

# Weekly Word

Monroe County Federation of Social Workers, IUE-CWA 381

167 Flanders St Rochester New York 14619

(585) 328-7170 voice

web site: [www.fsw-union.com](http://www.fsw-union.com)

John Vasko

(585) 328-2162 fax

e-mail: [fswmessage@aol.com](mailto:fswmessage@aol.com)

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## Rally!!!

Don't forget that Tuesday night, January 11, is the meeting of the Monroe County legislature and that we have scheduled a rally to protest our lack of a contract. It is imperative that you participate...you must stand up for yourself and help us win this battle together.

Did I say battle? Well, yes in deed, we are in a battle.

Take a look around you and see the effects of this battle. You've been reorganized multiple times over the past two and a half years in a nonsensical manner that does not serve the public, the taxpayer or yourself. Have we had an opportunity to impact these changes? Frankly...no! While the Union and some members have provided input into the decision making, the advice and expertise is ignored. Hence a broken system, for which fortunately none of us can be held accountable.

Take a look specifically at the Department of (now I guess it's called) Human Services. After a year and a half of "acting directors" we finally get a permanent director that, from most accounts, is insular and non-responsive. Last spring I looked forward to finally having a new, permanent director that had the authority to act and could possibly benefit the needs of this community of recipients and workers. Unfortunately, we have witnessed autocratic changes to long standing practices, the creation of a disjointed management team, and dissolution of the safety and security team, to name just a few items. Don't get me wrong...Ms Stevens is a wonderful person with a lot of potential, but unfortunately she has missed some opportunities to make this a better place. I hope there is a chance to get back on track.

Take a look now at our relation with the County Executive's office, if that's the place that controls ultimate labor management relations. First off, we've had 15 months of contract negotiations, where virtually nothing was accomplished for twelve of those months. Then, when there is a window of money saving opportunity there is a flurry of bargaining and a tentative agreement. The day after the contract was turned down, I requested of Human Resources some dates for future bargaining, hoping to meet mid-December. Still no dates! You saw in the last Weekly Word the list of outstanding grievances, arbitrations, and unresolved investigatory interviews. That list was sent to Maggie Brooks on December 15<sup>th</sup>

asking for an early January 2005 meeting with her to try to resolve whatever issues might be causing these delays and to revisit her March 2004 commitment to us regarding labor relations. That letter is still unanswered. Is that an indication of the commitment?

So what options do we have if our administration doesn't respond to our pleas? Unfortunately, only public action. I know you all hate this as much as I do. I, too, have better, more constructive things to do with my time. But I don't see any alternative than to take our message to the halls of the legislature. I don't see any alternative than to take to the streets in rallies and protests. I don't see any alternative than to continue with press and radio campaigns that point out the inconsistencies of County rhetoric with our reality and the reality of the people we come to work for...the vulnerable residents of Monroe County.

Through emails over the past week, I've seen many other Unions and community groups answering our call to join us at the rally. This is your opportunity to see the support you have in this community. Even more important than that, though, you cannot let the community see that you are not willing to fight your own battles. If you can't take a stand for yourself, no one else will be willing to stand for you. Let that happen, and you might as well accept your current condition. We are ever at your side, but we also need you at ours...and I hope you do recognize this as a battle.

**General Membership  
Meeting:**

**January 19<sup>th</sup>**

**5:30pm**

**Brighton Town Park**

**Mark your calendars now!**