The unions’ prescription for health: SOLIDARITY

Instead of our regular “President’s Corner,” we are publishing the response of the Coalition of Labor Organizations at MSU to recent reports about the affect of the fiscal crisis on the University.

February 17, 2009 Coalition of Labor Organization Unions and Associations statement on current health care discussions with Michigan State University:

Michigan State University President Simon’s February 6, 2009, letter to the MSU community was both sobering and informative.

We’re all aware of current economic conditions. In many ways we share the President’s exasperation at the current state of affairs, and we remain unequivocally committed to the principle that the working class standard of living determines the health and quality of life of local communities.

We can find little to disagree with in the President’s assessment that the Nation, Michigan, in particular, and MSU are all facing the most serious economic crisis in our lifetime. We also agree with her assertion that we need to continue to invest in effective health care approaches.

The unions and associations of the Coalition of Labor Organizations at MSU are committed to continuing this important work. Abandoning or even setting aside this work while we weather the current economic crisis will...
CT News

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Editorial Policy: The CT News is the voice of our union. It is our vehicle for communicating, on a regular basis, the issues that confront us as workers. Through this newsletter we explain union policies, show how dues are spent, and explain the views and actions of the elected leadership for evaluation by the members.

The CT News is the voice of the membership. We welcome articles from members and stories about members.

While contributions are welcome, they should be constructive and contribute positively to the welfare of our union.

We will accept no attacks on any union leader or member. We will accept thoughtful discussion of all related issues in the letters section, and reserve the right to reply to those that seem to reflect a misunderstanding of the union and its policies.

Direct ideas, letters, questions and comments to Cheryllie Finney.

CTU classifieds

For sale:


◆ Male Siberian Husky puppies: Will be 8 weeks on March 20 and ready for new homes. $200. Call 517-641-6530, Bath, MI. Pictures upon request, kraxy420@hotmail.com.

◆ PS2 console and more: PS2 console, 6 controllers (2 wireless, 4 wired), 2-8 mg memory cards with memory cleared, steering wheel and pedal set, all cords included, 46 games, Dance Dance Revolution Max 2 w/ Dance Mat. Will not sell items separately. Selling it as a big bundle only. What a steal! Will accept cash, cashiers check or money order only. $250 for all. Contact me at 517-712-4666 for a list of all games.

◆ Refrigerator: White, used, works and in good condition. $175. Call 989-413-6815. [Meghan R. Tappy]

◆ Pedestal sump pump: Less than a year old including a new switch still in package. Call 517-290-2058 after 5 pm or email kmason_2001@yahoo.com.

◆ 32 inch Sansui TV: Works great, comes with remote. 2 composite inputs, 1 s-video in, cable in, and audio out. Very heavy so you must be willing to pick up! Asking $175 or best offer. Please call 517-648-2244.

◆ Glass curio cabinet: Exterior 81" x26"x14". Interior shelves 21"x12". Three adjustable glass shelves and 2 fixed (5 total). Interior light. Walnut medium dark. Have pics. $125. Call 517-599-0179 or email lisagorski68@yahoo.com. [Ivette Duynslager]


◆ Player piano: Strabue, oak finish, country style, great condition, refinished, new keytops, looks great in a living room, selling as-is and where-is, comes with 59 QRS rolls/variety of boxed rolls all in great shape, including Christmas rolls. Appraised September '08 for $4,000, asking $2,500. If interested please email me at vdunaway@gmail.com.

For rent:

◆ Tent Event Rentals, LLC: Beat the rush and book now to reserve your tent, tables, chairs, for the upcoming season. Tent Event Rentals, LLC also has staging, dance floors, large BBQ grill on trailer. Competitive pricing and excellent customer service. Call 517-819-2659.

◆ 2 homes for rent with option to purchase.

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only leave us at the disadvantage of needing to do something more extreme in a shorter time frame sometime in the future. More importantly, the loss of progress will actually contribute to deepening and prolonging the crisis.

In addition to committing to a continuation and expansion of a collaborative approach to addressing the health care challenge, the President’s letter made two things clear. The current collective bargaining agreements will be honored—many will remember when the unions were asked to open their contracts during the 1980s. This commitment makes staying focused on long-term solutions more productive.

The second thing she made clear is that, from her perspective, “A sustainable approach will likely require a shared sacrifice.”

In today’s world it’s not possible to predict what we might be facing even in the near future. Without knowing what our collaborative work will result in, as well as what current efforts in Washington to prevent a national depression will produce, clearly it isn’t possible for anyone to know or predict what specific challenges we will be facing later in the year.

During challenging times, we have frequently seen employers tempted to look disproportionately to employees to resolve budget troubles. We hope that won’t be the case here. As we learn more about the University’s views, the unions and associations of the Coalition of Labor Organizations at MSU are committed to working together in representing their members as vigorously as necessary, in whatever way is necessary, to preserve our members’ interests in health care and all other economic security.

Brief background
In the 1980s health care costs began to be recognized as a serious concern for U.S. employers. Various industry reform measures were implemented which, unfortunately, failed to address the problem. In the mid 1990s MSU unions and associations recognized that the then current industry approach to the growing problem of health care cost would not solve the problem or meet the health care needs of the population. They saw clearly that, over the years, fuzzy thinking on the part of employers had made the problem worse. In every other aspect of their business, employers are focused on quality and value, but health care has been treated like a commodity. As employers focused on the rising cost of providing health care insurance, they have taken aggressive steps to bring down and control their cost. Their approach of reducing covered services, increasing co-pays, deductibles and point of service fees in the plans they offer, along with shifting direct premium cost to employees—in part or in whole—has proven counterproductive and has contributed to driving health care spending up.

Here at MSU, labor leaders and University representatives openly discussed the problem and agreed that a different approach was necessary.

In the employer sponsored health care system, employers have a strategic role to play in engaging the health care industry. By disengaging, employers lose most if not all of their ability to influence costs not only for themselves

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**buy:** Across from Park Lake, 15302 Rosemont, Bath, $625-675/mo. 314 Center Street, Mason, $825-875/mo. Call 517-285-3415 for more info/showing.

**Services:**

*Steve's Professional Auto Repair:* Located at 2401 W. Main Street, Lansing, Michigan 48917, phone 517-484-2005. We do transmissions, clutches & clutch systems, brakes, and engine repairs on your car or small truck. Call or come see us today: “You Need Your Vehicle.”

*Ride sharing:* Capital Area Transportation Authority offers a ride sharing service called Clean Commute that several CTs are using. Contact Clean Commute at their toll free number (877-921-POOL), local number (517-393-RIDE), fax number (517-394-3733), or website (www.cata.org/cleancommute/index.html).

**Wanted:** Used outdoor kennels, complete or 6 ft. modular sections, kennel panels; also gates and used chain link fencing. Contact anishinaabegamig@yahoo.com.

**Free:** Advertise to your colleagues in the *CT News*. Contact Cheryllee Finney at ctnews@msu.edu. The *CT News* accepts ads from CTU members on items for sale and/or services provided by CTU members and/or their household family members.

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but also for the entire community. Con- sumers play a critical role in affecting the cost and quality of products, goods and services in any market, and health care is no exception.

However, in the employer sponsored health care system, where employers are purchasers forced to work with insurance companies or their agents, the only meaningful influence consumers have available to them is by working with employers as purchasers when decisions are made.

For this reason MSU labor and administration committed to work together in addressing the health care challenge. In this way, contractual barriers that made making changes necessary for the benefit of members were overcome and the combined influence of purchaser and consumer were brought to the market.

What’s been accomplished
MSU unions and associations, by forming themselves as a coalition and agreeing to work formally with the University through a Joint Health Care Committee, have contributed to reducing MSU’s health care cost by millions of dollars and holding trends below others who chose other methods.

What’s being done now
MSU unions continue to participate in the JHCC to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the benefits and work closely with Staff Benefits to bring consumer interests to the discussion around quality, cost and access.

This year the Coalition of Labor Organizationalys is participating with other University groups, specialists and consultants in a Health Care Advisory Committee in an effort to become more effective consumer representatives at the table and elsewhere.

Vision benefits open enrollment
Open enrollment will soon begin for the vision program sponsored by the Coalition of Labor Organizations at MSU. [Amy Lou Henner]

The benefit program, which is offered through Michigan Employee Benefits Services (MEBS), is paid for by the employee using the service.

For further information and to sign up, visit www.mels.com/oes. Use login “001080” and password “RUG2OPAL” or call the Customer Service Department at 1-800-968-6327, press “0” (zero) and ask for the billing department.

Where we need to focus
In the February 6, 2009, edition of the State News, President Simon is quoted as saying “our goal is to reduce cost but not shift the burden to the public payroll by reducing insurance. We think what we can do is really look progressively at some prevention methods using evidence that hopefully can reduce our health care costs... everything is on the table”

Again, in her letter of February 6, under the heading “Working Toward Solutions,” the President reaffirmed our mutual commitment to preserving access to quality health care for all MSU employees by continuing to engage the industry with a joint purchaser consumer partnership.

Your labor leaders agree this is the right approach. MSU benefits experts and labor leaders understand and agree that most employers don’t measure the cost of poor health among their employees. If they did, they would discover that many of the steps they have taken to reduce benefit costs have actually made the resulting costs of poor health even greater.

Smart business leaders know that what is measured can be improved. When the MSU Health Care Advisory Committee is able to identify meaningful and accurate ways to measure patient outcomes for medical conditions, we will be able to address ways to improve wellness and screening initiatives as well as address improved diagnoses, and find ways to achieve more timely treatments with less invasive methods.

We need to engage our health plans in cost reduction and containment strategies, which MSU does well, but we also need to continue pressing for accountability for quality and value from our benefits and push for outcomes measurement throughout the system.

As we address this important work throughout the year we will keep you informed of our progress and new developments. We are cooperating with the University in the development of the web site the President announced and we will provide members with our own ability to make their views known to their unions by conducting surveys and other methods.

President’s note: In the next several months, we will hear many rumors and much posturing on the part of politicians. Throughout it all, we need to hang tough, reporting information and rumors and discussing concerns with our union. We cannot let ourselves be swept away by fear or let ourselves be divided. Remember, we are in this together and together we remain strong.
A. Philip Randolph

In commemoration of Black History Month, it seems appropriate to touch on the contributions of A. Philip Randolph to the labor movement.

In the 1920s, a peak decade for the railroads, 20,224 African-Americans worked as porters (all called “George”) and train personnel for the Pullman Company. It was the largest category of black labor in the U.S. and Canada. Porters had tried to organize since the beginning of the century. Their hours were very long, with no overtime. Pullman paid very low wages, and the porters had to depend on the generosity of the traveling public to increase their income. Typically, porters’ tips were more than the monthly salary earned from the Pullman Company.

In 1925, Randolph helped organize the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, setting in motion a 12-year struggle, including job loss and harassment, before forcing Pullman to the bargaining table. On August 25, 1937, Pullman finally recognized BSCP as the official union of the Pullman porters. It was the first collective bargaining agreement between an African-American labor union and a major U.S. corporation.

Two years earlier, in 1935, it was the first labor organization led by African-Americans to receive a charter in the American Federation of Labor.

Conditions and wages improved greatly under the union.

As president of BSCP, Randolph utilized the power of the labor union and the unity that it represented to work for significant social changes on the national level. Among his subsequent accomplishments was the organization of two major marches on Washington, D.C., in 1941 and 1963, which resulted in important advances in black civil rights. The 1963 march made Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. a national figure. Randolph was the first African American to serve as an International Vice President of the AFL-CIO in 1957, and received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1964.

Quote: “The labor movement has been the home of the working man, and traditionally, it has been the only haven for the dispossessed; and therefore, I have tried to build an alliance between the Negro and the American labor movement.

We must have faith that this society, divided by ethnicity and by class, and subject to profound social pressures, can one day become a nation of equals, and banish ethnic prejudices to the limbo of oblivion from which it shall never emerge.”

CT goes bald—deliberately!

Cindy Stone, a CT in the MSU Library, says that her family, friends and coworkers are wondering if she’s a little bit crazy.

Why else would she allow her thick, feathery hair to be shaved?

What could persuade her to go bald?

Well, here’s the buzz about her upcoming buzz.

“I’ve gotten my share of incredulous looks, heard lots of ‘I just couldn’t do that’ comments, and heard from people telling me this is either the bravest or stupid-est thing they’ve ever heard of someone doing,” Stone said.

“Testing the waters of public opinion, I’ve asked a few close friends if they would be willing to pay to see me shave my head,” she added. “They all responded with a resounding, ‘Oh, yeah, you know it, sister!’ and that even includes my wonderful hair guy, Todd.”

So that’s the reason? She’s doing it for the money?

Yes, but not so fast. Stone won’t be keeping the money for herself. She will sport her brave new look in order to “Shave the Way to Conquer Kids’ Cancer with the St. Baldrick’s Foundation.”

“Now, it’s time to put your money where my hair is, or won’t be!” Stone said. She is hoping to raise at least $500, “both to justify my insane decision, and to fund as much research as possible!”

“No amount is too large or too small,” she said.

Donations can be made online by visiting www.StBaldricks.org. Click on the “Donate Now” link in the green “You Can Help” area, and search for “Cynthia Stone.”

While online giving is easiest, cash or checks made out to “St. Baldrick’s Foundation” will be gratefully accepted by Stone. For details, contact her at stonecy@msu.edu.

Stone invites anyone who wants to see the deed done, to join her at the Claddagh Irish Pub in the Eastwood Town Center on March 15 shortly after 11 a.m.

Coffee breaks thanks to CTU

The Union that brought you work breaks now brings the coffee and doughnuts right to your office.

Recent winners of the Solidarity Committee’s coffee and doughnuts drawing are:

▼ Elvira Shaw, Osteopathic Medicine, Dean’s Office, January
▼ Jackie Campbell, Department of English, February
▼ Juli Kerr, Forestry, January Membership Meeting

Submit your name to win a union coffee break with doughnuts from the Solidarity Committee. Contact Chairperson Lois Siefring at 353-4911 or lois.siefring@hc.msu.edu.

Seeking Nominations for 2009 CT Award

Submitted by Jacquelyn Mussell, Human Resources/Staffing Services

Is there an outstanding CT in your unit who deserves special recognition for his or her skills, abilities and dedication to excellence? Nominate that special person for the 2009 Clerical Technical Recognition Award! The winner receives $1,000 at a special recognition ceremony and is profiled in Source.

Criteria for the award include:
▼ Respect of peers and continuous diligence in attending to daily responsibilities; [Georgette Kennedy]
▼ Concern for students, faculty, staff, and colleagues, particularly (but not limited to) in assisting overseas U.S. students and faculty, international students, international faculty, etc.;
▼ Extraordinary and significant contributions to the community;
▼ Innovative thinking in facilitating unit tasks and responsibilities.

Individuals may be nominated by any member of the MSU community. Complete a nomination form and collect a minimum of two support letters (maximum of five) by MSU colleagues along with additional supportive information. Find nomination forms under the HR News section of the MSU Human Resources Web site at www.hr.msu.edu.

Submit nominations by 5 p.m., May 15, 2009, to: CT Recognition Award Selection Committee, Room 120 Nisbet Building. Direct questions to Jackie Mussell, 884-0114 or mussellj@hr.msu.edu.
**URs study their trade**

Every month URs join Board and staff members at the C-T Union Hall for training sessions that help prepare everyone to better represent members and further the work of the union in general.

The sessions provide for an exchange of information between our union leaders, including information from the union administration about issues we are facing as well as updates from URs about what is happening out in their districts. In addition, sometimes an outside speaker is brought in to help educate everyone on one or more relevant topics.

In January, MSU Human Resources Analyst Rosemary Huguelet provided information about filing workers’ compensation claims.

While Huguelet did a good job of explaining the procedures, her presentation made it clear that filing for workers’ compensation and keeping up with all of the regulations can be very complicated. The importance of contacting your UR or the CTU office in order to receive directions and assistance could not have been more clear.

Faculty Grievance Officer and School of Labor and Industrial Relations Professor John Revitte presented a very interactive workshop in February on “The Job of the Steward.” (In most unions, members who fulfill the role of our URs would be called stewards.)

The UR Coordinating Committee schedules the monthly sessions, and they are always willing to entertain ideas for future training. If there’s something you would like your union leadership to review, contact URCC chairperson Colleen Drake at 432-6123x162 or drake@msu.edu.

**Meeting**

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Several regulations covering the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Members with questions or concerns about using ADA and FMLA should always contact their UR or one of our contract administrators.

President Deb Bittner opened a discussion about the new requirements for taking out loans from our retirement accounts. Information about these loans can be found at www.hr.msu.edu/HRsite/Benefits/FacStaff/Retire/New403b/LoanProv/.

She also reminded us that we will be joining other campus unions to negotiate health care this year.

Several members had questions about surveys they received from the University recently. Bittner asked that members inform us when they are asked for feedback from the administration. It is important, especially now, that we stay together and work for our mutual interest.

The following members won door prizes: Walt Peebles won a gift bag that included a bag of union-made coffee, Juli Kerr won a coffee break for her office, and Amy McCausey and Duferia White each won $50.

**UR district news**

The following members have petitioned for appointment as Union Representatives. They will be appointed if no other CTS from their respective districts express an interest in the positions before 5 p.m. on March 12.


**▼ District 34** (Agricultural Hall, Cook Hall): Ann Brooks.

**District 12** (Natural Resources, Packaging, Trout Building): Juli Kerr has been appointed UR. Contact her at 355-0090 or kerrju@msu.edu.

Is there no Union Representative in your district? Interested in becoming a UR? For more information, contact URCC Chairperson Colleen Drake (432-6123 x162 or drakec@msu.edu) or Vice President Nancy Gray (353-8632 or grayn@msu.edu).
Calendar

March 3 CTU Executive Board Meeting. All members welcome. C-T Union Hall, 5:15 p.m.

Tax time

Misplace your W-2s just as you sat down to complete your taxes? Don’t worry. MSU makes these reports available on-line at payroll.msu.edu. The site also allows you to access two years of payroll statements and lets you edit your direct deposit and state and federal withholding information.

While the MSU Library does not provide tax forms or provide assistance with filing, it does publish a handy on-line guide that provides information on where to find the appropriate resources, including free assistance for low income filers. Visit guides.lib.msu.edu/page.html?page_id=262.

The Asset Independence Coalition (AIC), a coalition of non-profit and governmental partners, is another group offering tax assistance to low income households. Dial 2-1-1 and an operator will ask you a few questions to determine if you are eligible.

March 7 “Workplace Bullying.” What is workplace bullying and how big is the problem? What to do when your boss or coworkers are bullies. What unions can do. $35/person. Details at www.lir.msu.edu/laborEd/workshops.php. C-T Union Hall, 9:30 to 1:00 p.m.

March 13 Deadline to register for the Gerri Olson Educational Lottery Loan. See article, below.

Through March 15 “The Kresge Art Museum Collection: Celebrating the 50th” provides a retrospective glance at all sorts of wonderful pieces of art from the Museum’s extensive and varied collection, including many that reflect the world of work.

March 16 Deadline to submit items for the April 2009 CT News. Send letters, articles and other information to ctnews@msu.edu.

March 17 CTU Executive Board Meeting. All members welcome. C-T Union Hall, 5:15 p.m.

March 27 “Making Meaning on Both Sides of the Literacy Tracks: The Voices of First Year Students at Michigan State University.” LEP program. Bump Halbritter and Julie Lindquist, MSU Department of Writing, Rhetoric and American Culture. MSU Museum Auditorium, 12:15–1:30 p.m.

Game Night: We had a good turnout and a lively time at our February gathering. However, due to upcoming holidays and vacations, Game Night will be canceled until September.

Hold the dates: The CTU will participate in two Lugnuts games this year. We will join GWPAC on April 16. On August 15 we will celebrate with other unions in the community at the Labor Night game.