

DO YOU KNOW YOUR UNION'S HISTORY?

CREA/Local 75- Built from the Ground Up

The Congressional Research Employees Association (CREA) became the exclusive bargaining representative for employees of the Library of Congress's Congressional Research Service (CRS) on March 8, 1976, when it received its certification from Labor-Management Umpire Frederick U. Reel. The organization effort had begun early in the summer of 1975, shortly after the Library of Congress circulated a regulation, LCR 2026, creating a labor-management program at the Library.

Approximately 535 of CRS's 700+ employees are members of the CREA bargaining unit. These employees include attorneys, economists, scientists, environmental specialists, specialists in foreign affairs, political scientists, librarians, computer specialists, and support personnel. By law, CRS is in many respects separate and independent from the rest of the Library of Congress, and its employees have different needs from others in the Library. Recognizing this, CRS employees established an ad hoc committee to form their own union. On August 1, 1975, CREA's constitution was ratified with the signatures of 472 employees. The union's purpose was to represent employees' interests through collective bargaining and other appropriate means, to improve their working conditions, to improve employee-management relations, and to promote high standards on the part of employees and management.

Pursuant to the new constitution, the officers and a 22-member board of governors were elected on August 28, 1975. Congressman Mario Biaggi of New York administered the oath of office to the newly elected officers and board at CREA's first annual meeting on October 1, 1975.

With a constitution and duly elected officers in place, CREA then filed for recognition on the first effective day of the regulation, October 24, 1975. CREA was opposed by two other unions vying for exclusive recognition among CRS employees, AFSCME Local 2477 and the Black Employees of the Library of Congress (BELC), as well as the option for "no union." CREA won the representation election on February 18, 1976, by a substantial margin, garnering 343 votes, as compared to 19 for AFSCME 2477, 41 for the BELC, and 51 for no union. CRS employees in professional positions also voted overwhelmingly to include employees in nonprofessional positions in the bargaining unit, thus creating a single union to represent all employees.

CREA grew as an independent union; however, mount-

ing legal expenses from arbitrations and grievances continually infringed upon its financial standing. Seeing this, the union began its search to affiliate with a larger union to help offset these mounting costs. The process took several years of investigation, study and discussion on the part of the Board. While several unions were considered prior to IFPTE, they were quickly dismissed because CREA felt they would lose their autonomy—until they looked at IFPTE.

IFPTE appealed to CREA's need and desire to better represent its members. Affiliation with IFPTE would give CREA the autonomy it sought to preserve its name, organizational



Federation staffers, Steve Schwartz and Leighsa Zoppetti at CREA's union office.

structure, and decision-making authority; reasonable per capita tax payments; educational/training to officers, board members and stewards; disassociation from any IFPTE endorsements of political candidates, legislation or positions that might violate CRS's impartiality standards; and the development of benefit packages for members. Additionally, affiliation also afforded CREA membership in an organization representing similar positions,

and access to the Public Employees Department (PED), Civil Rights, and Occupational Safety and Health Departments, among others, within the AFL-CIO. Furthermore, one-third of IFPTE's members were federal employees.

It was a perfect fit. So, on August 6, 1985, CREA's Board of Governors voted to pursue affiliation with IFPTE. But the vote taken by the Board was only a first step. The next step was a motion put forward by the Board of Governors to CREA's membership outlining the terms and conditions of affiliation.

During the next several weeks, CREA representatives negotiated an agreement of affiliation with IFPTE. Membership meetings were held and information was distributed on the affiliation. These events led up to the final step—a vote by the membership.

As a result, a special referendum vote was scheduled for December 18, 1985. In an impressive ballot-casting binge, about seven of every ten CREA members eligible to vote in the referendum went to the polling place to make sure their views on affiliation were registered. Simply stated, 197 said "Yes," and 70 said "No." Thus, 74% of voting members decided CREA should take the historic step of affiliating with IFPTE. And the rest they say 'is history'.