

The Union Bug

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Shared Destiny

by Fred Andrist, USU Vice President and WCEA UniServ Director,
and Paul Hambleton, WCEA UniServ President and NEA Director

The USU will distribute notepads at the WEAC RA this spring that say: USU & WEAC, Common Interests, Common Principles. They have been popular with the WEAC membership and are a great way to make the general WEAC membership more aware of the USU. We believe the statement accurately describes two distinct similarities between the two Unions.

However, the past few years have seen both the USU and WEAC struggle with change. WEAC has worked through the 2010 document and has discussed a possible merger with the WFT. Dues increases at the national, state, and UniServ level may cause us to seek new ways to deliver services to members in a more efficient and effective manner while controlling costs. We see change both statewide and nationally due to closer scrutiny by the Federal government. The labor movement as a whole has been undergoing tremendous change for several decades. Through it all, WEAC remains one of the largest and strongest unions in Wisconsin. But as a result of these changes the WEAC/UniServ portion of the USU has and will see workload changes. Additionally, the WEA Trust's is under attack because of legislative actions. This obviously could have a major impact on the Trust portion of the USU membership.

Thus many factors put our two organizations on the verge of significant changes. It will not and should not be business as usual. To remain strong and influential, a Union must adapt. One only has to look at other Unions in history to see that the ability to change is paramount to survival. Unions that have been inflexible have diminished in influence or not survived at all.

A Union will not exist long unless it stands on larger principles and adapts to changing times. Unions have worked to create things much larger than themselves or their own interests. Unions helped create the 40 hour work week, social security, equal rights, civil rights, health care coverage, and many other benefits that now extend past current union members. We must remain committed to the goal of building not only our own unions, but also building a greater good in our society, or we shall ultimately lose our effectiveness.

In addition to those common interests and common principles, we would propose a third tenet: **shared destiny**. A strong and vibrant WEAC and Trust ensures a strong USU. Likewise, a strong and vibrant USU ensures a strong WEAC and Trust. If either organization is anything less, the other is less because of it. It is not uncommon for some USU members to begin their careers as members of WEAC and/or NEA. USU exists to help all its members not only maintain and improve their wages and working conditions, but also become better advocates for UniServ/WEAC/NEA members, which in turn improves the Union for which USU employees work.

We share the basic values of labor unions. UniServ/WEAC/NEA needs quality staff to do the work of the union, and USU would have little role without the labor organization formed by

<p>262-789-6000 800-354-7816</p> <p>Treasurer: Deb Byers CRUE 608-781-1234 800-753-0987</p>	<p>educators and support personnel in Wisconsin. The potential strength of each organization is diminished without the strength of the other.</p> <p>It is this shared destiny that makes it imperative that we work together on as many levels as possible. It will be with our combined talents that we will reach our maximum potential. The common interests and common principles between our organizations ensure a compatibility that we can build upon.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(Continued on Page 2)</i></p>
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(Shared Destiny, Continued from Page 1)

Does this mean we will always agree? Certainly not! How we deal with that disagreement will determine the strength of our organizations. Disagreement can be constructive or it can be destructive. Which path it takes often depends on not only how the message is sent but also how it is received. We hope that because of our shared destiny, most, if not all, would be constructive disagreements, which result in adaptation and improvement in representing educators and support personnel as well as working toward the larger goals of the labor movement.

As we face the changes that UniServ, WEAC, and NEA leaders must contend with, from declining membership to possible changes in the very structure of our union, it is imperative that we keep our shared destiny in mind. Further changes will come from the changing social, economic, and political landscape in our state. WEAC and the Trust do critical work representing the interests of Wisconsin's educators, support personnel, and public schools. USU members working for WEAC, the Trust, and UniServs play a crucial role in doing this work and in helping governance leaders make the right decisions. Change is coming, and like most change, we cannot be sure what shape that change will take. However, we can be sure that both organizations share a common destiny, and a successful negotiation of our future will depend on common principles and common interests.

USU Initiates NSO Job Action Investigation

The National Staff Organization (NSO) is the national affiliate of the USU. The NSO provides strong support for its state affiliates when there are job actions. The NSO, the world's largest union of union staff, has invaluable resources for the USU Trust Associates as we bargain through this crisis.

There are two kinds of assistance available. One is the expertise of veteran union organizers who have worked strikes and related job actions. Another is money.

The NSO guidelines on crisis assistance call for a detailed application for assistance. Sensibly, there is a need to know the type and extent of the crisis before valuable resources can be allocated.

This week, USU President Anne Boley and USU Trust Associate bargaining team spokesperson Al Manson sent a memo to the NSO asking for an investigation of the Trust bargain. The purpose of this request is to get access to NSO help. There will be a review of the current bargain by outsiders, with suggestions on how to improve the chances for a peaceful settlement. In addition, the investigation will provide the framework for building to a strike, if that should be necessary.

The clearest example of the type of NSO assistance available, if the investigation finds we are on the right track, is access to a crisis fund. The NSO Charlie Love Crisis Fund has over \$2,000,000. This money becomes available for strike assistance, provided the NSO guidelines are followed. These funds are available to striking members after five working days of a strike. Weekly benefits (Monday through Friday) are calculated at \$75.00 per day per

member and will be retroactive to the first day of the strike. Such funds must be given to members in good standing who are on strike, and are not to be used by the Affiliate to cover the cost of the strike.

The USU Trust Associate caucus has accumulated its own crisis fund of over \$200,000. By USU policy, this caucus crisis money is only to be used in the event of a job action. The other two USU caucuses – professional and associate – also each maintain crisis funds. Each caucus controls its own fund, and that means that it is possible for one caucus to help another. That is a comforting thought for the USU Trust Associates now, as it will be for all other USU members when negotiations begin for their contracts later this year.

Talk of a possible strike can be disturbing. Yet, when the Trust management declines to look into using interest arbitration as a way to peacefully settle the contract, it is saying that a strike is possible. We do not know if the contract will settle peacefully. We hope that it will. But we would be ignoring our responsibilities if we ignored the possibility of a strike. And so we have asked for NSO help. The expert advice and attention we get from the NSO will certainly help to maximize the chances for a peaceful settlement. It will also make sure that if we do have to strike, the strike will be successful.

USU Board Acts on WEAC-Fox Valley Grievances

At the January USU Board meeting, all WEAC-Fox Valley grievances to date were brought before the Board for consideration and action. The USU members who were named as grievants were in attendance and involved in the discussion.

The Board's actions were as follows:

- Seven grievances shall move to arbitration;
- Five grievances will not be pursued pending verification that the agreed to conditions have been met;
- Two grievances have been sent back for more discussion and possible resolution;
- The remaining grievances were withdrawn without prejudice and the USU will retain the right to file a grievance on a similar matter in the future.

The National Staff Organization (NSO) was contacted by Fred Andrist, USU Vice President and Grievance Chair, and asked to provide advocacy assistance for those grievances moved to arbitration.

NSO has assigned John Riley, who has recently retired and formerly was the coordinator for negotiations for the NSO Corridor States CBC, to advocate for the USU grievants. John is planning to meet with the grievants on March 19th.

who we are; explain to them that we are the staff union; and that we share common interests and principles with all WEAC members. Anyone interested in donating time to work the booth should contact USU president Anne Boley.

USU Booth at the WEAC RA

The USU will again be hosting an informational booth at the WEAC RA. This gives us the opportunity to let WEAC members know

Election Year Trivia

Q: Who was the only person to run for President of the United States while in prison?

A: Answer: Eugene Victor Debs, Socialist candidate in 1920, when he got nearly 920,000 votes.. (He also ran in 1900, 1904, 1908 and 1912.)

Debs spent many years as the leader of the railroad workers, starting with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen in his home state of Indiana. In June 1893 he organized the American Railway Union, America's first industrial union. In 1895, he and other leaders of the ARU were sent to jail for contempt of court in connection with the Pullman strike of 1894.

On June 16, 1918, Debs delivered his famous anti-war speech in Canton, Ohio, protesting World War I. For this speech he was arrested and convicted in federal court under the wartime

espionage law. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison and disenfranchised for life. In 1920, President Harding commuted his sentence to time served and released Debs.

Though considered by many as a great union leader, this is Debs' statement on leadership: "Too long have the workers of the world waited for some Moses to lead them out of bondage. I would not lead you out if I could; for if you could be led out, you could be led back again. I would have you make up your minds there is nothing that you cannot do for yourselves." (From an address on industrial Unionism delivered at Grand Central Palace, New York City, Dec. 18, 1905.)

– Louise Uphoff

NSO 2004 RA Delegates

Professi

onal Staff Caucus

Serving the 2nd year of a two-year term

Deb Byers

Tim Smith

Elected for a two-year term

Sandy Nass 73

Greg Spring 70

1st alternate Eugene Dunk 62

2nd alternate Dennis Eisenberg 56

WEAC/UniServ Associate Staff Caucus

Serving the 2nd year of a two-year term

Linda Coogan

Louise Uphoff

Serving a two-year term

Diane Johnson 94

Sally Leffelman 75

1st alternate Bonnie Breivogel 55

2nd alternate Ann Reynolds 14

WEA Trust Associate Staff Caucus

Serving the 2nd year of a two-year term

Dave Sundet

Deb Lewis

Jasmine Banks

Karen Weiss

Chris Farens

Serving a two-year term

Bev Kemp 82

Sandy Trapino 71

Debbie Hallett 67

Jill Gefke 65

Dennis O'Kroley 59

Kathleen Cruice 58

Jeanne Mooney 57

1st alternate Dale Bruheim 55

2nd alternate Anna Ehrhart 44

Remember that delegates are elected for a two year term. Alternates are for one year only.

Now that the NSO RA delegate election is over, it is time to think about the Spring USU elections. All four USU officers are elected for a two year term. That term ends on August 31, 2004; therefore USU will be voting on all officers and all stewards (stewards are elected every year) in June via mail ballots. All nominations are due to Terry Smith or Pete Gust no later than June 1st. Terry and Pete can be reached at South Central Education Association (SCEA) via phone, mail or

email at plgust@sceda.net or tlsmith@sceda.net.

Reminder!

USU Begins to Picket Trust Events

In the last issue of the Union Bug, details were given about the Trust Associate Staff bargain. As stated in the article, negotiations have stalled. The unresolved issues are retirement and moving from a two tier to a three tier drug card. Oddly enough management even at one point suggested that the Union give up the right to bargain the level of benefits within the plan, something that WEAC members should never consider doing.

The last bargaining session was February 23rd. When no progress was reached at that meeting, the USU bargaining team asked that USU Professional staff do informational picketing at the February 26th Trust Workshop which was held prior to the Winter Conference in Appleton.

Given the short time span between those two dates a call to action was quickly put out. Seventeen picketers showed up for some or all of the forty-five minutes of picketing outside the Paper Valley Hotel in Appleton. They were Val Gabriel, Steve Pieroni, Joyce Bos, Steve Holzhausen, Gene Degner, Mallory Keener, Deb Byers, Anne Boley, Sandy Nass, Jim Blank, Fred Andrist, Tim Smith, Tom Fineran, Toby Paone, Ellen MacFarlane, Steve Cupery and John Horn. They then walked into the workshop in mass and placed their picket signs along the back wall in clear view of the presenters. Just after lunch, USU President Anne Boley made a statement encouraging management to resolve the remaining issues in the bargain.

This picket was just the first step. In the future USU members will need to consider other actions to support our union brothers and sisters in the Trust. If unresolved, we will need to do more picketing and ultimately may have to support a strike by the Trust Associate Staff. With so many USU contracts either up or soon to be up for renewal, we must all stand united so that proper recognition is given for our efforts on behalf of our employers. Our strength must and will be in our solidarity!

USU Annual Meeting will be held at Ho Chunk, Wisconsin Dells, on Saturday, May 1st at 1:00 pm. Caucus meetings are usually scheduled in the morning by the caucus chairs. USU will pay for vouchered miles and Saturday lunch.
