

The Voice of 1199C

Fighting for Healthcare for All

January 2010

Volume 16 Issue 1



Executive Vice President Michele Mills (fourth from the left) congratulates delegates from Inglis House on the facility's 40 years as a part of District 1199C. More pictures from the celebration are on Page 9.

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National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees

AFSCME, AFL-CIO

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The President's Perspective

It's not the healthcare reform we needed
Workers will pay for elected officials'
failure to contain insurance costs

Failures in the healthcare reform initiative will haunt our 2012 contract negotiations proving it's critical unions build more political clout to gain power over our politicians. But unfortunately we begin yet another year with a divided national labor movement. The AFL-CIO and Change to Win have not reconciled despite the fierce battles faced by working people and none of us is winning at this most critical time in America when we face an economic meltdown with millions of workers losing their jobs.

In addition, we are living in the midst of an electorate that can't see the forest for the trees as evidenced by the fighting that has gone on as elected officials debated healthcare insurance. The true fact is we have the greatest healthcare system in the world. What needs to be reformed is the insurance industry.

The insurance and pharmaceutical industries operated as a two-headed beast and spent billions to keep the nation's elected officials in check.

The healthcare reform that could have made our next contracts more readily negotiable is not a cornerstone of the legislation. The relief from high insurance costs that we sought is not happening.

What can we do about it? We must empower ourselves because in 18 months the contracts at our major institutions are due to expire.

We must aggressively organize new workers beginning with those workers who are at our job sites but are not union members.

We must raise money for the union's Political Action Committee. In the coming year, each member should make a voluntary contribution of \$50.

And while we are thinking about money, now is the time to start getting ready for contract expirations. Members should begin putting aside money monthly so that in the event of a showdown, we will be prepared.

Our members' healthcare costs are rising and the next negotiated co-pays will be over the top. As a result, great determination will be required to be ready for contract talks in 2012.

In the words of Mother Jones, we must "pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living."

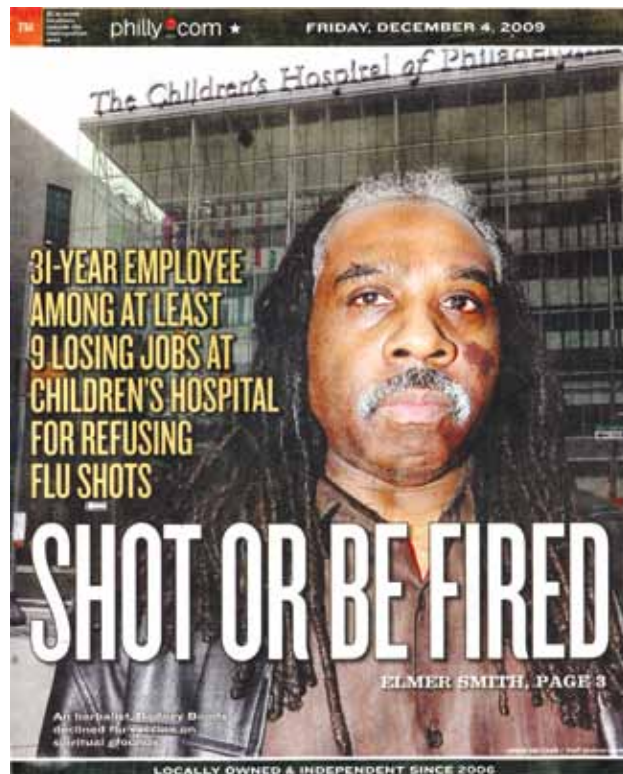
Henry Nicholas

1199C Members are in the News

Nine union members who refused “required” flu immunizations at the Childrens Hospital of Philadelphia were fired.

The union has filed for arbitration.

Philadelphia Daily News Columnist Elmer Smith shared our story with his readers.



AT CHOP, NO SHOT, NO JOB. NO SENSE?

RODNEY BOND never expected a gold watch or a plaque commemorating his 31 years of service to Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

He expected what he always got, a day's pay for a day's work. "This job served me well,"

Bond said. "I got married young, three years out of high school. I needed a job. Some may say I was complacent. "But I've been able to raise my family. I've always been happy for what this



ELMER SMITH

job has done for me.

"I'm disappointed about what's happening to me. But I'm not a disgruntled employee."

As of tomorrow, he won't be an employee at all. Bond, 51, who works in environmental services keeping the hospital clean, and at least eight others are being fired for refusing to take a seasonal flu shot.

Children's Hospital, in a laudable attempt to protect its patients, has required all its employees to be inoculated for seasonal flu this year for the first time in its history.

Hospitals around the city, indeed all over the country, are

adopting similar measures. But the requirement at CHOP exceeds the guidelines offered by the Centers for Disease Control and is far more harsh than policies at other area hospitals.

Typically, hospitals have required their workers to either get a flu shot or wear surgical masks when they are near patients. At CHOP, they have rejected the masks as a possible alternative.

Even hospitals with similar policies have not fired employees for failure to comply. CHOP is also distinct in its uneven application of the policy.

Hospitals generally offer workers the option of taking a flu shot or signing a statement to decline it for medical or religious reasons.

But at CHOP, a panel reviews the legitimacy of the claims, accepting some, rejecting others.

"Every request was given a careful evaluation," CHOP spokeswoman Peggy Flynn told me yesterday. "They had to show sincerely held religious beliefs."

How a group of medical people sets itself up as the arbiters of someone's sincerity is beyond me.

"They told some in our groups that they weren't religious enough," Bond said. "I am a herbalist. I have never had a flu shot. It goes against my belief system. That is a spiritual principle for

me. "How can my employer say it's not. Who on that board is spiritual enough to make that decision?"

Flynn maintains that the hard line was needed because "we wanted to be sure we were taking every step to ensure the highest level of patient safety."

Of course they do. But so do hundreds of hospitals where the policy is much more relaxed.

"Each organization needs to do what is clinically and culturally correct for them," Dr. Marc Hurowitz, associate medical director at Temple University Hospital, told KYW radio.

"In our case, we've found that if we work with people, we tend to get the same [results] rather than develop a confrontational way of dealing with it."

It may be tempting to dismiss the nine union workers and an undisclosed number of non-union workers who will lose their jobs as people who are just stubborn or who don't care about patient safety.

But organizations represent-

ing more than 100,000 registered nurses in America are opposing the mandatory inoculation requirements — and winning.

The Washington State Nurses Association filed a grievance against the policy that went to arbitration. The arbitrator agreed that the policy was too harsh.

Virginia Mason Hospital, in Seattle, went to court to overturn the arbitrator's ruling. A federal district court upheld the arbitrator. The hospital appealed to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and lost again.

The California Nurses Association's National Nursing Organization Committee, representing 86,000 nurses and health-care professionals, issued a statement in September saying that the policy should be optional.

It was concerned enough about patient safety to urge its members to comply.

"But nurses should maintain their right to decline for personal reasons," the nurses association's statement concluded.

For Rodney Bond, that idea makes as much sense for a guy



Bond, outside CHOP.

who mops the hallways as it does for nurses. His union, District 1199C of the Hospital and Health Care Employees Union, has filed for arbitration.

"We're not insensitive to patient safety," said union spokesman Gary McCormack. "But to fire people who don't want the shot is way too extreme."

"We offered to wear masks. We've been talking with them since the suspensions [two weeks ago]. But we're going to do whatever we have to do to protect our members."

Not soon enough for Rodney Bond and the others. He picked up his last paycheck yesterday.

"I felt so uneasy," Bond admitted. "I'm thinking, 'You're going to put yourself out of a job in this tough economy.'"

"But I'm not feeling as much pressure as some of us. We have one young couple losing their jobs. They have five children and this is their only income."

"It's hard. But I prayed about this and I know God's got my back."

"I'm going to stick this out if I end up living in a hole. This is about my freedom." ★

Send e-mail to smithel@phillynews.com or call 215-854-2512. For recent columns: <http://go.philly.com/smith>

Mayor Nutter addressed the delegates in October and returned for the annual Holiday Party in December



President Nicholas listens as Mayor Nutter tells delegates that the homicide rate dropped 30 percent and the high school graduation rate is up to 60 percent. Workforce development funds will be part of the city's share of the federal stimulus money, Nutter promised, saying, "It's a tough time, but hang in there."



Executive Vice President Peter Gould swears-in new delegates at the October meeting



We're on the job at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital



Stuart Marks, a 22-year member and Andrew Masi, a 20-year member share efforts in Moving and Delivery.



James Martin, a 35-year member in Custodial, completes a room set-up.



Felecia Petty, a 10-year member in Environmental Services, changes a bed.



In Custodial, Margie Dash, a two-year member, walks ahead of Regina Hallman, another two-year member.

Jefferson Hospital operates with strong support from our union members



Thomasine Duckett, a 12-year member, and Unit Clerk in the Department of Nursing, examines files and records.



In Driving and Receiving, 25-year member Lenny Qualtiere (left) works with 34-year member Thomas Weeks (center) and Mark Olinger, a 24-year member.



Robert Bell, a nursing assistant for four months, examines equipment.



Geneva Yeagins, a 35-year member in Patient Transport, handles her charge.

Training Fund kicks-off anniversary year

In 1974 when District 1199C established the Training and Upgrading Fund it was little more than a card table – now the Breslin Training Center takes up three floors of the Land Title Building, a Center City high-rise at 100 S. Broad St. More importantly the Training and Upgrading fund boasts thousands of graduates.

On September 24, the Training Fund held a 35th birthday reception at its offices and kicked-off a year-long series of events.

Future programs set for the Breslin Training Center 10th floor include:

January 26 at 4:30 – “New Start” is to feature blood pressure tests, HIV testing and mammograms.

February 25 at 4:30 – “The Making of a Visionary Educational Institution.” There is to be a discussion on the history of the Union, Training Fund and its connection to the Civil Rights Movement

March 25 at 4:30 – “Education and Healthcare.” There is to be a discussion of the educational requirements for the advanced healthcare careers .

The celebration year closes with a formal dinner scheduled for 7 p.m. Thursday April 8 honoring the graduates and supporters of Training Fund programs.

For more information, contact the Training Fund at 215-568-2220, 1199Ctraining.org.



Photos from September 24 reception by Lynette Hazelton



A Celebration for Inglis House



At the party on December 11, Joanne Allen (right) was recognized as the longest serving member — 39 years! President Nicholas (below) said, "Let us make 40 more."





Sponsored by

District 1199C

National Union of Hospital and Health
Care Employees, AFSCME, AFL-CIO

Saturday, April 10, 2010 • 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
1319 Locust Street, Philadelphia

-
- Blood pressure screening
 - Foot and neck massage
 - Mammography information
 - Prostate cancer screening and more

Representatives from

- American Cancer Society
- American Heart Association
and others

Free bike helmets for children provided by Injury Prevention Program,
Philadelphia Health Department

Labor Donated

Healthy snacks

Door prizes

Raffle





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AFSCME AFL-CIO**

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**Official Notice to Members of District 1199C
Regarding upcoming District-wide elections**

In accordance with the By-Laws of District 1199C, Articles X and XI, members are hereby notified that the District elections for officers, executive board members, and Delegates will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday, March 30 and 31, 2010. The offices to be elected include the following: president, secretary-treasurer, two executive vice-presidents, one vice president of the Hospital Division, ten members of the executive board, and delegates representing all departments and classifications in all institutions.

Not later than January 6, 2010, detailed notices will be posted on Union bulletin boards in all institutions outlining the officer positions to be filled, the area slots for the Executive Board to be filled, and all Delegate slots to be filled at your institution.

Nominating petitions will be available beginning on Thursday, January 14, 2010, and must be returned to the Union Headquarters by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, February 15, 2010.

Detailed notices will be posted on Union bulletin boards in all institutions no later than March 12, 2010. These notices will provide the names of the candidates for officers' positions, executive board positions, the persons running for delegate positions at your institution, and notification of the day, hours and locations of polling for your institution

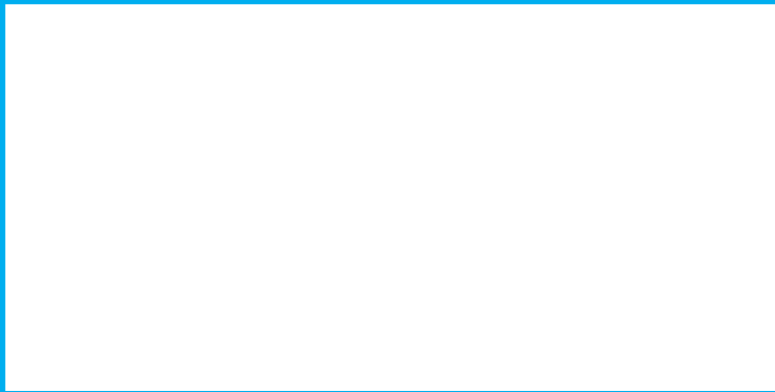
To be eligible, a candidate for office must be a member in good standing for a minimum of one year. This requirement is waived for candidates for delegate at newly organized institutions.

To obtain a nominating petition, visit the Union Headquarters at 1319 Locust Street between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Call (215) 735-1300 with questions or for more information.



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"If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did and it never will."

-Frederick Douglass (1818-95)