

Strike/Settlement

Members of the Catholic Teachers Union [CTU] staged a strike October 19-22 at three high schools in the Camden NJ diocese.

The four-day strike at Camden Catholic, Holy Spirit & Paul VI High Schools was resolved October 23 when members from those schools and the Special Education programs overwhelmingly ratified the deal hammered out October 22.

Teachers at Sacred Heart High School [who were not on strike] ratified the terms of the contract October 26.

The issues which led to the strike were salary increases and the diocesan- proposed two tier system for payment into medical benefits.

The new four year contract gives salary increases of \$1140 per year for each teacher in the first two years and increases of 3.5% [step + 1%] in each of the third and fourth years.

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NACST Convention

The 31st annual NACST Convention was held October 9-11, 2009 at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Cleveland OH.

Thirty eight union leaders from fourteen locals served as convention delegates.

The keynote speaker was William Droel, Board member of the National Center for the Laity, former Catholic High School faculty member and, currently, professor at Moraine Valley Community College in Palos Hills IL [see page 4].

NACST President Rita Schwartz gave the annual State of the Union address [see page 3].

SDACT President Mike Milz updated convention delegates on the situation in Scranton, including the resignation of the local Ordinary.

In addition to the annual Report of Locals, convention delegates overwhelmingly approved an amendment to the NACST Constitution dealing with eligibility to run for National office. [see page 4].



NACST President Rita Schwartz with COACE President Kathleen Mahoney and CHALTA President Mike DeSantis at the 2009 OCEA Convention

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Strike/Settlement

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All teachers will begin paying 5% of the medical premium in the third year of the contract.

The agreement calls for two of the four days to be made up and gives each teacher a signing bonus of \$250.

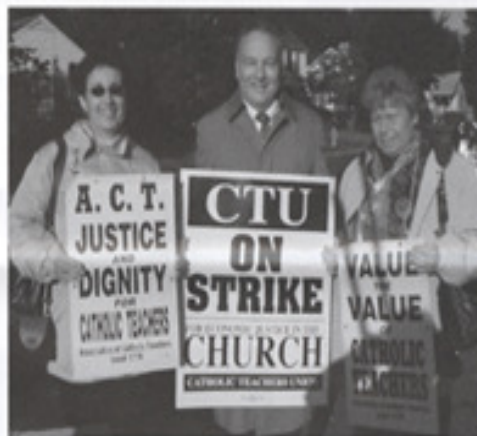
The union and diocese have agreed to work together during the next two years to look into the development of a High Deductible Medical Plan which is Health Savings Account qualified in order to reduce health care costs to the schools.

During the strike, the three high schools remained open on "modified schedules," with two classes reporting on alternate days.

Students and parents joined the lines at the schools.

Striking teachers returned to classrooms October 26.

Preparations are now underway to begin negotiations at Wildwood Catholic High School in the spring.



NACST President Rita Schwartz with CTU President Bill Blumenstein and Irene Tori [ACT] on the strike line

from the President...

STATE OF THE UNION

While trying to put together this year's State of the Union Address, I thought back on the Address that President Obama delivered this past January. I was amazed at how similar the issues facing our country and our local unions and the National really are, especially in four major areas - the economy, health care, education and the war.

The economy has affected our schools and our teachers, their continued employment and their paychecks. Many parents have been faced with a dilemma in light of the ongoing recession - pay the mortgage or pay the tuition. What they decided to do affected our schools' enrollments and, consequently, our teachers' jobs. A number of teachers faced lay-off, some saw their schools close. The teachers who remained on the job faced a lot of belt tightening. Some dioceses asked their teachers to take a salary freeze. The problem with a freeze is that unless everything freezes, including the medical premium the teachers pay, the freeze, in reality, becomes a pay cut.

Health care coverage and premium cost are in many ways the most important part of our negotiated contracts. As medical expenses continue to escalate, negotiating effective and affordable health care becomes more and more problematic. Whatever changes occur with the plan that the federal government finally adopts as the national health care plan will be reflected in all of our future contract language.

Education for those of us in the classrooms becomes more and more demanding. It means teachers are being asked to do more and more. They are constantly facing challenges to the way they teach and the way they mark from parents and students as well. Without a negotiated contract, teachers are unprotected and are at the mercy of administrators many of whom are more inclined to cover their own and their diocese's butts than they are to support their teachers.

One area that is a double-edged sword for us as teachers and as union representatives is the constantly burgeoning area of sophisticated technology. We are ninging, tweeting, blogging and skyping. As teachers, we are urged to use all the new technology in our classrooms. However, as union

leaders, we sit in principals' offices with teachers who have violated acceptable use of technology policies, who haven't used prudent judgment on their personal Facebook pages, who cross the line on texting and cell phone usage. It gets scarier and scarier.

The last major issue is scary also. It is the war in which all of us are engaged. As Catholic teacher unions, we do not have an Afghanistan or an Iraq; we do, however, have a Scranton and an Altoona. The battles against union-busting extend to other dioceses as well. The Archdiocese of New York has split up its high schools and let it be known that the union will not be part of the new model. Luckily, because the bishops of New York have always recognized the presence of New York Labor Law, the union can file unfair labor charges at the New York State Labor Board.

In Pennsylvania, the push continues to pass legislation that will protect Catholic school teachers by including them under the PA Labor Relations Act.

On June 22, 2009, the US Bishops gave us the latest "do as I say, not as I do" document, **RESPECTING THE JUST RIGHTS OF WORKERS: GUIDANCE AND OPINIONS FOR CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE AND UNIONS**". This project, ten years in the making, exhorts Catholic health care institutions to provide "a free and fair choice on questions of representation in the work place" for their workers. We can easily substitute "Catholic school teachers" for "Catholic health care workers." The same rights put forth for those in health care need to be guaranteed for those in teaching.

Last night, at the start of our Convention, we heard the REPORT OF LOCALS and there is no better barometer for the State of the Union. Our locals are healthy, thinking positively and determined to prevail. We are all working hard to make the lives of Catholic school teachers better. Keeping our individual locals strong, keeps everyone of us strong as we continue the fight for justice and dignity.

As always, let the National Association of Catholic School Teachers know what we can do to help.



2009 NACST Convention

Affiliated Locals

Altoona Johnstown Catholic
School Teachers Association
(Diocese of
Altoona Johnstown PA)
Michelle Kirk

Association of Catholic Teachers
(Archdiocese of Philadelphia PA)
www.act1776.com
Rita Schwartz

Catholic Teachers Union - NJ
(Diocese of Camden NJ)
www.ctunj.com
Bill Blumenstein

Central Ohio Association of
Catholic Educators
(Diocese of Columbus OH)
www.coace.com
Kathleen Mahoney

Cleveland High School
and Academy Lay
Teachers Association
(Diocese of Cleveland OH)
Michael DeSantis

DELTA
(Diocese of Worcester MA)
Jonathan Meagher

Diocesan Elementary Teachers
Association
(Diocese of Buffalo NY)
Sue Manzella

Federation of Pittsburgh
Diocesan Teachers
(Diocese of Pittsburgh PA)
Russ DelVecchio

Greater Hartford Catholic
Education Association
(Archdiocese of Hartford CT)
Paul Fitzpatrick

Greensburg Diocesan Teachers
Association
(Diocese of Greensburg PA)
Kreg Mendus

Convention Business:

Constitutional Amendment

Convention delegates adopted an amendment to Article VI, Section 6 of the NACST Constitution, listing qualifications for officers of the Executive Committee. The amendment allows for service on the Executive Committee by any member in good standing from any affiliated local, duly elected by convention delegates. Previously, it was uncertain whether or not former teachers who retain membership in affiliated locals were qualified to hold office on the Executive Committee. The amendment adopted clarifies that provision for qualification.

Convention Resolution

Convention delegates also approved a resolution calling for the "initiation of dialogue between representatives of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the National Association of Catholic School Teachers focusing on how Catholic school lay teachers can exercise their right to a fair and free choice on questions of representation in the workplace while assuring that this right be respected by their employers." The resolution was developed as a response to the document resulting from discussions held between labor movement leaders and Catholic health care facilities in the U.S. The USCCB's "Respecting the Just Rights of Workers: Guidance and Options for Catholic Health Care and Unions" explicitly states the guidelines for the implementation of Catholic social justice teaching in the U.S. today. The convention resolution calls for similar dialogue between Catholic school labor leaders and the USCCB.



Rita Schwartz with the SDACT Executive Board at the September 30 General Membership Meeting

2009 NACST Convention

Keynote Address:

Education for Catholic Identity

William Droel began the keynote speech by expressing thanks to convention delegates and the union members they represent for everything being done to extend and promote Catholic identity.

Droel noted that the contemporary world is faced with two extreme ideologies: atomic reductionism/utilitarianism on one side and fundamentalisms on the other. As evidenced in societal attitudes these extremes breed individualism and attempt to infuse independent areas with religion.

Students are living episodically and know numerous factoids but, without a meaning system built on reason and reflection, they cannot adequately deal with the problems they encounter. Droel stated that the Catholic identity focused on the tradition of "fides et ratio" gives Catholic school students a balance between extreme scientism and fundamentalisms. The values of promoting the common good and service in the community are mediated through the Catholic body of reflection to help students understand their circumstances and experiences.

Droel referenced a Catholic University of America [CUA] study which found that Catholic young adults have a belief that charity is important because of Christ's presence in the poor and their belief that God is present in the sacramental life of the Church.

Catholic schools are to be commended for educating and nurturing students about these values.

Catholic education in the United States has gone through 3 phases. First, from 1790 to 1920 Catholic education went *against* culture. Then, from 1920 through 1960 Catholic education went *above* culture. Now, since 1960, Catholic education is *in* the culture marked by pluralism.

Catholic schools in the current culture promote the Catholic world-view that real social change to help the poor and provide for the common good is achieved in a middle ground between individualism and "big institutions." Catholic schools stabilize regions and areas, serving as social and economic resources in neighborhoods. The CUA study concluded that each year a person spends in a Catholic school yields a higher "values" rate. Catholic education fosters a relational model for students to solve the problems they encounter. This education has resulted in Catholic school [especially secondary & college] graduates having 2.5 years more education and earning on average \$6000 a year more than those who did not get a Catholic school education.

Droel concluded the address by encouraging teachers to continue to promote the "faith & reason" tradition in Catholic schools which has such a positive effect in a pluralistic culture.

Keynote speaker William Droel with NACST President Rita Schwartz



The National Center for the Laity publishes the newsletter *Initiatives*. For more information about the work of the NCL, contact National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago IL 60629, www.catholiclabor.org/NCL.htm.

Affiliated Locals

NACST @ St. John Vianney
(Diocese of Trenton NJ)
Judith Cumbia

Queen of Peace H.S. Lay Teachers Association
(Archdiocese of Newark NJ)
Donna Giovia

St. Denis Teachers Association
(Diocese of Trenton NJ)
Janne Darata

St. Joseph's Teachers Association
(Archdiocese of Newark NJ)
Darlene Fisher

St. Louis Archdiocesan Teachers Association
(Archdiocese of St. Louis MO)
Patricia Spellman

St. Rose Teachers Association
(Diocese of Trenton NJ)
Sean McDonald
Bonnie Scherr

Scranton Diocese Association of Catholic Teachers
(Diocese of Scranton PA)
www.sdaact.com
Michael Miltz

Secondary Lay Teachers Association
(Diocese of Buffalo NY)
Doug Bowers

Union County Catholic Education Association
(Archdiocese of Newark NJ)
Marc Berger

Youngstown Confederation of Diocesan Teachers
(Diocese of Youngstown OH)
Barbara Demesko

2009 NACST Convention



Former Executive Committee Members Honored



**Steve Lieb
Pittsburgh**



**Catherine Manzella
Buffalo**

2009 NACST Convention



Communication is the Key

The CTU strike this fall has brought to mind a truism of union work: communication between union members and leadership is essential for success. Use of available technology greatly enhances the value of such communication.

The CTU strike was successful because of the local union leadership's continuous communication with members and the other main stakeholders in the schools, parents.

Prior to the beginning of negotiations, union leadership surveyed all members to determine priorities for negotiations. Membership meetings were held at each school to discuss union proposals as negotiations commenced.

Throughout negotiations, updates after each session were emailed to members and posted to the members only section of the union website.

Members worked together to send two mailings to parents during September and October. Two parent meetings were held by union leaders.

Media coverage during the strike gave union leaders the opportunity to clearly explain union positions and the request for parents and members to contact school officials to urge a return to the negotiation table.

During the strike daily summaries of actions at the schools, on the lines, were posted on the main page of the union website. The site, which averages about 40 hits per week, received more than 21,000 hits during the strike week.

The strength of union members on the lines, the support of parents communicated to diocesan and school officials, and the strong intent to resolve the dispute fairly concluded with a good contract and labor peace for the next four years.

As banal as truisms may be, it is often enough useful to be reminded of their validity and efficacy. Even when the cause is just, without effective communication between all interested parties, the cause may fail.

The CTU strike was successful because of communication.

The result is good for the union members, the parents, students, and, ultimately, the schools.



CTU members on the strike line with Rita Schwartz and Irene Tori [ACT]