



SERVING THE WORKING PERSON

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This newspaper brings down the curtain on a 4-year battle that clearly benefits the members and their families. When speaking with members I have always said that language is more important than the mighty buck, what good is a pay raise if a member does not have a job? Only a few members have complained that the (11 $\frac{3}{4}$ %) pay raise they received in September and the (9%) raise over the next three years was not enough. I asked if he/she will receive an annual increment over each year of the contract and in many cases the answer was "Yes." And, when I explained that the total increase compounded through 2005 is almost a 40% increase, there was silence.

I realized these members may not have lived through the 1991 and 1992 layoffs, 1991 lockout, pay raise rejection in 1995, a second pay raise interest arbitration won and then taken to court by the State, which it lost, the facility closings/layoffs in 1995 and 1996 that resulted in hundreds of members who still today drive 70-80 miles round trip a day to their job. *And remember, these all occurred despite the fact that starting in 1995 and for every year through 2001 the annual state surpluses were reaching and exceeding half-billion dollars per year.* That history was important in both arbitrations over the last 10 months; the awards reflect it, awarding the Union's Last Best Offers for all 6 pay raises and their effective dates.

However, even more important is the new language I refer to as the "heart and soul" articles of the contract – Article 12, Seniority, Article 13, Layoffs and Contracting Out, Article 14, Vacancies and Article 15, Transfers. The major gains awarded in these articles has provided the members with the greatest job protections ever, all at a time when the tax cuts that have been passed onto the rich and their businesses are taking their toll in every state in America; a day doesn't go by when a city/town isn't announcing layoffs or some cut that affects the public services provided by the workers.

For years the State used "significant difference in qualifications" and in the case of D.O.T. the use of "practicums" to deny members vacancies, promotions, transfers and comparable jobs prior to layoff. All of this is now deleted and in the past. In my opinion, this is the biggest gain for members and their families in the entire contract for one reason – the boss who abused the system and provided the evidence in so many different ways, is delightful and fulfilling!.....lol lol lol! Thank you again for such a fine performance MP.

Training by seniority was won 10 months ago and it is an example of another gain never before available to members to allow for upward mobility. It is important to say that in the most recent arbitration only one agency fought to have this language deleted and I won't spend the time explaining who fought so hard against it or their reasons. I will only say that Archie lost.

Layoffs and Contracting out improvements were gained – prior to any permanent member being laid off all "special payroll" and "supplemental employees" shall be laid off first and layoffs and then contracting out bargaining unit work requires the State to prove actual savings or be assessed reasonable compensatory damages by an arbitrator. This was the State's #1 issue to win back in the arbitration award issued on April 19, more important than any other issue. This says something for what is planned in the near future if the economy doesn't turn around or if Bill Curry is not elected governor in November.

Work place violence and sexual harassment was a very big issue placed on the table by the State and only one witness testified on this issue. Throughout this witness testimony the hearing room was so quiet you really could hear a pin drop and I will explain the merits of that reason in a future column.