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*"It doesn't matter who my father was; it matters who I remember he was." ~ Anne Sexton*

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## Town loses union arbitration

By **MARJORIE NEEDHAM**

A Connecticut state arbitrator has found Middlebury's Board of Selectmen breached its contracts with municipal public service workers in May 2009 by unilaterally implementing medical insurance changes. The town switched employees to a health savings account from a point-of-service health insurance plan effective July 1, 2009. Town officials said they were making the switch to save money for the town, and they did not need to negotiate the change with the unions because the new insurance was as good as the former insurance.

Veteran Middlebury Police Officer Al Cronin, who is president of the police

union's chapter, said in a union press release, "We warned the town not to go down this road a year ago." It's too bad that they wouldn't listen to us then. Now that the 'chicken has come home to roost,' we can only hope that elected officials will respect our voices in the future."

First Selectman Thomas Gormley said Wednesday he didn't know whether the town would restore the workers' former health insurance. He said the arbitrator's decision did not include a remedy for the breaches of contract, so he has turned the matter over to town lawyers, and they will determine what the town is required to do. The breaches affect the police union, whose members have been working without a contract since July 1,

2009, and Middlebury Town Hall Workers (clerk and dispatch) and Middlebury Supervisors, whose contracts expire in 2010 and 2013, respectively. Gormley said he believed the health insurance issue was a major stumbling block in ongoing contract negotiations with the police union.

Union spokesman Matt O'Connor said Wednesday the union hopes to meet with town officials as soon as possible to discuss a remedy. "Not only were our members right, now we need to sit down and talk about how this will be fixed," O'Connor said. He said the union believes the town's municipal workers should be on the point-of-service health insurance plan they were on before July 1, 2009.