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Standing Up for America the Union Label Way

America's ongoing recovery from the tragedies of September 11 is literally fueled by the blood, sweat, and tears of her union members. The first responders were thousands of **International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)** union members, more than 350 of whom were killed in the flames of terrorist destruction, along with dozens of New York City police officers.

Through their sorrow, surviving brothers and sisters soldiered on to lead thousands of survivors to safety and to fight the fires; and to treat the injured (**SEIU Local 1199 Hospital Workers** and the most recent AFL-CIO affiliate, **United American Nurses**). Emergency medical technicians administered first aid and transported the injured to hospitals (**American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees; AFSCME; Public Employee Federation; PEF-AFT/SEIU**) as did city bus drivers represented by the **Transport Workers Union of America (TWU)**.

Among the emergency personnel responding to the Pentagon attack were Alexandria police officers, members of the **International Union of Police Associations (IUPA)** and IAFF members.

At the World Trade Center, while the thick dust and smoke hung in the air, members of the **International Association of Bridge, Structural Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers' (Iron Workers)** New York City locals left other construction jobs to volunteer digging out survivors and moving rubble. About 1,000 unpaid volunteer members of Iron Workers Local 40 and Local 580 worked round the clock for more than a week until construction contractors relieved them. **Sheet Metal Workers' International Association (SMWIA)** members from the city's Locals 25 and 28 were on the spot to help. The volunteers were joined by members of the **Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA)** with specialized training in asbestos removal. **International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE)** members volunteered to clear debris and help search for survivors and bodies. The union's hazardous materials specialists remained on the site for weeks to help train the army of workers to deal with their surroundings.

More than 1,000 members of the **International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT)** from six New York area locals were on the job within hours of the attacks. They were volunteers removing debris and helping transport supplies to rescuers and to the emergency central supply center set up nearby.

Members of the **International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators & Asbestos Workers (AWIU)** were working shoulder to shoulder with their building trades counterparts at ground zero. They plied their specialized skills to insulate exposed pipes and aid with the removal of debris.

The **Operative Plasterers' and Cement Masons International Association (OPCMIA)** continues as part of the New York City clean up. The union's members, who are undergoing specialized training in confined space and hazardous waste removal, expect to be working for at least a year in helping heal the city, reports OPCMIA Executive Vice President William J. Schell.

Members of the **United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers & Allied Workers** and SMWIA had been working on a massive remodeling job at the Pentagon. URW&AW Local 30 had recently completed a new roof for the entire building, according to the union's International Secretary Treasurer Kinsey M. Robinson. Washington area SMWIA members worked overnight on their part of the Pentagon project Monday, September 10, in the exact area that the hijacked plane plowed into the building. That scheduling quirk saved their lives.

With the nation's airways shut down by the crisis, getting vital material to relief workers in New York became another problem. IBT member Chris Hope was one who responded. Hope drove a UPS truck filled with phones, computers, and other vital supplies from Memphis to New York City to equip the emergency workers.

Other union members were pressed into service to get the rest of New York City back to normal. The explosions had destroyed power generation facilities and links, endangered gas lines, and interrupted steam supplies.

Members of the **Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA)** from Local 1-2 at Consolidated Edison went on 12-hour shifts to restore power. Other members who deal with gas and steam, meter readers and splicers went into an emergency mode to make certain that the city's power and steam were safe and

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Building Membership Participation Through Mobilization

It doesn't matter whether you are about to enter negotiations for your bargaining unit's first contract or your 20th renewal agreement, mobilizing your membership will give your local the best opportunity to achieve success at the bargaining table.

Why Mobilize?

Today, more than ever, we need an active, involved membership to overcome the corporate agenda, which seeks to diminish our wages, benefits, and all other favorable conditions of employment.

What is Mobilization?

Mobilization is a continuous process of organization, education, and collective action.

- Organization = Setting in place the internal local network to effectively communicate with each other face-to-face, one-on-one.
- Education = Learning about issues that confront us and what we can do about them as a union.
- Collective Action = Doing something collectively, as a group to win improvements in the workplace.

Increased members' involvement is essential to PACE's growth. Mobilization also is an effective tool in helping union's realize its goals in organizing and political action.

The Workplace Structure

If mobilization is to be successful, it must be built on a firm foundation of a comprehensive workplace structure. This allows the union to communicate one-on-one with every single member in a short period of time. Without an extensive structure, you won't be able to do one-on-one communication effectively. Lacking member-to-member communication, you won't get the high participation needed in collective actions to win changes.

Putting together the structure is the part everyone wants to skip, but it is critical. You can't move forward without first building this foundation.

When you form your local mobilization committee, you should have it consist of members from each work area and mirror the work force in age, sex, race, job title, shift, and work unit. In many cases, officers and stewards will make up the nucleus of the committee. In addition to the local's activists, reach out to rank-and-file members who would be willing to assist in mobilization activities.

Your mobilization committee probably will need some training on the issues, the local's history, and how to communicate effectively with co-workers. At this stage, goals should be determined and a plan of action developed. Specific goals should include strengthening the union's negotiating muscle by involving more members in union activities and educating the members about contract issues.

Once broad goals are decided, specify the activities the committee will undertake to reach its goals. These could include writing and distributing fact sheets on the issues, using solidarity stickers, and/or conducting a rally. Develop a calendar for when activities should occur. At each stage of an activity, evaluate the involvement level and success.

Setting Up Your Structure

1. Appoint a local union mobilization coordinator who will coordinate, train, and keep track of the mobilization efforts. This person will be key to the success of your effort. He or she is responsible for setting up the mobilization structure, recruiting building or work site coordinators, establishing a calendar of events, and following up on all mobilization and collective actions.

2. Building or work site coordinators must be recruited for each work location. Bring together all the building coordinators and review what mobilization is and what roles they will play in the mobilization structure.

3. Building coordinators will recruit canvassers—one for every 10 members. Each building coordinator should meet regularly with the canvassers to review mobilization goals and their roles and responsibilities. The canvassers must follow-up to make sure every workplace and member is reached. One-on-one, member-to-member contact will be the key to your success.

Remember, if we mobilize, we make our local union stronger. And the stronger the union, the better the contract.

PACE International Union, P.O. Box 1475, Nashville, TN 37202.

Union Quality Has a New Name!

Richard Van Elgort, founder of Union Friendly Systems, Inc. in 1984, is now delivering quality union made computers and membership software under the new company name of "Van Elgort Information Systems."

The company is still 100 percent union and continues to provide the union computer products and services known throughout the labor community for over 17 years. Van Elgort Information Systems maintains the existing collective bargaining agreements with CWA 9503 and IBEW 1710.

We recommend that you view the complete section of union computer products at www.unionmadecomputers.com.

Union Privilege Opens Layoff Helpline

Because of the tragic attacks of September 11 and worsening economic conditions, business closings and layoffs are impacting thousands of union members with many more job losses expected. The Union Plus Credit Card and Loan Programs have established a **Layoff Helpline** to assist union members who may experience difficulties making payments on the Union accounts due to a temporary or permanent layoff.

This new benefit for credit card and loan program participants is in addition to the Interest Free Disaster Relief Loan and the other assistance for program participants we have recently announced.

Members who call the **Layoff Helpline** will speak with a specialist who will evaluate their situation and determine the best short or long-term solution to help them during this difficult time.

**Union Plus Credit Card Layoff
Helpline: 1-800-551-2873**

**Union Plus Loan Program Layoff
Helpline: 1-800-365-1328**

The following procedures have been developed in order to provide these special **Layoff Helpline** numbers to members who have been affected by business closings or layoffs:

1. The union's Union Privilege Liaison contacts his or her Union Services Representative at Union Privilege with information regarding the affected members (local number, employer, number of members impacted).
2. This information will then be given to the appropriate individuals at Household so that they will know to expect calls from members.
3. We will then provide the Union Privilege Liaison with the **Layoff Helpline** phone number to give to the appropriate individuals at the local to distribute to members.

The bank specialist will determine what assistance the member qualifies for on a case-by-case basis based upon the member's account history, payment history, and credit record. The following help is available:

- Skim payment options
- Interest rate reductions
- Short-term hardship programs
- Long-term hardship programs
- Account settlements
- Credit counseling

We will continue to work to address the needs of members. As more help to program participants becomes available we will let you know. We will also be posting this information on our web site at www.unionprivilege.org.

The Ironworker, 1750 New York Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20006.

Asbestos

From the 1930s to 1965 the Brooklyn Navy Yard was loaded with activity. Thousands of men and women worked there—and at hundreds of other shipyards, factories, powerhouses, and construction sites—to keep America strong through times of war and peace.

They were unaware of the silent danger that stalked them every working day—*asbestos*.

For many, it would take decades before the symptoms started showing—shortness of breath, a cough that wouldn't go away, chronic fatigue.

And then the diagnosis—*Mesothelioma* or *Lung Cancer*—diseases that often entailed serious health consequences.

If you are a victim of asbestos-related mesothelioma or lung cancer, or a victim's immediate survivor, you should understand your rights and know what you are entitled to.

A free consultation with Weitz & Lutxenberg will help you choose your best course of action. Weitz & Luxenberg has been one of the leading asbestos law firms in the United States for more than 10 years.

To speak to a representative and to obtain a copy of a free booklet on asbestos litigation, call toll-free at 1-800-476-6070.

Standing Up for America the Union Label Way

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operational. UMWUA members had power restored to three quarters of those who had been cut off within the first week.

United Steelworkers of America (USWA) established a relief fund for financial assistance to victims and their families. USWA President Leo Gerard issued an immediate condemnation of terrorists along with a call for restraint and tolerance among working families.

Members of the **International Longshoremen's Association (ILA)** began raising funds immediately. ILA International President John M. Bowers, along with employer groups, formed the Port of New York/New Jersey Port Community Fund to raise \$400,000 for victim relief. ILA Local 18041, whose members once worked in the shadows of the Twin Towers, didn't wait for direction. Within days of the attacks they had raised \$48,000 which they split between the New York City fire fighters and police funds for widows and orphans.

Communication Workers of American (CWA) members in Washington and Manhattan rebuilt entire communication systems to reconnect the destroyed facilities to the rest of the world. It took thousands of phone technicians working around the clock to restore vital voice and data communications for the Department of Defense and the New York Stock Exchange--both deliberate targets of the terrorists.

Members of the **National Conference of Firemen & Oilers (NCFO)**--an affiliate of the SEIU whose members provide engineering services to area buildings--were credited with leading more than 1,300 hotel guests and employees to safety from the Marriott Hotel in the WTC complex.

From literally the moment that the first plane struck the World Trade Center and throughout the weeks that followed, Americans depended upon reports from members of the **American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA)**, and reporters and editors from the **Newspaper Guild (TNG-CWA)**, along with CWA-represented printers, and newspaper workers represented by the **Graphic Communications International Union (GCIU)**.

At great physical risk, photographers from the **National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians (NABET-CWA)** provided dramatic video footage of the agony of the attacks while **International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)** engineers kept studios going non-stop.

The scale of the disasters in New York, at the Pentagon, and the plane crash in Pennsylvania strained emergency supplies and equipment. Alert union members were quick to fill in the gaps. **Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Int'l Union (BCTGM)** put out an emergency call to union-affiliated bakeries in New York City to collect and help distribute 20,000 dust masks for workers at ground zero.

Glass, Molders, Pottery, Plastics and Allied Workers Int'l Union (GMP) members from the union's Owens Brockway local 259 in Waco, Texas, donated 500 pairs of insulated work gloves that the Red Cross trucked from the region to New York City.

Iron Workers Local 5 in Washington, D.C., moved quickly to offer equipment and aid. Fred Barnes of Local 5 said within days of the attacks, local members and employers collected and delivered three vans full of rubber boots, masks, and other equipment for use by recovery workers.

Members of the **Marine Employees Beneficial Association (MEBA) and Seafarers Int'l Union of North America (SIU)** moved the hospital ship USNS Comfort into position in anticipation of treating injured but few materialized. Other MEBA members piloted the ferries that helped evacuate people fleeing from ground zero. Later, many of those ferries were pressed into service to move rubble to New Jersey for ultimate disposal at a landfill.

Millions more working families have rallied to the side of their countrymen--providing aid and comfort in thousands of ways, large and small.

The **United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW)**, along with its **Retail, Wholesale & Department Store Union (RWDSU)** affiliate, coordinated a food bank for families devastated by the disaster. UFCW members teamed up with the IAFF to move truck loads of donated food to rescue workers and victims and their families.

Carhartt, a leading U.S. manufacturer of work clothing, and its two **UFCW, Textile and Garment Council Locals** in Tennessee (Locals 1999-G and 227) came forward with tremendous generosity. While the locals conducted plant gate collections among workers, the company assembled a \$250,000 shipment for rescue and recovery workers that included 4,000 work coats, bib overalls, coveralls, 12,000 gloves, and 7,000 socks.

Members of the **Transportation Communications Union (TCU)** who staff the various commuter rail lines running under the World Trade Center complex rallied immediately to the cause. TCU President Robert Scardelletti authorized a \$100,000 donation to aid the victims.

Screen Actor's Guild President William Daniels released a \$50,000 donation from the SAG Foundation to assist victims and "ease the financial burden" on the families of those killed and injured.

A fledgling **Writers Guild East**, with some 4,000 members, raised and donated \$50,000, earmarked for the **Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees (HERE)** workers killed at the WTC and other HERE members who lost jobs as a result of the tragedy.

International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) members in Michigan delivered 5,000 5-gallon buckets to New York to aid in the grueling hand removal of debris in the first days after the attacks.

International Association of Machinists (IAM) members from the union's Local 1269 in Genoa, Illinois, delivered a Mobile Emergency Restoration Trailer (MERT) unit that their members built to provide essential communications for search and rescue teams.

In recent weeks, federal workers represented by the **American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)** had poured over the gutted hulk of the World Trade buildings. One of those was Monty Cole, an OSHA industrial hygienist who finished an air monitoring assignment at the site in early October.

"The rubble pile is still very hot, with temperatures exceeding 600 degrees. Smoke still fills the air in the immediate area, with occasional

flare-ups, which require the fire department to spray water from ladder trucks," Cole said. "The debris has virtually nothing recognizable remaining in it—only an occasional computer cable, or a piece of paper might be seen. Most of the debris is a mixture of concrete and dust," he said. "Our brothers and sisters in the building trades are still working 12-hour shifts, and doing a great job."

A number of AFGE members—including personnel who work for the Social Security Administration (SSA)—worked in the immediate vicinity of the Twin Towers. SSA has set up an expedited effort to process death and disability claims of some 3,150 individuals (filed through October 1) related to the attacks. Social Security provides a monthly income to the dependents and spouses of deceased wage earners.

IAFF President Harold Schaitberger vowed that the IAFF will "create a living memorial" for firefighters lost in the disasters and their families "that will help to protect our members for future generations, provide security for their families, while protecting our nation from the future acts of violence and terrorism that will surely come."

The IAFF collaborated with entertainer Willie Nelson and his Farm Aid charity to provide emergency food and financial aid to victims. Members of the **Federation of Professional Athletes**—players from the Washington Redskins—visited with burn victims from the Pentagon attack. Players from the NFL New York Giants visited with rescue workers and the families of victims to boost morale.

Four days after the attacks, CWA volunteers staffed phone lines when celebrities from the **American Federation of Musicians (AFM)**, SAG and AFTRA—along with their backstage counterparts from the **International Alliance of Theatrical State Employees and Moving Picture Technicians (IATSE)** and NABET—produced an unprecedented performance telethon that raised millions in relief funds.

While the nation's airlines sputtered back to life, railroads and their union workers from the **Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE)**, **the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWE)**, and **American Train Dispatchers (ATDD)**, the TCU, NCFO, and the **Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BRS)** took up the slack in the nation's transportation industry. **Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU)** members continued to guide cross-country buses—including Greyhound—that many people chose while America's airline industry was in disarray. The unions in the transportation industry, under the umbrella of the **AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department (TTD)** and President Sonny Hall have been in the forefront of lobbying efforts to win emergency funding for the airline industry and for sweeping new measures to protect passengers in all modes of transportation from further terrorist attacks. Those unions include: AFA, ALPA, the IAM, the IBT, and the railroad unions.

Members of the **National Association of Air Traffic Controllers (NATCA)** were the first authorities to report the hijacking incidents on September 11th. The wife of one NATCA member was among the passengers on one of the hijacked planes. NATCA has established a memorial scholarship fund for the children of member Doug MacKay. Mrs. MacKay was killed when the American Airlines plane hit the Pentagon. The union has also encouraged members to contribute to more than a dozen charities assisting victims.

Skilled professionals represented by the **International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE)** will play a key role in making the airways safer. At Boeing, IFPTE members are designing stronger cockpit doors and developing a video-monitoring system that will allow pilots to keep an eye on the cabins of aircraft. IFPTE members are also part of the team assembled by the Army Corps of Engineers to evaluate the structural integrity of buildings around ground zero. IFPTE has directed its fund raising activities to help the families of flight attendants killed in the tragedies.

AFT has launched its own AFT Recovery Fund while the union has encouraged initiatives by individual teachers providing support to children to cope with the tragedies. In Washington, D.C., AFT held a memorial service for the three members killed in the Pentagon attack along with elementary school students who were on their way to a National Geographic conference in California. AFT teachers also collected textbooks and supplies, which were shipped to temporary classrooms for New York City students whose schools had been in the ground zero area.

The **American Postal Workers Union (APWU)** and the **National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC)**, whose members have more recently become front-line troops in ferreting out those responsible for mailing Anthrax spores, has set up a link on its web page to connect members to the Union Community Fund if they wish to make donations. Complaints from APWU persuaded the U.S. Postal Service to take steps to protect mail handlers from exposure in mail facilities.

The destruction of the Church Street Post Office, part of the WTC complex, disrupted the lives of some 700 members of both postal unions responsible for delivering 85,000 pieces of mail to 16,000 addresses at the Twin Towers each day. Despite the crisis, the postal employees maintained their age-old pledge that the "mail must go through" with makeshift pick up points and hard work.

The performing arts unions have played a special role in restoring a sense of normalcy, especially in New York. **Associated Actors and Artists (4As)**, actors (AEA, AFTRA and SAG), musicians (AFM), stage hands (IATSE), and other behind-the-scenes unions coalesced to make sure that the "show goes on" in New York's famous theater district. They volunteered a substantial pay cut and other cost-cutting measures to permit Broadway and Off-Broadway theaters to encourage audiences back to that key New York City industry. In addition, performers diverted generous portions of their incomes to relief efforts.

Hundreds of **United Automobile Workers (UAW)** Local 683 members at a Ford Motor Company plant in Sharonville, Ohio, took part in a Red Cross blood drive September 19, as did nearly 300 AFL-CIO headquarters employees and staff members from other national unions in Washington, D.C., September 20.

Across the nation, millions of union families were responsible for a huge increase in Red Cross blood donations since September 11. Other UAW locals around the nation also set up similar plant gate collections to be donated to the Red Cross.

UAW leaders were there when the "Big Three" American auto manufacturers stepped forward with major donations for victim relief. DaimlerChrysler led off with a \$10 million donation. Ford provided a \$1 million donation to the American Red Cross, matching employee contributions, and donated 10 vehicles to the New York Fire Department, along with emergency response team services and office space

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to displaced government workers. General Motors matched employee contributions to the American Red Cross, provided a fleet of vans, trucks, and SUVs and provided a \$1 million donation to the Red Cross.

Since the Big Three took the lead other major auto producers selling cars in the U.S. followed their lead with cash and vehicle donations. Members of **Paper-Allied Industrial, Chemical & Energy Workers International Union (PACE)** at the Ft. Smith, Arkansas, Whirlpool plant raised more than \$11,000 at a plant gate collection on September 18th. Their donation was matched by the company.

Comedian Jay Leno (AFTRA) came up with a creative idea for raising funds for attack victims. After weeks of having his celebrity guests autograph his motorcycle, Leno offered the Harley (made by members of PACE and the IAM) in an auction. The top bidder paid \$360,000.

The **Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO** deputized union members to go door-to-door to collect donations for relief efforts from union families in the region. The ripple effect of the September 11th attacks and continued terrorist threats has hammered the Washington area's tourist industry and thrown thousands of HERE members, airline employees, and other hospitality-related workers out of work. The Council has mounted an intensive effort through its Community Services Agency to provide financial assistance, groceries, and other hands-on services to members of constituent locals.

In New York, the shock waves of the attacks caused hundreds of garment factories to close, forced the industry to lose millions of dollars worth of orders, and threw thousands of garment workers in lower Manhattan out of work.

The **Union of Neeletrades and Textile Employees (UNITE)** has mounted a "Made in New York" campaign to underscore the availability of quality clothing from New York. The union was joined by New York Senators Chuck Schumer and Hillary Clinton, along with representatives of major international clothing and retail companies and UNITE President Bruce Rayner to announce the campaign. UNITE also mounted a major fund raising campaign for victim relief.

The **International Brotherhood of Boilermakers (IBB)** is directing members to the New York City Central Labor Council Labor Support Center, which provides referrals to workers who have lost jobs and recruits volunteers to assist victims.

Retirement funds will play a major role in financing the reconstruction of the devastation. In late September, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said that national union pension funds will make some \$500 million in pension funds available for economic development in New York. The New York State Employee Retirement System, in conjunction with the unions that represent workers in the state, are working together to free up more than \$1 billion in transportation projects and new commercial buildings for the reconstruction effort.

— *America's recovery is a mosaic of the union creed: caring for working families, restoring hope, removing the scars, rebuilding the structures, putting life back together.* —

Union Label & Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO, 815 16th Street., N.W., Washington, DC 20006.

2002 Union-Industries Show Salutes "American Hero's": AFL-CIO's Working Families

The 2002 Union-Industries Show in Minneapolis set for Spring will be "A Salute to America's heroes: the Working Families of the AFL-CIO". The 2002 theme celebrates "both the day-to-day contributions that working families make to the welfare of our economy by producing the best products and services on earth, as well as the special efforts that we have all been making every day in the new atmosphere that confronts us since 911," declared Union Label and Service Trades Department President Charles Mercer.

The Show will officially open at noon, Friday, April 5, running through 7 p.m., Monday, April 8. As has been the tradition in recent years, the Show will hold a special early hours preview for local students as a result of a collaboration between the Department and the Education Minnesota, the statewide teachers' union formed in a merger between the Minnesota American Federation of Teachers and the Minnesota Education Association.

"The newly expanded Minneapolis Convention Center offers a terrific venue for the displays of the 400-plus exhibitors," said Dennis Kivikko, show manager and Secretary-Treasurer of the UL&STD.

Americans Endure Longest Work Year

Last year, Americans put in some 2.5 weeks more on the job than workers in other industrialized nations, according to the International Labor Organization (ILO). Most of our readers didn't need a study to tell them that. Employer abuses of overtime in recent years prompted many unions to seek contractual safeguards against mandatory overtime and requirements that employers provide adequate notice of overtime assignments to enable workers to arrange for family concerns such as child care.

Union Vocabulary

The world of unions has its own vocabulary. Some words or phrases are used solely within this world, while others may have a slightly different meaning than when you encounter them elsewhere. Here is a list of some of the more important parts of the union vocabulary. For a more comprehensive guide to labor terms see *The Lexicon of Labor* by R. Emmitt Murray (New York: The News Press, 1998).

AFL-CIO: the national federation that includes most American labor unions, resulting from the 1955 merger of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

agency fee: a fee, usually somewhat lower than the full dues amount, that nonmembers are required to pay to the union. The payment is calculated to cover the costs of the representation services that the union provides.

arbitration: the process by which a neutral outside party acts as a "judge," taking evidence and issuing a binding ruling on a contract grievance or other dispute.

bargaining: the process of face-to-face meetings, exchange of proposals, and give and take that produces a union contract.

bargaining team: the union or employer group of individuals that goes to the bargaining table for formal negotiations.

bargaining unit: the group of employees represented by a particular union, and usually covered by a single union contract.

Beck decision: a United States Supreme Court decision setting forth the financial rights (and obligations) of agency fee payers.

Central Labor Councils: the AFL-CIO—sponsored collection of the local unions in a particular city or other geographical area.

collective bargaining agreement: the document produced as a result of negotiations between a union and an employer, constituting the set of binding workplace rules.

constitution and bylaws: the governing documents of a local union or higher up union body.

dues: the money paid by union members to finance the costs of running the union.

duty of fair representation (DFR): the union's obligation to act diligently and fairly in the interests of members of the bargaining unit. This flows from the union's role as the exclusive representative of all those in the bargaining unit.

enabling legislation: a law that grants the right to unionize to public sector employees.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC): the federal agency that implements discrimination laws. Many states and localities have equivalent agencies.

Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA): the law governing most private employers' pension and welfare benefit plans.

Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA): the federal law setting the minimum wage and establishing standards for overtime pay. Many states and localities also have laws applicable in their jurisdictions.

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA): the 1993 law creating an entitlement to unpaid leave connected with family emergencies and medical situations.

Federal Labor Relations Authority: the equivalent of the National Labor Relations Board for federal sector employees, administering the federal labor law as it applies to those employed by the Federal government.

grandfathering: when there is a change in a workplace rule or job benefit, but employees already on board are permitted to remain under the old rule.

grievance procedure: a series of steps set forth in a union contract for attempting to resolve disputes between the employer and employees in the union.

impasse: a deadlock in contract negotiations.

International: usually refers to the national level of an American union, as in International Brotherhood of Teamsters, so named because of members in Puerto Rico, Canada, or elsewhere.

International Trade Secretariats: the international organizations that coordinate the efforts of the various unions worldwide that represent employees in particular industries or types of work.

just cause: the usual standard for discipline, requiring sufficient and fair grounds before punishing an employee.

Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA): a federal law containing the Bill of Rights of Members of Local Organizations, guaranteeing the right of union members to participate in union meetings, to vote in union elections, and so on.

lockout: a refusal by an employer to allow employees to report to work, designed to force the union to accept the employer's position in a bargaining dispute.

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Union Vocabulary

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mediation: the process by which a neutral person attempts to help the union and an employer resolve a bargaining or other dispute.

National Labor Relations Board (NLRB): the federal agency that administers the National Labor Relations Act, the labor law that applies to most private sector employees.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA): the federal agency that administers the basic health and safety law, the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

open shop: a workplace where union membership and payment of dues or other fees to the union are voluntary.

organizing: "external organizing" refers to acquiring union rights for unrepresented employees; "internal organizing" means persuading nonmembers to join the union that already represent them.

past practice: a procedure or workplace custom that can acquire binding effect.

private sector: privately owned companies and their employees.

public sector: government employment at all levels, including state, county, city, and other localities.

Railway Labor Act: the labor law covering the transportation industry, with rules on organizing and bargaining that differ substantially from those of the National Labor Relations Act.

rank and file: the members of a union; not the leaders, just you and your co-workers.

ratification: the procedure in which union members vote to accept or reject a negotiated contract settlement.

retaliation: punitive action taken against an employee for exercising a contractual or legal right.

"right to work": legislation prohibiting various types of union security arrangements. In jurisdictions covered by such laws, unions cannot require nonmembers to make a financial payment to cover any of the union's costs of operation.

steward: the front-line union representative, usually a volunteer, who is responsible for giving guidance on workplace rights, filing grievances, and other representation and organizing tasks. Sometimes called "the union's eyes and ears."

seniority: a worker's length of service with an employer relative to the length of service of other workers. Contracts frequently use seniority to determine layoffs, promotions, recalls, and transfers.

strike: a collective refusal to work, designed to pressure an employer to accept the union's position in a bargaining or other dispute.

trusteeship: placing the day-to-day running of a union local in the hands of a higher union body, usually as a result of financial irregularities or mismanagement.

unfair labor practice (ULP): a labor law violation, committed by either an employee or a union. Common employer violations include making changes in the workplace without going through the union, and interfering with employees' rights to engage in union activity.

union local: the lowest level in a union's formal organizational structure, usually consisting of employees in a particular workplace or city.

union shop ("agency shop"): workplace where new employees are required either to join the union or to pay a "fair share" fee to the union to compensate it for direct representation and other services.

Wagner Act: the 1935 federal statute, subsequently amended, that set up the framework for union representation for most private sector employees. Formally, the National Labor Relations Act, named for U.S. Senator Robert F. Wagner of New York (1877-1953).

Weingarten rights: an employee's right to have a representative present when being questioned about a possible disciplinary infraction. Named for a 1975 United States Supreme Court decision, NLRB v. J. Weingarten, Inc.

whistleblower: an employee who gives information to the public, the news media, or a government agency about some employer activity that the employee believes is illegal or improper.

workers' compensation: the government-regulated insurance scheme providing for set monetary payments to employees who are injured or disabled in connection with their jobs.

Humor - Prison vs. Work

In prison, you spend the majority of your time in an 8 x 10 cell—At work, you spend most of your time in a 6 x 8 cubicle.

In prison, you spend your time looking through bars from inside wanting to get out—At work, you spend your time wanting to get out and go inside bars.

In prison, the guards lock and unlock all doors for you—At work, you must carry around a security card and open all the doors yourself.