Proposition 1A is the Best Choice for Seattle’s Children

By Karen Strickland

Local voters are on the threshold of a truly historic decision that could help launch more of Seattle’s youngest citizens toward a successful future. Unfortunately, this opportunity has been clouded by City Hall’s decision to place two positive programs for children in opposition on the ballot. Voters can only choose one of them.

The preschool and early childhood education proposals on the November ballot promise the civic benefit of a more prosperous city that nurtures its children, and implements its progressive values into public policies that reduce crime and poverty—keeping Seattle a place where our children can grow up strong and build their own lives and careers.

Members of the American Federation of Teachers-Washington and SEIU 925 are partners in this undertaking. At both the state and national level, these unions have long been supporters of early education as one of the policies essential to providing our earliest learners their best start possible in life. Did you know that 85% of brain development occurs by age 3?

We also know that our existing child care system, which today serves 30,000 of Seattle’s children, is facing a crisis and needs different solutions.

Our efforts—along with many allies who have come together as the Yes for Early Success coalition—have focused on addressing three key challenges facing early childhood education in Seattle.

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Exclusive Interview with WSLC President Jeff Johnson

Election 2014: “We can make a good start.”

By Mike Andrew

While “there’s no easy path to take back the State Senate,” Washington State Labor Council (WSLC) President and PSARA member Jeff Johnson told me in a recent interview, “at least we can make a good start in turning the state around.”

PSARA has an important role to play in making that happen, he continued, because our members’ “life experiences and their membership in an organization like PSARA make them valuable voices out in their communities.”

“Can Democrats take back control of the State Senate?” I asked.

“If I answered on the basis of the primary,” Johnson replied, “the chances look horrible. The primary turnout was so low, and among union members even lower than the average.

“But we can see things starting to turn around. I’d give us a 50/50 chance. We have a good shot at two, possibly three seats.

Continued on Page 10

PSARA Legislative Conference

By PSARA Government Relations Co-Chair Chuck Richards

PSARA members will discuss our legislative strategy after the 2014 elections and adopt the PSARA legislative agenda at our bi-annual Legislative Conference. The gathering will be on Wednesday, November 12th, from 10 am to 12 noon at UFCW Local 21 on 5030 First Ave. S., Seattle. A light breakfast will be served. Parking is available.

Our invited speaker at this year’s conference is Pam Crone, returning for her third year with PSARA as our lobbyist. Pam will offer her views on the likely politics and outcomes of the 2015 session.

PSARA members attending the meeting will have the opportunity to discuss the recommendations from the Executive Board as to what should be PSARA’s priorities for the 2015 session. Once our legislative agenda is approved, we will break into table discussions by legislative districts to plan appointment with legislators before the session begins on January 12th.

See Page 7 for more details.
Education Workshop in Bellingham October 5th

PSARA’s Education Committee chairperson, Mark McDermott, will be presenting his interactive workshop, Making the American Dream Real for Everyone, in Bellingham on October 5. Mark’s workshop focuses on using our history to help chart a progressive path forward for those of us who care about building communities based on hope and opportunity for all.

The workshop inspires us to overcome the skepticism and cynicism that serves to paralyze so many good people and to be active participants in creating a better community, a better nation and a better world.

Mark is literally traveling from coast to coast and many points in between as invitations pour in from people who have attended his workshop and decided they wanted to present Mark’s work in their own communities. See more details about the Bellingham workshop on the back page of this newsletter in the Meetings & Events section.

Vote Yes for Buses - But We Can't Stop There

By Katie Wilson

In the November general election, Seattle voters will have one last chance to save our Metro system. Seattle Transportation Benefit District Proposition 1, if passed, will raise approximately $45 million per year to preserve most bus service in the city of Seattle and on some intercity routes by means of a 0.1% sales tax increase and a $60 vehicle license fee.

The Transit Riders Union urges you to vote YES on Proposition 1. Thousands of Seattle and King County residents depend on Metro buses every day, and we cannot afford to lose our service.

Climate change is accelerating, and our planet can't afford more cars on the road. At the same time, this is not a permanent solution. The proposed measure pushes the burden of funding public transit further onto working and poor people, leaves transit riders in the lurch throughout the rest of King County, and contributes to the fragmentation of what should be a unified regional mass transit system.

Even if the ballot measure passes in November, public transit in Seattle and King County will remain woefully underfunded. Fares are too high, service is not frequent or extensive enough, drivers’ schedules have been tightened to the point where they don’t have time to use the bathroom.

The Transit Riders Union is therefore calling upon the Seattle City Council to approve, in addition, two more progressive funding options for public transit: an Employee Hours Tax on business and a Commercial Parking Fee increase. This funding may be used to:

- Reverse the September 2014 service cuts or restore comparable service for those whose mobility has been reduced by the first round of cuts
- Contribute to the chronically underfunded Human Services Ticket Program
- Contribute to a buy-down of Metro’s new Low Income Reduced Fare from $1.50 to $1.00 or $1.25, as would have happened had King County’s Proposition 1 passed in April
- Roll back fare increases, making public transit more affordable and attractive for all
- Fix the schedules to improve drivers’ working conditions
- Increase, improve and modernize Night Owl Service
- Add new service

Please join us in the fight for affordable and reliable public transit for all!

Katie Wilson is General Secretary of the Transit Rider’s Union and a PSARA member.
Honoring our Educators

By Robby Stern

My wife, Dina, has been a school nurse at a middle school in Renton for five years. Previously, she was at the outpatient pediatric clinic at Harborview for 20 years, and worked at several other jobs as a pediatric nurse and labor and delivery nurse. She is an amazingly caring human being and we are lucky to have her delivering health care to our children.

All of this is an introduction to why I am so angry at the “educational reformers” who attack our teachers and our public schools.

Dina is a veteran nurse. She has seen it all! She has first-hand knowledge of the physical and emotional challenges confronted by the children in our schools. She is deeply aware of the obstacles faced by students, teachers and staff in the schools.

While talking over the dinner table in the evening, sometimes my mouth and the mouth of my father in law (who lives with us) literally drop open at the complexity of the day to day challenges faced by our educators.

Bill Gates, Arnie Duncan and all the “experts” and politicians who think they know best should spend a school year in our schools (not one of their expensive private schools) and really learn the challenges faced by people who are devoting their lives to public education. The Seattle Times editorial writers frequently discuss how the legislature failed our children by not requiring the use of test scores to evaluate teachers.

Have any of these journalists spent really significant time in these schools?

Lack of resources is obviously a huge issue. We need additional caring people in the schools to help. Besides smaller class sizes, we need social services to provide support to kids in the schools as well as providing support to parents to assist them in assisting their kids.

Teaching is incredibly stressful. Teachers put in much more time than just the time they spend in the classroom. They also make significant financial sacrifices, as does my wife, in purchasing supplies that are needed and are not covered through the school budgets.

I believe there needs to be a sabbatical system where after certain number of years, teachers can get time off with pay to recharge. Some might say that they get summers off but because of teacher pay scales, many, if not most teachers have to find other work during the summer and besides that, the summer break is really not sufficient to recharge. The school year for most school employees finishes at the end of June and they are back planning and working by the beginning of August.

We should be honoring our educators, not by just simply saying “we honor our educators”. Words are cheap and the politicians and corporate types (in which I include the Seattle Times Editorial Board) can talk but they do not put their money where their mouth is.

The Washington Supreme Court ruled in the McCleary case that the Washington state constitution declared funding of K-12 education the paramount constitutional duty of the state. We can anticipate that a large number and perhaps a majority of legislators will declare that they have to cut social and health programs to meet the constitutional mandate.

If these elected leaders think we will make progress in educating our children by cutting health care and social services to increase education funding, they are wrong. Our kids and families need additional services, not less services, in order for the kids to be able to come to school ready and able to learn and be successful.

The corporate educational reformers could volunteer to give up their tax breaks that the legislature has handed out like candy in a candy store and join the effort to close tax loopholes. They could fight (like a few of them have done) for a fairer taxing system, making the wealthy pay their fair share. But instead, we can look forward to the next Seattle Times editorial that shamelessly carries the water for their owner, by advocating for the repeal of the Washington inheritance tax. Many of these corporate types do everything they can to avoid taxes while criticizing our educators. (Microsoft has gazillions of $s in off shore accounts!)

Thank you teachers, administrators and support staff in our public schools. Through your work, you truly are trying to make our communities a better place to live.

Upcoming Legislative Session

PSARA will be active in the 2015 legislative session. Many critical decisions are on the docket including the passage of a state operating budget, transportation budget and capital budget to cover the period from July, 2015 to the end of June, 2017. PSARA’s lobbyist, Pam Crone, will be our eyes and ears in Olympia, advocating on our
Union Busters Busted in Sequim, Shelton, Chelan

By Tim Wheeler

Sequim, WA.—This town in the rain shadow of the Olympic Mountains is the nation’s best place to retire. And since the Sequim City Council voted unanimously Sept. 8 to kill two anti-union “Right to Work (for less)” propositions it is even more retiree-friendly.

Of Sequim’s 73 employees, 50 are union members mostly represented by the Teamsters.

Ted Miller, a Sequim councilman, told his colleagues during the regular Sequim City Council meeting, “It would be hard for any proponents to come up with initiatives that violate more statutes and more court decisions….They are grossly invalid.”

Mayor Candace Pratt then called the question. Even the lone conservative councilmember voted against the proposition. On that same day, the Commissioners of the City of Shelton also voted unanimously to kill identical anti-union measures. The measures died in Chelan, east of the Cascades, for lack of enough valid signatures.

In all three towns, it was the Olympia-based Freedom Foundation that bankrolled the union-busting scam. They in turn are backed by the American Legislative Exchange Council and ALEC’s new spinoff, the American City and County Exchange (ACCE). All are funded by the billionaire Koch brothers. Freedom Foundation (FF) and Initiative and Referendum Institute (IRI) Attorney, Shawn Newman, have filed a lawsuit against Sequim to force the measures onto the ballot.

But Sequim City Attorney, Craig Ritchie, responded, “These proposed initiatives do not meet the requirements of state statutes….They interfere with and coerce administrative action.” They “usurp or infringe upon a power granted to the governing body of the City of Sequim.”

He warned that the propositions also put Sequim at risk “of being forced to commit unfair labor practices.”

During the public comment period, Clallam MoveOn co-chair, Sam Woods, himself a disabled IBEW member, told the council, “For outside groups to come in here and try to subjugate the citizens of this city to the billionaires back in Wichita, Kansas, or in Olympia, it offends me.”

Karen Parker, a hospice nurse and a Sequim resident, said, “These measures are a power grab by a rightwing outfit not based in Sequim…I do not want to see my tax money wasted on frivolous causes that have no benefit to me or my community.”

Backers of the proposition denounced “union bosses” who they claimed are bankrupting Sequim with exorbitant wages and benefits. One speaker raved that opponents are “communist sympathizers” and unemployment checks are “nothing more than taking from one group and giving to another.”

Rex Habner is paid $277 monthly serving as President and Business Manager of IBEW Local 997 that represents the employees of Clallam County Public Utility District. Habner told the Council, “I negotiate contracts. I’m a full time lineman. I’m the ‘Big Boss’ you just heard about.”

The aim of these union-busting measures, he added, “is to gain a greater chokehold on the people who work for the city, to lower their standard of living.”

Later, Habner told this reporter the council’s vote to kill the propositions is a “win.” At the same time, he warned that FF has filed a lawsuit that seeks to force the two measures onto the November ballot.

“They’ll be back. We have to be ready. It goes back to the Koch brothers. The more little cities they can get to approve these anti-union measures, the more pressure they can put on Olympia to enact ‘Right-to-Work (for less)’ for the entire State of Washington.”

Tim Wheeler is a writer and former editor of People’s World, and a PSARA member.
We urgently need a paradigm shift in our concept of the purposes and practices of education. We need to leave behind the concept of education as a passport to more money and higher status in the future and replace it with a concept of education as an ongoing process that enlists the tremendous energies and creativity of schoolchildren in rebuilding and respiriting our communities and our cities now, in the present.---Grace Lee Boggs

Robby Stern once asked me, "If it’s not about jobs, what’s education for?"
The question stunned me, for a second or two...

My dad, an immigrant from Okinawa when he was 17, had learned enough English (and the dialect used in Hawaii, "local pidgin") to express himself well enough for daily conversation, but had difficulty expressing "deeper thoughts" about "da kine stuff hard fo' explain."

For him education was about more than getting a job. In addition to the usual immigrant parent telling his kids to "study hard, listen to the teacher," Dad would often say, "if you get college education, even if you garbage man, you can be happy."

I had pondered that often, especially while attending a college that most students called, "a graduate school prep." (And also when I learned that "sanitation workers" in New York City were making way more than college professors, at least those in Portland, Oregon). Going to graduate school did not make any sense if you were happy with a college degree. But it didn’t really matter, because when I was a kid, I thought my dad was crazy.

Dad also saw education as a way for a community of people to grow together, "increasing knowledge" and helping everyone attain as much education as possible so that everyone would rise together to some lofty status of understanding.

He also drew a tapered spiral cone, like a spring that tapered in at the top. And he also mentioned this cone as "tipped. " But I never asked him the real critical thinking question, "What happens when the community reaches the lofty goal? " and "Why is the cone tipped?" I never bothered to make sense of this either. Until recently.

Earlier this year, I was advised to rest (for health reasons). That gave me an opportunity to read “The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century," by Grace Lee Boggs with Scott Kurashige. In it, Boggs made the case that: "as citizens of a nation which had achieved economic growth and prosperity at the expense of African Americans, Native Americans, other people of color, and people all over the world, our priority had to be in correcting the injustices and backwardness of our relationships with one another, with other countries, and with the Earth.

"In other words, our revolution had to be for the purpose of accelerating our evolution to a higher plateau of Humanity. That’s why we called our philosophy ‘dialectical humanism.’"

Grace Lee and James Boggs were developing these thoughts on theory and the practice of activism in “conversations” with friends and comrades. Upon reading these passages, I conjured up images of Dad and Zenwa Uncle “talking story” with their immigrant friends and “rising to a lofty status of understanding." Sounded very similar to evolving to a higher plateau of Humanity.

As for the tipped spiral or coil, well, if the coil is tipped and you try to walk up a tipped coil, at many points, you will be walking downhill. If you don’t understand this, try getting a spring from a flashlight and just tip it a little. And let your fingers do the walking. You’ll find that even when you’re forging ahead, you may also be backsliding.

Frieda Takamura also gave me an interpretation of my dad’s thoughts on being happy if you “graduate college”: “If you are educated, no one can take that away from you."

I’ll take that. I’ll also take that he was an early pioneer of Grace Lee and James Boggs’ dialectical humanism, in fact predating them. It’s certainly much better than thinking he was nuts.

Answering Robby’s question: Education is a process by which people learn to solve problems, ask and answer questions necessary to advance the common good. That involves critical thinking and critical questions. We need problem solvers. We have a lot of problems to solve, such as how to change the minds and the wills of the one percent, and how to change our own behavior so we can bring about the kind of fair and just world we want to live in. This is why we can’t go along with the “education reformers” controlled by Bill Gates and his friends.

May 2013: "Frieda, I want to write about the so-called education “reform.” Where should I begin?"

"Common Core," she said. "It’s a micro-cosmos of what’s happening in our lives."

After a little research, I realized she was right.

September 19, 2014: The most important change in Race to the Top and Common Core since last year is that Secretary of Education Arne Duncan’s gang has gotten a lot meaner in their war against the teachers and students. Last year, many teachers were still supporting the Common Core Standards, because they thought the curriculum was still in their hands. But as more teachers began to see what was really going on, they began to fight back against Arne’s gang and their union leaders who bought into it.

The harassment of teachers and disregard for children are good reasons for banning Arnie’s corporeates from having their big part in determining the skill set and knowledge of the next generation of working people.

My dad was kicked out of high school and like lots of other folks, couldn’t go to college. But he showed me we all need to pay attention and do our part. Joining the struggles over who controls education is bringing me closer to my dad and my uncle than I ever expected.
Strengthening Women’s Economic Security

By Marilyn Watkins, Policy Director at the Economic Opportunity Institute and a PSARA member

My mother died this summer. She lived for eight years with breast cancer, continuing the activities she enjoyed almost to the end. Then she declined rapidly, dying at home with the support of hospice, surrounded by family.

My sister and I were able to take three weeks off work, first caring for mom, then helping our father who had shared life with her for 62 years. Our other three siblings had less generous workplace policies and could only fly in for a few days.

Caring for family in those sacred times at the beginning and end of life shouldn’t be a privilege of the lucky. It should be a right, regardless of where you work or how much you make.

That’s why the FaMLI Act is central to the Washington Work and Family Coalition’s agenda. It will allow all workers to take up to 12 weeks off to care for a new child or ill family member, or for their own serious health condition. And it will provide income through a small payroll premium of 0.2% - just 3% of what employees and employers pay into Social Security.

Washington’s FaMLI Act is modeled after successful programs in California, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Hawaii. In these states, new parents take longer leaves, especially lower income parents of color. Babies are healthier. New mothers are more likely to be working a year after childbirth and less likely to use public assistance. And of course when adult children can provide care, seniors aren’t forced into expensive nursing homes and hospitals.

Paid Sick Days and Paycheck Fairness are the other two pillars of the Work and Family Coalition agenda.

Everyone gets sick, but only 4 in 10 workers get paid sick leave – except in the rapidly growing number of jurisdictions that have passed sick leave laws. No one should be forced to work with a contagious illness or leave a sick child at home alone. People should be able to take their parent to the doctor and get preventative care, without losing the week’s grocery money or risking their job.

PSARA was a key member of the coalition that passed a sick leave ordinance in Seattle in 2011. Earlier this year, the Washington State House passed a similar statewide bill, but the caucus controlling the Senate refused to act.

A University of Washington evaluation of Seattle’s law found that access to paid leave increased significantly after passage, especially in restaurants, while the city outperformed nearby communities in job and business growth. Thirteen cities and two states have already adopted sick leave standards.

Families and our economy will also be healthier when women get equal pay. Washington state made pay discrimination illegal in 1943, yet the average woman in Washington brings home $24,000 less each year than the average man. That’s a big hit to family budgets. Lower wages also result in lower Social Security benefits and less retirement savings. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 22% of women over age 75 living alone are in poverty compared to 4% of married women.

The Paycheck Fairness bill will move us closer to gender equality by assuring workers won’t get fired or retaliated against for discussing compensation. The bill will also require employers to justify differences in pay and career tracks based on bona fide factors such as education or experience. Enforcement would be strengthened so workers have effective recourse and employers know the law is being fairly applied.

PSARA members can help pass the FaMLI Act, Paid Sick Days, and Paycheck Fairness in 2015:

• Tell Legislators and candidates for the Washington Legislature that you expect action on these policies and ask for their support.
• Check out the Work & Family Coalition website at waworkandfamily.org. Sign up for email alerts and like us on Facebook.
• Attend the Women’s Economic Security Forum at the Bellingham YWCA October 16, 5:30-7:00 pm.

Strengthening women’s economic security

Join a community conversation on policies that support healthy families and communities, including Equal Pay, Sick & Safe Leave, Paid Family Leave

October 16th, 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.
Bellingham YWCA
1026 N. Forest St.

Sponsored by: Washington Work and Family Coalition, Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action, NW Washington Central Labor Council, Community to Community Development, and other partners

October 2014
2014 PSARA
Legislative Conference

Wednesday, November 12th
10 am – 12 noon

UFCW Local 21
5030 First Ave. South • Seattle WA

METRO Route #121 on 1st Ave. So
METRO Route #23 on 4th Ave. So

Learn about the impact of the Nov 4th election on the 2015 Legislative Session

A light breakfast will be provided.

Featured Speaker:

Pam Crone,
PSARA’s Olympia lobbyist

Discuss and approve our 2015 Legislative Agenda

Gather with PSARA members from your legislative district and plan for meetings with your legislators to advocate for PSARA’s legislative agenda.

To help us plan materials for the conference, please RSVP to PSARA at 206-448-9646 or to govrelations@psara.org.
The Retiree Advocate October 2014

Lifting Wages Will Help Sustain, Strengthen Social Security

By John Burbank

This week the Social Security Trustees reported that our FICA contributions plus interest, net of all benefits paid out, have increased the Social Security Trust Fund by $32 billion. The trustees also forecast that Social Security benefits are completely sustainable for the next two decades. The media hasn't played these reports up much, perhaps because they don't fit into the narrative that finances for Social Security are collapsing and the only way to save Social Security is to dismantle benefits now. That's a solution akin to amputating someone's foot now, because he might get gangrene 20 years from now.

We shouldn't disregard the financing of Social Security two decades from now. But the “solutions” proposed by the guardians of privilege only add to the recipe of redistributing money upwards to the already wealthy and powerful. We have had enough of that over the past 35 years.

The Social Security Trustees forecast projected revenue and costs for 10 and 75 years into the future. Obviously, this is at best a “guestimate.” The trustees can't foresee each economic downturn.

"If we continue to hold wages down, and not adjust them upwards for productivity, we let more and more income slide into corporate profits, and hundreds of billions of dollars is exported to other economies via the outsourcing of production."

They can't foresee immigration and the Social Security contributions of these immigrant workers. The guessing is educated, but not accurate. In 1986, the trustees predicted that the Social Security Trust Fund would run out of money in 2051. Then in 1994 they predicted that the trust fund would be drawn down to zero in 2029. Now their “prediction” is for 2033.

The funny thing is that the trust fund was purposely built up in anticipation of baby boomers retiring, and intended to be drawn down to help finance their retirement. So while the guardians of privilege see a problem with this drawdown, it is actually the model developed by one of their own, Alan Greenspan, the former chair of the Fed. And when the trust fund is drawn down, it won't result in the demise of Social Security. Up to 1981, Social Security was pretty much a pay-as-you-go program, with current revenues from taxes paying for current benefits. That is still the way it is for the 80 percent of benefits.

In developing their forecasts, the trustees include a factor estimating worker productivity increases. But while productivity increases were proportionately shared between workers and corporations after World War II, in the recent decades these increases have accrued more and more solely to corporations. That detracts from Social Security contributions through FICA taxes.

There is a simple way to increase contributions to Social Security, insure sustainability of benefits, and actually increase those benefits. Increase the minimum wage, and have all wages reflect increases in productivity. For every $1 increase in wages, Social Security receives 12.4 cents. Increasing the minimum wage to $10 an hour for the 3.6 million American workers who make $7.25 or less would bring a minimum of $2.5 billion each year into the Social Security Trust Fund. If we were to increase wages by $2 for the one-fifth of all workers who make less than $10 an hour, the trust fund would gain $11 billion each year. That equals more than the combined Social Security benefits for more than 750,000 recipients.

We often forget about the interconnections between different facets of our economy. If we continue to hold wages down, and not adjust them upwards for productivity, we let more and more income slide into corporate profits, and hundreds of billions of dollars is exported to other economies via the outsourcing of production. It also means that the social programs Americans hold closest to their hearts and depend on for their economic security are undermined by a diminished stream of revenue, that is, FICA taxes. We are willing to pay those taxes. But we can't when our wages stagnate.

Here is why the effort for increasing the minimum wage is so important. We not only begin to insure that workers will get appropriate compensation (and respect), but in turn, these workers and their employers, through FICA taxes, build up Social Security funds for current and future retirees. It's mutually beneficial, for all of us.

John Burbank is the executive director and founder of the Economic Opportunity Institute in Seattle, and a PSARA member.
Interview With Will Parry, Part III

Reprinted from Real Change

Editor's Note: In 2010, former Retiree Advocate editor and lifelong working class activist Will Parry gave a 90th birthday interview to Real Change reporter Cydney Gillis. This is Part III of that interview. The conclusion will follow in a subsequent issue.

What was it like having the FBI follow you around?

I'll give you one example. They had a stool pigeon named Traynor Hansen who worked for the Seattle P-I who was an FBI agent ... He came to our office at the People's World one time and he must have been wired. He asked me incriminating questions like: What would you do if you stumbled across some military secrets? Would you turn them over to the Russians? I'm putting it crudely. I told him I didn't care about military secrets. I cared about the welfare of people. He started the conversation by flattering me about my coverage of the Smith Act trial. I knew that was bullshit because I was very green at covering legal proceedings and I was not at all satisfied with my own coverage, so he was fluffing me up ... He subsequently came out publicly as an FBI agent.

They recruited throughout the labor movement. They had a twofold attack. From within they recruited stool pigeons and people to be disruptive and divisive. It still goes on today. There are people in the labor movement for whom the leadership never does anything right, they're never radical enough ... I'm often critical of leadership, but not that way.

[Then] there was this nationwide campaign to get the reds out of the labor movement. They got rid of the communists and all the militancy, all the left-wingers. It took the starch out of the labor movement. It was several steps removed from any action to overthrow the government. It's against the Constitution and the Bill of Rights to outlaw teaching and advocacy of anything. It was just a very repressive time.

What happened after you moved to the box plant? Did the FBI still follow you?

When I got the job at Longview Fibre, for the first few weeks, I went to work by different routes and watched for tails. But they caught up with me eventually, the FBI did. After I'd worked there four or five months, the superintendent calls me into his office and asks if I'm a communist and of course I denied it. I had to hold a damn job. Fortunately the superintendent was a nice guy and he had gone to Washington State College at the same time I did and he let me stay. Otherwise, I would have been out on my can. There were a lot of people who got fired for being reds. I was the only lefty there.

One year, some forces within the union red-baited me, so I wasn't re-elected to the standing committee—I was defeated, badly. I just ignored it and kept going to the meetings and did my best to play a constructive role. The next year, they re-elected me. [After becoming a legislative lobbyist for the union] I had the same thing happen later with the area council of the Western Paper and Pulp Workers. They red-baited me there, too [because] Louise, my wife, had chaired a committee for a candidate who [in 1975] was an open communist running for the Legislature—Elmer Kistler. So my union brothers and sisters asked me about that. They were not happy about it at all. [But] I told them if we had a half-dozen people like Elmer Kistler in the Legislature, my job as lobbyist would be one hell of a lot easier.
“It all depends on turnout,” Johnson added. “People are turned off by the gridlock in Congress and they couldn’t care less whether Democrats or Republicans are at fault.

“They see parallels between the State Senate and the US Senate – they don’t distinguish between federal, state, or local governments. There’s not enough revenue and so no one is providing social services, public transportation, or public education.

“It turns people off. And that’s exactly the goal of the Republicans and the Koch brothers! There’s a plan to quash the voice of the people, to reduce the Democratic vote by 10%. That’s what we’re up against!”

“So what do we do about it?”

WSLC has targeted a number of Legislative Districts where a big push by labor could net Senate seats for Democrats, Johnson explained, “and we don’t look at these as just District races. These are statewide races! The outcome will have a huge impact on our [statewide] economy and future polices.”

Johnson urged PSARA members to sign up for phonebanks and doorknocking walks in these targeted districts where we can make the biggest impact.

“We have to play where the game is,” he said.

“We’re good at raising money,” Johnson explained, “but we can’t raise enough to compete with the Republicans. We need to have our people out in the neighborhoods knocking on doors and talking to voters face to face.”

“What are the key districts?”

Rodney Tom, who turned over control of the State Senate to Republicans in a deal that made him Majority Leader, is already out of the picture. When Democrat Joan McBride filed to challenge him in the 48th Legislative District, he dropped out of the race.

Now McBride is running for the State House seat formerly held by Cyrus Habib, and Habib is a good bet to win Tom’s Senate seat.

WSLC also considers the 28th District a “must win” race. Democratic Senate candidate Tammy Green “is so buoyant,” Johnson told me, “she brings real passion to the race. She’s already knocked on 22,000 doors.”

In contrast, her Republican opponent Steve O’Ban is linked to the right-wing Freedom Foundation. (For more on the Freedom Foundation’s anti-union antics, see Tim Wheeler’s article on Page 4.)

In the 42nd District, WSLC is backing Seth Fleetwood against Republican incumbent Doug Erickson.

“This one is a little more difficult because of redistricting” that put more conservative voters into the district, Johnson said, but WSLC is relying on help from allies in the environmental community.

“Erickson is just a patsy for big oil,” Johnson explained. “He’s a climate change denier. He scoffs at the idea that Boeing should give something back to this state.”

In the 45th District “Matt Isenhower is a real fighter. He’s hit more doors than any other politician in the state,” Johnson said admiringly. “He even took a leave of absence from his job to campaign full time.”

Isenhower’s opponent, Republican incumbent Andy Hill, is Senate Budget Chair, “so he has to take the blame for the state’s budget impasse,” Johnson said. “He claims he’s a great education advocate, but he won’t raise revenue for education, he just wants to take money from other social services.”

The race in the 30th District pits Mark Miloscia – now politically reincarnated as a Republican – against progressive Democrat Shari Song.

“This is a very frustrating one,” Johnson said, shaking his head.

“When Mark was in the House he cast some good votes for labor. He went off track on social issues that were very important to us [for example opposing reproductive choice and marriage equality], and he went off track on budget issues too.

“But for Shari to win, communities of color have to come out in much greater numbers than they did in the primary. So there’s a lot more work to be done creating those community connections.”

“What can PSARA do to help?”

“We’ve scheduled five major walks in multiple cities, plus phonebanks twice a week,” Johnson replied. “We’re working with union leaders and with organizations like PSARA to get their members fired up.

“We need 3,500 volunteers. If we meet that number we can hit every targeted door in the state. I know we may be asking people to drive some distance, or go outside their neighborhoods – their comfort zone – but that’s what it will take.”

PSARA members who want to help should visit WSLC’s website – wslc.org/cope/lv-sched.htm, or phone WSLC Field Mobilization Director Lori Province at 206-351-2956.

We did it! The Seattle City Council unanimously passed a resolution urging federal lawmakers to lift all federal restrictions on public insurance coverage of abortion. Thanks to PSARA members who came out to support the efforts of NARAL Pro-Choice Washington, All* Above All, The CAIR Project, National Council of Jewish Women (Seattle), National Institute for Reproductive Health, and to all the individuals who came to the Council meeting!
behalf on the issues we prioritize.

There are some critical races in November that will determine the direction the legislature will go during the 2015 session. Besides reading the interview with state AFL-CIO president Jeff Johnson in this issue of the Advocate, take a look at the website of the WA State Labor Council, AFL/CIO and other progressive groups to see who they have endorsed and what races they have designated as critical. Please consider responding to their requests for assistance during this campaign season.

You can also help us formulate PSARA's legislative priorities for the 2015 legislative session. PSARA's Government Relations Committee (to which all PSARA members are welcome) will present a list of legislative priorities to PSARA's Executive Board. In turn, these priorities will be presented to our membership at the Legislative Conference to be held on Wednesday, November 12 from 10 a.m. to noon at the offices of UFCW 21.

Please sign up to attend the conference and also plan to participate with us when we ask you to be active during the legislative session.

Proposition 1A is the Best Choice for Seattle's Children

Continued from Page 1

- First, many families cannot afford it. We support a city policy that places reasonable limits on the percentage of income that families should pay for early education care programs.
- Second, it is difficult to recruit and retain the excellent early educators that our children deserve. We support raising the minimum wage paid to these professionals and the formal establishment of an organization made up of early educators to represent their interests in the city.
- Third, Seattle must ensure that the programs in which our children enroll are the highest quality possible. We support professional development that guides teachers and care providers—and quality standards that are shaped with input from early educators themselves.

Proposition 1a, Initiative 107, on the November ballot, is the expression of these principles. Also before voters is the Seattle Preschool Program, Prop 1b. We believe these two initiatives are compatible and complementary. Unfortunately, the City Council has taken the position that they are in conflict, which means that Seattle voters are being denied the chance to endorse both parts of a comprehensive approach to early education. We filed a lawsuit and appealed the court's decision in favor of the city, but in the end, we were unable to get the two proposals separated on the ballot.

Our children need both programs. One is a limited experiment that will serve a portion of Seattle children. Ours is a program initiated with grassroots support—nearly 30,000 petition signatures—that would bolster the standards and quality for all early educators in the city.

In this moment, since we have to choose between two programs, we encourage you to support Proposition 1a, Citizens Initiative 107, developed, sponsored and supported by people working on these issues for nearly 20 years. By supporting the development of an infrastructure that includes community, educators, policy makers and elected officials, we can ensure access to high quality, affordable care for all of Seattle's children into the future.

Karen Strickland is President of AFT Washington, and a PSARA member.

"PSARA is involved in everything we care about: workers' rights, environmental justice, civil rights, social justice, democracy."

At PSARA's Summer Meeting, participants were asked to write down a one-sentence description of PSARA. This is what one of our members said about us.

You can help us carry on the work that we all care about by recruiting a new PSARA member. Use the coupon to the right, or visit our website.

To subscribe or renew visit

http://psara.org/become-a-member-of-psara

Karen Strickland is President of AFT Washington, and a PSARA member.
Meetings and Events

PSARA Government Relations Committee: 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m., Wednesday, October 1, Seattle Labor Temple, Room 226, 2800 First Ave., Seattle. All members welcome as we finalize the committee’s recommendation for PSARA’s 2015 Legislative Agenda and make further plans for PSARA’s Legislative conference.

PSARA Environmental Committee: 2 p.m. – 3:30 p.m., Thursday, October 2, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Ave., Room 226, Seattle. All members welcome as we get a report from the climate change mobilization in NY City, review the outcomes of the visit by Naomi Klein and continue our work with the Blue/Green Alliance.

Making the American Dream Real for Everyone: Led by Mark McDermott, Chair of PSARA’s Education Committee: Sunday, October 5, 1 p.m. – 4 p.m., Unitarian Fellowship Sanctuary, 1207 Ellsworth Ave., Bellingham, WA 98225. This is an inspiring and interactive workshop that Mark has been presenting across the U.S.

PSARA Diversity Committee: 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 9, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Ave., Room 226, Seattle. All members are welcome as the Committee works on plans for a tour of the Northwest African American Museum for PSARA members.

Green Lake Discussion Group: Noon to 1:30 p.m., Thursday, October 9, Green Lake Library, 7354 East Green Lake Drive N., Seattle. Brown bag lunch. The gathering will discuss the topic, “It’s Election Season”. Bring your lunch, your questions and your knowledge for lively discussions.

PSARA Executive Board Meeting: 12:30 p.m. – 3 p.m., Thursday, October 16, Central Area Senior Center, 500 30th Ave. S., Seattle. All PSARA members are welcome.

PSARA Government Relations Committee: 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m., Wednesday, November 5, Seattle Labor Temple, Room 226, 2800 First Ave., Seattle. All members welcome as we finalize plans for PSARA’s 2015 Legislative conference and discuss what we learned at the Senior Lobby Conference.