

The Voice of SEIU Local 250 Members working at Mercy Hospitals in the Sacramento area.

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

THE UNION TALKS

UNION COPE FUND SUPPORTS POLITICAL CHANGES IN HEALTHCARE

MARCH 2004
Volume 3, Issue 3

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-
dillwood@sbcglobal.net

Ellen Dillinger, Editor

INSIDE

- **Transcribers bargain job changes**
- **Statewide Bargainers' Report**
- **Health and Safety Committee**
- **EVS Letter**
- **Shop Steward Training**
- **Chief Steward and Field Rep #'s**

An online copy of this newsletter as well as information and photographs of Sacramento union events can be seen at

<http://dillingertoons.net>

What is COPE? "How does it affect me? What are the advantages of contributing to COPE?" These were the most frequently asked questions, when SEIU members were asked this month to contribute or increase their COPE contributions.

Cope=Committee On Political Education. Every pay period thousands of SEIU members donate a few dollars or a few cents to COPE. SEIU 250 uses COPE money to fight for better wages and benefits through political action. Last year SEIU 250 depended on COPE contributions from members to win important political battles such as passing SB 2--the new California law that requires medium sized and larger employers to buy health coverage for workers and their families.

In 2004, SEIU 250 and other SEIU Locals across the nation will be waging a campaign to elect a pro-worker president. We will be registering voters, providing



City Councilmember Dave Jones (lower right) is now the Democratic candidate for Assembly District 9. At his victory celebration on election night, he thanked the coalition of people and organizations that came together to make his campaign a success.

SEIU Local 250 was part of the coalition of unions that supported Dave Jones, contributing the labor of many volunteers, including interns Michelle Magana (MGH) and Suzette Walker (MSJMC), who worked day and night phone-banking, precinct walking, coordinating volunteers and doing whatever was necessary for the campaign. Dave's win is the victory of a good man, but it is also the victory of all the volunteers who participated in this campaign!

If you were not directly involved in Dave's campaign, you may be asking how it happened that our union decided to back Dave Jones. Well, last Fall, the Local 250 Political Action Committee (which any Union member can join), as part of SEIU and the Central Labor Council, interviewed all the candidates. Of particular interest were candidates' views on healthcare and Labor (that's us) issues. Although there were several good candidates for District 9, Dave came out on top and we gave him our support. --E.Dillinger

information about issues to our members, and working in the community to ensure that a President who will put working families first will be elected. So, the next time you are approached about COPE, think about the long

term benefits to you and your families. We need your help. We can't make changes without you!

Suzette Walker (LVN)
Mercy San Juan Medical Center

An injury

MHS IMAGING SERVICES TRANSCRIBERS REACH SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT ON NEW VOICE-OPERATED SYSTEM



Transcribers Joyce Hugo, Tish Mulcahy, and Ellen Dillinger with settlement agreement. Transcriber Diane Bossi (taking the photo) stated that "Though the anticipation of PowerScribe was ominous and threatening, we are now near the end of this arduous journey, thanks to diligence, hard work and a commitment towards working together for the best possible outcome. PowerScribe at this point appears to be a positive addition to our work environment." Other transcribers not pictured are Joyce Krula, Joan Sjodin, Rosemary Anderson and Jean Kwong.

outcome we favored. The subsequent official MHS revelation of this purchase and its consequences (lay-offs were mentioned) at MHS Operational Improvement meetings during the summer of 2003 did nothing to improve morale.

The purchase of PowerScribe posed several interesting questions to us as Union members. CHW's choice of new equipment is out of our hands, but how do we bargain the inevitable changes that new equipment and technology brings? Fortunately, our contract has some guidelines on this subject and ensures our right

to bargain over any changes.

How do we negotiate change? In November of 2003, the Union and MHS held a joint training session to improve relations between the two entities. At this meeting, it was made clear that Union members and management needed to figure out ways to work together to effect needed changes. The pattern of how to do this was not spelled out, though we did have the good example set by union members led by Debora Patton in EVS last year.

In Imaging Services, the transcribers responded to this event with a letter requesting management's proposal for any changes employees might

experience due to the voice-operated system. Our department manager presented a proposal at the end of January 2004, which gratifyingly contained no lay-offs, but did set the stage for weekend rotations, something employees did not want. After much discussion, we decided that it was not possible to know how many transcribers were needed and when until we had tried the new system, and for that purpose, a 90 day trial period was agreed to by management and the Local 250-represented transcribers. During this trial period, employees would agree to rotate every 4th weekend (with the exception of those hired for weekends) and we would meet after a specified period to discuss staffing issues in light of the knowledge gained by using the system. As part of the process, a vote was held (and thanks to shop stewards Brenda Emmons-Toddrill and Cindy Nino for their help on that!). Throughout the proceedings, our field rep, Josie Summers, served as an advisor, and signed off on the final agreement.

So, are we worried about a system that at this point sometimes translates the word "findings" as "Bicycle"? I guess you could say we are relieved to find that our ears and knowledge make us more accurate than PowerScribe, but we realize that with time, PowerScribe will "learn" and improve and may not need all of us as editors. If that happens, we propose that our Union contract and the cooperative relationship we have established with Imaging managers and supervisors during this transition will continue to work to the benefit of both patient care and employees.

--Ellen Dillinger, MGH

Is a computer transcription system that translates the word "Findings" as "Bicycle" something to worry about? Can the words "change" and "cooperation" go together in our workplace?

Transcribers in the Imaging Services Department at MHS learned in June of 2003 that MHS had purchased a voice-operated computer to replace the existing Dictaphone transcription system. Described in the literature as a "labor-saving device," the purchase of PowerScribe was initially not welcome news to our group of eight transcribers. Though we were working with equipment so old that sound quality was impaired, it appeared that MHS's new equipment was intended to replace us, not an

UNION DELIVERS STATEWIDE BARGAINERS' REPORT- MGH

Shop Stewards and Bargaining Committee members from MGH met on March 2nd at the hospital for an update on the first SEIU/CHW bargaining session, held February 24 and 25th in Oakland. Jan Karbowski (RT) and Sylvia Star (Patient Reg), our MGH statewide bargainers, described the progress and goals of the bargaining process.

The general goal is that on May 1, 2004, SEIU Local 250 Union members intend to have a master contract signed that includes fair wage increases, improvements in retirement with retiree health insurance, employment and income security, and expanded Union rights.

A master contract with CHW would provide continuity in wages, benefits and other contract issues throughout the 29 SEIU organized hospitals in the state. It would unite the 15,000 represented healthcare workers who currently belong to either Local 250 (in Northern California) or Local 399 (Southern California) under one contract. Wage scales in the contract would be organized around the principle that those who do the same work should receive the same pay. (Currently healthcare workers in S.Cal. do not have wage scales and there is discontinuity of job matches). The employment and income security goal proposes the creation of a Training and Upgrade Fund, paid for by the employer. CHW could then "grow their own" employees rather than endure shortages in certain specialties and

"STANDARDS PRESERVED" SHOULD BE PRESERVED.....

CHW's proposal to eliminate the "Standards Preserved" clause in our contract runs counter to our Union's most basic goal for a contract: that we continue to be made better by our contract, not worse. Eliminating "Standards Preserved" opens the door to being made worse.

the necessity of hiring travelers.

Expanded Union rights would include paid time for union stewards. Currently shop stewards are paid one hour a month for shop steward meetings, but all other Union work is unpaid. Managers engage with the Union on their paid time, so why shouldn't we be paid for our time?

In describing the statewide bargaining process, Jan noted that the bargaining committee looked at various practices in all the hospitals and determined which qualified as "best practice" to be bargained into the new contract. This seemed not unlike CHW's efforts last year to find "benchmark" hospitals on which to model the larger system. Agreement between SEIU and CHW may be closer than we think!

There is some evidence that agreement isn't close, however: Jan and Sylvia reported that CHW's opening proposal included several takeaways, including eliminating the "Standards Preserved" clause in our contract and inserting a management's rights clause. The latter would allow management to dictate anything that wasn't spelled out in the contract. We currently have no management's

At article in the *Sacramento Bee* several months ago described companies that stopped their 401 K match due to financial problems. Since this is a voluntary match by the employer, the same could occur at Mercy if we were to lose the "Standards Preserved" clause. --Albert McConkie, MGH



" We have a strong negotiator, a strong bargaining team, and strong membership. That translates to a winning contract for all!"--Jan Karbowski, RT.

rights clause and consequently have the right to bargain issues not addressed in the contract. We need to keep it that way!

Jan and Sylvia strongly encouraged the bargaining committee and shop stewards to attend bargaining and general meetings in order to stay informed. Local bargaining will start later this spring, so it's essential to keep up to speed on bargaining developments.

The work of our two state bargainers and of all the bargaining committee is greatly appreciated!

--Ellen Dillinger, MGH

To emphasize SEIU's commitment to the bargaining goals set by our members, a petition is being circulated by shop stewards and bargaining committee. We urge all union members (SEIU and CNA) to sign this petition!

is an injury

CHIEF SHOP STEWARDS

MGH: Chief Steward
Gina Mastergeorge
 Home: 240-2912
 Work: 453-4567
Debra Patton, VCSS
 Home: 348-6904
 Work: 453-4171

METH: **Chris Kurpies**
 Work: 423-6176

Bruceville Terrace:
Daryl Bell
 Work: 423-6025

MSJH: **Sherri Macias**
 Home: 971-0654
 Work: 537-5037

Woodland Clinic:
Annette Hendrix
 Refer to Union
 bulletin board for
 stewards' phone
 numbers.)

FOLSOM: **Nikki Sparks**
 Home: 725-0614
 Work: 983-7400

**SEIU Local 250 Field
 Representatives:**
 Josie Summers: 275-6342
 (MGH,MSJMC,)

Mary Hennigan, 275-2659
 (METH, FOL, WOOD)

STEWARDS MEETINGS

Methodist/Bruceville meets
 3rd Wed. 1530-1630 hours.
 Location: Methodist Hospital

Mercy General meets 2nd
 Wed. at 1630 - 1730 hours.
 Location: MGH Green-house

Mercy San Juan meets 3rd
 Thursday, 1800-1900 hours
 Location: MSJH Conference
 Room.

Woodland Clinic and Hospital
 meets 1st thursday, 1730-
 1830 hours.
 Location: DCR 3 and 4

Mercy Folsom meets 2nd
 Tues. 1330 - 1530 hours
 Location: MHF Conference
 Room

THE ROAD WAS LONG AND HARD....

Recently the EVS Department at MGH has gotten a lot of attention for the strides we made in our negotiations with Mercy General. There are those who think it was an easy task, but the truth is? It was a very long road, and there is still a lot of work to do. In the beginning of our negotiations, management wanted job assignment deletions, and this would've meant displaced workers and heavier work loads. We were told by management that there would be no relationship formed with the Union. There were times the EVS workers did not know where we were going, and many feared for their jobs. If it had not been for Debora Patton, our shop

steward, we might not have made it through. Debora led this fight. She helped organize informational pickets, marches on the department, held employee information meetings, and even stood up and had her say with the CEO about the budget. All of this was scary for her, but she would always say "I am

doing this for you guys, and I don't care if I lose my job." Yes, it has been a long road, and there were a lot of good things that brought about good changes in our department, but we must never stop fighting for what we believe in. We can accomplish anything standing united! --- Betty Davis, MGH



April 2003: Mediation brings a settlement agreement between EVS and MGH after a six month struggle.

WORKMEN'S COMP ISSUE TO BE ADDRESSED BY JOINT COMMITTEE

In an effort to lower workmen's comp costs, CHW has made an historic move. They requested that SEIU work together with CHW to assemble a Joint Health and Safety Committee. As a joint committee, CHW and SEIU have a common interest: to prevent injuries in the work place. We will be com-

ing from different perspectives, however. CHW wants to save money while SEIU wants to find ways to protect the employees from injury. In the end, we hope to have the same goal of making the work place a safer environment.

This is a pilot project. In Northern California, Mercy

San Juan Medical Center, and Methodist Hospital are among the hospitals that have been chosen to lead the way with Health and Safety Committees. If the pilot program is successful, we hope to have committees at every facility in CHW.

Preston Garrison, MSJMC

SHOP STEWARD TRAINING SESSIONS

DATE: Saturday, March 20, 2004
LOCATION: 1911 F Street, SEIU Local 250 Hall
TIME: 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

This is a Part II session, but the classes don't need to be consecutive. The training is a requirement for all shop stewards, so new stewards, this is your chance!

to all.