

Insider

Newsletter of the Wisconsin Professional Employees Council
WPEC, WFT, AFT Local 4848, AFL-CIO

Number 1

May 1993

The celebration's over. Let's get down to work!

As we swept up champagne corks on the morning after the vote, the realization set in that we had a union without a contract, without a constitution, *without members*.

The victory party was over, and it was time to roll up our sleeves and get down to the job of creating a new union.

The Fiscal & Staff unit vote was one of the biggest wins for the labor movement in recent years. The size of the "yes" vote and the size of the turn-out overturned a lot of "conventional wisdom" and captured the attention of unions across the country.

Since mid-March, dozens of your co-workers have been working on a draft of a constitution for the new union. They have a first draft but a lot of work needs to be done before the constitutional convention on July 16-17.

Others have been getting ready to bargain our first contract. They've been getting trained in contract language and bargaining strategy, and working on a way to find out what members want.

Still others have been putting together a membership drive, so that we have some members to come to the constitutional convention, participate in elections and bargaining.

There are a few dozen people doing a lot of work. They need help. They need your special skills and your time.

Look over the reports on the constitution, bargaining and membership drive in this issue and pick an area you want to work on. Then give someone at the WPEC a call at (608) 255-9377 or 1 (800) 682-9855.

Drafting a constitution For a democratic union

In order to form a more perfect union, for ourselves and our posterity, a committee of volunteers has been working for two months on a draft WPEC constitution.

How will we select the bargaining team? How much will the dues be and how will stewards be selected? Will the governing board represent geographic areas or will it represent members on a proportional basis? Who will make decisions between conventions?

These are a few of the decisions members will have to make at the constitutional convention, which will be held on July 16-17. The committee's job is to get a draft to charter members before the convention.

But writing the draft constitution might be the easy part of the Constitution

See "Constitution" on Page 4

WPEC vote "big deal" in labor movement

It's been a bad decade for the labor movement. So, when 3,607 professional employees voted overwhelmingly to organize--bucking the trend and overturning some conventional wisdom along the way--it captured the attention of unions across the country.

The WPEC was the largest group to organize in Wisconsin in 15 years, and it was the biggest win for the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) in five years.

And, no one we talked to can remember the last time a large group of professionals were organized from scratch.

One surprise was the large margin of victory (60%) *and* the record level turnout (82%). Conventional wisdom holds that low turnout favors the union, since the hard core supporters usually vote.

One formula predicted we would lose if more than 70% of the unit returned ballots. Based on the large turnout, going into the last day of the election it was assumed the vote was too close to call. This may excuse some of the frantic last minute activity to get supporters to return ballots.

"I guess these people *really* wanted a union," as one national "expert" observed.

The organizers used surveys to find out what made members of the Fiscal & Staff unit unhappy. No one in the unit would be surprised to learn that the "three top concerns were money, wages and salaries." But people were also unhappy about job security and there was isolated but intense concern about unfair treatment.

If widespread dissatisfaction among the unit caused a sort of spontaneous combustion, it was the national AFT that provided the initial fuel, in the form of organizing staff and a six figure budget.

But, all observers agree that it wasn't the money, staff or even widespread dissatisfaction. It was the grass roots workplace organizing by members of the unit that made it work.

Welcome to WPEC and WFT, AFT Local 4848, AFL-CIO, Etc.

You may have noticed on the masthead that this is the "Newsletter of Wisconsin Professional Employees Council/WPEC, WFT, AFT Local 4848, AFL-CIO."

By now most people know the WPEC acronym: Wisconsin Professional Employees Council.

But when we voted to organize we also voted to affiliate with the Wisconsin Federation of Teachers (WFT), which consists of about 9,500 public employees.

We will also answer to the name Local 4848 of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

When we voted to form the WPEC, we voted to affiliate with the national AFT, and national unions like AFT are broken down into locals, with numbers. WPEC joins the 4,847 who went before us.

And, of course, all good unions belong to the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO).

Membership drive precondition for successful union

The vote on March 16 just gave us the legal right to organize a union. It's the job of the Membership Committee to turn that legal right into people and power.

A successful drive depends on an expanding circle of members recruiting their co-workers.

"One-on-one contact--members sitting down with their co-workers to answer questions and discuss the merits of collective bargaining--is probably the most effective tool in a membership drive," according to a Membership Committee report.

The committee is also producing four pieces of literature, designed to answer the kinds of questions potential members have about joining the union.

Phone banks will be used to follow up personal and mail contacts. The phones will also be useful to talk with potential members who live and work in rural areas.

At this point, the Membership Committee is divided into four area committees, in Madison, Milwaukee, the Fox River Valley and (coming soon) Eau Claire.

These committees need help. For more information, call WPEC at (608) 255-9377 or 1 (800) 682-9855.

To Do:

- contact co-workers
- distribute literature
- phone banking

Why join? Why now?

Would you rather have your next raise negotiated by a union with 100 members or one with 1,000 members?

The obvious answer to that question is the motivating force behind the "Charter Member" campaign. If we can't show broad support for the union when we go into negotiations in July, they'll eat us alive.

Besides adding strength through numbers, there are other good reasons to join now.

Want to vote on a proposed contract? Or be involved in selecting the bargaining team or the issues we'll be discussing at the table?

Want a say in setting up the new union's constitution? Want to participate in elections for union representatives?

You didn't think *non*-members get to vote on these things, did you?

1.25% raise still coming in May

WPEC represented employees *will* get the 1.25% raise that was scheduled for non-represented employees on May 30. It should show up in the second check in June, although it's so small you may have to squint to see it.

Represented state employees got the 1.25% last year.

Continued from Page 1

A union constitution for ourselves & our posterity

Committee's job. They're also supposed to plan the convention. First, they had to get a place that would hold 300 people, on relatively short notice. Then some members have to be put up overnight, meals and entertainment have to be arranged...all tasks that make constitution writing simple by comparison.

And, in their spare time, committee members will develop rules and the agenda for the convention.

But members of the Constitution Committee got to work before the ink was dry on the news stories of the election victory, and the draft is ready for the printers. And, while a lot of detail work still needs to be done on the convention, it's all coming together.

Anyone willing to devote time or talent to the Constitution Committee should contact the WPEC office at (608) 255-9377 or 1 (800) 682-9855.

To Do:

- plan convention
- plan rules & agenda
- staff convention

Hold July 16-17 for Founding Convention

The founding constitutional convention for the WPEC will be held July 16-17 at the Memorial Union on the UW-Madison campus.

The convention will vote on the WPEC constitution, set dues and elect officers. Only members will be allowed to participate.

Plans are to hold a get acquainted social function (a.k.a. "party") on Friday evening and then start work early Saturday morning.

More information on overnight accommodations and travel will be distributed as plans are firmed up.



World class bargaining team ready by July

It will take a lot of work, research and training, but the WPEC plans to field a world class bargaining team when we go into negotiations with the state in July.

The Bargaining Committee--currently made up of about 30 volunteers--met in March to set up four task oriented subcommittees.

Research One project of the Research Subcommittee is to develop a detailed survey to find out what members want to see in their first contract. That group will also start the complex task of identifying comparable jobs in the public and private sector against which we can compare our pay ranges.

Structure The Structure Subcommittee is working on a system of "Area Reps," who will be the conduit for two-way communications between the Bargaining Team and the members.

Writing The Writing Subcommittee is compiling language from other union contracts and will take the results of the research and turn it into specific bargaining proposals.

Communications The Communications Subcommittee is charged with developing the tools and strategy for internal communications and a public relations strategy. That subcommittee initiated an all day training session for WPEC activists on public relations, which

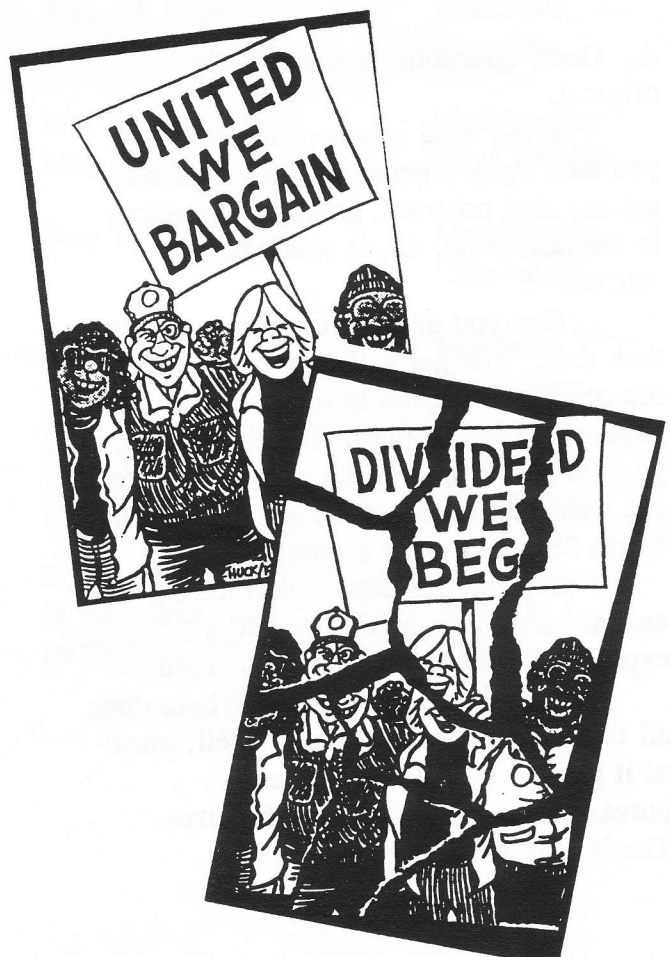
was held on April 24.

At least two other training sessions are planned. An all day session on Bargaining Strategy was held in May 8, and another session on Consensus Bargaining is being planned.

There's a lot of work to be done in a short time. Pick something from the "To Do" list and call WPEC at (608) 255-9377 or 1 (800) 682-9855 to get involved.

To do:

- survey members
- public relations strategy
- research other union contracts
- research comparable jobs
- recruit "Area Reps"



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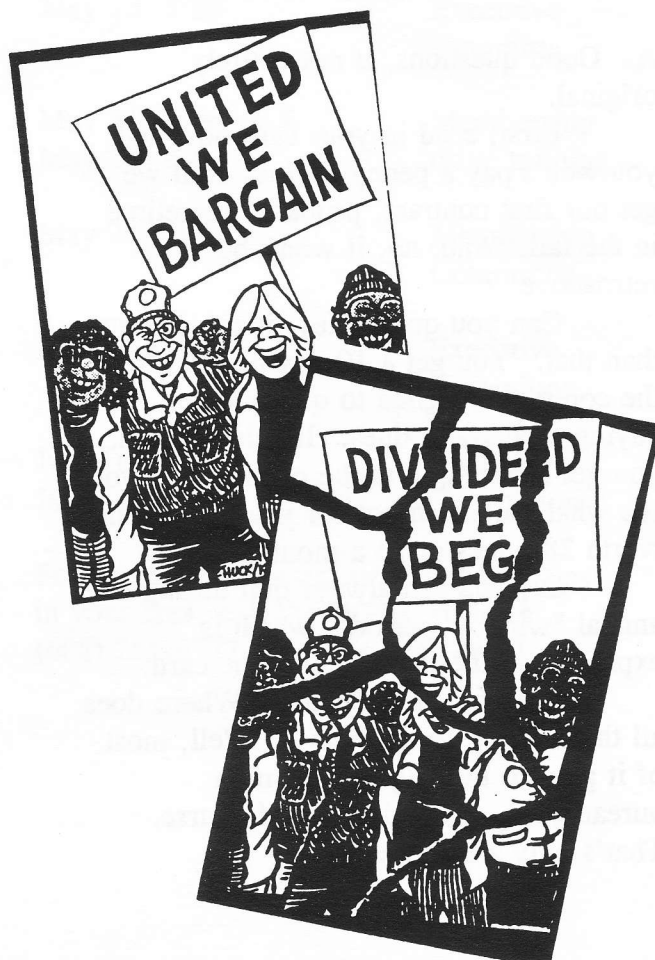
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Ask Al

A column of professional advice
From a really smart guy

What About Dues, Anyway?

Q. I'm on the edge and will probably mail in my membership card. But I want to know a little more about dues. Like, if I send in my card now, when will dues start coming out of my check? And, if I join and the union turns out to suck, can I quit? And, while we're at it, where does all that money go, anyway?

--Edgy in Eau Claire

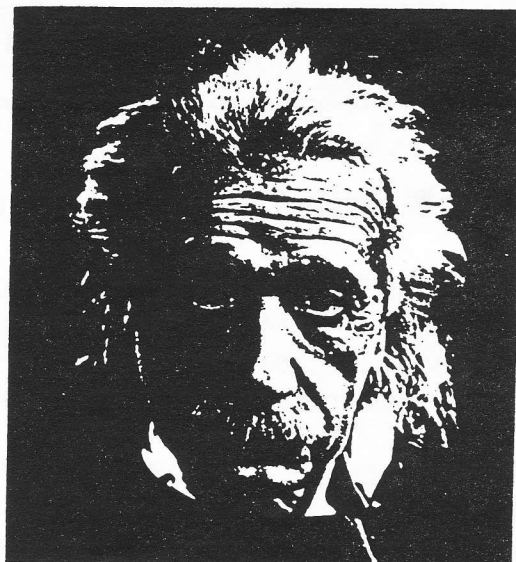
A. Good questions, if not entirely original.

First, send in your card now and you won't pay a penny in dues until we get our first contract, probably sometime in the fall. And, no, it won't be retroactive.

Can you quit? Hey, it's even better than that. You get a 10 day period after the contract is signed to quit without paying a penny in dues. In other words, you get a free look at the contract. If you see what the union got for you and it's not worth 28 bucks or so a month, quit.

Or, you can always quit during the annual "window period," which is explained in the fine print on the card.

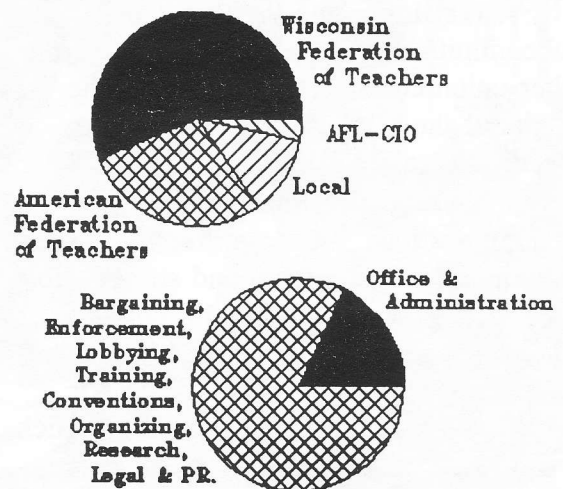
Now for the question, "Where does all that money go, anyway?" Well, most of it goes to buy cigars for union bureaucrats. (Just kidding, of course. That's only a small expense.)



Let me import a chart from a Freelance file and draw you a picture.

Ah, there...isn't technology wonderful?

As you see from the top chart, the Wisconsin Federation of Teachers gets the largest bite of the dues dollar. *But*, that's the part of our organization that bargains and enforces the contract.



The second chart tells the story by breaking the dues down into general categories. And about 82% goes for things like bargaining, contract enforcement, training, research, organizing, public relations...bread cast upon the water.

Workshop plots WPEC media strategy

Imagine the camera is right on you and the tape is rolling.

The state's negotiator is claiming they can't afford the WPEC wage proposal and will have to lay off state employees if they are to meet the union's pay demands.

The Channel 3 reporter wants the union's response.

This time it was just a role playing session at a union sponsored workshop. But situations like it will surely happen before we see our first contract. The only question is whether we'll be prepared.

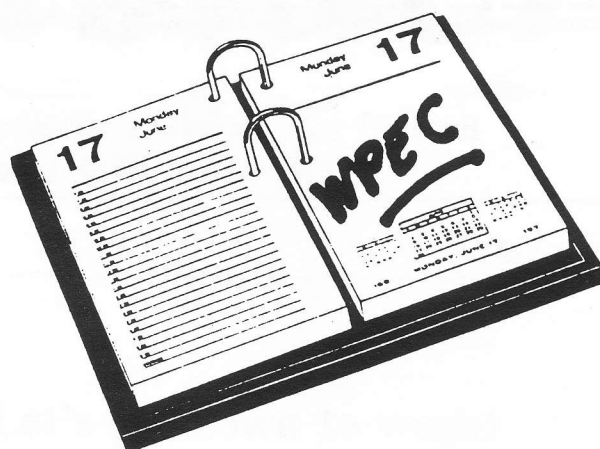
Members of the WPEC Bargaining and Executive Committees attended an all day session on public relations and the media, presented by American Federation of Teachers public relations expert Janet Bass on April 24.

Much of the session dealt with techniques like "flagging, bridging and hooking," and other tools of the public relations trade, that help the union's spokespersons stay in control of the interview and sell our message.

To enhance realism, and make the beads of sweat appear on the foreheads, committee members got to practice various techniques before a camera. Then they got to watch themselves on tape while listening to Bass and other workshop participants critique their performance.

One of the goals of the Bargaining Committee is to develop a public relations strategy in support of the union's bargaining team, so the workshop included an analysis of various audiences and mediums for our message.

There's a lot of work to do between now and the start of bargaining in July, so any member interested in working on public relations and the media should call the WPEC office at (608) 255-9377 or 1 (800) 682-9855.



Mark your calendar

May 10 5:30	Membership Committee
May 18 5:30	Executive Committee
May 21 evening & May 22 9-4	Membership drive training
May 24 5:30	Membership Committee
June 1 5:30	Executive Committee
July 16 evening & July 17 all day	Founding Convention

For meeting locations, or phone hookups in your area, call the WPEC office at (608) 255-9377 or 1 (800) 682-9855.

*Fair pay
and a
fair say*

WPEC

*Stand up
for what
professionals
deserve!*

WISCONSIN PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES COUNCIL

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Inside this issue of the *Insider*

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Bargaining: crash course in negotiations

Public relations: getting good ink

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