

LOCAL 10-00086 • UNITED STEELWORKERS • AFL-CIO

"We urge everyone to use this time, this absence of distraction, to think about where we want to go as a nation, and to become more involved with this great democratic process of ours."

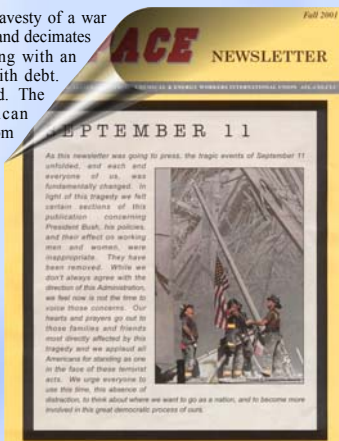
Something in the Air

The above quote comes from the editorial that accompanied our Fall 2001 newsletter, the cover of which appears below. We chose to return to this particular issue not because we wish to mark any timely anniversary of the event, but because we want to revisit the challenge put forth at that time, not just to our union members, but to all Americans as well. It is our belief, that in the six plus years since 9/11, something has gone seriously wrong in our country.

Two things stand out: a continuing travesty of a war in Iraq which bleeds our military dry and decimates the lives of our finest soldiers, along with an unsound economy crippled daily with debt.

Do not think that the two are unrelated. The price tag for this war to American taxpayers is \$195 million per day. From a labor perspective alone that's enough money to raise the minimum wage \$3.34 an hour for every minimum wage worker, or to extend unemployment benefits one week for 722,000 unemployed Americans, or to provide comprehensive safety and health training to 121,875 workers. Education, health care, and Homeland Security, key components to a strong and secure nation, all suffer because of a lack in funding.

This downward spiral can be traced to a complete failure of leadership, starting with George W. Bush, and a government for sale to the highest bidder. It is both a disgrace, and a travesty, that an opportunity for the supposedly best and the brightest to lead a united America out of darkness has merely highlighted the utterly stupid and shallow management skills of our leaders for the entire world to see. This is a country being run like a corporation, and we, its citizens, are merely throwaway pieces when it comes to the bottom-line.



Here at West Point forgive us for sometimes wondering if our current leadership is not of a kind that is running our government. We, the union, have continually and consistently shown that we make medicine, and make it well, and yet we are quite aware that plant management and Whitehouse will move our work elsewhere in a heartbeat if they can. How does that make America a better country?

Understand that this company does not seem to like our union. Every policy decision appears designed to undermine seniority and destroy our solidarity simply because it is perceived that we are an impediment to some five-star ranking in Forbes magazine. For the sake of our families, our future, and a hard-fought working tradition handed down from previous generations, we cannot let them succeed. Each of us in this bargaining unit needs to resolve, right now, to make a concerted effort to co-operate with one another, to work accident-free, and to be compliant. We must continue to show that no one in any right-to-work state or unregulated foreign land can do what we do better, more efficiently, more safely than we.

Something is in the air. It might be doom. Or it could be a revolution. A younger, formerly disengaged age group is suddenly energized, while an older, once vital generation finally shows signs of shedding its cynicism. People who have never bothered casting a ballot in their lives are suddenly impassioned for change, for a voice, simply because in their hearts

they know it is getting late. This country is sick of the lies and business as usual.

If you are tired of being spoon fed the corporate nonsense and propaganda from Wall Street that tells us that Americans cannot hope to compete in the global economy, then now is the time to be the best at what we do. Down the road, if that isn't good enough, let the chips fall where they may.

Local News

⊙ As a result of last November's elections our Local now has a lot of new faces. Your new Executive Board is as follows: President Mike Parente; Plant Chairman Dan Bangert; Vice-President Phil Hughes; Recording Secretary Paul Mercurio; Secretary-Treasurer Daryl Bailey; Financial Secretary Frank Deitzel; Sergeant-at-Arms Mike Gauger; Guide Gene Donegan; Trustees Gary Holland, Kevin McCafferty, and Bill Panetta; Board Members-at-Large Debbie Yakscoe, Dan Matthew, Jim Hofmann, Mike Grabowski, and Steve Parente. The Plant Committee is comprised of Mark Snyder, Phil Hughes, Bill Panetta, and Daryl Bailey. Good luck to all the new leaders, as well as returning officers.

⊙ Just because membership has decided on a change in leadership doesn't mean that the company now respects us, that greater wages and enhanced benefits are on the way, that our efforts towards self-direction and ingenuity will be rewarded, and that all thoughts of moving manufacturing down South or overseas will suddenly fade away. On the contrary, we are fighting for our lives, and in order to promote unity throughout the rank and file, we are announcing the formation of new committees, as well as the restructuring of old ones. Daryl Bailey will chair the new Civil Rights Committee. Linda Bunt will be Chairwoman of the new Women's Committee, with Kisha Byrd serving as Co-Chair. Paul Mercurio will reassume the Chairman's position of the Communications Committee and the 10-86 Newsletter, while Phil Hughes will chair the Legislative Committee, with Mark Snyder serving as Co-Chair. Mark will remain Chairman of the Safety Committee, with Debbie Yakscoe and Dan Bangert continuing as Co-Chairs. Anyone interested in serving on these committees should solicit the appropriate Chairperson.

⊙ Last November the members of our USW Safety and Health Committee were honored by PhilaPOSH, the renowned non-profit organization dedicated to the protection of workers' health and safety. Our committee received the Outstanding Health and Safety Award. Other award recipients included: Joseph J. Dougherty, Ironworkers Business Manager, for the Karen Silkwood Award; Thomas Paine Cronin for the Tony Mazzocchi Award; Arthur Steinberg and Joseph McGugan for Leadership in Health and Safety Awards; Philadelphia City Councilman Juan F. Ramos, who received a Special Recognition Award. In presenting the award to our committee, Jim Moran, former PhilaPOSH director, said "that nobody was more important in the battle for human rights than frontline union workers such as these."

⊙ Congressman Patrick Murphy (D-PA), who was in attendance at the PhilaPOSH Awards Night, successfully petitioned and awarded our Safety Committee a Congressional Citation for its excellence in the area of worker safety and health.



⊙ The Local has entered into a month to month contract with a new law firm. After a lengthy interview process with three prospective firms, the Executive Board voted to recommend to membership Willig, Williams, and Davidson. The recommendation was approved at the January 14, 2008 membership meeting. Willig, Williams, and Davidson, located in Philadelphia, is an accomplished, diverse law firm which concentrates on representing labor unions, employee benefit funds, and individual working people. They are committed to providing the highest level of professional services and to building strong personal relationships with each client.

⊙ In January the Plant Committee filed a formal information request on the Skills Assessment test. Many hours were dedicated to research in preparation of this comprehensive request regarding everything from grading practices and demographics, to personality profiling. We are working with the International and the USW in Rahway, as well as our new law firm, to assess the potential challenges regarding the test. To date the failure rate hovers at a 50% rate, begging the question, if the company deems half of us unqualified to swing mops, how is it we do such a fine job of making medicine?

⊙ The company is making a concerted effort to help employees with paycheck issues. If you have a paycheck issue, you must first go to your supervisor for resolution. If no resolution is forthcoming, the employee or the supervisor needs to contact HR Service Center at 1-866-MRK-HR4U, or visit the website at <http://hr.merck.com> and establish a case number. If there has been no resolution or reply within 3 days, contact Michele Thrush (x20100) and she promises to look into the issue. Michele also informs us that the company will be holding meetings on Wednesdays for paycheck problems from 8:30 - 10:00 AM in Building 53B-4003, and that employees/supervisors are welcome to come with their questions.

⊙ Our web page www.USW10-86.org has a new look. This is the first phase of a two-part reconstruction. Additional in-depth browsing is coming for all current members. We ask your patience as the newer, improved changes are forthcoming.

⊙ Our own Maurice Lee was recently deployed for a second tour of duty in Iraq. Anyone wishing to give a shout out to Maurice can contact him by email at: maurice.d.lee@us.army.mil.

⊙ Finally, it bears repeating: If you are injured, or suspect you have been injured while at work, you must inform your supervisor and report to Health Services immediately to record the incident. Not reporting an injury places you and your rights under worker's compensation in jeopardy. It also endangers your future and that of your co-workers. **If you have any questions regarding a workplace injury contact your shop steward, the union office, your safety rep, or our site safety rep, Debbie Yakscoe (20185).**

Family Medical Leave Act

Congress enacted the Family Medical Leave Act in 1993 and President Clinton signed it into law. The Act was designed to allow eligible employees to balance the demands of their workplace with the needs of their families and their own health. You are entitled to these rights without fear of retaliation.

You are eligible for FMLA if you have 12 months of employment and have worked at least 1250 hours during the 12 months prior to the start of your leave. (Note: the company has exercised its option to adjust from a calendar FMLA to a rolling year FMLA. Section 825.200 (d) (1) of the Act states that "such a transition must take place in such a way that the employees retain the full benefit of 12 weeks of leave under whichever method affords the greatest benefit to the employee. Under no circumstances may a new method be implemented in order to avoid the Act's leave requirement." Therefore, it is the union's position that all employees will have 60 days of FMLA as of January 1, 2008 providing they are eligible for the benefit).

As an eligible employee you are entitled to 60 days of job-protected leave in a 12 month period to:

- 1) Treat or recover from a serious health condition that renders you unable to perform the duties of your job.
- 2) Care for a child, spouse, or family member suffering from a serious health condition.
- 3) Care for a newborn, newly adopted, or foster child.

A serious health condition includes injuries or illnesses that involve medical treatment and incapacitate you or a family member. FMLA also covers disabilities resulting from chronic ailments or pregnancy. The company may request a certification by a doctor or health care provider, verifying that your leave is for the purpose recognized by FMLA. At that point you have 15 calendar days to respond to the certification requests. The company does not have the exclusive right of requesting recertification without meeting certain criteria. Guidelines for recertification can be explained on a case by case basis.

The most important thing to remember is to protect your self. Make copies of all documents that you submit to the company and record on those documents the date they were submitted or ask them to initial and date the copies.

FMLA is a complicated benefit and the above information only touches on basic issues and rights concerning the act. If you have any question regarding FMLA please contact your shop steward or the union office.

~Phil Hughes

RAPID RESPONSE FOR 2008

Rapid Response participated in some major legislative victories in the past year. The first was the Employee Free Choice Act (H.R.800) which passed both Houses of Congress. Unfortunately the Senate vote did not secure a 3/5 majority, rendering it unable to override a Presidential veto.

The second and still ongoing campaign is the Anti-Sweatshop Legislation, known as The Decent Working Conditions and Fair Competition Act (S.367 & H.R.1992). Backed by the United Steelworkers, it was introduced in the Senate by Byron Dorgan (D-ND) and in the House of Representatives by Congressmen Michael McHaud (D-ME) and Chris Smith (D-NJ). This legislation is critical, not only to American workers trying to compete globally on an un-level playing field, but also to workers in Third World countries suffering exploitation and human rights abuses, simply to enhance corporate earnings.

If, as a Merck employee, you do not think this affects you, we urge you to think again. Recently the company's Director of Clinical Research in the Asia Pacific region began working with the Chinese State Food and Drug Administration regarding science based decision making principles. In other words, they may be exploring the possibility of manufacturing Merck products in Asia. Imagine your children taking a Chinese vaccine. It has already been proven that China has substandard

manufacturing regulations. To date Chinese businesses have sent to our shores toys covered with lead based paint, substandard tires that disintegrate when the rubber meets the road, fake auto parts, contaminated food products, and killer pet food.

Now Merck, with the blessing of our government, could conceivably give China the same opportunity to manufacture medicines and vaccines.

Join the fight to stop toxic imports. The USW has launched a nation-wide campaign to end the toxic trade which is putting our jobs and our families' health in jeopardy. Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Senator Robert Casey (D-PA) have introduced The Food and Product Responsibility Act (S-2081). This legislation covers a wide variety of goods including consumer, industrial, medical and food products and requires companies that produce and import toxic products to cover the full cost of any potential recalls. The action began in January of 2008 and our local has so far submitted over 338 letters to Senators and Congressional Reps asking support on this important legislation. We need more participation. It is our jobs and our future. For more information on Rapid Response or Legislative Actions contact Phil Hughes or George Walsh.

~Phil Hughes

Martin Luther King 40th Anniversary

In January seven members of our Local went to the 40th anniversary celebration of the Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike in Tennessee. The event took place over the Dr. Martin Luther King holiday weekend. In attendance were Allen Adams, Daryl Bailey, Dan Bangert, Kisha Byrd, Desiree Churchill, Gordon Goodman, and Gary Holland. All seven members participated in community action events designed to raise worker awareness of this important and significant historical event.

During a heavy rainstorm in Memphis on February 1, 1968, two black sanitation workers were crushed to death when the compactor mechanism of the trash truck they were sitting in was accidentally triggered. The workers had been seeking shelter from the storm in the back of the truck. On the same day in a separate incident also related to the inclement weather, 22 black sewer workers had been sent home without pay, while their white supervisors were retained for the day with pay. About two weeks later, on February 12, more than 1,100 black sanitation workers began a strike for job safety, better wages and benefits, and union recognition. Dr. King's support and participation in the strike was crucial in turning national attention to the inequities facing minority workers in the South. On April 4, as he stepped out of his motel room to go to dinner, Dr. King was assassinated.



Candlelight vigil outside the Shelby County Justice Center

Speaking about the event, Gary Holland had this to say. "It really opened your head up to the fact that this strike wasn't just about minorities, but about working people everywhere, and that unity and strength isn't just a slogan, but a valuable lesson for us all."

*This issue is dedicated to the memory of
Sakk Frankenfield,
a ground-breaking safety advocate
and tireless union man.*

NEWSLETTER STAFF

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Writer/Contributor Phil Hughes

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