

## 90 Church Staff Lobbying For Better Windows

By GINGER ADAMS OTIS

A coalition of state, city and Federal unions gathered on the steps of City Hall Nov. 10 to renew their calls for double-paned windows in their workplace at 90 Church St. in lower Manhattan.

The workers have been protesting the lack of protective interior windows for more than a year without success. They're worried that the pending demolition of several buildings damaged on 9/11 will stir up toxic dust that's been dormant, and that diesel fumes and increased particulate matter will increase air pollution around the site. They said their existing windows, installed in the 1930s, were ill-fitting and "leaky."

### Speaking of the Mayor

The group presented a petition signed with more than 1,300 worker signatures to City Council Member Robert Jackson, who attended the protest in a show of solidarity and promised to make sure "the Mayor saw it."

He got his chance just minutes later, when Mayor Bloomberg, trailed by two security guards, walked briskly across the City Hall courtyard toward the entrance. Paul Stein, of the Public Employees' Federation, took advantage of the unexpected proximity to press a flyer into the Mayor's hands, while Mr. Jackson waved the petition and the boisterous crowd on the stairs began to chant "Double panes, double panes!"

The Mayor looked quizzically at the group, and according to Mr. Stein, admitted he was not familiar with

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## 90 Church Staff Calls for Better Windows

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the issue, but agreed to peruse the literature.

"He was very pleasant," said Mr. Stein. "He promised to read it, and I hope he does."

Postal Workers at 90 Church Street, along with workers for the Housing Authority and PEF, were asked to return to their jobs in the days after 9/11 to restore a feeling of normalcy to the area, said Lainie Kitt, a shop steward with Teamsters Local 237 and a NYCHA employee.

### Plans Go Unheeded

But since then, she stated, neither the city, the Postal Service, nor the building's owner—Mort Zuckerman of Boston Properties—has responded to their calls for better windows to keep out dust and pollution.

"Why not work with us?" shouted Ms. Kitt, addressing her question to the absent Mr. Zuckerman—who is the publisher of the Daily News—the HA and Postal Service. "Why not keep us safe and healthy?"

Several floors in the building have been double-paned, but only those occupied by PEF employees, who work for the state. Many of them spoke at the rally, saying they wanted the same consideration extended to their fellow workers.

Tom Anderson, vice-chair of the Organization of Staff Analysts, chastised the city and Federal governments for taking a short-term view of the problem.

### 'Can Save Lives'

"What does it cost to install some double-paned windows?" he asked. "It's a fraction of a fraction of what's spent elsewhere. What's the cost of lingering, painful, terrifying, and possibly fatal illness? Some workers will have their fate changed by this."

He accused HA leaders of shrugging off responsibility, stating that "the victim and



The Chief-Leader/Pat Arnow

HEALTH HAZARDS LINGER?: Komilla John, an occupational safety and health specialist for the Civil Service Employees' Association, told the crowd at City Hall that an independent panel of experts recently rejected the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's clean-up plan for buildings around the World Trade Center site as significantly 'flawed.' She said that meant many places believed to be safe 'may have been cleaned incorrectly.'

the victim's family, the pension system, the Social Security system and the retirement system will pay the price, and NYCHA will have moved on. Why isn't taking safer, less-expensive preventative health measures like [double-paned] windows a routine matter?"

In a letter written to the coalition about installing double-paned windows, a spokesman for Mr. Zuckerman said that it was "an individual tenant matter ... [left] to the other tenants at 90 Church Street to make their own decisions about whether such storm windows are warranted."

### HA: Did What's Needed

HA officials have previously stated that they feel they've taken sufficient steps to protect worker health. The agency brought in industrial cleaners after 9/11 and had

the building stripped while checking for contamination. They installed pre-filters to supplement the building's ventilation system and do regular testing of air and water quality.

But the workers said there's still visible detritus wafting in every day, and they're concerned about the cumulative effect of working eight-hour shifts in an area

that they describe as "the city's largest construction site for the next 10 years."

Suzanne Mattei, of the Sierra Club, seemed to sum up the rally's mood best. "These good people aren't asking for the moon," she said to the crowd, with visible frustration and anger. "They're asking for windows. So why don't you just give it to them?"