

# Working Together

Monthly Newsletter of Locals 34 & 35

November 27, 2000 Volume 1, Number 2

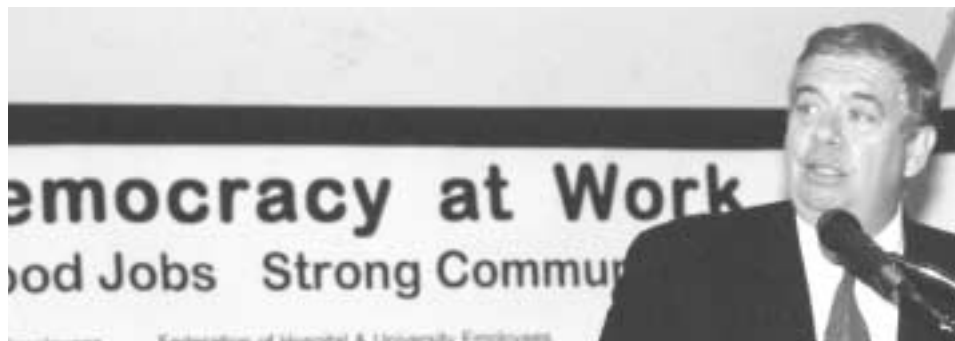
## Election Year Activism Builds Union Strength

During this important election year, Yale's unions have worked hard to make certain that area political candidates heed the voices of Yale's workers.

During October, Local 35 members in the Women's Leadership Program collected sufficient signatures of unregistered eligible voters to have Yale designated as an official worksite registration location. Under state law, all employees were then entitled to visit a voter registration table for 30 minutes during the paid workday. Over 600 new voters were registered. The unions then researched key races in which members would be voting and offered over 1000 members information about their candidates through targeted letters and member-to-member phone calls.

During the final weeks of the campaign season, union volunteers walked through communities in the Second and Fifth Congressional districts to talk to union members. In each of these districts incumbents faced serious challenges from candidates who opposed minimum wage increases and the right to organize.

On Election Day, our unions had 135 volunteers in the field from early morning until after the polls closed. Volunteers spent all day calling other union members, leafletting worksites and visiting members at their homes to encourage them to get out and vote. Our efforts contributed significantly to Congressman Jim Maloney's sweeping success in the 5th Congressional District. In Meriden, where H.E.R.E. volunteers concentrated, Maloney won by a 2-to-1 margin, twice the margin in 1998.



*H.E.R.E. General President John Wilhelm on the New Haven Green on October 18*

Although Sam Gejdenson lost his re-election campaign, he won in New London, Norwich and Middletown, the areas where union efforts were concentrated.

Local 34, 35 and GESO will remain active in local, state, and national politics. Plans to make voter registration part of new member orientation are underway. By actively participating in our democratic system, working people ensure themselves a stronger voice in the workplace.



*Over 135 volunteers went door to door, all wearing the "HERE for Justice" blue T-shirts seen all across the state on election day.*

## "Democracy at Work" kicks off contract campaign

On a rainy October 18, over 2000 Yale workers and their supporters gathered under a huge tent on the New Haven Green to celebrate organized labor at Yale. The rally was called "Democracy at Work: Good Jobs, Strong Communities," and was sponsored by the Federation of Hospital and University Employees-Local 34, Local 35, GESO, and Yale-New Haven Hospital's District 1199. The event chronicled the history of the labor movement in New Haven and at Yale, from the formation of the first union at Yale in 1941 to current struggles of GESO and the workers at Yale-New Haven Hospital. One theme ran throughout the entire event: the importance of partnership between Yale and its unions.

The event began as over 100 clergy and politicians processed from Center Church into the tent. Many of those gathered remarked at the impressive array of allies.

New Haven Mayor DeStefano gave a spirited opening. We also heard from Connecticut's Attorney-General Richard Blumenthal, and watched a videotaped statement from Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (the U.S. Congress kept her in D.C.). The strongest remarks, though, came from Yale's own employees.

Pat Marchitto, Sr., set the stage: He used to work at the Armstrong factory, but

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### A Peek Inside:

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*"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world" - Anne Frank*

# Labor Board Victories for GESO & YNHH

## Graduate Researchers & Teachers can unionize NYU grad union is certified

After years of waiting, the national precedent has finally been set. On October 31, 2000, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) in Washington, D.C., decided that graduate students who work as teaching or research assistants at private universities are employees with the right to unionize.

The ruling came in response to a union petition filed by graduate assistants at New York University. The NLRB held a union election among NYU graduate assistants this past May.

The Yale administration had two responses to the decision. Publicly, President Levin slammed the decision as a threat to our country's "national interest." On campus, however, Provost Richards distributed a groundbreaking letter, which conceded that this decision, "gives gradu-

ate assistants at each institution the right to decide for themselves whether to elect a union." She said that we now "enter a new phase of this discussion." For the first time, the Yale administration has conceded that their own graduate teachers have the right to unionize.

The ballots at NYU could only be counted after the appeal was settled. On Wednesday, November 8, the ballots were tallied. Although it seems no election that week was simple, the union at NYU appears to have won. The uncontested ballots favored the union 597 to 418, a margin of 179. There are an additional 295 contested ballots, but even the administration admits that at least 150 of these were cast by M.B.A. students who are not graduate assistants at all. Thus, the remaining contested ballots number fewer than the union's margin of victory.

On November 13, the NYU administration agreed that the union should be certified. Now, only contract negotiations remain . . .

## Hospital Backs Down; Workers allowed to distribute newsletter

In September, workers from the Yale-New Haven Hospital stood outside on the sidewalk at shift-change to distribute copies of their union's newsletter. Security told them to stop, and some were even threatened with arrest. Kent Hilton, a building services aide, was standing with his 4 year old son when security said to him, "We're going to arrest you."

After an investigation, the NLRB issued a complaint in October, alleging that YNHH's threats violated the law. A hearing date is set for February.

In late October, workers again stood outside the Hospital, distributing their newsletter. They were prepared for the worst. But the workers had stood their ground, and Yale had learned its lesson. They distributed the information in peace, and the union grew one step stronger.

## Our Members Ask . . .

### 1. What is a "neutrality agreement"?

A "neutrality agreement" typically involves an agreement between an employer and a union in which each side pledges that the campaign for the union will be peaceful, and that neither side will engage in threatening or harassing tactics.

Also known as a "Labor Peace Agreement," the union often agrees not to strike or even not to picket, and the employer usually agrees to support the employees hearing all sides of the issue, without the employer one-sidedly pushing the anti-union position. Often, the employer agrees to a card-check agreement.

The end result? The campaign is peaceful, the employer does not use its position of power to bias the decision, and the employees make their own, independent choice. The primary goal is to preserve a campaign atmosphere of "labor peace".

### 2. What does "card check" mean?

"Card Check" is a way for an employer

to verify majority support for a union. It is often contrasted with the "Ballot Election" method. Either method is permitted under current federal labor law, though the NLRB will only use the second method to force a recalcitrant employer to recognize the union.

If both sides agree to the "Card Check" method, then an impartial third party "checks" to see if union "cards" have been signed by an absolute majority of all employees. If so, the union is recognized.

"Card Check" has a number of advantages. For one thing, it requires a higher threshold of support: an absolute majority of all employees, not simply a majority of those who vote. More importantly, this method avoids the highly polarized environment—often accompanied by employer threats and insinuation—that precedes a labor board election. Instead, employees make their own decision on their own time.

### 3. Has Yale ever supported labor neutrality?

Yes, they have. They first supported neutrality in 1954, when Yale dining hall employees were organizing to join the union. At that time, they stated that University policy, "will be that of a neutral and disinterested observer." The NLRB never got involved, Yale accepted union representation for the dining halls, and a contract was settled without a strike. Back then, contracts were regularly settled without strikes.

Yale again supported neutrality in 1998, when Yale helped broker a neutrality agreement between the Omni Hotel and Local 217. Yale supported a "Card Check" neutral-

ity agreement. At the Omni, management recognized the union and settled an excellent contract, all without any strike or any disruption.

We hope Yale will follow this same path for its own graduate teachers and hospital workers, and allow everyone to decide for themselves in peace.

### Congratulations to: Jeannie Pappas

(Local 34, Peabody Museum) who suggested "Working Together" as the new title for this newsletter. We received many entries, and after a hotly contested election among the officers of Locals 34 & 35 (no recounts, thank goodness!), this new title was selected.

Congratulations!

## Union News in Brief

### Trucks get global tracking devices; Workers don't get air conditioning

Over the summer, Yale announced that all Yale trucks will be equipped with a global satellite tracking system. John Martin, a 35 member and steward, recently challenged Yale's priorities, saying that the environmental conditions in the Traffic, Receiving & Stores (TR&S) warehouse need improving.

In a meeting with Don Relinan, the unit's head supervisor, John pointed out that the mailroom is very dusty and has no windows. If there is enough money for such an expensive system to be installed on every Yale truck, perhaps the University could afford an air conditioner so that the workers in TR&S could breathe clean air? Unfortunately, the supervisor refused. He suggested instead that any unhappy worker can find a job elsewhere. John persisted in arguing that the University should make the mailroom a safe place to work for current and future employees. Stay tuned for more.

### Local 34 Membership Meeting

Local 34 members from all over the campus filled the First & Summerfield United Methodist Church on Wednesday, November 1st, to vote on proposals that prepare us to win our next contract. The members voted to hire into permanent positions three organizers: Alida Schlessinger, an external applicant who has interned with Local 34 for one year; and Mark Firla and Adam Marchand, internal applicants who each took a leave of absence this summer to work for Local 34.

Other votes hired Union office staff into permanent positions: Hired were Deborah Conlon (Office Manager); Jessica Suraci (Dues Coordinator); and Angie Cowan (Office Assistant II). A vote was also taken to expand Accountant Diana Boice's position, both in duties and hours, and to hire Nancy Anderson into a part-time one-year fixed-duration

position to facilitate the transfer of data from the old office Macs to the new PCs.

Members also voted to turn in our old copy machine for a new model and to free up money to pay for expenses that may arise in the next several months related to the next contract.

### Beloved Library Employee Passes Away

Ellen Schwartz passed away on Wednesday, November 1, after a brave struggle with cancer. Ellen was a dedicated library employee who had recently celebrated thirty years of service to the University.

A long-time union supporter and Local 34 committee member, Ellen was well-known for her kindness and warmth. She is survived by her husband, David, and her mother. Several library employees and Local 34 leaders attended Ellen's memorial service at Shure Funeral Home on Friday, November 3. In lieu of flowers, her family invites contributions to the American Cancer Society or to the Congregation Beth El Keser Israel



Connie Ellison told how the contract we won in 1996 helped her "get back on her feet" by getting her into a Local 35 benefit-level position.

Yale paid close attention. Three of Yale's top officers were in attendance, and after the event Linda Lorimer (Secretary) told Local 34 President Laura Smith that she was "impressed".

H.E.R.E. General President John Wilhelm closed the event by saying, "If Yale and its employees can find a way to partner instead of quarrel, we can build a model for the state of Connecticut and for the entire country." It is now up to us to show the world that it is possible.



Photos, clockwise from top: Rosa Anna DeFilippis (GESO, MB&B); Bill Felder and Bill Alexander (retired, Local 35); A spirited crowd, led by spirited hospital workers; Nancy Ryan (Local 34).



## Working Together

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**We're on the Web!!**

***www.yaleunions.org***

## Union Calendar

### Local 34 Holiday Party & Membership Meeting

**Wednesday, December 13**

**5:30 pm**

First and Summerfield Methodist  
(corner of College & Elm Streets)

Children and Families Welcome!



*New Haven Mayor John DeStefano and Connecticut State Attorney-General Richard Blumenthal electrified the crowd on October 18 with their enthusiastic support of union representation for Yale's graduate teachers and hospital workers, as well as their continued strong support of the workers in Locals 34 and 35*

## Scholarship Available

The Yale University Women's Organization (YUWO) offers scholarship awards for continuing education for women whose formal education has been interrupted or delayed. Applicants are judged upon merit and need. The award may be used for course tuition and related expenses.

The number and amount of the awards vary. Last year, 12 women received awards totalling \$12,000. Current Yale staff members and their spouses will be given first consideration.

To receive an application, send a self-addressed stamped business size envelope to:

Connie Marsden  
32 Hunting Ridge Farms  
Branford, CT 06405

Call with questions: (203) 481-1795



*Local 34 members Cathedral and Eric Hoag prepare to go out door-knocking in Middletown, early on a Saturday morning*