

THE GUILD Reporter

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The challenges
facing American
mass media
pages 4-6



IN THE AFTERMATH

Lots of pizza, counseling— and uncertainty

In the first burst of professional reaction to the attacks of Sept. 11, virtually all TNG-CWA-represented newspapers responded with free food, lavish management praise and lots of counseling opportunities. Some went beyond even those basics, especially in and around New York City, providing free or subsidized lodging, help with other expenses and—even—massages.

But as the adrenaline rush subsided and most newspapers returned to something approaching "normal," former trends and patterns re-emerged—most notably the industry's proclivity for maintaining profit margins through staff reductions. And reporters, photographers, camera crews and producers more accustomed to leaving the newsroom in search of the next story suddenly had the war—or something akin to it—brought home, as anthrax attacks were reported at the Florida office of several supermarket tabloids, then at NBC News in New York and at The New York Times.

Immediately after the Sept. 11 hijackings, all New York dailies provided counseling for their employees, as did major news organizations with large New York bureaus, including The Associated Press and The Washington Post. But Reuters, in addition to canceling all non-critical travel for a week after the attacks, went one

additional step: it brought in a masseur to help relieve tension.

The most disrupted operation was the Wall Street Journal's, whose offices at the World Financial Center remain closed. Instead, reporters and editors were dispersed across five locations, with some sharing space in Manhattan with ad sales staff, some working from a Dow Jones Newswires office in Jersey City and some commuting to the corporate campus in South Brunswick, N.J. As of mid-October, Dow Jones was still paying for additional commuting expenses and was picking up many housing costs.

At the New York Times, reported Guild unit chair Lena Williams, management gave all staff members the option to leave work Sept. 11 to look after families "but most of them chose to continue working." In the days following the attacks, however, some Guild members contacted the union to say they were "edgy, nervous or spooked," prompting a Guild request that management hold a general counseling session—in addition to individual counseling available through the Employee Assistance Program—"to give employees an opportunity to talk to and listen to those who handle security at the newspaper."

At the Bureau of National Affairs, by
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Zinser swings, and misses, yet again

By Bruce Nelson
TNG-CWA Staff Representative

Michael Zinser lost another one. The management labor lawyer, based in Nashville, has always been more of an instigator than a litigator. He seizes upon the processes of the National Labor Relations Board, and its vast appellate labyrinth, not so much as a serious effort to affect the country's developing labor law, but as an ample source of billable hours.

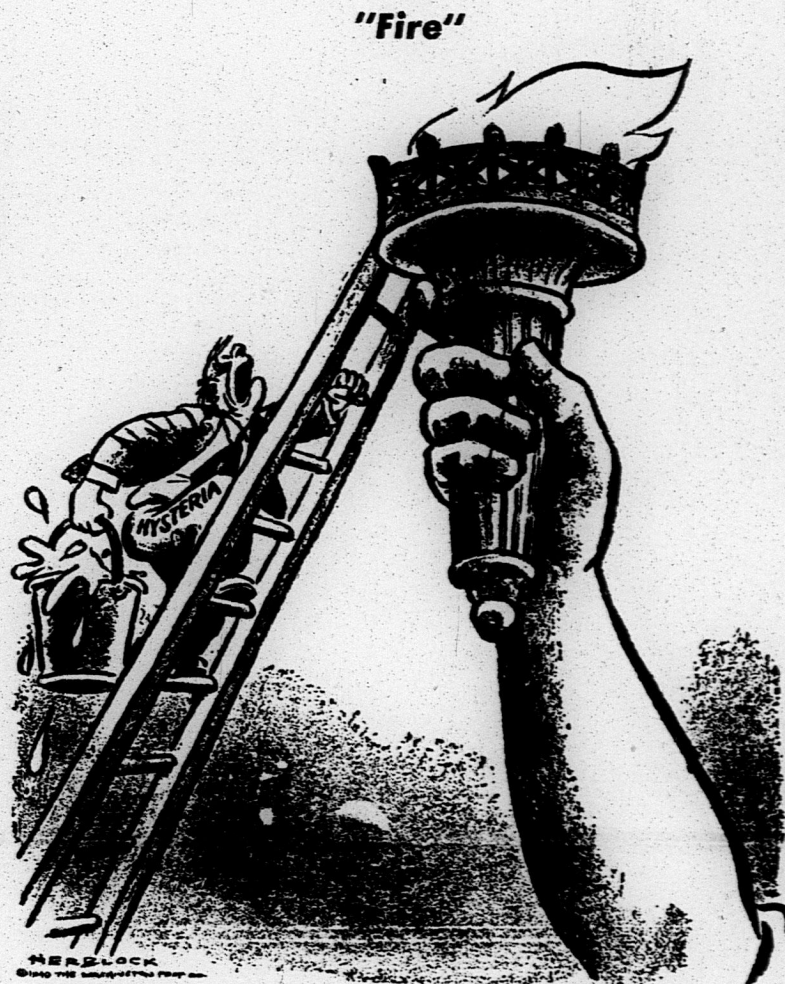
Zinser recently lost a case involving the Albany Guild, in which he attempted to convince a judge that the publisher

could stop deducting dues based on an employee's "private right of conscience." More recently, he shocked many labor law observers by losing a Teamster case in which a judge found that newspaper carriers were employees and entitled to organize a union.

In his latest foray, Zinser fought not only the Guild and Region 13 (Chicago) of the NLRB but also corporate counsel for Hollinger International, providing the lone voice in the wilderness for what the publisher of the Post-Tribune in northwest Indiana wanted to hear—that she was right.

When Hollinger bought the assets of

Continued on page 2



As timely today—when international terrorism is prompting numerous Congressional bills that would restrain civil liberties—as when it was drawn, this 1949 cartoon illustrates the enduring relevance of Herblock's political wit and insight. The artist himself, however, could not outlive his art: Herblock died Oct. 7. For story, see page 8.

Friendly fire

*In the cross-fire between religious zealots
and political extremists, organized labor
and a free press suffer casualties*

By Andy Zipser
Editor, The Guild Reporter

Friendly fire. The phrase is an oxymoron, the juxtaposition of incompatible ideas. There's nothing friendly about "fire" in the battlefield sense, of bullets or bombs or missiles. "Friendly fire" is supposed to convey the idea of death by accident, of tragic errors in judgment.

But friendly fire isn't just a phenomenon of the battlefield: it can occur in civil society through unjust imprisonment, censorship, blacklisting, racial profiling—in any number of ways in which people are victimized by their own society for the way they look, the opinions they hold or the friends they make. And the U.S. is no stranger to the concept, with a repressive

history that starts with the Alien and Sedition Acts of the late eighteenth century and continues through the internment of Japanese-Americans, red-baiting and the creative uses that Tricky Dick found for various federal agencies.

Always, the catalyst is the same: the U.S. is under attack. And, always, the response has been the same: equal parts of

gingoism, xenophobia and a demand for mass conformity. Given that dynamic, it's not sur-

prising that two groups whose values and principles are most strongly jeopardized are journalists and trade union members.

Which is another way of saying that the members of The Newspaper Guild-CWA, already on the front lines in the "war on terrorism," need to watch their backs twice over.

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Gary local pitches in when publisher's software fails

Newsroom employees at the Hollinger-owned Post-Tribune in northwest Indiana are defying the company's latest union-busting scheme by pulling out their checkbooks.

The 51 members of the Gary Newspaper Guild, TNG-CWA Local 14, have been writing personal checks or filling out money orders to pay their Guild dues since the company stopped deducting dues from payroll checks in late July. Publisher Boni Fine, on giving the union a surprise 60-day notice that the company would stop the long-standing practice, claimed the Post-Tribune no longer has the computer software needed to deduct the dues every two weeks.

The Post-Tribune uses the same centralized Hollinger payroll system as its sister paper, the Chicago Sun-Times—where dues are still being deducted for the much larger Chicago Newspaper Guild. Michael Puente, president of the Gary local, said Fine will have a chance to explain the discrep-

ancy when she responds to an unfair labor practice charge, now pending before the National Labor Relations Board.

Meanwhile, dues are being collected individually, according to Karen Snelling, the local's treasurer. "Fortunately, the overwhelming majority of our members are happy to pay," she said. "They understand that the Guild is fighting for them."

All but two of the 51 members have continued paying dues since Fine discontinued the payroll deductions, with several paying in advance.

The local, which represents reporters, copy editors, photographers, graphic designers, editorial assistants and deputy editors, has been locked in contract talks with the Post-Tribune for more than three years. Tentative agreements have been reached on key issues, but negotiations have stalled "due to the Post-Tribune's failure to make bargaining a fair contract a priority," said a local spokesperson.

Zinser lays egg in Gary . . .

Continued from page 1

the Post Tribune in 1998, it established its own initial employment terms, including specific dollar amounts employees would contribute toward medical insurance. It then recognized the Gary Newspaper Guild and began negotiating a contract. There still is no contract but the company's insurance costs have kept rising, so Publisher Boni Fine simply hiked the employee contribution—in some cases doubling the rates—earlier this year.

"Wait just a minute," said the Gary Guild. "You can't change the terms of employment unilaterally. You have to bargain with us."

But Publisher Fine insisted that she had slipped earlier increases over on employees and never got caught. Such a "past practice" argument has about the same weight in labor law as it does in

criminal courts. A bank robber may have escaped arrest on two previous bank heists, but it won't wash to say the prosecution has waived its right to charge him for the one he was just caught pulling.

In fact, Hollinger's corporate counsel responded to the Guild's unfair labor practice charge with a memorandum that acknowledges the violation. Hollinger labor representatives backed up that acknowledgement with an attempt to make a full settlement.

A desperate publisher went looking for new legal advice, and Zinser was only too happy to accommodate her.

So off Zinser went before NLRB Administrative Law Judge William N. Cates on October 5 and "disavowed" the previous positions taken by Hollinger corporate attorneys, single-handedly attempting to uphold the honor and

integrity of Publisher Fine with the I-Got-By-With-It-Before defense.

He lost, in almost record time. In a rare bench decision, Judge Cates repeated the oft used refrain from well settled NLRB law, that a waiver must be "clear and unmistakable," and that in merely failing to object to one unilateral change, a union does not waive its right to object to another.

The judge said he will issue a written order later this month, finding that the Post-Tribune violated the law and ordering it to escrow the excess insurance payments (approximately \$20,000 and growing) while it engages in good faith bargaining with the Guild.

Judge Cates had one final observation to share with Publisher Fine: "... your (corporate) counsel had it right."

As is always the case with Zinser, an appeal is expected.

. . . but keeps racking up billable hours in Eugene

Michael Zinser's approach to bargaining is the destructive equivalent of pouring sugar into a fuel tank, but you've got to say this about the U. S. of A.: it's a big country. Big enough to be home to several publishers willing to spend more money on a Tennessee lawyer than

on their own employees.

The latest proof of this contention was provided by the Eugene Register-Guard, whose management and members of the Eugene Newspaper Guild's bargaining team traveled to Oakland, Cal. in late August to meet with a federal mediator. The local's last contract expired May 1, 1999, and negotiations have been marked by an unprecedented string of charges of unfair labor practices filed by the Guild. A mediator, it was agreed, might help break the logjam.

And so, apparently, she did, for on Aug. 31 the Register Guard's publisher, Alton Baker, wrote a letter stating that there was only one outstanding issue left: the company's e-mail proposal. The Guild, says local President Suzi Prozaniski, agrees that e-mail is the only issue on which the two sides have been unable to agree. It also is a) the subject of an outstanding ULP charge against the company, now scheduled for a Nov. 14 hear-

ing; and b) a non-mandatory subject of bargaining, which means either side can refuse to bargain the issue.

No matter. Zinser, whose role as management's lead negotiator is seen by the local as the reason why bargaining has been so bitter and protracted, fired off a letter contradicting Baker's statements and announcing that any agreements reached in mediation were moot. The same fruitless bargaining that had gone on for the previous 900 days would have to continue.

"It seems to me that the one who gains the most from delaying bargaining is this high-priced attorney from Nashville," Prozaniski observed in the most recent local newsletter. "Good money that could have gone toward employee raises has instead gone into Zinser's pockets."

Whether that will prove to be a good management investment will be tested Nov. 17—when the two ULPs already scheduled for a hearing will be joined by a third.

In brief . . .

ProJo dues fight sent to arbitrator

A U.S. District Court judge has torpedoed an attempt by The Providence Journal to financially strangle the Providence Newspaper Guild, ruling that a dispute about dues check-off should be allowed to proceed to arbitration. Journal management stopped deducting union dues from employee paychecks almost two years ago, when the last contract expired, then blocked the local's grievance by claiming that it had been filed after the contract expired. The local has been collecting dues by hand since February, 2000.

First a contract, then four lay-offs

Just two weeks after Canadian Media Guild members ratified their first contract with TVOntario—with 95% in favor—four are facing layoffs due to a corporate "restructuring." But with two of the pink-slipped employees claiming 15 and 33 years of service, CMG is crying foul. "This is a direct violation of the employees' rights under the new TVO-CMG seniority clause and a display of extremely bad faith on the part of TVO managers," said CMG President Lise Lareau, who promised a protest under the new contract's mandatory mediation clause.

Negotiators carry on despite buyout

Workforce reductions throughout the industry are beginning to reach Guild leaders. At the Boston Newspaper Guild, currently mired in contract negotiations with the Boston Globe, three members of the union negotiating team have accepted buyout offers—but are staying at the bargaining table under a contract provision that allows them to soldier on for one year or until talks are complete. The trio includes Leonard J. Kelley and Dolores Kong, plus local president Bob Jordan.

Carriers get union organizing okay

In a decision that could result in union organizing among thousands of newspaper carriers nationwide, an NLRB judge in Missouri has ruled that such carriers are newspaper employees, not "independent carriers," and therefore eligible for union membership. The decision was sought by Teamsters Local 460, which has been trying to organize carriers at the St. Joseph News-Press for two years. Management, represented by Michael Zinser (see stories on p.1 and at left), has appealed.

Medicine Hat unit agrees to contract

Members of the Media & Communications Workers of Alberta have reached agreement on a four-year contract with The Medicine Hat News

after four months of negotiations. The pact calls for wage increases of 1% in the first year, 1.5% in each of the second and third years and 2% in the fourth year; plus scale increases of 2.5% to 4% for the majority of employees. The unit has 70 members in all departments except the pressroom.

Yes, we represent other union staffs

The 15 employees of the American Postal Workers Union who are members of the Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild have reached tentative agreement on a three-year contract that includes wage increases of 9% over term, plus a \$250 increase in base pay on an employee's hire-date anniversary. The agreement also provides for two additional sick days and institution of a 401(k) plan Jan. 1 with a 1.5% employer match for employees who make a 3% contribution.

Giants get boost in dad's eulogy

While no Guild members perished in the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, Guild family members were lost. Among them: Peter



West, above right, shown with his son, Matthew, who works at the Boston Herald. Apologizing at his father's eulogy for not being a writer or public speaker, Matthew West nevertheless was bold enough to give God a few pointers on how to deal with his dad. Among them:

- Ten o'clock means 9:45.
- If you don't yet know what "a soft-tail deuce" is, get ready to find out.
- Repeat after me: the Dallas Cowboys stink. Go Giants.

Leuchter deadline fast approaching

The deadline for submitting applications for the next Irving Leuchter Memorial Scholarship, an \$8,500 award that covers the costs of a six-week residential seminar in labor studies at Harvard University, is Nov. 1. The seminar is scheduled to run Jan. 7-Feb. 15 and includes courses on economic analysis, labor law, union administration, long-range planning, labor history, and arbitration and dispute resolution. Applications should be sent to: Dr. Elaine Bernard, Executive Director, Harvard University Trade Union Program, 1350 Massachusetts Avenue, #713, Cambridge, MA 02138. Questions? Call 617-495-9265.

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First the pizza, then uncertainty

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way of contrast, employees were dismissed with pay in the late morning of Sept. 11 and the company—"to the dismay of a few irrepressible reporters," according to one unit member—suspended publication for a day. BNA also gave employees time off to attend memorial services.

Free food was abundant in newsrooms coast to coast—although it helped to like pizza. At The Mercury in Pottstown, PA, that meant a pizza party about a week after the attacks, as a gesture of thanks for long hours and hard work. At the Knoxville News-Sentinel, it meant an unexpected trial by fire for new editor Jack McElroy, who had flown into town that morning for a quick "meet and greet" before flying back to Denver in the afternoon. With all flights grounded, however, he ended up leading an all-staff meeting to brainstorm story ideas with local connections—then dug out a corporate credit card to pay for pizzas.

But the most common thread everywhere seemed to be concern for employees' mental health. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch brought in a counselor, and news group leaders were instructed to monitor "the emotional component of staff." The Cox papers in Ohio distributed information on coping with grief. Supervisors at the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel were invited to schedule group counseling, where necessary, and encouraged to be flexible in allowing time off for employees.

For those near ground zero, such concern was hardly an over-reaction. Ken Martin, a Dow Jones employee who lives a block from the World Trade Center, described his evacuation in an e-mail of staccato sentences that read, in part:

"Went to our emergency staging area at Albany and the Hudson River. . . . Wanted to leave the site to see the North Tower. People continued jumping. I took one of the reporters to an eyewitness of the jet going in. . . ."

"Shortly thereafter the first building went. We only saw a cloud coming towards us. Everyone was saying, 'Oh, my God!' The scene was unreal, seemed like a movie. One reporter had crossed Liberty Street seeing body parts on the road. Anything was possible."

Daniel Sternoff, a Treasury desk reporter for Reuters in New York, was about two blocks from the World Trade Center when the first tower collapsed. "It was absolutely terrifying. It was going up like a mushroom," he wrote. "I got swallowed up by the cloud and was in it for a few minutes until I was able to take shelter in a narrow building."

Such stories were legion in the days following the attacks, but as that terror subsided, another worry has replaced it: money. Although numerous editors went on record

in September with a "hang the expense, we're going to get the story" attitude, financial reality may be giving their publishers pause. This, after all, is the industry that was axing 10% of payroll earlier this year because of declining ad revenues—and the terrorists' attacks haven't exactly stimulated the economy.

Dow Jones, for example, was already signalling in mid-September that more layoffs may be coming because of its extensive costs. In early October, editors at Reuters' American operations told the Guild they are bracing for an unspecified number of job cuts by year's end. The move "follows tough times among banks, brokerage firms and other financial services companies that have long been our company's bread-and-butter clientele," noted a unit newsletter.

Meanwhile, the fresh threat of anthrax attacks has disrupted some news operations and introduced a previously unknown element of uncertainty. Two floors of The New York Times were evacuated Oct. 12 after the newspaper's bioterrorism reporter received an envelope that later tested positive for anthrax spores. Within hours, newspapers as distant as the San Jose Mercury News had shut down their mailrooms while management scrambled to develop new mail-handling procedures. The Toledo Blade issued a comprehensive set of guidelines for handling mail, and numerous companies distributed rubber gloves to mail-handling employees.

TNG-CWA has urged local representatives to request meetings with management to develop appropriate procedures. "Our locals must address what now appears to be a growing threat to workers' health and safety and security," said TNG-CWA President Linda Foley, noting that federal labor law requires managers to meet with unions on such issues.

'All the news' isn't quite fit to print

First the New York Times "disappeared" its freelance contributors by removing their work from its electronic databases. Now it's going a step further by blacklisting 13 of them—11 of whom, as it happens, lent their names to the successful class-action lawsuit that prompted the database purge.

The black sheep sued the Times several years ago for its reproduction of their work in various electronic formats without their permission or additional compensation. When the U.S. Supreme Court recently sided with the writers, ordering the Times and other publications to negotiate a licensing agreement, the Times instead removed all freelancers' work from its electronic archives and announced that each writers'

work would be restored only if he or she renounced all rights.

But that apparently wasn't punishment enough for those who had the chutzpah to put their names on the lawsuit. Those writers were singled out in a Sept. 18 memo from the company's director of editorial rights and contracts, e-mailed to all New York Times editors, advising them not to "engage any of the below named plaintiffs to write for the newspaper."

The writers singled out by the memo included New York University law professor Derek Bell, author and book reviewer Margot Mifflin and playwright Barbara Garson.

Jonathan Tasini, lead plaintiff and president of the National Writer's Union, promptly compared the memo to "the discredit-

ed and immoral blacklists of the 1950s" because "it says, 'Don't hire these people.'"

Weighing in on behalf of the freelancers was the International Federation of Journalists, with President Christopher Warren condemning "an irresponsible attack on press freedom and pluralism." In many parts of the world, he added, the company's action would be illegal because it discriminates on the basis of union activity.

"These writers and reporters are being victimized because of union activity and because they have stood up for their rights," he observed. "The drawing up of a blacklist like this is not only discrimination against trade unionists, but amounts to an irresponsible attack on press freedom and pluralism."

In a separate case further buttressing the freelancers' position, the Supreme Court earlier this month declined to hear an appeal by National Geographic regarding its reproduction of a freelance photographer's work in a CD-ROM collection it has been selling. The decision let stand an appeals court ruling that the magazine had infringed the freelancer's work.

"Once again, the legal system has come down in favor of the individual creator's rights in the digital age," said Jonathan Tasini, president of the National Writers Union. "We can only hope that media companies will now see that it is time to end their legal delays and sit down to negotiate meaningful solutions to the widespread infringement they are guilty of."



Members of the TNG-CWA executive council, meeting in downtown Washington, D.C. Sept. 22-24, included (l to r) Connie Knox of Baltimore and

Lesley Phillips of Boston. TNG-CWA Secretary-Treasurer Bernie Lunzer is in the right foreground; also visible is TNG-CWA President Linda Foley.

TNG exec council meeting overshadowed by attacks

Meeting less than two weeks after the shattering events of Sept. 11, the TNG-CWA executive council cruised through a short agenda that included a resolution of appreciation for Guild members' professionalism following the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Council members also held an extended, off-the-record discussion on the Guild's human rights program.

The council:

- Clarified its policy on delivery of legal services to TNG-CWA locals and their members, defining more extensively which kinds of cases will qualify for services; and specifying that Canadian locals should submit assistance requests to TNG Canada. The policy also specifies that local unions remain free to retain their own attorneys—at the local's expense—to pursue cases not approved by TNG-CWA for assistance, as long as pursuing such cases does not conflict with the TNG-CWA constitution or policies.

- Urged locals to provide TNG-CWA with electronic copies of collective bargaining agreements, as well as payroll information for employees working under Guild contracts. The latter will not be used in a way that allows individuals to be identified, but is essential to the Guild's ongoing analysis of actual earnings in the newspaper industry.

- Encouraged locals to review existing contracts, communications policies and practices "to ensure that employees' fundamental free speech rights are respected and promoted." Of particular concern to the council have been attempts by employers to curtail the discussion of union matters in the workplace, especially via electronic mail systems, violating employees' civil rights.

- Passed a resolution acknowledging the "extraordinary demands" placed on TNG-CWA members by the Sept. 11 attacks. "Despite potential dangers and frightening uncertainties, Guild men and women worked through their own emotions to get their jobs done," the council observed. "To recognize these exemplary efforts, the Executive Council of TNG-CWA commends and thanks our members—particularly the reporters, photographers, camera crews and producers, editors and designers, but also members in other departments whose work helped produce the news and get it to the public."

- Approved eight subsidies of up to \$400 each for locals with fewer than 200 members sending delegates to the sector conference in Orlando. Only one subsidy per local will be awarded; if more than eight apply, the subsidies will be awarded based on a random drawing. The deadline for subsidy applications is Dec. 17.

Under fire as journalists,

Continued from page 1

While the attacks of Sept. 11 ostensibly were aimed at several landmark buildings, their deeper purpose was to punch a hole into the American fabric of freedom and rational discourse. Judging by the subsequent spate of legislative proposals to restrict civil liberties, the hate-mongering on talk radio, the instances of mob behavior based on racial stereotyping, they succeeded.

In some ways, however, the most worrisome collateral damage has been the chilling effect of the attacks on the mass media overall. To be sure, the press has created a semblance of jealously guarding its First Amendment rights, mixing it up with the government on issues clearly within its purview. Criticism has been leveled at the White House for slowing the flow of information to a trickle, at the military for preventing reporters from observing the battlefield, at official admonitions that journalists "watch what they say."

Similarly, there has been enough of an outcry over a relatively few but highly publicized instances of media self-censorship—from cancellations of Bill Maher's "Politically Incorrect" (but hardly courageous) television show, to the firing of columnists in Oregon and Texas for actually writing what they thought in their newspaper columns—that such incidents no longer seem to be occurring. (For more examples, see www.newsguild.org/2edged.php.)

But the truth is that the press, as an institution, is a jealous guardian of its prerogatives when it feels they're being encroached—by the government. There is little at risk when TV networks or major newspapers complain about being excluded from big headline events, and everything to gain, with dramatic footage and gripping stories bringing in more viewers, more readers and, no coincidence, more advertising dollars. But quite often what's being defended is the right to gather news as entertainment.

Meanwhile, although the diminished frequency with which columnists are being fired may suggest editors and publishers have rediscovered the importance of free speech, it's at least as likely that fewer columnists are being sacked because they've heard the message: this is not the time to rock the boat. Contrarian points of view are all well and good when the stakes aren't too high, but this is war, dammit. So Dan Rather tearfully announces he'll go wherever Commander Bush sends him and gets lauded; Reuters announces a perfectly defensible policy of describing people's actions instead of pinning them with a "terrorist" label and is heaped with ridicule.

In an environment of flattened discourse, media coverage of many issues becomes two-dimensional and criticism of public policy all but invisible. A petition signed mid-October by more than 250 communication scholars from around the world, calling for "more responsible journalism," may as well have been a pebble dropped down a well for all the attention it garnered—yet its recommendations in other circumstances would have been considered nothing more than a reiteration of sound journalistic principles. Among its points:

- Expand and balance the range of information reported beyond current and former U.S. military and government officials, to include domestic and international academics, think-tank analysts and civic leaders;
 - Incorporate historical, cultural and religious dimensions into interviews and reports whenever possible, rather than treating them as discrete topics isolated from routine reporting;
 - Select language and images that most dispassionately and accurately describe events; avoid routinely adopting the terms and interpretations used by government officials;
 - Limit the repetition of extreme images of destruction, violence, pain and suffering.
- The great bulk of post-Sept. 11 media

coverage hardly meets such standards. "The coverage on network news and in news magazines has seemed to me to have adopted the goal to prepare us for war, rather than to explore questions such as, 'How did we get to this point?' or 'Whose war would this be?'" observes Aaron Castelan Cargile, one of the petition signers and director of graduate studies at California State University in Long Beach. "I've been gravely disappointed by the largely uncritical lens Americans have been given to view this 'war.'"

Media critic Robert McChesney, author of "Rich Media, Poor Democracy," has been even more blunt, describing most media coverage in the aftermath of Sept. 11 as "blatant propaganda." Although exhaustive in their description of the hijackings and their aftermath and in repeating official denunciations of terrorism, the media have all but ignored their crucial responsibility "of providing any context so that Americans could make sense of this attack," he explained to a LIP Magazine interviewer. "Not 'making sense of it' in the sense that justifies it, but sense of it so that you could understand why people would be moved to do this, what forces in the world it reflects and how strong they are, what the reasons are behind why those forces exist."

But it's not just this formless war that is largely unexamined; its domestic repercussions are likewise not being examined with traditional journalistic skepticism. For while the press may not hesitate to challenge an over-reaching government, it responds much more slowly to corporate power grabs—and the more it is itself a corporate creature, the more diminished its ardor.

The great majority of Americans typically pull together in times of perceived crisis, forsaking individual ambitions to go marching off to war. But there's always that small percentage—"policy profiteers," in a pithy headline in *The Nation*—that recognizes the whiff of opportunity. Or as observed by

Wisconsin Sen. Robert La Follette during World War I, "wealth has never yet sacrificed itself on the altar of patriotism."

The fires at the World Trade Center and Pentagon hadn't been extinguished before outstretched corporate hands were being thrust under Congressional noses, first by the airline industry—conveniently overlooking the financial straits it had already been navigating before the attacks—then by rental car companies, the hospitality industry, insurance companies and a steadily growing line of other mendicants. The same opportunists who earlier this year rammed through a series of tax cuts disproportionately favoring the wealthy also came back for more, arguing that the recession now upon us could be averted only if those with a lot of money benefited from even more tax cuts.

All this, of course, is proposed with great seriousness as essential for the nation's health. Yet even as Congress opened its purse, lavishing \$15 billion on the airlines, the pink slips began flying: more than 400,000 layoffs were announced within the first month after Sept. 11, roughly a third of that from the aviation industry. So much for the healing power of corporate welfare. Moreover, the true number of layoffs is undoubtedly much higher, since some industries—notably hotels and restaurants—don't announce most layoffs. Officials of HERE, the union representing many hotel workers, are predicting a loss of as much as half of the union's membership, and unofficial counts of "hospitality industry" workers who have lost their jobs or are working severely curtailed hours exceed one million.

Despite this bloodletting, the same members of Congress who called for a united response to terrorism in approving corporate handouts became deeply divided on issues of unemployment compensation, health care and training assistance for the rapidly growing ranks of the unemployed. Although Democrats pushed a \$2 billion relief pack-

Journalism: not just a mirror of

[As a homogenizing corporate grip tightens around the mass media, those who feel ignored and those who believe in a more activist press are scrambling to create alternative news outlets. The following article was written by one such journalist, the editor of Street Spirit, a newspaper published by the American Friends Service Committee.]

By Terry Messman

Many forms of politically engaged journalism have arisen to fight social injustice, from Tom Paine's pamphleteering to Upton Sinclair's muckraking reports to the no-holds-barred struggle of the underground press with the war machine of the 1960s. These and other socially conscious writers [including the Guild's Heywood Brown—Ed.] practiced what I call "justice journalism."

In contrast to this vision of journalists as agents of social change, however, today's major publishers and editors impose a narrow code of conformity and "neutrality" that transforms most journalists into mere stenographers for the powers-that-be. Dissent and outspoken critique have largely been silenced, in favor of so-called objective reporting that nevertheless seems always to uphold the established order. Journalism schools, by and large, are in lockstep with the corporate vision of safe, sanitized reporting and rarely teach the justice journalism of the past.

But nature, as we've been taught, abhors a vacuum. The

homogenized world-view packaged by the corporate press has triggered a wave of new, independent forms of journalism and has forced maverick media groups to take the news into their own hands. Muckraking journalism has been reborn at the barricades of anti-globalization protests and has reappeared on street corners and in homeless shelters across the country. An outspoken brand of justice journalism lives on in the passionate experiments in media activism by the Independent Media Centers, and in the insurgent reporting on poverty and economic inequality carried out by a coast-to-coast network of homeless newspapers.

"There's room and there's enormous need for independent, committed, idealistic journalism," says media critic Norman Solomon, the author of "The Habits of Highly Deceptive Media." But, he adds, it has "never been easy to go against the grain" for journalists who engage in advocacy reporting and "the closer to home the stories are, the greater the obstacles."

As one important example of journalists "who are breaking down the dichotomies between media and social activism," Solomon points to the Independent Media Centers which sprouted up in Seattle and Washington, D.C. to provide independent, grass-roots coverage of the growing movement against corporate globalization. "It's in contrast to the prevalent mainstream media's tacit assumption that if you believe in corporate power—or don't believe in anything—that makes you a reliable journalist," he says.

The violent police attacks on independent journalists cov-

ering the July protests of globalization in Genoa, Italy, demonstrated that radical journalists sometimes suffer the same persecution meted out to activists. "I think it's very significant, because both activists and independent journalists can really threaten the corporate power structure," Solomon says.

Lisa Sousa, a volunteer for San Francisco's Independent Media Center (IMC) and former staff person at Media Alliance, agrees with Solomon's assessment of the significance of police attacks on IMC journalists. "The brutality against independent journalists in Genoa, Italy, shows how dangerous it is to get the truth out there," she says. Sousa journeyed to Quebec to cover the protests surrounding the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in April 2001. "When the police are beating you and shooting bullets at you while you are reporting, and trashing your office and confiscating your videotapes, it becomes clear that independent journalism is activism, no doubt about it."

For their part, IMC media activists often see themselves as an integral part of the broader movement for social change and are quite consciously and deliberately "blurring the line between activism and news," she adds.

Sousa agrees with many of today's younger generation of media democracy activists who have challenged corporate definitions of objective journalism. Objective journalism is a "huge myth," Sousa says. "Big corporations are definitely not objective; they have too many financial interests at stake. At least money doesn't drive what indymedia reports."

and as trade unionists

age—reduced, in the interests of “compromise,” from the \$3.8 billion originally sought—to aid the 140,000 laid-off airline workers, a Republican-led filibuster in the Senate torpedoed the bill. The cynicism with which Senate conservatives view the unemployed could be seen in Texas Sen. Phil Gramm’s threat to amend the relief bill to allow oil drilling in the Alaskan wilderness. So much for setting aside partisan policy issues.

But as it happens, those suddenly facing unemployment (including a steadily growing number of newspaper workers) do so at a time when the unemployment insurance system is in its worst state in at least a decade, both in the U.S. and in Canada—not because of economic stress, but for precisely the opposite reason. A decade of explosive stock market gains, the dot.com and telecom bubbles and econo-babbling about repealing the business cycle resulted in neglect, and sometimes outright plundering, of the funds that were supposed to cushion workers against the inevitable fall. (We can speculate some other time about the repercussions we’d be seeing if the same forces had also succeeded in privatizing Social Security.)

Only about a third of unemployed Canadians receive unemployment insurance, down from approximately 75% just a dozen years ago, thanks in large part to the government treating the unemployment fund as a piggybank to balance the budget: between 1993 and 2001 it withdrew nearly \$46 billion to pay down the deficit, all the while stigmatizing those who had lost their jobs as loafers and parasites. The U.S., meanwhile, has a patchwork of 51 unemployment insurance systems administered by 50 states and the District of Columbia, each setting its own eligibility standards and benefit levels. The result is arbitrary mayhem, with a similarly low percentage of unemployed workers as in Canada—roughly a third—getting assistance, but at near-poverty levels.



DAVID BACON/NORTHERN CALIFORNIA MEDIA GUILD

Moslem mourners gather in Fresno, Cal. for the funeral of Abdo Ali Ahmed, a Yemeni grocery store owner murdered in an apparent hate crime following the attacks on the Pentagon and World

Trade Center. Racial and ethnic profiling is a typical but profoundly undemocratic human response to threats, placing an extra responsibility on the media to spotlight its appearance.

(In 15 states, average UI payments replace less than a third of an unemployed worker’s lost wages; none replaces as much as 50%. According to the Economic Policy Institute, average weekly benefits in 28 states are too low to lift a one-parent, one-child family above the poverty level. The average weekly benefit in California, for example, is \$162.95—only 78 cents more than in Alabama, despite a huge difference between the two states’ costs of living. For

more detailed numbers, see EPI’s U.S. unemployment insurance calculator at www.epinet.org/datazone/uicalc/.)

The sorry condition of the insurance program—not a federal “handout”—for working stiff is not an accident but the result of a decade-long series of policy decisions. So perhaps the White House was only being consistent, following the Sept. 11 attacks, when it proposed an economic relief package that involves virtually no new federal

funding for workers but that would create permanent tax breaks for high-income earners and corporations. If adopted, the package would provide an additional 12 weeks of benefits to workers who remain unemployed after the usual 26-week maximum—provided they lost their jobs after Sept. 11 and worked in New York, Virginia or a state experiencing a 30% jump in unemployment compared with the three-month period pre-

Continued on page 6

reality, but the hammer shaping it

Jeff Perlstein, now a Bay Area social justice organizer, co-founded the original Independent Media Center in Seattle in the weeks preceding the World Trade Organization protests in November 1999. “I think the most vital aspect of the IMC is that it reclaims media for the general population,” Perlstein says.

Perlstein likens advocacy journalism to Bertolt Brecht’s adage that art is not just the mirror that reflects reality, but the hammer with which to shape it. “The best of advocacy journalism substitutes media for art as a tool for changing reality and influencing opinion,” he says. “But this cuts both ways. [Advocacy journalism] is not just something the left does. This is also what the corporate media do. They’re advocating a world view based on corporate dominance and hegemony.”

Noting that a study by Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting showed that Fox TV news had several Republican commentators for every one Democrat, Perlstein comments, “This is advocacy reporting from the right wing. It’s ‘objective’ if it’s from the center or the right, but it’s ‘advocacy journalism’ if it’s anything left of center.”

As the IMCs attempt to foster media democracy in cyberspace, a parallel democracy movement in newsprint has given rise to grassroots homeless newspapers in scores of major cities throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe. This street newspaper movement has embraced the legacy of participatory journalism by encouraging homeless people and activists to write first-hand news accounts of the nearly

invisible world of poverty and human rights violations that goes largely unreported in the corporate-controlled press.

Reporters for street publications now write front-line dispatches from the little-known way-stations of poverty seldom visited by mainstream journalists: slum hotels, homeless shelters, welfare offices and the streets where police criminalize the very poor. While the mainstream media stereotype and editorially attack homeless people as a detriment to downtown commerce and tourism, homeless advocates speak up and fight back through a coast-to-coast network of grassroots, populist newspapers.

Chance Martin, the editor of the Coalition on Homelessness publication *Street Sheet*, deplores the current state of objective journalism. “I think it’s an intentional effort to maintain the status quo,” says Martin. “I think that the thing that frightens the mainstream media most in this country right now is any opinion or voice that is outside the norm.” As a working journalist who studies the coverage of homeless issues by San Francisco’s major newspapers and television stations, Martin disputes their objectivity: “There’s a definite bias there,” he says. “It’s definitely slanted.”

“We see people with real legitimate causes, like Act Up activists trying to get more money for AIDS research, or homeless activists trying to get more money for housing, or antiwar activists fighting against Star Wars, and the mainstream media categorizes them as fringe, as dangerous, as violent, and as people that the younger generation shouldn’t

emulate or even associate with,” Martin explains. “One thing coming out of this anti-capitalist movement that’s really encouraging is that there’s a generation creating a new media. And it’s needed, because the commercial media has mortgaged its soul to the bottom line.”

Ken Moshesh, a street journalist for *Poor Magazine*, has leapt over more of the barriers between journalism and activism than perhaps any other reporter. A homeless resident of Berkeley, Moshesh was arrested repeatedly by University of California police for illegal lodging. As a skilled journalist, Moshesh reported on his arrests and subsequent court trials for *Poor News Network*, but he also played a leading role in a protest campaign at Berkeley City Hall and waged a court fight that overturned the lodging law.

Moshesh publicized his court fight in the major media, but decided to report in his own voice in the homeless press. Moshesh says that because homeless people’s experiences are not considered newsworthy, they are not invited by the mainstream press to report on what happens to their lives as a direct result of repressive laws set in motion by government officials to criminalize poverty. That lack of media democracy, he believes, perpetuates homelessness. “This is supposed to be a democracy for all of the people,” he says. “In order for that to happen, representatives from all of the people have to have a voice, so that some of the people won’t be able to monopolize the news in such a way that other people are completely left without a voice.”

Under fire as journalists, unionists

Continued from page 5

ceding Sept. 11. The first requirement means that hundreds of thousands of workers who lost their jobs before the attacks, and who must now compete with post-attack unemployed workers in a tight job market, get no extra relief; the second, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, means residents of only 17 states will qualify for the extension, anyway.

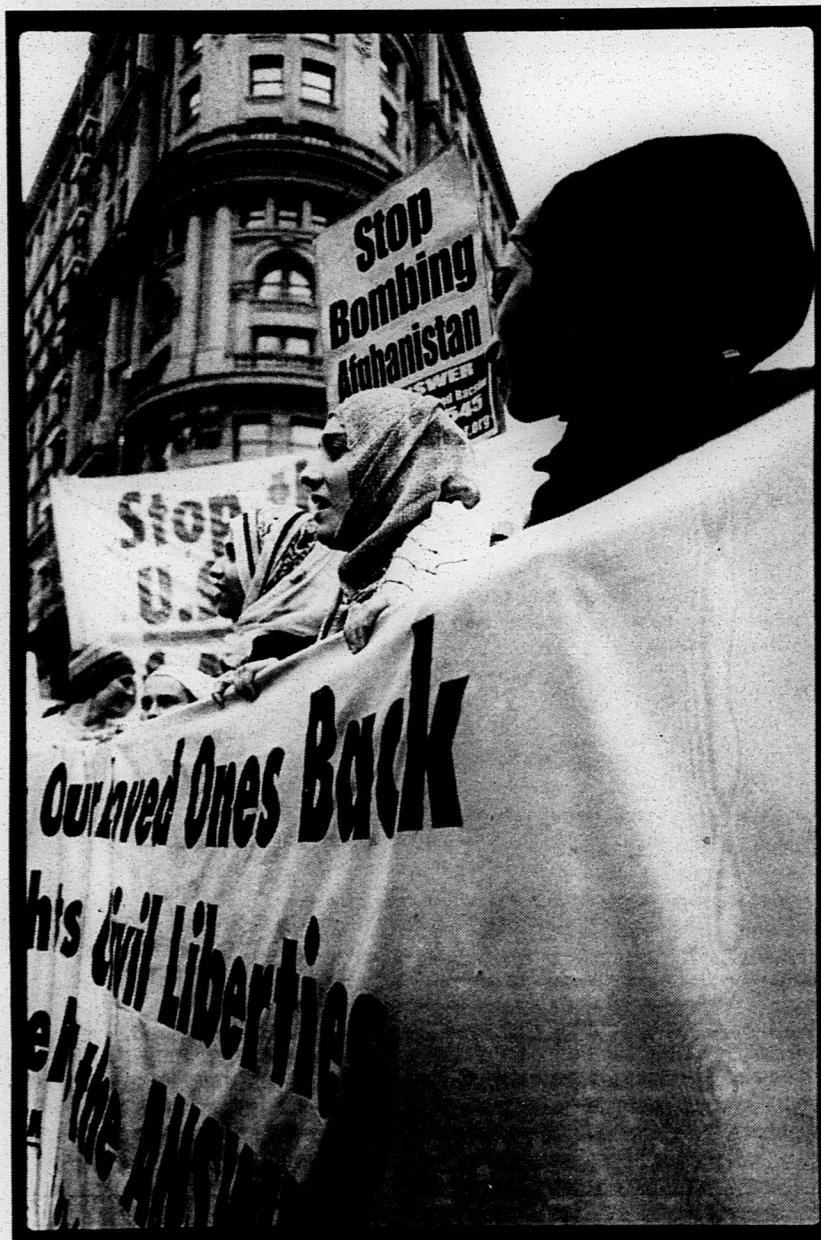
On the tax side, however, the administration has a more generous—and much longer—outlook. It is, for example, seeking permanent tax code changes that would allow corporations to write off the costs of new equipment and capital investments immediately, instead of depreciating them over several years; and of extending the carry-back period for losses to five years from the current two. Both changes would plump up corporate bottom lines considerably while reducing federal revenues.

Meanwhile, the House Ways and Means Committee has approved a proposal repealing—retroactively—the corporate alternative minimum tax, which was adopted in 1986 to end the use of so many tax loopholes that some companies never paid taxes at all. The retroactive provision would mean approximately \$25 billion in tax rebates to the companies that have paid this alternative minimum the past 15 years, including \$1.42 billion to IBM, \$833 million to General Motors and \$671 million to General Electric. Poetically, two of the top ten corporate recipients would be United Airlines (\$371 million) and American Airlines (\$184 million), already targeted by the \$15 billion relief package.

Rich though these spoils may be, however, they pale beside the wealth corporate America believes it would reap if only it could get fast track authority—now dubbed “trade promotion authority”—for the President. With such authority, its advocates believe, the White House would be empowered to open the world to free trade; free trade would result in greater prosperity for all; and greater prosperity would eliminate the blight and deprivation in which terrorism thrives. Which is to say, every American should understand that supporting fast track legislation is a patriotic act—and, by extension, that opposing it is not.

That isn't left-wing paranoia speaking. It's Robert Zoellick, the country's top trade negotiator, who in a Washington Post article argued that trade leadership has to figure into the war on terrorism. “Trade is about more than economic efficiency,” he wrote. “It promotes the values at the heart of this protracted struggle.”

Well, yes—if by those values Zoellick meant corporate freedom from government oversight and social accountability. He could not have meant higher living standards for the world's masses, because increased global trade over the past two decades has resulted in greater immiserization. As the Economic Policy Institute announced, in a study released Oct. 11, “the evidence is overwhelming that this current globalization agenda is a scourge on the poor.” Among EPI's findings were a widening gap between rich and poor within nations, as well as a growing gap between rich nations (that's us) and poor nations (most certainly including Afghanistan), and widespread and growing poverty in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. In 1999, for example,



DAVID BACON/NORTHERN CALIFORNIA MEDIA GUILD

Marching not in Lahore or Kabul but in San Francisco, these Moslem women led a march Oct. 7 protesting the bombing of Afghanistan—and, not incidentally, challenging U.S. media claims of reportorial objectivity. These and other protests received scant coverage, even as the major networks acceded, in varying proportions, to White House requests that they give less play to Osama bin Laden's statements.

the world's poorest 400 million people lived on an average of 78 cents or less per day—compared to 400 million living on 79 cents or less a day in 1990 and 72 cents or less in 1980. “Once inflation is factored in, those numbers are even worse,” notes the report, titled “The Unremarkable Record of Liberalized Trade.”

Not surprisingly, therefore, one of the battlegrounds over trade promotion authority has hinged on organized labor's demands that greater freedom for corporations be tied to increased protection for workers, including the elimination of child labor (more than 250 million children under the age of 14 are forced to work worldwide) and guarantees of workers' rights to unionization. The need for such guarantees was underscored Oct. 9 by the ironically named International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, which in its annual survey reported that 209 trade unionists were killed or “disappeared” in 2000; an additional 8,500 were arrested, 3,000 were injured, 20,000 were dismissed and more than 100,000 harassed because of their trade union activities. More than 100 countries have legal obstacles to establishing trade unions.

Environmentalists, meanwhile, have

lobbied for similar environmental safeguards in any new trade treaties, but both they and unionists had been dismissed by free traders before Sept. 11 as Luddite isolationists. Now such dismissals have acquired an additional flag-waving tone that brooks little disagreement.

(Which is not to say that there hasn't been disagreement nonetheless. Particularly on point was a letter to the editor from Sen. Ernest F. Hollings in response to Zoellick's diatribe, in which he quoted the latter's argument that Congress must pass fast track legislation “so America can negotiate agreements that advance the causes of openness, development and growth.” As Hollings noted, “Congress doesn't have to do that. All that is required is for Mr. Zoellick to negotiate those agreements.”)

All this should matter to TNG-CWA members for several reasons, starting with the obvious: the state of the economy in general, and of the unemployment insurance program in particular, will have deep personal meaning for those about to be laid off, as well as those who have already lost their jobs in the past year. But on a more abstract level, organized

labor's health worldwide has a direct and growing effect on all unions in the United States.

Free trade on a global scale, as currently defined, means capital mobility—the unrestricted opportunity for factories, offices and other workplaces to skip around the world in search of the cheapest labor that qualifies for the job. And labor stays cheap as long as it is splintered and divided, without the negotiating leverage or bargaining power that comes with effective unions. Moreover, labor stays cheap as long as it—unlike capital—lacks mobility: as long as labor is restrained from seeking higher wages elsewhere. It's noteworthy, therefore, that in the weeks after Sept. 11 all Congressional momentum for immigration reform has dissipated. Instead of amnesty for illegal immigrants already in the U.S. and looser provisions for guest workers, all the talk now is about clamping down at the borders and setting up tracking systems for people already in the country.

The newspaper industry is not immune to these economic forces. While newspapers as a tangible product with short shelf-life still must be manufactured in close proximity to their customers (although most publishers are dearly wishing for an economically viable internet-based business model), virtually all pre-press activity can be unmoored and moved about at will: copy editing, ad design and page layout can be done anywhere. So can a lot of reporting, thanks to increased reliance on telephone interviews and internet data bases and less on old-fashioned shoe leather; and, if need be, there are hungry freelancers in every city who can be hired by the hour for a piece of local color. So if copy editors can be hired in an English-speaking but low paying country like India, or if page layout can be done more cheaply in Ireland or the Czech Republic, economic logic may drive even newspaper jobs overseas—unless there's a contract addressing such issues.

But there's another trend of concern to TNG-CWA members that can only be exacerbated by Sept. 11: the relentless consolidation of all media, including newspapers, on a global scale. This possibility was articulated in an off-hand comment by Viacom president Mel Karmazin, who suggested earlier this month that media revenues also have taken a big hit because of the attacks—and therefore Washington should cut broadcasters a regulatory break by deep-sixing key ownership rules. One of those rules caps single ownership of television stations at 35% of the national market. Another supposedly prevents cross-ownership of television and newspaper operations in the same city.

“Supposedly,” wink-wink, because the rule is already widely flouted in the expectation that it's on its last legs. Indeed, the Oct. 15 issue of *Editor & Publisher* features a profile of Cox Enterprises that all but boasts of its “triple play” in Atlanta, where it owns the market's leading broadcast TV station and its largest radio group and its largest daily newspapers. It's pretty much a safe bet, however, that no one at the Federal Communications Commission is in a lather about Cox—not since Sept. 13, or two days after the hijackers attacked. That's when the FCC opened hearings that are supposed to “review” the ownership rules—and almost certainly dispose of them.

Then watch the feeding frenzy begin—and the jobs start disappearing.



LOOKING AHEAD

NY Times targets the wrong enemy

By Linda Foley, President

NBC news anchor Tom Brokaw struggled to keep his emotions in check as he described how he felt about a long-time assistant contracting cutaneous anthrax from a hate letter addressed to him. Meanwhile, a few blocks away in midtown Manhattan, Judith Miller, a reporter who covers bio-terrorism for the New York Times, received a similar letter filled with an unidentified powdery substance. She wrote how she felt the same kind of helpless outrage as Brokaw. (Tests on the letter delivered to the Times proved to be negative for anthrax.)

Miller and Brokaw had become targets—one apparently the victim of a hoax, the other imperiled by a real threat—just because they report the news.

That's a large part of what's so unsettling about terrorism: targeted for bioterrorism because you work for the media; targeted by Osama bin Laden because you're an American; targeted for racial profiling because you "look Arab"; targeted by extremists because you live in New York or Washington or Chicago, or because you fly in planes, or work in tall buildings.

Since Sept. 11, we all feel as if someone pinned bull's eyes to our backs when we weren't looking, like those "kick me" signs worn by unsuspecting vaudevilian straight men. Only this isn't an act and no one is laughing.

The New York Times, almost better than any other employer, has been particularly sensitive and responsive to vulnerability felt by its employees during these difficult times. From around-the-clock coverage of Sept. 11's horrific events to an anthrax scare in its own building, the Times has gone out of its way to take care of its staff's physical and emotional needs.

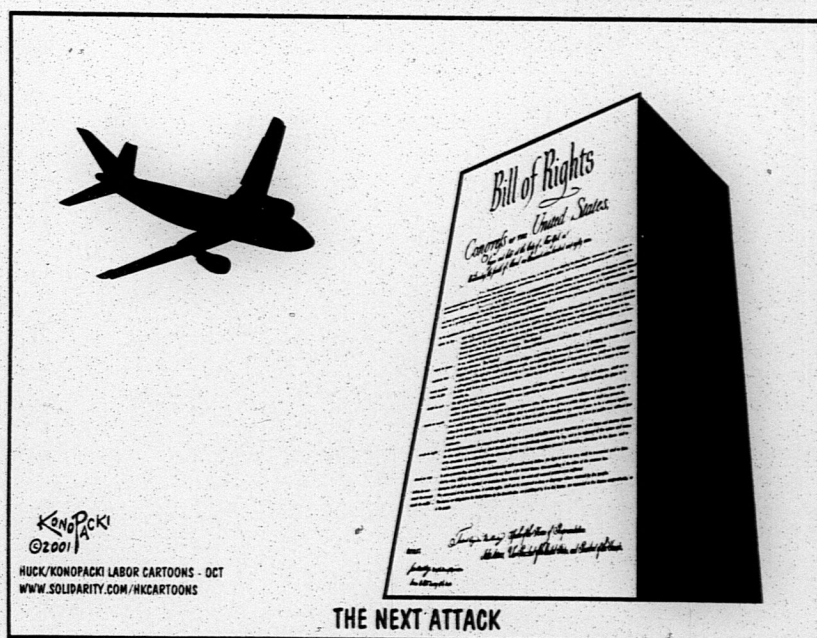
Therefore, it is particularly disappointing to see the New York Times' reaction to the Supreme Court's verdict in *Tasini v. New York Times*. In that case, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Times and other publications were not entitled to use a freelance writer's work on a web page or in a database without the author's express permission.

The Times has refused to seriously bargain over the amount and method of reimbursement to the freelance writers for reuse. In addition, the Times has purged its archives of any articles written by freelancers unless and until they sign "all-rights" contracts, which stipulate that the Times may reuse any of their articles without additional compensation.

More appalling, however, the Times has instructed editors not to purchase work from any of the 13 named plaintiffs who filed the *Tasini* suit. The list of names was distributed by a senior Times editor in a Sept. 18 memo to "News Execs," with the recommendation that "the newspaper not engage any of the below named plaintiffs to write for the newspaper." During the Cold War, this tactic was known as blacklisting. One other irony: the Times' internal memo was issued after an editor inadvertently commissioned one of the plaintiffs to write a firsthand account of her experiences on Sept. 11 at Ground Zero in New York City.

Ignoring the need to reach an agreement on compensation with the freelancers, then attempting to blacklist them and freeze publication of their articles, is unbecoming for a newspaper that has shown such class and responsibility both in print and in practice during the aftermath of Sept. 11.

The Times should lower its sights from these writers. They aren't the enemy.



Language as politics

Corporate English obscures reality by excluding people. Passive verbs are consistently used and the subjects of action not identified (as in this sentence). For example, corporate English commonly portrays economic processes as if they just happen, independent of people. So, instead of saying, "The school is charging students more money for courses," corporate-language users write "Tuition fees are going up." Similarly, they write, "Interest rates may climb again," instead of "The banks will charge you more for a loan."

Using this kind of passive language, writers avoid saying who is responsible for actions. No one can be called to account for what is being done. The human experience and consequences are left out. Terms like "escalating inflation rate" or "pension de-indexing" do not conjure up the image of people lining up at food banks.

While corporate English leaves people out, it can also draw them in by becoming part of everybody's language. For example, when people use the word "restraint" to

describe what a government is doing when it cuts social-service budgets, they mouth the government's line. In this way, corporate English can control the content of our thought and speech.

Clear language has its roots in the popular education movement. Popular English, which the movement promotes, is more than using easy words and sentences. It uses language that addresses matters of power and control, with the people put back in. So, for example, take a sentence like this: "Miners are advised to adhere to a schedule of chest x-rays at two-year intervals." Using clear language, it can be changed to: "Miners should get their chests x-rayed every two years." Popular English advocates would also add: "... and join the union health and safety committee."

Popular English focuses on the choice of political perspectives as much as the choice of words.

[From "Making It Clear/Writing on Our Side," by the Progressive Literacy Group in Vancouver, British Columbia]

Wrapping themselves in Old Glory . . .

By Norman Solomon

In Time magazine's special issue about the events of Sept. 11, chilling photos evoke the horrific slaughter in Manhattan. All of the pages are deadly serious. And on the last page, under the headline "The Case for Rage and Retribution," an essay by Time regular Lance Morrow declares: "A day cannot live in infamy without the nourishment of rage. Let's have rage."

Exhorting our country to relearn the lost virtues of "self-confident relentlessness" and "hatred," the article calls for "a policy of focused brutality." It's an apt conclusion to an edition of the nation's biggest news-magazine that embodies the human strengths and ominous defects of American media during the current crisis.

Much of the initial news coverage was poignant, grief-stricken and utterly appropriate. But many news analysts and pundits lost no time conveying—sometimes with great enthusiasm—their eagerness to see the United States use its military might in anger. Such impulses are extremely dangerous.

For instance, night after night on cable television, Bill O'Reilly has been banging his loud drum for indiscriminate reprisals. Unless the Taliban quickly hands over Osama bin Laden, he proclaimed on Fox News Channel, "the U.S. should bomb the Afghan infrastructure to rubble—the airport, the power plants, their water facilities and the roads."

What about the civilian population of Afghanistan? "We should not target civilians," O'Reilly said, "but if they don't rise up against this criminal government, they starve, period." For good measure, O'Reilly urged that the U.S. extensively bomb Iraq and Libya.

A former New York Times executive editor, A.M. Rosenthal, was able to top O'Reilly in armchair militarism. Rosenthal added Iran, Syria and Sudan to O'Reilly's expendable-nation list, writing in the Washington Times that the U.S. government should be ready and willing to deliver a 72-hour ultimatum to six governments—quickly followed by massive bombing if Washington is not satisfied.

In a similar spirit, New York Post columnist Steve Dunleavy demanded oceans of innocent blood: "As for cities or countries that host these worms, bomb them into basketball courts." The editor of National Review, a young fellow named Rich Lowry, was similarly glib about recommending large-scale crimes against humanity: "If we flatten part of Damascus or Tehran or whatever it takes, that is part of the solution."

More insidious than the numerous hot-head pundits are the far more numerous reporters who can't stop providing stenographic services to official sources under the guise of journalism.

We've heard that it's important for journalists to be independent of the government. Sometimes that independence has been more apparent than real, but sometimes it has been an appreciable reality and a deserved source of professional pride. But today, judging from the content of the reporting by major national media outlets, such pride has crumbled with the World Trade Center towers.

More than ever, as journalists report for duty, the news profession is morphing into PR flackery for Uncle Sam. In effect, a lot of reporters are saluting the commander-in-chief and awaiting orders.

Consider some recent words from Dan Rather. During his Sept. 17 appearance on David Letterman's show, the CBS news anchor laid it on the line. "George Bush is the president," Rather said, "he makes the decisions." Speaking as "one American," the newsman added: "Wherever he wants me to line up, just tell me where. And he'll make the call."

American journalism is sometimes known as the Fourth Estate. But Dan Rather is far from the only high-profile journalist who now appears eager to turn his profession into a fourth branch of government.

Solomon, whose latest book is "The Habits of Highly Deceptive Media," is an associate of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, a media watchdog group that first published this commentary. FAIR may be visited on the web at www.fair.org.

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: November 9.) Letters may be e-mailed to the editor at azipser@cwa-union.org.

Guild's longest-tenured member dies

First—and only—cartoonist to win Broun Award

No one carried a Guild card longer—he signed up in '34—than Herbert Block. And no one did a better job of skewering politicians, illuminating human folly and standing up for the little guy—as evidenced by several Pulitzer Prizes and the Heywood Broun Award.

But more than 70 years after he first started drawing cartoons for the Chicago Daily News, the cartoonist better known as Herblock reached the end of his sketchpad October 7, dying of pneumonia at the age of 91.

Although both his father (briefly) and brother were reporters, Herbert Block became a journalist with pictures rather than words, winning several newspaper

drawing and coloring contests as a child. He landed his first "real" newspaper job before he was 20, mere months before the great stock market crash, but even at that early age had already developed the trademark style that would stay with him into the next century—and which would inspire generations of cartoonists after him.

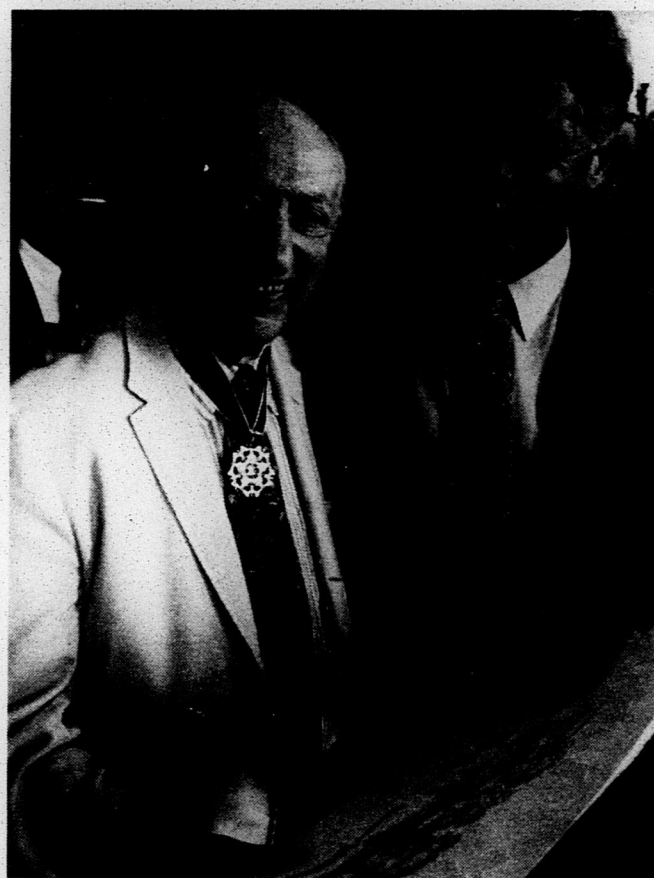
For Herblock was an atavism, a throwback to the great lampooning tradition of Honore Daumier in France and Thomas Nash in the U.S.—both of whom had flourished in the 19th century. In the years since, cartooning had become a pallid, clichéd affair that ruffled no one—until a Chicago kid started raising hell about monopolistic

businesses and totalitarian governments, about campaign finance reform and McCarthyism—about, most famously, the venality of those who occupied the White House. His 1954 drawing of Richard Nixon crawling out of a sewer marked a watershed in political commentary—and proved prescient by two decades.

Four years after signing on with the Chicago Daily News, Herblock moved to Cleveland to join a Scripps-Howard feature service, where he won—in 1942—his first Pulitzer. He then spent a couple of years in the U.S. Army before joining, in 1946, the only other paper for which he would ever work: The Washington Post. He ruled there—after helping publisher Philip Graham understand their relationship—until he published his last cartoon this past August. Along the way he racked up two more Pulitzers, one in 1954 for a cartoon on the death of Stalin, and one in 1979—more than a decade before he packed it in—for his life's work.

Herblock's more rarefied distinction, perhaps, was the Heywood Broun Award he received for his work in 1949—the first and only time the award was presented to a cartoonist. Moreover, 1949 was also the first time the Broun judges awarded two prizes instead of one, also honoring black reporter Ted Poston for his courageous reporting from the South. The judges described Herblock's cartoons as constituting "one of the most powerful of contemporary journalistic influences," explaining:

"They combine graphic skill, a high sense of social values and a mordant wit. They are a jog to complacency, a taunt to hypocrisy, a challenge to meanness. The whole body of Herblock's work seemed to the judges to exemplify



Despite decades of lampooning U.S. presidents, Herblock nevertheless was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Clinton in 1994. Four years later, one of his cartoons depicted Clinton on a tightrope, one upraised hand balancing the budget, the other a shapely brunette in an all-too-brief dress.

the spirit of Heywood Broun."

That spirit continued to suffuse Herblock's work for decades thereafter, as he repeatedly contrasted the plight of working people with the advantages enjoyed by the wealthy and powerful. When his work was exhibited at the Library of Congress a year ago, curator Harry Katz observed that Herblock "observed the suffering around him and used his editorial panel as a vehicle for progressive reform."

Eight years ago, when the

Washington-Baltimore Guild paid special tribute to him for his 60 years as a dues-paying Guild member, Herblock joked, "I think it was Woody Allen who said, 'Life really consists of just showing up.' In my case, I'm being honored for just showing up on the Guild rolls."

As personally modest as he was politically and morally aggressive, Herblock did more than just show up; he arrived ready to mix it up with the rich and powerful.

"You're Trying to Destroy Free Enterprise"



Throughout his long career, Herblock championed the small and weak against the large and oppressive—often tackling subjects of apparent timelessness.

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DAYBOOK

TNG Canada Rep. Council,
Oct. 26-28, Halifax

Western District Council,
Oct. 26-28, Seattle

AFL-CIO Safety, Health Conf.,
Oct. 28-30, Pittsburgh

Irving Leuchter scholarship
deadline, Nov. 1

Tri-Council Meeting,
Nov. 2-4, St. Louis

New England Dist. Council,
Nov. 2-4, Manchester

AFL-CIO Civil, Human Rights
Conf., Dec. 2-3, Las Vegas

AFL-CIO Biennial Convention,
Dec. 4-7, Las Vegas

New Officers' Training,
Jan. 19-21, Meany Center

TNG Sector Conference,
Feb. 14-17, Orlando

FROM THE MORGUE

Fifty years ago this month:

Arguing that the mid-section of the country needs more union attention than the two coasts, the Denver local mounts a drive to have the American Newspaper Guild move its headquarters to that city. . . . A 10-page sample issue of the National Reporter, a proposed national labor daily, is distributed to unions nationwide in a bid for financial backing. . . . Delegates from 13 journalists' trade unions agree to form a new world federation to replace the Communist-dominated International Organization of Journalists.

Twenty-five years ago this month:

Members of the North Jersey Guild vote to merge their local's five units into the New York Guild. . . . CBS newsmen Daniel Schorr, having refused to identify for the House Ethics Committee his source for a secret report on the CIA, resigns after 23 years with the network. . . . An estimated one million Canadian union members walk off the job in a day of protest against continued wage controls, forcing suspended publication of five Guild-represented newspapers.

Ten years ago this month:

Connie Knox and Russ Cain are sworn in as first-time members of the International Executive Board. . . . AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland promises federation support for the Dayton Guild as it seeks a first contract at the Cox-owned Dayton Daily News, blasting as "a damned atrocity" the refusal of two Cox-owned radio stations to sell air time to the Guild for an ad campaign explaining the stand-off.