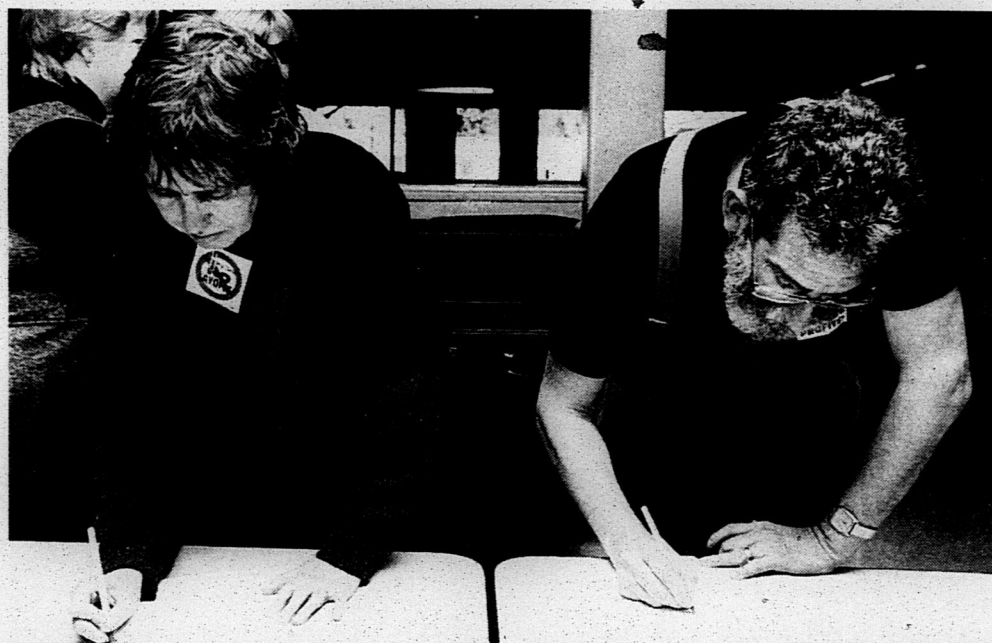


THE GUILD Reporter

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When unions
and the press
collide
page 8



Rebecca Parr and Carl Neiburger sign a petition seeking a no-layoff guarantee at a "Take 5 at 5" event in the San Jose Mercury News cafeteria; their t-shirts—a lowercase 'j' in red on a black

background—pay tribute to resigned publisher Jay Harris. Below, graphic artist Silas Fong, compositor Jim Harper and Harper's computer sport "people before profits" stickers.



JOAN BAZAR/SAN JOSE GUILD

As layoff toll mounts, KR workers rally

NY Times, Dow Jones also start cutting

As Knight Ridder's budget-cutters began pink-slipping dozens of union-represented employees nationwide, Guild members at Knight Ridder newspapers wrote letters of protest, held solidarity actions April 3 and prepared for a showdown at the company's April 23 shareholders' meeting.

The protests, coordinated through the TNG-CWA Knight Ridder Council, followed last month's high-profile resignation of Jay Harris as publisher of the San Jose Mercury News. Although company officials subsequently said the Mercury News reporting staff would not be cut, as of April 17 at least 19 of the newspaper's Guild members had been laid off; new positions at the newspaper had been found for only three.

The Mercury News also laid off 30 to 35 of the paper's 186 Teamsters-represented circulation drivers.

(Other newspaper companies also began announcing sizeable payroll cuts. Dow Jones Chairman Peter Kann sent a memo to all employees urging a proper "perspective" on that company's dismissal of 202 of their co-workers, pointing out that the company has a total workforce of more than 8,000. Plus, he added,

See pages 4-5 for text of Jay Harris' speech explaining why he quit, plus a sample of comments from KR employees about the cuts they're facing—or have suffered already.

most of the company's savings are coming not from personnel reductions but from other measures, such as reduced newsprint consumption—another way of saying the Wall Street Journal is running fewer ads these days.

(The New York Times, meanwhile, said it will make an unspecified number of staff cuts through buyouts and layoffs. Company officials have been meeting with the New York Guild to negotiate terms of a buyout plan; under the Guild contract, all regular full-time and part-time employees who worked at the Times as of Sept. 11, 1997 can't be dismissed as a result of a reduction in staff, automation or subcontracting before March 30, 2003.)

Guild members who have been laid off at the Mercury News include marketing, advertising, classified sales, magazine produc-

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TNG gains first Chinese-speaking unit

By Stephanie Moore
N. Calif. Media Workers Guild

At the Chinese Daily News in Los Angeles, long hours and unquestioning loyalty were considered basic job requirements. Employees were expected to accept low pay and unreasonable company policies in exchange for the privilege of working. "We're not servants!" many employees of the Chinese-language daily lamented

when they started organizing last fall.

On March 20 they took a decisive first step to ensure they're not, voting 78-63 for representation by The Newspaper Guild-CWA, Local 39521. Although the employer has filed objections to delay certification, the vote is the first time employees of a Chinese-language media company in the United States have become unionized.

"This worker-initiated cam-

paign is a milestone in the growing movement of Asian immigrant workers refusing to accept inferior working conditions and treatment simply because English is not their first language," said Quynh Nguyen, National Organizing Director for the AFL-CIO Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance. "Ethnic media workers in particular have recognized the potential of unionization."

The CDN is one of the largest

Asian-language newspapers in North America, with branches in San Francisco, New York, Toronto and Ontario, as well as distribution centers in several other cities. The CDN is known in Chinese as the World Journal; its parent company is based in Taiwan. Its Los Angeles-based workers, primarily Mandarin-speaking immigrants from Taiwan and China, will be in a wall-to-wall unit that covers all departments, from editorial to ad

sales to production and a book wholesale division.

By some estimates, "ethnic" media have grown more than 200% over the last decade, as the multilingual population in the United States has burgeoned. But while many foreign-language media companies are at least as profitable as their English-language counterparts, their employees are paid significantly less and labor under inferior conditions.

(The Newspaper Guild already represents workers in Yiddish- and Spanish-language publications, and NABET-CWA represents Spanish-language TV stations and a Korean-language radio station. And employees in the ad sales department of the World Journal's

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Byline strike challenges loss of pension package

When Canada-based Hollinger International bought The Herald News in Joliet, IL last December in an asset sale, it was not legally bound by any contracts negotiated by seller Copley Press Inc. But as part of its purchase agreement, Hollinger did agree to honor virtually all of the terms Copley had negotiated with the Chicago Newspaper Guild less than a year earlier—all, that is, except for the employee pension program and an employer 401(k) match.

That may have assuaged Copley's corporate conscience, but it didn't sit well with employees. "We negotiated these benefits in good faith over an eight-month period with Copley," says Herald News reporter and unit chairman Charles B. Pelkie. "Then Hollinger walks in the door and tells its new employees that they really aren't worth that much. That doesn't fly with this union."

Now the union, which has represented the newspaper's editorial staff for the past 40 years, is fighting back with a byline strike that Jerry Minkinen, executive director of the Chicago Newspaper Guild, says has "virtually 100%" support. And it's taken its campaign public, reaching out to other unions to gather community support for a restoration of employees' retirement benefits.

Hollinger, however, has taken a hard line, issuing

a "take it or leave it" offer earlier this month: sign off on a contract that excludes the retirement package, it told Guild leaders, or see the company suspend dues check-off and the union security provisions it had been honoring under the terms of its agreement with Copley.

When the Guild refused the unilateral offer, Hollinger followed through on its promise. The Guild countered with a grievance, filed April 16, in which it asked for a company response by April 20 or it would request an arbitration panel.

"I don't know that any of it's legal," Minkinen said of Hollinger's unilateral suspension of dues check-off and union security, "but I guess we're going to find out."

Hollinger has bought several newspapers in the Chicago area in recent months, followed by extensive layoffs of non-union workers, so its refusal to maintain retirement benefits for unionized employees wasn't entirely surprising. But one of its non-union newspapers is competing with the Herald News, suggesting to Minkinen that Hollinger might be motivated by something more than financial considerations.

"Either the bottom-line finances aren't as bad as Hollinger wants us to believe, or the company is simply attempting to muscle out the union," he concludes. "Either way, we're ready to fight."

Canadians settle two wire service contracts—sort of

Negotiators for the Canadian Media Guild reached contract agreements in recent weeks with that country's two major wire services—or so they thought, until Reuters' lawyers in New York got their hands on the proposed deal. Now a ratification vote, originally scheduled for April 4, is on hold pending further review.

A happier outcome seems in the works at Canadian Press-Broadcast News, where a three-year agreement was reached in record time April 11. Talks were conducted "in an atmosphere of unprecedented cooperation on both sides," said a Guild spokesperson. "There is another way to

do business, and this is it."

The new pact includes a salary increase of 3% retroactive to Jan. 1, with additional increases of 2% next year and 2.75% in 2003, plus a 2% signing bonus for all employees on staff since 2000. It also includes reclassification of four jobs, resulting in significant pay increases; an increase in the per diem to \$50, from \$32; and upgrades in the dental plan. The contract also resolves a long-standing dispute about pay for out-of-town assignments.

CP-BN also agreed to add an additional full-time employee to its French-language operation in Montreal and to return four technicians, who had been laid off in

1995 and who had been working under a separate part-time agreement, to full-time permanent status.

Meanwhile, the tentative four-year contract with Reuters Canada Ltd. calls for a wage increase of 3.2% retroactive to Jan. 1, plus additional increases of 2.5% in each of the next three years; Reuters withdrew its proposal for "pay for performance." The agreement also increases the kilometer allowance to 36 cents, from 31.5 cents, and amends maternity and paternity leave provisions to conform to recent changes in the Canada Labour Code. It also includes new language on vacations, personal days, time off in lieu and relocation expenses "to reflect current practice."

April 4 had been set as the date for a Guild meeting and ratification vote, but the company's negotiators apparently didn't obtain a legal review before signing off on the agreement. A Guild spokesman said the union is discussing some changes requested by Reuters' attorneys.

Union Local Representative

The Minnesota Newspaper Guild/Typographical Union is accepting resumes for the position of Local Representative, the number two position in this union of about 1,100 active members.

Experience in organizing, contract bargaining, grievances and arbitrations required. Desk-top publishing, word processing and database computer program work preferred.

Prefer applicants with experience working for newspaper industry unions.

Send resumes by April 30 to:

John M. Sweeney, Executive Officer
Minnesota Newspaper Guild/Typographical Union
2855 Anthony Lane S., Suite 110
St. Anthony, MN 55418

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In brief...

Wheeling, dealing in New England

The Newspaper Guild of Greater Boston and the parent corporation of New England Construction News have reached an agreement that allows the company to permanently close its Rockland, MA office June 1. Three full-time and three part-time employees will receive five weeks' severance for each year of service and will get paid health insurance during the severance period. The deal also includes a two-year extension of the current contract with two 3.5% raises, retroactive to Jan. 14, at the company's other locations; and requires any new offices opened within the Greater Boston area to become part of the current bargaining unit. Any other offices opened in New England states will be covered by a Verizon style card check/neutrality agreement.

tions that include urine and handwriting analyses, they pushed the envelope a bit too far last June when they tried to give Guild-protected editorial employees the Myers-Briggs Personality Test. The resulting Guild complaint led to NLRB charges of direct dealing and refusal to bargain, but a hearing scheduled for March 8 has been postponed until summer.

We lose one...

A hotly contested organizing campaign at the Paxton-owned Jonesboro Sun in Arkansas—catalyzed by the company's broken promise to install air conditioning in the mailroom—ended in defeat for pro-union forces. The April 15 election, in which representation by TNG-CWA was voted down, 23-65, followed weeks of anti-union campaigning by Paxton's hired guns, the notorious law firm of King & Ballou.

Teamsters win at Register-Guard

A federal administrative judge has ruled that 60 workers in The Register-Guard's distribution center should be represented by the Teamsters and has directed the Eugene, OR publisher to negotiate with the union. The unusual order was based on the judge's finding that the newspaper repeatedly broke the law last year in trying to prevent its employees from joining the union. But the newspaper has said it will appeal, a process that could take years—during which it may ignore the order.

Guild pension fund still flying high

Wall Street's bubble may have burst last year, but the TNG International Pension Fund is still flying high, thanks to a fundamental diversification strategy. The fund's investment earnings of \$4.7 million, offset by \$1.3 million in net withdrawals, marked an overall gain of 7.2%; its equity segment advanced 2%—compared with a 9.1% loss posted by the S&P 500 Index—while its bond portfolio jumped 13.8% and its real estate segment gained a healthy 12.3%.

Anything but plain dealing in Ohio

Oh, those wacky folks at the Cleveland Plain Dealer: overly fond of lengthy job applica-

... and win one

The organizing news out of Minneapolis was in the pink, as employees of Lavender magazine voted 9-0 for TNG-CWA representation. The unit was organized by Martin Demgen, of the Minnesota Newspaper Guild/Typographical Union, who was hired Jan. 2 under a joint funding program with the CWA organizing department.

Local One elects

Richard Peery of the Plain Dealer unit of the Northeast Ohio Guild has been re-elected as the local's president. Also elected were Yvonne Webb, Beacon Journal unit, as first vice president; Edd Pritchard, Repository unit, second vice president; Bill Canterbury, Beacon Journal unit, third vice president; Ron Rutti, Plain Dealer unit, fourth vice president; and Zach Schiller, Plain Dealer unit, treasurer.

New York's Front Page wins award

Donna Fowler, editor of the Newspaper Guild of New York's newspaper, is the recipient of the Metro New York Labor Communications Council's prestigious Mary Heaton Vorse award for 2000. Her winning story was "Emotions High on Election Day." The award is the only one given to an individual rather than a publication and will be presented at the Metro Council convention May 4.

Layoffs mount, so do protests

Continued from page 1

tion and computer employees. In several instances, however, the company is contending that the dismissals are not economic layoffs but "for good and sufficient cause"—a claim that enables it to circumvent various contractual obligations, including placing dismissed employees on a rehire list and extending their health insurance coverage.

"The Guild will fight the company's blatant disregard for our contract with every legal tool at our disposal," promised Luther Jackson, administrative officer for the San Jose Guild. Meanwhile, the local is urging its members to work to rule by taking full lunch breaks, taking state-mandated breaks in the morning and afternoon and going home at shift's end.

"If we donate our time to the Mercury News, that tells the company that it can get the work done with fewer people, thus encouraging the current layoff strategy," Jackson explained.

Other Knight Ridder papers proved no less adept at dealing from the bottom of the deck. At the Akron Beacon Journal, where eight Guild members were slated for layoffs, eight others—equating six full-time equivalent positions—volunteered to resign to save most of their co-workers' jobs. But while such a substitution is covered under the Guild contract, management accepted the resignations—then laid-off the original eight employees anyway.

"The voluntary resignations should have reduced the number of layoffs—but instead, we see 16 people no longer there, and of course the employer just pocketed the extra payroll savings," said Hannah Jo Rayl, executive secretary of the Northeast Ohio Guild. Two grievances over the incident have been moved to arbitration by the local, which also filed a charge with the NLRB.

Other Knight Ridder layoffs have included three newsroom positions at the Grand Forks Herald, which has reduced 12 positions overall. Most newspapers in the chain have implement-

ed hiring freezes, and some have significantly reduced overall staffing through attrition: at the Monterey County Herald, for example, the number of Guild positions has dropped from 158 to 130 over the past three years.

The flurry of job cuts, prompted by a much publicized corporate effort to maintain—or improve—profit margins in a softening ad market, has infuriated many Knight Ridder employees. A nationwide solidarity event April 3 was observed at nearly a dozen newspapers, with participants wearing "People Before Profits" stickers and distributing flyers. Mercury News employees held a mass break, "Take 5 at 5," as did Beacon Journal employees, who stood silently by their desks.

A letter signed by 29 staffers, who contributed to the Beacon Journal's four Pulitzer Prizes, warning of the "devastating impact" of the job cuts on the paper, received wide notice—although no response from corporate headquarters. Guild members at the Duluth News-Tribune published a special newsletter on the issue and distributed copies of Jay Harris' resignation letter.

And, in a further show of solidarity, Guild members at the Cleveland Plain Dealer collected \$3,200 for the layoff assistance fund in Akron.

P. Anthony Ridder
Chair, CEO; Knight-Ridder
In 2000, Ridder got \$5,811,814 in total compensation from Knight-Ridder. He has \$8,842,056 in unexercised stock options from previous years.

Russell T Lewis
CEO, President; N.Y. Times
In 2000, Lewis got \$9,329,053 in total compensation from the New York Times. He has \$1,559,974 in unexercised stock options from previous years.

Peter R. Kann
Chairman, CEO; Dow Jones
In 2000, Kann got \$6,413,400 in total compensation from Dow Jones. He took home \$602,007 in stock option exercises from prior grants. And he has \$3,501,074 in unexercised stock options from previous years.



Bill Chih Ming Sheu and Jerry Lee explain to the press how they unionized.

Breaching a Chinese wall

Continued from page 1

office in New York joined the CWA after winning a March 29 representation election.)

Workers at the CDN contacted TNG late last summer, after the company president threatened a wage freeze and said he wanted employees to sign a document confirming they were "at-will" employees. The majority of CDN employees had dedicated more than 10 years of service to the company, with many being with the newspaper since its founding, 25 years ago. Now, faced with the possibility of imminent dismissal, they quickly gathered authorizations and filed for representation Oct. 26—with 95% of the 152 employees signing cards.

"Culturally, the employer is perceived as a father who takes care of you," said Llien-Yi Wang, reporter and organizing committee member at the CDN, explaining the large social and psychological hurdle organizers had to surmount. "But there is a growing awareness in the Asian community that we have rights and we can exercise them."

Within five days of the filing, Taipei management removed the News' president and replaced her with Min Shen Su, former president of the San Francisco CDN. Its attorneys shifted into stall mode, requesting hearings that dragged on for more than three months as they alleged that every fifth employee was a supervisor and that the newspaper should be divided into seven bargaining units.

Meanwhile, the company also retained union-busting consultant Larry Wong and started exerting direct pressure on the employees; through mass captive meetings and one-on-one anti-union meetings between employees and senior managers. Anti-union materials were cranked out with regularity. Employees lamented that their company was throwing hundreds of thousands of dollars down the drain on attorneys and consultants.

But the CDN organizing committee had developed a communication and support network among the employees that sustained the "union yes" movement to the election. A union newsletter reached CDN employees every 10 days, with some departments posting it on the wall. The newsletter was a powerful educational tool, as the vast majority of workers had little knowledge of what a union is and does. When the election date was finally set for early March, workers became more public at the workplace, with some departments wearing "yes" buttons.

The workers also counted among their supporters Congresswoman Hilda Solis, Senator Gloria Romero and Monterey Park Councilwoman Judy Chu, all of whom wrote letters to the CDN president requesting that he respect the workers' right to an election free of intimidation. As the election neared, letters of support came in from CWA President Morton Bahr, TNG President Linda Foley and TNG locals around the country, giving a great boost to the workers' morale.

The voting began March 19 and more than 95% of the CDN employees went to the polls. As the votes were counted March 20, organizers cringed at each "no" vote and breathed relief at each "yes." When the count became official at 2 a.m. on March 20, workers ran to spread the news throughout the building and cell phones began ringing with other supporters anxious to know the results. Although the final vote was closer than expected, the organizers count this as a great victory and believe only a handful of the employees have any philosophical opposition to unions.

"We know that some of our fellow workers simply got scared and confused. As we go forward to bargaining, we will have an opportunity to show everyone what unions are really about: participation, rights, and an equal voice," said organizer Jerry Lee. "It feels so good to win."

Per capita increases

This is official notice that the TNG-CWA per capita on May dues, payable by Locals to TNG-CWA on or before June 15, 2001, will be \$16.50. (Combined with the 50-cent CWA Defense Fund payment, the total amount due from locals per member, per month will be \$17.)

The CWA Defense Fund payment of 50 cents per member, per month, is payable on the following classifications: (1) regular full-time; (7) regular less-than-full-time; (5) at-large full-time; (H) at-large less-than-full-time; (8) paid leave full; (F) agency fee full-time; and, (G) agency fee less-than-full-time.

The increase in the annual per capita rate is 42 cents per month from the previous rate of \$16.08, which has been in effect since May 1, 2000. The per capita payable on behalf of employed members

whose dues are less than \$16.50 per month is \$6.60 (\$7.10 with the CWA Defense Fund payment). By operation of the per capita formula in the Constitution, the increase in the average top reporter minimum in Guild contracts with daily newspapers is translated into a percentage increase in the monthly per capita payable by Locals to TNG-CWA.

The average top reporter minimum in Guild contracts with daily newspapers on April 1, 2001, was \$850.54, an increase of \$21.27, or 2.57% over the \$829.27 average top minimum on the same date a year ago. The 42-cent per month increase in the per capita rate, from \$16.08 to \$16.50, is an increase of 2.61%. The formula for computing the monthly per capita requires averaging of top reporter minimums in all contracts with newspapers published at least five days per week. On April 1 of this year, there

were 91 such contracts.

The statistics show that TNG-CWA Locals have 89 daily newspaper contracts with top reporter minimums at or above \$500 a week. The number at or above \$600 is 79; of these, 69 are \$700 or over, 53 are over \$800, 33 are over \$900, 23 are \$1000 or over, and 10 are \$1100 or more.

The TNG-CWA Constitution provides that per capita payable on behalf of regular members employed full time, and other employees covered by a TNG-CWA contract that requires them to pay an agency, or similar fee equivalent to dues, shall be recalculated each year in April. Applying the formula outlined in Article XVIII, Section 7, TNG multiplied the average top reporter minimum of \$850.54 by .01939, producing a figure of \$16.4921 which, rounded up to the next cent, produces \$16.50, 42 cents over the present per capita of \$16.08.

Harris: 'It's easier to rock the

Three weeks ago today, Mercury News and Knight Ridder executives met to discuss how to respond to the sharp decline in the newspaper's ad revenues and how best to achieve the parent company's goals for the year. I resigned the following Monday.

What troubled me most about the meeting was its myopic focus on numbers. It wasn't the cutting so much. I have cut and forced others to over many years. I was taught how to do so by the best on both sides of the table.

What troubled me—something that had never happened before in all my years in the company—was that little or no attention was paid to the consequences of achieving “the number.” There was virtually no discussion of the damage that would be done to the quality and aspirations of the Mercury News as a journalistic endeavor or to its ability to fulfill its responsibilities to the community. As importantly, scant attention was paid to the damage that would be done to our ability to compete and grow the business.

In a written budget overview I gave the day before the meeting, I argued that while we could achieve the near-term savings being sought, those savings would be “more than offset by a long-term diminution of the vitality and potential profitability of Knight Ridder's Bay Area franchise.” But despite my best efforts in the letter and in the meeting the next day, they could not or would not hear the warning.

In reflecting on my last days at the helm of the Mercury News, I was drawn to something my predecessor as publisher, Larry Jinks, had given me on January 28, 1994—his last day in the office as publisher. For those of you who don't know him, Larry was a distinguished editor who led the Miami Herald and the Mercury News. Jim Batten chose him to be senior vice president for news for Knight Ridder. And most important to this story, he had steered the Mercury News safely through the last deep Silicon Valley recession in the early '90s.

On his last day in the office, when he was turning the stewardship responsibility for the newspaper he loved over to me, he gave me a copy of what I think was an excerpt from a book. He said it contained an important insight to keep in mind in my new job. I kept it in my desk over the years. The excerpt described what social scientist Daniel Yankelovich dubbed the “McNamara fallacy”:

“The first step is to measure whatever can be easily measured. That is okay as far as it goes. The second step is to disregard that which can't be measured or give it an arbitrary quantitative value. This is artificial and misleading. The third step is to presume that what can't be measured easily really isn't very important. This is blindness. The fourth step is to say that what can't be easily measured doesn't exist. This is suicide.”

Few events have angered as many Guild members as Knight Ridder's recent cost-cutting maneuvers—the brunt of which are borne by employees—despite its ongoing profitability. Here are two views of such number crunching.

Starting at left are excerpts of the speech delivered by Jay Harris at the April 6 annual meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. Harris resigned as publisher of the San Jose Mercury News for reasons he makes abundantly clear—reasons The Newspaper Guild-CWA has been raising for some time.

At bottom is a sampling of commentary from Knight Ridder employees themselves.

In that Friday budget meeting seven years later, our discussions were focused on getting to a number—and essentially blind to all else. It was like watching a loved-one commit suicide—unintentionally.

I woke up Saturday morning about 3 a.m. I had a knot in my stomach and was deeply troubled. While I was asleep the stark reality of what had happened and what seemed to lie inevitably ahead had worked its way to the front of my brain. Over the next several hours the idea came together in my mind that resigning was the only way to slow things down, to possibly get corporate to open their eyes to what was in prospect.

Moreover, I had decided that resigning was the right thing for me to do. I confronted the fact that continuing negotiation and compromise was little more than slow and silent surrender. Like many others, I had become an unacknowledged co-conspirator in something I knew not to be a good thing, but didn't know how to stop.

Later that morning, after the sun came up, I talked the matter over with my wife Christine. We agreed that resigning was the right step and that we would strike out on a new path together. Christine pointed to an additional benefit: we would no longer have to pay the heavy toll the on-again off-again struggle over budgets and values was taking on the family and me.

Saturday afternoon I canceled the Sunday conference call to discuss next steps on the budget. I now had a new plan for the scheduled resumption of budget talks Monday with corporate. I set to work on writing my letter of resignation, in which I laid out my reasoning and my suggestions for a more appropriate approach to the budget challenges and company goals.

The next morning I started my farewell note to the employees of the Mercury News. That was the tough one. I was saying farewell to my Mercury News family, to a dream, and to the plan I had to be publisher of (that) paper for the balance of my career.

On Sunday afternoon Christine and I told the kids. My oldest daughter, Jamarah, who hates surprises, cried and eventually went to her room to work it through. After the family discussion I went back to work polishing the letters.

I didn't see Jamarah again that day. So the next morning, before leaving for work, I went upstairs to wake her for

school. She was awake but still in bed. I sat down on the bed next to her and said, “Sometimes you have to sit at the front of the bus.”

She smiled and said, “I understand, Daddy.”

I knew then that everything would be all right.

On Monday at 1:30 I submitted my resignation. I resigned because of a

fundamental disagreement over business strategy and an equally fundamental disagreement over whether the company's values and priorities had been changing over the years. I want to emphasize here that I did not resign solely because of newsroom-related concerns, although it is true that the very real possibility of deep cuts in news staff and newshole concerned me greatly. I resigned because I was concerned about damage to the whole of the paper—the business side as well as the news side—and about a lessening of our ability to fulfill our myriad responsibilities to the community.

Before going to corporate to submit my resignation I burned my bridges behind me. I arranged for my farewell message to the staff to be sent to “ALL” by e-mail while I was at Knight Ridder. There would be no turning back, no conversation leading to compromise.

I had lived as long as I should or could with a slowly widening gap between creed and deed. Had I continued down the same path, what faced me was the utter frustration of disassembling something I'd thrown my life into building up, and the unavoidable violation of the sense of trust and family, of shared aspirations and shared destiny that I'd worked to build over the years. I had watched a long train of abuses against the traditions and core values of a great profession and a great company. I had witnessed enough.

A Knight Ridder colleague suggested the other day that I “take the high road” in my talk today. I believe I am. What I did on March 19 and the story I tell you today is not an act of betrayal. It is an act of fidelity to the values of my profession and the best traditions of Knight Ridder. The first statement of company values issued during my years with Knight Ridder contained these words:

“Our enterprise is both a business and a public trust.”

As I said in my letter of resignation, I worried that in Knight Ridder greater priority was increasingly given to the business aspects of the enterprise than was given to fulfilling our “public trust.”

It was the conviction that newspapers are a public trust that brought me to Knight Ridder in 1985. I understood then and understand even better today that a good newspaper and a good business go hand in hand. Indeed, without a good business it would be impossible for a newspaper to do good journalism over the long haul.

But at some point one comes to ask what is meant by a good business. What is good enough in terms of profitabil-

Tony Ridder hears it from the troops . . .

Thanks for a really swell time

Dear Mr. Ridder,

I wanted to write and tell you what a fine time I've had working for the Akron Beacon Journal. (That's a newspaper your company owns in Northeast Ohio.) I've only worked here since last June, but I've had an opportunity to uncover plenty of great stories, and put them into what I consider the best newspaper in Ohio. (Ohio is a state in the Midwest.) All the while, I've been able to work with the most talented group of writers and reporters with whom I've ever had the privilege to associate. It's been very inspiring—in fact, my desk is only about 20 feet from John S. Knight's old typewriter, which is now kept behind glass.

Of course, you're cutting these fine people off at the knees. How do you expect the dedicated and loyal reporters at the Beacon Journal to keep putting out a quality paper when you're eliminating nearly a quarter of the reporting staff? You faceless corporate hacks take a break from your golf game long enough to scream that circulation must stay

up, but then you order arbitrary budget cuts that force the elimination of entire sections of the Sunday paper. And when that's not enough, you order layoffs that eliminate the very employees who have helped keep circulation from falling. Seriously, the kid who changes the oil in my car could run Knight Ridder with more foresight than you.

I brought my wife and two children to Akron—a thousand miles from our native Florida, where I had a secure job and other offers—to work at the Beacon Journal. The editors here were able to attract me with the excellent reputation they and John S. Knight had built over a period of decades. In just a few months, you've managed to wreck everything they built. How many top-notch reporters will choose to move to Akron, if they would face the prospect of working at an understaffed, demoralized newspaper?

Maybe I should have seen this coming. After all, it wasn't that long ago that Knight Ridder budget cuts gutted the Miami Herald. Remember what happened then? There was a mass exodus of talented reporters, and the Herald is a shadow of its former self.

Don't worry about me; I'll land on my feet. I don't regret coming here, even though I've been laid off now. In fact, my only regret

is that you haven't come to visit the Beacon Journal. I would have loved to piss on your shoes.

—Mark Schlueb, former staff writer, Akron Beacon Journal

Staff morale? It's in the crapper

Akron Beacon Journal staffers' letter to Knight Ridder CEO Tony Ridder

Dear Tony:

Your decision to hold the Akron Beacon Journal to a nearly impossible profit margin—and to force the paper to lay off newsroom employees in early April—is of great concern to us.

While we are aware of declining advertising revenue throughout the newspaper industry, we would like you to be aware of the devastating impact these layoffs will have on the Beacon Journal and its readers.

Anticipation of the layoffs already has sunk newsroom morale. The 10 reporters, photographers and graphic artists contributed an incredible body of work to the paper (see enclosed portfolio of their work).

They also are part of the Beacon Journal family, a close family that works hard 365 days a year to produce one of the best regional papers in the nation.

This hard work has resulted in four Pulitzer prizes, the most of any paper of our size in the U.S. In the Knight Ridder chain, only the much larger Philadelphia Inquirer, Miami Herald, Detroit Free Press and Kansas City Star have earned more Pulitzers.

The ingredients in great journalism are simple: Money, ample staffing, and guts. Great journalism isn't cheap. Nothing great ever is. Had the Beacon Journal of yesterday been held to today's profit motives, it could not have assembled our current newsroom wall of Pulitzers—a display that has long been a wonderful recruitment tool and a source of pride to everyone working here.

Now, with layoffs coming soon and a hiring freeze sure to stay with us for many months, our Pulitzer legacy will give way to our layoff legacy. Recruits will only remember that we laid off the last round of people we hired.

For those journalists who choose to remain at the Beacon Journal, the prospects for producing great journalism are not good.

boat when you're not in it'

ity and sustained year-to-year profit improvement? And how do you balance maintaining a strong business with your responsibilities as the steward of a public trust?

Maybe that is the most important question, because our business—if you approach it as a public trust as well as a business—is different from most businesses. Most businesses can reduce expenses more or less proportionately with demand and revenue without doing irreparable damage to their core capabilities, their market position or their mission. Manufacturing businesses are a good example. When fewer items are bought fewer items need to be made and layoffs in various areas are possible.

But news and readers' interests do not contract with declining advertising. Nor does our responsibility to the public get smaller as revenue declines or newsprint becomes more expensive.

That is where the balancing act comes in. That is where the character of leaders comes in and the priorities they set.

Let me give you a situation analogous to the one facing newspapers. Hospitals are important, and at times essential, to our health as individuals and, at times, the health of whole communities. Over the last ten-to-fifteen years our nation's health care system has been ravaged by a variety of market forces and the drive for increased profitability. Today, shortages of nurses and even medicines are not uncommon in many hospitals. At times doctors don't have necessary equipment available or adequate support. HMOs can be more focused on their bottom lines than the health of their clients. In short, the quality of the nation's health care system has declined because of market forces and business imperatives, and with it there has been a decline in the health care industry's ability to meet the nation's needs.

In the same way that hospitals are important to the health of individuals and communities, good newspapers are important to the health of our communities, our nation and our democracy.

The press is protected in the First Amendment to our national constitution. It is the only business so protected because the framers saw a free press as essential to the maintenance and health of our democracy. My arguments

today are not First Amendment arguments, though. The First Amendment protects nearly all forms of speech and press activity. My argument today applies in particular to newspapers, newspaper companies and the leaders of such companies who believe their newspapers have a special responsibility to our society.

My argument today is that a freedom, a resource so essential to our national democracy that it is protected in our Constitution should not be managed primarily according to the demands of the market or the dictates of a handful of large shareholders.

In managing a newspaper or a newspaper company in the public interest you are faced with these questions:

When the interests of readers and shareholders are at odds, which takes priority? When the interests of a community and shareholders are at odds, which takes priority? When the interests of the nation in an informed citizenry and the demands of shareholders for ever-increasing profits are at odds, which takes priority?

The balancing of profits and quality is not as easy to understand as it may seem. It defies simple analysis. Many newspapers are part of publicly held companies. There are several such newspapers where quality does not vary noticeably in good times or bad—The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal come immediately to mind. There are others, and I would include Knight Ridder in this

number, which publish very good newspapers, but the tension between quality and responsibility on the one hand and financial expectations on the other are constant and the balance is tenuously maintained. And finally, there are public newspaper companies where there is little evidence to be found of a concern about quality—or responsibility.

Clearly, there is nothing inherent about being public that insures a priority on quality or a priority on profits. It must be said that the same is true of privately held companies. Some, whether individually owned or part of a larger group, are quite good and reflect a concern by the owners for quality and community. The St. Petersburg Times would be a good example. Other privately held newspapers are an

embarrassment. They seem to be little more than the owner's pet cash cow, or in the case of private newspaper groups, the owners' herd of cash cows.

But the question in the spotlight today involves publicly held companies, and I thought the tension and its sources were captured clearly and succinctly in a recent segment on The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer. NewsHour media correspondent Terence Smith was interviewing Lauren Rich Fine, a media analyst for Merrill Lynch, and there occurred the following exchange:

Fine said, "... the real issue here comes from trying to serve the public in a high-quality fashion, but at the same time being beholden to shareholders."

Terence Smith then asked: "Well, Lauren Fine, what profit margin does Wall Street expect from a newspaper, a publicly held newspaper company? If they average in the 20s, is that enough? What does it have to be?"

To which Fine responded: "Well, it's never enough, of course. This is Wall Street we're talking about."

That is an honest and unabashed statement of what some of us see as the tyranny of the current situation.

It matters not whether the source of that tyranny is the demand of analysts and major shareholders, the reaction of corporate executives to those demands, or merely the demand of owners of privately held newspapers for an unreasonably high return.

The point has been made that American newspapers on average are better than ever. I agree. But their improvement, their upward momentum is being overcome by the gravity of the marketplace. The drive for ever-increasing profits is pulling quality down. Unless some booster restores newspapers' upward momentum, gravity will take over with potentially irreversible consequences.

What is generally true of newspapers is true in Knight Ridder. There are many good newspapers and good newspaper people in Knight Ridder and some of both that are very good. The Mercury News is ranked one of the ten best newspapers in the nation. Knight Ridder journalists continue to do the best journalism they are capable of, which I want to emphasize is still among the best in the nation. But the momentum of the company, like the momentum in many other media companies, is trending in the wrong direction.

The trend threatening newspapers' historic mission is clear—if we're willing to see it. And it can be challenged and reversed—if we're willing to speak out.

Of course, many are unable—or unwilling—to see or speak the truth of the situation. There are many reasons for this. One is that the high salaries many of our leaders receive—in newsrooms and newspaper business offices as well as corporate headquarters—have turned into golden handcuffs. And those handcuffs have morphed into blindfolds and gags as well. Sometimes we refuse to see the

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MIKE PLUNKETT/PHILADELPHIA GUILD
Vicky McClure, staff writer at the Philadelphia Inquirer, shows her sentiments about Knight Ridder's budget cuts as projects editor Marc Duvoisin leads a session on narrative writing

and what they have to say ain't pretty

Along with watching 10 coworkers leave, they also face a dramatically smaller news-hole to display their work, significantly scaled back suburban coverage with the closing of two bureaus and the downsizing of our statehouse bureau (on top of last year's closing of our Washington bureau), slashed travel and overtime budgets, and the prospect of additional layoffs as ad revenues continue to falter.

The readers already have noticed many of our cutbacks. They aren't happy. And the worst cuts—the layoffs and the missed coverage—are still to come.

This is no way to run a newspaper or a newspaper company. This is not good business. Wall Street will eventually figure out that you are irreparably harming your core product and the long-term viability of your newspapers. The Beacon Journal and its employees deserve better. Our readers deserve better.

We respectfully ask that you reconsider. Sincerely,

—Contributors to the Akron Beacon Journal's Pulitzer prizes:

Paul Tople, Art Krummel, Dennis Balogh, Doug Oplinger, Ed Suba, Jr., Susan Kirkman, Larry Pantages, Katie Byard,

Bill Canterbury, Jim Carney, Diane Evans, Laura Haferd, Bob Hoiles, Charlene Nevada, Mary Grace Poidomani, Dennis Earlenbaugh, Robin Witek, Terence Oliver, Lew Stamp, Carl Chancellor, Yvonne Bruce Webb, Bob Dyer, Jocelyn Williams, Gloria Irwin, Deb Kauffman, Colette Jenkins, Steve Love, David Knox, Mike Cardew Sandy

No platitudes here, we're sure

The following is a March 30 letter from Frank McComas, Knight Ridder's senior vice president/operations, to an Akron Beacon Journal reporter who presented him with a list of questions during his recent visit to Akron. Beacon Journal editorial writer Sarah Vradenburg then weighed in with a response she e-mailed to McComas. Both letters were posted in the Beacon Journal newsroom.

Thrity Umrigar
Akron Beacon Journal
P.O. Box 640
Akron, OH 44309-0640

Dear Thrity:

During my last visit to Akron, you gave me a list of questions relating to the business and economics of Knight Ridder as well as our strategies.

As you probably know, each of our newspapers operates as its own independent business unit. Each business unit has its own goals that are based upon a multiplicity of factors, which change from time-to-time depending on a variety of circumstances including local and/or national market conditions. Although I appreciate your interest in how Knight Ridder as a corporate entity functions, I suggest that you direct your inquiries about the Beacon Journal to the management team at the Beacon Journal.

Very truly yours,
(signed) Frank McComas

Dear Mr. McComas:

Most of us in the Akron Beacon Journal news room have read your response to Thrity Umrigar regarding the list of concerns she gave you on your recent trip to Akron. You extolled the independence of each "business unit" in Knight Ridder.

Immediately below the place where your response is posted is an excerpt from an

interview with P. Anthony Ridder regarding Jay Harris' resignation as the publisher of the San Jose Mercury News. In that excerpt, Mr. Ridder said Knight-Ridder would accept no plan that included layoffs at the Mercury News and that discussions were continuing regarding cuts in advertising, circulation and marketing. Does the Mercury News enjoy less independence than that described in your letter to Ms. Umrigar? Or does it enjoy more protection because of its proximity to corporate offices?

With our newsroom figuratively and almost literally decimated and with more cuts likely, it's refreshing to see a corporate executive still so naive about the realities of working for Knight Ridder. Surely, you weren't trying to placate her, and us, with meaningless platitudes.

I hope, as you and Mr. Ridder proceed to disrespect the newspaper group that was once a proud legacy of John S. Knight, that you rest easy on your corporate profits. In the future, those who still remember what it was like to work for Jack Knight would simply appreciate the courtesy of an honest response. He would at least have given us that.

—Sarah Vradenburg, 17-year employee of the Akron Beacon Journal

Walking with Joe Hill at Harvard Yard

By Mike Sweeney

I saw the specter of Joe Hill in mid-February, strolling Harvard Yard, nodding his head in agreement and listening intently to a group of union activists discuss workers' rights, organizing and the state of the American labor movement. Hill smiled before he faded away, secure in the knowledge that the cause to which he sacrificed his life remains alive, if not exactly in the greatest of health.

Joe Hill at Harvard? Why would the legendary Wobblies organizer make an appearance at the nation's most elite university, a place that trains the nation's new breed of corporate marauders? A place whose business school is known to be a bastion of free market capitalism?

In fact, the spirits of Hill and other fabled union leaders, like Samuel Gompers, Mother Mary Jones, Eugene V. Debs, John L. Lewis and George Meany, appear each January at Harvard when activists from around the world gather to participate in the



Harvard Trade Union Program. The spiritual presence of these pioneers remains on campus for at least the six weeks of the program, which comprises an intense curriculum of classes, lectures and seminars about all aspects of the labor movement worldwide. They've been appearing at Harvard since 1942, when the program was founded.

One of the founders, former U.S. Labor Secretary John T. Dunlop, now 86, still teaches in the program. And students learn quickly that his extensive knowledge and sharp wit leave no room for ill-preparedness or ignorance.

I was fortunate enough to participate in this year's program as the recipient of The Newspaper Guild's Leuchter Memorial Scholarship, which paid for my tuition and housing. After years of waiting for the "right time" to apply for the scholarship, and postponing the application because of work commitments, I decided last year there never would be a "right time" and so took the plunge.

I got it. I went. The experience was remarkable.

Like many who work in the labor movement, my experience was limited to my work with my union, 20-plus years as a volunteer and six as a full-time paid staff member. And, like many, my training in labor union work and my knowledge of the movement came on the job. So I saw the chance to attend the Harvard program as an opportunity to study the labor movement, both historically and in modern times, and to meet labor union leaders from around the world. I was not disappointed.

My Harvard experience led me to draw two basic conclusions.

One, the American establishment—the courts, all levels of government, the business community—does not care and has never cared about the welfare of this nation's workers. This fact resonated repeatedly as we slogged through the United States' bloody labor history—hundreds of incidents ranging from Revolutionary War days to modern times, and including such historic events as the Chicago Haymarket Square bombing in 1886, the Ludlow Massacre of miners and their families in Colorado in 1914 and the clashes between striking coal miners and state police in Virginia in 1989.

Program participants from Canada, Japan and Australia marveled at the level of

brutality and legal shenanigans this country has used—and continues to use—to keep down its workers. As summarized by one of the top officers of the nurses' union in New South Wales, Australia: "It's a crime the way this country treats its people, particularly its refusal to provide health care for everyone."

Two, the labor movement—the force needed to oppose such crimes against workers—is at its weakest. We lost ground last year in the proportion of the workforce that is unionized. Our new president has already begun his assault on the few legal protections we have left.

Yet despite the reminders of our brutal past and the gloomy outlook for the future, I left Harvard after six weeks feeling rejuvenated. I and my classmates concluded that the labor movement can grow, that it can change and that it can become more of a force in this country. And all that can and will happen because folks like us make it happen.

Or as Joe Hill said, just before he was shot to death by a firing squad:

"Don't mourn. Organize."

Sweeney is executive officer of the Minnesota Newspaper Guild/Typographical Union, TNG-CWA Local 37002.

Rocking the K-R boat

Continued from page 5

truth. Sometimes we see it but dare not speak it.

But this muffle of good fortune has not produced absolute silence. Today, we hear a growing chorus of brave souls—both inside and outside the industry—protesting vigorously, and an audible grumbling of discontent from within the ranks of journalists and readers alike.

When Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg, near the beginning of what we now call the Reformation, there were people of good will working at nearly every level of the Catholic Church. Those, like Luther, who left the church to protest its debasement, and the many who remained to work for improvement from within, gave rise not only to a new branch of Christianity, the Protestants, but also forced the reform of the Catholic Church.

Much the same needs to happen today.

A publisher wrote me this week to say he respected my decision to resign and hoped I would respect his decision to stay in the job and put out the best paper he could for his community. And that newspaper is still quite good.

Not only do I respect his decision, I know it is the right one if we are to set the balance right again. We need people like that publisher working on the inside to support good journalism and build healthy businesses. Great institutions fail when they are overcome by a corrupting ideal or when the good people who sustain them lose faith and leave.

I made the choice to work from the outside. As Nancy Woodhull, a friend and talented editor who died too soon used to say, "It is much easier to rock the boat when you're not in it."

So, where do we go from here? First, let me say that I am hopeful and optimistic about the future of American newspapers—both as a business and as key contributors to the vitality of our democracy.

I neither believe nor will I accept that the

current trend can't be changed, that the proper balance can't be restored, that the unwise is somehow unavoidable or that a course that is inconsistent with our principles and values must be followed.

Just as we journalists can make better bad situations in our community by shining our spotlight into usually hidden or unseen places, we can apply the same remedy to our own house. I believe that if we are willing to speak the truth, willing to talk together and work together to determine what the proper balance is and how it can be restored, that we can achieve that end.

And what should such a collaborative effort consider and whom should it include? Here are a few thought starters:

- The discussion needs to include all the stakeholders, not just publishers, editors, large shareholders and institutional investors. Journalists and employees from the business side need to be at the table as well. So do readers, scholars and a diverse group of community representatives.

- One goal of the effort should be to develop a working definition of what being a good and faithful steward of the public trust requires of newspaper managers and newspaper owners. The moral, social and business dimensions of the issue should be fully explored and given equal priority.

- The discussion should build the case for a steady and reliable investment, in so far as prudent business allows, in news, circulation, research and promotion. It should also make the case for a reliable and supportive environment that will attract and hold the best talent in all departments.

- The case needs to be made that editors must seek equal access to the publisher's chair. Journalists cannot leave the helm to those who do not have a deep commitment to a newspaper's responsibilities to its readers and its community.

- A way must be found to give the public a sense of "ownership" in its community's newspaper. It should hold the paper—its managers and owners—to reasonably high standards, and accept nothing less.

Will the FCC be riding to newspapers' rescue?

The cash machines we quaintly refer to as "newspapers" may be about to become a lot more lucrative—for their owners and top management, that is. For employees, the outlook is less benign.

The anticipated catalyst for this turn of events will be a decision by the Federal Communications Commission to junk the cross-ownership rule, a 26-year-old regulation—grounded in the wistful belief that a democracy needs competing voices—barring a company from owning both a newspaper and a television station in the same market. In a particularly Orwellian twist, the dropping of the ban is being contemplated out of concern for . . . the free speech rights of corporations.

But the predictable outcome will be less speech, not more, because dropping the ban will unleash a new wave of media mega-mergers. That forecast doesn't require a crystal ball: large newspaper companies have long complained bitterly at being shut out of the television game in their own cities. Owning multi-media properties in the same market, on the other hand, would enable all kinds of "synergies," which is corporate-speak for repackaging and cross-promoting the hell out of your product: newspaper copy can become television fodder that can be masticated into radio and internet items that can promote the original print version, and on and on in a merry and very lucrative circle.

The outlook is so exciting that Forbes magazine is already speculating about which newspapers and newspaper chains will be put in play. One obvious starting point is for newspaper companies that already own broadcast properties to acquire the newspapers in those markets. Among the possible acquisition targets, the magazine suggests, are McClatchy, Media General and Pulitzer; among potential suitors for these and other

media properties are Gannett, Tribune and Hollinger International.

But Forbes may not be thinking big enough: a more likely scenario, if only in a second wave of acquisitions, is that the truly big media boys will belly up to the bar: Viacom, AOL Time Warner, Disney, General Electric and so on. And when they do those synergies will really fly, churning the mass media mix into a homogenized goop.

This whole process reportedly could begin as soon as next month, which is the kind of timing that a media predator could only describe as fortuitous: with one newspaper company after another reporting lower earnings because of weak advertising revenue, newspaper stocks are under increasing pressure. Swooning stock prices make their companies vulnerable to takeovers, which is one reason why the Tony Ridders of the world are fighting to maintain their abnormally high profit margins. Taking the lid off the cross-ownership ban will only increase the pressure they're feeling.

But the outcome, despite such exertions, is pretty much inevitable: newspapers will fall like dominoes. Their employees will pay now, as we are already seeing, but also later, when the tidal wave of mergers and acquisitions is followed by the equally inevitable consolidations, restructuring and layoffs. Newspaper owners, on the other hand, will profit nicely because they'll be getting top dollar for their properties, and you can bet their managers will be well rewarded for their stewardship, too.

As for the democratic sensibilities that led to the cross-ownership ban in the first place? Don't ask: they've been trumped by the notion that corporations have the same rights as people.

—Andy Zipser

LOOKING AHEAD



'Discretionary' pay an easy route to abuse

By Bernie Lunzer, Secretary-Treasurer

Discretionary pay, often referred to as "merit pay," has been in Guild contracts from our start in 1933. The Guild's founders knew there would always be some form of payment over scale in the news industry. When salespeople in the commercial departments were organized, commissions and bonuses also were acknowledged. But the Guild's goal for its scale—its wage "minimum"—never changed: the pay scale should reflect the value of the work.

Recent years have seen an explosion in discretionary pay, as many managers—ostensibly to create a meritocracy, or "pay for performance" system—relied more and more on payment beyond the scales. More recently, news reports suggest that the use of discretionary pay is being reconsidered in several industries, although there is little evidence of this among newspapers. There should be.

Guild locals need to make regular requests for information to review the use of discretionary pay. A model request letter is being sent to all locals for submission to the employers with whom the Guild has contracts. The information should be broken out by individual, and should allow each local to determine whether merit raises are being doled out in a discriminatory fashion. Locals have a legal right to this information, and in most cases the obligation to provide the information is reinforced in the collective bargaining agreement.

Many locals already have established committees to review such data and provide a statistical analysis to unit members. Some locals provide the information to individuals so that they can use it in discussions with management. But few locals provide the detailed information to all their members, and some locals have even entered into agreements with management to not allow broad access to the information. This is unfortunate. I've become convinced that broad scrutiny is the best way to mitigate the overuse and abuse of discretionary pay. Individuals have a right to see how they are "valued."

I do agree that there is a place for over-scale pay, bonuses and commissions. In conjunction with solid wage minimums, these additional payments can reward exemplary service or can be used to retain highly marketable employees. But several managements have set out to freeze the scales, making all future increases truly discretionary.

Their real goal seems to be to minimize the power of the union and to make employees beholden to the company. This issue was at the heart of the Detroit strike (and in Seattle), where Gannett set out to abolish all future guaranteed increases. That should have sustained our unfair labor practice charge, which would have changed the entire dynamic, but a group of D.C. Circuit Court judges manipulated the law to favor corporations.

In Seattle we were hemmed in by pattern bargaining. While other unions were satisfied with their wage, the Guild was stuck with scales that were almost \$200 per week below those of comparable markets. Industry commentators, who should know better, ignored this reality by talking about the average wage, which they quoted as being more than \$1,000 a week for the journalists. Anyone working under such a system knows that statistical averages are meaningless in newsrooms where some are favored with discretionary pay of more than \$300 a week over scale, while others get less than \$50. House payments are not made with statistical averages, nor are utilities, tuitions and food. Commission plans fare no better. When they begin to deliver a decent return they are inevitably modified. Also, sales people who have no control over their accounts can never be certain commissions will be there tomorrow.

The current use and overuse of discretionary pay demands our vigilance. Locals need to act by reviewing the use of discretionary pay and sharing the information with their members. At the national levels, TNG and TNG Canada need to play a role in coordinating this review and should consider further action to counter bona fide discrimination. We stand ready to help locals mount necessary challenges. Other reviews may only show what we already know: discretionary systems are inevitably subjective. There are winners and losers.

Renewed pressure to push back against unfair pay schemes is at the heart of the Guild mission. Let's work to shed some light on the use of discretionary pay and use bargaining to reduce and eliminate inequities. Most importantly, wage "minimums" must be raised to reflect the real value of the work being done. This original goal of the founders of the Guild is as relevant today as it was in 1933.

From the 'fitful irony' file

The American Newspaper Guild, meeting in Portland, Oregon for its 1952 convention, passed a bevy of resolutions—including this little gem, some 30 years before a certain president crushed the air traffic controllers' union:

Whereas, Ronald Reagan is a distinguished actor on the American Screen, and

Whereas, he has likewise distinguished himself in the field of trade unionism as leader of the Screen Actors Guild, AFL, and

Whereas, said Ronald Reagan came before this convention of the American Newspaper Guild and delivered an inspiring, heart-warming "shop talk" on the common problems of the motion picture and publishing industries;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that this convention give Ronald Reagan a warm vote of thanks for his address and offer of cooperation and send congratulations to the Screen Actors Guild on its wise choice of leadership.

How Trade Improves Human Rights:



G. Calm/010301

LETTERS

To the Editor,

Thanks for the insightful and informative article on the NLRA in the Feb. 23 issue of The Guild Reporter. Frankly, I was surprised to learn that there are those in the labor movement who are not afraid to challenge conventional wisdom. Elaine Bernard's observation was especially relevant and revealing.

Kudos to you and the Guild Reporter for raising the issue. Labor's reliance on the renting of politicians has been a failure for as long as I have been an observer of the labor scene. The issues your article raises should be fodder for raging debates in every union hall in the nation.

In Solidarity,

—Jim Templeton, formerly with the Washington-Baltimore Guild

To the Editor,

I just wanted to say thanks for the fascinating weekend I had at the George Meany Center for the new officers seminar. I was amazed at everything that the union has to do and realized how much work lies ahead of me. I also understand that I have a ton of work ahead of me as far as learning goes, to become the best shop steward that I can be, but after this weekend I walked away knowing that in the end it will all be worth it.

I found the staff to be very friendly and they stressed (repeatedly) that if there was ever a question about anything that I should call and never be afraid to ask. They did a dynamite job on every aspect. Given the time frame they had to work with, they should all be commended on touching base on every issue.

One of the most important lessons, I believe, came after class, when we were allowed "downtime" in the recreation room. To me this was one of the most valuable things about the weekend, because I had personal contact with other union members. This was important because it showed me the larger picture of the union and let me get to know several of my

"other brothers and sisters" in the union. Friendships were formed, and that is also important, further proving that we in the union are one family working for a great cause. I now feel that there are other new officers out there, just like me, who will need help.

I cannot tell you enough what a great experience this was for me and I know from talking with other officers, that they too found it to be something we will remember. I honestly found this weekend to be (are you ready? . . .) WICKED PISAA!!!!

—Thomas P. Mahoney, Shop Steward, Brockton Local 31027

To the Editor,

I want to take this opportunity to give my public heartfelt thanks to the Guild members of the Boston Globe Employees Association Local 245.

Members of the BGEA, under the leadership of Bob Jordan and the executive committee, have been my "adopting family" during the extraordinarily long Detroit newspapers' strike and lock-out (where more than 100 of us remain illegally fired).

Brothers and sisters in the BGEA were incredibly generous, supportive, and communicated their affection and concern through both personal contact and BGEA-wide publications.

In the late 1970s I served my college journalism internship on the city desk of the Globe, where Bob Jordan was an assistant city editor at the time. Little did either of us know that our paths would cross again in this epic struggle despite years passing and so many miles between us.

The BGEA didn't just preach solidarity—it acted on it, year after year. The difference this has made in my life is immeasurable, and my gratitude will extend for a lifetime.

Sincerely,

—Kate DeSmet, Local 22, Newspaper Guild of Detroit

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: May 11.) Letters may be e-mailed to the editor at azipser@cwa-union.org.

Unions, press not hearing each other

By Lou Mieczko
Detroit Newspaper Guild

Are workers' voices being heard? That was the question posed in the first in a series of public forums hosted by the Metropolitan Detroit AFL-CIO, and the answer—as delivered by a 10-member panel of Detroit-area media and union representatives—was a resounding no.

"We have 45 seconds to tell a story," said Florence Walton, a reporter for WWJ radio in Detroit, a CBS network affiliate. "We get complaints about the lack of depth to our reports. We have to pretend that there is balance."

Mike Bowersock, a reporter for WKBD-TV, Channel 50, an affiliate of the United Paramount TV network, agreed. When asked who receives press releases and faxes from union representatives, Bowersock stunned the audience when he said low-level student interns often field such material and decide whether it is distributed to an assignment editor.

"Embarrassingly, it often is a 20-year-old college intern that sorts through the faxes and press releases," Bowersock said. "This

goes on at my station and most others."

Bowersock and Walton were only two of five media representatives at the March 29 session, designed to improve the relationship between the mass media and organized labor. Others included John Gallagher, a Detroit Free Press business reporter and Guild striker who has been recalled to his job; Ann Mullen, reporter for Metro Times; and Jerry Vaughn, reporter for WDET radio, the Detroit outlet for National Public Radio.

Labor panelists, meanwhile, included Susan Watson, editor and public relations director for the Detroit Federation of Teachers and a former columnist for the Free Press; Richard Leebove, owner of RL Communications; Roger Kerson, assistant director of communications for the United Auto Workers Union; Marty Mulcahy, editor of The Building Tradesman, official union paper for the Detroit Building Trades; and Laura Johnstone, spokesperson for the Service Employees International Union's Michigan Council.

Watson, a top columnist for the Free Press for 30 years who was



PHOTOS BY GEORGE WALDMAN/DETROIT NEWSPAPER GUILD

Lynn Marie Smith, of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees, leads the audience in song before the formal panel discussions start in the first of a series of forums on labor issues.

fired during the recent strike by the Guild and five other unions against that paper, scolded the media representatives for their shallowness and ignorance of labor issues.

"As a citizen of the community, my biggest pet peeve about the reporters I see covering labor is that you are unprepared, distressingly transient," Watson said. "Far too many of you just don't measure up."

Labor unions, however, came in for their own share of criticism. Gallagher, of the Free Press and a member of Guild Local 34022, said "basic media training" is needed for many labor leaders.

"Returning phone calls promptly, being available on short notice to tell your story, those are

all things lacking all too often," Gallagher said.

Vaughn of WDET radio said labor leaders need to make "rank and file members more available" to the media, a criticism echoed by Mullen of the Metro Times, an alternative weekly.

The lack of in-depth labor reporting, however, was a recurring comment from both the media and labor panelists.

Leebove, an independent labor public relations consultant in Detroit, questioned why major newspapers, including the Free Press and Detroit News, no longer have "labor reporters" covering the labor beat full-time.

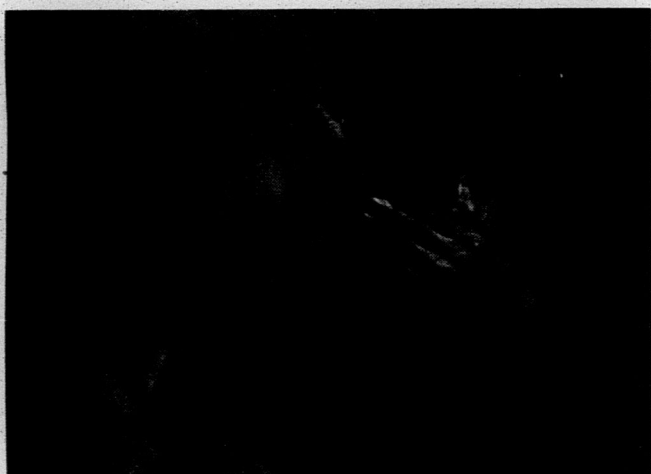
Gallagher likewise lamented the lack, saying there is a "lack of sophistication" by many print

journalists in the way labor issues are covered. "Newspapers react too much to the superficial," he said. "It is a structural weakness at too many papers."

The UAW's Kerson noted that a business reporter recently asked him, "When does management get to vote on the union contract?"

Shawn Ellis, conference coordinator for the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO, said he was pleased with the initial forum and that the labor body would be sponsoring several more media-labor conferences in the coming months.

"It is important for us and our affiliates to have better lines of communication with the print and broadcast media," Ellis said. "This was a successful first step in that direction."



Susan Watson, editor of The Detroit Teacher and a former columnist at the Detroit Free Press who was fired during the newspaper strike, looks on as other panel members speak.

DAYBOOK

TNG Canada Rep. Council,
April 28-29, Kingston, ON

New England Dist. Council,
May 5-6, Portland, ME

Western District Council,
May 5-6, San Francisco

CWA Nat'l Women's Conf.,
May 9-12, Las Vegas

Mid-Atlantic District Council,
May 19-20, Albany NY

Tri-Council, June 2-3,
Memphis, Tenn.

Pride at Work Convention,
June 21-24, Everett, WA

TNG Sector Conference,
July 5-7, Minneapolis

Annual CWA Convention, July
9-10, Minneapolis

CLUW Biennial Convention,
Oct. 4-7, Las Vegas

FROM THE MORGUE

Fifty years ago this month:

Secretary-treasurer Ralph B. Novak files a \$500,000 libel suit against the Salt Lake Tribune Co.—just months after its editorial and circulation employees voted for Guild representation—for describing the Guild as "a commie-controlled organization." . . . After 16 months of walking a picket line at the Arkansas Gazette, Guild-represented employees get a boost from NLRB charges that the publisher has engaged in unfair labor practices. . . . Guild member Carl Rowan—"a Negro reporter for the Minneapolis Tribune"—gets five book offers after publication of his 18-part series on the Deep South, "How Far from Slavery?"

Twenty-five years ago this month:

Reasoning that "journalism is primarily a field of generalists," the NLRB reaffirms that reporters, writers and editors do not meet the definition of "professional employees" in the National Labor Relations Act. . . . All six key unions at the Washington Star approve a series of drastic economic measures—including wage cuts and layoffs—in an ultimately failed bid to keep the paper alive. . . . Newspapers are ranked the country's third largest employer, behind steel and auto parts, with approximately 385,000 employees (excluding carriers).

Ten years ago this month:

The Canadian Wire Service Guild and three other unions representing English-speaking employees of the CBC agree to form a joint collective bargaining council. . . . The Guild tabulates nearly 2,900 cases of repetitive stress injuries among its locals—or roughly 9% of the membership.

THE GUILD Reporter

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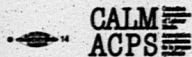
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