



CALENDAR

Mon., Jan. 17

- **MLK JR. DAY RALLY & MARCH**, see page 4.

Sat., Jan. 22

- **STATEWIDE PLANNING MEETING** at Everett Labor Temple, 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

Wed., Jan. 26

- **MEMBERSHIP MEETING**, 6:15 p.m., Hall 6.
- **POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE**, 5:30 p.m., Hall 6.
- **NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION**, 5:30 p.m., Rm. 238.

La Clinica Workers Successfully Organize for a Voice at Work

On December 9, 200 health care workers at La Clinica Health Center in Pasco, Washington voted to join Local 8. They will be the second Migrant and Community Health Center to organize with OPEIU in Washington state.

“We now have a say in decision making and a voice so we can say what the needs of our patients are,” said **Elvia Uribe**, a Medical Assistant at the Clinic. “Our Executive Director wouldn’t listen to our needs so we contacted the Union,” said Uribe.

Workers and supportive community members began picketing La Clinica in October after the Executive Director fired three doctors and closed one of the Clinics. “It was very stressful,” Uribe said, adding that she and other staff ended up working extra long shifts just to help the medical staff and patients. “It was hard on my family, too, because I would get home too tired to spend time with my children.” Workers were successful in getting their Executive Director removed on November 9 and have launched a campaign to seat labor supportive community members on La Clinica’s Executive Board.

Extensive media coverage, active involvement from the community and unfair labor practice charges filed by the Union played a major role in countering the employer’s anti-union campaign. Most important, of course, was the 25 member in-house Organizing Committee which ensured a solid victory. Local 8 hopes to be at the bargaining table in late January.

(At left) La Clinica workers are thumbs up after winning their election Dec. 9.



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State of the



By Suzanne Mode and Cindy Schu

We begin 2005 by welcoming nearly 200 workers at the Community Health Center La Clinica who voted in December to be represented by OPEIU Local 8. These employees clearly recognize the benefits of Union representation and the power of having a genuine voice on the job. They reflect the strength and courage of all Local 8 members who work so hard to keep our Union strong and advance social justice in the workplace and the community.

This victory caps a year of wins and losses for Local 8. We secured first contracts at CAMP and the Lower Columbia Community Action Program but oversaw the closure of a Group Health facility in Bellingham, losing nearly 20 members to reorganization. We negotiated enhanced severance for scores of members in Medical Records at Group Health who will lose their jobs because of automation, yet continue to bargain a first contract for workers at the King County Housing Authority. WDS members in Colville narrowly voted to give up the Union, while WDS members in Seattle unified as never before to stand up and fight their anti-union boss.

Throughout the year, Local 8 members—with help from staff, challenged unfair disciplines, protected work standards and made sure our voices were heard on the job. A 20 year employee at Group Health was returned to work after her termination was reversed by an arbitrator. Many employers were forced to produce information

they didn't want to share with the Union and bargain over their decisions and actions. Contract improvements far outweighed concessions.

The skyrocketing cost of health care continues to be the most divisive and difficult issue we confront in 2005. Double-digit increases over the last several years have made barely adequate coverage almost prohibitively expensive for everyone. Healthy employees are pitted against the unhealthy. Single workers resent coverage extended to spouses. Employers are undermining employees' wages and quality of life by demanding that they keep paying more.

Elected leaders—both local and national, must be held accountable to changing the current health care system in this country. We must demand reform and insist on change. Despite our political defeats in 2004, Local 8 members mobilized for democracy as never seen before in the history of our Union. We need to celebrate our efforts and continue that fight for principled candidates, fairness at work and justice in the community. Now is not the time to give up.

OPEIU Local 8 finished the year financially healthy. We accrued some reserves, adjusted to a lower subsidy from our International organization and purchased a new phone system after 30 years. To ensure that we can sustain whatever challenges may come our way in

Continued on page 3



STATE OF THE UNION

cont'd from pg. 2

2005, we postponed the hiring of a full-time Member Support Representative. Instead, several members are being recruited to work for Local 8 on a part-time basis to improve Union visibility at work and provide support for the numerous contract campaigns expected this year.

Statewide representation and increased membership involvement remain top priorities for Local 8. We represent bargaining units in over 20 counties, from the Tri-Cities to Longview. Our Union organization needs to reflect our diversity and extend a voice to all of our members. We will be tackling these challenges at our second Statewide Meeting scheduled for March

5–6 in Tokeland. Members will decide how best to structure our organization, expand representation to all parts of the State and protect our commitment to remaining a democratic Union.

Most important, Local 8 continues to grow. In these days of outsourcing, automation and the overall downsizing of living wage jobs, workers still understand that only Union representation offers real solutions. Only Union members can freely assert their rights, bargain strong contracts and demand a voice in workplace decisions. We are a Union dedicated to organizing—our bargaining strength grows, our standards rise and our members benefit as a result.

*Happy New Year
with Peace on Earth*

Know Your Rights!

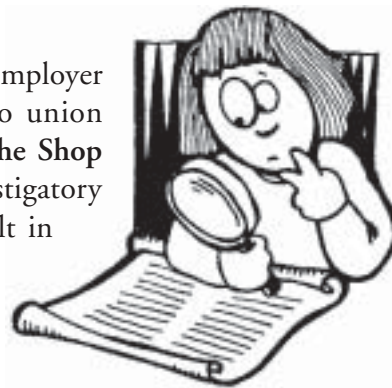
An employee who is called to an interview with his or her employer which may lead to some disciplinary action is entitled to union representation. **It's up to the employee to request having the Shop Steward or Union Representative present** during an investigatory interview which the employee reasonably believes will result in disciplinary action.

IF MANAGEMENT WANTS TO QUESTION OR "INTERVIEW" YOU, First: Ask what is involved. Ask if this might lead to you being disciplined.

- If so:
- **Tell management** that you want a Union Representative or Shop Steward present.
 - **Refuse to answer any questions** until a Union Representative or Shop Steward is present, although you should attend the meeting if required.
 - **Refuse to allow** any tape or any other electronic recording of the interview.
 - **If management insists on proceeding** with the interview without regard for your rights, make clear that you are proceeding under protest.

If you make the mistake of starting the interview and become disturbed by the direction the interview is taking, stop the interview and request that a Union Representative or Shop Steward be present before continuing with the interview.

REMEMBER THESE MAGIC WORDS: *"If the discussion of this meeting could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or impact on my personal working conditions, I request that my steward or union representative be present. Without union representation, I choose not to answer any further questions at this time."*



*Thanks to
everyone
who gave
generously
to our
Holiday
Families.*



Join us to March for Justice!

Please join us on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Monday, January 17 at the gym at Garfield High School in Seattle at 11 a.m. on the top row of the east bleachers. If you can't attend but want to make sure you are contacted about future events, call **Shelby Mooney** at (206) 448-2615.

Want to see a more active Union? Thinking about how we connect with members who live all over the state?

Local 8 needs your thoughts and ideas to help tackle these two big questions. We're bringing together 50 Local 8 members for our **Second Statewide Meeting** in Tokeland, Washington on March 5 and 6. A planning meeting will be held on **Saturday, January 22 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.** at the Everett Labor Temple, 2812 Lombard Street. Can you help plan for Local 8's future? Please call Cindy or Suzanne to sign up at (206) 441-8880.



Local OPEIU Journal

OPEIU Local 8, 2800 First Ave., Rm. 304, Seattle, WA 98121-1114

Address Service Requested

Office & Professional Employees
International Union Local 8's
Meetings are held at the Seattle Labor
Temple at 2800 First Ave. (between
Clay & Broad Sts.) Free parking under
the Ellington Condos for
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Social Security: An Invented Crisis

By Maureen Bo, Retired OPEIU Business Manager and member of Alliance for Retired Americans

For years Wall Street and the right-wing think tanks have tried to brainwash workers into believing that Social Security is going broke and won't be there when they reach retirement age. Wrong. At the current rate of funding, even with the baby-boom retirements, the fund will be solvent for 100% payment of current benefits until 2042 to 2052, depending on which budget projection figures are used. Even after that, it is not going to be broke, but would fund benefits at 75–80% if nothing is changed.

A Great American Success Story Since 1936, Social Security has been a great success, providing lifetime retirement benefits with annual cost-of-living increases. Thirty percent of its beneficiaries collect survivors' insurance or disability insurance which would otherwise be too expensive to buy. Social Security has come a long way to eliminating poverty among the elderly since 1936. It is a great administrative bargain with tiny overhead costs. It isn't perfect. It can be improved, but not by privatizing. Could we strengthen the fund in the next 30 to 40 years in ways that will assure all workers at least a secure base income in retirement? Experts say yes.

Privatizing is not Reform Replacing the current system, in whole or in part, with personal investment accounts will make things worse. First it will siphon 20–25% percent of current payroll taxes from the fund for private accounts requiring the government to borrow trillions of dollars to pay for current benefits, on top of the enormous current deficit. If the debt can't be repaid, there will be those like Alan Greenspan to say: "Cut the benefits." Second, most people don't get rich in the stock market; some lose everything. In this case, if a worker loses the 25% in the stock market account, he or she is left

with only the 75% that went to the main Social Security fund. Women workers will come out worse because women still earn less and tend to have years out of the workforce raising children and caring for elderly parents.

The need for social security grew out of (guess what)—the stock market crash of 1929! So now we should put our money back there? So now the bursting of the dot-com bubble won't apply to us? It is crazy to create a new social security dependent on the very economic forces that drove so many Americans into poverty in the Great Depression of the 1930's. Our priority should be to ensure that people who work their whole life don't spend the twilight years in poverty.

A Call to Action. The Alliance for Retired Americans and 49 other organizations including the AFL-CIO oppose the



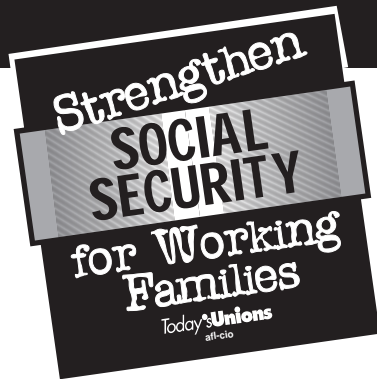
The need for Social Security grew out of the stock market crash of 1929! So now we should put our money back there?

move to privatize. The ARA has launched a campaign to ask workers to call their Senators and Representatives and urge them to oppose privatization of Social Security and to write letters to the editor. ARA supports the following means of improving the current system. 1) Scrap the cap for payment of contributions from the \$87,900 income per year so people with income more than \$87,900 pay the same percentage as we do on all earnings.

That would take care of any future funding shortfall. 2) Set a minimum benefit of at least 100% of poverty level. 3) Strengthen the current system with increased staff and resources; stop contracting out confidential benefit operations to private entities.

Credits for information in this article to: Will Parry, President, Puget Sound ARA, Retiree Advocate; Economic Opportunity Institute fact sheet; Paul Krugman, New York Times; Working Assets Act for Change e-mail 12/6/04.

The Top 10 Reasons to Strengthen Social Security and Reject Privatization



10 You probably won't win the lottery before you retire.

9 There's no guarantee you'll hit a stock market jackpot, either.

8 Even if you do, it might not last as long as you do.

7 And without cost-of-living raises, it might not be worth much when you really need it.

6 You sleep better knowing that if something happens to you tomorrow, your family's protected.

5 Your kids sleep better knowing that when you retire, you can afford independence.

4 Women and people of color lose enough to unequal pay during their working years. Social Security helps level the field for them in retirement.

3 It's better to have retirement money in your pocket than in a Wall Street money manager's pocket.

2 After a lifetime of hard work, every retiree deserves dignity, security and freedom from poverty.

1 No one should *have* to work 'til 70.

Call Congress toll-free at
1-877-722-7494

For more information about the
AFL-CIO's campaign to strengthen
Social Security for working families,
call toll-free 1-877-760-2340
or visit www.aflcio.org/socialsecurity