

Unity in the Wake of Tragedy

In addition to thousands of other casualties, the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 may have taken the lives of more than 60 SEIU members—New York State workers with offices in the World Trade Center and janitors, porters and security guards working at the trade center.

All of the NCFO members working at the World Trade Center and the

Pentagon are safe and accounted for, though some of them will be among the more than 6,000 SEIU members expected to permanently lose their jobs or be displaced for a long period of time.

A group of Local 56 engineers, by acting with calm efficiency, became quiet heroes at the Marriott World Trade Center hotel. When the first

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plane hit the World Trade Center, they were on duty at the hotel, located between the two towers.

“Our guys put their emergency training into practice in the most difficult circumstances,” says Local 56 Business Manager Larry McNeil. “It would have been easy just to focus on saving themselves.”

Before the hotel was crushed by the falling towers, NCFO members had brought all 1,300 employees and guests to safety.

“It sure was something,” says Local 56 member Henry Pantan, “but we were just doing our jobs.”

From a statement by SEIU President Andrew Stern

Honor the Victims by Uniting for American Values

“...Those responsible for the attacks on September 11 must be found, and targeted action must be taken to ensure that they can never strike again.

“...We cannot condone attacks here at home on Arab-Americans or other innocent people based on the color of their skin or the country they originally came from.

“Just as we are a nation of immigrants, we are a union of immigrants, with members from all countries of the Middle East as well as all other continents. This is the time to make an extra effort in our workplaces and in our communities to reach out to each other and show the world that in times of crisis we unite behind our ideals.

“Another attack on American values was mounted just two days after the tragedies in New York and Washington by Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson. The two men said on national television that feminists, civil liberties organizations, Americans who believe in a woman’s right to choose about abortion, and gays and lesbians invited the terrorist attacks on this country by making God mad.

“Americans cannot fight hatemongers and religious intolerance by becoming hateful and intolerant ourselves. The best way we can honor the victims of the attacks of September 11 is to stand up for the basic values America has always aspired to.”

Give All You Can

To help the families of SEIU members killed or injured in the terrorist bombings and the thousands more traumatized by the attacks or left without jobs, SEIU has started a relief fund.

Send your tax-deductible contribution to

SEIU September 11th Relief Fund

SEIU

1313 L Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

You can also make a donation online at www.seiu.org.

Ask President Francisco

Q School vouchers are being pushed as something that will help minorities and improve public schools. But I work in the Palm Beach County school system and worry that vouchers will hurt public education. Should I be worried?

*Jarutha Fields, Local 1227
West Palm Beach, Florida*

A My wife and I sent both of our sons to parochial schools and part of me wishes that a school voucher program had been in place to help us with the cost.

But I must put my own personal self-interest aside. I can't support vouchers because there is too much evidence that they weaken, rather than strengthen, public education. They don't really help kids in underfunded schools and take the focus away from what is really needed to improve those schools. Vouchers also would undermine job security and the well-being of thousands of NCFO members like you who work in our public schools.

Public schools have to provide education to all students, but private schools can "cherry-pick" and select only the students they want, leaving the public schools with even fewer



resources to carry out their mission. That's the way the profit-seeking education corporations that are springing up operate.

Studies done of voucher programs in Cleveland and Milwaukee show a litany of problems, from the hiring of uncertified teachers and cost overruns, to no real improvement in student performance. In both cities the large majority of families getting the vouchers were already sending their children to private schools.

A voucher program in your state was ruled unconstitutional.

It's been proven time and time again that the best way to insure quality public education is to reduce class size. That costs money and we have to

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fight for it. The last thing America needs are quick fixes offered by free market zealots that divert attention from that fight and drain precious resources away from public education.

NCFO members who transport children to and from school and make sure their trip is safe, provide nourishing meals, and ensure clean and warm classrooms and properly maintained buildings are a vital part of the education system too. And when the profit-hungry get into the business of replacing public schools, it's in these areas that they seek to cut corners the most and reap their profits.

Underlying much of the push for vouchers is an ideological attack on the role of government. The private sector works great for most things, but there are some places it simply does not belong: like prisons, Social Security and public education.

Counting Our Blessings

The terrible tragedy of September 11 still haunts all of us. It makes me want to count my blessings even more than usual.

One of mine is that I've had the opportunity to work with and for you this past year. I feel so grateful.

Secretary-Treasurer Dan Anderson and I, speaking as well for the Conference Executive Board and the hard-working NCFO staff, wish you all the best this holiday season. It is our deepest hope that 2002 will bring you and your family great blessings and much reason for gratitude.

Facts of Life Quiz: Test Your Knowledge

- 1** How many low-income taxpayers are not receiving one of Bush's tax rebates this year?
- just a few
 - one million
 - just over 10 million
 - almost 35 million
- 2** What percentage of married couples earning between \$27,000 and \$44,000 aren't getting rebates either?
- zero percent
 - 11 percent
 - 26 percent
 - 42.6 percent
- 3** Which of the following were results in a recent poll of working Americans?
- four percent believe Bush cares equally about protecting the rights of employers and employees.
 - 49 percent say employers and business count more with the President.
 - 56 percent say they don't trust the administration to defend equal pay for women.
 - 75 percent say that because Bush seems like a nice guy on TV he would not do things to hurt working families.
- 4** Which of the following is true?
- The price of a Disney T-shirt bearing a picture of Pocahontas equals a week's wages for the worker in Haiti who sewed it at a rate of 375 shirts an hour.
 - The top one percent of US citizens owns more wealth than the bottom 95 percent.
 - Because the US spends a greater percentage of its gross domestic product on medical care than any other industrialized country, it has the longest life expectancy.
 - Though 45 million Americans—one sixth of the population—have no health insurance, this is a big improvement over a decade ago.
- 5** What percentage of US corporations keep their employees under regular surveillance?
- zero, because it is against the law
 - 10 percent
 - 50 percent
 - 80 percent
 - 90 percent
 - 100 percent, because it is required by law
- 6** Which of the following is true?
- President Bush appointed people with lots of different points of view to his Social Security Commission.
 - Bush's proposal for partial privatization of Social Security would rob the Social Security trust fund of \$2 trillion in the next decade.
 - Without Social Security, 60 percent of American seniors would be in poverty.
 - 80 percent of retirees get a majority of their income from Social Security.
 - The Social Security trust fund is bankrupt.
- 7** Which of the following is true?
- A recent study concluded that Democrats have more nightmares than Republicans.
 - Nearly 1/3 of US workers feel overworked or overwhelmed by their jobs.
 - To push for Bush's tax cut for the rich, the National Association of Manufacturers asked lobbyists to show up for a rally wearing hard hats and other working class attire.
 - US workers end up in emergency rooms 3.6 million times per year due to workplace injuries.
- 8** About what country did the international human rights group Human Rights Watch charge that workers trying to unionize "are spied on, harassed, pressured, threatened, suspended, fired, deported or otherwise victimized," adding that "the frequency and growing incidence of workers' rights violations should cause grave concern among [those] who care about human rights and social justice?"
- Cuba
 - Colombia
 - Mexico
 - United States
- 9** How many US workers are killed on the job every day?
- one
 - five
 - 16
 - 21
 - no statistics are available

ANSWERS 1. d is the figure calculated by Citizens for Tax Justice, as reported in the *Washington Post* of 5/31/01 (which also contained the answer to #2). 2. c, 3. a, b, and c were all results in the July survey by Hart Research Associates. 4. only a & b are true. The US ranks 21st in life expectancy among industrialized countries, according to the US Department of Human Services. In 1990, 32 million Americans lacked health coverage. 5. d, but the American Management Association says the percentage keeps growing. 6. b, c & d. All of President Bush's appointees to his commission favor some sort of privatization. Even with no changes, full funding is available for all benefits through 2037. 7. b, c & d are true. Dream researcher Kelly Bulkeley found that Republicans have more nightmares than Democrats. 8. While all of the countries listed have labor rights problems, the report was about d, the US. 9. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that c is the correct answer for the period 1980-1997.

NAFTA, FTAA, Fast Track US and Mexico: It's Time to Stand U

Long-time Kentucky Members Ask: What About Us?

Last year, the members of Local 70 at Parker Seal in Berea, Kentucky, ratified what may have been the best contract in the 45-year history of their local.

"We won big improvements in pensions, \$1.10 in wages over three years and some important language changes," says Local 70 President Jay VanWinkle, who has worked for 35 years at the plant making o-rings for everything from asthma inhalers to missiles.

"We felt like we were bargaining



Leaders of Local 70 stand in front of Parker Seal equipment soon to be shipped to Mexico. "The Mexican workers are not the problem, they're not our enemies," explains Local 70 Vice President Jimmy Hazelwood (right). He's shown with Chief Steward Eddie Wilson (right) and President Jay VanWinkle.

with one hand tied behind our back," recalls bargaining committee member and Chief Steward Eddie Wilson. Having seen much of their work transferred over the years to company plants in Matamoros, Mexico, across the border from Brownsville, Texas, they faced company threats to shut down completely in Berea.

Corporate greed won out over loyalty. All of the almost 140 workers, averaging 55 years old and decades of loyal service to the company are out of work, their plant closed and their work shifted to other plants, including the two in Matamoros.

"People are both sad and angry," says VanWinkle. "We can hardly believe that the plant really closed after 50 years. It was still profitable, too. We're angry about how they're treating us."

For older workers like VanWinkle (who recently turned 60), the biggest problem will be health insurance

until Medicare kicks in. For younger ones like Vice President Jimmy Hazelwood, 43, there's the very real problem of trying to find good jobs: he and his wife both worked at Parker Seal.

"The Mexican workers are not the problem, they're not our enemies," Hazelwood emphasizes. "Everyone has to make a living. But they should be making decent wages like ours."

Hazelwood understands that if Mexican workers can have real unions that help raise their wages and conditions, greedy companies like Parker Seal will be less likely to shift work out of the US.

VanWinkle worries not just about his coworkers, but also about what lies ahead for working people.

"Every time you turn on the news there are more layoffs. We're heading to a bad fix and without much help in Washington," he warns.

That's why he says, labor's fight against expanding the NAFTA is so important.



The Parker Seal assembly line in Berea, Kentucky, is shut down after 50 years of operation. Average wages there were \$12.94 per hour. In Matamoros, workers take home around 92 cents per hour.

Up for Workers

Terrible Conditions South of the Border

Some 45,000 to 50,000 Mexican workers toil in the more than 100 US-owned factories in the city of Matamoros (across the border from the southern tip of Texas).

In theory, most of these workers—including those at the two Parker Seal factories—have union representation. They're all "members" of the CTM, the labor confederation controlled by the PRI, the party that ruled Mexico for more than 70 years.

"In reality there is no union representation, no seniority rights, no job protection, no health and safety program and no enforcement of Mexican labor laws in Matamoros," explains Domingo Gonzalez, a long-time labor rights and environmental activist in the border area.

"Wages in Matamoros have dropped to 50 percent of what they were five years ago," adds Gonzalez, who currently is organizing in conjunction with the United Steelworkers in Brownsville. "Take-home pay now average around 93 cents per hour, or around \$7.40 for eight hours of work.

According to a study done by a church-funded nonprofit organization, a family of four in Matamoros needs at least \$21.54 per day for basic survival.

Living conditions are terrible for maquiladora workers like those who work in Parker Seal plants, as this housing near Matamoros, Mexico illustrates. Workers in the US-owned plants on the Mexican-US border earned less than they need for a family of four to subsist.



The study also found that while a unionized auto parts manufacturing worker in the US needs to work 11.1 minutes to earn enough for a gallon of 2% milk, a Mexican working in one of the border maquiladora plants has to toil 146.3 minutes for it.

Gonzalez also points out that the 40-hour work week has given way to 48 or even 56 hours of toil each week and that a two-tier wage structure encourages the firing of higher paid, more senior workers who have no job security at all.

"People sometimes ask me 'isn't it better that Mexican workers get jobs?' Gonzalez notes. "I suppose you can say that a few workers are helped, but these plants don't make long-term investments, don't pay wages that allow people to have a house, health care for their families or decent transportation. It just allows them to survive and without any rights or dignity."

Stop NAFTA Expansion In its Tracks

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has destroyed hundreds of thousands of good jobs in the US, actually pushed wages down in Mexico, allowed corporate criminals to get away with poisoning the environment and permitted runaway factories to treat workers like slaves and get away with it.

Corporations in the US, Canada and Mexico are actually suing state or national

governments in the other countries to overturn environmental regulations or to force privatization of government services.

If President Bush gets his way, the situation will get even worse by expanding NAFTA into a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

FTAA negotiations will continue (in secret) for some time, but the fight over giving the Bush Admin-

istration Fast Track negotiating authority is happening this Fall.

Fast Track would give Bush a totally free hand to negotiate FTAA. Congress could then only vote it up or down. No amendments (for example, to defend labor rights) would be permitted.

As we go to press, a vote was expected on Fast Track early in the fall, perhaps even before you receive this issue of *The Journal*.

Use the AFL-CIO's toll-free hotline to contact the lawmaker representing your district in the House of Representatives, the key battleground. Ask how he/she voted—or plans to vote—on Fast Track and tell them why you oppose it. Just call 1-800 393-1082 (and be prepared to key in your zip code) to reach your Representative.

Around The Conference



Three Win SEIU 2001 Scholarships

Matthew Essex, the son of Illinois Local 8 member and power plant relay electrician Richard Essex, is the winner of a \$4,000 award from the SEIU 2001 Scholarship Pro-

gram. Matthew is now attending Spoon River College in Canton, Illinois.

Two NCFO daughters—**Andrea Whiteley Den-nis** (center) and **Danielle Snodgrass**—also won

\$1,500 scholarships in this year's program.

Andrea's father, Oklahoma Local 1122 member Samuel Whiteley, works in the Tulsa diesel shop of the BNSF railroad. She's attending Oklahoma's Northeastern State University in Broken Arrow.

Danielle is attending Kent State University in Ohio. Her father, Daniel Snodgrass, is a member of Ohio Local 100 and works as a school custodian in the Cuyahoga Falls public schools.

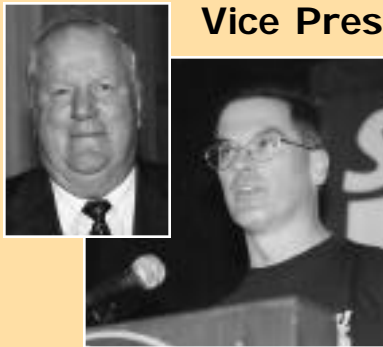


Though Indiana Still Wants Him **Smith Becomes Conference Organizer**

Stressing NCFO's determination to help more American workers win union representation, President George Francisco recently named long-time Indiana Local 131 President Robert Smith as Conference Organizer.

"I know how much the membership at the Indianapolis Water Company will miss having Bob there to work with them and represent them," notes Francisco. "But in helping other workers organize and making NCFO stronger, he'll still be fighting for them as well as the rest of us."

His first day on the job, Smith headed to Kentucky to join Conference Organizing Director Johnny Thacker in an organizing drive.



Vice President Poczekaj Retires

Healy Tapped to Fill Out Term

After an NCFO career of more than 40 years, Conference Vice President Ray Poczekaj retired from the union effective August 1, 2001, after serving on the conference executive board since January 1997.

Poczekaj also served for the past four-and-a-half years as president of Chicago Local 7, which he had served as a business represen-

tative since 1980. He became an NCFO member after starting work as a maintenance laborer for the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago back in 1960.

Tim Healy, Local 7 Business Representative for the past six years, has been elected to step in for Poczekaj, both as president of Local 7 and as a conference vice president.

"I have big shoes to fill," says Healy, who has been a Local 7 member since starting work as a mechanical assistant in Cook County Hospital in 1982.

Making the Move

NCFO headquarters staffers spend an August weekend helping the conference get settled in the new downtown Washington offices. Shown (from left) are Pat Whitley, Faye Sharpe, Laurie Flaherty, Tom Washington and Malanka Queen.



Repetitive Outrages

Hopefully you will not be among the 1.6 million American workers who have or will suffer a job-related repetitive strain injury this year to their backs, wrists or shoulders. These injuries often are terribly painful and debilitating.

They're also mostly preventable through changes in workplace and equipment design and proper work rules, as decades of scientific studies and experience have proven.

That's why there was such an outcry when President Bush, in one of his first acts after taking office, killed the long-awaited OSHA ergonomics standard put into effect in November, 2000.

President Bush does care, Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao assured us. It was just that OSHA had rushed to issue the ergonomics standard and had gone too far.

Decade of Delay

Rushed?

"Workers and unions have been seeking government action and an OSHA ergonomic standard to prevent these injuries for more than 10 years," AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka points out. But most of corporate America fought tooth and nail against doing anything, demanding one study after another. The subsequent studies all documented the need for a strong standard.

In 1999 alone, OSHA held nine weeks of hearings and heard from over 1,100 witnesses before making the standard final.

So what did Bush and Chao give us instead of the protections?

More hearings, this time called "forums," the first held at a college campus just outside of Washington

in July with a panel of "experts" leading off.

Corporate "Experts"

A Swedish orthopedist who has been a consultant to Volvo and Boeing asserted that "there is no scientific evidence" to show that activities like "frequent heavy lifting, frequent bending, and twisting" are the primary causes of back pain.

The major causes (he said with a straight face) are "psychological and social factors." He recommended that workers with back pain just keep working, even warning that when a worker blames repeated heavy lifting and his/her employer for the problem and asks the union for help, *it psychologically causes the pain to get worse*

Next came a US professor of medicine from North Carolina who asserted that the incidence of carpal tunnel syndrome "is 1 per 1,000 peo-

ple per year and it has nothing to do with what you did with your arm."

Then the head of operations for a corporate medical firm, self-described as the largest occupational health group in the country, testified.

"I have serious doubts that such an entity [as ergonomic injury] exists, except in rare occasions," he claimed, later adding that "the scientific evidence does not support that carpal tunnel syndrome can be caused by or aggravated by keyboard work."

Afterwards, Trumka reminded those in attendance that corporate America always digs up "experts" to do its bidding, while ignoring the real scientific evidence.

"I remember in 1969 in the industry that I come from, coal, we had people stand up and say that black lung doesn't exist, that actually breathing coal dust was good for you...[and that the problem was] all in our minds," he pointed out.



Think **NCFO** for Your Holiday Gatherings

To help you and your family celebrate the holidays in NCFO style, we offer you a list of food, spirits and holiday products made by your union brothers and sisters or at companies where they work.

Food & Beverages

- Gortons of Gloucester frozen fish and seafood (Boston Local 3)
- Cook Family Foods hams and ham products (Kentucky Local 5)
- Butternut bread (Chicago Local 7)
- Major Peters bloody mary mix (New York Local 266)
- Golden Brands/Golden Foods shortening and cooking oil (Kentucky Local 320)
- Armour pork loin (Local 320)
- WaWa milk, eggnog, milk, coffee, fruit drinks (Philadelphia Local 473)
- Pepsi-Cola (Local 473)

Sweets

- Junior Mints, Charleston Chews, Sugar Daddy, Sugar Babies & Pom Poms (Local 3)
- Keebler cookies (Local 7)

Spirits

- Samuel Adams beer (Chicago Local 7)
- Jim Beam Brands liquor (Kentucky Local 320)
- Early Times, Old Forester, Canadian Mist, Southern Comfort, Usher's Scotch whiskeys (Local 320)
- Pepe Lopez Tequila (Local 320)
- Ancient Age, Old Charter, W.H. Wheeler, Everett Lee, BenchMark, Eagle Rare liquors (Local 320)
- Seagrams liquor (Local 320)
- George Dickel Tennessee Whisky (Tennessee Local 513)
- Barton Brands gin and vodka (Georgia Local 679)

Other Holiday Supplies

- American Greetings Holiday Candles (Kentucky Local 77)
- Gibson holiday cards, gift wrap and gift bags (Local 77)
- Reynolds Wrap (Local 320)

And remember those transit lines NCFO members keep running. They can bring you safely home from holiday celebrations:

- Amtrak (many different locals)
- Massachusetts Bay Area Transit (Boston Local 941)
- Metro North (New York Locals 520 & 933)
- New Jersey Transit (New Jersey Local 338)
- Metro (Chicago Local 660)



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