LISTENING TO A QUESTION during press conference on dealing with sexual harassment are CSEA President William L. McGowan, left, and Meyer S. Frucher, director of the Governor's Office of Employee Relations.

Fight begun against sexual harassment

With sexual harassment described as “a pervasive, costly and destructive force in the workplace,” labor and management joined forces at a press conference in Albany last week to announce plans to attempt to eliminate sexual harassment as a factor for state employees.

While the Governor’s Office of Employee Relations Director Meyer S. Frucher unveiled a statewide policy to end sexual harassment and directed its implementation by all departments, agencies and regulatory boards, the heads of major employee unions, including CSEA’s William L. McGowan, announced they are helping fund along with the state a new model training project to eradicate such harassment.

The model training project, scheduled to begin this fall, is being funded through joint labor-management committees of the state and the unions by the Center for Women in Government. Said to be the most comprehensive such program in the country, it will train top state management, supervisors, employee advocates such as union stewards, and rank-and-file members on preventing all forms of sexual harassment.

CSEA President McGowan, commenting that his union is proud to help bring the problems of sexual harassment into the open so it can be dealt with more effectively, said: “CSEA and other labor unions in America have historically fought against infringements of the rights of workers in the workplace. In modern America, sexual harassment is an increasing infringement that has taken a heavy toll on the careers of workers and on their dignity as human beings.

“Sexual harassment becomes so engrained in the psychology of the workplace that its effects will be perceived whether or not it is actually present.

“In a union that has for more than seven decades prided itself on its dedication to the principles of merit and fitness, there can be no tolerance of sexual harassment.

CSEA election ballot in mail

ALBANY — Ballots were mailed to eligible CSEA members on schedule late last week under the union’s elections to designate new union regional officers, members of the State Executive Committee, and county educational representatives.

Ballots must be returned by 6 p.m., June 22 to be valid. Ballots are scheduled to be counted on June 26.

Eligible voting members who have not received a ballot by Tuesday, May 26 may request a replacement ballot on or after May 26 through their CSEA Regional Office, where they may request an affidavit which must then be signed by their Local president, and the affidavit then mailed to the independent election agency handling the election, which will forward the actual replacement ballot to the member.

CSEA ELECTION BALLOTS were delivered to the U.S. Postal Service facility in Colonie on May 14 for mailing to eligible members. In photo at right, CSEA statewide Election Committee Chairman Greg Szumiacki, left, hands over receipt for ballots to postal services employee Steve Marra.

Budget crisis ends, regular paychecks (remember them?) will replace scrip

ALBANY — After more than five weeks of political pushing and pulling, legislative leaders and Gov. Hugh Carey last week finally reached agreement on a state budget for the fiscal year that began on April 1, ending the longest “no budget” crisis in the state’s history.

By the end of the week, budget bills were flying through the Senate and Assembly and sent to the Governor’s Office for final approval.

While many elements of the midnight budget agreement were not immediately clear, it appeared that state employees working for the State Liquor Authority have been spared from the threat of extinction for their agency. In the Executive Budget, Gov. Carey proposed only funding the State Liquor Authority for three months of this fiscal year and phasing it out.

Objections to this action were raised from many sectors of the state, and CSEA attacked the Carey proposal as “short sighted” and “not in the best interests of the people of New York State”. The budget compromise finally worked out reportedly includes full year funding for the Liquor Authority.

Another advantage of the budget agreement was an end to the issuance of “scrip” instead of regular employee paychecks. For five weeks state employees were being issued “scrip”, a form of promissory note because legally the state didn’t have authority to issue regular paychecks since there had been no appropriation of funds for personal services.

While scrip was being accepted by banks throughout the state, it complicated check cashing and caused long bank lines and other headaches for state workers. With passage of the budget, it was expected regular paychecks would soon be issued, perhaps as early as this week’s administrative payroll.

In a related development, State Comptroller Edward Regan told CSEA President William L. McGowan and other public employee union leaders that his office would soon be recommending steps to prevent this year’s scrip fiasco from being repeated in the future. He warned that under similar circumstances in the future he might be forced to end issuance of scrip which would mean state employees would receive no compensation of any kind.

That possibility drew a quick response from CSEA President William L. McGowan who retorted, “Our position on that possibility is very simple. If we don’t get paid then we don’t work, period.”

While it appeared at Public Sector press time that the budget hassle was over, full details of the new state budget were still being analyzed by CSEA experts. Details on this budget and its effect on CSEA members will appear in future editions of the Public Sector.
The Civil Service Employees Assn. is an extremely diverse organization. Its membership of upwards of a quarter of a million workers perform thousands of different jobs at hundreds of work locations throughout New York State. The needs of those members can vary as much as the members themselves, and it takes a sophisticated staff organization to meet those needs. CSEA employs a professional staff of more than 200 people to provide services to the membership. Slightly more than one-half of that total are assigned to statewide headquarters at 33 Elk Street, Albany, with the remainder assigned to the six regional headquarters maintained by CSEA throughout the state. "Staff Profiles" is an informational series designed to acquaint members with staff departments and personnel.

### Dave Stack's office: Keeping a handle on the unions assets

The man behind the money at CSEA is David Stack. As Comptroller, he’s responsible for managing and controlling the assets of the union.

"Given our troubled economic times and "Reaganomics," there's no question we must be ever-vigilant about any new government policies that could affect CSEA's financial standing," Stack said.

"Right now, we're attempting to get a handle on what impact any cutbacks, such as in CETA, would have on CSEA. If we lose members as a result of cutbacks in federal funding to New York State, well that certainly has an impact on the union as a whole.

"There are some basic, built-in costs of running the union, and the more people available to share that burden, the less costly it is on a per-member basis," he explained.

Stack oversees about 60 CSEA headquarters staff, in the departments of Finance, Building Services, Membership Records, Internal Auditing and Data Processing. He is also coordinator of several committees, including the Directors' Budget Committee, the Special Audit Committee, the Scholarship Committee, and the Committee to Study the Cost of Operating Group Life Insurance — all of which rely on his department for financial guidance, advice and information.

Stack works closely with CSEA President William L. McGowan and Treasurer F. John Gallagher on such matters as CSEA budgets, cash flow needs and financial projections, and he is responsible for investing CSEA money.

In recent weeks, he has been busy coordinating the delegate-mandated increase in membership dues.

"We have to get the word out to all those agencies that deduct our members' dues that there's been an increase," said Stack.

"There are more than 1,000 payroll sources we have to notify.

"We'll be doing a lot more of this — training the treasurers and reviewing the mandated reports they file with us. There are more than 300 Local treasurers with varied backgrounds and needs. We have Locals, such as in Nassau County, that are very large and command large budgets, and others that are just getting by financially."

COMPTROLLER DAVE STACK confers with secretary Denise Futia on a current project.

COMPTROLLER Dave Stack, above right, discusses union finances with one of the several CSEA committees he coordinates.

INTERNAL AUDITOR Michael Camarota, pictured at left in a meeting with CSEA Treasurer Jack Gallagher, left, is charged with setting up and monitoring internal fiscal controls and procedures. He also works to ensure that Locals are complying with basic accounting rules and are properly guarding members' assets.
The New York State workers
subject of a unique project

A new, membership-oriented project is about to begin. Its main goal is to give rank and file members of CSEA, who are State employees, an opportunity to voice their opinions about their jobs and working conditions. The project will also look at wage and benefit gains made since CSEA began participating in collective bargaining 13 years ago.

Called "The New York State Worker: A Project on State Employees, Their Needs and Working Conditions," it is the first totally grassroots project to come out of the Committee on the Work Environment and Productivity (CWEP). "This project belongs to the rank and file. Its success depends entirely on their interest and participation. That's the bottom line," says Project Director Jim Cohen. Though funded by both CSEA and the State, the project will be independent, autonomous and neutral. "We have no ax to grind. Our goal is to gather employees' opinions and look at their jobs without prejudice," says Cohen. "Then CSEA and the State can do whatever they want with the information. Hopefully, they will act on it and not leave us hanging on any problems that we uncover."

According to Cohen, rank and file will participate in the project in a variety of ways, including serving as staff. They will also function as participant observers at their worksites and as expert informants. Outside researchers will work together with rank and file in order to assure neutrality.

Organizationally, the project is divided into three teams, with one team for each of the three main groups of employees in the State workforce - clerical workers (administrative), hospital workers (institutional), and blue collar workers (operational). Each team will be responsible for talking to a representative sample of workers in every region of the state. Comparisons will be made between groups, where appropriate. Also statewide information will be gathered from Civil Service and other agencies.

The Directors of the three teams are particularly experienced with the issues affecting their part of the workplace. Marsha Love, Director of the Clerical Employees team, is a former office worker with both research and organizational experience in that area. John Duggan and Margaret Weisel, co-directors of the Blue Collar team, both bring over 10 years of personal experience in various skilled trades and manual labor. And Bill Kornblum, head of the Hospital Workers team, is a highly regarded sociologist who works primarily on union oriented projects.

When the teams go out to talk to the membership, they know they will do a good job because they've all been there themselves," says Project Director Cohen. "I expect the members will see that and I hope that will produce a lot of participation."

Safety problems under control at state research labs

ALBANY — Safety in the state operated research laboratories in the Empire State Plaza's Tower Building, a concern of the Civil Service Employees Assn., for a number of years, is finally "under control" according to the CSEA local president there.

Monthly meetings between a CSEA safety committee and management, periodic inspection by management and the union and the faithful reporting of all suspected violations helped to result in the clean up of numerous safety hazards, some of which were quite serious, says Labs and Research Local 665 President Doris Rabinowitz.

"We've come a long way toward making the labs a safe place to work," she said. "But, we've now reached a point where progress is really being made: problems are being acted upon in a timely manner through a smooth running system."

Capital Region CSEA Field Services Director Jack Corcoran and Field Representative Aaron Wagner, who recently toured the facility, agree with the local leader.

This is the first time since the CSEA first became concerned about safety (in the labs) in 1974, that the union is pleased with the conditions that they saw.

The laboratory division was moved into the sub-basement level of the Tower building in 1972. In the confusion of getting settled, it was not until late in 1974 that the CSEA became aware of the ever increasing presence of hazards, Corcoran explains.

At the CSEA's request, the state began to make some changes, but improvements were slow in coming and during 1976 and 1977 the problems reached a peak, he recalled.

At the new state official's request, the state officials pointed out to state officials the lack of proper storage for flammable and explosive chemicals, inadequate storage for materials and equipment and a shortage of safety equipment such as sterile hoods in some labs, fire blankets, gas extinguishers and masks.

As late as 1977, the employees still had not been provided concrete instructions for an emergency evacuation and exits were not clearly marked.

It was in September of 1977 that the CSEA formed a safety committee to address these issues.

From the start the committee found the state to be cooperative and concerned about the well being of the employees, says Rabinowitz who then served as a committee member.

After only a few discussions the storage facilities were improved, additional equipment was purchased, fire drills were held and the state began an extensive safety training program for employees, which continues to this day.

Still, it has taken some months for all improvements to be made. In December of 1980 the CSEA complained of the presence of unchained gas cylinders which could explode upon impact and non-working and un-inspected fire extinguishers.

After the state reported these matters had been attended to, Wagner toured the facility in March with the Capital Police and found the level of safety to be quite satisfactory.

"I think we've reached a plateau. At last we're confident of the safety measures and precautions being taken here, and I feel they will be maintained," he said.

Some minor hazards remain, said Rabinowitz, but they are being addressed at committee meetings.

Retroactive cost of living adjustment checks will be issued to state employees next month

ALBANY — Cost of living increase adjustment checks will be distributed to CSEA-represented state employees next month as retroactive pay raises for the state's fiscal year that ended March 30.

The lump sum checks are to be distributed by check separate from normal paychecks but by the same method of distribution. The state Department of Audit and Control has not yet determined the exact date the checks will be issued.

Provisions for the payments are contained in CSEA-State contracts covering the Administrative, Institutional and Operational bargaining units.

In the first year of the three year contract ratified by union members in 1979, a flat seven percent increase was applied to the salary schedule. In the second and third years of the contract, however, a more complex increase formula had to be developed that accommodated the state's continuing fiscal problems while assuring the employees of the maximum seven percent salary increases allowable under federal wage controls in effect when the contract was negotiated.
ENCON EAP SIGNING — Tom Holland, left, representing Council 82 and Joseph E. McDermott, President of the Capital Region of CSEA talk with "Making OSHA more meaningful for public employees," is how Region 3 President Ray O'Connor describes a special program that CSEA Safety Coordinator Nels Carbon will conduct in the Southern Region on Monday, May 18, at the Bear Mountain Inn.

Local and unit presidents as well as health and safety committee members are invited to the event which will begin at 7:00 p.m.

The Southern Region includes Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester counties.

In a related matter, O'Connor also announced that he is setting up a regionwide Health and Safety Committee. Scott Daniels has been appointed its first chairman, Tom Schmidt and Susan Wein its first members. O'Connor expects additional appointments to be forthcoming shortly.

CSEA SAFETY HOTLINE 1-800-342-4824

Budget examiner job opening

ALBANY — Applications are now being accepted to fill the position of Budget Examiner.

Assigned to CSEA’s Research Department, the Budget Examiner analyzes the impact of state and municipal budgets, determining the availability of funds for salary and benefit increases. Duties also include certifying whether any contracted-out services could be performed by the current workforce at a lower cost.

The position requires occasional travel throughout the state.

Minimum qualifications include graduation from a four-year college with a major in public or business administration, plus two years of state or local government employment with responsibility for managing fiscal affairs. One year’s experience must involve preparing, analyzing and interpreting budgets or fiscal reports. Excellent presentation skills are required.

Applications must be received by May 26. Send resumes to Personnel Office, CSEA, 33 Elk Street, Albany, New York 12207.

Workers consider credit union

ALBANY — State employees in Warren and Washington counties may now become members of the State Employees Federal Credit Union.

A meeting to explain the services and benefits of the credit union will be held at 7 p.m. May 14 at the Queensbury Motel in Glens Falls. The meeting is open to all members and potential members from the two counties.

Chartered in 1936, the State Employees Federal Credit Union was begun as a means of promoting thrift among its members and to provide loans to members at a reasonable interest rate. The credit union’s services includes auto, home improvement and personal loans; payroll deduction; share certificates; money market certificates; travelers checks; and free notary service.

1-800-342-3565

CSEA EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

A confidential source of help in dealing with personal, family or substance abuse problems.

CSEA INFOLINE

A referral service when you need CSEA's help but don't know how to put your union to work for you.

CSEA SAFETY HOTLINE

The number to call when you encounter a safety or health problem on the job.

CSEA EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

A confidential source of help in dealing with personal, family or substance abuse problems.

BACHE, TER RUSH & POWELL

For answers on your questions about CSEA-sponsored Accident & Health, Supplemental Life and Family Protection insurance plans.
Sid Layo grateful for long-delayed retirement check

ALEXANDRIA BAY — "The union (CSEA) is great!"

With those few words, Sid Layo, a retired equipment operator and truck driver for the New York State Parks and Recreation Department, expressed his appreciation to CSEA for helping to complete the proper paperwork that led to the belated start of his retirement benefits.

Rocco Crescenzi, Thousand Islands Parks Commission employee and Vice-President of Black River Valley Local 015, explained the events leading to the beginning of benefits for Mr. Layo.

"We first learned of Sid’s problem during a conversation with him last January at the Town of Hounsfield Sanitary Landfill, where he had taken a 20-hour per week job to supplement his family income," Crescenzi said.

"At that time, Sid explained he had applied for State retirement benefits in 1977 after serving as a seasonal employee for 14 years. He was told he had no benefits coming," Crescenzi continued.

"At this point, we decided to involve the union (CSEA), and I contacted Local 015 President Fran Mitchell and CSEA Field Representative Tom Dupee. With the cooperation of the Office of Parks and Recreation, and the State Employees Retirement Bureau, we were able to complete the proper paperwork," Crescenzi said.

"As a result of CSEA’s efforts over several months, Mr. Layo began enjoying his retirement benefits April 1, 1981. Unfortunately, under the rules which state an application for retirement must be on file at least 30 days prior to retirement, the first four years of Sid’s retirement were lost.

But he did elect to participate in a ten-year plan and will draw retirement benefits through 1991," Crescenzi said.

"Now, Sid Layo can look forward to some income other than Social Security and the small salary earned by his wife at a village restaurant."

"Sid Layo’s case is another good example of what CSEA can and will do for its membership. As far as we in Local 015 are concerned, it gave us satisfaction in knowing we helped to win some well-earned benefits for a former state employee who had just about given up hope," Crescenzi said.

MH prezs to elect two

SYRACUSE — CSEA’s Mental Hygiene Presidents Committee will fill the vacant positions of committee vice chairman and secretary/treasurer during a special committee meeting scheduled during the union’s State Delegates Workshop May 20-22 in Syracuse.

The Mental Hygiene Presidents Committee consists of the presidents of the union’s 56 mental hygiene locals and the 14 mental hygiene representatives on the union’s statewide Board of Directors.

Committee chairman Danny Donohue, in his committee report, urged all mental hygiene local presidents and board representatives to attend the committee’s special meeting since no proxies will be permitted to attend or vote at the special meeting, he said.

The election to fill the two vacancies are the only items on that agenda, with mental hygiene policy and problems due to be discussed on the first night of the State Workshop at a departmental meeting open to all delegates, Donohue said.

He also urged all members of CSEA mental hygiene locals to vote in this month’s local elections.

"With negotiations for a new contract with New York State going to start later this year, I am sure the governor and his staff are interested in knowing how much support our elected mental hygiene leaders have behind them.

"A strong, supported union will help us all in negotiating for better benefits and representation. On the other hand, that guy, 'apathy,' can kill us all," Donohue said.

Donohue said he and Collective Bargaining Specialist Paul Burch had successfully negotiated the holding of a statewide labor/management meeting between CSEA and the State Office of Mental Health for May 27-28 in Hidden Valley, N.Y.

At the meeting, all psychiatric centers will be represented by two persons each from the CSEA local and from management, he said.

He said the purpose of the meeting is to open better lines of communication between the union and management at the psychiatric centers and to demonstrate the usefulness of labor/management meetings at the local level.

CSEA Collective Bargaining Specialist Jase McGraw and Donohue are trying to set up a similar program with the State Office of Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, he said.

Turning to President Reagan’s proposed federal budget, Donohue warned that mental hygiene would suffer one of the largest reductions.

"In addition to cuts in Medicaid reimbursements and other direct federal aid to mental hygiene, the proposed cuts to state governments would most likely mean other cuts to mental hygiene."

"Mental hygiene receives the largest share of the New York State budget. If federal funds to the State are reduced, that means less money available to mental hygiene unless State taxes are drastically increased," he said.

He urges all CSEA members to let their congressmen know they are opposed to Reagan’s proposed budget.
Valhalla — The health and safety of the 32 employees of Westchester County's laundry facility continues to be an ongoing battle between the Westchester County CSEA Unit and the county.

Exposure to contaminated laundry and being stabbed and cut by expended hypodermic needles and surgical and medical instruments have the laundry employees working in fear that they could become seriously ill or seriously injured. Laundry employees report that among the three million pounds of laundry washed each year at the facility, the dangers come from the dirty laundry received from the Westchester County Medical Center.

The facility also does the laundry for other county facilities, including the jail, Ruth Hayter Geriatric Institute, Law and Research and Health Affairs Department offices. Employees at the facility identified a number of health and safety problems caused by the Medical Center's laundry, including:

• Hypodermic needles with syringes containing blood, surgical and medical instruments are sometimes found in the dirty laundry — which amounts to less than two percent of the facility's workload — many times not properly marked and, therefore, mixed in and handled with the non-contaminated laundry.

• Medical equipment found in the dirty laundry is not properly bagged for use by the employees. Making the facility's trolley system unworkable for handling of that laundry.

• Many of the laundry employees' injuries are from needles found in the dirty laundry.

• Some other power outside of her own health and safety problems caused by the Medical Center's laundry, including:

  • Use of water-soluble bags for contaminated laundry. At a cost of less than $200 a year, the contaminated laundry could be washed without being directly handled by the employees.

  • All other laundry properly bagged for use by the trolley system for safer handling of that laundry.

  • Have Medical Center nursing and housekeeping staffs make a better effort to sort dirty laundry.

  • Use enclosed carts to transport dirty laundry in the truck.

  • Color-coded bags be used to help determine where in the Medical Center the problems actually are occurring.

  • Use enclosed carts to transport dirty laundry in the truck.

Ms. Wein said the Medical Center must be losing thousands of dollars in instruments — some of them thousands of dollars a year in medical equipment is probably lost this way.

This collection of bottles, containers and medical instruments pictured below, are approximately one month's accumulation of materials found in the laundry from the Westchester County Medical Center.

— Garbage is collected in the same open carts with the dirty laundry.

— Health and safety problems caused by the Medical Center in the same truck.

— Hypodermic needles with syringes containing blood, surgical and medical instruments are sometimes found in the dirty laundry.

— Contaminated laundry — which amounts to less than two percent of the facility's workload — many times not properly marked and, therefore, mixed in and handled with the non-contaminated laundry.

— Much of the dirty laundry is improperly bagged, making the facility's trolley system unworkable for that laundry.

— Mach of the dirty laundry is transported in the same open carts. The carts contain some contaminated laundry. The clean laundry goes back to the Medical Center in the same truck.

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English as a second language

Promotion denial prompts Local to teach foreign born employees the American way

PAYING CLOSE ATTENTION to the experimental English program is Local 637 member Maria Novoa.

PURCHASE — Losing a grievance can sometimes produce unexpected results. Local 637 President Lon Gerardi explained that when CSEA lost a grievance against the State University of New York filed by an employee who was denied a promotion because she did not have sufficient command of the English language, he decided to do something about it. Gerardi thought it was, “plain unfair” and along with Local Vice President Jose Pedre and Field Rep. Larry Sparber went to SUNY’s Director of Personnel Richard Silver with an idea – a special “English as a second language” course to be held on “company time” for cleaners and janitors.

Funding was sought for an “intensive program to teach English to foreign born employees who speak Spanish or Italian as a primary language.” The grant, according to Director of Education Tom Quimby, was made under Article 14 of the Occupational Services Unit contract which establishes an Employee Benefits Training Program. Indeed the whole application procedure moved so swiftly, it was as if the idea had a momentum of its own, and within two months time $4,000 was allocated for an experimental program. This especially pleased the local president because it meant to him that Article 14 was, “something real.”

The grant itself was used to hire an instructor and to purchase classroom materials and supplies, including tape recorders to be employed as training tools.

Instructor Ruth Belchitz then went to work. She personally interviewed employees to decide whether they belonged in the beginners or the advanced class.

Local 441 clerk honored with Employee of the Year award

BINGHAMTON — Beth Gillette, an active member of CSEA Local 441 at Binghamton Psychiatric Center, and a 15-year veteran of New York State Mental Hygiene service, has been selected for the Employee of the Year award by a labor-management committee at the facility.

Among her colleagues, Beth Gillette is known and admired for her work in tandem with the grievance committee at the facility. She is a Grade 3 Clerk at Binghamton Psychiatric Center, and has opted not to accept a promotion.

Beth Gillette

In a comment following the award announcement, Clara Pruitt, President of CSEA Local 441 said, “Beth Gillette has been an inspiration to us all. For 15 years, she has displayed many unusually fine qualities, both in her service to the State and to her fellow members of CSEA. We are happy and proud she has been selected for the award.”

WRAPPED UP IN THEIR BOOKS are, from left, Catherine DiGovino and Anna Gizzo.

Each group would get an intensive weekly two-hour session. Classes got underway in March and the learning process reached out to 40 state employees. The teaching method was personally designed by Belchitz. She uses work sheets, and has the lessons taped so that the students can take them home and, as part of their homework, review the lesson and reinforce what has been learned.

The typical classroom atmosphere is intense. The people are quiet, eager to learn, in the words of one, “I want to speak more better English.” Their instructor works patiently, repeating phrases, stressing pronunciation, prompting them gently, building up their self confidence so they can begin their climb up the career ladder. And to think it all began when the union lost a grievance…

Local to teach foreign born employees the American way

CROTON-ON-HUDSON — Union officials are investigating a fire and explosion at Westchester County’s Croton Point landfill which sent 28 firefighters and ten county employees to area hospitals to be tested for inhalation of potentially toxic fumes. And even though the 38 men were all later released, that hasn’t satisfied Local 8601st Vice President Carmine DiBattista who wants a written statement from the Health Commissioner guaranteeing that the workers would suffer no permanent damage from their exposure to the toxic explosion.

The incident apparently started when highly combustible batteries exploded and released lithium chloride which is known to cause neurological damage. Workers at the site were apparently not aware of the side effects of exposure to lithium. One complained, “We were kept in the dark. We should have known about it.”

The explosion, according to sources, occurred when the batteries were being placed in a truck to take them where they were to be buried. Circumstances regarding disposal of the batteries — which are designed primarily for military or commercial uses — are now being looked into since they were supposed to be sealed in containers. Meanwhile, Anthony J. Contin, co-chairman of the Westchester Unit’s health and safety committee, has written county officials advising them that a probe of the fire and explosion has been initiated. He also expressed concern about the impact of workers coming in contact with potentially hazardous and toxic materials at the landfill which a fire official later described as, “like a minefield.”

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GERERDA MASULLO gives the English lessons her undivided attention.

Firefighters subject of toxic explosion; permanent damage still in question

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The typical classroom atmosphere is intense. The people are quiet, eager to learn, in the words of one, “I want to speak more better English.” Their instructor works patiently, repeating phrases, stressing pronunciation, prompting them gently, building up their self confidence so they can begin their climb up the career ladder. And to think it all began when the union lost a grievance…

Local to teach foreign born employees the American way

CROTON-ON-HUDSON — Union officials are investigating a fire and explosion at Westchester County’s Croton Point landfill which sent 28 firefighters and ten county employees to area hospitals to be tested for inhalation of potentially toxic fumes. And even though the 38 men were all later released, that hasn’t satisfied Local 8601st Vice President Carmine DiBattista who wants a written statement from the Health Commissioner guaranteeing that the workers would suffer no permanent damage from their exposure to the toxic explosion.

The incident apparently started when highly combustible batteries exploded and released lithium chloride which is known to cause neurological damage. Workers at the site were apparently not aware of the side effects of exposure to lithium. One complained, “We were kept in the dark. We should have known about it.”

The explosion, according to sources, occurred when the batteries were being placed in a truck to take them where they were to be buried. Circumstances regarding disposal of the batteries — which are designed primarily for military or commercial uses — are now being looked into since they were supposed to be sealed in containers. Meanwhile, Anthony J. Contin, co-chairman of the Westchester Unit’s health and safety committee, has written county officials advising them that a probe of the fire and explosion has been initiated. He also expressed concern about the impact of workers coming in contact with potentially hazardous and toxic materials at the landfill which a fire official later described as, “like a minefield.”
Cite contract violation

MINEOLA — Nassau County has been violating its agreement with CSEA Local 830 regarding contracting out for services performed by members of the bargaining unit, Local 830 President Nicholas Abbatiello has charged.

Abbatiello said according to the agreement, which was signed in 1980, the county was supposed to send monthly reports to Local 830 on county contracting out for services, discuss with the local any future attempts to contract out, and not lay off any employees due to contracting out.

He said the local has never received a monthly report, and the county is looking into contracting out for county vehicles and for ambulance services though it has not notified the local about those inquiries.

He said the county has not laid off anyone, but it is offering new positions to employees.

Contracted in cleaning facilities, he said, is a lack of cleanliness have occurred.

Abbatiello said since the contractor has taken over the custodial functions as the job of its own employees.

"Many times the contracted security guards have been found drinking or sleeping on the job," she said.

Abbatiello said that at this time Local 830 was documenting all the abuses of the agreement to be able to prove the full extent of the problem.

"I don't believe the county is saving money by contracting for services which lack the quality of service given by its own employees," he said.

"The contracted employees have no vested interest in the county, and the quality of their work has brought the unfortunately expected results," he said.

The situation also will be brought up in the ongoing contract negotiations between Local 830 and the county.

Women's conference attendees advised to gain goals now

ALBANY — "Women must use their union more," Atty. Marge Karowe, of the CSEA law firm of Roemer and Featherstoneau, told some sixty attendees of the recent Second Annual Women's Conference sponsored by the Capital Region of the Civil Service Employees Assn.

"Present statistics indicate that women make up 48 percent of the State government workforce and 54 percent of the local government workforce," she said. "Women must use this power at the bargaining table to gain economic and social changes now."

Karowe said that legislative enactment of laws takes too long. Women can gain child care centers, career ladders, educational reimbursement, transitional programs, and even fight for comparable worth now, at the bargaining table, without waiting years for national policy to be legislated.

The morning session featured presentations by AFSCME staff members Anieta Pateron, Marsha Anderson, Joanna Williams and Ron Coder on time management.

Union campaigns to halt contracting-out in Beacon

BEACON — Union leaders are reacting quickly to indications the City Council is looking into the possibility of contracting-out operations at the Sewage Treatment Plant here.

In a letter to the city's elected officials, CSEA Unit President Dave Erca protested, "Public employees are being made scapegoats for the current problems of state and local governments, and some of the leaders of the anti-public employee chorus are private contractors who are trying to get their hands on more government contracts."

He continued, "The typical approach is for contractors to deliberately submit a low bid to win a contract. Once it is awarded, the company often gets a virtual monopoly over the service and, even if the contractor's work proves unsatisfactory and more costly, the local government is often unable or reluctant to take it back."

"So we're warning you against any 'quick fix' and look out for automatic escalator clauses which raise rates behind your back."

Erca also sent Beacon officials copies of the book "Government for Sale" which describes the pitfalls of contracting-out.

Union announces opening for project coordinator for EAP

ALBANY — CSEA is looking for a Project Coordinator for the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

The EAP Coordinator is responsible for planning, coordinating, directing and evaluating the confidential program designed to assist public employees in dealing with alcoholism, drug abuse, family or financial problems.

Qualifications include a bachelor's degree with a major in labor or industrial relations, public administration, education or personnel administration. Applicants must also have four years experience in a related field, two of which must be in an administrative capacity. A master's degree in an appropriate field may be substituted for one year's experience.

Applicants should submit resumes by May 26 to Personnel Office, CSEA, 33 Elk Street, Albany, New York 12207.

Calendar of EVENTS

May

20-22—State Delegates Workshop, Saratoga Springs.
30—Westchester County Employee Day, Playland, Rye.

1—Office of General Services Local 660 election of officers. Deadline for ballots 5 p.m. at P.O. Box 7153. Ballots to be counted at 5:30 p.m. at CSEA Headquarters, 2nd floor conference room.
3—Long Island Region I Mental Hygiene Task Force, noon, Region I satellite office, Hauppauge.
6—Cortland County Local 812 retirement dinner, 6 p.m., Central Office of Moose Club, South Main St., Cortland.
15—Long Island Region I Executive Board meeting, 7 p.m., Mashimins Hall, Melville.
19—Office of General Services Local 660-CSEA picnic, noon to 5 p.m., food; activities till 9 p.m. Western Turnpike Golf Course, Guilderson. Jim Rockwell, chairman.
Labor/management meetings

'A viable labor relations tool'

TOM QUIMBY, CSEA's director of education and training, makes a few points during the recent Region VI labor/management seminar.

BATAVIA — An atmosphere of cooperation, a positive commitment to work on improving problem areas, and continuous open lines of communications were underlined as basic, necessary ingredients to the success of the labor/management meeting at a recent seminar in CSEA Western Region VI.

The history and evolution of the labor/management meeting, union and management roles, choosing the proper topics and developing a winning, positive approach were all addressed by specialists in a day-long program developed by CSEA Director of Education and Training Tom Quimby and Region VI President Robert Lattimer.

With the coming of age of organized labor, the private sector labor/management concept is gaining in acceptance as a viable labor relations tool, according to Robert Ahern, Executive Director of the Buffalo and Erie County Labor/Management Council, one of the speakers.

"But the public sector presents special problems that require recognition of the political realities and the civil service system," Ahern said in recounting that the mayor of Buffalo has asked the council to draw up a labor/management plan for the public employees of Buffalo. The council has dealt with strictly private labor/management matters to date.

CSEA has been "adapting private sector labor/management methods to our public sector needs," related CSEA Collective Bargaining Specialist Paul Burch. "The number one essential to any level of labor/management meeting is an atmosphere of cooperation with a sincere commitment on the part of union and management to solve all issues that are solvable at that level" he said.

"For issues that require a higher authority to resolve, agreement should be made to send it on to the next level without delay," Burch continued. "Achieving a continuing working relationship and developing and maintaining credibility are also very basic necessities to continued positive results," Burch concluded.

Tom Hines, Assistant Director of the Governor's Office of Employee Relations, said state-level labor/management meetings "are making progress in solving problems."

"The meeting is important," Hines continued, "but most important is the labor/management relationship which should be positive" so that when a problem arises the two sides can discuss it and solve it.

"The unions are here to stay," declared the Governor's representative, and some segments of management must get away from the attitude of hoping the unions will go away."

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING SPECIALIST PAUL BURCH outlined the key element of a working relationship with management — cooperation.

CSEA/P PROGRESS REVIEWED — CSEA Collective Bargaining Specialist Jack Conoby (left photo), center, flanked by CSEA/P committee members Joe Conway and Elaine Todd, recently presented CSEA Capital Region officers with an update on the progress of the Clerical and Secretarial Employees Advancement Program. Joan Tobin, right photo, CSEA DOT Main Office Local president and one of the members of the bargaining team which negotiated the CSEA/P concept with the state, discusses program successes with Ed Van Heusen, Department Criminal Justice Services vice president.
CSEA, helped raise more than $3,000 in a walkathon recently in response to the Conference to be used to improve the Atlanta neighborhood where the murder-stricken Atlanta neighborhoods.

The marchers walked from Pilgrim Psychiatric Center in West Brentwood to Central Islip Psychiatric Center, a distance of six miles. The walk was becoming an eyesore to the area but the renovation and reuse of the plaza area is "the corner stone in the economic rebirth of the area," according to the Mayor of the Village of Menands Tom Gibbs.

Andrew J. Kean, Worker's Compensation Administrative Officer, said "This is a dream come true. For twenty years both labor and management scoured the area looking for a suitable location that provided the storage, geographic access and office space everyone desired at a price the State OGS could afford."

Worker's Compensation Local President Brian Ruff explained why the employees had put up with the converted factory location for so long. "CSEA has a file a foot and a half thick on this building. It's a factory, not a multi-use building, but our members and the public who use this facility love its convenient location. It's not in downtown Albany, which means that people from Troy, Cohoes, and Watervliet can use it without worrying about a parking ticket, and our members also benefit since they can get in and out of the building quickly. The only problem is the structure, it's old and showing its age."

The new location is far superior to the old. The new building is well insulated and air conditioned. A new experimental lighting system, easy on the eyes and on the state energy pocketbook has been installed throughout the building in employee work locations, fire sprinkler systems cover the work and storage area. "We've limited the access of the public to one controlled area. They won't be able to wander throughout the facility as they can now do in the old building," Kean explained. Ruff noted that a few violent situations had developed over the years when an individual had lost a case and attempted to vent frustration on the workforce."

The big move is scheduled for May with an open house scheduled for mid-summer.

Favorable DOT decision causes upheaval

CORTLAND — When Raymond Smith, a member of CSEA Local 520 received a certified letter from the New York State Department of Transportation stating his grievance was sustained, and notice of discipline withdrawn, he thought the matter was settled.

As events turned out, the letter with its favorable decision prompted a reaction by management that forced the filing of another grievance.

The initial grievance was filed after Smith was given a notice of discipline following an incident that occurred in January, 1981, at the Cortland YNDSOT residency garage. According to the testimony involved in the subsequent hearing held March 3, 1981, Smith and his supervisor exchanged remarks regarding the method Smith was using to install a snow sealant. Further words were exchanged and Smith was invited to follow the supervisor to the resident engineer's office to discuss the matter.

The outcome of the exchange of words and subsequent meeting in the engineer's office was a notice of discipline dated January 26, 1981.

Three days after the hearing (March 6, 1981), Smith received official notice that his grievance had been sustained by an Agency Labor Relations Representative. The certified letter also stated the notice of discipline be withdrawn.

Apparently, the resident engineer at the Cortland-Tompkins DOT garage chose to ignore the finding of the Agency Representative, because a memorandum of reprimand concerning the entire event was placed in Mr. Smith's personal history file.

After learning of the action by the engineer, Mr. Smith contacted George Van Dee, President of CSEA Local 520, and Terry Moxley, CSEA Field Representative, and requested another grievance be filed to remove the detrimental memorandum from his file.

CSEA and Ray Smith now await another hearing date, another hearing to review the circumstances of the case, and hopefully a directive to withdraw the memorandum in the file.

"I didn't do anything to bring on the charge in the first place. It was a minor incident that could have been avoided. The State (New York) could have saved itself a lot of time, work and money. All I really want is for someone to pull that letter from my personal file. It's as simple as that," Smith said.

In a comment concerning the case, Terry Moxley, CSEA Field Representative, said, "This is a typical example of how the Tompkins-Cortland DOT management handles an Agency decision. Someone could pick up the telephone and say 'pull the letter,' but that would be too easy. They would rather drag everything through another hearing and all the paperwork that goes with it. You would think their so-called management could find a better use of State time and money."
 Edward Elmendorf is responsible for the state’s foliage

The man behind the Plaza’s plant menagerie

By Tina Lincer First
Communications Associate

ALBANY — He is the Empire State Plaza’s plant man, the person responsible for watering, feeding, cleaning, spraying, arranging, choosing and catering to the some 2,500 green growing things inside the massive state complex.

Elmendorf, of Albany, a thin, bespectacled man of 62, has been working as Supervisor of Plant Detail at the plaza for seven years. Previously, he worked for 28 years at a private florist shop until it closed.

“This is cleaner than working for a greenhouse,” he says. “But there’s a lot of features here that work against the plants. Lack of humidity. Poor lighting. People break the tops off, too, to try to make cuttings. Moving ‘em all the time hinders ‘em, too. They call that ‘trans- portation shock.’ The plants get acclimated to a certain spot and they do better when they’re left there.”

In addition to the plaza, Elmendorf is responsible for the indoor foliage at the Capitol, the Ten Eyck Building and the State Office Building Campus.

Hanging plants annoy him. “They’re too high to reach and you have to water ‘em more because they get more air flow and dry out faster,” he says. “Often they hang over a desk and when you go to water ‘em, you get water all over the desk.”

Elmendorf and his crew are responsible for the care and feeding of plants growing throughout the Empire State Plaza, the Schenectady Post Office Building, and the Empire State Plaza in Albany.

There are seven different kinds of plants at the plaza — the schefflera, corn plant, palm, spathiphyllum (a Chinese lily, and the only flowering plant), philodendron, yucca and rutabaga. The tallest of these is a 12-foot tall corn plant located in the Justice Building.

Helping Elmendorf preside over this luxurious plant kingdom are two other CSEA Local 660 members — groundkeeper Frank Selke and a shop steward, and Dominic Catalfamo.

“Always get an eye for beauty. And I got a good boss,” says Dominic, 56, a small, wise-cracking man with bushy eyebrows and a thick Italian accent, who was a bricklayer for 32 years before changing jobs because of a physical ailment.

“Always get an eye for beauty. And I got a good boss,” says Dominic. “He’s an expert. The man knows it all, honest. I’m ready to step up when he retires,” he adds, with a mischievous look at Elmendorf.

“Don’t mind him — Dominic gets rambunctious a week,” said Elmendorf, grinning at his co-worker. Selke, 56, a former mailroom and parking services attendant and eight years a CSEA member, joined Elmendorf in 1977 with no experience in making greenery grow. “I like plants,” he says simply, “and Eddie is a good teacher.”

A large part of the plant crew’s responsibilities is arranging the foliage during special occasions and events. When Gov. Hugh Carey got married recently, they moved about 80 plants from their display areas to the Cultural Center for the Albany wedding reception. “It was a long way,” said Elmendorf, noting he had extra help that day. “We had to hand-truck ‘em over there.”

In general, men, people who work at the plaza are appreciative of their plant care.

“We get a lot of compliments,” said Elmendorf, adding that they are often called upon to give advice on personal plants in offices as well as on problem plants their owners bring from home. Unfortunately, he said, there are also people with little appreciation, who think nothing of trash their litters — everything from orange peels and peanut shells to beer cans and cigarette stubs in the soil.

“You name it, they put it in,” said Selke.

All three plantkeepers say they have very few problems at home. Dominc Catalfamo is one of the men who drives a “I got it on the dining room table” — while Selke says he has four — “I won’t allow any more.”

And expert Elmendorf?

“I have a few indoor plants,” he says, noting that his wife, Evangeline, is the one who takes care of them. Having any more, he says, “would be like the mailman who goes for a walk on his day off!”

Local 010, official, cleared of charges

ALBANY — CSEA’s Board of Directors last week dismissed all charges against CSEA Local 010 following an investigation by a hearing committee of the Board into allegations of fiscal irregularities within the Local.

In a four page report following two days of hearings in New York City, the six member panel reported, “... the Committee finds no bad faith on the part of the Local or any of the individual officers or members of the Local and certainly no misappropriation of assets of the Local. While the Committee may not have agreed with all of the expenditures which the Local made, none of them were illegal at the time made or made in bad faith or for personal gain on the part of any of the officers or members of the Local.”

Acting on the report on May 14, the Board of Directors voted without dissent to dismiss all charges against the Local and that the Executive Board of the Local be returned to office immediately. The Executive Board was suspended from office temporarily on March 2, pursuant to Article VI, Section 4 of the CSEA’s Constitution.

Charges had been filed against the Local and individual charges had been filed against Local President Joseph Johnson upon allegations of irresponsible management of Local funds, severe depletion of Local assets, improper and unauthorized expenditure of funds and breach of fiduciary duty to the members. The action of the hearing board and the Board of Directors found all the charges unfounded and dismissed them.

The Board recommended that appropriate steps be taken to notify the membership of the Local of the Board’s findings on the allegations and to correct reports published in the news media about the incident. CSEA’s policy in such matters is to make no public statements concerning allegations leading to a trusteeship until the mandates of the Constitution have been followed and the accused have an opportunity to defend themselves at an appropriate hearing.

“Our union has created safeguards to protect the interests of our members from the possibility of improper conduct of officers, commented CSEA President William L. McGowan concerning the Local 010 matter. “The allegations in this case were handled in a direct, fair and even-handed manner by thoroughly investigating the allegations, allowing the parties involved to answer the allegations in an appropriate forum and then having the Board of Directors make a final determination in this case. That is what has been done and we are pleased that the hearing committee concluded the interests of the members of Local 010 had not been jeopardized.”

No issue

There will be no issue of The Public Sector published next week. The next issue will be dated June 3, 1981.