

*"The boss doesn't listen when one guy squawks, but s/he's gotta listen when*

# ***THE UNION TALKS***

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Volume 1, Issue 2



This is an MHS employee-produced monthly newsletter. It will report union activities and issues from facilities represented by SEIU Local 250.

Letters and suggestions are welcome—  
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## **INSIDE**

From the Chief  
MSJH Revelation  
Methodist Report  
Union cartoon  
MGH President Resigns

Information and photographs of Sacramento union events can be seen at  
<http://dillingertoons.net>

## **TECHNICAL BARGAINING UNIT WINS CONTRACT WITH KAISER WAGES!**



Gerald Sachs (Sp.Procedures Tech, MSJH), signs the contract while Robert Harrington (RT, MSJH) and Jan Karbowski (RT, MG) look on. It is 0200 hours 10-18-02.

**I**n the early hours of the morning on October 18<sup>th</sup>, bargaining between SEIU Local 250 and CHW finally culminated in a contract agreement for the Technical Unit.

Bargaining for the techs began August 1. A bargaining committee was elected to represent the 600 technical employees at the four area CHW hospitals and Bruceville Terrace. Other employees were welcome to attend the bargaining sessions.

The first four meetings proved frustrating for the employees due to the absence of one or more of the CHW committee members at scheduled bargaining sessions. Thirteen proposals were discussed and presented by the techs to CHW for consideration. These covered areas such as wages, float criteria, on-call/stand-by issues and licensure reimbursement. Because of the lack of progress, John Borsos, our Union negotiator,

established a deadline of September 25<sup>th</sup> to reach a settlement.

With the deadline established, the next meeting proved much more productive than any previous sessions. Employer-paid family healthcare was agreed upon, but the wage proposal was refused and countered with a 9% across-the-board offer.

At the next session, the job matches were brought up, but 75% of the bargaining unit was still not properly matched based on skills performed. At issue were several job classifications, including the LVN's, OR techs, Respiratory Therapists, and the various Imaging modalities. Matches were based on the Kaiser January 2002 B2 wage scale. At the close of the negotiating process, the job matches for Imaging Services were still unresolved. At stake is the wage range that comes with the appropriate job match, but more important is the recognition given to the employee for skills performed.

The first wage increase will go into effect with ratification of the contract.

(continued on page 3)

**An injury**



Chief Shop Steward Bill Watson, Mercy General Hospital

**“Strength comes in numbers and solidarity equals power—Get involved so that this sort of injustice disappears!”**

**More strength has recently been added to our numbers—Woodland Hospital voted 10/17/02 to join Local 250! Election of Bargaining Committee will be November 7, 2002.**

## From the Chief!

There used to be a publication called “The Updater” that was put out by the now gobbled-up Mercy Hospital of Sacramento for its employees. I’d like to call attention to the December ’86/January ’87 issue of that publication, because two long-time employees featured on the cover of that issue have recently been terminated.

Richard and Denise Creighton were married May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1981. “Ten days before I started working here,” stated Denise in the article about Mercy General employees married to each other. Soon afterward, Richard was hired and began working in the Engineering Department.

Richard was the first to feel the sting of “*The Mercy Touch*”. Injured on the job in May of 1994, he continued to work with a torn tendon in his shoulder. He stayed on the job nearly another five years until another tear to the tendon in the same shoulder required him to undergo multiple surgeries to repair the damage. He was released back to work in April of 2002, and received a letter from Human Resources that Richard and Denise say required him to carry a 100 lb. weight for 100 feet, ten times in an eight hour shift. These are the criteria he had to meet before being able to return to his job. As it turns out, Richard was not to go back to his job. About six weeks after his return date passed, he had a stroke. Approximately two

weeks later, while recovering from this stroke and on State Disability with sick time and PTO left in his accrued banks, he was terminated.

Richard Creighton had managed to do what few others have accomplished recently: he had lasted 19 ½ years. It took multiple coronary artery bypass and shoulder repair surgery, and a stroke to finally get him fired. A pretty tough guy in my book! Now he’s trying to retire and guess what? Yup....he can’t get the papers he needs to fill out. Seems they want him to wait until he’s 65, even though he wants to retire, and has the right to, now. Maybe carrying 110 lbs, for 100 feet, ten times in an eight-hour shift will get him that retirement.

Denise managed to last longer. I guess that makes her tougher, or at least luckier. She was fired August 19, 2002. A little over 20 years, by my reckoning. Seems Denise has come communication skills issues, newly discovered after twenty years. By admission from her superiors, her job performance was exemplary, but she just wasn’t nice enough while performing the jobs of two and three people with skill and accuracy. The stuff about a disabled and unemployed husband, two kids (one who has a real shot at the next Summer Olympics), and an employer not quite sensitive to the situation, though having caused much of the tension, seemed not to matter. She was not offered any sort of help,

even though it was available. No communications classes, personal counseling, nada, Zip. And then on top of it all, all the accusations raised against her remain unchallenged. Seems the info that got her axed can’t be confirmed. The second and third-hand allegations cannot be substantiated because she is being denied her rights to due process and the ability to face her accusers. Hmmmmm... I thought we lived in America.

The Creightons were both recipients of “Mercy Medallions.” Denise used to help plan the Christmas parties (when we used to have them), and was active in the Mercy Guild. This is a Mom and Dad, working almost 40 years between them, at Mercy General. Both of them good at their jobs, family rearing, and volunteer work. Both going the extra mile when needed and both in need of help. Hey, LET’S FIRE THEM! Now there’s some rocket science. Lots of brain-storming going on there. Yessirree!

This is not the only story of this kind in “The Nekkid City.” There are injustices going on all around us, every day, at these facilities. Make yourself aware of them and join in the attempts to correct them and set things right. Strength comes in numbers and solidarity equals power. Get involved, people, so that this sort of injustice disappears!

## **MGH PRESIDENT RESIGNED.....**

Tom Peterson has resigned his position as President of Mercy General Hospital after twenty years with the Mercy Healthcare system. His resignation was effective October 31, 2002.

Employees at Mercy General and readers of this newsletter will remember the great interest Mr. Peterson took in our Union, devoting many hours of his time to it in the weeks preceding last November's Union election. Critics interpreted his remarks during that period as "anti-union" and "anti-employee", but others took a more charitable view, citing as proof of his interest the extreme lengths Mr. Peterson went to in order to ensure the presence of all employees at mandatory hospital meetings before the election. These meetings highlighted Tom's views on the shortcomings of Kaiser, a Union hospital. When pressed by avid questioners, he would expound on the unlikelihood that Mercy employees would ever

be getting Kaiser wages. How surprised and pleased he must be that the Tech unit got Kaiser wages in their new contract!

Following the Union victory at MGH, we saw less of Mr. Peterson, and it was soon realized that the shortest path to his door was with a Step 2 level grievance. Employees who reached this step in the grievance procedure found it easy to meet with the nattily-attired hospital president, though the conversation sometimes had a strained quality to it. Visitors under these circumstances often claimed he lacked "sympathy" and appeared "uninterested" when they described various contract violations.

We wish Tom well in his next endeavor. Whatever that may be, he can take pride in the role he played in bringing Local 250 to the MHS system!

--Ellen Dillinger, Med Transcriber, Imaging Services, MGH



Field Rep. Josie Summers and former Shop Steward Lonnie standing outside MGH's Human Resources office, the site of much Union activity during Mr. Peterson's regime.

## **TECHS NEGOTIATE CONTRACT**

(continued from Page 1)

The second increase is set for May, 2003, and will reflect the Kaiser October 6, 2002 B2 wage scale. Imaging Services will go into arbitration to resolve the classification disagreement. Stand-by/on-call pay will increase, as will preceptor pay. Also agreed upon were a wage equity adjustment process, the ability (for the employee) to voluntarily reduce hours, and a ratification bonus.

The entire negotiation process has been a learning experience for all. We didn't realize the existence of many of these issues until we participated in the bargaining process. At issue were not just wages, but benefits and scheduling of overtime and call.

This process has also given employees an opportunity to meet co-

workers from their respective departments in the other hospitals, as well as from other areas of their own hospital. This has enabled everyone to learn more about what is at issue in various aspects of patient care and how everyone plays an important role.

--Lorenza Clausen, Special Procedures Tech, Imaging Services, Mercy General

**"We didn't realize the existence of many of these issues until we participated in the bargaining process"**

**YIKES!** Sometimes one article on a page cries out to another for direct action! Read Chris' article on AB 109 and then think about what the Patient Care Committee could do to change sick leave policy! This is why we need people to get on this committee!

**DATES TO REMEMBER**  
**Shop Steward Meetings:**

Methodist/Bruceville meets every 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month at 1530-1630 hours.

Location: Methodist Hospital

Mercy General meets every 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday at 1630 – 1730 hours.

Location: Mercy General

Mercy San Juan meets every 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday, 1800-1900 hours  
 Location: MSJH Conference Room.

**AND FOR THOSE PROBLEMS NOT SPECIFICALLY ADDRESSED IN THE CONTRACT.....**

We have the Patient Care Committee at each of the hospitals. As spelled out in the contract, this committee will consist of six bargaining unit employees selected by the Union and six representatives of the Employer. Its purpose is to monitor the quality of patient services and make recommendations for improvements in terms of staffing, work environment, systems of patient care delivery, etc. The six employee members of the committee will be allowed four hours of paid time per month to attend the meetings.

What, specifically, might you be discussing? During bargaining, the issue of on-call/standby limits came up. While it was realized

that some employees were hired with the understanding that they do call, it was also realized that there should be limits on how much can be required. One night a week and one weekend a month? —What is the best for employees and the patients they care for? And then, of course, safe staffing levels need to be discussed...

If you are interested in being on the Patient Care Committee and resolving these issues, contact your shop steward or Union field rep.

**The story from Methodist.....**



**WHEN A BILL BECOMES A LAW— AB 109**

Have you heard of AB109?

Mercy hopes you haven't.

Bill 109 became a Law 01/01/00. Did your manager inform you of it? Probably not, so I will. All Department Managers have their own interpretation of it. Anyone can interpret the wording of something to benefit themselves or department needs. If you

call in sick, Mercy gives you five unexcused absences on a yearly rotating calendar. On the sixth call in one year's time, (a whole 365 days) you start your disciplinary action with a verbal warning. Well, that is only the beginning... you had better stay healthy the remaining 360 days.

Now, what happens if you have sick children or elderly parents or an ill spouse to care for on a day you are scheduled to work? I guess they're out of luck: send them to school sick or stick'em in a nursing home. Because if you call in ten times in

365 days for whatever reasons you are possibly up for termination. I guess Mercy's Mission doesn't apply to your family... This is the bottom line, spoken from the horse's mouth. You are entitled to five unscheduled absences each 365 days for your own personal illnesses. AB109 gives you an opportunity to care for the above-mentioned without accruing unscheduled absences. There are limitations to this law so check with your shop steward for details.

--Chris Kurpies, Chief Shop Steward, METH.

"What happens if you have sick children or elderly parents, or an ill spouse on a day you are scheduled to work???"

**to all.**

## MSJH UNION MEMBERS SHOW ZERO TOLERANCE FOR WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

On August 14, 2002, members of Mercy San Juan Medical Center's Human Resources Dept. failed to respond appropriately when a unit supervisor threatened an employee with a weapon, not once but twice, within four days. The employee was told there was no need to inform Local 250 of the recent events, "HR would handle it." HR's way of "handling it" was to give the supervisor a week's suspension (with pay we assume, since she was seen continuing some of her duties) and four hours of psycho-logical evaluation by a doctor. However, Local 250 did

not feel that this was an appropriate punishment for the gravity of the offense.

A group of shop stewards at Mercy San Juan formed a committee to devise a plan of action. This included informing Union coworkers of what had happened, starting a petition, and utilizing community resources.

In less than 24 hours, we obtained over 200 signatures between the campuses of Mercy San Juan and Mercy General. The petition stated that we would accept nothing less than the termination of this

supervisor. A letter was also hand-delivered to administration, reinforcing what was stated in the petition.

The power of the unity of the members of SEIU Local 250 forced the administration at Mercy San Juan Hospital to do the right thing.

Within four days of starting the petition, delivering the letter and receiving community support, we were informed that this supervisor had "RESIGNED".

--Victoria Taylor, LVN, MSJH

*How long would you last in our workplace if you pulled a knife on your supervisor? We all know the answer to that one, but how does it work when it's the supervisor who pulls the knife?*

## WE NEED MORE SHOP STEWARDS!

The Techs have ratified their contract and now it's time for them to join with the Service unit to see that the contract is enforced. Members of both bargaining units (Service and Tech) are encouraged to volunteer as shop stewards and help with this important part of being in a Union.

**What you'll be doing:** Shop stewards monitor hospital compliance with the contract, file grievances, solve problems on the job, and work to ensure a safe workplace. When the contract is violated, shop

stewards organize coworkers to take corrective action. (See MSJH story above).

NOTE: State and federal laws protect employees who take part in union activities from discrimination by employers. YOU CAN DO IT!

Training is provided by the Union. If you are interested in helping your co-workers and enforcing the provisions of this contract that we worked so hard to get, contact your Chief Shop Steward.

--Josie Summers

### CHIEF SHOP STEWARDS

MGH: **Bill Watson**  
Home: 455-9310  
Work: 4534810  
METH: **Chris Kurpies**  
Work: 423-6176  
Bruceville Terrace:  
**Christine Thomas**  
684-9265  
MSJH: **Sherri Macias**  
Home: 971-0654  
Work: 537-5037

### SEIU Local 250 Field Representatives:

**Josie Summers:** 275-6342  
(MGH, METH, BV TERR)  
**Mary Hillman:** 747-7957  
(MSJH, FOL, WOOD)

### **NEXT STEWARD TRAINING SESSION:**

Saturday, November 23,  
TIME: 0900 – 1430.  
WHERE: Central Labor  
Council Bldg.  
2840 El Centro Road #111  
Sacramento, CA 95833

Contact: Josie Summers  
or  
Mary Hillman

FISHING FOR SHOP STEWARDS

**SEIU LOCAL 250 UNION HALL HAS MOVED!**

The new location is:

1911 F Street  
Sacramento, CA

You are invited to an open house on Thursday, November 21, from 1600 – 1900 hours.

RSVP to Jim Airheart (916) 326-5850.

SEE YOU THERE!!!!!!

The Sacramento Labor Council recently honored SEIU Local 250 for Excellence in Organizing at its annual "Salute To Labor" Awards Dinner. As you may recall, it wasn't easy.....



**LABOR RECOMMENDS....**

The following candidates and initiatives are believed by the California Labor Federation to be in the best interests of working people.

- Governor: Gray Davis (D)
- Lt. Governor: Cruz Bustamante (D)
- Attorney General: Bill Lockyer (D)
- Secretary of State: Kevin Shelley (D)
- State Controller: Steve Wesley (D)
- State Treasurer: Phil Angelides (D)
- State Insurance Commissioner: John Garamendi (D)

Locally, the Sacto. Central Labor Council Recommends:

- Measure G YES
- Measure H YES
- Measure T NO
- Measure S (full-time mayor) YES

**VOTE**

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