



CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS TIPS

Chants and Signs

Chants and signs at rallies and on picket lines often appear unedited in the media – giving us what amounts to an opportunity for free TV, radio, or newspaper advertising. It’s crucial that we use those opportunities to get a message across that builds public support.

We know from polling and focus groups by SEIU and the AFL-CIO that...

- By 2 1/2 to 1, the public thinks we make demands in our own self-interest rather than in the public interest.
- While more than 80% of Americans think "working people" have too little influence in this country, only 20% think "unions" do.
- Many more Americans would want an "employee association" rather than a "union," in part because they believe that unions don't exist to find reasonable solutions to problems but instead exist to create conflict for conflict's sake.

So we have to plan chants and signs that present us as...

- Working people, not the union as an institution.
- Acting in the public interest, and not just fighting for self-interest.
- Working for reasonable solutions, not making “demands” at everyone else's expense.

NOTE: We also know from experience that most members like a public interest message because they feel good about appearing to neighbors, friends, and the people they serve as caring about the whole community and not just themselves.

CHANTS

Which chant, if captured by TV or radio, will send the best message to build public support?

DEMANDING UNION SELF-INTEREST OR WORKING FOR PUBLIC INTEREST

The boss says cutback -- We say fight back!	Put patients first! Put patients first!
We're from the union, mighty mighty union Everywhere we go, people want to know Who we are, so we tell them [repeat]	It's just not fair To cut patient care
What do we want? More staff. When do we want it? Now!	Understaffing, that's no good Treat our seniors like you should
Hey hey, ho ho, unionbusting's got to go!	We're standing up For the American Dream

SIGNS

The same principle applies to signs as to chants.

Do signs say, "On Strike," "X Employer Unfair," or "Stop Unionbusting"?

OR do they say, "Put Patients First," "Safe Staffing For Our Seniors," "All Families Need Health Care," "Standing Up for the American Dream," etc.?

Sutter Roseville workers rally

By Keith Reid / The Roseville (CA) Press-Tribune, Oct. 21, 2002

Purple shirts and picket signs became the center of attention in front of the Sutter Roseville Medical Center entrance Wednesday.

The question picketers chanted time and again, "What's this about?" was promptly answered with the chant "patient care."

Rallying Sutter Roseville health care workers were making their plea for higher wages, increased benefits and a greater say in hospital staffing issues. They say Sutter Roseville's quality of patient care is lacking and are demanding change. Negotiations between the hospital and the Service Employees International Union Local 250 began yesterday.

"This rally is a way of bringing attention to the community of how understaffed that the Sutter Roseville Hospital actually is," said SEIU representative John Borsos. "For a hospital that has made \$70 million in the last two years, there is no reason that they cannot provide appropriate levels of staffing and patient care."

The workers who rallied were those who work in technical and maintenance jobs at the hospital. They say they want the same wages as employees at the Kaiser Permanente hospital two miles away. They quoted that a housekeeper at Sutter Roseville earns \$9.87 an hour compared to Kaiser's \$13.13; a sterile processing technician \$10.93 compared to \$14.03; and a surgical technician \$14.28 compared to \$16.63.

Cheryl Stizzo is a single mother and a secretary in the Sutter Roseville emergency department. She said that it is difficult to make ends meet each month, and that she has to pay a portion of her check to keep her children covered under her health plan.

"Employees feel like Sutter is making a lot of money on our backs, and we want to be compensated for it. We want living wages," she said. "We have a hard time keeping quality staff because of low pay and benefits. We've lost 400 employees to Kaiser or Mercy Hospital in the last two years."

Sutter Roseville's director of human resources, Jerrie Adams, was caught off guard by the rally. She said that the pay scale there is competitive with other health care providers in the community, and that the benefit options are very good.

"This is the very first time that I have ever seen an informational picket before negotiations have taken place," said Adams. "I don't know everything that they want, and I won't really know until Friday."

Adams added that the hospital is staffed very well, and that department managers, all professionals in the medical field, make staffing decisions. "I can say that this is a very rewarding work environment, and if I were a patient, I'd feel very comfortable that I was receiving quality care," she said.