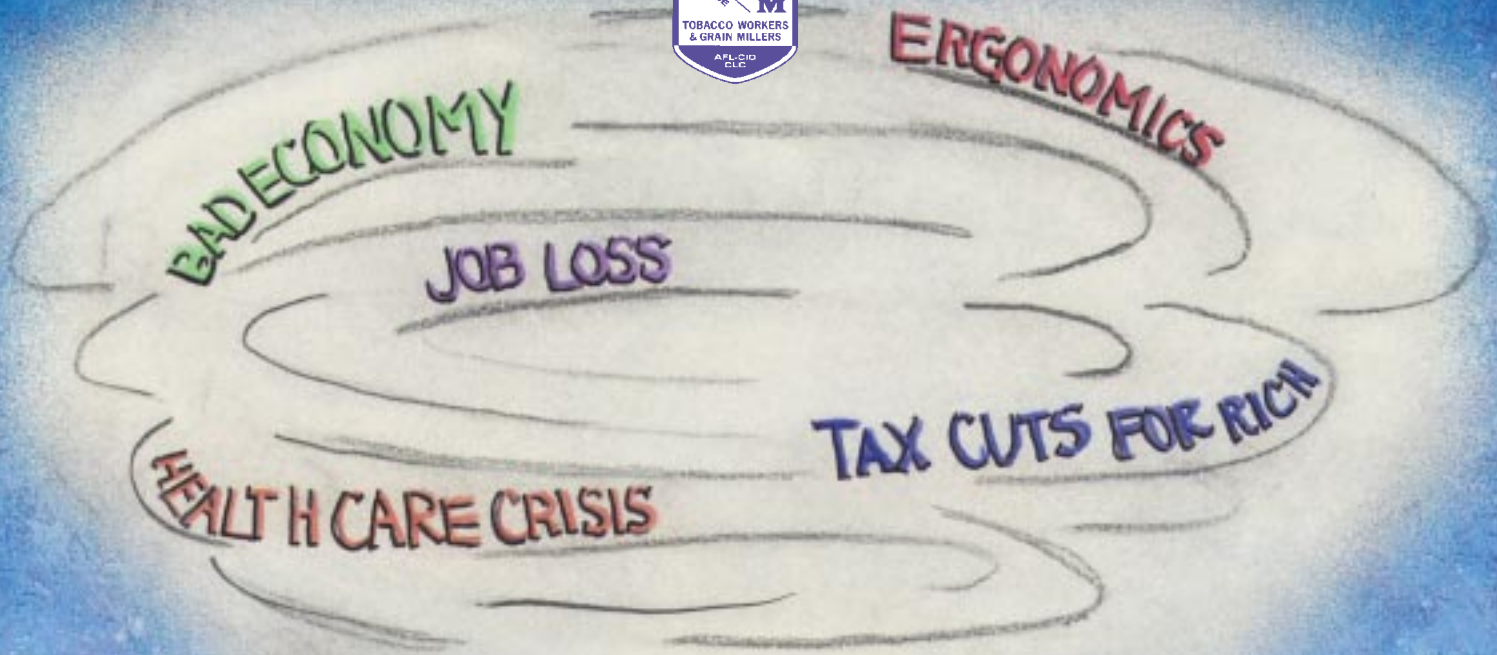


JANUARY/  
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# BCTGM *News*

VOLUME 5  
NUMBER 1



## Workers and Trying Times



## *the* PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### Is the Time Right for Union Organizing?

Recent statistics indicate that the answer to the question is a strong "yes." The combination of a sagging economy and contempt for corporate leaders

have created an atmosphere of workers wanting the protection that only a union can provide.

But the deck is stacked against working men and women in the United States who want to organize. In the workplace, workers who try to form unions are spied on, harassed, pressured, threatened, suspended, fired, deported—all in retaliation for their effort to organize. Sadly, our nation's laws fail to protect these workers. The corporate state holds all the cards.

To add insult to injury, working people are faced with one of the most anti-union governments in history. Consider the following actions: The stripping of union rights from tens of thousands of federal workers; outsourcing 850,000 government jobs; invoking the anti-union Taft-Hartley Act on the West Coast dockworkers; repealing ergonomics standards designed to prevent workplace injuries.

Our history proves that American workers have already paid for the basic freedom of association and collective bargaining rights. This country's treatment of workers is something for which we are globally admired. In fact, as signatories to the International Labor Organization's (ILO) basic principals, we endorse such rights. The ILO, a specialized agency of the United Nations with 173 member countries, includes not only government but also worker and employer representation at all levels. One of its primary functions is to set and supervise international labor standards, including those covering the right to organize and other basic worker rights.

We judge other nations' suitability for trade relationships and foreign assistance on their compliance with these very same basic rights. How shameful is it that right here, in the "freest nation on earth" we have political leaders who are intent on denying decent wages and working conditions, health benefits, retirement security and the right of collective bargaining to their own constituents?

The enforcement of labor agreements and existing labor laws is vital. We need to end those labor law loopholes that sanction the exploitation of millions of working families.

The collective action of BCTGM members and working families throughout the nation is essential to restoring responsibility, accountability, and fair-

ness to the workplace. But let me frankly tell you: that isn't going to happen without political change.

If we don't start now to educate the general public about the need for such reform, then we won't be able to pass bills when the political climate shifts in our favor.

And that kind of political change isn't going to happen without the active participation of every single BCTGM member. So let's work together to make that change happen in November 2004 and we will then be in a position to make this a more worker-friendly place for millions of Americans.

Yes, American workers need unions more than ever. This is not a Democrat or Republican issue—it is a bi-partisan issue; a civil rights issue. BCTGM members must demand democracy in the workplace and be willing to act collectively towards that end for fair wages, retirement and health benefits, and job safety. Workers must be willing to take the fight for economic security to the shop floors, to the glass offices, to paneled boardrooms with new energy and purpose.

That energy may well be fueled by asking yourself one question: Can you name a single action taken by the Bush administration that favors or promotes the long term interests of working men and women?

**Frank Hurt**

*BCTGM International President*



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# 2003 INTERNATIONAL STAFF MEETING:

## A FIVE-YEAR FOCUS ON GROWTH

BCTGM executive officers, vice presidents, representatives and headquarters staff met in Las Vegas January 5-9 for the International's annual staff meeting. The purpose of the event, according to International President Frank Hurt, is to gather for a review of the past year, discuss the union's future goals and sharpen the skills and strategies the BCTGM needs to accomplish such goals.

Staff members discussed the declining economy and its effect on workers, including BCTGM members. "The union's most important challenge in this climate is to organize, we must be an advocate for the unorganized," said Hurt.

A key part of the meeting included the announcement of an ambitious five-year growth plan that focuses on creating a new culture for organizing. "We are embarking on a new five-year journey to reverse the direction of our organization and to ignite the fires of interest of bringing the benefits and protection of the BCTGM to more and more non-union workers," said Hurt.

"You are the face and voice of this union in the field and the messenger who must deliver the messages to create, promote and implement our strategies and tactics to revitalize our union. We must begin by reminding our locals and their members that the best method of protecting their current contracts is through organizing," Hurt concluded.

In addition, staff members participated in interactive workshops on organizing, contract negotiations, arbitration and political action.



# NEW CONGRESS CONVENES AS NATION

The 108th Congress was sworn in on January 7, 2003. The members of the new Congress come to office at a time of deep national economic trouble and great uncertainty about an effective course of action that will put Americans back to work.

While the statistics are troubling, the reality for workers is even more disturbing. Recent unemployment rates are the highest in nearly a decade. Over the past two years, nearly two million American jobs have been lost, including hundreds of thousands in the manufacturing and production sector. At the same time, millions of working families have lost their health insurance while health care and prescrip-

tion drug costs continue to skyrocket. (See page 8)

As the states face their worst economic crisis in 50 years, funding for public schools and colleges and other programs critical to working families is being sharply cut. Workers take a double hit as states raise sales and excise taxes that have a disproportionate and unfair impact on working families.

In discussing the effect of the severe economic conditions facing our nation, BCTGM International President Frank Hurt said, "Our members and their families have been hit hard

America's production sector and lead to the creation of more high-wage jobs with comprehensive benefits packages. This has always been the most effective prescription for economic prosperity and the strength and growth of the middle class."

## Same Failed Plans

Unfortunately for American workers, the Bush Administration and the new congressional leadership are locked into the same "solutions" that have made a bad economic situation worse. The same day that the new Congress was taking office, President Bush proposed an economic plan that was little more than another massive tax cut for the wealthiest Americans. He restated his commitment to this approach in his State of the Union address on January 28.

Under the Administration's plan, the wealthiest one percent of families will receive an average tax cut of more than \$30,000. Most working families would receive little or nothing under their plan. (See pages 6-7)

## Bad News Budget

On February 3, the Administration presented its budget for the federal government for the next fiscal year. Like the tax plan, this budget is more bad news for American workers. It calls for severe cuts or elimination of many job training programs at

*"Once again, it is up to the labor movement to set the pace for necessary change in national economic policy."*

—BCTGM International President Frank Hurt

by the relentless recession. Hardly a week goes by that we are not dealing with the fallout from another one of our employers closing a plant, laying off workers or reducing hours.

"Congress must take bold and immediate action to set in place a new set of economic policies; policies that will revitalize



# FACES STAGGERING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS



a time when unemployed workers need assistance the most. The budget also significantly weakens the ability of the Department of Labor to enforce workplace safety and health standards by failing to provide Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) with the funding and staffing necessary for the agency to get its job done right.

## **A Better Plan for Workers**

“New tax cuts for the very rich won’t create new jobs for American workers. More trade deals that reward employers for closing plants here and moving production to low-wage countries will only lead to more layoffs and difficult times for workers, including BCTGM members,” President Hurt argued.

“Forcing seniors to leave their doctors and rely on HMO’s and private insurance companies in order to receive a prescription drug benefit is cruel and unfair. And talking about strengthening important programs such as education, health care and homeland security without providing

the necessary funding for them undermines their effectiveness,” Hurt added.

The BCTGM, the AFL-CIO and other labor organizations support a comprehensive, dynamic approach to revitalize the American economy, create good jobs and meet the needs of working families and their communities. This goal can be realized by redirecting hundreds of billions of dollars the wealthiest investors and largest multinational corporations would get under the Administration’s “stimulus” plan.

Among the elements of a successful economic program for working families, are:

- Tax cuts targeted to working families;
- Full funding for public education, including higher education;
- Affordable health care coverage for all Americans;
- Prescription drug coverage for all seniors that is a Medicare benefit;
- International trade policies that encourage employers to maintain and expand production in the U.S.;
- Full funding for homeland security including port and airport security, border patrol, customs information systems and chemical weapons safety;
- Revitalized commitment, including adequate staffing and funding, for effective workplace health and safety enforcement,
- Restoration of funding for worker training programs;

- Expanded and extended benefits for the unemployed

“These elements are the building blocks for economic recovery and job creation,” said Hurt. “We are up against the business community that is vehemently opposed to these priorities and will utilize all of their resources to defeat a plan that puts working families first.

“Once again, it is up to the labor movement to set the pace for necessary change in national economic policy. Americans know that the current economic strategies are failing. They know more of the same will not fix a chronically weak economy. Organized labor will lead the way in mobilizing working families, union and non-union alike, for the tough fight ahead in Congress,” concluded Hurt.



# ECONOMIC GROWTH AND YOU:

## A REALITY CHECK FOR WORKERS

While promoting his new “economic growth” plan, President Bush and other Administration officials have made a number of statements that are technically accurate but nevertheless quite misleading. These arguments primarily (but not exclusively) involve a

deceptive use of averages. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has released several analyses examining these arguments. The following summary examines some of the statements the President made during a January 22 speech in St. Louis:

**“92 million Americans will keep an average of \$1,083 more of their own money when this tax plan goes through...”**

This statement is misleading because the average is skewed upward by the very large tax cuts that would go to a small number of high-income taxpayers. Data from the Urban Institute-Brookings Institution Tax Policy Center show that 80 percent of tax filers would receive less than the \$1,083 “average” amount, while about half of tax filers would receive \$100 or less. The White House produced the \$1,083 average figure by averaging together high-income people who would get massive tax cuts—the average tax cut would be \$90,000 for people who make more than \$1 million per year—with the much larger number of Americans who would get small tax cuts.

Thus, while \$1,083 may be the average tax cut amount, it does not accurately reflect what an “average” American would receive. The Tax Policy Center data show that the average tax cut for those in the middle fifth of the income spectrum would be \$256.



**“The Council of Economic Advisors said these proposals over the next three years will create 2.1 million jobs.”**

This statement glosses over the fact that the CEA estimates show the plans will create only 190,000 jobs in 2003—which simply equals the number of jobs the Labor Department says we lost just in the last two months. These 190,000 jobs equal only 0.1 percent to 0.2 percent of the U.S. workforce.

In addition, the CEA estimates show the plan could pump up jobs in 2004—an election year—but that after 2004, the plan would actually reduce the rate of job growth. This outcome is not surprising, given the plan’s effect in swelling medium and long term deficits.

**Editors Note:** The information on this pages was provided by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, one of the leading organizations in the country working on fiscal policy issues and issues affecting low- and moderate-income families and individuals. For more information, visit them on the web at [www. http://www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org).

### Working Families Gain Nothing in Tax Plan

Almost a third of America’s couples and singles would receive absolutely no tax cut from President Bush’s proposals to accelerate some of his previously-enacted tax cuts and exempt dividends from personal income taxes. A new analysis released by Citizens for Tax Justice (CTJ) looks at the 2003 effects of the latest Bush tax cut plan on a state-by-state basis. The analysis finds that the shares of taxpayers slated to get no tax cut are especially high in lower-income states. Nationwide, 31 percent of taxpayers would get nothing from the Bush plan.

#### States with the highest share of taxpayers getting nothing from the 2003 Bush tax plan

	<i>% with no tax cut</i>
Mississippi	44%
Louisiana	42%
West Virginia	42%
Arkansas	40%
Alabama	39%
Kentucky	38%
Oklahoma	38%
South Carolina	36%
Montana	36%
Idaho	35%
Tennessee	35%
New Mexico	35%

**“A family of four with an income of \$40,000 will receive a 96 percent tax cut.”**

The provisions that benefit middle-income families would merely accelerate tax cuts which are already scheduled—in contrast to the \$364 billion dividend exclusion, which would provide a new, permanent tax cut primarily for high-income earners. Over the long-term, middle-class families would receive no new tax-cut benefits while high-income earners would receive large and permanent new tax cuts from the dividend exclusion.

It is also worth noting that many lower-income families are entirely left out of the Administration’s tax plan. For example, a married family with two children and \$20,000 in earnings (such as two minimum wage earners) would receive no benefit whatsoever from the tax package. According to the Urban Institute-Brookings Institution Tax Policy Center, nearly 11 million families with children—or one-fourth of all families with children—would receive no benefits from the proposed tax cuts. These lower-income families are excluded despite the fact that they are most in need and most likely to spend additional funds and stimulate the economy.

**“13 million elderly would receive an average tax cut of \$1,384.”**

Although the elderly as a group would receive a large relative share of the Administration’s proposed tax cuts, these benefits would flow predominately to those elderly individuals who have high incomes.

According to estimates prepared by the Urban Institute-Brookings Institution Tax Policy Center, nearly 15 percent of the total tax-cut benefits of the “growth” package would go to tax filers over the age of 65. But of this total going to the elderly:

- About 14 percent would flow to those over age 65 with incomes exceeding \$1 million a year, and who represent just 0.2 percent of all elderly. These very high-income elderly would receive an average tax cut of over \$90,000 in 2003.

- Over 60 percent of the benefits would go to those elderly with incomes over \$100,000, who account for only about 11 percent of all elderly tax filers.

- Fewer than 11 percent of the benefits would flow to the elderly with incomes of less than \$50,000, even though this group represents two-thirds of all filers over age 65. Overall, this group of elderly would receive less than 2 percent of all the benefits from the total tax-cut package.

## FACTS NOT FICTION

The economy has changed significantly over the last several years. For working families, the change has not been good:

- The nation has lost 1.7 million jobs over the past two years after adding five million jobs in 1999 and 2000.
- Unemployment is at an eight-year high and expected to grow. Ten million unemployed workers want jobs but cannot find them. More than four million work only part-time because they cannot get full-time positions.
- More than two million unemployed workers have run out of their regular state-provided unemployment benefits and the emergency unemployment benefits they received under the temporary federal program.
- Reversing the progress at the end of the 1990s, the ranks of the uninsured rose to more than 41 million in 2001. An estimated 300,000 individuals lost health coverage during the first six months of 2002. Most Americans without insurance—80 percent—are in working families.
- Workers’ premium payments rose 27 percent for single coverage and 16 percent for family coverage in 2002.
- For workers who have lost billions in retirement savings, the 2002 year-end investment reports brought more bad news: The stock market declined for the third consecutive year, marking the first three-year losing streak in 60 years.
- Bankruptcy filings continue at a record-setting pace. Filings for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30, 2002—more than 1.5 million cases—were almost eight percent greater than the 2001 fiscal year. And the total number of cases filed in the three-month period ending last September set the national record for any three-month period in U.S. history.
- States are experiencing their worst financial crisis since World War II, with cumulative three-year budget shortfalls that exceed \$180 billion. States are laying off workers and making deep cuts in health care, education and public safety funding.

# America's



# Health Care Crisis

## *What it means to BCTGM working families*

In the United States today, our health system is broken, and its costs are spiraling out of control. According to the federal Census Bureau, more than 41 million people have no health care insurance. Over the last year, as the economy slowed, the number of uninsured Americans rose by a staggering two million. More than 80 percent of these are from working families, according to the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.

While wage levels have remained relatively steady for more than a decade, health insurance premiums have soared and prescription drug costs have rocketed. (Premiums are the overall cost of insurance policies, often paid on a monthly basis, and differ from insurance deductibles, which are the out-of-pocket costs consumers must pay before insurance coverage kicks in.) Between 1995 and 2000, the price of prescription drugs accounted for 30 percent of rising health care costs.

Citing skyrocketing prices for medical technology, prescription drugs and hospital stays, insurance companies hit employers with group policy premium increases averaging 12.7 percent last year—the largest increase in health benefits costs since 1990,

according to the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Health Research and Educational Trust nonprofit research groups. As a result, workers have had to pay the price, either out of their own pockets in higher policy premium contributions and deductibles for plans with reduced benefits, or in lower wages when employers have picked up part of the increased costs.

*“Union members should not have to pay twice for health benefits,” notes BCTGM International President Frank Hurt.*

### **Taking it to the table**

The AFL-CIO has identified health care costs as the major collective bargaining obstacle, as evidenced by the strike over health benefits by BCTGM members at Hershey last year.

Employers, seeking to pass those costs to workers, are attempting to increase premiums. Workers with good quality health benefits are sure to face employer take-away demands as costs continue to climb.

Some members will be negotiating for improved health care coverage. And others will be trying to win health benefits they've never had.

The BCTGM is standing strong for affordable health care and proposing alternatives to slow health care cost hikes.

“Union members should not have to pay twice for health benefits,” notes BCTGM

International President Frank Hurt. In the collective bargaining process, union and management negotiators consider the total cost of the settlement and, “Agreements are frequently reached when the union members choose to put more of the total value of the settlement into maintaining or improving health benefits.

“When we ‘buy’ health insurance with money from the total package that could have gone to wages, in effect, we have already ‘co-paid’ our fair share of health costs,” Hurt concludes.

Unfortunately the cost increases in health care are expected to get worse. As the U.S. economy continues to fail, falling tax revenue will further strain the nation's vulnerable Medicaid and Medicare system—the principal funding of

care for the nation's growing elderly population.

"Instead of squandering resources on tax cuts to the wealthy and big business, we would do better to confront the challenges facing our nation," says Hurt.

"As a union, the BCTGM will continue to fight at the bargaining table to keep our members health care benefits affordable. But as a nation, we can't ignore the fact that rising health insurance costs continue to spiral out of control. And until we take some of the excess profit out of health care and start serving the needs of people, the crisis will not improve," Hurt concludes.

## Making Coverage More Affordable

But times have changed. Consider the following:

**FACT:** More than 2 million Americans lost their health insurance in 2001, the biggest drop in coverage ever.

**FACT:** Between 2000 and 2002, average family health insurance premiums rose 23 percent—to nearly \$600 a month—and most employers passed on the higher costs to employees through higher premiums, co-pays, and deductibles.

**FACT:** Eight in 10 uninsured Americans come from working families.

**FACT:** Employer-based insurance premiums increased by 11 percent in 2001—far outpacing employee earnings and inflation.

**FACT:** Employers are shifting higher costs to employees in the form of benefit cuts and increased premiums.

**FACT:** Administrative costs account for nearly 25 percent of all U.S. health care spending

## VITAL FACTS

- The relationship between uninsured Americans relying on indigent care and rising costs forms a cycle: as uninsured Americans are unable to afford preventive primary care and receive treatment for health conditions at hospitals, hospital costs increase. This cost increase, along with other cost drivers, pushes health premium costs out of reach for the poor, low, and middle class working people. Bringing uninsured Americans into the pool of insured Americans would put downward pressure on costs for all, since many of the uninsured are healthy young adults and require little medical attention.
- Union employers under contract to BCTGM must compete against companies like Wal-Mart who do not provide health insurance to their workers. The union employers that do provide health insurance have higher overhead costs than the non-insuring companies and in effect pay their share of health care costs, thus placing a competitive disadvantage on employers that offer health benefits.
- The New England Journal of Medicine estimates that no more than 50 cents of every health care dollar actually reaches those caring for patients. The rest goes to administrative costs, marketing, and profits. While Medicare spends less than 3 cents of every health care dollar on overhead, private insurers take 13 cents and those who insure individuals 35 cents—much of it for advertising and sorting out the sickly to cover the healthy.

At one time, many people could take health care for granted. Good coverage was part of almost every benefit package. If you had a job, you had health care.

## What can the BCTGM do about it?

### • *Support Legislation to Reduce Costs*

Prescription drug prices are out of control, accounting for nearly 44 percent of all health insurance increases in 1999. By joining together, states and employers can negotiate reasonable costs with prescription drug manufacturers.

### • *Negotiate Improvements with Employers*

By forming a union, workers are able to negotiate benefits directly with their employer—instead of accepting arbitrary decisions. Once workers have voted to accept a contract, management cannot change benefits without their approval.

# Increasing BCTGM Power through Education in 2002

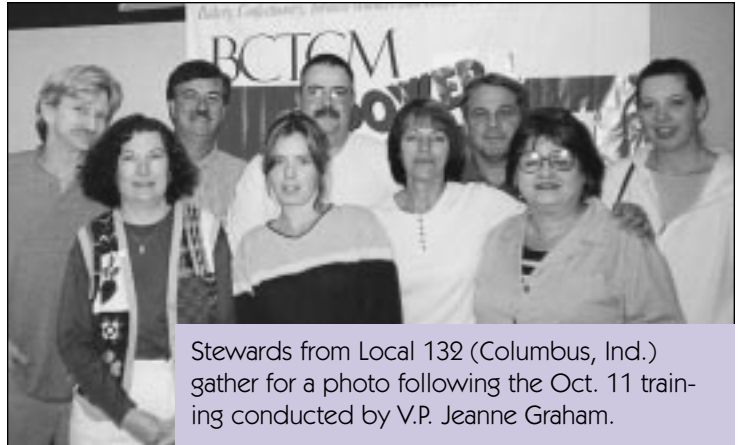
The BCTGM has historically valued education as a vital tool to build and strengthen the union at both the International and Local levels.

In 2002, the International co-sponsored 38 local training programs in the U.S. and Canada. Principally Regional Education Coordinators and/or Vice Presidents and Representatives conducted local union training programs, such as steward and executive board training.

Whenever possible, the training involves those who service a specific facility or local. This allows local union training to be more closely related to actual servicing and bargaining experiences.

Union skills in grievance handling, arbitration, collective bargaining and organizing are central to the make up of all the training programs. Working collectively, local leadership and members brainstorm goals and develop action plans at the end of the program.

Pictured here are scenes from some of the training programs held in 2002.



Stewards from Local 132 (Columbus, Ind.) gather for a photo following the Oct. 11 training conducted by V.P. Jeanne Graham.



Stewards from Local 342 (Bloomington, Ill.) participate in interactive workshops.



## ATTENTION

### APPLICANTS TO THE 2003 BCTGM SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The deadline for applications to the BCTGM 2003 International Scholarship program has passed. All those who submitted an application prior to the January 31 deadline date are reminded to **submit the following requirements prior to the March 31 deadline for requirements:**

- **Personal Profile**—completed by the applicant
- **Academic Report**—completed by the high school (or college, if a member). The report should reflect the first semester grades for the senior year (or more recent academic performance, if a member).
- **Essay**—500- to 750-word essay written by the applicant on “Organized Labor’s Contribution to the Welfare of the People of North America.”
- **SAT or ACT Scores**

**For more information contact the  
BCTGM International Scholarship Office at 301/933-8600.**

# Industrial Unions Launch Lobbying Effort

With unemployment at its highest level in eight years and the nation's manufacturing industries in crisis, the BCTGM joined 3,700 delegates gathered in Washington, D.C., Feb. 4 determined to develop strategies and propose legislation to restore the nation's industrial strength and retain good-paying jobs.

BCTGM International President Frank Hurt, Secretary-Treasurer/Director of Organization David B. Durkee, Executive Vice President Joe Thibodeau, and Assistant to the President Bob Harbrant represented the International Union at the conference.

Under the banner "Manufacturing Works: Good Jobs, Healthy Communities, A Voice for Working Families," the conference focused on the impact of unfair trade policies and health care costs and the need for labor law reform. The legislative conference follows the release of a new AFL-CIO report "Time to Get Real About the Economy: A Check-Up on the Nation's Economic Health at the Mid-Point of the Bush Presidency." The report outlines the significant changes, many of them detrimental to working families, that have occurred in



AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer  
Richard Trumka

the two years of the Bush administration.

"BCTGM members know first hand the sad state of the manufacturing industry. Layoffs and plant closings have devastated workers' families and lives from coast to coast. It is time we highlight the needs of those in the manufacturing area who have been overwhelmed by the economy and who receive less than nothing from the Administration and its friends running the Congress," said Hurt.

AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka, who chairs the Industrial Union Council, told delegates, "Public policies and practices that have all but destroyed our manufacturing base weren't accidents of history. They were created and perpetuated by the men and women we elected

to office and they can be changed by those same men and women."

Manufacturing is in a deep crisis. The United States has lost 2.5 million manufacturing jobs since April 1998, accounting for 90 percent of the jobs lost in the past four years. In the past six months, every state has lost manufacturing jobs, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). As a share of total U.S. jobs, manufacturing declined since its peak of 40 percent just after World War II to 27 percent in 1981 and now stands at about 15 percent. The economic consulting firm Economy.com estimates 1.3 million manufacturing jobs have moved abroad since 1992, with most leaving in the past three years, primarily to Mexico and east Asia. Union manufacturing workers especially have been hit hard. In 1984, union members held some 28 percent of all manufacturing jobs. By 2001 that ratio dropped to 15 percent, the BLS reported.

The IUC is made up of: the BCTGM; Electrical Workers; Graphic Communications; IUE-CWA; Machinists; Mine Workers; PACE International Union; Steelworkers; Teamsters; UAW; UNITE; and United Food and Commercial Workers.

## CORRECTION:

In the November/December 2002 issues of this publication, we mis-reported information concerning the new Kellogg master agreement. (see "Union Negotiates New Kellogg Master Agreement," page 11)

Please note the following correct information concerning the new Kellogg master agreement:  
The pension amount for time worked prior to

1978 was increased to \$40 per month, per year of service. The pension amount for time worked after 1978 was increased to \$51 per month, per year of service. The pension increases have no bearing on anyone who retired prior to the expiration of the prior agreement.

We apologize for any confusion this mistake may have caused.



# Organizing Through Health and Safety

Every day in Canada, roughly three workers die of an occupational accident or illness and an additional 3,000 are injured at their workplace, according to Human Resources Department of Canada. This continues to occur in a country that has had extensive health and safety laws protecting a workers' right to a safe workplace on the books for decades.

Throughout North American labour history, unions have sought to protect workers from unsafe workplaces. Labour has used collective bargaining, political pressure and—when necessary—strikes, to initiate revolutionary changes in some of the country's most unsafe industries. In the past century, working conditions—especially in the manufacturing sector—have improved dramatically. This is due in part to labor's successful pressure on provincial and national governments to enact health and safety legislation, including the implementation of mandatory health and safety committees in all workplaces, both union and non-union.

As spelled out in provincial and federal legislation, it appears that Canadian workers should suffer minimal occupational injuries and illnesses. Workplace health and safety committees are supposed to monitor the working conditions, and make recommendations to management on the necessary changes. Provincial health and safety

boards were created to properly enforce the regulations, while fines were established to deter corporations from breaking the legislated regulations.

However, the path between health and safety legislation and safe workplaces is littered with dead and disabled workers.

## Lost Lives, Lost Time

Over the past thirty years, the industrial and manufacturing sectors in North America have undergone profound changes. While the manufacturing sector has become more automated and streamlined (resulting in the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs), management has simultaneously pushed its workforce to work longer hours, and at a quicker pace. The result has been an increase in occupational hazards, including such injuries as carpal tunnel syn-

drome, stress, and injuries related to exhaustion.

According to the Association of Workers Compensation Boards of Canada, in 2001 920 Canadian workers lost their lives due to an occupational illness or injury.

This figure is 162 deaths higher than in 1993. Additionally in 2001, nearly 375,000 Canadian workers were severely injured at work causing them lost time on the job. In a majority of provinces, workplace injuries continue to rise. (See table)

According to government statistics, in 1997, the 398,000 reported time-loss injuries amounted to 17 million workdays lost, or the equivalent of the number of hours worked in 71,000 full-time jobs in one year. These statistics clearly illustrate that the current health and safety laws are not strict enough, are not being enforced, and are not a sufficient deterrent to corporations that consciously disregard the nation's laws.

## An Organizing Tool

Canada's unions, including the BCTGM, have successfully organized around the issue of health and safety. Statistics prove that workers in non-union workplaces are more likely than union workers to experience workplace injuries or die on the job. In 1994 and 1996, studies done for the Ontario Workplace Health and Safety Agency found that 78-79 percent of unionized workplaces reported high compliance with

	1996	2001
N.S.	7,940	9,082
N.B.	3,906	5,162
Quebec	119,633	112,887
Ontario	103,071	98,359
Manitoba	17,255	18,544
Alberta	31,835	38,755
B.C.	71,602	66,076
Sask.	13,465	15,065
PEI	2,436	1,779
Nfld.	5,272	6,173

Source: Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada

health and safety legislation while only 54-61 percent of non-union workplaces reported such compliance.

Another reason why union workers enjoy safer workplaces with fewer injuries is due to the training of health and safety committee members by their unions, independent of the training they receive from management. Unions like the BCTGM actively train workers to ensure their day to day safety. This is extremely important, since the training provided by management to these mandatory committees is often inadequate.

According to a Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) report, “New Strategies for Health, Safety and Workers Compensation” such training is vital in an age of deregulation and government cutbacks. In the report, the authors argue that current governments are, “hiding behind the façade that the two workplace parties, utilizing the internal responsibility system and a co-operative spirit, can effectively deal with health and safety issues, mainly without a government regulator.”

The BCTGM takes a two-pronged approach to deal with



the reality of the situation: education and organizing.

All union workers, especially those on health and safety committees—need to be able to identify potential hazards, understand the laws protecting



themselves, and be familiar with the necessary steps to eliminate the hazard. According to BCTGM International Vice President Sean Kelly, “The BCTGM is committed to educating and mobilizing our members around this issue because it is truly a matter of life and death. Wage increases and pension improvements will not mean anything to a worker, if he is killed or maimed on the job.”

In addition BCTGM organizers help mobilize non-union workers around health and safety issues. “Whether it is by putting pressure on employers, or lobbying governments to enforce existing legislation and create new safeguards, it is our responsibility to fight to protect all workers,” said Kelly.

### **How Employers Fudge the Real Injury Statistics**

- **Pressure workers not to report Workers Compensation Board (WCB) claims.**
- **Use company doctors.**
- **Pressure WCB representatives to deny a workers’ claim.**
- **Employ behavior-based safety programs which offer workers incentives not to report injuries.**
- **Appeal workers successful claims with the WCB.**

# LOCAL *View*

## Holiday Spirit



Food, fellowship and fun were enjoyed by retirees of Local 802 (Buffalo, N.Y.) at their annual Christmas party on December 3. Pictured here are the more than 60 retirees who attended the festive event.



## Labor Scout Award

Troy Brunner, a member of Local 464 (Hershey, Pa.) for more than 22 years, was recently presented with the George Meany Award from the United Way of the Capital Region and the Harrisburg Region CLC. Pictured here (from left, back row) is John Waters, United Way; Bill Sprandel, Local 464 Fin. Sec.-Treas.; Brunner; and, Joseph Capita, United Way. Also picture (front row, from left) is Brunner's wife Mary Ann and sons Troy and David.

Prior to the November elections, U.S. Representative Jack Quinn (R-N.Y.) visited Local 16 (Cheektowaga, N.Y.) and met with Bus. Agt. Lawrence Backlas. Quinn and Backlas discussed political action and how unions can positively effect a company's bottom line. Pictured here is Backlas (left) presenting Quinn (right) with a BCTGM-PAC check.



NEW!

# Pet Service Program

BCTGM

POWER



According to the American Animal Hospital Association, the average bill for a routine veterinary visit can cost \$100 to \$150 per visit. Treatment for your pets' major illness or injury can easily run into the thousands of dollars.

BCTGM Power Pet Services is designed to help labor union members keep their dogs, cats and other pets healthy and happy—at a reasonable price.

- **The BCTGM Power Pet Savings program.** Provided by Pet Assure, this is a pet health care savings plan designed to provide savings for all veterinary services, including routine pet health care and coverage for all animals. BCTGM Power Pet Savings program may be used in conjunction with traditional pet insurance to save you even more money on all veterinary bills. Every pet is covered—including dogs, cats, birds, fish, reptiles, horses and more—regardless of age or condition.



Even pre-existing conditions are no problem. Members show their Pet Assure membership card when they pay for their veterinarian services and the discount—which applies to all services—is immediately reflected on your bill. Features of the program include:

- Union-member-only 40 percent savings on a Pet Assure membership.
- Union-member-only 25 percent point-of-sale discount off all veterinarian services

from a growing network of more than 2,500 participating veterinarians nationwide.

- Up to 30 percent savings on pet-related products and services such as pet food, grooming, boarding and pet supplies from thousands of local and national merchants.
  - Free pet ID tag and 24/7 locator service for each enrolled pet.
  - Online account management. You can view bills and search for vets in your area online.
- **BCTGM Power Pet Health Insurance.** Protect against the unexpected cost of your pets' illnesses or injuries. Save 10 percent on regular premium rates with your BCTGM Power discount or get your first month free when you enroll your pet into Quickcare First. For details and to enroll, call **1-866-473-7387**.
  - **PETCO.com Bargains.** Union members receive 30 percent off their first purchase over \$30 at PETCO.com.



Rice Krispies

Oreos

Ritz Crackers

Drakes

Nabisco

Quaker Oats

Cheerios

Frito-Lay

# The Working People Behind These Names

## Belong to a

Tootsie Rolls

Russell Stover

## Union—

Kraft

Hershey Foods

## The BCTGM

Kellogg's

Nestle, U.S.A.

120,000 members of BCTGM take great pride  
in producing the products and profits  
at many of the biggest and best known names  
in North America under a union contract!

Heinz

Keebler

Wheaties

Twinkies

American Crystal Sugar

Philip Morris

### *BCTGM:*

Vie de France

### *The Union that makes a difference!*

American Licorice

See's Candies

Pillsbury

Sara Lee Bakery