

THE GUILD Reporter

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The CWA's 64th annual convention gave special attention to the union's media workers.

Media convergence hot convention item

By Janelle Hartman
CWA Senior Writer

Recognizing that editorial diversity and job security are threatened by a shrinking media marketplace, delegates to CWA's annual convention June 17-19 pledged to strengthen media unions and to increase public awareness of the risks of ongoing media consolidation.

The resolution addressing media "consolidation, convergence and restructuring" came near the end of a Las Vegas convention that also recognized the winner of this year's Heywood Broun award and installed TNG President Linda Foley for a third term.

Urging passage of the resolution, delegate Tony Winton of the Associated Press said his local's 1,600 wire service workers "are painfully aware of how the concentration of media ownership has threatened not only our wages and benefits but, indeed, the very foundation of a free and independent press that our nation depends on."

Public policy that once championed media diversity and quality is rapidly bending to a corporate agenda, as media companies argue that the internet and cable TV have made ownership restrictions obsolete. In the United States, laws that once barred companies from owning more than one TV station or a combination of newspaper, TV and radio stations in any one community are being challenged. Ownership rules also have been relaxed in Canada, where media giant CanWest Global is forcing hometown



TNG delegates to the CWA convention include (left to right) Henry Holcomb, president of the Philadelphia Guild; TNG-CWA Chairperson Carol Rothman; Connie Knox, Region 2 vice president; and Gerald Minkinen, executive director of the Chicago Guild.

papers to run the corporation's national editorials (see related stories, page 3).

Aside from raising questions about the role of the media in a democracy, such developments have raised concerns about job security, advancement opportunities and fair wages for CWA's 60,000 members in print, broadcasting and electronic media. Vinnie Vero, of the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians (NABET-CWA), told participants in a pre-convention workshop that until Fox bought WWOR in New Jersey, nearly a year ago, the TV station had employed 220 union employees. Now there are 75, with much of the work shuffled to Fox's enterprise in New York City.

Vero works in master control and used to have two assistants to help him with a single station. Now, he said, he scrambles to do all the programming alone—and not just for WWOR but for two other stations, more than 400 miles away. "It's tough to see people

go—people you've worked with all these years," he said. "But suddenly you get a new owner and they've got other ideas."

As media companies expand to the internet, those with union workforces are determined to keep the union out of their web enterprises. But their efforts can backfire. Tim Schick, administrator of the Providence Newspaper Guild, said that even though reporters for the website were doing exactly the same work as Guild-covered reporters, the Belo-owned Providence Journal steadfastly claimed that online reporting was a non-union function. The company went so far as to physically isolate the web office a mile away, only to discover it needed the resources of its newspaper and Guild members to make it a success.

"Now the website is ours; we do all the work," Schick said, adding however that the company is taking steps to make sure the unit doesn't get any bigger.

Continued on page 6

Canadian Guild, CBC at impasse

60 days to try conciliation

Negotiators for the Canadian Media Guild and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation were to sit down with a federal conciliation officer July 18, following a June 21 declaration of impasse in their contract talks. The conciliation period must run at least 60 days.

"I'm hopeful a settlement can be reached," said Dan Oldfield, the Guild's administrative officer and a member of its bargaining team. "I believe all the elements of a mutually satisfactory agreement are on the table."

Although conciliation may be extended by mutual agreement, failure to reach an agreement or an extension by Aug. 27 will start a 21-day "cooling-off" period. Once that clock has run, either party may—but is not required to—exercise its right to strike or lock out the other, provided it first gives three days' notice. For the union to strike, however, it must first hold a strike vote with a majority voting in favor. A strike vote would be valid only for 60 days.

Impasse was declared by the Guild after its bargaining team had reviewed the CBC's latest response to its contract proposals and following consultation with all location unit presidents. "We have done this reluctantly," the team said in a published statement, but "the Corporation's offer is neither fair nor equitable and has left us with no choice."

The Guild's contract expired last November, but bargaining was derailed when the CBC and its other large union, the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers, got into a tussle—variously described either as a strike or as a lock out—in early December. The Canadian Media Guild's talks got back on track this past spring, but despite some agreements, the two sides were unable to close several

significant gaps. Among the outstanding differences:

- The CBC repeatedly brushed aside Guild proposals for retroactive wage increases, substituting a \$500 lump-sum payment, and offered a 2% across-the-board increase for the life of the agreement. "This is less than any other wage offer proposed or accepted recently by other bargaining units at the CBC," the Guild pointed out.

- Guild proposals on behalf of freelancers—seeking fair compensation, protection of copyright, payment for re-use and training—have all been rejected, as have proposals on behalf of temporary and term employees.

- Other rejected Guild proposals address pay inequities; job reclassifications; layoff and recall language; a change in vacation policy; limits on out-sourcing of unit work; and a reduction in the probation period from two years to one year.

"In addition to the Corporation's total unwillingness to address the critical issues raised in the Guild's proposal," the bargaining team noted, "the Corporation is also seeking changes to the agreement that attack the union's jurisdiction as well as members' work and security." Among them: a CBC proposal permitting an unlimited number of program managers to do unit work, and a proposal establishing "program interns"—quasi employees hired at the lowest scale for two years and given comprehensive training on all platforms (television, radio and new media), but with no guarantee of work thereafter.

Such training, the Guild said, would be "significantly more" than is given any current employee, raising the possibility that the program interns "could potentially displace existing employees in the event of a layoff, based on their newly acquired qualifications."

Inside this issue



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Guilda is kicking butt, taking names in Buffalo

Look—up in the sky. It's a bird! It's a plane! It's ... it's ... Guilda? Yup, Guilda. Strange visitor from another planet, or at least from the fevered imaginations of the members of the Buffalo Newspaper Guild, Guilda is faster than a slick PR mouthpiece, able to leap corporate egos in a single bound and can bend company lawyers over her knee—or around her little finger, as circumstances dictate.

And these days, with contract negotiations at the Buffalo News shuddering to a near halt after five months of fruitful bargaining, Guilda is seeing an increasing amount of action. Usually relegated to a quiet role tending to—well, to whatever superheroes tend when not mixing it up with mortals—Guilda recently has been showing up everywhere to remind Buffalo Guild members that the fight for truth, justice and a fair contract is everyone's business. Now she's popping up on buttons worn on the job, jumps off the local's web page and has taken to blasting management in the local newsletter.

"The last few sessions have reminded Guilda that, despite the presence of a new chief negotiator, The News' philosophy remains unchanged," she muses in a recent issue, using the third-person form favored by the super-endowed. That philosophy? To "suck every penny it can out of its employees and the community so that the newspaper's billionaire owner can become even more ridiculously wealthy."

Pow!

That billionaire, for those who don't know, is Warren Buffett, who didn't become the first- or second-richest man in the U.S. by sharing his wealth. So while contract negotiations between the two sides were amicable as long as they hashed out relatively

minor—and non-financial—issues, the tenor changed considerably once talk turned to money matters.

At the top of the union's agenda are wages and pension improvements, two areas in which Guild members continue to lag despite The Buffalo News' profitability. The union bargaining team, in unveiling its package, stressed the need to eliminate the current \$30,000 cap on pension benefits so that future retirees can have a respectable retirement income. The Guild also plans to suggest other improvements to the pension plan.

"This issue is about fairness, nothing more, nothing less," said Guild President Phil Fairbanks. "Our members agreed to this cap during The News' battle with the Courier-Express as a way of helping the paper survive. Now that times are good, it's time for management to do the right thing and restore the pension benefits that its employees deserve."

Union leaders also have reminded the company of the need for a reasonable pay raise. Since the last contract settlement, Guild wages have failed to keep pace with inflation. Other Guild objectives include a more equitable classified incentive plan, improved dental coverage and higher differentials for employees working nights and weekends. The union also is seeking a new differential for employees who work two jobs at the same time.

Given the company's hardened posture, Guilda's help no doubt will prove invaluable—but she won't be alone. The local also has hired a veteran public relations man, Tom Campbell, to help design community and workplace mobilization activities. Campbell's firm specializes in working with unions and was instrumental in creating a 1996 bargaining publicity campaign that featured the Town Crier.

Meanwhile, nine bargaining sessions have been scheduled for the last three weeks of July.



AFL-CIO staff ratifies pact

By Mark Gruenberg
Press Associates

By an 81-45 vote after difficult talks, members of the AFL-CIO professional staff have ratified a new contract with the labor federation. The 3-year pact covers the 190 staffers who are members of The Washington-Baltimore Guild.

The federation partially won one of its key demands, dumping a no-layoff clause after April 1, 2003. Layoffs after that date will have to conform with a detailed procedure that includes seniority

and bumping rights.

But the AFL-CIO also agreed to discuss its budget problems with the Guild each year and identify positions it wants to "defund," while giving "defunded" staffers the right to apply for vacant positions. The pact also bans the AFL-CIO from hiring outside consultants to perform Guild work.

"It was the strength of the union's mobilization that was the difference" in bargaining, said Guild President Dawn Rodriguez-Lamar, who also is AFL-CIO unit chair.

The new pact includes a 2%

raise retroactive to April 1, followed by a 2% increase next year and 2.75% in 2004. Field staffers get a \$1,600 differential each.

AFL-CIO negotiators had argued that given the labor federation's financial condition—it has run multi-million-dollar deficits in three of the last four years, including this year—the no-layoff clause could not survive. But they also tried to "defund" several Guild-represented positions during bargaining, chilling talks—especially when it was noted that two of the positions were held by shop stewards, five women, four were minorities and two were pregnant, including Lamar. All were activists or officers.

Later, embarrassed, the federation reversed course. "Ultimately, the federation came around and realized that what they were doing was wrong," Lamar said.

Correction

The May issue of The Guild Reporter incorrectly identified the photographer who took two front-page pictures of demonstrators outside The Washington Post. The photographer was Ray Crowell, of Page One Photography and a member of the Washington-Baltimore Guild. Sorry, Ray.

In brief . . .

Mixed result in St. Louis union vote

Employees of the Pulitzer-owned Suburban Journals of Greater St. Louis voted for representation by the St. Louis Newspaper Guild in one office, but voted against representation by the slimmest of margins in three others: in two offices by one vote, in the third by two. As reported by the local "alternative" weekly, The Riverfront Times, Pulitzer "took a scene right out of the John Sayles movie Matewan by bringing in operatives from King & Ballow" to block the unionization campaign, threatening layoffs and warning of Guild-inspired strikes if the union were voted in.

Card-check wins Minneapolis unit

The Minnesota Newspaper Guild/Typographical Union won recognition through card-check for 80 interpreters at Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis. Organizer Abram Isaacs, who was hired under the 75/25 CWA subsidy, worked on the campaign, along with Local Representative Martin Demgen, who served as the local's organizer in 2001.

DJ workers wary of New York return

The much-delayed return of Wall Street Journal and Barron's staffers to the World Financial Center—damaged in the collapse of the World Trade Center—reportedly is now scheduled for this summer, but the move is encountering resistance from employees. A recent informal survey of 175 co-workers by Journal reporters and editors found 72% opposed to returning, with health worries topping the list of concerns. Of those supporting the return, most cited an easier commute.

Ohio printers okay 4-year contract

Production plant employees represented by TNG-CWA Local 1096 (IAPE) in Bowling Green, Ohio have ratified a new, four-year agreement with Dow Jones & Co. The contract, which will expire December 31, 2005, provides dollar increases totaling approximately 10.84% over its duration, with first-year increases retroactive to January 1, 2002; it covers 17 press, mailroom, machinist, and building maintenance employees.

Pittsburgh reaches tentative accord

A tentative contract agreement has been reached between the Pittsburgh Newspaper Guild and the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, expanding the union's jurisdiction to include 10 formerly exempt employees and creating several new job classifications. Wage increases will alternate between percentage-

based hikes of top minimums and fixed dollar amounts; a \$500 signing bonus will be paid; the company will increase its pension plan contributions; and employees taking leaves of absence after 10 years of service will get half-pay. On the flip side: some increased health care costs, slightly more latitude for exempt employees to do unit work.

Little progress seen in DC talks

Bargaining between the Washington-Baltimore Guild and The Washington Post continued June 26 and 27 and July 1 and 10. But despite "tentative progress" on protection of vacation benefits, on the crucial issues of wage increases and preservation of the Guild itself "there was none," a local spokesperson reports.

Foley, Amber win higher offices

TNG-CWA President Linda Foley has been elected secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO Department for Professional Employees. The DPE represents the interests of white-collar workers—such as intellectual property rights—that cross union boundaries. Meanwhile, TNG Canada director Arnold Amber has been elected to the executive council of the Canadian Labour Congress and is one of four vice-presidents representing so-called "smaller unions" affiliated with the CLC. The vice-president posts were created at the last CLC convention, held three years ago.

Western Council elects officers . . .

The Western District Council elected new officers at its meeting June 15, including: Win Canavan of San Jose, president; Adele Berlinski of Eugene, 1st vice president; Lucy Witeck of Honolulu, 2nd vice president; and Steve Swenson of Bakersfield, secretary/treasurer.

. . . as does the Boston Guild

The Boston Newspaper Guild recently elected new officers, including: Steve Richards, president; Mary Corbett, vice president; Patrice Sneyd, treasurer; Jenna Russell, recording secretary; and Esther Martin, Scott Steeves and Carl Younger, all at-large.

How're we doing? We want to know

Looking for membership feedback, TNG-CWA has posted a short survey on its web site and is asking Guild members to take a few minutes to fill it out. The survey can be accessed on our home page, www.newsguild.org (go to "Guild Info," then to "TNG 2002 Interest Survey"), or to the direct link: www.newsguild.org/info/interest_survey2002.php.

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The Newspaper Guild International



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CanWest protests mounting

Nobody yet has repealed the law that reserves freedom of the press to those who own one, but thanks to the Asper family and its stranglehold on the media through CanWest Global, a lot of Canadians are trying. Among the efforts:

- Guerrilla Media's internet parodies have paid increasing attention to the Asper disaster, despite being shut down twice by threats from CanWest's lawyers. Recent top stories included CanWest's new hi-tech editorial "moodware," a Microsoft product that "interacts with a writer or editor as they work in their normal word processing environment, warning the user when they inadvertently employ abusive language, nasty characterisations, non-core-value opinions or other inappropriate language."

Properly known as the Core-value Editorial Neural Network System with Onscreen Reporter's Semantic Helper & Interactive Phrase-fixer (CENNSORSHIP), the system is "very intuitive and user-friendly," assigning devils on a sliding scale of one to four—with four devils sending the writer straight to hell. But you can check it out for yourself at <http://GlobalBS.com>.

- A national boycott of the Southam chain—the newspapers bought by CanWest that now are obliged to run "national editorials"—has been launched at <http://www.southamboycott.ca> in an effort to stop the group-think exercise. "I understand that canceling your newspaper is a difficult thing to do," write the site's unnamed sponsors, "but subscription cancellations are the only thing they are going to listen to."

- To background yourself on the controversy, a helpful web site with hot links to news stories is <http://www.fpq.org/canwest/articles.htm>. Coverage is far-reaching, such as an interview on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, which has been covering that country's proposals to drop its media cross-ownership regulations.

- TNG-Canada/CWA is promoting postal and e-mail protests of CanWest's editorial policies at www.tngcanada.org. Sample messages state that the sender is protesting CanWest's suppression of diversity of voices and the local autonomy of its newspapers; its removal of the editorial independence of its local newspaper through the imposition of "national editorials"; and its censorship of news, views and commentary in its newspapers that do not reflect CanWest Globals' corporate goals.

CITIZEN ASPER

Publisher, fired for editorial, fires back with libel lawsuit

You've got to hand it to Izzy Asper and the Canadian media empire his family controls: every time the public's furor dies down, a new outrage stokes it up again.

This time it's the very public sacking of Russell Mills, who was fired as publisher of the Ottawa Citizen on June 16 for not consulting with corporate headquarters before publishing an editorial seeking the resignation of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. The editorial followed a major article alleging misconduct by Chrétien.

Mills, 57, had been the Citizen's publisher since 1986 and had a reputation as a "company man" who had survived three corporate administrations. The day before he was fired he had received an honorary degree from Carleton University for his service to journalism.

Although a spokesman for CanWest Global, which owns the Ottawa Citizen, confirmed for reporters June 17 that Mills had "left the company," he added that the separation was "a private matter between him and the company" and declined further comment. But CanWest President Leonard Asper subsequently alleged, in broadcast and published interviews, that Mills had failed repeatedly to comply with basic principles of journalism—and that, no surprise, prompted Mills to issue notices of libel. Such notices are required by Ontario law before a lawsuit is filed.

The Mills affair is only the latest in a series of controversial moves by CanWest to impose the Aspers' viewpoint on its numerous media properties, including 14 of the country's biggest daily newspapers. But each fresh outrage seems to provoke an even deeper backlash. Canadian news sources reported that the Ottawa Citizen lost 3,000 subscribers in the first week after the firing, while two CanWest-owned papers in Vancouver lost another thousand.

TNG-CWA-represented reporters and photographers at the Citizen withheld their bylines for five days to protest the firing. The Ottawa Newspaper Guild issued a statement deploring Can West's

action "because of the message it sends about our newspaper and our journalism." The statement urged CanWest management "to live up to the words of its spokesman, Ken MacDonald," who stated last year that the success of each of the company's newspapers "has been built on relentless local coverage and fierce editorial independence."

Criticism poured in from elsewhere, including a stinging rebuke from the Vienna-based International Press Institute, whose director noted the close political connections between Chrétien and the Aspers. The firing was "an attack on press freedom by an unholy coalition between politics and big business," contended IPI Director Johann P. Fritz. "Many believe that it is only in autocratic countries of the Third World or in countries in transition that democracy and a free press are in danger. But the Mills affair will have a chilling effect on critical reporting in Canada and will bring an increase in self-censorship."

Opposition members of the Canadian parliament questioned—and Chrétien's spokesman denied—whether the prime minister had played a role in Mills' firing. But CanWest chairman Izzy Asper and his son, David, are significant contributors to the ruling Liberal Party, are personal friends of Chrétien and have required their newspapers to run editorials—written at corporate headquarters—that are sympathetic to the government. Recently, for example, all CanWest newspapers had to publish two "special" editorials blasting journalists, in general, for writing too critically about the Chrétien administration.

"Russell Mills was fired because the prime minister's buddy happened to be his boss," charged New Democratic Party leader Alexa McDonough.

But even Liberal Party members have become discomfited by the Aspers' efforts to monopolize public discourse. "This whole sorry story shows alarming immaturity on the part of the Aspers... who appear not to have the foggiest notion of the concept of press freedom in a democracy," Liberal legislator John Dryden told Reuters.

Sterile germ plasm dominates Canadian debate

[Until he quit several weeks ago, Lyle Stewart's column was one of the few in the CanWest roster that didn't preach the gospel of neo-conservatism. Here's why he couldn't take it any longer.]

By Lyle Stewart
Montréal Newspaper Guild

Happy trails. Those two words, sincerely expressed, marked my e-mailed departure from The Gazette's op-ed page early last month [June], a few days after the third time my weekly column had been spiked in recent months. And I meant it in a relatively lighthearted way.

Except for the two local thought police in the CanWest ministry of truth—those being editor-in-chief Peter Stockland and recently appointed editorial page editor Brian Kappler—I bear no rancour toward the people who continue to toil under exceedingly difficult circumstances at the paper. Most journalists there are professionals whose interest is in bringing original stories and new perspectives to their readers—exactly what you would expect of a cosmopolitan big-city daily, but a goal that is increasingly impossible to reach under the paranoid command economy of CanWest Global's Southam newspaper chain.

The irony, if you can call it that, was that none of the censored columns were on the

taboo topics that generally get writers, editors and publishers demoted or fired from Asper-owned papers these days. Despite e-mail invitations from readers to do so, I issued no pleas to recognize Palestinians and other adherents to Islam as something more than subhuman, I made no calls for Jean Chrétien's resignation, and above all, I failed to utter a single criticism of the Southam editorial-cum-untouchable party line.

Those failures were born of the foregone conclusion that those pieces would never get published. Call it self-censorship. That's exactly what it was.

No, the third strike in this at-bat came over an interview with the internationally recognized activist Vandana Shiva, hooked to her appearance last month at an anti-GM-foods conference in Toronto. In my own mind, getting an interview with Shiva was something of a coup. And I'm pretty certain she's never before been quoted in the pages of The Gazette.

Shiva's groundbreaking work in her native India consists of traveling the subcontinent to gather and archive naturally developed crop seeds; Indian agriculture is now almost completely under the thumb of Monsanto and its monoculture of patented, genetically modified crops. The genetic diversity of traditional Indian crops is being lost. And in the face of corporate domination of India's desperately poor farmers, Shiva is

performing a heroic service to India and humankind in general.

This was the kind of story I was hired to bring to The Gazette's overwhelmingly right-wing op-ed page two-and-a-half years ago. My mission was to provide an explicitly progressive perspective on the issues of the day, and to touch on topics that ~~never~~ see the light of a mainstream newspaper's day. I knew my status at the paper was strictly one of a progressive fig leaf (a tiny one at that, being limited to 700 words a week). But I viewed it as a small way to bring a little editorial diversity on issues I care deeply about to Montréal readers whose daily fare consisted of a never-changing menu of neo-conservatism.

Kappler, however, had never heard of Shiva, nor did he think her credible. Considering his political biases, that wasn't a great surprise, but he summarily killed the column before we even had a chance to discuss it. That was that.

As I thought about it, the spiking of the Shiva column provided an apt metaphor for modern-day journalistic diversity in Canada. Ideas are like seeds. If planted in fertile ground they can grow in wildly diverse and wondrous ways. Under the corporate domination of the Aspers, however, there is a growing monoculture of mainstream ideas in Canada. A single, patented version of sterile germ plasm occupies an ever-greater

space in the field of debate. Call it a Terminator seed.

I highly doubt there was any direct instruction from Winnipeg to kill this particular column. But the atmosphere of censorship and intolerance that the Aspers have encouraged throughout the chain has emboldened like-minded people, such as Kappler and Stockland (who pulled my initial post-Sept. 11 column out of an exaggerated concern for American sensitivities).

Coming for the third time, and the second spike from Kappler specifically in as many months, there was no rending of garments on my part. One gets accustomed to this sort of thing. And that's exactly the sensation that told me it was time to give it up.

A few people have since told me they were disappointed in my decision, that there is more to gain by staying at the front and fighting the good fight. I absolutely agree, and that attitude informed my decision to continue in the previous two instances. But I knew that my future efforts for the paper would suffer from even more self-censorship and second-guessing. And Montréal readers, a diverse and demanding lot, deserve much more than that.

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Labor round-up

Campaign begins for labor law reform

Using the spotlight of a Senate hearing, the nation's unions and sympathetic senators opened a new campaign for the right to organize and for labor law reform to put teeth into enforcement. Deliberate defiance and violation of labor law is part of an overall "growing and scandalous corporate abuse of power," AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney, the leadoff witness, told the Senate Labor Committee on June 20. Sweeney and others, including individual workers and a leading human rights group, presented evidence of a wide range of employer abuses of worker rights, including illegal firings, mandatory anti-union "captive audience" meetings, forcing workers to listen to supervisors' anti-union lobbying and threats to close if workers vote union. Human Rights Watch Executive Director Kenneth Ross testified there were fewer than 500 illegal firings for union organizing in each year of the 1950s, compared to an estimated 23,000 now. Many company tactics to stop organizing "aren't illegal—but they should be," Sweeney added, such as hiring union-busting consultants and, for immigrants, calling the Immigration and Naturalization Service to threaten deportation.—Press Associates, Inc.

Much at stake in mid-term elections

This is the sweaty season, and not just because of the temperature. Election campaigns are heating up, with much at stake for organized labor as George Bush nears the mid-point of his first term: 36 governors' seats are up for grabs, with four—in California, Illinois, Michigan and Pennsylvania—considered especially crucial to labor. And control of both the U.S. House and Senate is also on the line, with only a one-vote margin in the Senate as a check on an increasingly worker-hostile Bush administration.

AFL-CIO increases per capita tax

A per-capita "tax" of four cents per union member per month to fund the AFL-CIO's political action, mobilization and education, kicked in July 1. Money from the new tax, estimated to raise an additional \$17.5 million through the end of 2004, will be added to the six-and-a-half cents per member already dedicated to political activities. "The legislative process must not be a one-sided affair, with corporate interests calling all the shots," Sweeney told the AFL-CIO board in pushing for the increase. Committing the per-capita tax raises "guarantees that working families will have a voice in politics," he added.

First step taken (again) for RSI regs

A Senate panel, voting 11-10 along party lines, approved legislation June 19 requiring the Labor Department to create workplace regulations designed to reduce repetitive-stress injuries. Sponsored by Sen. John B. Breaux, a Louisiana Democrat, the bill gives the department two years to create regulations covering all industries that make it clear what employers are required to do and when. Such regulations would supercede the Republican approach, articulated by Labor Secretary Elaine L. Chao in April, when she said her agency would establish "voluntary guidelines"—and then only for certain industries with high rates of injuries.

UPS sues Canada over competition

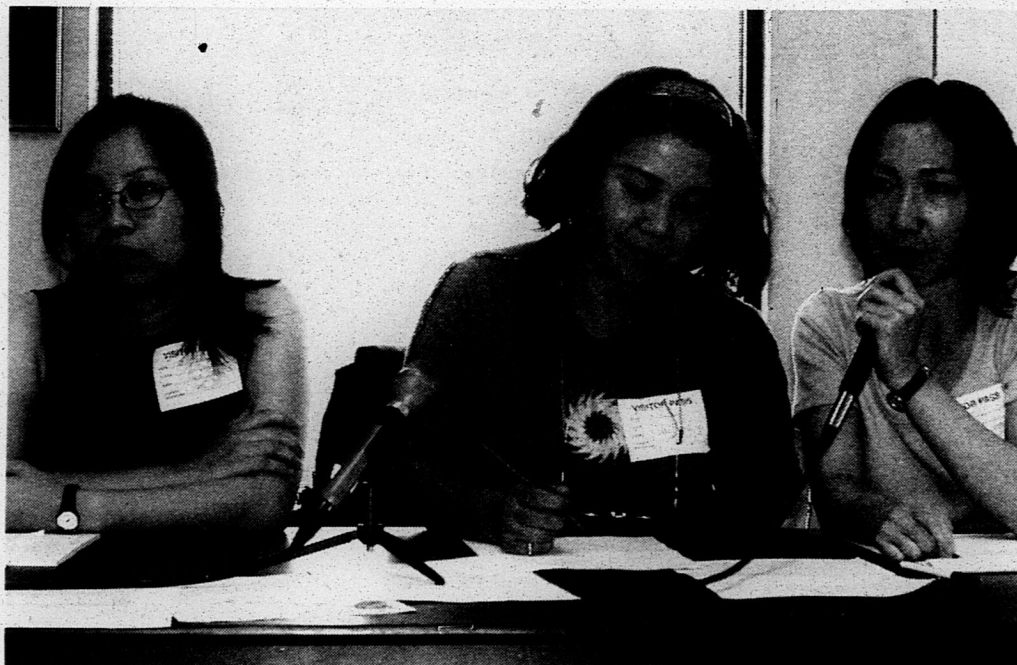
United Parcel Service has offered the latest example of corporate financial interests trumping the democratic rule of law, suing the Canadian government for \$250 million under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). UPS contends that public support for Canada Post is hurting its effort to expand its courier business—an argument, if it prevails, that critics predict will encourage private broadcasters to sue Ottawa because it supports the CBC, private hospitals to sue Ottawa because it supports public hospitals and private schools to sue Ottawa because it supports public education.

11 months later, New Era strike over

More than 200 CWA members returned to work July 8 after voting, 125-36, to ratify a four-year contract at New Era Cap Co. The vote ended an 11-month strike and removed New Era, which makes baseball caps, from the AFL-CIO's boycott list. More than a dozen major colleges had cancelled their orders with the company before it backed off demands that workers take a 30% wage cut. The new contract includes pay raises of 4%, establishes a joint union-management health and safety committee to address ergonomic problems and maintains seniority.

Labor lost ground in 2001 NLRB voting

How was 2001 from organized labor's perspective? Overall, not so hot, according to year-end numbers recently made available by the Bureau of National Affairs. Among the statistics: the number of resolved National Labor Relations Board representation elections dropped to 2,378, from 2,869 in 2000, a 17% decline. Fewer elections generally mean fewer new union members—although the percentage of election wins ticked up slightly, to 53.6% from 53% the previous year. Still, the overall trend was down, with the total number of eligible voters in representation victories plunging to 48,843 in 2001, from 69,952 in 2000, a 30% slump.



Kepeng Lian, president of a self-help group of former RCA workers in Tao Yuan, Taiwan, sits flanked by interpreters at a meeting at CWA headquarters.

Being hired by RCA in the 1970s was considered a "great honor," she said—before the new hires started dying from cancer.

RCA's globalization a hit-and-run affair

When RCA arrived in Taiwan in 1970 to open a factory for manufacturing television sets, Chihken Wu viewed it as an economic lifeline. Both he and his wife worked at the plant, as did more than 20,000 other Taiwanese, and Wu dreamed of the day he would finally be able to visit the United States itself.

That dream finally came true last month—but the dream, Wu told CWA employees through an interpreter, has become "a nightmare." Unbeknownst to most of its employees, RCA for years poured toxic wastewater into a well that subsequently contaminated the surrounding soil and groundwater. Over the next three decades, more than a thousand employees developed various cancers that they attributed to their poisoned drinking water, and at least 216 died. Wu's wife was diagnosed with cancer in 1997 and suffered a miscarriage.

"All of us are living in fear, wondering if we'll get a cancer tomorrow," he said.

Although the contamination became publicized in 1994, after former workers sounded the alarm and the Taiwanese EPA confirmed their claims, RCA had already ceased to exist as a separate company. General Electric bought it in 1986, stripped it of the assets it wanted and sold the balance—including the Taiwanese factory—to Thomson two years later. The plant was closed in 1992.

While Thomson, a French company, yielded to pressure from the Taiwanese EPA to clean up the site, the \$6 million it committed was sufficient only for removing surface soil. Thomson then had the land rezoned for commercial use and sold it for \$533 mil-

lion. The groundwater, meanwhile, remains untreated and neither Thomson nor General Electric has offered to compensate former employees, claiming there is no scientific proof that groundwater contamination caused the illnesses.

Now the former workers are bringing the fight home—principally to GE, which indemnified Thomson against liabilities "arising from pre-acquisition environmental events or conditions." Arriving in California for a publicity campaign aimed at embarrassing GE into taking responsibility for its pollution, representatives of the Self-Help Group of ex-RCA Workers in Taiwan showed a film and described their situation to unions, reporters and community groups that might exert pressure on the company.

GE and Thomson responded by agreeing to meet with delegation members, then abruptly reversed themselves. That prompted a sharp rejoinder from IUE-CWA President Edward Fire. Writing on behalf of the 14 unions—including IUE-CWA—comprising the Coordinated Bargaining Committee of GE Unions, Fire noted that "establishment of an open and honest dialog" between the workers and GE is necessary "to ensure that the Company operates its global businesses in an environmentally responsible manner that meets minimal internationally recognized labor standards."

Wu, meanwhile, observed that because globalization has given capital freedom to move, "building up an international workers' link is very important to us." To which added Kepeng Lian, president of the self-help group: "They did all that on purpose. A company like this, we should punish them."

CWA calls for H1-B repeal

Among the resolutions adopted at the CWA convention was a condemnation of abuses under the H1-B visa program and a call for its immediate repeal. Although the union had grudgingly supported the program in previous years because of its education and training provisions for domestic workers, President Bush's budget for next year proposes eliminating those features. The administration instead wants to shift some of that money to ensure faster processing of permanent foreign labor certifications—a move the CWA derided as adding "insult to injury."

The problems with the H1-B visa program, as outlined in a draft of the resolution, include:

- The number of visas now authorized is higher than any reasonable estimate of shortages of skilled workers;

- H1-B visa holders are often paid less than other workers doing similar jobs;

- High-tech companies have pushed legislation to raise H1-B limits even as they fought legal attempts to support the application of basic labor law to their use of permatemps;

- Such industry lobbying occurred as more than 200,000 high-tech workers lost their jobs in 2001, and as layoffs continue this year;

- The industry's efforts appear to be an attempt to lower local wages and make bigger profits for corporations at the expense of local communities while breaking existing unions.

The resolution, however, also called for recommitting CWA support for "winning justice for immigrant workers."

A LITTLE SUMMER READING

Capital moves—and moves again, and again

By Andy Zipser,
Editor, The Guild Reporter

The global search for cheaper labor—regardless of the human cost—may occupy today's headlines but it's not exactly news. It drove the slave trade, ultimately undermining the labor movement in sometimes unexpected ways (see Steve Early's review, below). And when overt trafficking in human beings became unacceptable, the managerial class moved the factories to the workers instead of the other way around.

But long before the largest corporations went overseas they played the game within the United States itself, hop-scotching south and west out of the industrial northeast in search of the next impoverished community willing to exchange its dignity for a bit of pottage. In their wake they left blighted urban landscapes that still haven't recovered, but as Jefferson Cowie relates, it's not just the Rust Belt that was sucker-punched: so were its successors, and for the same reason. There's always someone over the horizon more desperate yet.

The cleverly titled *Capital Moves* focuses on one particular company to explore this dynamic, but RCA—only the name is gone—is in that sense an icon: it represents a much larger phenomenon. It also challenges even the most meticulous researcher to keep up. While Cowie amply documents RCA's peregrinations, from Camden to Bloomington to Memphis, and finally to Juarez, the corporation has traveled even further afield, bringing first hope and then despair to Formosa. (See page 4 for a related account.)

Started in 1919 as a government-supported monopoly, the Radio Corporation of America pooled patents held by a handful of giant companies (most notably GE, AT&T and Westinghouse) as a way of keeping wireless communication—that era's equivalent of the internet—in American possession

"Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor," by Jefferson Cowie; The New Press. 279 pp. \$16.95.

and to develop it for the national good. Its manufacturing and licensing of patents made RCA the instant giant of the communications industry, with annual revenues shooting up from \$2 million its first year to \$182 million within the decade.

As its Camden, New Jersey-based manufacturing operations exploded, RCA quickly developed the hiring approach it would use with cold efficiency for decades thereafter: of the 9,800 workers employed at RCA in 1936, approximately 75% were women—ideally young, single women—who did all the wiring, crimping and soldering under the watchful eyes of male inspectors. For young women traditionally relegated to teaching, nursing or house cleaning, the possibility of working in a light industrial setting was extraordinarily seductive. Management, meanwhile, stressed that such work was ideally suited for women because it required "feminine patience and deft fingers."

But the same docility that management prized on a repetitive production line had another virtue: it made women less susceptible to unionization. And while assembly-line work at RCA paid better than house cleaning, the women on the production line earned significantly less than their male counterparts.

The specter of unionization became a reality in Camden in the mid-1930s, when a "city of contented industries" was hammered by a series of successful organizing drives spurred by the New Deal and the Wagner Act. RCA, however, wasted no time in dispersing its operations throughout the

United States; the bulk of its household electronics production went to Bloomington, Indiana, where the economy was flat on its back. As in Camden, the manufacturer hired mostly young, unmarried women desperate for jobs. And, as in Camden, rising living standards and the eventual unionization of the workforce pushed RCA into looking for yet another home—and then another.

From Bloomington RCA moved to Memphis, which in addition to its poverty had the virtue of a racially segregated labor market that could be manipulated by a manufacturer willing to play the races off each other. But even that attraction waned with the creation of the *maquiladora* system on the U.S.-Mexican border.

"The same factors so evident in Bloomington and Memphis—a glut of available labor, a history of economic underdevelopment, a weak and divided labor movement, meager industrial traditions, and political elites dedicated to the interests of capital investment—could be found in unprecedented abundance on the Mexican side of

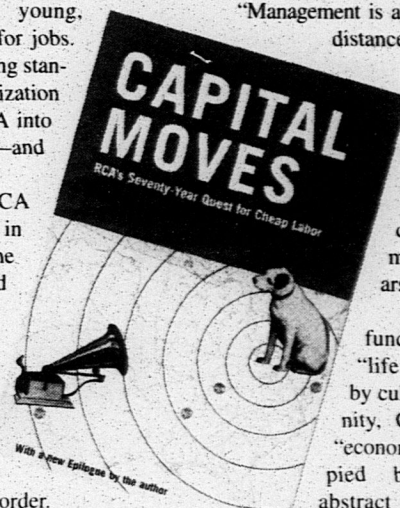
the border," Cowie writes.

RCA hopped the border in 1968, setting up shop in Ciudad Juarez, and over the next decade grew to be the largest employer in what became the largest industrial park in the world. Concurrently, the cost of labor as a percentage of final product cost plummeted, from 12% of the cost of a receiver in 1954 to 6.4% by 1977.

The most notable lesson to be drawn from this odyssey, Cowie suggests, is that the wielders of capital have far greater ability than workers to transcend and use space.

"Management is able to manipulate distance to fragment labor's collective power... Command of spatial relations, therefore, becomes a crucial weapon in management's arsenal."

While most of us function within a "life space" defined by culture and community, Cowie adds, the "economic space" occupied by capital "is abstract and discontinuous." But there is a way of reconciling the two: "The global topography over which capital moves, however, is shaped by the consciousness, action, and resistance of workers." Cowie concludes, in what amounts to an explicit call for workers—and their unions—to link arms across national borders.



Labor paying price of missing civil rights boat

By Steve Early,
CWA Representative

The struggle of African-Americans for economic equality was one that unions in the 1960s—at least the more liberal ones—nominally supported and in which veteran black labor activists played a seminal role. Yet the civil rights movement as a whole clearly passed labor by and further diminished its already reduced stature as the champion of the underdog and leading national voice for social justice.

In a key chapter of *State of the Union*, titled "Rights Consciousness in the Workplace," Nelson Lichtenstein explores how unions, their contracts and negotiated grievance procedures have been further marginalized by the enduring legal and political legacy of the civil rights era. According to the author, this has created "the great contradiction at the heart of American democracy today," as a transformation in law, custom, and ideology has made a once-radical demand for racial and gender equality into an elemental code of employer conduct.

Now, every US employer has to be an "equal opportunity" one or face an avalanche of negative publicity, public censure and costly litigation. Discrimination against workers—on grounds deemed unlawful by the 1964 Civil Rights Act and subsequent legislation—has become downright un-American, with the newest frontiers being the fight against unfair treatment of workers based on their physical disabilities or sexual preference.

But at the same time, as *State of the Union* and other studies have documented,

collective workplace rights are neither celebrated nor well enforced. What Lichtenstein calls "rights consciousness" is the product of heroic social struggle and community sacrifice—but, ironically, often reinforces a different American tradition, that of "rugged individualism." This tradition finds modern expression in the oft-repeated threat to "call my lawyer" whenever disputes arise, on or off the job.

To make his point, Lichtenstein exaggerates the degree to which individual complaint-filers at the federal

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (and equally backlogged state agencies) end up on a faster or more lucrative track than workers seeking redress at the National Labor Relations Board. But there is no doubt that high-profile discrimination litigation has paid off in ways that unfair-labor-practice cases rarely do. Among other examples, the book contrasts the unpunished mass firing of Hispanic phone workers trying to unionize at Sprint in San Francisco—a typical modern failure of the Wagner Act—with big class-action victories like the settlement securing \$132 million for thousands of minority workers victimized by racist managers at Shoney's. The restaurant case involved much public "shaming and redemption" via management shakeups at the corporate level; Sprint merely shrugged off allegations of unionbusting until a federal court ruled in its favor.

Lichtenstein's solution is for labor today to find ways to "capitalize on the nation's well-established rights culture of the last 40

years," just as the CIO "made the quest for industrial democracy a powerful theme that legitimized its strikes and organizing campaigns in the 1930s." He looks to veterans of 1960s social movements—who entered the withering vineyard of American labor back when cold warriors like George Meany and Lane Kirkland still held sway—to build coalitions with non-labor groups that can "make union organizational rights as unsailable as basic civil rights."

In so doing, Lichtenstein recommends finding a middle way between a renewed emphasis on class that downplays identity politics—"itself a pejorative term for rights consciousness"—and an exclusive emphasis on the latter that may indeed thwart efforts to unite workers around common concerns. In the past, Lichtenstein notes, "the labor movement has surged forward not when it denied its heterogeneity" but instead found ways to affirm it, using ethnic and racial pluralism within unions to build power in more diverse workplaces and communities.

Unfortunately, too often in labor today—particularly in several high-profile, "progressive" unions led by onetime student activists—participatory democracy is missing. Membership mobilization has a top-down, carefully orchestrated character that subverts real rank-and-file initiative, decision-making and dynamism. The emerging culture of these organizations resembles the "guided democracies" of the Third World, in which party-appointed apparatchiks or technocrats provide surrogate leadership for the

people who are actually supposed to be in charge. In politics, it's equally disheartening to see that labor's "independence" is not being demonstrated through the creation of more union-based alternatives to business-oriented groups within the Democratic Party, or by challenging corporate domination of the two-party system.

This is not what Lichtenstein has in mind when he urges adoption of "a well-projected, clearly defined political posture in order to advance labor's legislative agenda and defend the very idea of workplace rights and collective action." His book applauds the authentic militants who battled contract concessions and the labor establishment prior to the 1995 palace coup that put John Sweeney and his associates in control of the AFL-CIO. While the author backs "the new agenda of the Sweeney leadership," with its primary focus on the right to organize, he argues that the fight for union democracy is equally "vital to restoring the social mission of labor and returning unions to their social-movement heritage."

But how labor is viewed, aided, undermined or ignored by men and women of ideas (including the author) is, by itself, never going to determine its fate in any era. Workers themselves, acting through organizations they create or remake, are still the primary shapers of their own future, whether for better or worse.

Adapted from a much longer review first published Feb. 25 in *The Nation*; Early, a journalist and lawyer, has been involved in union organizing and reform since 1972.



CWA President Morton Bahr, at right, administers the oath of office to the Guild's new executive board. Left to right, they include: Scott Stephens, Region 3 vice president; Arnold Amber, Director, TNG Canada; Percy

Hatfield, Canada East vice president; Peter Szekely, Region 5 vice president; Lesley Phillips, Region 1 vice president; Karolynn DeLucca, Region 6 vice president; Carol Rothman, TNG-CWA Chairperson; Lucy Witeck,

Region 4 vice president; Connie Knox, Region 2 vice president; Scott Edmonds, Canada West vice president; President Linda Foley; and Secretary-Treasurer Bernie Lunzer.

BILL BURKE/WASHINGTON-BALTIMORE GUILD

Convention concurs on corporate convergence

Continued from page 1

Consolidation presents an array of problems but it isn't all bad news for unions, said Guild President Foley. When union newspapers such as the Journal expand to the web, it's a chance for the union to expand, too. "What we should not lose sight of is that convergence also creates an opportunity for us to build union power," she said.

Still, unions are in for a fight. Corporations savor consolidation as a way to cut budgets and increase profits. "Wall Street is driving already very profitable newspapers and broadcast outlets to cut costs to reach even higher profit margins, resulting in job loss and a lower quality product," said CWA researcher Debbie Goldman, who reported on consolidation at the workshop.

Although it didn't work for the Providence paper, digital technology is letting scores of companies less concerned with quality set up shop anywhere and use a skeletal staff for a variety of jobs. Goldman said that Media General boasts that its state-of-the-art multimedia production facility in Tampa, Fla., is a sign of things to come.

"At one centralized assignment desk, editors assign and edit the day's news for the local newspaper, TV station and online media," she said. "Print reporters go on air and TV technicians may tape stories that are joint products of print and TV reporters. Ad sales are bundled across the media."

Convergence has had an extreme impact on radio across the country, with just two companies controlling the majority of stations nationwide. "Concentration and ownership changes have threatened to wipe out the truly independent radio station," said Winton, of AP. Today, he added, you can go for miles, city to city, and never hear radio news.

"FCC regulators, often ignoring their duty to manage the airwaves as a public trust, have turned that responsibility on its head," he said.

In some cases, the technological ease of moving jobs has given employers a tool with which to punish union members and to deter would-be organizers. In Buffalo, N.Y., said James Joyce, NABET-CWA vice president, the union was involved in a labor dispute three years ago that led to a lockout. Although the union won, "now the employer's answer to their solidarity is to shift technological jobs to non-union stations in Indianapolis and Massachusetts."

Joyce pointed out that only six companies—Disney, Time-Warner, AOL, General Electric, Viacom and Fox—control virtually all of TV broadcasting. "Do we really need General Electric controlling more and more of the media?" he asked, urging passage of the resolution.

Foley and TNG Secretary-Treasurer Bernie Lunzer said the resolution and workshop are only the beginning of discussion that they hope to take to Guild and other media locals nationwide. "We intend for more research, more education, more meetings like this one, across sectors," Lunzer said.

In other convention business:

Delegates heard Seattle Times reporter Duff Wilson describe the obstacles he and colleague David Heath encountered in researching and writing their Broun Award-winning series, "Uninformed Consent." The series detailed unethical drug trials at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center, which fought the reporters at every step. Equally unsettling, however, was the strike against the Seattle Times that postponed publication of the series just as it was nearing completion.

"We had a rough year in Seattle," Wilson said. "We found out our publisher could be just as stubborn in fighting us in a labor situation as he was backing us as investigative reporters against an adversary like the Hutch."

Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), considered one of the likely Democratic candidates for president in 2004, made a strong pro-union speech, telling delegates he's had it with hypocrisy from some in Congress who couldn't wait to shake hands and take pictures with New York's firefighters in the wake of Sept. 11. Those are the same lawmakers, Kerry observed, who are chipping away at workers' rights, job safety laws and other working-family initiatives while bailing out corporations to the tune of billions.

"I think it's time to remind our Republican friends that those people they are so quick to give speeches about, those heroes they refer to, the firefighters and police officers who were willing to lug that hose and go up those stairs to remove people from those buildings and give their lives so that others might live, we should remind them that those people were all members of a union," Kerry said. "They believed in the right to organize and the right to strike and

the right to bargain."

Harold Schaitberger, president of the International Firefighters Association, echoed Kerry's sentiments. "They are calling my people 'heroes,' the fiber of their community, the backbone of the neighborhood," he said. "Well, I know all too well just how short a memory too many politicians have, and I'm prepared to tell them that I don't want any more of their praise, I don't need any more of their plaudits. I don't need their homilies and I don't need their prayers and I sure as hell don't need their lip service."

Schaitberger's emotional speech also paid tribute to CWA's Sept. 11 victims: "I, too, have a heart that breaks, a heart that brings you the condolences of a quarter of a million of my members to the families, the loved ones, the friends of those CWA members who lost their lives on that fateful day."

While honoring CWA locals that have raised the most money for the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, CWA's charity of choice, delegates heard from

Florence Ngobeni. The 29-year-old HIV-positive woman lost her baby to AIDS and now provides care and counseling for the staggering numbers of AIDS patients in Soweto, South Africa.

"What is hard is children are involved, children that are my children and your children," Ngobeni said, her voice choked with emotion. "Working in the hospital I have learned to love, to forgive and to embrace life. This union has helped us embrace life, has helped us bring hope to those who are hopeless and I'm proud to be standing here today to say 'thank you' for all your efforts."

Delegates were brought to tears by a video produced by NABET-CWA that honored CWA members who died at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, as well as former Guild member and Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl, killed in Pakistan covering the war on terrorism. As the video ended, delegates began to grasp each others' hands and sway to the music while singing "America the Beautiful," led by Debbie Thomas of the TNG-CWA staff.

'Kill the chicken to scare the monkey'

At the Chinese Daily News in Los Angeles, the company is so determined to keep out TNG-CWA that management has given a union-busting attorney a luxury suite in its office building.

That's just one of the indignities that reporter Lynne Wang and 150 colleagues have faced in the year and half since 95% of the employees in advertising, business, circulation, news and production signed cards saying they wanted to be represented by the Guild.

But United Daily News, the Taiwanese media company that owns the paper and others in Taiwan, New York and San Francisco, figures all it has to do to stop the union is steadfastly refuse to bargain. And, after failing to derail the union through the National Labor Relations Board, that's exactly what it's done.

Speaking to a rapt audience at the CWA convention, Wang told of intimidation, harassment and retaliation by managers against union leaders. Before the election in March 2001, she said, "My supervisor called me into the office at mid-



Lynne Wang

night, yelling and screaming at me for supposedly writing an article in the union newsletter. In spite of all (these) scare tactics, my co-workers were brave enough to vote 'yes.'"

While awaiting a decision from the NLRB—which declared the union election fair and valid—the company fired and publicly humiliated union supporters, Wang said. The company is facing multiple unfair labor practices charges, but is undaunted. After her own testimony before the board, she said the company posted two newsletters above her workstation with the Chinese saying, "Kill the chicken to scare the monkey."

"This is a tragedy for immigrant workers who believe so much in the protection guaranteed by U.S. laws," Wang said. "We really need your support. We want the mother company to see that all of CWA is behind us."

To show support for the Chinese Daily News workers, go to www.newsguild.org, find the Chinese Daily News story and click on "more." You'll be linked to a CWA page from which you can e-mail a letter to the owners calling for them to recognize the union and bargain in good faith. From the site, you can also link to video of Lynne Wang's speech.

LOOKING AHEAD

Convergence is here, and it's pretty messy

By Bernie Lunzer, Secretary-Treasurer



The Newspaper Guild-CWA has begun a dialogue, with its locals on convergence, first last spring at a tri-council meeting in New York, more recently in Las Vegas with a jointly sponsored seminar with NABET-CWA. Both meetings made it clear that melding various technologies has blurred the boundaries between once distinct news media (see related story, page 8). Meanwhile, industry-led efforts to change the rules that limit joint ownership of newspapers and television and radio stations will further erode job definitions and differences in responsibilities.

Many Guild and NABET members welcome these new challenges. In Pittsburgh, for example, several writers have jumped at the chance of appearing on television broadcasts—and when they do so outside of work hours, get paid an additional appearance fee. At Newsday on Long Island, on the other hand, GCIU members have been blocked from TV appearances because their contract requires payment of such a fee. As of two months ago, management was telling the print journalists they couldn't do TV news because "the union won't let us," when in fact Newsday simply didn't want to pay the small premium.

Meanwhile, many locals have already had to deal with the impact of the web on their members. During the tech-bubble years, several employers created separate companies to keep the (non-union) web operation segregated from their unionized shops, but that trend is now being reversed. In most cases, like work is receiving like pay, as web-based news programs import most of their material from the more traditional news-gathering operation.

But the interactive nature of the web also has created new work—and fresh challenges. Although some employees have volunteered as moderators for web message areas, others resent having to respond to substantial amounts of e-mail. Many concerns throughout the print world have been voiced about the web's "speed-up" effect on news gathering and reporting: publishers

want to be the first to break stories, often on the web, trampling the usual time allotted to generating a story and increasing the risks of mistakes and superficiality creeping in. Breaking stories on the web also has raised concerns about tipping off the competition prematurely.

Perhaps the major concern about convergence, especially between broadcast and print, is the resulting overall reduction in the number of working journalists and skilled technicians. NABET workers find themselves using high-end equipment to prepare material for delivery at multiple TV stations throughout the country. Locations that once employed 50 technicians now may have as few as 10. Material is reused and repackaged, reducing the amount of original news being generated.

Publishers and media-owners are working furiously to speed up convergence by making all forms of cross-ownership legal. They point to Chicago as an example, where a grand-fathering law has allowed cross-ownership all along. The newsroom at the Chicago Tribune has broadcast facilities built into it, enabling non-represented print journalists to get their stories on TV and on a sister radio station. All three media promote their co-owned media outlets and downplay the competition. Other cities are preparing for rules changes that will permit similar "efficiencies," and "strategic alliances" are being developed where full co-ownership is not yet possible.

We need to respond to these changes and accept that many will come to fruition. At the same time, we must be prepared to fight against the potential negative outcomes. Our worst fear is that fewer workers will be used across the news industry, resulting in fewer jobs and less real news. The industry already faces a crisis on diversity issues, with most news operations not reflecting the composition of the communities they serve. Fewer jobs will make this unacceptable situation even worse. And as we face continuing political and economic upheaval in the post 9/11 world, less news will not make a stronger democracy. We're not naive; we



know that the news industry is a business that must be profitable. But the core tenet of journalism—that it serve the public interest—cannot be lost, and we in the union must be its principal guardians.

Beyond that, there are numerous other challenges facing our members as the news media become increasingly more corporatized and concentrated. Corporations will continue to fight for more intellectual property rights, while trying to take ours away. We already face employers that tell us we cannot work for other media, even as they meet with each other to figure out how better to merge their products and introduce even more technological changes to make more of us redundant.

Will we get the proper training to use these new technologies? Our employers have a terrible track record in that record, viewing most of their employees more as expenses than as investments. As the level

of expertise that is expected of us rises, will we get proper pay recognition? That's doubtful, too—without pressure from those most affected. Will employers be realistic about the number of workers needed and the number of hours it will take to create a quality product? Experience tells us we'll need to pressure them every day on this issue, too.

The way news is delivered is bound to change. We need to help manage that change and recognize that the future of journalism cannot be left to corporate managers. If cross-ownership goes forward, we need to fight against its worst possibilities. Media concentration certainly may be good for the balance sheet, but it won't necessarily make the "free world" better.

We'll be working with Guild activists to stay in front of this issue. We need your help, too. If you want to respond to this article, email me at blunzer@cwa-union.org.

LETTER

To the Editor,

Kevin Keane, a man of the highest quality, is stepping down after many, many years of outstanding leadership as president of the Wire Service Guild.

On behalf of all Guild members, active and retired, we say "Thank you!" for all his great work, not only on behalf of the WSG but for what he did for all Guild members. We may be retired, but we never forget.

—Jack Wallace, Wilkes-Barre Guild

Editor's note: Although Kevin has stepped down as president, he continues his labors as the Guild's administrative officer.

To the Editor,

I was stunned to see the cheap shot taken at Israel in my union newspaper ["Helmets, flak jackets required," Guild Reporter, May 24]. The lede singles out Israel as a place

that's dangerous for journalists: "Even a putative democracy like Israel (what in the world does this mean: Israel is not a democracy?) apparently has given its troops permission to shoot at journalists."

After an extensive search I could come up with no story even vaguely supporting the notion that Israel announced it was okay to shoot journalists. It's outrageous that this snide, unsubstantiated remark is the only evidence presented on journalism's very real dangers.

A quick Google search finds, for example, that the Taliban reportedly offered a bounty of \$50,000 for each Western journalist shot. The same story out of Afghanistan reports that eight journalists had been killed that month. Yes, that month! To say nothing of Daniel Pearl, or the dangers we faced in Pakistan or Lebanon or Bosnia or Algeria (where Algerian journalists have been tracked down

and beheaded), just to name a few.

In a world that gets more dangerous every day, is the Israeli government really a working journalist's biggest worry? And if not, why did your anonymous writer feel the need to drag it in?

—Martin Golan, New York Guild

Editor's reply: Israel was not "singled out" in the story, but was cited as an example of how widespread the threats faced by journalists have become. It's one thing for dictatorships and authoritarian regimes to target journalists: it's something considerably more troubling when countries as westernized as Israel decide that reporters and journalists are fair game.

And yes, the Israeli government—to the extent that the Israeli Defense Forces act in compliance with government policies—is cause for worry for working journalists. Italian

freelance photographer Raffaele Ciriello was shot and killed March 13 and Boston Globe reporter (and TNG-CWA member) Anthony Shadid was shot and wounded March 31, both apparently—although not conclusively—by Israeli soldiers. Other incidents are less nebulous, including Israeli soldiers shooting at clearly identified journalists April 1 and 2 and using stun grenades and rubber bullets April 5 to drive reporters away from Arafat's compound while they awaited the arrival of Middle East envoy Anthony Zinni. For a more comprehensive list, visit the web site maintained by the Committee to Protect Journalists, at www.cpj.org/Briefings/2002/Israel.cases.html.

"Putative," according to Webster's, means "commonly accepted or supposed." While most Israelis and much of the Western world indeed view Israel as a democracy, 19% of Israel's citizens are Arabs who feel increasingly disenfranchised and marginalized.

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: August 2.) Letters may be e-mailed to the editor at azipser@cwa-union.org.

It's a small world, after all . . .

. . . and other NEXPO tunes to drive you crazy, most rhyming with 'convergence'

By Andy Zipser
Editor, The Guild Reporter

Surely there are few more annoyingly persistent tunes than that oh-so-bubbly Disney ditty, "It's a Small World, After All." How apt, then, that this year's NEXPO—the annual newspaper trade show that increasingly resembles a techie version of Never-Never Land—was held in Orlando, home of the Magic Kingdom and other fantasies.

It tried to be glitzy. It was cloying. Most of all, however, it provided a sharp reminder of the tunnel vision that can afflict an imploding industry. Striving to transform weakness into virtue—of turning lemons into lemonade, if you will—a business once built on individual talent and entrepreneurial flair increasingly is turning to gee-whiz technology for its salvation.

Despite some attempts to dress things up—this was NEXPO's 75th anniversary; the ribbon-cutting door prize was a diamond necklace with a one-carat stone—there were abundant signs of distress. Trade-show acreage diminishes each year, and some exhibitors, such as Adobe, clearly trimmed expenses from last year. And no wonder: final attendance barely topped 2,300, a number minimized by the Newspaper Association of America in favor of a reported "participation" of slightly more than 6,000—including exhibitors, who apparently outnumbered potential customers nearly two-to-one.

Last year's official participation was reported as 6,580, and that was at least 35% below the attendance just a couple of years earlier. The trend helps explain why next year's NEXPO will be folded in with the NAA's annual "Newspaper Operations Super-Conference," providing twice the

bang for the buck for tighter travel budgets.

Meanwhile, realizing it had to do something to pump things up, NAA this year took the highbrow route of scheduling wall-to-wall workshops and panel discussions. Some, unfortunately, were little more than opportunities for exhibitors to hawk their wares to a captive audience. Others, even when not selling a particular product, invariably emphasized the labor-saving aspects of technology—not surprising for a trade show, of course, but underscoring just how much the newspaper business regards employees as obstacles to profitability rather than as assets.

Representative of this thinking was Mark Cardwell, an executive producer for the Associated Press, whose workshop was titled "Integrating Newsroom Workflow." Cardwell's prescription? "Automate everything you can, move everything upstream that you can, and keep, keep, keep searching for ways to make things more efficient."

While some workshop presenters pulled no punches in stressing workforce reductions—a big selling point, for example, for electronic tearsheets, one of today's hotter technologies—Cardwell put a kinder, gentler face on his recommendations. "I'm not talking about getting rid of people," he stressed. "I'm talking about not having your reporters doing clerical work, but reporting and writing, and not having your editors just punching numbers all day."

But as Cardwell also mentioned, his own staff shrank by five in the past year, even as it introduced three new products. And although he didn't describe it as a speed-up, Cardwell did acknowledge that AP's three-year-old "fast-filing" program—under which

reporters are filing all the time, not just on an AM-cycle—was presented to employees as the "key to everybody's job and future."

(How has the wire service rewarded employees for stepping onto a faster treadmill? If he were working at some other companies he might have given bonuses, Cardwell disclosed almost offhandedly, but at AP he's been able to get by with thank-you notes.)

Although several workshop speakers stressed the importance of getting management "buy-in" before implementing new technologies, the apparently unspoken consensus was that similar attempts to secure employee buy-in are unnecessary. Indeed, Keith Wheeler, multimedia editor for The Orlando Sentinel, may have captured the zeitgeist perfectly when he asserted the importance of "driving the message down"—and if you encounter resistance, he counseled, tell that person he or she would be "better off selling shoes."

While the NEXPO trade show gave abundant evidence of one kind of shrinkage, a one-day seminar on newspaper convergence, tacked onto the beginning of the festivities, provided another. Organized by the American Press Institute, the session was dedicated to exploring "multi-platform publishing"—which, seminar leader Andrew Nachison explained, means nothing more arcane than "delivering news to the audience when and where they want it."

Except that the "audience," it soon became clear, doesn't know what it wants until it's told. And the driving force behind convergence isn't audience satisfaction, anyway: it's "efficiency." For example, offered a Knight Ridder representative, eight different

papers from the chain sent eight different reporters to cover the recent meeting of Roman Catholic bishops—and wrote essentially the same story. Wouldn't it have been more efficient to send only one reporter and farm out his or her work?

Similar logic, festooned with the latest MBA buzzwords—"platform agnostic," "looking for a partner who can help you better leverage your resources"—dominated a day in which the underlying assumptions were simply taken for granted. Consider, for example, a hand-out distributed by James K. Gentry, dean of the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications and a leading consultant for media companies trying to merge "platforms." "Why converge?" asked the heading at the top of the first sheet before ticking off numerous benefits, including "more and better" content, brand extension and opportunities for cross-selling ads.

"Why not converge?" asked a seminar participant. "Is there a downside to convergence?"

Gentry, surprisingly, was nonplused. "Good question," he finally replied. "No one's asked that before."

Yet perhaps Gentry's flat-footedness was not surprising, given the prevailing mind-set. The second page of his hand-out had two columns, contrasting an "easy" convergence scenario with a "difficult" one. "Easy" factors included committed, focused leadership and a single manager, as contrasted to "other leadership priorities" and multiple managers in the "difficult"

convergence. The word "employees" appeared nowhere on the page—but "unions" did. Under the "difficult" scenario.

Sitting through hour after hour of similar presentations and discussions—ultimately stretching across five days—a skeptical observer might well have concluded this was a classic example of the technology tail wagging the industry dog. As a dozen people sat around a table discussing the challenges of the next 10 years, for example, the anxiety of not being able to keep up with technological changes was so palpable it prompted the moderator to observe that everyone's attention seemed fixated on the funnel while forgetting its contents.

"What about what gets poured into the funnel? What about what goes into the funnel and how it comes out the other end?" he pressed. The group pondered the question for a minute—then quickly resumed its discussion of software applications.

The few voices seeking to address precisely those points were lost in the overall din—voices like that of Eric Kenly, chief executive of I.O. Technologies. The industry's biggest barrier to sustained growth, he asserted, is a lack of training for employees. Dollar for dollar, according to a Bank of Boston study, the investment return on training is more than double the return on capital investment as measured by increased productivity.

But hey—that's a broader vision than can be encompassed by an inwards-looking industry. It's a small world, after all—and getting smaller all the time.

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Democratic Media and Organizing in Uncertain Times
Sept 26-28, 2002 New York City

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Labor Journalism and Civil Liberties in Times of Crisis.

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Robert McChesney, Professor, University of Illinois
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*Partial listing

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS:
Opening reception, Thursday evening 6:30 PM at the Graduate Center, CUNY 365 5th Avenue at 34th Street featuring Elizabeth Fave, signing her new book, *Writing the Wages: Eva Velez and the Rise of Labor Journalism*, and Moe Foner's recently published book, *Not for Bread Alone*.
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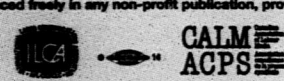
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Nat'l Assoc. Black Journalists,
July 31-Aug. 4, Milwaukee

Asian-American Journalists,
Aug. 7-10, Dallas

Knight Ridder Council,
Sept. 7-8, Duluth, Minn.

Nat'l Lesbian, Gay Journalists,
Sept. 12-15, Philadelphia

Customer Service, Mktg. conf.,
Sept. 25-29, Boston

Western District Council,
Oct. (date TBA), Los Angeles

EC Finance Committee,
Oct. 19, Washington, DC

TNG Exec. Council meeting,
Oct. 20-21, Washington DC

New England District Council,
Oct. 26, Boston

Canadian Regional Council,
Oct. 26, Ottawa