

## Message from the President

# Why We Need a Strike and Organizing Fund

We face a tremendous challenge. In 2013 most Local 26 members will be in contract negotiations. The contracts for all hotel workers, convention center workers, Fenway Park workers and MIT workers - 5000 Local 26 members in all - will expire.

The difference between our wages, benefits and working conditions and the non-union is enormous. Local 26 housekeepers receive \$25.17/hour in wages and benefits. The typical non-union housekeeper receives closer to \$12.50/hour, usually with no or unaffordable health insurance. The average Local 26 Harvard food service worker receives \$29.00/hour in wages and benefits compared to \$11.00/hour at the typical non-union campus food service operation. This wage and benefit gap is a direct threat to us as we approach 2013. The issue of maintaining affordable and quality health insurance is the best example of why.

When asked, "What is the most important issue facing us in the upcoming contract negotiations?" Most Local 26 hotel workers that I have spoken to say - Health Insurance. Today our hotel employers pay \$7.20/hour for our health insurance. Over the life of our current contract their payment has increased by \$3.22/ hour. Our contributions have remained the same - \$4/\$8/\$12 a week. Non-



**Members and leaders of Local 26 meet to discuss our coming contract campaigns and the need for a strike and organizing fund**

union hotel employers have passed most of the increases for health insurance onto hotel workers. Health care experts project health insurance costs will rise by 10% or more a year. Non-union hotels will continue to pass these costs on to their workers. Half of the hotels in our area are non-union. Given the huge gap between our hotel employers' health insurance costs and the non-union hotels, our employers will be motivated to fight hard to push the rising cost of health insurance onto us. This is also true when it comes to wages, hours, job security and retirement.

To combat this we need to do two things.

1. Be better organized and better prepared than ever before to

stand up to our employers as we negotiate our new contracts.

2. Eliminate the gap between our wages and benefits and the non-union by organizing more non-union workers into Local 26 than ever before.

In order to do this, I will propose the establishment of the Local 26 Strike and Organizing Fund at the April 18th Local 26 Membership Meeting, to be voted on by secret ballot on May 10th. If we each chip in \$0.10/hour or \$4.00/week to support Local 26 members who stand up to employers by strikes and other actions and to support workers who are organizing into Local 26, we will take a giant step toward meeting the challenge before us.

- Brian