**GENERAL COUNCIL PRESIDENT’S SPEECH**

**MAY 2014**

**Good morning and welcome to MAGE’s 34th year of representing NEREs.**

**Sadly, we open this meeting for the first time without our founding member, Mary McClellan, who passed away this past January. Mary was a champion fighter who helped get this organization up and running so that the voices of the managers and supervisors would continue to be heard. She served as President and pretty much on every Committee and office there is, right up to the end. We also lost two more long time board & committee members Harry Schultz and Mary Blackledge-Dixon, who both served on the board and as delegates for many years. Please let us take a moment of silence…. Thank you!**

**This happens to be Professional Nurse’s Week… so thank you to all of our Nurse Managers here today, and also Happy Mother’s Day this Sunday.**

**We have a lot to be thankful for and a lot to be proud of as an organization. I am proud to tell you that these last few years have been the ONLY years that MAGE has succeeded in negotiating raises substantially higher than the raises that the rank and file received. The 3% raise and 2% lump sum that we negotiated a few years ago, when the rank and file only received a 1% raise and 1% lump sum, was the direct result of our MAGE lawsuit and the result of us raising holy hell at the Civil Service Commission meetings. The 1% raise that you received this year, when your subordinates in the rank and file are only receiving a 1% lump sum, is also the direct result of MAGE’s efforts and only MAGE’s efforts.**

**Not enough NEREs understand that the OSE had already decided to give us a 1% lump sum this year, because that is what they had already negotiated with the unions. But because of MAGE and only MAGE, you received a 1% raise. Your next raise will also be higher because of MAGE. They originally planned on giving a 2% raise next year. Through MAGE’s efforts, you will now be receiving an additional .5% lump sum.**

**I remind you about these successes because you, each of you, need to go out and spread the word to those managers and supervisors who don’t think they need MAGE … those employees who think that, because their current supervisor likes them, MAGE cannot help them and they have nothing to worry about.**

**The fact is that supervisors come and go, administrations change, and new supervisors arrive, and goals and expectations change and all of a sudden… you’re not a good employee any more … and then they call for help… after it’s too late. Or, you’re involved in a Reduction in Force and your bumping rights were violated … but it’s too late. Or, one of your subordinates makes a false allegation against you about something you said or did… but at that point… if you are not a member of MAGE … it’s already too late for us to help you.**

**We also count on YOU, the dedicated members and officers to go out and spread the word about what you hear today. Talk about our constant lobbying efforts to protect our retirement benefits and our fight against these constant assaults on state employee health benefits and privatization.**

**It is clear that this administration and this legislature remain dead set on privatizing the entire state. They just succeeded in privatizing Food Service in Corrections and Children’s Services in DHS in Grand Rapids, in spite of our herculean efforts to stop them. We anticipate more of the same this year and we anticipate more lawsuits in our efforts to stop them.**

**In order to pay for these battles, we need money. More members translate into more money, which translates into more power to affect and protect your futures. We buy auto insurance, we buy house insurance, we buy boat insurance … but when it comes to the most important insurance of all… job insurance… too many NEREs balk. We cannot fight these battles without the funds to mount an aggressive offense.**

**We, your MAGE Board of Directors and MAGE staff, have done our part. We have cut staff health benefits substantially and moved to a much smaller office and reduced our General Council meetings to once every two years and reduced the number of Board meetings. We have also negotiated a $120,000 organizing subsidy that we have been getting from our International, OPEIU, which is no small task. We have, in fact, just convinced them to extend that subsidy for one more year, with the understanding that, if we do not end up with a net increase of 200 MAGE members by this time next year, it will be reduced by 50% the following year.**

**It is with this in mind that I will be proposing to your Board of Directors, at the meeting following this meeting, a new organizing initiative. Throughout this fiscal year, I propose that we offer a $10 reward for every member who convinces an employee to sign a card, if that employee indicates on the card that he or she was referred by a certain member. Staff will document every reference that comes in and if, at the end of the year, that employee is still a member, we will tabulate how many employees a certain member referred and send them a check for the sum total of members x $10 … so you refer 10 members and MAGE sends you a check for $100 … and I will further propose that … whoever at the end of the year… has referred the most members … will also get a bonus check of $100.**

**Like I have said so many times in the past… there is strength in numbers … if we don’t start convincing these 10,000 fellow employee free loaders out there to join, MAGE is not going to be here to protect our retirement benefits when you all finally retire.**