

THE GUILD Reporter

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CanWest claims first victims Montreal staff yanks web site; two columnists quit when censored

While the Federal Communications Commission in the United States ponders whether increased media monopolies have a chilling effect on democratic discourse, the Canadians are receiving a dramatic lesson in the affirmative.

A little more than a year after acquiring a string of newspapers from former "press baron" Conrad Black, CanWest Global Communications told its editors they would be obliged to publish corporate editorials as

often as three times a week. When the inevitable protest followed, CanWest responded in one of two ways: it ignored those beyond its reach, and it threatened, dumped or censored those closer to home.

When Guild-represented employees at the Montreal Gazette held a two-day byline strike and posted a petition opposing the new policy on a web site, management responded with a heavy-handed memo that essentially charged its critics with treason.

"Crucial as free expression and a free press are to journalists," averred a memo from editor-in-chief Peter Stockland and managing editor Raymond Brassard, "they do not automatically trump every other right nor does the designation 'journalist' negate the right of the owner of a newspaper company to run that newspaper as he or she wishes, consistent with the law."

For those too dense to comprehend the implications of that sentence, the memo

added: "Case law supports sanctions, including suspension or termination, against those who persist in disregarding their obligations to their employer after clear warning." The by-line strike ended, the web site was yanked.

But there have been casualties, nonetheless. Gazette political columnist Don Macpherson, writing about the new editorial policy, observed: "A policy that forbids a

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The Sept. 11 death of Shawn Nassaney prompted the Pawtucket (R.I.) Newspaper Guild to set up a scholarship fund in his memory. Present at a recent check-passing ceremony are (l to r):

Brother Daniel Aubin, FSC; Shawn's parents, Margaret and Patrick Nassaney; Congressman Patrick Kennedy, D-R.I.; and Guild members Denise Barry, Nancy Devonis and Doug Hadden.

9/11 prompts RI local to create scholarship

When the attacks of Sept. 11 hit home, members of the Pawtucket Newspaper Guild—representing employees in the business, advertising and editorial departments at The Times of Pawtucket, R.I.—determined to do something positive and local in response.

At an October meeting at which the annual election of officers became an afterthought, Guild members voted enthusiastically and unanimously to contact the city's parochial high school, St. Raphael Academy, about raising funds for a scholarship in memory of Shawn M. Nassaney, a 1994 graduate of the school who was aboard the United Airlines Flight 175 that struck the second World Trade Center tower.

Nassaney and his girlfriend, Lynn Goodchild, from nearby Attleboro, Mass., had been enroute to a vacation in Hawaii. They were

both 25 years old. Nassaney had graduated from the academy in 1994, after excelling academically and making a splash in local sports pages as captain of the cross-country team, and had been equally successful at Bryant College.

School principal Brother Daniel Aubin quickly agreed to start a memorial scholarship that would be awarded on the basis of character, achievement and community involvement.

The local community embraced the effort, with businesses and individuals donating the food, hall, disc jockey, decorations, other services and more than two dozen raffle prizes for a Nov. 16 dinner-dance organized by Guild members Denise Barry and Nancy Devonis and local president Doug Hadden. One hundred and sixty tickets and more than 1,000 raffle tickets were sold for the event, raising more than \$2,600, with more than half of

the Guild's members joining 16 members of the Nassaney and Goodchild families for the occasion.

The dinner-dance also got other donations in motion. Significant contributions came in from American Power Conversion Corp., where Nassaney was a promising young sales manager; from Congressman Patrick Kennedy, D-R.I.; and from as far afield as the Borough Council of Belper, England, Pawtucket's sister city, which collected £300 for the fund.

Numerous businesses, individuals and local political officials also have contributed to the ongoing effort, which at a check-passing ceremony Jan. 10 had grown to three-fourths of the \$10,000 needed to make the scholarship self-perpetuating. If all goes as planned, the first scholarship recipient will be named by next

Changes coming to exec council

At least one contested election and one constitutional amendment await delegates to the upcoming TNG-CWA sector conference, and at least two new faces will be added to the TNG-CWA executive council.

Scheduled for Feb. 14-17 in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, this year's sector conference is being held several months in advance of the CWA convention to provide sufficient time for election of new officers. All TNG-CWA officers serve three-year terms that begin on the opening day of the CWA convention.

Among current incumbents, all four top officers—the sector chairperson, president, secretary-treasurer and director of TNG Canada—have announced they will run for re-election, as have four vice presidents. At Guild Reporter deadlines, there were no publicly declared challengers to the incumbents. But three vice presidents will be stepping down in June, and a fourth seat—representing eastern Canada—has been vacant since last

summer, following John Barker's resignation.

Those not seeking re-election include Beverlyann Morris, from region 3; Russ Cain, from region 4; and Jack Norman, region 6. Only one candidate had declared for each of those positions as The Guild Reporter went to press, although additional candidates could emerge at the sector conference: Scott Stephens, a reporter for the Cleveland Plain Dealer, in region 3; Larry Hatfield, currently an at-large vice president, in region 4; and Karolynn DeLucca in region 6.

The only contested seat appears to be in Canada, with Percy Hatfield and Dan Seguin both seeking to represent Canadian locals east of Manitoba. Seguin is president of the North Bay Newspaper Guild. Percy Hatfield (like his "brother," Larry) is one of two at-large vice presidents on the current council, but both those seats are being eliminated this year in a constitutionally-amended drive to reduce the council's size.

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Quincy newsroom votes to affiliate

By a vote of 45-2, the Patriot Ledger Newsroom Associates voted to affiliate with the Guild sector of CWA. The formerly independent union represents about 60 workers in the newsroom of the Quincy, MA, Patriot Ledger.

The election followed on the

heels of one last August, in which approximately 63 workers in the financial services, advertising, dispatch, building services and ad services departments voted 39-2 in favor of affiliation with TNG-CWA.

The Patriot Ledger, owned by Newspaper Media Corp., has a daily circulation of about 72,000.

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In Milwaukee, management really does take the cake

Of all the things management at the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel has done to workers, this one takes the cake. Literally.

As a sweet way of making its point during negotiations on a health care contract reopener, the Milwaukee Newspaper Guild tried to donate four sheet cakes to the Journal Sentinel newsroom's potluck holiday party Dec. 13. Each cake was decorated with the message, "Sick About Health Care—Healthy Holidays—Milwaukee Newspaper Guild," in pink and green frosting.

But when the first cake showed up in the newsroom that morning, management couldn't stomach the idea of seeing its position criticized in whipped cream. One high-ranking editor was so frosted that he confiscated the Guild's cake and held it hostage in his office, thereby suggesting an apt metaphor for management's position on health care: By evading its legal responsibility to bargain with the Guild, and then imposing the huge cost-shifting plan that management wanted, Journal Communications Inc.—the newspaper's parent company—is trying to have the workers' cake and eat it, too.

The cakes were part of a mobilizing campaign that Local 51 has mounted in its struggle for affordable health care. The Guild local is the only Journal Communications union whose contract specifies how much the company must contribute to workers' health care, which has stymied management's effort to shift more costs to workers. Because of that issue, talks on Local 51's current contract ended with an agreement to reopen the pact for more health-care negotiations halfway through the contract's four-year term, in 2001.

When it became clear that management's goal was to eliminate all contract language and take total control of health care, the local's members started mobilizing, distributing bulletins on their position to union and non-union workers in the cafeteria and wearing buttons reading "Sick about health care" with a picture of a bandage.

After the local's executive board, on the advice of the international, rejected a tentative agreement, management responded by declaring an impasse and imposing its conditions just before Thanksgiving. Starting next year, those conditions would boost workers' health-care costs by 28% to 100% or more and would force working spouses either to sign up for their own companies' health insurance or pay another \$75 a month for Journal Communications coverage. And for the long term, managers said their goal would be to double or triple the amount workers are paying now for health care.

The local responded with more mobilizing. Across the newsroom, bright pink table-tents appeared on computer terminals, proclaiming "Still sick about health care . . ." on one side, "And not getting any better" on the other. As Christmas approached, a second round of table-tents—this time in bright green—announced, "Scooged by Journal Communications—health care costs up 28% to 100%+" on one side, and "Can't afford to be well, let alone sick" on the other.

Posters with the Guild message also showed up in restrooms and elevators, although managers tried to rip them down as fast as they went up. Then came the cakes. And, just before Christmas, stewards handed out small bags of candy and cough drops bearing the message, "Healthy Holidays—The Milwaukee Newspaper Guild."

As for management's pastry-pilfering, Guild representatives brought the other three cakes to the Journal Sentinel cafeteria, where they were gobbled up during the lunch and dinner hours. Union members also brought smaller cakes, with the same message to the human resources and benefits managers for the Journal Sentinel and Journal Communications so they wouldn't have to steal anybody else's cakes.

And the Guild eventually liberated the hostage cake and served it in the newsroom the next day, minus the message. By then, its legend had already spread.

Human rights revamp ahead

High on the agenda for February's sector conference will be a report and panel discussion on the TNG-CWA human rights program, with delegates expected to vote on a wide-ranging set of recommendations to update the Guild's efforts. The program was last overhauled in 1976, when its primary focus was on affirmative action.

The recommendations will be proposed by a TNG-CWA committee, chaired by regional vice president Peter Szekely, which has been responding to concerns from some Guild members that the program needs updating. Guiding the committee's work

were the results of a membership survey that identified the following priority issues:

- Family concerns, such as medical leave and dependent care.
- Equal opportunity and discrimination in matters such as promotion, assignments, and equal pay.
- Benefits equity, including retirement and domestic partners.
- Diversity, covering representative staffing, disability accommodations, education and training.
- Workplace security, including workplace violence, hate crimes and privacy.

A plenary panel, scheduled for Feb. 14, also will address many of the same issues. Moderated by Lena Williams, a New York Times

reporter and unit chairperson and author of "It's the Small Things" (see page 5 for related item), the panel will include Hamlin Grange, president of ProMedia, a Toronto-based media consultant who designed a tool to analyze cultural diversity in media content; Ken Wong, director of the UCLA Labor Center; and Rudy Renaud, former managing editor of *Lavender*, a Guild-represented magazine for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

In addition to seeking conference approval of its recommendations, the committee is expected to introduce new constitutional language amending Article VIII, Section 20, which defines each local's participation in the program.

Council to get new faces

Continued from page 1

Campaign statements and brief biographies of candidates for any contested positions will be published in the next Guild Reporter.

The Canadian vacancy also means a concurrent election must be held to fill the position through the end of the unexpired term—a period of only a few months—and has prompted submission of a constitutional amendment by the TNG-CWA Canada Bylaws Committee. Coincidentally, both Seguin and Hatfield served on the committee,

which Seguin chaired

The proposal would create a mechanism for filling board vacancies that occur between sector conferences. Current language provides that such vacancies will be filled at the next regularly scheduled sector conference.

Seguin said he will run for the interim position as well as for the full three-year term. At press time, Hatfield said he still hadn't decided whether to seek the interim seat but definitely will run for the full three-year term.

In brief . . .

Card-check won for Minn. PIRG

The Minnesota Newspaper Guild/Typographical Union has achieved a voluntary recognition agreement for 20 employees at the Minnesota Public Interest Research Group in Minneapolis. The grunt work was done by new local organizer Abram Isaacs, who was hired under a subsidy program from the CWA organizing fund.

Seminar leave 'good, sufficient'

The Pittsburgh local of TNG-CWA won an arbitration with the Valley Independent regarding access to unpaid leave for the New Local Officers Seminar. Although contract language provided unpaid leave for "good and sufficient cause," management had decided union education did not qualify, forcing a unit officer to take vacation time to attend last year's seminar. But arbitrator James Duff determined that the employer "improperly attempted to apply a policy of blanket denial" of leave requests, "in disregard of the agreement's open mandate that leave requests be granted." In remedy, the vacation days taken by the grievant to attend the seminar will be restored to her.

CEP lockout ends with ratification

The Communications, Energy and Paperworkers union and the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. reached a tentative agreement just before Christmas, ending a two-week lockout; ratification of the new contract followed a week later. The Canadian Media Guild, which also represents CBC employees, supported the CEP picket lines with cash donations, food, petitions and volunteer pickets.

More staff cuts ordered in St. Paul

The St. Paul Pioneer Press began a second round of workforce reductions a week before Christmas, offering early retirement and buyout packages in several departments. The company said it wanted to cut the Guild/Typo workforce by as many as eight employees, in addition to cutting two to five newsroom positions and three jobs in other departments.

Jersey Journal seeks 50% cuts

The 135-year-old, Newhouse-owned Jersey Journal, claiming it is on death's doorstep, told its three major unions—including TNG-CWA—that they have to agree to staff cuts of nearly 50% by month's end or see the paper shut down. Management's demand means 17 of the 35 Guild-represented employees in the newsroom will

lose their jobs. TNG-CWA staff rep Bruce Nelson has been working with local president Ron Leir to craft an enhanced severance package, but reports there isn't much sweetening available—and any package will be moot, anyway, if the other two unions don't get a deal within the next couple of weeks.

ProJo closes Newport bureau

The Belo-owned Providence Journal, whose penny-pinching ways have been dramatized by its stonewalling at the bargaining table and its peddling of non-existent parking spaces to employees, has made another dubious belt-tightening move: it closed its two-person bureau in Newport on Jan. 4. Staffers interpreted the move as a retreat from the newspaper's commitment to statewide coverage.

Register-Guard to lay off up to 15

After working nearly a thousand days without a new contract, thanks in large part to attorney Michael Zinser's dilatory tactics, Guild-represented employees of the Register-Guard got some more bad news Jan. 11: up to 15 employees face layoffs by Feb. 15. The cuts will come on top of 20 positions that already have been eliminated through attrition. Local president Suzi Prozanski said many employees of the Oregon daily immediately offered to reduce their hours if that would prevent job losses.

How much is overtime worth?

Newspapers traditionally have tried to erase overtime provisions in the newsroom, but the Albany Times Union has a new wrinkle: it's proposing to increase the top minimum for some reporters and photographers by 10%—or by approximately \$120 a week—if they agree to be exempt from overtime. The Guild is reviewing the proposal.

Liver donor dies helping brother

Albany Times Union reporter and TNG-CWA member Mike Hurewitz died Jan. 13 from surgical complications after an operation in which he donated part of his liver to his brother. The brother, Adam, is a physician from Long Island and is recovering. Mike Hurewitz, 57, had been a reporter for almost 30 years and had worked for the Long Island Press and the New York Post before joining the Times Union in 1994. The Albany Guild has established the Mike Hurewitz Scholarship Fund for Journalism Students in his memory.

Sound bite:

L. Michael Zinser reportedly will be popping up next at the Hawaii Tribune-Herald in Hilo.

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Labor round-up

Help for RSI victims more elusive

The Bush administration got some unexpected help in its battle against efforts to protect workers from repetitive stress injuries: in a Jan. 8 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously that an automobile plant worker afflicted with carpal tunnel syndrome was not disabled because her condition did not prevent her from performing essential life functions, like cooking or brushing her teeth. The decision came less than a year after Bush suspended OSHA's ergonomics standard, adopted in the waning days of the Clinton presidency, with the promise that the Dept. of Labor would review the new rules and issue a more reasonable standard this past fall. But Bush's real agenda became evident Jan. 11 when he gave a recess appointment—circumventing Congressional scrutiny and approval—to Eugene Scalia as the Dept. of Labor's chief attorney. Scalia has written that ergonomics is "quackery."

Bush, unions split a couple

The Bush-led war on labor had more divided results on other fronts. On one hand, a federal judge struck down an executive order requiring government contractors to post notices informing employees they do not have to join unions or pay certain union fees—an order previously issued by Bush's father but repealed by Bill Clinton. On the other hand, the Bush administration repealed a Clinton-era rule that prevented the government from awarding federal contracts to businesses that have broken environmental, labor, tax or other federal laws.

Looking for cross-ownership stories

The fight over a Federal Communications Commission proposal to lift the U.S. ban on cross-ownership of local newspaper and broadcast stations continues, with the FCC soliciting replies to the briefs filed last month (see page 6 for the position paper submitted by the AFL-CIO). With the Newspaper Association of America and most large newspaper chains strongly supporting repeal of the ban, the Guild and CWA plan to take the fight to Capitol Hill and are tentatively planning to lobby congressional representatives during CWA's Legislative and Political Conference in March. Meanwhile, TNG-CWA President Linda Foley has requested all Guild locals and members to contribute stories illustrating the adverse effects of sharing news, information and points of view in those cities where cross-ownership is already allowed. Such information can be e-mailed to Foley at lfoley@cwa-union.org. The markets in which cross-ownership already exists include: Dallas, Cedar Rapids (IA), Temple (TX), Spokane, Atlanta, Dayton, Columbus (OH), Fargo (ND), Milwaukee, Baton Rouge, Tampa, Paducah (KY), Idaho Falls, Quincy (IL), Cincinnati, South Bend (IN), Chicago, Columbus (MS), Bristol (VA), Youngstown (OH), Fort Lauderdale, New York, Hartford (CT), Los Angeles, Phoenix and Long Island.

Leggett finally freed—for now

The end of a federal grand jury term in Texas also meant an end to Vanessa Leggett's ordeal, as the freelance writer was released from prison Jan. 4 after a record-setting 168 days behind bars. Leggett was jailed for refusing to hand over four years of research and taped interviews in a murder case the grand jury was investigating. But her woes may not be over: federal prosecutors could empanel another grand jury at any time, and have suggested that if they do they will once again be seeking Leggett's notes.

Minimum wage a matter of geography

Although raising the minimum wage supposedly has been a top priority for Congressional Democrats for the past three years, the wage remains stuck at the sub-poverty level of \$5.15 an hour. So it's a good thing that there's more than one level of government: residents of 5 states saw their minimums go up Jan. 1, to \$6.90 an hour in Washington, \$6.75 in California, \$6.70 in Connecticut and \$5.75 in both Hawaii and Maine. Meanwhile, Eastpointe, MI—a Detroit suburb—became the 70th city nationwide to pass a living wage ordinance, requiring city contractors to pay their workers at least \$8.50 an hour if they also provide health care benefits, \$10.62 an hour if not.

Hoffa reelected, feds bow out

James Hoffa Jr. was overwhelmingly reelected president of the Teamsters in balloting that saw voter turnout drop from the previous election, to 22%. Challenger Tom Leedham, leading a reform slate, polled only 34% of the vote, down from the 39% he received in a three-way race in 1998. Hoffa's victory was soon followed by an agreement with the government that ends four years of federal oversight of the union, with a U.S. attorney lauding the Teamsters' "commitment to implement meaningful reform" of its internal financial controls—a premise that Leedham had challenged. Hoffa's next big challenge is the UPS contract, up for renegotiating this month.

First black union president in 220 years

The American Postal Workers Union recently installed William Burrus—the first black in 220 years to be elected president of a major U.S. union. Burrus also serves on the AFL-CIO Executive Council.

Social Security, Enron: two sides of one coin

Two apparently unrelated events within the past several weeks underscore the reality—and perils—of the corporate assault on the tattered remnants of the New Deal.

One, announced Dec. 11, was the unsurprising endorsement by a presidential commission of partial privatization of the Social Security system. The only script deviation was the commission's proposal of three—not just one—privatization options, although each calls for replacing part of Social Security with individual accounts.

The other, announced nine days earlier to remarkably mild press coverage, was the largest bankruptcy filing in American history. But that wasn't Enron's only distinction: despite its deep financial problems, the company managed to enrich its top executives by hundreds of millions of dollars—even as it prohibited its employees from selling the Enron stock that the company had pumped into their 401(k) plans in lieu of actual cash contributions. Those retirement plans now are all but worthless.

The Social Security commission's conclusion was foregone both because of its mandate and its membership. Hand-picked by the Bush administration precisely because of their support for privatization, the commission's 16 avowedly "bipartisan" members were charged not with analyzing the merits and drawbacks of such a transformation, but with devising a formula for siphoning at least part of Social Security's deductions into private accounts. With several such formulas now on the table, the White House can be expected to demand that Congress choose among the options rather than debate the ideological premise underlying all three: that the government has no business looking after the welfare of retirees.

The irony is that the commission ostensibly was established because Social Security is "broken": using 20-20 economic foresight, the system's critics predict-

ed that the fund would run out of money several decades hence, so the only thing to do was to transfer it out of the government's hands and into the hands of wealth-generating brokers and financial planners. But by its second meeting the commission had decided that "broken" was too extreme a diagnosis, moving the patient from terminally ill status to the intensive care unit.

All of the commission's proposed remedies, however, require a reduction in Social Security benefits to offset the diversion into private accounts. Under historically "normal" market conditions, the trade-off will be hardly worthwhile. For example, diverting 2% of the 12.4% combined payroll tax into private accounts would drain more than \$100 billion a year from the trust fund. Even after adding back investment income—minus fees and expenses, of course—a 30-year-old worker would suffer a loss of more than \$3,000 a year in retirement income, assuming an annual after-inflation return of 5.9%, according to research by the Century Foundation.

Among the prime proponents of privatization has been the financial industry, which has salivated for years over the prospects of getting its hands on trillions of dollars in fresh investment income. But the industry's track record of handling large inflows of public money has not been sterling, as demonstrated in the 'Eighties, when a Congressional decision to lift restraints on the savings and loan industry resulted in the theft and dissipation of hundreds of billions of dollars in savings.

The Enron bankruptcy filing should serve as yet another reminder that the free market—unlike a government administered pension system—is often a casino, with spectacular losers more prevalent than big winners. And the losers often are far more widespread than initially understood: union-sponsored benefit funds, for example, hold an estimated 3.1 million shares of suddenly worthless Enron stock.

CanWest can—but should it?

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newspaper from deciding for itself where the interests of its readers lie is not only bad journalism, it's also bad business." After a little chat with his editors, the column was rewritten to read: "A uniquely Canadian policy that allows for editorials written from both local and national viewpoints, and occasional lively disagreement between the two, could be good for business."

The Gazette's editorial page editor, Peter Hadekel, asked to be reassigned—and was obliged. Two cartoons by Terry Mosher were rejected, including one that had the line, "Imagine, a newspaper that looks just like, ummm, Global Television," in reference to CanWest's television network.

After the New Year, the shock waves began spreading beyond the Gazette. Steve Kimber, director of journalism at University of King's College in Halifax, had written a column for the Halifax Daily News since 1985. But when the paper—on orders from CanWest headquarters in Winnipeg—killed a column that had been scheduled to run Jan. 4, Kimber quit in protest. A couple of days later so did a colleague, Stephanie Domet, after the Daily News refused to run her column defending Kimber.

Growing evidence of CanWest's heavy-handedness has drawn sharp rebukes from several corners, albeit without notable effect. The National Assembly, hinting it might take direct action, adopted a resolution calling on the newspaper chain to "publish a statement of principle and of commitment to the quality and diversity of news." Ironically, the federal

In defending his parent company's corporate editorials, Murdoch Davis, editor-in-chief of Southam News, insisted the policy would still leave room for healthy debate in the chain's newspapers.

"Columnists, op-ed writers, individual writers, outside contributors—the whole range of people who provide other opinion commentary—is not only permitted, it's encouraged," he told a Canadian Press reporter.

But recently resigned columnist Steve Kimber begs to differ. As he wrote, in part, in the spiked column that led to his resignation:

"I've had more than one recent column sliced and diced. I can only assume it was done to remove opinions that did not correspond with those of the new owners. They didn't. And I admit I've also done some self-censoring too, steering clear of certain subjects on which I know the owners have taken a stand for me. ...

"This might not be so bad if the Aspers owned one or two newspapers, but they are the dominant player in the newspaper business in Canada today. They own the National Post, 14 major metropolitan newspapers, 126 smaller papers and Global Television. In most of the markets in which their newspapers operate, they are the only game in town.

"Why shouldn't freedom of the press, as legendary press critic A.J. Liebling once put it, be 'guaranteed only to those who own one'?"

"Because, quite simply, real democracy depends on the free flow of ideas, of debate and disagreement. And newspapers are the best forum for those debates."

Cabinet had mere weeks earlier implicitly endorsed the principle of cross-media ownership by renewing the broadcast licenses of both the CanWest Global and Bell Globemedia empires.

The International Federation of Journalists, meanwhile, weighed in with its own critique, observing that CanWest's newspapers "are being molded into a single voice for the company's national agenda." The new policy, the IFJ added, "is a prime example of how quality journalism is at risk from powerful monopolies."

Thus far, however, CanWest's response has been to hector its critics about ownership rights and to dismiss them as "leftists"—an ironic response, at a time when its reporters have been grouching about feeling like they work for Pravda.

Back to basics

It's all too easy, in this hurly-burly world of ours, to lose sight of what it is we're trying to accomplish, or why, or where we can find help to get it done. At times like that, a good book can make all the difference . . .

By Andy Zipse
Editor, The Guild Reporter

That line about those who forget the past being doomed to repeat it has become so clichéd, we do something even worse: we don't just forget the past, we ignore it. At least forgetfulness can be chalked up to old age or carelessness. But when it comes to ignorance, there's something essentially willful about it—a deliberate turning away from the discomfort that enlightenment often engenders.

Is it any wonder, then, that the battles of 50, 60 or 70 years ago are being revisited? That Social Security is threatened with dismantlement, that the eight-hour day increasingly is a fiction, that democratic resistance to corporate media monopolies is fitful and ineffective? Yet the very terms and assumptions with which such developments are discussed—if discussed at all—are shaped by forces most people can't perceive, much less comprehend, without making a conscious effort.

Good thing, then, that consciousness-raising aids are available. Three that are fairly recent, featured here, should be of particular interest to TNG-CWA members because they reside at the same contentious intersection of organized labor and the media that was staked out by the Guild nearly 70 years ago. But as these books make clear, the media—through their power of shaping public discourse in ways that legitimize the corporate agenda—have made good use of the intervening decades, deepening working class ignorance and forgetfulness.

Indeed, so thoroughly has public consciousness been scrubbed that the very notion of a "working class" has become quaint, if not downright disreputable. Yet as the lucidly written "From the Folks Who

Brought You the Weekend" quickly drives home, the whole of American history has been defined by people who *work* for a living, often in opposition to those who have others work for them. The struggle between labor and capital, most famously explored by Karl Marx but far pre-dating him, began with indentured labor and slavery in the colonies and continued through wave upon wave of attempts at unionization. But the working class struggle hasn't been solely against business interests. "From the Folks," unlike more conventional histories—and as its title suggests—views history from the ground up rather than from an Olympian height.

This is not a book about great men or working class heroes, but about "folks" who wish nothing more than some control over their own lives—and, as a result, whose activism often opposes not just industrial capitalists but their own bureaucratic union leaders.

And, because history indeed does repeat itself, "From the Folks" provides innumerable parallels to the present. For example, in a foreshadowing of what Americans could expect in the tariff-free paradise of NAFTA and the WTO, post-Revolutionary War America sank into a depression when U.S. ports reopened to British trade—and a glut of imports put craftsmen out of work and drove farmers into bankruptcy. A century later, the selectively titled "Gilded Age" anticipated the current lop-sided distribution of wealth and income, with the richest 1% of Americans claiming a combined annual income larger than the poorest 50%. The market economy was so skewed that democracy itself was threatened, warned observers of that time.

The union movement arose in response to such inequities and to the abuses they spawned: more than a million wage workers in the 1880 census were younger than 16. Yet no matter how desperate the times, the press was wielded more as a weapon against the working class than as its shield. When the AFL made rapid gains in organizing steel workers after World War I, corporate executives quickly labeled organizers as "red radicals"—and the Philadelphia Inquirer was quick to echo the charge, lamenting that the unionized workers were "penetrated with the Bolshevik idea." The New York Times, meanwhile, noting the preponderance of Slavs among the miners, lamented that they were "steeped in the doctrines of the class struggle and social overthrow, ignorant and easily misled."

The AFL's organizing drive soon collapsed under that kind of pressure, but the press continued to pile on behind corporate initiatives. When corporate publicists declared war on union shops, claiming that the open shop embodied "the spirit of the Constitution," the Tampa Morning Tribune weighed in by announcing, "The greatest menace today to the perpetuation of the free institutions of the United States is to be found in the destructive propaganda, aims and practices of the American Federation of Labor."

The irony of the Tribune's declamation was that the AFL, until that post-World War I moment, had been the "good" union movement. Unlike the IWW, which fanned strikes and preached worker control of the government, the AFL had kept labor peace and campaigned in support of the war. But class struggle—these days poo-pooed as an ideologically anachronistic holdover without relevance to a consumer society—was indeed in play. And with the overseas

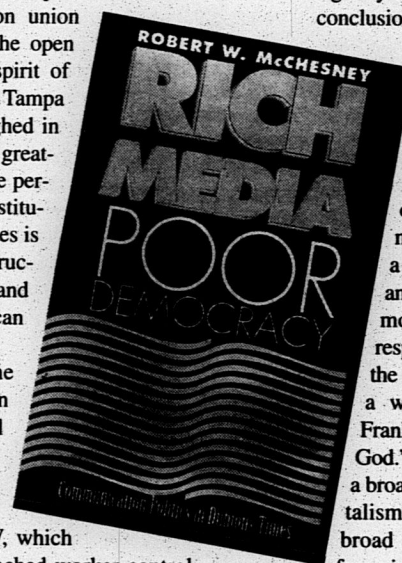
enemy dispatched, American business interests could turn their attention to the enemy within.

But "The Folks Who Brought You the Weekend," while a highly readable primer on labor history, has too broad a sweep to more than hint at the subversive role played by the media. For a more comprehensive description it's useful to turn to Robert McChesney's "Rich Media, Poor Democracy," which turns an unblinking eye on the mad rush toward media oligopoly and its abandonment of any pretense of serving democratic discourse. (Just how wild that ride has been is inadvertently demonstrated by the book's "dated" pedigree: published a mere two years ago, its cataloguing of media mergers and acquisitions doesn't include some of the biggest deals ever, including the AOL-TimeWarner merger and the acquisition of AT&T Broadband by Comcast. But the exponential curve on which these deals are occurring only underscores McChesney's conclusions—as well as the sense of foreboding he fosters.)

Divided into two main sections, "Rich Media, Poor Democracy" provides a history of the corporatization of media and, more tellingly, a critique of that process and of market capitalism more generally. In that respect, McChesney treads the same ground covered on a wider scale by Thomas Frank in "One Market Under God." But where Frank wields a broad brush, examining capitalism's subversion of the broad culture, McChesney's focus is more narrowly fixed on

the mass media themselves; the two books complement each other remarkably well.

As McChesney notes at the outset, the inherent contradiction in "democratic media" is that of capitalism itself: although capitalism "benefits from having a formally demo-



Other resources

In a world of increasingly homogenized media, it's sometimes hard to remember that there are other perspectives and resources out there. Some are struggling, some are well established but obscure, but all are worth checking out:

The Northland Catalog—Advertising itself as "The Mall of the Other America," Northland is a collective (annual memberships start at \$25) that sells union-themed bumper stickers, buttons, T-shirts, posters, notecards, mugs and mousepads. On the web at www.northlandposter.com; or get a catalogue by calling 800-627-3082 or writing to: Northland Poster Collective, P.O. Box 7096, Minneapolis, MN 55407.

Labor Heritage Foundation—Although the Foundation carries some buttons and posters, the real emphasis here is on books, movies and videos. The music runs the gamut from traditional (Joe Hill, Woody Guthrie, Utah Phillips) to contemporary (Charlie King, Tish Hinojosa, Annie Feeney), as do the books and videos, which roam the landscape from Matewan to Ravenswood,

Paul Robeson to Karen Silkwood. You can visit at www.laborheritage.org, or write to 888 16th Street, NW, Suite 680, Washington DC 20006.

Industrial Workers of the World—Yes, believe it or not, the Wobblies—although only a shadow of their former selves—are still alive and kicking. They're also the source of in-your-face labor materials, chiefly books and pamphlets aimed—as the catalogue helpfully explains—at "rebellious workers." Some music, including song books, also is available. Check 'em out at www.iww.org; by calling 215-763-1274, or by writing to: Industrial Workers of the World, P.O. Box 42777, Philadelphia, PA 19101.

Workers Independent News Service—Radio doesn't have to be a wasteland of reactionary prattle—not with WINS gathering news by and about working people. Offering a broad mix of programming, from a daily 3-minute headline news package to longer news pieces, wide-ranging features and complete half-hour programs, WINS distributes its products to subscribing stations via its web site, www.laborradio.org. Or write for more information to Frank Empsak, executive producer, at 414 Lowell Hall, 610 Langdon Street, Madison, WI 53703.

BuyUnionNow.com—Still relatively small but growing by leaps and bounds, this web site does exactly what its name implies: sells products that are exclusively union- and American-made. Its expanding product line—now at 1,000 items, divided into 23 product categories—is as diverse as furniture, sporting goods and housewares, including such brand names as Huffy, West Bend and Diamond Cut Jeans. Worth a look before going elsewhere. (The URL is not case sensitive.)

Independent Press Association—Billing itself as "the antidote to monopoly media," the IPA is a nonprofit organization that supports independent publications committed to social justice and a free press. Founded in 1997, its membership—currently at 350—includes the ethnic press, youth publications and political and cultural magazines and newspapers nibbling at the fringes of the corporate media. Services include technical assistance manuals, workshops, directories, translation services, a one-stop advertising service, distribution networks and a revolving loan fund. The IPA may be visited at www.indypress.org; called at 877-INDYMAG; or written at Independent Press Association, 2729 Mission Street, Suite 201, San Francisco, CA 94110.

From 'One Market Under God'

Whenever a Fortune 500 company (or its prodigal philanthropic stepchild) takes up public moaning about persecution, one is permitted a little skepticism. And the Newseum's historiography is suspicious stuff indeed, oblivious to vast regions of the American experience even as it goes out of its way to hail the achievements of just about every approved social or political struggle. As told by the News History Gallery, the march of liberty includes feminism and the civil rights movement, the fights against Hitler and Communism, dozens of individual battles against racism and sexism, and victory after victory for champions of free speech. It makes no mention—none—of the fight for the eight-hour day and for the right of workers to unionize, of the other various reforms won by labor in the course of the century, or of which side "our" friendly "media companies" were on in

those struggles. And the closer one looks the more apparent this erasure becomes: William Allen White is lauded for opposing the Klan and for supporting free speech, but his Progressivism somehow never comes up. . . . The Newspaper Guild, which represents reporters and editors at any number of American newspapers, is mentioned only in a short bio of its founder, the popular columnist Heywood Brown. And "working class" is used almost exclusively as a demographic notation, as in its "relish" for tabloids and affinity for certain Hearst columnists.

The Newseum's consistent evasion of class is part of a more sinister reticence about the seamier side of the trade. The chronic journalistic problem of keeping editorial separate from business, easily the biggest journalistic issue of the nineties, is mentioned nowhere. The Ethics Center, where one may grapple

with "the difficult choices faced by journalists every day" (typical dilemma: how to cover a wheelchair-bound president), fails to discuss how one might deal with the misdeeds of a local business that advertises in your paper. Even the exhibit on conglomerates, while acknowledging that the giant media companies have been criticized, invokes the tired The Press vs. Tyranny canard in this remarkable bit of casuistry: "Executives say the size of their corporations helps them stand up to governments that would control news." It's a view of liberty that consistently understands "freedom" as a thing wrung from an inherently repressive state by inherently liberating media corporations: That liberty might have an economic dimension, that the corporations themselves might someday be repressive and the state liberating is simply left out, as though contrary to the physical laws of the universe.

cratic system," it also "works best when elites make most fundamental decisions and the bulk of the population is depoliticized." No wonder, then, that as control of the media has been concentrated in the hands of the elite, the electorate also has grown increasingly depoliticized and apathetic.

The full dimensions of the problem are by now depressingly familiar and have been related in some detail by intervenors opposed to the FCC's attempt to end the ban on cross-ownership of print and broadcast media (see page 6 for one such filing). McChesney's contribution is to go beyond a body-count recital to explore the consequences. The emergence of "the marketplace" as American society's mediator of all wealth is destructive of good government (which can only obstruct the market's evenhandedness) and of organized labor (which likewise interferes with economic "freedom"), while corporate America's capture of the media ensures an absence of critical self-analysis and effective questioning of the status quo.

"The corporate media may well be the most powerful adversary in the ranks of capital," McChesney writes, in a passage that should resonate for every newspaper chain employee. "They are in the enviable position of owning the very media that would provide any coverage of media politics to the general public. In general, that means that the news media avoid any discussion of media structure, leaving analysis of media ownership and advertising to the business pages and the trade press, where they are covered as issues that concern investors, not workers, consumers or citizens."

Frank's broader swipe at the marketplace chronicles its success at transforming the very essence

of economic democracy. Whereas generations of Americans believed in a reasonable standard of living for all, the new paradigm holds that democracy is absolutely the same as a free market—indeed, that the market is *more* democratic than any of the formal institutions of democracy, including elections, legislatures or government itself. The dollar is the new ballot, perfectly expressing the popular will through the machinery of supply and demand, and anyone who interferes with it is guilty of contempt for the common man.

That clever inversion—clever because it

ostensibly glorifies Joe Sixpack, whereas its primary purpose is to make the world safe for billionaires—was shaped over decades by industrial psychologists, corporate flacks and Madison Avenue's image makers. Their master narrative conveyed a sense of inevitability to market development, "branded" corporations so they acquired more rights than real people and convinced workers that they were just too hip and too cool to be trapped in the traditional labor movement.

But the new mythology did more than enshrine the market and demonize anyone trying to control it: it portrayed those who questioned it as simply stupid. Or worse. So a writer in the Financial Times could insist, for example, that objections to globalization arose from a "hatred of markets" so "pathological" that it was analogous to racism. End of democratic debate.

The Financial Times example underscores the extent to which market zealotry has cap-

customer service," Frank writes.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, both McChesney and Frank believe that one antidote to the ideological bankruptcy of today's press is organized labor. Indeed, Frank quotes A.J. Liebling's hope that someone other than wacky, headstrong millionaires would start or gain control of newspapers,

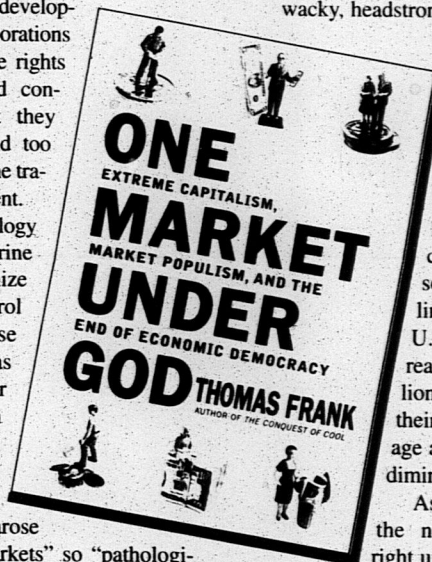
including his remark that he "cannot believe that labor leaders are so stupid they will let the other side monopolize the press indefinitely." But in fact that's precisely what has happened so far: whereas in Liebling's day there were 800 U.S. labor newspapers, reaching as many as 30 million readers a week, today their number, reach and coverage are a fraction of that—and diminishing rapidly.

As McChesney points out, the neoliberal "free market" right understands the importance of media far better than the working class and its allies on the political left. Leading U.S. right-wing foundations have thrown vast resources at pushing the media and educational systems into providing more explicitly pro-business positions to their constituents. The political right leads the fight against all noncommercial and nonprofit media. And labor coverage in the mainstream press has been eviscerated, with fewer than 10 labor reporters working for daily newspapers in the entire country—in contrast with the thousands who write business stories.

"If one read only the commercial media," McChesney writes, "it would be difficult to determine what on earth good was served by having labor unions at all."

For all that, however, McChesney contends that the best chance for preserving the integrity of the press is "to increase the power of journalists to control the news—and that is accomplished by establishing strong, progressive unions." Moreover, organized labor has to take a leaf from the right-wing's playbook and create better noncommercial media, as some unions have started to do by producing labor video documentaries.

McChesney also supports the media literacy movement as a potential corrective—if it educates people to be skeptical and knowledgeable users of the media without insisting that the existing system is by definition good, democratic and immutable. Reading these books will destroy any such misapprehensions



"From the Folks Who Brought You the Weekend: A Short, Illustrated History of Labor in the United States," by A.B. Chitty and Priscilla Murolo; The New Press; 2001.

"Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times," by Robert McChesney; University of Illinois Press; 1999.

"One Market Under God: Extreme Capitalism, Market Populism, and the End of Economic Democracy," by Thomas Frank; Doubleday; 2000.

tured the mass media, giving the lie to those who once contended that the press is too adversarial: indeed, Frank contends, the national press simply is not interested in raising fundamental challenges to the existing order. Instead, the concept of "public journalism" took hold in the 'Nineties, adding elitism to the list of sins of which crusading journalists could be accused: democratic culture, the public journalists proclaimed, had no room for reporters trying to impress their views on the community. "The key to solving journalism's problems, its leaders maintained, was to understand editing as

Recent work by our own

Harcourt, Inc. has just released the paperback edition of "It's the Little Things: The Everyday Interactions That Get Under the Skin of Blacks and Whites." Written by Lena Williams, reporter for The New York Times and chair of the Times unit of the Newspaper Guild of New York, "It's the Little Things" explores a range of annoying to dangerous incidents caused by a lack of understanding between the two races, from hair tossing by a woman in an elevator to job discrimination.

Bob Drews, a 20-year member of TNG-CWA Local 39098 in San Jose, Calif., has completed his first novel, "Sandman." The story of Tom Phillips, a successful 48-year-old freelance travel writer suddenly confronted by a potentially fatal illness, "Sandman" follows his revealing—and sometimes humorous—journey in search of life's answers. Published on-line by iUniverse and available at on-line bookstores, including borders.com, amazon.com, iuniverse.com and barnesandnoble.com.

A third edition of "Literary LA," expanded from the original and "featuring the coffeehouse scene then and now," is to be released next month. First published in 1981, "Literary LA" was written by Lionel Rolfe, currently a member of the CWA local at City News Service in Los Angeles and a former Guild member at the San Francisco Chronicle. "Literary LA" is one in a series of books Rolfe has written that focus on LA culture, including "Fat Man on the Left: Four Decades in the Underground," "In Search of Literary LA" and, as co-author, "Bread and Hyacinths: The Rise and Fall of Utopian Los Angeles."

A publication party for the new edition is scheduled for Feb. 3 at 4 p.m. at Skylight Books, in the Los Felix section of Los Angeles. More information is available by e-mail from calclass@earthlink.net.

Pam Parker, member of the Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild, has just released her first CD, "Working Class." Including music that runs from rhythm and blues to folk and rock, the selections include other composers' work—the Beatles' "Blackbird," for example—as well as Parker's own, including "Parker's Blues," about a working woman's struggle to survive financially and her belief that the answer lies in a union job. Joining Parker are her son, Jobari, the (Washington) DC Labor Chorus and Bones of Contention, a Washington-based rock 'n' roll and rhythm-and-blues band.

Available from the Labor Heritage Foundation (see p. 4).

Dropping cross-ownership ban hurts newspapers, democracy

By Joel S. Yudken and Christine Owens
AFL-CIO Public Policy Department

[This an edited version of the AFL-CIO statement opposing relaxation of the cross-ownership ban, submitted Dec. 4 to the Federal Communications Commission.]

The AFL-CIO is troubled that despite the Federal Communication Commission's past position, repeatedly affirmed by the Supreme Court, the FCC now asks for evidence to demonstrate why it should not modify or throw-out the cross-ownership rule. The AFL-CIO believes that the burden of evidence instead should be on those who want to change the rule, to show that weakening it will not create harm.

Diversity of ownership is essential for diversity of voice. Loosening or eliminating the broadcasting/newspaper cross-ownership rule will harm information and viewpoint diversity in the following ways:

- It will reduce the number of distinct "voices" within local news markets.
- It will contribute to the continued decline in the quality and diversity of local news media outlets.
- It will further erode the amount, quality and diversity of public interest news coverage, including federal, state and local government activities, foreign affairs, political events, and investigative/critical reporting.
- It will further reduce minority ownership of media outlets, reducing content targeted to minority audiences.

Media consolidation has put increasing pressure on local newspapers and broadcast stations to reduce costs and increase profits. As large newspaper chains absorbed large numbers of local newspapers in the late 1980s and the 1990s, editors whose compensation was tied to corporate financial performance cut newsholes and news staff, requiring newspaper staffs to do more with less, with a predictable impact on product quality. For example, after the Asbury Park Press, New Jersey's second-largest paper—once considered one of the most enterprising independent papers in the nation—was sold to Gannett in 1997, the newly appointed publisher slashed the newsroom staff from 240 to 185. The result was an exodus of the Press' most talented people, shortened stories, de-emphasized government news and more trivialized local news.

TV news directors have confronted similar pressures. According to a recent study by the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism's Project for Excellence in Journalism, half of all surveyed TV stations reported they had either budget cuts or layoffs in the past year, the average cut being 8%. In addition, 60% of the stations made unscheduled budget cuts over the last fiscal year. At the same time, two-thirds of the stations said they added broadcast hours and 57% had to produce the same or more news despite layoffs, budget freezes or budget cuts.

Based on the experience of existing cross-owned news outlets, relaxing restrictions on newspaper/broadcast cross-ownership will add additional burdens on news workers, who find themselves required to practice their craft in multimedia formats for which they have had little prior experience or training. For example, almost every newspaper in the country has an internet web-site, and reporters are finding themselves with

increased work loads and difficulties adjusting to writing for the two different formats. The raw material for an article written by newspaper reporters often goes online before a final edited version appears in print. KIRO-AM-TV in Seattle, WA, once the poster-child for TV-radio mergers, ran into trouble because of the different formatting requirements of TV and radio: it was difficult to get TV reporters to devote enough time to radio, which requires much more live material, while the radio reporters were uncomfortable doing on-air television reports.

In cross-ownership situations, reporters who once worked just for television or print are now writing a TV story, writing a newspaper article on the same story and producing an online version. Newspaper photojournalists are being required to carry both still and video cameras on their assignments. Employees are required to do double and treble duty producing copy for the different media, meeting continuous rather than daily deadlines. The blending and cross-utilizing of media operations also requires news decisions for all the outlets to be made in a coordinated way, sometimes in the same meeting.

Although proponents of cross-ownership claim this coordination leads to greater efficiencies, that is not the issue. These efficiency gains do not offset the serious harm to diversity of voice that results from diminished quality and homogenization of news products and fewer independent local media voices.

The loss of voice is especially evident in local newspaper markets. As Thomas Kunkel, dean of the Phillip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland, and Gene Roberts, longtime executive editor of the Philadelphia Inquirer, note in the American Journalism Review:

"Unlike other realms of business, in the newspaper industry, consolidation—in tandem with the chains' desperation to maintain unrealistic profit levels (most of these companies are now being publicly traded)—is actually reducing the amount of real news being gathered and disseminated, most conspicuously at the local and state levels, where consumers need it the most. This is because consolidation has resulted in far fewer news outlets, and the economic pressures have resulted in fewer reporters with fewer inches in the paper to say anything."

In most cities and small towns, there is only one financially-stable, community-wide newspaper. In most of these communities, local residents have few alternatives to learn about local events, town government (or even the state government) meetings, school board developments, local sports teams, available real estate and the like. Broadcast does not compete effectively with newspapers in these markets.

The Commission should therefore be concerned that over the last decade a large portion of these local dailies has been bought—and often sold and bought again—by larger, non-local newspaper chains. A study by the Project on the State of the American Newspaper, which documented every newspaper sale from 1994 through July 2000, found that two-thirds of the sales involved one of these community newspapers. During that period, 47% of all local papers changed hands, sometimes three or four times. For example, the Northwestern (circulation 23,500) in Oshkosh, Wisconsin,

which had been locally owned since the Andrew Johnson administration, was sold three times in less than three years. As Kunkel and Roberts observe, "since with each swap a paper typically is more highly leveraged, budgets got tighter, and content of necessity became expendable."

As a result of this large-scale shift from local to non-local corporate ownership, there now are fewer than 300 independent newspapers out of 1,500 dailies in the United States. Driving most of these sales is a corporate ownership strategy called "clustering," in which a company purchases multiple media properties—ranging from as few as two papers but as many as eight or more—in close proximity to one another. For example, the Newhouse and Gannett chains together own 13 out of 19 dailies in New Jersey, or 73% of all circulation of that state's newspapers. There are at least 125 such clusters in the nation, involving a quarter of all daily newspapers.

The shift away from local ownership to large corporate chains and clustering reduces the number of separate newspaper voices in the same area. Management decisions for local papers are subsequently removed from local communities, creating more distance between the owners and readers, as well as a loss of local editorial independence.

The concentration of local television stations by large national networks, which now is being facilitated by the Commission's loosening of the duopoly ruling, is taking a similar toll on diversity in local TV news programming. Local TV stations increasingly are pressured by their corporate owners to improve their bottom-lines, which are largely dependent on maintaining advertisement revenues. These pressures raise serious questions about the ability of local news stations to maintain their journalistic independence. The Project on Excellence in Journalism found, in its survey of 118 news directors around the country, that more than half reported that advertisers pressure them to kill negative stories or to run positive ones. Almost one in five news directors—especially in smaller markets—say that their sponsors try to prevent them from covering stories. One quarter of news directors in small markets—those under 376,000 households—report that they have been pressured to censor their news.

A potentially greater threat to local TV independence comes from the ability of the large national television networks, which already dominate prime-time television viewing, to influence local TV programming. As Gene Kimmelman of Consumers Union recently testified before a Senate committee, "there is a substantial danger that further ownership of local stations would lead to increased pressure on local stations to carry nationally-oriented programming, which maximizes national advertising revenue, at the expense of local programming."

Newspaper/TV cross-ownership in local markets adds to the pressures on both local newspapers and local TV stations to shape their news coverage to meet the needs of their absentee corporate owners, rather than those of their local readers and listeners. To the extent that cross-ownership of these media increases concentration, it will create additional downward financial pressures on local news editors and directors to cut public

affairs programming.

In the first-ever comprehensive survey of newspaper coverage of state capitals, the Project on the State of the American Newspaper documented a strong nationwide retreat from state government coverage throughout the decade of the 1990s—sometimes to the point of near abandonment. It found only a total of 513 full-time reporters at all 50 state capitals, which is in stark contrast to the number covering media events such as the Super Bowl, where more than 3,000 media credentials are issued each year. Over a decade, newspaper commitment to statehouse coverage fell in 27 states, among them New York, Michigan, Connecticut and Illinois. In fast-growing Georgia, statehouse coverage almost disappeared.

A similar lack of coverage was found in the nation's capital. A 1999 survey of 19 key departments and agencies showed a wholesale retreat in coverage of the federal government. Regular reporting on the Supreme Court and the State Department, for instance, dropped off considerably throughout the '90s. Until the recent crisis, local print coverage of foreign stories also declined. In a comparative survey of 10 metropolitan newspapers, the Project found that coverage of international events dropped from 5% in the mid-1960s to just 3% in the late 1990s.

Public affairs coverage on local TV stations also has been diminishing. For example, the Project for Excellence in Journalism reported that poverty, welfare and homelessness are all but absent in local TV news. Out of nearly 6,000 stories studied, less than 1% (only nine stories) dealt with these topics. Coverage of politics, policy and government dropped by nearly half from the previous year, to just 8% of all stories. Even on network television, Dan Rather noted in a recent speech, foreign coverage had fallen to 6% of total news.

Minority ownership and representation in media markets also has declined as a result of media concentration. Currently, minorities only own 3% of all radio and TV outlets in the nation. TV stations owned by minorities fell from 38 to 32 between 1997 and 1998, and the number of minority TV owners fell from 22 to 13 in the same period.

The currently minuscule level of minority-owned media raises concerns that ethnic and racial minorities are not well served by the media. As Joe Lawson, past president of the National Association of Minorities in Communications, argued in response to Viacom's purchase of the Black Entertainment Network (BET), "The sense of community and connection to cutting-edge issues for people of color is usually not the same [as] when the station or the network is minority-owned. . . . There need to be media outlets that are owned by African-Americans, and if the industry cannot keep the voice alive through other minority-owned networks, this will be a tragic loss."

Diversity of ownership is essential for diversity of voice. If the Commission chooses to relax or eliminate the ban on cross-ownership, media concentration will grow and information and viewpoint diversity will suffer. The ostensible economic advantages of freeing newspapers and broadcast firms from merging in the same local markets touted by the proponents of cross-ownership need to be weighed against these significantly adverse impacts on media diversity.



LOOKING AHEAD

CEP vp's tirade 'utter nonsense'

By Arnold Amber, Director, TNG Canada

Although the Canadian Media Guild was enormously supportive of technicians locked out last month by the Canadian Broadcasting Corp., CEP vice president Peter Murdoch apparently couldn't distinguish between his friends and his enemies. In a Dec. 18 web posting he wrote, in part:

"Of course behind all this remains the CIRB hearing. The quest for one union, a request backed and supported by the American-based Canadian Media Guild and CBC management. The concession items which the CBC wants to delete from the CEP's technicians' collective agreement are not in the CWA/Guild's contract. And the compliant CWA has never put up much of a struggle during any round of negotiations. The CWA leadership always seemed to prefer to use the CEP as cannon fodder."

"So it would appear that this struggle is not about getting rid of items in a collective agreement, but actually the CBC wanting to get rid of a Canadian union in favor of a more accommodating American one. And doing it through the nastiness of a labor dispute. Shameful, isn't it?"

Amber, whose titles include President of the CBC Branch, CMG/CWA, responded as follows:

The article you ran Tuesday, Dec. 18, by Peter Murdoch of CEP on the lockout at the CBC, contains many misrepresentations about my union, The Canadian Media Guild (CMG), and the union to which it is affiliated, the Communications Workers of America (CWA). Now that the lockout is over, I would like to set the record straight.

But before I do, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the CEP on getting its new contract with the CBC. The approximately 4,000 members of the CMG at the CBC do all sorts of jobs—from reporting, producing, anchoring and other production functions to administrative and clerical duties. We are delighted that the work stoppage is over and we can, with our colleagues on the technical side, produce quality radio and television programmes and the CBC's gold-standard internet service for the Canadian public.

Murdoch's conspiracy theory that the lockout and the dispute were all about the

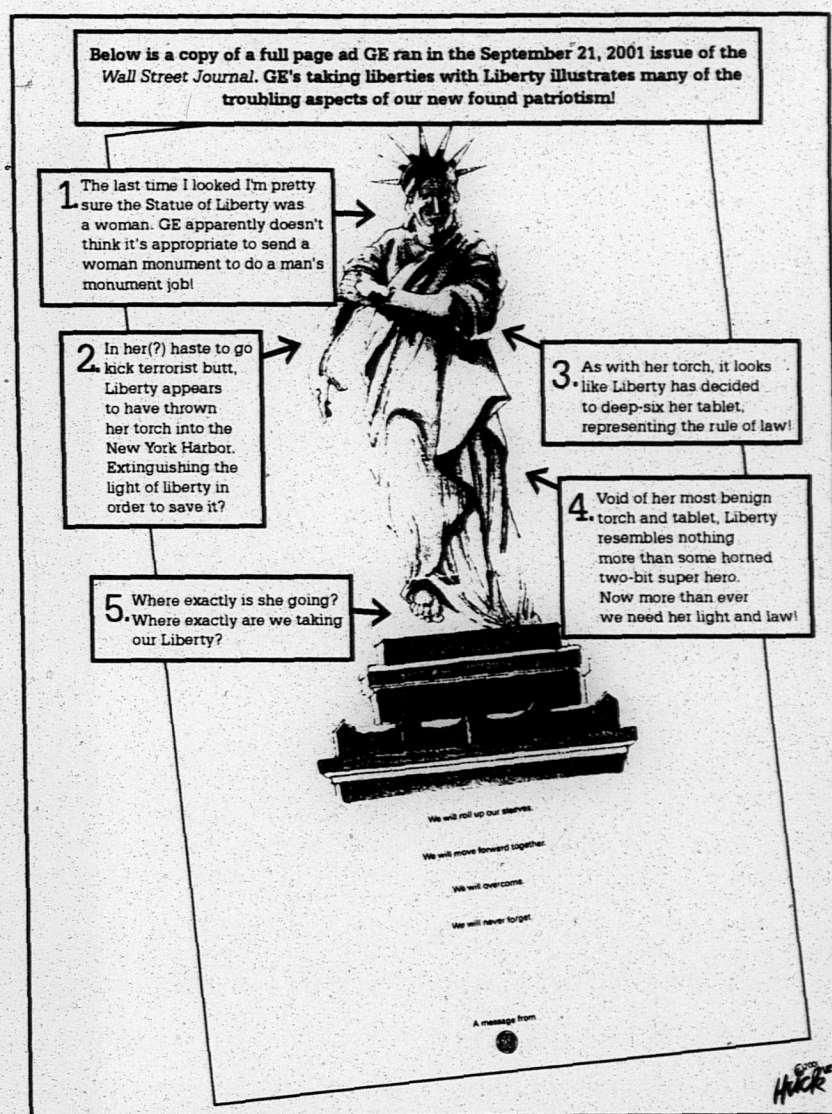
creation of one big union at the CBC is utter nonsense. The CEP (and its predecessor, NABET) have been in conflicts with the CBC through the years. Since I have been working at the CBC there have been three other work stoppages involving the CEP/NABET and none of them took place while anyone was waiting for a CIRB ruling on whether or not there should be a consolidation of unions at the CBC. The terms of the agreement that ended this year's lockout illustrate that there were a number of issues that both sides felt were worth fighting over even if it resulted in a work stoppage.

In his article, Murdoch theorizes that the CBC wanted to delete items from the CEP contract which are not in the Canadian Media Guild contract. The truth of the matter is that over the years every different union contract at the CBC had good (and not so good) provisions that were absent from the contracts of the other unions.

For example, in the just concluded CEP/CBC agreement, CEP members cannot be scheduled to return to work within eight hours of the end of their shifts, while we in the Canadian Media Guild have a more generous 12-hour "turnaround clause." In fact, our CMG contracts are in many respects equal or superior to the CEP contract and are decidedly better than most in the Canadian media industry. For every benefit that is exclusive only to the CEP in its contract there are even more exclusive benefits to us in the CMG contracts.

This negates Murdoch's charge in his article that the "compliant" Guild has never put up much of a struggle during any round of bargaining. That the Canadian Media Guild has been able to negotiate good contracts without striking is a testimony to its ability to bargain and the strength of the power it wields.

Murdoch, in his article, also chose to ignore the significant contributions made by members of the Canadian Media Guild. During CEP's 1999 strike at the CBC, CMG members gave over \$200,000 to CEP members, either directly out of their own pockets, or through donations made by the CMG union. Again, in the recent lockout, CMG members from coast-to-coast-to-coast made similar contributions.



Let's deal with Murdoch's attempt to demonize the Canadian Media Guild because it is part of the Communication Workers of America (CWA). Democracy is essential to good unionism. When Murdoch and others left The Newspaper Guild years ago to join the CEP, we in the Canadian Media Guild and other Newspaper Guild locals across the country decided to continue to remain part of an international union with solid roots in the broadcasting and newspaper industries. That's what our members wanted and voted for. We are quite happy with our decision. We see real advantages in our arrangement. We are connected to the CWA, which among its 750,000-plus members includes about 10,000 NABET workers involved in every phase of broadcasting in the United States. We like the strength we have in being part of the CWA family, and love the autonomy we have here in Canada over our policies and action.

What was most offensive in Murdoch's article was his unexplainable assertion that, "The CWA leadership always seemed to prefer to use the CEP as cannon fodder." While writing this, Murdoch was also pleading with the NABET members of the CWA to help stop, wherever they could, sports transmissions from the United States—such as hockey and the Olympics—destined for broadcast in Canada through the CBC. In all cases, the CWA gave its total support to the CEP. (In 1999, some CWA members actually picketed playoff hockey games in the U.S. on behalf of the CEP.)

It's unfortunate, in my opinion, that Murdoch used the occasion of the CEP labour dispute to blame and attack our union, which has been so helpful to his members at the CBC. A tirade of ill-founded charges did nothing for his members at a time when they were locked out of their jobs seeking direction and facts from their union leadership.

LETTERS

To the Editor,

Andy Zipser, in the Dec. 14 Guild Reporter, suggested that the role of a union newspaper should be to provide propaganda to its members. Let me offer a different mission for a union newspaper, and especially The Guild Reporter: give us news.

I have been active in the Guild for longer than I'd like to admit. News about how other locals and units are handling similar problems to those we face in my workplace is the most valuable thing the Guild Reporter can provide.

Unfortunately, that seems to be increasingly crowded out of the paper by speeches of union politicians, the thoughts of the editor and articles from obscure left-wing publications.

I was a unit official at my workplace for

five years. I am proud of what we accomplished at that time. I learned early on that the members are smarter than I. We accomplished things because I learned my role was to try to empower members to bring their ideas to fruition, not to propagandize the members as to what I thought was the proper view of the world.

There is an all-news radio station here in Washington, D.C. whose motto is, I think, "More news, less talk." That would be a good motto for The Guild Reporter, too.

—Ken May, Washington-Baltimore Guild

[The editor wishes to demur on one point: the suggestion that union newspapers should be propaganda vehicles was not his—nor embraced by him—but that of other labor edi-

tors attending the ILCA convention.]

To the Editor,

CWA needs to reexamine its relationship with Household Bank FSB. Using the CWA logo, Household Bank solicits business from Guild members under its "Union Plus Loan Program." In a December, 2001 letter, Household offered loans of up to \$7,500 at the outrageous interest rate of 19.49%. A member who takes a loan for 72 months (at \$178 a month) would wind up paying a total of \$12,816. That includes the \$7,500 borrowed and \$5,316 in interest.

Household tries to make members think that 19.49% is some kind of bargain by saying that "Rates are at a 3-year low." Well, rates indeed are at historic lows but you sure can't tell that from Household's efforts to

charge members almost 20% interest on their personal loans.

If CWA and the Guild really want to do something to assist members who need financial help, they should find a banking partner who won't try to gouge their members.

—Stan Hinden, The Washington Post (ret.)

[The various Union Plus programs are administered by the AFL-CIO through its Union Privilege office; TNG and CWA are among several dozen unions that subscribe to its offerings. Invited to respond to the letter writer's concerns, Union Privilege noted that it offers interest rates ranging from 12.99% to 19.99% based on applicants' credit histories. As always, caveat emptor.]

Life is good on top of the food chain . . .

Company	Executive	Title	Age	Income, 2000	Income, 1999	% chg	2000 income, by category		
							Salary	Bonus	Other
A. H. Belo	Robert W. Dechard	Chmn/Pres/CEO	50	2,016,372	1,003,667	100.9	863,200	635,900	517,272
Dow Jones	Peter R. Kann	Chmn/CEO	59	3,372,334	2,438,853	38.3	841,167	888,000	1,643,167
E. W. Scripps	William R. Burleigh	Chmn	67	2,946,639	3,769,913	-21.8	600,000	464,918	1,881,721
Gannett	John J. Curley	Chmn/CEO	63	9,004,600	11,205,442	-19.6	1,100,000	2,000,000	5,904,600
Harte-Hanks	Larry Franklin	Pres/CEO	59	1,415,920	1,054,400	34.3	835,000	561,120	19,800
Hollinger Int'l	Conrad M. Black	Chmn/CEO	56	2,445,194	595,123	310.9	448,639	1,860,462	136,093
Journal Register	Robert M. Jelenic	Chmn/Pres/CEO	51	1,549,866	1,415,355	9.5	900,000	275,000	374,866
Knight-Ridder	P. Anthony Ridder	Chmn/CEO	61	3,327,124	3,395,186	-2	893,846	506,339	1,926,939
Lee Enterprises	Richard D. Gottlieb	Pres/CEO	59	1,946,455	2,152,490	-9.6	615,000	184,000	1,147,455
McClatchy	Gary B. Pruitt	Pres/CEO	44	1,209,693	1,258,864	-3.9	775,000	425,025	9,668
Media General	J. Stewart Bryan III	Chmn/Pres/CEO	63	1,233,630	2,321,794	-46.9	830,000	346,894	56,736
NY Times Co.	Russell T. Lewis	Pres/CEO	54	3,601,174	4,545,638	-20.8	870,000	1,305,000	1,426,174
Pulitzer	Michael E. Pulitzer	Chmn/Pres/CEO	72	1,375,729	4,501,181	-69.4	980,000	363,879	31,850
Tribune Co.	John W. Madigan	Chmn/Pres/CEO	64	5,467,944	13,652,485	-59.9	846,311	3,000,000	1,621,633
Washington Post	Donald E. Graham	Chmn/CEO/Pub.	56	583,454	1,259,782	-53.7	399,996	0	183,458

. . . but for journalists, a rising body count

Even without the savagery they've encountered in Afghanistan, the world's journalists did not have a good year in 2001. But just how bad it was varies considerably, depending on who's doing the counting and how the results are defined.

According to Reporters Sans Frontières, 31 journalists were killed last year, a number virtually unchanged from the 32 deaths it reported in 2000. But the Committee to Protect Journalists reports that 37 journalists were killed last year "as a direct result of their work"—a 50% increase over the 24 killed in 2000. The International Press Institute, meanwhile, tallied the deaths of 53 "journalists and media workers" through the end of November, while the International Federation of Journalists—of which TNG-CWA is a member—reported 100 "journalists and media staff" killed over the full 12 months.

Regardless of which numbers are used, all four journalists' groups agree that the world has grown increasingly hostile to reporters, photographers and crusading editors. Even Reporters Sans Frontières, the organization with the most conservative death count, concludes that by every other measure journalists increasingly are under attack: the number of journalists arrested in

2001 spiked up nearly 50%, to 489, while the number of journalists attacked or threatened jumped more than 40%, to 716. And more journalists are ending up behind bars: after declining steadily since 1995, the number of imprisoned journalists climbed sharply at year's end, to 110.

"Some part of the press is censored somewhere in the world every day," Reporters Sans Frontières noted, "and nearly a third of the world's population lives in countries where there is no press freedom."

The Committee to Protect Journalists observed that the deadliest environment was Afghanistan, where eight journalists were killed "in the line of duty" and a ninth died of wounds sustained there two years ago. But as the committee further notes, last year's death toll includes at least 25 journalists who were murdered outright.

"Journalists covering the war in Afghanistan showed extraordinary courage, but we should also remember that journalists around the world who uncovered corrupt, illegal acts and graft at high levels of power were murdered with impunity," said the committee's executive director, Ann Cooper. "Whether the perpetrators are paramilitary groups in Colombia or corrupt officials in Thailand, the message is clear: journalists

who report on illegal activities will receive a death sentence."

Indeed, as the International Press Institute made clear, the world's deadliest region for journalists was not in southeast Asia but in Latin America. Colombia, already an abattoir for union activists, claimed 10 reporters' lives at the hands of leftist guerrillas, right-wing paramilitary groups and organized criminals.

The differing body counts among the various organizations are attributable in part to different definitions and degrees of certainty. For example, IPI acknowledged the death of only one journalist in the collapse of the World Trade Center, that of William Biggart, a freelance news photographer; the IFJ, on the other hand, attributed the deaths of seven "media staff" to the same incident, including those of broadcast technicians working on the tower roofs.

Meanwhile, the Committee to Protect Journalists said it still is investigating 18 other journalists whose deaths last year may have been related to their professional work. That may explain why CPJ reported that no journalists were killed in Africa—where 18 had been killed the previous two years—while IPI reported that three were killed, including two reporters covering a pro-democracy march by

ethnic Berbers in Algiers.

As bleak as such body counts are, perhaps more alarming is the steady growth in press repression reflected in Reporters Sans Frontières' other statistics. For example, 489 journalists were arrested at some point in 2001—often with no official explanations given and no official arrest warrant issued. Some were freed quickly, but others spent weeks or months behind bars, often in primitive conditions exacerbated by beatings and strong-armed interrogations. Jails currently holding the most journalists are in Iran (18), Burma (18), China (12), Eritrea (8) and Nepal (7).

Hundreds of additional journalists have been physically attacked or threatened while doing their jobs, sometimes by criminals but often by the authorities or political party activists. Most such attacks are never investigated in any serious, sustained way, Reporters Sans Frontières notes.

Moreover, 378 press media were censored last year, and government reactions to the Sept. 11 attacks "had considerable consequences on press freedom in the world," the organization reported. "Several laws adopted for fighting terrorism are especially worrying, and weaken the basic principle of the free circulation of information."

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DAYBOOK

Deadline for Barr, Broun
 entries (postmark) Jan. 25

TNG Sector Conference,
 Feb. 14-17, Orlando

CWA Legislative Conference,
 March 3-6, Washington, D.C.

TNG-CWA staff meeting,
 April 14-19, Myrtle Beach, SC

Nat'l Civil Rights, Equity Conf.,
 April 25-28, St. Louis

CWA Safety & Health Conf.,
 May 5-8, Cleveland

Herblock, Broun, Barr Dinner,
 May 14, Washington, D.C.

Nat'l Hispanic Journalists,
 June 12-16, San Diego

CWA Convention,
 June 17-19, Las Vegas

Native American Journalists,
 June 19-20, San Diego

FROM THE MORGUE

Fifty years ago this month:

An arbitration award gives Guild-represented employees of the Associated Press the highest minimum pay rates anywhere in the newspaper industry. . . . The San Francisco-Oakland Guild petitions for recognition as bargaining agent for editorial employees of the Santa Rosa Press-Democrat. . . . The New York Times, drawing on an AP survey of conditions abroad, concludes that the world's governments are placing increasingly more stringent curbs on the free flow of news.

Twenty-five years ago this month:

The average reporter top minimum under Guild contracts is reported at \$321.26. . . . The Justice Dept. says it is investigating Rupert Murdoch's acquisitions of the New York Post and the Village Voice. . . . Canadian federal agents raid the newsrooms of Vancouver's two dailies for evidence to use against demonstrators in a fisheries dispute, prompting stiff protests from TNG's executive board and others.

Ten years ago this month:

Membership in the Translators' Guild, TNG's "newest and perhaps most unique local," crosses the 100 mark for the first time. . . . Detroit Guild members hold a vigil for the third consecutive year in front of the Detroit Free Press and Detroit News to protest the papers' refusal to recognize Martin Luther King Day as a holiday. . . . A federal mediator is assigned to try to resolve a lengthy contract dispute between the Dayton Guild and the Dayton Daily News.