

THE GUILD Reporter

June 18, 2004

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Chinese News: poster child for NLRB meltdown

Union leaders have said for years that federal labor law is broken. Now the proof they're right is so obvious it gets international notice—and among the most prominent examples of that breakage is the Chinese Daily News.

In a report issued earlier this month (www.icftu.org/survey), the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions harshly criticized the U.S.—as well as such brutal regimes as Colombia and Uganda—for undermining workers' rights. While third-world countries may imprison, torture and murder union organizers, acknowledged Peter Bakvis, director of ICFTU's Washington office, a more apt standard for the U.S. is to compare it with other industrialized nations.

"The basic recognition of trade unions is a problem that's particularly strong in the U.S.," Bakvis said. "In Europe, you don't have that problem of employer recognition."

The ICFTU report singles out Wal-Mart, Cintas and Smithfield's Tar Heel—among others—for

breaking U.S. labor law, but notes this is a low-risk strategy. Union organizers are hampered by woefully inadequate penalties for law-breaking, a huge backlog of unfair labor practice cases at the National Labor Relations Board—25,000 in 2002—and a growing cadre of consultants who make a living by prolonging labor disputes. "Union-busting is big business" in the U.S., the report observes.

Indeed. Among the rogue companies detailed by the ICFTU is the Chinese Daily News, where 152 workers voted March 19, 2001 for representation by TNG-CWA. As the report notes, "The company has been denying the workers' freedom to form a union ever since. It hired a consulting firm to misinform and intimidate employees, and gave its lawyer an office in the newspaper building, resulting in pervasive surveillance. The company also sought to exploit the cultural sensitivities of its workers, intimidate and interrogate them about their loyalty, and punish them for their union support. The

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Tribune cutting jobs despite higher ad sales

Apparently unhappy that profit margins slumped by a third after it bought Times Mirror, Tribune Co. is eliminating at least 200 jobs. Most of the cuts are targeted at the Baltimore Sun and Newsday, which are unionized, and at the Los Angeles Times, which is not.

Management at the Sun offered a buyout to 63 employees, then withdrew it when the Washington-Baltimore Guild initially challenged a company deadline of June 25 for accepting or refusing the offer. Union officials said the deadline violated federal labor regulations, which require a 45-day decision period, but Sun management said it would proceed with

layoffs, instead. The buyout offers were resubmitted when the local said it would not interfere with union members choosing to waive their deadline rights.

At Newsday, most of whose employees are represented by the Graphics Communications International Union, a management proposal to cut 54 pressmen and five paper handlers in exchange for extending current contracts by 18 months was rebuffed by the union. The Morning Call, a Tribune paper in Allentown, Penn., eliminated 20 positions a day after the Tribune announcement. The Los Angeles Times, which won five Pulitzer Prizes this year but

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James Crutchfield, publisher of the Beacon newspaper June 7. At left is Jane Snow, former unit president and TNG-CWA vice-president.

Akron okays strike

Fights merit pay, outsourcing, 0% increase

By Rollee Dreussi
Northeast Ohio Newspaper Guild

Guild members are girding for an active summer at the Akron Beacon Journal, following a bargaining session June 10 at which the Knight Ridder-owned newspaper budged little in its insistence on major concessions.

Management's slight movement was in marked contrast to a significant counterproposal presented at the start of the bargaining session by negotiators representing the Akron unit of the Northeast Ohio Newspaper Guild. The Guild's proposal addressed all five major areas in which management has been seeking concessions since bargaining began, 11 months ago.

Another bargaining session has been scheduled for June 22.

Following management's presentation of an unexpected "final proposal" May 13, the Akron unit kicked its mobilization plan into overdrive. Members proposed and overwhelmingly passed a strike authorization vote at a unit meeting May 19. A byline strike, supported by nearly every Guild member, was conducted May 30 through June 5.

Daily lunchtime informational picketing was conducted at the Beacon Journal in downtown Akron from June 7 through June 11. Even a pouring rain that Friday didn't stop 30 Guild members from manning street corners and marching around the building.

The mobilizing committee also sent a letter to the newspaper's advertisers, informing them of the



Bargaining team member Yvonne Webb holds up the full-page ad—with added commentary—that management ran in the June 6 Beacon Journal.

situation, and the head of the Tri-County AFL-CIO Labor Council sent a letter supporting the Guild to the publisher, James Crutchfield.

Driving the increasingly tense stand-off is a series of company demands that Guild leaders say would effectively gut the union and tarnish the quality of a news-

paper that despite its relatively small size has four Pulitzer Prizes to its credit. Among the draconian demands:

- Doubling employees' share of health care costs while requiring the Guild to surrender bargaining rights over any future changes in health plan coverage.

- Trampling Guild jurisdiction by removing most limitations on outsourcing unit work to independent contractors.

- Eliminating premium pay for new employees assigned to positions of "increased responsibility," such as assistant editors, which currently pay up to \$89 per week above minimum scale.

- Removing all limitations on job transfers for new employees; allowing management to transfer current employees without their consent under certain circumstances.

- Freezing contract pay scales for almost two years while moving to a merit-based pay system. Most bargaining unit members would receive a total raise of about 5% over a five-year period on the contractual pay scales.

"Nobody wants a strike, but our very survival is at stake," observed unit chair Stephanie Warsmith. "We want management to come off their hard-line position, which we feel would be a great detriment to the quality of the newspaper. We believe our readers deserve better."

The Guild contract expired last August, although its terms and conditions remain in effect until a new contract is signed or impasse is reached.

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Among the "industry" leaders: the Burke Group, which since its founding in 1981 has orchestrated approximately 800 antiunion campaigns and has been involved in dozens of organizing drives tarnished by allegations of unfair labor practices, including the Chinese Daily News. Companies like Burke are engaged by 75% of employers confronting union organizing drives, resulting in significantly fewer union victories—and where unions do win in such circumstances, continued employer opposition after the election means more than a quarter of certified unions fail to secure first contracts.

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Coincidentally, the AFL-CIO and its affiliates are planning a week-long campaign June 28 to July 4 to drum up support for the Employees Free Choice Act. Introduced in Congress last December, the act would strengthen card-check organizing rights, as well as require arbitration in stalled bargaining for first contracts and stiffen penalties for labor law violations.

Several dozen CWA locals have already committed themselves to promote the campaign, and Guild locals are being asked to pitch in. Postcards appealing for political support of the EFCA, as well as posters and stickers, can be ordered from CWA at www.cwa-union.org; look under "What's Hot."

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That could mean the original plan wasn't sound, but corporate presidents aren't paid to second-guess themselves and Fuller has urged more belt-tightening all along. Most famously, the Sun last year imported strike breakers while it was still in contract negotiations, in effect holding a gun to the union's head. Early this year it unceremoniously sacked its highly respected editor, Bill Marimow, at least in part because he resisted pressure to cut jobs. In March, when asked about the Sun's prospects by trade journal Editor & Publisher, Fuller called it "one

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But while Fuller's public pronouncements emphasize revenue enhancement, the company's actions tend to focus on cost cutting. And, as might be expected, the impact of such cutting is minimized.

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Arbitrator affirms pension ruling

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Wire employees ratify 2-year pact

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NLRB seals fate of Detroit leader

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Badges? We don't need no stinkin' . . .

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step better by passing out their own buttons. "It's what we in the writing trade call 'subtle irony,'" commented John Bonfatti, vice president for mobilization, when asked about using buttons to protest badges.

CU gets low marks as a workplace

Thinks aren't so hot at Consumers Union—in fact, working conditions have deteriorated so much over the past couple of years that the New York Guild unit has undertaken a "quality of work-life" initiative, including a written analysis of the problems and meetings with management. "Too many Guild members are chronically over-managed, over-worked and under-appreciated for the work they do," summarized unit chairperson Bill South.

Staff cut without prior discussion

The Daily Item in Lynn, Mass. laid off a full-time desk person and reduced the hours of a full-time artist June 2, marking the first time in four years the Item has cut staff. The lack of prior management discussion with the Guild has prompted sharp criticism from local officials.

Christmas now optional holiday

Members of the Bay City News Service unit of the Northern California Media Guild have ratified a three-year contract that maintains the existing health care plan with no additional costs to employees. Other gains include 3% annual increases on each employee's anniversary date, retro to March 31; three additional days of vacation, for a total of eight, after one year's employment; and the right to switch Christmas for another day off in an acknowledgement that not everyone celebrates Christian holidays.

Scholarship won

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The Newspaper Guild International



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hcoleman@cwa-union.org

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AP: Over the top on implied plagiarism

By Jay Jordan
News Media Guild

The News Media Guild has filed a national-level grievance over The Associated Press' suspension and termination of veteran Denver sportswriter John Mossman over what the news cooperative claimed were integrity issues.

Mossman, with more than 30 years' experience, was fired in May after the company said he used a few largely unchanged sentences from a Major League Baseball web site in a 280-word story. A grievance meeting was held June 9 and AP reportedly is considering the union's request for reinstatement with full back pay. The union also wants rescinded a written reprimand given to the desk supervisor on duty while that

story was developed.

Guild President Tony Winton said the termination letter sent to Mossman did not accuse him of plagiarism. "The union has some very serious questions about the termination," he said.

Staffers at the AP Denver bureau have said there's no written policy on sports or news pickups from public relations-oriented web sites and that managers were heavy-handed, lacking both standards and consistent application. The Guild says the practice is widespread and was known and condoned by management.

Mossman's termination has angered Guild members across the country. They argue that the news cooperative is actively in the business of picking up and rewriting material from publicists and news service

members alike—by phone, modem, fax and other means—and that Mossman did nothing wrong.

Editor & Publisher has picked up Mossman's story, asking "When does rewriting news for a wire service become a firing offense?" The report said the accusations have a chilling effect in a wire service where the work necessarily involves rewriting news first published or posted elsewhere.

"The AP is a cooperative by definition," Winton said. "It involves the sharing of news and photos and other material . . . from members. That's what the AP is."

Indeed, plagiarism arguably cannot apply to such work, since by definition it requires stealing or appropriating someone else's ideas and writing. News releases by

their very nature are intended for reproduction, while AP members contractually agree to exchange copy.

Staffers have been vehement in denouncing the firing, with one writing, "Maybe there's a little extracurricular budget cutting going on at the expense of senior staffers? Maybe a relatively new CoB (chief of bureau) wants his own staffers in place? Maybe SPT (the national sports desk) is trying to sneak young, fresh blood into the mix?"

Arguing that the company could pick any number of vague accusations in attempting to justify an unjust termination, the staffer concluded, "Seems to me that Guild membership is more important than ever to prevent these attempts at end-runs around the contract and its job security provisions."

Horsing around in Philadelphia

After working up quite a sweat in May and early June, the Philadelphia Newspaper Guild's newest member has slowed down considerably in recent weeks. But even at his most sedate pace, fans say, he brings more horse sense to the table than any dozen other Guild members combined.

Overlooking several contract provisions regarding jurisdiction and working within job classification, local officials issued Guild membership to Smarty Jones after he started writing a regular column for the Philadelphia Daily News. Drafting fellow Guild member Don Russell to overcome his inability to work a computer keyboard, Jones took on a truly bewildering number of roles, from editorial writer, photographer and movie reviewer to sports, sex and gossip columnists.

"He did a bang-up job on all accounts," Russell commented. "My personal favorite was his editorial against flies. He hates 'em and, I believe, his passion resulted in one of our paper's strongest, and most unequivocal editorials of all time."

Several Guild members noted without surprise that Jones was a devoted union member. "As a hard-working employee he repeatedly faced management's whip, while his opportunities were reined in by the constraints of a fierce competitive market," Russell said. "In short, his career seemed to be going around in circles. Without the Guild representing his interests,

Smarty would've been regarded as little more than a nag."

Although losing the Belmont Stakes put a hitch in Jones' giddyap, Russell believes "writing is in his blood forever" and that at some point Jones may turn to the muse once more. Until then, here's a small sampling of his scribbling as it appeared in the Daily News:

May 19, on the tourist carriage trade: *I'm shocked—just shocked!—that in this age of modern convenience we're still forcing horses to pull carts.*

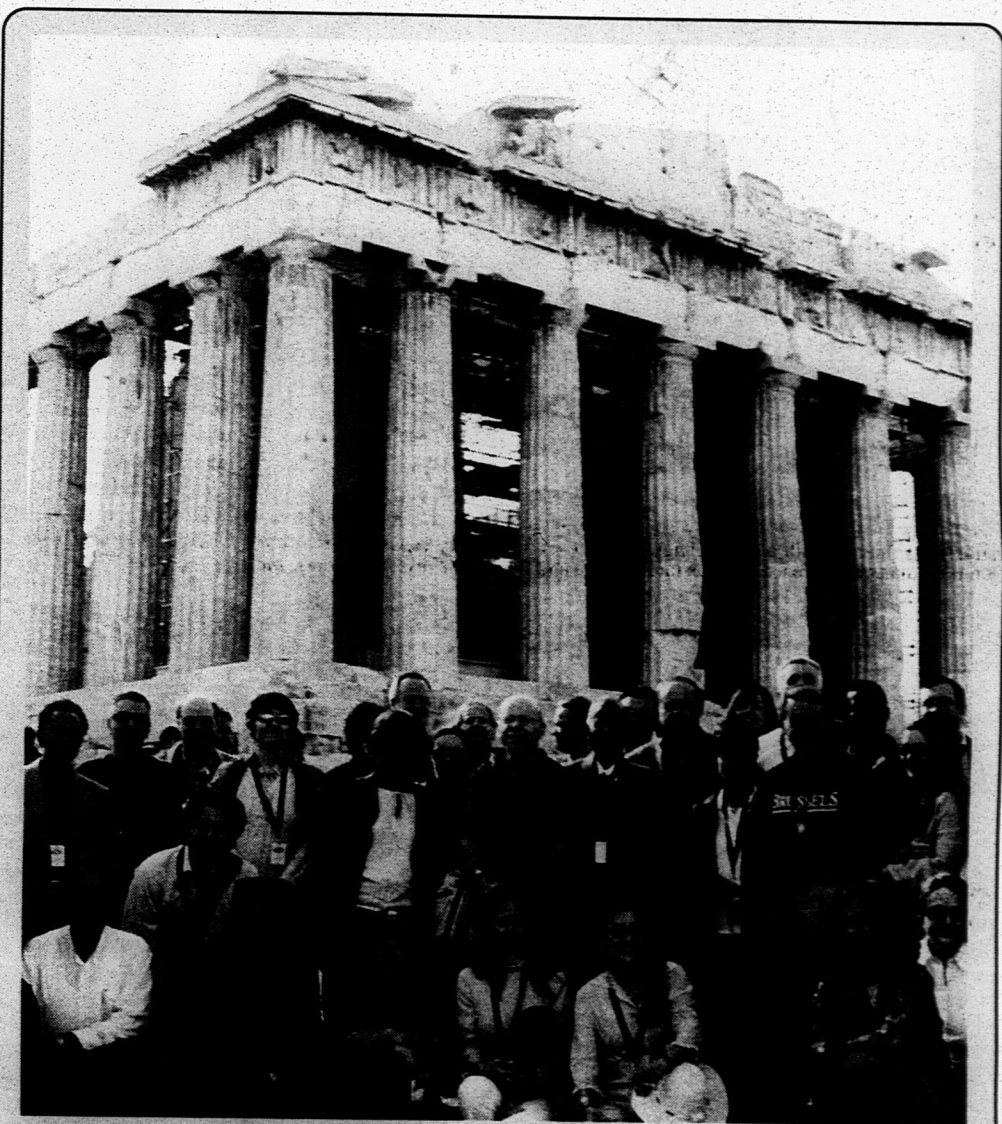
What about buses and cars? I mean, what part of "horseless carriage" don't they understand? From what I hear, these poor, working-class horses spend day after day sweating in the hot sun, dragging tourists around the streets of Old City, tripping in potholes, dodging cabs and listening to out-of-towners complain about the smell. . . .

May 28, on the movie "Troy": *Before the summer movie season gets into full swing, I want to register a very loud "neigh" about one of the early season hits. I'm talking about "Troy," the Brad Pitt blockbuster.*

Specifically, the single most important character in this heroic story makes only a cameo appearance in the film.

That's right: the Trojan horse. . . whose presence on the battlefield changed the course of history—and all he gets in this 160-minute epic is about 60 seconds of screen time.

And not a single speaking line.



Where's Arnold? . . .

. . . Amber, that is, Director of TNG Canada. In the picture he's standing smack in the middle of the first row, surrounded by other journalists attending the XXV World Congress of the International Federation of Journalists; TNG-CWA President Linda Foley is at his left, once removed. Foley was re-elected vice president of the group, while Amber was re-elected regional advisor for North America. The week-long IFJ Congress, held in Athens, ended May 29.

St. Louis Guild ratifies Post-Dispatch contract

Putting an end to 18 months of wheel-spinning in their negotiations with the Pulitzer-owned Post-Dispatch, members of the St. Louis Newspaper Guild voted June 6 to ratify a five-year contract.

The 245-to-108 decision followed a 9-7 split on the bargaining committee on whether to submit the tentative agreement for membership approval. Although the new contract contains several givebacks, Jeff Gordon, the local's first vice president, said he believed the talks had "reached the threshold of what the company would offer with or without a major battle."

"The top leaders of the Guild weighed potential risks against potential rewards," he added. "We believed it was time to settle."

Among the new provisions:

- Workers in the top two pay classifications will pay 15% of health care premiums in the first year, 25% each year thereafter; those in lower classifications will pay 15% the first year, 20% in the second and 25% thereafter. Health care premiums may be increased up to 13.5% a year.

- Pay increases vary by scale but range between 2.25% and 5% per year at the higher scales and 2.5% and 6% in lower scales.

- Outside sales representatives and columnists will be exempted from overtime—perhaps the agreement's most contentious provision—although any ad rep assigned to work on a weekend will receive an additional \$175 or 20% of average earnings, whichever is lower.

- Approximately eight more Guild positions have been exempted from the bargaining unit, which also lost exclusive jurisdiction over its work. Existing full-time and part-time employees are guaranteed not to be laid off as a result of subcontracting or assignment of work to non-unit employees,

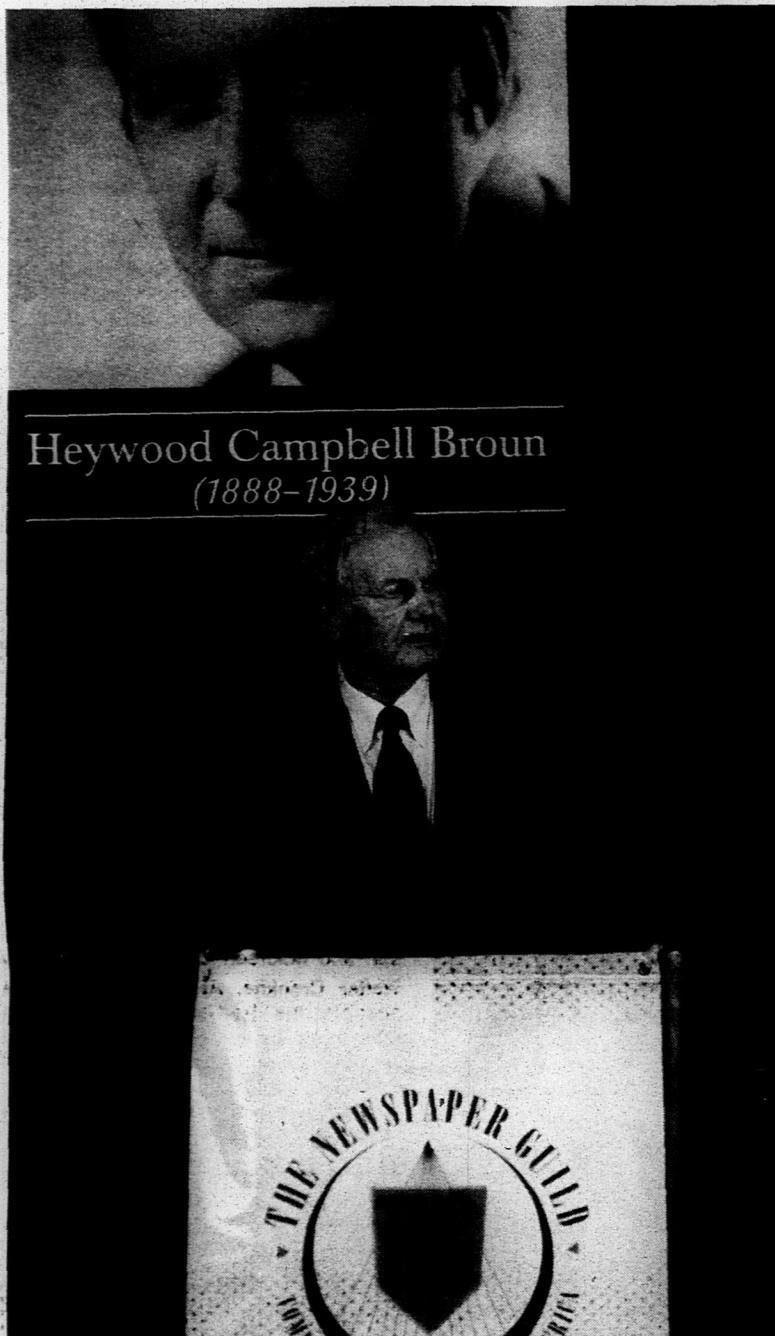
but the guarantee expires the day before the contract itself expires and will not carry over via the evergreen clause.

- The probationary period for new employees is extended to nine months, from six.

- All bargaining unit employees will be subject to the company's ethics policies, which will be established and changed solely by the employer.

- Bylines may be withheld only for "preserving and furthering the professional integrity of the employee's work product," and not as part of a job action.

'It's the news we need



Heywood Campbell Broun
(1888-1939)

Bill Moyers delivers the keynote address at the third Freedom Award Fund Banquet, held May 19 at the Hyatt Regency in Washington, D.C. Approximately 300 attended the event, which honors Guild icons Heywood Broun, Herbert Block and David S. Barr. Below, Barr scholarship winners Olivia Cobiskey and Annalyn Rose Censky (at right) share a moment with Walter Cronkite, an early Guild activist who welcomed the crowd with opening remarks.



[The keynote speaker at this year's Freedom Award Fund Banquet was Bill Moyers. His remarks, excerpted here, may be read in full at www.newsguild.org; the web site also has an audio file of Walter Cronkite's remarks.]

Thank you for the invitation to be here this evening. I was flattered to know you think I might have something to say at a gathering like this. I was honored to be on the same stage with Walter [Cronkite], and I was gratified to see these young people coming along who are the next generation of journalists. Then my pleasure doubled when I learned that you would be presenting the Herb Block Award to John Moyers and TomPaine.com. . . .

When John Moyers first proposed the idea for TomPaine.com some five years ago, he had a hard time convincing me. Remember, I started on a newspaper at the age of 16, and then for the last 33 years I've been in broadcasting. I took the internet as another fad, another Frisbee or hula-hoop or maybe even a Studebaker. But John had a vision and proposed what he called an experiment in philanthropy—a public interest journal on the web whose mission would be to amplify public-spirited journalists by providing them access to the public square with technology as modern as a modem.

I was skeptical. . . [but] it worked. A million people visited TomPaine.com the first year. In the second readership doubled, and by the third year it was averaging a quarter of a million visits per month, some three million for the year. You could find news on TomPaine about working people that you couldn't find anywhere else. You would find news on TomPaine about the class war no one else was covering, news about race and equality ignored by the mainstream, about piracy in high places and the plunder of the environment, about trade that was neither fair nor free, about the false claims of ideology and the growing conglomeration of the media. . . .

Herb Block would have loved it. Herb had inspired me many years ago. One of my cherished possessions is the book he sent me shortly before his death with an inscription cheering me on when I was under attack from the right wing. He would have found John and his team at TomPaine kindred spirits of a different generation and of a different media, but sharing a passion for journalistic truth-telling as old as the republic. I even imagine Herb Block and Tom Paine smiling down on us on this occasion from heaven.

I know, I know. Theodore Roosevelt labeled Tom Paine a filthy little atheist, but Teddy was wrong on this. Tom Paine believed in a supreme being. What he opposed was organized religion, with its superstitions and hypocrisies and its defense of privilege and tyrannical power. Paine was not the first journalist to be denigrated both before and after his death for the heresy of plain speaking. At the end of his life he was sick, penniless and maligned as the worst infidel. When he died 195 years ago, on the 8th of June, his bones were lost and never recovered and his services to this country all but forgotten.

But think about this. In 1776, just before enlisting in Washington's army, this penniless immigrant published "Common Sense," the hard-hitting pamphlet that slashed through legalisms and doubts to make an uncompromising case for an independent and republican America. With as many as 100,000 copies bought by a small literate population, "Common Sense" became our first best seller. The man had something we need today: an unwavering determination to reach ordinary people with the message that they mattered and could stand up for themselves. "As it is my design," he said, "to make those that can scarcely read understand, I shall therefore avoid every literary ornament and put in language as plain as the alphabet

what I mean to say." And he did.

Tom Paine became the journalistic voice of the American Revolution, the champion of the common man, the conscience of a new press. He was quirky, cranky and cantankerous, a skeptic to the core except on one thing: Thomas Paine was a true believer in liberty. Because of him, freedom and freedom of the press were birth twins of the American experience. They grew up together and neither has fared well without the other.

At times, journalism has risen to great occasions and even made other freedoms possible. From editors who went defiantly to prison after being charged under the Sedition Act for circulating opinions that questioned the motives of Congress or incriminating—whatever that meant—the president of the United States, to the willingness of Arthur Sulzberger and Katherine Graham to risk criminal prosecution under espionage laws if they printed the Pentagon Papers. From Lincoln Steffens and Ida Tarbell and Upton Sinclair taking on the shame of the cities, the crimes of the trusts and the treason of the Senate, to Walter Cronkite laying out—to Bill Paley's distress—the story of Watergate in an entire broadcast, to Seymour Hersh reporting on torture and "Sixty Minutes II" broadcasting the horror of Abah Ghraib, the greatest moments in the story of journalism have come not when journalists made common cause with power, but when they stood fearlessly independent of it.

Why, you say, does an old press secretary speak like this? For one thing, I grew up in the South, a southerner whose people suffered a terrible revenge for driving truth-tellers from the pulpit, for driving truth-tellers from the classroom and from driving truth-tellers from the newsroom. It took a bloody civil war to end slavery and tell the truth about America. And then it took another hundred years before the victory of Appomattox was fully required. And yes, I served in the Johnson White House, when we drew the wagons around in a circle to the great detriment of our country and the Vietnamese. So I know what it means to see journalism. And to enjoy it.

I carry in my head the image of a smiling I.F. Stone, having just published another of his little four-page weeklies exposing official deceit and contradictions in the government's own documents, pausing long enough amidst the thunder of battle with the reactionaries to declare, "I have so much fun, I ought to be arrested!" Quite a story we can tell, quite a tradition we share.

So why, when we pause to celebrate, as we are tonight—why despite plenty of lip-service on every ritual occasion to freedom of the press—why are we so uneasy, so uncertain, so anxious for our craft? Partly, it's because of the secrecy.

The secrecy today is so thick as to be all but impenetrable except to the most indefatigable digger, helped along by an occasional breakthrough of sheer luck. In earlier times there were padlocks for the presses and jail cells for outspoken editors and writers, as our governing bodies tried to squelch journalistic freedom with blunt instruments of the law. Now, the classifier's top-secret stamp, used indiscriminately, is as potent a silencer as a writ of arrest.

It's gotten so bad that the president and CEO of the Associated Press, Tom Curley, last week called publicly for a media advocacy center to lobby in Washington for open government. "My God," I said to myself, "where are those 6,000 journalists who live and work there?"

"You don't have to have your notebook snatched by a policeman," Tom Curley said, "to know that keeping an eye on government has lately gotten a little harder."

Indeed. With almost no public debate, Congress gives government agencies the right

to keep our freedoms'

to search your home, your office, your telephone logs, your e-mails, your medical records, your restaurant receipts, your banking and credit card information—without your consent or your knowledge. [George Bush] signs an executive order postponing release of thousands of classified documents that are 25 years old or more. He signs another executive order sending hundreds of millions of tax dollars to religious organizations with no obligation to show us where the money's going or how it's being used.

In the first time in the history of the United States, the vice president is given the power to decide what is classified and what is not. Behind closed doors, key environmental protections are shredded. And in the middle of the night, without so much as a single fingerprint left in the margin, some invisible hand inserts into an omnibus bill a loophole providing billions of dollars in subsidies to powerful clients.

The stakes are enormous. And when you review this you remember the answer Richard Reeves gave to a student to define real news. "It's the news we need to keep our freedoms," Dick answered. Real news is the news we need to keep our freedom.

But it's not just government that is squeezing out real news. Some of the media giants are doing it themselves, as they consolidate ownership. They're shrinking their news holes and isolating public affairs away from prime time. A study by Mark Cooper of the Consumer Federation of America reports that nearly two-thirds of today's newspapers are monopolies.

Take a look at a recent book called "Leaving Readers Behind: The Age of Corporate Newspapering," published as part of the Project on the State of the American Newspaper under the auspices of the Pew Charitable Trust and the leadership of Gene Roberts, the former managing editor of the New York Times. The report describes a furious unprecedented blitz of buying, selling and consolidating of newspapers from the mightiest daily to the humblest weekly. A world where small hometown dailies are being bought and sold like hog futures, where chains now devour other chains whole, where they are effectively ceding whole regions of the country to one another, further minimizing competition, where money is pouring into the business from interests with little knowledge and even less concern about the special obligations newspapers have to democracy.

I'm not making this up. The Daily, in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, with a circulation of 23,500, a paper that prided itself on being in business since the Johnson administration—that's the Andrew Johnson administration—in 1998 it was sold not once, but twice within the space of two months. Two years later it was sold again—four owners in less than three years. In New Jersey, the Gannett chain bought the Asbury Park Press and then sent in a publisher who slashed 50 people from the staff and cut the space for news—and then was rewarded for being Gannett's manager of the year.

You better get used to it, the authors conclude; it won't be long before America is reduced to half-a-dozen major print organizations. The non-partisan Project for Excellence in Journalism says this: "Newspapers have 2,200 fewer employees than they did in 1990. The number of full-time radio news employees dropped by 44% between 1994 and 2000. The number of broadcast network correspondents has dropped by one-third since the 1980s, and the number of TV network foreign bureaus is down by half in a time of a war with terror."

Except for "Sixty Minutes" on CBS, the network prime magazines "in no way could be said to cover major news of the day." Furthermore,

the report finds 68% of the news on cable channels was "repetitious accounts of previously reported stories without any new information."

What happens when robust journalism bites the dust? The Pew report tells of examples like Cumberland, Maryland, where the police reporter had so many duties piled upon him he no longer had time to go to the police station for the daily report. But newspaper management had a cost saving solution: put a fax machine in the police station and let cops send over the news they thought the paper should have. No brutality today, Mr. Editor.

There is a 1999 survey in the book that shows a massive retreat in coverage of key departments and agencies right here in Washington, including the Supreme Court and the State Department. At the Social Security Administration, whose activities affect literally every man—and not just Walter—only the New York Times was maintaining a full-time reporter. And at the Interior Department, which controls 500 to 600 millions of acres of your land, and looks after everything from the national park service to the Indian Bureau, there were no full-time reporters in 1999.

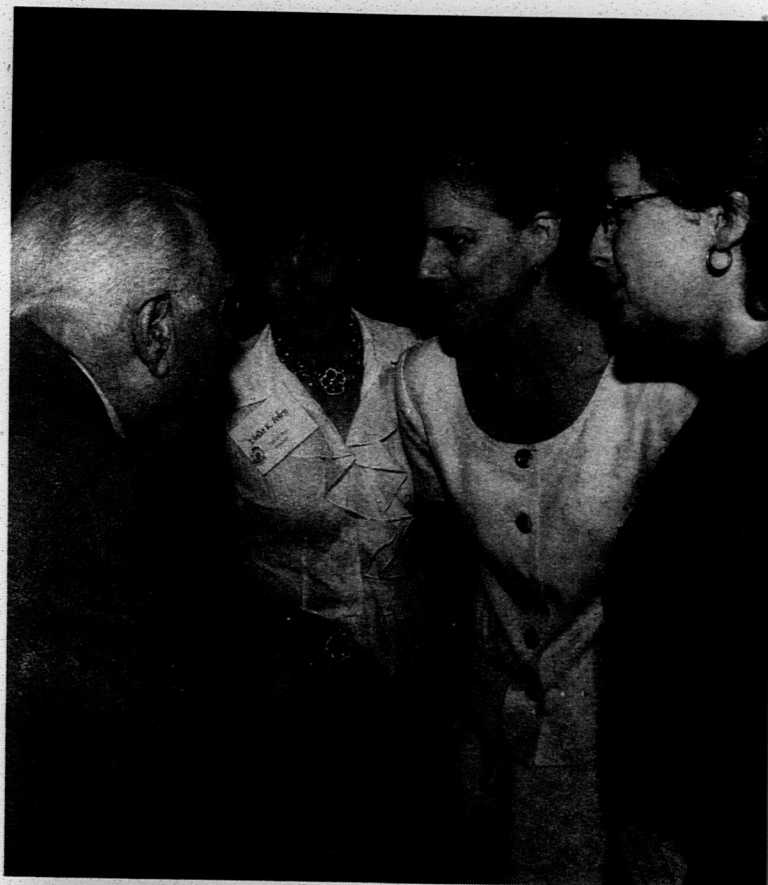
That's here in Washington. Out across the country, there is simultaneously a near-blackout of local politics by broadcasters. The public interest group, Alliance for Better Campaigns, studied 45 stations in six cities in one week last October. Out of 7,560 hours of programming analyzed, only 13 were devoted to local public affairs—less than one half of one percent of local programming nationwide.

Meanwhile, as secrecy grows and media conglomerate in fewer and fewer hands, we have witnessed the rise of a new phenomenon: a quasi-official partisan press, ideologically linked to an authoritarian administration that, in turn, is the ally and agent of some of the most powerful financial and business interests in the world who loath transparency.

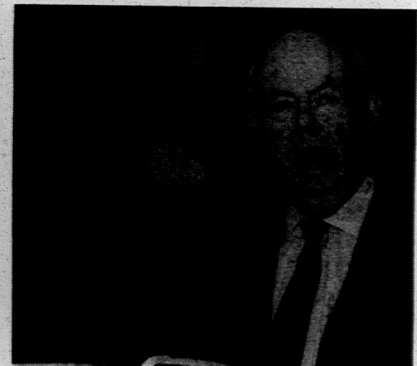
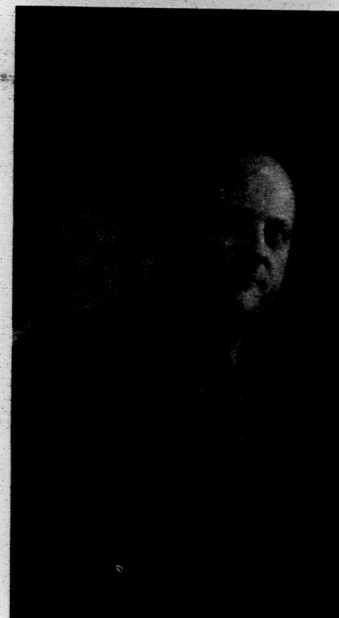
This convergence dominates the marketplace of political ideas as a phenomenon unique in our history. Stretching from the pages of the Wall Street Journal to Rupert Murdoch's empire to the nattering nabobs of know-nothing radio, to a legion of think tanks bought and paid for by corporations circling the honey pots of government, a vast echo chamber resounds with a conformity of opinion, serving an ideology whose world-view cannot be proven wrong because it admits no evidence to the contrary. When you challenge them with evidence to the contrary, when you try to hold their propaganda to scrutiny, you're likely to wind up in the modern equivalent of a medieval iron maiden—between the covers, that is, of an Ann Coulter book. Or you'll wake up one morning in an underground cell at Fox News, force-fed leftovers from a Roger Ailes' snack and required to stare 24 hours a day at photographs of Rupert Murdoch on the four walls of the cell while listening to a piped-in Bill O'Reilly singing the hallelujah chorus in praise of himself.

So, that's why tonight is so important. Why the Barr, Broun and Block awards are more than about ritual, ceremony or even celebration. They are ringing confirmation of what journalism can do. I don't want to claim too much credit for this craft, but I don't want to claim too little for it, either. I believe journalism and democracy are deeply linked in whatever chance we Americans have to redress our grievances, retake our politics and reclaim our revolutionary commitment to equality and justice.

One last thing. The character in Tom Stoppard's play "Night and Day," a news photographer, sums it up when he says, "People do terrible things to each other, but it's worse in places where everything is kept in the dark." So keep fighting the good fight.



Above, TNG-CWA President Linda Foley presents Broun winners Christine Willmsen and Maureen O'Hagan (at right) to Walter Cronkite. At left, John Moyers accepts the Herbert Block Freedom Award on behalf of the iconoclastic TomPaine.com web site. Below, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney urges greater journalistic attention be paid to working people and their struggles.



ALL PHOTOS BY RAY CROWELL/WASHINGTON-BALTIMORE GUILD



TNG-CWA international rep Marian Needham shakes hands with Bill Moyers as Tom Schick, administrative officer of the Providence Guild, looks on.

News round-up

Overtime lawsuits have tripled in six years

While the U.S. workforce braces for new overtime rules, scheduled to take effect in August, one sign of what's in store can be seen in court: according to a Bloomberg report, the number of lawsuits alleging that U.S. companies are not paying required overtime to their white-collar workers has tripled since 1997. More than a hundred class-action lawsuits were filed in 2003, including claims by "managers" with few managerial duties who had been told they were ineligible for time-and-a-half pay after 40 hours.

Four-day strike at SBC followed by contract

Think of it as a swift jab to the kidneys: just hours after ending a four-day strike against SBC Communications, more than 100,000 CWA members finally got a contract offer they could accept. The 5-year pact strengthens job security, continues company-paid health care premiums and will return white-collar jobs to the U.S. that had been off-shored to low-wage countries abroad, including India and the Philippines. Although the agreement will increase co-pays for medical services and prescription drugs, a \$1,000 bonus for workers and \$2,500 for retirees is intended to offset the hikes.



Taking a break from the Western District Council meeting in Bakersfield, Guild members join the SBC picket line. From left, Norma Bastreis of Hawaii, council president Adele Berlinski of Eugene and Wayne Cahill of Hawaii.

Women working harder for less reward

A woman's work is never done—and there's more of it, according to the AFL-CIO's annual Ask a Working Woman Survey. The national random sample phone poll of 1,450 working women found they're working harder for less reward and more anxiety in 2004 than they did six years ago, the first time the survey was conducted. Nearly half of employed females 18 and over said either they or someone in their family had been out of work in the past year. Some 62% of those surveyed contributed between half and all of their household's income. Overwhelmingly, respondents worried about the rising costs of health care (92%), the increased number of white collar jobs moving overseas (79%), overtime pay being eliminated and losing their jobs altogether (71% each).

Yes, Virginia, it was a police riot in Miami

Activists who protested last year's closed-door meetings in Miami to finalize the Free Trade Area of the Americas were met with the equivalent of martial law, according to a draft report released by the Miami-Dade County Independent Review Panel. In some cases, police reacted with an "unrestrained and disproportionate use of force" and "civil rights were trampled," according to the report, which documents numerous instances of intimidation, harassment and other repressive tactics. The report may be seen at www.miamidade.gov/irp/Library/5-19-04_FTA_A_Exec_sum.pdf.

GOP jumped on offshoring bandwagon

The off-shoring bug has bitten the GOP elephant on the rump. According to the Hindustan Times, "till very recently the fund-raising and vote-seeking campaign for the Republican Party was done partly out of India. And this was handled by two call centres located in our own friendly neighbourhood in Noida and Gurgaon." The Times added that approximately 125 telemarketers solicited financial contributions for the Republican Party between May 16, 2002 and July 22, 2003. The workers' mandate "was to mobilise support for President George W. Bush and solicit political contributions ranging between \$5 and \$3,000 from lakhs of registered Republican voters. . . . [editor's note: 1 lakh = 100,000]."

U.S. security getting off-shored, too

The Bush administration has awarded a \$10 billion contract to Accenture, formerly Arthur Andersen, to oversee creation of a "virtual border" around the U.S. to block terrorists from entering the U.S. The award was made less than two years after the White House and its Congressional allies gutted a House-passed provision banning homeland security contracts with corporations that exploit tax loopholes, move off-shore, and avoid U.S. taxes. Accenture recently moved its corporate headquarters to Bermuda to avoid U.S. taxes. Its executives have given President Bush more than \$68,000 in campaign contributions since 2000.

Got kids? Wondering what they'll be doing?

Recent Bureau of Labor Statistics projections for white-collar job growth for 2002-2012 contrast sharply with earlier estimates, revealing the impact of shipping jobs offshore, according to an analysis by the Department for Professional Employees. Over the next decade, BLS now says, seven of the 10 occupations with the most job growth will pay low wages and will not require a college degree. This is a major shift from earlier estimates that had projected rapid growth for white-collar, high-tech positions. The largest number of new jobs will be retail salespeople, food preparers, waiters and waitresses, cashiers, janitors, nursing aides, orderlies and attendants. Forecasts for the most rapidly growing occupations show a similar pattern, with most growth among low-paid medical service workers. Just two years ago, the 2000-2010 BLS projections indicated that the seven most rapidly growing occupations would be in information technology.

'Free enterprise,' Wal-Mart style: \$1 billion subsidy

By Mark Gruenberg
Press Associates, Inc.

Despite its image as a bastion of "free enterprise," Wal-Mart has garnered a total of at least \$1 billion in state and local government subsidies nationwide to erect new warehouses and stores, according to research by think-tank Good Jobs First. Moreover, the study points out, the various state and local tax breaks, infrastructure improvements, loans and outright cash bestowed on Wal-Mart come with few if any obligations, do not produce good jobs and fail to improve local economies.

Instead, the jobs Wal-Mart creates are offset by job losses at the local retailers it drives out of business. And tax losses from closed competitors offset the tax revenues Wal-Mart generates—indeed, the report notes, in many cases local governments have exempted Wal-Mart from property taxes.

The world's largest retailer had 2003 revenues of \$256 billion and a \$9 billion profit. The study taking it to task, "Shopping for Subsidies," was released May 24 and is the first comprehensive look at state and local subsidies for a retailer. Previous similar studies focused on state and local subsidies for factories.

Factory subsidies, while also high, at least "produce better upstream and downstream effects" in jobs and tax revenue, said Greg

LeRoy, executive director of Good Jobs First.

The study may bolster union and community leaders in their attempts to organize Wal-Mart workers and to force the retailer to compete on a level playing field. The nation's largest private employer—Wal-Mart has more than a million workers—is known for its below-market wages, high-cost health care, determination to force its workers to use public health services and rampant labor law-breaking.

Federal agencies and courts have found Wal-Mart guilty of race and sex discrimination and of locking workers in its stores after hours and forcing them to work overtime without pay. It also has been militantly anti-union, defeating repeated organizing campaigns by the United Food and Commercial Workers. Meanwhile, Wal-Mart's grocery chain competitors have used the giant as an excuse to demand wage cuts and health care givebacks of their own.

The irony is that some portion of this anti-worker campaign is underwritten by the taxpayer. Indeed, the \$1 billion in economic development subsidies identified by Good Jobs First understates the total, according to Philip Mattera, the study's research director, because of the impossibility of tracking down all the local subsidies for the chain's 3,000-plus retail stores nationwide.

The full study may be read on-line at www.goodjobsfirst.org.

Under Bush, the rule is 'there are no rules'

The Bush government's rollback of federal rules regulating the environment, job health and safety, labor and civil rights is extensive, largely hidden from view and will have a lasting impact on the U.S., a new report claims.

"Special Interest Takeover," released May 25 by the 10-year-old Citizens for Sensible Safeguards Coalition—whose members include the AFL-CIO and other unions—details not just obvious examples of deregulation, such as ergonomics, but hidden ones, such as huge data requirements that have all but stopped rulemaking. And it points out that the key public safeguards of transparency and the right to comment have become a sham, as Bush's agencies accept public comments but ignore them.

Meanwhile, corporate special interests, aided by dozens of corporate lobbyists named to high posts in the Bush regime, wind up writing lax rules—or no rules at all—for industries they once worked for.

"What is happening to our regulatory system across the entire federal government is truly, truly alarming," observed former Environmental Protection Administrator Carol Browner on introducing the 130-page detailed report.

Issues covered by the report range from workers' rights to overtime pay to children's exposure to lead to poisons in the air to lack of anti-terrorist protection at chemical plants. It also profiles a Bush OMB official who, on ideological grounds, kills new regulatory proposals after letting industry see them in advance and in secret.

The report singles out the repeal of the ergonomics rule—a major TNG-CWA priority—which was 10 years in the making, as an example of how the current administra-

tion's actions corrupt the entire regulatory process.

"As with the environment, special interests hold the trump card over the American worker," wrote report investigators, drawn from OMB Watch and other public interest groups. Not only was ergonomics repeal "the first major piece of legislation Bush signed," but "the administration declined to even collect information on the extent of ergonomic injuries, not letting facts get in the way of the predetermined decision to do nothing." That's a common pattern government-wide, the report adds.

And while the Bush regime insists on tough cost-benefit analysis for any rule—so tough that other standards are delayed or dropped—it ignored data showing the ergonomics rules would produce \$9.1 billion in annual benefits and cut 460,000 injuries a year, the report observes.

"Unfortunately, the Bush administration ignored these findings and bowed to business interests" that pushed ergonomics repeal. Those interests, led by UPS, FedEx, Anheuser Busch and the Chamber of Commerce, "contributed more than \$11 million to GOP lawmakers during the 2000 election cycle."

Bush also dumped a Clinton rule to record how many workers suffered diminished hearing due to excessive noise on the job. And Bush quadrupled the amount of coal dust miners could be exposed to.

The report also profiles the many former lobbyists and business officials Bush named to enforce—or not enforce—pro-worker and environmental rules, including OSHA Administrator John Henshaw, a former top industrial hygienist at Monsanto and at a Monsanto spinoff.—Press Associates, Inc.



LOOKING AHEAD

Reagan no Walesa on labor matters

By Linda Foley, President

Okay. Let me admit up front that I had no interest in the pomp and circumstance surrounding America's final farewell to Ronald Reagan. I'm sorry for his suffering through a decade of Alzheimer's disease, and I sympathize with his family for their ordeal. I admit his one-liners made me smile sometimes. But that's about all the emotion I can muster regarding the passing of America's fortieth president.

However, I can get very emotional when I think about the consequences of his presidency for The Newspaper Guild, its members and for me personally. On the personal side, my first experience in a massive worker demonstration was Solidarity Day, September 1981, in Washington, D.C.

A month earlier, President Reagan had fired 11,000 of the nation's 13,000 air traffic controllers for exercising their fundamental constitutional right to strike, sending a clear signal to employers across the country to do likewise when confronted by their unions. The AFL-CIO's reaction to the gauntlet thrown by Reagan was to march, 500,000-strong, on the nation's capital.

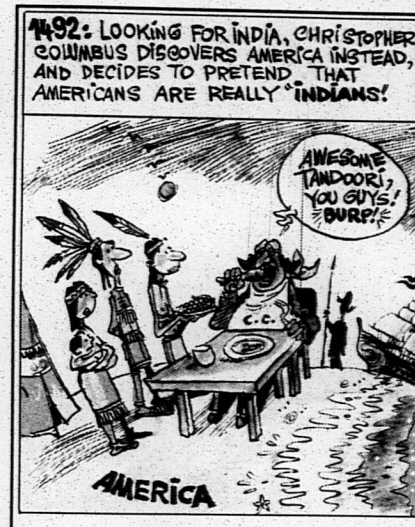
Because the Professional Air Traffic Controllers were on strike, we eschewed "scab-controlled" planes for trains, automobiles and, in our case, buses. Once I had

pulled an all-nighter on a bus with Kentucky steelworkers, sheet metalworkers, telephone operators, machinists—and, yes, even striking PATCO members—I was hooked on the labor movement.

The ensuing march, with hundreds of Guild members from all over the country (who were just as bleary-eyed from their nocturnal journeys) joining thousands of our sisters and brothers from other unions, cinched it for me. It was a demonstration of the sheer numbers behind the initials "TNG" and "AFL-CIO." I realized I had become part of something big and powerful.

I can't be so nostalgic about the effects on the Guild itself or its members. Reagan's power play with PATCO turned out to be merely the opening battle in a decades' long war he and his successors have waged against workers' rights in this country. Since that fateful time in 1981, every Guild member who has exercised or thought about exercising the fundamental democratic right to strike has had to face the prospect of being "permanently replaced." If it was okay for the President of the United States to fire strikers, then it was okay for any U.S. employer to do it.

The blow to workers' rights was swift and devastating. Consider that when Ronald



Reagan was first sworn into office, about 20% of the U.S. labor force belonged to unions. When he left office, in 1989, the number had fallen to less than 15%. Today, it's around 11% (8.2% in the private sector).

Emboldened private sector employers, including many publishers, went even further, punishing workers who participated in actions short of striking. In the intervening years since the Reagan Administration, they have singled out union leaders for lesser assignments, endlessly stalled negotiations for new contracts, fomented movements to decertify the Guild and tried to end the careers of those who work to organize their co-workers.

Many who eulogized Ronald Reagan noted his role in prompting the downfall of the Soviet Union and its iron grip on much

of Eastern Europe. Arguably, Reagan's policies did have an effect on the USSR's ultimate demise.

But in August, 1980, long before Reagan challenged Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev to "tear down this wall"—even before he was elected president of the United States—Lech Walesa, a dockworker from Poland, jumped another wall at the Gdansk shipyards. He and his comrades began a wave of strikes culminating in the formation of the only free trade-union movement in the Soviet bloc. By the time Reagan left office in 1989, Walesa's Solidarity movement had led to the first parliamentary elections in Poland since before World War II.

Now that's something I can get emotional about.

LETTERS

To the Editor,

Your piece describing the change in position of the New York local on freelancers definitely deserves its place on the front page of The Guild Reporter (April 23). Congratulations to you, to Linda Foley, to the N.Y. Guild and to our whole union for making it happen. I especially liked seeing the supportive way the ASMP statement was included, which I understand to mean that the New York local has gone to bat for freelance photographers at the New York Times.

Freelancers are workers, too, and provide an increasing percentage of the content of newspapers and periodicals, both union and non-union. Most are young, and include some of the most progressive voices in our profession. If we want a strong union, we have to take the industrial approach and organize everybody, wall to wall (or screen to screen). It will still require a lot of work and imagination to figure out how the Guild can advance the needs of both freelancers and staff writers and photographers, but this is a good start.

As a freelancer and Guild member for almost two decades, I feel we've turned a corner.

—David Bacon,
Northern California Media Guild

To the Editor,

Congratulations to the Guild leaders who produced the awards banquet with John Sweeney, Bill Moyers and Walter Cronkite. It was the classiest event in my 33 years as a dues-payer. It was great to hear about past victories and present challenges. Only the future was elusive.

The one person of color who was listed on the program had to cancel, eliminating

any racial diversity among the speakers. The audience of 300 was even more foreboding. It seemed fewer than 5% were not white. That sends the wrong message to the allies we will need in upcoming battles. The Guild will not survive if we do not include the 21st Century work force in every endeavor.

—Dick Peery, President,
Northeast Ohio, Local 1

[Editor's note: Broun judge Tracey Neale and Broun chair Susan Watson, both women of color, had to cancel.]

To the Editor,

In the May 21 issue, Guild President Linda Foley rightfully lauded Seymour Hersh and the rest of the press for their coverage of the Iraq prison abuse. She should also deliver a kick lower in the anatomy for the underreporting of the Berg beheading.

Foley also noted Hersh's My Lai exposé. I hope that the ongoing jail coverage does not carry the seeds of a repeat of the My Lai-Hué massacre imbalance.

What Hué massacre? That is exactly my point.

—James O. Clifford, Sr., (ret. UPI-AP)
Redwood City, Calif.

To the Editor,

After the May Tri-Council meeting, at which we discussed the Guild's possible participation in politics, I traveled to Richmond, where I happened to visit the grave of Edgar Allan Poe's mother.

As you may know, Poe lived for a while in Richmond, mostly with his foster parents. His mother was buried in St. John's Episcopal Church in Richmond in 1811, and because she was an actress—which was then considered some sort of awkward occupation—she was buried in the middle of the night, so no

one would know she was there.

While I was in the cemetery, I entered into conversation with a gentleman from Richmond who asked what I did. I said I was a journalist. He said, "Let me ask you a question," and somehow I knew it wouldn't be a positive question. Then he asked, "Why are you journalists so biased?" and I replied "Biased against whom?" although I knew full well what he was getting at.

So you see, whether we're involved in politics or not, people still feel we're biased, anti-conservative, anti-Republican and anti-Bush. I hate labels, but in this case, the stereotype would be liberal or left-wing, which to me is a better label than right-wing, which I feel is most often connected with Central American dictators who, naturally, have been supported by conservatives in America.

So I told the gentleman in the Richmond cemetery that most journalists seemed to have been born with the liberal gene. And since they go into this profession knowing they won't get rich but believing that in some instances the profession can be used as a vehicle for positive change, they tend to also have the idealist gene.

He didn't feel that was a good gene to have.

I am not in favor of the Newspaper Guild endorsing political candidates, but c'mon—being a labor union, who couldn't figure out which side we're on? While most people recognize the endorsements newspapers make, does anyone need to guess who unions support? Are there any labor unions in America endorsing Bush or the Republican line in general? I think not.

While I think the Guild making actual endorsements may be going too far, I do believe that journalists, as citizens, should

have the same political rights as any other citizen and should be able to give their money to any politician or political cause they desire.

Getting back to Mrs. Poe, in a new monument donated by the Poe Society of Richmond, Edgar Allan Poe paid his respects to his mom in English that could only be supplied by one of America's greatest early writers:

"The actor of talent is poor at heart, indeed, if he do not look with contempt upon the mediocrity even of a King. The writer of this article is himself the son of an actress—has invariably made it his boast—and no earl was ever prouder of his earldom than he of the descent from a woman who, although well born, hesitated not to consecrate to this drama her brief career of genius and beauty."—The Broadway Journal of July 1848.

—Mike Ulreich, President,
Chicago Newspaper Guild

To the Editor,

I just read the Reporter on the first Guild contract at the Philadelphia Record. I started at the Record in 1928 as an office boy, when I was 15 years old. I think I might be one of the oldest members—I'm now 91 years old.

I had 18 years on the Record, two years on the Camden Courier and 29 years on the Philadelphia Inquirer, where I was a shop steward and RA member.

I volunteered in World War II and served in the artillery for two battle stars, then went to Yank Magazine as a photographer in Rome. I covered the first war crime trial for German General Dossler, who was in command in Italy.

—Charles W. James,
Havertown, PA

The mission of The Guild Reporter, approved May, 2004 by the TNG-CWA Executive Council, is as follows:

"As stated in the TNG-CWA Constitution, 'It shall be the duty of The Guild Reporter to promote in every legitimate way the policies of TNG-CWA.' The Guild Reporter belongs to the rank-and-file membership of TNG-CWA.

"Guild Reporter content will be of interest to the

members, and its first priority will be current news affecting the locals. The members of this union expect The Guild Reporter to inform, motivate and challenge its readers.

"To maintain its journalistic integrity and traditions, The Guild Reporter must never become a personal political platform or be misused for internal political purposes by the elected leadership of TNG-CWA."

By TNG Convention action, letters to the editor shall be limited to 200 words and shall avoid libel and subjects detrimental to the Guild. Members subjected to personal attack shall be given opportunity to reply in the same issue, but publication of either attack or reply shall not be delayed longer than one issue.

Deadline: Friday before publication. (Next deadline: July 9.)

Raines: ruled by a plantation mentality

By Andy Zipser
Editor, The Guild Reporter

It's ironic that The New York Times is making news these days as much as it is reporting it. Jayson Blair, Rick Bragg, Judith Miller—headline fodder all, albeit more prominently among journalists than for the public.

But Howell Raines keeps adding himself to the list, in the May issue of Atlantic Monthly but also on the Romenesko news blog and in a letter to Los Angeles Times media reporter Tim Rutten. Like a sullen Achilles who can't endure the injustice of his exile, the deposed executive editor is compelled to fire off just one more rant to buttress his contention that if only he hadn't been surrounded by fools, incompetents, hacks and toadies, if only he could have been given ample room to swing his mighty sword, if only . . .

If only.

Much of this normally would go unremarked in The Guild Reporter, were it not for Raines' decision to include The Newspaper Guild in his catalogue of speed-bumps on the road to greatness. As detailed in a mind-numbing, 21,000-word article in the May issue of Atlantic Monthly—headlined, perhaps also ironically, "My Times"—Raines found when he was named the paper's executive editor that it meant stepping into the middle of "a quiet but intense factional war" between senior editors, who understood the need for change, and the "traditionalists" who opposed them.

Precisely who those change agents might

have been, other than Raines himself, is open to question. The change-embracing "senior editors" apparently didn't include investigative editor Steve Engelberg or managing editor Bill Keller or Washington bureau chief Jill Abramson, all of whom get the back of Raines' hand. They did not include Raines' predecessor as executive editor, Joseph Lelyveld, about whom Raines oozes contempt, or that journalistic hack Lelyveld hired as his first managing editor, Gene Roberts. Even Arthur Sulzberger comes in for an ambivalent drubbing, for failing to "stiffen his spine" sufficiently to stand alongside his Horatio.

But Raines leaves no question about the identity of the "traditionalist" barbarians in his path. Thanks to The Newspaper Guild, the Times has a culture of "management by mendacity" in which "sloppy work is accepted as adequate." While the exiled executive tips his hat to editors who "had been frozen out of the creative process and any meaningful managerial responsibilities," which suggests that problems at the Times begin at the top, that theme isn't nearly as satisfying as demonizing the Guild and is soon abandoned.

No, as Raines sees it, the newspaper's "sometimes mindless job guarantees to the main employees' union, the Newspaper Guild" have blocked all efforts to create "a meritocratic workplace." Indeed, "generations of senior editors have found it an excruciating task to put out the paper while testifying at endless grievance hearings. On a newsroom floor with some 1,200 journalistic employees and an even larger, more militantly pro-Guild support staff, where the

company is the daddy and the union is the mommy, no one is supposed to speak publicly about the attitudes of entitlement and smug complacency that pervade the paper.

"The paper's top editors have complained privately for years about the dysfunctional traits the Guild tries to promote into newcomers," he adds. Former executive editor Max Frankel had to overcome "furious Guild opposition" to institute a bonus system. Bill Kovach, when he was "an influential editor" at the paper, was forced to dispense "blunt advice to prevent new reporters from adopting Guild-endorsed work habits."

"The Newspaper Guild serves as rush chairman of the culture of complaint," Raines laments, "and with the Times hiring younger people these days, the Guild's safety net is particularly reassuring to new employees who may still be insecure about measuring up to Times standards. However, older reporters and copy editors who careers are stalled and who are essentially running out the clock until retirement are the culture of complaints' chief stewards."

All of which suggests that sexing-up a story didn't start with front-line reporters.

Bruce Lambert, a Times reporter and Guild officer, observes that Raines' "anti-Guild passages are so rife with falsehoods and misconceptions that they rival anything that Jayson Blair ever concocted." Responding online to the nonsense, Lambert notes that the "mindless job guarantees" consist entirely of requiring the Times to have "just and sufficient cause" before firing someone. "If that seems onerous to Raines," he observes, "we

can only conclude that he wants the right to fire for unjust and insufficient causes."

The Guild never opposed bonuses; it objected to management unilaterally instituting a compensation program that is a legally required subject of negotiation—and succeeded in creating merit standards to avoid favoritism. There is no such thing as a "grievance hearing"; there is a monthly grievance meeting that lasts an hour or two—with management represented by its labor relation department, not by editors. It would be "mathematically impossible" for the Guild unit at the Times, which has approximately 1,500 members, to have support staff that outnumbers the journalists.

And on and on . . .

Non-Times Guild members also wrote to protest Raines' skewed vision. Kathy Shaw, who chairs the Worcester unit of the Providence Newspaper Guild, observes that the two newspapers Raines repeatedly cites as meritorious competitors—The Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post—are both staffed by Guild-represented employees. "There never was a Guild contract that I know of that dictated to management who they could hire as reporters," she writes. "I'd hate to see where newspaper people would be today without Guild protection."

Jim McGrath, an editorial writer at the Albany Times Union, makes similar observations before concluding, "How sad it is that such a brilliant newspaperman, after such a long and triumphant journey, is still imprisoned by a plantation mentality."

That may be the most apt epitaph of all.

When it's 'business,' news quality suffers

When making ever higher profits becomes your over-riding goal, and your single biggest expense is payroll, logic dictates that the surest way to increase one is to cut the other. And that you can realize "economies of scale" by merging with the competition. And that profit-enhancing "synergies" can be realized by demolishing artificial barriers between internal departments.

Now those still on the payroll at U.S. newspapers are saying such economic reductionism has gone too far. "They fear more than ever that the economic behavior of their companies is eroding the quality of newspapers," write Bill Kovach, Tom Rosenstiel and Amy Mitchell. "In particular, they think business pressures are making the

news they produce thinner and shallower. And they report more cases of advertisers and owners breaching the independence of the newsroom."

Kovach is chairman of the Committee of Concerned Journalists; Rosenstiel and Mitchell are director and associate director, respectively, of the Project for Excellence in Journalism. Both groups lent their weight to the Pew Research Center for its latest survey of journalists, which in its entirety (see <http://people-press.org>) makes for depressing reading.

According to the poll, a clear majority of journalists—66% at national news organizations, 57% at local ones—agree that profit pressures are hurting news coverage, up from 41% and 33%, respectively, 10 years

ago. That's cause for concern, but perhaps more disturbing is the contrarian view of the national news executives charged with implementing various profit-enhancing measures: 57% believe increased business pressures are "mostly just changing the way news organizations do things" and not having an adverse effect on quality.

Whereas five years ago journalists were obsessing about their own sins—mostly of ethics and standards—now they're worried about "problems that seem more structural and protracted." Nearly nine in 10 think news coverage avoids complex issues; 56% think the press is too timid; 52% believe increased performance pressure is resulting in sloppier reporting.

The disconnect in perceptions between

journalists and executives implies such problems won't be addressed—but also accounts for the finding that journalists have less confidence in their bosses than they did just five years ago. But the Pew survey found an even more significant break in perceptions: leadership ratings have "dropped most precipitously" among senior news executives.

"Five years ago, 42% of senior news executives nationally had high confidence in their bosses," Kovach, Rosenstiel and Mitchell observe. "Today, just 30% do. Locally, the number is 18%."

Such trends, the trio concludes, contribute to a sense of dispiriting fragmentation. "Not only do they disagree on solutions," they write, "they seem further apart on identifying the problems."

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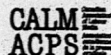
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DAYBOOK

- 2004 UNITY Convention,
Aug. 4-8, Washington, DC
- TNG Sector Conference,
Aug. 26-28, Anaheim, CA
- CWA Annual Minority Caucus,
Aug. 26-29, Anaheim, CA
- CWA Annual Convention,
Aug. 30-31, Anaheim, CA
- Western District Council,
Oct. 23-24, Hawaii
- Safety and Health Conference,
Oct. 24-27, Baltimore, MD
- Great Lakes District Council,
Nov. 6-7, Detroit, MI
- CWA Legislative-Political Conf.,
March 6-9, Washington, DC
- TNG Sector Conference,
May 5-8, 2005, Victoria, BC
- CWA Annual Convention,
Aug. 29-31, 2005, Chicago

FROM THE MORGUE

Seventy years ago this month:

The American Newspaper Guild holds its second annual convention in St. Paul, just six months after its founding convention, in Washington, D.C. Heywood Brown is reelected president, while Jonathan Eddy is retained as executive secretary. Delegates also decide that the Guild Reporter shall be published twice a month after Aug. 15 and that its editor will receive a salary. . . . Fifty-nine of 60 Guild leaders responding to a nationwide straw poll oppose affiliating with the American Federation of Labor.

Fifty years ago this month:

A Toronto publisher becomes the first Canadian to be tried and convicted of violating a statute prohibiting interference with the operation of a trade union. . . . General Motors blacklists the Wall Street Journal—and the Associated Press, to which it belongs—after the daily's publication of a series on deliberate overproduction of cars to allow a factory shutdown, weakening union bargaining leverage. . . . The Tri-City Newspaper Guild changes its name, becoming The Newspaper Guild of Albany; no word on how Troy and Schenectady members feel about that.

Twenty-five years ago this month:

TNG international rep Charles Dale announces he'll run for TNG secretary-treasurer. . . . The strike-lockout that has idled 1,400 members of five Vancouver unions—including more than 800 in the Guild—ends after nearly eight months. . . . TNG President Charles Perlik, warning of growing media monopolies, urges a U.S. Senate committee to enact legislation to limit the number of newspapers a single company can acquire.

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