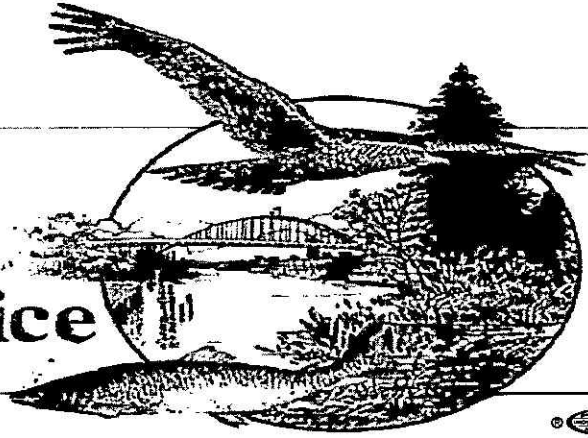


LOCAL Voice

August 2004



www

© GCI 1218-M

Local 3336's Environmental Platform

Remember Measure 7? The property rights initiative that would have forced governments to pay landowners to obey the law? It passed in 2000 by several percentage points but the Oregon Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional, not because of what the measure proposed to do, but because of a technicality in how it changed the state constitution. Well, it's back, and it's worse, and you'll see it on your ballot in November. Can we, as public sector employees who work for the environment, turn threats like anti-environmental ballot measures into opportunities? Yes!

We need to identify our allies and join forces. If environmental advocacy groups need public sector unions to help them fight bad ballot measures, we will later need them to show support for DEQ's budget, understand our demands for better wages and benefits, and pressure our leaders to make the sound environmental decisions.

Since the World Trade Organization Seattle protest, environmental and labor groups have recognized the benefits of working together. Environmental advocacy groups asking for our support frequently contact our Local's Executive Board (E-Board), and in the past, we have not been able to respond quickly. The Local leadership felt that issues outside traditional labor causes needed to be presented and discussed with the membership.

The E-Board named an ad-hoc committee to draft a policy for responding to requests of support from environmental groups and other groups beyond those with

whom we already have partnerships (for example, Jobs with Justice, Cross-Border Labor Organizing Committee). Ad-hoc committee members were officers Karen Williams, Kevin Downing, and Liz Waddle, and member volunteers Leslie Kochan and Greg Geist. Greg also agreed to continue as our Local's environmental policy coordinator.

The ad-hoc committee produced a *platform*, or a general statement upholding the environmental principals we felt our Local stood for and would support. The draft platform was presented at membership meetings in March and April 2004, was posted on union bulletin boards, and has been on the Local website since February 2004 (www.afscme3336.org). After incorporating members' comments, the E-Board voted to adopt the platform as a statement of AFSCME Local 3336. We now have a statement we can send at a moment's notice when an environmental advocacy group requests AFSCME 3336's statement of support or general opinion about issues like water conservation, dam breaching, plastic bottle deposits, or privatization of public services.

As well as forming crucial alliances and helping other groups with their struggles, we need to speak up and tell the public what valuable work we do for the environment. Ralph Groener, our Council 75 lobbyist, will lead a *green* coalition of union members who work in the natural resource agencies (Division of State Lands, Land Conservation and Development, DEQ). The Green Coalition will probably testify before the Legislature, but before that, we have to **elect** the Legislature. AFSCME's Green coalition

and environmental groups will need lots of volunteers to educate voters (knocking on doors, phone banking) to elect state legislators that are supportive of--or at least not hostile to--environmental protection. If this is important to you, even if you have as little as two hours to give, pick up the phone and tell Greg Geist at 503-229-6991 that you want to help!

--Karen Williams

As the Economy Grows, Workers Still on the Short End

U.S. economic growth is strong but real wages are falling, unemployment is still high and poverty is rising. The most recent data for profits, assets, income and wages indicate that all the gains of the recovery have been captured by the wealthiest sectors

--Labor Research Association

Why Are Unions Involved in Politics?

Given the size of my credit card debt, if it weren't for the Cordwainers I'd be in debtors' prison today. Who are the Cordwainers you ask?

Well, in 1806, members of the Cordwainers (shoemakers), recognized as one of the first American unions, were arrested and charged with conspiracy after striking for higher wages. Using a Conspiracy Doctrine dating from the 14th century, the courts judged union members to be in an *illegal conspiracy* against their employers. With the force of the law, troops, and scabs, the employers crushed the Cordwainers union. The fledging labor movement nearly disappeared under the thumb of the Conspiracy Doctrine.

The Workers Discovered Politics: But workers found another way to improve their lot--they formed political parties with progressive platforms to fight for free education; a ten-hour work day; elimination

of debtors' prison (lucky for me!) and child labor; and universal *male* suffrage (women weren't on the radar screen yet---oh! that's because there wasn't any radar!). Throughout history, when it's been difficult to make progress at the bargaining table, people turn toward politics.

...And They Got a Day Off: We can gain inspiration from successful labor/government collaborations that have resulted in a better world than the Cordwainer's world of 1806. A good example is the creation of Social Security, and wage and hour laws during New Deal in the 1930s. Like the bumper sticker says, "*The Labor Movement: The folks who brought you the weekend.*"

Pardon Me, There's A Forklift On My Foot: Government and business don't give benefits and decent working conditions out of the goodness of their hearts. In fact, reading the newspaper shows that they take them away. One of the first bills George W. Bush signed upon taking office eliminated the newly formed ergonomic regulations--10 years in the making--that would have provided for safer and healthier working conditions, as well as recourse for job-related injuries for anyone who sits, stands, lifts, drives, or moves at work.

Who's Next? The current administration also wants to exempt thousands of Homeland Security workers from federal labor relations authority: they would be *at-will* workers with no legal right to organize into unions. Federal workers have fewer labor rights than county public workers but they do have the right to representation and the right to bargain over certain working conditions. They can't strike, so you won't see them marching with picket signs during a nuclear scare ("*Two, four, six, eight! Pay raise or annihilate!*") Naw, it won't happen.

Because of the *importance* of this work, President Bush thinks managers should have unilateral authority over workers

and conditions, and shouldn't have to negotiate with workers. Federal workers have relatively modest union rights, and Bush wants to use administrative or *legislative action* to take them away. Sounds a bit like the 14th century Conspiracy Doctrine, wouldn't you say?

There's a direct relationship between the breadbox and the ballot box, and what the union fights for and wins at the bargaining table can be taken away in the legislative halls.

-- Walter Reuther, UAW President 1946-1970

Keep an eye on your pension protection and health insurance. These benefits, won by the labor movement after World War II, are starting to erode (or be stolen, like the 401K plans and pensions that you read about in the business pages). Consolidated Freightways workers who just lost their jobs (~~via a recorded message on Labor Day!~~) also saw their health insurance evaporate.

Like the Cordwainers, workers will again turn to the legislative process to protect the gains made at the bargaining table. These problems are too big for local unions to solve themselves. In addition, what about the majority of workers who don't have a union? Do we as union members want to contribute to social policy? If so, then labor needs to be involved as a partner with other social constituencies (for example, seniors, the poor, the uninsured, environmental caretakers, etc.) who work to determine social policy. Politics and grassroots organizing is the only way to do this.

Not Everybody's Got A Union: Jobs with Justice is a national coalition of labor, community, religious, and constituency organizations that works for workers' rights and economic justice. I asked Margaret Butler of Portland's Jobs with Justice why coalitions are important: "We don't have enough power as individual unions to win the

struggles of working people; we need the rest of the labor movement and the community with us. We forget that many workers are fighting for basic respect and the right to organize."

Jobs with Justice does not endorse candidates, nor does The Coalition of Labor Union Women (see www.local88.ws for August's Labor Press Story *Get a CLUW!*). Both work through direct action, lobbying politicians, coalition building, and education to improve social and working conditions.

....And Some Unions Got Politics:

Among public employees, bargaining *is* politics because the government is our employer: they have power over our wages, benefits, and working conditions. We have the unique opportunity to elect our own bosses. The policies that affect government workers are made in the Multnomah Building, or in Salem or in Washington, D.C. The current attempt by Oregon's legislature to eliminate PERS is happening in the political arena but the components of the system came out of bargaining.

How Much is that Politician in the Window? I don't know--ask business. According to Cornelia Murphy, Political Coordinator for AFSCME Council 75, "Overall, business outspends unions fifteen to one." To those who claim we're *buying politicians*, we couldn't buy a politician's finger with our contributions, nor would we want to. Nevertheless, we do want access to politicians. Cornelia believes "We should help candidates and politicians when they need it most, when they are trying to get elected, so that when they're elected, they'll know who we are and what we do. Through the interview and endorsement process, we find out what they stand for and what their positions are."

If a man tells you he loves America, yet hates labor, he is a liar!

--Abraham Lincoln

The United States is the only industrialized nation without a labor party. Hence, the union focuses on electing pro-labor legislators. To do this, most unions use *hard* money given voluntarily (not collected through dues) for direct contributions for federal candidates and campaigns. AFSCME's campaign is called PEOPLE (Public Employees Organized to Promote Legislative Equality).

Soft money (dues) cannot be used for federal candidates according to federal campaign finance law. We use dues money for education and research (for example, to check and publicize voting records), and to communicate about why we endorse candidates and issues, then you decide. Dues money can also be contributed to local candidates and campaign issues, such as supporting a library levy.

Together We're Stronger: In the 2000 national election, the Oregon AFL-CIO had the highest labor turnout in the country with 86.3 percent of registered union members voting. Business may outspend us fifteen to one, but we have old-fashioned numbers on our side. Our money goes a long way, buoyed by a strong communication structure with union members and families.

Depending on the state, unions dedicate special funds to fight ballot measures that are anti-union or -public employee, such as Bill Sizemore's recent attempt to prevent unions from being involved in the political process.

Take care who and what you vote for. If you vote for politicians and measures that are opposed to funding services for our clients, opposed to funding PERS, and opposed to public services, please don't blame your union when jobs, benefits, and services get attacked.

Best Defense Is A Strong Offense: Oregon labor spent \$5 million in election year 2000 to defend union members' hard-won rights. However, leading up to the 2002

election, labor got proactive and created the Voter Education Project (VEP) to watchdog the ballot initiative process. By spending just half a million, the VEP discovered and publicized initiative irregularities, and blocked Bill Sizemore from putting measures on the ballot through fraud. The VEP made headlines with shocking videos of signature gatherers forging names. Spending less money on defense frees us to support positive change and candidates who care about working people and the disenfranchised.

Don't agonize. Organize.
—Florynce Kennedy

In every industrialized country besides the United States and South Africa, benefits such as paid vacation, sick time, health care, and maternity leave are guaranteed under the law. Did you know that? I didn't, and now I'm hopping mad. By contrast, American unions must renegotiate these benefits with every contract; those without a union (86 percent of workers) depend on their employer's goodwill.

Naturally, U.S. employers try to prevent workers from organizing since they'll have to pay for benefits. If benefits were legislated (and all employers had to pay), having a union wouldn't be such a scary thought for employers. Moreover, we union workers wouldn't have to pour our time and money into bargaining and political action to gain and maintain benefits that workers in Canada and Europe take for granted.

Can we shift the way this country looks after its workers? It's been 200 years since the Cordwainer's struggle for fair and decent working conditions was crushed. They turned to politics. So must we. Comments? Maryorrlocal88@aol.com

The Other Theory of Relativity: I consider it important, indeed urgently necessary, for intellectual workers to get together, both to protect their own economic

status and generally speaking, to secure their influence in the political field. *Albert Einstein (commenting on why he joined the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO)*

What Can We Do To Be Involved?

Attend a union meeting: See the calendar on our website at www.afscme3336.org. Go to a labor education class: Labor Education & Resource Center (LERC) teaches everything from grievance handling to labor law. For info on upcoming classes, call LERC at (541) 346-5054 or find them through their website at <http://www.uoregon.edu/~lerc/>. Learn more about labor history and current events. Go to the Pacific Northwest Labor History website at www.pnlha.org to learn more about labor history, follow international labor news at <http://www.laborstart.org/> or Oregon labor news at <http://www.nwlaborpress.org/>.

- **Spread the word:** Make member-to-member phone calls and distribute election information flyers at your worksite. Call Cornelia Murphy at 503-239-234-7470 to sign up. Easy! Fun!
- **Become a steward:** Call Chief Steward Karen Williams: (503) 229-6254. Help create a fair and positive workplace.
- **Volunteer at your local Central Labor Council:** Call the Oregon AFL-CIO at (503) 585-6320 to find out meeting times and locations of your local central labor council's meetings.
- **Join Jobs with Justice:** Support local labor struggles and work on issues that impact us all—from stopping privatization of public sector jobs to the environment. There are now Jobs with Justice chapters in Bend, Eugene, and Portland. Visit www.jwjpdx.org.
- **Work on a political campaign:** In November, we must elect legislators who care about working people and quality public services. Without your help, we won't succeed.

- **Talk to telemarketers:** Ask them if they know about legislated benefits in other countries. Tell them about the advantages of being in a union. Don't let them get a word in. Either you'll organize some workers, or you won't get any more calls. Can't lose.

—Northwest Labor Press, By Mary Orr, Executive Board Member, First printed September 20, 2002

Overtime Pay a Thing of the Past

A new study from the Economic Policy Institute predicts that **6 million workers stand to lose their right to overtime pay beginning August 23.**

Safety at DEQ

The DEQ has three safety committees:

1. Vehicle Inspection Program
2. Laboratory, and
3. Central.

Employees working at the VIP and Laboratory have access to their own safety committees. These committees work diligently to improve safety in their specialized work areas. However, the Central Safety Committee (CSC) is available if these committees need assistance on a safety issue. Employees working at all other regional offices are only represented by the Central Safety Committee.

As stated in the DEQ Central Safety Committee charter:

The Central Safety Committee brings together employees and management in a **cooperative** forum to improve communications regarding safety issues, makes recommendations for improvements in safety policies and procedures, and reviews accidents and injuries that occur within the programs for preventative

purposes. The Committee actively promotes safety and health in the workplace. The Committee also **provides support** to the safety committees operating in the Vehicle Inspection Program and Laboratory Division.

Five management and five employee representatives meet on a monthly basis. The committee has an open door policy, and all of the minutes are posted on the Q-Net. The most difficult task for both management and employee representatives is trying to remember to *shed* their positions and enter the door as individuals looking to improve safety. Trying to leave out comments such as *we have a budget crisis* and *employees won't like doing this* is very difficult for most of us. Our assignment, however, is to identify safety issues and make recommendations to the Executive Management Team and to the managers with health and safety issues.

"For the Committee to fulfill its obligations, it is important for management to give serious consideration to the recommendations" (Charter). Any safety issues that the CSC has brought forth and employees feel strongly about but the EMT has denied, can be brought to the Joint Labor/Management Committee for discussion.

Take the time to learn who your safety committee representatives are. This is an easier task if you work at the VIP or Laboratory since each station or section has their own representative on your safety committee. You can find your representatives and access meeting schedules, meeting minutes, and charters on Q-Net. Look under HR Info Center, Health and Safety, and Committees to find out what is being done to improve safety at the DEQ. <http://deq05/intranet/MSD/Hr/h&s/Committees/CommitteeCenter.htm>

Outsourcing Not a Panacea

About 70 percent of the largest companies in New York City currently send some jobs overseas, mostly in information technology or business support. By 2005, the number is expected to climb to 90 percent.

However, according to a survey of 100 of New York City's largest employers sending jobs overseas in an effort to save money is not as cost-effective as most people believe.

The true cost of the offshore worker is closer to \$17 a hour when you tack on another \$5 an hour for telecommunications and security, \$3 an hour for offshore management overhead, \$2 an hour for technology and \$2 an hour for training, travel and transition.

—New York (Reuters) Monday, July 19, 2004

Career Opportunities at DEQ

With nearly 50 percent of DEQ's employees eligible for retirement within the next 10 years, we will be talent short. To continue providing the high level of service and a good work environment, it is more important than ever that the union and management work together to find better ways to keep and promote workers.

After the last bargaining session, a workgroup with two representatives from management and two representatives from labor was established to discuss career development and training opportunities.

Whether you are a vehicle inspection program staff who wants to move up to a Natural Resource Specialist (NRS) position, or a professional staff wanting to expand your skills, you are likely to run into some type of roadblock such as: While training is available, often both managers and employees are focused on getting the job done and forget about improving skills.

As it currently stands, most career development are employee initiated. The employee must research position options, requirements and appropriate training.

DEQ does have a mentor program but pairing the mentor and employee is sometimes not done.

Simply put, we don't have a systematic approach to career development and training.

Finding A Better Approach: The workgroup brainstormed some ideas on how to tackle this problem. Some of the ideas include:

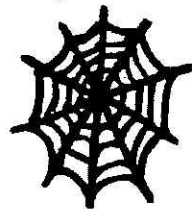
- Using the new performance management system to provide an opportunity for managers and employees to explore personal career goals and chart a path to reach the goals.
- Having management work with the employee to reach their goal once a career path has been identified.
- Developing a list of position training packages (what the Division of Administrative Services calls training is a key element in maintaining an effective workforce; that is, core competencies). The training packages should include the basic attributes of the position and the specific training needs.
- Identifying additional training that will enhance an employee's performance in their current position.
- Cross-training workers and getting DEQ out of the silo mentality where one person only does air quality or only water quality or only land quality.
- Ensuring consistency throughout the agency and making it easier for managers and employees to participate.

The workgroup hopes to work with two other agency teams: the Hiring Practices Team and Performance Management Team in developing further recommendations. We have many tools at DEQ to help foster career growth and expand skills; the workgroup has recommended to the labor-management bargaining team that the union, employees and management work together to develop a

user-friendly program that will keep DEQ's excellent workforce.

We Need Your Input!

Please provide your comments to any of the AFSCME officers, Larry Calkins in The Dalles or Tish Kremedis at Human Resources.



Were on the WEB!
Visit us at
www.afscme3336.org.



Newsletter Staff:
Martine Roberts-Pillon
Liz Waddle



Don't jump, Bill!

What does a candidate for Local 3336 President need? A desire to serve, a drive to lead, and a passion for justice. Put those factors together and an individual like **Bill Brown** past President of Local 3336, is unstoppable.

Bill served this local as President for over two and a half years. He led with conviction and spoke out for what he believed in but never made decisions without considering various member viewpoints. Bill understood the importance of involving members and providing greater access to the Local's leadership. He helped develop a strategic plan for improving outreach and communication to members and made many trips to regional offices to hear regional views and provide updates on union activities. Bill also worked hard on contract issues and improving employee health and safety, issues very important to him.

Bill had very high expectations of himself in the role of President. He worked as hard as any Local 3336 President has ever worked. Bill resigned from his position of President last month (leaving it in the hands of the very competent Liz Waddle) but he has not resigned from the union. **When you see Bill next, don't forget to say *thank you***

American Federation of State, County and
Municipal Employees
Local 3336
P.O. Box 40446
Portland, OR 97240-0446