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Canadian Guild study uncovers culture of bullies

By Barbara Saxberg
VP, Equity & Human Rights, CMG

A troubling picture of human rights violations in the workplace has been uncovered by a study commissioned by the Canadian Media Guild.

Conducted by a team of researchers at York University's Centre for Research on Work and Society, the study focused particularly on Guild members' perceptions and experiences of discrimination and harassment at work. Approximately a thousand CMG-represented workers responded to the study questionnaire, which was supplemented by 43 phone interviews to expand on the data. The great majority (88%) were employed by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, but every CMG site was represented.

While it would be wrong to conclude that every Guild workplace is overwhelmed by problems, the study clearly shows that harassment is subtle and systemic and that incidents of discrimination are disturbingly frequent. Perhaps surprisingly, the study also found that such harassment is perpetrated by co-workers as well as by managers.

For example, the researchers reported that "many newsrooms seem to enable a 'culture of bullying.'" Such bullying, they noted, "may come from managers or other co-workers," with men and women equally capable of bullying the most vulnerable members of the workplace, defined as "the newly hired, contract workers, people of colour and women in male-dominated environments."

Reports of discrimination and harassment were found among all CMG employers, with the following highlights:

- 83% of respondents said they had observed or experienced some form of workplace harassment or discrimination in the past year.
- 60% said they'd experienced or observed discrimination at least once in the past year.
- More than a quarter reported experiencing or observing discrimination more than twice in the past year.

The most common basis for discrimination was age, targeting both

older and younger workers (37% reporting). Discrimination based on gender was next in frequency (30%), followed by discrimination based on union involvement (27%). There were few reports of discrimination based on aboriginal status or religious beliefs.

Among those who responded, federally designated "employment equity groups"—visibly ethnic or racial minorities, aboriginal people, people with disabilities and women—were represented roughly in proportion to their numbers in the Canadian labor force. Members of those groups were much more likely to report discrimination. This is not surprising and likely reflects the personal experiences of these group members.

Almost 60% of respondents were working in programming or editorial positions and almost a third in technical or trade positions; 13% reported working in clerical positions.

Women, younger employees and aboriginal or visible minority respondents were more likely to report being temporary or part-time, while the majority of respondents were permanent staff. This raises the possibility that the real numbers on harassment and discrimination may be even worse than reported.

The most commonly reported form of harassment, reported by more than half of the respondents, was demeaning comments made by co-workers or supervisors. Inappropriate sexual comments also are prevalent in some CMG workplaces. A smaller group of people reported comments or behaviour that were explicitly threatening, but the results overall suggest that workplace harassment tends to be subtle and systemic.

Other findings:

- Many Guild members fear reprisal if they complain about harassment or discrimination.
- Ineffectual management has allowed minor problems to escalate, creating a chronically toxic working environment.
- Downsizing and increased competition have lead to hostility and anger toward members of employment equity groups.

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Union volunteers jam AFL-CIO headquarters in Cleveland in preparation for get-out-the-vote efforts.

Full-court press comes up short

By Andy Zipser
Editor, The Guild Reporter

In what has been described as the largest labor mobilization in at least a decade, U.S. unions and their allies pulled out all stops in seeking to unhorse George Bush. And two weeks after Election Day, labor's generals were still hyping the effort—if not its results.

The numbers were impressive. The AFL-CIO and its member unions mobilized 5,000 paid staffers and

225,000 volunteers; indeed, in the weeks leading up to Nov. 2, CWA's headquarters building resembled a ghost town and most Guild staffers spent more time in Pennsylvania and Ohio than at home. The federation reported spending upwards of \$45 million on the effort, while the Service Employees union said it alone committed \$65 million.

All that money and manpower was focused primarily on increasing voter turnout among union households. The calculus was simple. Whereas only

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A Columbus rally takes Ohio Secretary of State Ken Blackwell to task for his vote suppression tactics.

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After brief, optimistic lull, newspapers cutting again

For a brief spell, following the downturn of 2001 through 2003, it seemed the newspaper industry would cease its bloodletting. Advertising was making a comeback and profits were in an upswing. Maybe, at long last, the steady drip of layoffs, cutbacks and early retirements would be stanchied.

No such luck.

Although somewhat distorted by fraudulent bookkeeping at several large dailies, the newspaper industry's overall circulation figures are continuing their decades-long decline. While the cumulative losses are modest, some papers are taking sizeable hits. The Los Angeles Times, for example, suffered a 5.6% drop in average daily circulation for the six months ended Sept. 30 compared to the year-earlier period. The Washington Post slipped 3%. The industry overall was down 0.9%.

The circulation drops have moved in tandem with economic forecasts of ad sales and profits. Indeed, even the most successful newspaper companies show a disturbing softness when examined closely. Gannett, for example, reported that operating revenues shot up 8.4% in October—but only because of its television operations. Overall newspaper national ad revenues slipped 1.6% for the month, on a 1% decline in ad volume.

None of these or other statistics of economic health are cataclysmically out of whack, but there's enough weakness that the optimistic predictions of early this year have been shelved. And as the year winds toward an end, the budget- and payroll-cutting that so often marks the season has resumed, albeit at a more measured tempo than in recent years.

The Guild-represented Philadelphia Inquirer and Daily News are in the midst of an enhanced voluntary retirement program, in which most employees already eligible for retirement are being offered an additional \$50,000 bonus to pack their bags by Dec. 6. Frank Santafede, administrative officer of the Philadelphia Newspaper Guild, says the Knight Ridder-owned papers are hoping to get 40 takers. "It's not like a big hit," he observes. Then again, he adds, it's one more drop in the trickle that has seen the number of Guild-

represented employees reduced from 1,057 full-timers and 49 part-timers in May, 1998 to 872 full-timers and 106 part-timers this past January.

At the San Francisco Chronicle, where strong contract provisions prevented any layoffs following Hearst's purchase of the paper several years ago, 44 management and non-union positions are being eliminated through a combination of layoffs and attrition. The cutbacks were blamed by management, currently in contract bargaining with the Guild, on weak business conditions.

Tribune Corp. and Belo, both of whom have been among the most prominent circulation fraud perpetrators, also have been among the earliest papers this year to announce job cuts. Belo has said it will trim payroll by 250 company-wide, including approximately 60 non-unionized newsroom employees at the Dallas Morning News. Tribune newspapers Newsday and the Orlando Sentinel are cutting 100 and 20, respectively, and sister paper The Hartford Courant acknowledged it, too, might have to eliminate jobs before Jan. 1.

But while the real economy is driving many of these cuts, others clearly are being made with an eye on Wall Street. Indeed, in a remarkably candid and revealing memo to her staff, Orlando Sentinel publisher Kathy Waltz revealed that eliminating jobs is "never easy"—then observed that because most employees are shareholders, "I know everyone wants to see an upward swing in the stock price."

Meanwhile, in a portent of still more job cuts to come, Tribune also announced it will consolidate the Washington bureaus of its eight papers that currently report from the nation's capital. Plans are to move all of the D.C. operations into a single office by January of 2006, amid suggestions that staff cuts will follow as duplicative coverage is eliminated. "The purpose of the restructuring is to minimize repetition in editorial coverage," explained Jack Fuller, Tribune's publishing president.

The likely result, however, will be a "super-bureau" providing a standardized product to all Tribune newspapers.

P-D pact extended 8 years

Guild-represented employees of the Cleveland Plain Dealer have ratified an eight-year contract extension that runs through February of 2014 but includes a wage reopener in 2010. The extension includes a wage and fringe package increase of \$23 per member per week on March 1 of each year, starting in 2006.

That gain may prove illusory, however, because the extension includes an automatic funding trigger for the health and welfare fund. The trigger requires an actuary to determine how much money is needed for the fund each Jan. 1, with any increases coming

out of the package.

The package also covers any increase in health care costs, so if those costs jump more than \$23 a week, Plain Dealer employees will be digging into their own pockets to cover the difference. The unit had already agreed to put the entire wage/fringe increase of \$31 paid Nov. 1, as prescribed by the last re-opener agreement, into the health and welfare fund.

The total of \$92 over four years is the same wage/fringe package amount that was bargained in the 2002 re-opener, but those increases were \$31 each, spaced 16 months apart.

Culture of bullies

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- Members of employment equity groups face greater levels of job insecurity.
- Members of employment equity groups are rarely given adequate training on hiring, setting them up to fail.
- Supervisors are seen to unjustly favor some employees for projects, assignments and advancement.
- Many of the problems are traced to a lack of management accountability.

What happens next?

The study's baseline data and qualitative information will be reviewed by CMG with human rights experts and legal counsel, and will be used to develop education and awareness programs and in collective bargaining. Plans also are being made for a CMG-spon-

sored human rights conference to address many of the issues unearthed by the study.

The Canadian Media Guild will continue to actively investigate any complaints that members bring forward. Several grievances based on age and racial discrimination currently are heading toward arbitration. Guild leaders said they will continue their efforts to develop workplaces that are inclusive.

An executive summary of the study results can be downloaded from the internet in PDF format at www.cmg.ca/CMGHumanRightsReportSummary081104.pdf.

Correction

The Guild Reporter inadvertently misspelled John Shostrom's last name in a cutline on page 4 of the Sept. 10 issue.

Guild briefs . . .

Guild disclaims Allentown interest

TNG-CWA and the Lehigh Valley Newspaper Guild have disclaimed any interest in the local representing editorial employees of the Morning Call in Allentown, Pa., where a decertification petition had been filed. Guild officials said the local had been inactive for at least the past decade.

'Proletarian' posing prevails in Chicago

The Chicago Newspaper Guild has ratified, 83-14, a three-year contract with the Chicago Sun-Times that includes annual 3% raises and more money for healthcare premiums. The contract negotiations, which teetered on the edge of a strike, featured a sharp exchange between film critic Roger Ebert and ousted chief executive Conrad Black, who deplored Ebert's "proletarian posturing" in supporting the Guild. Ebert fired back by reminding Black that while he and his cronies were pocketing virtually all of the company's profits, Sun-Times escalators had been turned off "to save on electricity and maintenance."

Yakima daily has new 4-year pact

The Pacific Northwest Guild has negotiated a new contract at the Yakima Herald-Republic, completing negotiations a month before the old pact expired. The four-year agreement took effect Oct. 20 and includes annual raises of 3%, 2.5%, 2.5% and 2%.

CBC budget cut \$10 million more

The proposed Canadian federal budget for the 2004-2005 fiscal year reduces funding for the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. by \$10 million. One positive note, according to the Canadian Media Guild: because CBC had anticipated the cuts, "there will not likely be massive layoffs"—for now. But additional cuts are anticipated in future years, prompting Guild requests to meet with management to explore possible implications.

Tribune changes rules midstream

As Tribune Corp. searches for new and innovative ways to maximize corporate profits, it recently cut off access to the retiree health plan for Baltimore Sun employees retiring after August 31. Earlier this year, however, the Sun provided Guild officials with written assurances that only employees hired on or after June 25, 2003 would not be eligible to participate in the plan—which isn't exactly generous, in any case, since the retirees pay the full premium; the company's only

cost is administrative. A Guild grievance has been filed.

AP house-cleaning prompts grievance

Within two weeks of taking the job, the Associated Press's bureau chief in New Jersey has employees up in arms for pulling its veteran three-person statehouse crew off political beats and demoting the reporters to night and weekend duty. Also demoted was a day supervisor with 32 years' of journalism experience. One of the three, state capital news editor John McAlpin, was AP employee of the year in April, 2003. Another, Kathy Hennessy, resigned in protest. The Guild has filed a grievance.

Louisville warning to all Guild locals

Two recent National Labor Relations Board decisions involving the Louisville Courier-Journal serve as an object warning to all locals to vigorously defend their rights. In both cases, the board ruled 2-1 that because the newspaper's unions—not including TNG-CWA locals—did not object for nearly a decade as management made unilateral changes in their health care plans, they had lost their right to object now.

Reuters continues off-shoring jobs

Reuters has announced still more forced relocations of jobs to southeast Asia, with picture-editing and graphics operations to be consolidated in Singapore. Desks responsible for re-packaging news into online formats will be consolidated in Toronto, and the UK sports results desk will be outsourced. The shake-up will affect about 50 jobs.

Ad sales pitched for TNG convention

The Victoria-Vancouver Island Newspaper Guild is drumming up advertising support for its convention program. Ad copy and payment are due no later than Feb. 1. For prices, ad specs and other information, go to www.vving.ca.

Milwaukee elects new president

Jennie Tunkieicz, a Racine County Bureau reporter, has become the sixth president of the Milwaukee Newspaper Guild. She succeeds Laurie Lynch-German, who left a reporting job in the Ozaque-Washington Bureau to pursue a career as a private investigator. Also elected Sept. 12 were Amy Finard as second vice president; Greg Pearson as first vice president; Kwanza Griffin as secretary; and Bob Helbig as treasurer.

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Youngstown local strikes

Health care, wages top issues

Punched by a four-year wage freeze and feeling betrayed by broken promises regarding their health plan, the 171 Guild-represented employees of the Youngstown, Ohio Vindicator went on strike in the early morning of Nov. 16, one hour after their last contract expired. The walk-out came on the heels of failed mediation talks, with no further sessions scheduled.

Tony Markota, president of the Youngstown Newspaper Guild, said all of the newspaper's unionized reporters, photographers, copy editors, circulation district managers, delivery drivers and classified advertising sales people were honoring the picket lines. So were approximately 25 mailers represented by the Teamsters, who had been working without a contract.

Preparations were underway to launch a weekly strike paper, The Valley Voice, beginning Nov. 19. The local has set up a web site, www.valleyvoiceonline.org, and has launched an advertising boycott of the Vindicator, a family-owned newspaper.

Guild members said they were striking because they haven't had a wage increase since May 16, 2000; roughly half make less than \$9 an hour. The company's best offer to date, said Markota, was for a two-year contract with a 1% increase in the first year and no increase but a \$400 signing bonus in the second. The 1% increase, he noted, would translate into raises between 6.5 cents and 18 cents an hour.

The Guild's last offer, mean-

while, was for a flat dollar increase across all job classifications of \$7.50 a week per quarter, for a cumulative increase after two years of \$60 a week.

But as far apart as the two sides are on wages, the union's biggest flash point has been health care. Two years ago, Markota says, the Guild accepted company protestations that it was financially strapped and agreed that its members for the first time would pick up part of the premium—but only because of assurances that management and non-union employees would be treated similarly. "The company lied, and that simply outraged everyone" he adds: in addition to still paying all health care premiums for non-Guild employees, the Vindicator improved their plan while leaving the Guild's plan unchanged.

Now, Markota says, the company is trying to further increase Guild members' share of the premiums, to 15%, while proposing that new employees take an even bigger hit of 25%.

Although the Guild offered to enter contract negotiations Aug. 25, management didn't come to the table until Oct. 13 and shortly thereafter requested intervention by a federal mediator. More recently, the company's primary negotiating tactic seems to consist of unsubstantiated threats that acceding to the union's bargaining proposals will force it to close the paper.

The last strike against the Vindicator, in 1964, lasted eight months.

NLRB hits reporter for political speech

The National Labor Relations Board has ruled that newspaper managers did not violate the law when they admonished a Guild-represented reporter for seeking city council support in contract negotiations. The board said management's legitimate and substantial business justifications outweighed the employee's right to engage in protected activities under Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act.

At issue was an Oct. 22, 2002 off-duty appearance by Tom Anderson before the Fremont City Council. Identifying himself as a business reporter for the Fremont Argus, Anderson asked the council to adopt a resolution supporting the Northern California Media Workers Guild in its contract negotiations with his employer.

Although Anderson did not regularly attend council meetings or report on the city council, a few weeks after his request he wrote a news article quoting city officials who report to the council. This prompted Anderson's immediate supervisors to call a meeting Nov.

22, in which they expressed their concern that his request to the council created the appearance of a conflict of interest. The two editors did not discipline Anderson.

Nonetheless, the local filed an unfair labor practice charge that was upheld by an administrative law judge, who ruled that the company had violated federal prohibitions on interfering with employees engaged in protected activities. The NLRB reversed that decision, setting a troubling precedent by reasoning that although Anderson did not cover the council, newspaper beats change and reporters sometimes are assigned to cover stories outside their usual beats.

Consequently, the board ruled, Anderson's employer "had a legitimate and substantial business justification" for initiating a discussion. And since Anderson was not disciplined—and, indeed, management made it clear he was free to engage in union activity—the board concluded any adverse effect was minimal.

The union is considering its legal options.



Trail of (two) tiers

CWA members jam the sidewalk in front of the Washington Post on Nov. 15 to protest its persistent refusal to abolish a two-tiered wage structure for its mailers. Under the two-tiered structure, in place since 1991, approximately 120 of the newspaper's 400 mailers and helpers are classified as "utility mailers" and paid \$11.27 an hour—or less than half the \$884 weekly median journeyman

wage. Although the predominantly African-American utility mailers are trained to do every mailroom job, from running computers to assembling more than a million newspapers each Sunday, their lack of promotion opportunities and inability to afford health care coverage forces a high turnover, slowing production and limiting union participation. To put this in perspective, the combined pay of the company's top four executives exceeds the entire utility mailers payroll.

Blethen tries to drive a wedge into Guild ranks

Seeing to neutralize Guild support for maintaining two daily newspapers in Seattle, Seattle Times publisher Frank Blethen sent an e-mail Nov. 10 to CWA President Morton Bahr and TNG-CWA President Linda Foley warning of "deep cuts" if the local doesn't start supporting his efforts to end a joint operating agreement with the Seattle Post-Intelligencer. The P-I is owned by Hearst, which has said the paper would not be economically viable without the JOA, but Blethen insists his paper can't survive unless the JOA is ended.

The Pacific Northwest Guild, which represents approximately 700 Times employees and 150 at the P-I, has backed a citizens' group called The Committee for a Two-Newspaper Town. Although the Guild is officially neutral in the fight between the two employers, some citizens' group decisions have been more favorable to Hearst's position than to Blethen's.

The tensions created by these cross-currents were on full display at a Guild meeting Nov. 13, when a motion to withdraw Guild support for the citizens' committee resulted in a heated two-hour debate. Several speakers observed that the committee's "aggressive" positions have dovetailed with Hearst's too often for comfort, but others countered that this

simply reflects both parties' emphasis on maintaining both papers—and therefore on preserving more jobs.

"We're interested in preserving multiple daily newspapers, and we would support or resist either one of the two major players involved in this controversy to do that," committee co-chair Phil Talmadge told the P-I.

Commenting on Blethen's e-mailed appeals, Talmadge told the Seattle Times: "What is interesting is that Frank Blethen seems to think if the Guild withdraws its support, the committee will disappear. That simply won't happen."

Although the motion to withdraw Guild support for the committee was defeated, 62-43, observers said the voting reflected the split between P-I and Times employees, with the former leaning toward support for the committee and the latter opposed. Blethen's jawboning undoubtedly exacerbated the schism, as he has lobbied his employees for some time to support his rather than the Guild's position.

In his e-mails to Bahr and Foley, Blethen said the paper was continuing to hemorrhage advertising revenue and urged the union leaders to put pressure on the local to change its course. Bahr and Foley declined to comment on the exchange.

Canadians reject latest CanWest squeeze-play

CanWest Global Communications Corp., which raised a journalistic and political firestorm in 2001 when it tried to impose a national editorial policy on its many media outlets, is at it again—this time in an assault on freelancers. And, no surprise, it's getting a similar, outraged response.

The Canadian Media Guild has joined a chorus of writers' groups in denouncing a new contract that requires freelancers to waive their copyright and "moral rights." The waiver enables CanWest to re-use freelance material in any way it sees fit in its newspapers, internet sites and television stations, according to CMG President Lise Lareau.

"The level of concentration of media ownership in Canada means there are only a handful of media owners left, and this one is using its clout to gang up on the little guy," says Lareau. "It's pushing the limit on copyright law, labor law and individual writers' abilities to make a living."

Under the new contract, CanWest asserts a right to "exclusively use and exploit the Content in any manner and in any and all media, whether now known or hereafter devised, throughout the universe, in perpetuity." The contract also stipulates that the freelancer must waive all "moral rights" to the content, meaning it can be manipulated any way CanWest wants without the authorization of the person whose name will appear on the work. "This is an aggressive and abusive approach to people who write Canada's stories," says Lareau.

The Guild is also troubled by the contract's attempt to infringe on labour rights. The contract specifically states that freelancers who sign it "are not subject to any union or collective bargaining agreement." Several groups, including the Periodical Writers Association of Canada and the Writers Union of Canada, have joined the Guild in calling on CanWest to drop the proposed contract.

Labor needs 'that vision thing'

By David Bacon
Northern California Media Guild

There's no question that labor pulled out all the stops to defeat George Bush, which makes Bush's victory all that much harder to swallow. For many of the most progressive U.S. labor leaders, however, it was more than just bitter—it was threatening. "We have no alternative now but to resist at every level," said Stewart Acuff, the AFL-CIO's organizing director. "And one of the things we have to anticipate is the repression of political enemies. We're all going to have to stand up for each other."

Dolores Huerta, legendary co-founder of the United Farm Workers, was even more blunt. "We might as well start organizing now, if we don't want to run for cover after this one," she warned.

The first Bush administration compiled a four-year history of prohibiting union representation of many government workers, issuing federal injunctions during lockouts and strikes, rolling back overtime and worker protection legislation and racking up job losses greater than any administration since Herbert Hoover. With the threat that another four years would exceed even this record, unions throughout the U.S. sought to educate their members about the implication of a Bush reelection and to carry that message to the larger workforce, too.

And, in many ways, union members heeded the call. Eliseo Medina, executive vice-president of the Service Employees, called the mobilization unprecedented and said that despite Bush's victory, "thousands and thousands of members participated in this effort." If nothing else, he added, that effort has built a base from which labor can resist the attacks it now expects.

"We've got our work cut out for us," Medina cautioned. "We still have a battle for health insurance, for decent wages, and for immigrant worker rights. If we're going to succeed, not just in making positive changes but in making sure things don't get worse, we're going to need an engaged membership and engaged communities. If we don't speak up, nobody else is going to."

As is the case in every national election, unions contributed votes to the Democratic side of the ticket in larger proportions than their share of the population. But Huerta felt the Kerry campaign could have done more, especially in combating the use of abortion and gay marriage as wedge issues by the Republican Party. "There were little papers printed in Spanish and English, distributed throughout the Latino community, saying a vote for Kerry was a sin," she explained. "We only got 54% of the women's vote, which was down from 62%. That means we lost a lot among women. You need organizers on the ground. People get so confused by television and never hear the truth. Unless you have someone who hand-carries the message, we're going to lose every time."

Acuff saw the same problem while campaigning in Wisconsin. "In the upper Midwest, there was an alignment for many years between workers, union members and Catholics. That alignment has been broken," he declared. "We saw a lot of confused and conflicted working people in Wisconsin in this election, particularly over the issue of abortion."

Huerta and Acuff point to an important division, not just in the electorate in general, but among union members. Only 16% of union voters listed "moral values" as their prime interest, but Bush won 59% of their votes. Unions concentrated their attack on

the economy, which 42% of union voters listed as their main concern. Kerry took 71% of those votes.

But while the war in Iraq made constant headlines and was the main feature of presidential debates, the official AFL-CIO campaign had little to say about it. Some unions, like SEIU, used their own set of campaign points that condemned the war. But while 40% of union members listed Iraq as their primary issue, the 51% of this group who went to Kerry didn't do so because of convincing arguments by the AFL-CIO.

This split in labor was visible even during the primaries, when public sector unions in particular supported Howard Dean because of his antiwar stance. "It's wrong to think that speaking out on the war is the kiss of death in November," Medina warned at the time. "It's draining resources needed at home, leaving a huge deficit leading to the loss of jobs, while kids of working families are being sent to fight and die."

Indeed, labor opposition to the war has grown since last summer. Art Pulaski, executive secretary of the California Labor Federation (the AFL-CIO's largest state body), declared after Kerry's loss that "opposition to the war is going to swell in labor. It's going to be part of our opposition to everything the administration does." Acuff called the war "not only unnecessary but unjust. Waving the bloody shirt may work, but it doesn't mean it's right. It's certainly not about combating terrorism or keeping this country safe. It's about Bush's political agenda."

While many labor activists foresee a long series of defensive battles throughout a second Bush term, some still see an opportunity to advance labor goals, especially on health care. In California, for example, the effort by unions and healthcare advocates to

pass Proposition 72—which would have required large employers to provide health insurance for their workers—failed by a whisker. "As a result, all of us will pay more for our healthcare," Pulaski fumed. "Many will lose their insurance, and taxpayers will subsidize Wal-Mart and MacDonald's. This issue is not going away."

That's why Medina thinks there's a good possibility a similar measure will be put on the 2006 California ballot. "The solution is going to have to begin at the state, not at the federal level," he asserted. "This is a marathon, not a sprint."

Acuff, who won notoriety in 1994 by leading sit-ins at the office of then-House Speaker Newt Gingrich to protest the "Contract on America," warned that new campaigns of resistance and civil disobedience might be in the works. He concluded that unions have to go beyond just talking about bread-and-butter issues. Over the long haul, he said, the key problem for labor was "the vision thing"—unions need to present an alternative to the moral and social values trumpeted by the religious right.

"We need to define an agenda that has the potential to change peoples' lives, that's more than just tinkering around the edges," he explained. "We don't need to retreat on an agenda of fundamental change, including immigration, healthcare and the right to organize. That would be a huge mistake. But we need to talk about the values that provide the foundation for that agenda—greater liberation for human beings, greater freedom, greater opportunity, more justice in the country and in the world."

Bacon was recently honored by the International Labor Communications Association for his coverage of Iraqi labor unions.

'More of the same' means treading water

Continued from page 1

13% of the the U.S. labor force is now unionized, 26% of all voters in 2000 and 2002 came from union households. Given the closeness of the last presidential vote, labor's strategists reasoned, amping up the union turnout to 30% or more of the total could make a decisive difference. And the key to increased turnout, the reasoning continued, was increased contact. So the numbers piled up: hundreds of phone banks were set up, six million doors were knocked on, 32 million fliers got distributed.

The only thing missing from the calculation was the possibility that the evangelical right might be using the same playbook. So while the actual number of union household voters increased in 2004 compared to 2000, the proportion of such voters slipped, to 24% of the whole.

Oh, and there was one more problem with the calculus: overkill.

The AFL-CIO headquarters in Cleveland is thronged with union volunteers trying to find an assignment; most are dispatched in teams to canvas neighborhoods. Armed with detailed maps and the addresses of union members, they are supposed to knock on doors, hand out literature, politely ask for whom the respondent plans to vote and what his or her top issues are. The information is to be entered on a computer-generated printout that has a bar code for each union member—propaganda fodder for the nuttiest right-wing fringe, which obsesses about precisely this kind of individual tracking.

Back at headquarters, the responses are to be scanned into a computer for... well, no one says, exactly. The information might have been useful months earlier, but with a

week or less until Election Day it's all rather irrelevant. And besides, the scanning is tedious work, made even more so by balky equipment. The unscanned printouts end up getting tossed onto a pile that keeps growing, day by day.

Organized labor had much to fret about heading into the election, and the short period since Nov. 2 only confirms its worst fears. Every working-class gain of the past 60 years is under attack. A partial list includes further attempts to trim or eliminate overtime pay, by abolishing the 40-hour workweek and by substituting comp time for overtime; outlawing card-check recognition; further marginalizing the minimum wage; privatizing part or all of Social Security; busting government unions in the name of "national security"; pushing for tort "reform" to hobble the only recourse injured workers have when regulatory agencies don't do their jobs.

It's not just labor that's on the defensive. The Federal Communications Commission, which has displayed an alarming proclivity for removing regulatory obstacles to further media consolidation, now has more of a green light to indulge its impulses. A Kerry victory, rumor had it prior to the election, would have resulted in commissioner Michael Copps—the FCC's most outspoken opponent of further media consolidation—being named chairman. Kerry's loss assures the continued FCC leadership of Michael Powell, who confirmed Nov. 11 that he intends to stay at the helm, perhaps through 2007.

The biggest threat to labor and to democratic values of diversity and free speech, however, is posed by the near-certain replacement of one or more Supreme Court

justices—a prospect driven home by the news, just as election campaigning reached fever pitch, that Chief Justice Rehnquist has cancer. The likelihood of a more conservative majority emerging over the next couple of years implies the court will be more inclined to restrict First Amendment rights of free speech, free press and assembly, all in the name of strengthening national security.

Working a modern phone bank can be an adrenaline-pumping experience for novices. You sit at a computer terminal, listening to a dead headphone, waiting while a computer automatically dials number after number in search of a human being. When a connection is made, the recipient's name, address and telephone number pop up on the screen simultaneously with his or her voice in your ear saying "Hello? Hello?" Respond too slowly and the other party may hang up—that initial dead silence has become all too familiar to too many people by now.

The script you're supposed to read is, like all scripts, stilted and non-conversational. Most phone bankers quickly drop it and try to target the bare essentials: Remember to vote Tuesday. Please vote Democrat. Vote for Kerry. And, by the way, would you mind saying who you'll vote for?

A master computer in a back room displays aggregate results. Less than 5% of the numbers dialed result in a conversation with a live person; of those, a majority are supporting Kerry. What the numbers don't tell you is the frequency with which callers respond. "Do you know you've already called me two/three/four times?" That happens a lot.

In emphasizing the terrific outpouring of dollars and manpower, the AFL-CIO's post-

election message seems to be that labor did everything humanly possible and that next time the trick will be to do even more of the same. "We made our voices heard, and they cannot be ignored," AFL-CIO President John Sweeney declared after John Kerry's concession speech. "Never have so many different unions done so much. Never have we been so unified, moving forward together. Hundreds of thousands of us phone banked, walked precincts, leafleted, educated and mobilized other working family voters in the largest-ever union movement political program. And in doing so, we built a lasting force to continue the fight against attacks on working families and the fight for the economic justice and fairness all working families deserve."

Well, maybe. But as the current administration has demonstrated, those voices can indeed be ignored. And as labor licks its wounds and casts an uneasy eye toward the future, the union critics who for the most part held their fire before the election now are challenging the status quo and its conventional wisdom. If Election 2004 affirmed the right-wing's ascendancy, it also may have ushered in a labor revolution.

"Kerry? I'd never vote for that man," the plainspoken woman tells me in response to my computer-generated call. "Why would I vote for a man who looks down his nose at the rest of us, who jets around from one mansion to another, who never got any dirt under his fingernails?"

"Ma'am," I reply, "I don't necessarily disagree with you, but every word you say describes George Bush."

Pause. "When did our government get taken over by the wealthy?" she asks.

Voting problems get short shrift

By David Swanson

Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild

Although John Kerry surrendered the election less than 24 hours after the polls closed, a rising chorus of voices continues questioning the validity of the results. For the most part, however, the mainstream media have given these developments only superficial notice.

The relevant question is not whether there was enough fraud and error to decide the election—nor even whether there was more fraud than usual—but whether there was *any* fraud or errors. Where did the problems occur? How they can be prevented in the future? Most notably, what new kinds of fraud have been enabled by new technologies and by the privatization of our election process?

One clue that all was not well was provided by the now much-maligned exit polls. On Nov. 2, however, media commentators made it quite clear that they had seen the polls and took them seriously. Professional pollster John Zogby took them seriously enough to call the race for Kerry. Wall Street took them seriously enough to start dropping stock prices.

Indeed, until this election, major media outlets generally have used exit polls as evidence of a election's honesty. Back on Sept. 28, for example, the New York Post took election monitor Jimmy Carter to task for giving a clean bill of health to the failed recall effort against Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. "Oddly," the newspaper editorialized, "that result was completely opposite the findings of an exit poll conducted by a well-regarded polling firm used often by the U.S. Democratic Party, which showed Venezuelan voters booting Chavez by the same 59%.... Yet Jimmy Carter said that the election was 'free and fair.'"

Other U.S. media commentary took the same tack. "Find Out If Chavez Stole Vote," urged a Miami Herald headline. United Press International ran a column arguing that Carter was unqualified to criticize voting procedures in Florida because exit polls had proven him wrong in Venezuela; Carter had said that Florida's voting arrangements did not meet "basic international requirements."

On Oct. 17, the New York Times ran an article on the use of exit polls to identify and prevent election fraud in a number of coun-

tries. The article suggested that exit polls might play a similar role in the upcoming U.S. election. But a Nov. 5 New York Times article sang a very different tune, starting from the assumption that the Nov. 2 exit polls had been proven wrong by the official vote counts. The Times' article sought to determine—in a very "balanced" and "objective" manner—exactly what went wrong with the exit polls, but not whether they were wrong or right.

The New York Post switched song books as well, running an online column Nov. 3 by Dick Morris demanding to know who had rigged the exit polls. Exit polls, according to Morris, cannot be off by as much as they were this time without intentional fraud. Morris presented no evidence of fraud in the exit polling and no evidence that it was the polls rather than the official counts that got it wrong.

As pointed out in various analyses, the exit polls were accurate within their margin of error in many states but surprisingly far off in a number of swing states—and always off in the same direction, showing more support for Kerry than was found in the official counts. Warren Mitofsky, co-director of the National Election Pool, told the News Hour with Jim Lehrer that "Kerry was ahead in a number of states by margins that looked unreasonable to us." Mitofsky speculated that perhaps more Kerry voters were willing to participate in the exit poll, but did not suggest any reason for that speculation other than the difference between the exit polls and the final counts.

Exit polls aside, there are other reasons for concern about the election results, starting with specific evidence of miscounted ballots. Although the national media have virtually ignored the issue, local reporting has documented some of the problems—enough, in fact, to prompt three members of Congress to request a General Accounting Office investigation. The request, made by John Conyers, Jerrold Nadler and Robert Wexler, cited just some of the problems that surfaced, including a machine in a single Ohio precinct awarding Bush an extra 3,893 votes, machines in North Carolina losing 4,500 votes, machines in Florida miscounting absentee ballots, and voters in both Florida and Ohio reporting machines registering votes for Bush that were intended for Kerry.

More troubling than these and similar

...FROM THE SAME MEDIA THAT
SOLD US THE STORY OF SADDAM'S
VAST STOCKS OF WMD.



THE 2004 VOTE HACKED?
HIJACKED? OUR CRACK
TEAM OF REPORTERS
FOUND THERE'S NOTHING
TO THE RUMORS

M. WUERKER



problems is the fact that much of the electronic vote counting is in the hands of private companies, produces no auditable record, and easily lends itself to tampering.

An analysis reported by Thom Hartmann found some surprising results in Florida counties in which optically scanned ballots were counted on a central computer. For example, Franklin County, with 77.3% registered Democrats, went 58.5% for Bush. Holmes County, with 72.7% registered Democrats, went 77.25% for Bush. "Yet in the larger counties," Hartmann noted, "where such anomalies would be more obvious to

the news media, high percentages of registered Democrats equaled high percentages of votes for Kerry. And although elections officials didn't notice these anomalies, in aggregate they were enough to swing Florida from Kerry to Bush. If you simply go through the analysis of these counties and reverse the 'anomalous' numbers in those counties that appear to have been hacked, suddenly the Florida election results resemble the Florida exit poll results: Kerry won, and won big."

Swanson is media director of the International Labor Communications Association.

Labor confronting election's implications

By Mark Gruenberg

Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild

Faced with the impact of labor's political loss on Nov. 2, the AFL-CIO Executive Council agreed Nov. 10 that it will discuss how best to restructure the union movement at its mid-February meeting in Los Angeles. But what changes will be debated is up for grabs, and interviews after the council session in Washington made clear there are disagreements over what should happen next.

Instead, the council spent much of its D.C. session reviewing the impact of the presidential campaign, meeting with defeated Democratic nominee Sen. John F. Kerry. Indeed, interviews made clear that talk of political restructuring took up more time than was paid to the federation's own reorganization.

Labor won't be able to ignore its own reorganization because Andrew Stern, president of the Service Employees, is demanding a massive overhaul of the 50-year-old federation. Stern's 10-point plan, widely circulated Nov. 9, includes \$2 billion for organizing, a \$25 million campaign to unionize

Wal-Mart and a campaign—details unspecified—for universal health care. But the biggest and most contentious of Stern's proposals calls for greater top-down direction by the federation, including forced mergers of smaller individual unions.

In a subsequent telephone press conference, Stern made clear that unless there is drastic change, his union—the federation's largest—might leave. Stern said SEIU already has an in-house committee looking at the impact of disaffiliation should reforms not go through. "We've had too many recommendations" for change "which leaders have not adopted," Stern said. "We need to change the AFL-CIO now."

Stern publicly launched his campaign at SEIU's convention in June, when he said the federation must be "reformed or replaced" because workplaces, employers and corporations have changed while labor has not. He then created a stir just before the Democratic convention in July by telling reporters that a Kerry win might hinder reform efforts within both the Democratic Party and in labor.

Sweeney said Nov. 10 that the federation agrees with many of Stern's goals, and has started to implement some of them. And

Steel Workers President Leo Gerard strongly supported putting health care atop the agenda, arguing on behalf of using the national mobilization structure that was created for the political campaign to push for a single-payer health insurance program. Sweeney agreed, observing that unions can't reinvent a mobilization structure every two years.

But Sweeney, Gerard and Stern all were not prepared to discuss specifics of a particular campaign, leaving the details for another day. And in their press conferences, Sweeney and Stern differed on other essentials. For example, Sweeney cited creation of a federation task force to assist the United Food and Commercial Workers in its campaign to unionize Wal-Mart as proof of greater inter-union cooperation. Stern retorted that the task force has met only once and that what's needed is a mass mobilization to educate the nation about Wal-Martization. Stern also proposed dedicating the \$25 million the AFL-CIO gets from its credit card contract with Household Finance to fund the Wal-Mart campaign, but the federation council didn't delve into such details.

Forced mergers and the concept of "lead unions" for specific sectors, also proposed by

Stern, have been other sore points. Stern's plan specified that the AFL-CIO "should have the authority to require coordinated bargaining and to merge or revoke union charters, transfer responsibilities to unions for whom that industry or sector is their primary strength, and prevent any merger that would further divide workers' strength." As with other points in Stern's plan, the council said it will decide which issues it wants to tackle at the February meeting.

Machinists President Thomas Buffenbarger, however, sharply criticized such consolidation proposals, and IAM's Grand Lodge already has empowered its executive council to take any action—including disaffiliation—if IAM's autonomy is threatened. "We'll defend ourselves if the AFL-CIO chooses to leave our people out of the equation, by focusing on the service sector and the public sector and leaving the manufacturing sector and the transportation sector out," Buffenbarger told Press Associates, highlighting a growing schism within the federation.

Gruenberg is editor of Press Associates, Inc.

News round-up

U.S. raids, closes Indymedia sites

In a chilling attack on free speech, U.S. authorities on Oct. 7 seized two internet servers in London belonging to the independent media network Indymedia. More than 20 Indymedia sites around the world were taken down as a result of the raid. The servers were returned on October 14, but no formal charges have been announced and no explanation has been given for the raid. SEIU spokesperson Joe Parris told Agence France Presse that the raid was "not an FBI operation" but that the FBI issued the subpoena on behalf of Italy and Switzerland. U.S. authorities have refused further comment.

Wage increases gain over 2003

Wage data from contracts negotiated in the first ten months of this year, compiled by BNA, show an average first-year wage increase of 3.3%, up from 3% in the comparable period of 2003. Factoring lump-sum payments into the calculation, the average first-year wage increase was 3.6%, compared with 3.3% in the comparable period of 2003.

Ranks of joblessness up in 'recovery'

The nation's unemployment rate rose 0.1% in October, to 5.5%, and 8.072 million people are out of work, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. But that's not the whole story. While the number of those without jobs rose by 9,000, another 116,000 dropped out of the labor force altogether—which means they aren't counted in the jobless numbers. And one of every 11 workers—9.1%—was "marginally attached" to the labor force in October, up from 8.9% in September. The average length of long-term unemployment remains at 19.6 weeks—Press Associates, Inc.

US Airways workers okay strike

CWA-represented agents and reps at US Airways have voted 86% to 14% to authorize a strike or other lawful job action in the event that management imposes concessions through the bankruptcy process without a vote of the employees.

Minimum wage boosted in two states

One bright spot in the Nov. 2 elections: huge majorities of voters in Florida and Nevada approved measures boosting state minimum wages to \$6.15 an hour, a dollar more than the federal minimum. Union activists worked with ACORN in Florida to win a constitutional amendment, which also indexes the minimum wage to inflation. In Nevada, voters approved a measure that would require businesses that don't offer health insurance to workers and their families to raise their minimum wage. But voters must approve the measure again next year for it to take effect.

Cell phones linked to brain tumors

Researchers from Sweden's Institute of Environmental Medicine published the results of a study Oct. 13 showing that a person who uses a cell phone for at least ten years has an increased risk of developing a brain tumor on the side of the head where the phone is usually held. The researchers pointed out that only analogue cell phones had been in use for more than 10 years, so their results did not apply to digital phones, which might or might not produce the same or similar effect.

Scholarship applications coming due

Another 30 college scholarships of up to \$3,000 each are being offered by the CWA Joe Beirne Foundation for the 2005-2006 school year. Winners also will receive second-year scholarships for the same amount, contingent upon satisfactory academic achievement. CWA members and their spouses, children and grandchildren—including the dependents of retired, laid-off or deceased members—are eligible. Applications must be submitted online no later than March 31 and may be found on the foundation's website at www.unionvoice.org/ct/S7z_1m11pPL/Application.

Want gift ideas for your fave activist?

Just in time for the holidays—and for organizing in 2005—Union Communication Services has published a new, 56-page catalog of publications and tools for unionists. Among the notables: "A Troublemaker's Handbook 2," with strategies for everything from agitating to outsourcing to walking out to running a website—or running for office. Other books deal with organizing, labor law, a history of scabs, a kid's book about textile mills in Lowell, Mass., and more. The free catalog is available at ucsbooks@unionist.com or by calling toll-free (800) 321-2545. —Press Associates, Inc.

Give gift of good jobs when shopping

The AFL-CIO is promoting "Buy Union Week" from Nov. 26 through Dec. 5, urging union members to "Give the Gift of Good Jobs" as they do their gift shopping by buying union-made products. Don't know what those are? Visit www.ShopUnionMade.org, which offers everything from greeting cards and clothing to computers, sporting goods and games.

Reutherism redux:

What happens when poor workers' unions wear the color purple . . .

[As Andy Stern and several other labor leaders laid the groundwork for a post-election reformation of the U.S. labor movement (see related article, page 5), a 10,000-word essay/book review by CWA organizer Steve Early appeared in a somewhat obscure journal called "Against the Current." Excerpted here, Early's essay examines Stern's own union, the purple-shirted SEIU, to critique the ideas he's advancing. The entire essay may be read at www.ilcaonline.org; the easiest way to find it is by typing redux in the search box.]

By Steve Early
CWA National Organizer

Under the post-1995 leadership of John Sweeney, the AFL-CIO has demanded a "living wage" for the millions of African-Americans, women and recent immigrants working in menial, low-paid jobs. Progressive allies of labor, including minority community activists, have widely applauded this new focus on the "most oppressed." Many believe it represents a renewed labor commitment to social justice, empowerment of the poor and greater diversity.

Nevertheless, leading unions for the working poor—Service Employees International Union and its lesser satellites, the recently merged HERE and UNITE—remain frustrated with the overall pace of change. Along with the Carpenters and Laborers, they've formed the New Unity Partnership to promote their own ideas and strategies for membership recruitment and union restructuring.

"As it is configured today, the AFL-CIO has no hope of organizing the 90% of workers who are not in a union," SEIU President Andy Stern told HERE and UNITE delegates at their merger convention in July. "Sisters and brothers, it is time . . . we need to transform the AFL-CIO or build something new." Indeed, NUP's union leaders are now mulling a challenge to Sweeney's re-election bid next June. If that fails (or doesn't extract sufficient organizational concessions), some NUPsters may quit the federation altogether, which the Carpenters have already done.

The key player in this constellation of "organizing unions," Stern's SEIU, is laying claim to a place in the liberal imagination once occupied by Walter Reuther's United Auto Workers. During the 1960s, the UAW was labor's leading voice for civil rights in the South, "Great Society" reform, and, belatedly, peace in Vietnam. Reutherism had its roots in the great radicalizing upsurge of the mid-1930s. Similarly, many Service Employees officials have their own "movement history," linked in their case to the social and political upheavals of the 1960s, on campus and off. Some SEIUers even spent their younger days building independent unions as a grassroots alternative to the dysfunctional organizing methods and structures of the labor establishment in the 1970s and 80s. Today, they're part of that establishment but still see themselves as promoting a brand of "social movement unionism" that's better and more successful than anyone else's. They tell other trade unionists—and their own members—that American labor faces a stark choice today: "Organize (our way) or die."

Since the mid-1990's, SEIU's own organizing—plus many mergers and affiliations—has doubled its size. As argued by one of its key strategists, Stephen Lerner, the union's increased "market share" has helped raise the living standards of many thousands of new members among the working poor. For many activists and academics, this record of success ends any debate about the best way for other unions to grow.

Some observers do question whether the SEIU "organizing model" is readily transferable. They note that SEIU, until now, has had the singular advantage of operating mainly in the public sector, among smaller private firms, or within health care and home care entities that rely on public funding—a ready-made environment for union political leverage, lobbying and deal-making. IBM, Toyota, Microsoft, Wal-Mart, Verizon Wireless, Overnite, or even partially unionized General Electric operate in an entirely different league, as unions trying to organize them are reminded every day.

But when workers win—by whatever method—a greater "voice at work," this doesn't guarantee that they'll have sufficient control over their union, its internal decision-making or its leadership. At the bargaining table in any industry it's obviously better to have "union density" than not have it; but "density without democracy" is a deficiency which can, over time, seriously undermine union contract enforcement and rank-and-file militancy on-the-job. The lack of financial accountability and transparency, which go hand-in-hand with undemocratic practices, lead to business unionism at its worst. Sooner or later, corruption scandals erupt. . . .

As Stern's vision has been implemented, the key agents of change—engineers of "effectiveness," imposers of "unity" and would-be creators of "union power"—are not rank-and-file members, but full-time staffers instead.

Who are these people and where do they come from? As longtime labor and Puerto Rican community activist Juan Gonzalez reported four years ago in his N.Y. Daily News column, many of SEIU's "well-educated organizers" are recruited "from universities and the community, as well as from other unions." They have, in common, "grand visions of a powerful new labor movement" but, personally, "may have suffered little in the trenches." According to Gonzalez:

"In their zeal to build the new movement, they start to think that the workers under them are not as well-educated or politically sharp as they are. Pretty soon, they want to run the unions with the members simply rubber-stamping their grand plans. Gradually, they begin to mistake the well-being of members for their own designs. Genuine democracy, which is not always efficient, gets sacrificed for paper democracy." . . .

Throughout the union, not having worked in an SEIU-represented job clearly is no bar to upward mobility. In Massachusetts, two of SEIU's big public sector locals—one just out of trusteeship and the other still in it—are headed by staffers who weren't part of any state or local government units that their locals represent. Officers of the state's new building service local have never been unionized janitors there or anywhere else. In Oregon, a state worker leader switched locals, via a trusteeship, to become SEIU's new Portland janitors' president. In Seattle, the lead organizer in the union's southern California home care worker drive—a former political operative—is now president of Local 775, which represents 30,000 Washington state home health care aides.

Not all of those deployed as SEIU trustees are white or from college educated, middle or upper-middle class backgrounds. Sometimes they match the demographics of their new assigned local more closely. But their political mission remains the same: to build a base for themselves and institutionalize international union control. They don't view their local restructuring or trusteeship-related roles as an opportunity to develop the full leadership capacity of indigenous militants, who have, in some cases, spent years struggling for change in a troubled local before the international stepped in. Rather, these staffers operate with the clear understanding that they—not any longtime member—will become principal officers of the local, after running with all the advantages of "incumbency" in its first post-trusteeship election.

Organizer Eliseo Medina no doubt had similar plans in mind when he was hired away from the CWA to take over a janitors' local in San Diego. Medina had been a Farm Workers activist and 7-year CWA organizer in Texas but never an SEIU member; now, he's one of the international's four executive vice-presidents. To groom a new building-service division chief for Boston janitors, SEIU parachuted in Mexican-born Rocio Saenz, a California Justice for Janitors staffer (with prior union experience at HERE and UNITE) who acted in Ken Loach's film, "Bread and Roses."

Saenz's second-in-command under the Local 254 trusteeship was Jill Hurst, an Anglo out-of-towner now serving as secretary-treasurer of the renumbered, re-organized, and heavily-immigrant Local 615.

Continued on page 7



LOOKING AHEAD

One thing unites red and blue: the !*%#! media

By Linda Foley, President

Another U.S. presidential election has come and gone. Not unlike four years ago, the country once again finds itself a divided nation.

This time, however, Americans in blue states are even more blue about the prospect of another four years under George W. Bush's cowboy government. And the red states see more red as their bare majority is dismissed and derided by self-proclaimed intellectually superior Eastern-Northern-West Coast elites.

Radically different political views of radically different life experiences. Rural, small-town vs. urban, big-city. WalMart vs. Nordstrom's. Church on Sundays vs. Thursday evenings at the gym.

But despite our differences, there's at least one thing Red and Blue agree on: The media.

Family values being destroyed? Blame the media. Bush's misguided policies getting a free ride? Blame the media. Too much sex and violence in schools? Blame the media. Don't have a true picture of the war in Iraq? Blame the media. Exit polls don't match the vote outcome? Of course, the media got it wrong; blame them.

Across all states and nearly all states of mind, "the media" have replaced "politicians" as one of our most reviled institutions. This united disdain and distrust of commercial media has been fomenting for several decades. The days when Woodward and Bernstein were folk heroes and Walter Cronkite was the most trusted man in America are long gone.

What happened? For one thing, media—particularly local media—got bigger and more distant. In an effort to homogenize content to make it appeal to broader swaths of audiences across multiple communities and lifestyles, U.S. media have dumbed down the news and sexed up the entertainment to minimize costs and increase sales and profits. (Sex sells; news doesn't.)

So both "red" middle America and "blue" urban America get bombarded with "Hollywood" entertainment values and

"happy-talk" news values. Neither is satisfied, and both have a right to be angry about it.

We live in an age in which sophisticated information technology can bring the world into our living rooms and vast libraries of knowledge to our desktops. We also live in an age when we feel more vulnerable and threatened because we have lost our sense of community. From New York City to Granville, Ohio, we're all searching for the lost security of our hometown.

Modern media could help lessen the anxiety. Instead, their corporate, consolidated nature more often than not feeds, rather than eases, our fears. Our media create a sense that the world as we know it is but of control and out of touch with our lives.

It doesn't have to be this way. "Big media" didn't get big because of natural selection. The consolidation and concentration of media ownership and outlets is a direct result of public policy decisions made in response to political and technological pressures (the former more so than the latter).

But the airwaves still belong to the public. And, as we have seen recently, the public is beginning to find its voice on this issue. More than a million people filed comments with the Federal Communications Commission against ownership deregulation. Thousands of people have shown up at FCC hearings around the country to voice their support for keeping local media local. Hundreds of thousands protested when Sinclair Broadcasting announced it was airing an anti-Kerry documentary on the eve of the election. And don't forget the millions of viewers who complained to the FCC about the famous Janet Jackson flash at the Superbowl.

Record numbers of "red" and "blue" voters turned out to cast ballots in Election 2004. Just by showing up, they—divided as they were—made a powerful statement about our democracy. Just think how powerful they would be if those citizens united and committed their votes to restoring public interest values, localism and democracy to U.S. media.



Reutherism redux

Continued from page 6

When Hurst explained to The Boston Globe that "it's a real transition to have a leader who is part of that community," she meant, of course, immigrants generally—because Saenz has never been part of any 254 or 615 bargaining unit. . . .

Even in a more quiescent era, mutinies and defections are spreading within the "Purple Army." A group of San Francisco janitors whose elected officers were removed by the international formed an independent union, the United Service Workers for Democracy Local 87. In August, these former SEIU members called for a representation election that resulted in a major SEIU defeat: by a margin of 947 to 573, USWD supporters working for the city's largest building service contractors voted to change unions—despite SEIU's flooding of San Francisco with out-of-town organizers, who tried unsuccessfully to thwart the decert.

In Massachusetts, e-mail has become the whistle-blowing weapon of choice among other dissenters who are still working within SEIU structures. In the wake of a controversial Boston janitors' strike settlement in late 2002, a young Harvard-educated staffer—who had just been profiled in the Boston Globe as the archetypal SEIU organizer—confided to disillusioned Justice for Janitors supporters that he shared their concerns about the rift between strikers and the union hierarchy. "My first concern with calling the strike a 'victory,'" said Aaron Bartley from Local 254 (now 615), "is that not a single worker I know believes it to be such."

To Bartley, who worked for the 254 trusteeship, the main post-strike debate in Boston should be about the functioning of "the purple machine" itself: its problems with "hierarchical structure; member participation and power; leadership development; democracy, broader consciousness, etc."

From his perspective as an organizer of immigrant workers, Bartley observed:

"[T]he fact that the international designed, implemented and settled this strike without really giving a f--- about what workers, or [local] staff for that matter, had to say is bad enough. The fact that we have in our ranks 200 or so experienced union leaders and warriors from far more painful and powerful struggles in places around the world like El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic makes some of what happened here a damn shame."

More recently, another well-known labor activist in Massachusetts quit his field rep job to protest SEIU Local 888's belief "that members are incapable of intelligent decision-making and activity without almost total direction from staff." . . .

The danger inherent in the SEIU/NUP strategy is clear. If successful, it may foster a smaller-scale, U.S.-version of the "cartel unionism" which has trapped so many Mexican workers in deeply compromised collective-bargaining relationships, as part of their country's corporatist labor-management system. In Mexico, decades of political wheeling and dealing by "charro" union officials—increasingly unaccountable to those they represent—has resulted in tremendous union "density" on paper but very little positive union presence on the shop floor or in workers' lives. The lesson of that experience is quite relevant to current debates about the organizational restructuring promoted by NUP unions, under the leadership and inspiration of SEIU. Put simply, the lesson is that you can't "remake," "re-build" or "re-organize" unions in any society without workers and what goes on in their workplaces being central to the project—unless, of course, you're no longer interested in having the union function as a genuine workers' organization.

LETTERS

To the Editor,

I was one of the Guild members active in the Sacramento Bee unit at the time of the strike there in the late '70s, when McClatchy Newspapers wanted to switch to mornings and used a strike as the occasion for doing so. Now I am a few months away from retiring and moving to Europe and I have a raft of materials related to the strike that might prove valuable to anyone wishing to research it.

If any TNG members know of anyone—journalist or academic—who might be interested in these materials, please have them contact me at Dzims@yahoo.com. I'll keep this stuff until the New Year, but after that, it's gone.

—Jim Staley, Fair Oaks, Calif.

To the Editor,

I am seeking information on my grandfather, Harry R. Zander, who reportedly was a founding member of the Guild in the early '30s.

Mr. Zander, a reporter for AP, the World-Telegram, the Milwaukee Journal and others, also was a friend of Heywood Brown and of Alan Hathway, longtime editor of Newsday. He also was acquainted with Harry Houdini from his days in Wisconsin, and attended the seance at which Mrs. Houdini attempted to contact her departed husband. Mr. Zander died in New York in 1938 or 1939.

Any information or contacts your readers could give me about the life and career of Mr. Zander would be gratefully appreciated. My e-mail address is: jfcoffin@bluemarble.net

—Frank D. Coffin, Indiana

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: Dec. 10.)

Canadian award honors fallen president

By Charles Shannon
Montreal Newspaper Guild

For months after John Belcarz died in October 2003, leaders of TNG Canada and the Montreal Newspaper Guild debated how best to memorialize that local's president and longtime leader. The breakthrough came when someone voiced the obvious approach: What would John have done?

So they asked Mary.

For more than two decades, Mary Belcarz was her husband's not-so-secret source of strength. She could have objected to the Guild workload that kept John away much of the day, after his job at the Montreal Gazette had kept him away much of the night. Instead, she pitched in. Somehow, together, they found the time to raise two fine sons, Mark and Paul. John even found time to coach little-league hockey.

Over the years, Mary absorbed John's pragmatic, no-nonsense approach. Or perhaps it was the other way around.

In any case, it showed in what she and the family proposed. John's memorial should honour the qualities his life exemplified: hard work, integrity, and unselfish dedication to others. The Guild, she suggested, should establish an annual award to recognize those simple but all-too-rare virtues.

So, on Oct. 16 of this year, TNG/CWA's Canadian director, Arnold Amber, announced creation of the John Belcarz Award of Merit, to be accorded for the first time in 2005 "to a deserving Guild member in Canada." And, Amber warned, "In years when there is not a person who meets the Belcarz standard, the award will not be given."

The award, sustained by a three-way partnership of TNG Canada-CWA, the Montreal Guild and John Belcarz's family, was announced at a special tribute held in Montreal in conjunction with TNG Canada's fall meeting of the National Representative Council. The council earlier had approved

unanimously a \$5,000 grant to get the award started.

A committee comprising members of the Belcarz family, the Montreal local and TNG Canada's executive will investigate a design for the award, develop the criteria, and set in place the process by which nominations will be encouraged, received and adjudicated. The committee also will accept funds from locals and individual members to ensure the award's sustainability.

Originally a district manager in the Montreal Gazette's circulation department, Belcarz joined the local executive as a vice president in 1980.

In a letter read at the evening tribute, attended by approximately 100, then-president Larry McInnis related the time Belcarz brought up the idea of running for TNG Canada vice-president. When McInnis pointed out that he couldn't hold down both that post and VP of the local, Belcarz made a typical decision: he stuck with the members he represented.

Another turning point for Belcarz, alluded to by many at the tribute, came in 1998, when the Gazette turned its district managers into independent contractors. That could have spelled the end of Belcarz's link to the Guild. Undaunted, he created a wholly new category of Guild membership—associated members—that allowed him to remain president.

Belcarz would keep that post, twice acclaimed by the local membership, until he passed away at the age of 51 after a heroic battle with cancer. As TNG-CWA President Linda Foley reminded guests, "John worked on Guild business until only a few days before his death." Quoting from a resolution unanimously adopted at the TNG sector conference in Anaheim, she added, "He fought for what he believed in, and he never gave up. Never."

One mark of Belcarz's impact on people was the attendance at the tribute of J.P. Tremblay and his wife. As vice-president of human resources at the Montreal Gazette,



Jan Ravensbergen, showing Mary Belcarz a memento of her husband's near-hole-in-one.

Tremblay had faced Belcarz "nose to nose" across bargaining and grievance tables for more than 20 years, but they came out of those confrontations with a mutual respect for each other.

The evening was ably emceed by TNG Canada's eastern vice-president, Percy Hatfield, whose injections of humour—and even his own poetry—kept the atmosphere upbeat. TNG-CWA Secretary-Treasurer Bernie Lunzer was also present, as were Gerry Minkinen, executive director of the Chicago Newspaper Guild, and former TNG-CWA Vice-President Tom Thibeault.

Many of the speakers tried to sum up what had made Belcarz so special.

Amber: "John was extraordinary in the sense that he never put on any airs of being extraordinary."

Foley: "John Belcarz was the glue that held his local together, that helped make TNG Canada as strong as it is today."

Lunzer: "I did a lot of work in smoky rooms with John over a bottle of Cognac. . . I miss him as a friend."

Ross Hargrave, a fellow district manager-distributor: "You all know he never lost his cool. At a point where you could lose your

cool, he came close to it. But he never did."

Minkinen (after reminiscing about shopping for a compressor with John during a break in a Chicago convention): "He will always be with us."

Jan Ravensbergen (John's successor as Montreal local president): "Integrity—I don't need to say any more. You'd put your life in his hands."

And Mary Belcarz put it all in perspective: "The Guild was John's passion, and he would never expect to be honored in this way for something that he just enjoyed and came naturally to him."

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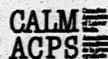
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Deadline for
submitting
Broun, Barr
awards
entries,
Jan. 28;
see
contest
rules at www.newsguild.org

Knight Ridder Council meeting,
March 4-5, Akron, Ohio

CWA Legislative-Political Conf.,
March 6-9, Washington, DC

Freedom Award Banquet,
March 30, Washington, DC

Western District Council,
May 5, Victoria, BC

TNG Sector Conference,
May 5-8, Victoria, BC

CWA Safety-Health Conference,
June 1-3, Baltimore

CWA Annual Convention,
Aug. 29-31, Chicago

FROM THE MORGUE

Seventy years ago this month:

Heywood Broun and other Guild officers meet with President Roosevelt at Hyde Park to talk up a five-day workweek, as well as proposed revisions to the Newspaper Code. . . The publisher of the Duluth Herald and News-Tribune refuses to enter contract negotiations with Guild representatives, saying he is unalterably opposed to "professional men and women prostituting themselves to the level of trade unions." . . The Guild's first major strike is called at the Newark Ledger, where 42 employees walk out and begin publishing their own morning paper.

Fifty years ago this month:

In the first case in its history involving a Guild union, the National Labor Relations Board throws out an "independent" union's petition and recognizes Guild jurisdiction at the Newport News Daily Press. . . The NLRB rules that employers who claim they can't afford to meet union bargaining demands now have to document the claim. . . The Denver Guild renews a campaign to relocate the national Guild office to its city.

Twenty-five years ago this month:

A survey of newspaper chains reports a loss of four such "groups" in the past year, but adds that the number of dailies published by the survivors increased to 63.2% of the total from 60.8%. . . A presidential commission concludes that press coverage of the Three Mile Island nuclear plant accident was generally balanced, despite confusion and contradictory information provided by industry sources. . . Lane Kirkland becomes the second president of the AFL-CIO.

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