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UPAGRA protests outsourcing effort

Members of UPAGRA, the TNG-CWA local in Puerto Rico, took to the streets early this month to protest a lack of progress in contract negotiations at Univisión. The last contract expired more than a year ago, but agreement on a successor pact has foundered over issues of seniority and outsourcing.

According to local president Néstor Soto, Univisión management is attempting to abolish a contract clause that gives qualified employees a first shot at job vacancies. Univisión "wants to put the corporate policies that they have in the United States in Puerto Rico, and thereby fill job openings here with outsiders," Soto said—conceivably replacing Puerto Ricans with foreigners.

Soto further suggested that Univisión may be moving toward importing all of its programming, further eliminating Puerto Rican employment.

Although company representatives have claimed abolishing the provision would put Univisión on an equal footing with the island's other commercial television stations, Soto said contracts at both Telemundo and Televisión contain similar clauses. A similar disagreement has stymied negotiations at Univisión's radio division, where the contract expired Sept. 18.

Other obstacles to a new agreement include company demands to increase workloads for photo-journalists and reporters; for the right to change work schedules without UPAGRA's consent; and for the flexibility to assign unit work to managers.

Joining Guild members in picketing were members of the Union of Tronquistas, the Confederacy of Teachers, CWA and the United Steel Workers, which represents the radio employees.



'Off-shoring' now lapping at news jobs

By Andy Zipser
Editor, The Guild Reporter

Within a space of mere months, the threat of "off-shoring"—once of concern primarily to industrial workers—has transfixed white collar workers in every service sector. So perhaps it's not a surprise that this latest riff on getting the most work for the least money is reaching the newsroom, too.

To be sure, thus far only Reuters has sounded the off-shoring note. But if the explosive speed with which the phenomenon is ricocheting through the ranks of legal researchers, tax attorneys, software engineers and others is any indication, the piper is only warming up.

In an electronic posting early this month, the British-based news service said it will hire six journalists in Bangalore, India, to provide basic financial reporting on 3,000 small to medium-size compa-

nies—in the United States. The Indian reporters will work primarily from company press releases, earnings reports, filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission and Wall Street analysts' reports, all of which are available electronically.

Reuters characterized the off-shoring as a pilot project that would expand its coverage to companies it doesn't cover regularly now. But depending on how well the pilot works, the concept could be expanded in size and scope. "This could be a very exciting way to get more news on our wires in a more efficient way," enthused David Schlesinger, Reuters' global managing editor, in an interview with N.Y. Times reporter Jacques Steinberg.

Pulling Reuters to Bangalore are the virtues that have made that region in particular, and India in general, a lodestone for a growing roster of American companies.

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Alive and kicking — after 12 years of contract talks

By Steve Orr and Gary Craig
Newspaper Guild of Rochester

The last time the Newspaper Guild of Rochester ratified a contract, George Bush was president—George Herbert Walker Bush, that is. The U.S. had yet to go to war in Iraq once, much less twice, when that three-year contract was approved in September 1989.

Yes, our collective bargaining agreement at the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle expired in September 1992. Yes, that means we've been at the table bargaining with Gannett for 11-plus years. And yes, we know, our experience gives new meaning to the notion that "bargaining with Gannett" is an oxymoron.

But despite Gannett's attempts to bust our union with tactics that succeeded at other newspapers, we're still here. Any rumors of our demise have been greatly exaggerated.

For several decades our local and the company have had an odd bargaining pattern, with Gannett insisting on a leisurely approach. We meet for a few hours every couple of weeks, or every couple of months. Because there is no continuity from one session to the next, we spend a great deal of time re-acquainting ourselves with what's gone on before and trying to remember exactly where we left off.

This odd pattern aside, we have managed to resolve the majority of

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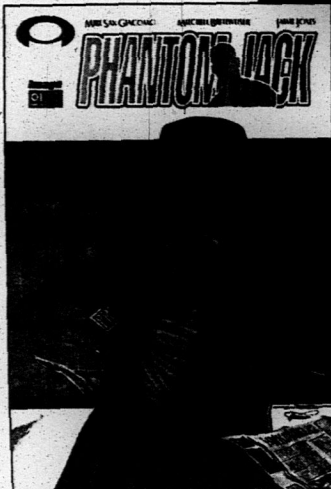
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Tom Ridge's biggest nightmare . . .

Who says reporters can't be creative? Guild member Michael San Giacomo, a general assignment reporter for the Cleveland Plain Dealer, began reviewing comics for Newhouse News Service a decade ago, then started writing a regular web feature. From there, it wasn't much of a leap to writing a comic itself.

"Phantom Jack," slated to hit the stands with its first issue next month, chronicles the guilt-driven exploits of a reporter who can make himself invisible. We leave it up to you to decide if this is an example of newsroom wish-fulfillment, but you can learn

more about San Giacomo and his alter ego at www.newsarama.com



The covers of the first two issues of "Phantom Jack," drawn by Mitchell Breitweiser.

Rochester defines 'patience'

Continued from page 1

the issues on the agenda, and have negotiated language that is favorable to our members, to the company, or to both parties. Still left, however, is the hard part—harsh new language on discipline, hours, overtime and the like that the company has had on the table for years. Since we're not inclined to give in and they're not inclined to withdraw, here we sit.

Since this process began, nearly a dozen years ago, we've seen the evening Times-Union shut down. We're on our fourth publisher since the last contract was ratified. (Gannett publishers apparently have shorter term limits than do our country's presidents.) We've seen waves of reporters, photographers, copy editors and artists come and go, with many of our talented brethren choosing to leave the field altogether because of Gannett's incessant emphasis for short-term profits over quality journalism and employee morale.

Although our local was founded nearly 70 years ago and still represents approximately 100 newsroom employees, we've long been hobbled by having an open shop and no dues check-off. On the

other hand, all the terms of our expired contract—except for arbitration rights—remain in force, providing us with job protection provisions as well as such standard benefits as health insurance, pension, sick leave and vacation.

Against this backdrop, Gannett continues resorting to the tactics that have worked for it elsewhere. It withholds the company's 401(k) retirement plan from represented members, hoping to create enough in-house animus to divide the union. It refuses to compromise on key issues, even resisting significant Guild concessions. It once or twice has tried to foster in-house opposition to the union, although its last effort was so anemic it probably bolstered our support instead of weakening it.

And the company's storied hypocrisy is always evident at the bargaining table.

Gannett maintains it wants to recruit the best and brightest, yet its bargaining team openly boasts of keeping contractual salary minimums among the nation's lowest, at \$304 for beginning reporters and \$419 at top of scale. These figures bear no resemblance to reality—average starting pay for reporters, artists, photographers or copy editors with little experience

is closer to \$600, while experienced news staffers might start at \$750 to \$800 or more—but the low minimums do make the union look bad.

Gannett portrays itself as a wonderful workplace for working mothers. Yet we've had to fend off an effort to cut back on maternity leave for new mothers.

Gannett stresses that it's a diverse workplace, yet it wasn't until this month that it finally agreed to include sexual preference in the contract's non-discrimination clause. And Gannett took that step not because it was the right thing to do, but solely because New York state recently prohibited discrimination against gays and lesbians.

Within the Guild, however, we know what working conditions would be like were we to surrender our contractual protections. And as our staff shrinks, as is happening across the newspaper industry, our newsroom colleagues realize how many more unreasonable demands would be placed on them if left to the whims of Gannett management. That's why, even after all these years, our ranks are again getting more energized.

Bottom line? The Rochester Guild is still here, still active and now is even growing. And we'll keep on fighting for as long it takes.

Steve Orr has been president of the Rochester Newspaper Guild since 1988; Gary Craig has been local secretary since 1999.

Correction

An article in the January Guild Reporter erroneously stated that the Worcester Telegram & Gazette was owned by Hearst before it was sold to The New York Times. It was in fact owned by the San Francisco Chronicle, which was eventually sold to Hearst—but not before the Worcester paper changed hands.

Thanks to several alert readers who brought this to our attention.

Guild briefs . . .

Environmental staff joins Twin Cities

Employees of Clean Water Action, a national environmental group based in the Twin Cities, voted 28 to 13 on Feb. 9 for representation by the Minnesota Newspaper Guild. Key issues prompting the organizing drive were wages—traditionally low at such non-profit groups—and gaining a voice at work.

CBC backing off retirement policy

The Canadian Broadcasting Corp. has announced it will ease its mandatory retirement policy, which requires most employees to leave at the end of the month in which they turn 65. Some provinces have already struck down similar provisions as discriminatory, and the Canadian Media Guild filed a grievance several months ago on behalf of Toronto employee Don Nelson, who was forced to retire against his wishes. If all goes according to plan, mandatory retirement will be "retired" sometime this fall.

Detroit unit OK's 3-year contract

The Detroit Newspaper Guild and four other unions of the Metro Council of Newspaper Unions agreed on a new, three-year contract at Independent Newspapers, Inc. Ratified by Guild members Jan. 18, the agreement includes a lump-sum bonus of 2.8%, a 2.5% raise next January minus pension diversions and a 2.7% raise the following January, also minus pension diversions. The company's pension contribution will increase to \$30 a week this year, \$31 in 2005 and \$32 in 2006.

Canadians plan transition confab

Now that the "one big union" campaign at the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. has been resolved in the Guild's favor, the Canadian Media Guild is planning a transition conference April 2-4 in Ottawa to figure out how best to meet the needs of its expanded membership. Delegates will be asked to bring ideas of what the "new" CMG should look like so it can better meet the needs of Guild members from different media, different languages and different regions.

AP pension plan to be scrutinized

The News Media Guild is seeking detailed information on the status of AP's pension plans, following public remarks by chief executive Tom Curley that the plans could be underfunded by as much as \$100 million and will require substantial contributions over the next several years. The company told NMG at least year's contract negotiations that it would need to make

contributions, but not at the level made public by Curley.

Seattle support for 2 newspapers

Trying to ensure that it isn't out of step with its members, the Pacific Northwest Guild recently polled them on their views regarding the local's fight to preserve the joint operating agreement between the Seattle Times and the Seattle Post-Intelligencer. In response to the question, "Do you agree with the Guild's support of the Committee for a Two-Newspaper Town?" 66.2% replied, "yes," 20.8% replied "no." Thirteen percent were ambivalent or had no opinion.

NLRB accedes to Providence deal

As expected, the National Labor Relations Board notified the Providence Journal that the tentative contract it had negotiated with the Guild was acceptable as a settlement of all charges against the company. The NLRB decision freed the payment of retroactive pay and of a signing bonus, and means wages will go up 12.46% after raises for this and prior years are factored in. But watch out for the tax bite . . .

Guildsman named King humanitarian

Walter M. Brasch, a member of the Hazleton Newspaper Guild and a journalism professor at Bloomsburg University, has been awarded that school's 2004 Martin Luther King Jr. Distinguished Humanitarian Service Award. The presentation cited his extensive work for social justice, as well as his writings to promote democratic ideals of fairness, justice and respect for all people. Among the books Brasch has written is "With Just Cause: Unionization of the American Journalist."

Harrisburg picks Guild exec board

Members of the Harrisburg Newspaper Guild nominated the following officers without opposition at their most recent general meeting: John Luclew, executive vice president; Ellen Lyon, vice president; Andy Isaacs, secretary; and Janet S. Pickel, treasurer. Local President David DeKok was appointed by the executive committee Jan. 13 to fill a vacancy and will have to be nominated at the local's next general membership meeting.

Toledo Guild election results

Lillian Covarrubias has been re-elected president of the Toledo Newspaper Guild. Also elected were Cathie Brandman, vice president; Steve Murphy, secretary; and Jeffry Hojnack, treasurer.

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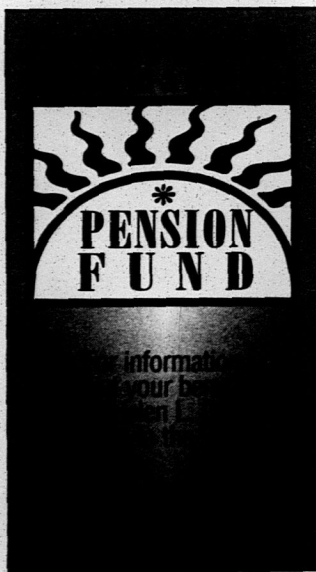
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Canadian police raid reporter's home, office

Nearly a dozen officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police swooped down Jan. 21 on the home of Ottawa Citizen reporter Juliet O'Neill, searching her house for more than five hours, downloading her computer hard drive and confiscating files and notebooks. A nearly simultaneous raid took place at the Citizen's city hall bureau, prompting charges of "police state" tactics from the newspaper's editor and by officials at CanWest Global, which owns the Citizen.

Police said they were looking for documents O'Neill may have used for a Nov. 8 story she wrote about Maher Arar, an Ottawa telecommunications engineer who was intercepted by U.S. officials as he was returning to Canada and deported to his native Syria. Arar was imprisoned and tortured in Damascus for 10 months, inflaming Canadian resentment toward the U.S. for its treatment of a Canadian citizen.

O'Neill's article referred to a leaked secret document that supposedly summarized Arar's confession, in which he told interrogators that he spent seven months in training with Afghanistan's mujahadeen in 1993. Arar, now back in Canada, has denied being a terrorist or being a member of al-Qaeda and said he

gave a false confession to end his torture.

O'Neill's work materials were seized on a search warrant issued under Section 4 of the Security of Information Act, which was passed after the Sept. 11 al-Qaeda attacks in the U.S. The section broadly prohibits distribution or unauthorized possession of secret government materials; a conviction under the law could result in a 14-year prison sentence. But since the secret document cited by O'Neill must have been leaked by the Mounties themselves, Canadian journalists have been incensed that the Mounties searched O'Neill's house and office in what is tantamount to an investigation of themselves.

Protests against the raids were filed by the Canadian Journalists for Free Expression and by TNG-CWA, deploring "this attack on press freedom and privacy." There has been no official response to the protests, an initial frenzy of media coverage has been followed by a news blackout on the issue and no charges have been filed against O'Neill.

"It was a big story for about four days... and then it just disappeared," said Arnold Amber, director of TNG Canada.

RFA to eliminate Cantonese service, blames budget cuts

The struggle by Washington, D.C.-based professional employees of Radio Free Asia for Guild representation has been an uphill struggle from the beginning.

Activist Xiaoxia Gong, a director of its Cantonese language service, was fired for alleged insubordination. RFA attorneys argued before the National Labor Relations Board that their employees were so lacking in English language skills they wouldn't be able to understand an NLRB ballot. And when the employees prevailed anyway, voting by an overwhelming margin to create a unit within the Washington-Baltimore Guild, RFA contract negotiators began a war of attrition at the bargaining table, refusing to yield on such basic items as union bulletin boards.

Earlier this month the struggle took another dark turn, as the taxpayer-supported agency announced it

will eliminate its Cantonese broadcasts. The cut means two of the unit's most active members will be out of a job, vice chair Hong Liu and Tanya Lau, both of whom are on the bargaining committee.

RFA bargainers told the Guild that the Cantonese service is the victim of cuts in the Bush administration's 2005 fiscal year budget. No date for ending the service has been announced, but the plug could be pulled any time before October. In response to Guild inquiries, RFA management said it couldn't tell right now if Cantonese service employees could be transferred to other positions within the service. The RFA has had a hiring freeze since December.

Because the RFA is legally prohibited from lobbying Congress to restore its funding, the Guild, CWA and the AFL-CIO have started exploring the possibility of intervening with Congress.

Thumbs down in St. Louis

The headline in the St. Louis Journalism Review said it all: "Post management tries to snooker Guild."

That's how members of the St. Louis Newspaper Guild saw it, as they overwhelmingly rejected a proposed four-year contract with

the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that included cumulative wage raises of up to 15.3% but took back some of that in higher health insurance premiums. But the 337-17 vote seemed more motivated by issues of job security than by finances.

In urging members to reject the

offer, the Guild bargaining committee pointed out that the proposal rolled back layoff protection; would require commission-sales staff to work overtime without compensation; would give the company carte blanche to transfer any employee to any other job in any department; would eliminate progressive discipline, allowing discharge of an employee on a first offense; and would allow the company unilaterally to establish policies on ethics and freelance work outside of business hours.

Guild members previously authorized a strike by an even wider margin, 353-15.



Northern smiles

Canadian Media Guild officials are all smiles after their recent representation victory over the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers (CEP) union. The win means CMG gains 1,800 members from CEP to represent all 6,000 employees of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation outside the province of Quebec. Shown, left to right, are Dan Oldfield, CMG senior staff representative; Kathy Viner, CMG staff representative; Arnold Amber, TNG Canada director; and Lise Lareau, CMG president.

Union version of 'man bites dog'

In a reversal of the usual sequence of events, it's the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. that has filed a grievance against the Canadian Media Guild instead of the other way around. The CBC's complaint? That continued use efforts by the Guild to distribute information to its members via personal e-mail violate the collective bargaining agreement.

An employer grievance is always rare, even though the grievance process is designed specifically to help unions and employers resolve disputes. The more typical course of action for most employers is to do whatever they want, leaving it up to a union to complain if the action violates a contract, the law or past practice.

CMG officials, expressing surprise at the turnabout, nevertheless welcomed the opportunity to discuss the broadcaster's complaint. "Until now, the CBC has been unwilling to seek solutions, preferring instead to try to prevent the Guild from communicating with its members," a CMG web site posting observed.

CBC blocked the Guild's e-mail access to its members during

the recent campaign in which employees were asked to pick between CMG and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers union. The Guild has argued all along, however, that it has both the right and the obligation to communicate with its members about workplace issues. And following the election, Guild officials were assured at a national grievance meeting that management would stop trying to block such e-mails.

The Guild, for its part, was responsive to CBC's concerns by sending e-mails directly to individual members and not via so-called "mass mailings." To date, CMG officials say, the CBC has not mentioned a single instance of Guild e-mails disrupting employees' regular work in any way.

Ironically, in announcing its grievance the CBC sent an e-mail to every one of its employees—including those in Quebec and Moncton who are not affected by the dispute. It also distributed its grievance announcement via two other messaging systems, Prolog and iNews, which the CBC has consistently said should never be used for distribution of this kind of material.

The International Labor Communications Association

Seeking a media activist to work in its Washington, D.C. office. Will coordinate web-site (ilcaonline.org), newsletter, education programs, grants and more. Should be knowledgeable about unions, workers, media reform and democracy. Salary \$40,000 range. Send letter and résumé to:

Martin Fishgold,
Search Committee, AFSCME Local 371,
817 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10003.

Local Newspaper Guild/Typographical Union Local 3702 is taking applications for a full-time organizer. Applicants must have organizing experience at all levels, from initial contact to house calls and a campaign. Experience organizing in the newspaper and communications industries preferred. Successful applicant will direct the local's organizing program and work closely with the local's organizing committee. Good pay and benefits.

Send application letter and résumé to:

Mike Sweeney, Executive Officer
Local Newspaper Guild/Typographical Union Local 3702
1000 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10003

Off-shoring: the jobs move. You don't

Continued from page 1

"It's a place where you can get people who understand English, understand financial statements, understand journalism and who are educated to a very high standard and eager to do this kind of work," Schlesinger explained to Steinberg.

Plus, he added, they work cheap.

Decades in the making, the recent explosion of outsourcing by American companies to cheap labor overseas is the long awaited payoff from the electronic revolution. The digitizing of all forms of information, the evolution of desktop computers and creation of a global grid of cable and satellite networks have effectively erased distance as a constraint on human activity—as long as that activity can be expressed in bits and bytes. Now, any jobs requiring symbol manipulation can be shipped to wherever they can be done most cheaply—but human beings, still stubbornly formed of molecules much bigger than electrons, generally stay put.

Much of this revolution in human labor was made possible by data processors and computer programmers who rode the high tech wave of the 'Nineties, oblivious to the implications of what they were crafting. But since the bursting of the dot.com bubble four years ago, more than 800,000 high tech jobs have been lost nationwide. Many, it turns out, went overseas—and the pace is quickening. Dell already has 5,500 customer and

tech support workers in India. Siemens is moving most of its 15,000 software programming jobs from Europe and the U.S. to India, China and eastern Europe. Jobs also are being off-shored at an accelerating pace by IBM, Boeing, Microsoft, Kodak and other iconic American trademarks.

And it's not just high tech jobs that are going abroad. This year, at least 100,000 federal and state tax returns will be prepared in India, according to technology consulting firm Boomer Consulting. Literally dozens of states have outsourced taxpayer-funded work to foreign workers, arguing that they need to save money at a time when tax revenues are dwindling and budget deficits loom. But aside from complaints that tax dollars should not be used to drain jobs away from taxpayers, critics worry that all kinds of sensitive private information—in tax returns as well as state forms—is making its way overseas without adequate safeguards, increasing the possibility of identity theft.

A different wrinkle on the off-shoring phenomenon was reported by the Asian Times, which observed that India is emerging as a destination of choice for surgery patients: more than 60,000 foreign patients from 34 countries have been treated in the past decade. Cardiac surgery, for example, costs approximately \$35,000, or about one-fifth the cost in the U.S., and is being performed with a 98.5% success rate. Breast implants in Thailand are going for as little as



\$1,260, compared with a median U.S. price of \$5,000.

Fifteen global car makers have set up car design offices in India. Fashion design is growing rapidly in India and Vietnam. India also is joining Japan, Taiwan and Korea as a key location for post-production of U.S. movies, and American law firms are using Indian, Korean and other overseas lawyers for relatively routine work, such as patent prosecution, legal research and contract drafting.

Economists view such developments with equanimity—one reason, perhaps, they have been identified as practitioners of "the dismal science." Indeed, Greg Mankiw, chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisors, raised hackles earlier this month when he dismissed the rising tide of off-shoring as "simply the latest manifestation of free trade" and therefore to be applauded as "generally a positive contribution to prosperity." Doubtless the same argument could be made on behalf of slavery, child labor and other odious practices, but even in purely economic terms the outflow of good-paying jobs is unhealthy. Joblessness continues weighing down the American economy, while the rising trade imbalance threatens to end in a cataclysmic run on the dollar.

The problem is becoming severe enough that state and federal legislators have introduced a raft of remedial bills. The Jobs for America Act, introduced Feb. 12 in the U.S. Senate, would require companies to give three months' notice to their workers and to the Dept. of Labor any time they plan to move 15 or more jobs overseas. Senator John Kerry has introduced a bill that would require foreign-based call center employees to identify their location to U.S. callers. The Truthfulness, Responsibility and Accountability in Contracting Act of 2003, better known as the TRAC Act, was introduced in the Senate last year to halt outsourcing by the entire federal government.

Similar bills have been introduced in at least a dozen state houses coast to coast, including some of the staunchest "right to work" states. South Carolina's House Speaker, for example, introduced a restrictive bill in January after learning that food stamp recipients in 40 states—including his own—rely on help desks in India. But such initiatives are being countered by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other business groups, and a new coalition of technology, banking and insurance groups was being organized as The Guild Reporter went

to press specifically to fight legislative initiatives.

Shareholders also are getting into the act. The CWA Pension Fund, for example, submitted a proxy proposal asking Sprint's board of directors to study how sending jobs overseas will affect the company's brand name and reputation. Although Sprint management tried to keep the proposal off the April 20 ballot, the Securities and Exchange Commission overruled it. Sprint last summer signed outsourcing contracts with IBM Global Services and EDS for hundreds of information technology jobs that are expected to go overseas.

Thus far, however, the momentum is all with the off-shoring movement, not just in numbers but in the growing diversity of jobs that can be shipped abroad. Reuters' hiring of six Indian journalists is only a tiny piece of its Bangalore operation, where it is recruiting up to 600 employees to process data on equities, fixed income, foreign exchange and various commodities. Justin Abel, global head of the company's data operations, has acknowledged that the Indian center will result in the shifting of 150 jobs from Reuters' U.S. and European facilities—but doing so, he added, will give Reuters a 60% cost advantage.

Three meetings later, a contract

By Tom Hiltz
Newspaper Guild of Greater Boston

Wrapping up the fastest settlement in memory, members of the Herald News unit of The Newspaper Guild of Greater Boston voted Jan. 15 to ratify a new contract by a margin of 65 to 8.

The three-year agreement raises all pay rates 2% at signing and 2% in each of the two succeeding years. Minor language changes clarify existing paid sick-leave provisions and the number of allowable management-written editorials, and a side letter commits the employer and union to work together to ensure that the 8-of-10 membership maintenance provision is enforced.

"We really feel good about this," observed Unit Chair Cheryl Rebello. "The committee got the support of the membership to do the right thing for the greatest number of members. I'm proud of them all."

Preparation for negotiations began two months before the October 1, 2003 expiration date, when a poll revealed that the members' chief concern was a loss of wage increases during protracted bargaining. The prior round of bargaining lasted almost five years, during which there were no raises.

"It just didn't make sense to us

to lose \$2,000 in wages while negotiating a paltry \$200 signing bonus," said bargaining committee member Sylvia Machado.

Members also felt that management perceived the Guild to be weak because of the large number of non-members. As part of a mobilization plan, a new member drive began with a goal of signing as many new members as possible and submitting the authorization forms to the employer all at once. In six weeks, volunteers signed 32 new members, resulting in a 40% increase in total membership.

Support was universal for a simple initial proposal, so the Guild offered to extend the existing contract for three years: no changes were proposed other than increases to all pay scales. The company committee was stunned, with one of its members describing the proposal as the "simplest and most sensible" he had seen in his 40 years of dealing with newspaper unions.

The company nonetheless came up with a short wish-list at the second meeting, as did the Guild. The parties reached tentative agreement in the third meeting.

The Herald News is located in Fall River, Massachusetts and is owned by the Journal Register Company.

Pittsburgh OKs concessions

Responding to a hardship plea from Block Communications, owners of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette since 1993, members of the Pittsburgh Newspaper Guild voted Feb. 23 to approve a series of mid-contract concessions. The give-backs are designed to help the company avoid a projected \$6.5 million loss this year.

The Pittsburgh Guild represents more than 260 editorial workers at the newspaper. Approximately 850 workers represented by nine other unions approved the same givebacks a day earlier, including loss of a \$10-a-week raise that was scheduled to start in July, a \$10 increase in prescription drug co-payments and loss of a week's vacation in 2005, saving money on overtime costs.

Although the Guild contract runs through 2006, Post-Gazette managers said they needed the givebacks because of declining revenue and spiraling health-care

costs. An audit of the Post-Gazette's financial records convinced Guild leaders that some concessions were justified, although not as much as the company's initial request, which called for a 10% across-the-board pay cut and a second proposal for monthly contributions for health care coverage.

A generally satisfactory relationship with management was a significant factor in how union members voted. Block Communications "treated us well since they bought the newspaper, so we have an obligation to help them if they request it," commented Joseph Molinero, president of Teamsters Local 211 and co-chairman of the Unity Council, made up of all 10 of the newspaper's unions.

Guild members at Block's other major property, the Toledo Blade, agreed a few months ago to a three-year wage freeze and higher health deductibles, also for economic reasons.

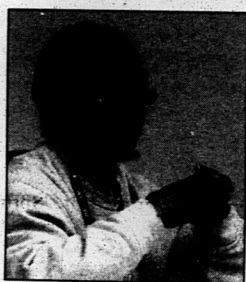


The most recent crop of new local officers poses for the traditional group portrait, at left. Participants shown below included Jordan Malik of Providence, Montreal local members Muriel Lemenu and Charles Shannon, and Bill Weyandt of Minnesota. Geeta Hanjra of Manchester is center page; Richard Thompson's picture is below his byline.

All photos by Bill Burke, Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild.

Guild's 'boot camp' proves a winner

By Richard Thompson
Memphis Newspaper Guild



Feb. 13-16 at the George Meany Center in Silver Spring, MD.

"I'm in over my head."

Mark Watson, the Memphis local's president, asked (OK: directed) me to attend after hearing my "the-company-will-never-know-what-freakin'-hit-'em" pitch for a mobilizing campaign. That little outburst had come a few weeks earlier, when we both attended Convergence II, the strategic brainstorming conference TNG-CWA held just outside Baltimore. Mark was so impressed he appointed me to develop the strategy. Then he decided I needed to go to the residential seminar to learn how to do that.

Aside from being a novice at this, I was reluctant to return to Maryland because a snowstorm had converged on the area as I left Convergence. I barely got out of Baltimore that Sunday, only to get stranded overnight in Charlotte, North Carolina. The next day I had to take a flight to Nashville, get a rental car and drive nearly 3 hours to Memphis.

"You want me to go back?" I asked, incredulous.

Yes, he did. The the experience would be invaluable not just for me, he explained, but for the local itself because we're in contract negotiations with The Commercial Appeal, which is owned by Scripps.

So I returned, along with Sherrye Neal, who works in the Appeal's business office. We're both first-timers on the bargaining team. And guess what? Mark was right.

LET ME PAINT a picture: a three-day "seminar," so-called because it had "sessions." But it's more accurate to describe the program as an information-intensive "boot camp," held at a tucked-away winter respite for a throng of Canada Geese.

Excluding Friday, when the seminar

introduction didn't start until 7 p.m., it was boot camp-esque.

You rose early, before 8 a.m., because breakfast only lasted an hour. (Sorry, that's early for someone who hibernates on the weekends. I never made it to breakfast.) Sessions started at 9 a.m. From there, it was a three-hour sprint of information until lunch, which lasted only an hour. Then, another four hours of information. (In all fairness, there were sprinkles of five-, 10- and 20-minute breaks within and between sessions.) Finally, an hour for dinner.

Two-and-a-half full days of this.

Not to mention that you get a seminar bag so loaded with material that the weight of what Guild work requires becomes all too clear.

TO BE HONEST, I wasn't sure if I was strong enough to handle the weight, the responsibility, of Guild work before I attended the seminar. Or smart enough, for that matter. I could not have told you the difference between an organizing drive and a mobilization. Family Leave Act? Huh? Weingarten Statement? Isn't that an alternative rock band in Seattle? (And chances are I even spelled "Weingarten" wrong.) See, I had/have a lot to learn. But I wasn't alone; there were 30 other participants who were more or less in the same boat.

The seminars covered mobilization, organizing, the Family Medical Leave Act, bargaining strategy, grievances, arbitration, contract language, communications and more.

With each session I grew more exhausted because some speakers held your attention better than others; nevertheless, I grew in knowledge.

FOR ME, THE CROWNING "I-can-do-this" moment hit in the collective bargaining exercise on that Sunday. Participants were split into groups, and then each group was subdivided into a bargaining team and management. We were all employees of the Daily

Avenger, a 60,000-circ. daily, where vacation time was just a memory among the overworked staff. The bargaining team's mission: get better vacation benefits.

As a member of the union bargaining team, I was joined by John Martins of Hudson County, Amelia Robinson of Dayton, Muriel Lemenu of Montreal, Jordan Malik of Providence and TNG Staffer Debbie Thomas, who serve as our guide. The management side of the table, guided by TNG-CWA President Linda Foley, included Michael Hill of Washington-Baltimore, Troy Melhus of Minnesota and Michael McNessor of Albany, all of whom got really into character. In fact, we all did.

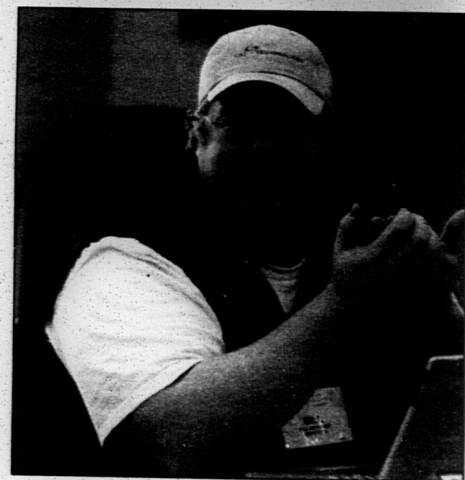
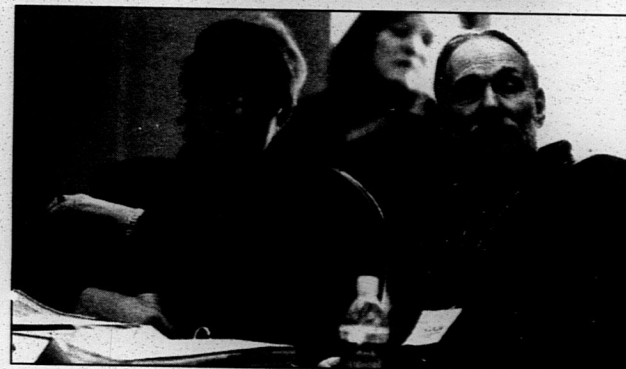
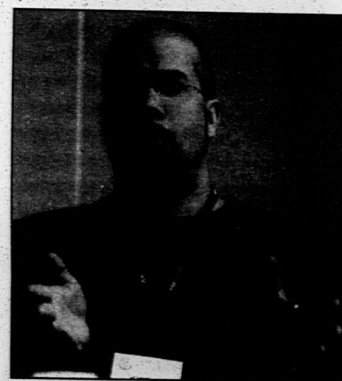
As negotiations continued, caucus after caucus, swapping and debating proposals, I felt a strong obligation to get better benefits for the Avenger staff. Bolstered by the input and work of the team, something

just clicked and all my trepidations about bargaining faded away. We all came away with some valuable lessons.

Chief lesson: Never throw your proposed changes into management's face and say "Here. We're going to lunch." Bad, bad, bad move. That's what made Michael McNessor get into character; he felt disrespected—and rightfully so. From that point on, the process was more professional. (Some tentative agreements were reached, by the way.)

I'M NO LONGER in over my head. In fact, thanks to the TNG-CWA staff, who were patient, attentive and forthcoming, I have the know-how to go forward. And most importantly, I know that I'm not alone. Remember that seminar bag I mentioned? Well, it's so chock-full of how-to information and tips that anyone reading it could run a local, start an organizing drive, mobilize workers and get a good contract.

Indeed, there's so much information that



I suggested TNG-CWA put a lot of it on a CD. My rationale: the sheer volume of paper might intimidate new officers, who are already nervous about the weight of their responsibilities.

Yet, now that I think about it, that's crazy.

I mean, if paper intimidates you... well, you need more help than this seminar. Brothers and sisters, to that I say, Amen.

News round-up

Serve your country, forget overtime

The truly cynical nature of proposed changes in overtime rules—promoted by the White House as benefiting workers who now are denied overtime pay—has been made more evident by several defense companies eager to cash in on a loophole affecting former service men and women. Writing to the Department of Labor, Boeing and others voiced support for a change allowing employers to withhold overtime pay from some workers who were trained in the military. The new rules are expected to take effect next month.

Jobless benefits renewed—and needed

By a 227-179 vote, the Republican-run House belatedly approved a 6-month reinstatement of federal jobless benefits, weeks after the benefits had expired. More than 375,000 people had exhausted their state jobless benefits before the Feb. 4 vote, leaving them without any income. Meanwhile, any economic upswing is unlikely to ease job prospects in the newspaper industry, according to the February issue of trade journal *Presstime*. "With the economy improving and newspaper advertising on the rebound, one would speculate that media companies might look to rebuild the workforce that was trimmed over the past few years. Wrong," it asserts, quoting several publishers' plans to continue searching for "efficiencies."

CWA contributes to UFCW workers

The CWA is contributing \$125,000 to the United Food and Commercial Workers, while IUE-CWA is kicking in an additional \$100,000. CWA Local 9400 is chipping in \$10,000 and six other California locals are contributing a percentage of their dues each month. The donations are helping support as many as 70,000 supermarket workers who are on strike or have been locked-out by Safeway, Koger's and Albertsons in southern California; the supermarket chains are demanding that employees accept a much higher share of their health care costs.

Taxpayers foot Wal-Mart's worker costs

Low wages and benefits for Wal-Mart workers mean American taxpayers spend hundreds of millions of dollars each year for housing, medical, child care and other costs for the retailer's employees, according to a report issued this month by Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.). A hypothetical Wal-Mart store employing 200 people, the report calculated, puts taxpayers on the hook for \$167,000 in tax credits, deductions, and vouchers for housing, \$108,000 in children's health insurance and \$36,000 for free and reduced-cost lunches, among other subsidies. Miller's report was prepared partly in response to the ongoing grocery strikes and lockouts, in which supermarket chains are claiming they have to slash health benefits to compete with Wal-Mart. The report is available online at <http://edworkforce.house.gov/democrats/WALMARTREPORT.pdf>

San Antonio latest front in media war

The battle to counter media consolidation continues, most recently with the second in a series of six Federal Communications Commission forums across the U.S. on localism in broadcasting. Approximately 500 San Antonio residents turned out Jan. 28 to hear and address FCC commissioners on the issue, with many declaring that "the airwaves belong to the people." TNG-CWA President Linda Foley was among the presenters at a press conference at the forum, which was held to release an AFL-CIO-commissioned report on radio behemoth Clear Channel Communications.

Spanish-language stylebook released

The National Association of Hispanic Journalists has released its first stylebook for Spanish-language journalists in the United States. A guide on grammar and other style questions in Spanish news reporting, *Manual de Estilo* also addresses common problems with intonation and pronunciation on the air, as well as the tricky craft of translating stock market terms and government jargon. To purchase a copy of the book for \$14.95 or for more information, visit the NAHJ at www.nahj.org.

One more step toward consolidation

Knight Ridder has taken another significant step toward corporate consolidation by forming a national retail advertising team, operating out of corporate headquarters in San Jose, as well as at its various properties. The 11-member team will pitch the chain's newspapers as a "group buy" primarily to national retail and auto advertisers, such as Target, Sears, Ford and General Motors. Tribune and Gannett already use the approach, which tends to undercut sales prospects for locally based account managers.

CLUW launches HIV-info web site

The Coalition of Labor Union Women, an AFL-CIO constituency group, has launched Labor Cares, a new website designed to raise awareness and to educate union members about HIV/AIDS. The site contains facts and news about HIV/AIDS and provides resources for unions to help combat the disease; it may be seen at www.laborcares.org.

Journalistic casualties of war keep mounting

Thirty months after four commandeered airliners shocked the American public by killing thousands, journalists continue dying in an open-ended, ill-defined "war" and their friends keep calling—with scant success—for some kind of accounting.

Reuters repeatedly has demanded a thorough investigation of the 72-hour detention and interrogation of two of its journalists and their driver by U.S. troops in Iraq, but has had scant response. A Feb. 3 letter from Reuters' global managing editor to the U.S. Defense Department called government investigations to date "woefully inadequate," noting that none of the Reuters employees had been interviewed.

Military officials, while denying that the Reuters employees were tortured, conceded they were "purposefully put under stress," including sleep deprivation. The military has contended that "enemy personnel posing as media" had fired on U.S. troops, although the Reuters letter asserts that "there is no credible evidence" to support the claim.

Separately, Mariane Pearl, widow of a Wall Street Journal reporter who was beheaded two years ago by Islamic terrorists in Pakistan, wrote earlier this month in *Salon.com* that she feels abandoned by her former

husband's employer. "The Wall Street Journal's interest has seemed to wane," she wrote. "It remained remarkably dedicated until we found out for sure, nearly a month after his kidnapping, that Danny had died."

Although Pakistan captured and tried four men accused of Pearl's kidnapping and murder, his widow complained that the Journal had not sent anyone to represent him at the trial and recompensed her for only a small portion of her Pakistani attorney's fees. Last May, she added, a Dow Jones lawyer "leveled with me. . . . 'It is your case, not ours,' the lawyer eventually told me."

Since then, the widow added, she's had to rely on Yahoo news alerts for updates on cases involving her husband, such as the Feb. 17 arrest of yet another militant suspected of involvement in Danny Pearl's murder. "From the Journal," she wrote, "all I've heard is the sound I've learned to dread the most: silence."

Meanwhile, the International Federation of Journalists has called for greater attention to safety training for Iraqi journalists after nine journalists were killed in terrorist bombings earlier this month. The bombers struck at the offices of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), killing 109 people in all.

New union reporting rules affirmed after all, start July

By Mark Gruenberg, Staff Writer
Press Associates, Inc.

Rejecting AFL-CIO arguments, U.S. District Judge Gladys Kessler upheld the new, onerous union reporting rule the Bush regime created, but delayed its implementation until at least July 1.

In her 57-page decision Jan. 23, Kessler said the rule fell within the limits of the 1959 GOP-written Taft-Hartley Act, but that Bush Labor Secretary Elaine Chao had acted arbitrarily and capriciously by ordering a March 1 effective date.

That date didn't give the 4,778 unions affected enough time to retrain their workers and redo their accounting systems to comply, Kessler said. She added that the effective date could be postponed even later than July 1 if the Labor Department doesn't produce in a timely way its promised free software to help unions meet their expanded obligations.

As a practical matter, Kessler further added, since most unions' fiscal years have already started, the first reports under the new rule are due March 31, 2005.

Kessler issued a court order halting the new rule Dec. 31, saying the AFL-CIO had a reasonable case. The AFL-CIO was arguing the rule would cost its member unions more than \$700 million to implement,

would impose huge personnel burdens and would detract unions from their prime purpose of representing their members.

Kessler's more recent decision contends the federation's argument was unconvincing. "The court concludes the rule is reasonable, adequately explained and not arbitrary or capricious," she wrote.

Chao hailed Kessler's decision as giving "members access to meaningful information about their union's fiscal health, management and priorities." The AFL-CIO had no immediate comment.

The new rule requires unions and other labor groups—such as central labor councils, state federations and trusts—with annual receipts of at least \$250,000 to identify all spending of more than \$5,000 in one of six specific categories, including bargaining, organizing and legislation. Staffers would also have to report their pay and how they spend their time.

"The record demonstrates (Chao) carefully weighed the costs and benefits and concluded, on balance, that technological advances made it possible to provide the level of detail necessary for union members to have a more accurate picture of their union's financial condition and operations without imposing an unwarranted burden on reporting unions," Kessler wrote in further explaining her opinion.

Worldwide mood: gloomy

People worldwide feel "unsafe, powerless and gloomy" about their nations' economies, a new poll shows—and that makes them skeptical of globalization. The poll, of 43,000 people in 51 countries, was conducted for leaders of the World Economic Forum, which met Jan. 21-25 in Davos, Switzerland.

The respondents' views, especially on their power over economic forces, echo years of AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney's warnings to the forum: That workers worldwide will not support globalization controlled by—and for the benefit of—elites and corporations, and to workers' disadvantage.

Sweeney addressed the 2004 forum, but the text of his remarks was not immediately available. But former President Bill Clinton delivered a similar message to the forum's leaders on Jan. 21.

"There are lots of wonderful people who are dealing with the rough edges of globalization, but we do not have the systems the world needs to respond in a comprehensive way" to worldwide worries by people, not elites, Clinton said.

Those worries also were capsulized in a Gallup Poll whose results were released to forum members

Jan. 8. By a 50%-31% margin, respondents felt their nations are less prosperous than a decade ago.

Pollsters recorded negative views on the economy in North America (42%-33%), South America (66%-14%), Pacific nations (62%-33%), Central Europe (48%-28%), Western Europe (48%-32%) and Africa (62%-31%). Only Western Asians (63%-20%) and Middle Easterners (42%-39%) had positive feelings about their national economies.

"Results consistently show [that] individuals feel they have little or no personal impact on the economic, political and social factors that affect daily life, expecting national and international actors to deliver the background stability required to look after and provide for their families," the pollsters added.

Echoing Sweeney's words, forum Secretary-General Jose Mara Figueres said the poll painted "a bleak picture indeed of how ordinary people see . . . their ability to affect events."

"Although there are signs of a changing environment both economically and in security, it seems this is still extremely fragile and people at large have yet to be persuaded that things are changing," Figueres added.—Press Associates, Inc.

LOOKING AHEAD

Convergence II just a first step

By Bernie Lunzer, Secretary-Treasurer

The Guild recently held one of its most innovative meetings in recent memory, with more than a hundred activists and staff members gathering outside for three days Jan. 23-25. Titled "Convergence 2: A Strategic Seminar," the meeting actually was a discussion of power: How much power do our locals have? How can we gain more?

The meeting was off the record, in order to make the discussion more fruitful, which means you won't find a Guild Reporter story about the proceedings. But some resolutions can be made and shared, based on an informal survey I conducted via e-mail to which approximately half of the members responded.

The meeting was held over three days and involved a review of some recent bargaining and other local activity. We did small group brainstorming around central concerns of the union and used the full group to prioritize. Last, we established working resolutions to move the priorities forward. The members are expected to work on their issues over the next year, with some reports due at the August sector conference.

The vast majority of the feedback was positive with this response: "The meeting was well focused, kept to a schedule, had clear goals and resulted in a working program." Another respondent said, "I thought it was a nice combination of brainstorming on big ideas followed up by establishing concrete action items. We managed to have a productive discussion with little destructive rancor." Several attendees

echoed the following sentiment: "The cross section of participants, from large to small locals and paid staff to volunteers, made for a diversity of opinions and contributions."

Many attendees agreed with the following respondent: "Overall, one of the more useful Guild seminars I've attended over the years. I really liked the small groups approach and thought it was handled well in terms of taking the information in, summarizing it and kicking it back for all of us to bring back. I was particularly interested in the contract/bargaining aspects, since my local is going to the table in a few months. I found the give-and-take in the small groups to be invaluable."

Fully 95% of the responses were positive, but as is always the case, there were a few criticisms. "My biggest disappointment was this: faced with the potentially gravest challenge we've ever faced as a union, a belief that the strike may no longer be a viable economic threat, we didn't think outside the box," wrote one respondent. This sentiment was voiced by several others who had hoped we would not only identify our challenges but begin defining answers. We advised folks that strikes could never be ruled out, but that locals needed appropriate training and a strike would always be the last resort.

Clearly, although folks knew this was only the start of our problem-solving process, many of our members are frustrated by the current bargaining climate and are impatient. In direct response, the meeting set several key goals for bargaining: developing a best practices tool kit/manual; refining eco-

Continued on page 8

18 'failures' haven't diminished his drive

By Tim O'Brien

President, Newspaper Guild of Albany

I've failed this union 18 times. I am going to confess this, but it's true. We have more than 250 members, but only 18 people who work at the Times Union and are covered by the Guild contract have chosen not to be members.

Consider each one of them a personal failure on my part. Many of them held that before I got here, but I still feel responsible for not converting them to the Guild. Don't get me wrong: we have managed to convince quite a few such non-members over the years, and in recent history, more have joined the union. It is my proudest achievement as a Guild president when a person has not been a member comes to me and says, "Now I get it. I want to join." The best way to convert someone is to let them see what we do.

During contract negotiations, we usually have people who see what happens in the bargaining room, realize the Guild is standing up for their interests, and join. I hope that happens every year, too.

Sometimes an employee sees a co-worker being treated, or a benefit denied, and how the Guild handles the issue.

Sometimes we have represented the interests of a non-member directly, because we are legally and morally obligated to do so, and that person decides to sign the membership form and card.

Some former non-members and agency fee payers have gone on to become stewards or to hold union office. At least one that I know of became president. (No, not me. I joined from the get-go.)

I've had reporters over the years say they hesitate to join because they believe they'd appear biased since our parent organization, the CWA, supports political candidates.

Excuse me, but the Times Union endorses political candidates: I have no problem explaining that I as a reporter have nothing to do with either of those endorsements. And publishers' groups and media owners have no qualms about supporting politicians; why should the unions that represent their workers? When you see the types of proposals being made in Washington, D.C.—like eliminating overtime for reporters, editors and online personnel—we should not hesitate to lobby our elected officials, just as media corporations do.

Adapted from the February issue of the Albany local's newsletter, The Guildier.

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LETTERS

To the Editor,

I'm one of the Buyout Babies. I leave The Washington Post, after more than 36 years, with a heavy heart. But it's not as heavy as it might be, because my decision and my path were made possible by a great organization: The Newspaper Guild. I've been a member since my first day at The Post.

Management didn't offer that boatload of buyout bucks out of sheer love. The money came from our pension fund. Yes, "our." Local 35 of TNG negotiated the fund into existence more than 30 years ago.

I know. I was there when it happened.

When extra millions became available (thank you, Wall Street), they sent a message more forcefully than I ever could.

This union works.

It provides for its members.

Its contracts produce real benefits.

And the biggest, loudest message: You are better off if you're a member than you'd ever be if you relied solely on the tender mercies of the seventh floor.

The Newspaper Guild has made The Washington Post a place to have a life as well as a career. I could never have owned a house, raised a family or provided for my old age without the contracts that this union negotiated.

When I needed \$50,000 worth of medical care in 1997, I could never have counted on getting it or paying for it without the protections and provisions in "that little booklet."

When I worked on national holidays, the Guild saw to it that I received extra pay.

When my mother died, I got a day of bereavement leave, with pay. It didn't fall from a tree. The Guild assured it for me.

You would have to go a long way to find an organization that's more democratic, more fair or more effective. I'm proud to have been a member.

If you don't belong, I urge you to sign a card today. It's your union. It's your future. Some day, it may be your buyout, too.

—Bob Levey,

Washington-Baltimore Guild

To the Editor,

I am disappointed that The Guild Reporter has confused journalistic integrity with "a remarkable shrinking of the personal sphere," as you wrote in your January issue.

Journalism Ethics 101 teaches us to avoid anything that could call our objectivity into question. Certainly, attending a demonstration would fall into that category, no matter what beat the reporter covers.

We should make some sacrifices to preserve our reputation for fairness and objectivity. We should not run for public office. We should not contribute to political candi-

dates. We should not have a personal or financial stake in what we cover. And we should not attend any demonstrations, lest we call into question the objectivity of us or our media outlets. That's not asking a lot.

This is an era when investigative reporting is met not with a demand to correct the problem but with an attack on the journalists who wrote the story. The Guild should be out front making sure our members have the highest integrity. I have made a career out of writing about public officials following the same loose ethics that the Guild thinks journalists should have.

San Francisco Chronicle Managing Editor Robert Rosenthal is right when he says, "Any journalist who assumes a prominent public role in any political issue inevitably creates the appearance of that conflict."

I'm dismayed that The Newspaper Guild takes the opposite view.

—Jonathan D. Salant,
News Media Guild

To the editor's knowledge, The Newspaper Guild has never taken a position supporting "loose ethics." The Guild has had a long-running debate over the extent to which journalists should surrender their civic rights in the name of "integrity." As Brother Salant implies, in his statement about "this . . . era," the balance between private and professional behavior keeps shifting. And as he also notes, that shift has required "some sacrifices"—sacrifices that arguably have grown more pervasive and intrusive over time. Additional views on this subject are welcome.

To the Editor,

I would like to register my support for Project Censored and to The Guild Reporter for publishing its findings. Too often, real news gets overlooked and ignored.

One example is the capture of Saddam Hussein. There were credible accounts that he was captured by the Kurds, then drugged and placed in his "spider hole" for US troops to retrieve.

I'm not saying these accounts, published in the Scottish Sunday Herald and Agence France Presse, are the final truth, but they deserve to be considered. My local paper, the Oregonian, ran the US version of the "capture," but not the other account. I phoned the Oregonian's public editor and e-mailed him the other stories, but they never appeared in the Oregonian.

Maybe that story will appear in next year's Project Censored.

—Per Fagereng (SF Examiner, retired)
Portland, Oregon

NG 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 are 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: March 19.) 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.

Urging labor to build media relationships

By Tom Schram

How can unions do a better job of getting their message out to the public? By looking at journalists as real people trying to do their jobs and not by staging media events, concluded a panel of experts convened by the International Labor Communications Association in Detroit in late January.

The ILCA is an AFL-CIO affiliate that promotes professional standards for labor publications. The panel, composed of four labor activists and five Detroit-area journalists, suggested that unions look at reporters in a different light. "It's basically a people thing," said Bob Ankeny, a reporter for Crain's Business, Detroit's business week-

ly. "You're not really dealing with media, you're dealing with people. There are people at every business publication in the country who want to hear the union side. It's important that unions have a relationship with the reporters," he stressed.

Steve Babson, a labor studies professor at Wayne State University, said that unions need to do a better job of putting a human face on their stories and dramatizing them. "The assumption is that media is monolithic and one-sided. Unions should look at the journalist not as a representative of a media conglomerate but as a person," he said. "Appeal to the journalist as someone who has a job to do."

M.L. Elrick, a Guild steward who is a reporter for the Detroit Free



Panel members include (l to r) Bob Ankeny, reporter for Crains Detroit Business; Jayne Bower, news anchor for WWJ Newsradio 950; M.L. Elrick, reporter for the Detroit Free Press; Curt Guyette, reporter for Metro Times; and Jerome Vaughn, reporter for WDET Public Radio.

Press, said that the legacy of the 1995-2000 labor dispute between Detroit's two dailies and their unions makes it difficult sometimes to form those relationships. Still, he added, the effort has to be made.

"There's been a lot of tension between the newspapers and unions in this town," Elrick acknowledged. "But if you try to get to know each other, if you know what your position is, you should be comfortable."

Richard Lebove, a Detroit-area

communications consultant who often works with the Teamsters union, seconded that notion.

"The reporter has a job to do. If you can get them off the record and tell them, for example, what's going on with this strike or contract negotiation, you'll get your message through."

But Lebove acknowledged that union officials often fear talking to the media because they believe they will be misquoted or taken out of context. "They say, 'We're bet-

ter off not speaking.' But if you don't tell your side of the story, no one else will."

Curt Guyette, news editor for Metro Times, Detroit's alternative weekly paper, said that unions' insularity is further exacerbated by their tendency to view the world in black-and-white extremes. "It seems almost as if it's a cause," he commented. "I feel that there is a 'with us-against us' attitude. Our obligation is to the story."

But Jill Christoff, who works

on media issues for the United Food and Commercial Workers, said that unions' first obligation is not to the media.

"It's just not that simple. The fear that union officials have is not unfounded," she said. "We are people, too. Sometimes we have to talk to our membership first. It's not that we view the media as antagonists."

Freelance writer Tom Schram is co-chair of the National Writers Union of Southeast Michigan.

Follow-through will be Convergence test

Continued from page 7

nomic pressure tactics for campaigns; and planning new training seminars. Those assembled also agreed to: improve local new member programs; pursue a Guild-wide literacy program to improve our community involvement; research and refine ways to better involve members in their locals; develop meaningful newspaper chain caucuses to improve bargaining and organizing; work on better marketing the Guild's image within the

industry, emphasizing the independent voice we bring to workers while focusing on corporate responsibility; and resolve how the Guild may participate in legislative issues that are key to our industry while not impinging on the objectivity of our members who cover these issues.

This is a quick sketch of the goals that were set out. The working groups are all scheduled for conference calls over the next few weeks, and many of the ideas from the

meeting will be worked on at upcoming district council meetings. Guild staff assigned to the groups will help maintain communication, and for the first time the Guild is using its members-only web-site forums to share ideas on the topics. All members are welcome to join in the discussion and become involved; to gain access to the members-only site, look in the left navigation bar on our home page, at www.newsguild.org.

Clearly, the goals of the meeting were

ambitious, but I'm convinced we're committed as a union to work for solutions. Apart from the New Local Officers' Seminar that we hold annually (and which is always full of energy) I felt this was the most hopeful and optimistic meeting we've ever had.

But the following comment also reflects what most of the survey's respondents felt, and is a good caution: "The proof of all this will be in the follow-through, both at the local and national level."

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DAYBOOK

- Amer. Copy Editors Society,
March 18-20, Houston, TX
- CWA Legislative Conference,
March 28-31, Washington, DC
- CMG "Transition Conference,"
April 2-4, Ottawa
- TNG Canada Rep. Council
April 17-18, Sault Ste. Marie
- CWA Civil Rights Conference,
April 22-25, Jacksonville, FL
- Freedom Award banquet,
May 19, Washington, DC
- 2004 UNITY Convention,
Aug. 4-8, Washington, DC
- TNG Sector Conference,
Aug. 26-28, Anaheim, CA
- CWA Annual Convention,
Aug. 30-31, Anaheim, CA
- CWA Bargaining Institute,
Sept. 26-30, Silver Spring, MD

FROM THE MORGUE

Seventy years ago this month:

President Roosevelt requests newspapers of more than 75,000 circulation put their news staffs on a five-day, 40-hour work week. . . . After initial skepticism, the leaders of several newspaper craft unions begin warming up to the Guild and urge it to affiliate with the American Federation of Labor. . . . Jo Leonard is elected "chairman" of the Albany Knickerbocker Press chapter, becoming the Guild's first woman head of a shop unit. . . . Weighing in on a debate over the future direction of the Guild, trade journal Editor & Publisher editorializes that a "guild can achieve better results for members than trade unions" because it could better "establish friendly relations with publishers."

Fifty years ago this month:

Twenty years after an initial attempt at forming a Guild local was beaten down by the publisher, newsroom employees of the Providence Journal and Evening Bulletin are at it again. Egging them on is a memo from press critic A.J. Liebling, who advises that "you don't wait until you get sick before taking out an insurance policy." . . . Labor Press Associated, a press service for labor publications, shuts down after its Guild-represented staff goes on strike.

Twenty-five years ago this month:

The Guild files arguments opposing a proposed joint operating agreement that would cause the loss of 300 jobs at the Scripps-owned Cincinnati Post. . . . The Montreal Star resumes publication after an eight-month shutdown, following contract ratifications by its unions.

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