



SERVING THE WORKING PERSON

April 2003

As stated in this column six weeks ago, negotiations with the Governor and General Assembly are in a lull or, like on a computer, in a "sleep mode." The tempo will not pick up anytime soon. The Finance and Appropriations Committees recently announced a further delay until early May before presenting a budget. Regardless of what these committees report for tax increases or no tax increases, how much each state agency will get to spend beginning July 1, 2003 will mean nothing.

- All state agencies have been told by OPM that the refilling of most vacancies will not be approved until sometime in June, after they've received the results of the ERIP.
- The Health/Dental insurance open enrollment period for actives and retirees has not yet been scheduled, and may occur later than May. Rate negotiations with the carriers are ongoing. Once the rates are finalized, we will know what the premiums will be. Be sure to attend a membership meeting to receive the latest information.
- Questions about members presently laid off and what can be expected in the future is extremely important to everyone.

As far as touching on these issues, my point is that in May we will be holding Membership Meetings. Instead of hearing second- or third- hand from a member or steward who attends, or believing what someone in management or on the radio/tv says, I suggest attending a meeting yourself. See Page 4 for meeting dates and locations.

What has happened to state workers since the November election has never happened before, and many say this is the worst they have ever seen state service.

Always Last To Settle

While all the attention is on the negotiations between SEBAC and the Governor, four (4) unions in the executive and one (1) judicial branch union started negotiations, some units as early as 16 months ago. They could go as long as two years before reaching pay raises and a contract. The obvious stumbling block in the negotiations is job security and pay raises.

Sound familiar? It should, because the state negotiators are proposing the same job security language givebacks and "zero" pay raises as they did in 1999 with our union.

The executive branch unions in negotiations are Clerical, Correction Lieutenants, Human and Social Services, and Administrative & Residual. Keep in mind that three out of four unions suffered as many layoffs or more than the maintenance unit over the last five months.