

has accounts. That was what finally brought Colin Care to the table: the fact that they knew that, if they did not go along with the desire of the workers in Jersey to join the union, they would have a whole New York metro-area fight. I think that has been a tremendous ingredient in the success of the whole campaign, the willingness of the workers in other areas to even do work stoppages in support of the Jersey workers. If we continue on that road, I think we will have a very good chance of winning this fight.

Q: What do you find are the main problems on the job that are driving more and more workers to want to join a union?

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We have had African-American members who were very supportive in the Jersey campaign. An Asian worker came out and made visits, and even though she didn't speak Spanish she was very excited about bringing these folks into the union.

You need to understand that many of these janitors work for the same contractors that the union members work for in New York. So they can see organizing is in their self interest, since if these contractors can get away with paying \$6 an hour in Jersey, then it's just a matter of time before they start bidding for work in Manhattan at low wages too. So that is a tremendous factor in the recruitment and training of our members who are already in the union to go out there and organize.



Q: Given what you have said about how often some of these firms violate labor law, what do you say to workers who have a genuine fear that if they get involved with a union they'll be fired?

HF: The question always comes up in the first organizing meeting. We do organizing through committees. Research shows that it works, if you have committed members. One of the very first things we go over with the committee members is that possibility. We don't hide it from them. We say we will fight it. We have a battery of lawyers and supporters who fight for the workers, and we have been very successful in retaining people in our campaigns. But it is a cost of a campaign. So we tell people this happens, we need to be prepared. And when it does happen we fight back very hard to right the wrong. We make sure that they understand that the more workers involved and the more we have a multi-employer kind of activity out in the open, like a strike or rally, then in the end the better off we are. The stakes are much higher for the company when the campaign is very public, when we tell people exactly what we are going to do, and when people already express in writing and verbally exactly what they are going to do, it's better than trying to have a secretive campaign where it would be hard to prove that people were actually involved because nobody knows that they have been part of the effort.

Part of the success of J4J is having the workers in motion. The time between a worker first saying, "OK, I'd like to join the union" and taking an action like a strike is very short in our campaigns. It requires a tremendous amount of effort. Strikes are the method that we organize through. No campaign in J4J has been done without committing workers to strike. The strikes are against unfair labor practices, which unfortunately these contractors are too prone to do. As soon as people express interest in the union, managers and supervisors commit these violations, and that's when the workers have the opportunity to strike and to be able to go public with their demands. These are not economic strikes.

Q: How big a threat to Local 32BJ's efforts are company unions?

HF: They present a threat because 32BJ dominates the market. This is both a geographic and an industry market in the sense that within the NY metro area contractors grow and die, and building owners operate across the region. Because prevailing wage levels are determined by our master agreement, there is always the possibility that a contractor can say, "Well, I can cover myself, because this is largely a union region. Then I can make a bid on a building and say I have a union." They do that by going to other unions that are willing to negotiate contracts with wages that are far below the prevailing wage of the 32BJ agreement. Very often these are "independent unions" like District 6 or Local 713, which are not in the AFL-CIO.

But, frankly, there are sometimes even AFL-affiliated unions who, in their need to increase membership or because they have been contacted by the workers, may end up negotiating contracts. Because they don't have our industrial strength, their contracts are site-by-site contracts and can only settle for very low wages. So one of the issues we are raising in the AFL-CIO, particularly for janitors, is that we have to have a discussion about jurisdiction. It doesn't help when we have other unions with substandard contracts, it doesn't help when those workers are not in 32BJ. It actually undermines what we are trying to do, and it is not fair for those workers either. We say the same works for us: we do not organize in manufacturing and we do not organize people in retail stores, even if we represent the stores' maintenance workers in the mall. Because we feel that we will not be able to secure a decent contract for them, because the bulk of our membership is not in that industry. I think that that's one of the issues we need to be pushing in the AFL: how can we have industry-based organizing that acknowledges which unions have the capacity because of their density and because of the companies that they represent to organize workers and bring wages up. As opposed to just organizing workers and not be able to increase wages because they don't have real industry power.

a contractor to provide that living wage. If we don't engage the owners and managers into accepting their social responsibility over what the contractors do, our organizing does not succeed.

The members learn that both through formal training and in practice, by participating on the street in

within SEIU; we have had discussions within 32BJ and they more or less reflect that view. But our president, Mike Fishman, is the one involved in the New Alliance and he can talk about this much more.

Q: Has the New York City Central Labor Council been very involved in Justice for Janitors?

HF: The CLC has been very involved in providing a general framework of support, especially when we have confronted a difficult fight. For example, when a contractor goes union an

Q: Which of those 4 demands do employers resist most?

HF: Part-time work and health benefits are the ones that they fight to the bone. They claim that part-time work has been imposed by the building owners who want to save energy costs because of buildings operating just part of the day. They even claim that workers want part-time work, which I don't believe at all. Nobody has come to me and said, "Oh, don't work me full-time!" I think it's a way for them to save money. But those are things which we have been able to move in other cities and we are very determined to move it back to what it was. This industry was once full-time and directly contracted by the building owners. Then they started subcontracting, and that's when it deteriorated to the point that it went to part-time. One reason it went part-time is that nobody in her right mind would be willing to have a full-time job that pays so little. That's part of the problem: we have to make these good jobs, and going full-time is part of it

Q: A few weeks ago, students at Harvard staged a 3-week sit-in at the university's administration building to demand a living wage for janitors there. This drew national attention to the plight of building service workers at a university with a \$20 billion endowment. Events like that, and also the Seattle and Quebec City demonstrations around globalization have raised hopes that youth are getting more concerned about social justice. What do you think unions can and will do in coming years to try to attract more young people?

HF: I think we need to put the message out there, and match that message with the reality of our commitment and resources, that the new civil rights movement for the 21st century is fighting for low-wage service workers, many of whom are either people of color or immigrants. And that's where the next fight for civil rights needs to happen. And I think that, if we do that, we're going to have much more of an ability to attract young people. Many of these cleaners are very, very young. That message needs to be out there more, not only for J4J, but for other service workers. Look who does the hotel work – it's mostly young workers. Look who cleans buildings –