

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT REPORT

July 2009

Submitted by Stan Wylie

June was a very busy month and I managed to get in a week of vacation... Whoo Hoo! I started the month by attending Organizing School in Denver. The training was for 3 days and we worked about 12 hours each day. I used vacation time and the District covered the travel costs so it cost this local nothing for me to participate. We certainly got our moneys worth on that training. With the Employee Free Choice Act legislation working its way through Washington DC the union wants to have as many representatives as possible trained to be able to hit the ground running. As I have said before there are far to many people seeking union representation that have not been able to get it because of the difficulties and threats from employers to employees that has put huge roadblocks in any organizing campaign. The Employee Free Choice Act will help eliminate many of those. Don't get me wrong still won't be easy and will still require a lot of work but at least the playing field will be more even.

The training I received was very good and I hope to pass on the information to anyone who wants to be part of the organizing committee and who will volunteer to assist. In all the years I have been involved in the union's activities I have never really had focused training on organizing and found this training to be very beneficial and really cemented the limited exposure to organizing I have had before. I look forward to putting it to good use very soon.

I also met on several grievances this month both at 1st step and 2nd step. I mentioned in previous months that in regards to Qwest and MV they have really stepped up their discipline and too many folks have been terminated. Hopefully we will be successful in many of those grievances. I would also like to mention Craig Dameron has done a lot of grievances as well in the Network Organization and has been pretty successful. He also has been working with management on some of the surplus folks and helping coordinate conversations with Qwest staff and the Bargaining Agent that have allowed folks to keep their jobs that might not have if we did not get involved.

In fact most of the AVP's and Stewards have been picking up a lot more grievances and working those through the system in a timely fashion. Many of our Stewards have really picked up additional responsibilities and are working hard to represent their areas. Thanks for that. I should mention that includes the MV Stewards as well. We trained several a few months back and they are busy representing their members at MV.

I should take a moment to discuss what recently happened at MV Transportation. It has previously been reported that MV Management approached the Local and basically said due to budget cuts we either need to impose a pay freeze (members were to get a raise in July) or layoff close to 90 folks. While I was not really involved in the negotiations or the vote that transpired I do know that there were a lot of meetings and a lot of information was reviewed. It

is unfortunate to be in a position such as that. Since these were significant changes to an existing contract then it went to a vote to the members. Overwhelmingly the members choose to accept the pay freeze as opposed to having so many folks lose their jobs. While I understand it is a difficult position to be in it is evident that these folks took the high road and looked out for each other. It would have been very easy for the more senior folks to vote no and get their raise while the lower folks were forced off the payroll. The number of voters could have easily made that happen. So to all the members at MV Transportation I applaud your vote. That truly showed the spirit of unionism and protecting your fellow brothers and sisters.

The CWA convention was also held this month and I have lots of information to share. The District meeting prior to convention was pretty non eventful and really no earth shattering news was shared there. Vice President Caddell's primary message was to focus on goals remember the triangle; keep working on representation, and of course the Employee Free Choice Act.

President Larry Cohen addressed the convention and said he felt this has been the toughest time for this Union. To make that point he discussed several bargaining issues and included the bargaining of the Qwest contract. They had put up a slide show and in that slide show showed a photo of our rally in Seattle. He keeps waiting to hear from employers to say lets work together on health care reform and the Employee Free Choice Act and he has not heard a word... He was very happy that with everyone in town for the convention and legislative conference that we were able to make over 200 appointments with politicians to have conversation about CWA's goals regarding health care reform and the Employee Free choice Act. President Cohen also talked about rebuilding the middle class and that tax cuts and federal jobs were not going to do it.

"We have to have better collective bargaining" he said. He believes collective bargaining will lead to more consumer buying power and that will lead to new jobs and of course new jobs will equal a better economy. He made it clear that business is out to stop the Employee Free Choice Act and mentioned the Chamber of Commerce has already spent \$200 million to fight it. They have even made the statement that "Civilization itself is at stake if the Employee Free Choice Act passes." Just a bit on the ridiculous side you think?

This is also a unity issue for our republican friends. They have made it clear in the Senate we will not get one vote in support of this legislation and if we don't get 60 votes they will filibuster it. He talked a bit about historical lessons and back in 1964 there was an 88 day filibuster on the Civil Rights Act before it passed. He also expressed concern over the 27000 IUE CWA retirees that are in federal court to preserve the healthcare they were promised when they retired that now the companies they work for want to strip because the company is in bankruptcy. He wants the government to consider the union contracts before the banker's contracts.

President Cohen also talked about partnering with the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) on working together to be a bigger united labor movement. The presidents of both those organizations addressed the conference. The first

speaker was a woman Randi Weingarten President of the AFT. She talked about as did Larry a united labor movement also echoing the thought that we are stronger working together. Her organization has already successfully partnered with the NEA and she gave us some background on that. Those 2 organizations represent over 2 million people. One thing she talked about is that companies are continually asking for employee's to give back. She specifically mentioned AT&T and their current contract negotiations. She pointed out they posted 3.1 billion in profit and during the same time laid off 8000 workers and are continually seeking employee cutbacks specifically in health care. She went on to say "It's America, they have that right, but it is not right!" The video of her speech is on the international website I would encourage people to go take a listen. She was very inspirational.

Dennis Van Roeckel President of NEA also spoke. Primarily the same message although he did tell a funny story I feel worth mentioning. Recently several labor leaders were invited to the White House for a bill signing with President Obama. While several of them were waiting they were chatting about the last time any of them had been to the White House. Most had indicated it had been about 8 years... John Sweeny of the AFL-CIO indicated he had been there in the last couple years. Most were surprised to hear that and asked why President Bush had invited him to the White House and he replied. "Oh I wasn't invited by the President I was invited by the Pope". Dennis followed that up with a Quote from FDR I believe that said "It's our opportunity, what are we going to do with it?" He stressed the importance of working together.

I can't agree more it is our time and we must act now. Wearing a button or watching others is not enough. We need everyone to be vocal; you a citizen of this country have a right as well as an obligation to tell your elected officials what you want them to do for you. They work for you give them something to do.

We also heard from Jeff Rechenbach the Secretary-Treasurer. He also discussed the Employee Free Choice Act and health care reform. In regards to the Employee Free Choice Act he discussed what those against it are saying. He brought up that many employers say it takes away the employees right to a secret ballot. (This is not true they can choose a secret ballot if they want.) Jeff also found it a bit ironic that those non union employers who are using the secret ballot argument when currently none of their employees have a vote about anything regarding their working conditions and the employers set the conditions. In discussing the need for health care reform Jeff talked about the commercials being run that indicate health care reform would eliminate the patient and doctor to choose the best course of treatment and would allow the government to make the decision. Again, another fear tactic being used. He followed that up with currently patients are not making the decisions about their treatment either. The insurance companies are making those decisions and most of the time those decisions are all about costs. He also said many Americans are finding that their health insurance policies are much like hospital gowns when you need them you can be certain they will not cover your ass.... Funny I thought.

Senator Harkin from Iowa addressed the convention. He had a really touching story about his brother and how his brother who was deaf lost his job after 23 years with his company for no reason. His brother was 53 and deaf so very difficult for him to find job. It broke his spirit. The Senator holds the company responsible for that and he will never forget it. He quoted a fact that when folks are asked 60% said they want a union so he believes something must be broken if only 7% of the private sector is organized. He finds it interesting that it is so difficult for ordinary law abiding citizens to join a perfectly legal organization. He is a co-sponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act. He also believes the way to economic recovery is to pass the legislation. Senator Harkin also related a story about a debate that was going on in congress where his republican counterpart was making the argument that the rich create jobs so they needed tax breaks to create more jobs to which he replied if that is the case then why are so many unemployed today. The rich have gotten the tax breaks for the last 8 years and unemployment has skyrocketed.

Labor Secretary Hilda Solis also addressed the convention. She also shared a personal story regarding her father who worked for a battery recycling plant when she was growing up and how before the union represented the workplace they had no safety standards and battery recycling was very dangerous. She said the Union helped establish safety guidelines and gives credit to the Unions to one of the reasons her father is still alive today at 85 years old. She talked about how Unions were instrumental in establishing OSHA. She also made a point to say "Make no mistake the Labor Department is back in the enforcement business!" They will be adding 600 new investigators and staff to focus on safety in the workplace. She discussed green jobs and that the new green jobs will pay 10 to 20% more than current non green jobs within the same sectors and that these jobs will stay in America.

Congressman James Clyburn spoke as well. He discussed the energy bill and the need of broadband for everyone. He noted today we are 14th in the world in regards to delivering broadband and a couple years ago we were 12th. "We are going backwards not forward" he said. He applauded one of CWA's initiatives the "Speed Matters" campaign and how that campaign helped educate other legislators and even President Barack Obama on the importance of broadband and how it affects commerce and education in our country. He believes we need to get broadband to everyone including the rural areas. He went on to say if we don't then we will still be in a more difficult position in regards to global commerce and a country of our size and stature should not be in that position. We need to make it happen and that will help restore jobs as well in the country.

Executive Vice President Annie Hill spoke as well. Annie is part of a panel on health care reform and is involved in the discussions with President Obama's team on health care reform. She made it clear we need to stick to our resolve and the principles that have been laid out by CWA that must be included in any reform package. She indicated there are many in Congress who want to water down health care reform and insists we can not let that happen. Reform must be meaningful or it really is no reform at all. She let some members share their stories and heartbreaking they were. Reform has to happen bottom line. She understands we get busy

with grievances, community services, and other tasks associated with labor but wants everyone right now to prioritize and not let health care reform be placed on the back burner. This is happening now and we need everyone involved in the fight. And a fight it will be. It won't be easy. Be prepared to take action, commit to taking action.

The last speaker who came to the convention was Vice President Joe Biden. The Vice President talked a lot about his history with labor. His speech is also on the international's web site and I again would encourage everyone to check it out. In his speech he mentioned that labor is always stronger when working together and sometimes were not always working together. He applauded that we were working with the AFT and NEA on health care reform and the Employee Free Choice Act. He said his message from the President and him was simple, "Welcome back." He said that the Employee Free Choice Act was about giving a fighting chance. He said the President and him genuinely believe that there is no way to restore the middle class without restoring organized labor. The Vice President talked about the economy and how it grew 20% from 2000 to 2007 but at the same time middle class folks lost on average \$2000.00 a year, they did not share in that economy and actually got less then before the growth in that period started. The Vice President also spoke about those who are against organized labor and their arguments that Unions are only looking at their self interest when he believes that is opposite of the truth. He stated "Organized labor is for a purpose, it is workers opportunity to enjoy their just rewards from their hard work." The Vice President also spoke of the economic recovery package and that they believe they have already saved 150,000 jobs and hope to create 600,000 in the next 100 days. He went on further to say the recovery will be difficult but it will happen.

What I found interesting about the Vice President's speech is his inclusiveness. The way he phrased everything, we, us, our, etc... Clearly he is supportive of Labor and he actually had much more to say about President Obama's ideas and plans for the future and how they will need labor's support to get these changes enacted.

The legislative conference was tied in to the convention and basically was part of the convention. Since it was in DC it gave a lot of opportunity to work on the legislative issues that we have been addressing and that by now if you are still reading this report have heard a lot about. I want to give a big thank you and job well done for Jeannine Maury our Legislative Chair. She scheduled visits with pretty much every representative from Washington State while we were there. We had an opportunity to meet with Patty Murray's and Maria Cantwell's offices and have some frank discussion about health care reform as well as the Employee Free Choice Act. One note of importance is that Maria Cantwell is on the Finance Committee that will be responsible for figuring out how to fund a public option. Prior to our delegations visit she had not come out in support of a public option and since our visit she has. I can't say for sure if it was our visit that prompted her to support the public option or not but I can say for sure she heard our message and within a few days publicly spoke in support of it. Our group also met with many of the Congressman's offices as well. I will let Jeanine cover that in greater detail in her report. All in all I feel the visits were very successful.

I also wanted to mention the Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi hosted a congressional reception at the House Office Building. Dozens of Representatives from virtually every state dropped in and again CWA folks were able to discuss the issues important to us and ask for their support. I had kind of assumed up to this point that our democratic officials would be in support of the public option in regards to health care reform and I can tell you from the discussions we had they are all not in support of it. While all of them believe health care reform has to happen they are not quite ready to jump in to support the public option. It will take hearing from their constituents to get them to make the right choice.

Getting back to the convention for a bit there were quite a few resolutions passed that should be mentioned. One of them I talked about which is the United Labor Movement, while I talked with us partnering with the NEA and the AFT the resolution also encourages Locals to build unity resolutions with our state federations and labor councils. The premise being of course that the strength of labor united cannot be ignored.

Another resolution was Employee Free Choice, It's Our Time, which urges Locals to continue to outreach to Senators in the coming weeks until passage of the Employee Free Choice Act occurs. Another one is for Bargaining Solidarity. Again asking Locals to work together and support other Labor organizations in any tough bargaining issues within our geographical area that we can show support of our fellow brothers and sisters who may be in a tough fight over a contract. One other resolution that was a bit controversial is to allow SIF funds to be used for organizing campaigns. There are pluses and minuses to this particular resolution and I won't get into detail here, I will say it did pass though. Some of the other resolutions were about support of public safety officials, past pregnancy disability discrimination, and Media diversity, and quality jobs.

For any of those who have looked at the website and been a bit disappointed in its lack of updates you should see changes very soon. We have been working with Jason May who has volunteered to redesign and update it. We had to make some hosting changes etc... Before that could take place and those changes were finally done yesterday so hopefully within the next couple weeks we will have a newer updated website. Jason has been instrumental in directing us on what changes have to take place so moving forward changes and updates to the website can be done much more easier and timely. So I want to thank him for his efforts and ask everyone to keep checking it to see the changes.

One other side note the Executive board has been discussing on and off for several years now the fact that with our shrinking membership and escalating costs that the Local may have to move from the current location. If we are going to do this we have to make a decision by December of this year in order to move in July. While no concrete plan has been formulated or acted upon we are currently seriously looking at other alternatives. We will want to hear from the membership as well obviously as it is your local. Feel free to give us your thoughts about moving the local and what you would like to see or not see regarding any move.

Thanks to all who took the time to get this far. I realize it was a long report but honestly had a lot to report.