

SOCIAL SECURITY PRIVATIZATION: WOMEN MUST FIGHT BACK

Any major change in Social Security will affect women much more than men. That's because more women depend on Social Security's retirement and survivors' benefits.

About 60 percent of Social Security recipients over age 65 are women. Women are also less likely than men to have pensions or supplemental retirement savings. Without Social Security, 52 percent of white women, 65 percent of African American women, and 61 percent of Latinas over 65 would live in poverty.

The fact that women live longer than men increases the importance of Social Security's life-long benefits. Women still earn almost 25 percent less than men do. Saving enough while you're working to make sure you don't outlive those savings is almost impossible. And as more

pension plans are replaced by 401(k) programs, a secure source of retirement income is crucial.

Not a Crisis

President Bush has been pushing Social Security privatization since he ran for Congress in the 1970s. In campaign speeches then, Bush predicted that Social Security would go bankrupt by 1988 unless it was privatized. That didn't happen then, and it won't happen now.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) says that Social Security — even if nothing is done to it — will be able to pay full benefits until 2052. But there are small changes, like raising the cap on taxable income from \$90,000 to \$120,000, that will extend funding well into the 2070s.

Setting up private accounts would be a boon to Wall Street but a bust for working people. First, the cost of establishing private accounts would take \$4.9 trillion from the Social Security Trust Fund. Most women earn less than \$25,000 per year; earnings on their small private accounts would be eaten up by

continued on p. 7

DON'T FORGET

March

National Women's History Month

April

April 19 – Equal Pay Day

April 28 – Workers Memorial Day

May

Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month

May 1 – International Workers Day

June

CLUW NEB

Washington, DC

(details available soon)

Gay Pride Month

See www.cluw.org for current updates on activities.

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www.cluw.org



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C L U W P O I N T

FIGHTING FOR THE FUTURE



by Susan L Phillips

As the new year gets underway, it's a time for thought and rededication to our principles and to developing new strategies designed to build CLUW into an even greater force for progressive change.

As union women, one of the important issues we deal with is preventing abuse against women. Abuse cuts across all income levels, races, and the circumstances of women's lives.

There are different types of abuse. The most discussed forms are physical and psychological abuse, which can be equally devastating on women's lives.

I add another form of abuse to the list: political abuse.

Because of the outcome of the recent election, political abuse of workers — and of women — already is increasing. It's happening in the form of bureaucratic harassment and outright assaults on the right of unions to organize, bargain, and even exist. It also is manifest in the administration's proposed budget and enforcement cutbacks for programs that benefit women — such as Social Security, pension protections, and attacks on the Family and Medical Leave act.

One of the characteristics of our democracy is majority rule. This concept is what governs political decision-making in our country. And in the Congress, unfortunately, those with progressive agendas will not control the agenda.

Instead of the labor movement being on the forefront on the political engine pushing for change like national health care, controls on prescription drug costs, fairer tax policies, fighting against privatization and job outsourcing, we are going to be fighting for our survival. Along with the rest of the labor movement, CLUW will be fighting to protect Social Security, Medicare, jobs, and health care.

And we'll be fighting to fend off the onslaught against unions themselves. We could be battling against national right-to-work-for-less legislation, and national "paycheck deception." And all union entities — from International unions to the smallest local unions — already are beginning to be subjected to microscopic scrutiny of union books, expenditures, and activities.

As 2005 continues to unfold, we have to rededicate ourselves to our values of peace, opportunity, equality, and justice — and prepare for the times ahead. With solidarity and vision, we must believe in our principles, in our-

— and in the future — as CLUW sisters, union activists, and those who shape the future of our great country.

We have to rededicate ourselves to our values of peace, opportunity, equality, and justice

■ A LETTER TO JOHN SWEENEY

CLUW responded to AFL-CIO President John Sweeney's request for suggestions about the federation's priorities and programs by sending a strongly-worded letter that emphasized the importance of women's voices at all levels of union leadership. It also underscored the fact that women are entering the work force in record numbers and are more likely to vote for union representation than men — and should be involved in the national debate about the labor movement's future. The full letter can be found on CLUW's web site (www.cluw.org).

... Working women suffer most from the economic assault being inflicted on American workers. Because women in general start on the economic ladder at a lower level in terms of wages, benefits, and retirement security than men do, the attacks on workers' standard of living hurt women to the greatest degree. Women suffer most from not having unions; they are more vulnerable to lay-offs, low wages, have lower — if any — health benefits and pension coverage. Women also hold the majority of part-time and temporary jobs, and need union protection to ensure fair treatment. ...

The power of union women in the political arena was demonstrated clearly during the 2004 presidential election. Union women not only understand first-hand the political and legislative challenges that directly affect our lives, but we also take action. The AFL-CIO's own studies revealed that while the overall women's vote for Kerry was just 51 percent, union women supported Kerry by a 72 percent margin. This electoral strength is significant, and is testament to the labor movement's success in reaching its women members with effective messages.

Because women are among the fastest growing demographic groups entering the labor market and will continue to be for the foreseeable future, it is crucial that the labor movement address the needs of women workers and seek to organize them.

Specifically, CLUW urges the AFL-CIO to:

- Ensure representation and participation of women, people of color, and immigrants at the highest levels of federation policy determinations and decision-making. Encourage unions to target for organizing, where appropriate, industries and workplaces that have large numbers of women workers.
- Encourage affiliates to hire women organizers and strive to have women more visible at all levels of union leadership so that women seeking to organize will view unions as responsive to women's needs and con-

cerns. Continue to target union women as a key electoral swing group, providing outreach, communication, and involvement not only in election years but on an ongoing basis.

- Work to encourage union women to seek elected office and provide financial and personnel support for them. Highlight as priorities on the AFL-CIO's legislative agenda issues that affect working women and their families, including pay equity, affirmative action, the right to organize, paid family and medical leave, Social Security, protections for part-time workers, national health care, and others.
- Review and implement the recommendations of the AFL-CIO Working Women's Committee issued in July 2004. These recommendations reflect the collaborative thinking of many experienced labor leaders, both women and men, and suggest tangible, achievable goals that will help address the under-representation of women in union leadership.
- Use available resources and expertise by including and involving CLUW and the other constituency groups in the federation's overarching Wal-Mart effort.
- Support CLUW and the other constituency groups with financial assistance as well as by including representatives of these organizations in formulation of federation policies and strategies to address the challenges we all face.

We look forward to working closely with the AFL-CIO in the days and months ahead to ensure that our labor movement embraces the future with strength, energy, and bold action to improve the lives of working families.



CLUW Presidents, Present and Past

Susan Phillips and Gloria Johnson at the NEB meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico, August 2004.

■ CLUW OFFICERS PLAN FOR FUTURE



National Officers Strategic Planning Session

Top: Judy Beard (APWU) CLUW Treasurer, and CLUW President Susan Phillips (UFCW).
Bottom: (l to r) Sue Schurman, President, National Labor College; Gloria Brimm (UAW), CLUW VP; Irasema Garza, AFSCME Women's Rights Department Director; and Bennie Bridges (AFGE), CLUW VP. Other officers and national staff attended, but not pictured.



The CLUW National Officers Council met in February at the George Meany Center for Labor Studies to strategize about how to strengthen and build CLUW for the challenges of the days ahead.

"We will develop a plan for the future for how we can build CLUW into an even greater progressive force within the labor movement," said CLUW President Susan Phillips. "Every organization can benefit from periodic self-evaluation — taking a look at what we're doing, how we're doing it, and how we can become more effective."

The group reviewed CLUW's mission statement, discussed strengths and weaknesses, and devised a plan of action to make sure that women's voices are heard in the current discussion about the labor movement's future. Future strategy sessions will examine CLUW programs and how they support the labor movement's goals as well as ideas for fundraising.

These thoughts will be discussed with the National Executive Board at the upcoming meeting in March, with suggestions and ideas eagerly awaited and welcomed from NEB members. Suggestions from all CLUW members are welcome. E-mail Susan Phillips at sphillips@uvcw.org.

■ THANK YOU

CLUW wishes to thank the following contributing (\$50), supporting (\$75) and sustaining (\$150) members. To become a special member of CLUW, please make your check payable to CLUW and mail to the CLUW National Treasurer, Judy Beard, 1925 K Street, NW, #402, Washington, DC 20006. Your contribution will help empower women through the labor movement.

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LOCAL NEWS



The Labor Coalition for Community Action (LCCA), composed of the six AFL-CIO constituency groups and the AFL-CIO co-sponsored a reception honoring newly elected Congressional leaders on February 16th at AFL-CIO Headquarters. Linda Chavez-Thompson, Exec VP, AFL-CIO and Susan Holleran, CLUW DC State VP (AFSCME) (above) participated.

MICHIGAN

Metro Detroit

Despite the bitter cold weather on Monday, January 17, Metro-Detroit CLUW members joined a crowd of 700, at its peak, for the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Freedom March and indoor Rally at the Central United Methodist Church in downtown Detroit. The spirited and loud group marched down Woodward Avenue chanting and singing spiritual and union songs, united by their desire for peace and social justice. CLUW members seen in the crowd included: Brenda Standerfer-Jones (APWU); Annie Butler (UAW); Millie Hall (OPEIU); State Senator Martha Scott; former State Representative Derrick Hale, Diane Feeley (UAW); Dr. Roberta Cottman of Wayne State University and Fern Katz (MFT).

Metro-Detroit CLUW Member, Charlene Batchelor (AFSCME) is the new Executive Director of the Women's Justice Center/My Sister's Place Shelter, which helps women and their children in domestic violence situations with housing, mentoring and legal assistance.

Cited as a crusader for the city of Detroit by Leslie Hastings of the

Detroit Convention and Visitors Bureau, on January 26 at the Ford Conference Center in Dearborn, Michigan, Millie Hall of Metro-Detroit CLUW was one of three (in a field of one female and two males) to receive the J.L. Barrett Award. Flanked by 20 members of Metro-Detroit CLUW and family members, Millie stated how honored she was to receive the award and seized the opportunity to showcase the hard work, commitment and dedication of the Metro-Detroit CLUW members in their communities and in the labor movement.



Millie Hall, Metro-Detroit CLUW Chapter President (OPEIU), Dawn Giorgio, CLUW member and Detroit Marriott Rep., and Patricia Nash, Metro-Detroit CLUW (AFSCME) at the J.L. Barrett Awards Ceremony

Genesee County

C. L. "Candy Lady" Anderson, a founding member of CLUW passed away on Friday, December 31, 2004. Sister Anderson has been a life-time resident of Flint, Michigan and was employed at Buick, a division of General Motors and was a member of UAW Local #599. In addition to CLUW, Ms. Anderson was a member of A. Philip Randolph Institute, Unity for Justice, Unity Caucus, a member of CBTU, Women's Committee of Local #599, Veteran's Committee, Region 1- C Women's Council, Eastern Star Chapter #65, United Way, the Old News Boys and Toys for Tots.



Photo courtesy of Karen Mattison.

The Womens Rights and Concerns Committee of the UUP (United University Professions) Delegate Assembly, met on January 21 in Albany, NY. Members live throughout New York State and work at one of the SUNY Hospitals or SUNY Universities. Tina Manning (pictured on right) is the CLUW Metro Detroit liaison to the committee.

■ NAILING DOWN A GOOD MANICURE

From the **CLUW Women's Health Committee** by Helen Ramirez-Odell RN

Nail cosmetics is a multi-million dollar industry. Most nail cosmetics are considered safe. However, there are many problems associated with them. Allergic reactions are common. Symptoms are itching, burning and tenderness in the nail bed (the skin beneath the nail), the cuticle area, and sometimes in the face and neck. Methacrylate (MMA) has been banned although some discount salons may use it due to its low cost. Other allergens include formaldehyde compounds in nail lacquers and hardeners. Never apply an artificial nail if your natural nail or skin is irritated. Have one nail done first. Wait a few days to see if a reaction develops before doing the rest.

Nail polish removers are the most common cause of irritant reactions. Symptoms include dry, peeling nails, loss of the cuticle, and brittle nails that chip and break. Dermatologists recommend that nail polish remover not be used more than twice a month. Polish removers with acetone are especially drying. If your nails are brittle, apply a

moisturizer each time you wash your hands. Rub the moisturizer into your nails and cuticles as well as your hands.

Trauma can occur when sharp instruments are used during a manicure. Electric drills used to remove acrylic nails may go through a nail and even injure the underlying nail bed. When artificial nails are applied, the nail is often abraded to improve bonding of the acrylic. When the acrylic is removed, the surface layers of the nail are subject to further injury. The FDA says that artificial nails should never be worn more than three months at a time. Also, cuticles may be pushed back gently but should not be cut. The cuticle protects the nail and when it is removed there is a space where bacteria and fungus can enter.

Infections can develop if manicure tools and instruments have not been properly sterilized. Even a minor cut alongside the nail or cuticle allows bacteria and fungi to enter. Fungal infections account for almost half of all nail disorders. Fungal growth occurs frequently

under artificial nails as a result of moisture becoming trapped between the natural and artificial nails. Symptoms are usually a white or yellow spot under the tip of the fingernail or toenail. As the fungus spreads, the nail may discolor, thicken and crumble at the edge. Fungal infections are often difficult to treat although medications are available from your doctor.

Well-groomed hands and nails are important to one's appearance. However, long fingernails, rings, and various nail treatments often harbor bacteria. Outbreaks of infections have been traced to artificial fingernails of health care workers. Short, natural fingernails are recommended for nurses and other health care workers who provide care to patients.

■ POSTAL EXHIBIT

Neither Snow Nor Rain Nor Heat Nor Gloom of Night...

The Smithsonian's National Postal Museum is showcasing the work of letter carriers and postal workers with an online exhibition: "In the Line of Duty: Dangers, Disasters and Good Deeds." It chronicles the courage, commitment and quick thinking of workers who risked their own lives to do their job and to save others.

Visitors to the Web site – www.postalmuseum.si.edu/duty – can view artifacts and photos showing how a postal clerk aboard the Titanic tried to save the mail and the challenges workers faced after anthrax was found in the mail in 2001.

"It takes courage to face dangers and disasters in the line of duty. The men and women of the United States Postal Service have been doing this for more than two hundred years."

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Enclosed are my CLUW dues for one year.

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Social Security, cont'd from p. 1

administrative fees.

Bush's proposed changes to Social Security would also gut benefits for the disabled and survivors. The CBO calculates that widows' benefits would be cut by about 45 percent to a typical \$476 a month — including proceeds from private accounts. This is 35 percent below the poverty line.

The White House acknowledges that a significant reduction in benefits, designed to get deeper over the years, would go hand in hand with private accounts. Cuts of 30 to 50 percent in guaranteed benefits would be necessary to make up for the accelerated drain on the trust fund.

Stop the Madness!

As details of the Bush proposal are unearthed, economists and the media are speaking out about its problems. Elected officials are beginning to get the message. Even members of Bush's own party question the wisdom of this drastic action.

CLUW women must raise their voices to protect this 70-year-old program that has never missed a payday. Call your U.S. senators and representative at 202-224-3121 in Washington, D.C. Or visit them at their local

offices when they come back home for recess — like Easter. Let the decision-makers see the faces of those who will suffer most under privatization.

Visit the AFL-CIO website, www.aflcio.org, for additional information and action plans. You might also ask your local librarian to get copies of Paul Krugman's informative New York Times articles on Social Security. Sign up at www.cluw.org to become a CLUW e-activist.

Don't let Wall Street steal your hope for a secure retirement!



EMAIL ALERT!

Want to be in the know about CLUW? Join our e-Activist Network! Sign up to receive CLUW e-mail alerts at www.cluw.org

2005 SUMMER SCHOOLS FOR UNION WOMEN

All Regional Summer Schools are sponsored by the United Association for Union Education in cooperation with the AFL-CIO

A full listing with dates, locations and contact information can be viewed at www.cluw.org/links.html



Reaching Out Across Borders

CLUW participated in an exchange program for Trade Union Women Leaders in the African Diaspora sponsored by the Solidarity Center and TransAfrica Forum on January 21, 2005. Pictured (l to r): Sheila Love (SEIU), DC Metro CLUW President; Avril Crawford, President, Guyana Teachers' Union; Connie Cordovilla (AFT), CLUW VP; Violet Seboni, 2nd Dep. President, Congress of South African Trade Unions; and Com. Ladi Iliya, National Treasurer, Non-Academic Staff Union of Educational and Associated Institutions, Nigeria.

■ UNITY STATEMENT

Here is a summary of the Unity Statement developed by the six AFL-CIO constituency groups. Read it all at www.cluw.org.

We are united in our commitment to build a strong, democratic labor movement in the United States, one that represents the hopes and aspirations of all working people for social and economic justice. We believe that there is a crisis within the American labor movement. Declining union density, intensified government and corporate attacks on workers and on our standards of living, policies of free trade, outsourcing, privatization, attacks on social programs, and union busting threaten workers of all colors.

Full Participation – The leadership of the American labor movement at all levels must represent the rich diversity of the American workforce. There is concern about the lack of diversity among labor's leadership bodies and about proposals to

drastically reduce the size of the AFL-CIO executive council without a strong commitment to maintain and increase diversity.

Organizing – A commitment to organizing is critical for labor's future. Women and people of color have been involved in most successful organizing campaigns, but these same groups are not reflected in campaign leadership. There is great need for organizing in the South and Southwest.

Legislation and Political Action – Labor must work as one to elect those really dedicated to a working people's agenda — and aggressively support political inclusion of communities of color. Efforts to demonize and/or scapegoat people of color, women, LGBT, and immigrants must be exposed and resisted.

Civil, Human, and Women's Rights – Organizing and political action cannot be

separated from a strong civil, human, and women's rights agenda, to: end workplace discrimination of all kinds; stop violence against women; defend affirmative action and pay equity; full labor rights, reform immigration laws and repeal employer sanctions; give access to all rights and protections for LGBT workers.

Globalization – We support the expansion of global labor solidarity and oppose corporate policies promoting a race to the bottom.

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