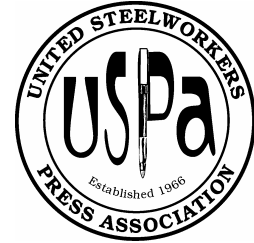


STEEL COBRA

Volume 10,
Issue 1

Sept/Oct. 2003

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Delegates of the United Steel Workers of America meet with Senator George Voinovich in Cleveland Ohio. Senator George Voinovich seated on the left and District 1 Director Dave McCall on the right. (Story on pages 5-6)

Union Meeting Sunday October 12, 2003 2:00 pm

At this meeting we will be discussing **Contract Negotiations** and electing tellers for the October 15 strike vote. Bring your families we will have hotdogs, pop and chips.

Do Not Forget This Meeting! Be There

No Jobs, No Work, No Homes

By Bob Herbert, NY Times

Talk about preaching to the choir. President Bush and his clueless team of economic advisers held a summit at the president's ranch in Crawford, Texas. This is the ferociously irresponsible crowd that has turned its back on simple arithmetic and thinks the answer to every economic question is a gigantic tax cut for the rich. Their voodoo fantasies were safe in Crawford. There was no one at the ranch to chastise them from bequeathing backbreaking budget deficits to generations of yet unborn Americans and no one to confront them with evidence of the intense suffering that so many poor, working-class and middle-class families are experiencing right now because of job losses on Mr. Bush's watch.

After the meeting, Mr. Bush said, "This administration is optimistic about job creation." It's to bad George Akerlof, a 2001 Nobel laureate in economics, wasn't at the meeting. Mr. Akerlof bluntly declared that "the Bush fiscal policy is the worst policy in the last 200 years and within 10 years, we're going to pay a serious price for such irresponsibility."

The president and his advisers could have learned something about the real world, if instead of hanging out at the ranch, they visited American cities and

talked to the folks who have been thrown out of work and, in some cases, out of their homes in this treacherous Bush economy. Officials at homeless shelters around the country are seeing increases in the number of *families* seeking shelter because of extended periods of joblessness. The pattern is as depressing as it is familiar: the savings run out, the rent or mortgage doesn't get paid, the eviction notice arrives.

One of the many families at a rescue mission was featured in a front-page article in USA Today. William Kamstra, who earned over \$40,000 a year before losing his job, looks for work each day while his wife and their three children spend the day at the library. They sleep at the mission. That story ran one day after a front-page Wall Street Journal article that

spelled out how sweet just one of the Bush tax cuts has been for those in the "upper tax brackets": "The federal tax cut, which slashed the tax rate on dividends and prompted many companies to increase their payouts, is proving to be a boon for some *corporate executives who are reaping millions in after-tax gains.*"

Some people have reason to be optimistic. It's the best of times, or the worst of times. Depending on your perspective.



Wacky Wisdom

He who thinks by the inch and talks by the yard deserves to be kicked by the foot.

Most people work for a good cause: ' cause they need the money.

Nothing is work unless you would rather be doing something else.

Work for the Lord. The pay isn't much, but the retirement plan is out of this world.

CONTRACT

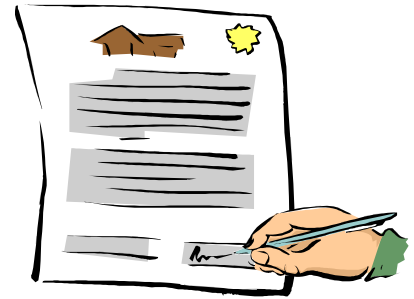
O *YOUR CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS*

R *INFORMATION CENTER*

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First of all I would like to commend each and every one of our members who wore their **blue t-shirts** on opening day of contract negotiations. I took our Sub District Director, Pat Gallagher, on a tour of the plant (His first time in a tire plant) and he was amazed at the sea of blue shirts being worn. Pat stated that he was, “overwhelmed” by our show of solidarity. He also commented on “how busy everyone is” and the cleanliness of the plant. He stated that he had heard how dirty it was at some other tire facilities in Ohio and was expecting the same thing here, only to find the complete opposite at our plant.

Well, week one (4 days) has come and gone and, unfortunately, (to be expected right off the bat) no progress was made. The Negotiating Committee went into bargaining with the intent of protecting **all of our integrity** by not overburdening negotiations with frivolous and useless proposals. We did this by submitting (contract language only, did not include P&I, Inequities or Miscellaneous) around 25 proposals that responded to the needs of our members. Unfortunately the Company did not follow our lead and submitted 60 proposals to us that would definitely effect the way we do things now. I cannot go into detail with you as to the exact proposals, as the FLSA states that we must bargain in good faith, but I can and will tell you that they are in reference to Articles IV, V, VI, and VII in our current contract book, along with agreements in the back of the book that relate to these Articles.

The Negotiating Committee would like everyone to continue to show your solidarity (this is strength and leverage for us) by following their instructions as contract talks continue. We have set the date for our strike vote, Wednesday October 15, and you will be informed by your Union Stewards as to what shirt to wear for that day. We will also be holding our monthly meeting for October on the 12th at 2:00 p.m. We will be updating you on the progress of negotiations so please try to attend. We will also be grilling up hot dogs and serving pop and chips so bring along the family too. Please keep the rumors to a minimum, work safely and continue to show your solidarity.

Remember, “united we’re one, divided we’re done.”

In Solidarity,

Workers' Compensation

You may have heard or read (hmmm, I wonder where?) that Ohio businesses are concerned because *they* believe their worker's compensation premiums are increasing by 400%. (That may be the reason why a lot of companies are going after W/C supplements in Union contracts)

Nothing could be further from the truth!

During the last six (6) years, these same companies enjoyed a **75% reduction** in those same premiums. That 75% reduction returned a staggering **\$9.3 billion**, yes that's right, **\$9.3 bbbbbillion** back to these businesses. This return was due to a healthy investment climate and were decisions by the BWC and its Oversight Commission.

Presently, with a shrinking economy, the BWC has found it necessary to collect the full premium to safeguard the worker's comp system. Yet, despite years of rebates, the business community is looking at this as an increase and raising the same old stale cries of alarm. So in an effort to save money, the business community is, once again, seeking legislation to cut benefits for injured workers. (Work till you drop and we'll get another one that looks just like ya!)

These cuts are the same that voters turned down in 1997 and include:

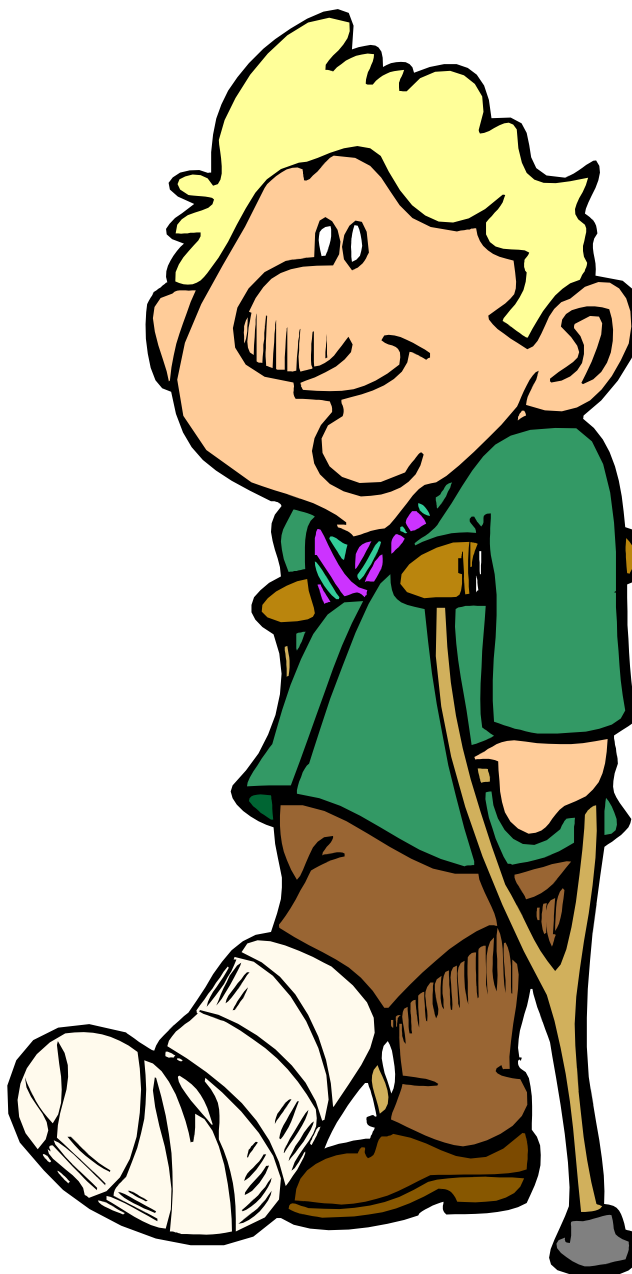
1. Eliminating wage loss provisions;
2. Eliminating non-medical factors in PTD (permanent total disability);
3. Changing the definition of occupational disease;
4. Changing the standard allowance of injuries to pre-existing conditions;
5. Eliminating provisions to increase TT (temporary total) due to increase of wages; and
6. Shortening the "life" of a claim.

These changes are desired by businesses to "save money." Not surprisingly they only effect the benefits granted to an injured worker. The business community already has persuaded the State Legislature to *reintroduce* legislation (HB 223) that would force workers to prove that drugs or alcohol did not cause a work-site accident. Just 8 months ago, the Ohio Supreme Court struck down identical legislation (HB122).

We will update you on the path HB223 takes through the General Assembly and seek your assistance to prevent the legislature from ignoring the will of the people.

p.s. Support each other and our Negotiating Committee during contract talks and *always* remember to fill out an accident report if you are injured. Thank you.

In Solidarity,
Worker's Comp Committee



RAPID RESPONSE

For those of you that took the time to stop and sign the petitions that dealt with the USWA's Health-care Bill of Rights and the Overtime Comp Bill, we would like to thank you for your outstanding support and let you know what progress your efforts have made.

We had meetings with U.S. Rep. Paul Gillmoor of Ohio's 5th district and U.S. Sen. George Voinovich of Ohio. The

petitions were given to each of them to show the overwhelming support of health care reform here in the U.S. Rep. Gillmoor did not seem to be aware of the problems of health care to the average American worker and his family or that many Americans do not have health care coverage at all. When we explained the problems of health care

to Mr. Gillmoor, gave him up to date data and statistics, his only response was, "and how are we supposed to pay for it all." I ask you, when has a politician ever worried about "paying" for legislation that benefits him or his corporate cronies. I'll bet he never blinked an eye when he voted yes to spend 87 million on rebuilding Iraq. We would encourage those of you who live in his district to give him a call or e-mail on how you feel about this issue.

In our meeting with Sen. Voinovich, we presented him with over 21,000 signatures of Ohio citizens who are concerned with the rising cost of health care. During the 2-1/2 hour meeting, the delegation presented Mr. Voinovich with all the facts, figures and real problems that the workers face today. Your Local President, Frank Cline, did a great job informing the Senator on issues from high cost

health care to Chinese imports, and how they effect our lives now and in the future. Sen. Voinovich stated that he has been to Cooper Tire several times and that he, "always asks management to invite the Union Officers." Frank's reply was that, "we have never received an invitation since I've been local president. Either we're too controversial politically, or the Company doesn't give a @#*^\$." Mr.

Voinovich stated that "we will be invited next time."

I felt that Sen. Voinovich was genuine in his desire to help us. I guess time will tell. *(since the writing of this article, Voinovich and DeWine sided with Bush and voted to block the overtime rule changes)

For those of us who reside in the 4th district, we have not met with Congressman Oxley. We have tried to no avail to set up a meeting with him. Come on Mike, you can run but you can't hide!

Prior to these meetings we had contacted representatives from Cooper Tire and asked them to side with us on these issues. If they could not accompany us to these meetings, we asked that they write a letter in show of their support to combat the high cost of health care. After weeks of run-around, the Company informed us they would not write a letter or accompany us and they will, "pursue their own way in finding a cure for the health care problem." We would have welcomed their efforts in helping us fight this issue.

Tracy Burton, Rapid Response Chairman 207L

USWA Sub. Dist.4 RR Coordinator



Senator Voinovich answers questions from the delegates of District 1.

RAPID RESPONSE Continued.....



District 1 Director Dave McCall discusses foreign trade with Senator Voinovich as Rapid Response Chairman Tracy Burton waits to discuss health care with Senator Voinovich.



Left to Right: Senator George Voinovich and Rapid Response Chairman Tracy Burton.



Delegates of District 1 gather in Cleveland to speak with Senator Voinovich on key is-

Left to Right: Senator George Voinovich, District 1 Director Dave McCall and Local 207L President Frank Cline.



Rx Coalition Inks Agreement On historic Drug Plan **News from the AFL-CIO**

The Coalition for Affordable Prescription Drugs, founded in January 2001 by the Ohio AFL-CIO and 26 Unions (including ours), community, health care and religious groups, has reached an agreement on a prescription drug plan that a health care expert has described as “the best of its kind in the country”. Ohio Best Rx would provide prescription drug discounts of 25 to 40% for people age 60 and older and for underinsured or uninsured Ohioans earning up to 250% of the federal poverty level (federal poverty level starts around 17K a year).

Negotiations began in early summer, led by the Ohio AFL-CIO and its affiliates, and representatives of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers Association (PhRMA). Jeffery Lews, president of Heinz Philanthropies and an expert on health care issues and the crisis created by the expense of prescription drugs, joined negotiations at the AFL-CIO’s request. If Ohio Best Rx becomes law, and all indications are that the General Assembly will move quickly on the proposed bill, the Coalition will drop its petition drive for an initiated law.

President of the Ohio AFL-CIO, Bill Burga, praised Democratic Sen. Robert Hagan and Rep. Dale Miller for their efforts to place the issue before the General Assembly. At the request of the AFL-CIO, Hagan and Miller introduced legislation calling for Rx reform in 1999. Those bills were ignored and received little bipartisan support, prompting the petition drive for an initiated law. The Coalition had planned to go on the ballot in 2004 if no action were taken on current versions of the Miller and Hagan bills.

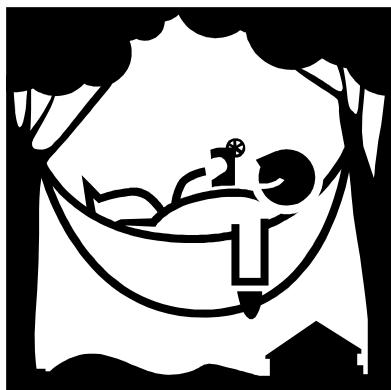
And what kind of help did we receive from the Republicans (Oxley, Voinovich, and DeWine) and their corporate backers on the Prescription Drug Bill? You guessed it, NOTTA! I guess it’s just a lot easier for them to make us pay for it all.

In solidarity, especially through contract negotiations,
The AFL-CIO Committee

Retirement

Ron Weyer is retiring from Cooper on September 27th, 2003. Ron is a stock servicer in the tire room with 35 years of service.

Ed Guilloz has 14 years of service and is a millwright here at Cooper. He will retire September the 27th, 2003.



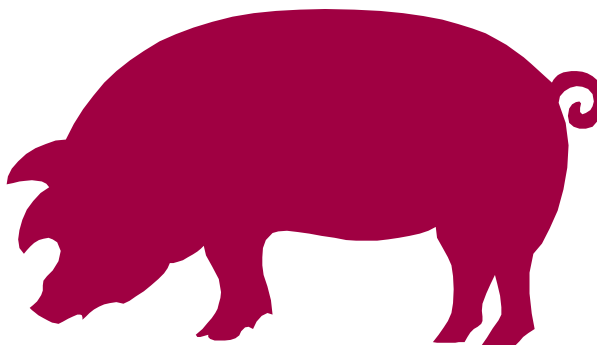
USWA HOG ROAST and CAMPING

Friday October the 3rd 2003 to Sunday October the 5th 2003

In Columbus, Ohio

If you are interested, we have some free tickets to the hog roast.

See Bob Brumbaugh or call the Union Hall and leave your name and phone number



Prolonged Standing: taking the load off

We've all felt it -sore feet, stiff legs and low back pain, all resulting from long hours of standing at work.

While they may not be considered major workplace injuries they do have adverse health and safety consequences for workers. Workers who are tired and suffering are less alert increasing the risk of incidents.

European studies report one third to one half of all workers spend more than four hours a day on their feet, standing and/or walking. The largest portion of these workers work in the manufacturing and service industries, which include, retail sales associates, industrial workers (machine operators and assembly-line workers), supermarket workers (especially cashiers), and food services staff. Others such as casino dealers, mail carriers, large scale laun-

dering workers, teachers and health care workers also spend a large percentage of time on their feet.

A recent U.S. study confirms that prolonged standing is especially risky for pregnant workers and their unborn children. Working in a standing position for six or more hours per day while pregnant has been linked to pre-term births, low birth weights and high blood pressure for the mother.

Generally, the effects of prolong standing can be eliminated or reduced through work organization and work-station design. A well-designed workstation with a well-designed job, make it possible to work in a balanced position without unnecessary strain on the body.

Prolonged Standing Continued....

How does the body respond to prolonged standing? Joint compression

Each body part is compressed by all of the sections of the body above it. For example, the head, arms and torso compress the hips, but the feet are compressed by the weight of the entire body. Compressing a joint is like squeezing a sponge-body fluids are squeezed out of the space in the joint. Without body fluids and circulation, joints become malnourished, and cannot continue to support the weight of the body. Wear and tear of body parts occurs.

Insufficient blood return in the legs

Gravity pulls blood down into the feet. One way that blood returns to the heart is through cyclic muscle contractions. When muscles are engaged in one long contraction to keep a person standing, it hinders proper circulation of body fluids. This can result in blood pooling in the legs, which can eventually lead to varicose veins.

Postural muscle fatigue

Postural joints and muscles keep the body from falling over while a person is standing or walking. These joints and muscles need nourishment, which they get

from circulation. Muscles also need rest breaks to recoup from bouts of work. Standing or walking for a long time, forces muscles and joints to work nonstop without nourishment. Without rest muscles become exhausted, resulting in pain.

What are the health consequences?

Standing is a natural human posture and by itself poses no particular health hazard. In fact, when standing for short periods of time, the body is in one of its most comfortable positions. The lumbar curvature is naturally maintained, the spinal column is properly supported and the body's internal organs are in a relaxed, natural position. However, working in a standing position on a regular basis can cause the following:

- Sore feet;
- Swelling of the legs;
- Varicose veins;
- General muscular fatigue;
- Low back pain; and
- Stiffness in the neck and shoulders.

Keeping the body in an upright position over time requires considerable muscular effort that is particularly unhealthy even while standing motionless. When muscles are constricted, blood



flow to the load-bearing muscles is reduced. These are the muscles used to maintain an upright position. This causes muscular strain in the legs, back and neck.

Insufficient blood flow accelerates the onset of fatigue and causes pain and even, permanent damage to body tissue. This results in injuries such as varicose veins, arthritis in the knees and hips, plantar fasciitis (inflammation of a tough band of tissue on bottom of the foot), heel spurs, flat feet, high blood pressure and low back pain.

Prolonged and frequent standing, without some relief by walking, causes blood to pool in the legs and feet. When standing occurs over prolonged periods without some relief by walking, it can result in inflammation of the veins. This inflammation may progress to chronic and painful varicose veins. Excessive standing also causes the joints in the spine, hips, knees and

feet to become temporarily immobilized or locked. This immobility can later lead to rheumatic diseases related to degenerative damage to the tendons and ligaments.

How are feet specially affected?

The foot has dozens of bones, joints, muscles, nerves, blood vessels, tendons and layers of fascia {connective tissue). When the body tissues are sufficiently stressed, they become swollen and/or inflamed. Chronic inflammation may create scar tissue and changes to bony structures. The bones of the foot form arches that



are supported by ligaments and muscles. These arches contribute to the strength, stability, mobility, and resilience of the foot. During standing, walking, running or jumping, the arches serve as shock absorbers, spreading energy before it is transferred higher up the leg.

If arches are lost (for example through conditions of flat feet, overpronation [flattening of the arch and inward tilting of the ankle]), the shock-absorbing quality of the arches disappears. This affects the feet, knees, hips and spine. Losing the arch in the foot also changes the position of the knee and hip, which makes them more vulnerable to injury from working on the feet.

SAFETY COMMITTEE

DAN RADEBAUGH
BRUCE MARSHALL

Bush Administration's pension proposal could derail secure pension plans for millions of workers, AFL- CIO warned July 15. AFL-CIO said defined benefit plans remain "soundest vehicle" for building and safeguarding retirement, but that Administration's pension proposal could "unnecessarily jeopardize their stability." Among other points, Bush's proposal would change method by which private pension liabilities are calculated and timing and amount of employer contributions to pension funds. "There is a real risk that the Administration's proposal could signal the end of secure pension benefits for millions of American workers," said Federation leader John Sweeney. He said Congress should consider how to make pension plans stronger and better funded.



Our family greatly appreciates all the donations and prayers received during our daughters open heart surgery. We thank you every much!

The Hildreth family;
Steve “ Benji”, Jenny, Hayden and Kaylin

Thank You

Middle Class

September 4, 2003

The Collapse of the Middle Class

A BUZZFLASH GUEST COMMENTARY

by Rep. Bernie Sanders

The corporate media doesn't talk about it much, but the United States is rapidly on its way to becoming three separate nations.

First, there are a small number of incredibly wealthy people who own and control more and more of our country. Second, there is a shrinking middle class in which ordinary people are, in most instances, working longer hours for lower wages and benefits. Third, an increasing number of Americans are living in abject poverty --going hungry and sleeping out on the streets.

There has always been a wealthy elite in this country, and there has always been a gap between the rich and the poor. But the disparities in wealth and income that currently exist in this country have not been seen in over a hundred years. Today, the richest 1 percent own more wealth than the bottom 95 percent, and the CEOs of large corporations earn more than 500 times what their average employees make. The nation's 13,000 wealthiest families, 1/100th of one percent of the population, receive almost as much income as the poorest 20 million families in America. While the rich get richer and receive huge tax breaks from the White House, the middle class is struggling to keep its head above water. The unemployment rate rose to a nine-year high of 6.4 percent in June, 2003. There are now 9.4 million unemployed, up more than 3 million since just before Bush became President. Since March, 2001, we have lost over 2.7 million jobs in the private sector, including two million decent-paying manufacturing jobs -- ten percent of our manufacturing sector. Frighteningly, the hemorrhaging of decent paying jobs is now moving into the white-collar sector. Forrester Research Inc. predicts that at least 3.3 million information technology jobs will be lost to low-wage countries by 2015 with the expansion of digitization, the internet and high-speed



data networks.

But understanding the pain and anxiety of the middle class requires going beyond the unemployment numbers. There are tens of millions of fully employed Americans who today earn, in inflation adjusted-dollars, less money than they received 30 years ago. In 1973, private-sector workers in the United States were paid on average \$9.08 an hour. Today, in real wages, they are paid \$8.33 per hour --more than 8 percent lower. Manufacturing jobs that once paid a living wage are now being done in China, Mexico and other low-wage countries as corporate America ships its plants abroad.

With Wal-Mart replacing General Motors as our largest employer, many workers in the service economy not only earn low wages but also receive minimal benefits. Further, as the cost of health insurance and prescription drugs soar, more and more employers are forcing workers to assume a greater percentage of their health care costs. It is not uncommon now that increases in health care costs surpass the wage increases that workers receive -- leaving them even further behind.

With the support of the Bush Administration many companies are also reducing the pensions they promised to their older workers -- threatening the retirement security of millions of Americans.

One of the manifestations of the collapse of the middle class is the increased number of hours that Americans are now forced to work in order to pay the bills. Today, the average American employee works, by far, the longest hours of any worker in the industrialized world. And the situation is getting worse. According to statistics from the International Labor Organization the average American last year worked 1,978 hours, up from 1,942 hours in 1990 --an increase of almost a week of work. We are now putting more hours into our work than at any time since the 1920s. Sixty-five years after the formal establishment of the 40-hour work week under the Fair Labor Standards Act, almost 40 percent of Americans now work more

Local 207

Local Union No. 207
1130 Summit Street
Findlay, Ohio 45840

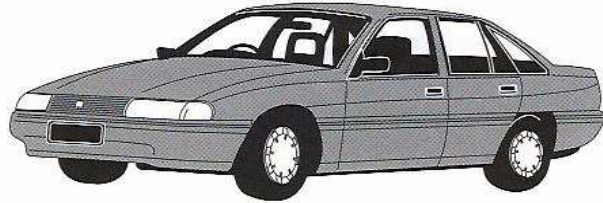
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**Next Union
Meeting
Sunday Oct. 12
2:00 pm**



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Working For Working Families

Middle Class Continued...

And if the middle class is having it tough, what about the 33 million people in our society who are living in poverty, up 1.3 million in the past two years? What about the 11 million trying to make it on a pathetic minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour? What about the 42 million who lack any health insurance? What about the 3.5 million people who will experience homelessness in this year, 1.3 million of them children? What about the elderly who can't afford the outrageously high cost of the prescription drugs they need? What about the veterans who are on VA waiting lists for their health care?

This country needs to radically rethink our national priorities. The middle class is the backbone of America and it cannot be allowed to disintegrate. We need to revitalize American democracy, and create a political climate where government makes decisions which reflect the needs of all the people, and not just wealthy campaign contributors. We need to see the middle class expand, not collapse.

A BUZZFLASH GUEST COMMENTARY

* * *

Rep. Bernie Sanders of Vermont is the only Independent in the U.S. House.