

## President's *Perspective*

# Protecting the future with unity, strength and action



Geraldine Stella  
President,  
USW Local 9265

**G**reetings sisters and brothers, As we head into fall, I can't help but think about how much has happened since the spring. We have been holding membership meetings to keep everyone up to speed on the various issues facing our Local.

### New Members

First, a big welcome to our new members: Lydia Brassard, policy fiscal analyst; Deborah Niemczyk, secretary; Lisa Pinkard, temporary field representative; and Bradley Kolb, field representative. It can be hard to welcome new people in if they don't work in our office, but if you do work near them, go to their regional office, or have a chance to call them, do so, say hi and maybe tell them a little about your experience with the USW. It's an exciting time to be part of our Local and you can help them learn about their new environment.

### Post-Janus Activities

The Supreme Court of The United States (SCOTUS) decision on the Janus v. AFSCME case was no surprise. As we expected, the court ruled against working people and overturned a precedent that, for more than 40 years, provided for workers in union shops to pay fair share fees (*See related story, page 4*). As a result, PEF immediately lost 1,200 Fee Payers from their rolls.

But of those 1,200, six hundred converted to full PEF members. Since the SCOTUS decision, approximately 100 PEF members have dropped out. Considering the dire predictions of a loss of 30 percent of the membership in the first six months, this is good news indeed!

But what does it mean for USW? Well, for one thing it means that the future for PEF and public sector labor unions is a lot more secure than we thought. PEF had about a 10 percent cut in the 2018/2019 budget to prepare for Janus losses. We do not know what, if any, modifications PEF will do to its budget in light of this. But we do know that PEF still needs to fight, and USW will be in the fight with them.

As such, we established a joint committee to meet with PEF on post-Janus activities and member engagement. PEF Vice President Randi DiAntonio will head up their member engagement efforts. She spoke about some of the successful membership engagement activities in her division. We

discussed a number of issues with messaging, communication, consistency and providing tools and resources for re-signing PEF members. We stressed that staff will assist in these efforts, but peer-to-peer is the most effective in these types of campaigns. We will be meeting regularly with PEF on this issue. If you have any ideas, please talk to your steward or anyone on our Executive Board.

### Short Term Disability

In late August, PEF MBP trustees decided not to allow PEF staff to participate in their short-term disability program. Those who have it will be grandfathered in, but cannot change it or start a new plan.

This is a benefit provided to PEF staff for many years. We are looking into our options on our rights around this issue, but we need more information from you. We need to know who has the plan, if you would have increased it, or if you wanted it and weren't able to get it. Please contact Tara Bentley with any information.

### Negotiations

Negotiations may feel as though they have been going on forever. But in actuality, we had a few changes to our contract committee, as has PEF. We have met four times with PEF's team, and have planned a very aggressive meeting schedule between now and January.

USW and PEF have both put revised proposals back on the table. But, not everything is on the table. Both sides are working very hard to address the challenges that remain. The next few months will be important. Harder proposals will be put forth, and we will need to show solidarity while we step up our game.

Contract negotiations are not just about cost-of-living increases, they are about respect. Unions have long fought for dignity and respect in the workplace. It is one of the cornerstones of the labor movement. PEF staff have worked hard over the past three years, doing more with less as a result of PEF's austerity budget. It was prepared in anticipation of the Janus case decision, and eliminated staff positions and redistributed work to those with already heavy workloads. And PEF staff put their shoulders to the wheel as PEF rolled out their member engagement plan. We are proud of the work we do for PEF and for the labor movement overall. That work deserves to be compensated, not just with cost-of-living increases, but with the respect that good hard work deserves.

*(Continued on page 3)*

# USW International selects Cunningham as activist of the year

Dedication and hard work often go unrecognized, but that's not the case for one United Steelworkers (USW) Local 9265 member who earned the USW District 4 Rapid Response Activist Award from USW International.

Gary Cunningham, a Local 9265 administrative vice president for 18 years, is the recipient of this prestigious award for his unflinching commitment to serving his union.

Martin Blair, a field representative for PEF in the North Country, nominated Cunningham.

"Gary is a tireless advocate for unions and the middle-class. For nearly 30 years, he has not only diligently walked picket lines, but organized and led various rallies and pickets. He sent out USW communications, collected signatures for petitions, did phone banking, all for union campaigns. He never sought any praise or promotion. His service is derived from caring for the labor movement. It is exceptional for a union member to contribute as much as he has, for as long as he has.

"Gary, for the right reasons, did and does the yeoman's work of the union. Without members like Gary, unions cannot succeed," Blair said.

USW Local 9265 President Geraldine Stella said Cunningham served on several negotiating teams, the Steelworkers Action Team (SWAT)



"I urge everyone to become and stay active in the union. You don't have to hold an officer's position to make a difference. You can serve on a committee, help distribute SWAT materials, or just share your ideas at membership meetings. It's all about protecting what we have, what we work for and what we want to leave to our children and future generations."

— Gary Cunningham



Committee and labor-management committees. He is currently a member of Local 9265's Rapid Response Political Action Committee.

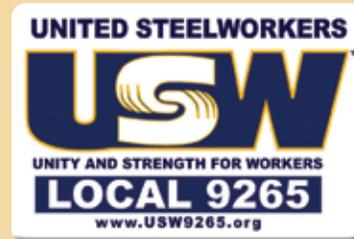
"Gary has been responsible for direct outreach to other USW locals and many other labor unions. He inspires people to get involved, and he really exemplifies the very best of the labor movement," Stella said.

"I am very honored and ecstatic to be selected for this award," Cunningham said. "I was to receive the award in August at the Steelworkers Annual Convention in Atlanta,

GA., but my family had a trip planned to California. I will be receiving the award in February.

"I urge everyone to become and stay active in the union. You don't have to hold an officer's position to make a difference. You can serve on a committee, help distribute SWAT materials, or just share your ideas at membership meetings.

"It's all about protecting what we have, what we work for and what we want to leave to our children and future generations."



**Geraldine Stella**

*President*

*gstella9265@gmail.com*

**Katherine Vorwald**

*Vice President*

*Katie.vorwald@gmail.com*

**Tara Bentley**

*Vice President*

*tara.bentley30@yahoo.com*

**Melinda Hoffman**

*Recording Secretary*

*mjhoffman@gmail.com*

**Nancy Holford**

*Financial Secretary*

*nholf@aol.com*

**Martin Blair**

*Treasurer*

*martinblair2@yahoo.com*

**SteelPower**

Official Newsletter of  
United Steelworkers  
USW Local 9265

Fall 2018

Published quarterly

**Deborah A. Miles**

*Editor/Writer*

**Mario Bruni**

*Layout*

**Contributing Members**

Tara Bentley

Gary Cunningham

Paige Engelhardt

Geraldine Stella

Katie Vorwald



[www.usw9265.org](http://www.usw9265.org)



# Contract negotiations update

Fellow workers, thankfully, due to everyone's hard work and dedication to the labor movement and the future of PEF, PEF has not faced the feared drop in membership and dues that it anticipated earlier this year.

We are all playing a crucial role in ensuring PEF continues to meet and exceed the needs of its membership.

In addition to USW/PEF negotiations, PEF is gearing up to begin its contract negotiations with the governor. Like we have done since PEF's inception, I am confident we will rise to the occasion to help PEF and its members secure greater protections and stability for themselves, their families and the communities they serve.

Since our 2018 conference day, the USW negotiating team has met with PEF four times, most recently on October 3. With new faces and new ideas on both sides, each team wanted to submit refreshed proposals. Neither side is starting from scratch, but a lot has changed since the last proposals were put out in 2017 and 2018, so a thorough review on both sides was warranted.

At this point, both USW and PEF have exchanged conceptualls and contract language largely dealing with non-economic issues. These include proposals for USW to have release time for new employee orientation, changes in the structure of L/M teams, electronic timekeeping, improvements in workweek flexibility for administrative and professional staff, discipline and discharge concerns, developing a workplace violence prevention program, and length of probationary periods, among others.



**YOUR USW LOCAL 9265 CONTRACT TEAM — From left to right; Tara Bentley, Shawn Bobb, Caitlin Janiszewski, Nancy Holford, Melinda (Mindy) Hoffman, Deborah Stayman, Bob Beckwith, Geraldine Stella, and Katerine (Katie) Vorwald.**

The teams agreed on many new dates well through January. The new PEF Chairperson, Vice President Sharon V. DeSilva, expressed a desire to move negotiations along by utilizing our negotiation dates effectively. USW concurred with Ms. DeSilva and stated we share an interest in productive and fruitful meetings, so that we can settle this contract.

At conference day, we presented to you a side by side comparison of the previously proposed health insurance plan through the USW benefit fund and our current benefits with BlueShield of Northeastern New York. We are actively reviewing the details of the plan, and want to be as confident that any plan is a good fit for the needs of our membership.

We are drafting economic proposals

that fully and fairly compensate USW members for all of their hard work for PEF. After all, an investment in staff is an investment in PEF's future success!

Finally, I want to thank the negotiating team for their tireless efforts, ideas, challenges, and reminders that we need to take a break and eat before we get all worn out. As always, you can contact me, anyone on the team, or on the USW Executive Board if you have any questions or concerns. We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming regional membership meetings.

Until then, remain in solidarity.

**— By Katie Vorwald, Chief Negotiator, Vice President, Professional Staff**

## President's Perspective



PEF's recurring theme is about working together and being #UnionStrong. Our theme is, "You can only win with your WHOLE team." We are part of that team, with PEF the employer and PEF the union (See our ad that appears in PEF's convention yearbook on the back page of this newsletter). Unions working together to win the future of the labor movement and fight for the rights of the working class. We should always be looking for ways to raise each other up, not drag each other down.

PEF will be going into its own negotiations with the state soon, another way of winning its future. PEF staff are a big

part of that fight. We put our heart and soul into it, not just because it is our job to do so, but because it is the right thing to do, as one union to another.

The Steelworker Action Team (SWAT) is gearing up for the next action. So, look for SWAT activities coming your way in the near future!

As always, I am proud to be part of USW Local 9265. We really do have the best and the brightest. Every single one of you makes our Local, and PEF, a better union.

In Unity,

*Geraldine*

Geraldine Stella  
President, USW Local 9265

# Democracy, justice and decency at heart of labor movement

The U.S. Supreme Court decision on the Janus v. the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) case will have a seminal effect on our country.

Labor movement leaders have known about and experienced, for a long time, how big money and power is being used not just to cripple, but to decimate public-sector unions across America.

The outcome of the Janus case has already precipitated floods of emails to teachers, nurses and other public-sector workers enticing them to “give yourself a raise” by stopping payment of union dues. The process is easy, with a simple click of an opt-out button. But recipients of these emails need to really consider how that simple click will affect their lives and future generations.

The decision of this case and the anti-union aftermath attacks are a louder wake-up call to union leaders as they strive to inform, unite and retain dues-paying members. Some have realized union survival depends on repairing the union’s image, to make it a desirable and essential worksite partner, during an era of deepening division in America.

It is also a time for all public employees to remember why unions were initially formed, and to evaluate the ways unions have helped employers to pursue human decency.

Drive, energy and conversation is needed today to actively address

worksite issues and to keep workers in their unions.

Workers need to be reminded that public-sector unions fight against privatization and push for legislation that would require transparency at all state agencies. They fight for cost-benefit analysis to ensure taxpayer

Labor unions are the leading force for democratization and progress. They must continue to organize, despite the Janus ruling, because that is the only effective answer to organized greed. When fewer workers have unions, the standard of living falls for everyone and the gap between the rich and the poor grows.

As Andy Stern, the Service Employees International Union president emeritus, once said, “Unions have been the best anti-poverty program that actually worked and did not cost the government a dime.”

Louis Brandeis, a U.S. Supreme Court Justice from 1916-1939, said, “Strong, responsible unions are essential to industrial fair play. Without them the



**S**trong, responsible unions are essential to industrial fair play. Without them the labor bargain is wholly one-sided. The parties to the labor contract must be nearly equal in strength if justice is to be worked out, and this means that the workers must be organized and that their organizations must be recognized by employers as a condition precedent to industrial peace.”

— Louis Brandeis, U.S. Supreme Court Justice 1916-1939

dollars are being spent wisely. They fight to get a safe-staffing bill signed into law. Mostly, they fight to keep the power with workers and protect their jobs.

Without union representation, workers will have no recourse when they are bullied on the job or unjustly written-up by an employer. If you join the right-to-work ranks, be prepared to lose future raises, battles for occupational health and safety issues, solving worksite issues at labor-management meetings, longevity increases, vacation time, and possibly your pension.

This is a cry out to public-sector employees to face the challenges of anti-labor activists and to rise above in collective strength to defeat what will become a powerless working class.

labor bargain is wholly one-sided. The parties to the labor contract must be nearly equal in strength if justice is to be worked out, and this means that the workers must be organized and that their organizations must be recognized by employers as a condition precedent to industrial peace.”

Now is the time for union members to support their organizations and to look past color, creed or class. It is a time for union leaders to be fully cognizant of their members’ needs, and to focus on each others strengths, and not weaknesses, for human decency remains the anchor of the labor movement.

— By Deborah A. Miles, Reprinted commentary from The Albany Times Union, July 31, 2018



**USW LOCAL 9265 CONFERENCE DAY — Cary Eldridge, USW staff representative, swears in our newest members of USW Local 9265 in June, 2018**



# Clara Lemlich Shavelson, Crusading Leader of Labor Rights

Shavelson ignited a huge strike by women garment workers that helped galvanize the labor movement. She went on to fight for suffrage and tenants' rights.

A slight young woman with lively dark eyes pushed her way to the front of a crowd of garment workers at a union meeting in New York City in 1909 and demanded to be heard.

"I am tired of listening to speakers who talk in general terms," the woman, Clara Lemlich Shavelson, declared in Yiddish, as the audience lifted her onto the platform. "I move that we go on a general strike!"

The crowd roared its approval, according to news reports at the time. Male union officials had cautioned against a strike, arguing it would be too difficult and too costly, especially for young women working in the factories.

But the day after the speech, thousands of young women were among the garment workers who formed the Uprising of the 20,000, a milestone action in a swelling labor movement that made workplaces safer, workdays shorter and wages higher.

Shavelson, already a battle-worn veteran of the movement at 23, has pushed to the margins of history books, sometimes remembered as an anonymous "wisp of a girl." But she was an influential woman in a labor movement dominated by men, advancing feminist ideas and later grass-roots tactics, like consumer boycotts, that were ahead of her time.

The Uprising of the 20,000 ended when many shops agreed to pay higher wages, adopt a 52-hour week and recognize the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union on the factory floor. (One holdout was the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, where an infamous fire killed 146 workers a year later. The male union negotiators had ignored the striking women's safety concerns, letting factories off the hook for conditions inside.)

The strike also had a different kind of impact, as a weekly paper noted in 1910:

"These young, inexperienced girls have proved that women can strike, and strike successfully."

By the time she spoke that day, at Cooper Union in Manhattan, she had been arrested 17 times and beaten by police and company guards, who broke six of her ribs. She had hidden her injuries from her parents, fearing they would forbid her from returning to the picket line.

Shavelson would go on to become a radical across causes, galvanizing working-class women to fight for suffrage, battling landlords and evictions in the 1920s and '30s, and leading housewives in a struggle for lower food and rent prices during the Great Depression. (The New York Times, for instance, reported on a "boycott of high-priced meat spread by militant housewives" in 1935 that was organized by Shavelson.)

Described by contemporaries as warm and vivacious, with a nearly absolutist certainty about what was right, Shavelson viewed every aspect of her life through a political lens.

"When you don't work, and you don't work in the movement, you're nothing," she was quoted as saying in "Common Sense and a Little Fire" (1995), a book by Annelise Orleck about Shavelson and three other female labor leaders.

Shavelson was born Clara Lemlich in the Ukrainian village of Gorodok in 1886. When she arrived in the United States

at age 16, she was already committed to the Marxist revolutionary movement that had begun in Russia. She found work sewing dresses in a cramped factory in New York City and threw herself into learning. A 1954 article in Jewish Life Magazine detailed how after 11-hour workdays, she read Russian

classics at the local public library and studied Marxist theory.

Shavelson dedicated herself early on to helping working women, and after the 1909 strike she began to see the women's vote as an essential tool.

"The manufacturer has a vote; the bosses have votes; the foremen have votes;



Clara Lemlich Shavelson led a labor movement dominated by men, advancing feminist ideas that were ahead of her time.

the inspectors have votes. The working girl has no vote," she wrote in Good Housekeeping in 1912. "When she asks to have the building in which she must work made clean and safe, the officials do not have to listen."

Clara married Joe Shavelson in the early 1910s, and they had three children, prompting her to shift her focus to the political and social conditions under which the wives and mothers around her lived.

She pursued a vision of motherhood that was almost unheard-of at the time, bringing her children with her to Socialist meetings as soon as they were old enough to walk and organizing rent strikes that got her family evicted from at least one home.

She and other working-class women in her Brooklyn neighborhood formed tenants' unions, fighting for rent control and taking militant action, like pouring boiling water from teakettles onto those who arrived to carry out evictions.

Shavelson joined the Communist Party U.S.A. around 1926, and she remained loyal to it throughout her life, despite mounting evidence of Stalin's murderous crimes against his people. After a trip to the Soviet Union in 1951, she praised Soviet health care and education. She was subsequently summoned to Washington to testify, and her passport was revoked. It was only years later that she admitted, reluctantly, that she had been wrong about the Soviet Union.

Shavelson died on July 25, 1982, in California at 96.

Near the end of her life, she moved into the Jewish Home for the Aged in Los Angeles, where she organized the nurses and orderlies, according to "Common Sense."

"How much worse could these conditions get?" Shavelson, then 83, asked hesitant staffers before they successfully unionized. "You'd be crazy not to join a union."

— *By Zoe Greenberg. Reprinted from The New York Times, September 2018*



Thousands of young women were among the garment workers who formed the uprising of the 20,000, a strike intended to improve labor conditions in factories.

# Our Founding Principles

**The work of Steelworkers Organizing Committee begin in 1942 with a set of founding principles - values that still guide us today:**

**To unite** in one organization, regardless of creed, color or nationality, all workmen and working women eligible for membership.

**To increase** the wages, and improve the conditions of employment of our members by legislation, joint agreements or other legitimate means.

**To endeavor** to obtain by joint negotiation or legislative enactment a six-hour day and five-day week.

**To strive** for a minimum wage scale for all members of our organization.

**To provide** for the education of our children by lawfully

prohibiting their employment until they have reached eighteen years of age

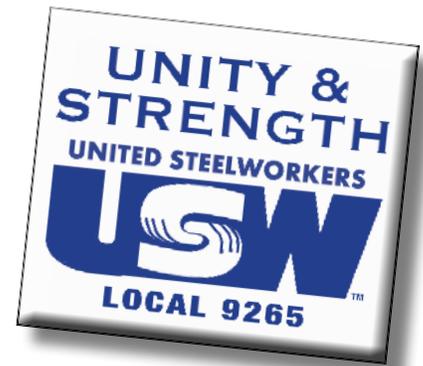
**To secure** equitable statutory old-age pension, workman's compensation and unemployment insurance laws.

**To enforce** existing just laws and to secure the repeal of those which are unjust.

**To secure** by legislative enactment, laws protecting the limbs, lives and health of our members; (laws) establishing our right to organize; (laws) preventing the employment of privately armed guards during labor disputes and such other legislation as will be beneficial.







**WE'RE HERE TO STAY** — Supporting the Worker's Unity Capital Region coalition of labor unions rally in Albany, June, 2018.

**We Support Our Contract Team!**

[www.icehell.com/USW9265](http://www.icehell.com/USW9265)

Let's focus on our game so we can help you win yours  
*Fair Contract Now*

**UNITY AND STRENGTH — USW**  
Local 9265 members at the Conference Day reception In Albany, June 2018.



**You can only win with your WHOLE team!**

**INVEST in your FUTURE — INVEST in PEF staff**



**Geraldine Stella**  
President

**Katherine Vorwald**  
Vice President

**Tara Bentley**  
Vice President

**Melinda Hoffman**  
Recording Secretary

**Nancy Holford**  
Financial Secretary

**Martin Blair**  
Treasurer

PEF Delegates, visit our convention booth for more information