

THE GUILD Reporter

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Summer time,
and the reading
is easy...

page 6

ON
DEADLINE



Bombing ends, question remains: who's a reporter?

A rose is a rose is a rose—but when is a journalist a propagandist? And who decides?

For TNG-CWA delegates at the April sector conference in Ottawa, the answers were abundantly clear. And for the executive council of the International Federation of Journalists, meeting in Boston just a few weeks later, the answers were just as obvious. The only problem was that the two groups came down squarely on opposite sides of the question.

Guild delegates, asked to approve a resolution condemning NATO bombing of Serbian media offices and transmitters, unanimously rejected the proposal amid comparisons of the Serbs' "fascist media" to the Nazi propaganda machine. For resolution opponents, equating an authoritarian regime's propaganda artists with real journalists was "criminally irresponsible."

But for IFJ members, at whose

behest the defeated TNG-CWA resolution had been introduced, the U.S.-Canadian position is incomprehensible. "It is unbelievable that The Newspaper Guild is the only journalists' organization in the world that hasn't condemned this targeting of journalists," IFJ General Secretary Aidan White told The Guild Reporter.

That clash was brought to a head at the IFJ's meeting May 15, when an eight-point resolution on the Kosovo crisis was endorsed unanimously—with the exception of a paragraph deploring "the decision by NATO to attack media targets." Noting that she personally might not disagree with the sentiment, TNG-CWA President Linda Foley nevertheless added she could not support the resolution as written, "given the position the delegates to our conference have taken." In the end, the executive committee opted to vote on each point separately, allowing Foley to

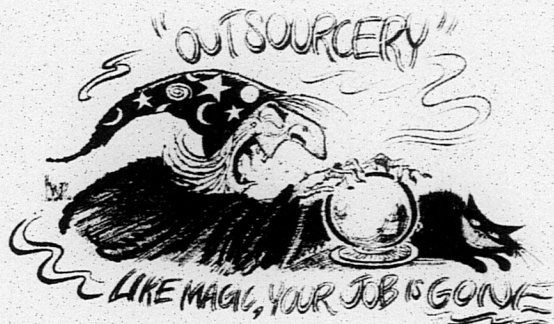
Continued on page 3



Power through solidarity

Leaders from five central Pennsylvania locals (Harrisburg, Hazleton, Scranton, Wilkes-Barre and York) gather June 5 for the charter meeting of the Central Pennsylvania Leadership Group—not including the very tall and plastic woman in the background. Exchanging ideas were, from left: Peter Rekus, Harrisburg; Joe Hainthaler, York; David Slade, Scranton; Caryl Clarke, York; Jim Lewis and Mark Klaus,

Harrisburg; Kelly Monitz and Ed Socha, Hazleton; and Joe Dwyer and Carol Crane, Wilkes-Barre. Making it a family event were Dwyer's two children, Eddie Dwyer, 10, and Jessica Dwyer, 5. Participants discussed a mutual response pact similar to Jobs with Justice, exchanged e-mail addresses and phone numbers and agreed to meet twice annually. The next meeting will be in York in the fall.



Outsourcing, wage scales pivotal in Baltimore Sun talks

What does it mean when someone like Mark Willes, a former cereal salesman, becomes chairman of Times Mirror Co.?

At the company's Baltimore newspaper, The Sun, it means starting wage scales that in some cases fall below the poverty line for a family of four. And it means an employer who wants to go a

step further by eliminating some jobs altogether, turning to outside contractors to get the work done.

It's no surprise, therefore, that contract negotiations between the Sun and the Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild have grown increasingly heated, with the Sun determined to jettison its janitors and building mechanics

Continued on page 3

Permatemps seek first union contract

Close on the heels of their success before a federal appeals court (The Guild Reporter, May 21), a group of Microsoft permatemps has formally petitioned for union representation by WashTech, TNG-CWA Local 37083.

Sixteen of 18 "contractors" working in the company's Desktop Finance Division, including accountants, lawyers and business school graduates, signed the petition and say they are seeking equitable pay, better benefits and job classifications that are appropriate for the work they do. All work as business analysts on a soon-to-be-released Microsoft financial software product.

This is the first time a group of Microsoft permatemps has sought union recognition for collective bargaining purposes.

The 18 workers—a majority of whom found their own positions, without the assistance of an employment agency—are pay-rolled through four different agencies, but all work full-time at Microsoft and are supervised by Microsoft managers. The group considers Microsoft and the agencies to be "co-employers" and is seeking to negotiate with whoever has the authority to make decisions concerning job classifications and benefits.

"We are professionals and we want to be treated professionally. We haven't been able to do that as individuals, so we came together as a group," explained Barbara Judd, one of two elected representatives of the group. "All we want is parity between agencies and equity in our group. We want to be at the table as equal partners with

the agencies and Microsoft, when it comes to discussing our job duties and benefits."

In a letter given to their Microsoft manager and the four agencies, the workers state they have formed a bargaining unit that "is a cohesive group which intends to work together on all issues regarding job classification, pay, benefits, and all other working conditions. Our goal is to improve the working situation for the group as a whole."

But the agencies disagree, with one sending Judd a letter saying it does not believe the group "is an appropriate bargaining unit under the federal labor laws or that WashTech represents a majority of these employees." With Microsoft claiming the permatemps are agency employees and all four agencies refusing collective bargaining, the stage is set for growing tension and possible confrontation.

Although a letter to the four agencies expresses the permatemps' hope they will "achieve our goals without resorting to a work stoppage or a disruption of the project," some have started discussing strike possibilities.

Inside this issue



Wire service minimum scales Page 3

Stress? You're feeling stress?.... Page 5

Mergers are crippling newsrooms ... Page 8



Guild newsmakers

Members of the Journal Register Council, formed last year to address common workplace and contract issues, include (clockwise from bottom right) Joe Hart, council president, Delaware County; Patricia Doxsey, Kingston; Doug Hadden,

Pawtucket; Michelle Bell-Payne, Norristown; Judy Bacca, Norristown; Jim Schaufenbil, TNG-CWA international representative; Maureen Burk, Philadelphia; Tom Hiltz, Boston administrative officer; and Mary Oswald, Norristown.

If you want heat, go north

TNG Canada-CWA members are still working in Fredericton after a heated spring, but that doesn't mean all is well as the long, hot summer draws near at The Daily Gleaner.

The Fredericton Typographical Union filed a charge of bad faith bargaining against the New Brunswick paper in February, accusing The Gleaner of making unlawful proposals during negotiations. In addition to claiming management gave notice of possible layoffs, the local accuses Gleaner management of communicating "directly or indirectly" with a Guild member for the purpose of bypassing the union's bargaining committee, and of negotiating with FTU members one-on-one.

The New Brunswick Labour & Employment Board has overruled the company's motions to dismiss and has announced that the bad faith charge will be heard.

Meanwhile, hearings on the

union's charge of unfair labor practices, filed last fall in protest of the "layoff" of local president Tim Martell and two other FTU members, continued for eight days in May. Four more hearing days have been scheduled for July, for a total of 16—by all accounts a record for the New Brunswick board.

Six grievances related to the "layoffs" also have been filed, with the first arbitration hearing held April 30. If the local prevails, the three currently unemployed FTU members would return to The Gleaner until all other proceedings have been completed.

In contract negotiations, meanwhile, there have been no talks since a March 9 conciliation meeting despite an expressed willingness by both sides to continue bargaining. The conciliation process has since ended, and the local is working without an agreement, but Gleaner management has given verbal assurances it has no

intention of locking out its unionized employees. The FTU had already stated it is not planning a strike vote. Further talks await a resolution of the bad faith bargaining charge, but meanwhile management has imposed conditions of employment that include not recognizing the General Laws of the CWA and not observing the status quo provision of the expired agreement.

Finally, May proved once again it's a rough month for New Brunswick's newspaper publishers. Following the May 1997 dismissal from The Gleaner of publisher Calvin MacIntosh, and the May 1998 dismissal of publisher Brian Butters, May 1999 saw the removal of two publishers from the Irving-owned Saint John dailies, Bruce McIntyre and Jamie Milne.

In what is being referred to as a "management juggling act," Fredericton publisher Victor Mlodecki and Moncton Times & Transcript publisher Jonathan Franklin will share the two Port City papers, with Mlodecki overseeing The Saint John Times Globe and Franklin managing The New Brunswick Telegraph Journal.

Speculation is that Milne was replaced because of the embarrassment he created by mishandling the Fredericton situation.

Attention, newsletter editors: help is at hand

A recurring plea for help from TNG-CWA locals—that someone please provide help for their newsletters—has been heard. Twice, apparently.

The International Labor Communications Association is awarding five \$1,000 scholarships to editors of local union member publications and to Web site managers to help them attend the annual ILCA Convention. This year's convention will be held Oct. 7-9 in Los Angeles.

Interested parties should contact the ILCA office at 202/637-5068 for an application form and for more information. Deadline for applications is July 15.

Separately, the George Meany

Center for Labor Studies—in cooperation with ILCA—is resurrecting its workshops in news-writing and editing for union publications. The five-day course will run Sept. 6-10 at the center's Silver Spring, Md. facility.

Elise Bryant, senior staff associate at the center, says course material will cover news and feature writing, design, page make-up, photo cropping and layout, headline writing "and more." In addition, round-table discussions will explore subjects such as how to plan each issue and how to make publications more readable and useful.

For more information, call the Meany Center at 301/431-6400.

In brief . . .

Halifax newsroom wins certification

Let no one accuse the Nova Scotia Labor Board of rash behavior: it took that bureaucracy fully 370 days to certify The Halifax Chronicle-Herald's newsroom bargaining unit. "If the Nova Scotia Labor Board were helping God create the world, it would still be a work in progress," commented Gary LeBlanc, president of the local. The first contract negotiating sessions were held June 3 and 4.

Ditto for another Halifax unit

Another prolonged encounter with Nova Scotia's labor board is only one-fourth completed, as mailroom workers at the Halifax Daily News voted by a three-to-one margin for TNG Canada-CWA representation. The election was the mailroom's second, following a labor board decision that each unit at the newspaper would have to seek representation as a separate collective bargaining unit. Separate elections are expected for newsroom, composing and pressroom employees.

Let's not rush into anything . . .

It took management at The Kingston (Ontario) WhigStandard only 10 bargaining sessions to declare impasse, moving so quickly that TNG Canada didn't even have a chance to put its monetary package on the table. The union had been negotiating three full-time and three part-time contracts at the paper, all of them expired, covering six departments. Five of the six have voted 100% to grant strike authority to TNG's negotiators; the sixth, advertising, endorsed a strike by a more lukewarm 52% majority.

. . . unless it's a handshake

In sharp contrast to their Canadian newspaper colleagues, the the newsroom employees of CJOH-TV in Ottawa voted 70% in favor of a new three-year contract—achieved after only three bargaining sessions. The new pact includes wage increases of 2% retroactive to this past January and 1.5% in each of the next two years, as well as a C\$200 signing bonus. It also includes a new merged wage scale that improves salaries for junior employees.

Here's a first: a Detroit contract

There's more to Detroit than the News and Free Press. There is, for example, the Michigan Catholic, whose eight full-time members unanimously ratified a new two-year contract that increases their workweek to 35 hours—but includes a 7% wage increase retroactive to last October and a 5% increase that kicks in this fall.

Guild family wins scholarship

Pamela Richard, daughter of Michael Richard of the New York Newspaper Guild, is one of 15 students representing CWA to win a Union Plus scholarship. Her award is for \$1,500.

Pittsburgh local fetes long-timers

The Pittsburgh Newspaper Guild, in celebrating its 65th anniversary, recently honored 15 active and four retired members. Forty-year pins were presented to Ken Maness and Donald Miller; 25-year pins were presented to Joanne Anderson, Phil Axelrod, David Fink, Ken Fisher, David Guo, Tom Hritz, Ernie Hoffman, Bill Kasziewicz, Dann Palmer, Marino Parascenzo, Dan Rick, Harry Tkach and Ruth Yatsko, and to retirees Vince Gagetta, Clara Herron, John Moody and Al Rosensweet.

Foley joins arb association board

TNG-CWA President Linda Foley has been elected to the board of directors of the American Arbitration Association.

What's going on at the Buffalo News?

The Buffalo News, long a cash machine for Warren Buffet, seems intent on wringing even more money out of its operation—this time by squeezing The Buffalo Newspaper Guild. Relations have become so strained the local is contemplating a record six arbitrations this year, after going to arbitration only once the entire decade. The circulation department is a particular hot spot.

Jordan easily wins BGEA re-election

Boston Globe columnist Bob Jordan won reelection as president of the Boston Globe Employees Association by a margin of 410-291.

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Did Serb bombing set troubling precedent?

Continued from page 1

vote in favor of seven of the eight points while abstaining on the bombing issue.

White, who traveled to Belgrade May 4 seeking the release of journalists detained by Serb authorities, says the bombing violated assurances he had been given in April by Javier Solano, NATO's general secretary, that it would not target journalists or media centers. Solano, according to White, said there was no truth to rumors that NATO would bomb Serb transmitters unless they broadcast a full explanation of the alliance's reasons for attacking Yugoslavia, and added that NATO already had aborted strikes that might have involved journalists.

Instead, a dozen TV employees were killed in the RTS broadcasting studios. And while U.S. journalists remained largely silent, reaction overseas was swift and angry. "This is barbarity," charged John Foster, general secretary of the National Union of Journalists in Great Britain. "Killing journalists does not stop censorship, it only

brings more repression. It makes you wonder what the democratic values we are supposed to represent in this conflict are worth."

Aside from his personal pique at being misled, White says NATO's about-face is troubling because of the precedent it sets. Now, he says, "we have to contemplate the potentially tragic consequences of targeting the media not just in this region, but worldwide"—a theme echoed by other IFJ representatives. "Tomorrow it could be any other country," observed a Brazilian delegate. "What's to stop the U.S. from deciding that Colombia's journalists are also propagandists and killing them if they don't report on the drug war the way it wants?"

Whether the U.S. would do that or not, it's not a stretch to say U.S. policy decisions have shaped media perceptions of Yugoslavia and, therefore, of the independence of Serbian journalists. It wasn't all that long ago, for example, that the



BRIAN SNYDER/BOSTON NEWSPAPER GUILD

TNG-CWA President Linda Foley addresses the International Federation of Journalists, above, as IFJ President Christopher Warren looks on. Above left, IFJ General Secretary Aidan White makes a point.

Kosovo Liberation Army was depicted by the U.S. government—and dutifully described by the media—as an outlaw movement. As reported by Jim Naureckas in the current issue of Extra!, even a cursory Nexis search of the New York Times, the Washington Post and other national media turns up numerous stories of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo a few years back—but of the minority Serb and Montenegrin populations, by Albanians hell-bent on creating an ethnically "pure" province.

Last year's good guys are this year's bad guys, and vice versa. Yet once the U.S. media begin to buy into those kinds of black-and-white distinctions, says White, they run the risk of themselves becoming propaganda machines. The only course for journalists to follow, then, is to resist any demonizing of other journalists—or run the risk of being demonized in turn.

Wire service top minimums

(vs. reporter top minimums)

U.S.	AP	Reuters U.S.	UPI	Newspaper Reporter
Albany	\$909.20	---	---	\$771.20
Baltimore	920.20	---	---	1000.00
Boston	964.70	\$1367.73	---	1179.18
Buffalo	909.20	---	---	984.79
Chicago	964.70	1367.73	677.78	1146.48
Cincinnati	909.20	---	---	882.50
Cleveland	909.20	---	---	1066.11
Dayton	909.20	---	---	660.50
Denver	920.20	1367.73	---	967.00
Detroit	920.20	---	---	750.54
Fresno	906.70	---	---	675.00
Harrisburg	909.20	---	---	631.90
Honolulu	920.20	---	---	1058.00
Indianapolis	909.20	---	---	844.88
Knoxville	909.20	---	---	672.00
Lexington	909.20	---	---	550.00
Los Angeles	964.70	1367.73	677.78	686.41
Memphis	909.20	---	---	792.69
Milwaukee	920.20	---	---	798.00
Minneapolis	920.20	---	---	1018.24
New York	982.70	1367.73	677.78	1361.77
Peoria	909.20	---	---	742.63
Philadelphia	920.20	---	---	1170.00
Pittsburgh	920.20	---	---	1030.00
Portland	909.20	---	---	795.35
Providence	909.20	---	---	960.91
Puerto Rico	557.00	---	---	575.00
Rochester	909.20	---	---	419.00
Sacramento	920.20	---	677.78	649.00
St. Louis	909.20	---	---	1054.00
St. Paul	920.20	---	---	1018.24
San Francisco	964.70	1367.73	677.78	993.58
San Jose	909.20	---	---	983.60
Seattle	920.20	---	---	844.88
Toledo	909.20	---	---	944.03
Washington	982.70	1367.73	677.78	980.00
Yakima	909.20	---	---	589.67

Canada	Canadian Press	Reuters, Canada	Newspaper Reporter
Montreal	\$1064.49	\$1217.42	\$1129.00
Ottawa	1064.49	1217.42	1066.11
Victoria	1064.49	---	1139.55

[Source: TNG-CWA Collective Bargaining Dept., 4/1/99; Canadian wages in Canadian dollars.]

Picking at scab a good way to get one's juices flowing

They're throwing hand grenades at the Chicago Sun-Times, where the advertising staff was to vote on representation by the Chicago Newspaper Guild as this issue of The Guild Reporter went to press.

An anonymous letter, headlined "Scabwatch" and sent May 8 to local president Gerald Minkinen, noted that a Detroit strike-breaker "is moving her sorry ass to Chicago" and urged she be "constantly reminded of what she did to cause pain and suffering in Detroit." The letter also requested "all of you . . . treat this vile whore with the contempt with which she is due."

Strong stuff indeed, but not anything that would have evoked more than a bemused shrug—had not a copy of the letter also been sent to Sun-Times officials. Apparently unmollified by a tele-

phone chat in which Minkinen disavowed any knowledge of Scabwatch or interest in following up on its requests, Ted Rilea, the newspaper's vice president for labor relations, fired off a sharply worded letter. Inventing "a continuing effort to harass and intimidate this employee" and sternly warning "in no uncertain terms [that] this will not be tolerated," Rilea threatened Minkinen with "necessary legal action against you individually as well as your organization."

Wow. All that without a clue as to who had sent the letter, and despite statements by Minkinen and by Detroit Newspaper Guild President Lou Mleccko that neither has ever heard of a group calling itself "Scabwatch."

Or as Minkinen wrote in response to Rilea's letter, "I agree that the content of the May 8 letter

is gross and offensive, and not of a nature the Chicago Newspaper Guild would wish to associate with. As you know, we simply do not use such language in anything we post or send."

But hey—it's a great tempest to stir up in a teapot just before a representation election.

ON A RELATED NOTE: the National Labor Relations Board shot down an attempt by the Detroit News to dismiss an unfair labor practice charge over its firing of Mleccko. The NLRB trial on the charge is now scheduled for Sept. 22.

Separately, the Lansing City Council recently voted, 6-0, to condemn the Detroit Newspaper Agency's labor practices. The council urged to agency "to comply immediately with the order of the NLRB" reinstating employees.

Baltimore unit defends janitors

Continued from page 1

and the union just as resolved to keep them. Jack Wilson, the company's chief negotiator, recently vowed that "outsourcing will definitely be there in the end," but Guild members voted unanimously June 15 to oppose the move. And while Sun negotiators tried to sweeten their effort to dump 34 employees by offering a \$1 increase in shift differentials, union leaders derided the move as a cynical, view of union members as "self-centered and greedy."

The Sun's potentially divisive proposal is, however, emblematic of the hardball bargaining tactics it introduced last December, when it

sprang a "take-it-or-leave-it" contract proposal that set a two-week deadline for acceptance. Unit members rejected it decisively.

Now, with the existing contract due to expire June 22, the Guild is turning up the heat in its own way. A TNG-CWA-funded radio ad campaign, for example, is hammering at the Sun's nine-year freeze on starting wage scales—a period during which the cost of living has risen 31%. Some scales now start at such low levels that the company has hired more than 200 employees over the past three years at poverty-level wages; 63 were hired for less than \$300 a week.

Low wages and outsourcing

strike disproportionately at women and minorities—only four of the 63 employees hired for less than \$300 a week were white males—but at least the Sun is consistent: it offered to recognize the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as a holiday in exchange for a new commission sales plan and a new formula for calculating overtime that would penalize part-timers.

"The community, if they knew the Sun was linking a moral issue to a financial one, would be appalled," bargaining team member Cain Whitaker told company negotiators.

All of which suggests there may be a long, hot summer ahead.

Labor round-up

Slow but steady progress for unions

The balance tipped even more favorably toward organized labor last year, as the number of union elections, the union win rate and the number of eligible voters in elections won by unions all were up over 1997. According to a preliminary analysis by BNA of data compiled by the National Labor Relations Board, unions also for the first time won 50% of the elections in which they participated in units of 500 or more workers.

Maybe permatemps should go overseas

While Microsoft's permatemps complain about the company's unwillingness to hire them full-time, the software giant and its Silicon Valley counterparts keep complaining to Congress about a serious shortage of skilled workers—a shortage they claim can't be filled with home-grown talent. But because the fiscal 1999 cap on temporary visas under the H-1B program was reached in early June, four months early, the push is on to raise the ceiling beyond the current cap of 115,000—keeping the permatemps dangling.

Helms leads "right to work" campaign

Promising the political death of anyone who opposes him, Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina is spearheading a well-financed campaign to push the National Right to Work Act through Congress. But no, the legislation doesn't guarantee a job to everyone who wants one; it only assures that union-represented employees don't have to pay union dues. Or as Helms himself put it, the act would "repeal forever Big Labor's power to force workers to pay union dues in order to work." As if. On the flip side, the Independent Contractor Classification Act has been introduced in Congress to end the practice of misclassifying workers as independent contractors to deny them full-time benefits.

Lukewarm support for two labor bills

While the AFL-CIO strongly supports the Independent Contractor Classification Act and even more vehemently opposes the Helms campaign, it is lukewarm at best about two other pieces of proposed legislation: The Right to Organize Act in the Senate and The Workplace Democracy Act in the House. Both would remove major obstacles to workplace organizing of non-unionized workers, but have been advanced by politicians too far to the left to make the centrist-hewing AFL-CIO comfortable: Sen. Paul Wellstone of Minnesota and Rep. Bernard Sanders of Vermont.

Singing the blues for a good cause

Borrowing a leaf from corporate America's playbook, the CWA and Jobs with Justice are engaging in a little image building of their own by sponsoring the B.B. King Blues Festival. Scheduled from early August through early October in 11 major cities—at least one per CWA district—the bill includes not only the legendary bluesman but Tower of Power, Kenny Wayne Shepherd and a Native American group, Indigenous. Check your CWA News for dates and venues.

Clergy add their voice to labor's cause

It's not just students and white-collar professionals taking a fresh interest in unions—now it's the clergy, too, prompted in part by a Judeo-Christian tradition that historically has supported labor's right to organize. And frequently leading the way is the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, a multid denominational non-profit headquartered in Chicago that has 42 affiliated branches and 2,000 clergy members. NICWJ members "mobilize people outside of the labor community," observes a veteran strike organizer, inserting a moral and religious dimension into labor's struggles with capital. The group will present a "National Religion-Labor Gathering" in Los Angeles Oct. 8-10, immediately prior to the AFL-CIO's biennial national convention.

Doctors win one, lose one . . .

Nearly 800 doctors at Los Angeles County-USC General Hospital made history by voting to join the Union of American Physicians and Dentists, winning the largest election for post-residency physicians in 18 years. But on the other end of the continent, the NLRB's regional office in Philadelphia ruled that more than 500 New Jersey doctors working for an HMO are independent contractors—not employees—and therefore could not legally form a union.

. . . while bike messengers just win

Yep, bike messengers. As feistily independent a group as you can imagine. But all 42 of the San Francisco pedal pushers employed by UltraEx cast their ballots, voting nearly 2-to-1 to join Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 6.



RAY CROWELL/WASHINGTON-BALTIMORE GUILD

First steps

Six journalists from Bosnia-Herzegovina and their two interpreters hear about The Newspaper Guild-CWA's Journalist to Journalist exchange program during a visit to Washington, D.C. on June 11. Bosnian journalist Azra Alimajstorovic, who is coordinating the program for the Guild, explained how TNG-CWA will sponsor an 11-week program for up to three journalists to experience on-the-job reporting and news-gathering as well as trade union skills. The visiting journalists, from various unions and professional organizations, represented several ethnic divisions in Bosnia. Vlatko Meriks is with the Association of Croa-

tian Journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Branko Peric is president of the Independent Association of Journalists of Republika Srpska; Branislav Bozic is president of the Association of Journalists of Republika Srpska; Eas Osmancevic is vice president of the Association of Journalists of Bosnia Herzegovina; Mirko Sagolj is with the Independent Association of Journalists of Bosnia and Herzegovina; and Miljenko Kracic is president of the Association of Croatian Journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina. TNG-CWA President Linda Foley and Research Director Larkie Gildersleeve explained various other Guild programs and policies to the visitors, who were next headed to the West Coast.

Fed Court hijacks US Airways contract talks

In an Alice-in-Wonderland turn of events, a U.S. District Court of Appeals unanimously set aside a second election that had certified the CWA as bargaining agent for US Airways' passenger service employees—just as contract talks, which started in 1997, reportedly were about to conclude.

The ironic twist? The court ruled that US Airways had been denied its "constitutional right of free speech" when it was restricted in communicating its views to employees during the union election campaign.

Following the decision, US Airways wasted no time in announcing it would immediately increase wages and modify benefits "we believe you deserve"—

changes that in many cases had already been negotiated by the CWA. The airline's agents haven't had a pay raise in nearly seven years.

Although 84% of its employees have signed union membership cards, the airline denied CWA's request for voluntary recognition. The union then filed a request with the National Mediation Board for a third, expedited election, with ballots to be mailed July 1 and counted Aug. 2. US Airways would have to agree to such a schedule, however, and has not indicated if it will.

The CWA's first stab at organizing the agents, which it lost, was set aside by the mediation board after complaints were filed

that US Airways had tainted the election by improperly haranguing employees at "employer-employee roundtables"—in essence, thereby denying the union's right of free speech. The airline, however, said it was merely involving employees in decision-making.

US Airways lost a lower court decision when it challenged CWA's victory in the second election, but found a more sympathetic ear at the appeals level. That panel seems to have expanded Constitutional protection of corporations to new levels, ruling that the First Amendment entitled US Airways to influence the first election—even if that entailed using its economic leverage to create a captive audience.

New thriller: 7 Days in June

Seven days in May" was a political thriller; the AFL-CIO hopes "7 Days in June" will be an economic one.

The nationwide campaign, running June 19 through June 25, will feature at least 80 organizing drives in more than 50 cities and include rallies, demonstrations, marches, town hall meetings and forums. Jobs with Justice also will conduct a series of Workers' Rights Board hearings in Seattle, Cleveland, Atlanta and Gary, Ind., including testimony from US Airways workers about their efforts to achieve a fair contract (see story above).

More than an airing of grievances, however, 7 Days in June will stress workers' rights to choose a union and to have a voice at the workplace—rights that routinely are attacked by employers. "Our research shows that the public disapproves of many coercive employer tactics," said AFL-CIO president John Sweeney, "but it also shows that most people don't know enough about unions or about current employer interference for them to support our efforts."

Among the statistics generated by the AFL-CIO to bolster its contention:

- One in four employers fires workers active in union campaigns, for an annual total of more than 10,000.
- Ninety-one percent of employers faced with a union organizing drive force employees to attend closed-door meetings to hear anti-union propaganda; 80% require immediate supervisors to attend training sessions on how to attack unions.
- Half of employers threaten to shut down if employees join together in a union.
- That's why 7 Days in June is needed, Sweeney added—"to begin getting our message out."

What do prison guards, pilots and newspaper workers share?

Stress. Lots and lots of stress, and a macho culture that says it's all part of the job

By Andy Zipser
Editor, The Guild Reporter

For most newspaper employees, pecking away at keyboards and staring at computer screens, the concept of worker safety may seem vaguely Victorian. Coal miners, steelworkers, meatpackers—those are the kinds of people for whom worker safety laws were designed, not white-collar professionals whose greatest workplace hazard may be a paper cut.

Except that a glance around most newspaper plants, with their abundance of arm splints and wrist braces, suggests that workplace safety isn't exactly a given. And as the single greatest effect of the digital revolution—speed—further permeates the industry, such injuries are certain to increase.

But that's not the worst of it. Although repetitive stress injuries are nothing to take lightly, at least they're relatively visible. The more insidious consequence of the digital revolution is the hidden toll it takes on the mind and nerves.

The International Federation of Journalists reports, for example, that journalism has become one of the most stressful occupations because of its constant demands, changes in technology, deadline pressures and unsocial hours. Throw in job uncertainties caused by mergers and downsizing, and the IFJ concludes that journalists are as

Journalist, the magazine of the U.K. National Union of Journalists. "The people who manage newspapers do not have the basic building blocks of what makes a good manager."

"It is in the nature of journalists to be bright people with inquiring minds," Williams adds. "Take away the right to use the mind, add in some technology that doesn't do what you want it to and you will quickly run into serious problems."

Newspaper workers—both in the newsroom and out—are of course also susceptible to all the other ills of society, among them an overall increase of psychological harassment in the workplace. If overt physical harassment has been curbed by lawsuits, supervisors can bully their subordinates through verbal attacks, demeaning comments, capricious evaluations, the cold shoulder and other forms of psychological terrorism that are at least as destructive.

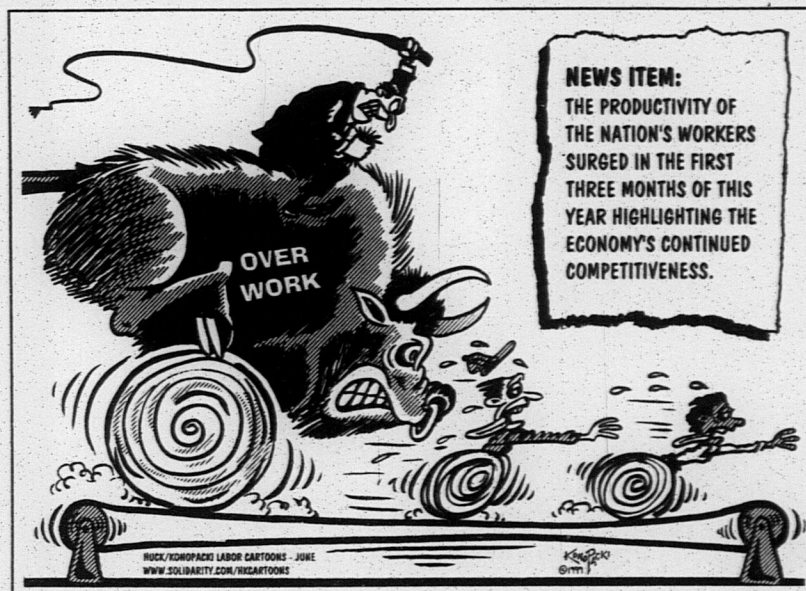
A 1998 report by the International Labor Organization on violence in the workplace concludes it is increasingly psychological in nature. Judith Wyatt and Chauncey Hare, in a foreword to their book on the subject, go even further by declaring that work abuse "is an epidemic." Yet whatever the level, the phenomenon—as described in a recent issue of Trade Union World—is "largely unfathomable and not talked about."

"The victims feel guilty, their colleagues turn a blind eye, company doctors do not understand and the employers are even less understanding when they themselves are not the perpetrators of such harassment," the magazine observes. "The most frequent reactions are to play down the suffering caused and to regard the

problem invariably as a clash of personalities or an inability to cope with the 'stress that goes with the job.'"

In detailing the principal causes of such bullying, the magazine could be describing the modern newsroom: "heightened competition, mergers, acquisitions and restructuring operations, the frenzied search for maximum productivity, crazy work rates and the precariousness of jobs." As the article adds, the employer-employee relationship essentially is based on power, "and injustice is inherent in the authoritarian way in which companies operate. But current trends are simply making matters worse."

Against this unseen tide there are only a few defenses, and those are either inherently flawed or under attack. Most notable among the former is employers' substitution of employee assistance programs and other



forms of counseling for genuine reform, thereby emphasizing treatment of symptoms rather than root causes. "Employers think they can set up an employee assistance program or a counseling program and then they've 'done' stress," says Williams, the occupational psychologist. "The counselors carry on treating people and putting them back in the workplace that made them ill in the first place."

The ILO similarly warns against such programs, criticizing "self-appointed experts, pre-packaged programs good for any occasion and situation and remedial interventions focused on the effects rather than the causes of stress."

Yet in the U.S., where approximately one in every seven workplace personal injury claims is for stress-related health problems, don't look to the government for help. For the federal agency most directly responsible for ensuring workplace safety, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, something as nebulous and hard to pin down as stress or psychological harassment doesn't register on the radar screen. Even as obvious a workplace injury as RSI has been beyond its capacity to remedy; as keyboard industries—seeing the strategy has worked for tobacco companies—keep insisting there is inadequate scientific proof of a link between the jobs their employees perform and the wrist, arm, elbow and shoulder injuries they suffer.

While OSHA may yet prevail in setting ergonomic standards to prevent RSI, its years-long struggle over the issue eloquently underscores its own precariousness. Under relentless political attack since its inception in 1970, it is critically underfunded and understaffed and faces renewed threats in each new Congressional session. For example, the AFL-CIO reports there are so few OSHA inspectors it would take the agency 109 years to inspect each workplace just once. And if those inspectors found a "serious" violation—defined as a substantial probability of death or grave physical harm to employees—the result would be an average penalty of \$709.

Apparently even that's too much oversight and penalizing for some, however, because Senator Michael Enzi, a Wyoming Republican, has introduced another of those coyly named pieces of legislation, the "Safety for Employees Advancement Act." Also referred to as the SAFE Act, Enzi's bill would immunize employers from OSHA penalties if they set up safety and health pro-

grams that are certified by employer-paid consultants; would eliminate workers' rights to request on-site OSHA inspections; would "permit" OSHA to issue warnings instead of citations for violations; and would permit employers to override OSHA standards by using any alternative methods they deem effective to protect workers.

The other notable defense against workplace abuse, the union, also is under attack, although unions have the potential—through appropriate contract language—to defend their members' safety and health more effectively than either EAPs or OSHA. The Newspaper Guild was foremost, for example, in setting VDT standards—for the screens and not, alas, for the keyboards—when that technology was first introduced. And the TNG-CWA bargaining program calls for contract provisions that establish joint union-management safety and health committees, "to recommend changes in equipment or process the committee believes will improve workplace safety."

The pastel colors and sonorous clicking of keyboards in a newspaper office may seem a world away from the din, heat and exertion of working in a furnace room or on an assembly line. But there's more than one way to injure the body or crush a spirit, and the first step toward self-defense is to acknowledge there is a problem—and the problem is not "the job." It's not the employee. It's the workplace—which, come to think of it, is why unions were created.

Guild stress survey delayed for redesign

A TNG-CWA stress questionnaire that was to be distributed this spring is being redesigned, following a pilot release at the Baltimore Sun, and won't be available until late this summer.

Once completed, the survey will be the industry's first attempt to study possible connections between types of work-related stress—such as long hours, multiple deadlines or bad supervision—and specific physical and psychological symptoms.

Because a high response rate will ensure the most reliable results, locals will be asked to aggressively promote this project among their members.



stressed out by their jobs as airline pilots and prison guards. Only miners and police officers have it worse.

Like police officers, however, many journalists tend to shrug off any stress-induced ill effects as part of the job—and out of a desire to keep their jobs in a time of uncertainty. The phenomenon has become so pronounced, says the IFJ, that psychologists have coined a term for the compulsion to keep working when not fit—"presenteeism"—and say it is an inevitable consequence of "corporate liposuction."

As if technological and organizational changes weren't enough, the newspaper industry is plagued further by bad management. "It is ironic that within the newspaper industry there are often serious internal communication problems," observes occupational psychologist Dr. Stephen Williams in

Take a break from Grisham . . .

Summer's here, which means the beach or mountains or maybe just a pool-side chair in which to enjoy some brain candy: Grisham, Clancy, Grafton, Parker, maybe the new Hannibal the Cannibal thriller. But every now and then, when the sugar rush becomes too intense and you begin to hunger for something more substantial, consider the following:

On Deadline: Labor Relations in Newspaper Publishing

Technological change is upon us in newspapering, regardless of how much or how little we desire it. But the manner in which newspaper managers impose change, and in which workers embrace it, is the subject of Sleigh's book.

Sleigh, now director of strategic resources for the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, earlier in his working life erected printing presses, including one of the presses he writes about in "On Deadline." His is a perspective not often found; unlike today's tell-all tomes, Sleigh had little idea he would be writing about the impact of technological change he had his own hand in 15 years earlier.

He sets up the reader by describing the good, the bad and the ugly of printing press installation at three papers: the (then) Cowles-owned Minneapolis Star-Tribune, where management and the unions worked more or less jointly to ease the transition; the Chicago Tribune, where management busted the press operators' union in the quest for management control; and Knight Ridder's Miami Herald, where management had trouble imposing its desired changes in a nonunion environment because the press room was its own self-contained fiefdom.

But the meat of Sleigh's book is the New York Daily News strike of 1990-91, where Sleigh served as

By Stephen R. Sleigh; Social Change Press, Bayside, N.Y. 203 pages. Softcover, \$17.95

an advisor to the unions. In "On Deadline," he serves up instructive precursors on how New York's newspaper unions jockeyed for position as the alpha male among their number during negotiations and strikes going back another 30 years.

In this respect, "On Deadline" is a far more straightforward retelling of the bitter Daily News dispute than "Strike: The Daily News War and the Future of American Labor." In that book, Richard Vigilante's inside-baseball account painted actors on both sides of the table as some combination of self-serving venal buffoonery.

Sleigh focuses more on the tactics employed on each side, first at the table, and then for the hearts and minds of the Big Apple's citizenry. By focusing more on strategies and less on personality traits, Sleigh details the eventual union victory in considerably more dispassionate tones.

But he doesn't end with the Daily News being plucked from near-certain doom with wannabe tycoon Robert Maxwell's purchase in 1991, continuing with Maxwell's sudden death, the collapse of his house-of-cards business empire, the subsequent sale of the Daily News to Mort Zuckerman, the freeze-out of the Guild in a new round of contract talks, and the mass firings of Guild employees that followed—an injustice whose rectifying is long past deadline.

—Mark Pattison

[Pattison is secretary of the Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild.]

The Lexicon of Labor

By R. Emmett Murray; The New Press, New York. 207 pages. Softcover, \$13.95

If there's one (just one?) glaring oversight in public education, it is the abysmal degree to which history classes focus on society's accumulators of wealth while virtually ignoring those who create it—and those who struggle to help them. Lots and lots of detail about the Carnegies and Rockefellers and—if texts are current—the DuPonts and Gateses, but precious little about folks like Uriah Stephens, Sidney Hillman or Joe Hill.

So it is a truly refreshing experience to encounter R. Emmett Murray's little lexicon, which diligently and concisely fills in many of the gaps—and not just of people, but of places, events and laws. Confused about the differences between the Wagner, Taft-Hartley and National Labor Relations acts (two of 'em are the same, while the third drastically undercuts it)? Wonder where the phrases "featherbedding" or "blue collar worker" originated? Want to know what impact the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* has had on labor unions? It's all here, plus a lot more.

Unlike most textbooks, "The Lexicon of Labor" also has the virtue of being as up-to-date as—well, as yesterday's headlines. Ron Carey is in here, as is NAFTA, the ADA and John Sweeney. So is the Detroit newspaper strike, which gets more than a full page—a tribute, perhaps, to Emmett's own background as a long-time Guild activist and past president of the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild.

It's only fitting, therefore, that the lexicon also devotes a half-page to Heywood Broun, ending with this Brounism: "It is better to be Guided than gelded." Amen.

—Andy Zipser



The LEXICON of LABOR

By R. EMMETT MURRAY

With a Foreword by THOMAS GEOGHEGAN



The election of new AFL-CIO leaders more than three years ago ushered in an era of *glasnost*. Where open discussion and criticism of union problems was once *verboten* under the regimes of George Meany and Lane Kirkland, current labor federation president John Sweeney has, to his credit, let a hundred flowers bloom.

One byproduct is a minor book-publishing boom. Jo-Ann Mort's "Not Your Father's Union Movement" and the Ray Tillman-Michael Cummings collection, "The Transformation of U.S. Unions," offer different but complementary perspectives on the challenges facing labor today. Both address many of the same topics: how and why Sweeney's reform administration came into power, what it's doing to promote new organizing and political initiatives, the importance of community-labor alliances, the challenge of globalization and the role of women and immigrants in unions.

However, as Mort's subtitle suggests, her contributors are mainly "insiders"—new AFL-CIO department chiefs, other union headquarters staffers, or their pollsters, consultants, speechwriters and journalistic admirers. In contrast, the Tillman-Cummings book draws more on the workplace and organizing experience of union rank and filers, past and present.

The authors rounded up by Mort, communications director for UNITE, give Sweeney's team high marks for its media savvy, campus outreach, liberal pronouncements, sensitivity to diversity issues and purge of cold warriors. Some who aided in the production of the book are, in effect, grading their own papers. The overall tone of the book is thus more self-congratulatory than self-critical, with heavy emphasis on technocratic solutions to

labor's problems (i.e. more sophisticated use of paid media, opinion surveys, union pension funds and new policy ideas) and not as much focus on membership empowerment.

The Tillman-Cummings crowd, meanwhile, acknowledges the differences between Sweeney and his conservative predecessors but is more apt to find gaps between the new AFL's upbeat rhetoric and the grim reality of continuing union decline. It expresses concern about the degree to which implementation of the federation's programs is still top-down and staff-driven. Its members believe there's a crucial link between union strength and internal democracy (a subject rarely mentioned in Mort's book) and that organized labor's failure to permit a greater rank and file role in decision-making will prevent it from becoming an instrument of fundamental social change.

Says Herman Benson, elder statesman of the group and defender of union dissidents for the past 40 years: "Before the labor movement can effectively spread the message of freedom and social justice to the nation, it must renew that same spirit within its own ranks and convince its own members that this great movement belongs to them and not to its officials."

Nevertheless, one hallmark of the new AFL's organizational style is "staffing up," rather than tapping the skills and abilities of rank and file volunteers. Not just any staff will do, either. When Amy Dean, a Mort contributor and Central Labor Council leader, was profiled recently in a San Jose newspaper, she boasted: "I have the brightest

staff in the county! We have a joke that the first week you come to work at the Labor Council you have a nervous breakdown, because you're used to being the youngest and smartest, and here are all these other people who are also used to being the youngest and smartest. You have to figure out who you are and what you're about."

When going to work for a worker's organization has become an experience akin to being a freshman at Harvard, there's definitely something wrong with the "new" organizational culture that's being created to replace the old one. Labor's old guard may have been eased out in some places, and its new faces may be more energetic, racially diverse and gender-mixed. But if the main movers and shakers are appointed hotshots instead of the people who punch a clock and pay dues, not enough has really changed.

That's why, to a degree greatly downplayed in Mort's book, it is their "father's union movement" that workers

must still try to change. No matter how liberal-minded a union may be in its political endorsements, coalition partners or policy state-

ments, if the members don't have any effective control over the functioning of the organization, that's a formula for decay. The contributors to "Transformation," for the most part, understand this iron law of union organization. That's why "Not Your Father's Union Movement" needs to be read together with "The Transformation of U.S. Unions" to get a more accurate picture of life "inside the AFL-CIO."

—Steve Early

[Early is a CWA staff representative based in Woburn, Mass. An expanded version of this review originally appeared in *The Nation*.]

Not Your Father's Union Movement: Inside the AFL-CIO

Edited by Jo-Ann Mort; Verso. 226 pages. \$20.

The Transformation of U.S. Unions: Voices, Visions, and Strategies from the Grassroots

Edited by Ray M. Tillman and Michael S. Cummings; Lynne Rienner Publishers. 285 pages. \$22.50

LOOKING AHEAD

Here's a watchdog that refuses to bark



By Linda K. Foley
President

In an ironic twist, the Newspaper Preservation Act is being used to destroy the very newspapers it ostensibly was designed to save.

Passed in 1970, the NPA created Joint Operating Agreements for newspapers from Seattle to Detroit to York, Pa. Beginning with its disingenuous promotion by publishers and throughout its Orwellian history, the act exempted certain newspaper companies from anti-trust laws in the interests of "maintaining a newspaper press editorially and reportorially independent and competitive in all parts of the United States."

By allowing competing newspapers to combine commercial and production operations, NPA framers argued, so-called "failing newspapers" in competitive markets could continue to publish, thereby preserving multiple editorial voices in a community. The preservation of distinct editorial voices was a laudable goal, they said; after all, our nation couldn't leave it to market forces to ensure a free, diverse press.

At the time the law was passed, The

Newspaper Guild was a loud dissenter. The Newspaper Preservation Act was a ruse, we said. Its overriding objective was to cut costs, fix prices and allow publishers to divide profits among themselves with impunity. "A license to print money," we called it.

We were right. But even The Newspaper Guild couldn't foresee then how today's media conglomerates would use the NPA to subvert the very principle it purports to uphold: the preservation of editorial and reportorial competition.

For all its shortcomings, the Newspaper Preservation Act did seem to recognize two marketplaces in which newspapers compete: one for money, the other for ideas. And although Joint Operating Agreements eliminated financial competition, they in fact preserved editorial competition. In exchange for being given free rein to colude economically, JOA partners agreed to provide their communities with two newspapers for a specified period of time, usually measured in decades.

Judging by recent developments, however, the public pact has unraveled. In Chattanooga, Tenn., for example, the owner of the Free Press last November bought its JOA partner, The Chattanooga Times, then promptly announced it would close the acquisition—even though the JOA had 15



"We're all in favor of employee privacy... so keep your opinions to yourself."

more years to run. The papers were almost evenly matched in circulation.

And here's the real rub: The U.S. Department of Justice wouldn't even investigate the situation, the Guild's strong objections to such inaction notwithstanding. The Chattanooga Times, after 20 some years as the lesser partner in the JOA, didn't have the wherewithal to compete on its own, the department said. Therefore it constituted a "failing firm" under the legal definition and could be bought and subsequently closed by its competitor—which, in this case, was actually its business partner.

Did Congress really intend for an NPA-created arrangement to facilitate the closure of a JOA newspaper? Of course not, but the Department of Justice's inaction in Chattanooga seems to have started a trend in that direction.

Within weeks, the Hearst Corporation, owner of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, and the Seattle Times Co., the P-I's stronger JOA partner, announced a new deal. The Times, designated by the original Joint Operating Agreement as the afternoon paper, would become a morning paper, competing head to head with the smaller P-I, which had been gaining circulation.

In addition, the new and improved Seattle JOA would change the profit split to more favorably compensate P-I owner Hearst. In a move designed to further hasten the Post-Intelligencer's demise, the new agreement allows Hearst to continue to receive 32% of the profits for the duration

of the JOA (about 85 years) even if it closes the P-I. However, Hearst's profit share will cease if it sells the P-I to another company.

Does anyone suppose Hearst will look for a buyer? Or think it likely the company will spend money on a head-to-head competitive struggle when it can make a nice piece of change just by folding its hand? This is what's known as a no-brainer.

Here, too, The Newspaper Guild has exhorted the Justice Department to investigate. And here again—at least as of this writing—it hasn't.

Meanwhile Hearst has been busy positioning itself in another JOA city, San Francisco. The private company that publishes the San Francisco Chronicle has announced its intention to prepare that newspaper for sale. Under the JOA, Hearst has first dibs on the purchase. Speculation is that Hearst will buy the Chronicle and close the weaker Examiner, its financing no doubt aided by increased revenues from its enhanced profit split in Seattle.

There currently are 13 cities with Joint Operating Agreements. The demise of a newspaper in each of those communities could affect more than 6 million readers.

When we made our case for Department of Justice intervention in Chattanooga, a Justice official said an investigation would be pointless, like "a dog barking at the passing freight train." Maybe so, but if that train isn't derailed soon, many U.S. citizens who rely on newspapers to bring them credible news and information will get railroaded.

Union shop agreements enhance right to work

It is said that the right to work, which the Court has frequently included in the concept of "liberty" within the meaning of the Due Process Clauses... may not be denied by the Congress.... One would have to be blind to history to assert that trade unionism did not enhance and strengthen the right to work. To require, rather than to induce, the beneficiaries of trade unionism to contribute to its costs may not be the wisest course. But Congress might well believe that it would help insure the right to work in and along the arteries of interstate commerce....

"It is argued that the union shop agreement forces men into ideological and political associations which violate their right to

freedom of conscience, freedom of association and freedom of thought protected by the Bill of Rights. It is said that once a man becomes a member of these unions he is subject to vast disciplinary control and that by force of the federal Act unions now can make him conform to their ideology.

"On the present record, there is no more infringement of or impairment of First Amendment rights than there would be in the case of a lawyer who by state law is required to be a member of an integrated bar."

—From a U.S. Supreme Court decision handed down May 21, 1956, upholding the union shop provision of the federal Railway Labor Act.

Editor:

On the off-chance you hadn't heard, I regret to report the death of Robert T. Forsyth, former IR and past president of the old Sacramento Guild Local 93. Bob died May 5 of lymphatic cancer. He was 58. Three hundred news and political figures showed up at a memorial service June 6 in Sacramento.

This man was a legend. I've never seen such absolute affection as that displayed at the memorial. Laugh after laugh convulsed the church as many Bob stories were recounted. He was a profane man, so the recurring use of "f**k" in a church would have delighted him. Thank God it was a Unitarian church.

Bob had formed a close friendship with C.K. McClatchy. One day they were sitting and bullshitting in C.K.'s office when the owner looked out the window and saw demonstrators. "Who do you suppose they are, Bob?" he asked. Bob

looked out and said, "I think you've got a strike, C.K. See you later."

During the R&G campaign in Phoenix, Bob went out to a staffer's house to get a card. The guy wasn't buying it. "I don't know about these unions," he said. "I join a union, and next thing I know Jimmy Hoffa's on my doorstep." Bob looked at him and said, "Pal, Jimmy Hoffa is your doorstep." And got the card.

—Robert Dudnick
Former GR associate editor
Past president, San Jose Guild

Editor:

So The Newspaper Guild thinks bombing journalists is okay—or maybe that's just Serbian journalists. NATO, after all, has told us they are just tools of government propaganda, and we will accept all NATO propaganda.

Every other member union of the

International Federation of Journalists adopted a resolution condemning NATO's bombing of the Serbian state broadcaster, RTS. It is outrageous that The Newspaper Guild became the only media union which did not.

The war over Kosovo has caused some strange alliances, as left-wing pacifists aligned with right-wing isolationists. But journalists should stick up for journalists regardless of such distinctions, not because many of our colleagues worked in the RTS building but because attacking journalists is tantamount to attacking freedom of expression.

The NATO attack set a very dangerous precedent, giving the green light to attacks on the media by any side in any conflict. If an organization such as NATO has no qualms about attacking journalists, how can we, as journalists, expect to be safe in any conflict?

Journalists are non-combatants, as

defined in Protocol I, Article 79 of the Geneva Conventions. Journalists are there to tell the story, to try to find the facts among the propaganda. If we believe in the right to free expression we have to oppose the short-sighted military view that allowed NATO to bomb RTS and get away with it.

Our union should not have allowed them to get away with it.

—Claire Trevena
Canadian Media Guild
Toronto, Ontario

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: July 16.)

LETTERS

Merger mania taking its toll

The first signs of the toll taken by media merger-mania are showing up in newsrooms, according to a recently released survey from the Pew Research Center.

Interviewing 522 working journalists and news executives, the center found widespread agreement that the lines between commentary and reporting and between entertainment and news have blurred; and that news reports increasingly are riddled with factual errors and sloppy reporting. Journalists today also are more likely than they were just a few years ago to say that the press drives controversies instead of merely reporting the facts.

And a majority of reporters and editors says they know where the problem lies: increased bottom-line pressure is hurting the quality of coverage.

Increased concern about financial pressure is especially evident in national television, where a 53% to 38% majority of those surveyed say that pressure to make a profit is hurting the quality of coverage—a reversal just since 1995. Overall, however, the study also found a clear split in perceptions between the newsroom and the executive suite: whereas reporters and editors say quality has suffered because of the financial squeeze, a clear majority of their bosses—

the newsroom executives who set budget priorities, staffing levels and an overall sense of mission—think that financial pressures are simply changing the way things are done.

"The impact from the business side is a subtle pressure," observe Bill Kovach, Tom Rosenstiel and Amy Mitchell of the Committee of Concerned Journalists, in a commentary on the Pew Center's findings. "This is not a matter of executives or advertisers pressuring journalists about what to write or broadcast. It involves cutbacks, buyouts, focusing journalists' incomes to business incentives, creating a commercial rather than journalistic mindset in the newsroom."

The survey's second significant finding is that most journalists now concede they are out of touch with the public—a development that also may be attributable to financial cutbacks. Although the Pew Center does not analyze the reasons behind the newsroom's sense of being disconnected, tighter budgets,

smaller staffs and an increased emphasis on speed all serve to reduce journalists' "face time" with the communities they cover.

Moreover, those surveyed agree that journalists are too focused on "internal dynamics," such as being the first to crash a story, are too cynical and pay too little attention to complex issues. And the public has taken notice, the Pew Center adds, citing a separate survey in which two-thirds of the

public said the press doesn't care about the people it covers.

Yet although journalists and the public agree on the media's shortcomings, they concur less often on the reasons behind the public's dwindling appetite for news coverage—perhaps another indicator of how the press is out of touch with its audience. For example, the media and the public agree that a major reason for the shrinking pool of readers, listeners and viewers is the news media's loss of credibility. But while journalists and news executives also blame information overload for the public's disaf-

fection, two-thirds of the public says it likes having so many information sources available.

Overall, then, the survey describes a complex dynamic of dissonant perceptions: news executives who tell themselves their cost-cutting measures are merely producing more efficient operations; reporters who believe they're losing their audiences because the cost-cutting harms quality, but who also believe they're being tuned out by an overwhelmed public; and a public that essentially views the mass media as self-absorbed and increasingly irrelevant to its own needs.

For the Committee of Concerned Journalists, whose commentary is included with the full report, the key issue to be resolved is one of values. "While at a distance journalists, top editors and business-side executives seem to agree on their larger professional values, a closer look reveals a sense of disconnection and disagreement," the committee observes. But it then concludes that the appropriate fix is for journalists to "focus on what the majority recognize as the core problem—the credibility of their work," without in any way addressing that disconnection or the financial pressures that have so dramatically eroded journalistic credibility.

Journalists in the newsroom increasingly feel that business pressure is 'seriously hurting the quality of news coverage.'

The more things change, the more . . .

[In a journalistic age marked by saturation coverage of Di, OJ and William Jefferson Clinton's id, a little reality check is in order. The following is excerpted from Alan Barth's Washington Roundup column, published in the June 10, 1999 Guild Reporter.]

Critics of American journalism must stand awed and shamed today by the achievement of this country's newspapers in reporting the nuptials of Miss Rita Hayworth of Hollywood, Calif., and His Highness Prince Aly Khan of Karachi, India. In delicacy of sentiment, imaginative embroidery of detail and general comprehensiveness, the coverage of this stirring story

here was probably unmatched by the press of any other nation.

American journalistic initiative and enterprise proved themselves abundantly in getting the vital facts of the romance between these star-destined lovers. It was not an easy story to handle in view of their known reticence and exaggerated sense of privacy. Yet American reporters did the job. Nothing essential to public knowledge and understanding of the great event was omitted. . . .

No expense was spared in the effort of the American press to convey the full color, glamour and excitement of the Khan's meteoric courtship of the movie queen. . . .

Far off in the primeval forests of Canada and Scandinavia,

majestic trees were felled—who knows how many—to make possible the telling of this tale.

Skilled writers were dispatched to foreign lands to interview the different principals, to learn the reactions of the Vatican and the Moslem hierarchies, to probe the attitude of the bride's and bridegroom's scattered relatives.

Their reports were sped by wire and wireless to the great news-gathering centers of America. Relayed swiftly to city rooms and Sunday supplements, they were meticulously edited by trained copyreaders and turned over to the practiced fingers that manipulate the wondrous Mergenthaler linotype machines, passed along to stereotypers and pressmen, then loaded onto delivery trucks, rushed to waiting carrier boys and tossed upon the

doorsteps of eager readers. Expert photographers lent their artistry to depicting in various poses the lovely Rita and the handsome Aly, not to mention their respective former husbands and former wives.

But what does it all mean? What values are to be learned by a troubled world from this historic alliance between wealth and beauty, this marriage of oriental nobility and occidental charm, this mating of a princely Casanova with the most ravishing of pin-ups?

It goes to show, of course, what we knew all along, that love knows no trivial bounds of language, caste or creed and that all of us, the world over, are soulmates under the skin.

This is a timeless tale, a tale

oft-times told, of love triumphant over youthful follies and errors, of fate joining hands that time and distance and man's silly conventions have long kept asunder. No one can read of so much money and so much sex appeal without realizing that they were intended inevitably for one another. . . .

And should there be any so insensitive as to cavil at the reporting of this romance, statistical proof can—and no doubt will be—adduced to show afresh that the American press always gives the American public what it wants—or at least that the American public, in the absence of any alternative, always appears to want what the American press gives it.

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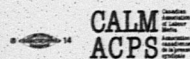
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FROM THE MORGUE

Fifty years ago this month:

In its largest representation election ever, the American Newspaper Guild is overwhelmingly chosen by Associated Press employees nationwide as their collective bargaining agent. . . . The St. Louis Post-Dispatch hires its first black reporter. . . . Delegates to the CWA's convention vote to affiliate with the CIO and to absorb the CIO's Telephone Workers Organizing Committee, for the first time creating a single union for all telephone workers. . . .

Twenty-five years ago this month:

A six-month strike-lockout at the Victoria Times and Colonist ends with a settlement that includes a 34% increase in key top-minimums over 22 months. . . . The Guild files a representation petition to represent 328 editorial employees of the Detroit News—the largest group sought by a Guild local in five years. . . . In the first report of its activities, the National News Council announces it had received 160 complaints about the media in the eight months of its existence, of which 28 were judged sufficient for further consideration. . . .

Ten years ago this month:

Eleven TNG-represented witnesses give often devastating testimony to a House subcommittee about the effects of carpal tunnel syndrome. . . . UPI staffers protest coast-to-coast over the firing of a veteran reporter who refused to show management the manuscript of a book he was writing about the company. . . . An administrative law judge rules that El Mundo must recognize the Puerto Rico Guild as exclusive bargaining agent. . . .

DAYBOOK

AFL-CIO's "7 Days in June,"
June 19-25, nationwide

Great Labor Arts Exchange,
June 20-22, Meany Center

Unity '99, July 7-11,
Seattle Convention Center

CWA Convention,
July 12-14, Miami

CLUW Convention,
Aug. 30-Sept. 5, Chicago

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

TNG-CWA Executive Council,
Oct. 21-23, Baltimore

Great Lakes District Council,
Nov. 5-7, Buffalo, N.Y.

Midwest District Council,
Nov. 12-14, Chicago