



Solidarity Now!

The Award Winning Newsletter of CWA 4730

Organize Educate Mobilize

Communications Workers of America
Poplars 331, 855-7929 or 855-8508

<http://www.indiana.edu/~cwa/>

March, 2001

Volume 18, Number 2

ARE WE IN A WAR ON DRUGS OR A WAR ON PURSE STRINGS?

by Linda Harl

As reported in last month's *SN*, the drug benefit provided to employees changed January 1, 2001. Several basic questions about the program were answered by Susan Brewer of the University Benefits office in that issue.

Now it is time to look at the effect these changes are having on employees. CWA has been given a list of drugs regularly purchased by a real Support Staff person. We'll call her Fulana (Spanish for Jane Doe). She has a few chronic conditions herself (high blood pressure, arthritis), but more significantly her husband has cancer and is unable to work. Thus, Fulana's income has to go as far as possible to meet the family's needs.

Together the couple needs eleven drugs on a regular basis. Some are generic; many are not. The old monthly cost of these drugs from the local pharmacy was \$97.04. The new cost is \$210.00. That is an increase of over 100%! Yes, she could mail in the eleven prescriptions at a cost of \$420, saving \$210 over the walk-in price. But, that's a considerable amount of money to spend all at once, especially for someone on a limited budget. (Remember we had to get new prescriptions to start the new plan, so staggering the mail-ins to spread the cost probably wasn't an option for her.)

Fulona says she didn't use the mail in option before primarily because of the convenience of getting the medicine locally. She also says, however, that some of the drugs were cheaper from the local pharmacy than they would have been from the mail order company. Although she doesn't have an exact comparison of all of the mail-in prices, she does know that the prescriptions which were \$30 under the previous plan now cost \$50 under the new one. This is a 66.7% increase.

As a further example of how this benefit change has affected her, Fulona reports that she had a respiratory infection last month that was bad enough that she went to the doctor. She got four prescriptions that were \$25 each, totaling \$100. She had taken all of these drugs previously, at different times, and paid under \$10 for each of them. So, from \$40 to \$100 to treat similar illnesses is a jump of 150%. Mail-in isn't an option for this kind of "one time" situation.

We all know that drug prices are rapidly rising. So, we can't realistically expect to pay the same price year after year. I looked through back issues of the Benefits Offices newsletters and elsewhere on their web page, and I couldn't find any specific numbers given to justify this drastic change in our drug benefit. However, *Newsweek* reports that prescription drug spending in the U.S. climbed 15% in 2000. So, let's say for the sake of argument that overall drug prices in Indiana did go up 15% or even 20%. Why is the percentage of increase to users so much higher than the percentage of increase in price?

NOMINATIONS AND ELECTION

by Marilyn Estep

Nominations for the position of Executive Board Member at Large of CWA Local 4730 were held on Thursday, February 22, 2001. The final nominee's are:

Kathy Brummett

Linda Harl

The election will be held during the March membership meeting.

Date: Thursday, March 22, 2001

Time: 5:15 pm

Place: Large Conference Room,
Telecommunications Building, 10th/ByPass

EASY ACCESS TO YOUR STATE GOVERNMENT

State Information Center:	800-382-1563
Indiana Senate:	800-382-9467
Indiana House:	800-382-9842
Office of the Governor:	317-232-4567
Attorney General:	800-382-5516
Department of Health:	800-433-0746
Department of Insurance:	800-622-4461
Literacy Resource Center:	800-624-7585
State Park Information:	800-622-4931

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE LOCAL BUS SYSTEMS

by Linda Butler

For some IU staff employees, riding the bus to work and between campus sites is an idea that works. One IU staffer who rides city buses to work and home every day said that riding the bus saves her the expense of owning a car plus the cost of the annual parking permit. She hears her co-workers complaining about hunting for a parking space or having to park blocks away from work and doesn't regret her decision. Some staffers choose to ride the bus to work because they are saving money for home ownership or other reasons. Given Support Staff salaries, staffers often have to make hard choices.

Not having enough parking spaces in places where employees want to park makes taking the bus attractive for employees who need to attend meetings across campus during the day. The bus can be a really good choice when going mid-campus, or where long distance or bad weather makes walking an unattractive choice.

The cost of riding either the campus bus system or Bloomington Transit is 75 cents per ride. For people riding each way daily and paying the straight per-ride fare for a year, this adds up to more than the cost of an A sticker. Bloomington Transit offers some pass options that could help bring down the cost. A monthly pass is available for \$25. The semi-annual pass can be purchased for \$125. The Campus Bus System does not offer any kind of discount pass, but given the number of times that an individual staffer would use the campus system, that probably doesn't make much difference.

The IU bus schedule can be accessed online at www.iubus.indiana.edu. The schedules can help determine which bus to catch, and at what time to get to an on-campus meeting.

Bloomington Transit Online is at www.bloomingtontransit.com. A link for "bus nerds" can gain access to the London bus schedule. Back on this continent and more to the point, the Bloomington bus schedules are listed

here. Additionally, hopes for future improvements in city bus service are listed. They include use of "real-time" schedule information, electronic swipe bus passes, and traffic signal preemption devices.

The lack of a Sunday schedule for city buses and the relatively early weeknight times that city buses stop running do limit their usefulness for employees who do not work the usual 8-5 schedule; nevertheless, the two bus systems do offer options and conveniences for many Bloomington-based IU employees.

FMLA OKAY

by Steve Ingeman

Employers don't like the paperwork involved with the Family Medical Leave Act, but they admit that it has had "no noticeable effect" on productivity, profit, or growth. This is the finding of a recent Department of Labor survey, which looked at the law's effects over the past seven years.

The Family Medical Leave Act provides job protection for employees during unpaid leave if that leave is taken to care for themselves or for family members. Opposition to the law prior to its passage was based on the expectation that it would pose a hardship for businesses. Proponents suggested that any hardship would be offset by retention of trained and skilled workers, but only time would bear this out. While a large number of employers responded that the paperwork and administrative rules associated with FMLA were difficult, 77 percent said they could see no effect on productivity as a result of complying with the law. Nearly 88 percent said there was no noticeable impact on profits or growth.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY STATEMENT ENDORSED

by Steve Ingeman

CWA Local 4730 recently endorsed a draft Environmental Policy Statement written by the Council for Environmental Stewardship, a campuswide committee that includes CWA representative Peter Kaczmarczyk. In doing so, CWA lends its voice to the call for IU to incorporate environmental planning into its daily procedures and long-term planning.

The Environmental Policy Statement draft is a succinct document which spells out how the university can and should take environmental concerns into consideration. While it is worded generally, so as not to handcuff administrators, it also provides concrete proposals: for instance, that all planning activities should formally incorporate an environmental assessment; that environmentally oriented volunteer service by faculty, staff, and students should be recognized and rewarded; and that the university should strive to increase use of reused, reusable, recycled, and recyclable materials. Such a statement has already been adopted at many Big Ten schools and a large number of universities around the country and the world, and the statement has been endorsed on campus by the RHA, SEAC, and the GSO, among others. It is surprising that IU, with its respected SPEA program, has not yet done so. And the need for such a policy statement is very real. As Peter puts it: "It is imperative that we as people, institutions and communities look more at the long term affects of our actions rather than the short term bottom lines, and I think this policy will aid the university in doing just that in regards to all actions it takes that will or could have an environmental impact."

Membership Meeting

March 22, 2001

5:15 p.m.

Telecom Building

2715 E. 10th Street

Large Conference Room

**MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:
PETER KACZMARCZYK, CWA
REPRESENTATIVE ON THE
COUNCIL FOR ENVIRONMENTAL
STEWARDSHIP**

by Steve Ingeman

From time to time *Solidarity Now!* spotlights a staff member for their contributions to their workplace, their union, and their university, and in this case, to the environment around us. Peter Kaczmarczyk has volunteered to serve on the Council for Environmental Stewardship as the CWA representative. The Council is preparing to present a draft of an Environmental Policy Statement to IU administrators in the near future, in hopes of having it adopted as general IU policy.

A full-time IU employee since 1995, Peter's union involvement began about 5 years ago, when it became necessary for him to file a grievance. Like many employees, he was generally supportive of the union, but had never gotten around to joining. His experience during the grievance, however, convinced him that the union provides a "vital voice" for workers, and that it is "absolutely essential in keeping an eye on how the university deals with its employees." While the grievance was unsuccessful, Peter was extremely pleased with the support he received during the process, and he specifically thanks his steward, Jane Goldsmith, for her help with the paperwork and processes required to properly file the grievance and have it heard.

Peter's commitment to the union comes out of his realization that employers sometimes have to choose between their own interests and those of their employees, and that, without a voice for workers, the employer will be inclined to follow its own interests. This point was brought home once again by Peter's wife's experience with a local manufacturer of promotional products, XJD, owned and operated by Tim Boeglin. At XJD, the manufacture of items such as mousepads and the cleaning of the machinery involve some pretty frightening chemicals, and with poor ventilation and extreme

temperatures on the floor, workers were concerned about their health. There is even an allegation that the employee who was responsible for working with OSHA resigned after being asked to sign a false report. That, along with some precipitous dismissals of loyal employees with little justification and no recourse, led some XJD employees to try to organize under the Steel Workers Union earlier this year. Rather than respecting his employees and listening to their concerns, Boeglin apparently decided to employ trained union busters, and undertook a successful campaign to thwart his workers' organization efforts. Organizers were fired, and new hires were screened for their views on unionization. The organizing effort continues, but at this time little or no headway has been made in protecting the interests of the employees at XJD. His wife's experience there has further convinced Peter of the need for labor to organize and look out for itself.

Here at IU, Peter has seen the union make some good gains, "not only in regards to issues such as pay and benefits, but also where there are health concerns, such as the ergonomics of our work stations and the quality of the air we breath within the many campus buildings." He notes, too, that "the union has gone to bat for workers on more mundane but equally important issues such as parking, or lack thereof." Peter's own involvement as the CWA representative on the Council for Environmental Stewardship, he hopes, is "just a start to my playing a more active role in social and political issues around the university and the community." We will look forward to that as well.



LOCAL 4730
Communications Workers of
America, AFL-CIO

I hereby request and authorize the deduction of dues from my pay as established by Communications Workers of America (C.W.A.) of which I am a member. These will be paid to the Treasurer of C.W.A.

NAME (print)

Department

Work Address

Work Phone

Home Address

City/ST/Zip

HomePhone

Soc. Sec. #

Signature

Received by: _____

Date: _____

Get Involved! Make a Difference!

Fill out the membership card above and show your support. If you are already a member, how about putting your own talents to use by working with a union committee?

SINCE YOU ASKED

Question: *Why do I get Solidarity Now!? I'm not a member of CWA.*

Answer: Under the Articles of Cooperation approved by the IU Board of Trustees, any recognized union must represent the entire constituent group regardless of membership status of the individuals. That means CWA Local 4730 represents all Support Staff, and our Executive Board therefore thinks all staff have a right to know what the local is doing. This is why we send *Solidarity Now!* to everyone.

This is how it works. IU Printing Services handles the newsletter printing. They can access Human Resources' files and print the addresses right on the newsletter. Thus, everyone who gets a "Support Staff" mailing from Human Resources (or from anyone else) also gets *SN*. That's why there is an STF on the top line of the address. CWA has no way of adding or deleting anyone from this mailing list.

MEGA-CORPORATIONS, THE GLOBAL ECONOMY, AND THE CHALLENGE TO LABOR

by Steve Ingeman

The new global economy presents new challenges to workers and their rights. As the GE closing reminds us locally, low wages and worker exploitation in other countries is not just "someone else's problem." And as global corporations become larger and larger, it becomes more and more difficult to have a meaningful voice in defense of worker interests. If you wanted to boycott GE, for instance, you would soon discover that "GE" is too large to be meaningfully boycotted, with interests not only in small appliances and household items, but also in financial services under numerous names, and even a partial stake in NBC.

Local 4730 recently supported a talk on campus by Jim Keady and Leslie Kretzu of the Olympic Living Wage Project. The lecture was sponsored by No Sweat!, an on-campus group working to end sweatshop labor worldwide. Keady and Kretzu lived for a month on the wages paid to Nike workers in Indonesia. The wage and the living conditions were horrifying, according to Keady, who said he lost 25 pounds over the month and lived in a "concrete box" that was rat and roach infested. The wages of Indonesian Nike workers, Keady says, are starvation wages, but there is little that can be done within Indonesia. As a multinational corporation with vast assets, Nike can easily afford to move its production elsewhere if the cheap and exploitable labor dries up there.

The Olympic Living Wage Project and No Sweat! work to affect changes in Nike's manufacturing centers by reducing demand in the United States for sweatshop-produced goods. Similar strategies will need to be employed, and new strategies will need to be developed, if labor is going to be able to effectively protect workers' rights in the face of increasing globalization and corporatism.

GE and Nike and other members of the Top 200 global corpora-

tions were recently studied by Sarah Anderson and John Cavanagh of the Institute for Policy Studies, and the findings are amazing:

- Of the 100 largest economies in the world, 51 are corporations, and only 49 are countries.
- While the sales of the Top 200 are equivalent to 27.5% of the world's economic activity, they employ only .78% of the world's workforce.
- Between 1983 and 1999, the profits of the Top 200 grew 362.4%, while the number of people they employ grew only 14.4%.
- Of the 82 U.S. corporations on the list, 44 did not pay the full standard 35% federal corporate tax rate during the period 1996-1998. Seven firms actually paid less than zero (because of rebates) in federal income taxes in 1998: Texaco, Chevron, PepsiCo, Enron, Worldcom, McKesson, and General Motors (the world's largest corporation).
- A full 5% of the Top 200's combined workforce is employed by Wal-Mart, a company notorious for union-busting and widespread use of part-time workers to avoid paying benefits.

If you would like to see the full text of this report, you can access it at: <http://www.ips-dc.org/top200>.

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Bloomington, IN 47405

Local 4730



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