

Martin Luther King Jr. — Visionary and Trade Unionist

We all know that Martin Luther King Jr. was a visionary. We know he was a champion for civil rights. But did you know that he also was a strong supporter of unions and workers' rights from Day One?

As AFL-CIO Organizing Director Stewart Acuff said last year, speaking before the Electrical Workers:

"I would submit to you that Dr. King was a trade unionist. He believed in our movement and struggled for our movement. He knew and he preached that civil rights were inadequate without economic rights. Dr. King knew that our economic system allows a few to have too much power and wealth and workers to have too little, so he believed that we have a responsibility to struggle to push down wealth and power from those who have too much to those who have too little. That is why he was a trade unionist. His last great campaign was the Poor People's Campaign to organize America's poor to fight for economic justice and dignity."

In 1961, King explained his belief that the civil rights and union movements were linked. Speaking before the AFL-CIO Convention that year, he said:

"The two most dynamic and cohesive liberal forces in the country are the labor movement and the Negro freedom movement... Together we can bring about the day when there will be no separate identification of Negroes and labor."

Four years later, he told the Illinois AFL-CIO convention:

"Negroes in the United States read the history of labor and find it mirrors their own experience. We are confronted by powerful forces telling us to rely on the goodwill and understanding of those who profit by exploiting us. They deplore our discontent, they resent our will to organize, so that we may guarantee that humanity will prevail and equality will be exacted."

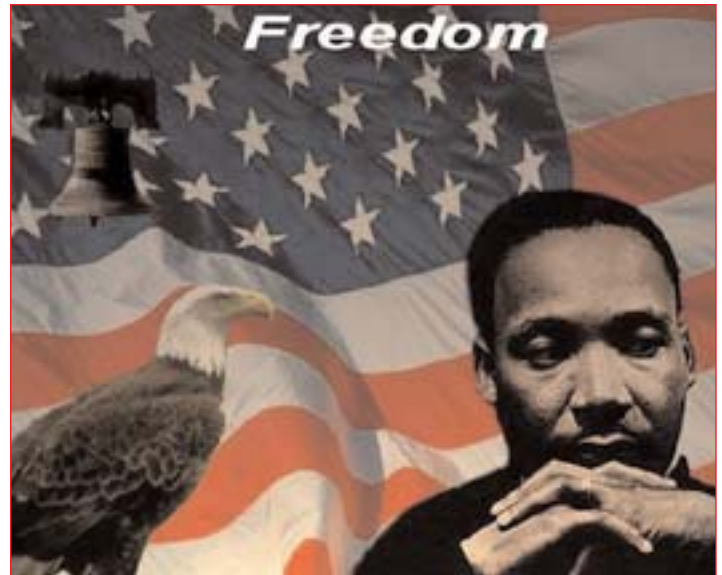
And in 1967, one year before he died, King wrote in his book, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* that unions are just as important as business in ensuring economic success for people of color:

"Our young people need to think of union careers as earnestly as they do business careers and professions."

This year, the annual AFL-CIO King Day celebration is in Memphis, the site of his last campaign and where he was assassinated while helping city sanitation workers gain a voice at work.

Michael Honey points out his book, *Going Down Jericho Road*, that King always supported the union movement as a means of bringing justice to the workplace. Honey is one of the speakers at the annual King Day celebration.

King had qualities that allowed him to lead a mass movement that joined working-class people to the middle class through the black church. In a remarkable few moments in his first speech at the first mass meeting of the Montgomery Improvement Association, King put the struggle against segregation into a moral and world-historical context. "There comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression," and have to organize, he said. Unions had set the precedent. "When labor all over this nation came to see that it would be trampled over by capitalistic power, it was nothing wrong with labor getting together organizing and protesting for its rights."



From The President's Desk

We have a presidential election coming up. And I think the big problem, of course, is that someone will win.

Barry Crimmins

Has anyone else noticed there is an election going on? Every day the lead story on the evening news or talk radio centers around which presidential candidate is leading in the polls and who will win their respective party's nomination.

Now the latest bandwagon each of them has jumped on is the idea of an economic stimulus package of tax rebates with the intention of helping middle class America and jump-starting the economy. With all due respect, \$ 600.00 doesn't do anything to help middle class taxpayers or the poor.

Here is a message to all of the presidential candidates. If you want to help the middle class and poor taxpayers and get the economy going, help us to organize into labor unions.

Labor laws no longer protect our right to organize. Union penetration in the United States has fallen to historic lows. We no longer have the level playing field with corporations the National Labor Relations Act intended to provide us.

It's a pretty well understand fact that Unions in America and around the world are what create the middle class. It's also well understood that the middle class is the economic engine driving the economy forward. So, if you want to help the middle class, if you want to stimulate the economy, help us organize into labor unions.

Tuesday, February 12th is Primary Election day in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia. Tuesday, April 22nd is Primary Election in Pennsylvania.

We have American soldiers, young men and women who are fighting and dying every day around the globe defending our right to live in a free democratic society. Part of the responsibility of

living in such a society is making sure we participate in the democratic process. What this means is that when we get the opportunity we find the time to go to the polls and vote for the candidate of our choice.

I encourage each of you to do so on the Primary day where you live.

While we all are motivated by different issues in who we vote for, let me take a moment to talk with you about what your motivation should be from the standpoint of a working person.

As working people, our aim is to earn a decent living in order to provide for our families and ourselves. Without a Union, most of us would be earning less than half of what we do today, with far fewer benefits. As fewer workers have the benefits provided by belonging to a labor union, it puts greater pressure on those of us who do to maintain the same standard of living.

Last year, a bill was introduced and passed in the U.S. Congress called the Employee Free Choice Act. This bill would have begun the process of restoring collective bargaining rights for working people.

Before you go to the polls, consider each candidate's position on this bill. You can find this information at:

http://www.aflcio.org/issues/politics/issues_efca.cfm

In August of this year, our contract expires with Verizon. Imagine the stimulus a five or six percent increase in our wages would be to the economy. One of the reasons such an increase is so difficult to obtain is the rising costs of health care coverage in the United States. Imagine if we had Universal Health Care coverage in the U.S. We wouldn't have health care coverage at the bargaining taking money away from our wage increase.

For those who believe Universal Health Care or what some negatively call "Government run Health Care", means some bureaucrat in Washington rationing out health care, explain to me the difference between some government bureaucrat and some large multi-national insurance company bureaucrat.

We all have some sort of rationing of our health care, even those of us who have the coverage. The difference between the government and the insurance company is simple. One is motivated by profit and the other is not. It's the profit motivation causing insurance companies to ration our health care. I'm not sure what would motivate the government bureaucrat to do the same.

Follow this link to find out the candidate's position on Universal Health Care Coverage:

http://www.aflcio.org/issues/politics/issues_efca.cfm

The right to vote is a precious thing. Before you do so make an informed choice concerning who will most look out for your interests as workers.

See you at the polls.

Les



Communications Workers of America

2108 news

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 (301) 595-1834: Avaya
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RMC 2108 Retirees Corner

By Dennis Strout, President RMC 2108

I want to start this article by thanking everyone who helped make last year a most enjoyable one. We have a lot of members who contribute to the success of this chapter on a monthly basis. Thank you so very much for all of your hard work and making my job a whole lot easier.

Last year we increased our membership for the fourth year in a row. Any time you finish the year with more members than you started, is a good year. I want to continue to see the chapter grow. The membership gave the executive board some good ideas on different things we could try to get more retirees interested in joining the Retirees Chapter and we will be trying some of them. The first one that I am going to try is to invite all retirees of Local 2108 to come to one of our meetings. I'm not asking you to join the chapter, just come to a meeting and see what goes on. You might like it and want to join or you might not. I will tell you now that our meetings for the most part are low key. We have a business meeting and sometimes a guest speaker and then we have lunch and socialize. Take a chance and come to a meeting, you might like it.

The officers have been meeting to try to come up with some ideas for future meetings. We have asked the members for their input also. This being a year in which politics will rule the headlines we will try to get some of these people running for office to come and speak. We also are trying to get someone from the Social Security Administration to speak on Social Security issues. We are already working on that one. As far as social activities goes we are asking for membership input as to what you would like to do as well as coming up with our own ideas. We will of course keep you informed as to what is planned.

This year the Union will be bargaining a new contract with Verizon. The big issue is health care. Verizon has already made it known that they are asking for givebacks on that issue. Retiree health care is going to be a big part of the equation. You need to pay attention to what's going on. Information that I receive will be given out at the meetings and I will also include it in these articles if it is timely.

Speaking of retiree health care, the EEOC made a ruling in Dec. that has a lot of people around the country upset. I received numerous e-mails from other CWA retiree chapters complaining about it. The following is an explanation from the CWA Retired Members Council. Hopefully it will clear up any concerns you may have had.

Dear Retiree,

The new EEOC rule regarding retiree health care is a bit complicated and needs an explanation that is more clear and straightforward than the ones provided by the general public media.

1. A new EEOC rule published Dec. 26, 2007 authorizes the practice used by many employers (including CWA's employers) of taking Medicare into account when structuring health benefit packages.

2. The rule, in essence, allows employers to provide a lower level of benefits-or even no benefits at all—to retirees who are Medicare eligible, and a higher level of benefits to those retirees who are under age 65 (Medicare eligibility age).



RMC 2108

3. Employers who offer retiree health benefits generally coordinate those benefits with Medicare by offering supplemental plans. For those not yet Medicare-eligible, they offer a "bridge" benefit to cover health expenses until the retiree goes on Medicare.

4. The new ruling was made by the EEOC as an exemption to the Age Discrimination statutes.

5. The ruling was made in response to a 2000 decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 3rd Circuit that held that the Age Discrimination in Employment Act requires employers to spend the same amount on health insurance benefits provided Medicare-eligible retirees as those received by younger retirees. The decision is referred to as the Erie County decision because the employer involved in the case was Erie County, Pa.

6. When the case was finally settled in March of 2002, Erie County equalized benefits by preserving the level of benefits for Medicare-eligible retirees and reducing the benefits paid to younger retirees.

7. The recent EEOC decision was made with exactly that scenario in mind – if employers were required to offer benefit plans of equal value, they would more likely choose the least expensive approach.

8. Employers are not required by law to provide health benefits to either active or retired workers.

9. The EEOC decision is lauded by many as the common sense approach to preserving the greater good for the greater number. The decision recognizes that retirees under age 65 have a greater need for employer-sponsored health benefits because they are not generally eligible for Medicare. Employees who have Medicare do not need as much health care coverage from their former employer as a younger retiree because Medicare is the primary carrier. Savings from providing supplemental coverage for older retirees allows employers to preserve health benefits for younger retirees.

10. AARP, which offers health insurance plans to individuals, opposes the ruling, calling it discriminatory, and will appeal the ruling to the Supreme Court.

I hope to see you at our next meeting on Feb. 13th. Remember, we will be at our new location. The address is:

**10782 Rhode Island Ave.
Beltsville, Md. 20705.**

The phone number is **301-595-2108**

2008 CWA LOCAL 2108 SCHOLARSHIP GRANT

CWA Local 2108 is proud to offer scholarships to our members and their families. Please read the rules below, and call the Local if you have additional questions.

1. Three \$2,000 scholarships are available.
2. Available to members in good standing since last negotiated contract, their spouse and dependent children or dependent children of deceased members.
3. \$1,000 will be mailed directly to the institution per semester.
4. Student must take at least 9 credits per semester.
5. Must have a letter of acceptance to college or accredited learning institution with application.
6. Drawing at July membership meeting as a raffle.
7. Community Service Committee will screen applications.
8. Applications must be postmarked by June 30, of current year.
9. Resignation from the union will forfeit scholarship awards.

NAME: _____

SOCIAL SECURITY # _____

RELATIONSHIP TO MEMBER: _____

ADDRESS: _____

HOME TELEPHONE #: _____

CITY: _____

STATE: _____

ZIP: _____

MEMBER'S NAME: _____

WORK TELEPHONE #: _____

NAME OF SCHOOL: _____

CWA Joe Beirne Scholarships

Eligibility

CWA members, their spouses, children and grandchildren (including dependents of laid-off, retired or deceased CWA members) may apply. Applicants must be high school graduates or at least high school students who will graduate during the year in which they apply. Undergraduate and graduate students returning to schooling may also apply. Prior winners may not reapply.

Scholarships

Thirty partial college scholarships of **\$3,000** each are being offered for the 2007-2008 school year. Winners, selected in a lottery drawing, also will receive second-year scholarships of the same amount contingent upon satisfactory academic accomplishment.

Dates

Applications are accepted during the months of November through March. Final deadline is **March 31, 2008**.

Selections

Winners are chosen by lottery drawing and only winners will be notified.

More Information and Application

More Information and the online application are available on the CWA website:
<http://www.cwa-union.org/members/beirne/general-information.html>



We're Moving...

By the time you receive this newsletter, Local 2108 will have moved...to Beltsville. Our new offices are just off US Route 1 on Rhode Island Ave. Our new address is: **10782 Rhode Island Avenue • Beltsville, MD 20705 • Phone • 301.595.2108**. Our membership meetings, the RMC Meetings, Steward and Chief Steward Meetings will now all take place at our new location. Please visit us often!



CWA Local 2108 Members

Welcome New Members

Mike Carter

Russell Mosley, III
Darius Regis
Daniel Mahoney
Corey Lewis
Michael DeShields
Kang Kim
Clint Tang How
Joseph Nowlin

Ed Anderson

Torez Rowser
Suzgo Phiri
Danielle White
Ijeoma Chijioke
James Trent
Jacinta Sellman
Georgette Hoyah
Franshanta McClorin-Webster

Transferred Members

Mike Carter

Ronald B. Jones
Theodore Farrison
Gregory Harley
Kevin Wade

Wayne Stephens

Kenya Pollard

Tony Gunn

Dave Goldberg

Vallorie Coley and LaTasha Carpenter

Ramona Diggs
Karen Holland
Robert Sherrod
Donna Dillman-Butler
Takiya Abdullah
Jerry Marrow, Jr.
Lawrence Beane
Jeanne Shoemaker
Joyce Cooper
Tawanna Tucker
Michelle McGhee
Tamara Berger
Rochelle Grant
Deloris Gamble
Sheila Jones
Terri Powell

Kevin Bennett

Tyson Hoffman

Karen Lewis

Demasion Butler
Derrick Horton
Cohan Ngo
Gisella Copello
Demasion Butler

Larry Gibson

John McLaughlin

Barbara Oliver

Denise Burt-Tillman
Juanita Winbush
Sue Mitchell-Facklam
Candice Saunders
Thomas Brodtkin
Frank Donadio
Eric Robinson
Dana Blackwell
Barbara Quigley
Sandi Hall
Gwendolyn McKinsey
Sonia Thibodeaux

Ed Anderson

Zahirah Nur Truth
Jennifer Vivas
John Craig
Eric Wainwright
Teresa Henderson
Jaimonese Montgomery
Yvonne Noell-Arthur
Roger Dumas

Carl Brogden

James Owen

Richard Johnson

Jamar Daniels

John Butler

Gary Hertzberg
John Bender
Brodie Maizel
James Hooks
Joseph Wood

Scott McElroy

Christopher Gregory

Kendra Whitaker-Hughes

Bobbie Bethea

Retired Members

Bruce Clark
Mary Hammond
Sandra Harding
Sharon Harley
Robert Henry

Robert Hurley
Arlene Streeter
Thomasene Curry
Linda Diaz
Connie Lawrence

Carolyn Matthews
John McDermott
Roosevelt White
Pamela Curtis
Lois Ringgold

Personals

We wish to extend sincere sympathy to the family and friends of:

Maria Louise Renninger, mother of **Harry Renninger** who died on December 23, 2007.

Robert Powell, husband of retired member **Helen Powell** who died on December 25, 2007.

George Brown, brother of **Diane Craver** who died on January 2, 2008.

Charlie Wilburn, a retired member who died on January 4, 2008.

Betty White, a retired member who died January, 2008.

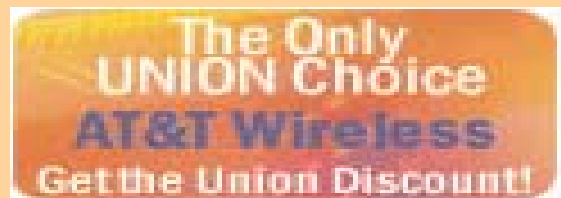
Werth Eden, father of **Judy Eden** and retired member **Barbara Eden-Balster** who died on January 5, 2008.

Bobby Lane, grandfather of **Tershanda Huff** who died on January 9, 2008.

Congratulations To:

Lisa Young and Steve Randolph on the birth of their daughter **Courtney Ann Randolph** on November 27, 2007

Monique Tyler and Andre' Corley on the birth of their daughter, **Solea' Valyn Corley** on December 19, 2007.



Want To Have Input on 2008 Negotiations?

Now's your chance....



Want to have an opportunity to have a say in what CWA negotiates for you in upcoming 2008 Bargaining with Verizon and Verizon Connected Solutions, Inc.? Local 2108 has what you're looking for.

On the next page, we have printed our CWA MEMBERSHIP BARGAINING SURVEY, which allows YOU the chance to tell us what's important to you. It could be a few things, it could be several things. We even give you space to input your own ideas. Simply cut it out and mail it, fax it or hand-deliver it to your steward once completed, and we'll give it to our Negotiations Committee for them to consider.

It's important for all members to fill out the form so the union has a better idea of exactly where we stand when we negotiate with the company. Remember, your contract expires on Saturday, August 2, 2008. WEAR RED on Thursdays.

CWA Battling Idearc over Unilateral Pension Freeze, Health Cutbacks

Battling a unilateral pension freeze and benefit cutbacks by Idearc Media, CWA is mounting a major grassroots mobilization and corporate campaign against the directory advertising firm, which was spun off from Verizon in 2006 but remains the official publisher of Verizon directories.

About 700 CWA and IBEW members in New England and Upstate New York have been working without a contract since June when the company declared a bargaining impasse and imposed steep concessions in all benefit programs as well as job security and sales commission plans.

The unions have filed unfair labor practice charges, currently being investigated by the National Labor Relations Board, against the company for declaring an illegal impasse, bad faith bargaining, refusing to provide information and making unilateral contract changes.

"We have fought hard over 45 years to gain the contracts we currently enjoy, and the company wants to take it all back in one round of bargaining," said District 1 Vice President Chris Shelton. The CWA workers are represented by Massachusetts Locals 1301 and 1302.

Other CWA contracts with Idearc expire this summer and at various points throughout 2009. Altogether, CWA represents 1,700 Idearc workers in 17 locals in Districts 1, 2 and 13 in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. Their jobs include sales, customer service, graphic design and clerical support.

Representatives from the Idearc locals are meeting with union officers and staff in New Jersey to map out a strategy that includes reaching out to shareholders, the financial community and news media.

The unions' message: Idearc is compounding poor management decisions that have tanked the company's stock by 48 percent in the past year by creating labor turmoil and poor employee morale. While Idearc's revenues are dropping, those of its major competitor, AT&T Directories, grew by 26 percent in the first three quarters of 2007.

VCSI Health Benefit Coverage...NEW Open Enrollment

As many of you know, as of January 1, 2008, some VCSI members have had deductions taken from their paychecks for health benefit coverage. Many of these members have complained that they were not notified, and hence did not realize there was a change (or the accompanying charge).

CWA has had several discussions with Tom Stribling about the problem. The Union requested that VCSI allow the members to have an "open enrollment." The company agreed and will notify all VCSI members. VCSI will be sending a letter to all VCSI members allowing them to make a change in their benefits if they choose to do so.

The letter will compare health plans and cost, if any. The initial letter VCSI sent out for 2008 "open enrollment" was a passive communication with no comparisons or cost for the plans.

The members will have two (2) weeks to make any changes. The changes will be retroactive to January 1st, 2008. The company has committed to give the Union a copy of the letter before they mail it to the members. CWA will share a copy of the letter with all of you as soon as we receive it.



VERIZON INC. & VERIZON CONNECTED SOLUTIONS, INC. (VCSI)

CWA MEMBERSHIP BARGAINING SURVEY

LOCAL 2108 - BELTSVILLE, MARYLAND

Please complete this form and return it by Thursday, May 1, 2008 by one of the following methods:

Fax: :301.595.2412 • U.S. Mail: 10782 Rhode Island Avenue • Beltsville, MD 20705 • Hand deliver to your Steward

This survey is intended to give the Negotiating Committee an idea of which items the membership would like to see improved or changed in this year's bargaining and the relative importance of each. Please put a number 10 in the block opposite the item you consider the most important. Put a number 9 in the block considered next most important and so on down to number 1. Put as many number 1's (tenth choice) as you wish....

- Shorter wage progression schedules, Job and employment security, Pension improvements, Earlier retirement without penalty, Rights to privacy, Other Benefits, Shorter work week - shorter hours, Improvements in hospital & medical plan, Elimination of subcontracting, Increased holidays, Improvements in sick pay & beginning the first day, Union Jobs in other subsidiaries, Increased overtime premium payments, Elimination of the monitoring of employees, Safe/Healthy work conditions, New rules for due process (discipline suspended until grievance process is completed), Improve the savings plan, Better Management, Ban of supervisors performing bargaining unit work, Contractual rights to training and retraining, Base wage increase, Improved ISP, Further restrictions of supervisors returning to bargaining unit, Profit sharing, Child care, Elimination of tests or training to pass tests, Elimination of all forced overtime, Employment guarantees, Co-determination of company policies which affect employees jobs, Improved dental plan, Make temporaries / terms permanent, Paid clothing allowance, Upgrades, Less job pressure/stress, COLA, Better absence control plan

OTHER GOAL:

Four horizontal lines for writing other goals.

NON-ECONOMIC BARGAINING SUGGESTIONS - THESE SHOULD PRIMARILY CENTER ON CONTRACT LANGUAGE CHANGES AND WORKING ISSUES:

Five horizontal lines for writing non-economic bargaining suggestions.

Please circle your employer : VERIZON / VCSI

Member's Name and Work Location (Optional):

Local 2108 Union Calendar

February 2008

- 6 Chief Steward Meeting 9:00 am
Local Office, Beltsville, Md.
- 13 Retired Member Club Meeting 11:00am
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 13 General Membership Meeting 6:00pm
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
Join us at our new location !!
- 14 Valentines Day
- 15 Delegate Ballots Counted
- 18 Presidents Day - Local Office Closed

March 2008

- 5 Chief Steward Meeting - 9:00am
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 9 Daylight savings time begins
Set clocks ahead 1 hour
- 9-13 Communications and Technologies Conference
Dallas, TX
- 12 Retired Member Club Meeting 11:00am
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 12 General Membership Meeting 6:00pm
Local Office, Beltsville, MD (Cancelled)
- 17 St. Patrick's Day

**VERIZON AND VCSI CONTRACTS
EXPIRE ON AUGUST 2, 2008**

ARE YOU READY?

START SAVING TODAY!

WEAR RED ON THURSDAYS!



Visit Local 2108 On The Web: www.cwlocal2108.org

**VCSI & Verizon
Bargaining Survey
See pages 6 & 7**

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