

A4 CENTRAL ILLINOIS/NATION Decatur, Illinois • Thursday, November 25, 1999

WTO: Sweeney says objectives are simple

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Union are more sympathetic, at least rhetorically. Their shared concern reflects rising public anxiety in rich nations about the pervasive disruptions to treasured lifestyles that the increasingly competitive global economy is fostering.

Perhaps most important, Sweeney believes history is on his side. America's own experience teaches that this battle must be fought and can be won, he says.

"At the turn of the last century, when the great trusts and banks of the Gilded Era forged a national industrial economy, America faced a similar challenge. It was an era of sweatshops, child labor, brutal repression of workers and poisonous workplace conditions," Sweeney recalled recently in a major address about the WTO at the National Press Club in Washington.

Back then big business had cops and courts to enforce the rules on its side. Union organizers were beaten and jailed.

But after decades of struggle, "eventually we wrote new rules, including the minimum wage, a 40-hour workweek, workplace health and safety, the right to organize, antitrust and the Fair Labor Standards Act. The result, after World War II, was a growing economy in which the blessings were widely shared and the great American middle class was created," Sweeney noted.

Just as workers' rights required legal protection in the new U.S. industrial economy of a century ago, Sweeney contends, they deserve the same now in the emerging global economy.

Economists talk of global trade negotiations in terms of lower tariffs, cheaper goods, rising exports and more jobs. But labor leaders like Sweeney believe today's global trade rules permit big corporations to exploit underpaid workers in backward economies to produce cheap goods that U.S. workers cannot compete against. The result, in this view, is fat profits for the few, and low wages and lost jobs for the many.

"Our objectives are simple: Every worker deserves protection of basic human rights, prohibitions against child labor, slave labor, discrimination and the freedom to join together with others in a union," the AFL-CIO leader proclaimed.

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OVERTIME: Sheriff's office also feels pinch

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time. But if you're forewarned and you have time to deal with issues, it's not nearly as bad."

The Macon County Sheriff's Office, which assisted Decatur police, also felt a pinch from overtime costs. The sheriff's office paid approximately \$4,400 for 114 overtime hours. Capt. Jerry Dawson said. But the number of overtime hours actually worked was probably triple, he said, with many deputies choosing to take days off in the future for hours worked.

Deputies answered all of the priority service calls for Decatur police during both Rainbow/PUSH marches and two days during protests at Decatur high schools.

The sheriff's office ran out of money allotted in its budget for overtime pay Nov. 8, the first day Jackson said he would be arrested. But there was more than enough money in other areas of the department's budget to cover the costs, Dawson said.

Even though the compensation days will not cost the county extra money, the days off down the road means there will be times where patrol shifts are shorthanded.

"We were strictly supporting Decatur police when they needed us. We just tried to help them out when we could," Dawson said. "Everyone was on kind of a standby 24 hours a day for awhile. It was a lot of people down."

The Illinois State Police also had officers working security details and directing traffic around some of the larger demonstrations, but in smaller numbers compared to local officers. Mark McDonald, spokesman for the State Police, said the man hours in Decatur did not become expensive for the department.

"We had very minimal overtime

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even though we had some people from different districts come into Decatur," McDonald said. "We brought some folks in from District 9 in Springfield and District 8 in Peoria, but we brought most of them in on their shifts."

Gary Hunt, director of personnel for the Decatur school district, said there were no particular overtime costs to the district. "Most of the people who dealt with this were contractual people — like administrators," Hunt said. "The real impact was the loss in productivity."

Secretaries and other support personnel at the Kell Building were unable to work on usual duties and projects because they were answering hundreds of phone calls and receiving hundreds of e-mail messages and faxes, Hunt said.

"The real loss was in services to the students and parents of this district," Hunt said.

As far as the legal costs go, Hunt said the district receives a monthly bill and they have not received one for this month. He said that figure will continue to grow until the lawsuits are settled.

The district now has three law firms representing its compared to the usual one.

— Staff Writer Kim Dickson contributed to this story

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