

August 20, 2007
Volume 2006-2007
Issue No. 5

The Union Bug

Published for the members of the United Staff Union

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USU MEETING SCHEDULE

Board - Friday, 9/21/07, 6:00 p.m.
Hilton Garden Inn, Wisconsin Dells

Board - Friday, 11/9/07, 6:00 p.m.
Radisson, Madison

Board - Friday, 1/18/08, 6:00 p.m.
Concourse, Madison

Board - Friday, 3/7/08, 6:00 p.m.
Sheraton, Madison

Board - Friday, 4/25/08, 6:00 p.m.
Sheraton, Madison

Annual - Saturday, 4/26/08, 11:00 p.m.
Sheraton, Madison

USU PLACES SANCTIONS ON SWEA UNISERV

Hopefully you have seen the letter that was sent to South West Education Association (SWEA) UniServ, headquartered in Platteville, sanctioning them for their continued poor behavior toward staff. This action was not done because of a single action taken by SWEA leadership, but rather from an accumulation of questionable actions and a demonstration of behavior that has been hostile to staff and has continued to get worse.

USU leadership has been dealing with the UniServ President, Julie Addison-Fulton, for two years. It has been a continued topic of conversation at Labor/Management meetings and between the parties. Unfortunately, it has spiraled down to a point where, based on a motion by the USU Board, the USU leadership decided to send the letter.

Many people have asked what does sanctioning an employer mean and are surprised to learn that this is not the first time USU has done it.

First and foremost it publicly recognizes the employer as a poor employer. The letter was sent around the state and to the NSO. It is presently the lead story on the NSO webpage.

Additionally we will take steps to discourage anyone from working in SWEA; particularly should they be looking for new hires. It could also mean that we could picket SWEA functions or meetings where SWEA leaders are in attendance.

This action was not taken lightly. Calls were received from SWEA members thanking us for sending the letter. However, it was taken in the hopes that serious steps will now be taken by the SWEA leadership to get their house in order and return to an efficient, well running UniServ.

Our Union brothers and sisters in that office deserve no less.

“Solidarity is not a matter of sentiment, but of fact, cold and impassive as the granite foundations of a skyscraper. If the basic elements, identity of interest, clarity of vision, honesty of intent, and oneness of purpose, or any of these is lacking, all sentimental pleas for solidarity, and all other efforts to achieve it will be barren of results.”

Eugene Debs

THE FACES OF USU

What is the USU; or better yet who is the USU? The USU has five different contracts to negotiate and enforce. These contracts involve four different caucuses. The USU is unique in the nation in that all five contracts are contained in one union. Other states have different contracts in different organizations and even though they work together, they are not organizationally connected. Being in one union brings benefits that we are all in this together but along with that comes responsibilities. We must set aside our differences and embrace our commonality.



Below are the contracts and the membership numbers. The WEA Trust P & C and the WEA Trust Associate are combined into one caucus.

WEAC/UniServ Associate Staff	83
WEAC/UniServ Professional Staff	101
WEA Trust Associate Staff	248
WEA Trust Professional Staff	8
WEA Trust Property & Casualty Associate Staff	<u>19</u>
Total Membership	459

"I'm trying hard to find common denominators. Because I seriously doubt there will be any world here if we don't find some way to talk with people we disagree with."

*Pete Seeger, folk singer,
songwriter, social activist*



HARVARD TRADE UNION PROGRAM

NSO continues to sponsor three seats in the prestigious Harvard Trade Union Program (HTUP) and is actively looking for candidates to participate next year. Routinely, NSO pays for one tuition fully, generally reserved for Associate Staff, and two partial scholarships.

The HTUP is an intensive six week program designed for leaders. The dates this year are January 7 through February 15, 2008. It covers the essential skills necessary to effectively manage and lead unions, as well as providing an incredible opportunity to explore key issues for the labor movement.

Since 1942, the HTUP has prepared union activists to meet the challenge of dynamic leadership within their unions and society. Today, the program helps union leaders develop keener analytical, managerial, and problem solving skills as well as discover ways to deepen public understanding of the value and importance of labor unions.

Anyone interested should contact Cheryl Singleton, Region 1 Director, NSO Liaison to the Harvard Trade Union Program. Her contact information can be found on the NSO website at nationalstaff.org.

"A good contract with a good union is good business."

*John T. Dunlop,
1980*

"A solid contract is, in a very real sense, another Emancipation Proclamation."

A. Philip Randolph

NSO RA NEWS

The USU was represented well at the NSO Representative Assembly this past June. We were recognized as the largest delegation and we even sat right up in front!!

An important part of this year's RA dealt with proposed Constitution and Bylaw changes. Last year a committee had been formed to review the document and make recommendations. Our very own Jina Jonen was on the committee and spoke to the changes. As with all RAs most recommendations were passed but some were defeated. For more information or for copies of the amended document, go to the NSO webpage at nationalstaff.org.

A topic that generated a lot of discussion was the attack by NEA on several affiliates' retirement program and how they could potentially fund (or not fund) it. The discussion went so far as to make plans for informational picketing at the NEA RA; however, NEA came to terms with the NSO prior to that so it was called off. The USU was preparing to help with informational picketing should it have been necessary.

In addition to the usual reports, ten new business items were introduced. Some were withdrawn, some were defeated, and some were passed. What follows were the highlights of some of them.

New business item #8 asked that the Executive Committee make a recommendation to the 2008 RA on the feasibility of having RA meetings every other year. This was defeated with the concern for the lack of yearly communication with each affiliate's representatives on important issues cited as a reason.

New business item #10 asked that the NSO-Retired dues and fees be set by the Executive Committee. This was referred back to the Executive Committee because the body felt that the NSO-Retired dues should be acted on by the RA just like other dues issue. The whole question of NSO Retired dues and fees will be a topic of discussion at the 2008 RA.

New business item #4 asked for "clear format changes for all Constitution and Bylaw changes" along with clearer "submission procedures" for both. This was defeated but will probably resurface next year because some were concerned about the clarity of these things.

This year's Winter Advocacy Retreat is scheduled for January 18-19, 2008, in Sarasota, Florida. Watch for information on how to attend.

Kathy Hill, Indiana Associate Staff was elected as our Regional Director to the NSO Executive Committee. She had previously been elected to fill a vacant position.

And finally the Representative Assembly approved the budget which included a \$4.00 increase for Associate Staff and \$7.00 increase for Professional Staff. The budget was adjusted to reflect actual spending levels.

MEMBER TO MEMBER ISSUES

With the increasing demands of our jobs and life in general, conflicts will occasionally arise between USU members. Remember that the Union can play an important role in this area and that our Policies have a procedure for dealing with some types of conflicts. The Policies, along with the Constitution and Bylaws, can be found on the USU Website at usu-wisconsin.org.

*"It is a pretty good rule
to work with anyone
who will work with
you."*

*John L. Lewis, in
Men Who Lead
Labor, 1937*

2007-2008 ELECTION RESULTS

The following are the results of this summer's election:

WEAC Associate - Denise Maney and Deb Meylor

Receiving votes: L. Coogan, C. Gruendemann, M. Plansky, A. Reynolds, C. Ritter

WEAC Professional – Dennis Eisenberg/Courtney Derwinski (co) and Jina Jonen

WEA Trust Associate – Jacinta Jones, Jenny Ahlvin, Kathy Cruice, Jodi Kelter, Dennis O’Kroley, Jill Gefke, Judy Rostan, and Pam Born

Receiving votes: D. Aberle, J. Banks, P. Bennett, Y. Bode, N. Brownell, D. Bruheim, P. Clark, D. Darrow, K. Detra, P. Dyer, A. Ehrhart, S. Felin, K. France, S. Geary, D. Hallett, B. Jones, B. Kemp, L. Linsmeier, C. Moll, J. Nelson, J. Olson, B. Ossmann, A. Prien, J. Rasmussen, K. Shattuck, S. Shilbauer, B. Steckelberg, J. Stamm, D. Sundet, B. Vondra, K. Weiss, L. Williams,

WEA Trust Professional – Eugene Dunk/Mike Zemplinski (co)

WEA Trust Associate P & C – Kim Rucker/Cynthia Majors (co)

Northwest Associate – Renee Ison

Northwest Professional – Peter Gust

Northeast Associate – Deb Armitage

Northeast Professional – Tim Smith

Receiving votes: Kathy Rohde

Southwest Associate – Rachel Schendel

Southwest Professional – Joyce Bos

Southeast Associate – Robbyn Marcinkevic/Julie McIntosh/Mrosz (co)

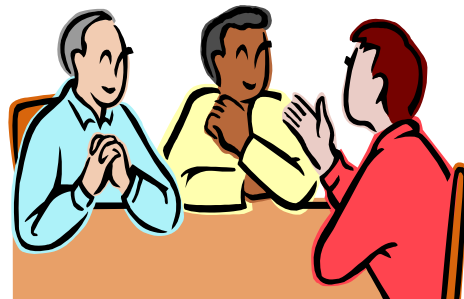
Receiving votes: Carol Bauer

Southeast Professional – Steve Johnson/Steve Cupery (co)

WEAC/UniServ Associate Caucus Chairs – Dianne Hellenbrand/Bonnie Breivogel (co)

Receiving votes: Renee Ison, Cindi Ritter, Kathy Spannbauer

The WEAC/UniServ Professional Caucus Chair is determined at their September Caucus meeting.



There are many committee openings to be filled in the next couple of months. The President will make recommendations and the USU Board will potentially confirm them in September and November.

If you are willing to serve on the following committees, please contact President Andrist as soon as possible.

Policy, Nominations, Scholarship, New Member, Editorial Board, Financial Review, Pension and Benefits, and Newsletter

THE “NEW” STATE OPTION WITHIN WEAC

First on an individual basis, and now being considered to be included formally into the WEAC Policies and Procedures – UniServ Policies, WEAC is changing how a UniServ may choose to operate within the WEAC family. UniServs that are either presently, or as of September 1 of this year will be, under this arrangement on an individual basis are SLUE, SWEA, and TRUE.

Debate over the issue at the July WEAC Board meeting centered over the added cost to all WEAC members for an individual UniServ to move to this option. Some WEAC members are concerned about subsidizing other UniServs with their dues dollars.

An amendment was offered to contain this financial incentive which was ultimately sent back to committee to be clarified and redrafted. With that important piece no longer being a part of the discussion, the Board tabled the second reading of the document until such time as the amendment could be reconsidered. However, it wasn't without much hand wringing and parliamentary attempts to move it through.

Quite possibly this whole matter could be reconsidered at the September WEAC Board meeting.

A summary of the document appears below. A complete document can be obtained by contacting President Andrist.

The length of the Agreement is usually for one year at the beginning but then renewable for five years. However, it can be either made permanent or terminated by mutual agreement at any time.

During the term of the Agreement, WEAC is the sole employer of both Associate and Professional staff. WEAC will be responsible for management of staff, assigning staff and hiring new staff. The UniServ will continue to have sole governance responsibilities for the UniServ and will continue to hold a seat on the WEAC Board, etc.

The UniServ dues will be locked in and turned over to WEAC to cover the contractual obligations at the onset of the agreement. Future dues increases for governance and operational purposes only will be set by the WEAC Board. Dues increases for future staff costs will become part of the WEAC budget. All NEA and WEAC grants will be returned to WEAC.

The UniServ needs to transfer to WEAC sufficient funds/assets to fund to-date any and all accrued contractual liability for staff including post-retirement obligations. Thereafter the liability will become WEAC's even if the UniServ returns to “Local Option” after at least six years.

Ownership of equipment will transfer to WEAC and become their responsibility within the operating budget of the UniServ.

Should the parties disagree on any aspect of the Agreement there is an arbitration process included in the agreement.

“The Unions’ continued reluctance to grapple with a technology revolution that might eliminate mass labor could spell their own elimination from American life over the next three or four decades.”

*Jeremy Rifkin, futurist, author, president,
Foundation on Economic Trends, 1995*

The WEA Trust P & C group has been without a contract since July 1, 2007. They have met five times so far with at least two more bargaining sessions scheduled later in August.

The main issues are wages, retirement contributions, and health insurance. Progress has been slow but their last meeting, August 7th was productive and the team feels better about the direction.

The USU team is Kim Rucker, Cynthia Majors, and chief spokesperson, Sam Froiland. The Management team is Jim Polcyn, Merry Bachim, and spokesperson, Pranav Shah.



LABOR/MANAGEMENT MEETINGS WORKING AS THEY SHOULD

USU elected officers regularly meet with WEAC managers, usually Dan Burkhalter and Dave O'Connell. The topics range from easy to resolve to difficult. The time, however, is well spent. Everyone leaves the meeting with a better understanding of the issue and how it might be dealt with. They occasionally result in better working conditions for USU members.

Three recent examples illustrating the success of these meetings are:

- ♣ instituting a Roth 401k plan without the usual negotiations which means what are we willing to give up for gaining this.
- ♣ instituting a sick leave sharing program and then promoting its use for a USU member that was going on LTD due to medical reasons and did not have enough sick days to carry through the qualifying period without going on unpaid leave.
- ♣ promoting the use of the sick leave sharing program a second time for another USU member with health issues both personally and within the family.

There is every reason to believe that these meetings will continue to be beneficial to both parties.

WEA TRUST MEMBER BENEFITS EMPLOYEES ARE USU MEMBERS

WEA Trust Member Benefits provides personal insurance (auto, home, additional liability insurance) and retirement and investment services (TSA, IRA) to WEAC **and USU members**. *TSA is government/public school employees only.*

About Member Benefits

- ♣ Created by WEAC more than 30 years ago to enhance the financial well-being of WEAC members and now USU members
- ♣ A not-for-profit organization, no commissions, no shareholders
- ♣ Programs are designed to meet the needs of participants and include unique coverages not found in most other policies
- ♣ Increased participation in these union-created programs makes them stronger and increases their ability to expand products and services to better serve union members
- ♣ USU members provide excellent personal service as evidenced by industry-leading satisfaction and participation retention rates
- ♣ Participants have a high level of confidence and satisfaction in their union program delivered, in part, by USU members