

Lack of negotiations progress report

U OF M UNIVERSITY UNIONS UNITED



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After 3 days of mediation... U admin still stuck at 1%

Last week, the AFSCME unions were in mediation for 3 days with the employer. In mediation, a state-appointed Bureau of Mediation Services mediator goes back and forth between the union and employer reps to try to get them to make a deal.

In those 3 days, we expected to see some movement on wages from the employer, who is still stuck at its initial 1% across-the-board offer. Since civil service people got a 3% across-the-board increase on July 1st, most union workers rightfully expected that the U would offer us at least that much.

But after almost 2 months of negotiations and 3 days of mediation, the employer has not moved an inch, and is still stuck at its original proposal of 1% across-the-boards.

There are only 3 more days of mediation left – this Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. This week is the “push week” where we will likely see a final offer from the employer.

The union negotiating committee, seeing no movement from the employer, is still proposing a 6% across-the-board increase for each contract year.

For the U to propose a 1% increase, after the wage freeze and health insurance increases over the last two years, is an insult. A 1% increase works out to 1 penny on the dollar of your salary. In other words, if you make \$14.00 an hour, a 1% increase

would be a 14 cents an hour raise, bringing your wage up to \$14.14 an hour. That’s an increase of a measly \$11.20 per paycheck (and that’s pre-taxes and deductions!).

A 6% increase is less than a dollar an hour increase for everyone making below \$16.50 an hour, and a bit over a dollar an hour increase for those above that amount. It is not a lot of money. But it would go a little bit of the way in making up for the economic hit we took over the last two years.

The employer claims that no one was hurt by the pay freezes and health care cost shifts from the last round of negotiations – that no one lost anything – that the health care shifts did not eat up any wage increases and that our membership did not move backward economically.

We know by simply looking at our paychecks that most of us barely tread water over the past two years. The wage freeze plus the increase in health care premiums mean that between mid-2003 and mid-2005, your actual biweekly take-home pay hasn’t significantly changed. Depending on your health plan, and whether you got a step increase in contract year 2003-2004, you could actually be taking home

(continued on back)



graphic: riniart.org

If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will.

–Frederick Douglass (1815-1896), abolitionist and former slave, from a speech on August 3, 1857

Move forward or take backs?

There are other vital issues in negotiations besides just wages and health insurance. The union is still fighting to get contract language that would increase our quality of work-life (*6 week parental leave instead of 2 weeks; tuition remission for our families*), maintain or increase our job security (*continue the Rule of 75*) and increase our mobility (*no subsequent probation, internal hiring priority, eliminate selection criteria*).

We bring those proposals forward in every round, and continue to fight for them this time, though the employer so far has said “no” to all of them even though they are minimal or even no-cost items.

While the unions are proposing progress for our members, the employer has proposed to move us backwards by taking away things that we have had – in other words, concessions.

- They propose to end 50% union leave for the president of the Local 3800
- They propose to end the Rule of 75
- Management is refusing to correct an error in the clerical contract that takes back gains on salary protection on rehire from layoff ○

Support Sliding Scale Health Premiums

In health insurance negotiations, the union proposal for wage-based, sliding-scale health insurance premiums is still on the table. We still encourage you to go to the U of M University Unions United website:

www.UofMUnionsUnited.org

to send an email to U administrators telling them you support wage-based health insurance premiums.

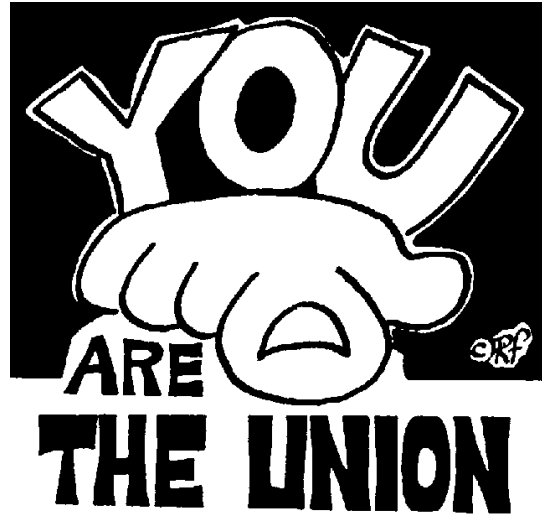
The employer’s proposal to go to a 4-tier system (1 single and 3 family tiers) is still on the table too. The union is still opposed to this proposal since it would unfairly increase the burden on our members with families.

Admin Still Stuck at 1%, cont’d (continued from front)

less now. For many people this was true even after adding in the healthcare lump sum payment.

This is not rhetoric from the union – we encourage you to look at your pay statements online and compare your take-home pay from (for example) an August 2003 pay period, an August 2004 pay period, and an August 2005 pay period. Did your take-home pay go up or down between then and now? If it went up, was it an amount that kept you even with inflating gas and food prices?

For the employer to move up from their 1% wage offer, there needs to be some pressure from the workplace so they know this is unacceptable. We encourage you to visit the University Unions United website **www.UofMUnionsUnited.org**, to print out the posters there with the message that “1% is not enough”, and put them up in your workspace this week. Talk to your co-workers and encourage them to put up posters too. If you want a real wage increase over the next two years, this is the week to speak out. ○



Check the union websites regularly this week

www.UofMUnionsUnited.org
www.afscme3800.org
www.afscme3937.org
www.d.umn.edu/~afscme/