

THE GUILD Reporter

January 14, 2000

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*Hawaiian Journal:
where anguish, anger
and hope have flowered*

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Guild's newest members: 700+ Canadian actors

Months after forming a Toronto-based professional association, more than 700 movie and television "background performers"—otherwise known as extras—are joining the Canadian Media Guild, a TNG-CWA local.

The unanimous decision to seek CMG representation, reached Jan. 7 at a spirited meeting of more than 100 members of the Professional Association of Canadian Talent, followed several rebuffs of the group by the Alliance of Canadian Television and Radio Artists. "Their initial goal was to become a separate guild within ACTRA," explains CMG staff rep Keith Maskell, but over a series of five meetings between the two groups, "ACTRA essentially told them to go away."

Although ACTRA claims to represent background performers, a PACT spokesman says its membership consists largely of actors with speaking roles or with silent on-screen exposure in commercials. Background performers, by contrast, do crossovers in front of the camera, sit and stand still and mimic conversations. Differences in compensation and working con-

ditions are huge: ACTRA members are paid more than \$18 an hour and get overtime plus benefits, compared with the 16-hour days put in by PACT members—at \$7 an hour, no benefits and segregated eating facilities.

After years of grumbling about their second-class treatment, PACT's founding members circulated a petition last May to drum up interest in creating the group, then initiated their talks with ACTRA. But PACT leaders also turned to the Canadian Media Guild for help, and following ACTRA's rebuff decided to seek a more formal relationship with the TNG-CWA local.

Now both sides are gearing up for a fight neither thinks it will lose. "We know ACTRA and we know we're in for a big fight with ACTRA, but it doesn't bother us," said CMG President Lise Lareau. ACTRA officials, meanwhile, contended they "will not tolerate a raid" upon their jurisdiction.

Following adoption of new by-laws Jan. 21, PACT plans to apply for a bargaining certificate from the Canadian Artists and Performers Professional Relations Tribunal. A decision isn't expected before fall.

Down to the wire: AFP settles, AP gets byline strike

A millennial meltdown at Agence France-Presse was averted in the early afternoon of Dec. 30, when the wire service agreed to a two-year contract. AFP Guild members had voted unanimously in early December to authorize their bargaining committee to call a strike at 12:01 a.m. Jan. 1.

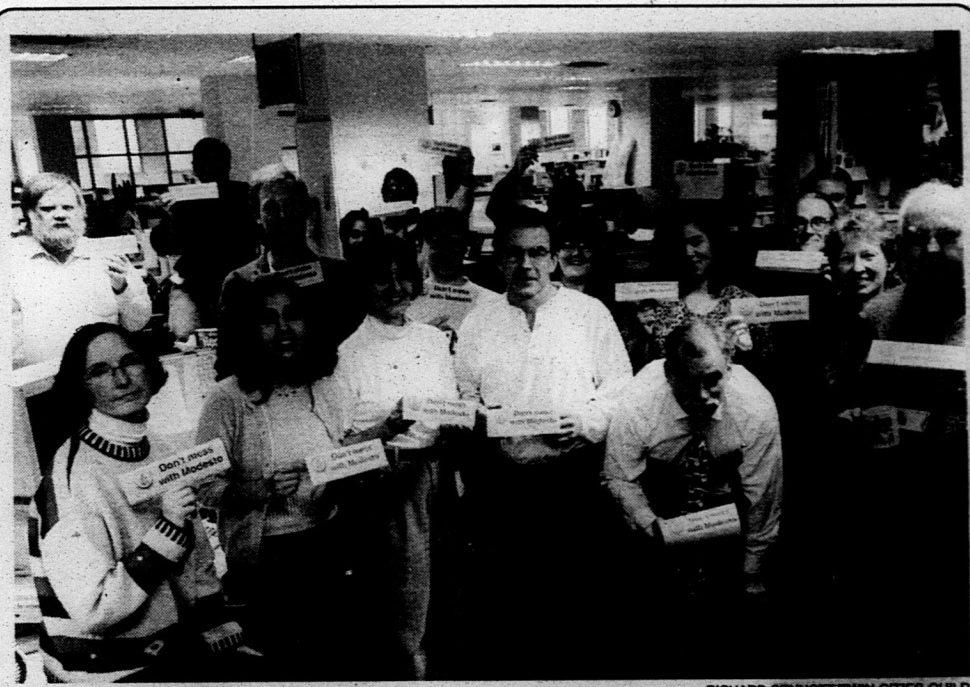
But the story was altogether different at The Associated Press, whose U.S.-based writers and photographers launched a 10-day by-line strike the morning of Dec. 31 after two months of inconclusive contract negotiations with the

Wire Service Guild. The last contract expired Nov. 30.

More than half of the unit's 1,500 members supported the protest, withholding their names from stories or photos transmitted over the AP system. Informal support for the by-line strike also came from other TNG-CWA locals. When photographers at the Denver Rocky Mountain News learned why photos were moving on the AP wire without photo credits, for example, they decided to withhold their names, too.

The contract settlement at

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RICHARD SENNOTT/TWIN CITIES GUILD

Hey, McClatchy!

Guild members at the Minneapolis Star-Tribune, showing support for their colleagues at the Modesto Bee, display their "Don't mess with Modesto" desktop tents; both papers are part of the McClatchy chain. Contract negotiations at

the Bee, where labor relations historically have been strained, started in November with the company demanding it be allowed to assign work currently under Guild jurisdiction to non-union workers or to subcontractors. Star Tribune employees have been putting the paper tents on their computer screens.

Supreme Court affirms permatemp pensions

Boost for WashTech members at Microsoft's expense

Microsoft was rebuffed by the U.S. Supreme Court for a second time Jan. 10, as it let stand a lower court ruling that as many as 15,000 permatemps should have had the opportunity to buy discounted stock. Two years ago, the Supreme Court declined to hear another Microsoft appeal in the long-running case.

While company attorneys called the prevailing appellate court ruling—which by some estimates could cost Microsoft as much as \$40 million—a "windfall of stunning proportions," the permatemps who worked for years without benefits said it's only their due.

"Microsoft has abused its immense power to cheat a large fraction of its own workers out of the most basic benefits, including health care, for the sake of their own greed," said Elizabeth Spokoiny, one of the original plaintiffs in the case, filed in 1992. "It's

about time for them to be treated with the respect they deserve."

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals found last May that the workers Microsoft has been hiring through temporary help agencies are in essence "common-law employees" because of the extent of control and supervision the company exercises over them. Most of the software giant's 6,500 current permatemps have been with Microsoft for more than a year, notes WashTech, a TNG-CWA local, and more than 40% have worked there more than two years.

Such workers, the court reasoned, are covered by the same pension rules as other employees—including Microsoft's stock option plan, which gives employees an opportunity to buy shares at a 15% discount. The inducement packs considerable punch: a single share bought for \$21 in 1986, when Microsoft went public, is now worth more than \$11,000.

The Supreme Court's decision not to hear Microsoft's appeal, issued without comment, exhausts the company's legal defenses and clears the way for the appeals court to determine how much money or stock should be dispersed. But WashTech organizers and others hope it also sends a clear message to the company that it must reform its ways—and to the permatemps themselves that the only defense they have against a rapacious employer is each other.

"While this ruling is good for permatemps in the long run, any immediate benefits depend on whether Microsoft intends to follow through and make things right," observed Barbara Judd, a WashTech member and Microsoft contractor. "In the end, real power and a voice on the job for workers will only come through organizing."

ON A RELATED NOTE, Washington's high-tech workers accustomed to burning the midnight oil to meet project and ship deadlines may get some relief, if State Sen. Darlene Fairley has her way. Fairley said she plans to introduce a bill in the upcoming legislative session that would eliminate mandatory overtime for the state's wage earners. Industry spokesmen contend Fairley's bill "does not make sense."

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NLRB judge orders 50 fired Detroit workers back to work

An administrative law judge has ruled that the Detroit News, the Detroit Free Press and the business agency for the two papers were guilty of unfair labor practices for firing 50 workers because of strike-related activities. Gannett and Knight Ridder, owners of the two papers, were ordered to rehire the workers with full back pay and interest, to purge their personnel files of any references to the discharges and to post notices announcing the decision.

But the judge also upheld another three dozen strike-related firings by the newspapers. And in keeping with their long-standing

practice of challenging every adverse decision in a labor dispute that started July 13, 1995, both newspapers notified the National Labor Relations Board that they will appeal that part of the decision requiring the reinstatements.

Of the 50, eight are Guild members and a ninth is a CWA-represented printer.

Gannett's and Knight Ridder's truculence over an admittedly bitter affair has gone beyond legal carpet-bombing to include shading the news itself. In quoting Teamsters officer Al Derey on the decision, for example, the Free Press made liberal use of ellipses to trim his observation that the rul-

ing "clearly states that these . . . renegade corporations . . . have illegally fired 50 members . . . for legally protected activity." Derey's full statement specifically identified the renegade corporations as Gannett and Knight Ridder, neither one of which is identified in the Free Press story.

Although the strike that prompted the firings ended nearly three years ago, when the six unions offered to return to work without new contracts, nearly 600 employees still have not been called back. Although the NLRB ordered in Aug. 1998 that the locked-out workers be reinstated, that decision also is being appealed.

Ordered to rehire 2 workers, publisher dismisses 2 others

While some publishers respond to court orders that they reinstate workers by filing appeals, some prefer to fire a corresponding number of other employees.

That's what happened in Fredericton, New Brunswick, when a provincial trial court upheld an arbitrator's order that two members of TNG-CWA Local 30664—including local president Tim Martell—be returned to their old jobs. Martell and Ann Lingley were laid off September 30, 1998, in a thinly veiled attempt by management at the Fredericton Daily Gleaner to decapitate union leadership amidst stalled contract negotiations.

But while local members celebrated the court's Christmas pre-

sent, delivered Dec. 21, and management agreed that Martell and Lingley would return to work Jan. 3, the Irving family-owned newspaper also was slipping a lump of coal into the union's stocking. In a letter to Martell dated Dec. 28, Gleaner publisher Victor Mlodecki unilaterally imposed new terms and conditions of employment by eliminating the seniority rights and grievance clause of the expired contract.

And then Mlodecki called in two vacationing employees, 19-year staffer Charlene Steeves and the local's secretary-treasurer, Esther Shanks, and laid them off with the suggestion that they "seek independent advice" (read: "Sue the union") because the layoffs were unfair.

"Management really wanted to punish us with these layoffs," Martell says. "Neither of these members were at work when Mlodecki wanted to make his announcement, but he wanted other employees to see them marched in to lose their jobs and see them marched back out of the building in tears. This was the most blatant act of management retaliation we've seen yet."

The local is mulling its options, although Martell—still back on the job—believes it most probably will file additional unfair labor practice charges. The membership, meanwhile, has agreed to suspend further negotiations until the current grievances and board charges are resolved. The unit's last contract expired November, 1998.

Star-Bulletin wins another round

Legally, at least, the news couldn't be better for employees of the Honolulu Star-Bulletin. On Dec. 17, the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals denied a petition by Gannett and Liberty Newspapers that it reconsider its November decision upholding a preliminary injunction that forces the newspaper to keep publishing.

As before, the court's ruling was a model of brevity, consisting of just seven lines of type. The

decision clears the way for a Sept. 21 trial on complaints filed by the Hawaii attorney general that Liberty's agreement to close the afternoon daily in exchange for a \$26.5 million payoff from Gannett violated state and federal antitrust laws. The deal would have given Gannett's morning newspaper, the Honolulu Advertiser, a monopoly in the island state's biggest city.

More good news for Star-Bulletin supporters came Dec. 23, when the Gannett-Liberty deal's expiration date came and went without an extension. "I can confirm that the termination agreement has a Dec. 23 expiration date, that the expiration date has not been extended, and that there are no negotiations in progress to extend it," Liberty attorney Alan Marx told a Star-Bulletin reporter Dec. 22.

Just what the future holds, however, remains murky. The two publishers also have withdrawn a motion—set for hearing Feb. 5—to dismiss the state's suit, apparently to defer potentially embarrassing discovery proceedings. Because of the withdrawal, for example, a deposition that had

been scheduled for Jan. 10 has been canceled.

But with a trial still eight months away, some observers wonder if Gannett simply is changing its tactics to a war of attrition. Some Star-Bulletin street boxes have been removed, despite court orders that the newspaper's viability not be damaged pending the outcome of the trial. A series of mysterious "technical problems" has played havoc with Star-Bulletin deadlines while leaving the Advertiser unaffected. And no one yet has figured out who hacked the server that carries the Save Our Star Bulletin web page, which disappeared for several days.

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In brief . . .

Philly unit gets a Xmas present . . .

Three days before Christmas, the Philadelphia Guild and 10 other unions agreed to a six-year extension of their contracts with Knight Ridder's Philadelphia Inquirer and Daily News. Although financial details are still being worked out, the pact includes wage increases of approximately 3% per year and guarantees that the circulation department will not be moved to Miami, as Knight Ridder has done at other papers.

. . . but Gary gets a visit from grinch

For the past 27 years, the Gary Newspaper Guild ran an annual "Christmas Neediest Fund" for the city's children, and in 1985 welcomed the Post-Tribune as an official cosponsor. In 1998 the effort raised more than \$12,000—but after contract talks bogged down last summer, management at the Hollinger-owned paper apparently decided that not even the Christmas season should be allowed to thaw the frosty relationship. So this year the Post-Tribune launched its own fund-raiser, the Empty Stocking Fund, froze out the Christmas Neediest Fund and killed a column explaining that the Guild's fund was still operating. Ho, ho, ho!

Providence Guild requests mediator

Despite continued efforts by the Providence Newspaper Guild to hold substantive contract negotiations with the Providence Journal, the only company response Dec. 29 to a Guild proposal of more than 20 items was to agree to a wage increase of 47 cents. Per day. The company's "offer" came just two weeks after it unilaterally demanded that union members select new health plans before they were negotiated, prompting the filing of unfair labor practice charges. The unit requested federal mediation following the Dec. 29 session.

Brown flip-flops on SF Examiner

San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown has described the San Francisco Examiner as "not worth using as toilet paper," but now that it may be on the edge of extinction he's changed his tune. Calling the Examiner a "civic

treasure" during his inauguration speech Jan. 8; Brown said he wants to find a group of investors to buy the paper and keep his city a two-newspaper town.

If this were wine, it'd be well aged

The advent of the new year must mean—yup, that the Harrisburg Newspaper Guild is entering the sixth year of contract negotiations at The Patriot-News. The glacial pace at which the talks are scheduled—the next session, set for Jan. 31 at a federal mediator's office, will be only the 54th—is only partly to blame for the lack of closure; so is a company that has flip-flopped in its demands, recanted agreements and made no bones about its intention to wring every possible concession out of its employees. The latest company demand? To do away with the evergreen clause, which maintains the expired contract's terms and agreements while negotiations continue.

Get applications in immediately

Deadlines for college financial assistance are quickly approaching. Applications for Union Plus Credit Card Scholarships must be filed by Jan. 31 and may be obtained by writing to Union Plus Scholarship Program, P.O. Box 34800, Washington, DC 20043-4800 or by logging on to its web site at www.unionprivilege.org. The deadline for scholarship applications to the Joseph Anthony Beirne Memorial Foundation isn't until March 31, but early filing is encouraged. Application forms should be obtained from your local.

Two Guild local presidents die

Two former presidents of TNG-CWA locals on opposite ends of the country died in recent weeks. Former Hawaii Newspaper Guild President Stan Souza, who also served on the International Executive Board, died Jan. 11. Souza served four consecutive terms as an at-large vice president, losing his 1991 reelection bid by only 122 votes. Charles Wayne Hughes, a two-term president of the Washington-Baltimore Guild in the 1970s and winner of a Guildsman of the Year award, died December 19 at the age of 73.

The Newspaper Guild International



For information about your benefits, contact Helen L. Coleman, assistant to the trustees:

1-888-893-3650
hcoleman@cwa-union.org

Walking the plank:

An inside view of Gannett's efforts to close the Star-Bulletin

[As the list of recent and threatened newspaper closures gets longer, certain elements emerge as constants: The attempts by management to disclose as little as possible. Heightened security measures. A maelstrom of rumor, speculation and gossip. The guilt experienced by those who land on their feet, the despair of those who see no escape, the defiance of the brave, the foolhardy and the proud. Some pray for a swift resolution and resent those, like the Guild, whose struggle only delays the inevitable. Others will kick and scream to the very brink of the grave—and, astonishingly, sometimes will prevail.

The story of the Honolulu Star-Bulletin is far from over, but one notable chapter has already been written: It is the first newspaper in a Joint Operating Agreement whose planned demise has been averted. The story of that struggle, and the lessons it offers to newspaper employees elsewhere who may undergo similar trials, has been chronicled from the beginning—in print and photos—by its investigative reporter, Ian Lind, on his personal web page. Excerpts follow; those who want to see Lind's entire opus can access it through a link at a Guild-sponsored site, www.savestarbuletin.org/.

By Ian Lind

Investigative Reporter, Honolulu Star-Bulletin

September 15, Wednesday

My first day back after a week-long trip to Chicago. . . . Routine, until mid-afternoon, probably around 4 pm, a wave of worry. Unexplained management meetings. No answers forthcoming about the subject. Finally, word that "an announcement" will be made Thursday morning. We've been through rumors before. A month ago, some Advertiser staffers were supposedly asked to submit lists of whom they would hire from the Star-Bulletin, but as far as I know this was never confirmed. But by 6 pm, all television stations are reporting the Star-Bulletin's imminent closure. . . .

September 16, Thursday

Rupert Phillips makes his announcement in our newsroom about 8 am. I'm not there. I decided to arrive fashionably late. If the news is what we expect, then I don't need to rush in. And if there's some unexpected announcement, I'll have the pleasure of a surprise. Of course, the news is as expected. Bad.

September 22

Star-Bulletin staffers have been lining up for interviews across the hall at the Advertiser since the beginning of the week. The Advertiser expects to pick up about 20 of our approximately 100 staffers, leaving the remaining 80 or so to fend for themselves.

I was interviewed yesterday by Advertiser editor Jim Gatti and managing editor Jim Kelly. It wasn't much like a job interview, although friendly. My impression is that they already knew what they are going to do in my case, one way or the other. . . . Several other reporters confirmed similarly vague interviews. Each of us hopes for the best. Some were offered a cookie or donut. Not I.

September 23

The interview process is painful. No one really wants to work for the newspaper which we have competed with. It's hard to maintain



Ian Lind and his wife, Meda, with the ghost ship "Endeavour"—the European ship that "discovered" Hawaii, under Captain Cook—in the background. The Endeavour's sails, decorated via the magic of computer software, sport a defiant "Yes, We're Open" sign and a yellow hibiscus, the Star-Bulletin's equally in-your-face floral mascot.

a professional attitude when we've tried so hard to kick their butts and produce a better newspaper, a battle we were winning. And most of us believe that Gannett set up the Star-Bulletin for failure and finally orchestrated the pulling of the plug. But they're covered by the same Newspaper Guild contract and salary scale, which is far above any other competing local media. And money speaks with a certain terrible clarity. . . .

A fiery two-page anonymous letter goes up on the bulletin board in the newsroom, an impassioned plea to fight to the end for the Star-Bulletin's survival. It immediately draws a crowd of readers, and continues to attract attention for several days. Reactions differ. I can see head-shaking, some expressions of support. One person wonders aloud if the writer is in danger of "going postal"—it's the first mention (and so far the only mention) of workplace violence as a risk.

September 25

Disturbing rumor that some Star-Bulletin staffers have tried to gain an advantage by dropping negative information about other writers during interviews at the Advertiser. You don't want to believe such tales. The situation is grim enough without turning on each other.

September 27

The day started with the "green flash" at sunrise during our walk on the beach in Kaaawa. A good omen?

Several people have been to meet with a Gannett recruiter who is here for a couple of days. Few people really want to leave Hawaii, and I would guess fewer really savor the idea of working for another Gannett newspaper. But the days are rapidly being crossed off the calendar. . . .

September 28

Another green flash this morning despite the heavy clouds. These little miracles of nature boost the spirit, however subtly.

September 30

We saw the green flash for the third time this week during our sunrise walks in

Kaaawa. That might be a record for us. An omen of what?

As one former Advertiser reporter, who left unhappy with the Gannett management style, commented to me: "It would be good if they offered you a position. But it would be really good for you if they didn't." Who knows what to think?

October 4, Monday

A month from now the Star-Bulletin will likely be no more, but there are now public threats of lawsuits by the attorney general and an unnamed citizens' group that claims to have support of The Newspaper Guild.

The problem here is that these initiatives are coming in a way that reduces all of us at the newspaper to pawns in someone else's agenda. No one is talking to us about it, except most indirectly through unidentified union intermediaries. Not everyone welcomes these moves, although they hold out some untested glimmer of hope that the Star-Bulletin can continue to exist on life support. Some in our newsroom are angry at what they see as outside "interference" in this inevitable process. We're going under, and let's try to do it as smoothly as possible, make the transition easier for those going over to the "dark side" (Gannett), and mercifully quicker for those that aren't offered positions over there. . . .

Notices have been posted for upcoming workshops on unemployment benefits, another on "personal resilience in times of change," and a third on "psychological aspects of retirement." What a cheery slate!

October 5, Tuesday

Adding insult to injury, trucks from the Hawaii Newspaper Agency have already started picking up certain Star-Bulletin sales boxes from sidewalks around town and hauling them back to be repainted in Advertiser colors. HNA claims the targeted boxes have very low sales. Right, we all believe that.

October 6, Wednesday

Lawsuits were filed today by the state attorney general and a community group "with broad support." . . .

A special meeting called by the Newspaper Guild at the last minute was grandly unsatisfying. Guild staffer Wayne Cahill made an upbeat presentation without much real substance. No one was present to discuss the litigation in any detail. "Our attorneys say we have a very good case" was about as good as it got. . . .

October 7, Thursday

Here's the nut: The Star-Bulletin today is worth more dead than alive. Liquidation value exceeds operating value. Its live value is based on the income stream promised by a series of set payments spelled out in the current JOA with Gannett. But its worth "dead" is the savings to be reaped from not having to pay salaries, equipment, publishing and delivery costs to put out a second newspaper for the next 12 years.

What this means is that the Star-Bulletin's value to an outside buyer is measurable and limited, while its potential closing value to the current owner is much higher. A peculiar problem in this capitalist system. Like farmers being paid not to produce their crops, there is a certain weird rationale to Rupert cleaning up by not publishing.

What a country.

October 8, Friday

. . . Job offers from across the hall started trickling in Wednesday night and continued thru yesterday and today, and have managed to stay a safe distance from me. Those with good news have been reluctant to celebrate openly. Word spreads quietly and informally through the newsroom as each new offer emerges. Informal lists, like scorecards, pass from hand to hand. At this point, no news is no news. Each announcement reduces that magic number of open positions and reduces the odds for those who wait.

I am still one of the waiters, even while rumors swirl that all potential jobs are now filled. Investigative reporters are a luxury for a newspaper, both economically and politically. . . .

We haven't yet begun to grapple with the conflicts that arise with staffers who have accepted positions at the Advertiser. In the interim, while the Star-Bulletin is still publishing, will they be tempted to hold back, saving good stories for their first weeks in the new job? Will this be an unconscious pressure, lingering in the background? This is uncharted terrain around here, so we will just have to wait and see.

October 9, Saturday

Isn't it possible that the anti-trust lawsuits are going to block this sale and keep the Star-Bulletin alive, saving our jobs and avoiding the disruptions of our lives, not to mention giving renewed life to this great paper?

I'm sorry, but from my perspective it just isn't going to happen. Besides being non-participatory and driven by other interests and agendas, the lawsuits have the flavor of the Ghost Dancers, that dream that if we just dance and cry and shout long enough it will turn the stream of history, roll back the death of the afternoon newspaper, and make us whole again alongside our ancestors. I shouldn't be so cynical, but the clear weight of history and the direction of change is against us here.

I'm with those who want to move on and create a new way to speak truth to power.

Continued on page 4

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This whole affair isn't fair nor proper, but it certainly isn't a surprise in the scheme of things. This is the voice of pure modern capitalism speaking, and it ain't pretty, as others around the globe have been discovering. . . .

October 11, Monday

The hallway buzz today is about boxes of records being sent from the building in response to subpoenas that were served over the weekend. No one seems to know who carted them off. Is this the rumored Justice Department intervening? And what does it mean for us?

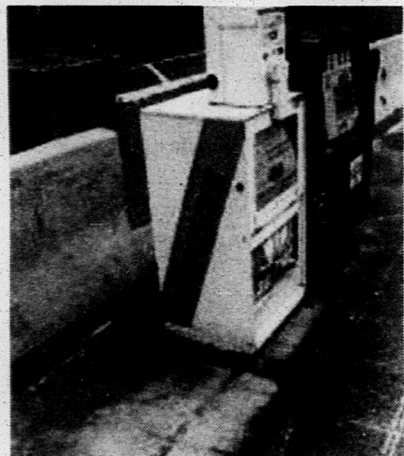
Unless a court orders otherwise, there are just three weeks of Star-Bulletins still to come off the presses. More people are talking about what part of the country they plan to fly off to in search of work. Others are wondering out loud what career options there are for former reporters. Everyone seems to be coping, with the occasional burst of temper betraying the underlying tension we all feel.

The worst thing, perhaps, is the looming dread that in three weeks or less, our means of getting into print will be gone. So many stories, so many issues, so little time. . . .

October 12, Tuesday

By most counts, there have now been offers made on 19 or 20 of the positions at the Advertiser, or virtually all the positions available. As a result, here at the Star-Bulletin the lines between haves and have-nots are emerging. It's subtle, of course, but becoming noticeable. Conversations veer in different directions depending on the status of those involved. There is a lot of awkwardness, both survivors' guilt and whatever you call its opposite.

The specter of the Star-Bulletin being in limbo for any extended period is disheartening. As jobs open up elsewhere, people are going to leave, and we could end up with a



Despite a court order, the Star-Bulletin box outside the U.S. District Court in Honolulu has been disappeared, leaving just an outline of where it once stood.

half-empty newsroom before this saga ends. For now, people are holding on in order to preserve their right to severance pay, which technically could be lost if you're not here on the day the paper closes. . . .

Practical interests are also diverging. Those with jobs waiting across the hall are beginning to see potential court-imposed delays in the scheduled closing of the Star-Bulletin as unfortunately disruptive, while those facing unemployment see delays offering at least some hope of additional paychecks. Those differences are likely to magnify in the weeks ahead. . . .

Personally, I'm going home to enjoy the cats and the sunset.

October 13, Wednesday

What a day. The City Desk was getting

reports from federal court this morning as the hearing progressed on the state's motion for a temporary restraining order to temporarily halt closure of the paper. As updates arrived by phone, messages were going out on the in-house e-mail system to update everyone here, while "runners" carried the same news up and down the halls. There was a general furor, joy muted by confusion and uncertainty, when the news came that a preliminary injunction had been issued. What does it mean? How long will this last? How long will we have jobs? People want to know, but there are no answers. The case now gets kicked up to the appeals court where it will hopefully be expedited. . . .

My stomach churned a bit hearing Gannett's argument that the First Amendment guarantees the right not to publish the Star-Bulletin. These are not your typical First Amendment advocates! . . .

. . . I haven't mentioned the guards, the small army of special rent-a-cops who moved into the news building and adjoining areas the day the closure was announced. They are doubled up on the various entrances to the building, and also in the back where papers are moved from the presses onto trucks for delivery. At first we were told they were assigned to keep other media out of the building, but it quickly became clear that they are here to watch us and keep us from stealing moveable objects.

They are a nice complement to the high-tech security system that went in a couple of years ago, with computer monitored doors accessible only with an electronic key issued to staff. A similar security system was installed in Detroit before Gannett and company tried to bust the unions there. It all goes together to generate a background sense of siege.

October 14, Thursday

It was street theater at the end of the day, as 75-100 people picketed the news building to protest Gannett's deal to shut down the Star-Bulletin. . . .

The Newspaper Guild and ILWU appeared to provide the structure for the group, although at one point individuals were being quietly told to just say they were from Save Our Star-Bulletin if asked by any of the other reporters present to cover the festivities. A pretty good core of S-B staffers came down to take part. As one said, "I never thought I would do this, but I looked out the window and saw all these people I don't even know out in the rain to defend my job . . . how could I NOT join in?" . . .

A couple of people reported that Gannett lawyers were up on the third floor of the building the whole time watching us in the rain with our signs, and making fun of people who were there with their kids. This news drew immediate anger and resentment. One person put it this way: "It's not enough for them to put us out of work, they've got to humiliate us while they do it. Rupert (Phillips) stood there and told us this

was strictly business, but they're already making it personal, taking perverse joy at the prospect of a child out on the street with unemployed parents. It made me sick to my stomach to hear."

October 15, Friday

It was a crazy day, with new information about the legal battle emerging constantly. We got copies of the order granting the preliminary injunction, so for the first time

Honolulu Star-Bulletin

Straub settlement: \$4.3 million

When Advertiser manging editor Jim Kelly reportedly scoffed that the Star-Bulletin would probably feature an investigative report on the price of hibiscus plants—a remark interpreted as a slap at a string of in-depth probes by Rob Perez of consumer pricing in gasoline, food, etc.—the Star Bulletin's response illustrated that competitive juices still flow strongly in Hawaii.



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were able to go over the court's reasoning in detail. . . .

With just two weeks to go before the newspaper's scheduled demise, it is getting harder to concentrate on writing. . . .

One ominous move that could cause problems for people who work in other parts of the building was disclosed in legal documents filed today. Mike Fisch, president of Gannett Pacific Corp. and head of the Hawaii Newspaper Agency (which prints and distributes both the Advertiser and Star-Bulletin, and handles the sale of advertising, etc.), disclosed that planning was underway to dissolve HNA and replace it with a new corporate entity. The new entity would then "hire" former HNA employees. It isn't clear whether all employees would automatically be transferred or whether this is an attempt to circumvent existing union protections. . . .

October 18

Today it's wait, and wait a while more. I'm sure everyone is doing what I am—that is, working on a story while trying to listen to other newsroom conversations for any developments in the legal proceedings. . . .

October 19, Tuesday

Parts of a conversation yesterday afternoon stick with me. I joined several people speculating about the 9th Circuit wrangling, and what might happen if this court case drags on for months.

"We'll slowly bleed to death," an editor predicted. "As people are offered jobs elsewhere, they'll leave, and those remaining will have to work harder, pick up the slack. We'll end up running the paper with interns

and inexperienced reporters. We'll just bleed until there's no more blood."

On the other hand, this was one of the e-mail messages that greeted us this morning: "I for one do not like the morbid tone of some of the events that have been discussed on staff message group this week. A United States judge says we shall not close on Oct. 30. Until something extraordinary overturns him, that's the way it is."

Meanwhile, assignments have been made for a final commemorative edition of the Star-Bulletin. Our current instructions are to "proceed as if we have to publish it on October 30." . . .

October 20, Wednesday

Excitement and confusion as news came via the Newspaper Guild that the 9th Circuit denied Gannett's request to lift the preliminary injunction while their appeal goes forward, but the court did agree to expedite its hearing of the case. . . .

There were a lot of emotional flips as we sorted out what the court's ruling actually accomplished. As one reporter observed: "The morning's jubilation was short-lived. We're ready to react to the slightest shred of good news." And that we are.

Word came late in the day that a grievance has been filed after workers in the circulation department (that services both our paper and the Advertiser) were told they could not wear Save Our Star-Bulletin buttons while on the job. . . .

October 21, Thursday

Another indicator of the mood. I was asked to remove two pictures from my web pages showing Star-Bulletin staffers joining in the picketing outside the building last week. The person making the request said he had been advised by a friend in Seattle that being unnecessarily visible is not a good idea under these circumstances for those who have pending job offers from the "surviving" newspaper. The edit was easy and quick, but a sad reminder that we're living with pressures leading to self-censorship. . . .

October 22, Friday

We're hearing complaints from Advertiser staffers now facing community anger at Gannett's move to close the Star-Bulletin. I say Gannett's move because the attempt to paint S-B owner Rupert Phillips as the primary mover is a transparent sham, at least in my view. The decisions are made by Gannett's corporate officers on the mainland, but it's Advertiser reporters and editors who have to personally face the backlash here at home. We know it's

uncomfortable for them but, as one Advertiser editor told me, "when it's all over I'll still have a job."

October 23, Saturday

Rumors, rumbles and speculation are hot items in the newsroom. Wherever two people stop to talk, more will gather or at least eavesdrop for any new information, whether hard news or wild speculation. This weaving of speculative scenarios can, and does, go on endlessly. It can become addictive, and debilitating. . . .



One highlight of the struggle was webmeister Blaine Fergerstrom's distribution of "security badges" featuring a miniature image of the Star-Bulletin front page that said it all: "Yes, We're Open."

October 25, Monday

All is quiet in the newsroom today, but there's a weird ambiance because we all know this was slated to be the Star-Bulletin's last week. An in-house message this morning:

"Overheard the rent-a-cops downstairs last night, it seems that they had no idea we were going to be open past 10/30. Maybe they should read the papers! NOT DEAD YET!"

One thing noticed: there has been virtually no mainland news coverage of our situation, despite the prominence of the players involved and the potential import of the legal issues being raised. A friend on the Washington Post's editorial staff said today he had copies of the legal briefs on his desk, but isn't sure the case is editorial material yet. He did not know what, if anything, they might be doing on the news side, despite the fact that S-B owner Rupert Phillips is a "local" in their part of the world.

Defections looming ahead. . . . Reporters have started flying off to mainland job interviews. Life moves on.

October 26, Tuesday

We got support today from an unexpected source. HGEA, the union representing state and county white-collar workers, took out a 1/2-page advertisement in the editorial pages of both the Advertiser and Star-Bulletin under the headline, "The Star-Bulletin Saga: Profits over People?" It is nicely done but uses blunt language to criticize the "profit and run" approach of both Gannett and Phillips/Liberty Newspaper. The moral support is appreciated by all! . . .

We're attending a friend's funeral tonight. It helps to keep everything else in perspective.

October 27, Wednesday

. . . Late afternoon. Long faces around the city desk. Word has just filtered down that a long list of news organizations, including major newspaper chains as well as the Associated Press, filed arguments with the 9th Circuit in favor of Gannett's right to crush the Star-Bulletin. Betrayed by our own colleagues, and, to add insult to injury, they wave the First Amendment as their rationale for rallying to Gannett's aid. Staffers file by to thumb through the legal documents. Depression reigns.

October 28, Thursday

"We're toast!" was ace consumer reporter Rob Perez's succinct evaluation this morning after reading through the legal brief filed by 10 news organizations in support of Gannett's appeal to the 9th Circuit Court.

Perhaps this is "normal" when absorbing top-notch legal arguments—the one you're reading right now always seems persuasive. But there's no sidestepping the fact that this case, along with the one put forward by Gannett, lay out what appear to be substantial grounds for the court to act against us.

Hallway discussions have continued all day, at least on my side of the newsroom, as we continue flying in circles, still hoping to see some crack in the logic of this newspaper nightmare. Some are still hopeful: "Isn't there room for the court to make new law? Aren't there limits on what a JOA can do?" I haven't been able to see much reason for optimism yet. The case obviously is not the simple slam-dunk that the District Court in Honolulu perceived, but several people in our newsroom with experience covering courts still argue there's a chance the 9th Circuit will allow the preliminary injunction to remain, pending a full hearing on the request for a permanent injunction. They

think the 9th Circuit "wants" this case. I'm anxious to be proved wrong on this. . . .

Another question has come up several times. What about the major newspaper groups that did not lend their names to this effort? Knight-Ridder, New York Times, Time-Mirror and others were conspicuously absent. . . .

October 29, Friday

Another week almost done. Tomorrow had been scheduled to be our last edition. It has arrived much faster than I thought possible, as will the next deadline, I'm sure. Mark Coleman just stopped by and suggested that coming to work next week will be like entering the "afterlife" or, perhaps, returning from that other side. . . .

I'm stunned, thanks to Save Our Star-Bulletin's on-line version of the full text of the 1993 Joint Operating Agreement between the Advertiser and Star-Bulletin. There are some startling factoids here for those willing to wade through the legalese. For example, Rupert Phillips has said the decision to close the Star-Bulletin came because his partnership has not received the extra payments promised if certain goals of the joint publishing operation are achieved. In 1999, that target profit is \$81,480,262. Meaning that Gannett expected to be able to make more than \$81 million in profit and to pay Phillips a share of the profits beyond that figure! Compare that to the entire cost of running the Star-Bulletin for a year, which is under \$10 million.

So the idea that Gannett is "losing money" might mean simply that profits are below the \$81 million figure. These are pretty staggering numbers.

October 31, Sunday

. . . There was a semblance of normalcy in the Star-Bulletin newsroom this week, but it played out against a background stress shared by everyone. Reporters are out looking for work or trying to decide where to look for work, or what kind of work to look for. There are permutations galore. Couples have to decide whether to pull up stakes and look for work on the mainland, where to draw the line beyond which they won't sacrifice to stay in Hawaii. These were decisions featured earlier in our reports on the islands' economy, but now experienced personally.

We're caught in an inescapable bind, reporting on the situation that engulfs us. In principle, it appears to violate the current-

ly popular codes of ethics promoted by the Society of Professional Journalists and most newspapers, which stress "objectivity" and the obligation to remain free of ties or interests that could sway our reporting. In our special circumstance, of course, that is impossible. Despite this, our coverage of our own situation has been decent, and is energized by what we have at risk. If anything, the existence of those interests has made us less aggressive than if this were happening to someone else. . . .



Longtime Star-Bulletin staffer Trini Peltier was prepared, whichever way the court decided: the other side of the sign says "We are closed."



Mr. and Mrs. Santa, each sporting subversive pin-wear supporting continued publication of the Star-Bulletin, guard the lobby to the Star-Bulletin and Advertiser. From time to time an issue of the Star-Bulletin would also appear in Santa's bag or tucked under an arm, and just as often these items would disappear, prompting renewed decorative efforts. Small statements and probably little noticed, but empowering nonetheless.

November 1, Monday

Officially running on borrowed time, after continuing to publish past the original October 30 closing date. The day started with echoes of Saturday night's "Not Dead Yet" gathering that drew dozens of current or former Star-Bulletin types and friends to Murphy's Bar and Grill, a downtown watering hole. . . . Staffers who have been offered jobs across the hall parted along with those who didn't. Retirees joined our newest hires. From the tales being told, a few in attendance might have felt close to dead when the sun rose on Sunday. How drunk are you when your friends wonder if they need to call 911?

Today's speculation in the newsroom centered on the Justice Department's ongoing interviews with the top advertisers with the Hawaii Newspaper Agency. These are reportedly serious interviews, conducted by speakerphone and lasting as much as an hour, involving Justice staffers in D.C. and San Francisco, along with a stenographer to make a record. Advertisers are apparently being asked about the advertising environment, whether there are alternatives to HNA, and then being quizzed on those alternatives and why they are, or are not, used more frequently. . . .

November 3, Wednesday

The Guild's Wayne Cahill brought news early this afternoon that the Department of Justice has intervened with an *amicus* brief, urging the 9th Circuit to leave the preliminary injunction intact. It's been slightly chaotic during the intervening three hours, as sometimes heated debates have raged among groups of reporters and editors throughout the newsroom speculating on the impact and substance of the DOJ move. At one point, a dozen people were in the hall by my desk throwing theories back and forth. Of course, we're flying blind because a copy of the brief hasn't made it here yet, although it is somewhere en route. Text of the legal filings should be available on-line by tomorrow. . . .

Cahill also said nearly 10,000 signatures have been gathered to date on petitions to save the Star-Bulletin, with plans to get more signatures during pre-game "tailgate parties" at upcoming University of Hawaii football games.

November 5, Friday

. . . Signs of the pressure continue to

emerge. A friend who just renewed an advertising contract with the newspapers reports that there has been a significant attitude shift in the past several weeks. Immediately after the planned closure of the Star-Bulletin was announced, Gannett was telling advertisers rates would not be lowered and they really had no choice. It was, he said, a "take it or leave it" presentation.

Currently, however, advertisers are being told they can cancel their contracts if the Star-Bulletin closes. It looks like enough advertisers balked at the hard line that they have had to build an escape clause into the new contracts.

I've been getting e-mail from concerned folks across the country, some also Gannett refugees. One of the more interesting arrived today, passing the word that a Nashville alternative weekly columnist predicted yesterday that the Star-Bulletin case could eventually force the Justice Department to revisit the death of the JOA there. . . .

November 7, Sunday

There have been several reports of Star-Bulletin subscribers being cut off on November 1 and finding the Advertiser being delivered to their door despite specific requests to the contrary. One subscriber was told it was an "office error," and who knows? . . .

November 8, Monday

The clock is ticking towards Wednesday's deadline for final documents to be filed in the 9th Circuit's review of the preliminary injunction that has kept the Star-Bulletin in print past the original Oct. 30 deadline for closing. Right now, you can just about hear every tick reverberating through the newsroom.

At this point, the outcome is out of our hands. Perhaps the persistent speculation about the future course of events is a way to reclaim some sense of control. Low key debates could be heard on and off throughout the day. Will the injunction be upheld or overturned? If it's upheld, what does that mean? Do you think we'll still be publishing into the next century (that is, past Jan. 1)? The cynics and the hopeful continue sparring, sometimes changing sides as the arguments proceed.

Won't they just find more ways to undermine our circulation and kill the paper if the injunction remains? That appears a distinct possibility, even under the optimistic scenario. . . .

Continued on page 6

Labor round-up

The call that finally got through

Strikes by CWA locals in six states against Sprint were averted at the last minute, as the company agreed to drop its regressive demands over health care and job security. The new three-year agreement, covering approximately 3,500 employees, includes annual wage increases of about 3%, as well as increased pension and savings plan provisions. Elsewhere, however, CWA is still getting a busy signal. CWA members at AT&T, irate at the company's failure to abide by the neutrality and consent election provisions it accepted in 1998, have overwhelmingly authorized a possible strike. And approximately 700 CWA and IBEW members turned out for a mid-December demonstration outside Bell Atlantic's Boston headquarters in support of their existing indemnity health plan, which the company wants to terminate. Contract talks aren't scheduled to start until August.

It's Post time—not!

Endeavoring to pressure the Southam group to accept a union at the strike-bound Calgary Herald, the Canadian Labor Congress and the Council of Canadians have launched a boycott of The National Post. The pre-Christmas call went out as the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union and the GCIU, having tried to negotiate a first contract without success for more than a year, entered the sixth week of their strike against the 116-year-old daily. The Herald is also owned by Southam, which in turn is owned by Conrad Black, who has made no secret of his antipathy to unions.

Teachers join the permatemp ranks

As job-creating capital flows overseas in search of cheap labor, the U.S. increasingly is looking abroad to recruit more highly-skilled workers as American permatemps. Now it's teachers: the federal government has agreed to grant special six-year visas to foreigners to teach math, science and foreign languages in Chicago's public schools, after which the city may sponsor them for permanent visas—or ship them back home.

Employer angst on the rise

The Bureau of National Affairs reports that employers are growing less confident that they'll achieve their goals in collective bargaining. Twenty-seven percent of management negotiators responding to a recent BNA survey said they were "very confident" about achieving their bargaining goals in 2000, down from 32% in 1999 and 33% in 1998. The survey also found that 40% of employers will propose first-year wage increases of 3% or more, up from 38% in 1999 and 30% in 1998, while only 17% of employers will bargain for lump-sum payments, down from 28% a year ago.

Erasing a blurred tax distinction

California's graphic artists finally got a partial tax break, as that state's Board of Equalization issued new regulations that recognize their work has a conceptual component—which isn't subject to sales tax. California has been the only state taxing services and copyrights by graphic artists and illustrators as tangible products, even though it exempted virtually identical work by writers, architects and others.

Unions sue IMF over its policies

Here's one for the "man bites dog" category: The South Korean federation representing unions in that country's banks and financial sector is suing the International Monetary Fund. The federation is demanding the equivalent of \$400,000 on behalf of 12 workers dismissed in response to IMF demands for economic reforms, an admittedly modest amount that it sees as "a symbolic action aimed at protesting against the pernicious policy of the IMF."

Money talks—but in D.C. it shouts

While the presidential candidates joust over campaign finance reform, the really big bucks are being spent on lobbying Congress and federal agencies: \$697 million in the first six months of 1999, according to an Internet company that tracks political spending. FECInfo, which calculated the total based on lobbying expenses and fees disclosed in reports filed with Congress, says the number would be much higher if it included money spent on advertising, grass-roots organizing and state lobbying.

Ergonomic standards still hotly contested

It's commonplace to criticize government for being cumbersome and slow while extolling the nimbleness of the private sector. But that cliché has been turned on its head by the struggle over new ergonomics standards.

Nearly two decades after TNG-CWA sounded the alarm over repetitive stress injuries in the newspaper industry, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration is ready to implement new ergonomics standards. But that lengthy history could grow even longer if business leaders and their Congressional allies get their way: although the draft standards were published last February, lawmakers and business groups have requested a 120-day extension of the comment period, now scheduled to end Feb. 1. The law requires only a 30-day comment period.

Although OSHA administrator Charles Jeffress has said he won't extend the deadline, the new rules have drawn a lot of political heat. The extension request, for example, was made by four senior Republicans on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers and others have vowed to continue lobbying against the standards.

If OSHA's proposed schedule holds, the comment period will be followed by three public hearings, in February, March and April. Anyone wishing to testify at one of the hearings must file notice by Jan. 24; for further information, see the administration's web site, at www.osha.gov.

By OSHA's estimates, nearly 2 million U.S. workers suffer job-related musculoskeletal disorders each year, with roughly a third of the injuries requiring time off from work. Correcting ergonomic problems is expected to cost \$4.2 billion a year nationwide, but also is expected to save more than twice that amount in reduced workers' compensation and other costs. Industry representatives dispute all those figures,

however, claiming implementation costs will be several times higher than the OSHA estimates.

While many newspaper companies already have some kind of ergonomic plan in place, repetitive stress injuries remain disproportionately high among their employees. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, for example, reports that the prevalence of such symptoms among newspaper workers ranges from 20% to 40%; the Bureau of Labor Statistics finds approximately 35% of all writers and editors experience such injuries. And even those numbers may be too low, judging by several site-specific studies: one such study, of 900 workers at three newspapers in Iowa and Illinois, found that more than half were reporting pain in their necks, backs or arms.

All three of the newspapers in that last study reportedly used it to implement effective ergonomic reforms. Ironically, however, the study's underwriter—the Newspaper Association of America—remains opposed to the new OSHA standards, even though the draft version has been modified to include NAA recommendations. The changes include a "quick fix" alternative, permitting an employer to correct a hazard within 90 days without establishing a full-blown ergonomics program if certain reporting requirements are met. Despite such adjustments, the NAA maintains that the new standards are excessively "costly and burdensome" [see column, bottom of page 7].

As AFL-CIO President John Sweeney has pointed out, however, the broad support for the new standards from the safety and health professional community—including doctors, nurses, industrial hygienists and safety engineers—"is validation that the scientific evidence on ergonomics is strong." As he further noted, such support "confirms what workers have known for years—that these injuries are caused by workplace hazards and can be prevented."

Assuming, that is, that the private sector allows government to do what it does best.

Hawaiian vigil ends—for now

Continued from page 5

November 11, Thursday

... Reports are circulating about a gathering of the Gannett executive clan held yesterday. The unexpectedly slow progress of this case, and Gannett's inability to quickly dispatch the Star-Bulletin to the realm of local history, is apparently causing talk of belittling to make up for the hefty legal fees and other unplanned costs. The result, as is so often the case, is the punishment of the innocent. If the injunction is upheld, plans to expand and improve the Advertiser, including the hiring of 20 or more Star-Bulletin staffers, may be modified or scrapped altogether. Offers made earlier contingent on the closing of the S-B could be "off the table." Suddenly we're all potentially "have nots" once again, and readers can forget those rosy Gannett promises of a new, expanded and better news product the morning after. ...

November 12, Friday

The pressure was boosted after yesterday afternoon's S-B editorial meeting to put the finishing touches on copy for the "final edition" of the Star-Bulletin, apparently indicating management belief the 9th Circuit decision could go against us. "Just in case"

is what they are saying, but the urgency has clearly cranked up a notch or two. ...

Apparently a further spin-off of Wednesday's Gannett meetings is the sense that the S-B will be facing a potential hiring freeze and/or further cutbacks if the legal situation extends the newspaper's existence. Veiled warnings are floated that we'll be facing unspecified adjustments to cope with restricted resources.

There is also a belated recognition that events have impacted on staff productivity, and management is indicating some discomfort in the amount of hallway analysis and speculation. Quiet advice was given to avoid conspicuous discussions of our predicament. Well, folks, this is how people process major transitional events like this which are determining the future of careers and lifestyles. There just isn't any way to stomp out the staff solidarity that is emerging from the shared crisis.

No one really knows how to positively deal with the situation. We have not had a staff meeting since the proposed closing was announced September 16. ...

November 13, Saturday

... Sometimes it's hard to wrestle the paranoia demon down and keep it under control.

Yesterday, someone suggested the new push to complete the Star-Bulletin's "final edition" is really being done to intentionally raise anxiety levels and, in turn, quash or discourage pesky dissent. ...

November 14, Sunday

... One of the depressing aspects of this whole experience is the routine corporate logic that Gannett applies to newspapers, as if they were a simple commodity like hamburgers or door mats, rather than part of the foundation of an educated and democratic society. It's as if we sold off our museums to the Gannetts of the world, leaving the realm of art to be reduced to editorial cartoons and advertising graphics.

A newspaper is more than a delivery vehicle for advertising, but Gannett and its cohorts seem intent on reducing that margin to a bare minimum. Or so it looks from here.

November 15, Monday

The sign ["Yes, We Are Open"] says it all! The 9th Circuit ruled today that the preliminary injunction protecting the S-B from closure stands "until the District Court renders judgment." Word reached us at 2 p.m. and was confirmed within the next 30 minutes. A sense of relief rolled across the newsroom, and reverberated throughout the afternoon. ...



LOOKING AHEAD

Should we save jobs—or papers?

By Linda Foley, President

They call it the Stockholm syndrome, although I'm not exactly sure why. It's the point during a hostage crisis when the captors and captives suddenly realize their fates are inexorably intertwined. This joining of forces lasts only as long as the crisis that fosters it. Afterwards, the two groups usually resume their previously opposing lives and views.

Something like that can happen to us as workers in the news industry. Although not exactly hostages of the multi-media corporations that run our industry, we are pretty much captive to their business practices and dealings over the newspapers, magazines, broadcast stations and internet companies that employ us. And often we get caught in the crossfire when the media and its owners come under attack for those practices and deals.

That's what's happening right now in San Francisco. The newspaper unions, which consistently have supported preservation of newspaper competition and fought publishers' efforts to consolidate, now are urging that the San Francisco Examiner be allowed to shut down, eliminating one of the Bay Area's most enduring daily newspapers.

In a deal announced last year, the Hearst Corp., owner of the Examiner, would purchase its joint operating agreement partner and rival, the San Francisco Chronicle, and then terminate the JOA and the Examiner. If the deal goes through, Hearst has promised to continue honoring the unions' collective bargaining agreements and has pledged there will be no layoffs. It has said that anyone who wants a job will have one.

From the perspective of the employees

at both San Francisco dailies, that's a good deal. It's certainly more comforting and secure than the prospect of working for a new, unfamiliar Examiner owner who is under no obligation to honor either their contracts or their employment tenure.

So the San Francisco newspaper unions are opposing efforts by government officials, other labor leaders, local politicians, other Bay Area publishers and community activists to stop Hearst's purchase of the Chronicle and closing of the Examiner. And, predictably, they have come under fire for doing so. Newspaper union leaders have been called "greedheads" and hypocrites for ignoring the broader community's concerns.

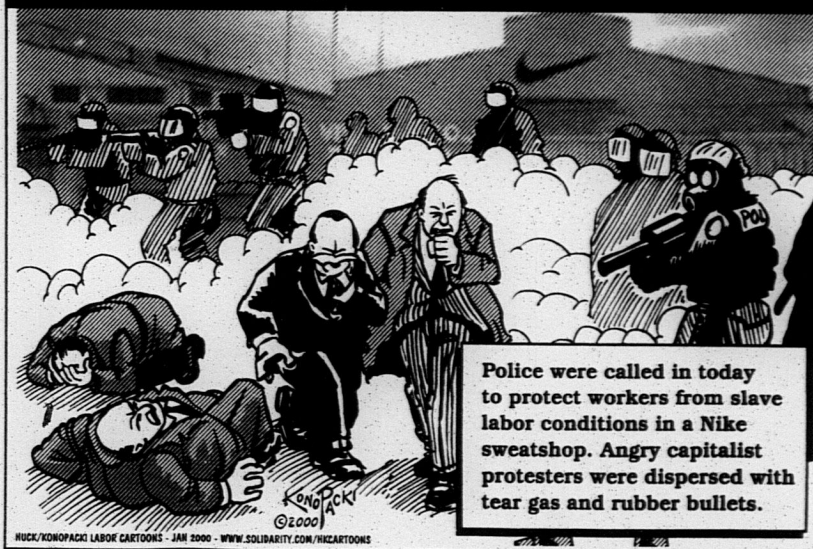
They are neither. They simply are being forced to make a difficult choice at a difficult juncture. Their economic lives are on the line, and rightly or wrongly, they believe their well-being at this moment is better served by supporting their employers' plans.

Yes, the closing of the Examiner will mean reduced newspaper competition in San Francisco. Yes, it will mean less competitive journalism. Yes, circulation, and hence the total number of newspaper readers, will go down. And, yes, all of that is bad for San Francisco.

But if hundreds of high-paying newspaper jobs are preserved with intact compensation, and if hundreds of quality journalists can continue to practice their craft in the Bay Area, that will be good for San Francisco, too.

It's hard to know which—reduced newspaper competition or retention of media jobs—will have the more lasting effect,

If there was justice in the world...



especially since the JOA is set to expire on its own terms in less than five years.

None of us, however, should lose sight of why union leaders in San Francisco face this conundrum. It's because newspaper owners want to have it both ways. On the one hand, they want special business considerations and antitrust exemptions, such as the Newspaper Preservation Act. "We can't be treated like other businesses," they argue. "We are the guardians of the First Amendment and the people's right to know."

At the same time, they use those special exemptions and considerations to produce consistently higher profit margins than most other businesses. For all the moaning about the demise of the newspaper industry and the shrinking numbers of newspapers, there hasn't been a year in the last 25 when the major players in this industry failed to receive increased profits. In fact, the newspaper industry's double-digit profits consistently outpace other manufacturing sectors of the economy.

Today's media owners are on a consolidation binge. The number of players in the industry grows smaller as the profits and assets of the ones who are left grow exponentially. In Nashville, Chattanooga and Hawaii, the self-proclaimed "guardians of the First Amendment" recently abandoned the "people's right to know" and cut deals that would have eliminated prominent newspapers in those cities. Fortunately, the citizens of Honolulu, with the help of the Guild and CWA, and the Hawaii attorney general stepped in to save the Honolulu Star-Bulletin. The other communities weren't as successful.

So no matter what happens in San Francisco, we must continue fighting to preserve competition, diversity of editorial voices and responsibility toward the public by the companies that employ us. Newspaper industry employees may be subject to the consequences of their employers' business practices, but we don't have to be held captive by their duplicity.

Maybe ergonomics will be the final straw?

By George Ehring

It's time to fess up about the labor movement. The news is hard to take. Organized labor, well, I hate to say it—it's a failure.

Since the time of the first industrial unions in Great Britain, unions have tried again and again to wrestle capitalism to the ground. What I mean, when you put it in blunt terms, is that they've tried to ruin the boss. And it hasn't worked—at least not yet.

Look at it this way.

First the British unionists wanted to get children out of the coal mines. They said it was horrible and inhumane to have little children working in veins so small no man could possibly squeeze himself into them. They didn't want their five- and six-year-old sons working in the cold, dark, wet and dangerous mines. They thought the kids should be in school, or at least at home, learning from their mothers.

But the boss didn't see it that way. Bosses have a different moral standard, you know, which of course is based on their concern for all their workers. The bosses said: If you take the kids out of the mines, we'll go broke. You'll all lose your jobs.

We don't care! said the miners. Get these kids out of here! (See what I mean—these workers must have wanted the boss to go broke.)

It took years and years, and the deaths of countless numbers of those children and other miners before the laws were finally

changed, but did the coal mine bosses go broke? They did not.

Not satisfied, the unionists took up another rallying cry. They actually wanted weekends off. They wanted time with their families. They wanted time to rest from their miserable jobs. Can you imagine? Were they thinking only of themselves again, and not about the company?

Well, you know what the bosses said to that silly idea. The replied with words like (but perhaps not exactly the same as): You are pulling my leg! We can't have you slacking off like that! We need that production! We'll go broke! You'll all lose your jobs! (Their intentions are only altruistic, as you can plainly see.)

And of course the workers' reaction was just as typical: We don't care! (heh heh.) We want the weekend off!

So over time, and after lots of strikes and lost pay and lost production, the bosses grudgingly gave in and let the workers have some time off.

And did the companies go broke? They did not.

So the unionists needed to try something else. We want a paid vacation! they said. (This is really pushing things, you know.)

The bosses rolled their eyes back into their heads and couldn't believe their ears. Once again, they responded with sensible economic arguments about how they could not possibly afford to pay a worker not to work because—and this is what the unionists were waiting to hear—they'd go broke

and everyone would lose their job.

Well, you already know what happened. More strikes, more arguments, and finally the bosses gave the workers paid vacations. And still they did not go broke.

But workers, you know, are never satisfied. Give them an inch and they'll take a mile. It wasn't good enough to have the children out of the mines. It wasn't enough to let them have the weekend off. (And Christmas, too!) Nooooo. . . . And now to pay them not to work, well, it was unbelievable, but somehow the companies kept on making profits and the bosses kept on getting richer and richer.

Still unhappy that they hadn't ruined the boss, the unionists had to scratch their heads to think up more schemes. Someone came up with the idea—get this—of company-paid pensions. That ought to do it, because now the workers were not only going to be paid not to work, they were actually going to be paid never to come back to work! It was diabolical.

And sure enough, the bosses could see a few good reasons why they should not do this, most of them having to do with the fact that if they did, they'd go broke and everyone would lose their job. You must understand by now that the bosses were not looking to line their own pockets, pay for their yachts or country homes, or their extravagant lifestyles. No siree. They just didn't want everyone to be out of work.

Well, just to show you how unsuccessful these unions were, they not only won company-paid pensions for their workers, they

also won paid maternity leave, all kinds of health and safety protections, shift premiums and equal pay. Some unions won company-paid dental coverage, childcare provisions, shorter work hours, reasonably good job security, cost-of-living allowances, paid education leave, and more.

In fact, with the solidarity of its workers, every single union down through history has won better wages, better benefits and, to sum it up, a better, more decent lifestyle for its members. And still the bosses have not gone broke. Imagine it: to win all these benefits and rights for workers and not drive the boss into the ground.

You just have to keep on trying. But whatever's next, you know the bosses can't afford it, or they'll go broke and you'll all lose your jobs.

Reprinted with permission from *Our Times*, Canada's independent labor magazine. The magazine can be visited at www.ourtimes.web.net

By TNG Convention action, letters to the editor 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: February 4.)

'No experience preferred'

Thomson starts training its own reporters—for \$5.35 an hour

As North American journalism sprints to keep up with the workaday consequences of audience fragmentation, corporate concentration, the internet and the commodification of news, the oldest media of all—print—may be foreshadowing the shape of things to come.

In the U.S. newsrooms of the Thomson newspaper group, a new type of reporter is hitting the beat. The company has been advertising in its own newspapers for local writers, "no experience preferred." The would-be reporters instead will receive 12 weeks of training at a school created and run by Thomson. The company hopes that by taking residents from the communities it covers and training them, it can boost readership and create journalists dedicated to local news. Twenty such reporters started work at their home town papers in mid-September.

"These people are going to be taught to do things differently," says Jim Jennings, vice president and editorial director of Thomson Newspapers, based in Stamford, Conn. "We are going to change the business." The train-

ing program, based in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, is modeled after England's Trinity editorial training center, which Thomson has run for more than 20 years.

But Thomson's new model j-school is unique to North American journalism. Some critics say 12 weeks of training may not be enough to instill the ethics of the business. "I hope they have thought through how long it can take for somebody to understand the culture of journalism, which has some very important and fundamental values about what constitutes news," says Terry Hynes, president of the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication.

"We want people committed to community journalism and really writing about their communities," says Lou Ziegler, who directs the training program, known as Reader inc. He says the company wants people with little or no journalism experience, people like U.S. Army veteran Frank Scotello of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. The retired lieutenant-colonel has been a college English professor and a published poet but said he has always been drawn to journalism.

"When I was in the fifth grade, I started a school newspaper. I guess it is a long, unfulfilled romantic notion of being in the press," says Scotello, who is Thomson's first class of recruits. All but two have college degrees and nine have graduate degrees. Thomson's minimum requirement was a high school education and passage of a test on current events, culture, history, people and writing skills. Each student is paid \$5.35 an hour and makes a commitment to work at his or her home-town newspaper for at least 21 months, after which he or she will receive a \$2,000 bonus.

What the school teaches about community journalism and marketing may be the key to whether it can produce journalists who fulfill their traditional role as watchdogs of the community, according to James Naughton, president of the Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg, Fla. "If it means these are bright, creative and enterprising people willing to challenge authority on behalf of citizens, no harm done. If it means they are going to be compliant, easy to manage, unresistant, low paid, then that is a problem."

Jennings, who observes that Thomson is investing \$3.3 million in training programs for new recruits as well as for its own experienced reporters, says it's wrong to infer that Thomson is trying to obtain reporters "on the cheap."

Travis Mayfield, editor of the Thomson-owned Tribune Star in Terre Haute, Ind., says he looks to the new recruiting program as a way to staff his newspaper with people who know the town's culture and people. His newest hire, Peter Ciancone, is a 43-year-old college history professor from Terre Haute. A reporter's job paying about \$26,000 a year is waiting for him once he completes the training program. "This is an opportunity to do something that is intellectual, challenging, around people and gives me a chance to write, which I do anyway," Ciancone says. "Now they are going to pay me for it."

Adapted from a slightly longer article published in the November issue of Scan, official magazine of the Canadian Media Guild.

"You can't spell 'cheap' without the 'AP' "

Continued from page 1

Agence France-Presse covers 52 employees represented by a unit of the Washington-Baltimore Guild. Although the unit's bargaining committee met with management for the first time Sept. 30, relatively few sessions were scheduled prior to the Dec. 6 strike vote—after which the pace picked up considerably. Additional pressure was brought to bear with the start of a media campaign Dec. 22, when the local ran a large ad in The Washington Post under the headline, "This Christmas, Scrooge has a French accent." The ad emphasized that for years AFP "has treated its American employees as second-class citizens, offering lower wages and fewer benefits than those enjoyed by their Paris-hired counterparts."

In the end, the two sides agreed on a two-year contract that includes a 2.4% wage increase in the first year, 2.6% in the second year and lump-sum payments of \$300 each year. Other gains include a fifth personal holiday; extension of medical coverage to

domestic partners "who are precluded by law from marrying;" and 80% reimbursement for participants in recognized smoking cessation programs. The contract also includes a new provision for unpaid sabbaticals of up to one year after every seven years of service.

Guild concessions include new language acknowledging AFP's right to contract out work "consistent with past practice" and increased flexibility for AFP to use part-timers.

At AP, meanwhile, where the wire service terminated the contract Dec. 14, the outlook is less sunny. Negotiations started Oct. 28 amid Guild expectations that significant wage hikes would be forthcoming, but management's top offer has been a 5.5% increase over two years—an amount union negotiators dismiss as unacceptable, given the average 5.3% increase in salaries for experienced newspaper reporters in just the past year. AP salaries, meanwhile, rose less than 5% in the past two years combined.

The wire service also is trying to eliminate overtime pay for U.S.-based reporters sent overseas and wants to reduce severance-pay protection.

As noted in a New York Post article, quoting unnamed AP reporters, "You can't spell 'cheap' without the 'AP'."

Some progress was reported after a bargaining session Jan. 10—the day after the byline strike was concluded—including tentative agreements covering health and safety, individual bargaining, life insurance, union dues check-off, temporary employees and a couple of other items. Perhaps most significantly, the wire service agreed to expand language on repetitive strain injuries to include the problems encountered by photographers and other staffers who lug heavy equipment as a regular part of their duties.

But AP also is insisting on creating a new category of employees who would have few benefits and scant job protection, and it wants the right to terminate employees who have been on disability for two or more

years. It still is demanding concessions on dismissal pay and sick leave. And thus far it has ignored union proposals for improved health and pension benefits. Guild members are especially irate that AP picks up 95% of health care premiums for managers and technicians, but only 90% of the tab for rank-and-filers—and 80% for two-person and family coverage.

One measure of how protracted the struggle may become should be seen Jan. 18, when Guild negotiators will make a new, comprehensive contract offer that includes their economic proposal. But no one is sanguine. "There's not much motion," said committee chair Martha Hodel after the Jan. 10 session. "The issues that are most distasteful to us are still hanging out there, and the membership is quite upset."

"The byline strike was extremely successful," she added, "and we think the company should take note of that. It's not dealing with just a handful of Guild goons at the bargaining table."

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DAYBOOK

TNG-CWA new officers' training, Feb. 18-21, George Meany Center

New England District Council, Feb. 26-27, Fall River, MA

Western District Council, Feb. 26-27, Monterey, CA

Knight-Ridder Council, March 3-5, Twin Cities

Working Women Conference 2000, March 11-12, Chicago

CWA National Civil Rights & Equity Conference, March 23-26, Las Vegas

TNG Canada Council, April 15-16, Victoria, BC

TNG-CWA Executive Council, April 29-May 3, Washington

Mid-Atlantic District Council, May 6-7, location TBA

Joint TNG-AAUP meeting, June 10-11, Washington

FROM THE MORGUE

Fifty years ago this month:

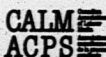
The American Newspaper Guild seeks certification as collective bargaining agent for all editorial employees of Canadian Press, Canada's counterpart to the Associated Press. . . . New York's second oldest newspaper, the Sun, is sold to Scripps-Howard and merged with the World-Telegram, throwing 1,300 employees—represented by their own, "independent" unions—out of work. . . . Herb Caen jumps ship after nearly 14 years as a columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle, switching to the Examiner.

Twenty-five years ago this month:

Contract settlements end a seven-week strike and lockout at the Cleveland Plain Dealer and Cleveland Press and an eight-week walk-out at the Wilkes-Barre Times-Leader, but a nine-week strike against the Great Falls Tribune collapses. . . . A former CIA agent tells New York Times reporter Seymour Hersh the agency's operatives frequently posed as reporters while monitoring antiwar activists. . . . A former Guild member and UPI reporter, Betty Southard Murphy, is the first woman ever appointed to the National Labor Relations Board.

Ten years ago this month:

The Broun Award is won by two reporters at the San Jose Mercury News for their expose of California's "untrained, unethical and unskilled" court reporters—a group that has since become both more professional and a TNG-CWA local. . . . The New York Daily News sets up a "strikebreaker newsroom" in Secaucus, New Jersey as contract talks begin.



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