

Catholic Healthcare West

What is CHW?

- A chain of private, not for profit hospitals operated by Sisters of Charity, a Catholic group of nuns.
- Hospitals are almost all located in the state of California.

1996

- Campaign begins
- SEIU conducts feasibility study
- First report on charity care issued
- Community outreach campaign regarding hospital acquisition

1997

- Organizing begins (3 hospitals)

1998

- Our views, our voices:
Survey of CHW employees which announces campaign to organize 4,500 employees
- Full page ad – NY Times. Ad raises questions about adherence to Catholic Social Teachings
- Work with religious allies; National Day of Prayer

1999

- “Working at CHW”
Broadcast Fax Bulletin to religious community
- “Inside CHW” – Fax to business community
- Lawsuit regarding Medicare reports

1999 cont.

- Charity care reports. (Broken Promises/Guarding the Charitable Trust)
- Radio advertising – Charity care
- Cardinal Mahony calls for mediation
- US Catholic Conference asks for less confrontational relations; issues: “Fair and Just Workplace”

2000

- Election wins and losses
- Independent commission finds evidence of intimidation/improper conduct

2000 cont.

- *The Sacramento Bee* (6/5/2000) reports: “Score one for the union in the ongoing battle between Mercy Healthcare Sacramento and the state’s largest and fastest-growing health care organizer – Service Employees International Union. The union, which failed in its bid to represent Mercy workers in a January union election, apparently used its influence to stop a health plan partly owned by Mercy from winning a lucrative contract serving California public employees.”

2000 cont.

- Fair Share Study released
- Demonstrations at Catholic Health Association
- June:

Union joins coalition to stop shutdown of one of CHW's hospitals. Turns out more than 1,300 to a public hearing. SEIU urges investigation by Attorney General.

2000 cont.

- September 27 LA Times reports: “Prompted by the closure of a small Long Beach medical center, California Atty. Gen. Bill Lockyer has launched an unprecedented statewide investigation into whether a giant nonprofit hospital chain has violated laws governing charities and anti-competitive behavior, his aides said Tuesday. ... The strongest pressure [for the probe] came from the Service Employees International Union, which is in a bitter fight to organize Catholic Healthcare West workers across the state. Its Sacramento lobbyist has repeatedly pushed Lockyer to use Long Beach to launch a full investigation.”

2000 cont.

- July – October

Series of 1 day strikes at 3 hospitals

- December

SEIU launches CHW monitor. Weekly newsletter distributed to more than 1500 people in the three CHW states, including government regulators, bond analysts, press, officials of CHW and major competitors, doctors, community activists. Newsletter investigates suspected violations of CA charitable trust law, turmoil in CHW management ranks, excessive compensation for CHW executives.

2001

- January

SEIU issues, “Uncharitable” report, documenting CHW violations of charitable trust law and offering specific recommendations for action by California AG and other officials. Leading California healthcare and consumer groups endorse findings.

2001 cont.

- April

CHW signs agreement with SEIU, under which SEIU organized 9,000 members at 20 hospitals

Lessons Learned

- Pressure from religious hierarchy; criticism on moral grounds; publicity about bad charity and hypocrisy towards unions was NOT ENOUGH.
- Loss of contract; inability to sell hospital and serious legal challenge to non-profit status, potentially costing millions, brought CHW to the bargaining table.