

# The Journal



National Conference of Firemen & Oilers Newsletter



## SEIU Convention Acts to Increase Members' Power

*Francisco Elected to SEIU International Executive Board*

Some 1,200 SEIU Convention 2000 delegates—including an active NCFO contingent—enthusiastically approved a plan to greatly increase the union's bargaining power, accountability to members and political clout.

At the heart of the New Strength Unity Plan is the revitalization of SEIU's Divisions—Public Services, Healthcare, Building Services, and Industrial and Allied Services—and the channeling of more union resources to them.

The work of almost all NCFO

members is covered by one of the divisions.

"The increased ability of locals with members in the same industries, who face the same issues and sometimes the same employers, to work together and coordinate their efforts will make a big difference for all of us," notes NCFO President George Francisco, Jr. "This will be true in organizing, winning better contracts, fighting against privatization and defeating attacks on workers' rights," he adds.

The New Strength Unity Plan

also calls for increased use of the Internet for communication with members and expanded training programs to help members hold politicians accountable for their votes—and their promises.

Meeting in Pittsburgh May 20-24, participants in this 22nd SEIU International Convention also reelected their top officers: President Andy Stern and Secretary-Treasurer Betty Bednarczyk.

Elected to his first four-year term on the SEIU Executive Board was NCFO President Francisco, who also serves in the leadership group of the Industrial and Allied Services Division.

In addition to President Stern, who delivered a keynote address, convention speakers included Vice President Al Gore, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, House Democratic Leader Richard Gephardt, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney and Rev. Jesse Jackson.



President George Francisco, Jr., proudly holding an NCFO sign, leads the conference delegation into the SEIU International Convention as part of a spirit-building grand entrance by the entire convention. Carrying the banner with him (but partially blocked) is NCFO Vice President Paul Shiplett.

### NEWS FLASH

At our deadline, Boston Local 941 and System Council 2—working with other rail unions—helped Amtrak win a new three-year contract keeping the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority's commuter service unionized. They had to fight on many fronts. We'll tell you all about it in the next issue.

# Ask President Francisco

**Q** I'm 57 and have been working for 42 years. I'm worried about Social Security. Will it be there for me, and more importantly, for my 28-year-old son and his generation?  
 —Local 1227 member Jerry Mica, Riviera Beach, Florida



Jerry Mica, Local 1227, Riviera Beach, Florida

**A** The question you ask is on the minds of millions of Americans and there are two parts to the answer.

The first has to do with the financial health of Social Security. Wall Street, insurance companies, banks and right-wing groups have poured tens of millions of dollars into a well-orchestrated campaign. They're trying to scare working Americans into believing that Social Security is about to go bankrupt.

Frankly, all of this is a bunch of nonsense.

The latest official trustees' report conservatively predicts that Social Security will have plenty of funds to pay full benefits until 2037. (Just a few years ago the predicted year was 2030.)

And even if no changes are made, the system could pay two-thirds of current benefits until 2075. Richer Americans only pay Social Security taxes on the first \$76,200 of their income. A simple and equitable change like requiring them to pay the tax on all of their income would take care of most of that potential shortfall.

The bottom line is that Social Security is financially sound, and as the experience in countries like Chile and England has shown, pri-

vatization would make investment companies rich, but leave workers vulnerable. They could also lose the hundreds of thousands of dollars of free life and disability insurance currently protecting the families of all workers covered by Social Security.

But just because America's most successful social program is in good shape doesn't mean it will be there for your son's generation.

That's why the second part of my answer concerns politics.

Many Senators and Representatives—influenced by right-wing ideology and campaign contributions—favor privatization of Social Security. And while Al Gore strongly defends Social Security, George W. Bush has joined the privatization bandwagon. His partial privatization scheme might sound good, but it would require big cuts in benefits.

So, the only way to insure that Social Security will be there for future generations of retirees is to remain politically active and to vote for a Congress—and a President—who will defend and strengthen Social Security.

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## Get 'Em While They're Hot

If you've resorted to borrowing another member's copy of **The Journal** because you're not getting a copy mailed to you, beg no more.

Just make sure that your local union has your current address and drop us a line too.

And the same goes if other members are taking your copy. Send us the name, address, and local number of any NCFO member you know who isn't getting **The Journal**.

And we will make sure they do.

# Prevent Hand & Wrist Pain Before It's Too Late

If your job requires you to move your wrist repeatedly in the same motion, there is a risk of developing serious health damage from repetitive strain injuries (RSIs).

The best way to treat these often extremely debilitating injuries is to stop them from happening in the first place.

Many NCFO members have jobs requiring repetitive motion, such as:

- assembly line workers;
- meat packing and food processing employees who must make a repeated cutting motion;
- skilled trades workers (especially those doing carpentry);
- office workers who repeat hand motions at a computer.

## Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

One common type of this injury is carpal tunnel syndrome. The "tunnel" is in the wrist and the tendons and the main nerve to the hand pass through it. If the tendons or tendon sheaths are inflamed from frequent bending or twisting, they can squeeze or compress the nerves running through the tunnel and lead to the problem.

It usually begins with pain, tingling or numbness in the fingers, thumb and hand. Eventually, it can lead to clumsiness or weakness in the hand. In advanced cases, the muscles at the base of

the thumb begin to waste away.

While surgery is sometimes used to correct the problem, a post-surgery return to the same work, with no changes in the way the job is done, can bring the problem back.

The same is true of a wide range of other RSIs, including back injuries and chronic back pain.

RSIs—which are also called musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs)—afflict 1.8 million American workers each year, with at least 1/3 of the injuries being serious enough to cause lost worktime.

## Ergonomics

Most MSDs can be prevented through ergonomics, which means changing the job to fit the physical needs of the worker rather than making the worker fit the job.

Such changes as raising or lowering the position of a conveyor belt, gasoline pump or keyboard, re-designing tools, rotating work and providing regular and frequent breaks can go a long way towards eliminating these dangerous and

debilitating injuries.

In November, 1999, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), released its proposed ergonomics standard, offering protection from MSDs.

## Corporate Greed Syndrome

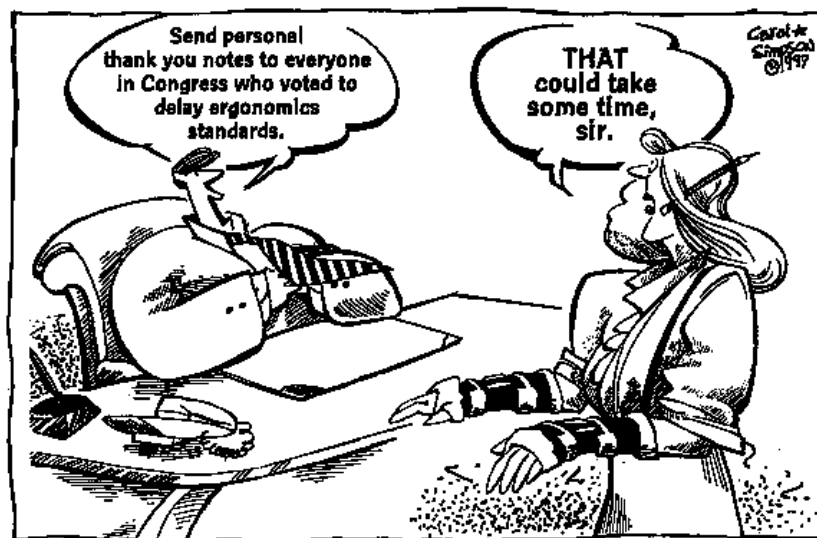
But the proposed standard has been held up for ten years by the greed of the National Association of Manufacturers and other corporate groups—supported by their mostly Republican allies in Congress. They've done this despite overwhelming medical and scientific evidence and the enormous suffering and millions of additional injuries caused by delay.

This year, more than 1,100 witnesses testified at nine weeks of hearings in several cities on the ergonomics standard, and relentless opposition continues from those motivated only by corporate greed—or corporate campaign contributions.

The future of the standard is uncertain and may well depend on the

results of the elections this November.

NCFO members have something that most American workers lack—a voice on the job. Through bargaining, safety committees and grievances, progress on making the work environment safer does not have to wait until Washington acts.



# Picture This

## NCFO Members at Work Carry Union Message to SEIU Convention

Thousands of delegates and other SEIU members attending the SEIU 2000 Convention in Pittsburgh in May read through reports highlighting the advances made by the union's newly revitalized divisions.

Helping to carry the union's message were photos of a number of hard-working NCFO members from around the country.



**Roberto Rodriguez**  
Union Pacific, Local 758, Los Angeles, CA



**Rogilio Devilla**  
Amtrak, Local 302, Los Angeles, CA



**Roberto Rodriguez**  
CSX, Local 758, Los Angeles, CA



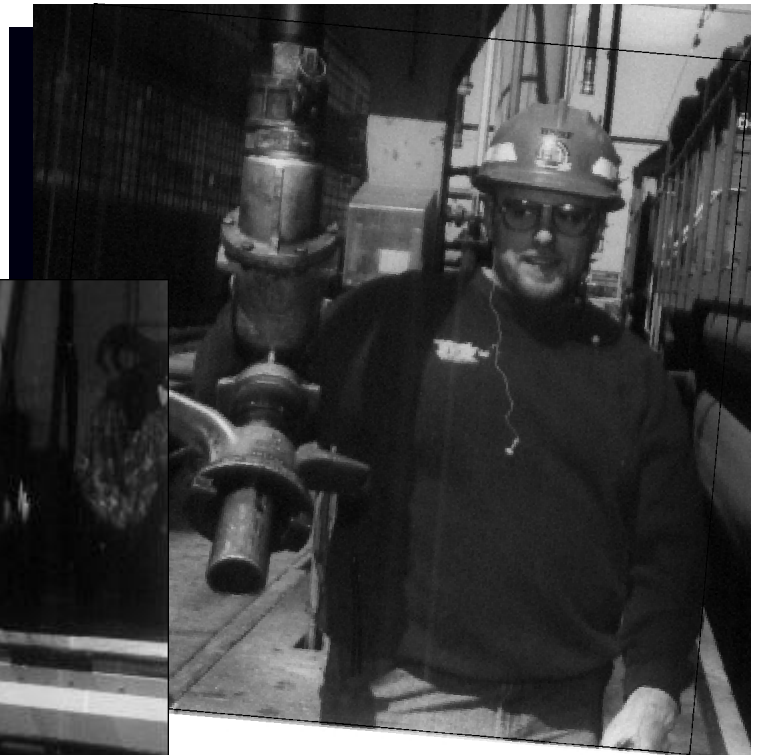
**Cindy Kruse**

Burlington Northern-Santa Fe, Local 634, Denver, CO



**Bruce Roper**

Master Electrician, Local 1227, Delray Beach, FL



**Wayne Knute**

Burlington Northern-Santa Fe  
Local 634, Denver, CO



**Albert Claypool**

Local 578, Louisville, KY



**Lee Wilkes**

School Bus Driver  
Local 1221, Pinellas County, FL



### MARCHING FOR GLOBAL JUSTICE

NCFO Secretary-Treasurer Dan Anderson (center) readies to lead thousands of trade union members, students and human rights and environmental activists in a Washington march protesting the policies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The march was part of a week-long Mobilization for Global Justice in April. NCFO members also rallied at the Capitol as part of the massive "No Blank Check for China" demonstration and lobby day.



### Going for the Gold

Local 1201 member Richardeane Mobley (right) helps one of the 2,000 participants in the Philadelphia Special Olympics off a school bus. Mobley, a school bus driver, was one of more than 150 Local 1201 volunteers who spent a beautiful Saturday providing transportation and other services for the annual event.

### Kentucky Merger Builds Clout

By an overwhelming margin, the membership of Louisville-based SEIU Local 557 has voted to merge into NCFO Louisville Local 320.

With almost 1,000 members, Local 557 represents workers in the Jefferson County Public Schools, the Housing Authority of Louisville, Quality Manufacturing and a number of other units.

"This merger will improve our economic and political clout in Kentucky and offers tremendous opportunities for bringing in hundreds of additional members through internal organizing," explains NCFO President George Francisco, Jr.

### Moody Blues

There are a few changes to the list of FELA attorneys available to help rail members injured on the job that appeared in the last issue.

The correct name of the attorney at **Moody, Strople & Kloeppel** is Willard J. Moody, Sr.

There's a change in the attorney to contact at Hunegs, Stone, Koenig, LeNeave & Kavaz. Ask for Randal W. LeNeave.

And there's another attorney to add to the list: Douglas S. Querin **Bricker, Zalovics, Querin, Thompson & Ritchey** 101 SW Main, # 915 Portland, OR 97201 503-226-1151/800-547-8811

You can find the complete list on the NCFO website: [www.NCFO.org](http://www.NCFO.org).

### Veteran NCFO Reps Retire

It's time to kick back a bit for Jackson "Jack" Henry (left) and Eugene "Gene" Heinz, who both re-



JAY HANDLER

cently retired as NCFO International representatives. "The working

men and women of NCFO benefited greatly from the 32 years that Jack, and the 34 years that Gene, dedicated to our union. These two brothers will be sorely missed," noted NCFO President George Francisco, Jr.

### NCFO Tragedy and Ceremony Mark Workers Memorial Day

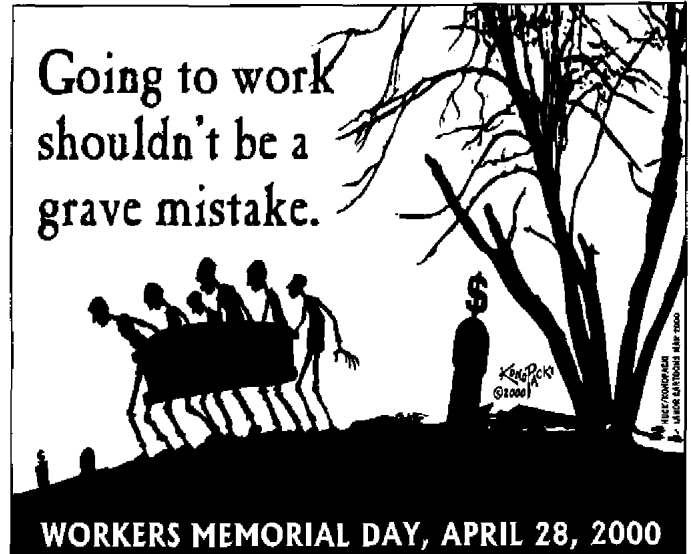
Early in the week that America's Unions held a wave of Workers Memorial Day events, the death of an NCFO member provided a vivid reminder of what it all means.

Local 473 member Robert Cronin, a refuse collector for the Township of Marple, Pennsylvania, was killed by an oncoming vehicle as he stepped out from the rear of his garbage truck. The mellow and friendly veteran public employee became one of the 6,000 workers expected to die on

the job this year.

Later that week, Local 266 hosted the Workers Memorial Day public ceremony for the Dunkirk-Fredonia Area Labor Council in New York State.

There, Local 266 President Robert Dando, Jr., noted that Workers Memorial Day was first celebrated in the late 1980s on April 28, the anniversary of the day



that the Occupational Safety and Health Act was signed into law.

The local then dedicated a flagpole in memory of its deceased members.

### Florida Local Brings Union Message to School Expo

Rich Pelkey (left), Cissie Weihman and Mike Rossignol stand in front of the Local 1221 booth at the Pinellas County (Florida) Expo 2000, a fair highlighting improvement in the school system.

"Our participation helped us publicize to the community and parents the important contributions our members and their union make to education and to reach unorganized employees with a message about the difference the union can make for them," explained Rossignol, Local 1221's president.



If your bargaining agent has entered into a collective bargaining agreement negotiated and ratified by your fellow bargaining unit members that obligates employees covered thereunder to pay an initiation fee and monthly dues to the union as a condition of employment, you have the right to be and remain a non-member of the union. You should be aware, however, that if you decide to become a nonmember, you would give up: the right to attend and participate in union meetings; the right to nominate and vote for candidates for union office; the right to run for union office; the right to participate in contract ratification and strike votes; the right to participate in the formulation of the union's collective bargaining demands; and the right to participate as a delegate to the National Conference or the SEIU Convention. Furthermore, your membership in the union gives it greater bargaining strength in negotiations for collective bargaining agreements, thereby producing a direct benefit to you and your fellow workers.

Individuals who nevertheless elect to be nonmembers are still legally obligated to pay a monthly agency fee to the union. Those who elect this status may limit their financial obligation to a pro rata share of the union expenditures that are reasonably related to collective bargaining, contract administration and grievance adjustment. Persons wishing to limit their obligation in this manner must inform their local union or System Council in writing.

# Their Victory Will Be Our Victory Too

Local 320's Bob Gunter doesn't work on a railroad, but he sees the fight to improve the railroad retirement system as his fight too.

The Railroad Retirement and Survivors' Improvement Act of 2000 contains proposals hammered out by NCFE, other unions and the railroads to help 50,000 widows of rail workers and improve future benefits for current NCFE rail members like Local 578 member Bob Claypool.

And it won't cost tax-



Local 320's Bob Gunter (right) is joining the effort of NCFE railroad members like Bob Claypool of Local 578 to get Congress to pass railroad retirement legislation.

payers a dime.

"When we can improve things for one segment of our diverse NCFE membership, it makes our union stronger and helps all of us in the long run," says Gunter.

"I'm writing my elected of-

ficials and urging members of my local to do the same. We know that our rail brothers and sisters will be there when we need them."

"When Congress hears not only from railroad workers but from hospital workers, public employees and factory workers too, they'll be impressed," adds Claypool.

**Take a few minutes and write to your Representative (U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515) and Senators (U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510).**

**Tell them that passing the Railroad Retirement and Survivors' Improvement Act of 2000 is the right thing to do for surviving spouses, for rail workers and for America.**



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