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You Can Fight City Hall—The Dover, N.H., IAFF Defeat of Privatized Fire Protection

Abstract

[Excerpt] In recent years public sector unions have faced an increasingly difficult bargaining environment. The combination of a sluggish economy, cutbacks in federal aid, and citizen resistance to tax increases have forced state and local governments to reduce expenditures. In many cases antiunion public officials have used their budgetary woes as an excuse to attack the unions that represent government employees. Although these attacks occasionally amount to blatant union-busting, they more frequently involve subtle efforts to erode contract protections, fringe benefits, or bargaining units. One of the most prevalent methods for weakening public sector unions is the practice of contracting out or "privatizing" specific government services.

In 1983 the city of Dover, New Hampshire, reached an agreement with Wackenhut Corp. for the provision of fire protection services. Had it been implemented, the contract would have undermined the positions of two locals of the International Association of Fire Fighters (officers and fire fighters). Wages and benefits would have been reduced and hours of work increased. Furthermore, because the IAFF locals are certified under the New Hampshire public employee labor law, the bargaining units would have been erased by the change to a private sector employer.

The IAFF locals successfully challenged the contract that would have eliminated their members' public sector union jobs. There were four key aspects of their resistance effort: A campaign was waged to cultivate community support for fire fighters. This was supplemented by efforts to gain the assistance of other unions in the state. In addition, corporate research exposed many questionable practices of Wackenhut Corp. Finally, political action at the local and state level led to the ultimate defeat of the privatization proposal.

This case study of the Dover IAFF locals provides concerned trade unionists and labor educators with an example of an effective response to proposals calling for the privatization of services. Following a brief chronology of the Dover case, each of the key tactics is examined below in the reconstruction of the successful campaign to defeat this union busting effort.

Keywords

International Association of Fire Fighters, IAFF, public sector labor unions, labor movement

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You Can Fight City Hall—The Dover, N.H., IAFF Defeat of Privatized Fire Protection

Richard W. Hurd and Jill K. Kriesky

In recent years public sector unions have faced an increasingly difficult bargaining environment. The combination of a sluggish economy, cutbacks in federal aid, and citizen resistance to tax increases have forced state and local governments to reduce expenditures. In many cases antiunion public officials have used their budgetary woes as an excuse to attack the unions that represent government employees. Although these attacks occasionally amount to blatant union-busting, they more frequently involve subtle efforts to erode contract protections, fringe benefits, or bargaining units. One of the most prevalent methods for weakening public sector unions is the practice of contracting out or "privatizing" specific government services.¹

In 1983 the city of Dover, New Hampshire, reached an agreement with Wackenhut Corp. for the provision of fire protection services. Had it been implemented, the contract would have undermined the positions of two locals of the International Association of Fire Fighters (officers and fire fighters). Wages and benefits would have been reduced and hours of work increased. Furthermore, because the IAFF locals are certified under the New Hampshire public employee labor law, the bargaining units would have been erased by the change to a private sector employer.

The IAFF locals successfully challenged the contract that would have eliminated their members' public sector union jobs. There were four key aspects of their resistance effort: A campaign was waged to cultivate community support for fire fighters. This was supplemented by efforts to gain the assistance of other unions in the state. In addition, corporate research exposed many questionable practices of Wackenhut Corp.² Finally, political action at the local and state level led to the ultimate defeat of the privatization proposal.

This case study of the Dover IAFF locals provides concerned trade unionists and labor educators with an example of an effective response to proposals calling for the privatization of services. Following a brief chronology of the Dover case, each of the key tactics is examined below in the reconstruction of the successful campaign to defeat this union busting effort.

Chronology of the Contracted Services Debate

The story of the attempt by the city of Dover to privatize its fire services began to unfold long before it became the focus of community debate. In the spring of 1982, city manager Robert Steele urged the city council to investigate the possibility of contracting out fire fighting and emergency medical services for this city of 25,000. He had read advertisements of a firm that provided these services and hoped this relatively new approach would decrease city expenses. Steele had previously engineered the contracting out of snow removal and garbage collection services in Dover. These moves

¹ For general discussion of this topic, see *Passing the Buck—The Contracting Out of Public Services*, A.FSCME, (Washington, D.C., 1983. An economic analysis of contracted public services was prepared by Richard W. Hurd under the title "An Economic Framework for Evaluating the Privatization of Services," address to the New Hampshire Society of Public Administrators, Durham, N.H., October 1983.

² The authors completed the investigation of Wackenhut Corp. which is summarized below. The work was partially funded by a grant from the IAFF. However, the IAFF bears no responsibility for the views stated here.

resulted in the transfer of some members of the AFSCME public works local, but no employees lost jobs or benefits.

Throughout the summer and fall city council members, Steele, and fire chief David Bibber studied the privatization concept. They attended seminars, contacted other cities considering the idea, and debated the issue in special workshop sessions. Finally, in November, the council established specifications and began accepting bids for contracted fire fighting and emergency medical services.

The Dover fire fighters, whose job security was threatened by the prospect, reacted. Informed of the council's study at its inception, the officers briefly considered bidding for the contract as an employee-owned business. Unable to post the required performance bond, they abandoned that plan. Instead both locals concentrated on organizing community opposition to privatized fire fighting. Further, they established a tough position in renegotiating the collective bargaining contract scheduled to expire in June 1983. This latter tactic failed to produce substantive results in bargaining that began in the fall and continued into the spring.

While the privatization plan was clearly raising interest and concern in Dover, it was also attracting attention in the state legislature. Dover state representative Jim Demers introduced two pieces of legislation in support of the fire fighters' position. A bill forbidding contracted fire services was defeated early in the 1983 session. However, a second bill requiring the licensing of private companies providing fire protection services was signed into law in May.

By April 1983 only two firms, Fire Suppression Management Consultants, Inc., of Georgia, and Wackenhut Services, Inc., of Florida, had submitted proposals for the Dover fire protection contract. Because Fire Suppression's proposal did not meet all of the bid specifications, the Wackenhut plan became the focus of the debate.³ It proposed to save the community approximately \$350,000 over a three-year period and claimed that the quality of service would remain unchanged. The company promised to continue operating both the town's central fire station and its smaller south end station (Steele had hinted that under city management the latter might have to close). Wackenhut also guaranteed that 10 fire fighters would staff each shift rather than the existing nine-man team.

However, the fire fighters quickly recognized that the projected savings would come at their expense. The proposal included an increase in fire fighters' weekly hours of work from 42 to 56, a 10 percent decrease in hourly pay, a less comprehensive fringe benefit package, and a reduction in the number of employees from 42 to 36.⁴ Furthermore, the switch from public to private management would require new union elections. Wackenhut made only vague assurances that it would hire the incumbent fire fighters, and given the proposed working conditions many of these experienced men considered looking for new employment.

For these reasons, the fire fighters publicly rejected the plan after its introduction at the May 18 council meeting. They labeled it as both a union-busting measure and one guaranteed to reduce the quality of fire protection. These concerns, along with information casting doubt on Wackenhut Corp.'s character, arose again at a public hearing on the issue three weeks later. Yet on June 22 the council voted 5-3 to sign a five-year Wackenhut contract effective August 1.

Within days of the decision both the fire fighters' and officers' unions had filed charges against the council citing violations of the city charter, the state constitution, and the new state legislation. The county superior court judge immediately issued an injunction against the contract and passed the cases on to the state supreme court. The hearing was scheduled for mid-September. The Voters Interested in Public Safety, a Dover citizens' group supportive of the fire fighters position, simultaneously initiated

³ A complete chronology of events appears in Daphne Northrop, "How Contracted Services Became Household Word," Foster's Daily Democrat, Nov 4, 1983, p. 26.

⁴ Wackenhut Services, Inc. bid specifications for contracted fire and ambulance services, mimeo (Cora! Gables, Ha.. March 28, 1983).

efforts to amend the city charter to prohibit contracted fire service. By September it had secured enough petition signatures to put the question to a vote on the November ballot.⁵

After more than a year of research, discussion, and litigation, Dover's contracted fire services debate was finally resolved in a matter of days. In the November 9 election, voters overwhelmingly supported both the charter amendment and council candidates sympathetic to it. Just two days later, the state supreme court ruled that because of Wackenhut's violation of the new state certification law for private fire fighting companies, the June 22 contract was invalid.⁶

Community Support for the Fire Fighters

When the fire fighters realized that neither bidding for the private fire fighting contract themselves nor collective bargaining was a solution to the contracted services issue, they turned to the development of community awareness of and support for their position.⁷ During the winter and spring of 1983, the firemen prepared and presented slide shows and lectures to a variety of community groups including the Elks, the Moose, and residents of senior citizens' housing. The programs explained both the content of the fire fighters' jobs and the implications of privatized services. The locals also collected the signatures of 2,477 Dover residents on petitions calling for the continuation of the current fire fighting services.⁸ Finally, the two Dover locals extended their information-disseminating efforts to neighboring communities. They secured a letter signed by officials of several nearby towns which promised that they would "take 'a long look' at providing [mutual aid] services to a city with a privately run fire department."⁹

The first test, of the fire fighters' community-based strategy came at the May 18 city council meeting in which Wackenhut representative George Zoley formally presented the privatization proposal. The months of effort had clearly paid off. The introduction of the petition and the neighboring communities' letter concerning mutual aid, coupled with the presence of nearly 300 supporters, sparked controversy with those council members who endorsed the Wackenhut scheme. Forced to respond and grasping for straws, one councillor, in an interview with the local newspaper, *Foster's Daily Democrat*, charged that the council was "being takers hostage" by the fire fighters who had unfairly colored public opinion.¹⁰¹⁰

The intensity of the debate in a community whose city council meetings normally generate little excitement made it both the lead story in local newspapers and the focus of radio talk shows in the weeks following the council meeting. Although the Dover media generally supported the Wackenhut proposal, fire fighters and their community supporters used letters to the newspaper editor and "open mike" programs to promote their viewpoint. When the city council scheduled the June 9 hearing on the plan, the fire fighters sponsored radio advertisements encouraging attendance and participation.

Again the efforts to raise community consciousness paid off. Almost 300 concerned citizens attended the meeting, and 60 spoke out in support of the fire fighters. Most of the speakers recounted their personal experiences with the fire department and praised its performance. Other residents sympathetic to the fire fighters introduced corporate research on Wackenhut's involvement in strikebreaking services, spy operations, and right-wing organizations, the details of which are discussed

⁵ Northrop, p. 26.

⁶ Carol Light, "Fighting in Dover May End," *Manchester Union Leader*, Nov 12, 1983, p. 1.

⁷ Information on the fire fighters' strategy was obtained from several interviews with officers of the IAFF locals, Dover, N.H., Summer 1983.

⁸ Kathy Scrizzi, "Firefighters Say They Won't Work for Firm," *Foster's Daily Democrat*. May 19, 1983, pp. 1.

⁹ *Ibid*, ix 16.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 1.

below. As a result, there were few doubts about public opposition to the contracting-out plan, but many questions about the character of Wackenhut Corp.

Although no one defended the private service proposal at the hearing, council members who had endorsed Wackenhut's bid prior to it remained unswayed. Several dismissed the hearing, insisting that the vocal supporters inhibited the "silent majority" of citizens from speaking out. Citing its perceived public support for lower taxes, the city council approved the Wackenhut contract on June 22

The councillors and city manager expected concern to fade once the decision to make the management change occurred. But as the steady stream of letters to *Foster's* in the weeks following the vote indicated, residents' anger, although unorganized, was not subsiding. The inflexibility of the five councillors who responded neither to public opinion nor to the corporate research was blasted by local residents. One letter to *Foster's* reflects the sentiment:

It seems to me that the councilmen, even those sincerely believing in contracting, should at this point say "Clearly the case has not been made for contracting. We have not been able to demonstrate its merits, if real, to our public. We do not have the right to ram it down their throats."¹¹

The issue remained in sharp public focus as the local media continued to report on the fire fighters' legal actions and the city's reaction to them. When the pro-Wackenhut council members and city manager responded to the court cases with condemnations of the fire fighters and threats of fire department cutbacks, citizens were again reminded of the disregard for public opinion exhibited in the June 22 vote.

The fire fighters soon found a way to harness this public energy and concern. Early in July, in response to a long-standing request of the Dover locals for assistance, IAFF staff member Michael Lass was sent to New Hampshire to assess the legal and political avenues for reversing the decision. Local union officers Doug Conway and Chuck Mone arranged for him to meet with a handful of citizens who had volunteered their services. The gathering represented a diverse mixture of Dover residents. In addition to the two firemen, it included a housewife with no previous political experience, a nun, a retired marine colonel, a state representative, and the president of the community's teachers' union. Some group members admittedly possessed little knowledge of unions prior to their involvement in the contracted services issue, and one had openly voiced opposition to them.

Lass immediately recognized the potential effectiveness of such a group. Acting alone, the fire fighters were open to the critics' charge of preoccupation with their own self-interest. But this group—the Voters Interested in Public Safety (VIPS)—was ready and able to do battle with the city council. The 10 member committee, while concerned with the fire fighters' job and income security, was able to frame its argument in terms of what was in the best interest of the community at large.¹² The group specifically defined its mission at its first press conference:

The purpose of this committee is to focus the attention of voters on two fundamental issues: the method of providing public safety services to the citizens of Dover, and the obligation of our elected city councilors to respond to an overwhelming majority of Dover citizens.¹³

¹¹ Jennie Hodgson, "System Didn't Work." *Foster's Daily Democrat*, June 28, 1983, p. 7.

¹² Interview with Michael Lass, IAFF, NOV. 30, 1983, Dover, N.H.

¹³ Peter Howard. "Citizen Group Forms to Fight Contracted Services," *Foster's Daily Democrat*. July 27, 1983, p. 3

Members of VIPS willingly contributed countless hours to the fire fighters' cause.

To achieve their stated purpose the group took courses of action. First, they undertook the necessary steps to resolve the contracting issue. With Lass' assistance, the group investigated the procedure for amending the city charter to prohibit the privatization of public safety services. At their July 26 press conference, they announced their intention to gather the 1,500 voters' signatures needed to place the amendment on the November ballot.¹⁴ They supervised more than 50 volunteers in a door-to-door signature campaign throughout Dover during late July and August. By mid-September the city clerk had confirmed 2,074 signatures.¹⁵ Dover voters had won the right to decide the fate of private fire fighting services in a citywide referendum.

The committee next attempted to educate the public on both the specifics of the Wackenhut proposal and the meaning of the charter amendment. With the IAFF's help, VIPS studied the terms of the Wackenhut agreement and communicated its weaknesses to the press at every available opportunity. Discouraged by the incomplete and misleading coverage provided by local media, they eventually published their own comparison of salary and fringe benefit costs in Dover's current fire department budget and in Wackenhut's proposal. It highlighted Wackenhut's expected profits and overhead expenditures and its shortfall in proposed expenditures on salaries, holiday pay, and overtime pay in comparison to the city's previous budget. VIPS also circulated flyers warning of the decline in the quality of fire fighting services likely to occur under profit-seeking management.

In the weeks just before the charter amendment vote, the five pro- Wackenhut city councillors and perhaps 10 other citizens formed their own political action committee, Citizens Against Charter Change (CACC). CACC members, with the exception of the city councillors, refused to be identified, but their goal—to counter the VIPS campaign— was obvious. They sent out professionally prepared, multicolored pamphlets reflecting the city attorney's interpretation of the charter amendment. He claimed that the amendment's wording could make snow plowing, trash pickup, and other municipal "public safety" services subject to it. CACC warned that this was likely to increase local taxes.

CACC's argument was quickly discredited in two ways. First, under persistent questioning by the public, the group admitted that Wackenhut Corp. had prepared and financed its pamphlet. In addition, VIPS produced a leaflet which responded to CACC's charges by clearly explaining the intent of the amendment's wording.

Both the early community education and the VIPS actions were essential to the defeat of the Wackenhut proposal. They provided the fire fighters with allies for their campaign against the city council position. Moreover, these activities kept the public's attention focused on the contracted services issue for more than a year. In November 1983, Dover citizens finally voted convincingly in favor of the charter amendment banning the private contracting of public safety services.

Union Assistance to the Fire Fighters

The union-busting issue prompted both verbal and material support for the fire fighters from unions throughout the state, and from the regional and national offices of the IAFF. George Dickson, the state president of the IAFF, helped bring statewide attention to Wackenhut's contracted services proposal even before its formal introduction. In May 1983, at a New Hampshire IAFF meeting held in Dover to focus on the issue, Dickson announced that his organization "[could not] support contracting out when it [would] mean reduced services,' and reduced welfare for fire fighters."¹⁶ Representatives of IAFF locals throughout the state joined the regional vice-president of the IAFF in offering moral support

¹⁴ Carol Light, "Firefighter Issue Facing Dover Vote?" *Manchester Union Leader*, July 27, 1983, p. 8.

¹⁵ Peter Howard. "Clerk Confirms Petition Signatures," *Foster's Daily Democrat*, Sept. 20, 1983, p. I.

¹⁶ Peter Howard, "Firefighters Rap Bibber for Stance on Services," *Foster's Daily Democrat*, May 11, 1983, p. 6.

and rebuttal testimony at the May 18 city council meeting where Wackenhut formally presented its proposal.

The national office of the IAFF came to the assistance of the local immediately after the city council voted in favor of the privatization proposal- In addition to dispatching staff representative Michael Lass to the scene, consultants were hired to provide in-depth research into the background of Wackenhut Corp. and to assess the political situation in Dover. The support of the international was invaluable in the campaign to reverse the decision to contract fire protection services.

The Dover locals had begun to build support within the labor movement in New Hampshire long before the international's direct involvement began. Local 1312 joined the State Labor Council in 1982 at the behest of Mark MacKenzie, an officer of the IAFF local in Manchester and executive vice-president of the State Labor Council. With his assistance, word of the Dover situation spread quickly throughout the New Hampshire labor movement.

In May, a month before the city council vote on contracted services, Local 1312 president Doug Conway spoke at the American Federation of Teachers state convention. Delegates passed three separate resolutions in support of the Dover IAFF locals. Dover's International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers local contributed office space and supplies to the fire fighters, which they passed on to VIPS once their campaign began. In August, the president of Dover's AFT Local 3536 and the president of the AFL-CIO State Labor Council, together with the presidents of the Dover fire fighter locals, sent a letter to the 1,500 AFL-CIO union members in Dover encouraging them to sign the VIPS petitions for the city charter referendum. The letter called attention to the union-busting tactics of Wackenhut and the city council, it also named the council members who voted for the anti-union proposal and urged union members to "Elect our Friends, Defeat our Enemies."¹⁷ (Wackenhut has taken exception to the letter's claim that the company had "been exposed as a union-busting corporation and has had numerous unfair labor practices filed against them and lost by them as well."¹⁸ It is now pursuing legal action against the State Labor Council.) At the State Labor Council's Labor Day picnic and its annual fall convention, President Harland Eaton again expressed support for the Dover fire fighters and called on all New Hampshire unions to lend their assistance.

The IAFF locals benefited greatly from the assistance offered by other unions. The moral, financial, and political support they received made it possible to sustain their lengthy struggle against contracted fire services.

Corporate Research on Wackenhut

Corporate research on Wackenhut Corp. also played an important role in the fire fighters' campaign against privatization. The research tapped a variety of sources including the Bureau of National Affairs *Daily Labor Reports*, the AFL-CIO *Reports on Union-Busting* (RUB Sheets), standard corporate indices (e.g., *Moody's*, *Standard and Poors*), current periodicals and newspapers, and financial and stockholders' reports requested from the corporation. Two types of information were produced which helped to raise the concern of Dover residents. First, the research revealed that many Wackenhut Corp. officers had held positions in either ultra-conservative political groups or government intelligence operations, and that some of the latter's techniques were used by the company. Second, it developed a picture of anti-union services marketed by Wackenhut.

George Wackenhut, the founder of this multimillion dollar transnational corporation,¹⁹ started his small security services company in 1954 drawing on his former experience as a special agent of the

¹⁷ N.H. Labor Council's Letter to Local Members," *Foster's Daily Democrat*, Sept. 12, 1983, p. 7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p 7.

¹⁹ The Wackenhut Corporation Annual Report 1982 (Coral Gables, Fla.: The Wackenhut Corp., 1982), p. 3.

FBI.²⁰ Today men with similar work histories continue to manage the greatly expanded enterprise. Of the 20 directors and executive officers now overseeing Wackenhut Corp., 13 have occupied high-level positions in the FBI, CIA, Secret Service, or military intelligence.²¹ In addition to serving in agencies with a concern for protecting society against "subversive" elements, some Wackenhut officials have actively participated in ultra-conservative political groups. Recently retired board member Ralph E. Davis served on the John Birch Society Council during his tenure with Wackenhut. Two others, Bernard Schriever and the late Cecil Wright, have served on the American Security Council—a private organization once dedicated to cataloging the activities of radicals and now actively supporting President Reagan's El Salvador policy.²²

The activities of Wackenhut Corp. reflect the political conservatism one would expect given the makeup of the board. As reported in both a *Nation* article in the late 1960s and a Rand Corp. study in the mid-1970's, the company had on file dossiers on more than three million "intellectual and political mavericks."²³ When introduced at the June 9 hearing, this information had a particularly strong impact on Dover citizens. Their respect for individual rights of privacy, which typifies New Hampshire residents, led them to question the character of Wackenhut Corp. on radio talk shows and in letters to the newspaper editor.

The second set of facts discovered in the corporate research, those concerning Wackenhut's union-busting services, exacerbated the uneasiness created by the knowledge of the intelligence-gathering activities. They clearly showed that Wackenhut acts on an anti-union philosophy in relation to both its clients' employees and its own workers. For example, the investigation uncovered evidence of Wackenhut's involvement in an unfair labor practice violation committed by Florida Steel Corp. in 1977. Finding that Wackenhut had hired an undercover agent to work in Florida Steel's Tampa plant, the NLRB ordered the latter "to cease engaging or soliciting or employing the Wackenhut Corporation....to engage in the surveillance of and to report on the union activities of employees."²⁴

In more recent years, Wackenhut has developed and marketed antiunion services through its Emergency Protection Services subsidiary. Among the clients of this business are some of the most blatantly antiunion companies in operation today. Three well-known customers enlisting Wackenhut's support are Brown and Sharpe Co. of Kingston, Rhode Island, Greyhound Corp., and Capita! Cities Communications, Inc.

Capital Cities is one of five firms which the AFL-CIO Industrial Union Department recently named to its "dishonor roll" of companies "engaged in continuing practices to violate workers' rights."²⁵ It has employed Wackenhut's strikebreaking services in at least three cities: Pontiac, Michigan, Kansas City, Missouri, and Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. The 1978 Wilkes-Barre strike serves as an example of the variety of tactics that Wackenhut employs. Wackenhut supplied 200 guards (there were only 240 strikers) who erected barbed wire fences and surveillance cameras around the plant, threatened pickets with chains, attacked at least one picket with clubs, and sprayed others with fire extinguishers. Eventually Capital Cities was forced by Wilkes-Barre public opinion to replace Wackenhut with a local guard service.²⁶

²⁰ Ibid., PL 22.

²¹ Ibid, p. 22-24.

²² David Schwieckart, "On Wackenhut," *Fosters Daily Democrat*, June 15, 1983, p. 9.

²³ Jim Hougan, *Spooks* (New York, William Morrow & Co., 1978) p. 72.

²⁴ Bureau of National Affairs, *Daily Labor Report* no. 214 (Washington. D.C., Nov. 4, 1977), P- C-4.

²⁵ "Five Union -Busting Companies Put en IUD's 'Dishonor Roll,'" *AFL-CIO News*, Sept. 24, 1933, p. 3.

²⁶ "Union Busting in Northeastern Pennsylvania," reprint from *Pennsylvania AFL-CIO News* (Harrisburg, Pa: Pennsylvania AFL-CIO, October 1978).

Wackenhut has also established an aggressive anti-union posture facing its own employees. Labor relations with Puerto Rican security workers have been particularly volatile. A memo written by George Wackenhut to one of his Puerto Rican managers was the subject of a 1967 Senate hearing. Wackenhut reportedly encouraged the use of violence against union organizers when the police did not intervene in his behalf²⁷ In the late 1970s Wackenhut was found guilty of three unfair labor practice violations during a union-organizing campaign there.²⁸

Corporate research also uncovered information about Wackenhut's contract negotiations with unions. In a telephone interview, the president of Transport Workers Local 525, which has represented Wackenhut employees at Kennedy Space Center, reported that unless an agreement is in writing Wackenhut negotiators cannot be trusted.²⁹

More directly relevant to the Dover case, this attitude toward unions was further revealed in a statement by Wackenhut to stockholders at their 1982 annual meeting. In reference to the new fire services business, he said "we realize that we are facing a hard-sell situation. What we are offering is logical and cost-effective, but in many cases we are fighting inertia, politics and labor unions."³⁰

Much of this information on Wackenhut's anti-unionism was reported to the public at the June 9 hearing, in letters to the editor, and in interviews with several area newspapers. It helped both to substantiate opposition to the contracted fire services proposal and to intensify public outrage at the council's decision to hire the corporation. For in addition to discounting public opinion, a majority of councillors disregarded the new and unsettling facts brought to light in the public debate. Only one councilman, Thomas Duffy Jr., was decisively influenced by it. Originally a supporter of the Wackenhut plan, he requested further clarification of the facts that were presented. Still in agreement with the privatization concept, he cast one of the three dissenting votes because of his concern with the company's character.

Political Activity to Defeat Wackenhut

Perhaps the most important part of the effort of the fire fighters and their supporters to reverse the contracting decision was political activity at the state and local levels. Even before the formal presentation of Wackenhut's proposal, the Dover locals were working with Dover state representative Jim Demers on a legislative agenda. The top priority was a bill forbidding contracted fire services. This proposal was opposed by the governor and legislative leaders of the Republican party (which controls both houses) and was easily defeated. An alternative piece of legislation recommended by Demers—a bill requiring the licensing of private companies providing fire protection services—became the top priority. With the lobbying assistance of the State Labor Council, which helped arrange for testimony by fire fighters from across the state and several fire chiefs, the bill was passed and signed into law in May. This became central to the union's legal battle. Since licensing guidelines were not yet established when Dover and Wackenhut signed the contract, the corporation failed to meet the law's requirements.

²⁷ Nan Robertson, "Chief of Kirk's Private Anticrime Drive Denies Use of Wiretaps," New York Times, May 19, 1967.

²⁸ Bureau of National Affairs, Daily Labor Report no. 26 (Washington, D.C., Feb. 8, 1982).

²⁹ Telephone interview with Sam Runion, Transport Workers Union Local 525, June 22, 1983, Durham, N.H.

³⁰ George Wackenhut, "The President's Message," The Wackenhut Corporation Interim Report (Coral Gables, Fla.: The Wackenhut Corp., April 1983). In the same speech Wackenhut explained that the corporation would be "directing extensive energies" towards the development of the contracted fire fighting business in the future. Corporate officials apparently intended to use Dover as a showcase to promote rapid expansion in New England. They invested a considerable amount of time and resources in securing the contract. George Wackenhut himself came to Dover in the final days before the city council vote. Wackenhut representatives visited other New Hampshire cities to promote privatized fire services. They also scheduled Dover city officials to speak at a seminar for public officials at Wackenhut headquarters in Florida in December 1983, presumably to advertise the attractive features of their business.

In response to the union's court case, an injunction was granted against the contract which postponed its implementation. The New Hampshire Supreme Court heard testimony in September and allowed additional time for the litigants to file written briefs. Because the terms of the contract allowed for its cancellation within 90 days of its effective date, the fire fighters were essentially granted a reprieve which allowed them to take their case to the voters.

Their first foray into electoral politics came in July when a special election was held to replace Bucky Peters, a supporter of the fire fighters who had resigned early in May for personal reasons. Stephanie Farria, a strong proponent of the Wackenhut plan, lost 265 to 144 to J. Andrew Gait, who had opposed contracted services because of his reading of public opinion.³¹ In an effort to support a seemingly sympathetic candidate, the IAFF locals campaigned door-to-door in his behalf

Privatized fire services continued to be a central issue in the November council elections. A *Foster's* report on a preelection candidates' forum indicated the importance: "For those who have feared or hoped—depending which side they're on—that the contracted services issue will rule the election, [the] Tuesday night [forum] fueled the theory."³² Kevin Mone, brother of officers' local president Charles Mone, ran against outspoken Wackenhut supporter Arthur Maglaras. Mone's campaign focused almost exclusively on the contracted services issue. Bucky Peters returned to compete for one of three at-large council seats against Ray Hennessey, Geraldine Sylvester, and James McAdams, all of whom had voted for the Wackenhut contract. Both in the candidates* forum and in letters to the newspaper editor, Peters launched sharp attacks on the incumbents for their vote on contracted services. On the other hand, the three ward candidates who had sided with the fire fighters ran unopposed, as did Gait. Overall, six of the 14 candidates seeking election favored the Wackenhut proposal—five of them were incumbents who had cast the deciding votes the previous June.³³

In addition to their support for candidates siding with them on the contracting issue, the fire fighters joined with VIPS to campaign for the charter amendment. Especially in the final days before the election, they worked to get the vote out by leafleting, knocking on doors, and posting signs.

On Tuesday, November 9, Dover residents chose their new city council. The three most outspoken pro-Wackenhut incumbents, Sylvester, Hennessey, and Maglaras, lost seats that they had held for several terms. The two candidates most supportive of the fire fighters, Peters and Mone, won easily. Only two incumbents who voted for the contract maintained their seats, but one won by only 44 votes out of 740 cast.³⁴ Although one new candidate favoring contracted services was elected, he promised to abide by the wishes of his constituency on this issue. Thus the makeup of the new nine-member council included six members supported by the fire fighters. Also on this election day, Dover residents voted 3,688 to 1,971 in favor of the charter amendment banning the private contracting of public safety services.³⁵

Just two days later the state supreme court ruled that because Wackenhut had not complied with the new state certification law for private fire fighting companies, the June 22 contract was invalid. Given the election results, it was clear that a new contract would not be signed. The fire fighters' victory was complete.

³¹ Kathy Serizzi, "Gait Captures Ward 1 Seat." *Foster's Daily Democrat*, July 20, 1983, p. 1.

³² Daphne Northrop, "Contracted Services The Hot Topic," *Foster's Daily Democrat*, Nov. 2, 1983, p. 1.

³³ Daphne Northrop, "Wackenhut Supporters Ousted from Council," *Foster's Daily Democrat*, Nov. 9, 1983, p. 1.

³⁴ "Dover City Council," *Foster's Daily Democrat*, Nov. 9, 1983, p. 5.

³⁵ John Basilesco, "Dover Rejects Contracted Services," *Foster's Daily Democrat*, Nov. 9, 1983, p. 1.

The political activity of the IAFF locals was the integrating component of their strategy. Community support, union solidarity, and corporate research all paved the way for the political successes. The state legislation, the amendment to the Dover city charter, and the city council victories of sympathetic candidates combined to defeat the union-busting plan to privatize fire protection services.

Conclusion

The importance of the Dover IAFF locals* successful campaign transcends the narrow concerns of preserving their 42 union jobs and two collective bargaining agreements- The strategy they employed can be used as a model by local unions facing similar threats in both the public and private sectors- This case is most relevant to public sector locals confronted with proposals to privatize services. These unions should be encouraged by the ability of two small locals to prevail over five popular, elected city officials backed by a multimillion dollar corporation intent on winning the tire fighting contract.

All union locals engaged in battles with antagonistic employers should observe the multifaceted approach pursued in Dover when designing their own campaigns. Of course, the weights assigned to the various components of the IAFF locals* strategy will vary with the circumstances. Virtually any union stands to enhance its cause and boost morale by building alliances with other unions in its city and state. Establishing effective public relations and close ties with community groups will raise citizen awareness and provide a further boost to the local union's power. Corporate research that uncovers details about the employing company, its parent corporation, subcontractors, major business allies, and even business customers can prove invaluable in developing bargaining strategy or waging a public relations campaign. Finally, political involvement at the state and local level can also be helpful, and is absolutely crucial for public sector unions- As is evident in the Dover case, both electoral politics and legislative measures can help labor organizations achieve their goals.

Confronted with the union-busting and concessionary bargaining that characterize today's labor relations environment, unions cannot afford to battle with their employers in isolation. They should move beyond traditional trade unionism by developing a broader, more sophisticated strategy that allows their allies to contribute. Union-busting attempts can be effectively resisted by a coordinated campaign of alliance building, corporate research, and political action.