

Weekly Word



Monroe County Federation of Social Workers, IUE-CWA 381

167 Flanders St

Rochester New York 14619

(585) 328-7170 voice

(585) 328-2162 fax

web site: www.fsw-union.com

e-mail: fswmessage@aol.com

John Vasko

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Labor Day

I hope you all have a great Labor Day weekend but that you don't forget to march on Monday. All we ask is a couple hours of your morning from 10am until Noon or so.

Why march?

I must admit, I feel a little ashamed to even have to talk about this, but as years pass, memories fade.

The celebration of and the paying of tribute to the working people of this country should never be forgotten. If you look around you, you'll see more and more people who have to work on this holiday, as well as many other holidays. The erosion of the power of working people, basically of the middle class, accelerates with each year. Each contract time, more unions fight to maintain the standard of living they have come to enjoy and have worked hard to earn. And those workers without the benefit of a Union find themselves scratching to meet their family's needs.

As an example, a few weeks ago I was sitting on my porch talking with a dear friend about his retirement plans. He was a 22 year veteran of Xerox until the early 1990's when he was sold (sound like slavery?) to EDS. Because of his significant health concerns, I asked about his retiree health benefits. I was shocked to learn that EDS does not offer retiree health coverage. I was fuming. How could a company whose founder has made billions from the company not provide for those who have slaved to make the company great? My fuming turn to shock and despair three days later when I learned that his services were no longer needed. What company is going to hire a 56 year old computer programmer with significant heart problems at the salary he has been earning when there are so many recent graduates who will work for lower pay?

Times are changing, my friends, and you should not take anything for granted. So let's get out on Monday and show the world (or at least people in Monroe County) that we're not going to take it any more

Why else should you march?

For those of you who can't march for the right reasons and for those who can, all marchers will receive a movie pass for marching in the parade. Also, if you want to join the Labor Council picnic at Cobbs Hill park directly after the parade, we have up to 50 tickets available for those who

march. We will pass out the movie and picnic tickets at the parade.

The float, the float

The float is nearing completion and promises to be a great attraction in this year's parade. Judy Gradford and her band of elves have worked diligently to get this float completed. And, her husband Ralph, has put in countless hours in the design and construction. Hats off to Judy and all who have helped!

The construction is, however, not yet complete. There is much work to be done and the last day to do this is this coming Saturday. We still need plenty of volunteers to help finish this project. Please contact Judy directly to let her know that you can help or call the Union office and let Joyce know that you will help. I believe the flyers that have been distributed for the parade have most of the contact information for Judy.

The specifics...

We will assemble at the usual place on Strathallen Park, near the hotel bearing the same name. This street runs between East and University. We will march down East Avenue, turn left on Main Street and then right on State Street. The route ends at Andrews Street. This route is different than in the past because of an organizing drive happening at the Crowne Plaza hotel.

There is free parking in the Sisters City garage on the corner of Fitzhugh and Church Streets (across from City Hall). We will have some vehicles transporting marchers from the garage to the beginning of the parade route so when you get done, you can just go to your car and take in a movie or a picnic, or both. Call Joyce at the Union office to let her know if you want a ride, how many people you have with you, etc. Plan to start arriving by 9am for shuttle service. I don't promise that it will all work smoothly, but it's got to be better than in prior years.

After Hours and SAP

I need to update everyone on the current status of compensation for caseworkers and examiners who work after hours. At this point, the County still disputes the amount of overtime credits/pay that workers should receive. Most of the discrepancy comes from how the new payroll system views hours worked for overtime. We have filed a grievance which has been denied by the County and is moved to arbitration. Until we have an agreement with the

County or a decision by an arbitrator in our favor, workers will still be compensated at the new, SAP rate. If, and that's a crucial two letter word, we are successful in winning the arbitration or in reaching a prior agreement with the County, then we can expect that all hours worked will be refigured and banks or pay corrected.

We do not have an arbitration date yet and some of our older grievances have just been scheduled for February of 2007. In other words, this could take some time.

How you approach this discrepancy in the meantime is a personal choice. With no guarantee that there will be a return to the proper way, you take a chance on losing overtime pay forever or, at the successful end of the process, a healthy reimbursement check. I can't make that decision for you. Be assured, however, that we will fight this injustice with all of the vigor at our disposal and all of the supporting testimony by all of you at the arbitration.

Human Service Workers of the Year

On October 19th, we will hold our second annual Human Service Worker of the Year awards ceremony. Shortly, you will all receive nomination forms and the invitation to the event.

The ceremony will be held at the Riverside Convention Center again this year from 11:30am to 1:30pm. The cost will be \$25. FSW members and retirees will pay \$15.

This year, G. Jean Howard, formally of Wilson Commencement Park, will receive the W. Burton Richardson Lifetime Achievement award for her years of service to that agency and our community.

We are taking nominations for public and private service workers and volunteers to be honored at the event. The nomination form lists all the qualities that we are seeking in a candidate.

What I ask of you is to look around you to the people you work with every day. Is there someone you feel who should be a recipient of this honor? Look at folks who you work with in our own agency, and any other private or public agency you normally encounter.

Last year was an extraordinary success for a first time. Long time Director of Social Services, Richard Schauseil, received the lifetime achievement award in front of almost 200 people. Let's make this year's event just as stellar.