

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

# THE UNION TALKS

## EVS EMPLOYEES USE UNION RIGHTS TO BARGAIN PROPOSED CHANGES

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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—[dillwood08@msn.com](mailto:dillwood08@msn.com)

### INSIDE

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

As many of you know, the Environmental Services Department is going through a redesign process. The department manager says that the process has been constructed to assure that cleanliness standards, efficiency requirements and budgetary concerns are met. Sounds like the makings of a great project to all that heard the proposal. Many of the job assignments will be altered and the employees of that department are expected to "bid" for

positions according to seniority. This basically means that all the jobs go up for auction and the most senior people get the prime assignments on the preferred shifts. Great . . . except that in the proposal, there is a cut of full time benefited positions and an increase in the number of supplemental positions that will get a schedule of less than 40 hours per pay period. These will not be benefited positions. Actually the number of the nonbenefited positions has increased from the original proposal. The schedules and projected job assignments have actually changed

at each and every meeting. People who now work full-time may not have a position to bid on since there will be

we, in turn, in good faith, are trying to understand the full impact of these changes on our coworkers and union



EVS employees have been active participants in bargaining the changes in their department. Led by shop Steward Debora Patton (center) these and other EVS employees are using their Union voice.

fewer full-time benefited jobs available. Hummmm. That doesn't sound so good. Wonder how the effected employees feel about that?

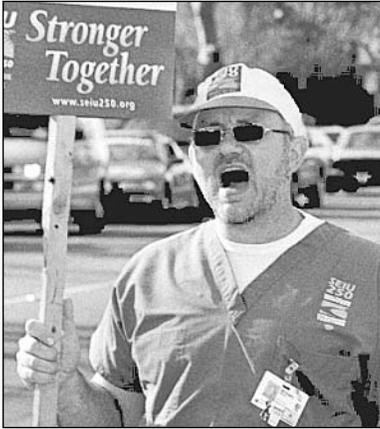
The redesign of a department in which contracted union members work, is an issue that MUST be negotiated with the union. The good news is that instead of simply imposing changes on the people in this department, management has chosen to abide by the contract and discuss the changes. Their good faith efforts are appreciated by one and all, and

brothers and sisters so that no one "loses out" on this proposition. Approval of this project is something we are being very cautious and thorough about, and there is no agreement as to whether or not job bidding will occur.

The last occasion we had to discuss this matter was on December 20th, and the meeting was attended by Union Reps, Stewards, EVS employees and Human Resources Reps. The meeting was open in order to

See "Employees Use Union Rights" page 2

**An injury**



Chief Shop Steward Bill Watson, Mercy General

## SHOP STEWARDS' MEETINGS

Methodist/Bruceville meets every 3rd Wednesday at 1530-1630 hours.

Location: Methodist Hospital

Mercy General meets every 2nd Wednesday at 1630 - 1730 hours.

Location: MGH Green-house

Mercy San Juan meets every 3rd Thursday, 1800-1900 hours

Location: MSJH Conference Room.

Woodland Clinic meets the third Friday of each month, noon- 1300.

## From the Chief!

(Editor's Note: This is the first "Union Talks" of 2003, and a good time for the Chief to look back on 2002 and what we have accomplished as a Union. Below are some highlights of what we've done).

**Bill:** We have managed, with the cooperation of management and Human Resources to reclassify a number of employees formerly working in unbenefted positions into positions that are full or part time with benefits. Although there are some "bugs" to be worked out, this process seems to be developing in a positive

voice opinions and concerns as to the implementation of the new departmental structure. The house was packed. There was even a surprise visit by the head of Employee and Labor Relations for the Northern Division of CHW ! It was a long and involved meeting where the department manager answered employee questions as best he could to try and ease any concerns. The meeting ended amicably with the promise of more information to help us understand exactly what management is proposing. A rematch will probably be scheduled for sometime in January.

manner for both the hospital and the employees.

Beginning this month, many employees will reap the benefits of fully paid dependent healthcare including, dental and vision coverage.

Technical bargaining unit employees that paid union dues after ratification of the contract but before the wage increases took effect, will have those dues credited to them. They will not pay dues on their paycheck to be issued January 16th, 2003.

A change in staffing ratios on two nursing units, resulting in increased

patient loads were revoked soon after they were initiated by management. Changes of that sort must be negotiated with the Union before implementation.

Lots of people have reported that they are no longer being ask to give their names and work extensions before exiting the parking garage.

General membership meetings are being scheduled and will be held on campus. These meeting will be open to all SEIU 250 members and will be held every other month to disperse general info to the general membership, generally.

## Employees Use Union Rights....con't from page 1

No decisions beyond what was discussed in that meeting have been made. Those in attendance are as up to date as they possibly can be, despite what has been going on between supervisors and individual employees. This issue is still up in the air and it is the contention of the Union that the employees in the EVS department will have the final say as to how and what will happen to their jobs. The Union does not see the work being done as a matter of job description and shift. We see it as someone's livelihood. Keeping 2 East clean on

the day shift is not just a job, it's Adelina's job. The housekeeper in Rehab during the day is Viola. Carmen holds down the fort in CSICU. These jobs are the means by which these people live. They are important to their well-being, and we intend to protect that. We understand budget concerns and time/motion stuff, but these are people's lives.

-- Bill Watson,  
Chief Shop Steward  
Mercy General

## Marching on the Boss Comes to Methodist Hospital

On December 23rd, we marched on a boss for the first time at Methodist Hospital, a Union activity protected by Federal Law. The march occurred after over 200 petition signatures had been collected protesting 1) the violation of employees' Weingarten Rights, 2) the blatant violation of California State Law AB109, and 3) the undocumented "interpretation" of Mercy Healthcare policy # 281 (Unscheduled Absences/Tardiness) and policy # 252 (Corrective Action) in the Mercy Healthcare Sacramento Personnel Policy Manual.

Prior to the march, we planned to gather in the hospital cafeteria to go over some last minute details. As we were discussing the fact that the Department Manager was off on an extended Holiday weekend, it was decided to march on whoever the department supervisor was for the day. As we were talking, I turned around, and to my surprise, the supervisor we were discussing was standing behind us getting coffee. It was decided in a split second by the group that the

time was now to take action. As our group of Brothers and Sisters (with support from General) approached the supervisor, our lead spokesperson (who did an excellent job) attempted to read our prepared statement. The supervisor was not cooper-

Resources...Once we arrived there, we regrouped and went in. We were told the H.R. Director was not in and that the on-call Director would not be available for 15 minutes. We went out to the lobby to wait. (Humm...another Manager out on an extended Holiday

were doing WAS hospital business. She then demanded that we move to a hallway outside the H.R. office, where we proceeded to present our petition in a public area rather than in the privacy of the H.R. office. She listened patiently and accepted our petitions and rudely asked if that was all. I guess they (Methodist) would rather air their dirty laundry in public.

All in all, I hope we got the point across that we will not let management get away with things they are accustomed to getting away with.

By the way... who keeps track of Managers sick calls or are they above the law? Wouldn't it be nice to call in and say "I'll be working at home today" or "I won't be in-- I have meetings all day".



Chief Shop Steward Chris Kurpies (far right) and other shop stewards marching through the halls of Methodist to HR to present a 200 signature petition protesting contract violations.

ative at all. She proceeded to call Security and the House Supervisor. She continued to go on about patient confidentiality, a non-issue in this circumstance, and wouldn't listen to us or take our petitions. Next stop Human

weekend). We returned in 15 minutes. She came to us with an attitude, obviously warned of our arrival. She told us to leave the office --that the H.R. office was there to conduct Hospital business. We had to remind her that what we

Next step: Inform the customers

Chris Kurpies  
Chief Shop Steward  
Methodist Hospital

### JOB MATCH ARBITRATION MEETING SCHEDULED

Arbitration for job matches: January 14, 2003 1911 f street any questions please contact your field representative.

**is an injury**

**HOSPITAL EMPLOYEE RETIRES TO COFFEE PLANTATION**

**Albert McConkie**, Special Procedures Tech in Imaging Services, is retiring in January after almost 25 years with Mercy General. He will be greatly missed by his department co-workers, and those of us in the Union will feel the loss as well. Albert was a central player in organizing the Technical Bargaining Unit, attending countless organizing meetings and spending hours on the phone enlisting co-worker support. His Union campaign day often started at 0600 hours, with a wake-up call from our Union organizer.

When asked what had caused him to participate in the Union campaign, Albert said hospital understaffing had been the #1 issue. Pressed further, he blamed Lewis and Nate, two Special Procedures co-workers who had strongly

supported the Union campaign, but left to work at better-paying Union hospitals. "I said I'd back them up during Union organiz-



ing, and then they left!" he said with a tolerant smile. Now, thanks in part to Albert, WE are in a better-

paying Union hospital!

Albert joined the Union organizing effort in the last two years of his service at

Mercy General. With retirement in mind, he had hoped that our Union contract would include an improved

pension and health benefits after retirement, but this did not occur. That is his wish for us when we renegotiate our next contract in 2004.

And the coffee plantation? Actually, another former Mercy General Imaging Services employee, Scott Schwiessinger, now lives and works in Hawaii and has recently purchased an acre of coffee trees. Albert will leave work at Mercy General to step onto an airplane bound for Scott's "plantation" in Hawaii, where he will arrive just in time for the coffee harvest. After some time in the fields, he will return to his home in West Sacramento, where many long-deferred projects await him. We wish him the best and appreciate all he has done for the hospital and the Union! --E.Dillinger, MG

**A SHOP STEWARD'S RESOLUTIONS FOR 2003**

**Going** back to work as a respiratory therapist has given me a renewed sense of what a union is all about. Seeing first hand what is happening in my hospital has made me more aware of the need to be united. My coworkers have been working short-handed for the year I was on leave. They never complained to me about it-- they recognized that I was working to help them create a better future for our patients and families. They encouraged me to do what needed to be done.

Now the real work has begun for me to walk the walk since I've talked the talk. Our hospitals have serious staffing issues that are not only related to shortages of employees but to inadequately trained personnel. One of my goals was to have the means to attract better staff by providing a work environment that was the best in Sacramento. Through the Staffing Committees we can accomplish this goal.

If you've heard it once

you've heard it a thousand times," the workers are the union." I am a worker and I am the union. I resolve to become more active in my union and make this hospital system the best it can be. I resolve to do my part to make CHW the employer of choice in Sacramento. Words are cheap. They come easily to me. I hope some of you know me as a person who takes action. And now is the time for action. I don't mean burning down the house, I mean get to know your rights, speak out and give support to

each other. United we have accomplished something so big that it's still not real for some folks. We have changed the history of our community. We have created a system through our contract to create a better tomorrow. I resolve to start today to change my tomorrow. I ask you to walk with me into the future. Together we cannot be stopped.

Mary E. Hillman, Shop Steward-MSJMC

## METHODIST REPORT: THE MYSTERY SHOPPER

For those of you reading this from a hospital other than Methodist, let me explain the Mystery Shopper. The Mystery Shopper was hired by Methodist to act as a visitor or a family member of a patient. The shopper would wander around the facility waiting for employees to either 1) ask them if they need help or 2) overhear them or see them do something they feel is not appropriate. At the end of their investigation, a summary of the shopper's comments went out hospital-wide, using employee's names and departments, whether the comments were positive or negative.

The Mystery Shopper is Methodist Hospital's great

new way to spend more money. This is a form of surveillance and needs to be bargained with the Union so that we can put a stop to Administration's inappropriate behavior. Using fellow employees' names on a paper passed out to other hospital employees with negative feedback from their (Methodist) spy is unacceptable! I have talked to H.R. about the spies/mystery shoppers, and was told they had been expecting to hear from me concerning this matter. Do they feel guilty?

Last year, Mercy Sacramento employees were required to attend a Corporate Integrity Agreement "class" as part

of CHW's settlement when it lost the Medi-Cal/Medi-Care fraud case. In the agreement employees were asked to sign during the class, we agreed to try to improve customer service. Suggestions were made as to improvements we could make and it became clear that Administration does not have a clue as to how short-staffed some departments are. Do they think we have time to follow all of the suggestions, like serving refreshments or notifying patients every 15 minutes regarding why they are still waiting? Maybe we should tell patients why they are really waiting: "WE ARE SO SHORT STAFFED WE CAN NOT SERVE YOU IN A TIMELY

MANNER!". If I were a patient waiting, I would think to myself, "Hey Dude, quit bringing me cranberry juice and get back to your job!" "Serving refreshments" --I don't recall that being in my job description. Again, did they forget we have a Union? We need to bargain for any changes! By the way, we don't keep refreshments in my department. Would they like me to give them something out of my lunch? On a positive note, I did hear that Administration Row did well. Well, Congratulations Administration Row-- "Everyone seemed so nice and helpful." Well, of course they were, you don't bite the hand that feeds you.

## SEIU LOCAL 250 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

SEIU Local 250 will be holding general membership meetings at scheduled times throughout the year. All members interested in learning more about Union issues are encouraged to attend. If you are a new employee, attending a meeting will earn you a \$50 return on your Union initiation fee. Dates, times and locations at each hospital for the year 2003 are:

### BRUCEVILLE TERRACE

FEBRUARY 6, APRIL 3, JUNE 5, AUGUST 7, OCTOBER 2, DECEMBER 4  
TIME: 6:30 am - 8:30 am and 3:30 pm. - 6:00 pm  
PLACE: MULTIPURPOSE ROOM

### METHODIST HOSPITAL

FEBRUARY 13 APRIL 10, JUNE 12, AUGUST 14, OCTOBER 9, DECEMBER 11  
TIME: 7:00 am - 09:00 am and 3:30 pm - 6:00 pm  
PLACE: ART THERAPY ROOM

### MERCY GENERAL HOSPITAL:

JANUARY 9 7:00 am - 9:00 am and 3:30 pm - 6:30 pm in GREENHOUSE "A"  
MARCH 13 7:00 am - 9:00 am and 3:30 pm - 6:30 pm in CONFERENCE ROOM #2  
MAY 8 7:00 am - 9:00 am and 3:30 pm - 6:30 pm in GREENHOUSE A  
JULY 10 7:00 am - 9:00 am in GREENHOUSE "A" and 3:30 pm - 6:30 pm EASTWEST AUDITORIUM  
SEPTEMBER 11 7:00 am - 9:00 am and 3:30 pm - 6:30 pm in CONFERENCE ROOM #2  
NOVEMBER 13 7:00 am - 9:00 am in GREENHOUSE "A" and 3:30 pm - 6:30 pm EASTWEST AUDITORIUM



## ***The Smallpox Vaccine Program:*** **Should YOU Volunteer?**

The Bush Administration is asking front line hospital workers to **volunteer** to be vaccinated against smallpox. No smallpox disease has occurred anywhere in the world for 25 years.

**The risk of a smallpox attack is unknown.**

**The dangers of smallpox vaccine are well documented.**

**WEIGH THE FACTS BEFORE YOU VOLUNTEER!**

### **Fact #1: The decision to be vaccinated is strictly VOLUNTARY.**

- As a health care worker, you likely will be among those asked to volunteer.
- The decision you make will affect you, your patients and your family.
- The decision whether or not to be vaccinated is *yours alone*.

### **Fact #2: Smallpox vaccination carries significant risks.**

The vaccine infects you with "live" *vaccinia* virus, a weaker "pox" type virus, that protects you against smallpox.

- *Vaccinia* virus is not the smallpox virus and cannot give you smallpox.
- The vaccine is effective in preventing the disease; in fact you have a 90% chance of preventing the disease if you are vaccinated within four days *after* exposure.
- This vaccine has been described as the "least safe human vaccine."

It can cause severe reactions, complications and even death.

- Because the vaccine contains live *vaccinia* virus, it can spread to other parts of your body or even infect family members, co-workers and possibly patients.
- 15 out of every 1 million people vaccinated for the first time will face life-threatening complications.
- Many more will suffer from fever and swollen lymph nodes.
- One third of those vaccinated become sick enough to miss at least one day of work.
- Severe side effects usually appear within three weeks.
- One or two people out of every 1 million people vaccinated will die.

Reactions to the vaccine are less common for those being revaccinated.

- Volunteers who were vaccinated for smallpox in the 50s, 60s or early 70s should have fewer reactions when they are revaccinated, but reactions can still be severe.
- It is not clear whether those who were previously vaccinated still have immunity, as it is believed that booster shots are needed every five to 10 years.

*Fact Sheet 12/13/02*

## Fact #3: You should not volunteer if you have any risk factors.

Don't volunteer to get vaccinated if you have any of these conditions or live in a household with someone who has any of these conditions:

- HIV, or do not know if you have HIV;
- cancer or any other medical conditions that compromises your immune system;
- skin disorders such as eczema or dermatitis (current or past);
- allergies to certain antibiotics used with the vaccine;
- allergies to latex products;
- a medical need to take high doses of steroids; or
- pregnancy or are considering it soon.

## Fact #4: Safeguards should be in place.

Before you volunteer to be vaccinated, find out about the following protections:

- a **training and education program** that includes the opportunity to ask questions;
- free, **on-the-clock counseling** to help you decide whether you should be vaccinated;
- **medical screening** and free and confidential medical testing to ensure you and members of your household have no conditions--such as HIV infection, pregnancy, antibiotic allergies, eczema and other skin disorders--related to adverse vaccine reactions;
- an **understandable informed consent form**;
- plans for on-site daily **monitoring and care** of the vaccination site and **tracking and reporting** of complications;
- a plan to **protect immune-compromised patients** from recently vaccinated health care workers;
- clear policies concerning **coverage of lost work time** for vaccination-related illnesses;
- **compensation** for personal, family and patient **medical costs** caused by vaccine complications;
- a clear written policy that health care workers will not suffer **discrimination** for refusing to participate in any smallpox vaccination program; and
- an agreement to use safer vaccination needles with integrated safety features as required by the federal ***Needlestick Prevention and Safety Act of 2000***.

## For more information

- Contact your local union steward or representative.
- Go to SEIU's Web site at [www.SeiuSmallpox.org](http://www.SeiuSmallpox.org)
- Download CDC's brochure with pictures of normal and severe reactions to the smallpox vaccine is available at [www.bt.cdc.gov/training/smallpoxvaccine/reactions](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/training/smallpoxvaccine/reactions)
- Additional information about smallpox and the vaccine is on CDC's Web site at [www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/smallpox/vaccination/facts.asp](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/smallpox/vaccination/facts.asp).

### Sources:

*Issues Concerning Smallpox Vaccination* (Draft), Bill Borwegen, SEIU October 17, 2002.

*Fact sheet on Smallpox Vaccination*, John Mehring, 1199P/SEIU, Fall 2002.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/smallpox/vaccination/facts.asp](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/smallpox/vaccination/facts.asp).

"Bush to Order Smallpox Vaccine for Some," *The New York Times*, November 27, 2002.

"Officials Work to Meet Deadline for Smallpox Vaccinations", Diane Cardwell, *The New York Times*, December 1, 2002.

"Cautious Steps Inject Good Sense Into Smallpox Debate", editorial, *USA Today*, December 3, 2002.

*NIOSH Alert: Preventing Allergic Reactions to Natural Rubber Latex in the Workplace* (June 1997), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, [www.cdc.gov/niosh/latexalt.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/latexalt.html).

## WE NEED MORE SHOP STEWARDS!

### CHIEF SHOP STEWARDS

MGH: Bill Watson  
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 METH: Chris Kurpies  
 Work: 423-6176  
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 Christine Thomas  
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 MSJH: Sherri Macias  
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### SEIU Local 250 Field Representatives:

Josie Summers: 275-6342  
 (MGH, METH, BVERR)  
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 (MSJH, FOL, WOOD)



## IT'S TIME FOR A LIVING WAGE IN SACRAMENTO!!!!

Come to a rally and City Council hearing January 9th. Join us in putting an end to the use of tax dollars for poverty wages and union busting in Sacramento.

When: Thursday, January 9th at 6:00 p.m.

Where: Sacramento County Board of Supervisors Chambers, 700 H Street

For questions or more information, call the Sacramento Living Wage Campaign at 321-2318.