



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/>

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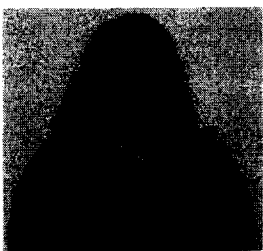
WE ARE CWA

by Linda Butler

The Communications Workers of America Local 4730 on the Indiana University campus is the voice of the Bloomington and Northwest Campus support staff employees. CWA Local 4730 strives to achieve fairness in the workplace for all support staff as well as the betterment of the work environment. To accomplish this, CWA Local 4730 negotiates biennial agreements to the Staff Policies and Procedures Manual, and represents support staff in fairness in the workplace issues, disciplinary and grievance processes.

As a further introduction to the local, please meet our officers:

In January, Bennita Booher assumed the presidency of Local 4730; Keith Welch, became the new Executive Vice-President; Laraine Cooksey the new Secretary; and Jean Collier was re-elected treasurer. Vice-President Yolanda Arroyo began her term leading local members on the Northwest Campus at Gary. All terms last for three years.



President Bennita Booher sought her office because, "I believe in the union and what it stands for. I also see it as an opportunity to be more involved with administrative decisions made for support staff."

Parking and health insurance are her two major agenda items. Increasing local membership is another big goal for the new president.

When asked how she would encourage someone to join the local, Booher replied, "I just spoke with a lady in my building about joining. She had some reservations

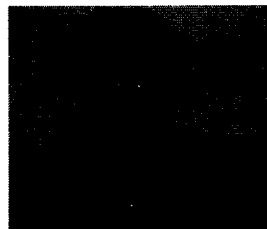
because she couldn't see (all) the union had done. I pointed out to her some of the (gains) we would not have if it were not for the union." Booher encouraged her to join the union, attend some meetings and talk with other union members. She is convinced that telling employees what CWA does on behalf of support staff, will draw more members into the CWA fold.



Keith Welch ran for Executive Vice-President because, "I think being a member of a union requires more than just paying dues; some effort is required for progress." He added, "I'd like to bring more IU employees into the union." He would also like to "lower the level of suspicion that many seem to have for unions in general. I get the feeling that many IU staffers regard the local as a secret society, in which they have no influence. We need to reach out."

Welch is concerned about "IU's seeming obsession with non-educational programs. There is never money to pay custodians, but always money to pay off the bloated contract of some athletics figure."

To encourage someone to join the local, Welch points out, "Together we have a voice that IU can't ignore."

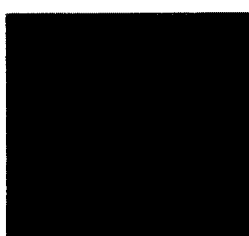


Jean Collier, re-elected treasurer, states, "I ran for office because I feel I have done an adequate job in the last 2 years I have been the Treasurer, and it is a way to help the union succeed." Jean also would like to see the local increase its membership and states it as one of her goals. She says, "The more people

involved, the more we are heard, and especially, the more we are listened to.”

She adds, “I think one of the most important issues (facing the local) is complacency in the membership - there seems to be an attitude of, ‘I am a member now, do something for me! Instead I would like to hear, ‘I am a member now, what can I do to help?’ Also important is health care and the usual parking and wages. But we need more people involved, so we can bring ideas to the table to help solve these problems and make sure we are heard.”

To encourage someone to join the local, she says, “Look at our accomplishments in the past, talk to other people who have been helped by the union, and show them what we are looking forward to accomplishing in the future with their help.”

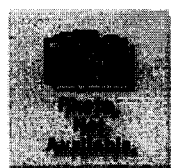


Laraine Cooksey, Secretary, would like to “make Local 4730 stronger in the eyes of the whole university, including the trustees.” She adds, “PR is important.” Cooksey agrees with President Booher that membership gains can be made by “letting people know what the union has done and is doing for them.” She wants “to make the local known to the administration as an active voice for support staff and techs, inform HR they are breaking our contract when they change policy without our knowledge or input, and tell them we will not hesitate to grieve this kind of action.”

She states, “We need to let the administration know the local should be involved in decisions to increase premiums on insurance or parking. We need a larger voice in decisions that make a dent in our paychecks.” She would like to be able to bargain also for retirees, adding, “We will all be there someday.”

Cooksey has been active in the local since its beginning and notes, “I have seen all the positive things that have happened because of CWA Local 4730. We are respected by our university, city and county communities, and by our state officials. Some day we will win collective bargaining and other rights that other states afford their workers. ‘United we stand; divided we fall.’”

To encourage someone to join the local, Cooksey says, “There is POWER in numbers; you hurt our ability to achieve the best possible benefits for the support staff unless you are behind us 100%.”



Vice-President Yolanda Arroyo leads local members on the Northwest Campus at Gary. She ran for office to “help members achieve what they deserve. As an organization, it is important to let people know how you can help them in a time of need. We would like to make a difference to those employees who need help.” Arroyo believes, “The budget issue will be important for many who may be trying to advance in pay but are currently locked into their current positions because of university constraints.”

Her message to encourage people to join the union: “We all need to put our best foot forward to help one another. We need to come together as a group and be heard.”

That’s a brief introduction to our local and its officers. It you would like to join us in improving conditions for support staff at IU, contact any of these people, your local steward, or call the union office.

OFFICE	NAME	PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL
President	Bennita Booher	855-9303	bboher
Executive Vice Pres.	Keith Welch	855-6253	kawelch
Executive Vice Pres. NW	Yolanda Arroyo	219-980-6779	yarroyo
Secretary	Laraine Cooksey	855-0661	lcooksey
Treasurer	Jean Collier	855-2536	jcollier
Member at Large	Gayla Bradfield	855-9044	bradfield
Member at Large	Cathy Brummett	855-6528	cajbrumm
Member at Large	Linda Harl	855-9503	lharl
Member at Large	Grace New	855-5279	gnew
Member at Large	Dorothy Laue	855-0282	laued

KEEPING YOU APPRISED

by Gail Francis

The local has had a lot of questions regarding the way equity raises have been requested and processed, so we scheduled a meeting for January 16 with Linda Rasmussen, the Director of Salary Administration and Performance Management, and Suzanne Ryan, Director of Human Resources for the Bloomington campus. CWA was represented by Vice-President Keith Welch, Steward Connie Vaughn, and myself. What follows is a synopsis.

Rasmussen explained that whenever an equity raise is being considered, the department should conduct a review to be sure the raise is not actually creating *inequities*. However, she does not require the department to provide any proof that the review was done. She did say that if anyone feels a review is done improperly (or not at all), she would expect to hear complaints.

We also learned that the criteria for requesting an equity raise are extremely flexible. Some examples she gave for acceptable criteria are: departmental seniority, university seniority, length of time in your job classification, length of time in your job title, exceptional performance, additional duties, your pay relative to the outside market value, pay relative to others in your department, class, job title, seniority, etc. **Therefore, if you believe any of these standards could justify an equity raise for you, ask your department to conduct a review and request an increase.**

We came away from this meeting with a concern that the term *equity* is being construed so broadly that it often becomes very subjective. Nonetheless, the broad interpretation of this policy does provide an opening for us to use it as much as possible to advocate for raises for a large part of our bargaining unit. (See recent issues of *Solidarity Now!* for more in-depth discussion on how to request an equity increase.)

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY – JOBS WITH JUSTICE

By Gayla Bradfield

CWA is looking for a volunteer to become involved with the local Jobs with Justice coalition. Jobs with Justice (JwJ) was founded in 1987 to improve working people's standard of living and job security and protect their right to organize. JwJ's central belief is that the workers' rights struggle is only a part of the much larger issue of economic and social justice. Therefore, they have created a network of local coalitions where labor, faith-based, community and student organizations come together to address workplace and community social justice causes.

Over 40 cities in 29 states have active JwJ coalitions, made up of both member organizations and individuals who sign a pledge to be there five times a year for someone else's cause, as well as their own. Both the AFL-CIO (of which our CWA Local 4730 is a part) and AFSCME (IU's service & maintenance employee union) are members of Jobs with Justice. Over 30 other organizations, including the American Postal Workers Union, the National Education Association, the United Church of Christ, and the National Family Farm Coalition belong as well.

To learn more about Jobs with Justice, open their website at <http://www.jwj.org>. The local chapter meets at 5:15 p.m. on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at the Monroe County Public Library. If you would be willing to represent our local at these meetings, or perhaps share this duty with other CWA members, please contact Gail Francis (cwa4730@indiana.edu, 5-7929).

***Solidarity Now!* is the official newsletter of CWA Local 4730 and is made possible by the dues paying members of that local.**

We encourage all CWA members to submit or suggest items for publication. If you have any questions about the newsletter, or would like to serve on the committee, contact Linda Harl, Sycamore 026, 5-9503, email: LHARL.

INSURANCE MESS

by Linda Harl

The members of the Executive Board of Local 4730 have collected a number of real horror stories affecting staffers who had to change from Precision to Anthem insurance on January 1, 2003.

Most of these stories involved people being told by either CVS or Osco that they had no insurance and would have to pay full price for needed drugs. One person has told us that their doctor also asked for full payment, because she couldn't produce an insurance card. All these incidents we've learned about occurred during the very early days of 2003 and most were eventually resolved.

There was one case, however, which wasn't resolved until a CWA steward, Cathy Brummett, became involved. Someone tried over a several day period to get coverage for drugs and was told she wasn't in the system even though other IU people were by that time. HR told her that they thought she had dropped her coverage completely. When Cathy demanded to see the open enrollment form, HR finally admitted that one entire letter of the alphabet had been skipped when the enrollment information was sent to Anthem. Even when this error was discovered, it took two tries to get the skipped people into the system.

My sense of fairness tells me to report that I broke my finger on Jan. 4 and had no insurance trouble at either Promptcare or the Bloomington Hospital. I think this was because Promptcare already had the group number and I took it with me to the hospital. Thanks Promptcare!

But perhaps my case was the exception or maybe I was just lucky, because I didn't need any prescription drugs. Many people had trouble and these "sudden" unexpected bills were a shock to the pocketbook. Most people involved, however, seemed to be just as mad at the way the whole thing was handled as they were about the sudden expense. Several factors contribute to this unhappiness. For one thing, Precision announced its demise last summer. Couldn't the open enrollment period have started as soon as IU knew switching to Anthem or dropping out would be the only choices for employees? Part of the surprise with the prescription issue was that most of us didn't know or didn't stop to think that the drug benefit might be tied to changing insurance carriers, because the drug benefit itself didn't change at all. A little

warning from the Benefits Office might have softened the blow. Sick people could have worked with their doctors to get some sample drugs or short term prescriptions.

In fact, why couldn't the Administration have given us something to verify coverage a bit earlier than the middle of January? For example, MCCSC people who lost Precision were given a letter before the end of December verifying their coverage and instructing them to use the letter until their cards came.

Then too, why was this done at exactly the same time as other changes in Benefits tied to PeopleSoft were implemented? (Ask your payroll person about "E-docs" and watch her turn red.) Those folks in Poplars can only do so much. Maybe some temporary help should have been hired.

I believe that most of these problems have been solved and staffers now have their insurance cards. The remaining issue is one that can't be ignored. We are still left with only two choices for insurance—neither of which is very satisfactory.

CWA has not only worked with individuals to solve some of the immediate problems, but is continuing meetings with Dan Rives and others in HR and elsewhere to try to find more insurance alternatives by next year. Stay tuned to *Solidarity Now!* for future developments.

FAREWELL AND THANK YOU

The *SN* Committee would like to thank **Jeanette Ash** for serving as the editor of *Solidarity Now!* since June, 2002. Jeanette began doing the layout of our newsletter last spring when Tina Gilliland went on maternity leave, and then, in addition, assumed the editor position beginning with the June-July, 2002 issue. Jeanette has recently moved to Columbus, OH to join her husband who is attending graduate school at The Ohio State University. We will miss Jeanette's talent, enthusiasm and energy, but wish her the best in this new adventure. One thing is certain—wherever Jeanette goes and whatever she does, she will make many friends, get involved and make contributions which exceed everyone's expectations.

Linda Harl has once again taken back the helm as *SN*'s interim editor, and Tina Gilliland has resumed layout duties. We appreciate the willingness of these two CWA members to volunteer their time and skills whenever they are needed.

BAHR: HEALTH CARE REFORM NEEDED NOW

In an interview this week with *Fortune Magazine*, CWA President Morton Bahr outlined the union's fight to raise the issue of health care nationally and called for real reform to address rising costs, concerns about retiree coverage and the critical matter of 41 million uninsured Americans.

Bahr stressed that health care is always an issue in bargaining one way or another, noting contract gains "come from an economic pot that includes all of a company's costs." He said workers pay for health care costs by accepting smaller wage gains than they might otherwise demand over the years, as well as paying deductibles and co-payments in many health plans.

Over the years, CWA has worked with employers to find ways to control costs, Bahr said, noting that in 1989, in bargaining with AT&T, CWA insisted that "together we build the first nationwide managed care system." He told the reporter, "We knew we would face the problem of rising health costs three years down the road if we didn't tackle the issue, so we took the lead then."

Today, employers are attempting to shift even more costs to workers, even profitable employers like General Electric Co. "The recent two-day strike sent GE a message that our members are very serious over this issue of cost shifting, but it also was intended to elevate the health care issue to national importance," he said.

Bahr noted that CWA is willing to work with deeply troubled companies, such as Lucent, where a tentative agreement calls for additional medical co-pays and deductibles for retirees with the company in turn putting the savings into a special fund to shore up the pension plan and continue paying for retiree health care. "In cases like this, our objective is always to protect jobs and retain retiree health care, which would be lost in the event of bankruptcy."

In the case of profitable companies, there is no excuse for cost shifting, Bahr said. He told *Fortune* the union doesn't expect health care cost shifting to be a real issue in the telecommunications industry, where members have demonstrated this is a clear strike issue.

Bahr stressed that the real solution is going to have to come in the form of national health care reform, because

one-third of the cost to employers that offer health coverage comes from the burden of the uninsured who use hospital emergency rooms as their sole health provider.

Bahr noted that big business, including the telecom companies, opposed President Clinton's attempt to require all major employers to provide some standard of health coverage.

"So we told them, if you're happy to keep paying one-third of your costs to subsidize the uninsured, don't come to us for relief," he said.

CWA, he said, is working through a union-management-health industry coalition, the National Coalition on Health Care, to find comprehensive solutions to containing costs and providing quality care for all citizens.

SINCE YOU ASKED

by Gail Francis

Question: What is the difference between an at-will employee and one that can only be disciplined or discharged for "just cause"?

Answer: Most non-union employees are "at-will", which means they can be disciplined or discharged at any time for any reason. The only legal protections such employees have come from civil rights legislation that prohibit employers from discrimination based on race, gender, religion, national origin, veteran status, or disabilities. But if a non-union employee is treated unfairly for any other reason, he or she generally has no recourse and no one to help him or her.

The policies which CWA and IU have negotiated for the support staff state that employees "will only be disciplined or discharged for just cause. . . . Just cause means having a legitimate reason to invoke formal corrective action." This is found in policy 6.3. It goes on to state, "All corrective action may be appealed by the employee through the Grievance/Complaint Resolution Procedure." During disciplinary meetings or meetings with your supervisor that could lead to discipline, you have the right to have a union Steward present to represent you. If you want to grieve an unfair discipline, a union Steward can help you through that process as well.

LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD WRITERS!



Have an opinion or great ideas about different issues that you would like to share with our readers?

Well, get involved by submitting your articles to *Solidarity Now!* We would love to hear what you have to say...so write away!!!!

Please submit all news worthy articles to Linda Harl at lharl@indiana.edu.



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.

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