about the psycho-sexual plight of members of the union, came to her with a huge fee as a private consultant. I'm of unmet psycho-sexual need. exclusively for the enormous pool private clinic in Melbourne to cater union officials in this country. If s It's time someone started talking Hello patients, ever since it opened. Here's a typical Of course the new clinic has been full (The ACTU has engaged me on a contract basis, of course. I'm paid a huge fee as a private consultant. I'm glad to say the ACTU people didn't rattle on too much about infantile notions like awards, wages and conditions. They've become too politically mature for that.) Of course the new clinic has been full ever since it opened. Here's a typical example of the union patient we are seeing. A lass was a union delegate in a section of a state public service - last week she was pushed to the limit. Two of her workmates, both members of the union, came to her with a conflict. Allegedly the dispute was over shared access to a computer terminal, but everyone who worked within ten feet of them knew it was basically a personality conflict dressed up as an industrial dispute. My delegate 'negotiated', she 'conciliated', she 'arbitrated'. She was patient, reasonable and wise. Finally the delegate snapped. She screamed: "I'm going to have to use the King Solomon approach in resolving this dispute." (You may remember King Solomon once settled a dispute over a child by offering to cut the child in half.) She rushed out to her car, grabbed a chainsaw, tore back into the office and sawed the disputed computer in half! She then screamed at the two astonished members: "Your dispute is over. You can boot up half each!" She's been an in-patient at the clinic ever since.

When a dispute is on between a worker and a supervisor, it's the union delegate who's got to go into the chief's tee-pee with a very cross Indian. Often the Indian has got a genuine and reasonable grievance - in fact the poor bugger's got a dirty great arrow sticking out of his back. The union delegate has somehow got to get them to stop shouting at each other and smoke the peace pipe. Then the chief has to be persuaded to pull the arrow out of the Indian's back! It's a delicate job, and all the more so when the delegate wants to remain friendly with the chief, because they've worked together for years, play sport together, are best drinking buddies and are related by marriage.

I had another patient the other day who had developed an odd union variation of the condition known as meeting psychosis. This patient worked for the Public Sector Union and he had reached the stage of calling meetings at home.

Each night he insisted that the family turn the telly off and sit in a circle in the loungeroom. He then put butcher's paper up all over the walls, armed himself with a big black texta and forced the family to indentify 'strategies' for amalgamating the KCU (the Kitchen Cooking Union, which has two members - his wife and his mother-in-law) with the GGU (the Garbage and Garden Union, also with two members - himself and his son). Once the KCU/GGU negotiations were on track, he then forced them to form a FYC, a Family Youth Caucus, whose job it was to find ways of luring his teenage daughter into joining the new amalgamated Principal Family Union.

It seems the daughter had been refusing to attend the nightly meetings. She was always off in her bedroom watching L.A. Law on her very own TV, bought with wages from McDonald's. Her father kept screaming at her: "Can't you see you're being exploited as non-unionised slave labour by a grasping US multi-national?" To which she'd scream: "I love every minute of it!"

I had another PSU patient who was a candidate for meeting psychosis. She had been in so many tough wage negotiation meetings, for so many years, that she now negotiates automatically in every life situation. For example, last weekend she wanted her son to do the simple task of vacuuming the inside of the family car. She couldn't simply ask him to do it. Instead she began with an ambit claim: "Son, clean the car inside and out." Her son, who was used to her negotiating techniques by now, was quite happy to wash the car, but countered with: "Mum, I'll only wash the hub caps, and that's all!" She said: "Son, if you want to eat tonight, you'll wash and vacuum, but you don't need to polish. That's my bottom line."

He adopted his fall back position: "I'll wash the outside, empty the ashtray, but nothing else. Otherwise I'll put a ban on emptying the garbage for a week!" She screamed: "Don't threaten me, I pay the food bills." He saw she was really angry, and so decided to put her in a win/win situation. "Look, Mum, you need a clean car, I need lunch. We can both get something here. I'll wash the car, if you do the vacuuming and make me a sandwich."

My PSU patient happily went off to get the vacuum cleaner. She'd enjoyed the negotiating battle so much she didn't even notice that she was doing the very job she had wanted her son to do.

Send your problems to Dr Hartman's secretary, Julie McCrossin, care of ALR.