



THE SHIELD

CWA LOCAL 4050/4090

VOL 1. NO.1 WINTER 2008

Dave Skotarczyk: Prez Sez:

2007 In Review, a Year of Trials and Tribulations

This issue of the Shield remembers and mourns members, family and friends lost in 2007. It serves as a reflection of the times we shared with them, and of the laughter and sunshine they brought into our lives.

It took several months to catch up on our work load but we did!

Prior to moving from our old location in the Book Building, the Local suffered a flood and several power outages, all due to poor building maintenance by the new owners. Records were destroyed and we lost access to our office for several weeks. We were forced to move our office to our new location, 220 Bagley, Suite 832 in the Michigan Building. My thanks

to the stewards, area reps and VP's who went the extra mile to serve our members during that stressful time.

A special thank you goes out to our Executive Vice President Troy Smith, without his help we would still be back logged.

I ask for your understanding and forgiveness if there was a problem that we could not get to in 2007; firings, suspensions and layoffs had to take priority.

There were good times in 2007

We had a great picnic. And, we had several meetings where we celebrated our friendship and solidarity.

To our friends in the Dispatch Center moving to Southfield in February, be assured that you will be missed. We wish you as easy and pleasant a transition to your new work environment as possible, and a bright future there.

My hope is that 2008 brings to each and every one of us many blessings, abundant prosperity and no unpleasant surprises.

Happy New Year to All!

Dave Skotarczyk,
President
CWA Local 4050/4090



Mike Klein, Vice President

NATIONAL BARGAINING UNITS

Happy New Year!

2008 presents challenges for the National Units. Combining companies through mergers and acquisitions have created issues for members at Alcatel - Lucent, AT&T - SBC, and Avaya -TPG.

Some of the issues of concern are:

- Impact on the work as to who will perform duplicated functions.
- Impact on job security.
- Impact on health care and other benefits.
- Impact on security of pension plans.

Structural changes will have an effect on our work but equity is our goal. Potential problems are being discussed at national forums since duplication of contracts and procedures are involved. As a union we must be ready to face these issues; or, gains we have made through the years could be reduced or lost. The CWA needs continued member support if we are to succeed.

Contract negotiations for AT&T Bargaining Units and Avaya will be up for negotiations in 2009. It's not too early to think about financial stability in preparation for any potential strike.

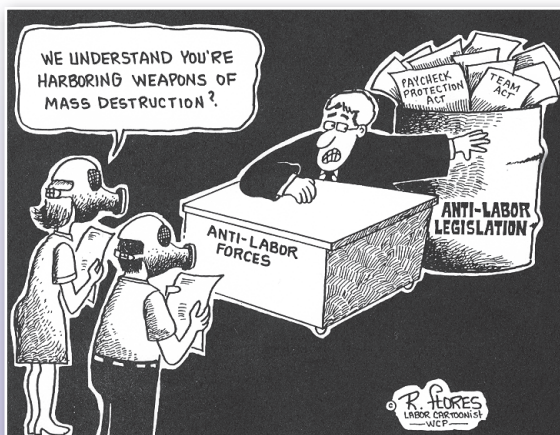
As Local 4050/4090 Legislative Chairman, I want to bring two issues up that have a bearing on our work life and our union's ability to represent. In Michigan, the national "right to work" advocates are campaigning to make Michigan a right to work state. I'm sure you know that right to work legislation limits

the union's ability to properly represent employees. Wages and benefits in states that have right to work laws are far inferior to the wages and benefits in non right to work states. That is why we refer to right to work laws as "Right to Work for Less". Coming from outside Michigan these advocates of right to work are petitioning to get their proposal on the ballots. Don't fall for their story and let's keep Michigan wages and benefits on top.

Another issue we need to know about is the Employee Free Choice Act. In recent years our federal government has weakened the ability of employees to form or join unions. This legislation, if passed into law, would allow employees to join or form unions by signing cards. The legislation has passed in Congress and is now in the Senate; however, we know that we don't have enough votes to over ride a likely veto by the current President.

The 2008 elections hold many issues that are of great importance to working people like us. Health care, trade agreements that strip us of jobs, the economy, the war and others are issues that will effect these elections. We will campaign to keep CWA members and there families informed on the issues and encourage all to exercise their right to vote so that we may elect legislators who support the interests of working people.

In Unity,
Mike Klein



EVP THOUGHTS

Defining the new positions:

The "Executive Vice President" position is a new title enacted in the last election. The initial suggestions were that the EVP would focus more on benefits and assuming more of the President's overall administrative functions where needed. The newly enacted positions of "Vice President at Large" would assume more of the duties of the old position of "Vice President". And, the newly enacted positions of *Area Representative* are to assist the Vice Presidents at Large, as well as assume duties previously performed by Chief Stewards.

While spending the first year trying not to overstep boundaries, assist with a few benefit cases, arbitrations, 3rd step grievances, steward training and miscellaneous phone and email complaints, the second year I found myself gravitating to situations where my assistance was needed and in some areas desperately welcomed without concerns of infringement. My second year was the most interesting of my career, let alone as a union rep. I was glad to be in a position to make the contributions I did, some at the expense of violence in meetings, EEO reports and Asset Protection investigations. I'll end with a phrase that one of our members often use: "If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything!" God Bless.

At your service always,
Troy Smith
EVP

Global Services

Global Services had many challenges in 2007. We suffered another surplus announcement and the company refused to honor our agreement to place the surplus members in the prem tech title. After two months of arguing and filing EEO complaints, and National Labor Relation Board complaints, the company came back to the table – and agreed to loan the surplus members to Network for 6-months in anticipation of getting a prem tech job; while this did not satisfy us, it gave us time to continue the fight.

Grievances filed to protest our work going to managers, the Field engineers and the Tier Two support, have been complicated. The company has made card check agreements with the CWA to organize those two titles declaring the titles non management. We will move forward to organize those titles.

We have open grievances about travel time on temporary assignment, improper layoff, and problems with forced home garaging.

In November 2007 we attended a Common Interest meeting with the new head of the nation wide CPE group. He reported the Global Services is now showing a profit. He is working with the Sales department to promote the products that we support. In the six months since he took over, sales of Nortel products have increased. His words are encouraging; time will tell if conditions turn around. Meanwhile, he did say the CEO is committed to staying in the CPE business.

We welcome back VP Joe Patti from disability.

Plymouth AT&T Legacy

Tony D'Onofrio

It has been an interesting year in Plymouth. We were fortunate not to lose any more people. The name change to AT&T Legacy resulted in our center receiving more calls; however, they were calls that should have gone to AT&T-SBC Local. In 2008, Customer Maintenance Center (CMC) is suppose to shoot a trouble from beginning to end if the trouble is in our national network. This will be a big change from how we currently interface with the LECs. We still have four work groups here - In the basement are the ACUS (billing folks), and the ATT CMC; upstairs are the 4ESS OSWF, and Building Techs. The Union was nice enough to have an after work party (close by) which was attended by our Reps, who have kept us up to date on all changes going on in the company. We also had a couple of pot luck office parties. Although the Alliance is still alive it is sort of on the back burner since we lost our local representative; so now it is even more important to keep up with your skills by attending classes on your own with the Alliance funds we have.

We enjoy hearing from our retired and laid off members, some of whom have found jobs with the local AT&T LEC or out of state in the old AT&T unit.

*Happy Holidays
and an Enjoyable New Year!*

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Letter to CWA District 4 Local Officers

Dear Colleagues:

It is time to step back and take stock of the past year. It was quite a year filled with joys, sorrows, many changes, and even more accomplishments.

2007 was a tough year to be a union activist, but in spite of that we got much accomplished. Here are some of the highlights:

Representation

Contracts we negotiated at a wide variety of employers including: Johnson Controls, Cleveland State University, the Toledo Blade (defeating a lockout), Comcast in both Port Huron and Detroit, GE, Delphi, Northwest Airlines, Windstream, and Century in both Ohio and Wisconsin.

At AT&T we beat back the company's attempt to move to commission-paid Service Reps, we were the only District to get the Tier II Tech Support in the core contract versus the internet contract, and saved hundreds of member's jobs by providing a path to new work with pay, benefits, and pensions protected.

We protected the value of members' lump sum pensions at both AT&T and Verizon in the face of a threat from legislation passed in Washington. District 4 led the way on this at both companies.

We won numerous arbitration cases, including reinstating 19 fired employees at AT&T in Cleveland (worth over \$1 million) and making whole 300 Cincinnati Bell employees who had their hours cut to 35 hours per week for 14 weeks (well over \$500,000).

Political/Community Action

The Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) passed the House with the help of grassroots lobbying in District 4 and across the country, setting the stage for this to become law if the 2008 elections go well.

Passed statewide video bills that will lead to hundreds of union jobs in Ohio, Illinois, and Wisconsin.

Passed national broadband mapping legislation as the direct result of the CWA Speed Matters campaign.

Organizing

Through the District 4 led Hubs and Routers negotiations at AT&T, we added 800 jobs to card check and got recognition for nearly 100 technical support workers at the Lightspeed Center. While the issue of work in the video hubs is still unresolved, we got a written commitment that we can arbitrate it if not resolved by the end of the first quarter of 2008.

Added nearly 2,000 union jobs at AT&T, including the AT&T Mobility Center in Evansville, Tier II Tech Support Center in Milwaukee, and Tier I Tech Support which was work brought back from India . . . to Indianapolis!

Education, Communications, and Structure

Launched the District 4 Communicator in June, an e-newsletter for District 4 Local Presidents 10-12 times a year.

Utilizing the new Strategic Industry Fund, launched campaigns including: Speed Matters, Verizon Total Engagement, GE Screw the Bulb, Milwaukee Cable Switch, health care, and Lucent/Alcatel.

Held many training and educational opportunities, including the first ever Multi-district Third Year Leadership School (with District 7), District 4 Education Conference, District 4/6 Equity and Civil Rights Conference, District 4 Mobilization Institute, and a week-long seminar on running strategic campaigns put together for us by the Midwest Academy.

Held discussions across the District and then voted at the Convention to add four seats to the Executive Board to enhance diversity. I was especially proud of the open and honest discussion we had on this issue in District 4.

All of these accomplishments took place in a very tough climate amidst significant personnel changes in our District staff. Many old friends retired in 2007 and thus over a third of the District 4 staff is new. While I know that constant transition and change of assignments was hard on both the staff and local leaders, the fact that we accomplished it while barely missing a beat is a real tribute to the unity we have in our District. I truly appreciated everyone's understanding and patience.

It was also a year filled with way too much tragedy, especially the untimely deaths of recently retired staff representative Crystal Roberts, Local 4300 President Sam Pagani, and former Local 4400 President and political activist Mark Johnston. We mourn their passing and all of the other losses we have all had this year. My mother's passing on November 8th was hard for me, but I was overwhelmed with all of the support I got from my CWA District 4 family. I thank you all very much.

The challenges continue but always with much to be hopeful about. As many of you may have heard, my Assistant, Sal LaCause, has been diagnosed with cancer of the larynx. The prognosis is very good. He is currently undergoing radiation treatments while continuing to work. The doctors say there is a 95% chance that the radiation will rid him of the cancer. Sal's spirit and sense of humor as he meets this challenge are an inspiration to all of us.

Our work and lives are filled with difficult challenges, most with less than a 95% chance of winning. Yet we persevere, in spite of the difficulty, because we have each other . . . because of our solidarity.

Like the song **Solidarity Forever** says:

"The Union makes us Strong".

Happy holidays!

Sincerely,

Seth Rosen - Vice President, CWA District 4



HiCap - 2007 was a year of problems and change in HiCap. We were removed from the Midwest Network organization and placed in the Wide World Customer Service organization. The Maintenance and Provisioning groups were put under two different management structures. The maintenance group has been reorganized and given a new mission. They are now a wholesale group, one of four across the country, with a multi state responsibility. I am sorry to report that our Dispatch Center will be relocated to Southfield- the target date is the end of February 2008.

Many members have had problems with the transfer plan. While some of the problems were corrected most were not. The rules of the transfer plan are not fair and equitable. Our only recourse is to attempt to change them in bargaining in 2009. Meanwhile we continue to take a proactive role.

Our Stewards, Area Reps and VP's have resolved many grievances and continue to fight the abusive attendance policy and other attacks on our members by the company. We thank them for their commitment and diligence.

I am sorry to report that our arbitration request on MSOC has been denied by the National Union. We are appealing that decision.

After many EEO complaints, many grievances filed, and many meetings with upper management an abusive manager has been given another assignment. We still have open grievances that we are working on to overturn the wrongs that this manager has caused. This is proof that "Consistent Persistence Resistance" will eventually win the day. We have two more managers to work on.

Lillie Brown's

Money Matters



Is Your Pension Calculation Right?

Experts estimate that up to 50% of pension calculations contain errors.

According to Steve Leventhal, a lawyer in Bend, Ore., who specializes in employee benefits and retirement planning, errors range from data-entry keying blunders to misinterpretation of complex pension laws.¹

The most common errors are: 1) Errors of omission – a company fails to include over time, profit sharing, or bonus payments in pension calculations. 2) Using incorrect formula – a company uses the wrong interest rate to calculate employee's benefits. 3) Sloppy record-keeping – If a company has gone thru mergers, or out of business, your pension plan might overlook contributions you made.²

Mistakes also occur when companies switch employees from traditional pension plans to cash-balance accounts, says Allen Engerman, who runs the National Center for Retirement Benefits (NCRB), a private pension-recovery firm in Northbrook, IL.²

Most of AT&T's bargained-for employees still have the traditional pension plan. If in the future, AT&T switches bargained-for employees from the traditional plan to another plan, pension calculation errors could occur. At one time, AT&T's management employees had the traditional pension plan. However, approximately ten years ago AT&T switched management out of the traditional pension plan. And, over the years AT&T has switched management in and out of four different plans. Management is currently in a hybrid-type Defined Benefit Plan known as Career Average Minimum (CAM).

So, what can you do?

Don't postpone paying attention to your pension benefits until retirement is only a few months away: It can take months to fix problems and address questions. Set up a file and keep all pension plan correspondence from Fidelity. This includes annual benefit statements and

the plan's summary plan description (SPD), which sets out the terms and definitions and spells out how your pension will be computed.

Starting five years before retirement, do pension calculation estimates (on Fidelity's web site) at least once a year; print and save them in your file. Or, call Fidelity and have them calculate your pension estimate and mail it to you. Remember, you should do this annually beginning five years before retirement.

It is recommended that once you've set a retirement date and received a pension amount from the plan, you should consider having the benefit reviewed by an expert who specializes in pensions. This is true, particularly if you had compensation from more than one source (management and craft), the company was merged or sold, or your plan was significantly changed at some point. If a professional you hire finds an error in your favor, the professional can file an appeal to the plan on your behalf. An appeal can take anywhere from three months to a year and a half.

Where to Find Expert Pension Help

The National Center for Retirement Benefits (NCRB) (800-666-1000; www.ncrb.com) will investigate and recalculate your pension. If it discovers an error and wins an appeal, NCRB will deduct 20% from the additional payment it recovers for you. For example, if you are entitled to receive an additional \$50,000 in pension payments, the firm collects \$10,000. There would be no charge to you if NCRB did not collect additional pension payment for you.

For a lawyer with pension expertise, contact the National Pension Lawyers Network (617-287-7332; www.pensionaction.org/npln.htm).

Pension actuaries charge either a flat fee or by the hour. For actuaries near you, contact the American Society of Pension Actuaries (703-516-9300).

Who's Who

Lillie Brown co-edited this newsletter; she has volunteered to be the Editor of Local 4050/4090 Shield. It has been my pleasure to serve as editor for the past 20 years – **Jackie Jordan**.

Members desiring to have new additions to their families announced in the SHIELD should email their baby's name, DOB, and gender to kencwa@sbcglobal.net. Indicate whether your bundle of joy arrived in 2007 or 2008. The announcement will be published in the next issue of the SHIELD.

Local 4050/4090 is currently building a list of our member's personal email addresses, as well as updating member's home addresses. Email

addresses will be used to quickly communicate breaking news to our members, and also for future mobilization efforts. Updated home addresses are needed to make sure that the local can communicate with all members via U.S. mail. If you would like to add your personal email address to the list, and/or update your home address, please email Ken DeWolf (kencwa@sbcglobal.net) with the information.

Don't forget to visit our website (www.cwalocal4050.us) regularly for current happenings. It is the best way to stay informed between quarterly publications of the SHIELD.

REMEMBERING IN 2007

This issue of the SHIELD serves as a remembrance of the spirit of the following union members in 2007: Doris Ann Berger-Reddick, Renee Thompson, and Torri Johnson.

AT&T Bargaining Council Meeting

Local officers from around the country met in St. Louis, Missouri, December 8th thru the 11th, 2007 to prepare for the next round of bargaining with the new AT&T. Presentations were made on changes in the telephone industry and the climate for bargaining health benefits and the CWA Health Care for All Campaign.

We realize the answer to the health care problems in America can not be solved by Unions alone; it will take action in Congress. We are willing and able to do what is necessary to protect our health care benefits. At our 2007 convention we created a Strategic Industry Fund to finance the battle to preserve our bargained benefits.

While all agree that CWA should be thinking outside the box to accomplish our goals, I stated that in the end it will be the strength of our membership that will win the day. All members should prepare now for the possibility of a long strike. Now is not the time to make long term financial commitments. Now is the time to save to protect our families in case of a strike. We must show the company that we are ready to do what is necessary. We went on strike in the 60's to get health care, we went on strike in the 70's to improve our benefits, and we will strike to preserve our benefits. All officers agreed.

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A+ Classes for AT&T Detroit

EDUCATION is the key to your SUCCESS!! Take advantage of your AT&T CPDP Benefit and learn new skills to help prepare and qualify you for new career opportunities! A+ Essentials – Part 1 and Part 2 classes are being offered by The Sage Group. Tuition is at no cost for eligible CWA members using their CPDP benefit.

Classes will be held at the Union Hall – 220 Bagley, Suite 832, Michigan Building in Detroit.

Dates: A+ Essentials: Tues/Thurs 02/12/08 – 03/13/08 (10 sessions)

Time: 6 – 9 p.m.

There are several ways to obtain an application form to register for the classes. You may request a form from Herb Harlen at The Sage Group 615-364-4738; forms may also be downloaded from Local 4050/4090's website www.cwalocal4050.us or you can get forms from the union hall.

Deadline to enroll is January 25. A completed enrollment form must be faxed to The Sage Group (fax 615-376-5432). Also, a separate CPDP tuition application must be faxed to AT&T and approved before class.

The new GATT Rate for 2008 is 4.52%

Footnotes from the Money Matters Article

¹Kiplinger's Retirement Report, Vol 10, Issue 6, June 2003

²National Center for Retirement Benefits, Inc. (NCRB)



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