

Sal Rosselli, President
SEIU UHW

Dear Sal,

I am responding to your comments about the recommendations of the Organizing Review Committee that you addressed to the Executive Committee. I thought I would lay out the committee process that we have followed for the last year and a half, try to explain the key recommendations, and then respond to some of your general critique of the union.

In September, 2006, President Stern named an Organizing Review Committee and four work groups: 1) Review of 04-08/Planning 08-12; 2) 21st Century Alternative Models; 3) Global; and 4) Organizing Technology. It was the broadest and most transparent process ever used to analyze SEIU's growth work, and we appreciated the involvement of more than 40 local union leaders and staff, as well as the International Union leaders and key organizing staff.

Together, this group led a 15 month process to review SEIU's organizing program which by its results and by most people's analysis is by far the most successful organizing program in modern history. With a ten year history of work by locals and the International, we were aware that SEIU had tried many different approaches, many extremely successful, but we recognized that certainly we had our share of campaigns that did not achieve the results we all wanted.

The data we collected and the analysis we openly conducted and shared was comprehensive, looking at all of the numbers: numbers of workers organized, by local, division, international in each year and each four year convention cycle; the cost of the organizing, again by local, division, and international; the type of campaign, whether worker organizing only, political involvement in gaining recognition, comprehensive campaigning, etc. We analyzed campaign technology in an attempt to provide the best advice for future campaigns. We analyzed many different theories of organizing, alternative forms of organization, and studied the global work of the union since the 2004 convention. All of this was used by work group and committee members to formulate the best set of proposals to the union, and I was proud that we were honest, factual, and both cognizant of our success but open to any ideas on how to improve.

At each Executive Committee and Executive Board meeting of the International from November, 2006 through the present, we have given interim reports, had discussions, answered questions, and engaged in debate. Each division has had extensive concurrent discussions about many of the ideas and implication of those ideas over this period.

In December, 2007, our final draft report and recommendations were delivered to the Executive Committee, which continued to make comments and then adopted the report without dissent. The report and recommendations will now go to the Executive Board for discussion, debate, and proposed adoption. We are proud that we openly attempted to

turn over every rock, put every piece of information out, and wrestle to the ground many issues that have been debated for years..

For the 8 year period before 1996 (data before 1988 is not available), we organized 30,000 workers per year on average. For 1997-2007, we organized 96,000 workers per year on average.

Our conclusions included the fact that we had been more successful in organizing over the last ten years than any other union in modern U.S. history. Over 1 million workers were organized, a number that does **not** include affiliations. While hugely successful, the committee's belief is that we can and must do more. Ninety percent of health care and property service workers are still unorganized, and 2/3rds of public workers don't have the benefit of a union.

As we looked at the history of the cycles of SEIU organizing over the last ten years, analyzed the numbers, campaigns, methodologies and costs, an outline for the future became much clearer.

Our first phase, adopted at the 1996 convention, was the local union program phase. Most of the effort of the international union was devoted to getting the local program up and running, working on the 10-15-20%, and infusing the union with hundreds of new organizers, organizing directors and member organizers. There were some major campaigns, but most of the effort was building the program bottom up with local unions.

In the next phase, adopted at our 2000 convention, we strengthened the local union program, added division programs, and vastly expanded our industry focus by creating the Unity Fund. The concept was simple -- take a successful local union program and add major campaigns involving regional and national employers that required resources and coordination beyond the abilities of any single local.

There were now two major organizing programs, local and industry, which sometimes intersected but often did not. Locals made their own plans often independent of other locals or the division, and the local leaders who made up the division leadership bodies planned campaigns often independently of many locals.

It is that basic analysis that led the committee to its major recommendation. In order to build a powerful union in our industries, to be more effective and efficient, to take advantage of the changing environment, to give more workers a voice in their lives, and to raise standards nationally, not in just limited geographies, we had to have one unified organizing plan in each division -- an SEIU Healthcare plan that includes every local, the division and the international; an SEIU Property Services plan and Public Services plan with united locals and shared responsibility for execution. We believe that we can build those plans. We are already witnessing local leaders coming together and taking on the challenge of organizing their industry so we can raise standards for all members and workers.

This requires SEIU to operate differently. It means unifying in the whole, rather than everyone going their separate way. We are asking local leaders to take unprecedented authority, and with it the responsibility, to create national industry divisions that can organize substantially more workers, and begin to meet the aspirations of workers throughout the country.

Once that plan is developed, it only makes sense to devote our resources -- our members, our bargaining, our employer relations, all of our energy and talent, and our money to implement that democratically adopted and shared plan. There is no cookie cutter approach and we expect each division to have different plans that reflect the different realities of our members and employers. A plan may include organizing in the geography of every local in the same year, or it may bear down on some geographies in one year and others the next.

But here's the catch 22. You can't develop the plan until there is agreement to do so. And without the plan any debate about its implications for a particular geography is carried out without the necessary information. What we believe our work over the last 11 years has shown is this. If every local goes its own way, we will not take advantage of the chance of our lifetime, we will not build the national union we are capable of building, and we will leave millions of workers without a union and without a chance to raise their standards. If some locals passionately work to build a national plan and others just want to take care of their own local, we will have a far less successful plan and will accomplish far less for workers.

For health care workers this has a huge historical context. SEIU and other unions like 1199 that are now part of SEIU have had a dream for 25 years of building a national health care union, and that opportunity is now quite achievable if we have the vision and courage to put first the long term interests of our members and the 90% of workers who are not yet union.

To allow individual leaders or local unions to choose to not participate or be held accountable to democratic divisional decision making processes where every major local union is represented would return us to the era of previous leaders who felt they could create a union that was for "Just Us" and not for "Justice for All." The history of the labor movement is littered with the failure of leaders who practiced an exclusive, elitist brand of unionism that served the needs of leaders or a narrow base of members in a single company, geography, craft, gender, race, or ethnic group.

I reject that any leader or local is so exceptional or their ideas are so correct that they can defy democracy and let other workers fend for themselves.

It is difficult, but we believed essential to the workers in our industries that we choose to be democratic, collectivize our decision making, and ask local leaders and members to see themselves as industry and divisional leaders.

What this recommendation does is ask local leaders to do exactly what we ask our members to do everyday. Unify for greater strength, come together as a collective so that we can exercise our power which is so much greater together than separate, participate in a democratic process, engage in discussion and debate, and when a decision is made, carry it out.

This proposal results in the international union placing substantial authority, resources, and control in local leaders in divisions. It requires the trust of the international officers in local leaders, and it takes local leaders trusting in themselves and each other.

Just as there needs to be one unified plan in each division, there needs then to be one unified plan for SEIU. There is work to do in geographies that may not be the priority of division plans, like the South and Southwest. There is work to do in cross-divisional employers, like private equity firms and contracting companies. The committee envisions an implementation process that gets us to one unified plan, with component parts that include a unified plan for each division, and with all of our collective resources put to carrying out that plan.

There are a number of other important recommendations of the committee, but for brevity's sake, I will raise them as they were raised in your comments, which I turn to now.

I reject that the results of the plan are to centralize and control decision making by the international. In fact, these recommendations result in significant decentralization and the placing of authority by the international in local leaders in their role as leaders of their division. I also believe that the recommendations are supported by more data than we have ever collected about any area in SEIU.

Although you refer to the report as cheerleading, we did organize over a million new workers, I am proud of that, and you should be too. Over one million workers made huge sacrifices, took great risks, and succeeded against great odds. Their success is unprecedented, and a tribute to sacrifices of thousands of organizers and local unions leaders. I am sorry you cannot acknowledge their selfless, unprecedented, and heroic work.

If we wanted to just cheerlead, we would beat our drum, change nothing, and rest on our laurels. But none of us can be proud or rest and not honestly confront the problem of millions of health care workers both in California and the rest of the country who desperately need a union so that they can raise their standards. The union movement's track record makes clear that they are not going to get one if we keep doing things the way we are.

Your attack on Change to Win is unfounded and I have heard you propose no alternatives on how to stop the slide of the percentage of private sector workers in unions. We participated in the creation of CtW just two years ago to try and not just sit by and watch the labor movement grow smaller not stronger. I think much progress has been made

after some very tough choices. You were involved in the leadership group that debated how to change the labor movement, and I believe, supported the union's decision.

Is the mere creation of CTW enough? Of course not, and we need to do more. Part of the analysis done by the committee shows this: SEIU was 8% of the labor movement in 1996, 12.5% today, and if the same trend lines continue into the future, SEIU will be 20% of the labor movement in 2012. If SEIU grows and the rest of the movement stagnates or falls, that's what will happen. This is not acceptable, and the committee recommendation is that we have to work to make CtW successful, that we cannot be a union island in a nonunion sea, either in our own industries by geography or in our country.

To use a quote about membership figures that originally came from an AFL-CIO press release as your point of attack is a bit weak. Six of the seven CtW unions have had net growth, some for the first time in a long time, none enough, but I certainly didn't expect overnight success. To compare the last two years with the two years following passage of the Wagner Act is a bit of a stretch, and there is no alternative model that I have seen you practice to date. But do get the facts right. We pay less than half of what we paid to the AFL-CIO to CtW, so in fact we are putting far less resource into CtW and more into our divisions and locals.

Your attack on our home care members in California is shameful. Workers fought for years to get the union, and they are proud of it. Polling of those members' attitudes about the union shows approval ratings higher than most other locals, including your own. Have they reached where they need and want to be? Of course not. The disunity in California and the failure of UHW to work with the division and other locals coupled with the purposeful leaks to the press to discredit SEIU all hurts workers. It will take a united effort to make the improvements and to raise the standards to where we all want them to be. But to denigrate the homecare workers' struggles, not recognize the dignity and respect the union has brought, and not recognize real progress is sad. I join most of the union in honoring their work.

As for our efforts to help the 300,000 workers in the multi-service industry to organize, we seem to have a fundamental disagreement. I believe those workers should be organized. And to date our work has begun the process for the 15,000 members organized into SWU to see their standards improve. Up until our decision to create SWU many local unions, including yours, accepted the nonunion status of these workers even when they worked for subcontractors to our own employers. SEIU does not believe in two-tier unionism, and felt that the growth of these multi-service providers as nonunion operations was a threat not only to the workers involved but to our members' standards, even if some local leaders did not want to help them organize.

In the first SWU contract, workers got 18% increases, again not enough, but 18% more than they had as nonunion workers as you left them for years. Workers got increases in the amount towards health care that the employer paid, and most have pensions for the first time, which would never have been accomplished under the strategy of accepting their nonunion status. A lot more is needed, but since these workers now have a union,

they can continue to make improvements into the future, and if the organizing is successful they can continue to gain power with their employers and be much stronger. What a shame that you left those workers nonunion for so many years and that you effectively enforced the nonunion standard on them. If it had been up to you they would continue to suffer without hope. It is more shameful that you derisively criticize their courage for joining a union and beginning the climb upwards towards a better life.

The committee looked at all of the organizing expenditures over the last ten years. One fact is that organizing cost per worker doubled between 1997-2000 and 2001-2004. Another is that a third of the local union 20% resource is not being spent. Finally, major local unions that have huge power to use their own resources, bargaining, and political strength to lead our organizing program have not done so, leaving workers in the entire industry to pay the price. Two thirds of workers were organized in campaigns that had *more than* local resources in them. Broad generalizations that do not match the facts may make good rhetoric but defy reality.

We made a number of recommendations that try to get at working together within the union to be more efficient and effective. One is that we need to invest more attention to research and development, share information across divisions, and believe it takes a partnership and a plan to meet the needs of the not yet union workers in our industries.

The facts don't support a general conclusion that local, divisional or national strategies are consistently more effective or efficient; all need work and far better coordination. You also appreciate that a major function of Unity Funds is to develop the models that reduce the cost for all local unions to unite more workers, as we have seen in homecare and child care.

Looking at the results of UHW's local program and your expenditures, it seems like rationally you would be spending more time examining your own record and looking for a more efficient and effective approach for UHW. In the last three years, your 20% organizing allocation has totaled \$31,208,705. With \$31,208,705 UHW organized 4,789 workers. Every member you organized cost an average of \$6,516 per worker, more than four times the national average.

In the five years prior to Local 399's merger into UHW, Local 399 organized 18,260 workers.

In the three years post-merger since you have taken responsibility for their organizing program 935 workers have been organized.

Last year UHW organized only 888 workers. As a result, health care workers in California have less strength this year than last. As the industry grows and the number of workers who have a union does not, workers' strength diminishes. The labor movement is rife with examples of once strong unions, with strong standards, that allowed density to slip and then saw increasing attacks on their standards. Will California health care be the next example?

For the past two years, the Florida Healthcare Union, operating in a “right to work for less” state with an SEIU membership of less than 10,000 healthcare workers, helped more hospital workers organize than you did in California. Last year, the SEIU local in Nevada, another right to work for less state, organized more health care workers than you did. Taking your approach to organizing and applying it to the division, other local unions, or the international would be a huge mistake. UHW has a wealth of great members, huge resources, tremendous political power, and why your organizing record is so minimal is worth a discussion.

The committee did a thorough analysis of the work of SEIU’s global program. Our conclusions are that multinational employers are becoming larger and stronger and are dominant in property services now and moving into health care and the public sector. We need to join with unions in other countries to organize these companies, believing that we can better confront their power together, raising the standards of workers in many countries, and fight the race to the bottom. The organizing hub recommendation is the most effective way to organize that work.

I believe in debate and believe it results in a better way forward. I don’t think attacks on members or other leaders is what workers expect of us. I don’t think grinding your axe as a major leader of SEIU about a wide range of issues not discussed in the report is necessarily intended to foster real discussion.

As I said before, we have had a discussion and debate over the last 15 months with a desire to make the best organizing program in the country better, and up until now I do not remember hearing any of these concerns brought by you or UHW representatives to the Committee.

I am glad to have the debate in whatever forum and in whatever style you choose. I would prefer that it start in the Executive Committee and Executive Board where you are a key leader, and then at the convention, and I would prefer that we leave accusations and unfounded conclusions out of it. But at the end of the day, it’s your choice.

I believe that you have a great contribution to make to build this great union. The members and the history of Local 250 and now UHW are so great. It is unfortunate I think that you choose to sit on the outside and throw stones, rather than being in the center and helping to lead our union. Again, it’s your choice.

Tom Woodruff, Chair
SEIU Organizing Review Committee