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Reporter

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'The real victim was democracy'

Broad coalition decries media consolidation, supports cross-ownership ban

Calling himself "the canary in the journalistic mineshaft," Canadian journalism professor—and censored CanWest Global columnist—Stephen Kimber brought his story March 15 to the National Press Club and an audience that included media representatives and more than a dozen staffers of the Federal Communications Commission.

Kimber was one of half-a-dozen panelists at a press/policy briefing, sponsored by a coalition of labor, consumer and public interest groups, defending the current U.S. ban on cross-ownership of newspapers and television stations in the same markets. Such barriers have already fallen in Canada, permitting CanWest to acquire newspapers and TV stations in more than a dozen major cities—and to start shaping the news from an increasingly centralized, corporate perspective (see related story at bottom right).

Now CanWest has intervened in the U.S., where an FCC review of the cross-ownership ban has elicited corporate complaints that it is too restrictive and outdated. Kimber, on the other hand, described what actually happens when media companies acquire too much control, from conferences that discuss "the line" to be taken on news stories to a hands-off attitude toward the owner's business interests and other sacred cows.

Many of the panel's comments seemed directed toward FCC Commissioner Michael J. Copps, who kicked off the morning with a short speech lamenting how little hard data the FCC has on which to base its decisions. "I'm a firm believer in the old adage that decisions made without you are usually decisions made against you," Copps cautioned.

Moderated by TNG-CWA President Linda Foley and Paul Almeida, president of the AFL-CIO Dept. for Professional Employees, the panel included Douglas Gomery, a professor of media economics at the University of Maryland, who recently published an analysis of what can be expected if the crossownership ban is repealed. "Giving any owner an exclusive monopoly over a locality's two top news sources [television and newspapers] might generate more corporate profits," he acknowledged, "but it has a negative economic, social, cultural and political impact."

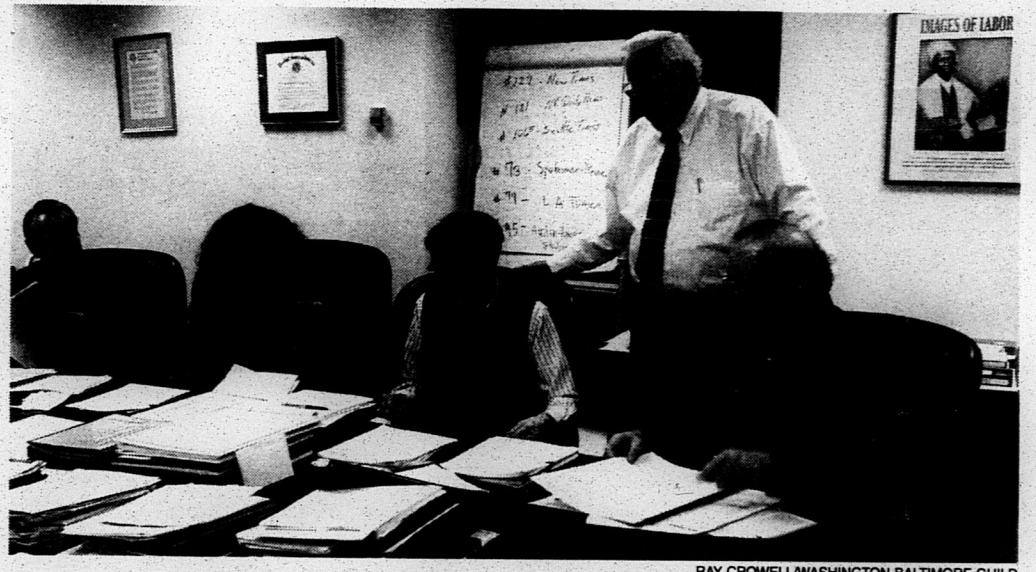
Also appearing on the panel were Mark Cooper, research director for the Consumer Federation of America; Belva Davis, the first African-American female broadcaster on the West Coast and winner of six local Emmies; Edward Fouhy, a five-time national Emmy winner and former CBS news director; and Wade Henderson, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights.

Fouhy, who recalled being told "we'll spend whatever it takes" to cover the war when he was sent to Saigon in 1967, added: "No one—take my word—would say 'spend what it takes' today," when all the television networks are owned by corporate conglomerates. Indeed, he added, the dismissive reference by one ABC executive to Night Line as "irrelevant" displayed a "breathtaking arrogance" toward serious news coverage.

Henderson, who said his coalition has not adopted a position on the cross-ownership rule, nevertheless reminded the audience that blacks couldn't buy air time in Mississippi in the 1960s, when whites held a firm grip on all the broadcast outlets. "The real victim was democracy," he observed, warning against consolidated control of the media.

BILL BURKE/WASHINGTON-BALTIMORE GUILD

TNG-CWA President Linda Foley watches slide presentation by Mark Cooper, research director of the Consumer Federation of America.



RAY CROWELL/WASHINGTON-BALTIMORE GUILD

Broun judges, shepherded by former Guild President Charles Perlik (standing), screen this year's entries. From left, they include Frank Swoboda, Jean Thompson, Carl Stepp and Tom Ferrick.

Broun Award goes to strike-interrupted series

For seven long weeks in late 2000 and early last year, it looked like the series that won this year's Heywood Broun Award wouldn't even get published.

Seattle Times reporters Duff Wilson and David Heath had spent more than a year investigating premature patient deaths at a cancer research center. Their series—including the revelation that some doctors at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center had a financial stake in experimental drugs that were being tested on unsuspecting patients—was 90% complete.

And then their union went out on strike.

Some reporters would have kicked and screamed at the bitter hand they'd been dealt, but not this pair. "Wilson and Heath put their union principles on the line and then risked the enmity of their publisher by helping to keep the strike strong," wrote Ron Judd, strike spokesman for the Pacific Northwest Guild, in a cover letter accompanying the entries.

"Wilson persuaded fence sitters in the newsroom to stay out in the crucial early days," Judd added. "Heath coordinated legal action over unfair labor practices. Both were prominent on picket lines and . . . both spent Christmas Eve

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Now CanWest is censoring the news, too

The hegemonic grip of the Asper family over its media empire—comprising 16 television stations, seven cable channels and 135 daily and weekly Canadian newspapers—now includes rewriting news stories.

Managers at the Regina Leader-Post recently rewrote the lead paragraph of a story about a speech at the University of Regina. When 10 reporters protested by withdrawing their bylines from the March 6 issue, six were given letters of reprimand and four were suspended and docked five days' pay for speaking to the media about the protest.

The censored story covered a speech to the university's journalism students by Haroon Siddiqui, editorial page editor emeritus for the Toronto Star (not one of the Asper-owned newspapers), that focused on the state of journalism in Canada—and, in particular, on the Aspers' influence through the company they control, CanWest Global. The story as written began: "CanWest Global performed 'chilling' acts of censorship when it refused to publish several columns, a Toronto Star columnist said Monday."

The revised version read: "A Toronto Star columnist says it's OK for CanWest Global to publish its owners' views, as long as the company is prepared to give equal play to opposing opinions."

The censored version also, ironically, cut a paragraph in which Saddiqui expressed concerns that the Aspers are censoring the news.

The Newspaper Guild of Canada/CWA, which represents

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ProJo censors NLRB trial, presents feeble defense

Although the Belo-owned Providence Journal was on trial for seven days as the National Labor Relations Board hammered it over 45 alleged violations of federal labor law, management apparently decided its best defense was to pretend the whole thing wasn't happening. Not a word of the proceedings made it into Rhode Island's biggest newspaper, and hardly a word in its defense was uttered in the courtroom.

"Although the Journal generally takes seriously its watchdog role in monitoring private entities and public officials," wrote Ian Donnis in the Boston Phoenix, "the paper has increasingly opened itself to charges of hypocrisy by failing to report on its own role as one of the most prominent and important businesses in Rhode Island."

But the Journal's public silence was simply a more muted version of its courtroom demeanor. While the NLRB took most of six days to lay out its case, attorneys for the Journal responded in less than a day, and in such desultory fashion that NLRB prosecutors are pondering whether to seek a court order to have the Journal pay their costs—a step typically taken only when a company's position is plainly without merit, according to Felice Freyer, who covered the proceedings on behalf of the Providence Newspaper Guild.

Testimony on the 46 allegations (the NLRB dropped one charge during the proceedings) focused on four main areas, including the Journal's imposition of contract terms without bargaining; refusal or delays in providing information to which the union was legally entitled; unilateral changes in working conditions; and regressive bargaining. But the key issue was whether negotiations had ever reached impasse, which Journal lawyer Richard A. Perras addressed "only in his opening arguments—and even then in a way that prompted the judge to question his logic," Freyer reported.

Contract negotiations between the Journal and its approximately 500 Guild-represented employees started in late 1999, with union-management relations becoming increasingly polarized as the talks dragged on. The most recent negotiating session before the trial was last November. The Journal then made a new contract offer just five days before the trial started, to which the Guild responded by proposing around-the-clock talks, but the new initiative quickly proved bogus when Journal management refused to discuss—or even explain—its latest "offer."

In a two-hour bargaining session on the second day of the trial, the Journal rejected a fresh proposal from the Guild but made no proposals of its own—after insisting that the session be off the record.

Such a "take-it-or-leave-it" approach to bargaining has typified management's conduct, NLRB attorney Elizabeth Vorro told the court. "The company has engaged in a pattern of bad-faith bargaining," she charged. "The company has barely moved since bargaining began."

Administrative law judge William G. Kocol is expected to rule within two to three months, with the Journal expected to appeal any adverse findings as far as it can. Indeed, the newspaper's dilatory tactics—the trial that just ended had been postponed repeatedly for almost a year—were displayed again when it refused to allow a separate hearing for additional charges the NLRB is likely to file, assuring further delays. But a decision favoring the Guild, say local officials, will at least provide a moral victory and a morale booster.

And while the process grinds on, they point out, Journal employees still have the protection of union representation. When Belo's non-unionized flagship paper, the Dallas Morning News, had to reduce payroll recently, it simply cut 70 employees; at the Journal, it offered voluntary buyouts instead.

Results of local elections

Lauria Lynch-German has become the first woman—and first part-timer—to win the presidency of the **Milwaukee Newspaper Guild**. She succeeds Dave Kirner, who stepped down after two years as president to become first vice president—the post Lynch-German had just vacated. Also elected were Tom Kertscher, second vice president; Bob Helbig, treasurer; and Maria-Romina Figueras, secretary.

Members of the **Erie Guild** have re-elected three of their top officers, returning Carol Prszybyszewski as president, Rex Alger as vice president and collective bargaining chair and Jerry Trombley as treasurer. Mary Beth Swoger was elected as the local's new recording secretary.

The **Newspaper Guild of Detroit** has re-elected three of its top officers, including Lou Mleczko as president, Audrey Lasater as vice president and Jocelyn Faniel-Heard as treasurer. Alesia Cooper was elected the local's new secretary.

Richard Peery has been elected to his eighth consecutive term as president of the **Northeast Ohio Newspaper Guild**. Other officers in the local include Yuvonne Webb, first vice president; Edd Pritchard, second vice president; Katie Byard, third vice president; Ron Rutti, fourth vice president; and Harlan Spector, treasurer.

Two hotly contested races in the **Star Tribune unit** of the **Minnesota Newspaper Guild Typographical Union** generated a robust 68% voter turnout. Incumbent Mike Meyers edged out challenger Ann Wilhelmy, 53%-47%, to gain re-election as unit secretary-treasurer, while challenger Mark Wollemann defeated incumbent Randy Furst by just four votes to become editorial vice chair. Incumbents Margaret Zack and Karolynn DeLucca were unopposed in their re-elections as unit chair and commercial vice chair, respectively.

The **New England District Council** has elected the following officers: president, Adolphe Bernotas of the Wire Service Guild; first vice president, Bob Jordan of Boston; second vice president, Betsy Regan of Brockton; secretary, Lesley Phillips of Boston; and treasurer, Wendy Caswell of Manchester.

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The Newspaper Guild International

PENSION FUND

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

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

Correction

The February issue of The Guild Reporter incorrectly reported that Guild-represented employees of the Jersey Journal would not receive severance pay if the paper closed down; the Guild's contract would have required all full-time employees to get severance under those circumstance. The incorrect statement was attributed to staff representative Bruce Nelson, who in fact stated the matter correctly—it was the Guild Reporter's editor who inadvertently transformed the meaning of Nelson's statement. Apologies have been extended.

In brief . . .

Rudersdorfer quits race for Canada vp

Facing a challenge over his eligibility to run for international office, Ray Rudersdorfer has withdrawn his candidacy for regional vice president for western Canada (see page 7 for Rudersdorfer's letter to the editor on the subject). As a result, the Guild Sector Election and Referendum Committee has declared incumbent Scott Edmonds re-elected by acclamation.

Register-Guard broke federal law

An administrative law judge has ruled that The Register-Guard's prohibition on wearing of union insignia and prohibition on using company e-mail for union purposes—while permitting e-mail use for other non-company business— violate federal law. He further ruled that the company's bargaining proposal to ban union use of e-mail is "an unlawful codification of a discriminatory policy and constitutes an illegal subject of bargaining"—an argument Guild representatives have been making for more than a year.

Canadian talks back to square one

The Canadian Media Guild reports it is "back to square one" in contract negotiations with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, following management's rejection of a limited agenda of key issues. Although CMG negotiators sought to discuss workload, meaningful wage increases, freelance working conditions and the impact of new technology, CBC "wanted to discuss nothing more than a minor wage increase, some tinkering with existing contract language on two items and what it referred to as 'housekeeping issues,' " said a staff representative.

Two locals gain wage increases

Recent contract agreements include a one-year extension in Pueblo, Col., that carries a 3% across-the-board wage increase and an increase in life insurance coverage to $40,000. Meanwhile, a two-year agreement at the Daily Racing Form includes a wage increase between 2.2% and 2.7% in the first year, followed by a 2% increase in the second; increased company contributions to the health care plan; and the addition of a fourth day of bereavement leave.

Death blamed on inadequate staffing

The death of liver donor Mike Hurewitz, an Albany Times Union reporter, is being blamed on inadequate staffing at Mount Sinai Hospital. State investigators reported that 34 transplant patients were left in the post-op care of an inexperienced first-year medical resident, that there were too few nurses in the unit and that Hurewitz's vital signs were not recorded "as frequently as necessary." Hurewitz, who had donated part of his liver to his seriously ill brother, died from inhaling bloody vomit caused by a bacterial infection in his stomach.

Guild on verge of returning to UPI

The Wire Service Guild, following UPI management's refusal to accept voluntary union recognition, filed a petition Feb. 28 at the National Labor Relations Board seeking a union certification election. An anticipated 43 editorial employees, including all "regional editors and correspondents," will be eligible to vote in the election, scheduled for April 12.

Time yields in Guild options fight

The Time Inc. unit of the Newspaper Guild of New York has announced "a financially attractive end" to its year-long battle with the company over profit-sharing and stock options. According to the terms of a settlement signed last month, all Guild-represented employees at Time received options at the then-current stock price of approximately $24 a share, rather than at the $38.56 strike price of April, 2001. Moreover, vesting for Guild-represented employees was made retroactive to the original granting date, so the first 25% of options would vest within two months instead of a year.

PD employees OK wage reopener

Guild-represented employees of The Plain Dealer overwhelmingly ratified a wage-fringe benefit package that covers the remaining four years in the unit's 10-year contract. The package includes a 29.4% increase in the pension maximum and three pay raises.

Warsmith named top police reporter

Stephanie Warsmith, reporter for the Akron Beacon Journal and a delegate to the TNG-CWA Knight Ridder Council, was named the 12th winner of the Al Nakkula Award, the only national award for police reporting. Warsmith was cited as the "clear winner" for her cleanly written, straightforward stories and her sensitivity toward crime victims, as well as her in-depth coverage.

Former Local 55 president dies

William C. Pike, former president of TNG-CWA Local 55, died March 10. A passionate defender of the rank-and-file, he led numerous contract bargaining teams and was a willing mentor to succeeding generations of union leaders.

NY Times turns to gouging photogs

It's been two decades since the government bailout of Chrysler made wage concessions an everyday concept. Still, when photographers began receiving letters in February announcing a one-third pay cut, they found the idea a bit breathtaking.

The letters began showing up worldwide in the mailboxes and fax machines of freelance photographers who work for the New York Times. The work of Margaret O'Connor, the paper's director of photography, the letters announced that The Times would no longer pay freelancers a customary $100 fee for transmitting digital images to the paper's New York offices. Photographers are now expected to handle that chore for free, leaving them with the $200 day rate that most Times assignments pay.

O'Connor argued that the digital transmission fee—originally instituted, she said, to help freelancers purchase the needed equipment—was no longer needed "since digital transmission is now both cost effective and commonplace."

But such cost effectiveness does not apply to the photographers themselves, who must make substantially higher capital investments now than they did in the film era. Canon's and Nikon's new professional digital cameras cost $5,500 each, storage cards go for hundreds of dollars and the wide-angles lenses and strobes that digital cameras require run into thousands more. Throw in a desktop computer and a laptop for travelling, along with Photoshop and other software, then plan on replacing most of it every two years or so . . . .

Without that "cost effective" $100 cut in their fees, many photographers are beginning to think they are subsidizing a multinational corporation every time they go to work for it.

Organized by Editorial Photographers—a group that successfully worked for fair compensation for freelance photographers at Business Week and Forbes—more than 500 photographers signed their names to a letter to O'Connor protesting The Times' wage cut. The signers included photographers from nearly every state and from more than 30 countries. "The cost of technology has become astronomical," the group pointed out. "The biggest advantage of the digital age has not been cost savings for freelancers. The biggest advantage has been convenience for our clients."

Forbidden by anti-trust laws from taking collective action against The Times, photographers were divided in their individual responses. "I have made my decision to not shoot for the Times until they deal with the fee structure fairly," said Jared Leeds, a Boston freelancer who says he shot 60 or 70 assignments for The Times last year.

Others were taking a wait-and-see attitude, hoping that O'Connor will follow through on her hints that The Times might increase assignment rates "when economic conditions improve"—although economic conditions never really deteriorated all that much. "While we did not match the financial record we established in 2000," says the company's 2001 annual report, "we still achieved our third most profitable year, and our share price rose 8%—at a time when the S&P 500 index declined by 13% . . ."

Picture editors at The Times, the Guild members who work most closely with the freelancers, seem to be in sympathy with them. "I think that it's unfortunate that The Times hasn't found a way of increasing the day rate of photographers in 22 years," said Christopher E. Jones, a 33-year veteran of The Times. "I have spoken to no picture editor who supported the decision" to cut freelancers' income.

But Guild leaders themselves are less supportive, if only because of the age-old tension between full-time staffers and freelancers and other subcontractors. "While we can sympathize with some of the concerns that have been raised, our strong position for a considerable time has been that The Times should not employ freelance reporters and photographers in the first place," said Barry Lipton, president of the Newspaper Guild of New York.

Stressing that his observations were shared by Times unit chair Lena Williams, Lipton added that it is "absurd" for The Times to tell its own employees there's not enough work for them—leading last summer to layoff threats and a negotiated buyout program that was accepted by approximately 100 employees—while the paper keeps farming out assignments to freelancers.

"We are not yet out of the woods," he added, raising the possibility of future layoffs.

Meanwhile, The Times has attacked the livelihoods of other freelancers. Photographers at The Times-owned Boston Globe are fighting a rights-grabbing contract that the paper insisted they sign if they ever wanted to work there again. Freelance writers in the National Writers Union went to the Supreme Court to stop The Times and other publishers from stealing the rights to re-publish their work. And Times photographers for several years have been angry that the newspaper has unilaterally used their work on The Times' web site without compensation.

"Once again, The Times is attempting to squeeze as much as possible from its freelance creators," an NWU statement observed.

Winners walked the line

Continued from page 1

mulling management letters saying they'd be permanently replaced if they stayed out on strike. Both stood firm."

And when the strike was over, they returned to work and finished the job—finished it so well, Judd added, that the result "was lauded by workers and managers alike for helping to pull the newsroom back together and restoring pride in quality journalism at The Seattle Times."

Plucked from among 186 entries by this year's judges, "Uninformed Consent" was lauded as a "compelling" and "lucidly written" series that explored the center's unethical—and deadly, for 80 of 82 unwitting patients—clinical trials. The series was so thorough, despite claims by Hutchinson Center officials that it was "blatantly false," that the center was forced to reform its policies and several outside agencies launched their own investigations, some of which are still progressing. The duo's "courageous series is in the best tradition of Heywood Broun," the judges observed.

(Lest anyone believe the judges were inordinately swayed by Judd's cover letter, it bears noting that when Wilson and Heath were finally tracked down with the good news, they were in Boston—receiving the 2002 Goldsmith Prize for Investigative Reporting for the same series.)

Also cited by the judges as entries of "substantial distinction" were a Washington Post series, "The District's Lost Children," and an ABC News 20/20 piece, "Empty Arms."

"Lost Children," reported by Sari Horwitz and Scott Higham with the assistance of database editor Sarah Cohen, documented the deaths of 229 children over a period of eight years after they were placed in the Washington D.C.'s child protection system. Forty of the victims, most of them infants and toddlers, died after the agency failed to take preventive action—despite nearly 700 prior warnings and recommendations from the city's oversight panels.

Horwitz, Higham and Cohen were likewise lauded for their work by other judges, winning top honors from Investigative Reporters and Editors.

"Empty Arms," produced and written by Joanna Breen and featuring correspondent Tom Jarriel, reported the travails of 12 couples who traveled to Cambodia to adopt children—only to have the U.S. government bar the children from entering the country. Viewers were so outraged that the government relented within 48 hours of the show's airing.

The award winners will be recognized at a banquet May 14 in Washington, D.C. that also will feature presentation of the first annual Freedom Award, created in honor of cartoonist Herbert Block.

BILL BURKE/WASHINGTON-BALTIMORE GUILD

Democratic whip Nancy Pelosi delivers the keynote address at CWA's Legislative/Political Conference, held March 3-6.

CWA rank and file takes to the Hill

Stumping Congressional halls after listening to a series of impassioned speakers, several hundred CWA members took a bead on the ongoing assault on workers' rights at the union's annual legislative/political conference, March 3-6.

With an anti-labor president in the White House, the Democrats holding a shaky one-seat majority in the Senate and the Republicans with a six-seat majority in the House, this year's mid-term elections assume special importance, CWA leaders emphasized. "We will ask, 'Which side are you on?' " stressed Executive Vice President Larry Cohen.

"Are you with Enron's Ken Lay, Global Crossing's Gary Winnick, GE's Jeff Immelt and IBM's Louis Gerstner? Or will you really stand up for the majority in your district who go to work each day concerned about their jobs and their families?"

Although the instant lobbyists had a smorgasbord of legislative initiatives from which to choose, CWA put special emphasis on four:

- Putting the brakes on fast track authorization, which has already passed in the House;
- Eliminating regulatory barriers for nationwide broadband service;
- Passage of hate-crime legislation;
- Reauthorization and greater funding of welfare, now known as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

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TNG delegates move to revamp

While delegates to the Guild's 67th annual gathering grappled with numerous issues, one agenda item was more prominently featured than the others: revitalizing the TNG-CWA human rights program.

A Valentine's Day panel underscored the need for a fresh look at how the union deals with issues of workplace diversity. Hosted by New York Times reporter Lena Williams, author of "It's the Little Things," the panel included Hamlin Grange, whose Toronto-based company measures cultural diversity in media content; Rudy Renaud, former managing editor of Lavender and now a union organizer with SEIU; and Kent Wong, director of the UCLA Labor Center and founding president of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance.

All agreed on the need for greater workplace diversity—including within the Guild itself. "If you're the person being organized, you want to see yourself in the organizer," Renaud observed. But as Wong also pointed out, such a change won't come easily. "Nothing changes without a demand," he stressed. "Change doesn't happen without a struggle—on every issue, there has to be a battle."

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No. 1 organizer

Barry Lipton, president of the Newspaper Guild of New York, holds the Union Builder's Award while flanked by his sector conference delegation. Lipton received the prestigious award, bestowed by District One but presented at the TNG-CWA sector conference in Orlando, "because of his efforts on behalf of organizing the Hudson News employees," explained CWA District One Vice President Larry Mancino. Lipton is the first TNG member to receive the award, now in its tenth year. Most Hudson News employees are emigrants from Pakistan and India.

Sometimes, though, even getting to the battle can be difficult. Although TNG-CWA created a task force last April to develop a plan for revitalizing the union's human rights program, the report it presented was criticized as long on abstractions and short on specifics. Among the report's points: that the human rights program would ensure the rights of all members and ensure diversity, that it would develop training and mentoring programs, that it would hold workshops on human rights issues at sector conferences and that it would seek to build coalitions and work on behalf of human rights legislation.

"I don't see in this document a sense of urgency, a sense of necessity, a sense of newness," complained Arnold Amber, director of TNG Canada. "I think we need something that's a lot tougher, a lot more focused, a lot more proactive."

Richard Peery, vice-chair of the sector conference's Human Rights Committee, which reported the task force's recommendations to the floor, apparently agreed, emphasizing that TNG-CWA "*used* to be considered in the very vanguard of human rights issues in this country." But the committee was recommending that the report be approved "in principle," he added, "with the understanding that it is a living document that will

OBITUARIES

Eugene B. Jones, a former president of the Newspaper Guild of Greater Philadelphia and an international vice president of the union, died March 16 after a long illness.

He was for many years on the advertising sales staff of The Philadelphia Inquirer and Daily News, but had been retired for several years.

"I served with Eugene on the committee in the late 1980s that managed our purchase and painstaking restoration of the long-vacant Spring Garden Soup House that is now our Guild Hall," said Henry J. Holcomb, president of the Newspaper Guild of Greater Philadelphia. "Through his leadership on this building, the parts of our contract that he helped negotiate, and the many other things he left in place, the union and its members still benefit every day from Eugene's leadership."

Friend Bill Cooper described Eugene as an active church member "who was all over the place helping people, even after he became very sick. For example, he was at the soup kitchen at Tindley Temple United Methodist Church every week, helping serve food to the homeless."

For nearly 30 years, Eugene worked in the admissions office at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, first full-time, then after coming to the Inquirer, part-time on Friday evenings and Sundays. "He was always interested in parents and their children, helping them find overnight places to stay while in the city, and helping in many other ways," Cooper said.

Cooper also recalled how, as a local history buff, Eugene enjoyed meeting tourists on the street and directing them to the right locations. "He would get annoyed when drivers in the horse-drawn carriages gave misinformation," Cooper said. "When asked by strangers where such-and-such a place might be, Eugene was known on more than one occasion to take them there, many times going way out of his own way."

When he wasn't busy with his church and community activities, Eugene was a pillar of the union, holding numerous offices over a 30-year period. He was president and vice president of the Philadelphia local, president of the Middle Atlantic District Council and twice an international vice president, serving from 1975 to 1977 as a Region 1 vice president and from 1993 to 1997 as an at-large vice president. He also chaired numerous committees and served as a trustee of the Inquirer-Daily News Guild Pension Fund, so as news of his death spread, it was not surprising that tributes began pouring in from around the country.

"I was very sorry to hear of Eugene's death," wrote Luther Jackson, executive officer of the San Jose Newspaper Guild. "I always enjoyed his positive spirit, dedication to union values and compassion for his fellow human beings."

Linda Foley, president of The Newspaper Guild-CWA, wrote: "Gene Jones was a great guy with a gentle demeanor. He took his Guild service very seriously. It was an honor to have him serve on our executive board."

Daily News columnist Stu Bykofsky recalled, "I served on the R.A. (the Guild's Representative Assembly) with Gene, I helped run strikes with Gene, and (best of all) I vacationed with Gene in Hawaii after a Guild convention there. I knew him to be a dedicated Guildsman, a humanitarian, a man of good spirit in all senses of the word. He was a gentleman, one of our best."

Kitty Caparella, a former president of the Philadelphia local who served with Eugene for many years, remembered him as "a soft-spoken man who worked part-time at a hospital on weekends and held the union together during the lean years of the 1970s. He was always ready to step in to help when times were tough. For decades, he served as a trustee on the Inquirer and Daily News-Guild Pension Fund, making sure that co-workers were being properly compensated and bringing members' problems to the board.

"He was one of the kindest people I know, who tried to solve problems without rancor," she added. "He was always among the top five people to volunteer to help in Guild activities. He loved the Labor Day Parade and was there each year, even after he retired, to hold up the Guild banner."

Eugene left a request that there be no funeral, but plans are being made for a memorial program.

Daniel Pearl, the Wall Street Journal reporter who was slain by Islamic extremists in Pakistan but whose body has not been recovered, was memorialized at a Los Angeles service and in gatherings in Washington, D.C. and elsewhere. The private service in California, a few miles from Pearl's childhood home in Encino, drew about 450 family members and friends, including Muhammad Ali—who had pleaded for Pearl's release—and others from as far away as Pakistan, Bombay and England.

Flags flew at half-staff at Dow Jones' corporate headquarters in New Jersey for 30 days, as the company announced it was establishing a trust fund for Pearl's unborn son with an initial $100,000 contribution. CWA said it would contribute $5,000 to the fund, while The Newspaper Guild-CWA said it would add another $1,000.

"The circumstances of Daniel Pearl's murder require our country, and all nations that value decency, to stand up and condemn such cold-blooded barbarism," TNG-CWA President Linda Foley declared in a public statement. Washington, D.C.-based members of IAPE, the TNG-CWA local that Pearl once belonged to, issued a statement that said they were "privileged to have worked with and played with this outstanding journalist, fine man and good friend."

A resolution on behalf of Pearl, adopted by the TNG-CWA Sector Conference before his fate was known, is reproduced below:

Danny Pearl

Daniel Pearl, a member in good standing of the Independent Association of Publishers' Employees during his U.S. tenure at the Wall Street Journal, was abducted Jan. 23 while on assignment in Pakistan while performing his duties as a journalist, gathering and reporting the news. Daniel delivered accurate and balanced reports despite dangerous conditions, political turmoil and pressure from extremist groups to restrict the free flow of news. He is a legitimate journalist—nothing more, nothing less—despite what his captors claim.

Daniel's continued detention has evoked worldwide public outcry and hope for his safe return. We stand strong behind the rights of journalists like Daniel to chase a story without the fear of physical harm. Pressure from political, corporate or other interests will not sway our pursuit of the truth. The action taken against Daniel is not just an assault against one man, it is an assault against his family, his friends, his colleagues, his profession and the rights of all humankind.

The 2002 Newspaper Guild-CWA Sector Conference demands Daniel's immediate release. We refuse to allow such coercion and intimidation to deter us from disseminating the news.

human rights

evolve as the task force continues its work."

Others, meanwhile, contended that any document would invariably end up rather abstract and that it would be up to the locals to give it any teeth. Conference delegates agreed, both giving Peery the approval he requested and approving a constitutional amendment (see item below) that requires each local to appoint a human rights coordinator.

Task force members continued their work after the sector conference concluded, meeting for an additional day and a half to sketch out a more concrete battle plan. Among their decisions: to concentrate on three broad areas of immediate emphasis, including family rights; discrimination and equal opportunity; and diversity, both within TNG-CWA and the industries whose employees it represents. The task force also agreed to establish an information baseline by gathering information about existing contracts, policies, job requirements and programs, as well as industry, union and community demographics.

The task force's "short-term goal is to compile a comprehensive report on the state of diversity in our industries and in our union," stressed TNG-CWA President Linda Foley in a letter soliciting the support of local presidents and administrative officers. "We will approach our employers on the basis that both union and management need to work on diversity to rectify the lack of it in our workplaces."

Foley's letter also stressed the importance of each local's commitment to the Guild's program, especially in its choice of a human rights coordinator. The coordinator, Foley wrote, "should be an activist who is sensitive to both diversity and union values" and should have access to the local's decision-making process.

All locals have been requested to provide TNG-CWA with their HR coordinator's name and to send him or her to a district meeting this fall, where initial training seminars will be offered. An e-mail list and web-based chat area for HR coordinators also is being created, to facilitate the exchange of ideas and information.

The task force said it would complete its baseline research by August and present a full report to the sector executive council in October. For more information about its work, contact TNG's Human Rights Director, Anna Padia, at *apadia@cwa-union.org*.

Significant conference actions

FINANCE-STRUCTURE & POLICY COMMITTEE

Current (pre-audit) Numbers

At the close of the first half of the fiscal year (December 31, 2001), The Newspaper Guild-CWA Sector of the Communications Workers of America had spent $1,281,347, or $73,276 less than the $1,354,623 budgeted for the period (5.4% under budget). Expenses were $52,429 under budget for full-time staffers. Part-time salaries and expenses (including all lost-time and expenses for committees and E.C. meetings) were $26,763 under budget. Electronic communications were $11,644 over (addition of cell phones for staff). Our "all other" category was $37,110 over budget, as we consistently have items that do not fit neatly into CWA categories.

The Segregated Fund has a current balance of $163,622. The Irving Leuchter Fund holds $7,371. The Anti-Discrimination Fund holds $42,132. The Guild's severance fund has a total of $197,011.

The Guild's Defense Fund has $3,142,933 as of June 30, 2001. The Northern California Local received $1,500 to help defray the cost of a McClatchy Council meeting held at the 2001 Sector Conference. The Finance Committee also approved a subsidy of $8,000 to the Translators and Interpreters Guild, with the understanding that the local work with Administrative Assistant Eric Geist to improve their financial situation. The Minnesota Guild requested and received $6,000 to help offset the cost of getting a first contract at Lavender Magazine. The Knoxville Local received $25,000 to offset the substantial cost of a successful arbitration (reinstatement ordered). The local understands that any future requests must be consistent with the terms of the TNG-CWA Legal Program. The Fund paid $2,500 for the design of the KnightRidderWatch.org web site.

The Executive Council approved an expenditure of $30,000 from the Anti-Discrimination Fund for the Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild. The Local had asked for help to offset the ongoing cost of litigation related to ongoing EEOC actions at the Washington Post, which has cost the local in excess of $50,000 per year. The local took responsibility for pursuing these discrimination actions as a part of a settlement with the Post. The Local has also requested mobilizing assistance for contract negotiations at the Washington Post, and the Finance Committee has approved some money for a unit web mobilization effort. Other requests from the local are still under review.

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

TNG-CWA amends its Constitution, Article XI Section 20 as follows:

SECTION 20. Each Local, in accordance with its bylaws, shall select a Local Human Rights Coordinator and forward the name and contact information to TNG-CWA. The Human Rights Coordinator shall guide and advise the local on implementing the TNG-CWA Human Rights Program at the local level and developing and advancing affirmative action programs for equal employment and advancement opportunities. This person also shall get appropriate training to fulfill his or her duties as Human Rights Coordinator.

ORGANIZING/MOBILIZING COMMITTEE

TNG-CWA recognizes the need to encourage locals to become more involved in expanding its membership. As such, we recommend that:

1. Locals establish local organizing committees, seek appropriate training and dedicate 10 percent of their budgets to organizing.

2. TNG-CWA accelerate efforts at an international level to organize Information Technology, e-Commerce and Internet workers, with the Executive Council investigating the changing nature of work and employee status, new organizing methods and reporting its findings to the next TNG Sector Conference.

3. Locals are urged to take advantage of CWA's 75/25 organizing program.

4. TNG-CWA continue the New Local Officers Training Seminar designed for new local officers.

5. TNG-CWA explore the possibility of expanding to three the number of members Locals can send to the New Local Officers Training Seminar each year.

The following recommendation was passed and referred to the Human Rights Committee:

That locals develop diversity programs designed to retain new members and to encourage them to seek advancement.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING COMMITTEE

1. Contract and payroll information

Local leaders of The Newspaper Guild-CWA continue to want an updated and efficient method for sharing contract and wage information in the shops where Guild members work.

To accomplish this, TNG-CWA is continuing to build a contract database and develop a system for efficient access to contract information. TNG-CWA will send out a list of Locals whose current contract and payroll information is on file.

For the database to be useful, Locals who have not already done so must provide TNG-CWA headquarters with electronic copies (e-mail or diskette) of all the current collective bargaining agreements they hold.

Those Locals with no way to readily produce electronic copies may seek help from TNG-CWA. Locals upgrading their computer systems are urged to pass along their used hardware to Locals without computers.

Further, Locals are reminded to send payroll information of employees working under Guild contracts to TNG-CWA, for ongoing analysis of the actual earnings in the industry. This information will not be used in such a manner so as to identify individual members.

2. Access to e-mail

Labor laws in both the United States and Canada have long recognized the right of employees to discuss union matters in the workplace. The emergence of electronic mail systems in our offices and shops has added a convenient and increasingly common way for employees to communicate at work.

TNG-CWA has assisted locals in bargaining language assuring the right of access to employer e-mail systems and, where necessary, has supported litigation to protect that right.

Locals are encouraged to review existing contracts, communications policies and practices to ensure that employees' fundamental free speech rights are respected and protected. TNG-CWA will continue to make the resources of staff and the legal services program available to units that encounter employers who seek to strip their employees of the right to communicate electronically at work.

FINANCE-STRUCTURE & POLICY COMMITTEE

TNG-CWA amends its constitution as follows:

SECTION 4.

(a) Within five days after a vacancy occurs in any elective Sector office, the E.C. shall notify the Locals concerned.

(b) For any vacancy that occurs no less than six months prior to the next regularly scheduled Sector Conference (except for a vacancy in the three principal offices), the EC shall include in the local notice a call for nominations. Each local so notified shall be responsible for communicating the call for nominations to its membership.

(1) Any member in good standing may nominate a candidate for such interim vacancy by submitting the nomination in writing to the Secretary Treasurer of TNG-CWA. (Only members of Canadian locals may nominate candidates for a vacancy in the office of Director of TNG Canada; only members of locals located within a concerned Region may nominate candidates for a vacancy in the office of a Regional Vice President.) Nominations, as well as the nominees' written declarations of their willingness to serve, must be received by the Secretary-Treasurer no later than 15 days following the EC call for nominations. The Secretary-Treasurer shall immediately notify locals of the nominees.

(2) If there is only one nominee for a vacancy, such nominee shall be declared the temporary successor.

(3) The temporary successor shall be the candidate receiving the majority of votes cast by the governing bodies of the concerned Locals, based on the voting strength to which each Local was entitled at the last Sector Conference. Votes of each concerned Local shall be counted in proportion to the number of votes cast for each candidate by each member of the governing body of the Local. Within 30 days of the call for nominations each concerned Local must certify the local vote results to the Secretary-Treasurer in writing, signed by two Local officers. The Secretary-Treasurer shall tabulate the results and notify the affected locals within 35 days of the EC call for nominations.

(4) If no candidate receives a majority of the votes cast, the Local vote conducted in accordance with paragraph (3) shall be considered a runoff vote and the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes shall be declared the final candidates. Local governing bodies shall then vote between the two final candidates based on the voting strength to which each Local was entitled at the last Sector Conference, and votes shall be counted in proportion to the number of votes cast for each candidate by each member of the governing body of the Local. Locals shall certify the local runoff vote results to the SERC in writing, signed by two Local officers, within 50 days of the call for nominations.

(5) Any temporary successor officer shall take office upon certification of the SERC and shall serve until a successor officer is certified by the SERC in accordance with the nomination and referendum procedures outlined in Section (d) below.

(c) In the event of a vacancy in any of the three principal offices, there shall be a temporary succession pending the election of a new officer. The Sector Chairperson shall thus be succeeded by the President, the President by the Secretary-Treasurer and the Secretary-Treasurer by the President, the temporary successor retaining also the duties of his or her own office. In the event of a vacancy in the office of Director of TNG Canada, there shall be a temporary succession pending the election of a new officer. The Director of TNG Canada shall thus be succeeded by the Deputy Director of TNG Canada who shall have voice but not vote on the E.C.

In the event of a contingency not met by these procedures, the E.C. shall take necessary action to provide for administration of TNG-CWA.

(d) In the event of a vacancy in any elective Sector office, of the three principal offices or in the office of the Director of TNG Canada or among the Regional Vice-Presidents, successor candidates shall be nominated at the next regularly scheduled Sector Conference and an election shall be held by referendum in accordance with this Article. The successor officer shall take office upon certification by the SERC and shall serve the remainder of the term of his or her predecessor.

THE EMPEROR UNCLOTHED

CanWest's 'creeping censorship'

By Haroon Siddiqui

The University of Regina holds an annual James Minifie Lecture, named after one of Canada's most courageous journalists. A Saskatchewan native, he covered World War II and later served as the CBC's correspondent in Washington. Past Minifie lecturers have included Knowlton Nash, June Callwood, Lloyd Robertson, Peter Mansbridge and Adrienne Clarkson.

When I delivered this year's lecture, editors at the Regina Leader-Post changed a story on it filed by their own reporter; they toned down the critical references to the paper's owner, CanWest Global. In protest, the paper's writers withdrew their bylines. Here's a condensed version of the talk, titled "Are media living up to their mission?"

I want to talk about the four Cs of Canadian journalism—corporatization, concentration, convergence and creeping censorship—and then about some media shortcomings. But first, a few statements of the obvious, to clarify the confusions that often clutter debate on the media.

• Media are a business, except for the CBC, which I support wholeheartedly.

• But media are more than the business of manufacturing widgets. Being in the business of news and opinion, they play a crucial role in a democracy. Indeed, they proclaim just such a role.

• As a business, media must make money. They do so by delivering audiences to advertisers.

• It is but human that some advertisers would be tempted to penalize the medium that may bite the hand that feeds it. The bigger and the more economically stable the medium, the more likely it is to resist such pressures and be editorially independent—if it is so inclined, i.e. if its owner is so inclined. But with the owners' right to own the press comes the obligation to guard the freedom of the press.

• Being a business, media are not in the business of offending clients to the point of driving them away. Media cannot get too out of sync with majority tastes and values. But they do have the choice to cater to the lowest common denominator or aim for the highest common factor. Some follow public opinion, even pander to prejudices. Others lead, at the risk of angering those who may not want to hear the truth.

• The notion of journalistic objectivity has been oversold. Journalism is subjective, hopefully practised fairly, based on news value. There are guidelines on what constitutes news, but news judgments reflect the biases of the editors, who reflect the biases of the owner. But good journalists always fight for fairness.

None of this is as scandalously new as we might think.

It has always been so, dating back to Confederation, when we had Grit newspapers and Tory newspapers. In the decades since, the Thomsons, the Bassetts, the Southams, the Siftons, the Irvings and the Honderichs have never really hidden their hobbyhorses.

So, what is new?

Concentration of ownership: It, along with the changing economics of newspapers, gave us one-newspaper towns. But that was mitigated by the ethos that if you ran the only daily in town, you had an extra obligation to reflect the diversity of opinion in your market. When Conrad Black bought the Southam chain, he ended up owning 58 of 105 dailies—the highest-ever level of concentration. He was ideologically driven, something he made no secret of. He was also involved with the content of his newspapers, as he was entitled to be.

For his critics, he had a rejoinder: After "the virtual monopoly of the soft left," he had injected some conservative balance into the media.

Black had another argument for critics of concentration of ownership, one that has been picked up by his successors at the National Post and Southam, the Aspers: Given the proliferation of radio and TV stations in most cities, and the advent of the Internet, there really is no danger posed by concentration of ownership.

It is a slick argument, except that it does not address concerns over the lack of diversity of views in print in cities with only one newspaper, especially one owned by an ideologue.

It must be noted that with the sale of the Southam papers to CanWest, concentration of newspaper ownership has decreased. The Aspers own only 27 dailies. The fear of the 1990s that we may end up with one or two owners has dissipated. Ownership of dailies is more fragmented and there are more buyers than newspapers for sale. This is a healthy development.

Yet, there is cause for concern, since CanWest also owns 120 community papers and a national TV network. I read the other day that it owns 60% of newspapers and TV media.

Corporatization: Whereas private owners may live with smaller profits to produce a good journalistic product, a market-driven newspaper is obligated to provide decent returns for investors. Shareholder-driven newsrooms are generally smaller newsrooms; they have fewer resources to cover their communities well.

Convergence: Buyers pay inflated prices to achieve convergence. Then they nickel and dime the companies they have bought. The presumed savings rarely materialize. The synergies are not what they are cracked up to be.

The benefits lie in the opportunities for cross-promotion of a company's various media holdings and cross-platform selling of advertising. But the question remains: At what cost? The market provides one answer. CanWest stock went down following the purchase of the Post and the Southam chain.

The question is: Which is the bigger threat—concentration or convergence?

Whatever the answer, there is no will in Ottawa, perhaps rightly so, to undo what has already happened. On convergence, there's a half-hearted attempt by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission to build "a firewall" between TV and newspaper newsrooms in the case of common ownership.

But it is, I am afraid, the wrong way to go, for it compromises editorial independence. In the long run, it may also be unenforceable.

Creeping censorship: The National Post appeared as an unapologetic right-wing paper. It was a welcome foil to the liberal Toronto Star in a city with four dailies. But in other cities, views different than Black's had trouble being heard, beyond letters to the editors.

With the advent of CanWest, the situation has worsened. The Aspers decreed in December that editorials written in their head office—on property rights, Triple-E Senate, military spending, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, etc.—must be run in all their major papers.

Among those who did not like it was Stephen Kimber, a columnist for their Halifax Daily News and director of journalism at King's College. His column was killed. He quit in protest. When Stephanie Domet criticized it in her column, it was canned. She quit, too.

When Peter Worthington, of the Sun chain, wrote against all this, his syndicated column got canned from the Asper-owned Windsor Star. "They are trying to eliminate another point of view in other papers," he said.

Among those protesting were the Canadian Association of Journalists, Quebec Federation of Professional Journalists, Canadian University Press, PEN Canada and the National Conference of Editorial Writers of North America, as well as 55 writers at the Aspers' Montreal Gazette who withheld their bylines.

Another Halifax columnist, Peter March, a professor at St. Mary's University, got canned after writing for the Daily News for 10 years, he said, because he had been critical of Israel.

Doug Cuthand, a columnist for the Leader-Post in Regina and the Star-Phoenix in Saskatoon, compared the plight of Palestinians to that of aboriginals here. His column was killed, the first to meet such a fate in 10 years.

All this is chilling.

The Montreal Gazette's veteran reporter Bill Marsden was quoted as saying of his bosses: "They do not want any criticism of Israel. We do not run in our newspaper op-ed pieces that express criticism of Israel and what it's doing."

There is an irony here. CanWest media are often critical, rightly so, of undemocratic Arabs who practise censorship against democratic Israel. Yet here we are in Canada witnessing creeping censorship against the Arabs.

The Aspers have argued they have a right to their views. But that was never the real issue. Rather, it was their censorship of other views.

To sum up: One ventures to say that under CanWest, all the four Cs have come together.

I want to move on to some other shortcomings of the media. Despite the declarative demands of the Broadcast Act and CRTC guidelines, that the regulated media reflect our multicultural reality, neither private broadcasters nor the CBC reflect our growing diversity. They and our newspapers do not reflect our demography. This is bad journalism.

The point is best made in the Prairies, the cradle of immigration and multiculturalism. Canada today is more immigrant than the United States. Yet you would not know that from our media. An anti-immigrant narrative continues to dominate their content.

There are about 4.5 million visible minorities in Canada. That's larger than the population of Atlantic Canada. Yet these visible minorities are largely invisible in our media.

Even the original inhabitants of our land do not make it to mainstream media, except when they fit the stereotype and conservative commentators can heap some more abuse on them.

The aboriginal population of Saskatchewan is 10%, about half of whom live in urban areas. Yet when I looked at a whole week's worth of the Leader-Post recently, the only photograph of an aboriginal was that of Grand Chief Ted Moses of the Cree in Quebec. No Saskatchewan aboriginal person had been allowed into the domain of the Leader-Post.

This is shameful.

There's no other way to say it.

Siddiqui is The Star's editorial page editor emeritus at The Toronto Star. His column, reproduced here with his permission, appears on Thursdays and Sundays. He can be reached at hsiddiq@thestar.ca

CanWest tells its reporters: shut up

Continued from page 1

workers at seven of CanWest's 14 large dailies, met with corporate management March 12 in an unsuccessful effort to have the suspensions and letters of reprimand withdrawn. The two sides instead agreed to proceed directly to arbitration, although no date had been set at press time.

The Regina management's actions came less than three months after management at the Montréal Gazette, also a CanWest Global newspaper, issued a gag order silencing reporters who had protested a nationwide editorial policy. Under that policy, all CanWest Global newspapers will publish editorials written at corporate headquarters—and will be barred from taking a different editorial position.

"It's adding insult to injury," protested TNG Canada/CWA staff representative Dan Zeidler, referring to the company's punitive responses. "The reporters have a right to withhold by-lines, and we believe a moral responsibility to tell the public about censorship issues at their paper. The company seems to have accomplished one thing, and that's to create a chill and uncertainty in every CanWest newsroom in the country."

The International Federation of Journalists likewise weighed in, with General Secretary Aidan White observing that CanWest was "showing the ugly and intolerant face of modern media."

But rather than concede that perhaps it had gone too far, CanWest Global management adopted a combative public stance. An article in the Leader-Post by Murdoch Davis, editor-in-chief of the chain's biggest dailies, contended that Siddiqui had "made his speech without a single effort to speak to anyone" at the company. "Instead, he relied on false reports in competing media (including his newspaper) and a few loopy rumours circulating in journalistic circles."

Indeed, shortly after meeting with TNG-Canada representatives, CanWest extended its gag order to all of its newspaper reporters and to its television operations.

LOOKING AHEAD

Profits or news? CanWest decides

By Linda Foley, President

A cold front is moving across the journalistic landscape of Canada. The efforts of CanWest Global Communications to censor and control local news coverage from its corporate headquarters in Winnipeg threaten press freedoms throughout North America.

The heavy-handed tactics of CanWest, Canada's largest media conglomerate—which owns local newspaper and broadcast outlets in every major Canadian city outside of Toronto—are a chilly warning to U.S. journalists already concerned that American media companies' quest for ever-rising profit margins has put quality on ice.

The chill began two months ago, when CanWest announced it would mandate so-called national editorials. CanWest's newspapers were obliged to adhere to corporate editorial positions in all published opinions, regardless of local, provincial or community concerns. Canadian journalists, and many of their U.S. colleagues, were outraged. Members of The Newspaper Guild-Canada in Montréal staged a byline strike, and several prominent columnists across the country resigned in protest.

Undeterred (perhaps even emboldened), the bosses at CanWest slapped a gag order on the Montréal staff, forbidding reporters to write about or even publicly discuss the policy. More recently, a story about a Toronto Star columnist's speech on CanWest was edited by the Regina Leader-Post in Saskatchewan to mute his criticisms of CanWest. Ten reporters there protested and withdrew bylines from their stories. They all were reprimanded, including four who were suspended without pay. CanWest now has extended its gag order to reporters at all of its newspapers and followed with a similar edict to its broadcast operations.

CanWest's owners, the Asper family, have never been shy about their political opinions or the way in which they use their media outlets to promote those viewpoints. The difference now is that they own more than 40% of the country's newspapers and their TV network reaches 94% of English-speaking Canada.

CanWest's ideological power grab came just months after the Canadian Radio and Television Commission granted the corporation the right to operate newspapers and broadcast stations in the same communities. Officials of The Newspaper Guild-Canada testified at hearings leading up to the ruling that such arrangements would mean deteriorating local news coverage and diminished diversity of viewpoints. But the CRTC renewed the licenses nevertheless.

Farther south, the U.S. Federal Communications Commission currently is considering repeal of a decades-old law that prohibits common ownership of newspaper and broadcast outlets in the same city. Proponents of repeal argue that lifting the ban will actually increase media diversity and improve local coverage. They try to obscure the evils of concentrated media ownership by equating diversity of outlets with diversity of viewpoints.

Opponents of repeal, including The Newspaper Guild-CWA, point to the potential for centralized corporate control of local news and diminishing opportunities for viewpoints to be heard and read – not unlike what's happening up North. What matters is who decides what we will see, hear and read, not how we receive it.

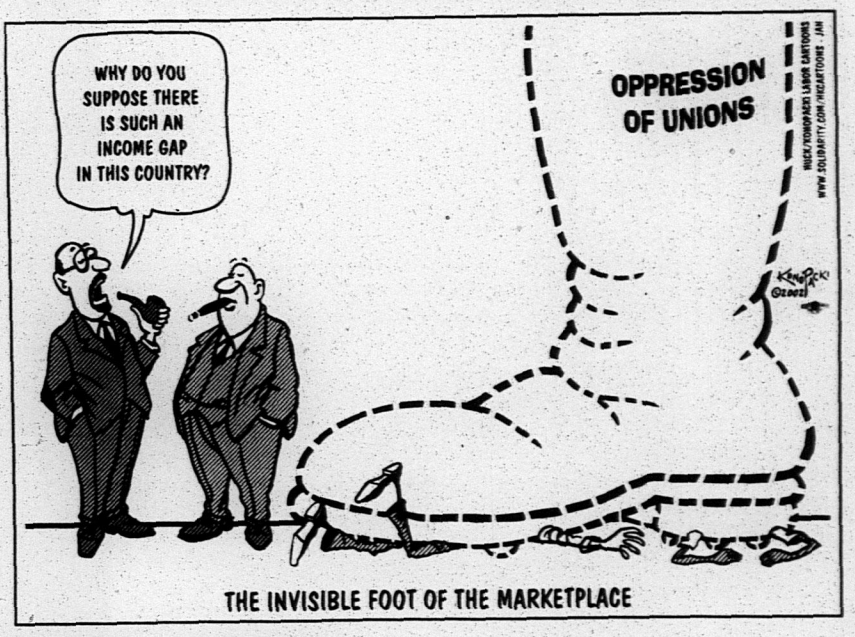
Not surprisingly, although its intervention was somewhat unusual, CanWest Global joined several major U.S. media conglomerates in filing a brief supporting repeal of the FCC's cross-ownership ban.

CanWest, and other media conglomerates, understandably want to maximize their profits by combining local media operations. The ability to offer advertising "across multiple local platforms" no doubt will improve commercial efficiency and profitability, Several media corporations, including CanWest, already are consolidating business and customer service operations in centralized locations.

What these media conglomerates don't want to acknowledge, however, is that more than profits are at stake when it comes to marketing and distributing news and information. The public interest—indeed, the ability of our democracies to function effectively—requires an open marketplace of ideas and news sources.

In a recent speech, former San Jose publisher Jay Harris referred to this dynamic as an example of the "law of unintended consequences." He pointed out that what we have is a profession—journalism—established to serve the public interest but that it is controlled by media corporations whose goal is to create wealth for their owners.

CanWest's recent actions show that media corporations will all but ignore any public responsibility to pursue profit-making monopolies, even resorting to outright censorship to achieve their goals. When that happens, public interest is left out in the cold and the opportunity for honest and open discourse is frozen shut.



LOOKING ASKANCE

Unconscious writing helps anti-labor agenda

By Andy Zipser
Editor, The Guild Reporter

You'd think that those us who make a living with words would be more sensitive to meaning, nuance and implication. You'd think we'd have more respect for the tools we use, testing their keeness, heft and overall suitability for whatever task is at hand.

But the reality—especially in a downsized world in which reporters have been transformed into fungible "content providers"—is that few journalists have the time for such contemplation. We just shovel it out, relying on formulaic structure and phrasing and resorting to clichés and conventional group-think.

Such an approach clearly is not conducive to critical thinking; indeed, by recycling the prevailing "wisdom" it simply reinforces the status quo, providing one reason for the public's skepticism toward the mass media. Moreover, there are entire industries devoted to doing precisely what journalists don't: spinning and massaging words to extract the last ounce of meaning. The spinners, however, are advancing an agenda that nowhere mentions "democracy" or "public interest."

Consider the egregiously misused word "earn," as in the sentence, "Chairman Kenneth Lay/Michael Eisner/John J. Curley/(insert your own nominee) earned a kabillion dollars in 2001." No one *earns* a kabillion dollars, or even a million. Lay/Eisner/Curley may get *paid* that kind of money (or, worse, pay themselves), but they no more "earn" a million dollars than a migrant farmworker "earns" $200 a week for 60 hours of back-breaking labor in the fields. The latter, by any meaningful calculation, "earned" a lot more than he got paid, but menial workers are not paid on a value-added basis. The labor "market" is driven by the law of supply and demand: the more workers available, the cheaper they become.

Corporate chieftains, of course, prefer to have their bloated incomes described as something they "earned" because that sounds moral and uplifting. It's not, and thoughtful reporters will start making the distinction.

Another lazy useage that corporate interests have managed to promote—and too many reporters have adopted—is the unqualified use of the word "jobs," as in, "The economy last month added 12,000 new jobs." In an age when jobs aren't merely blue-collar or white-collar but full-time, part-time, contingent, leased, self-employed and a dozen other permutations, the word "jobs" in naked isolation no longer conveys any useful information. Indeed, some "jobs"—such as the farmworkers mentioned above—are little more than indentured labor. To lump all labor under one semantic label is misleading.

Finally, many reporters continue parroting the corporate-speak that has unions "demanding" certain contract provisions, while employers respond with "offers." In fact, as years of tedious bargaining in Eugene, Providence and other TNG-CWA locals amply demonstrate, employers are very much in the habit of demanding everything and offering nothing, even when the NLRB weighs in against them.

LETTER

To the Editor,

After 29 years as an international organizer and representative, working for the ITU and then for CWA, I came back to my roots when I was elected president of TNG-CWA Local 30403, a former ITU local in British Columbia, in 1999. With a group of young, enthusiastic people elected to office, following several years of apathy and inactivity, our local members began to participate in provincial, national and international union activities.

It was on that basis, and with the encouragement of members from other former ITU locals, that I decided to jump into the political fray by running for TNG-CWA regional vice president, western Canada.

After the sector conference at which I was nominated, I took a week's vacation. When I arrived back in Vancouver, an e-mail from TNG-CWA Secretary-Treasurer Bernie Lunzer awaited me. In it, I was informed that a Guild member from California had requested a ruling on my eligibility to run or serve on the Sector Executive Council. The member made it clear that the request "bears no animus," but that he was concerned about protecting the sanctity of the election process. The same e-mail informed me that the request had already been forwarded to the Sector Election Committee.

Shortly after, our secretary received requests for information regarding my status—information that should have been available to the international through the secretary-treasurer's office.

The action taken by a Guild member in California bothered me. The fact that an investigation was under way without a prior phone call to me from TNG officers told me that my candidacy was not appreciated. With an already short campaign period interrupted by an investigation and the stigma of that hanging over my head, I decided I would not be welcome even if I won. Therefore, I withdrew my name.

—Ray Rudersdorfer, President
TNG-CWA Local 30403

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: April 19.) Letters may be e-mailed to the editor at *azipser@cwa-union.org*.

Why labor errs as a white knight

By Ron Chen
President, TNG-CWA Local 1096 (IAPE)

The Harvard Trade Union Program was a great opportunity to reflect on the challenges facing labor and what we need to do. I thank TNG-CWA President Linda Foley and program director Elaine Bernard for the opportunity to participate in this year's program through the Irving Leuchter scholarship.

I went with the idea that maybe I could use what I learned to help build a better Guild and a better CWA. So here are some thoughts I'd like to pass along.

In our six weeks together, our program leaders urged this year's class to confront labor's difficult situation by thinking "out of the box" in two basic ways.

First, we were asked to rethink our preoccupation with "simple" or "bread and butter" unionism—our single-minded focus on pay, job security, benefits. The argument here is that until unions can offer a broader vision of a better society, we will never reclaim the moral high ground we once occupied when we stood shoulder to shoulder with those fighting for civil rights, for example. Unions, we were told, must give up the dead-end role of being just another "special interest." Rather than protecting a dwindling band of workers (while others fall further behind), labor needs to identify itself as a "guardian of the public trust."

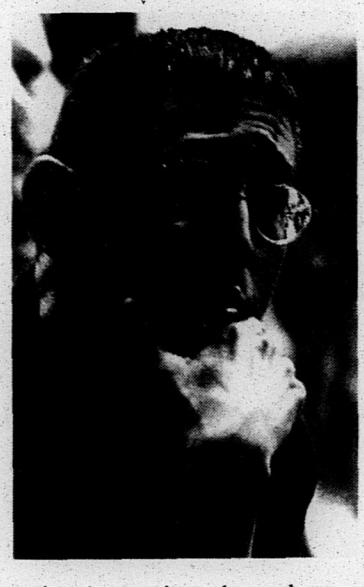
This made a lot of sense to me. In our locals, many union members wonder what it means to be "union." We call ourselves a labor "movement." But what makes us a movement? What "vision" are we offering?

How we see ourselves matters a lot. During the program, there was a revealing moment when one of our teachers asked how many of us saw ourselves as involved in a "calling" and how many saw us as involved in a "business." A small handful answered to "a calling."

Second, we need to change the way we do things inside the house of labor.

For starters, we need to "think strategically." Where is our union now? Where do we hope to be in two to five years? What will it take to get to where we want to be?

As highly political (and politicized) groups, unions mostly plod toward change. Within our locals and internationals, there are powerful incentives to maintain the status quo. Change is difficult, and many people are uncomfortable with change. Few are the leaders who have the courage to go through the stomach-churning political struggles that must be fought before change can come. Unions that try to change often find themselves wracked by internal turmoil—overworked staff who resist the changes, and unhappy members who miss the "service" model of unionism.



And yes, "visions" must be backed up by good human resources practices (yup, we're managers of the house of labor) on problems like how to recruit, train, evaluate and offer incentives to staff.

On a more basic level, unions have a long way to go in developing tough management skills that will allow us to make the best use of our scarce resources. And goodness knows labor's resources are woefully short for the tasks that lie ahead.

Vis-a-vis our employers, we need to look for better and more cost-effective ways (yup, more management stuff) to resolve disputes—and there are many ways, some calling for tough decisions.

These challenges—and how we respond to them—will be critical to labor's future.

Labor is in a tough situation these days. I went to HTUP suspecting the worst, and have returned with an even bleaker assessment.

Unions are rapidly disappearing from the U.S. workplace. One of our teachers, a member of Clinton's Dunlop Commission on the Future of Worker-Management Relations, sees labor's "market share" in the private sector falling further, to 5% within a few years. That's down from the already dismal 9% we have today.

Simply to maintain that 9% level, labor would have to recruit 500,000 new members every year (we are not talking about reshuffling the deck in "affiliations and mergers" with existing unions). By the way, none of our gurus at the Harvard program was optimistic we could reach that goal, never mind the utopian one million new members we would need to sign up each year in order to grow 1%.

Why have we fallen on such hard times? No simple answers here, although my classmates and I were offered various explanations.

A hostile environment: the media ("they don't like us"); employers ("they hate us"); Wall Street ("they really hate us").

A stacked deck: U.S. labor laws are stacked against workers who want representation and unions that seek to organize them. We all know employers will use every tactic against us (sometimes breaking the law), knowing full well they'll get away with whatever they do. None of our teachers held out any hope of quick reforms that would give us a "level playing field" with our employers.

Technology: Our jobs—as journalists, technicians, salespeople, painters or electricians—are all changing faster than many of us can cope.

And at least some of my classmates saw problems in our own house. In other words, some of labor's biggest wounds are self-inflicted.

But a lot of us (members and leaders) just don't get it. Despite all the rhetoric, scratch beneath the surface and you find business as usual. Those who see the "movement" under siege all to often respond by circling the wagons and preaching to the choir ("if we keep telling each other we're right, we must be right").

Stodgy leaders are another problem. Here's an example: In the program's six weeks, Enron's flameout dominated the news; my fellow students looked to the AFL-CIO to tell the employees' side of the story, to speak out for all workers who might find themselves on the short end of the stick. No such statement came. Our leaders are "behind the curve."

But after six weeks, I came to the conclusion that we need to overcome some old, comfortable stereotypes.

In our vision of the world, we see labor as "good" and management (also called capitalism or corporate America) as "bad." While capitalism itself may have no morals (not good and not bad), the majority of employers want to treat their employees in a good way. Calling corporations "greedy"—and acting as if they were—may satisfy labor's sense of righteous indignation, but it misses the mark.

We need to acknowledge that most workers—our members included—want to work with management to produce the best products possible. We want to do this because as workers we want to take pride in our work. We want to work as "partners" or "colleagues" wherever possible.

When we ignore the hopes and aspirations of most workers, we run the risk of being out of step with the mainstream. If our message resonates only with those most oppressed ("those who have nothing to lose," as my classmate put it), what do we offer to the millions who do have something to lose?

At our graduation ceremony, I caught a glimpse of this "great divide" between labor and today's work force. Our guest speaker talked about how America had lost its way, and how labor represented the best hope of a better society. At one point, he called GE's former CEO Jack Welch a "criminal"; he said he could not understand how Welch could be a hero to so many Americans

Listening to that speaker, I came to the conclusion that we're the ones who don't get it. And maybe that's why so often our message falls on deaf ears. No wonder labor has found it an uphill battle to organize all those white-collar workers in the office towers and on the suburban corporate campuses.

As I see it, this is labor's challenge: how do we cling to our fundamental identity as a "movement" while we address the hopes and needs of workers who want to work cooperatively with management?

We think of labor as a white knight. Maybe we would do better to think of ourselves as a "partner" in the workplace. Something to think about.

Chen was this year's recipient of the Leuchter Memorial Scholarship, which underwrites a six-week course of study at the Harvard Trade Union Program.

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DAYBOOK

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

Great Lakes District Council, April 27-28, Pittsburgh

TNG Canada Rep. Council, April 27-28, Vancouver, BC

Tri-Council meeting, May 3-5, New York City

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

Herblock, Broun, Barr Dinner, May 14, Washington, DC

Int'l Fed. of Journ. exec comm. June 7-9, Washington, DC

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:

News employees of the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. file an application for representation by the American Newspaper Guild. . . . Fifty Guild members refuse to cross an ITU picket line in Rockford, Ill., even though members of other crafts unions are regularly reporting to work. . . . Guild-represented employees of four newspapers in the San Francisco Bay area gear up for a strike as city-wide negotiations appear headed for impasse.

Twenty-five years ago this month:

A new, 31-month contract ends a 22-day walk-out by more than 800 Guild members at the Philadelphia Inquirer and Daily News. . . . Fiscal '76 is headlined as "year of the spectacular profit takeoff," as U.S. and Canadian newspaper and magazine companies post record profits and revenues. . . . The U.S. Supreme court rules, 7 to 2, that an employer is obligated to arbitrate disputes arising out of an expired contract.

Ten years ago this month:

Guild President Charles Dale brings a message of solidarity to a heavily attended membership meeting of the Boston Globe Employees Assoc., which has been without a contract for more than 14 months. . . . A total of 170 employees—including 127 Guild-covered workers—lose their jobs when Copley management completes a merger of its two San Diego dailies. . . . The Guild joins a broad push by organized labor to strengthen the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act, including a requirement of effective standards to prevent repetitive stress injuries.