditions.

**José La Luz**, a Visiting Labor Leader at Cornell ILR, has led campaigns that organized more than 120,000 public employees in Puerto Rico. He is with the AFL-CIO's organizing department, and a formerly Northeast director at AFSCME and education director for ACTWU.

**Kim Moody**, co-founder of Labor Notes and its director for many years. A member of the PSC, he teaches at Brooklyn College and is an author of *An Injury To All* and *Workers in a Lean World*.

What follows is adapted from their discussion.

### Union competition

**JOSE LA LUZ:** This question of jurisdiction, it has got to be tighter. The [multi-union organizing campaign] in Puerto Rico was horrifying. Everyone looked at it as, 'can I

add more members than another union?' The agreements we worked out quickly dissolved and soon different unions were filing election petitions in the same units. We can no longer afford that.

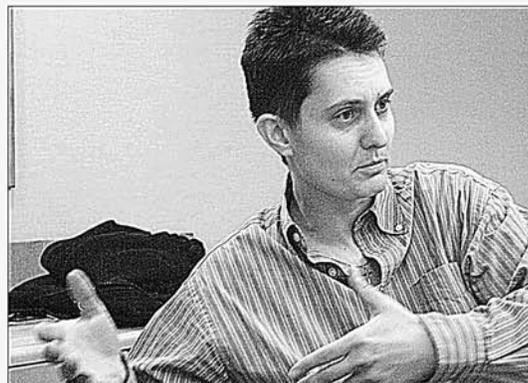
**KIM MOODY:** I fear honestly that

we are losing the ability to do jurisdictional organizing. For instance, this Steelworkers/PACE merger is a nightmare. United Steelworkers, Paperworkers, Chemical Workers, Energy Workers, Forestry Workers, it's absurd. But unions allied with SEIU have the same problem. The merger between UNITE, garment and textile workers, and HERE, hotel and restaurant workers - what's the logic there?

The Steelworkers say the steel industry is disappearing. Okay, but for some manufacturing unions, that's not the case. This country has got thousands of these little plants with immigrant workers making little pieces of automobiles. Less than 13% of the parts industry is union now, which means only about a third of the whole auto industry is union. And who is the UAW organizing? Adjuncts at NYU, graduate students. It doesn't make any sense.

### More or fewer resources to the AFL-CIO?

This is a serious discussion about the state and future of the labor movement. Too many union members are confused about the split and the issues being debated, and too few unions take seriously their responsibility to explain the issues in a serious, non-polemical way. The use of titles and subtitles breaks up the text effectively and makes the text easier to read and absorb. We liked the dynamism of the pictures.



Dorothee Benz

I don't understand the intent of proposing both at the same time.

**DOROTHEE BENZ:** You can't talk about the need for central bodies to be more dynamic and at the same time talk about defunding them.

**JL:** I would be in favor of a stronger center, along of the lines of what has happened in Brazil and South Africa - if in fact the workers are engaged at the base. In Brazil, when the trade union movement had to be rebuilt from the

caught up in the letter of the law. The NLRB says taxi drivers are independent contractors and don't have a right to a collective bargaining agreement. Whatever their NLRB classification, drivers are workers and all working people have a right to a union. We have to transform the NLRB, but we can't wait for them to validate our obligation to organize.

**DB:** Is labor law reform a prerequisite for increased unionization? I



### Unique Performance

The Clarion  
PSC/NYSUT, AFT

## Judges Comments

Photos: Gary Schoebert

means hundreds of people laid off, workers without labor law reform? like World War III to win every

# Does my vote count? Understanding the electoral college

By Chris Cutter

Ever since four years ago when President Bush won the electoral, but not the popular vote, the banter back and forth on the merits of the Electoral College and what it is and how it works has been the only political topic that outlasted every other issue debated during the last four years. Last year's political season (and results) saw a resurgence in the Electoral College vs the one person, one vote debate; so we thought an explanation of it would be in line with keeping 1103 Members informed of the political process.

We elect a president every four years, but not directly. In November of a presidential year, each state holds an election for president and the electors of that state make the actual choice for president. Each state has as many electors as it has Senators and Members of the House of Representatives for a total of 538. Yes, we know that should be 535, but the District of Columbia gets three votes even though it has no congressional representatives.

In December, the electors meet in their respective state capitols and cast their ballots. The ballots are opened, counted and certified by a joint session of Congress in January. If no candidate wins a majority of the electoral votes, or if the top two candidates are tied, the House of Representatives selects the president and the Senate selects the Vice President. (This hasn't happened since 1876 but it almost happened in 2000.) So you can see there is no "national election" but rather separate state elections. That is why candidates focus on winning each state one by one.

With this said, why not a popular vote? Let's look at people power vs state power in a historical sense.

## People power

The electoral college was a compromise of two important issues. The first was "How much power the people

should have" and the second was "How much power small and large states should have." Remember, no republic like the United States existed and our founding fathers were making things up as they went along based on history, philosophy and what they knew of other governments. In 1787 it wasn't clear if a democracy would work. The United States was intended to be a republic in which the people would govern themselves through elected representatives. Because the role of the president was so important, most of the framers thought the people couldn't be trusted to be knowledgeable enough to elect a president directly but rather should elect electors who would convene as a "college of electors" to consider all the candidates and pick the best man for the job

## State power

Our constitution was intended to unite the states under a single government. However, small states (like New Jersey) feared that if they formed a union with the other twelve states, they would be swallowed up under the influence of the other more populous states. That is why states have equal representation in the Senate but representation by population in the House of Representatives. This allowed large states to get their due while allowing smaller states to keep their identity and fight for their interests. So when it came to voting for president, the framers decided that the states should do the voting, not the people. That is how they came up with electoral votes by Senators and Representatives. Remember, we live in the United States of America — not just America.

The Electoral College is still a work in progress. Originally, state legislatures voted for electors and electors were free to vote for the candidate of their choice; but over time, they were elected because they supported the popular candidate in their state. Today, every state allows citizens

*(Continued on facing page)*

Unique Performance  
The Eagle  
CWA 1103

## Judges Comments

The author took very complex material and conveyed it in an understandable, accessible way.

*(Continued from facing page)*

to vote for their electors as represented on the ballot by the candidate they are associated with. An elector, in theory, could throw his vote to any candidate, but this almost never happens. It did happen in 1888 but had no impact on the election. Some states even have laws requiring electors to cast their votes according to the popular vote. The original constitution did not take into account the development of the two party system. Back then, the man with the highest number of votes became the president and the man with the second highest became vice president. In 1800, the Democratic-Republican Party nominated Thomas Jefferson for president and Aaron Burr for vice president, and because there was no separate voting for the two offices, the two men tied in the electoral college and the House of Representatives had to decide the issue. Thus came the 12th amendment that brought us to today.

Here's an interesting modern day footnote. As everyone learned in the election of 2000, the Constitution does not say that the candidate with the most popular support wins. It says the candidate with the most electoral votes wins and so George W. Bush won the election by the rules set forth in our Constitution. Actually, the last president to be elected by the majority of voters was George H. Bush in 1988. In 1992 and 1996, Bill Clinton won with a plurality, but with less than half the vote because there were three

candidates. Because H. Ross Perot failed to win a majority anywhere, he didn't win any electoral votes and Clinton was able to win a majority of electoral votes without winning a majority of the popular vote. In 2000 Al Gore won the majority vote by a slim margin but lost the electoral vote 271-267. (You need 270 to win.)

So, does your vote count? As we started this out article asking this question, many people have complained since 2000 that if the winner of the popular vote doesn't win, why vote at all? But every vote does count, it just counts in a different way. When you vote for president, you are really voting in a state election. Your vote counts just as much as that person in another state, but it may count less or more. In New York we have 31 electoral votes, electoral rich California has 55 electoral votes while Connecticut only has 7 electoral votes. The fairness of the electoral system has been debated for more than 200 years. Our founding fathers couldn't come to a unified decision and it was Alexander Hamilton who drafted the compromise electoral process that was finally included in the Constitution, explaining why the president should be elected indirectly rather than directly by the people. So blame him if you have to blame someone. Although many are very opinionated on this subject, as this writer is, it doesn't appear that the debate is going to die down anytime soon, but we hope this sheds some light on the process. ❖

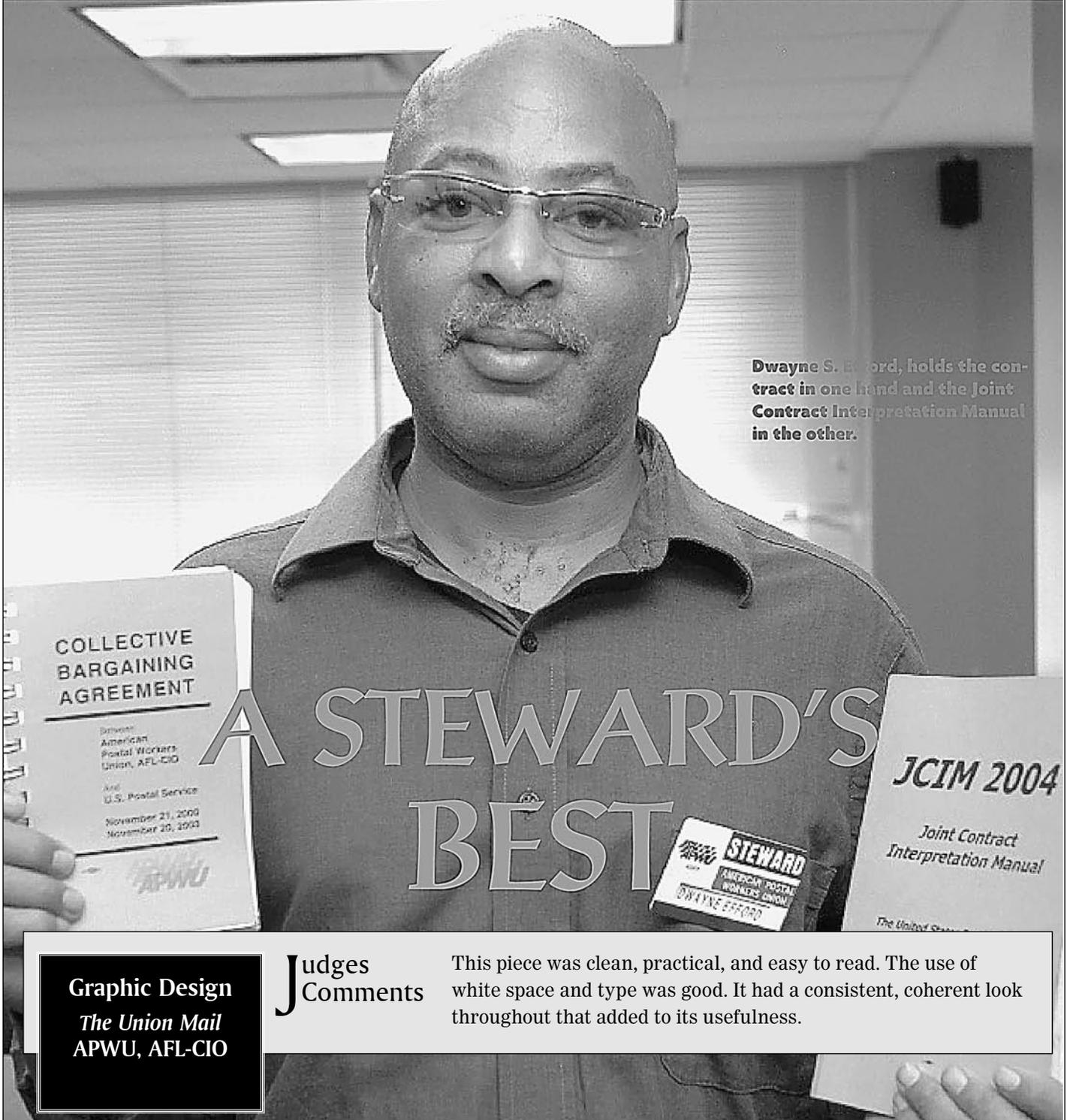


The

# Union Mail

Vol. 48 No. 11 November 2005

Published by the NY Metro Area Postal Union



**Dwayne S. Efford, holds the contract in one hand and the Joint Contract Interpretation Manual in the other.**

## A STEWARD'S BEST

**Graphic Design**  
*The Union Mail*  
APWU, AFL-CIO

### Judges Comments

This piece was clean, practical, and easy to read. The use of white space and type was good. It had a consistent, coherent look throughout that added to its usefulness.

# Organizing against the odds

*(Continued from page 11)*

If management hadn't managed to break the momentum, we'd have had a union by now."

## **The consequences of privatization**

The climate for public sector workers seeking a union — at least here in New York City — is far less hostile. The employer of public sector workers is the government — in other words, elected officials who have to face the voters. "We're able to go to the boss and say, 'We can produce so many people on election day,' and that gives us a seat at the table," says Atul Talwar, the labor lawyer. Plus, the local Public Employment Relations Board is much more responsive than the notoriously understaffed NLRB. "The law for public sector workers isn't pro-worker," says Talwar, "but it's much less anti-worker than the private sector."

But a growing trend by city, state, and federal government officials to privatize public sector jobs means that many people who were once government workers now find themselves facing the poorer worker protections in the private sector. A survey conducted by the Charlotte Observer in late 2003 found that all but two states use outside contractors to answer calls from Food Stamp recipients. And George W. Bush has announced plans to privatize as many as 850,000 federal workers, including such essential jobs as tax collection and aviation safety. Elected officials in some 31 states and on Capitol Hill have begun to resist this trend, considering legislation that would at least block the outsourcing of government work to companies overseas.

One powerful reform effort could make a difference for workers like Denzil Wallace and Claudia Sanchez: a bill drafted in part by the AFL-CIO called the Employee Free Choice Act. Under this legislation, when a majority of employees sign cards declaring their interest in joining a union — just like the 311 workers at King Teleservices — management would be required to recognize the union.

The law would also strengthen the penalties for intimidating or firing workers during organizing drives. "The labor movement," wrote Acuff in the April 18 Nation magazine, "agrees almost unanimously that the freedom to form unions is the central issue at the heart of our work over the next four years."

In the meantime, the effects of the unionization effort are still being felt at King. In January and February, King management called a series of meetings to dialogue with employees, and suddenly granted workers three sick days a year plus raises of 75 cents to \$1.25 an hour. "Had it not been for our unionization effort," says Sanchez, "they would never have done the little that they've now done. Even though we didn't win, some good came out of it."

## **It's not over 'til it's over**

And the struggle at King isn't over yet. Jonathan Werbell, a spokesperson for Mayor Michael Bloomberg, told the New York Sun that 311 call overflow was only outsourced because when the help-line was new, it was hard to gauge how much staff would be needed. Once King's contract expires, likely in two years (the city has refused to turn over the contract to 1180), the City Council may review the mayor's decision to use an outside contractor. "Instead of contracting the work out, maybe the city should hire these workers and pay them a decent wage with full benefits," says Susan Russell, chief of staff to City Council member Robert Jackson, chair of the Council's Contracts Committee. "And if we're going to contract the work out, then we have to ask whether we're treating the workers fairly and what steps the city will take to make sure these workers get the pay and benefits they deserve." Meanwhile, King has just announced that it will move its 311 callers from Long Island City to Brooklyn, where a core group of union supporters may restart their organizing efforts. ❖

# Waves of heartache, hope

## Outpouring of support by NYSUT members will rebuild schools destroyed by tsunami

*Editors note: The world's most powerful earthquake in 40 years triggered a massive tsunami Dec. 26 in the Indian Ocean. Hundreds of thousands of people were killed. Among the dead and missing are thousands of students and teachers.*

*Unions responded immediately to the disaster with pledges of support and aid. New York State United Teachers President Tom Hobart, representing the American Federation of Teachers, embarked on a six-day mission funded by Education International, the world's largest educators' federation, to some of the hardest hit regions in Indonesia and Sri Lanka.*

*What follows are excerpts of Hobart's reports from South Asia. His entire Weblog is available online at [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org).*

### Indonesia

Tuesday, Jan. 18

I spent all day yesterday and this morning in Banda Aceh, the city hit the hardest by the tsunami. When we arrived at the airport, the windows were covered with pictures of the lost people. It's a city of 440,000 people. 100,000 are missing or dead.

While touring the province, we stayed in the house of Amudy Ae, president of the local teachers union. The union has about 50,000 members in the Aceh province. The Minister of Education told us on Monday

ers were lost just in Banda Aceh.

One school had 100 kids and teachers in it when the wave came through. None of them has been heard from since.

### Wednesday, Jan. 19

The amount of debris that has to be removed, if I had to guess, is 20 to 30 — maybe even 40 to 50 — times that at the World Trade Center. I saw the WTC site and this reminds me of that catastrophe.

Some people have started calling it ground zero. I can see the plastic bags with corpses laying on the side of the road being picked up. Below the refugee camps they are still taking out the bodies. We went by a mass grave of about 1,000 bodies and a bulldozer was just piling dirt on the graves.

The government is providing the refugees with food, but a major problem is despair. I met a

“One school had 100 kids and teachers in it when the wave came through. None of them has been heard from since.”

young man who lost eight members of his family, including his wife.

There are at least 100,000 refugees. Many people are saying the government is repressing some figures and there could be as many as half a million dead.

### Sri Lanka

Thursday, Jan. 20

The death toll throughout Sri Lanka may reach 40,000 or more. The tsunami caused untold damage and some reports say that more than 80,000 teachers and students either don't have a school to return to or the school is being used as temporary housing.

We met with the Education International teacher union affiliates here and the affiliates of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. I've come to listen and basically say, “Tell

missing. The government reporting is terrible and there isn't really an exact figure of the casualties.

One school we visited was absolutely wiped out; there wasn't anything standing. I saw the principal rummaging through a pile of desks and chairs trying to see what was salvageable.

Most of the kids will be relocated to schools that were not destroyed by the waves. These schools are quite a distance from their old schools and I'm sure there will be a severe problem with overcrowded classrooms.

An even greater concern is protecting children from being kidnapped into the sex trade.

### New York

Tuesday, Jan. 25

I'm back in Latham and a lot of things are on my mind. You need to be kind of non-emotional when visiting the different schools, refugee camps and other areas of destruction.

But the nights were hard. Alone in my room I couldn't help but think of the despair we saw.

There's a difference between investigating a tragedy and living it. A lot of the people I saw were the relatives of the people who were dead.

Some survivors lost every member of their families. I met a man who said he visited the refugee camps every day looking for his wife and three children. In one day those people were just gone.

In Sri Lanka, they are encouraging widows and widowers to match up in hopes of rebuilding new families.

It is really heartbreaking.

The tsunami was a world problem. It could have just as easily come to California, the Carolinas or any coastal area.

We have a global responsibility to help these people.

So much has been done yet there is so much more that needs to be done. I urge you to contribute to the relief fund if you haven't already.

*In solidarity,*

Unique Performance  
New York Teacher  
UFT

### Judges Comments

This article featuring the trip of NYSUT (now retired) president Tom Hobart to Indonesia and Sri Lanka after the tsunami is both heartfelt and heartbreaking. It's a first person observer account done as a diary with snapshots — very imaginative layout.

Indonesia and Sri Lanka about getting teachers and kids back in school.

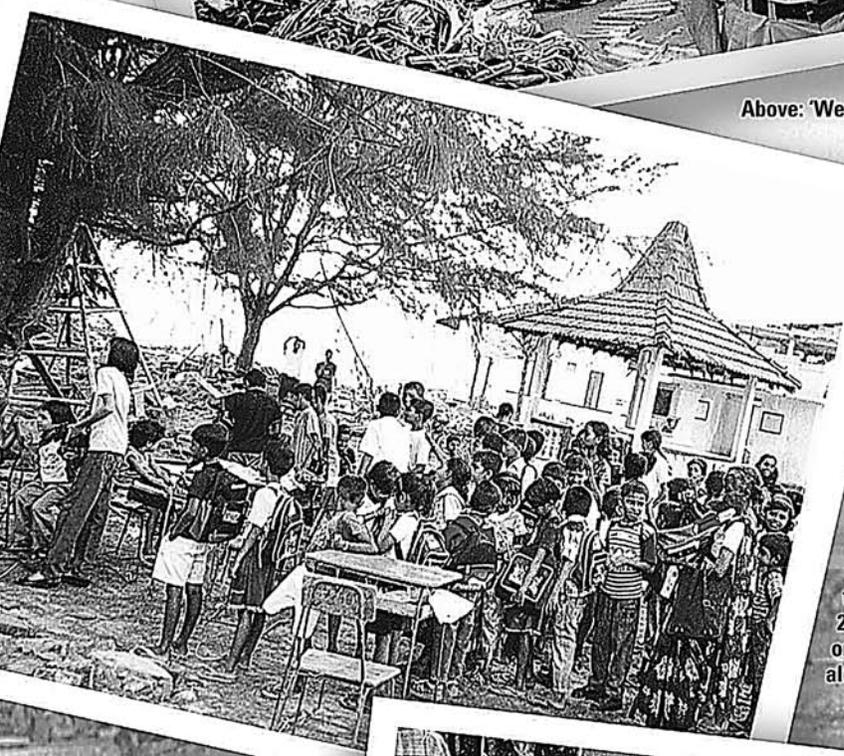
ple died when the train they were on was hit by the waves. The people who observed it said the train floated on the water for awhile before turning over. Many teachers did not survive or are

STEVE WHITNEY

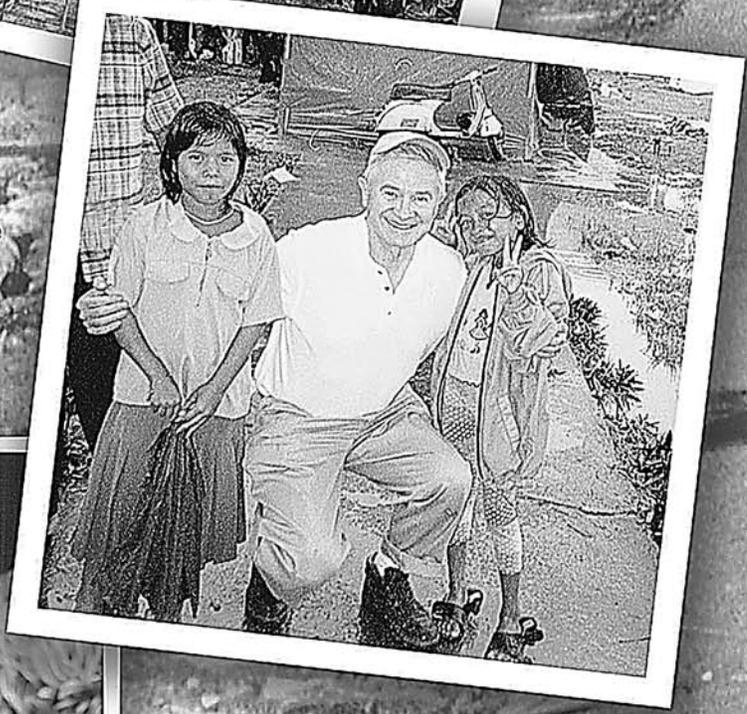
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Above: 'We were given surgical gloves and masks we were supposed to wear. A couple of times I caught a whiff of a sickening sweet smell. It may have been the decomposing bodies,' said Hobart. In Banda Aceh, Indonesia, 100-mile-per-hour waves left tons of debris, leveling buildings along the way. In late January, Education International was reporting that more than 45,000 children and 2,300 educators were dead or missing in Indonesia alone.



Above: Students in Sri Lanka wait to hear where they will go to school. Their former schools were either washed away, destroyed by the waves or are too close to the ocean and in a government-decreed no build zone.



Left: NYSUT President Hobart speaks at an Albany press conference about conditions for students. Above: Hobart talks with two girls who survived the devastation on the east coast of Sri Lanka.

## NYSUT members respond

**W**hen students in Meredith Bernadt's third grade classroom at Howe International Magnet School in Schenectady learned about the tsunami that left kids their age without schools — and in some cases without parents — they wanted to do everything they could to help. "Many of my students don't have a lot of money but they all wanted to help," said Bernadt, a member of the Schenectady Federation of Teachers. Bernadt promised her students she'd match dollar for dollar whatever they collected. "They were really excited. Almost every student brought in at least \$1 and some brought in more." With Bernadt's matching contribution, the students raised \$64 for tsunami relief efforts.

The efforts of Bernadt's students are just one example of the outpouring of support from students and New York State United Teachers members and leaders.

Some unions leading the way are the BOCES Educators of Eastern Suffolk, led by James Arden; the Mount Sinai Teachers Association, led by Mitch Wolman; the Hilton Central School TA, led by Kathleen Donahue; and Half Hollow Hills, led by Richard Lee.

To date, NYSUT has raised more than \$40,000 for the tsunami relief efforts. NYSUT President Tom Hobart, who recently returned from a six-day mission to tsunami-ravaged areas in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, urged union members to contribute whatever they could.

"Thousands and thousands of educators are lost throughout the region. And, for many, there are no schools to return to," Hobart said. "NYSUT is committed to a 'Tsunami Relief Program' that gets children and teachers back to schools and helps them pick up their lives following this terrible natural disaster."

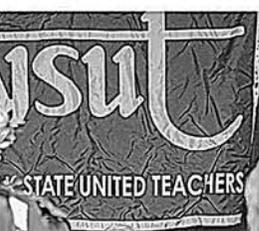


## How you can help

**Y**ou can help NYSUT and its national affiliate, the American Federation of Teachers, ensure students, teachers and their families can get back to a "safe, healthy existence and a hopeful future," by contributing to the union's tsunami relief efforts.

Every penny collected will go towards helping to get students and teachers back in the classroom.

Checks from local unions, individuals or school groups should be made out to NYSUT with 'Tsunami Relief' written in the memo section. Mail c/o the President's Office, NYSUT, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, N.Y. 12210-2455.



# THE SKYSCRAPER

STEEL, ELECTRICITY, CONCRETE  
THE HISTORY OF BUILDINGS AND  
CARPENTRY FOREVER CHANGED



The word “skyscraper” originated as a nautical term for a tall mast or sail on a sailing ship. Since the revolution in construction of the 1880s, it has been used to describe a habitable building taller than 500 feet.

The tradition of humans building toward the sky dates back thousands of years. Ancient architecture featured towers made of heavy stone with thick, sturdy walls to support their height and only a few narrow windows, making their rooms cramped and dark. During the Industrial Revolution, engineering advances in mechanical and structural materials, such as steel, reinforced concrete and electricity, made the modern skyscraper possible.

A big step away from cramped lower floors was cage construction, in which an iron frame supported the floors and the masonry walls bore their own weight. Completed in 1885, the 10-story Home Insurance Building in Chicago took this idea one step further: It was the first to be built with steel skeleton construction in which the metal framework supported not only the floors but also the walls, making it lighter, stronger,



and roomier through the building. It bore the general characteristics of a modern skyscraper, a steel frame and many windows, it was impractical to compel people to walk up so many flights, and water pressure could provide running water up to only about 50 feet.

In 1857, the installation of the first passenger elevator in the Haughwout Department Store in New York City made it feasible to construct buildings taller than four or five stories. For carpenters, this signaled a rapidly changing world: the new building techniques and materials threatened their craft and jurisdiction, and the building boom meant that ruthless jerry and botch building was threatening the tradition of guild carpentry and a living wage. Journeyman carpenters responded by organizing to defend their pay, their workday, and their jurisdiction. In 1861 they formed the United Brotherhood of Carpenters.

The development of the high-speed elevator after 1887 meant that skyscrapers were able to attain virtually any desired height and be accessible to anyone. In the 1890s the steel frame was formed into a completely riveted skeleton bearing all the structural loads, with the exterior thin “curtain walls” serving as an enclosing screen rather than a source of structural support.

The next important development was stronger foundations, first completely implemented in the 792-foot Woolworth Building in 1913. Massive caissons penetrated all the way down to bedrock. With New York City’s adoption of the Building Zone Resolution in 1916, ingenuity and economics

were no longer the only determinants of the size and shape of the skyscraper. Legal control was established over the height and plan

## Graphic Design

*The Carpenter*  
New York District  
Council of Carpenter

## Judges Comments

This two page layout is elegant in its use of stylized typefaces and the layering of images. Judges thought the Art deco screened images were very compelling. The typographic motifs capture the era in an imaginative way

*in 1930.*



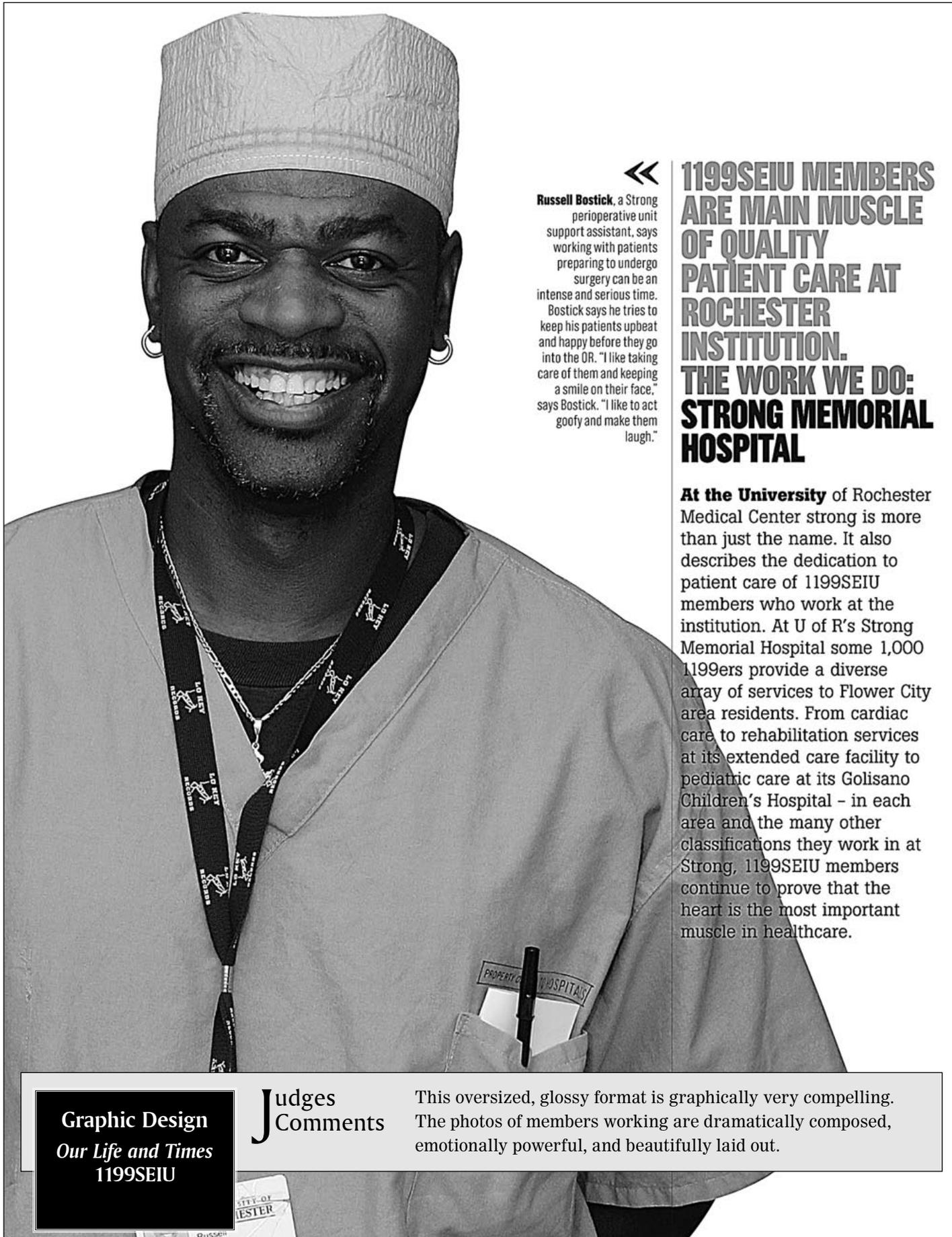
*In 1931, the 1,250-foot Empire State Building is completed in eleven months. At peak activity, 3,500 workers are employed on site and the tower rises a story a day. Only in New York!*

of buildings, as well as over factors relating to health, fire hazards, and assurance of adequate light and air to both buildings and streets.

The completion of the 1,046-foot Chrysler Building in 1930 marked the beginning of the age of modern skyscrapers. The improved structural designs made new skyscrapers even lighter and stiffer. Today's tallest skyscrapers rising 1,500 feet must be 50 times stronger against wind than the typical 200-foot buildings of the 1940s. The first solution was clustering steel columns and beams in the skyscraper's core, as was done in the Chrysler Building, to create a stiff backbone that could resist tremendous wind forces. The inner core is used as an elevator shaft, allowing an abundance of open space on each floor. In newer skyscrapers, like the 1,450-foot Sears Tower in Chicago, engineers moved the columns and beams from the core to the perimeter, creating a hollow, rigid tube as strong as the core, but weighing much less.

With many of the complex structural problems solved, architects still seek solutions to the difficulties of designing skyscrapers that meet community requirements of hygiene, transportation and commercial interests. In New York during the 1950s, public plazas were incorporated into many designs. And currently, architects and engineers are working to find healthier building materials and designs to protect both workers and inhabitants. And, of course, humans continue to dream into the sky. Though current engineering science does not allow for building beyond 2,296 feet, many architects are already planning much higher structures in the hope and belief that technology will one day reach beyond that 700-meter mark.





**Russell Bostick**, a Strong perioperative unit support assistant, says working with patients preparing to undergo surgery can be an intense and serious time. Bostick says he tries to keep his patients upbeat and happy before they go into the OR. "I like taking care of them and keeping a smile on their face," says Bostick. "I like to act goofy and make them laugh."

## **1199SEIU MEMBERS ARE MAIN MUSCLE OF QUALITY PATIENT CARE AT ROCHESTER INSTITUTION. THE WORK WE DO: STRONG MEMORIAL HOSPITAL**

**At the University** of Rochester Medical Center strong is more than just the name. It also describes the dedication to patient care of 1199SEIU members who work at the institution. At U of R's Strong Memorial Hospital some 1,000 1199ers provide a diverse array of services to Flower City area residents. From cardiac care to rehabilitation services at its extended care facility to pediatric care at its Golisano Children's Hospital - in each area and the many other classifications they work in at Strong, 1199SEIU members continue to prove that the heart is the most important muscle in healthcare.

**Graphic Design**  
*Our Life and Times*  
**1199SEIU**

### **J**udges Comments

This oversized, glossy format is graphically very compelling. The photos of members working are dramatically composed, emotionally powerful, and beautifully laid out.



In Strong's linen department, **Amy Bennett** and her co-workers make sure that patients have fresh sheets, towels and pillowcases each day. Bennett says she knows the importance of those simple things to someone who has to spend any time in a hospital bed.



**Shirley Hobbs** has seen a lot of changes at Strong in her 25 years there. A cardiac unit secretary, Hobbs assists Strong staff in caring for patients who have undergone often life-saving heart surgery. She says the experience made her take a look at her own health and well-being.



Strong's material management department is responsible for making sure that the hospital's employees have what they need to do their jobs. **Eddie Camacho** has been working in the area for 12 years. "Anything that comes into this hospital goes through us," says Camacho. "If they need something in the OR, they can be sure it will be there."



Nutrition assistant **Shirley Rutledge** delivers 60 to 100 trays at each mealtime to Strong's patients. She says her favorite part of the job is helping patients choose their meals from the hospital's special "room service" menu. "You get to be a little more intimate with the patients. You learn about them through their diet," she says.



Chief Steward **Don Marthage** has been in Strong's Food and Nutrition Department for 35 years. Part of his job is helping to make sure there is plenty of food for Strong's thousands of staff, patients and visitors. "I make sure we have enough and that it goes to the right places to take care of [everybody]."



Food and nutrition services cook **Mattie Session** has worked at Strong for 35 years. She prepares hundreds of meals each day for Strong's patients, staff and visitors. After work, Session makes sure her family is also well fed. For Session, appetite is a sign of good health. "When you see someone hungry and they're eating it must mean that something is working. They're going to be O.K.," she says.

# Will City workers unite?

In the last round of contract negotiations, city workers had to trade a lot to get a raise. After lengthy arbitration, police officers in June swallowed a whopping 21 percent pay cut for rookies in return for 10 percent raises over two years for current workers. When civilian employees, including members of DC 37 and Local 1180, settled a year and a half ago, they had to accept cuts for new workers, too — 15 percent less pay and fewer holiday and vacation days, among other things — in return for a cash bonus and 5 to 6 percent raises over three years for incumbents. And many city workers, including public school teachers and City University of New York faculty, are still waiting to settle in the face of demands by the Bloomberg administration for givebacks like fewer job protections and less leave time. City labor commissioner James Hanley has called “productivity” the administration’s watchword. In effect, says Barbara Bowen, president of the Professional Staff Congress (PSC), the union representing CUNY faculty and staff, “the city has demanded that workers pay for their own raises.”

Concession bargaining wasn’t exactly invented by the Bloomberg administration. Givebacks were part of deals in the 1970s and 1980s as well. But, says DC 37 chief negotiator Dennis Sullivan, “Bloomberg is just a harder principal to deal with because he’s stuck to his guns even when a deal gets close.” And he’s been far more successful at winning deep financial concessions than his predecessors.

That hasn’t made municipal labor leaders happy. “I think this attrition bargaining is terrible,” says Peter Gorman, president of the Uniformed Fire Officers Association. “I believe the selling of the unborn in particular,” meaning pay cuts for future hires, “is a horrible thing for labor to do.”

The question all city labor leaders face is how to turn the tide. If Bloomberg has workers with their backs against the wall, could the new bargaining season, set to begin this fall, finally be the moment for unions to unite at the bargaining table?

## Holding pattern

Mayor Bloomberg’s hardball style may have made some sense back when the city was knee-deep in debt from the double hits of 9/11 and the stock market crash. But with the city now boasting a surplus of \$3.3 billion, the mayor has yet to turn down the heat. Rising pension and health care costs, points out Local 1180 president Arthur Cheliotis, put any employer in a tough financial position. Still, for pet projects, like his bungled West Side stadium plan, the mayor was ready to divert hundreds of millions in city funds. Yet when it comes to raises for city workers — many of them severely underpaid compared to their counterparts in other cities and states — the mayor has held the line.

One of his main tools is to insist that no union can exceed the terms agreed to by the first municipal union he settles with — and that union, for the past several contract cycles, has been District Council 37.

It’s called pattern bargaining, and it’s looked like this for at least ten years: DC 37, which represents more than 100,000 city workers, about a third of the city workforce, settles with the city. The city then insists that every other union who sits down at the bargaining table agree to terms that closely parallel those set by DC 37.

Leaders of unions representing other city workers often grumble about the poor terms set by DC 37, whose members, typically earning far less than teachers, firefighters, and other city employees, can least afford to

*(Continued on facing page)*

News Writing  
*Communique*  
Local 1180 CWA

## Judges Comments

This article presents a strong, well reasoned analysis of the effect of disunity among the city’s public sector unions in past bargaining. It explains pattern bargaining in an accessible way, and challenges members to think about their interests as part of a labor movement larger than their own union. Clearly written and easy to read, 1180’s *Communique* has a consistently accessible style, and isn’t afraid to link larger issues to union members’ lives and interests.

*(Continued from facing page)*

wait indefinitely for cost-of-living raises. (Once these grumblings erupted into outrage, when it turned out that the notorious “double zero” contract of 1995, which froze wages for two years running, had been approved by DC 37 members in a rigged vote.) And the last contract was no exception. Shortly after DC 37 struck its last deal in April 2004, leaders of the United Federation of Teachers and police officers complained that cutting starting salaries would cripple recruitment. “If this is a pattern,” says the PSC’s Bowen of that deal, “then it is a pattern that does not work for many, many unions. DC 37 members ratified it, it was what their leadership and their members expressed as being a contract they would accept. But it’s not acceptable for our union.”

Others hold out hope that the pattern can be beat. Patrolmen’s Benevolent Association president Patrick

Lynch wrote to his members that their June deal “awarded raises well in excess of the civilian settlement, reversing a trend that stunted the growth of police officers’ salaries throughout the 1990s.” But the deal has more in common with the DC 37 pact than Lynch admits. “In both cases, you’re financing a raise for incumbent members at the expense of people who are going to be hired later,” says Richard Steier, editor of *The Chief*, a newspaper for municipal employees. “The PBA deal is much better for incumbents, that’s true, but it’s a much more onerous contract for workers who are going to be hired starting next year than the DC 37 contract is, because it takes a chunk out of their hides for a long period of time.”

To Local 1180 president Arthur Cheliotas, even if uniformed workers sometimes win a raise that’s a point or two higher than civilian employees, the recent police settlement “clearly demonstrates that not even the PBA can substantially break a pattern once it’s set.”

DC 37 negotiator Dennis Sullivan says his union only settled for givebacks because the last round was such a tough one for bargaining. “It wasn’t that we’re a weak union and the city settled with us cheap,” he says. “Maybe we’re more realistic about what’s possible. Frankly, it’s easier to talk about a deal than to make one. And a lot of unions don’t want to make deals because then they’d have to be responsible for something.”

According to Randi Weingarten, president of the United Federation of Teachers and chair of the Municipal Labor Committee, which includes every union representing city workers, the best way out of the pattern trap is for city unions to come to the bargaining table as a united front. “If we don’t pull together in a way that recognizes the extent to which this particular mayor is formidable, then shame on us,” she said in a January address to the Municipal Labor Committee. “When people perceive we are not strongly united, they can split and divide us. If we don’t work together as a coalition in the next round of bargaining, then I think that we will be in worse shape than we are in this round.”

### **Can’t we all just get along?**

Weingarten said that she raised the prospect of coalition bargaining back in January so that unions would have time to discuss it prior to the next round of bargaining. So why hasn’t the idea picked up steam?

Weingarten is an outspoken supporter of the coalition approach, as are many labor leaders who spoke to the *Communique* for this article, such as Arthur Cheliotas, DC 37’s Dennis Sullivan, and the Fire Officers’ Peter Gorman. “There’s more protection and strength if we all go in together, and not worry about what Randi

*(Continued on page 31)*

## **Hizzoner gets labor support**

Mayor Michael Bloomberg has gained a reputation for outsourcing city work to private contractors, dragging out contract negotiations, nickel-and-diming city workers, and turning the Office of Labor Relations into a farce, where grievances sometimes wait years for a response. Yet this summer he picked up some important labor endorsements.

In mid-July, District Council 37’s executive committee narrowly agreed to endorse the mayor in his re-election bid, voting 14 to 12. Said DC 37 executive director Lillian Roberts, “There was quite a debate on why we were endorsing him now, prior to the primary,” said Roberts. “It came down to the fact that if we were going to endorse him later, why not do it now, because we are out to win by any means necessary.” DC 37’s 121,000 members will engage in phone banks and canvassing that could make a difference to the mayor on Election Day. The endorsement came on the heels of the city’s July agreement to pay DC 37 members a 1 percent pay hike in return for productivity gains.

Then in early August, SEIU Local 32BJ endorsed the mayor, too. This endorsement came as less of a surprise, since Mayor Bloomberg has worked with developers in Greenpoint, Williamsburg, and Chelsea, who are set to build more than 16,000 new apartments, to make sure workers in the buildings are paid the prevailing wage — which could add up to nearly 1,000 new jobs for members of 32BJ.

Local 1180, like most of the city’s unions, has not yet made an endorsement in the mayoral race.

# Partners in school scandal: Privatization, waste, corruption

*Crooked vendors steal millions – Leaving students hungry at some public schools last October was only the latest failure of a system that still pays outrageous profits to crooked delivery contractors two years after DC 37 proved that members of Locals 372 and 983 could do the job better for less money and warned the mayor about the mounting waste of tax dollars.*

By Alfredo Alvarado

**M**ayor Michael R. Bloomberg got himself into a nasty food fight that left schoolchildren hungry at lunchtime while outside contractors got fat by ripping off the Dept. of Education. The city squandered a chance to save \$15 million in tax revenue as it allowed corrupt and wasteful practices to flourish in the school food delivery system.

At the start of the school year, as many as 11 schools throughout the city experienced major problems with the delivery of food by vendors. A shortage of delivery trucks and poor planning by the Dept. of Education and the private companies forced P.S. 126 on the Lower East Side to serve lunches of a hard-boiled egg, half a corn on the cob and breakfast leftovers. Things got so bad there that school workers borrowed food from nearby P.S. 1, P.S. 124 and P.S. 134. In the Bronx, some schools were relying on food handouts from Lehman High School.

“Now that private vendors have shown they can’t handle the load, leaving school children hungry, it’s time for DOE to reassign food delivery to experienced city employees,” said Veronica Montgomery-Costa, President of Dept. of Education Employees Local 372 and of DC 37.

## White paper pointed out problems

Throughout the five boroughs, Local 372 represents 26,000 school employees, such as aides, cafeteria workers, crossing guards and substance abuse counselors. Food delivery workers are in locals 372 and 983. The union

February 4, 2004

## Dear Chancellor Klein:

An investigation conducted by this office has substantiated that officials at the Office of School Food and Nutrition Services (OSFNS) have failed to adequately exercise oversight of food purchasing procedures.

Obvious weaknesses in the bidding procedures coupled with contract requirements that tended to favor one vendor were ignored by the OSFNS for many years, allowing that vendor and others to reap profits far in excess of what they should have earned.

These failures were exacerbated by officials at the Office of Purchasing Management, who also failed to protect the integrity of the bidding process despite mounting evidence that vendors were exploiting it.

The ineffectiveness of both offices resulted in millions of dollars of wasted expenditures on excessively priced food contracts.

Oversight deficiencies have carried over into the process seeking to award a new citywide food distribution contract to a sole vendor.

Richard J. Condon  
Special Commissioner of Investigation  
for the New York City School District

warned the city administration about waste, corruption and inefficiency in the delivery system. “Two years ago in our white paper, we pointed out the problems with private, outside food vendors,” said DC 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts. “Our members are already on the job, day in and day out, ready and able to deliver and prepare the children’s meals. DOE should let our members do the work.”

*(Continued on facing page)*

## Feature Writing

Public Employee Press  
DC 37, AFSCME

## Judges Comments

This article effectively dramatizes the serious impact of privatization on members and on the public. It explodes the myth of cost-savings gain through outsourcing. We especially liked the excellent lead and muckraking tone.

*(Continued from facing page)*

The private vendors deliver frozen foods using non-refrigerated trucks, a direct violation of the recommendations of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. Meanwhile, 15 DOE refrigerated trucks sit idle in a Long Island City parking lot. In early August, three vendors — Driscoll, Watermelon Plus and Louis Foods — got about \$35 million in contracts to provide all the food to the city's 1,200 schools. Now, instead of using city workers to close the delivery gap, the DOE plans to add three more vendors. "There are able and willing workers in the system who can make those deliveries," said Ms. Montgomery-Costa.

According to a 2002 DC 37 white paper on contracting out, "Better Services for Less," DOE could save a minimum of roughly \$15.3 million dollars by cutting the average cost per case to deliver food to the public schools. The school system has paid private vendors up to \$6.64/ case, while in-house delivery by union members costs only \$1.80/case.

The report also warned that "companies engaged in price gouging" by manipulating the current bidding system," and charged that DOE lost over \$126 million

dollars to these companies. Spearheading the Anti-Trust Division of the U.S. Justice Dept. as it uncovered the widespread collusion among food vendors to shut out competition and raise their prices was Joel Klein. His team convicted 12 companies and 21 individuals for rigging the contract bidding from 1996 to 1999.

Now Mr. Klein is chancellor of the city school system, but the waste and corruption continue. Richard Condon, special commissioner of investigation for the school system, released a report last year (see excerpts at left) that documented continuing bid-rigging leading to "millions of dollars of wasted expenditures on excessively priced food contracts."

"Hiring costly, inept private vendors for an essential service like school meals adds overhead, undermines quality, and shortchanges our children and our communities," said Ms. Montgomery-Costa. She joins Ms. Roberts in a simple message to Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein: "Stop wasting the taxpayers' money and let our members do the work." ♦

## Will City workers unite?

*(Continued from page 29)*

Weingarten or Pat Lynch or DC 37 are going to do," says Gorman. "In unity there is strength." The PSC's Barbara Bowen called coalition bargaining "something we should seriously consider."

But there are significant challenges to labor unity. Police and firefighters, who regularly risk their lives on the job, may suspect that they can do better negotiating on their own. School teachers, buoyed by a Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit that won a major increase in funding for city schools, may believe they have more leverage if they fly solo. And these strategic advantages, says Arthur Cheliotis, can translate into attitude. "There's a sense of elitism and pride among the uniformed workers," he says. "The idea that we're better than civilian workers, we're white males, and we deserve more."

### Roadblocks

Several labor leaders spoke to the Communique about these obstacles. "I believe all workers are valuable," says Dennis Sullivan. "This whole parochial 'I'm better than you' is sickening as a trade unionist. People can talk about coalitions, but if that means elitism has to prevail, that doesn't work for a union like ours."

Joe Mancini, of the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, for example, says the PBA has "no position" on coalition

bargaining. His union's go-it-alone strategy in recent years has been to push through legislation shifting its contract mediation process to the state Public Employment Relations Board from the city Board of Collective Bargaining, and to win raises based on comparing city police salaries to their suburban counterparts. Pete Gorman, president of the Uniformed Fire Officers Association, acknowledges that coalitions can inspire fear. "If I go into coalition bargaining, there's always a risk that I could have gotten more on my own," he says. "It takes trust. Some unions out there say if I make a coalition with unions X, Y, and Z, they weaken me. But if we say you can't pick one of us off because we stand in solidarity and negotiate in solidarity, then I believe we have more strength."

With the next round of negotiations likely to start this fall, the window of opportunity is quickly closing for city unions to enter into a solid municipal bargaining coalition this time around. And with DC 37 on good terms with the mayor — having recently given him their endorsement after winning an additional 1 percent productivity raise on the last contract — it seems likely that the old pattern will repeat itself, with the largest union going in alone, settling first, and setting the parameters for other union negotiations.

"I believe in coalition bargaining," says DC 37 negotiator Dennis Sullivan. "But I think it's probably an unreality right now." Randi Weingarten, chair of the Municipal Labor Committee, did not return repeated phone calls regarding her plans for jumpstarting a coalition this fall. ♦

# Interview With Sleep Researcher Dr. Charles Czeisler Harvard Study Documents Prevalence and Challenges Safety of 24 Hour

## The NEJM Articles in Brief: Work Hours, Sleep & Medical Errors

Both articles in the October 28, 2004 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine* are based on the results of the same study in 2003-04 in the Brigham & Women's Hospital MICU and CCU during a total of 2,203 patient-days involving 634 admissions. Each intern was studied during their two 3-week rotations and each did both a—

- Traditional schedule with 3 interns (Q3, with 30 consecutive hour shifts and total work weeks greater than 80 hours per week)
- Interventional schedule with 4 interns (no consecutive shifts greater than 16 hours, total work weeks less than 80 hours per week)

On average, subject interns worked 19.5 hours less per week, slept 5.8 hours more per week, slept more in the 24 hours preceding each working hour and had less than half the rate of attentional failures while working during on-call nights on the interventional schedule.

### Conclusions:

"Eliminating interns' extended work shifts in an intensive care unit setting significantly increased sleep and decreased attentional failures during night work hours." (NEJM p. 1829)

Conversely, the authors report that interns on the traditional Q3 schedule (with shifts of 30 consecutive hours) made:

- 35.9% more serious medical errors, including
- 56.6% more non-intercepted errors
- 20.8% more medication errors
- 5.6 times as many diagnostic errors

"Interns made substantially more serious medical errors when they worked frequent shifts of 24 hours or more than when they worked shorter shifts. Eliminating extended work shifts and reducing number of hours interns work per week can reduce serious medical errors in the intensive care unit." (NEJM p. 1838)

October 28, 2004—mark the date. The prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine* publishes two articles about resident work hours, sleep deprivation, and medical errors that should give the world of medicine something to consider.

Conducted by the Harvard Work Hours Health & Safety Group, the study observed interns at Boston's Brigham & Women's Hospital as they worked in the intensive care units on both a traditional every third night, 30+ consecutive hour schedule and on an "interventional schedule" of no more than 16 consecutive hours.

The data confirms what many in the medical community have long maintained: rather than improving patient care and reducing errors, scheduling residents to extended shifts of 24 or more consecutive hours does quite the opposite.

"Our results may have important implications for health policy, since more than 100,000 physicians are currently in training in the United States," the study's authors conclude. "Most of these residents are regularly scheduled to work 30-hour shifts, since extended work shifts and long workweeks continue to be permitted, even under the scheduling reforms instituted last year by

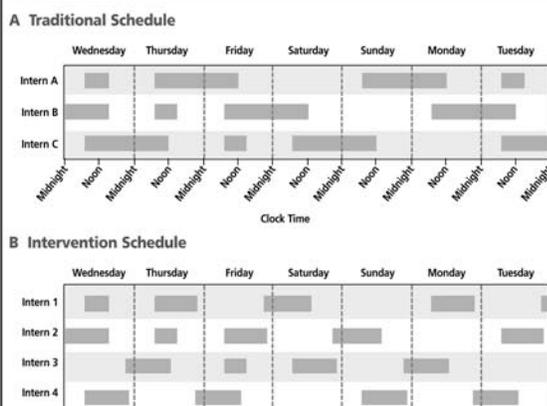
the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. Further modifications of these standards, particularly with respect to the duration of work shifts, may be needed to improve patients' safety in teaching hospitals nationwide." (NEJM p. 1847)

In a recent interview, *CIR News* asked Charles Czeisler, M.D., PhD, head of the Division of Sleep Medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital, what made the "interventional" schedule so successful. First, he stressed, reducing the consecutive number of

"We were stunned to find that there were five times as many diagnostic errors in the traditional schedule as there were in the interventional schedule."

Charles Czeisler, MD, PhD

hours worked was key. "I must have been asked hundreds of times—why didn't we just add a 4th intern, a Q4 schedule? I explained that it's not the total number of hours worked per



# THINKING OUT

## Intervention Call Schedule: 16-Hour

This "outside the box" intervention call schedule is unique because it splits the intern's on-call into two distinct parts—"Day Call" and "Night Call." As described by the Harvard Work Hours Health & Safety Group (NEJM p. 1830): Four interns provided continuous coverage on a four day schedule consisting of:

**Day #1:** Standard Day—approximately 7 am to 3 pm (8 hours).

**Day #2:** Day Call—7 am-10 pm (15 hours)  
Intern can stay 1-2 hours more if necessary for patient care and/or medical education.

**Day #3:** Night Call—Intern sleeps in on the morning of Day #3.  
Then takes a nap before returning to work at 9 pm to complete the second half of

### News Writing

CIR News  
CIR/SEIU

### Judges Comments

Judges found this story both compelling and frightening, but also hopeful. It covered real attempts at solutions such as "the alternate schedule that works better." It was lively, with a varied layout and effective photos of interviewees.

# zeisler, MD, PhD ventable Errors ours On-Call

week that is the problem—it's the consecutive hours worked."

Dr. Czeisler went on to explain that the most important feature of the new schedule "was that it eliminated the practice of scheduling residents to work 24 or more consecutive hours. That practice is not safe."

"We've heard it repeated so often, that in order to really know your patient, you have to stay with that patient to observe," he continued. "We were stunned to find that there were five times as many diagnostic errors in the traditional schedule as there were in the interventional schedule. It was just remarkable to be able to compare the conventional wisdom with the actual data."

Resident input in devising the interventional schedule was also essential to its success. Dr. Czeisler pointed out that the new schedule was actually adopted after two previous schedules were thrown out.

"Originally, we thought we would use a night float to guarantee ICU interns 10 hours of protected sleep. But as we began to work with that model, we realized that because we had to hire more staff, it was enormously expensive. Also, in talking with the interns, we found that they wanted to be able to work at night.

They argued that if they never worked at night, how could they then come back as senior residents to work and supervise others at night?"

Then the research team went to "Plan B"—deciding to test out the Association of American Medical College's 2001 recommendation that house staff work no more than 12 consecutive hours in an ICU setting. "We had four interns and they

.....  
"It's not the total number of hours worked per week that is the problem, it's the consecutive hours worked."

Charles Czeisler, MD, PhD

.....  
weren't supposed to work more than 12 hours at a time," said Dr. Czeisler. "But they were so conscientious—they would come in early before their shift and stay late after their shift. The shifts started blending into each other and soon the interventional schedule hours were as long, or longer, than the traditional schedule.

"We had to stop," said Czeisler. "We didn't want to enforce the schedule; to tell people 'you must leave.'



Dr. Charles Czeisler discussed the findings of the Harvard Work Hours Health and Safety Group with *CIR News*.

PHOTO: SANDY SHEA/CIR

We felt that was just the wrong message to give them."

Then it was back to the drawing board and interventional schedule #3 was devised, a decidedly 'outside the box' schedule that breaks the call into two parts, separated by 24 hours (see chart and box for more details).

Inevitably, the Harvard research team had to confront concerns about continuity of care, universally recognized as a crucial ingredient in the provision of quality patient care, not to mention avoiding serious medical errors. The interventional schedule

.....  
"We learned it was critical to develop team building skills. It's not 'my patient,' but 'the team's patient.'"

Charles Czeisler, MD, PhD

.....  
meant that not every intern was able to attend morning rounds and some attendings were displeased. Asked how that problem was addressed, Dr. Czeisler replied that, "we learned it was critical to develop team building skills. It's not 'my patient,' but 'the team's patient.'" He also stressed that there was much to be done to improve the transfer of information. Wrote the NEJM authors:

"Although our intervention decreased the rate of serious errors

overall, our efforts to optimize the sign-out process were only partially successful. The computerized template was never fully adopted, and the effectiveness of the planned evening sign-out was frequently sub-optimal. Although some groups of interns worked successfully as teams and effectively signed out every evening, even in the absence of formal training in team management, others did not.

"We suggest that future scheduling interventions address this issue by adding formal evening rounds for the entire team. Such improvements, coupled with the elimination of extended work shifts, could further improve patients' safety." (NEJM p. 1846)

Finally, *CIR News* asked Dr. Czeisler about the C word—cost. What were the implications of this study for the hospital's bottom line? He stressed, "how proud I am of our hospital, that they opened themselves up to this kind of scrutiny," and noted that the hospital did incur additional costs because of it. Still, Dr. Czeisler reported that Brigham and Women's was seriously considering limiting schedules to a maximum of 16 hours next year. So what about the cost? Dr. Czeisler noted that the annual cost of an additional intern in the ICU was about \$50,000 and the daily cost of billing in the ICU was probably greater than \$50,000.

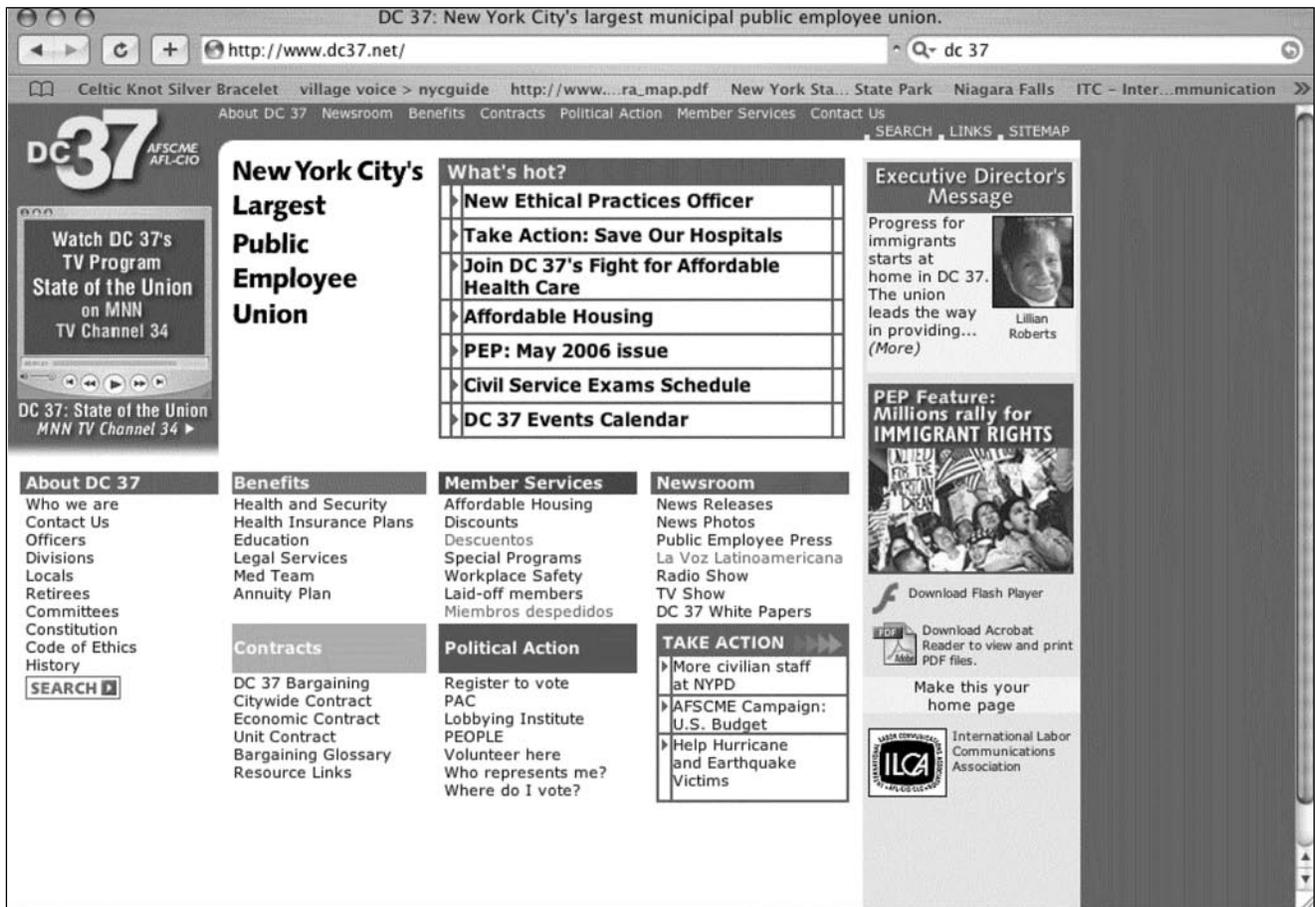
"The cost of reducing preventable medical errors," he concluded, "Priceless."

## SIDE THE BOX: ur Maximum for Safety

The intervention schedule includes a one-hour overlap between the out-going day-call intern, and incoming night-call intern—this overlap is often extended as clinically required. Interns only attended clinics when it coincides with standard day shift.

The big advantages of this schedule are:

- **Flexibility**—allows for interns to stay 1-3 hours longer than their scheduled 16-hour shift when patient care and/or medical education requires—without cutting into their sleep time.
- **Rested Interns** working nights were much more awake. Dr. Czeisler said one resident described them as "the energizer bunny—the only one really awake in the unit at night."
- **More Procedures** were done at night by interns on the intervention schedule than by those on the traditional schedule (contrary to the conventional wisdom that says housestaff see more/do more when they are in the hospital longer).
- **Fewer medical errors!**



**Web Site 1st Place**  
[www.dc37.net](http://www.dc37.net)  
**DC 37, AFSCME**

## Judges Comments

No frames! Congratulations to the DC 37 AFSCME web team for ditching the frames that formerly characterized their web site and developing a well-organized, comprehensible organizational structure, a challenge considering the size of their organization. The purpose of the DC 37 web site, as the web site states, is providing “easy access to the information you want and need,” and it does this very well. Links to pages about the district’s locals, benefits, member services, news, political action, and contracts are arranged in color-coded categories in a table-type format on the home page. Timely topics, such as tax-preparation help and the Events Calendar, are highlighted on top by using a slightly larger and bolder font and showing the table gridlines. Documents such as the full text of the collective bargaining contract and the Council’s constitution, plus the *Public Employee Press*, download easily in PDF format. Other useful content includes a chronological history of the Council and a bargaining glossary. The team makes strategic use of home page real estate to highlight the Council’s identity logo (“New York City’s Largest Public Employee Union”). And, I am happy to see that DC 37’s address is typed out at the bottom of the home page as well as in a “Contact Us” web page. (No Contact Information was one of the Ten Top Worst Web Design Mistakes for 2005 listed by web usability guru Jakob Nielsen.)

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CLICK HERE FOR TWO MORE

## Web Site 2nd Place

[www.psc-cuny.org](http://www.psc-cuny.org)  
PSC, NYSUT/AFT

## Judges Comments

Graphics are the delight and downfall of web sites; I am a sucker for unique, well-designed images but madly click away when I encounter distracting or over-used images. In the case of the Professional Staff Congress, the home page graphic of a group of dusky blue and black buildings whose shapes echo books, a tower and a graduation cap immediately drew me in. Graphics are used in clever ways throughout the PSC web site, and a sense of humor livens up the site in quirky ways that are hopefully appreciated by its membership (I particularly liked the use of automobile icons for the "Hitchhikers Guide" to the site).

Of course, a good union web site is more than its graphics, and the PSC site delivers on several levels. The site contains important basic information, such as the union's Mission Statement and affiliations, calendars of union meetings and NYC labor events, a Who's Who of the local with e-mail addresses for most of the listees, past and current issues of *The Clarion* easily downloaded in PDF format, plus highly detailed information such as salary schedules, links to benefit information, and an archive of contracts, constitutions, by-laws, resolutions, and minutes. There is clearly an effort here to provide all information to all members. I am impressed by the presentation of this information and data within a uniform design and color scheme.

Teamsters Local 237 -- Features

http://www.local237.org/features/2005/dae\_0205.html

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**Features: February 2005**

**The DOE's Skilled Trades Titles: Doing It Right the First Time -- Photo Gallery**

→ Leaky crumbling ceilings, loose tiles in the bathrooms and broken handrails in the stairwells of New York City's public schools are par for the course. With more than 1,200 facilities in five boroughs, many of which are over 80 years old, repairs are constantly needed. When school principals — responsible for more than one million students throughout the city — see such hazards, they know they can count on skilled trade workers to do the repairs correctly.

These Local 237 members — unlike cheaper private contractors frequently hired by the Department of Education — are background-checked by the FBI to ensure the safety of schoolchildren. The union's skilled trades workers also qualify with years of experience and must pass civil service tests. In addition, they stay abreast of changes in their trades with annual training — especially in relation to handling hazardous materials.



Supervisor of Bricklayers Lou Plumatillo recalls when securing materials was easier.




## Web Site 3rd Place

www.local237.org  
Local 237, IBT

## Judges Comments

Very often the actual work union members do becomes lost under layers of stereotypes and generalities. This is particularly true of members of Teamsters locals. Which is why I thought two features of the IBT Local 237 web site, *Members at Work* and *Women at Work*, were noteworthy. *Members at Work* profiles some of the diverse occupations that make-up the local and the members who hold them: TLC taxi cab inspectors in Queens, NYPD horseshoers in Pelham Bay, Shellfish hatchery workers in Islip. (Who would think Teamsters fertilize clams?) *Women at Work* profiles women who broke through gender barriers at the NYC Housing Authority during the late 1970s and early 1980s to become superintendents. The profiles are excerpts from oral histories which would otherwise have been simply filed away, unavailable to union women who badly need role models. I think features such as these add individuality to local union web sites and help members feel a sense of ownership. I am glad to see that these features have links on the Local 237 home page; I would like to see the features updated on a regular basis; such freshening not only updates the content, it keeps members coming back for more.



## Photograph

*The Clarion*  
PSC/NYSUT, AFT

## Judges Comments

Dave Sanders — *Contract action springs into summer.*  
This photo is perfectly composed in terms of the way space is divided. It captures the moment with emotion, depth, and movement.



**Photograph**

*Public Employee Press*  
DC 37, AFSCME

**J**udges  
**C**omments

Tom Bentsen — *Third Mate.*

This is an interesting work photo with dramatic composition and movement.



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— Coretta Scott King

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## 2006 CONTEST JUDGES

*Sally Alvarez* is a Senior Extension Associate in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University. Since 2001, she has directed the New York State AFL-CIO/Cornell Union Leadership Institute.

*Amy Manso* was a graphic designer in the labor movement for over 15 years, having worked for District 65/UAW and the ILGWU (and later UNITE). She currently lives and works in New Paltz, New York.

*Leyla Vural* is a New York City-based freelance writer and editor for unions and other labor-related non-profits. She earned her Ph.D. in geography from Rutgers University in 1994.

### **WEB SITE JUDGE**

*Donna L. Schulman* is Librarian at the NYC office of the School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University. She has taught Internet-related courses at Cornell, New York University, and the UALE Summer Institute for Union Women since 1987.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

Special thanks to District Council 37, Local 802, AFM, and 1199SEIU, for making our 2006 Convention and day-to-day work possible, and Consolidated Color Press for printing the journal.

**GENERAL EXCELLENCE**

( COVER)

*Communique*  
Local 1180, CWA

## **J**udges Comments

Judges feel the publication is consistently high quality (except for the cat food cover). It does an excellent and often courageous job of linking members' concerns to larger issues. It's consistently clear, crisp, well written, and imaginatively laid out.

LOCAL 1180

COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS OF AMERICA

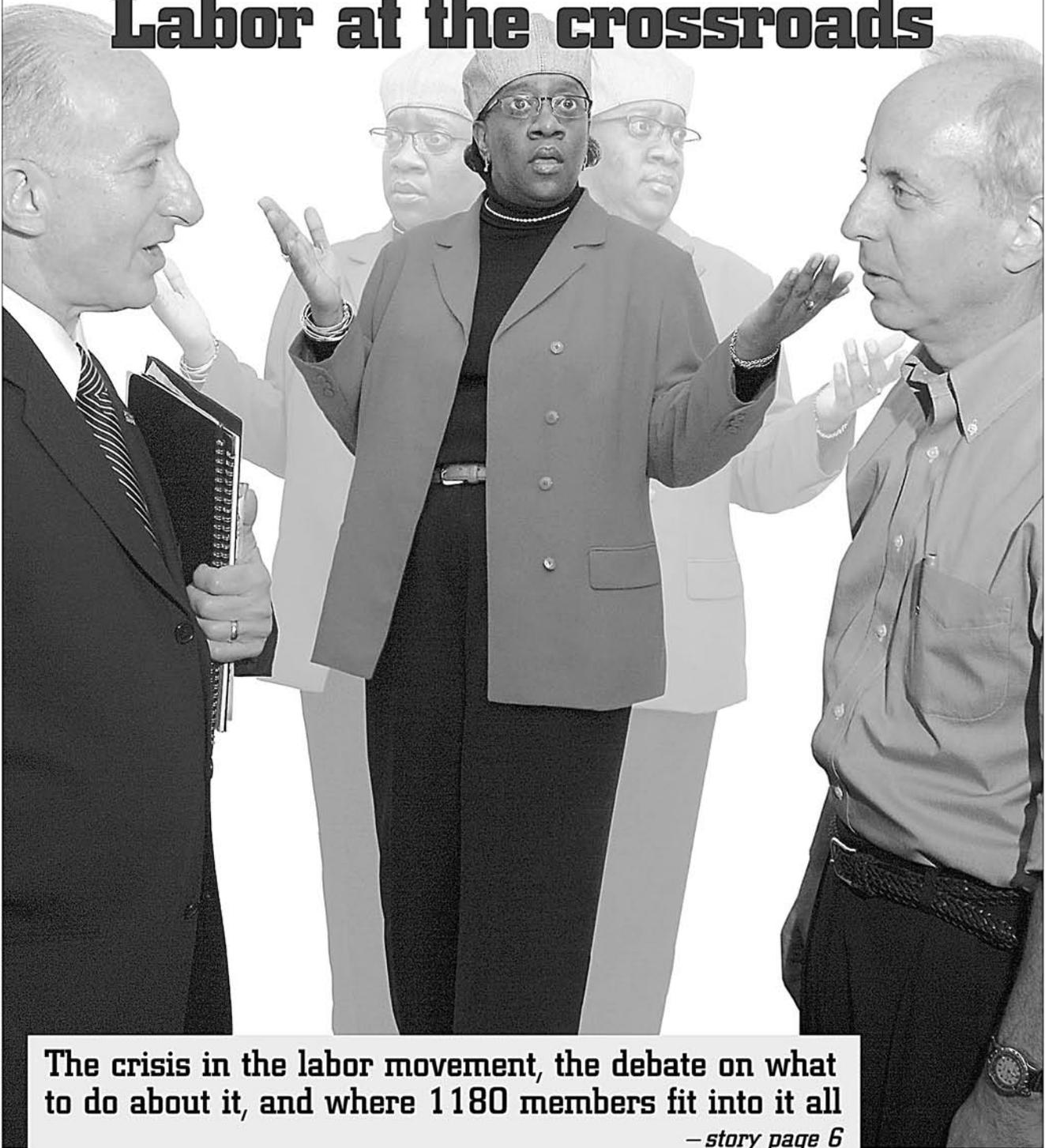
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# COMMUNIQUE

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2005

## Labor at the crossroads



**The crisis in the labor movement, the debate on what to do about it, and where 1180 members fit into it all**

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