

THE GUILD Reporter

November 18, 2005 A Publication of The Newspaper Guild and The Communications Workers of America • Volume 72, Number 11

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Feeling the squ-e-e-eze

More layoffs, buyouts deplete newsrooms and support staffs

As a long-awaited circulation report for the six-month period ending Sept. 30 confirmed that U.S. newspapers are still losing readers, a fresh spate of layoffs and buyouts added to the industry's mounting anxieties.

Following last month's announcements of significant payroll cuts at newspapers owned by Knight Ridder and The New York Times, management at the Tribune-owned Baltimore Sun said it planned to eliminate 75 positions, including a dozen or more in the newsroom. The news came a month after the newspaper said it was closing two of its five overseas bureaus.

(As The Guild Reporter went to press, a string of other Tribune-owned newspapers—none with Guild-represented employees—announced the elimination of several hundred more jobs. Among the casualties: 85

newsroom jobs at the Los Angeles Times, or roughly 8% of the staff; as many as 100 jobs at the Chicago Tribune, spread across numerous departments but including up to 30 in the newsroom; 26 jobs at the Daily Press in Newport News, Va.; and a dozen or so at the Morning Call in Allentown, Pa. Long Island's Newsday had earlier said it is cutting 45 newsroom jobs and is looking to eliminate another 165 next year from among its pressmen and drivers.)

At Factiva, owned by Dow Jones, 16 employees represented by IAPE, TNG-CWA Local 1096 were among 83 worldwide receiving layoff notices Nov. 9. The layoffs come in the middle of collective bargaining, with the current contract scheduled to expire Dec. 31, and continue a year-long pattern of Dow Jones layoffs "in fits and starts,"

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Knight Ridder in play; sale or break-up of chain possible

Knight Ridder, the second-largest newspaper chain in the U.S., put itself in play Nov. 14 with the announcement that it had retained a financial advisor "to explore strategic alternatives to enhance shareholder value"—a phrase commonly understood to mean the company is up for sale. The biggest unknown as The Guild Reporter went to press: will there be a buyer?

The decision came just two weeks after the company's largest shareholder, Private Capital Management, made public a letter complaining about Knight Ridder's declining stock price. Because nothing the company had done over the past year had reversed the trend, the letter concluded, "we view the best interests of the shareholders as being served by the board soliciting competitive bids for the company, either from financial buyers willing to pay fair value or industry participants."

With
the

next two largest shareholders rapidly piling on—the three own a combined 36% of Knight Ridder's stock—the company soon capitulated and turned to Goldman Sachs, its long-time investment banker, to solicit bids and explore alternatives. But with all newspaper stocks in a year-long decline and a softening advertising market overshadowing future revenues, a memo to employees from company chairman Tony Ridder underscored the uncertainties ahead.

A sale is possible but by no means certain, Ridder wrote. A timetable can't be predicted. Job protection, alas, can't be guaranteed—although despite such nerve-racking uncertainty, employees "must stay focused on producing our newspapers and web sites at the high standards for which we are known."

The possible implications of a sale for Knight Ridder's approximately 3,000 Guild-represented employees—at the San Jose Mercury News, Philadelphia Inquirer and Daily News, Monterey (Cal.) Herald, St. Paul Pioneer Press, Akron Beacon-Journal, Lexington Herald-Leader and Duluth News-Tribune—are equally uncertain. If the company is acquired through a stock purchase, TNG-CWA research indi-

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Pioneer Press unmask more errant ethics

By Mike Sweeney
Executive Officer, Minnesota Guild

The St. Paul Pioneer Press suspended a part-time copy editor for three days for joining church members in a protest against the U.S.-led war in Iraq. The Minnesota Newspaper Guild immediately challenged the disciplinary action.

The newspaper charged that Mahoney's attendance at the Sept. 24 anti-war rally in Washington, D.C. violated the company's newsroom ethics policy and created a "conflict of interest." Pioneer Press editors also told Mahoney that because he attended the rally, he no longer would be assigned to edit Iraq war stories.

Mahoney, a U.S. Army infantryman who fought in the Mekong Delta during the Vietnam War and has written two novels about that war, has worked at the Pioneer Press for five years. He traveled to the rally on a bus with fellow parishioners from St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church in Minneapolis, where he is active.

Mahoney's suspension came

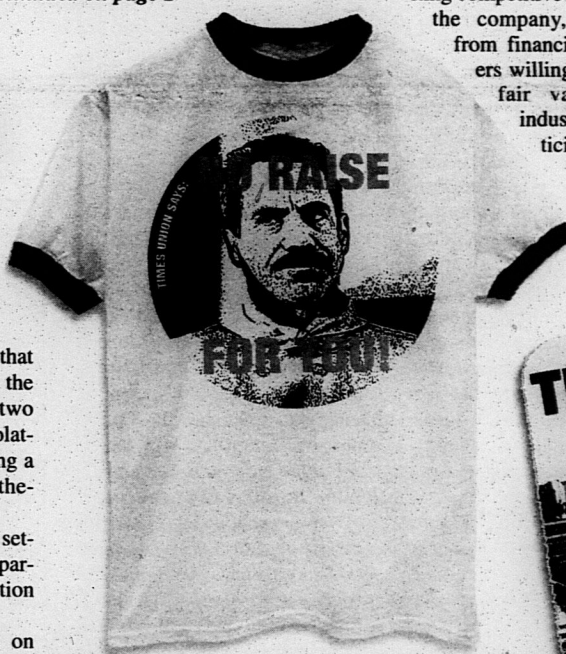
just four days after the union and newspaper reached a confidential settlement in a somewhat similar situation. In that case the Guild challenged the three-day suspension of two reporters the paper said had violated the ethics policy by attending a Bruce Springsteen get-out-the-vote concert in 2004.

Although the terms of that settlement are confidential, the parties expressed mutual satisfaction at the outcome.

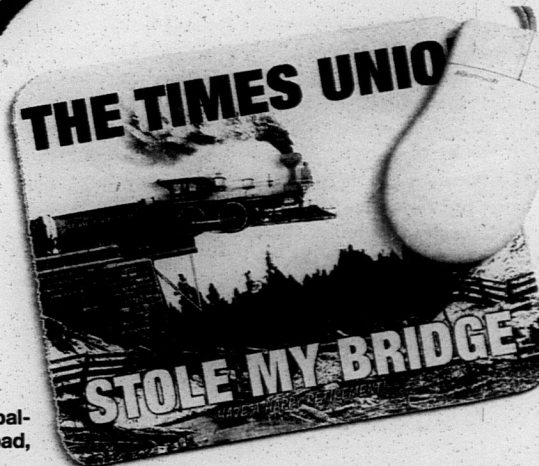
In the grievance it filed on behalf of Mahoney, the Guild has asked the Pioneer Press to rescind the suspension on two grounds: one, it did not meet the "just and sufficient" standard, and two, it did not create a conflict of interest as defined in the contract.

In fact, like the concert case, the public did not know of the incident until the paper issued its discipline. Both cases have attracted nationwide publicity and generated letters of support for workers.

As with the concert ethics case, the Mahoney grievance is being handled by TNG-CWA's law firm because of its national significance.



Among the mobilization tools that tipped the balance in Albany were this t-shirt and mouse pad, both designed by Mark Hempstead.



Post, Albany win contracts

Two Guild locals succeeded in negotiating new contracts in recent weeks, in one case following an increasingly visible mobilization campaign, in the other reaching agreement mere moments before the existing contract expired—a first in recent memory.

Members of the Albany Newspaper Guild ratified their new agreement 145-42, three weeks after an overwhelming 170-3 rejection of a proposal the Hearst-owned Times Union had insisted be taken to a vote. Having passed their first-year anniversary of working without a contract on Aug. 1, the local had grown increasingly militant, holding rallies that featured the ubiquitous—and huge—inflatable rat and flaunting t-shirts and mouse pads with pungent messages.

At the Washington Post, meanwhile, a comprehensive agreement was reached Nov. 7 and overwhelmingly ratified by members of the Washington-Baltimore Guild on Nov. 15. The agreement followed

months of bargaining capped by a 14-hour session that wrapped up at five minutes before midnight, when the previous contract lapsed.

Elsewhere, Guild members at The Hour in Norwalk, Connecticut, voted unanimously Oct. 21 to accept a new four-year contract. Contract negotiations at Reuters, following rejection of management's "last, best" offer two months ago, have gone back into off-the-record sessions. And Guild members at the Daily Freeman in Kingston, New York have given their struggle for a new contract a public face, following a 13-month standoff.

Details of the recent contract settlements include the following:

- The four-year agreement in Albany includes annual wage increases of 3% (with full retroactivity) but hikes employees' share of health and dental insurance costs from 12% to 14% immediately, 15% next

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Knight Ridder up for grabs

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cates the buyer would likely have to assume all contracts. But if the company is sold piece-meal, "the impact on Guild members could be severe," observed Luther Jackson, executive officer of the San Jose Guild.

In most cases, Jackson explained, an asset sale allows the buyer to cancel union contracts, fire the existing staff and unilaterally set working conditions for the newly hired staff. If the buyer retains more than half of the original staff the Guild would automatically be recognized as a bargaining agent—but would be starting at square one by negotiating a first contract, a potentially arduous process.

That's what happened in Monterey, where Knight Ridder purchased the Herald in 1997 but didn't agree to a new contract until the end of 2003. On the other hand, Gannett opted to retain the entire staff and the Guild contract when it acquired the Detroit Free Press from Knight Ridder this past August.

As Goldman Sachs explores strategic alternatives, TNG-CWA has started doing likewise, establishing a subcommittee to explore how the Guild might influence any sales transaction to ensure a high level of community service while safeguarding jobs and working conditions as much as possible. "We believe the best approach to addressing the crisis at Knight Ridder and in the newspaper industry is for employees, the industry and our communities to work together to promote newspapers and their essential role in a free society," declared TNG-CWA President Linda

Foley in a formal statement.

"Our vision for growth runs counter to those who believe that newspaper owners can cut their way to prosperity by eliminating jobs, slashing journalistic resources and dismantling circulation and marketing infrastructure," she added.

While all eyes are pretty much fixed on Knight Ridder, it's worth observing that the investment firm that started this particular avalanche has large positions in several newspaper companies. Aside from its 19% position in Knight Ridder—limited by a poison pill provision that kicks in at a 20% threshold—Private Capital Management owns 37% of McClatchy, 25.6% of Belo, 22.5% of Lee Enterprises, 18.2% of Media General, 14.6% of New York Times Co., 12% of Journal Register and 5.8% of Gannett. While newspaper stocks have suffered this past year, PCM is known as a "value investor," which means it sniffs out companies whose stock is under-appreciated—and PCM has a reputation of being very good at what it does.

Many industry observers, noting that newspapers are in the investment doldrums, are doubting that Knight Ridder will find a buyer. But PCM's holdings suggest others see latent value in such properties, with billionaire Philip Anschutz and investment firms like Blackstone Group and Providence Equity Partners—all of whom already have invested in newspapers—among those mentioned most prominently as potential bidders.

To keep up with this fast-moving story, visit the web at www.knightridderwatch.org.

Buyouts, layoffs continue

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according to IAPE administrator Tim Martell. Dow Jones, he added, has laid off 41 IAPE-represented workers throughout 2005.

Blethen-owned Central Maine Newspapers laid off seven full-time and five part-time Guild-represented employees, as well as three others, and instituted a hiring freeze for all open Guild positions. Although a Portland Guild statement noted that there have not been any layoffs of pressmen or typesetters to date, "unfortunately, we believe that will change."

The tailwind behind these changes was fanned, in part, by the circulation report released Nov. 7 by the Newspaper Association of America. Overall daily circulation for the six-month period, it said, declined another 2.6%, while Sunday circulation dropped 3.1%. Eighteen of the country's 20 largest dailies saw circulation

declines, including the McClatchy chain, breaking its 20-year record of constant circulation increases.

The only major papers to gain circulation, the New York Times and Newark's Star-Ledger, did so by minuscule amounts, 0.4% and 0.01% respectively. Many of the daily circulation drops, on the other hand, were breathtaking: down 16.5% at the San Francisco Chronicle, 8.5% at the Baltimore Sun, 7.7% at the Boston Globe, almost 11% at the Philadelphia Daily News.

Not surprisingly, many of those papers also are the ones taking a meat cleaver most enthusiastically to payroll—not to stanch the red ink, but to keep profits in the +20% range now accepted as the industry norm. In the process, they're trimming more than numbers.

The Tribune-owned Los Angeles Times, for example, decided to jettison conservative cartoonist Michael Ramirez and liberal columnist Robert Scheer, both of whom believe they were targeted because of their strong political views. Meanwhile, the axing of Ramirez—a Pulitzer Prize winner who will not be replaced—continues a trend among major dailies to do away with political cartoonists altogether.

Andres Martinez, the Times' recently appointed editorial page editor, told trade journal Editor & Publisher that he plans to use more commissioned artwork as well as stand-alone graphics—an outsourcing trend echoed up the California coast, where the San Jose Mercury News decided to replace its home grown Spanish-language publication, Nuevo Mondo, with Fronteras, which is produced in Mexico.

Thus far, at least, the large Guild-represented newspapers are offering buyouts in lieu of involuntary layoffs. The Washington-Baltimore Guild said about 140 of

its more than 500 represented employees at the Sun will receive buyout offers of one week's salary for every six months of employment, up to a maximum of one year's pay. Such offers ease the pain of losing one's job, but can't long mask the erosion of the workforce overall: the Sun's buyout offer, for example, is its 12th in the past eight years.

Among the more noticeable examples of reduced coverage due to workforce reductions is the Boston Globe, which is cutting 135 positions. In addition to closing its national news department—although not its Washington bureau—the newspaper is planning to eliminate its Sunday education section and will roll its stand-alone Life at Home section into the Thursday Living section.

Despite such steady erosion—or perhaps because of it—newspapers that announced buyout offers earlier report being oversubscribed. The St. Louis Post Dispatch apparently had no trouble finding 130 takers for the buyout it offered in August, cutting nearly 12% of its news and editorial staff—many of whom had more than 20 years' experience as reporters, editors and photographers. And in Philadelphia, where Knight Ridder hoped to entice 75 staffers at the Inquirer and 25 at the Daily News to take its buyout offer, applications were received from 94 and 32, respectively.

Yet Inquirer columnist Tom Ferrick, in a message to Guild members, observed that Knight Ridder was using "scare tactics" to induce employees to jump ship. "The message is: Take the buyout now, or be laid off tomorrow," he wrote. "You may ask yourself: What can I do to help? I have an answer to that question: Go ask your shop steward today about what you can do. This is no time to make like sheep and just bleat."

Guild briefs . . .

Cingular workers opt for WashTech

WashTech, TNG-CWA Local 37083, has gained representation rights for 934 Cingular Wireless call center workers in Bothell, Washington, following a card check procedure conducted by the American Arbitration Association. The inside organizing committee signed up coworkers by sitting in cafeterias and break rooms and by leafleting them outside the call center, while local organizers conducted a home visit blitz of more than 300 houses. Major workplace concerns included respect and changes in benefits and working conditions.

AP photogs seek share of profits

As part of recently initiated contract bargaining, the News Media Guild has proposed that photographers share in the profits generated from the resale of some of their photos. The Associated Press called the proposal "intriguing." "The resale of pictures has been a goal for photographers for years," said RA photographers' representative Don Ryan. "But we think it's achievable this time because of the AP's desire to find new markets and because it's indicative of the Guild's desire to think outside the box."

Three newsletters win CWA awards

Lost from the post-CWA convention coverage was a report on the 22nd annual local union newsletter awards competition, in which three TNG-CWA newsletters won accolades. Most notably, The Guild, edited by Michael McNessor of the Albany Guild, won first place for general excellence in its circulation category, as well as a second, two thirds and an honorable mention. The Guild News, edited by Joan Bazar of the San Jose Guild, also won first-place for general excellence in its circulation category, as well as a third; and the King News of the Kingston Guild received honorable mention for general excellence.

Arguments slated in Point Park case

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Washington, D.C., has scheduled oral arguments for Jan. 17 in the ongoing battle over certification and bargaining rights of the Pittsburgh Guild's unit at Point Park University. Point Park in July 2004 refused the Guild's request to bargain on behalf of its fulltime faculty after the faculty voted overwhelmingly a month earlier to be represented by the union. The NLRB has fought with the college on several legal fronts since then, but although the Guild and NLRB have won

every stage of the legal case the college has continued to exercise every possible appeal.

Memphis publisher comes with history

Joseph Pepe, formerly president of the Suburban Journals of St. Louis, has been named president and publisher of The Commercial Appeal in Memphis. Pepe succeeds John Wilcox, who generally was regarded as hostile to the Memphis Newspaper Guild, but Pepe was instrumental in defeating the St. Louis Guild's organizing campaign at the Suburban Journals. Contract negotiations at the Commercial Appeal, which is owned by E.W. Scripps Company, are now in their third year.

Grievance settles union e-mail use

A grievance at the Cleveland Plain Dealer over the use of the company's e-mail system, filed on behalf of unit chair Scott Stephens—also a TNG-CWA vice president—has been settled in the union's favor. Filed after Stephens was disciplined for sending out a mass e-mail on a Guild-related matter, the grievance was resolved with an agreement that Guild officers may use company e-mail to communicate with bargaining unit members on union-related matters in the same way the Guild bulletin board is utilized. Management also agreed to remove all disciplinary material.

Permatemps get checks—at last

Thirteen years after filing suit, the contract workers at Microsoft who inspired the creation of the TNG-CWA local WashTech are getting their reward: compensation checks from a \$97 million settlement have gone out to 8,561 permatemps who sued over being unfairly excluded from employee benefit and stock programs. But while the biggest award is \$51,000, the average payout is only \$5,000 and one poor soul will have to be content with a mere \$115.66. And WashTech co-founder Mike Blain thinks the permatemp case ultimately undercut union organizing at Microsoft by pacifying workers. "Lawsuits may eventually compensate for some wrongs done in the past," he said, "but organizing is the best pathway to fair treatment on the job."

Pittsburgh Guild elects officers

The Pittsburgh Newspaper Guild recently elected officers for the year ending Oct. 31, 2006, including: president, Mike Bucsko; first vice president, Sally Kalson; second vice president, Marianne Mizera; third vice president, Natalie Hill; secretary, Ed Blazina; and treasurer, Ken Fisher.

ADDRESS CHANGE, SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

The Guild Reporter (ISSN: 00175404) (CPC # 1469371) is issued monthly, generally at four-week intervals, at 501 Third St. NW, 2nd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001.

Periodicals postage paid in Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Printed in the U.S.

Postmaster: Send address changes or requests to stop delivery to: The Guild Reporter, c/o Grace Corner, Communications Workers of America, 501 Third St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20001

Address changes and requests to stop delivery also can be sent by e-mail to: duesinfo@cwa-union.org.

Subscription: \$20 a year in U.S. and Canada, \$30 a year overseas. Send subscription orders to: Tina Harrison, TNG-CWA, 501 Third Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001
Single copies: \$1.50

Councils grapple with forces of change

If any common thread ran through the recent spate of district council meetings, it could have been summarized in one word: change. The fit wasn't an entirely comfortable one.

Much of the impetus for change is being propelled by Resolution 1, adopted by CWA delegates at the convention this past August, charging all CWA locals with undertaking a thorough review of all aspects of the union. The resolution's goal is to reinvent CWA from the ground up by next summer, but some Guild members clearly feel the task is too large to be given justice in such a short period.

Meeting in San Juan the first weekend of November, the Mid-Atlantic and Southern District councils applauded the the "opportunity for our union to transform itself to meet the challenges that we are facing" even as they asserted that more time is needed "due to the complexities involved."

"As pointed out in Resolution 1 itself, we must conduct our review thoroughly and thoughtfully," the joint meeting's delegates said in the first of two resolutions on the subject. "We do not believe that this can be accomplished in time for constitutional changes to be enacted at the 2006 convention, and urge that such action be delayed until 2007."

A second resolution from the two councils requested that all

materials regarding Resolution 1 be made available in Spanish as well as English.

The Great Lakes District Council, meanwhile, meeting the same weekend in Erie, Pa., deferred most discussion of Resolution 1 until its next meeting, scheduled for late January in Pittsburgh. Instead, a major portion of its attention was monopolized by a second change agent, sometimes known as TNG-TNG: TNG, The Next Generation. Moderated by staff rep Marian Needham, a delegates youth forum produced a two-page report that kicked off with a pithy introduction: "The invisible. The powerless. The angry. The ignored. The misunderstood. The young."

The report presented several suggestions "that locals should take to heart," including:

- Do a better job of educating members about the Guild, starting with meeting new hires at the door.
- Reach out to college campuses, so no journalism student remains ignorant of the Guild's existence.
- Seek out younger members' opinions and find ways to bring them into leadership roles.
- Find new ways to exercise power that don't involve "killing a paper" with strikes and circulation boycotts.
- Take issues of pay equity and other gender issues seriously.

What 'the kids' are thinking

What do younger TNG-CWA members think about the union, or about organized labor in general? The Great Lakes District Council meeting generated quite a few anonymous comments as part of a two-page report, including the following:

"The union is just this nebulous idea. I [was told I] had to belong. We didn't get this big intro to the union, what it is, what your role is."

"There is that negative attachment to unions, too. There's such a negative stigma to it. There are 'old timers' making 50 times as much money; we'll never make as much money. You see this as a young person and you think, this is horrible, it's the worst way to run a business."

"Maybe we should have terms [limits] for officers. ...

Older people do get lax in the positions [at work]."

"Local elections are all inside baseball. You don't have enough people within the Guild who are vying for these kinds of opportunities. There are so many people that don't even know why they're even in a union."

"When you're a young person, sometimes what's a very strong benefit needs to be explained better. Things like seniority don't always make sense to the young. We need to frame these issues that matter."

"We wonder sometimes if we're really connected to the future. We're talking about not being able to retire from this industry, of being in the same boat as milkmen and blacksmiths. There are a lot of people really considering whether to stay in the field."



Yoko Kuramoto-Eidsmoe, newly appointed president of the Pacific Northwest Guild, left, and Liz Brown, the local's administrative officer, at the Western District Council meeting Oct. 29-30.

Kuramoto-Eidsmoe has been a leading proponent of the TNG-The Next Generation initiative, launching a well-trafficked message board on the subject at www.nwguild.org/forum/list.php?f=10.

Digging out contract details

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August and 16% in August of 2007. The local also accepted, more grudgingly, "significant" cuts of up to 50% in early retirement benefits, but in return each member received a \$5,000 one-time bonus.

"This was a very hard choice for us to make," said Guild President Tim O'Brien. "But in the end, we believe we reached the best agreement that we could for our members, and this is certainly a much better deal than the 'best offer' the members overwhelmingly rejected."

Other features of the Albany settlement include several job classification upgrades, affecting about 38 employees; increases in vision care reimbursement; elimination of the 1-in-10 modified shop while grandfathering 12 non-members under the old rule; an increase in maximum long-term disability payments to \$450 weekly from \$360; and \$1,500 payments to assist in child adoptions.

At the Washington Post, a new three-year contract covering approximately 1,350 news and commercial employees substitutes modest fixed-dollar increases for percentage raises. An immediate bonus of \$2,000 per employee is to be followed by four raises starting in nine months, with two raises ranging from \$8.50 to \$12 a week, depending on income, and two raises of \$10.50 a week each for all employees.

Part-timers working less than 30 hours a week will get a \$1,325 bonus and four raises averaging 28 cents an hour.

Other changes include an improved pension plan, with added benefits for both early (pre-65) and older retirees; immediate health coverage for an increased number of part-timers; use of sick leave to care for an ailing parent, spouse or domestic partner; an additional raise for mailroom workers in recognition of their

hazardous duty; and better and more frequent data summaries from the company regarding merit pay and other salary increases.

On the down side, the new contract caps at 12 the annual number of comp days for which employees can be paid and tightens time limits for filing expense account statements.

The four-year agreement at The Hour provides a retroactive raise of 3.5% and three subsequent annual raises of 3% each. Other gains include better bereavement language; increases in mileage expenses, also retroactive to Jan. 1, 2005; improved union jurisdiction provisions, and clearer merit-increase language. Management will continue to pay 92.5% of the health care premium for 2005, but the company has the option of raising employees' weekly contributions by a maximum of 10% in 2006, 15% in 2007 and 15% in 2008, above the prior year's rate.

Meanwhile, a 13-month-long stalemate in contract negotiations between the Kingston Newspaper Guild and the Journal Register-owned Daily Freeman have convinced the 65 or so union members to hit the streets. Fueling their indignation have been management's refusal to improve base wages or to increase mileage reimbursement—still set at 26 cents a mile—and its effort to shift more health care costs in the form of higher co-pays, higher deductibles and new charges for maternity and related care.

Fed up with the lack of progress, more than 30 Freeman employees and family members staged their first informational picket on Halloween. Jonathan Ment, the local's president, led the festivities with a bullhorn in one hand and a gasoline can in the other, while masked and unmasked pickets handed out candy and leaflets and urged passing motorists to "Honk for health care."

Interpreters avoid strike

Court interpreters in California's Region 2, which includes the San Francisco Bay area and coastal northern California, achieved a first contract Oct. 28. Covering approximately 120 members of the Northern California Media Guild, the agreement provides full benefits and regular employment.

Agreement was reached ahead of a threatened walkout, following an Oct. 10 reaffirmation of a strike vote first taken last May. A highly successful four-day walkout in

early July added credibility to the interpreters' very public strike preparations. Further strengthening their hand was a state-run agency shop election, tallied Oct. 27, that passed handily by a vote of 64-12.

Region 2 was the last of California's four regions to agree to a contract with its interpreters. Although the region has the state's highest cost of living and the most severe shortage of certified interpreters, its courts were the most opposed to recognizing the union.



Night-time pickets outside the Daily Freeman publicize their stalemated contract negotiations.

News round-up

Labor Dept. eases reporting rule

Union officials scrambling to comply with intricate new reporting requirements from the Dept. of Labor got an unexpected reprieve Nov. 7, when the department modified its rule regarding "gifts, gratuities, or loans of substantial value" that must be reported on Form LM-30. The rule initially required reporting of any item worth more than \$25, which could have included such relatively insubstantial "gifts" as a meal. The modified rule allows aggregation of such items and requires them to be reported only when they exceed \$250 in value from the same source. Form LM-30 must be filed annually by any union employee or officer who engages in any reportable transactions with employers or vendors.

Pentagon spin ignored in Iraq reports

Despite Pentagon requests that the media not take special note of the 2,000th U.S. military death in Iraq, referring to it as "an artificial mark on the wall set by . . . [those with] ulterior motives," most major newspapers treated it as a newsworthy development. Indeed, the New York Times used the officially disparaged word "milestone" in a headline, while USA Today, The Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times all carried special features.

New Deal has become a 'raw deal'

The only Democratic member of the National Labor Relations Board, Wilma B. Liebman, charged in an Oct. 27 speech that the New Deal legislation creating the NLRB has turned into a "raw deal" for workers. Whereas the 1935 legislation was crafted to address the "profound inequality in bargaining power" between workers and employers, Liebman said, in recent years the board's decisions have followed a pattern of "fewer workers have fewer rights." A second notable trend, she added, is a greater NLRB willingness to conclude that employers' rights outweigh those of workers or even the requirements of federal statutes.

Management with a piss-poor attitude

Judging by recent developments at Ford Motor Co., just about any kind of Orwellian intrusion into workers' lives can be justified in the name of workplace efficiency. According to a company memo leaked to the Detroit News, management at the auto maker now is keeping statistics on how long and how often each employee uses the bathroom. As the memo explains, "excessive bathroom breaks has [sic] been raised as a repetitive issue and a hindrance to our zones completing their daily and weekly responsibilities."

Medicare drug plan: patient, beware

Although there's some chance Congress may yet suspend the new Medicare prescription drug law, barring such intervention the benefit is scheduled to kick in Jan. 1. But seniors who already have some kind of drug coverage should be aware of the plan's details before switching. Under the Medicare plan, each year patients will pay the first \$250 in drug costs, then pay 25% of the next \$2,000, for total out-of-pocket expenditures of \$750 for the first \$2,250 in drug bills. Once that threshold is reached, however, the new Medicare plan pays nothing at all for the next \$2,850 in drug costs. And as icing on the cake, the plan's monthly premium is \$32 for anyone registering before May 15, more after that date.

Survival of the fittest at Wal-Mart

Hollywood often spends as much on promoting a movie as it does in making it, but the publicity director Robert Greenwald got just two weeks before the Nov. 13 release of "The High Cost of Wal-Mart's Low Price" was priceless, indeed. While the film focuses on the giant retailer's miserly health care policies, a leaked internal memo to its board of directors proposed a smorgasbord of initiatives to reduce Wal-Mart's health benefits by another \$670 million by 2011. In addition to dissuading "unhealthy people" from applying for Wal-Mart jobs, the memo suggested various methods to shed older or less fit workers, prompting one employee-rights lawyer to describe it as "a cesspool of legal violations."

For Senate, independence trumps truth

Recent White House propaganda initiatives prompted various responses, including introduction of the Truth in Broadcasting Act to require "conspicuous" disclosure of government-produced radio or video news releases. But that was before industry lobbyists weighed in at Senate Commerce Committee hearings Oct. 20, modifying the original language to such an extent that even the bill's name changed, to the Prepackaged News Story Announcement Act. The considerably weakened disclosure rules were defended in terms of "newsroom independence."

Faith in action on minimum wage

The National Council of Churches has launched a new campaign to increase the \$5.15-an-hour federal minimum wage and fight for local living wage ordinances. "We believe it's a moral outrage that minimum wage employees who work 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, only earn \$10,700 a year, which is \$5,000 below the federal poverty level," said NCC General Secretary Rev. Robert Edgar.

Undoing 32 years of gains against poverty

By Mark Gruenberg
Editor, Press Associates Inc.

Two recent Associated Press wire service stories that caught my eye are worth repeating. Here's the start of the first, with a twist:

"The gap between richest and poorest citizens is approaching a dangerous level and could lead to social unrest, media reported Wednesday, citing a government study. The most-affluent one-fifth of population is responsible for 50% of total income, with the bottom fifth taking home only 4.7%."

"The income gap exhibits a further widening trend," the government report continued. The AP story said that if the gap "continues this way for a long time, it may give rise to various sorts of instability."

I omitted the name of the country: it's China. But with very little change, those are the figures for the U.S.

The State of Working America 2004-2005, citing the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, reports the bottom fifth of the U.S. population earned 4.2% of all family income in 2001, down from 5.8% in 1979. It's dropped even lower since.

Meanwhile, the most-affluent fifth of the U.S. population saw its share of total national family income increase from 45.5% in 1979 to 52.4% in 2001. It's probably the same now, following a multi-year stock market slide that's been balanced by the jobless "recovery"—one whose benefits bypass wage earners and accrue to the rich.

The State of Working America did not forecast dire social consequences from that widening income gap, but anyone who read of the unrest in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, where the poor who could not get out of town had to steal food to keep themselves alive, can draw his or her own conclusions. What did forecast such unrest from the widening income gap was the 1968 report of the Kerner Commission, which reported on two unequal Americas, one white and one black.

And that brings us to the second AP story, about poverty in the nation's big cities—an issue brought back to the fore by Katrina:

"Despite more than 35 years of solid economic growth and income gains, the nation's poverty rate is no better than it was in 1968, just four years after President Johnson launched the War on Poverty," the

AP story said. Note the year AP cited.

"With poverty in hurricane-stricken areas approaching 30%—higher among African-Americans—political leaders of many stripes have issued urgent calls for the nation to do something about the 37 million Americans who fall into the category of have-nots," it added. The poverty rate last year was 12.7%—1 of every 8 people.

So, putting the two stories together, our poverty data is similar to China's, the poverty rate has retreated to where it was 37 years ago—and we need to do something.

The Radical Right will seize on the U.S. poverty data to argue that LBJ's War on Poverty failed, that his Great Society didn't work, that the poor are poor through their own fault. But The State of Working America paints a very different picture. Federal data, it reports, show "impressive progress against poverty in the 1960s" that subsequently "stalled in the early 1970s to mid-1990s." In 1967, census data reported 27.77 million poor people in the U.S., or 1 in every 7. By 1973 there were 5 million fewer poor people, even though the population had grown, and the proportion of poor people had been reduced to 1 in 9.

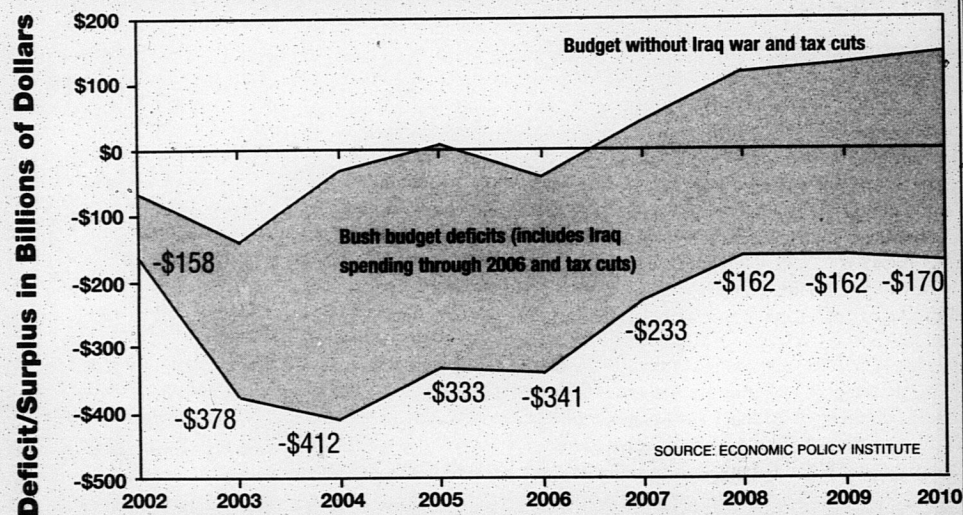
Fast-forward to 1989, after eight years of a Reagan presidency, and the U.S. had 31.53 million poor people, or 1 in every 8. By 2000, after eight years of Clinton, that number had barely budged—to 31.59 million—but the poverty ratio had declined back to 1 in every 9.

Then we got Bush II, and in the first two years of his presidency the number of poor people rose by 3 million and their share of the population returned to 1 in every 8. As AP reported, there now are 37 million poor and their share of the population is what it was before Johnson swung into action.

What does this show? That the War on Poverty was starting to work—until we stopped fighting poverty and started fighting in a big way in Vietnam. And under the trickle-down, help-only-the-rich economics that started with Reagan and continued through two different Bush presidencies, we've retreated all the way back to 1968. The uneven progress of the prior 32 years was erased in the last five.

Remember that forecast of "social unrest" in China? If it occurs here, we know where to place the blame.

The Bush Administration's Financial Legacy



Economy up, wages down

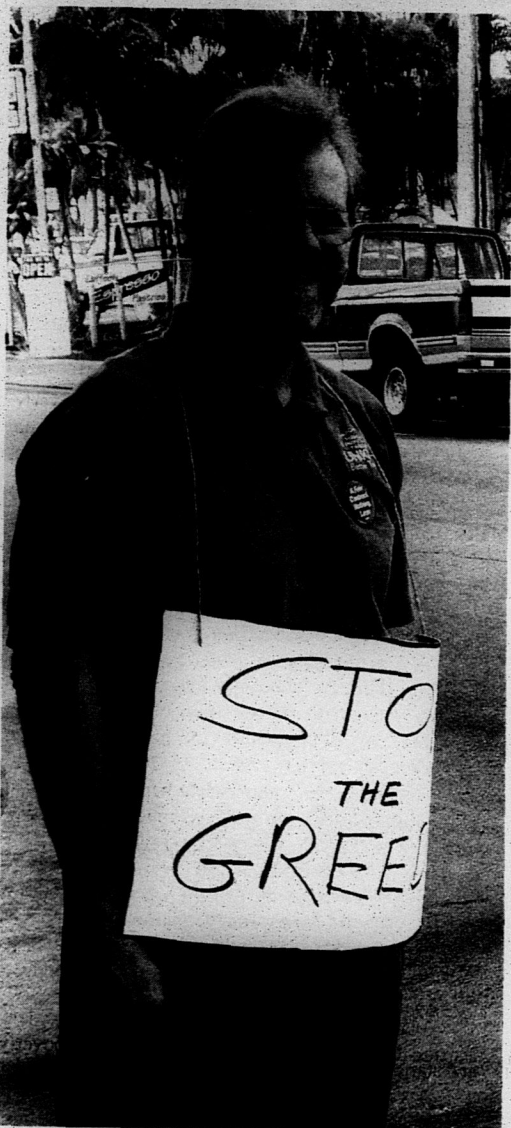
The disconnect between "the economy" and wage earners widened over the past year. While real GDP grew by 3.8% in the third quarter, for example, real wages have declined an average of 2.3% over the past year.

One consequence: the personal savings rate was a negative 1.1% in the third quarter, the only negative savings rate on record since 1947, according to the Economic Policy Institute.

Not everyone is trading financial water, of course. While average wages stagnate, the rich have gotten so much richer that the U.S. has become the third most unequal industrialized society in the world, behind just Russia and Mexico. More than 50% of all 2004 income went to the top fifth of households.

Ironically, the stagnation in wages narrowed the pay gap: women's average weekly wages rose \$6 last year, to \$573, while men held steady at \$713.

Union-busting trouble in paradise



By Hunter Bishop
Hawaii Newspaper Guild

Behaving badly. That's what the Hawaii Tribune-Herald said I was doing when I tried to help a fellow employee in trouble. But when the Big Island's biggest daily newspaper fired me Oct. 17 for performing my duties as a shop steward—after I'd been working there nearly 17 years as a reporter and news editor—it may have done the union more good than harm by rallying our 60 or so Guild members.

Hostile labor-management relations have lingered at the Tribune-Herald ever since a six-week-long strike was settled in 1967. But since the mid-1990s, when the Arkansas-based Stephens Group acquired the newspaper from Donrey Media, the pulse of the company's anti-union sentiments has quickened and now is racing at fever pitch.

Simply put, Stephens seems hell-bent on breaking the union. No longer willing to endure the tension inherent in any constructive labor-management relationship, management has adopted a policy of open contempt for organized labor and has attempted to disengage from the union whenever possible. Publisher Ted Dixon, for example, flatly refuses to meet with union representatives face-to-face on any issue.

Hawaii's election of a Republican governor—and the perception of a weakened support base for organized labor—apparently emboldened the newspaper's effort to marginalize the union, dilute its strength, co-opt its members and harass its leaders. But numerous other developments have played into this dynamic, most notably the long GOP grip on Washington, D.C. that has enabled conservatives to stack

the National Labor Relations Board in management's favor.

Most critically, Stephens brought in Michael Zinser, a Tennessee attorney whom no newspaper hires to negotiate collective bargaining contracts unless its intent is to break the union rather than reach a fair agreement. Zinser's primary strategy is to make utterly unacceptable contract proposals, refuse to modify them in subsequent "bargaining" and instead haggle over minutiae that stretch the bargaining process to mind-numbing length.

Another of the company's strategies is to attack the union's leaders to break the rank-and-file's spirit and morale. I'm certainly not the first to be targeted for union activism at the Tribune-Herald, only the latest. Others have left the company under duress or also were fired under dubious circumstances. But the recent incident involving me was perhaps the most outrageous and transparent attack on a union representative yet by a company that has become increasingly mean-spirited.

For example, employees in the circulation department are not allowed to rearrange their schedules in cooperation with their co-workers to accommodate college classes or church activities, even when the adjustments won't disrupt company work. There is no reason for such inflexibility: it's simply an issue of control. But what else might you expect from a newspaper whose top management believes the aloha spirit is a myth and that "local" people are lazy and stupid.

In my case, as a shop steward, I questioned a supervisor who was taking an employee into his office for possible disciplinary measures after he had advised her in front of several employees that she had violated a company policy. I did not raise my voice, interfere with the meeting, nor disrupt anyone's work. Yet my effort to protect a union member's Weingarten rights was used as a flimsy excuse to get rid of me.

So we are having problems, but we want everyone to know that the problems we are having are not just our own. The company's efforts to break apart our unions affect everyone in the community. The Tribune-Herald would like to operate unfettered by unions because then it would have carte blanche to pay low wages, cut benefits to the barest minimum, treat employees like a faceless commodity and produce a cheaper product.

We've been patient—some say too patient—in an increasingly hostile environment while we watched our earnings steadily erode. It's now been nearly 12 months since our last contract expired, and we haven't had a pay raise since January 2002—and that raise was a mere

1%.

There is no doubt we have enjoyed good jobs in Hilo for a long time due to the hard work and sacrifices made by union workers before us. But those gains will continue to slip away if we idly stand by. The people who built our unions from the ground up and fought to keep them strong for so many years knew that strong unions make a strong community. Now it's up to us to preserve our wages, benefits and job security for those who will follow us.

The Tribune-Herald's proposals for a new contract would freeze our wages, cut our benefits and jeopardize our jobs so the company can hire new, non-union employees at lower wages with fewer benefits.

The Tribune-Herald is a privately-held company that admits it is making money but doesn't have to open its books to show how much. We believe it's a lot. Meanwhile its lawyer-negotiator, Zinser, insists there is nothing wrong with the old collective bargaining agreement that is still in effect. In fact, his job is simply to "enhance" the contract for the company by taking more money out of employees' pockets while reducing their workplace rights.

It would be one thing if the company reinvested a significant portion of its profits in the newspaper, or even in the community. But of course that's hardly the case. In the editorial department, for example, a full-time news staff that is about half the size of the industry standard for a newspaper its size is struggling to produce a quality product. The union employees in the editorial department produce a remarkably good newspaper, considering what they have to work with, but coverage inevitably suffers because the Tribune-Herald refuses to provide the necessary resources. Instead, it pockets extra profits.

Meanwhile, the Tribune-Herald uses its monopoly status (Stephens Media Group also owns West Hawaii Today, a non-union newspaper and the only other daily on the Big Island) to hammer advertisers, raising ad rates on a regular basis. Of course, this additional enhancement of the company's profits just pumps more dollars out of the local circulation and back to the company's coffers on the mainland.

None of this has gone unnoticed by the community, which has started voicing its alarm. Now the Tribune-Herald's unionized employees are spreading the message to the airwaves, the streets, from neighbor to neighbor and into print, rallying support for a fair contract for us and for the community. Together, we will take our fight for a fair new contract to the Tribune-Herald, and together we will win.

CBC scored for 'cowboy way of doing business'

When Canadian lawmakers finally took a long, public look at how senior management at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has handled labor relations, they made no effort to conceal their displeasure.

"There is no confidence in you around the table—these MPs [Members of Parliament] have no compliments to pay you," Bloc Québécois MP Carole Lavallée told CBC President Robert Rabinovitch. MP Charlie Angus, of the New Democratic party, chimed in by blasting the public broadcast management's "cowboy way of doing business."

The tongue-lashing came Oct. 27, as the federal Heritage Committee examined the recent eight-week lockout of the CBC's 5,500 employees represented by the Canadian Media Guild. Although ostensibly taken as a preemptive measure to block a strike threat, the lockout had been signalled months earlier in contract negotiations marked by management's refusal to bargain in good faith.

"It's becoming clear that a lockout plan was well in play at least as early as the June meeting of the CBC's board of directors," CMG President Lise Lareau observed, a day after Rabinovitch tried to explain his actions in an Oct. 24 CBC radio interview.

Put on the hot seat by the Heritage Committee, CBC's senior managers were hit with a laundry list of complaints, from not bargaining in good faith to rushing into a lockout that denied service to the taxpaying public. A special grievance was voiced over management's decision to impose the lockout without informing the Heritage Minister, and management was further battered for not starting discussions with the

government about the broadcaster's parliamentary appropriation for 2006, even though the budget "pie is already being divided up."

Despite the pointed exchanges, Rabinovitch remained unrepentant and even pugnacious. During his radio interview, when asked if in retrospect he would have done anything differently, Rabinovitch responded: "Knowing what I know now, nothing has changed. We were still looking at a situation where the negotiations were not moving forward, but were stalled."

Appearing before the Heritage Committee, Rabinovitch continued to sidestep management responsibility for stalling negotiations with its insistence on hiring more contingent employees, claiming that the Guild was partly to blame for the lockout. That prompted a derisive response from Lareau, who observed that the union's strike vote had been forced by management's filing for conciliation in May, which started the strike/lockout clock ticking.

"CBC management insisted a lockout was necessary because there was going to be a strike," she commented. "What they never talked about was a third option: negotiating a fair deal with no work stoppage. The fact is, the deal we ended up with would have been possible without a strike or a lockout. They refused to compromise on their positions on the main issues until the final weekend of the lockout."

The committee wrapped up the day with a request for additional CBC materials, including a balance sheet of lockout spending and savings. The Guild has requested that it be given an opportunity to clarify any issues before the committee starts deliberating on motions.

Protest over AP Mexico firings

The International Federation of Journalists has called on the Associated Press to abandon union-busting efforts at its Mexico City office. In particular, the IFJ says the company should use its 37-year-old collective bargaining agreement to negotiate the settlement of a dispute with the Mexican journalists' union over five staff members who face dismissal.

The IFJ says the firings are a blatant attempt by AP to wipe out its obligations under its collective bargaining agreement with Mexico's Sindicato Nacional de Redactores de la Prensa.

"The case is bewildering because the SNRP and its members have had a good

relationship with AP management in Mexico for years," said Aidan White, IFJ General Secretary. "This case also raises concerns about the AP labor strategy and the possibility that its new global approach may be to slash costs by cutting personnel and collective bargaining agreements."

Although the firings were represented by AP as a cost-cutting measure, the wire service has ignored several union attempts to discuss alternatives. Instead, over the past several weeks management offered successively worse severance offers, culminating in an announcement Nov. 14 that there was no room for negotiations to keep the jobs.

End of lockout doesn't end CBC problems

By Lise Lareau
President, Canadian Media Guild

I'll never forget the feeling of sitting there in room 269 of the West Block in Ottawa, listening to the team of senior managers try to defend the lockout. Not only did they mislead the committee about why they feel they had no choice but to lock us out, they did it with us staring right at them. That type of "we are right no matter where the truth lies" attitude explains the lockout in ways that actual words cannot.

The challenge now is to get the CBC moving forward again. The Guild is asking to appear before the Heritage Committee to set the record straight and more importantly, to talk about what we would do to get management and employee relations back on track. (Though the CBC managers were asked several times about this by Heritage Committee members, they did not answer.)

Since the return to work, CBC managers have, by and large, adopted an attitude that "the lockout is over, and we will go on as if it never happened." Some are trying to revise history by calling it a "strike/lock-out." Others are openly antagonistic and combative with Guild officials. It's how not to repair relations after a labour dispute.

We need to jointly develop a plan of how to work together again. We need to heal a relationship that was sick even before the lockout. The culture of obfuscation, withholding of information, refusing to deal with conflicts before they get to a litigious stage, favouritism—those are the ingredients in a recipe for a poisonous workplace that must be changed.

How do we achieve that? There's no question it will be difficult—almost impossible—if the main players who masterminded the lockout stay in their positions. But we do not control those decisions. Another possibility is for the main players to be ordered by the Board to sign on to a program of constructive relationship building. It would include several steps:

1. A meeting between top management and union officials in a facilitated environment, possibly with several members of the Board present, to discuss how the culture can be changed.

2. Out of the discussions, the parties would sign a public document indicating steps they agree to take to do so.

3. Both parties would reveal how much they spend battling each other and pledge to try to cut those costs by a certain percentage. Both sides would have to agree to be open

with their numbers. (The Guild's numbers are part of its annually approved budget. The CBC's numbers are never revealed.)

4. Both parties would have to agree to a timetable for review of progress, which would be made public.

These are some thoughts, which can be developed further. But something along these lines has to take place, because senior management's appearance before the Heritage Committee suggested to me that the war on employees didn't end when we came back to work: it simply moved into a new phase.

There are other troubling signs, too. It was equally distressing to hear that CBC management has made no moves to discuss next year's Parliamentary appropriation with the government. Although Robert Rabinovitch and his team are fully aware the CBC is under-funded, they never appear to do the necessary work to secure the additional money they say they need.

At the same time, they now claim they have no money left over after the lockout. The claim is not credible. We know they saved about \$40 million in salaries. They could not have spent that amount on security, management bonuses (inflated though they were) and start-up advertising. We hope that Parliament gets to the bottom of CBC spend-

ing during the lockout. An audit is probably our best hope of getting those answers.

And there remains one essential question. How could Rabinovitch justify locking us out "because we believed the union would go on strike in October during hockey or possibly an election"? The CBC controlled the timing. It pulled the plug on talks in May to force an August deadline date.

We reacted by taking a strike vote in July, which has a 60-day limit. Our strike vote would have expired in the first week of September, long before October. All this is spelled out in the Canada Labour Code. In any case, why wasn't option 3 considered: bargaining past the August 15 deadline for another three weeks before the strike vote expired. It would have provided some necessary pressure on the parties to deal. If it had been serious bargaining, we would have been close to the deal we eventually got by the beginning of September, close enough to call off a dispute.

But this is a senior management team that only dealt with us in a fair way when they were absolutely forced to: after a seven-week lockout, with Labour Minister Joe Fontana staring them down and Hockey Night in Canada's timeline ticking. That's the culture that has to change, in the interest of public broadcasting in this country.

Eugene Debs' spirit still alive and kicking

By Stephanie Salter
Terre Haute Newspaper Guild

Not long ago, if anyone had told me I would some day find myself standing in the basement of Hulman Center, holding hands with more than 250 people—including the mayor of Terre Haute—while we all sang "Solidarity Forever," I would have said that someone was crazy.

But, sure enough, there I was last Saturday night at the 40th annual awards banquet of the Eugene V. Debs Society. No Debs Award dinner closes without the singing of the 1915 labor anthem, and almost nobody on Earth sings the song without clapping hands.

Or so I was told because this was my first-ever Debs do. It won't be my last.

Even if my politics were not liberal (or "progressive," as some folks nowadays prefer), I would become a Debs award dinner regular. Even if I had not been a member of a labor union my entire working life—currently Local 34046 of the Newspaper Guild—I would go again and again.

Why? Because it was fun. A bunch of well-read, politically passionate, history-revering human beings all gathered in a room to drink cocktails, eat George Azar's food, discuss socio-economic issues—and some baseball—and honor a man or woman who's trying to change life for the better is my idea of a good time. Singer-guitarist Anne Feeney, who led us all in "Solidarity Forever" and performed a bunch of other labor and leftist tunes, is also my idea of a good time. How can you not like a woman who quit being a lawyer to sing songs like "Joe Hill" for a living?

But, of course, my politics are liberal. I am an unapologetic union member, and I happen to think that the Debs creed is one of those touchstones most of America needs to dig out, clean off and put to real use:

"While there is a lower class, I am in it; while there is a criminal element, I am of it; and while there is a soul in prison, I am not free."

(Funny, that sounds a lot like something Jesus said.)

So, naturally, I found the four hours I spent at the Debs dinner extremely enjoyable. The keynote speaker alone was worth the price of admission.

Cecil Roberts has been the president of

the United Mine Workers of America since 1995 and is the only UMWA president to be elected by acclamation for three straight terms. He is a Vietnam War vet, lost both of his grandfathers to accidents in the mines and went to work mining coal deep beneath the surface of the Earth after he graduated from college in West Virginia.

He is also one hell of a speaker, more Southern Baptist preacher than union executive. He got a standing ovation before he spoke, one after, one in the middle and so many interruptions of thunderous applause, I lost count. If one politician in Washington, D.C., had Roberts' oratory skills, he or she would win any race entered.

Then there was the Debs Award recipient, Thomas Frank. Young, bespectacled and a demon researcher, he joined a roster of previous Debs Award winners that reads like a Who's Who of progressive thinkers. The awards began in 1965 with the first going to UMWA giant (and eyebrow king) John L. Lewis, then to such luminaries as Dorothy Day, Arthur Schlesinger, Jesse Jackson, Pete Seeger, Kurt Vonnegut, Coretta Scott King, Studs Terkel, Edward Asner, Ralph Nader, Dolores Huerta, Jim Hightower, Julian Bond and Molly Ivins.

Frank did not disappoint in his presentation. He is the author of the best-selling "What's the Matter with Kansas," as well as "One Market Under God: Extreme Capitalism, Market Populism, and the End of Economic Democracy." He is also an incurable number cruncher. Some of those he shared with the Debs crowd:

- In 1980, when more than 20% of the workforce belonged to labor unions, corporate CEOs averaged about 42 times the salary of the line workers in their operations. At the end of the last decade, with union representation dropping to about 8%, CEO salaries were 500 times that of their workers.

- While the median U.S. family income held relatively steady between 1989 and 1999, the workers in those families toiled longer hours—six more weeks per year's worth—just to hold that income line.

- The CEO of Wal-Mart makes as much in two weeks as his average worker earns in his or her entire lifetime.

Frank said that the "wealth inequality" between the rich and not-rich now "equals 1920s levels."

"The world of business has become the world, period," he said. "Every time they bust a union in America, a worker some-

where offshore cries out in joy."

As he argues in "What's the Matter with Kansas," Frank said that working-class Americans have bought a harmful bill of goods from ruling-class politicians who "may talk Christ, but they walk corporate."

"You vote to stop abortion and you receive a rollback in the capital gains taxes," he said.

Cultural anger has been marshaled by "a new aristocracy" to achieve economic ends that have little or no benefit for anyone not in the upper-upper levels of income. But the folks who are angry at the culture, Frank said, never seem to make the connection when it comes time to vote.

"It's like the French Revolution in reverse: workers come storming down the street screaming, 'More aristocracy!'" he said.

In the political and economic climate of today, "Eisenhower and Nixon look like liberals," he said. Of the prevailing force that is the marriage of politics, unbridled free-market capitalism and religion-fueled cultural divisiveness, Frank predicted, "With a little more effort, I think they may repeal the entire 20th century."

From the Nov. 4 Terre Haute Tribune-Star.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor,

Just read Debbie Thomas's piece in the Guild Reporter on ethnic slurs (Sept. 9). This subject is interesting. Did any tribes vote on it? How are these things decided? What if someone of Irish heritage objects to "Fighting Irish"? There also are the Vikings. I just saw a TV ad showing pillaging Norsemen.

How a term becomes an ethnic slur is an instance of gatekeeping journalism. We think about it only because it is in the news. Newspapers use "paddy wagon" and the marines and Navy think nothing of the term "Irish pennant." And make a list of all the derogatory terms that have the prefix "Dutch." No one gets upset because it is not on the media screen, or the news template.

I think there are ethnic names that aren't regarded as slurs. In my area we have Dons, Gaels and Highlanders. If I were black, I would be proud to see a team named "the Buffalo Soldiers."

Before you "take a stand" you should think about our role in dividing people. I thought a

lot about this when I saw the movie "Crash." We do have more in common than we think. Ignoring this fact has led to a wide distrust of the news media. The use of "Anglo" is a fine example. How in the world did one group come to define another? I object to the word because it is not exact. It is meant to cover non-Hispanics. How can people whose ancestors came from Italy, Russia, Germany, France or Poland be "Anglo"? And the Irish fought an "Anglo-Irish War."

Maybe I am over-sensitive because I feel disenfranchised. There is no male version of Ellen Goodman and European-Americans are lumped together under "white." If print had been doing its job in a fair and balanced manner there never would have been talk radio. And more people would be reading newspapers.

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

To the Editor,

I am writing in response to a letter pub-

lished in the October issue, in which a member questioned if it were worth the money to print The Guild Reporter, stating "It's a waste of money to publish a newspaper that is so outdated" and "the web site better serves the goal of disseminating news." Being from a circulation department, I was horrified to read this from a union member. I do understand that he was just talking about the Reporter, but suppose owners of other newspapers had this same thought. The circulation department at every newspaper would be rendered useless, countless jobs would be lost and in a lot of cases Guild membership would go down.

I am sure we use a union shop to print the Reporter, so we are giving union members work. Personally, I do not see this as a waste of money. Besides, nothing beats holding the hard copy of any newspaper in your hand.

In Unity,
—Tom Mahoney,
Brockton Local 31027



LOOKING AHEAD

Time we shape our own future

By Bernie Lunzer, Secretary-Treasurer

Back in the day (a term my son loves), in the infancy of the United Auto Workers, a problem arose. The workers had the audacity to attempt to bargain with the company over what cars got built and what they cost. Politicians "solved" the problem by drawing a line in the law: stupid workers here, intelligent managers over there. The divine right of management was to manage the company unfettered by employee input. Unions were relegated to bargaining over wages and working conditions.

So the auto workers did what they've almost always done: they didn't give up. They created "quality circles"—committees that met to discuss those exact same industrial goals that had been shorn from bargaining. They were convinced they had much to offer when it came to running the company.

Fast forward to the present. Like a lot of other good ideas generated by people who actually do the work, the "quality" and worker participation movement were absorbed and put under management control. That loss has been especially poignant for the newspaper industry.

I submit to you that the "captains" of our industry have given up, and privately are just counting the days. The most recent slew of layoffs and cutbacks stands as testimony to that. Not unlike the steel magnates in the U.S., they have decided to bleed what's left dry, and perhaps take the money elsewhere. Meanwhile, companies like Google are creating new ideas out of whole cloth, making billions selling other people's information. Oh, yeah—now they want to sell classifieds, too. Think they might be successful?

I think we, the workers in the information

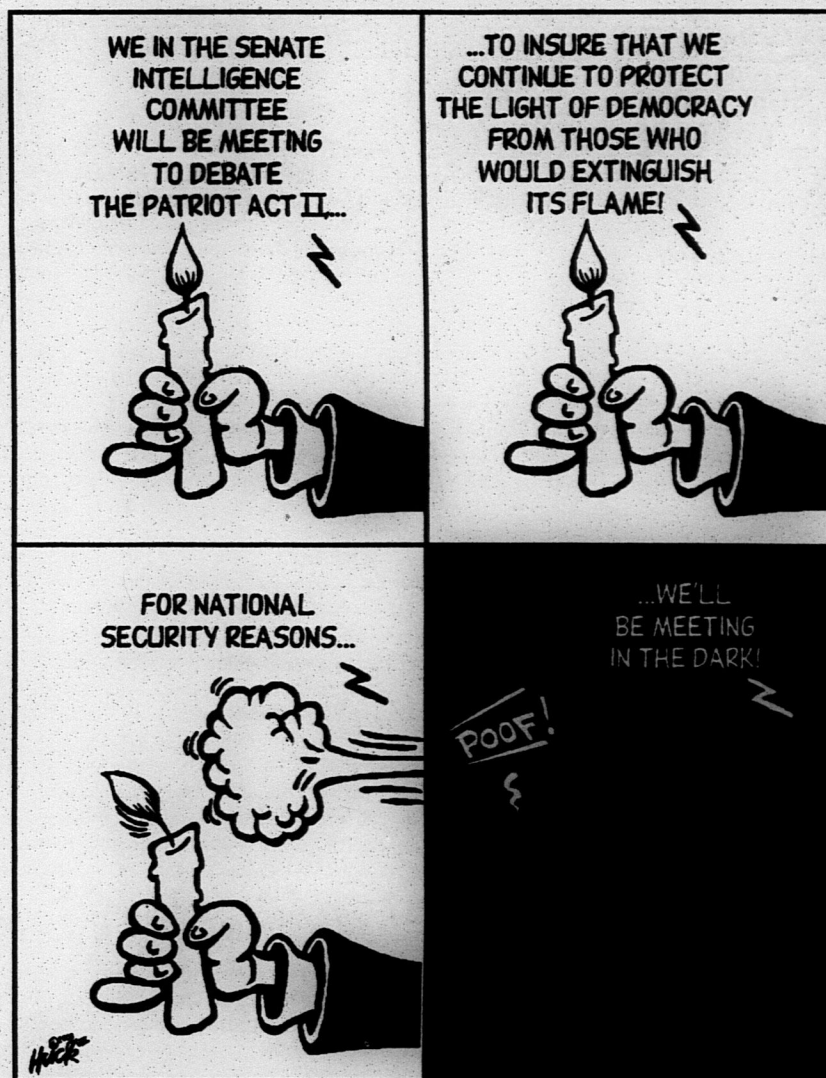
industry, need to help our short-sighted managements by demanding a discussion on the industry's future—and should have such a discussion with or without management's participation. I think "committees on the future of news" ought to spring up everywhere in our ranks, and I think the better managers will want to participate in such committees without demanding to control them.

Here's what the future cannot be: shrinking newspapers providing less and less information, giving readers less and less reason to read. Too many papers are suffering the death of a thousand cuts, turned into glorified shoppers, even though people still want trusted information. Yes, distribution logistics have been irretrievably changed: get over it and figure out what it is we're selling through whatever mechanism, web or otherwise. The Guild has a proven track record of thriving by adapting to changing technology. We need to assist our employers do the same.

It's no great secret that the industry has lived off the kindness of strangers for some time now. Our members may loathe short-sighted, mean-spirited managers, but they'll always go that extra mile for the product they love—although perhaps we've reached the point where even that will be snuffed out.

But I say we can't give up, even if management has. If they won't work with us, let's work without them and do it ourselves. The future of the information industry belongs to us, so it's up to us to bring back quality discussions. I'm convinced there is a future for real news and even that there's money to be made—and not just by executives, either.

Browse a business magazine or manage-



ment-theory book, and you'll discover that successful modern companies are those that empower and involve workers in key decisions that affect the future of the business. Perhaps if that practice had continued in the auto industry, every second car sold in the U.S.

today wouldn't be coming from another country. Maybe the auto industry would be producing good cars here—ones that people want to buy. Let's get over the myth that American management understands anything but greed. They need our help in the worst way.

Ringling the alarm on corporate job scams

By Greg LeRoy
Executive Director, Good Jobs First

Although news of the labor movement has been dominated in recent months by the turmoil within the AFL-CIO, I think it's worth remembering that America's labor unions are key watchdogs against corporate tax-and-job scams.

The stakes are huge. In the name of "jobs, jobs, jobs," states and cities spend \$50 billion a year; the average state now subsidizes jobs more than 30 different ways: property tax abatements, corporate income tax credits, low-interest loans, free land—and just plain cash. Such packages routinely exceed \$100,000 per job.

The net result is poorer public services and a big tax-burden shift. Large corporations, with their armies of consultants and accountants, are getting huge tax cuts at the expense of small businesses and working families. But much of this money clearly is wasted. Companies that get huge subsidies routinely fail to create as many jobs as they promised. Indeed, many lay people off, outsource jobs offshore, pay poverty wages and fail to provide health care.

Wal-Mart, for example, gets subsidies through the front door—and the back door.

It has benefited from more than \$1 billion in brick-and-mortar subsidies at its stores and warehouses. Yet each Wal-Mart store with 200 workers also costs federal taxpayers an estimated \$420,750 a year in hidden costs, such as Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance, free school lunches and housing assistance. The retail giant has more than 3,000 stores and seeks to open 300 more a year.

With big federal budget cutbacks squeezing state and local governments, our communities can ill afford such corporate freeloading. Fortunately for workers and taxpayers, the labor movement consistently steps up to the plate. Together with community groups, environmentalists, budget watchdogs, human service advocates and elected officials of every political persuasion, unions are strong, effective advocates for more accountability and less abuse.

From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, for example, union leaders at many factories blew the whistle when companies announced that facilities were closing—despite having received massive taxpayer subsidies that were supposed to secure the jobs. Embarrassed by these revelations, state and local officials enacted "clawbacks," or money-back guarantee contracts, to protect taxpayers and recoup money when companies fail to deliver. Today,

clawbacks are considered "best practice."

For the last dozen years, unions have formed coalitions through Jobs with Justice and with community groups like ACORN to win living wage ordinances in more than 130 localities. Originally created to cover service contracts for privatized government work, many such laws have been expanded to cover some companies that receive job subsidies.

Thanks to these coalitions, governments are giving fewer subsidies to companies that stick taxpayers with hidden safety-net costs like those at Wal-Mart. Indeed, health care advocates, including unions of health care workers, and investigative journalists have gotten 16 states to disclose the names of companies with the most beneficiaries on Medicaid and/or Children's Health Insurance.

Union leaders also promote good jobs as members of regional Workforce Investment Boards. Aided by the AFL-CIO Working for America Institute, 1,100 labor representatives across the country promote good wages and benefits and other taxpayer safeguards at companies that benefit from federal training monies. Through joint labor-management programs in industries such as construction, manufacturing and hospitality, unions help workers improve their skills and living standards. Such programs are extremely cost-effective

compared to corporate tax giveaways.

Unions and labor federations also support tax and budget watchdog groups in many state capitols, promoting good-government reforms such as transparency and disclosure when companies get huge tax breaks for jobs. Thanks to such efforts, 12 states now have some form of company-specific reporting of subsidy costs and benefits each year.

Unions also have helped form regional non-profit groups that publish research and organize reform campaigns. The Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy—and similar groups in Denver, San Jose, San Diego and Oakland—are pioneering the use of Community Benefits Agreements to ensure that neighborhood residents actually benefit from taxpayer-subsidized development projects.

Labor's strong support for corporate accountability on jobs and taxes benefits all taxpayers, most of whom are not union members. If you like Social Security, Medicare, free public education and your weekends, thank your local unions. And join their coalitions for more reforms in the coming year!

LeRoy is author of *The Great American Jobs Scam: Corporate Tax Dodging and the Myth of Job Creation* (Berrett-Koehler, 2005).

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 for letters and articles: Friday before publication. (Next deadline: December 9.)

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Celebrating 2 women who made life better

By Debbie Thomas
Human Rights Director

Icon: an image or figure. Pioneer: one who goes before, preparing the way for others. Heroine: a woman of great courage. These were just some of the words used to describe Rosa Louise Parks, who died Oct. 24.

Parks, as we should all know, was the seamstress who refused to relinquish her seat to a white man on a bus in Montgomery, Ala. This act of defiance in 1956 Jim Crow America was the spark that ignited the civil rights movement.

Hats off to the publishers of America's daily newspapers. In an unsentimental scanning of the front pages of approximately 150 U.S. dailies, courtesy of the Newseum website, I found that Rose Parks' death received front-page treatment in approximately 80% of them. The nation's editorial boards deserve our thanks for giving due recognition.

Now we're coming up on a different anniversary involving another American icon, pioneer and heroine. On Dec. 10, 1948, First Lady and Guild member Eleanor Roosevelt joined other representatives of the United Nations in signing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That event is now commemorated as International Human Rights Day.

The declaration outlines the basic rights of any free society, including the rights of freedom of speech, belief and justice for all. Remarkably, however, the declaration also enumerates rights that the United States has never recognized, especially those summarized in Article 23:

1. Everyone has the right to work, to a free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

3. Everyone has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

4. Everyone has the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Seems strange that we are still fighting for these rights today. For example, any number of our locals are currently fighting to prevent two-tier wage systems or discretionary pay increases: tell them about equal pay for equal work. Or try telling the workers at the Chinese Daily News that they have the right to form a union.

This year the AFL-CIO is gearing up to observe International Human Rights Day with what it is describing as the "biggest ever" mobilization for workers' rights. Actions are being planned in 68 cities for the week of Dec. 5-10, supported by a wide variety of community groups, including Jobs With Justice, Pride at Work, National Council of Women's Organizations, the National Council of Churches and the NAACP. Check out www.aflcio.org for more details and to hear a public service announcement from Julian Bond, NAACP chairman.

According to the AFL-CIO, two years ago more than 37,000 workers participated in Dec. 10 events in 72 cities. We want to top that this year. Dec. 10 is a day to stand up for the workers' rights that are routinely violated in this country and to make the point that workers' rights are human rights.

For more information on CWA and TNG activities, stay tuned to Get Active. If you are not a member of Get Active, contact Secretary-Treasurer Bernie Lunzer at blunzer@cwa-union.org.

STICKS AND STONES

Fag, Faggot: Originally a pejorative term for a gay male, it is now being reclaimed by some gay men. Still extremely offensive when used as an epithet.

Ball and Chain: This offensive phrase refers sarcastically to a man's loss of freedom because of a woman. Do not use.

Baby's mama, baby's daddy: Slang to imply parenthood out of wedlock. Avoid usage.

Canadian Guild pioneer
Beland Honderich dies

Beland Honderich, most widely-known as the former publisher of the Toronto Star but also a union activist who resurrected the Toronto Newspaper Guild in 1948—a point conspicuously absent from the obituary in his own paper—died Nov. 8. He was 86.

The much-lauded newspaperman's death was marked by major obituaries in both Canada and the U.S. But the accomplishments for which Honderich received the most recognition arguably would have been impossible at many of the newspapers that lamented his passing, which without a hint of irony effused about his crusading spirit on behalf of the weak and helpless.

Raised on a Mennonite farm in Baden, Ontario, Honderich worked at a variety of small newspapers in that province before being hired as a reporter by the Star in 1943. By then the Star ostensibly was a Guild shop, its workers having received a charter in 1937 as Local 87 of the American Newspaper Guild, but repeated attempts to negotiate a first contract had collapsed as the Star demoted known union supporters and intimidated others.

Exhibiting the kind of social conscience that would later transform the entire newspaper, Honderich—then a financial reporter, and so viewed with some suspicion by some co-workers—stepped forward and was elected president of the local in 1948. By the next year the Toronto Guild not only had its first contract but had negotiated what was then the milestone pay rate of \$75 a week for reporters with four years' experience. The Star capitalized on the development by proclaiming in its pages that it was "the first newspaper in Canada to establish the five-day, 40-hour week for editorial employees," adding that it had become "the first and only Toronto daily newspaper to pay its editorial workers time-and-a-half in cash for overtime."

Honderich went on to serve three terms as Toronto Guild president, but advanced even more rapidly at his chosen profession. By 1955 he was the Star's editor-in-chief, and 11 years later—at the age of 48—he was elected president and publisher, a post he held for 22 years. Yet throughout his career, the social conscience that propelled Honderich into Guild activism also led him to embrace the principles laid down by Joseph E. Atkinson, a radical Methodist who had taken over the Evening Star in 1899 with the announcement that it

would champion the underprivileged.

"I believe newspapers should play an activist role in society and not content themselves with reporting events," Honderich told a Carleton University audience in 1989, a year after he retired. "For events alone do not properly reflect what is taking place in society. We know, for example, that the distribution of income continues to be skewed in favor of the wealthy. Despite all our welfare services, there continues to be a real need and even suffering in our midst."

In keeping with that philosophy, Honderich is credited with transforming the Star from a scandal sheet that placed greater emphasis on entertainment than on news to a hard-driving news and analysis-centered publication. The stories he initiated challenged anti-Semitism, exposed discrimination and highlighted social policy failures. The work he demanded had to be factual, fair and compellingly written. And the paper overall had to have a point of view—anathema by today's standards.

"He very much believed in a crusading, if fair and accurate newspaper," said his son, John, who was the Star's publisher for a decade, until 2004. "He once made a convocation address in which he said there was no such thing as objectivity."

Honderich also was a staunch defender of newspaper independence and critical of media ownership concentration. In 1970 he appeared before the Davey Commission, which was investigating cross-media ownership in Canada at a time when the phenomenon was just beginning to emerge. But Honderich raised red flags even then, observing that such combinations were more alarming than chain ownership of newspapers. "As the public interest is best served by having many voices in the field of communications, the ownership by one person or company of a newspaper and/or radio and television stations must be questioned," he told commission members.

Although Honderich stepped down as publisher in 1988, he continued as chairman of the board of the Star's parent company, Torstar Corp., until 1995—a period including a bitter, month-long strike in 1992 that severely tested his belief in the importance of having an unionized newsroom. He kept an office near the newsroom until 1999.

Honderich, survived by his wife, Rina; a brother, Ted; and by two sons and a daughter, died from the effects of a stroke.

THE GUILD
Reporter

Official publication of
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Volume 72, Number 11

NOVEMBER 18, 2005

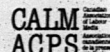
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Printed by Mount Vernon Printing Co.

DAYBOOK

TNG-CWA Executive Board,
Jan. 11-13, Washington, DC

Deadline for Broun, Barr
nominations: Jan. 27

Great Lakes District Council,
Jan. 27-29, Pittsburgh

New Local Officers Seminar,
Feb. 17-20, Silver Spring, MD

CWA Leg.-Political Conference,
March 12-15, Washington, DC

Western District Council,
April 1-2, San Francisco

CWA Civil Rights, Equity Conf.,
April 27-30, Philadelphia

Freedom Awards Banquet,
May 3, Washington, DC

TNG-CWA Sector Conference,
July 7-8, Las Vegas

CWA 68th Annual Convention,
July 10-11, Las Vegas

FROM THE MORGUE

Seventy years ago this month:

In a boxed front-page statement in The Guild Reporter, President Heywood Broun and Executive Secretary Jonathan Eddy urge all Guild members to buy newly issued "defense certificates" to help fund "a progressive and militant labor union." . . . Angelo Herndon, a striking Negro employee of the Amsterdam News, learns on the picket line that the U.S. Supreme Court has refused to review his conviction under an 1804 Georgia law prescribing death for anyone inciting slaves to insurrection. Herndon had been sentenced to 18 to 20 years at hard labor on a chain gang for organizing black and white unemployed workers in Atlanta in 1932.

Fifty years ago this month:

The Guild announces it will move its national headquarters next month from New York to Washington, D.C., where it will lease space from the IUE. . . . Concerned about soaring newsprint prices, the Guild's executive board adopts a resolution urging a Congressional subsidy for construction of additional newsprint plants. . . . The New York Guild sponsors an all-day series of workshops that examine the labor press.

Twenty-five years ago this month:

Halfway through the fiscal year, the Guild's general and defense funds are described by the executive board's finance committee as the most robust in Guild history. . . . The Guild's executive board, contending it's "past time for another inquiry," calls on Parliament for "early and urgent action" to limit newspaper ownership concentration in Canada. . . . The York (Pa.) Daily Record locks out all employees, including 46 Guild members.

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DEC 16

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