

Nursing home workers settle first contracts



Shirley Stigler from Piedmont Nursing Home in Portland (L) and Carlotta Davison from Willowbrook in Pendleton at General Council.

We have reached first contracts with three nursing home providers, covering 11 homes. Although each contract is different, all contracts include significant pay raises. All contracts include "Just Cause" so that workers can only be disciplined or fired with good reason, with due process, and with fairness to all concerned. All contracts contain union security and respect for seniority.

To Risk

To laugh is to risk appearing the fool.
 To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.
 To reach for another is to risk involvement.
 To expose your ideas, your dreams, before a crowd, is to risk their loss.
 To love is to risk not being loved in return.
 To live is to risk dying.
 To believe is to risk failure.
 But risks must be taken, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.
 The people who risk nothing, do nothing, have nothing, are nothing.
 They may avoid suffering and sorrow, but they cannot learn, feel, change, grow, love, live.
 Chained by their attitudes, they are slaves;
 They have forfeited their freedom.
 Only a person who risks is free.

— Anonymous

Belonging to a union...

by Carlotta Davison, Certified Nursing Assistant, Pendleton

My name is Carlotta Davison and I am a Certified Nursing Assistant at a nursing home in Eastern Oregon. We just recently signed a contract which we have been bargaining for a very long time. This is a poem about risk that my co-workers and I found which describes our recent experiences through this whole process, and we would like to share it with you.

Our union gives us the opportunity to take these risks for a better quality of life for ourselves, our family, and for the elderly. We really can be heard when we all speak with one voice and stand together, because what lies in our power to do also lies in our power not to do. My co-workers and I would like to thank SEIU Local 503 nursing home workers for this opportunity.

Legislators introduce four worker-friendly bills

Electing pro-working family politicians is already paying off as legislators file four new bills on our behalf.

Protecting personal information

The first would require state agencies that use prison labor to notify callers that they are possibly giving personal information to inmates. This issue is big for our brothers and sisters in DMV, where work once done by union members for family wages is now done quietly behind prison walls for far less.

Guarding against contracting-out

A second piece of proposed legislation guards against public funds going to contract-out our jobs to other countries. This once unthinkable idea is a reality in several states where services are administered by call centers overseas. We need to insure that taxes paid in Oregon stay in this state and help provide quality jobs.

Providing equal rights to citizens

Over that past two decades Oregon has seen a dramatic increase in our Spanish-speaking population, but the state has not kept up by providing help to these taxpayers. Legislators addressed this problem last week with legislation that would require the Department of Revenue to provide

services in Spanish. All Oregonians should have the tools necessary to pay our taxes and be productive members of our communities.

Making safety and staffing levels mandatory in bargaining

The fourth piece of legislation would make safety and staffing levels mandatory subjects of bargaining for non-strikeable units like OYA and several local governments. For years our members who do corrections and public safety work for youth and adults have seen increases in offenders without adequate staffing increases. Now management is not legally required to bargain over many safety and staffing issues. This makes it difficult for us to make progress on these critical issues in bargaining or through binding arbitration. If this bill is signed into law our front-line workers will finally have some of the protection that has always been provided to the rest of us.

“I think every Oregonian should have the choice as to whether or not they give personal information to prisoners.”



Mary Springer
DMV, Salem

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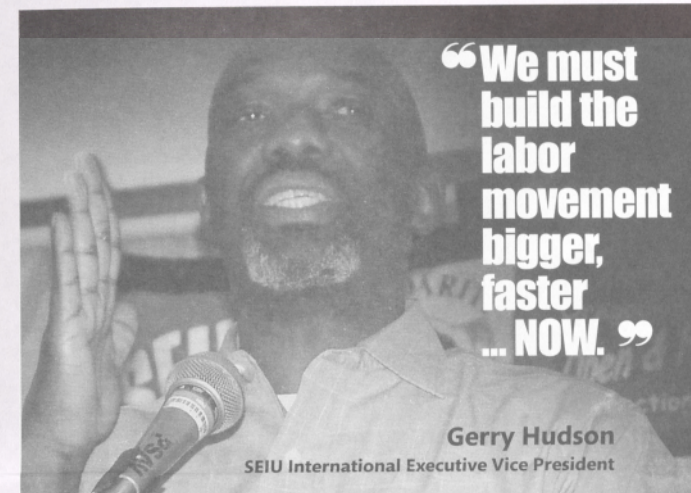
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Unite to Win

Our country, our unions, and all working people are at a crossroads



SEIU International Executive Vice-President, Gerry Hudson inspires stewards with his keynote address on why we must unite to survive at Stewards' Conference last week in Portland.

Do we continue to let our labor movement get smaller and weaker, while global corporations get larger and stronger?

Or do we make bold changes in the labor movement to build new strength and unity to win good jobs; affordable, quality health care; opportunity for all; and retirement with dignity?

In November 2004, Andrew Stern, SEIU International President, began a debate among the national leaders of the AFL-CIO affiliated unions around the structure of the American labor movement. The ideas proposed by SEIU could result in major changes at the AFL-CIO's July 2005 quadrennial convention. The plan promoted by President Stern, "Unite to Win: A 21st Century Plan to Build New Strength for Working People" asserts that we should unite the strength of workers who do the same type of work or are in the same industry, sector or craft to take on their employers. To achieve this goal, the AFL-CIO Executive Council should have the authority to recognize, to three lead national unions that have the membership, resources, focus, and strategy to win in a defined industry. This would include a plan produced by lead unions to win for workers in their area of strength. The following are some of SEIU's proposed principles to build 21st century unions with the strength to change workers' lives. We hope they will lead to a bold discussion at all levels of the labor movement, prompt action, and a new future for American workers.

"Unite to Win" recognizes that working people are strong only when:

- All unions work together, and not for separate or competing goals.
- All union members who deal with the same employer or work in the same industry or sector - no matter what union they are in - unite their strength to win contracts and legislation.
- Unions make it a top priority to help the 90% of American workers who don't have a union to join us and add their strength to ours in each industry or sector.

In our "Unite to Win" proposal, SEIU calls for one united union movement to:

- Lead a coordinated campaign for quality, affordable health care for all, including state and local reforms.
- Challenge the "Wal-Marting" of American jobs before Wal-Mart's low-wage, no-benefit policy drags down standards for all.
- Build a global union movement so workers around the world who work for the same employer or industry can coordinate strategy and fight the corporations' use of outsourcing and other tactics to drive down pay and benefits everywhere.

Bold improvements must be made now so that working people can speak with a strong, united voice.