THE GUILD
Reporter

November 13, 1998 | A Publication of The Newspaper Guild and The Communications Workers of America • Volume 65, Number 11

Journalism on the Couch, part II
page 4

Feds sue Time over "temps"

The growing corporate reliance on "just-in-time" workers got a slap in the face from the Dept. of Labor, which has sued Time Warner and a bevy of its subsidiaries—including Guild-represented units—for wrongly denying pension and health care benefits to hundreds of employees. Many were freelancers, characterized by Guild President Linda Foley as "among the most frequently abused professionals in our society."

The lawsuit follows a string of unresolved Guild grievances that charged the company with improperly manipulating breaks in service to maintain employees as temporary workers, violating both managerial guidelines and the collective bargaining agreement. But whereas most such challenges are brought under the Fair Labor Standards Act, this lawsuit was filed under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act—which means, among other things, that Time Warner is facing liquidated damages in addition to any "make whole" remedies the court may order.

The Dept. of Labor also is seeking an independent audit of the company to identify other misclassified employees. In addition to permanent temps, the government is suing on behalf of so-called "independent contractors."

While it has been reported that fewer than a thousand of the company's 40,000 employees worldwide might be affected by the suit, a court decision supporting the complaint would have major significance for the growing legion of companies—such as Microsoft, as described in last month's Guild Reporter—that are cutting expenses at their employees' expense. But that undoubtedly was the last thought on Time Warner's corporate mind when it denounced the federal lawsuit as "bureaucratic overreaching" and as "an assault on the creative community."

After all, the company said, its temps enjoy a "symbiotic" relationship that offers unparalleled "freedom and flexibility."



DAMON J. HARTLEY/DETROIT GUILD

Bittersweet

Free Press photographer Pat Beck is hugged by locked-out Free Press photographer George Waldman as she returns to work after three-and-a-half years of being on strike and locked out. The Press' new director of photography, Rob Kozloff, waits to escort her into the building. Although closed-door negotiations among the Free Press, Detroit News and several unions continue, no progress has been reported and hundreds of workers remain locked out.

Proxy season puts fresh arrow in unions' quivers

There's more than one way to make a point—and when it comes to filing shareholder proposals to advance employee issues, the Guild is leading the way within CWA.

With proxy deadlines looming, and with considerable assistance from CWA's research department, the Guild is preparing shareholder proposals to be filed with Gannett, Knight-Ridder and the New York Times Co. and is looking for shareholders through whom to file proposals with the Washington Post Co. and Journal Register.

In addition, CWA Local 1096—representing employees at Dow Jones and otherwise known as the Independent Association of Publishers' Employees—is filing a shareholder proposal at that company. And CWA is preparing at least two shareholder proposals for telephone companies and is backing two proposals filed with Walt Disney.

Long viewed as a rather arcane exercise, shareholder proposals in recent years have become an increasingly popular tool for all kinds of special interest groups and "stakeholders" trying to shape the corporate landscape. And while most fail to win, the issues they raise frequently stimulate public discussion and sometimes compel management to adopt

Continued on page 3

Just another Prozac kind of day in St. Paul

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."

David Hanners is a Pultizer Prize-winning reporter at the Pioneer Press who presumably knows his way around a straightforward bit of reporting. So when a representative of the company's health-provider told him that Pioneer Press employees use an above-average amount of medical health medication, that seemed pretty newsworthy.

Even more newsworthy was the spokeswoman's revelation that her company, Medica, was recommending that Pioneer Press management reduce its health care costs by addressing issues of job stress, increasing respect for workers and developing better methods of conflict resolution. "We don't make recommendations lightly," Carol Dalton told Hanners, pointing out that Pioneer Press employees get prescriptions at a rate 13.6% higher than Medica overall—and that one in five of those prescriptions is for mental health drugs.

As Hanners subsequently reported in his local's newsletter, Shoptalk-St. Paul: "Of the 10 leading diagnoses Pioneer Press employees receive when they go to the doctor, four are for mental health problems. 'It's pretty high to have four in the top 10,' the Medica representative said. 'In most companies, you might have, at most, two. Some new companies don't have any. But four is pretty high.' "

That's when the meds hit the fan.

A day after Shoptalk was posted on union bulletin boards, a rebuttal was issued by the company's director of employee relations, accusing the Guild of misrepresenting the facts. "Medica at no time suggested that mental health-related diagnoses can be attributed to workplace stress," Jill Taylor contended. "Medica at no time recommended onsite seminars be provided to promote a 'respectful' work environment and conflict resolution."

Such assertions didn't just contradict Hanner's report: they also denied the physical evidence, including a written report from Medica to the Pioneer Press and a highlighted copy of a catalog illustrating the kinds of programs Dalton had recommended. Both had been provided by Dalton to the Guild after the Pioneer Press spurned Guild requests for copies.

Dalton clearly had created a problem. Just as clearly, Dalton was going to have to fix it. And so, attached to Taylor's memo and distributed to all Pioneer Press employees, was a letter in which Dalton beat a hasty—if unconvincing—retreat. "While it is true that Pioneer Press has higher than average costs relating to mental health care," Dalton wrote, "it is impossible to attribute this to workplace stress."

Seminars to create a "respectful" work environment "have not been recommended."

Oh—and as for her interview with Hanners? Dalton told a Guild rep she can't remember ever talking to him. . . .

Inside this issue

Three locals settle contracts . . . . . **Page 2**
Radiation baths for the brain? . . . . . **Page 6**
Not shy—just very retiring . . . . . **Page 8**

Settlements reached at Rocky Mt. News, Cincinnati Post, Manchester Union-Leader

Guild members overwhelmingly ratified new three-, four- and five-year contracts at the Rocky Mountain News, the Manchester Union Leader and the Cincinnati/Kentucky Post, respectively.

Voting 168-40 for a contract that includes a controversial tie-in to the Denver Post, unit members at the Rocky Mountain News will get a 2% increase retroactive to last December and a 0.5% increase this December. A three-year "me, too" clause, to be applied retroactively as needed, assures News employees of achieving parity with whatever wage agreement is eventually reached at the Post.

(Bargaining at the Post, meanwhile, reportedly was back on track after publisher Dean Singleton switched chief negotiators—and a good thing, too. Guild and other union members, frustrated at the glacial pace of talks, were preparing a major boycott campaign that would have targetted subscribers and advertisers. Instead, the unions have collected thousands of signed subscription-cancellation cards which they plan to turn in to the Post if there are further delays. Unresolved issues still include wages, pension, restrictions on union activity, union security, management rights and a no-strike clause.)

Also notable in the News contract is a sweeping set of wage increases for clerical workers, ranging from $9 to $90 a week; the addition of eight previously excluded job titles to the contract; and the extension of employer-provided health insurance to part-timers working an average of at least 30 hours a week.

Manchester Union-Leader

At the Manchester Union-Leader, the four-year agreement includes annual 3.25% increases, upgrades ranging between $8 and $15 a week for all clerical positions and scale increases in the computer room of up to $80 weekly.

Other contract features include creation of a new job classification, for editorial assistants; a "wellness bonus" of two days' pay for employees who use no sick leave over a one-year period and one days' pay for those who use three or less days; and lump-sum payment of severance to retirees.

The Guild also agreed to experiment with a digital darkroom—to be overseen by TNG/CWA Regional Vice President Tom Thibeault. "I didn't request that, by the way—it was just given to me," Thibeault said.

Cincinnati/Kentucky Post

The new Cincinnati/Kentucky Post contract was ratified with only a single dissent, 57-1. The agreement includes an average minimum increase of 3% a year, moving reporters and editors from $842 to $962 over five years. While wage increases are not retroactive—the last contract expired almost a year ago—employees are to receive $200 each in lieu of retroactivity.

Other contract gains include a lowering of the normal retirement age to 62 for full retirement benefits and a slight increase in night differential pay.

One aspect of the Post contracts that is a harbinger for other locals is a provision allowing publisher Scripps-Howard to recruit unit members to do extra work at a Scripps-owned TV station. The agreement also permits the newspapers to use some of the work generated for TV. Unit members who volunteer for such duty are to earn at least the minimum paid to comparable TV employees, but a joint labor-management committee is to work out specific details as the situation develops.

The agreement also gives management more flexibility to use stringers, with the caveat that no current full-time workers will be displaced by freelancers. In addition, no more than 20% of the newsroom payroll may be spent for copy generated by freelancers.

In brief . . . .

Thibeault prompts early declaration

Region I Vice President Tom Thibeault got the next round of TNG-CWA elections off to an early start by telling a Tri-Council meeting Nov. 7-8 that he won't seek another term, prompting At-Large Vice President Lesley Phillips to declare she will seek his seat. A sector conference resolution approved in August will reduce the number of at-large veeps next year from five to two.

It's official: Philly now wall-to-wall

The last seven non-represented employees at Philadelphia Newspapers Inc, all in the returns department, voted 4 to 2 to join the Guild. PNI is publisher of the Inquirer and Daily News.

Wash. Post talks turning nasty

Contract talks betweenThe Washington Post and the Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild started Sept. 9 with a fistful of company non-starters, including proposals to permit spying on employees, mandatory drug and alcohol testing and lump-sum payments instead of wage increases in two of the proposed five contract years. The company also proposed that employees promoted to higher Guild-covered job classifications would be subject to the same six- or nine-month probationary period as new hires—regardless of previous seniority. Now *that's* nasty.

Severance dispute settled in Lowell

The last-minute settlement of a severance dispute in Lowell, Mass., barely averted an arbitration that had been scheduled for Nov. 3. The agreement, worth approximately $67,500 to be distributed among 80 people, recognizes length of service prior to the newspaper's sale to Dean Singleton.

Regina edit staff awaits board ruling

More than half of the 48-member editorial staff at the Regina Leader-Post signed Guild cards recently, reversing a heart-breaking loss two years ago when TNG Canada/CWA failed to unionize all of the newspaper's departments. Formal certification of the bargaining unit is expected Dec. 4, following a Saskatchewan Labor Relations Board hearing.

Twin Cities voting on Typo merger

Guild members at the Pioneer Press, Star Tribune and five smaller units are voting on a Guild Local 2 executive board recommendation for a merger with Minneapolis-St.Paul Typographical Union No. 30. The combined unit would be known as the Minnesota Newspaper Guild/Typographical Union. Ballots are to be counted Nov. 16.

LA Guild moves

The new mailing address is P.O. Box 769, Long Beach, CA 90801. No phone change.



BRYAN M. NOEL/UFCW LOCAL 1776

Members of United Foods and Commercial Workers Local 1776 join the picket line in front of the Times Herald in Norristown, Pa. to show their support for the Guild's bargaining team.

Demonstrators dog Jelenic in pursuit of contracts

Robert Jelenic of the Journal Register Co. has become the poster boy for rapacious newspaper executives.

When rumors surfaced that Jelenic would give a speech to the Fall River, Mass. board of trade, Guild members at the Fall River Herald News thought his visit warranted a reception. They have, after all, been without a contract for two years.

And when Guild members learned that Jelenic was to address local chambers of commerce at a luncheon in King of Prussia, Pa., they bought tickets for the event. Even working stiffs work up an appetite from time to time.

The result was a 90-minute picket line in front of the Herald News at which Greg Sullivan wore a gorilla mask and carried a sign imploring, "Mr. Jelenic, stop monkeying around with us." A similar picket line was thrown up in front of the Times Herald in Norristown, Pa. two days later—although the chamber, on learning that a bloc of luncheon tickets had been bought by Guild members, refunded the money and refused to feed the rioting masses.

Guild demonstrations against Jelenic are a natural outgrowth of the hard line he has taken at virtually all of his newspapers. This is perhaps best exemplified at the Woonsocket (Rhode Island) Call, where the Guild recently filed unfair labor practice charges and took the extra step of requesting a 10-J injunction "due to the serious and extensive nature of the employer's conduct."

Employee abuse at Woonsocket has run the gamut from petty to oppressive. At one extreme, the company's circulation director trashed two congratulatory floral displays that had been sent to welcome his staff into the Guild. At the other, local President Scott Cole was called into the managing editor's office Oct. 1 and told that Jelenic had a statement and a question for him.

The statement: "If you want a war, you've got a war."

The question: "Do you like to work here? If not, you should leave."

Small wonder Jelenic's employees are breaking out the monkey suits.

The Guild Reporter (ISSN: 00175404) is issued monthly, generally at four week intervals, at 501 Third St. NW, 2nd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001.

Periodicals postage paid in Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Printed in the U.S.

Postmaster: Send address changes to: The Guild Reporter, 501 Third St. NW, 2nd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001

Subscription: $20 a year.

Single copies: $1.50.

Labor round-up

Labor hits the polls—big time

Election results Nov. 3 that recalled the Truman-Dewey reversal of 50 years ago were credited in large part to labor's resurgence at the polls. With the AFL-CIO spending $15 million on a turn-out-the-vote effort, union household members accounted for 23% of all voters nationwide despite comprising only 17% of the American voting-age population. The result was a profound upset of GOP hopes and pundits' forecasts and the premature—but arguably overdue—retirement of Newt Gingrich.

Steel-ing jobs in a global economy

One repercussion of the November election is increased union pressure on the White House to reexamine its wholehearted embrace of global free trade—often at the expense of environmental and labor issues. Case in point: strong lobbying by steel producers and labor leaders to curtail dumping of foreign-made steel in the U.S. Steel sold at below-cost prices already has resulted in some U.S. layoffs and plant closings, which makes import tariffs sound like a no-brainer. But the import surge is being driven by foreign economies in desperate search of U.S. dollars to meet debt payments—to U.S. investors. A tangled web, indeed.

Supreme Court delivers union victory

Yet another Election Day surprise was delivered by the U.S. Supreme Court, in a unanimous ruling that collective bargaining agreements with union security clauses don't have to spell out that a worker doesn't have to join a union or pay full union dues. The court reasoned that elaborating on the intricacies of every contract term, such as "union membership," would result in "massive and unwieldy treatises" of "no discernible benefit." The landmark suit had been brought against the Screen Actors Guild by Naomi Marquez, who had been offered a bit part on a TV show but was replaced when she balked at paying her union dues.

Labor Party ponders next step

Two-and-a-half years after its founding, the Labor Party holds its constitutional convention Nov. 13-15 in Pittsburgh in a first step toward electoral involvement. Supported by hundreds of unions as diverse as the United Mine Workers, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee and the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers, the Labor Party is bidding to become an effective, worker-oriented alternative to the Democrats and Republicans.

Losing the game? Change the rules

The American Society of Newspaper Editors, recognizing it wouldn't meet its 22-year timetable for achieving racial parity in the newsroom, decided Oct. 20 it simply needs more time—about 26 more years, in fact. So ASNE now says its members should reflect the country's racial diversity by 2025, by which time today's publishers and editors will be long gone and a new generation can ponder silly deadlines.

Fly the surly skies

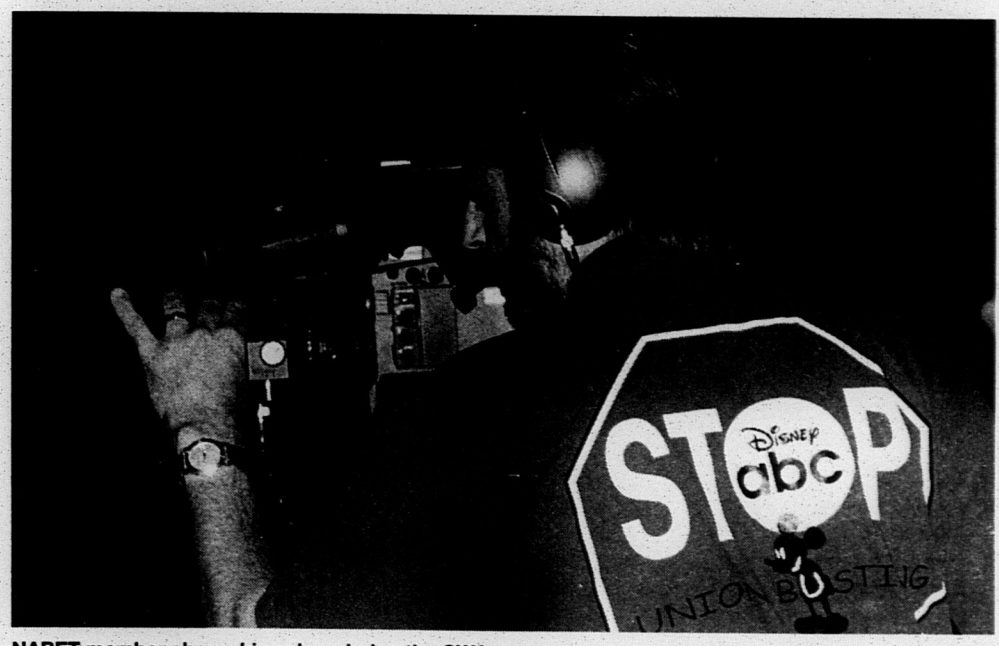
The Fedex Pilots Association began a slowdown Nov. 9 and will be counting strike authorization ballots Dec. 3 as it pressures the overnight delivery company to settle contract talks. Chief items of contention are below-industry wages and the company's unilateral imposition of work-rule changes this past spring.

Scalpel . . . clamp . . . union . . .

As more and more professions become commoditized, even the whitest of white-collar workers turn to labor organizing. Latest case in point: nationwide efforts by HMO doctors to overcome federal antitrust laws that view them as independent contractors, and therefore barred from collective bargaining. The Federation of Physicians and Dentists now claims 8,000 members nationwide; the Union of American Physicians and Dentists has 5,000.

Unions in a sweat over new code

With some fanfare, a group of human rights organizations and such clothing makers as Nike, Reebok and Liz Claiborne announced a new code of conduct to eliminate overseas sweatshops. But the AFL-CIO and the country's largest apparel union, the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, rejected the agreement for failing to ensure adequate monitoring and because it doesn't require the manufacturers to pay a living wage.



NABET member shows his colors during the CWA convention in Chicago. BILL BURKE/WASHINGTON-BALTIMORE GUILD

Now it's time to say goodbye . . .

Mickey Mouse network gives workers the boot

After 21 months of fruitless contract talks, ABC locked out approximately 2,200 NABET/CWA-represented employees in retaliation for the union's 24-hour walkout over an unfair labor practice.

The network's Nov. 3 action—still unresolved as The Guild Reporter went to press—drew an immediate rebuke from CWA President Morton Bahr, who requested political candidates and organizations refrain from granting election interviews to ABC television and radio reporters. Such a boycott "does not constitute taking sides in a dispute," Bahr said, "but it is rather a stand in favor of fair application of our labor laws and the rights of American working people."

Several politicians and entertainers, including vice president Al Gore and comic Adam Sandler, honored the request.

ABC entered the contract talks with five demands it said were non-negotiable, including one that employees switch their health plan coverage to parent company Walt Disney's "Signature Plan." But a year of requests by NABET for a breakout of the plan's out-of-pocket costs have gone unanswered, according to union spokesman Rich Gelber, prompting a complaint to the National Labor Relations Board and the one-day job action.

ABC has said it will end the lock-out when NABET agrees to give advance notice of future walkouts, which is like asking a defending football team to announce the next blitz. NABET has responded with a proposal for a 30-day no strike/no lockout period, but ABC nixed that as too short to be meaningful.

ABC continued operating by assigning supervisory personnel to some cameras, manning others with scabs and in some cases suspending non-essential live programming, such as day-time soaps. But the network could be in for a long fight. The National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians voted this past fall to join the CWA $170 million strike fund, and has prepared a shareholder proposal that targets Walt Disney.

Disney, meanwhile, has other labor problems: its 22,000 hourly workers at Walt Disney World represented by the Service Trades Council Union rejected a proposed contract by a margin of 2-to-1. The contract would have raised starting pay from $5.95 an hour to $6.25.

Proposals would tie exec pay to Guild's Monterey principles

Continued from page 1

changes it had previously resisted.

One proposal submitted at Disney last year, for example—and being resubmitted this year—would have repealed that company's "poison pill." (Poison pills typically are created by chief executives and compliant boards of directors to entrench management.) Last year's effort was supported by more than 40% of Disney's shareholders, which should have convinced chief executive Michael Eisner that all is not well in the Magic Kingdom—a warning which recent events (see story above) suggest he has ignored.

Guild shareholder proposals, meanwhile, attempt to advance the so-called "Monterey principles" first articulated last year, after Knight-Ridder assumed control of the Monterey County Herald from E.W. Scripps and announced all employees would have to reapply for their jobs. Knight-Ridder's tactics were so extreme that a coalition of community leaders began collecting cancellation pledges from Herald readers and started a letter-writing campaign to chief executive Tony Ridder.

The Monterey principles evolving from that campaign included the following:

• A newspaper company must be accountable to the communities in which it publishes.

• The company must be fair, responsible and law-abiding in its dealings with local advertisers, vendors, employees and communities.

• The company must dedicate adequate resources to ensure the public gets the information it needs to make informed civic decisions.

• The company must uphold freedom of speech and press and avoid corporate censorship of the news.

• The company's newspaper content must reflect the diversity of the communities each newspaper serves.

Although shareholders at Gannett and Knight-Ridder were asked last year to vote on the Monterey principles, Gannett kept the proposal out of its proxy statement by successfully arguing to the SEC that it improperly addressed issues of "normal business," which are exempt from shareholder intervention. So this year's proposal requires executive compensation to be based on adherence to the same principles—and executive compensation *is* fair game for shareholders.

Journalism on the Couch

Where we are

This is the second in a two-part presentation of a statement prepared by The Newspaper Guild/CWA Committee on the Future of Journalism, which was created earlier this year to address issues of professional concern to all Guild members.

Part one, published in the Oct. 9 issue of The Guild Reporter, outlined the committee's genesis, the work of the Hutchins' Commission and subsequent developments in the industry.

Copies of the entire report have been printed in pamphlet form and are available from the Guild. Readers' responses are encouraged and will be published in The Guild Reporter as space permits.

Fifty years ago the Hutchins' Commission warned: "If modern society requires great agencies of mass communication, if these concentrations become so powerful that they are a threat to democracy, if democracy cannot solve the problem simply by breaking them up—then those agencies must control themselves or be controlled by government. If they are controlled by government, we lose our chief safeguard against totalitarianism—and at the same time take a long step toward it."

In that era, William Allen White, the legendary editor-publisher of Emporia, Kansas, wrote: "Too often the publisher of an American newspaper has made his money in some other calling than journalism. He is a rich man seeking power and prestige. He has the country club complex. The business manager of this absentee owner quickly is afflicted with the country club point of view. Soon the managing editor's wife nags him into it. And they all get the unconscious arrogance of conscious wealth. Therefore, it is hard to get a modern American newspaper to go the distance necessary to print all the news about many topics."

Then, television was not the 500-ton monster of communications, but a pattern of business was already in place from big radio. "The large advertisers on the air use a small number of advertising agencies . . . These agencies not only place the contracts, but also write, direct, and produce the programs. The great consumer industries . . . determine what the American people will hear on the air," the commission concluded.

The publishing concentration that worried the Hutchins' Commission has only deepened. Fifty years ago 14 owners controlled 25 per cent of total daily newspaper circulation. Now, 14 owners have more than half the total circulation and 75 per cent of all newspapers are owned by chains. Two networks, ABC and NBC, are parts of immense conglomerate corporations and the other, CBS, is part of a manufacturing company that is transforming itself into a communications giant. (The new company arises from Westinghouse Electric that had a pioneer role in broadcasting.) A handful of companies interlocked with Hollywood and professional sports dominate cable television. New companies like Microsoft and America Online have commanding positions in the newest forms of mass communication. A bewildering array of cross-ownership makes it difficult to determine day by day whose interests are being served by the news departments that are subsumed by the corporate monsters.

This is the atmosphere we find in contemporary American journalism: Corporate profits are very strong, the prices for newspaper and broadcast properties are very high, and industry ownership grows ever more concentrated. The strong profit margins from broadcasting and publishing often support other less-lucrative enterprises. Those directly responsible for the news product, separated by layers of bureaucracy from top management, are under heavy pressure to assure fixed profit margins with little concern for quality of the ultimate news product. For top management, the news department is just an expense item in the balance sheet. There is much anecdotal evidence, cautiously confirmed by the American Society of Newspaper Editors, of the pressures news executives experience in their efforts to improve their products while attempting to meet arbitrary financial goals.

Morton Research, Inc., reported that in 1997 profit margins of major newspaper companies reached an average of 20 per cent compared with 15 per cent in 1996. No wonder that the sale of newspaper properties hit a new record in 1997, when 162 dailies changed hands for a total price of $6.2 billion, nearly twice the volume of 1995, the previous record year for sales. The last record year for the number of papers sold was 1986, when 119 changed hands. The high profit margins—higher than most other corporations can attain—were achieved despite the fact that revenues in real, non-inflationary terms were the same or worse than in 1987. Income from circulation was especially anemic. Thus, the higher profits were derived largely from cutting costs, especially in the producing the product, the news report.

Despite the obvious economic health of the industry, there is evidence of constant worry at the top levels of newspaper and broadcast management. Publishers are in demi-panic over competition from the Internet, such panic that many of them are giving away their best product free or for little compensation in the black hole of cyberspace. They continue to look for gimmicks and cosmetic changes in packaging instead of investing in content. The TV networks, which gained power by taking the headline function away from newspapers, now find they are supplanted as primary sources for national news by cable networks, ambitious local channels and all-news radio. The networks have responded by cutting back on original news coverage and filling their programming with soft feature stories and high-priced entertainment.

The deep disillusionment expressed by all ranks of journalists over the direction their business has taken is intensified by the resentment and distrust expressed toward them by large segments of the public. The miasma surrounding "the media" is part of the wider national disillusionment with the major institutions of American political, economic and social culture. Does aggressive journalism denigrate politicians and government? Or, is the political system sick and journalists fulfill their traditional responsibility by telling the story as they find it? Why does the public distrust all institutions and lump the mass media, including putative watchdogs of the public's interests, into the same basket? Why are so many people disillusioned and fed up with public officials? Why are so many opting out of the political system?

American democracy cannot survive if the fundamental political institutions lose the public's confidence and citizen participation erodes to the point where well-financed, selfish narrow interest groups dominate the decision-making process. American democracy cannot survive if journalism loses its unique status as the provider of reliable information required by the public to make vital decisions. Who else can fulfill the role of watchdog of the public's interest except a vigorous, free journalism? The position of the mass media is guaranteed by the First Amendment of the Constitution, but this bulwark can be maintained only so long as the general public believes the press by its performance warrants that protection. Maintaining the public's confidence in a free press is the responsibility of all in journalism, the owners and managers of the enterprises and the men and women practicing the skills required in the trade. Everyone must recognize that journalism is a high calling. Where there is a newspaper monopoly, as in most cities, the paper has a special responsibility to its community. While the journalism media can only function under private ownership without government interference, it must function as a unique business that makes unique demands on all who engage in it.

Committee seeks to put journalists

It may seem sometimes that an overwhelming proportion of the Guild's efforts are devoted to collective bargaining or contract enforcement, but the union's history also is replete with Guild initiatives regarding professional standards and practices.

Yet sometimes the press of day-to-day business obscures such relatively airy concerns, prompting TNG-CWA President Linda Foley to observe that today's professional dialogue has become dominated by publishers and academics. "It's time for the grassroots news professionals to get off the sidelines and join the discussion," she urged in announcing the creation earlier this year of the Committee on the Future of Journalism. The committee, she added, is a long overdue effort "to give working journalists a voice in the national dialogue over the performance of the news media."

Now a first statement in that dialogue has been made, with publication of "Journalism on the Couch." The 20-page pamphlet, said committee executive director Murray Seeger, a veteran journalist and longtime Guild member, is intended as a starting point for an ongoing examination of the media and for proposals to improve journalistic practices.

"As a group we can get attention for those issues we think are most important that individual workers in the industry cannot get," Seeger added. "As a group, we can say things that individual Guild members are less likely to say as individuals."

Its initial report completed, the TNG-CWA committee is now examining various palliatives undertaken by the industry, including ombudsmen, more prominent printing of corrections, "civic journalism," news councils and focus groups.

The committee also has worked closely with the

What to do?

In this atmosphere of crisis for all democratic institutions, there is no shortage of criticism or suggestions for improving the journalistic media. In the words of Professor (James) Carey, "The ultimate justification for journalism and the First Amendment is that together they constitute us as a civil society and set us in conversation with one another. Journalism is our public diary, our day book, and as such it forms our collective memory."

Thus, the press has the responsibility to report and analyze the functions of the system, including its failings, and to provide this information to the general public. Reporters and editors should be unfettered from economic or ideological harness to practice their craft as they believe is in the greater public interest. Their ultimate responsibility is to the readers, viewers and listeners. Owners and managers must see their enterprises are common carriers or quasi-public utilities in which service to their communities and the nation at large is their operating motivation.

Most journalists recognize that there are serious problems within our working world that need correction or adjustment. And they recognize change must come from within the business. As the Hutchins' Commission concluded 50 years ago, "the main positive energy for the improvement of press achievement must come from the issuers."

"Although the standards of press performance arise as much from the public situation and need as from the conscious goals of the press, these standards must be administered by the press itself. This means that the press must now take on the community's press objectives as its own objectives. And for the correction of abuses the maxim holds good that self-correction is better than outside correction, so long as self-correction holds out a reasonable and realistic hope, as distinct from lip service to piously framed paper codes."

There are uncoordinated efforts to study the problems of journalism and to seek change financed by the industry-based organizations such as the Dow-Jones, New York Times, Knight and McCormack-Tribune and Freedom Forum foundations. The Ford Foundation that once showed great interest in the future of journalism has moved into other fields. The Pew Charitable Trusts are a new, major force for experimentation and change in journalism by financing tests of civic or public journalism and improving reporting of the arts.

While the civic journalism movement has caused controversy when it appears that the projects encourage the mass media to become actors in political dialogue and not just observers, the projects have wide support when they encourage editors and reporters to pay more attention to their audiences. The Pew trusts are also financing a comprehensive Project for Excellence in Journalism that has initiated a national dialogue on current issues and a study of chain newspaper operations to be published in the American Journalism Review.

This project is guided by a group of leading journalists organized as the "Committee of Concerned Journalists." In its "Statement of Concern," the CCJ warned: "Many journalists feel a sense of lost purpose. There is even doubt about the meaning of news, doubt evident when serious journalistic organizations drift toward opinion, infotainment and sensation out of balance with news." The CCJ asserted: "Revolutionary changes in technology, in our economic structure and in our relationship with the public, are pulling journalism from its traditional moorings . . . there is a growing debate within news organizations about our responsibilities as journalists." It concludes that "if journalism is to survive, it falls to individual journalists, especially in each new generation, to articulate what it stands for." The CCJ is seeking a broad consensus among the best people in journalism on the need for improvements in journalistic practice. The Newspaper Guild has taken part in CCJ fora and encourages individual members to join the committee and take part in its work.

The American Society of Newspaper Editors has initiated its own studies, some in association with the Newspaper Association of America, to investigate the concerns of its members. The Open Society Institute, financed by George Soros, has recently given a grant to a University of Iowa team to study the operation of chain newspapers.

The Nieman Foundation at Harvard University, the 60-year-old model mid-career education program for journalists, and its offspring at the University of Michigan and Stanford University, explore the issues of journalism in this new communications age in addition to providing academic enrichment to journalists. The Poynter Institute, the American Press Institute and National Press Club Foundation and other organizations offer short courses to improve professional skills. At the same time, other organizations offer training programs that carry thinly-disguised ideological biases.

The Freedom Forum Foundation has offered scholarships to encourage professional journalists to obtain advanced degrees and join journalism school faculties. The Knight Foundation has created many endowed teaching chairs for professionals. After decades of expansion in journalism education, there is a substantial body of instruction in skills and ethical practices at the university level. However, there is an ongoing disagreement on the curriculum for journalism schools between experienced practitioners and career academics. In any case journalism school graduates represent only a portion of entry-level journalists. Many journalists enter the trade with no grounding in the basic rules; some new journalists feel the old lessons and rules no longer apply. A large portion of those men and women who call themselves "journalists" have personal agendas in conflict with those who had formal training in the trade. The industry, in general, has not been generous in supporting professional education.

Among other reform moves, there are calls for resuscitating the National News Council, although there is no support for this from the major media corporations. Some advocates are calling for new local or statewide councils on the Minne-sota model. There are repeated pleadings for issuing a code of ethics or practice for journalists such as the one put together by the Society of Professional Journalists. However, relatively few working journalists belong to SPJ and it has no means of enforcing its code.

There is no blanket professional society to cover journalists along the lines of the American Medical Association or National Bar Association and no serious interest in forming such a body. Journalists are not professionals in the terms of attorneys or physicians and cannot be required to seek licenses to practice their trade. Thus, there is no viable means for writing or enforcing a set of uniform rules of practice for journalists. The only codes of ethics are those carried by individual journalists and those put in force by their employers.

The lack of an accepted body of journalistic ethics allows the development of a highly competitive media market where opinion, conjecture, rumor and gossip crowd channels that once were reserved for facts and information. Journalists who are content to live on incomes they assumed would be modest as the price for working in an honorable trade are appalled to find that "heroes" are being made of those who compromise professional standards to become celebrities. All kinds of media merchants use journalist disguises to peddle personal positions to a public who cannot separate the snake oil salesmen from legitimate communicators.

The Newspaper Guild Committee on the Future of Journalism will take every opportunity to participate in the ongoing studies and efforts for improving the practice of journalism. We will assure that the voices of working journalists are heard in every forum. In addition, we will conduct our own fora and make our own suggestions for improving the practice of journalism. We have assembled a collection of recent, relevant polling and statistic information to help us prepare our statement for future action. Among the questions to be explored:

Can a set of standards of practice or ethics be promulgated or enforced for journalists? Is a new formal examination of the mass media of journalism required? Is more education in journalism required at the university level? At mid-career? How can the new mass media be included in a general journalism ethic? Can any industry self-regulation be effective?

Should the industry invest more in training journalists? What long-term role can The Guild play in improving the practice of journalism?

at the heart of professional debate

Committee of Concerned Journalists, a unit of the Project on Excellence in Journalism that's being supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts, and is seeking opportunities to meet with other groups sharing similar concerns. Committee support for the Concerned Journalists' "statement of concern" helped garner more than a thousand signatures on the document, which urges journalists to "join as a community of professionals to clarify the purpose and principles that distinguish our profession from other forms of communication."

Committee members and their affiliations are as follows:

Chairperson Linda Foley, President of TNG-CWA; Alan Abrams, Journal of Commerce; Jeff Buttle, Canadian Broadcast Corp.; Dick Carelli, Associated Press Washington, D.C.; Kate DeSmet, Detroit News; Tom Ferrick, Philadelphia Inquirer; David Hanners, The Pioneer Press; Larry D. Hatfield, San Francisco Examiner; Martha Hodel, Associated Press Huntington, WV; and Jeanne Lang Jones, Eastside Journal.

Also, Bob Jordan, Boston Globe; Bernie Lunzer, TNG-CWA secretary-treasurer; Beverlyann Morris, Toledo Blade; Ann O'Neill, Denver Post; Jim Price, Milwaukee Journal; Nicholas Reiher, Herald News; Kathy Sawyer, Washington Post; Holly Silbiger, Cleveland Plain Dealer; and Peter Szekely, Reuters Washington, D.C.

Support for the committee's work comes from the highest levels of the CWA, with President Morton Bahr noting that "the packaging and flow of information raises some of the most complex and important questions we face." CWA members, he added, "are at the forefront of the converging information industry and [so] we will be active in addressing these issues."

Cell phone advice: "prudent avoidance"

By Larkie Gildersleeve
TNG Director of Research, Information and Technology

Recent, much publicized reports that researchers have found no harm caused by use of cellular phones sounds like good news for the industry and for phone users. The phones, after all, have been blamed for causing cancer, leukemia, genetic damage and memory loss.

But those reports probably merit a second look. The one most cited is a 1997 *Wireless Technology Research* study finding no convincing connection between cellular phone use and cancer or other health effects. Yet as *Microwave News* notes, WRT is funded by the Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association. And it's worth noting that the WRT report recommends that users hold cellular phones at least six inches from their heads while using them. That might be called "prudent avoidance."

Indeed, a survey of reports by credible publications such as *Occupational Health and Safety Letter* and *Microwave News* reveals a "yes, but" situation. Yes, the research to date shows no definitive data confirming association between use of cellular phones and negative health results. But the research to date has been funded largely by the industry. As one labor health representative observes: "They have a bad track record in terms of objectivity. Anything they put out I would regard with suspicion."

Many members of the scientific community point out that such reasearch has been confined primarily to home use of radiation sources, not of potentially more intensive work use. Even studies that purport to be work-related have been of theorized or general exposures and, in some cases, of whole job categories, such as "electrical workers," not of specific individual exposures.

While there is almost no funding of independent research in the U.S. or Canada, research is continuing in England, Germany and Sweden—where the researchers are much less sanguine about the subject. The Toronto Star reports, for example, that some British scientists are demanding that mobile telephones carry a health warning.

Roger Coghill, a bio-electromagnetics researcher who runs an independent research lab, early this year announced plans to sue a local cellular distributor for breaching Britain's consumer laws. He says such warning labels would be a "reasonable, precautionary step," explaining that cellular phones emit radiation at levels comparable to microwave ovens—and are placed against people's heads.

Up to 60% of the microwave energy pulsing from a cellular phone antenna is absorbed by the brain next to it. While most experts have assumed these levels are not hazardous and, in fact, are within international safety recommendations, some cell phone users have complained of physical symptoms ranging from lack of concentration, headaches and memory loss to numb skin and brain tumors.

Some researchers claim that given the circumstances, such afflictions are only to be expected. "Very low, non-thermal levels of radio frequency and microwave radiation alter the basic biochemistry of cells, which has a potential to cause altered brain function, carcinogenesis and impaired immune system functioning," avers biophysicist Neil Cherry.

Given such sharp contrasts in expert opinion, CWA's director of safety and health, David LeGrande, recommends that people "use digital rather than cellular phones and use them as little as possible." He also is concerned about possible health effects of long-term exposure for those who constantly carry the phones.

Digital phones, however, are no panacea. Some users have reported that digital instruments interfere with pacemakers, causing them to slow down, shut off or speed up. A Mayo Clinic spokesperson said these problems occurred most frequently when the cell phone's antenna rested over the pacemaker.

The Guild, which for many years has warned that VDTs may emit harmful VLF and ELF radiation, has concluded there is still no definitive scientific evidence on the cause-and-effect relationship between such radiation and various diseases. We have counseled, however, that every precaution should be taken to protect our members from the possibility of harmful effects.

Locals that are appproached by members who are being required to use a cellular phone, a pager, a laptop computer or any other electronic communication device on a regular basis should contact TNG-CWA. The Guild will continue monitoring research on microwave radiation and will notify locals as new information becomes available.

Meanwhile, Guild members should not use any of these devices any longer than necessary. When such devices are not being used, they should be set aside and turned off. The watchword, as always, should be "prudent avoidance."

Proposed int'l code of ethics blasted by West's journalists

As is made clear on the preceding two pages, journalism today is beset by self-doubt, public opprobrium and wrenching economic forces. It is a business, in other words, that cries out for someone to do *something*.

So it was that the World Association of Press Councils, meeting in Istanbul in late September, voted to draft an international code of ethics for the news media and to form a world press council to police it. Both tasks were assigned to three-member committees, which are to report to the association's executive council in Brisbane, Australia next June.

As with other efforts to draft journalistic codes of ethics, the Istanbul initiative was presented in lofty terms. "Should we not expect accuracy and fairness across frontiers?" asked David Flint, who was appointed to chair the committee that is pondering "a voluntary mechanism for the mediation and resolution of transnational complaints [about] the conduct of the media."

But as with similar prior efforts, condemnation was swift and vehement. The World Press Freedom Committee fired off a press release pointing to "a real threat for press freedom" posed by such codes. "Even plain words can be terribly misused," it observed. "Such a panel's actions easily might be used to 'legitimize' actions taken against news people, especially in countries where press freedom is mentioned briefly in constitutions—but nowhere else observed."

While the world association defended itself by declaring that "a free press must be accountable to the public," Ronald Koven, the freedom committee's European representative, contended that the free press "is one of the most marvelous self-correcting mechanisms ever created." Clause Moisy, former head of Agence France Presse, added that he was "bemused by governments, high officials and university professors who call for journalism codes, but never for codes for governments, officials or professors."

"a solution in search of a problem"

As such rhetoric suggests, what's really at issue is not ethics but control. The world association comprises the press councils of 16 countries, including Germany and Great Britain but also countries like Nigeria and Egypt, both of which have have governmrent controls on the press; one of the three members of David Flint's committee is the Egyptian representative. In such countries the press is allowed to function only as long as it does so "responsibly," which typically means not challenging the established political order.

Code proponents didn't help themselves with their choice of venue, either: there are 11 journalists imprisoned in Turkey, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Ranged on the opposing side of the argument are the capitalist media, which value the free play of ideas and condemn political intereference as antithetical to democracy. But the western model, while claiming a noble philosophical pedigree, takes little account of the growing corporatization of the media—a process, ironically, that is transforming a tool of political self-determination into a marketplace commodity.

On a global stage that pits the authoritarian regimes of the world against the likes of Rupert Murdoch and Conrad Black, the latter clearly have the upper hand. When Flint spoke on behalf of the proposed code Oct. 15 at the Freedom Forum in Virginia, the American Society of Newspaper Editors boycotted the meeting—hardly an endorsement of the free play of ideas. And Steve Geimann, chairman of the Society of Professional Journalists—which not so long ago was trying to foist its own code of ethics on U.S. journalists—described the idea of a global ethics code as "a solution in search of a problem."

Such sound-bite dismissal of the world association's efforts is not unexpected, but trivializes the concerns that prompted them. Just as minority groups in the U.S. have long assailed a white male-dominated media of being insensitive to their issues, the governments of India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and other developing countries have complained for decades that the Western press is incapable of presenting a balanced view of their ethnic conflicts and problems of economic development.

Work-family conflicts create invisible dilemma

After more than three decades of social consciousness-raising about gender roles, have men assumed a greater share of responsibilities at home? And what has been America's corporate response to the demand for greater gender equity in the workplace—and, by extension, at home?

The answers, judging from comments made Oct. 28 by a panel of experts on the issue, are yes and no—and not enough. Men are shouldering more of the domestic load, but not as much as they should, while the corporate world has responded with quick-fix "concierge" benefits that avoid making more fundamental changes in the way it does business. "We need new thinking and new strategies to permit people—and that includes men—more time with their families or in community work," insisted women's advocate Betty Friedan.

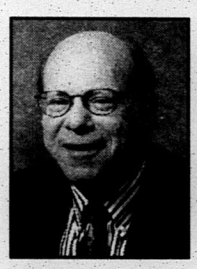
Sponsored by Cornell's Institute for Women and Work, a division of the School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR), and by the Ford Foundation, the symposium underscored the continuing feminization of family issues. James Levine, of the Work and Families Institute, commented for example on the "invisible dilemma" posed by men reluctant to talk about work-family conflicts, leaving academics and employers free to define work-family conflicts as "women's issues."

Keith H. Hammonds, editor and author of "The Daddy Trap: A Special Report," published in Business Week, said the magazine found that men face greater expectations at home, "but work isn't giving them the slack they need." And even more responsive employers may be applying band-aid palliatives, such as the dazzling list of concierge services offered by some top employers, including on-site shoe repair, dry cleaners, pharmacies, car cleaning, company-paid cruises, fitness centers, Sea Hawk tickets and relocation services.

All of which sounds delightful—but as pointed out by Anna Padia, TNG-CWA Human Rights Director and National Officer of the Coalition of Labor Union Women, such amenities "are no substitute for the basics."

"Workers today are working longer in more demanding jobs with less security," Padia remarked. "They need time and money and, more specifically, high-paying secure jobs with leave, health care and retirement benefits such as defined benefit plans, not 401(k) and stock option replacements." She noted that among Fortune magazine's 100 best employers, 18 have explicit no-layoff policies—and most of those, no surprise, are the result of union contracts.

The next symposium in the series will be held Dec. 10 at the Carnegie Endowment Center for International Peace, in Washington, D.C., and will focus on another timely subject: "Contracting Out: Danger Signal for Working Women and Men?"



LOOKING AHEAD

Black power's gonna get . . .

By Arnold Amber, Director, TNG Canada

If it was once true that when E.F. Hutton spoke investors listened, it's now true that in Canada, when Conrad Black does something big everybody in the newspaper industry goes crazy.

Amid howls of protest about concentration of ownership, Black over the past two years has gobbled up most of the Thomson chain, bought control of Southern Newspapers and acquired a large number of individual newspapers. He now has 41.8% of Canada's daily newspaper circulation. On October 27 he launched his long-awaited new national broadsheet, the National Post.

On the plus side, all this has meant more activity in an industry written off by many naysayers. It also has been a pleasant affirmation of newspapers in the new millennium. For many progressives, however, the National Post means another voice on the far right, not just in its columns and editorials, but also in setting the daily agenda and in providing another mouthpiece for business and political interests.

Yet the ink was hardly dry on the National Post's first issue when The Toronto Star, Canada's largest newspaper, put in a hostile $748 million bid for the tabloid Toronto Sun and 14 other dailies owned by Sun Media Corporation. Why? Because the Star's parent company, which also owns Harlequin books, feels it needs many more newspapers to keep its national advertising market share against Southam, which owns 61 of Canada's 105 dailies. Although most of the broadsheet newspapers that the Sun has purchased are in Southern Ontario, the Sun's tabloid newspapers, which it created on its own, extend to Ottawa, Calgary and Edmonton. A takeover would give the Star 26% of daily circulation in Canada and allow it to dominate the rich Ontario market. It also would gain the Sun's new media operation, which is far more extensive than anything the Star has going.

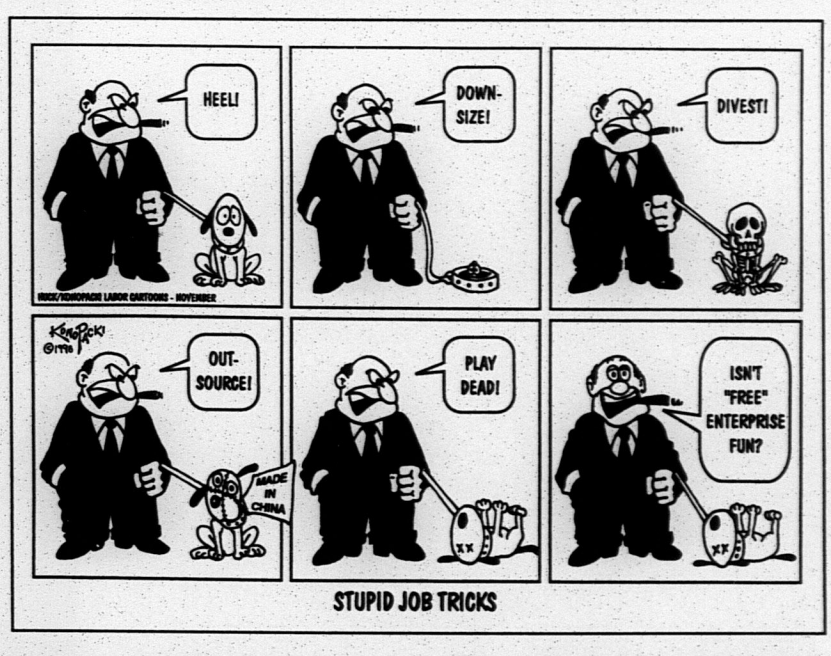
Although the bid makes some business sense, combining the two corporate cultures may be a problem. Founded in 1892, the Star is Canada's most nationalist newspaper, is more liberal than most on social issues and generally supports the ruling Liberal Party in its editorials. The feisty Sun, which grew out of the demise of the old Toronto Telegram during a 1971 strike, bills itself as "the little newspaper that could." It's downscale, populist, very much to the right and features a daily, scantily clad page 3 Sunshine Girl.

The sharp contrast between the two newspapers leaves many wondering if the takeover will ever happen. Paul Godfrey, president and chief executive of Sun Media, vows it won't. He says he'll either find the money to top the Star's offer or find a "white knight" to save his chain from falling into the Star's clutches. Godfrey may get at least something of what he wishes. The Star's 45-day takeover offer caused shares in the Sun to increase by almost 50% and, more important, has piqued the interest of a couple of other media giants. The most intriguing possibility is that the end-game may involve the man who started it all—Conrad Black. Five days after the Star made its offer, Southam said it was looking into the possibility of putting in a bid for the Sun Newspapers.

One possible scenario would be for the Sun to sell its 11 broadsheets to Hollinger/Southam and use the money to outbid the Star to keep its core Sun tabloid papers. On the other hand, the Star may win the whole prize but for more money than it has put on the table. Meanwhile, the issue of media concentration has once again become a national preoccupation. People who saw the National Post as adding diversity to the newspaper mix are again worried about a homogenous blend of all voices.

As for the National Post, there's not much innovation on display. One of the adjectives most closely associated with its early issues is "dense"—a lot of grey type and long stories, many of which don't warrant the verbiage given them. Yet there is no doubt that, like any developing newspaper, the National Post eventually will find a higher level, both in appearance and content. And one immediate benefit of its debut has been a revitalization of its chief competitors, The Star and The Globe and Mail, Canada's other national newspaper. The Globe in particular has gone to color, is less Toronto-oriented and has become much more sharply focused.

Through it all, Conrad Black is laughing. Because of the Star's takeover bid, the launch of his National Post has drawn more attention and more interest than even he probably imagined was possible. And because the Star has put the Sun group into play, Black also is in position to pick up another chunk of the Canadian newspaper industry that he doesn't already own. No wonder that when Conrad Black does something, everybody else goes crazy.



Freelancers are the serfs of a new information age

By Jonathan Tasini
President, National Writers Union

A silent, fierce war is underway against thousands of authors in every corner of the country. Every day, independent creators—writers, artists and photographers—are being forced, under the guise of the new information age, to sign away their rights forever to large media companies.

We are the new contingent, part-time workforce. Working in the information industry, we labor without health care, no pensions and no protections under the labor law. And, now, the one tool we rely on to give some economic protection—copyright—is being ripped away.

While the 1976 Copyright Act, in theory, protects individual authors, it is being obliterated by the free market weapon of choice: the sacrosanct written contract. Using the technology revolution as a convenient cover, media companies are relentlessly becoming the owners of all creative works, forcing authors to sign away rights in perpetuity—even for works for technologies not even invented—for which no one can define a value. Where such rights are not signed away under duress, writers are watching their work being used without permission—and without payment—by large media companies.

And now, a virtually invisible quasi-governmental committee is rewriting basic contract law to make it even easier for media companies to seize authors' rights. The National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws (NCCUSL) is quietly proposing new standards for the Uniform Commercial Code Article 2B. NCCUSL's final recommendation will then go to the 50 state legislatures for adoption. The current draft of Article 2B sets a lower standard of commercial behhavior for media companies.

Masking the broad attack on authors is a massive dose of hypocrisy. The media industry's lobby—in the personage of people like Jack Valenti, the hired gun for the motion picture industry—fights fiercely to protect copyright laws, trotting out authors as examples of the victims of international piracy and the lawless behavior of information users. They use us because it's obviously hard to feel sympathetic toward the wealthy executives Valenti represents. But the reality is that the industry seeks laws to fatten its profits while, at the same time, pursuing a campaign to deny us our fair share.

Congress seems either woefully uninformed or addicted to the huge campaign contributions legislators receive from the media industry. It is currently considering a series of bills to change the Copyright Act, including so-called term extension and legislation to implement recent international copyright treaties. None of these bills restores the basic principle of modern-day copyright: Protecting the individual author.

Why should the public care? Beyond caring about the authors, there is a far more powerful public interest. Two hundred years ago, the Constitution's framers realized that culture could not thrive unless those of us who created art for a living could pay our bills. In the Federalist Papers, James Madison wrote that "the public good fully coincides with the claims of the individual" who is a copyright holder.

If we allow large media companies to own all copyright, we will have less access to information and have to pay for whatever information we want to get. Madison's hope that copyright protection for authors would mean more information and freedom of expression will be dashed.

Rather than allow immoral contracts to shred and circumvent the Copyright Act, Congress must act quickly in defense of authors and the public interests they represent. And writers must unite to bring economic pressure to bear on the media companies so we receive our fair share from the great riches of the new information age.

[Adapted from the September issue of The Journal of Information Policy.]

LETTERS

Editor:

The Newspaper Guild is to be commended for renewing its examination of the future of journalism ("Journalism on the Couch," Oct. 9). However, any prescriptive therapy is doomed until a common assumption—found in paragraph five—is discarded:

"While we jealously guard our rights under the First Amendment, we understand that those who shelter under the title of 'journalist' must always act in a responsible fashion or we will lose that Constitutional protection."

The flaw is in the assumption of special privilege. Journalists have no special rights under the constitution. First Amendment rights go to all United States citizens. We have the same rights as the general public and no more.

Because those who practice our craft are special beneficiaries of First Amendment rights, we have particular responsibility to see that those rights are protected for all citizens and only then for ourselves.

Some journalists posture that media practitioners are an intellectual elite on a par with academics, at least. Apparently they believe that access to information is equivalent to intelligence, which then calls on them to lead the public on some higher path. I believe few of them hold special insight. Genius is in short supply.

In a 45-year career in newspapering, I found no one who described our role any better than a city editor who told his reporting staff each morning, "Gentlemen, today we are going to tell the readers everything we know for sure." I believe that's what readers, listeners and viewers want. That they don't get it is to our detriment.

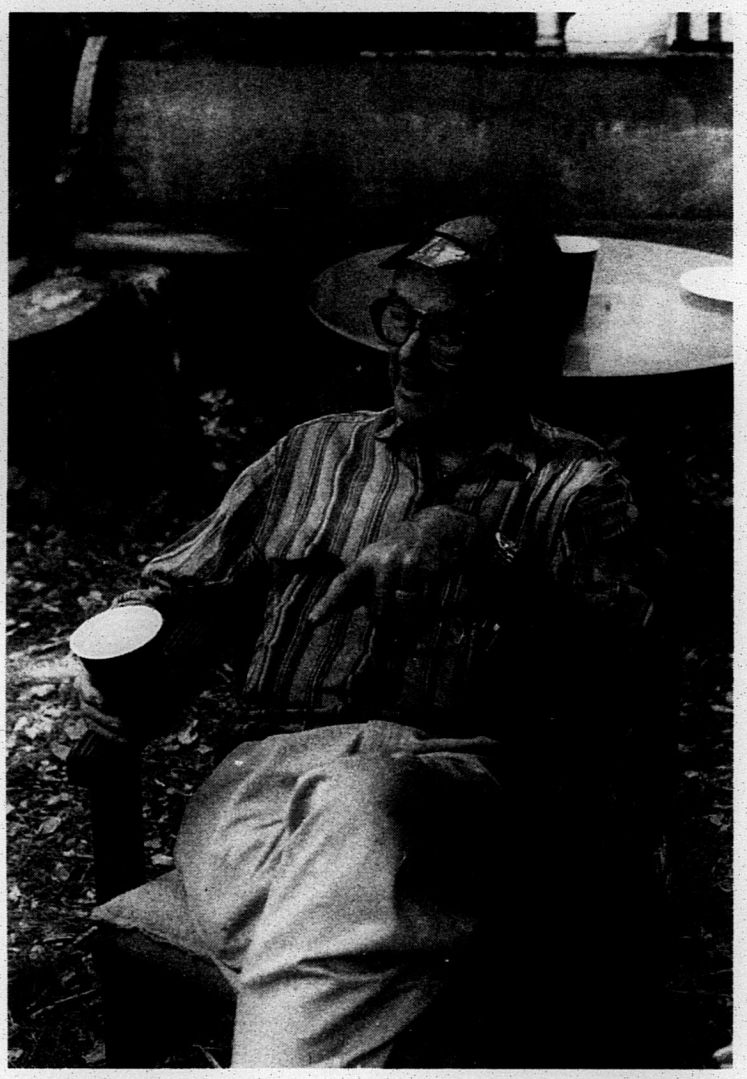
—Rod Riggs,
Lake Arrowhead, CA

By TNG Convention action, letters shall be limited to 200 words and shall avoid libel and subjects detrimental to the Guild. Members subjected to personal attack shall be given opportunity to reply in the same issue, but publication of either attack or reply shall not be delayed longer than one issue.

Deadline: Friday before publication. (Next deadline: December 4.)



STEWART APPLIN/SAN JOSE GUILD





Willys Peck, at right, relaxes with a beer during his 10th annual retirement party. Live entertainment, above, is provided by The Parlor People, including (l to r) Tony Marcus, Chuck Ervin and Sylvia Herold. A group of passengers waits for the next train outside Peck's railroad station, at left, as David Welch mans the throttle, below.



Willys Peck: a most retiring kind of guy

By Stewart Applin
San Jose Guild

Willys Peck considers the celebration of his retirement not as a one-time event but as an ongoing process—which is why the long-time San Jose Mercury News copy editor recently celebrated his 10th annual retirement party.

Several dozen newspaper people, colleagues, friends and their assorted spouses and children descended Sept. 12 on the Peck homestead in Saratoga, Calif. for an afternoon of food, drink, music and conversation about the newspaper business, now and then. Talk of "now" centered on the Mercury News publication of the entire Kenneth Starr report and the White House rebuttal. Talk of "then" was about nearly half a century of newspapering in the Bay Area, since Peck started working at the San Jose Mercury Herald in 1949 and still puts in a day a week on the Mercury News metro copy desk.

But for many guests, the day's highlight may have been a ride on Peck's small train. The red D.I.&A.N.R.R. comprises an engine and a flatbed car for passengers that wends along 400 feet of track around Peck's house. The engine, built between 1975 and 1977, is powered by a seven horsepower Briggs & Stratton motor and uses a garden tractor transmission and motorcycle chain to transfer power to the wheels. With its four gears it could hit 20 miles per hour on a straightaway, explained engineer David Welch—who nevertheless ran the railroad at a more sedate 3 mph.

Peck said he'd scrounged up the track from old dry yards and started putting it down in 1954, taking 15 years to finish the job—just in time to celebrate the centennial of the completion of the transcontinental railroad at Promontory, Utah. He did have to take one short cut, though: when it became apparent the train would scrape against his house, Peck took the obvious way out—and took a notch out of the siding.

Since no railroad would be complete without a train station, Peck refashioned an old chicken house and furnished it with historical items picked up from antique stores. One sign announces "The Long Branch—Miss Kitty Russell, Prop." in homage to the long-running television Western, Gunsmoke. Another reads "Furniture & Undertaking," recalling a time when furniture stores and funeral homes often operated out of the same building. And, of course, there's a sign proudly proclaiming "Peck Central Lines."

Live musical entertainment was provided by The Parlor People, a vocal and instrumental trio that played songs from the early 20th century in Peck's well-shaded outdoor amphitheater. And some more fortunate guests got a tour of Peck's house, which contains such oddities as a skeleton named Titus, a locomotive head lamp and other memorabilia Peck and his wife have accumulated. Small wonder, then, that many Mercury News employees are already looking forward to next year's retirement bash.

DAYBOOK

Western District Council, Nov. 14-15, San Francisco

Midwest District Council, Nov. 14-15, Milwaukee

CWA Occupational Safety and Health Conference, Nov. 15-19, San Francisco

CWA VDT Ergonomics Train-the-Trainer Program, Dec. 13-17, Los Angeles

TNG-CWA new officers' training, Feb. 12-15, George Meany Center

TNG-CWA sector conference, April 29-May 2, Ottawa

Unity '99, July 7-11 Seattle Convention Center

CWA Nat'l Convention July 12-14, Miami

CWA Equity Conference, Sept. 8-12, New Orleans

THE GUILD Reporter

Official publication of
The Newspaper Guild-CWA (AFL-CIO, CLC)
501 Third St., NW, Suite 250
Washington, D.C. 20001-2797
Telephone: (202) 434-7177 FAX: (202) 434-1472
E-mail: azipser@cwa-union.org

Volume 65, Number 11 November 13, 1998

President: LINDA K. FOLEY
Secretary-Treasurer: BERNIE LUNZER
International Chairperson: CAROL D. ROTHMAN
Director, TNG Canada: ARNOLD AMBER

At-Large Vice Presidents:
Percy Hatfield
Larry D. Hatfield
Connie Knox
Beverlyann Morris
Lesley Phillips

Regional Vice Presidents:
Region 1—Thomas J. Thibeault
Region 2—Lela Garlington
Region 3—Jane Snow
Region 4—Russ Cain
Region 5—Peter Szekely
Region 6—Jack Norman
Canada East—Larry McInnis
Canada West—Scott Edmonds

Director of Field Operations, Administrative Assistant:
Eric D. Geist

Administrative Assistant:
Kathleen Mulvey

Editor: Andy Zipser

Executive Secretary, Contracts Committee:
Marian V. Needham

Collective Bargaining & Research Associate:
Deborah W. Thomas

Director of Research, Information & Technology:
Larkie Gildersleeve

Human Rights Director:
Anna M. Padia

Membership Coordinator:
Bruce R. Nelson

International Representatives:
Michael R. Burrell,
Darren Carroll, Linda Cearley,
Janet David, Leo J. Ducharme,
Bruce Meachum,
Jim Schaufenbil

Administrative Staff:
Scott Bush,
Gwendolyn Doggett,
Malinka Franklin, Larry Smoot,

TNG Canada Representatives:
David Esposti, David Wilson,
Dan Zeidler

Administrative Staff:
Marjoline Botsford,
Joanne Scheel

ILGWU CALM ACPS

Printed by Mount Vernon Printing Co.