

THE GUILD Reporter

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Radio Free Asia votes for Guild

Approximately 125 employees of Radio Free Asia (RFA), resisting a strong anti-union campaign, have voted 77-37 for representation by the Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild. RFA, a government-funded agency, promptly filed an appeal with the National Labor Relations Board, claiming its employees didn't understand what they were doing when they cast their ballots because of their poor English-language skills.

The new unit include broadcasters, researchers and production assistants in RFA's Language Services headquarters in downtown Washington, D.C.. The service broadcasts news to the people of China, North Korea, Tibet, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Burma.

TNG-CWA petitioned the NLRB for an election April 4, after a large majority of RFA employees had signed a "mission statement" favoring union representation. Although balloting was conducted May 28, votes weren't counted until June 20 to give three RFA employees stationed abroad enough time to receive and return their ballots.

The mission statement seeking union representation said employees "hope to create a more harmonious and healthy environment within RFA, both between the management and workers

Two other TNG-CWA organizing victories have been reported recently. On June 13, all 14 employees of the Medicine Hat, Alberta, Shopper voted, 8-6, to be represented by the Alberta Newspaper Guild. And the Hawaii Newspaper Guild has organized the Maui Bulletin and the Maui Big Book, by a vote of 13 to 3.

and among workers ourselves." Goals listed in the statement included "job security, fairness, competitive wages and benefits, and a channel to express employees' grievances."

After the strong union endorsement, the RFA employees hoped to move quickly toward contract negotiations. "We hope management will work with us for fairness, equity and a better working environment as we pursue our common mission of broadcasting news and information to countries where democracy and human rights are lacking," said Liu Hong of RFA's Cantonese language service.

Instead, within less than a week, RFA lawyers petitioned to have the election results voided and a new election held. Because RFA employees "have only rudimentary English skills," the service argued, they were unable "to intelligently participate in the election."

Canadians blast cross-ownership

Wrestling with the same market pressures that have convulsed U.S. media markets, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage has released a long-awaited report on the state of Canada's broadcasting system. The verdict, after two-and-a-half years of work: things have gone too far.

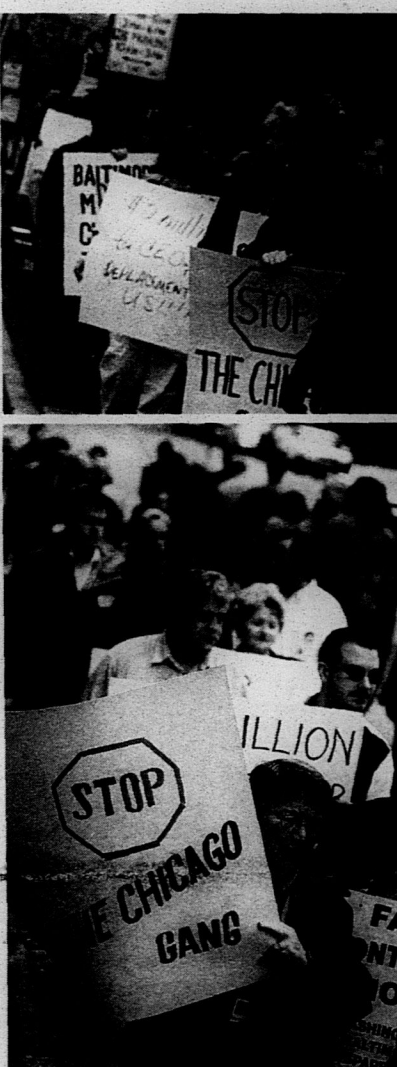
Titled "Our Cultural Sovereignty," the 872-page report recommends as a first step an immediate freeze on further corporate concentration of TV and radio ownership. As a second step, the report challenges Parliament Hill to turn back the tide by enacting legislation to undo some of the existing cross-ownership of print and broadcast media.

Such dramatic action is needed to "protect the integrity of editorial independence and journalistic freedom," the committee explained.

While the landmark recommendations—based in part on testimony by Lise Lareau, president of the Canadian Media Guild, and Arnold Amber,

director of TNG-Canada—were lauded by Canadian union members, media coverage was indicative of the problem. The report failed to garner big headlines in any of the newspapers published by CanWest Global Communications, which controls the nation's largest newspaper chain and its second largest private TV network: indeed, The Gazette in Montréal didn't run the story at all, while the Vancouver Sun dismissed it with a 71-word brief. The StarPhoenix in Saskatoon did only slightly better, carrying 138 words.

In concurring with the widespread perception among journalists "that too much (media) power is falling into too few hands," the report specifically recommends that a new federal policy on media cross-ownership be announced by June 30, 2004. Existing broadcast licenses for cross-media owners, including CanWest Global, BCE Inc. and Quebecor Inc., would be continued for a maximum of three years, expiring in 2006.



Hundreds of Baltimore Sun employees pound the pavement May 22, expressing their anger at Tribune Co.'s bargaining proposals—and tactics.

Sun unit OKs pact

Denounces scab hires, bad faith in bargaining

Confronted by strikebreakers recruited from the Tribune Co.'s newspapers nationwide, Guild-represented employees of The Baltimore Sun broke with their leadership and voted decisively to accept a new, four-year contract that includes a first-year wage freeze. But in a sign of dismay at their employer's scorched-earth bargaining tactics, the employees also voiced unanimous support for a statement deploring the company's "demeaning and destructive conduct" and accusing it of "negotiating in bad faith."

The 319-102 vote, taken less than two hours before the former contract expired, overrode a recommendation by the unit's negotiating committee to reject the proposal. In addition to deploring the wage freeze, committee members objected to contract provisions that create a new merit pay pool, allow outsourcing of some unit work and permit reassignment of employees to lower-paying jobs.

Further riling employees was management's insistence that the changes were needed to create a "performance-based culture." As explained by an apparently tone-deaf Sun spokeswoman, Linda Geeson, "With the system we're proposing, people will have an incentive to do great work." The Sun, it should be remembered, won a Pulitzer Prize just a few months ago and was a finalist for two others.

But while Sun employees staged a successful week-long byline strike and voted overwhelmingly June 18 to authorize a walkout, the Sun's carrot-and-stick approach ultimately prevailed. The carrot was a \$1,500 signing bonus—but only if the company's proposal were accepted before the existing contract expired. The stick: a promise not to let striking employees halt production, backed up by a reserve of strikebreakers imported by Tribune from at least four of its other properties.

The combination was too one-sided to resist. "Guild members saw that they could accept a contract they hated, or they could call a strike that could be 'won' only by ruining the paper," observed Wayne Countryman, a

Continued on page 2

Inside this issue



Dept. of Labor kicks labor out into street ... page 3

If you read only one speech, this is it page 4

Renewed optimism at NEXPO page 8

Sun workers scorn Tribune

Continued from page 1

Sun copy editor. In the end, he added, the Guild "cares about the newspaper and its readers more than the paper's owner does."

Bargaining committee members, meanwhile, expressed some surprise at the one-sided nature of the vote but not at the outcome overall. "Dealing with the Tribune was a challenge because it was aggressive in its tactics and aggressive in its demands," said Connie Knox, a TNG-CWA vice president. "Our members took a look at that and decided they were in a no-win situation."

Lori Calderone, administrative officer of the Washington-Baltimore Guild, took it a step further by observing that the Tribune is "a really vicious, vicious company" that essentially never budged from its initial bargaining position. "The committee strongly and clearly believed this was a very bad contract," she added, but unit members concluded that the only alternative was to work without a contract—a first for Baltimore, "fraught with risk and not necessarily any gain."

The new contract includes a \$24-a-week raise for all employees in its second year, followed by pay hikes of \$10 a week in the third and fourth—and additional increases, at management's discretion, of up to \$14 a week in the third year and \$15 a week in the fourth from the new "merit" pool. Although a setback, the increases are an improvement over management's initial demand that all wage increases be at its discretion.

Similarly, management initially sought unlimited job transfer rights, but settled for transfers within departments with 30-days' notice and agreed that employees transferred to lower-paying jobs won't have to take more than a 3% wage cut per year. And its initial demand for complete freedom in subcontracting unit work now includes a provision prohibiting layoffs as a result of out-sourcing. The local also preserved seniority rights in case of layoffs, which the company had wanted to abolish, and maintained its union shop provision, which requires that 80% of employees in each represented department be Guild members.

While on balance Tribune may be viewed as having won concessions, its brass-knuckles approach clearly carried a price—one that Sun management either doesn't recognize or is determined to ignore. Geeson, for example, claimed that with the new con-

tract "we can achieve great things together." Sun publisher Denise Palmer similarly said, in a statement, that the new contract "is fair and equitable" and "positions the company and its employees for a bright future."

Such comments stand in marked contrast to employees' complaints of having a gun at their heads. The statement they approved, immediately after the lop-sided but reluctant vote to accept the proposed contract, read in its entirety: "The Guild member employees of The Baltimore Sun accept this contract under bitter protest and condemn the Tribune Company for its demeaning and destructive conduct, for negotiating in bad faith and for hiring scabs to replace loyal Sun workers."

Recruited by a sardonic appeal to their "team spirit," the replacement workers reportedly were paid the salary of the Guild members whose jobs they were trained to perform in addition to their regular salaries. The Chicago Reader reported on the "snare-drum rhetoric" that other Tribune papers used to fill the ranks, quoting from a staff memo issued by the Daily Press of Hampton Roads, Virginia:

"Other Tribune newspapers, in the long-standing tradition of newspapers everywhere, are ready to step in to help The Sun continue to publish, which is both its right and its civic duty," declared the memo from publisher Ronnie Matthews. "We are proud of the support our employees are providing and look forward to their return."

But as the Reader also pointed out, the Tribune Company has an impressive history of defending such "tradition," even when it doesn't involve Tribune newspapers. When the Guild struck the San Francisco Chronicle and Examiner in 1994, for example, the company rushed replacement workers west even though it didn't have the remotest connection to either paper.

The recruiting of scabs did, however, produce one unexpected champion: Jeffrey Billman, a columnist for an alternative weekly in Orlando, promised to "out" any Orlando Sentinel employees who agreed to scab in Baltimore. The Tribune-owned Sentinel responded by threatening a lawsuit. As explained by attorney William B. Wilson, the newspaper was "concerned about the effect such a publication of names would have on the families of the replacement workers."

In brief...

Only 1-year deal, but it's a honey

The Pueblo Guild has ratified another one-year contract—management's only inflexible requirement—without concessions, while eliminating a merit pool and gaining a 3% wage increase. Other gains include a 1% mandatory company contribution to the 401(k), plus an additional 0.5% contribution until next January 1; as well as elimination of the straight-commission plan for outside sales reps, who now will have a \$400 base salary instead of the previous \$370 draw against commissions. The change means the sales reps now will be entitled to vacation, sick leave and overtime.

Washtech notches first 2 contracts

WashTech has signed contracts with two start-up high-tech companies, U.S. Union Network and Drakka Computer Solutions, both of whom voluntarily recognized the union. The nearly identical agreements include full-union shop and card-check recognition of new departments or enterprises, and both include a \$1 per hour raise for all employees.

Canton workers approve contract

Guild-represented employees of Canton Repository rejected a bargaining committee recommendation and approved the company's final contract offer, 106-16. The June 29 vote accepts a three-year pact with 3% annual raises across the board, with full retroactivity, as well as a couple of 4% raises in the second and third years, mainly for classified and day-time mailroom.

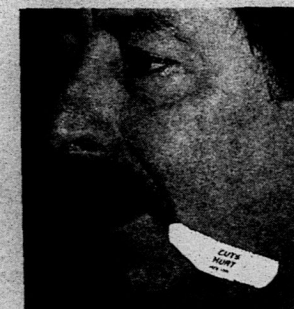
UPI slashes half of its workforce

In a move that's sadly familiar, United Press International has slashed as many as 20 editorial positions—about half of its workforce—to "reposition UPI in the marketplace." The Guild-represented workers are receiving one week of severance pay for each year of service, up to a maximum of 19 weeks; an additional \$900 for outplacement assistance by Morris & Associates; and six months of medical insurance payments or, at their option, the cash equivalent.

First contract signed at APTN

Canadian employees of Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) have unanimously ratified their first collective agreement, a three-year deal negotiated by the Canadian Media Guild that provides for salary increases ranging from 11% to 35% over the life of the contract. The agreement establishes a 35-hour work week with two consecutive days off and

entitlement to overtime compensation for all 20 or so members of the unit.



Dow Jones leaves 'em bleeding

Angered by the slow pace of contract talks, approximately 200 Dow Jones employees protested outside the company's South Brunswick headquarters June 30—many, like IAFE secretary-treasurer Virgil Hollender, above, sporting bandages printed with the slogan "Cuts Hurt." They were joined by hundreds more in other DJ locations protesting company demands for a wage freeze, an introduction of monthly health-care premiums, and the elimination of seniority protection for employees with fewer than five years on the job.

Blowing whistle on secret layoffs

WashTech recently blew the whistle on Microsoft's secret plan to lay off at least 800 tech support employees as it shifts the work to India and Nova Scotia. The plan would result in the largest firing of full-time employees in the company's history, according to WashTech president Marcus Courtney, but called for quietly laying off smaller groups of workers over the next several months so the magnitude of the firings would not make headlines.

NLRB orders talks at Register-Guard

By a 3-0 vote on June 20, the National Labor Relations Board ordered management at the Eugene Register-Guard to bargain with the TNG-CWA local over commissions for the paper's ad reps and a new charge to clients for advertising over the internet. Upholding its administrative law judge's ruling, the board said imposition of the new commissions—even though they weren't paid—and the new fees were illegal unilateral changes in working conditions. —Press Associates, Inc.

Past officer dies

Joseph B. Downey, a past president of The Newspaper Guild of Greater Boston and a former International Vice President of The Newspaper Guild, died June 23. A 1951 graduate of Boston University with a degree in journalism, Downey worked as a director of marketing and research for the Boston Herald Traveler.

Knoxville's 'Flanman' dies

By Sam Venable
Knoxville Newspaper Guild

Michael Flannagan, the fun-loving "Flanman" who wrote business stories for the Knoxville News Sentinel, entertained radio audiences on WDVX-FM and served several times as a board member for The Knoxville Newspaper Guild, died of an apparent heart attack. He was 41.

A native of Chicago who moved to Knoxville with his family as a teenager, Flannagan was born with a faulty heart valve and a hole in his aorta. He underwent the first of seven open-heart surgeries when only 6 weeks old, and received the first of four pacemakers at the age of 14.

Despite his weakened heart, Flannagan was renowned for his enormous enthusiasms and high energy. News Sentinel health writer Kristi Nelson, one of Flannagan's many newsroom friends, said that even though his life was cut short, he lived it to the fullest.

"He had a job he loved and through it had gotten to experience many things and interview many people he admired," she said.

Flannagan was hired by the News Sentinel as a copy clerk in 1979 and eventually worked his way into a reporter's position, first in the community news department, then on the business desk. But while his byline normally appeared over business reports, his first passion was music. Any and all music.

In addition to playing the drums in a local band called The Rattlehounds, which recently recorded its first CD, for the last five years he had hosted WDVX's "All Over the Road" and "The Fringe" programs on Saturday



nights. He also traveled extensively, including a trip last year to Cleveland, during which he visited the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and got to see Bruce Springsteen live twice in one weekend.

And, of course, the "Flanman" was a committed Guild member of many years standing, viewed by his peers as an articulate, reasoned voice even when others around him might be "hot under the collar."

"Mike was a good newspaper man and dedicated union member, but most of all he was a true friend," said local vice president Donna Colburn. "Although his heart may have been weak, it was made of solid gold. His presence—and especially his laughter—in the newsroom will be truly missed."

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Unions battle to keep 40-hour week

When the Federal Communications Commission decided to "modernize" its media ownership rules, it held only one public hearing. The U.S. Department of Labor did it one better: in revising its overtime rules, DOL held none at all.

An oversight? Not exactly—because when it learned that unions had reserved one of its public auditoriums for their own "hearing" on the subject, the federal department that was originally created to protect labor's rights abruptly canceled the event. Instead, several hundred union members congregated outside the building June 30, where they heard CWA President Morton Bahr suggest "that this country doesn't need two departments of commerce."

The noon rally, which drew national media attention and featured an especially strong showing from TNG and CWA, highlighted the threat to the 40-hour week posed by the regulatory attack on overtime pay.

Although related legislative efforts by the Bush administration have been frustrated by Democratic opposition, rule changes by the Dept. of Labor don't need Congressional approval despite their wide-ranging effects.

Among the changes the department is preparing is the reclassification of various jobs—including reporters and editors—as automatically exempt from overtime. Other changes include exempting anyone earning more than \$65,000 a year from overtime, and making it easier for employers to reclassify employees making between \$22,100 and \$65,000 a year as supervisors, who also are exempt from overtime. Exempt employees can be required to work whatever hours their companies demand without additional compensation.

While the Dept. of Labor has estimated that the new rules would exempt only

While the administration continues its assault on the 40-hour workweek, Americans already put in some of the longest hours of any industrialized workforce: 2.5 weeks per year more than the Japanese, up to three months a year more than some Europeans.

640,000 workers who currently are eligible for overtime, the Economic Policy Institute calculates that 8 million workers would be adversely affected. And CWA attorney Mark Wilson, who wrote a 26-page analysis of the proposed changes, contends that the numbers could be higher still because the language is so vague and ambiguous.

Notable in the department's proposed rule changes, Wilson added, is their "utter failure to incorporate any perceptible influence from the aims of the [Fair Labor Standards Act] itself." Adopted in 1938 by a Congress seeking to eliminate "labor conditions detrimental to the maintenance of the

minimum standard of living necessary for health, efficiency and general well being," the FLSA sought to achieve that goal by requiring premium pay for more than 40 hours of work a week.

"The 40-hour work week isn't just a perk," AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka told the June 30 rally. "This is a law that we won by generations of workers fighting for decent hours and decent wages. The 40-hour week and overtime pay are the legacy of some of the greatest uprisings of workers in our history to demand that they be treated with respect. Now the Bush administration wants to take it away. They want to take you back to the 1920s and 30s. We're not going to let them."

The proposed changes could go into effect as early as this fall—assuming a political backlash doesn't force the department to reopen the issue. An e-mail opposing the assault on overtime can be sent by visiting www.unionvoice.org/campaign/otpayjl.



Tim O'Brien, President of the Albany Newspaper Guild and a reporter for the Times Union, defends overtime rules for reporters at rally in front of the U.S. Department of Labor (see page 7 for excerpts

of his prepared remarks). Looking over his right shoulder is AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka; looking over his left is CWA President Morton Bahr.

Seattle papers have a new, local champion

Borrowing a chapter from the Hawaiian playbook, in which a citizens group successfully blocked efforts to close one of Honolulu's newspapers, the Pacific Northwest Guild has become a founding member of a Seattle organization calling itself the Committee for a Two-Newspaper Town (CTNT).

Led by two prominent local attorneys—one of them a former state Supreme Court justice—the group is seeking to intervene in a lawsuit filed April 28 by Hearst to preserve the joint operating agreement between The Seattle Times and the Hearst-owned Post-Intelligencer. The Times, owned by the Blethen family and Knight Ridder, has said it wants to dissolve the partnership on the grounds that it lost money in each of the past three years.

Arguments in King County Superior Court on behalf of CTNT's motion to intervene were scheduled for July 11. Arguments by Hearst to prevent the Times from terminating the JOA were set for July 18.

Although the Guild local is a CTNT member and put up \$3,000 to help get the group off the ground, union officials stressed that neither they nor CTNT are taking sides in the dispute. CTNT members "are united because they are concerned that the dispute over the JOA might leave Seattle with only one daily newspaper," a union web posting explains.

"We're siding with our members," the site adds. "We want both papers to publish. We're not taking sides, just trying to protect the interests of our members at both papers. Being a part of CTNT prevents the two sides from cutting a deal without also talking to the committee and its members, including the Guild."

While the possibility of job losses—including some at the Times—obviously concerns union officials, the union has stressed

that its members "are also readers and subscribers to the papers" and therefore have a broader stake in the dispute. CTNT leaflets, for example, emphasize that loss of a paper means loss of "a unique voice" vital to democratic discourse. Among the opposing viewpoints they highlight: the Times supported the war on Iraq, which the P-I opposed; the P-I supported monorail extension, which the Times opposed; the Times endorsed George Bush, while the P-I backed Al Gore.

Trial attorney Anne Melani Bremner and 2004 gubernatorial candidate Phil Talmadge, co-chairs of the group, said they intend "to take an active role in the dispute." Other CTNT supporters include Liz Brown, the Guild's administrative officer; Marcus Courtney, president of WashTech; former Washington governor Mike Lowry; U.S. Congressman Jim McDermott; and state senator Karen Keiser.

While the Times is arguing it has a contractual right to dissolve the JOA because of its three years of financial losses, Hearst's lawyers contend that the Guild's 49-day strike in late 2000 and early 2001 accounted for \$14 million of the red ink—the critical difference between profit and loss for those years. Hearst's 19-page motion asks for a ruling that those losses should be covered by the "force majeure" clause of the JOA contract, which excludes certain costs from the profit-loss calculation.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Justice is investigating whether aspects of the JOA—including a private side agreement between the Blethen family and Hearst—violate antitrust law or the Newspaper Preservation Act. CTNT supporters say community support for keeping two newspapers may be a key factor in how aggressively government lawyers pursue the case.

ProJo stonewalls union after contract rejection

Guild files nine more ULPs; elects new president

Repudiating a management effort to sidestep its losses before the National Labor Relations Board, Guild-represented employees of the Providence Journal rejected a contract proposal by a vote of 160-109. The company offer included \$1.2 million less in wage increases than had been ordered by the NLRB—and was contingent on the NLRB expunging 27 convictions of unfair labor practices.

But when Guild representatives notified management that they were prepared to resume bargaining, the company announced that the rejected contract was its final offer and that negotiations therefore are at an impasse. Although Guild administrator Tim Schick challenged the assertion, noting that management had never described the proposal as final, a company letter to the union dated June 25 stated it would not meet for further bargaining.

As a result, the Providence Guild has filed nine new charges of unfair labor practices against the Bel-owned company July 2 and is planning additional demonstrations to protest the company's continuing lawlessness. The new ULPs include three charges alleging illegal company efforts to influence the outcome of the June 11-12 contract vote by intimidating employees and removing union literature. Another

three charges concern the company's refusal to negotiate, its declaration of impasse where no impasse exists and its preconditioning of a contract on dismissal of ULP charges by the NLRB.

The remaining charges regard treatment of an employee who returned from medical leave.

Guild members who filled out a recent survey gave top priority to receiving retroactive wage increases equal to those given nonunion workers—3% a year in 2000, 2001 and 2003—add to eliminating the provision that would have made the contract contingent on the NLRB dismissal of ULP convictions.

One ironic outcome of the election was the payment of more than \$25,000 in back dues by Guild members seeking to restore their voting eligibility. Journal management ended dues check-off after the last contract expired, more than three years ago, but in a transparent effort to affect the vote outcome, recently offered loans to help employees bring their dues payments current.

Separately, Guild members voted for John Hill over Kerry Kohring, 102-80, as their new president. Hill succeeds Bob Jagolinzer, who died in a boating accident May 15. Hill, 46, has been Guild secretary since 1997 and is a bureau manager.

Journalists once drove

[More than 1,500 union members, politicians, community activists and social crusaders attended the "Take Back America" conference in early June, marking the biggest progressive gathering in the U.S. in several decades. Their overarching concern? The Bush administration's relentless dismantling of the government as mediator between the haves and have-nots, repudiating the premise of the American Revolution by restoring the rule of wealth.]

Future issues of *The Guild Reporter*, leading up to next year's elections, will explore several of the themes developed at the conference. But the best introduction to what's at stake was presented in a June 4 keynote speech by Bill Moyers, edited slightly here for length. Guild members are encouraged to respond with their own thoughts, as essays or letters to the editor.]

By Bill Moyers

Fifty-three years ago tomorrow, on my 16th birthday, I went to work for the daily newspaper in the small East Texas town where I grew up. It was a good place to be a cub reporter—small enough to navigate but big enough to keep me busy and learning something every day. I soon had a stroke of luck. Some of the old timers were on vacation or out sick and I got assigned to cover what came to be known as the Housewives' Rebellion.

Fifteen women in my hometown decided not to pay the Social Security withholding tax for their domestic workers. They argued that Social Security was unconstitutional, that imposing it was taxation without representation, and that—here's my favorite part—"requiring us to collect (the tax) is no different from requiring us to collect the garbage."

The stories I wrote for my local paper were picked up and moved on the Associated Press wire. One day the managing editor called me over and pointed to the AP ticker beside his desk. Moving across the wire was a notice citing one Bill Moyers and the paper for the reporting we had done on the "Rebellion." That hooked me, and in one way or another—after a detour through seminary and then into politics and government for a spell—I've been covering the class war ever since.

Those women in Marshall, Texas were its advance guard. They were not bad people. They were regulars at church, their children were my friends, many of them were active in community affairs, their husbands were pillars of the business and professional class in town. They were respectable and upstanding citizens all. So it took me a while to figure out what had brought on that spasm of reactionary rebellion. It came to me one day, much later.

They simply couldn't see beyond their own prerogatives.

Fiercely loyal to their families, to their clubs, charities and congregations—fiercely loyal, in other words, to their own kind—they narrowly defined membership in democracy to include only people like them. The women who washed and ironed their laundry, wiped their children's bottoms, made their husband's beds, and cooked their family meals—these women, too, would grow old and frail, sick and decrepit, lose their husbands and face the ravages of time alone, with nothing to show from their years of labor but the crease in their brow and the knots on their knuckles. So be it. Even on the distaff side of *laissez faire*, security was personal, not social, and what injustice existed this side of heaven would no doubt be redeemed beyond the Pearly Gates. God would surely be just to the poor once they got past Judgment Day.

In one way or another, this is the oldest story in America: the struggle to determine whether "we, the people" is a spiritual idea embedded in a political reality—one nation, indivisible—or merely a charade masquerading as piety and manipulated by the powerful and privileged to sustain their own way of life at the expense of others.

Let me make it clear that I don't harbor any idealized notion of politics and democracy; I worked for Lyndon Johnson, remember? Nor do I romanticize "the people." You should read my mail, or listen to the vitriol virtually spat at my answering machine. I understand what the politician meant who said of the Texas House of Representatives, "If you think these guys are bad, you should see their constituents."

But there is nothing idealized or romantic about the difference between a society whose arrangements roughly serve all its citizens and one whose institutions have been converted into a stupendous fraud. That dif-

ference can be the difference between democracy and oligarchy.

Look at our history. All of us know that the American Revolution ushered in what one historian called "The Age of Democratic Revolutions." For the Great Seal of the United States the new Congress went all the way back to the Roman poet Virgil: *Novus Ordo Seclorum*—"a new age now begins." Page Smith reminds us that "their ambition was not merely to free themselves from dependence and subordination to the Crown but to inspire people everywhere to create agencies of government and forms of common social life that would offer greater dignity and hope to the exploited and suppressed"—to those, in other words, who had been the losers.

Not surprisingly, the winners often resisted. In the early years of constitution-making in the states and emerging nation, aristocrats wanted a government of propertied "gentlemen" to keep the scales tilted in their favor. Battling on the other side were moderates and even those radicals harboring the extraordinary idea of letting all white males have the vote. Luckily, the weapons were words and ideas, not bullets. Through compromise and conciliation the draftsmen achieved a constitution of checks and balances that is now the oldest in the world, even as the revolution of democracy that inspired it remains a tempestuous adolescent whose destiny is still up for grabs.

But for all the rhetoric about "life, liberty, and the

erately on the 4th of July, pulled no punches. "We meet," it said, "in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of moral, political and material ruin. . . . Corruption dominates the ballot box, the [state] legislatures and the Congress and touches even the bench. . . . The newspapers are largely subsidized or muzzled, public opinion silenced. . . . The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few."

Furious words, from rural men and women who were traditionally conservative and whose memories of taming the frontier were fresh and personal. But in their fury they invoked an American tradition as powerful as frontier individualism—the war on inequality, and especially on the role that government played in promoting and preserving inequality by favoring the rich. The Founding Fathers turned their backs on the idea of property qualifications for holding office under the Constitution because they wanted no part of a "veneration for wealth" in the document.

Thomas Jefferson, while claiming no interest in politics, built up a Republican Party—no relation to the present one—to take the government back from the speculators and "stock-jobbers," as he called them, who were in the saddle in 1800. Andrew Jackson slew the monster Second Bank of the United States, the 600-pound gorilla of the credit system in the 1830s, in the name of the people versus the aristocrats who sat on the bank's governing board.

All these leaders were on record in favor of small government—but their opposition wasn't simply to government as such. It was to government's power to confer privilege on insiders; on the rich who were democracy's equivalent of the royal favorites of monarchist days. (It's what the FCC does today.) The Populists knew it was the government that granted millions of acres of public land to the railroad builders. It was the government that gave the manufacturers of farm machinery a monopoly of the domestic market by a protective tariff that was no longer necessary to shelter "infant industries." It was the government that contracted the national currency and sparked a deflationary cycle that crushed debtors and fattened the wallets of creditors. And those who made the great fortunes used them to buy the legislative and judicial favors that kept them on top.

So the Populists recognized one great principle: the job of preserving equality of opportunity and democracy demanded, the end of any unholy alliance between government and wealth. It was, to quote that platform again, "from the same womb of governmental injustice" that tramps and millionaires were bred.

But how? How was the democratic revolution to be revived? The promise of the Declaration reclaimed? How were Americans to restore government to its job of promoting the general welfare? And here, the Populists made a breakthrough to another principle. In a modern, large-scale, industrial and nationalized economy, it wasn't enough simply to curb the government's outreach. That would simply leave power in the hands of the great corporations whose existence was inseparable from growth and progress. The answer was to turn government into an active player in the economy, at the very least enforcing fair play and, when necessary, being the friend, the helper and the agent of the people at large in the contest against entrenched power.

So the Populist platform called for government loans to farmers about to lose their mortgaged homesteads. For government granaries to grade and store their crops fairly. For governmental inflation of the currency, which was a classical plea of debtors. And for some decidedly non-classical actions, like government ownership of the railroad, telephone and telegraph systems and a graduated—i.e., progressive—tax on incomes and a flat ban on subsidies to "any private corporation." And to make sure the government stayed on the side of the people, the 'Pops' called for the initiative and referendum and the direct election of U.S. Senators.

Predictably, the Populists were denounced, feared and mocked as fanatical hayseeds ignorantly playing

with socialist fire. They got 22 electoral votes for their candidate in '92, plus some Congressional seats and state houses, but it was downhill from there for many reasons. America wasn't—and probably still isn't—ready for a new major party. The People's Party was a spent rocket by 1904. But if political organizations perish, their key ideas don't. Keep that in mind, because it gives perspective to your cause today.

Much of the Populist agenda would become law within a few years of the party's extinction. And that was because it was generally shared by a rising generation of young Republicans and Democrats who, justly or not, were seen as less outrageously outdated than the embattled farmers. These were the progressives, your intellectual forebears and mine.

One of my heroes in all of this is William Allen White, a Kansas country editor—a Republican. He described his fellow progressives this way: "What the people felt about the vast injustice that had come with the settlement of a continent, we, their servants—teachers, city councilors, legislators, governors, publishers, editors, writers, representatives in Congress and Senators—all made a part of our creed. Some way, into the hearts of the dominant middle class of this country, had come a sense that their civilization needed recasting, that their government had fallen into the hands of self-seekers, that a new relationship should be established between the haves and the havenots."

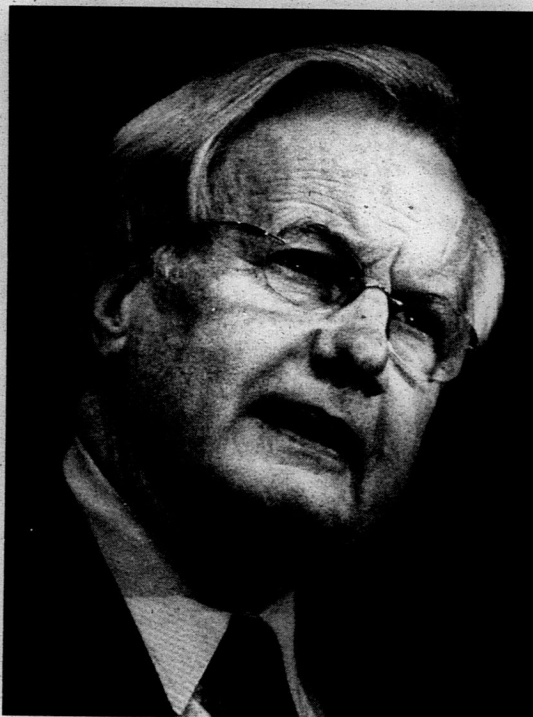
They were a diverse lot, held together by a common admiration of progress—hence the name—and a shared dismay at the paradox of poverty stubbornly persisting in the midst of progress, like an unwanted guest at a wedding. Of course they welcomed, just as we do, the new marvels in the gift-bag of technology: the telephones, the autos, the electrically-powered urban transport and lighting systems, the indoor heating and plumbing, the processed foods and home appliances and machine-made clothing. But they saw the underside, too—the slums lurking in the shadows of the glittering cities, the exploited and unprotected workers whose low-paid labor filled the horn of plenty for others, the misery of those whom age, sickness, accident or hard times condemned to servitude and poverty with no hope of comfort or security.

This is what's hard to believe: hardly a century had passed since 1776 before the still young revolution was being strangled in the hard grip of a merciless ruling class. The large corporations that were called into being by modern industrialism after 1865—the end of the Civil War—had combined into trusts capable of making minions of both politics and government. What Henry George called "an immense wedge" was being forced through American society by "the maldistribution of wealth, status, and opportunity."

We should pause here to consider that this is Karl Rove's cherished period of American history; it was, as I read him, the seminal influence on the man who is said to be George W.'s brain. From his own public comments and my reading of the record, it is apparent that Karl Rove has modeled the Bush presidency on that of William McKinley, who was in the White House from 1897 to 1901, and modeled himself on Mark Hanna, the man who virtually manufactured McKinley. Hanna had one consummate passion—to serve corporate and imperial power. It was said that he believed "without compunction, that the state of Ohio existed for property. It had no other function. . . . Great wealth was to be gained through monopoly, through using the State for private ends; it was axiomatic therefore that businessmen should run the government and run it for personal profit."

Mark Hanna—Karl Rove's hero—made William McKinley governor of Ohio by shaking down the corporate interests of the day. Fortunately, McKinley had the invaluable gift of emitting sonorous platitudes as though they were recently discovered truth. Behind his benign gaze the wily intrigues of Mark Hanna saw to it that first Ohio and then Washington were "ruled by business . . . by bankers, railroads and public utility corporations." Any who opposed the oligarchy were smeared as disturbers of the peace, socialists, anarchists, "or worse." Back then they didn't bother with hollow euphemisms like "compassionate conservatism" to disguise the raw reactionary politics that produced government "of, by, and for" the ruling corporate class. They just saw the loot and went for it.

The historian Clinton Rossiter describes this as the period of "the great train robbery of American intellectual history." Conservatives—or better, pro-corporate



the progressive agenda

apologists—hijacked the vocabulary of Jeffersonian liberalism and turned words like "progress," "opportunity" and "individualism" into tools for making the plunder of America sound like divine right. Charles Darwin's theory of evolution was hijacked, too, so that conservative politicians, judges, and publicists promoted, as if it were, the natural order of things, the notion that progress resulted from the elimination of the weak and the "survival of the fittest."

What, progressives wondered, would this do to the principles of popular government? Because all of them, whatever party they subscribed to, were inspired by the gospel of democracy. Inevitably, this swept them into the currents of politics, whether as active officeholders or persistent advocates.

Here's a small, but representative sampling of their ranks. Jacob Riis lugged his heavy camera up and down the staircases of New York's disease-ridden, firetrap tenements to photograph the unspeakable crowding, the inadequate toilets, the starved and hollow-eyed children and the filth on the walls so thick that his crude flash equipment sometimes set it afire. Bound between hard covers, with Riis's commentary, they showed comfortable New Yorkers "How the Other Half Lives." They were powerful ammunition for reformers who eventually brought an end to tenement housing by state legislation.

And Lincoln Steffens, college- and graduate-school educated, left his books to learn life from the bottom up as a police-beat reporter on New York's streets. Then, as a magazine writer, he exposed the links between city bosses and businessmen that made it possible for builders and factory owners to ignore safety codes and get away with it. But the villain was neither the boodler nor the businessman. It was the indifference of a public that "deplored" our politics and lauded our business; that transformed law, medicine, literature and religion into simply business. Steffens was out to slay the dragon of exalting "the commercial spirit" over the goals of patriotism and national prosperity. "I am not a scientist," he said. "I am a journalist. I did not gather the facts and arrange them patiently for permanent preservation and laboratory analysis. . . . My purpose was . . . to see if the shameful facts, spread out in all their shame, would not burn through our civic shamelessness and set fire to American pride."

If corrupt politics bred diseases that could be fatal to democracy, then good politics was the antidote. That was the discovery of Ray Stannard Baker, another journalistic progressive who started out detesting election-time catchwords and slogans. But he came to see that "Politics could not be abolished or even adjourned. . . . it was in its essence the method by which communities worked out their common problems. It was one of the principle arts of living peacefully in a crowded world." [Compare that to Grover Norquist's latest declaration of war on the body politic. "We are trying to change the tones in the state capitals—and turn them toward bitter nastiness and partisanship." He went on to say that "bipartisanship is another name for date rape."]

There are more, too many more to call to the witness stand here, but I want you to hear some of the things they had to say. There were educators like the economist John R. Commons or the sociologist Edward A. Ross, who believed that the function of "social science" wasn't simply to dissect society for non-judgmental analysis and academic promotion, but to help in finding solutions to social problems. It was Ross who pointed out that morality in a modern world had a social dimension. In "Sin and Society," written in 1907, he told readers that the sins "blackening the face of our time" were of a new variety, and not yet recognized as such. "The man who picks pockets with a railway rebate, murders with an adulterant instead of a bludgeon, burglarizes with a 'rake-off' instead of a jimmy, cheats with a company instead of a deck of cards, or scuttles his town instead of his ship, does not

feel on his brow the brand of a malefactor." In other words, upstanding individuals could plot corporate crimes and sleep the sleep of the just without the sting of social stigma or the pangs of conscience. Like Kenneth Lay, they could even be invited into the White House to write their own regulations.

And here are just two final bits of testimony from actual politicians—first, Brand Whitlock, Mayor of Toledo. He is one of my heroes because he first learned his politics as a beat reporter in Chicago, confirming my own experience that there's nothing better than journalism to turn life into a continuing course in adult education. One of his lessons was that "the alliance between the lobbyists and the lawyers of the great corporation interests on the one hand, and the managers of both the great political parties on the other, was a fact, the worst feature of which was that no one seemed to care."

And then there is Tom Johnson, the progressive mayor of Cleveland in the early nineteenth hundreds—a businessman converted to social activism. His major battles were to impose regulation, or even municipal takeover, on the private companies that were meant to provide affordable public transportation and utilities but in fact crushed competitors, overcharged customers, secured franchises and licenses for a song, and paid virtually nothing in taxes—all through their pocketbook control of lawmakers and judges.

Johnson's argument for public ownership was simple: "If you don't own them, they will own you. It's why advocates of Clean Elections today argue that if anybody's going to buy Congress, it should be the people." When advised that businessmen got their way in Washington because they had lobbies and consumers had none, Tom Johnson responded: "If Congress were true to the principles of democracy it would be the people's lobby." What a radical contrast to the House of Representatives today!

In a few short years, the progressive spirit made possible the election not only of reform mayors and governors but of national figures like Senator George Norris of Nebraska, Senator Robert M. LaFollette of Wisconsin, and even that hard-to-classify political genius, Theodore Roosevelt—all three of them Republicans. Here is the simplest laundry-list of what was accomplished at state and Federal levels: Publicly regulated or owned transportation, sanitation and utilities systems. The partial restoration of competition in the marketplace through improved antitrust laws. Increased fairness in taxation. Expansion of the public education and juvenile justice systems. Safer workplaces and guarantees of compensation to workers injured on the job. Oversight of the purity of water, medicines and foods. Conservation of the national wilderness heritage against overdevelopment, and honest bidding on any public mining, lumbering and ranching.

We take these for granted today—or we did until recently. All were provided not by the automatic workings of free enterprise but by implementing the idea in the Declaration of Independence that the people had a right to governments that best promoted their "safety and happiness."

The mighty progressive wave peaked in 1912, but the ideas unleashed by it forged the politics of the 20th century. Like his cousin Theodore, Franklin Roosevelt argued that the real enemy of enlightened capitalism was "the malefactors of great wealth"—the "economic royalists"—from whom capitalism would have to be saved by reform and regulation. Progressive government became an embedded tradition of Democrats—the heart of FDR's New Deal and Harry Truman's Fair Deal, and honored even by Dwight D. Eisenhower, who didn't want to tear down the house progressive ideas had built, only to put it under different managers. The progressive impulse had its final fling in the landslide of 1969 when LBJ, who was a son of the West Texas hill country, where the Populist rebellion had

been nurtured in the 1890s, won public endorsement for what he meant to be the capstone in the arch of the New Deal.

I had a modest role in that era. I shared in its exhilaration and its failures. We went too far too fast, overreached at home and in Vietnam, failed to examine some assumptions, and misjudged the rising discontents and fierce backlash engendered by war, race, civil disturbance, violence and crime. Democrats grew so proprietary in this town that a fat, complacent political establishment couldn't recognize its own intellectual bankruptcy or the beltway that was growing around it and beginning to separate it from the rest of the country. The failure of democratic politicians and public thinkers to respond to popular discontents—to the daily lives of workers, consumers, parents, and ordinary taxpayers—allowed a resurgent conservatism to convert public concern and hostility into a crusade to resurrect social Darwinism as a moral philosophy, multinational corporations as a governing class, and the theology of markets as a transcendental belief system.

As a citizen I don't like the consequences of this crusade, but you have to respect the conservatives for their successful strategy in gaining control of the national agenda. Their stated and open aim is to change how America is governed—to strip from government all its functions except those that reward their rich and privileged benefactors. They are quite candid about it, even acknowledging their mean spirit in accomplishing it. Their leading strategist in Washington, the same Grover Norquist, has famously said he wants to shrink the government down to the size that it could be drowned in a bathtub. More recently, in commenting on the fiscal crisis in the states and its affect on schools and poor people, Norquist said, "I hope one of them"—one of the states—"goes bankrupt." So much for compassionate conservatism. But at least Norquist says what he means and means what he says.

The White House pursues the same homicidal dream without saying so. Instead of shrinking down the government, they're filling the bathtub with so much debt that it floods the house, water-logs the economy, and washes away services that have lifted millions of Americans out of destitution and into the mid-

for irrelevance and ultimately obsolescence.

What I do know is this: While the social dislocations and meanness that galvanized progressives in the 19th century are resurgent, so is the vision of justice, fairness, and equality. That's a powerful combination, if only there are people around to fight for it.

The battle to renew democracy has enormous resources to call upon—and great precedents for inspiration. Consider the experience of James Bryce, who published "The Great Commonwealth" back in 1895, at the height of the First Gilded Age. Americans, Bryce said, "were hopeful and philanthropic." He saw firsthand the ills of that "dark and unlovely age," but he went on to say: "A hundred times I have been disheartened by the facts I was stating: a hundred times has the recollection of the abounding strength and vitality of the nation chased away those tremors."

What will it take to get back in the fight? Understanding the real interests and deep opinions of the American people is the first thing. And what are those?

That a Social Security card is not a private portfolio statement but a membership ticket in a society where we all contribute to a common treasury, so that none need face the indignities of poverty in old age without that help.

That tax evasion is not a form of conserving investment capital, but a brazen abandonment of responsibility to the country.

That income inequality is not a sign of freedom-of-opportunity at work, because if it persists and grows, then unless you believe that some people are naturally born to ride and some to wear saddles, it's a sign that opportunity is less than equal.

That self-interest is a great motivator for production and progress, but is amoral unless contained within the framework of community.

That the rich have the right to buy more cars than anyone else, more homes, vacations, gadgets and gizmos, but they do not have the right to buy more democracy than anyone else.

That public services, when privatized, serve only those who can afford them and weaken the sense that we all rise and fall together as "one nation, indivisible."

That concentration in the production of goods may sometimes be useful and efficient, but monopoly over the dissemination of ideas is evil.

That prosperity requires good wages and benefits for workers.

And that our nation can no more survive as half democracy and half oligarchy than it could survive "half slave and half free"—and that keeping it from becoming all oligarchy is steady work. Our work.

Ideas have power—as long as they are not frozen in doctrine. But ideas need legs. The eight-hour day, the minimum wage, the conservation of natural resources and the protection of our air, water, and land, women's rights and civil rights, free trade unions, Social Security and a civil service based on merit—all these were launched as citizens' movements and won the endorsement of the political class only after long struggles and in the face of bitter opposition and sneering attacks. It's just a fact: Democracy doesn't work without citizen activism and participation, starting at the community level. Trickle-down politics doesn't work much better than trickle-down economics.

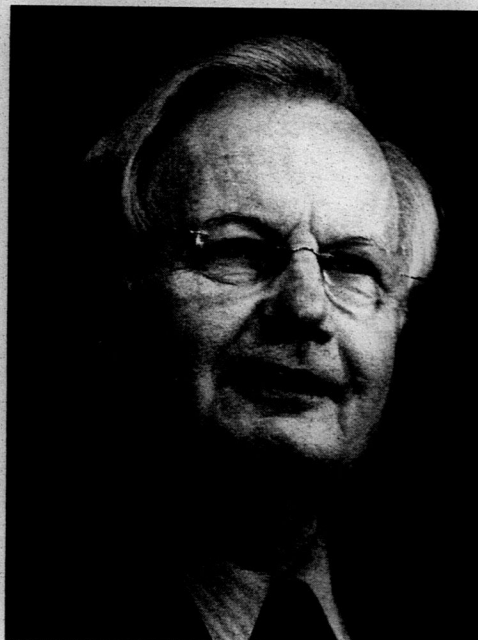
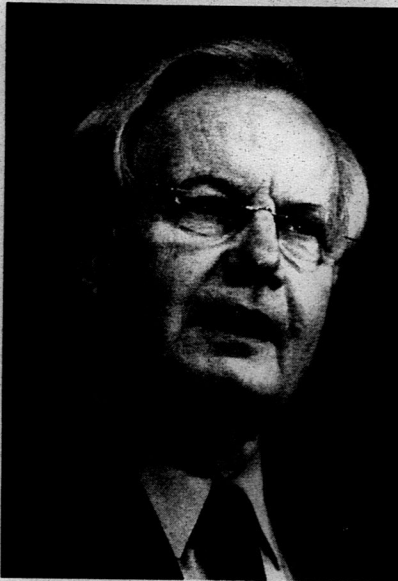
It's also a fact that civilization happens because we don't leave things to other people. What's right and good doesn't come naturally.

You have to stand up and fight for it as if the cause depends on you—because it does. Allow yourself that conceit, to believe that the flame of democracy will never go out as long as there's one candle in your hand.

So go for it. Never mind the odds. Remember what the progressives faced. Karl Rove isn't tougher than Mark Hanna was in his time, and a hundred years from now some historian will be wondering how it was that Norquist and Company got away with it as long as they did—how they waged war almost unopposed on the infrastructure of social justice, on the arrangements that make life fair, on the mutual rights and responsibilities that offer opportunity, civil liberties, and a decent standard of living to the least among us.

This is your story—the progressive story of America.

Pass it on.



Some implications of FCC's rule changes

By Chris Ledermuller
CWA Local 9400

When the Federal Communications Commission voted June 2 to lift or modify many media ownership rules, it assured the continuing consolidation of the means by which Americans get their news, watch their government and understand the world around them. This development has deep implications for a democratic society, and much has been written and said about the FCC's decision from that perspective.

But the new ownership rules have equally dramatic implications for the workplace and how our jobs will be structured, requiring TNG-CWA members to be more vigilant than ever. For example, the relaxed ownership rules will result in greater pressure for media mergers—but for mergers to look good to shareholders, companies must either increase revenues or decrease expenses. And labor is the most expendable expense. Look for sweeping layoffs and fewer workers doing more for the same or less pay, such as reporters being required to shoot their own photographs and copy editors expected to design pages, as already seen at many smaller papers.

Even more dire is the possibility of the "vapor paper." Jeremy Rifkin, in his book "The Age of Access," describes how corporations in the new economy can generate products and profit without owning assets by subcontracting every facet of production. At newspapers, that concept could mean news-gathering by wires and freelancers, as well as by large chains sharing copy and "localizing" stories. Pagination could be performed

quickly and efficiently overseas, then e-mailed back to a small core of news editors.

Meanwhile, there's no reason production and press divisions couldn't be separate businesses, hired by several competing newspapers on an out-sourced basis. Advertising departments also could be spun-off, with ad reps delivering clients to multiple media outlets. Publishers combining these independent elements could put out a daily newspaper with minimal overhead and Joe Q. Reader none the wiser.

The convergence of broadcast and print media poses its own set of problems. Broadcast media have "revitalized" their news divisions by borrowing tricks of the trade from the entertainment and advertising industries. Television news stories these days are structured around movie formats: hook viewers with a suspenseful crime as the lead, season with punchy visuals, close with a "happy ending" human-interest story. Moreover, broadcast news media have replaced journalists with celebrities, who can be pushed as brands. Expect more of the same when newspaper chains marry broadcast conglomerates, with reporters prodded to lure readers by making stories more entertaining as well as getting parked before a camera.

Sound gloomy? The FCC's rule changes make such an outcome more likely—unless we start paying attention. But what can the Guild do?

On the representation end, the Guild must strengthen job security and division-of-labor language in existing contracts. Increased severance pay, longer recall periods and job transfer programs would hedge against workforce reductions by making lay-

offs financially unattractive. Strong job-security protections would make companies think twice about mergers and acquisitions, because consolidations build up large debt loads and make share values less attractive to investors. On the other hand, if media companies persist in boasting that convergence helps profits, the unions should demand a larger share for salaries, benefits and improved equipment.

While large-scale media mergers usually harm workers, small newspaper-broadcast crossovers may help our members and smooth out issues at the bargaining table. Rank-and-file members at the local level should be surveyed to see if they support convergence (they may) and what contract provisions growing out of consolidation would serve their interests, such as television exposure. Otherwise, TNG-CWA should demand strong restrictions against broadcast influences that would degrade the working environment or the quality of our work.

On the organizing end, the Guild should focus on the larger newspaper chains, as they are the ones most likely to merge with broadcast giants. These are the corporations with the deepest pockets and can easily afford to stay profitable with unionized workers. And while the backbone of the Guild has been editorial employees, the union sends a powerful message if it represents advertising staff, since these are a newspaper's real revenue generators. TNG-CWA has more than a hundred unionized editorial departments in North America, yet only half that number in advertising divisions. By threatening to cut off advertising in a strike, the union is in a stronger position during bargaining and management would

have trouble printing a paper that lost money, if it even chose to print at all.

On the political front, unions have to remember that Big Media has more money and will always be able to outspend them, so the key to effective opposition is through alliances. Media consolidation has galvanized individuals and interest groups of every possible political persuasion, including such conservative organizations as the National Rifle Association, Parents Television Council and the Media Research Center. By allying with such organizations, labor could more effectively influence lawmakers to oppose the FCC's actions.

The Guild also can offer another line of defense to the anti-consolidation movement through the "voice" provision in the Model Contract, which seeks Guild representation on editorial boards or at news conferences. Guild locals should give a high priority to incorporating this language into their contracts, gaining the leverage to represent the anti-consolidation point of view. Such representation also could be used to demand that a percentage of news hole be required to cover local events.

A political organization of unions and nonprofit groups united against the media titans has the most potential for success, because such a coalition would be mutually beneficial to all groups. And by linking up with community groups to preserve a diversity of media voices, TNG-CWA would be more likely to build support for its own organizing efforts.

[Chris Ledermuller is a union steward and design clerk at the Press-Telegram in Long Beach, Calif.]

Fighting back in defense of Rights @ Work

[As the right-wing attack on families and working people gathers strength, slowed only intermittently by the confused response of a rudderless Democratic minority, TNG and CWA locals have been asked to take a public stance by adopting Rights @ Work resolutions. To date, five TNG-CWA locals have done so—including Northeast Ohio, Denver, Pittsburgh, Washington-Baltimore and Buffalo—and more are expected to follow suit prior to the sector conference.

Here, as an example, is the resolution passed by the Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild Executive Council at its June 10 meeting.]

Fewer than 9% of private sector workers and less than 37% of public workers are covered by collective bargaining agreements in the United States. This does not have to be. In Canada it is 30%, in Germany 60% and in Great Britain 26%.

The preamble of the National Labor Relations Act refers to collective bargaining as a public good. A public good means that it's more expensive to have clean water than dirty water, but that as a society we have decided that it is worth the price. There is some cost to collective bargaining, but we can't have a democracy without it. You can't have a large middle class without it. Increasingly, you can't have health care coverage or a defined pension without it. Represented workers earn 26% more, are 50% more likely to have health care coverage, and 300% more likely to be covered by a defined pension.

Labor contracts in this country cannot be for the protection of the rich and famous only, for CEOs and sports players. Individual workers do not have the ability to negotiate labor contracts and must have collective bargaining rights to meet the power of corporations. The Supreme Court under-

stood this in 1937 when they ruled that the National Labor Relations Act was indeed constitutional and stated in the decision:

"Long ago we stated the reason for labor organizations. We said that they were organized out of the necessities of the situation: that a single employee was helpless in dealing with an employer; that he was dependent ordinarily on his daily wage for the maintenance of himself and his family; that if the employer refused to pay him the wages he thought fair, he was nevertheless unable to leave the employ and resist arbitrary and unfair treatment; that union is essential to give laborers opportunity to deal on an equality with their employer."—Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Charles Evans Hughes

The collapse of collective bargaining in the United States is almost a secret in this country. It's time to bring this crisis out in the open, shed light on it and initiate a public debate on how to fix it. We must begin in our workplaces with our members.

Be it resolved:

1. That this local will implement a mem-

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION REACHES OUT TO U.S. WORKING FAMILIES



ber education program on collective bargaining rights that covers officers, stewards, activists and members.

2. That we will continue to make the connection between our bargaining and organizing rights at our employers, recognizing that our ability to bargain effectively depends largely on the percentage of employees we represent.

3. That in the tradition of Franklin D. Roosevelt when he said, "If I were a factory worker, the first thing I would do is join a union," this local will insist that elected offi-

cials in the Washington and Baltimore metropolitan areas sign on publicly in support of collective bargaining and to cast their votes in favor of workers' rights.

4. That we will support federal or state legislative initiatives to bring back collective bargaining rights, working with our allies and coalition partners—like central labor bodies and Jobs With Justice.

5. That we will participate in national actions aimed to bring attention to the collective bargaining crisis, particularly the NLRB.

LOOKING AHEAD

These days, it's all about control

By Bernie Lunzer, Secretary-Treasurer

Ask yourself this question: If democracy is good for America, shouldn't it be good for American newspapers?

If protecting people's rights, resolving disputes through systems of justice, encouraging broad discourse and promoting fairness build a better country, shouldn't they also build a better workplace? Especially in an industry that stakes its very existence on constitutional guarantees designed to protect the one from the many?

Indeed, there's a sound business argument to be made for such freedoms, too. Any newsroom whose reporters can legitimately challenge or question their editors will be sharper, quicker and more efficient—but reporters won't become actively engaged that way unless they're protected from arbitrary discharge, forced transfer or other unjust discipline. That's why the American Newspaper Guild was created, 69 years ago, and why job security clauses are such an important part of our collective bargaining agreements.

But business and philosophical logic have been turned on their heads in the Orwellian world of today's corporate media. Today's publishers believe that control, not democracy, is key to their success. Democracy is messy; dictators make the trains run on time. Far better for just a couple of key people to decide what you earn, what job you have—even how best to discipline you when you fail to understand, or concur, with their decisions.

To be sure, publishers have always tended to think that way: the Guild succeeded not because it showed them the error of their ways, but because it made compromise easier and less painful than arrogance. These days, however, the greater pain is coming from the other side of the ledger. As media corporations grow through mergers and acquisitions, so do shareholder pressures and Wall Street expectations. In the remorseless, escalating race after higher profits, our publishers are more determined than ever to control all aspects of their operations. And just about the only opposition they face comes from labor types like us, who persist in the mistaken belief that if democracy is so good for the country it must be good for the workplace, too.

We endorse the right of a reporter to challenge an editor without worrying about reprisal or forced transfer to a lesser paying job or different location. Wrong! In the brave new publishing world, an editor's news judgment is correct simply because he has been empowered by a publisher to make such judgments.

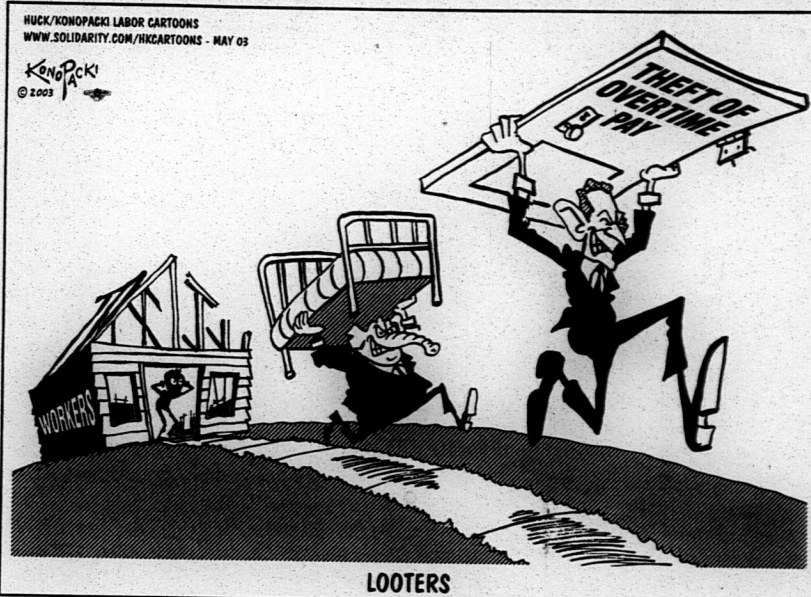
Some of us persist in thinking a reporter has the right to withhold her name when she is dissatisfied with the way her work has been handled. Wrong again! Giving a reporter that right also would interfere with a boss's ability to dictate outcomes.

A fair-minded individual might think that workers should be guaranteed a decent wage for doing a basic job—and perhaps get extra compensation for exceptional work. Unfortunately, a boss concerned primarily about control prefers the whip of discretionary pay: if he doesn't like what you do, no raise. Moreover, for discretionary pay to work really well it should be kept secret, so only you know the paltry amount of your worth. If you don't like it you can always leave, of course—in what passes for today's corporate understanding of "freedom."

For the current corporate way of thinking, this may well be the very best century for journalism. It's clear that corporate journalism has credibility with the public—just look at the ratings for Fox News—so more of the same must be even better. More control through more corporate dictatorship must mean more profitability. Perhaps, given enough time and effort, broader society will catch on and ultimately eradicate for once and for all those misguided notions of justice, fairness and democracy.

In the recent contract dispute at the Baltimore Sun, the Guild had the audacity to suggest that having corporate dictates rammed down our throats by Tribune Co. was not acceptable. Our members nevertheless accepted a contract that devalued them and their contributions. But after it was all over, company representatives condescendingly announced that we had gotten all worked up for nothing. That we should just get over it and move on. Go back to work. Get back to "quality journalism."

How nice of them to care.



Loss of overtime bad for family, journalism

[Excerpted from remarks prepared for a union-sponsored hearing June 30 at the Dept. of Labor; see story, page 3.]

My name is Tim O'Brien, and I am a reporter for a newspaper in Albany, N.Y. called the Times Union. The starting salary there is about \$28,000 a year, and at the top experience level, it goes up to the mid \$40,000s. There are three other daily newspapers in our region, and the salaries at each are considerably lower.

Clearly, these are working-class jobs. In fact, I asked one of my colleagues, a divorced father of two, if he had any vacation plans. He said: "I can barely afford to pay my bills. I can't afford to take the kids anywhere on vacation."

I myself drive an 11-year-old car, and my wife drives a 9-year-old car.

The little bit of extra money my colleagues and I make in overtime is usually spent. Because it is "extra" money, it gets spent on things like a new car, a roof on the house or a vacation with the kids. To eliminate our overtime would mean we would spend less, and that would hurt the economy. It also would give companies a disincentive for creating new jobs: why hire more people when you can make your current employees work longer hours at no extra pay?

But overtime isn't just about money, of

course. It's also about time—time we get to spend with our loved ones, our families.

Like many of my colleagues, I cover City Council and school board meetings, and when I do I start my workday at 2 in the afternoon and work until 10:30 or 11 at night. Recently, the school district I cover had a fiscal crisis and I was out several nights a week covering the meetings. I came home after one tough stretch to find a picture on my kitchen table, drawn by my 7-year-old daughter, depicting herself crying because daddy wasn't home to read with her before she went to bed, as we usually do.

If these regulations are changed as proposed, my daughter will have more opportunities to cry.

These proposed changes are not good for me, for my family or for the economy, and I don't think they are good for journalism, either. There is already tremendous pressure on reporters not to put in for overtime, to make side deals for comp time that never equal the hours worked. These changes would worsen the problem and drive many people, particularly people with children, to leave this profession that I so love.

If this is such a great idea, allow Congress to vote on these proposed changes. Let our elected officials who want to eliminate overtime stand up and be counted, so we can see who they are and remember their names.

LETTERS

To the Editor,

Not for the first time, I am puzzled that Andy Zipser feels so free to use The Guild Reporter as a personal journal. His "summer reading" commentary in the June 13 issue is the most recent example.

I don't agree with what I consider his somewhat skewed view of the labor movement and its ideological battles. And I don't agree that an unelected editor should set the political tone of a union publication.

Did Communists really bring democracy to unions? Well, perhaps if your historical source is Waiting for Lefty, the 1930s agit-prop play by Clifford Odets.

My first union card, dating back to 1941, was in the Fur & Leather Workers, whose president, Ben Gold, was openly a Communist. I got my \$18-a-week job with the help of an introduction from a Communist friend. That was \$3 more than I had been making, working full time and

going to school at night. But democratic unionism? Not exactly.

In unions and other organizations where Communists had influence, a high priority would be passing meaningless resolutions supporting the twists and turns of a Russia-first foreign policy, whether the slogan was "the Yanks are not coming" or, when the Soviet Union was attacked, "open up the second front."

In fact, the most democratic union I can recall was the International Typographical Union, with its permanent two-party system and a largely non-ideological agenda.

When I joined the Newspaper Guild in 1949, as a reporter on the Beaumont (Texas) Journal, I relied on The Guild Reporter for honest coverage, and I was not disappointed. I admired it also when I joined the staff of the Machinists Union, edited the then-weekly newspaper of the American Federation of Government Employees and, for more than

30 years, until my retirement in 1989, worked as a writer and editor with the AFL-CIO News.

But I'll choose my own summer reading, thank you.

—David L. Perlman, retired, Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild

[The commentary in question was a review of "Left Out: Reds and America's Industrial Unions," one of six book reviews published in the June issue; the editor is interested in hearing from other Guild members who lived through this particularly turbulent period of labor history.]

To the Editor,

Mark Twain remarked, "The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated," after hearing that his obituary had been published. Such is also the case with Communists in the U.S. labor movement, as described in your otherwise terrific book review of "Left Out: Reds

and America's Industrial Unions."

I, myself, am an open member of the Communist Party USA, and organizer in CWA Local 37083.

In Seattle alone, there are Communists in the Amalgamated Transit Union; American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; Graphic Communications International Union; Office and Professional Employees International Union; Service Employees International Union; and the United Food and Commercial Workers. These comrades of mine are in elected positions on executive boards, dues-paying members, retirees, work as organizers and, in one case, president of a local.

So, when you wrote, "... driving the final nail into the coffin of American labor Communist influence ..." that, too, was greatly exaggerated.

—Todd Tollefson, Member-Organizer WashTech/CWA 37083

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 pub-

lication of either attack or reply shall not be delayed longer than one issue.

Deadline: Friday before publication. (Next deadline: Aug. 8.) Letters and articles proposed for publication may be e-

mailed to the editor at azipser@cwa-union.org.

For address changes, see the box on page 2 or e-mail to duesinfo@cwa-union.org; sending such changes to the editor will merely delay processing.

Judging by NEXPO, all systems are go!

By Andy Zipser
Editor, The Guild Reporter

The national unemployment rate jumped to 6.4% last month, and publishers are still wailing about the hard times they're facing—but judging by the turnout and enthusiasm at the newspaper industry's annual trade show and convention, the economic tide has turned.

NEXPO attendance the past couple of years was dismal, the overall mood one of desperation. Turnout for this year's show, on the other hand, was up nearly 18% over 2002. And while the Las Vegas equipment extravaganza, held June 16-19, got a boost from being combined with the so-called SuperConference, also sponsored annually by the Newspaper Association of America, the atmosphere clearly was upbeat.

Several dozen manufacturers

chose this for their first NEXPO appearance, while traditional vendors like Goss and Adobe had bigger and more extravagantly outfitted "booths"—some running as much as 2,000 square feet—than in the recent past. And with good reason: the NAA reported that capital expenditures are poised to rebound by almost 10% this year, according to its annual survey. Computers will see the biggest gains, with hardware spending projected to increase in 2003 by 49.7% over 2002, while software will jump 45.4%.

(Capital spending this year may well equal newsroom payrolls. Equipment purchases, averaging \$25,828 per thousand circulation in 2002, are projected to increase this year to \$28,333. The industry rule of thumb for daily newsroom staffing, meanwhile, is one employee per thousand circulation.)

If any one trend emerged from all the exhibits and workshops, it

was the continued compression and blending of formerly distinct tasks and processes, eliminating some jobs while making others more complex. Computer-to-plate technology refinements continue; pressrooms and mailrooms are becoming so intertwined it's hard to tell them apart, hurtling down "the long road to total systems integration," in the words of Randy Woods, a writer for the convention-produced newsletter TechNews.

But it's not just the production end of the business that is being streamlined. In addition to ever larger multitasking demands—reporters given cameras, as well as being asked to write for the web and broadcast media—newswriters increasingly may expect to be working in a "virtual office": Sysprise Technologies, for example, demonstrated its continued development of handheld PDAs for reporters, enabling them to communicate with their editors, conduct internet searches and do all their writing in the field.

Meanwhile, media convergence and newspaper clustering—usually accompanied by further workforce reductions—already are transforming newsroom and sales cultures. For example, explained Jerry Trautman, Cox director of information technology, the newspapers in his chain are learning to see themselves as more than just individual publications. "There's a collaborative environment that Cox has evolved into," he said, "a culture of sharing."

"Collaboration" and "sharing" are high-concept ways of describing a loss of editorial voices, as news stories and other editorial "products" are run in multiple publications and "repurposed" for other media. One of the hottest buzzwords these days, for example, is "metadata," a way of identifying and storing information so it can be retrieved and displayed automatically in various formats, from print publications to web sites to electronic editions of a newspaper. Equally trendy are references to XML, or Xtensible Markup



The two faces of NEXPO '03: shiny and expensive equipment, below left, and an atmosphere that seems to say "let the good times roll."

Language, an apparently ultimate means of digitizing information.

All this technospeak can make your head hurt, but NEXPO admittedly is all about technology, and technology's great promise is increased efficiency—and how can one object to that? Aren't we all in favor of greater efficiency? But as Peter Lundquist, director of online content for Gannett's newspapers, asked one of the panels, what does greater efficiency mean? Higher productivity—or a chance to reduce headcount? The panelists didn't answer, but Christopher Caldwell, of Morris Communications, stated the obvious on a different panel: reduced headcount is "a necessary evil," he observed, in the neutral tones of someone who doesn't expect to be among those shown the door.

If "necessary" is an overstatement, "economically justifiable" is at least defensible: all this gee-whiz machinery and software does cost money. "You have to be honest and up-front about this stuff," explained an honest and up-front Chris Feola, Belo's vice president for technology. "People who work for newspapers are pretty smart, and when new systems are brought in they know

there's got to be a return on investment. And the return on investment may be them."

Pretty smart people also tend to resist being technologically displaced—or, at best, having their work so commoditized and reduced to pat formulas that they might as well be cranking out soup can labels. So a considerable chunk of NEXPO's presenters' energy was devoted to the "cultural challenges" all innovators must surmount, usually chalked up to innate conservatism and a failure to reach for the stars.

Newspaper consultant Len Kubas, for example, wore a large badge with the words "We've always done it that way" within a red, slashed circle. Cox's Trautman lamented that people just aren't flexible enough to change as often as change is needed, doggone it. And Belo's Feola, having shared his insights on ROI, added: "It's important to realize there's no choice here. Either you're growing or you're dying, and trust me, the growing is better—even with the pain."

As always, though, the question is whose growth. And whose pain.



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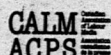
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DAYBOOK

Organizing Institute for Women,
July 25-27, Meany Center

Asian-American Journalists,
Aug. 13-16, San Diego

TNG-CWA Sector Conference,
Aug. 22-23, Chicago

CWA Annual Convention,
Aug. 25-26, Chicago

Nat'l Lesbian, Gay Journalists,
Sept. 11-14, Los Angeles

Pride at Work convention,
Sept. 18-21, Tyson Corner, VA

CWA Customer Svc./Mgt. Conf.,
Sept. 24-27, Fort Worth

CLUW 12th biennial convention,
Oct. 9-12, Seattle

Western District Council,
Oct. 25-26, Eugene, Ore.

New England District Council,
Nov. 1-2, site TBA

FROM THE MORGUE

Fifty years ago this month:

Millionaire statesman Averell Harriman is keynote speaker at the Broun Memorial dinner, held during its annual convention. . . . Guild members strike the Seattle Times over lack of progress in contract talks, shutting down the paper. . . . Knickerbocker (Albany, NY) News reporter Janet Scott is fired after refusing to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee about her knowledge of "communist infiltration" in the American Newspaper Guild.

Twenty-five years ago this month:

TNG's annual convention charges publishers with a concerted effort "to rip apart the very fabric" of their contracts, forcing "a series of defensive strikes for the first time in memory." . . . Convention delegates also reject proposals to cut costs by reducing the frequency of Guild Reporter publication to less than 22 times a year, calling the paper of "vital importance" to Guild members. . . . New York Times reporter Myron Farber is jailed for refusing to hand over his notes for use in a murder trial, prompting Guild complaints that shield laws are being ignored.

Ten years ago this month:

The Canadian Wire Service Guild wins TNG's biggest-ever election victory in a three-way contest, gaining representation for more than 2,000 CBC employees. . . . One day after locking out New York Post employees, ostensibly in an effort to force wage concessions, Rupert Murdoch wins the first-ever permanent FCC waiver of a media ban on crossownership of a television station and newspaper in the same market.

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