



Is CTU fragile?

President Bittner says challenges make the union stronger, p. 3.



In the family

CT Mary Metler talks about how important unions are to her family, p. 4.



Happy b'day FMLA

Let's celebrate FMLA and work on improving it, p. 5.



CT news

The voice of the Clerical-Technical Union of Michigan State University

February/March 2013

CTU steps up

News for Michigan unions has been bleak over the last couple years, culminating in the December passage of right-to-work legislation. CTU's response? We are strong and we are stepping up to meet the challenges facing us in this difficult political and economic climate.

"Right-to-work is wrong for CTU," said President Deb Bittner. "It was passed in order to weaken unions, it will not benefit our members and it will complicate labor relations. It is our responsibility to oppose it."

However, she expects that our organization will continue to thrive even under the new law.

Right to work & CTU

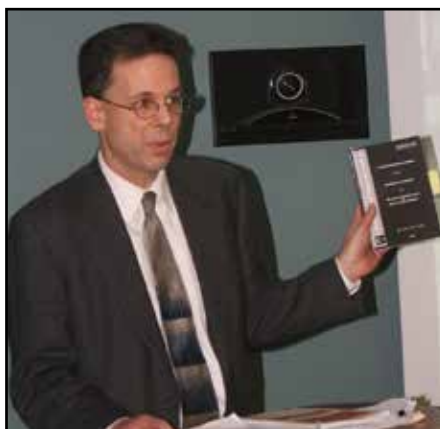
"We organized over 30 years ago," she said, "and we have worked hard to make sure our union provides an essential service that benefits all of us."

"It hasn't been easy and it hasn't been free. We are proud of our sacrifices, our representation and our accomplishments. The new law will have a negative impact, but we don't expect many CTs—our coworkers—to take something for free when the rest of us are paying for it."

Union continued on p. 5



January 21, 2013, Michigan State University East Lansing campus—CTU President Deb Bittner and Vice President Kim Smith joined the annual "Into the Streets" march on Martin Luther King Jr. Day.



January 29, 2013—CTU Attorney Mike Weissman spoke on the impact of the new right-to-work law and actions the CTU and other unions might take to oppose it.



January 9, 2013, Lansing—Workers said "We won't forget and we're not going away!" to returning legislators who passed the right-to-work law in December.

CTnews

The voice of the Clerical-Technical Union
of Michigan State University

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independent
since 1974!

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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 Cherylee Finney.

CTclassifieds

For sale

▼Lowrey Genie GLX 61 key organ:

Late '80s, in good working condition. Includes original bench and manual. Asking \$75. Contact Gary Lindsay: 517-281-5360, glindsay@hotmail.com.

▼'Badger' artist's air brush and compressor: Barely used. \$60. Two iMAC desktop computers: "All-in-one" with 20" screens. Three years old. Windows also installed. \$75 each. Contact Jan Cornelius at jacornelius@comcast.net or 339-4672.

▼Deacon's bench/sofa table: Solid oak, 2 drawers, 1 low shelf, brass fixtures, Amish made, excellent condition, \$300. For photos, contact runner6742@yahoo.com.

▼Vacant Land (Drummond Island, MI): 6 acres on paved road, near state land and snowmobile / jeep trails. Great location for a home. "Gem of the Huron." Own a piece of the Rock! Call 517-290-2058 or email moserk6@gmail.com.

For sale or rent

▼House: 4 bedroom / 2 bath, less than 10 miles from MSU, Southwest Lansing subdivision, built in 1993, remodeled in 2005, new roof in 2011. Price \$115,000. Please call for rental info or showing 517-528-9922.

Membership Meetings

Meetings for the rest of 2013 will be held in 252 Erickson Hall on Thursday, April 25, Tuesday, July 23 and Wednesday, October 23. Meetings begin at 5:20, but doors open at 5, so come early to socialize. Membership meetings are for making decisions about the Union, asking questions and receiving updates about Union activities.

Executive Board Meetings

1st & 3rd Tuesdays at 5:15
CTU Office
All members welcome.

For rent

▼Beachside cottage: 2 bedroom, 1 bath log cabin on the south shoreline of Drummond Island. Beautiful spot for swimming! Secluded, ranch style, "Up North" waterfront cabin. RARE white, sandy beach! Wood fireplace, VCR with some movies, DVD player, charcoal grill, and 2 kayaks. Pet friendly. Call 906-493-6799. Email drummondislandhotel@alphacom.net.

▼Suite or individual office: 2990 East Lake Lansing Road in East Lansing. Will work to meet your specifications. Contact the CTU, 517-355-1903.

Services

▼Quality Carpet and Upholstery

Cleaners: This winter has been long, cold, and dirty. Hopefully, we will see nice weather coming soon. Wishful thinking of spring starts to plant the spring cleaning seed. Germinate that idea, whether you want to spot clean certain areas from winter wear or begin your yearly spring cleaning. Reasonably priced, owner operated, free phone estimates. Give Quality Carpet Cleaners a call (517-694-0497), and we will meet all your winter, spring and year round cleaning needs.

▼Ride share: Capital Area Transportation Authority offers a ride sharing service called Clean Commute that several CTs are using. Contact Clean Commute: toll free (877-921-POOL), locally (517-393-RIDE), by fax (517-394-3733), or on the web (www.cata.org/cleancommute/index.html).

Free

▼CTU Conference Room: Available free to members (with deposit). For non-members, \$25/hour plus deposit. For questions, reservations, etc., contact the CTU office at 355-1903.

▼Advertise to your colleagues in the CT News. Contact Cherylee Finney at Cheryl@ctumsu.org. We accept ads from CTU members on items for sale and/or services provided by CTU members and/or their household family members.

CTU: Fragile or anti-fragile

President Deb Bittner

I was recently invited to attend a “Conversation with President Lou Anna K. Simon” about many of the challenges facing MSU and other institutions of higher learning. It was a “big ideas” conversation that didn’t focus on specifics. However, I couldn’t help but think about how some of the ideas might pertain to CTU.

One of the pieces we read to prepare for the “conversation” was “Learning to Love Volatility” by Nassim Nicholas Taleb.

Since “volatile” is a word that describes much of the world in which we find ourselves as a membership right now, I was particularly interested.

Taleb’s article suggested to me that we should think of our union as “more like a cat than a washing machine.” (He was talking about the economy, but I think the analogy holds.)

Washing machines are useful and stable and we rely on them. However, in many ways they are fragile, requiring significant maintenance to keep them doing the same thing and no ability to heal themselves if something goes wrong. When we “fix” them, we are attempting to return them to the exact status as before.

Cats and other organic systems are what Taleb calls “anti-fragile,” meaning they need some degree of disorder and stress to be able to develop. For example, the stress of exercise helps a cat develop muscles and bones. Physical and mental challenges help the cat develop additional skills. [Heather Johnson]

Thinking of the CTU as an organic being comes naturally. After all, we are made up of around 1,600 members—living, breathing people—who have democratically decided to organize so that we can have a voice on the job and representation in the workplace.

If we think of ourselves that way, rather

than as a machine or institution, we can appreciate volatility and the opportunity it provides us to try new approaches. When we are anti-fragile, adversity can only help us grow and improve. We will make mistakes, of course, but we learn from those mistakes.

A *fatal* mistake would be to believe that we can continue with business as usual, or that our past accomplishments guarantee our future.

The success of the labor movement, including the success of our own union, has provided us with a degree of comfort and stability. In part, that was our goal, and maybe our success led to complacency. Many of us doubted that right-to-work would ever be law in Michigan. Some of us still think that our wages, our benefits, our contract, even the laws that

protect us and our families, are a given. Not so.

To continue the metaphor, if the union is seen as a living organism under our control, like a cat, it needs the attention of its members. If we neglect to sustain it, or ignore it until the day we need it, we will find that it has died.

Some are already heralding the death of organized labor, and no one can deny that unions are facing some serious threats and outright attacks. However, just as cats are said to have nine lives, history shows the labor movement surviving death pronouncements many times.

We’ll survive the current climate also, by using the threats, attacks and intimidation to become even stronger shrewder, and more agile.

CTU: anti-fragile!

What Difference Does A Union Make?

Union

1. Wages, benefits and working conditions are protected by a legal contract.
2. A contract spells out how much each worker earns.
3. Unions negotiate raises for every one. Members vote on it, and if they feel it’s an unfair, they can vote it down.
4. If you are unfairly disciplined, unions provide due process to protect against unscrupulous supervisors.
5. If you don’t like something at work you can work together with your union to change it.



@unions4workers

Non-Union

1. Management can change wages, benefits and working conditions unilaterally.
2. No one knows how much anyone else earns. Disparate treatment/favoritism exists.
3. If you want a raise you must plead your case to a supervisor or manager.
4. If you are unfairly disciplined, you are on your own (at-will employee). You’re subject solely to policy.
5. If you don’t like something at work, you are at the mercy of management.



/unions4workers

CTcomments

It runs in the family

Dear CTU,

I was very proud of my family on December 11, 2012. There were three generations of my family who demonstrated in the Lansing rally against right-to-work. My mother, who is 80 years old and a former Teamster, my brother, who is 57 and a retired UAW member, and my niece, who is 35 and with AFSCME, all walked among the 12,000 people who registered their disagreement with the RTW legislation. They felt it their duty to support the workers and their own rights as union workers.

So you can imagine my pride, especially in my 80-year-old mother, who marched with everyone else on a very cold day to support the union workers. Despite her personal health issues, she said she felt it her duty to march and remind people of the rights they have gained with the unions.

Before his death, my father was a GM worker who belonged to the UAW beginning in 1962, and he retired a union worker. I remember when he first started his job. I was 12 years old. It was through the union that his shop began to get better wages and benefits.

"We had a large family," as my mother recalls now, "and we couldn't have made it without the union and their negotiating benefits for your father."

When my father first started with

GM, my parents had to pay for our health-care benefits. This was a hardship on a family with five children. But as things progressed and years passed, the union negotiated better healthcare and other benefits for UAW workers. This, in turn, helped my parents raise the children they had with quality of care.

My mother says that we must keep fighting to preserve the unions in our state and not allow misleading adver-



Lansing, December 11, 2012—CT Mary Metler's niece, mother and brother at the rally against RTW in Michigan.

tisements to scare people or mislead people into what they are actually giving up. She says that the elderly, especially, are prone to become fearful of what comes next.

Often times I hear people say, "What has the union done for me lately?" Well as an employee and CT who was laid off for a couple of years before returning to MSU, I can tell you that we have the best benefits around. With nonunion organizations, the expectation is high in regard to what you will do as an employee.



"If you work 24 hours a day, you won't need your apartment and that will save you a lot of money and that's the same as getting a raise!"

No one is really looking out for you, and you are just sitting at your desk after a couple of years wondering if you will ever get that raise you were promised when you started. At least that was my experience. So when I was offered a job to come back to MSU as a CT, I jumped at the chance. A lot of times you don't appreciate what you have until you don't have it anymore. I wanted to come back to MSU and have the benefits the union negotiated for us as CTs.

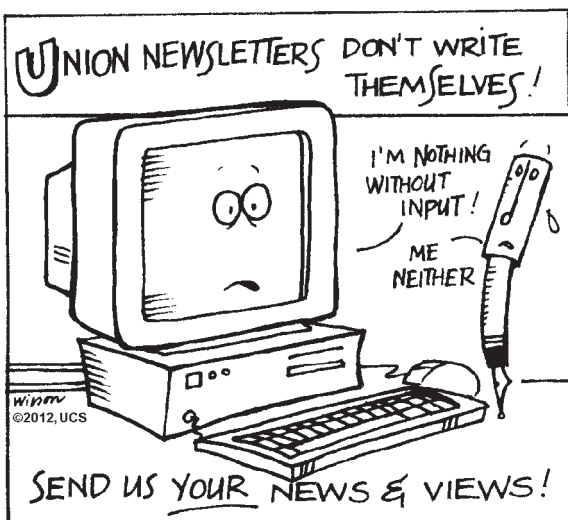
We must keep on fighting to preserve our union because it is through the union that we have the wages we do, the benefits that have been negotiated and the working guidelines we all share as CTs. We know what is expected of us. RTW might seem like a great deal, but in reality it is misleading, and until you work without a union, you can't appreciate what you have with our union.

Know your rights. And promote solidarity because it matters to us, to our children, our grandchildren and our friends and family.

There is no evidence that RTW will attract jobs to the state, but even if it did, at what cost? Working a job that pays \$10 an hour for what has been paid \$13 an hour with a union shop? It will lower our standard of living significantly.

In Michigan, the presence of unions has changed people's lives. I know it has changed my family and we all believe in Solidarity.

—Mary Metler, Member, CTU



Happy birthday FMLA!

This February marks the twentieth anniversary of President Bill Clinton signing the Family and Medical Leave Act, the law that requires large employers to grant up to 12 weeks per year of unpaid leave for a family or medical emergency.

Before the law, workers without a union contract or an enlightened employer couldn't take time off to welcome a new baby or care for a seriously ill family member.

While the FMLA is a vital law that deserves to be celebrated, it needs to be even better. It currently only applies to workplaces with 50 or more employees, meaning that some 44.5 million workers are not covered. Smaller employers are even less likely to provide any sick leave and other work-family benefits, leaving their workers with a crisis of balancing job and family.

Further, family leave policies in many

other industrialized countries provide for paid leave, but the FMLA only provides for unpaid leave. Expanding the FMLA would enable more workers to meet the needs of their families without having to compromise their income and job security.



Union continued from p. 1

Bittner spoke on January 29, at our first membership meeting of the year and the first meeting since RTW passed in December.

Because only 33 members attended the meeting, 17 short of a quorum, we couldn't conduct business, but we certainly had a lot to discuss.

CTU Attorney Mike Weissman was on hand to explain the new right-to-work law and discuss its potential impact on our union.

He said that because legislators attached a \$1 million appropriation measure to the new law, it cannot be overturned through a ballot *referendum*.

However, Weissman said, the Michigan Constitution allows for voters to enact a law repealing RTW through the *initiative* process. One difference is that an initiative would require more signatures on a petition than required by a referendum—258,088 instead of 161,305. [Jennifer Lanuzza]

Weissman held up the CTU Contract and reminded us that it runs through March 31, 2015.

He also briefly mentioned several legal cases that have been filed in opposition to various aspects of the new law.

If RTW is still in effect when our Contract expires in 2015, what will that mean for CTU?

Just as we do now, Weissman said, the CTU will represent every clerical and technical worker in the bargaining unit—not just dues-paying members. If

someone chooses to not be a member, we negotiate contracts that cover them and we must represent them in investigations, grievances and arbitrations. This is the current law and it did not change with passage of RTW.

What changed is that employees who choose to not become members can no longer be charged a fee for the union's services. [Denise Gay Jones]

"You and the other people paying dues are going to be paying for those who don't pay but use the services and reap the benefits," Weissman said. "It's a situation that can lead to dissension between dues paying members and non-dues payers."

Those who don't pay dues, or "free riders," will not be allowed to vote in union elections, participate in contract ratifications or have a voice in the union. They can also be barred from access to additional activities or benefits the union might provide outside of the contract.



January 29, CTU Membership Meeting—Union Representative Stephen Stofflet and Member Heather Dover volunteered for appointment to the Audit Committee.

CTU sends message of strength

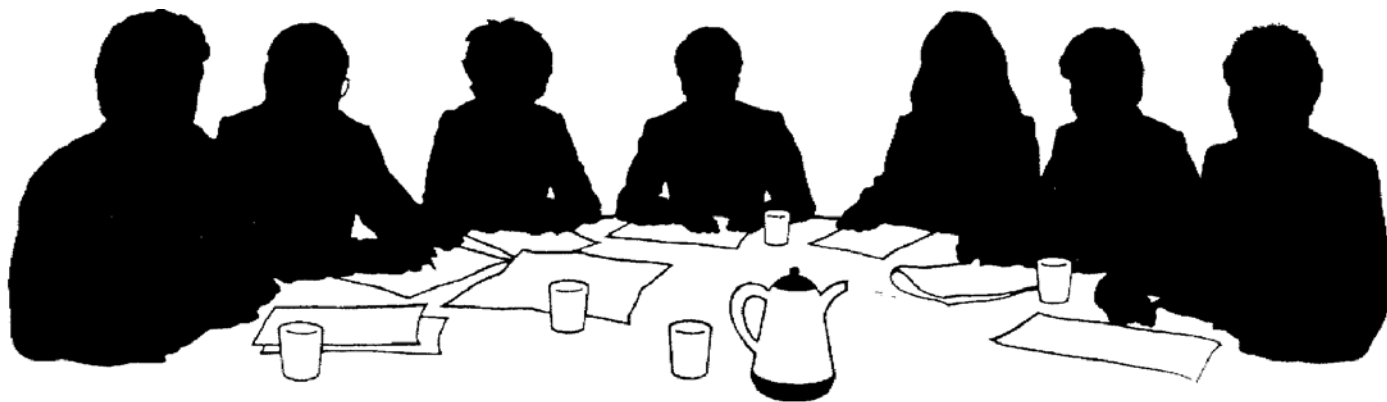
In a straw poll, members in attendance unanimously voted to continue our participation in the fight against RTW by contributing 30 cents per member per month to the effort. Because we lacked a quorum, the vote will be considered by the Executive Board in making a decision.

Members also unanimously supported \$1,000 donations to the Greater Lansing Food Bank, the MSU Student Food Bank and the MSU Safe Place. Discussion about the donations included comments about how the public thinks RTW destroyed unions. Members said the donations could show 1) that we are still here and still strong and 2) that we are an important and contributing part of the community.

Two members, Heather Dover and Stephen Stofflet, stepped forward to be considered for appointment to the two vacancies on the Audit Committee. Both Dover and Stofflet are active members of CTU.

In other business, CTU Treasurer Jan Wallace reported on the union's finances and said that the Finance Committee will start meeting in February to set the budget for the year.

Door prizes went to Amanda Van-Koeveering and Julie Detwiler (\$50 each), Wendi Winston (Spartan spirit bag), Susan Meyers (CTU hoodie), Jeannine Lee (CTU computer bag).



Board actions

October through December 2012

The following CTU Executive Board discussions took place October through December 2012. All expenditure decisions are included, but the list does not represent meetings in their entirety. CTs can receive copies of complete minutes through the mail or email by contacting the CTU office at 355-1903.

October 2

Agreed to repair leaking faucet in kitchen and install sprayer.

Discussed role of University Physician in determining FMLA eligibility.

Cancelled November 6 Executive Board meeting because of the election.

Discussed CTU participation in 2013 Martin Luther King Jr. events.

October 16

Donated \$250 to participate in labor's support of United Way.

Agreed to pay \$297.27 for Lansing State Journal annual subscription

October 24

(special meeting)

Accepted the results of CTU's October 23 General Election.

November 20

Donated \$100 each to the Old Newsboys charity newspaper, the Capital Area Literacy Coalition and the Tri-County Office on Aging.

Agreed to purchase \$70 program ad and \$280 table for eight at the Greater Lansing Holiday Commission luncheon and program commemorating Martin Luther King Jr.

Purchased a \$174 ad in the State News special Martin Luther King Jr. edition.

December 4

Agreed to pay \$375 each plus lodging, meals and the cheapest form of transportation for the CTU president and contract administrators to attend the Labor Arbitration Conference in Chicago in April.

Donated \$50 each to Capital Area Humane Society and Ingham County Animal Control.

Agreed to pay \$95 for president's Human Resource Specialist recertification.

Donated \$200 to help sponsor MSU students on their Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service "Into the Streets" activity.

Donated \$80 for half-page ad and one auction item for the Pioneer Civitan Club of Lansing's golf fundraiser to help sponsor Special Olympics.

Agreed to send two additional people to January luncheon of Labor and Employment Relations Association for \$20 each.

Announced that Director Jeanette Robertson will continue as CTU representative on MSU's All-University Traffic and Transportation Committee.

December 18

Approved the purchase of four additional \$35 tickets to the Greater Lansing Holiday Commission luncheon honoring Martin Luther King Jr.

Renewed donation of \$480 per month to the Michigan State AFL-CIO to con-

tinue fighting right-to-work.

Donated \$100 to the Listening Ear.

Agreed to discuss specific donations at the January 29 Membership Meeting: MSU Student Food Bank, the Greater Lansing Food Bank's "Empty Plate" fundraiser and MSU Safe Place's "Annual Race for the Place."

URdistricts

The following CTs have been appointed to UR positions:

▼ **District 28** (Clinical Center [B, C, D Wings], Engineering Research, Radiology): **Becky Sullivan**. Contact her at 884-3374 or sulli306@msu.edu.

▼ **District 30** (Campbell, Central School, Gilchrist, Landon, Mayo, Human Ecology, Union, Williams, Yakeley, Wills House): **Pam Sloan** can be reached at 884-0692 or pamsloan@msu.edu.

▼ **District 32** (Main Library): Contact **Judy Redding** at 884-0811 or redding5@msu.edu.

We have 17 districts without a UR. If you are interested in becoming a UR, contact URCC Chairperson **Becky Sullivan** (884-3374 or sulli306@msu.edu).



"Good news, Dave! I'm going to adjust your salary in a way that will reduce your taxes!"

It's that time again!

Tax info

Tax preparation getting you down? Help may be available. The Capitol Area United Way is offering Volunteer Income Tax Assistance. This free program provides certified volunteers to help low- to moderate-income (generally, \$50,000 and below) individuals and families prepare tax returns. E-filing is available. For more information, visit the CTU website at www.ctumsu.org or call the CTU office at 517-355-1903.

If you are using educational assistance, there's a piece of good news on the tax front. In a rare New Year's Day session, Congress passed the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 (H.R. 8), which, among other things, permanently extends allowing an employee to exclude from income up to \$5,250 per year in educational assistance at the undergraduate and graduate level regardless of whether the education is job-related.

Misplaced your W-2? Easily retrieve a copy: Log into EBSP, click on ESS Clerical-Tech, click on Payroll, click on W-2 Reprint. For questions or problems, contact the Payroll office at payroll@ctrl.msu.edu or 517-355-5010.

And remember, union dues are tax deductible if you itemize.

Sometimes you gotta laugh



The Employee Familiarization Program

Productivity was very low at the plant. Management brought in a consultant to figure out ways to improve output. The consultant was amazed by the great number of posted rules and procedures the employees were ordered to follow, all very complicated with each step spelled out in detail. He asked one of the managers about the need for such elaborate instructions for the workers.

The manager said "Well, we like things

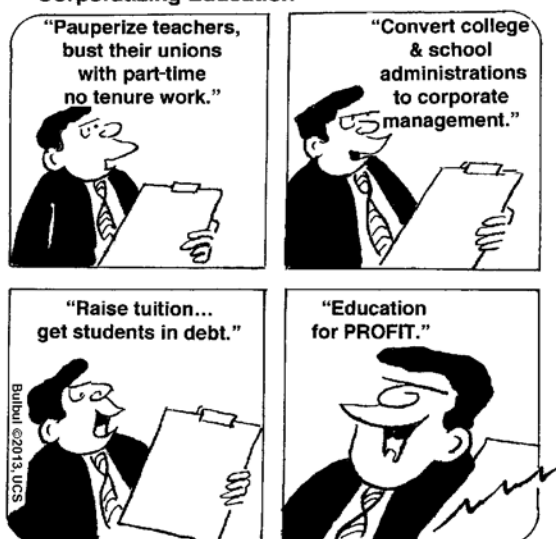
done a certain way so we set it out for the employees step by step."

The consultant found this odd. "Don't you think your employees can think for themselves? Do you hire stupid employees?"

"Oh no!" the manager said. "We don't hire stupid employees. We have a special new employee familiarization program to *make* them stupid."

—From Union Communications Services

Corporatizing Education



A tale from Reality Land

Once Upon A Time, in Reality Land, as Hostess Bakery began to face financial woes, the company's CEO got a 300% salary increase from \$750,000 to \$2,250,000. Then, it was discovered that the former Hostess CEO tripled his salary early last year. Meanwhile, a number of top executives saw massive pay raises, some nearly doubling their salary. [Amy Pollok]

Suddenly, the new CEO blamed union workers for the company's bankruptcy filing, even though the workers were the very ones who gave concessions multiple times in the last few years—valiantly fighting to save their jobs and their company. In December, a staggering \$1.8 gazillion (okay, just \$1.8 million here in Reality Land) in bonuses were awarded

to executives *after* the bankruptcy filing. The End. . . .

Or, so we thought. Late last year, Hostess Brands admitted to The Wall Street Journal that money taken out of workers' paychecks, intended for their retirement funds, was used for company operations instead.

The Moral of the Story: Hostess is but one example of the blame the worker and union game. Don't fall for the corporate-induced fairy tale again. Share this with your friends and family, and we wish you a Happily Ever After. . . .

—From Unions 4 Workers

Do you have a labor joke, funny story, photo or cartoon you'd like to share? Email it to us at Cheryl@ctumsu.org.



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2990 E. LAKE LANSING ROAD
EAST LANSING, MI 48823-6219

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

CTcalendar

March 1–May 31. Open enrollment for the vision program offered through the Coalition of Labor Organizations at MSU. Watch for more information in the April issue and on-line at www.ctumsu.org.

March 5. CTU Executive Board meeting. C-T Union Hall, 5:15 pm. Members welcome. [Barbara Heckaman]

March 10. Vegan Potluck. Bring a dish to pass and a copy or three of the recipe. Free and open to the public. Dinnerware provided. 6–7:30 pm, CT Union Conference Room. For more information contact marian.erickson@yahoo.com.

March 13. Relaxing Under the Stars. Remember when you were a kid, when you would lie on the grass on a clear night and just look up at the stars?

Join Health4U to re-capture that feeling of relaxation and wonderment. Abrams Planetarium, 12:10-12:50 pm. Information and registration at health4u.msu.edu.

March 15. “Russia in America, Cosacks in Pennsylvania”: The Department of State Police and Early Twentieth Century Conflict in the Coalfields,” Gary Jones, History Department, American

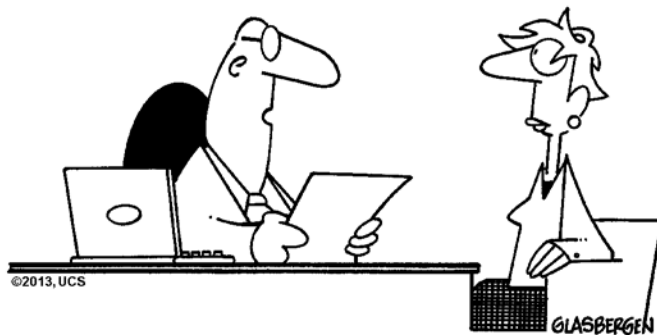
International University. An “Our Daily Work/Our Daily Lives” presentation. 12:15–1:30, MSU Museum Auditorium.

March 18. WACFO Forum and Resource Fair, 11:30 am–2:30 pm, Kellogg Center Big 10 Rooms. Register at www.wacfo.msu.edu.

March 19. CTU Executive Board meeting. C-T Union Hall, 5:15 pm. Members welcome.

March 22. “French Creole Music and Language from the Missouri Mines: 1723-2008,” Dennis Stroughmatt; Writer and Performer. An “Our Daily Work/Our Daily Lives” presentation cosponsored by the MSU Library Colloquia Series. MSU Library, Room 449W.

April 25. Save the date: Take Our Daughters And Sons To Work Day.



“If you are willing to take a 25 percent pay cut, I’m willing to give you a 10 percent raise!”