

THE GUILD Reporter

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It's getting hotter in Toledo

Blade suspends benefits; owners take similar hard line in Pittsburgh

Confronting an employer who seems determined to break its unions or go bankrupt trying, Guild-represented employees of the Toledo Blade suffered yet another indignity in late September when they learned their dental and vision coverage was being suspended. The suspension was blamed on a shortfall in the newspaper's benefit fund, which is jointly administered by company and union representatives.

Although Toledo Guild members swiftly

remedied the problem Oct. 9, voting to divert an extra \$7.86 per shift from their wages to maintain coverage, the suspension was only the latest in a series of skirmishes over stalled contract talks. While the family-owned company has locked out members of five of its seven unions in an effort to strong-arm negotiations, a subscriber and advertiser boycott launched in response has taken a heavy toll.

Union officials estimate that overall cir-

culation has declined 25% or more; an Audit Bureau of Circulation report that would confirm the estimate was due at press time and may be seen at www.accessABC.com. Advertiser defections are also mounting and include the Blade's second largest advertiser, a car dealer with more than \$15,000 in weekly billings.

Meanwhile, the Blade's owner, Block Communications Inc., has started rattling the saber at its other major newspaper, the

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. With negotiations recently started and its existing contracts with the Pittsburgh Guild and five other unions set to expire at year's end, the company has said it is prepared to sell the paper if it doesn't have new agreements—including major union concessions—by Dec. 31. Those concessions, as at the Blade, include not only reduced costs and lower headcount but revised work rules to increase management "flexibility."

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In San Jose, the other shoe drops

'Lean Dean' lives up to his name

The jeremiads began as soon as MediaNews emerged as top bidder for several former Knight Ridder newspapers. The company's emphasis on clustering would destroy each newspaper's community identity. MediaNews chief executive Dean Singleton was known as "Lean Dean" for a reason, earning the moniker by slashing wages and reducing head counts. Editorial excellence would become a distant memory.

Turns out that prophets of doom sometimes know what they're gnashing about.

When the new owner of the San Jose Mercury News finally came to the bargaining table Sept. 21—nearly three months after the San Jose Guild's contract had expired—it was to demand a virtual gutting of past agreements. Erasing a decades-old relationship between employer and employees, MediaNews is demanding creation of a two-tier wage scale, elimination of the defined benefit pension plan, a one-year elimination of paid vacations and complete control over health insurance coverage, including the unfettered freedom to determine employee premium levels, co-pays and extent of coverage.

Nor is that all. Another series of demands essentially would destroy any meaningful union protection for

employees, including elimination of all jurisdictional protection while instituting a management right to subcontract any work in the bargaining unit. The company also is seeking the right to unilaterally set performance standards and to discipline employees based on those standards; to use personal evaluations as disciplinary tools for the first time; and to reserve the sole right to determine who is laid off, without regard to seniority.

Moreover, in an effort to ensure the union doesn't put up too much resistance, Singleton warned the Guild's bargaining committee that prolonged negotiations "could lead to dramatic reductions in staff"—but the threat didn't seem to have the desired effect. "All in all, this represents an outright assault on all of us. We cannot let it stand," responded a Guild bargaining bulletin.

Indeed, staff reductions appear all but inevitable anyway, "dramatic" or otherwise. Asked if Guild acceptance of the company's proposals would avert layoffs, publisher George Riggs replied that there are no guarantees. And the growing number of Mercury News stories carrying bylines from other MediaNews papers—where salary levels and benefits are considerably lower—is an omen.

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DARRYL BUSH/NORTHERN CALIFORNIA MEDIA GUILD

Full court press

San Francisco Chronicle reporter Lance Williams greets supporters, many wearing T-shirts with the message "Sportswriters for Freedom of the Press," outside a federal court room Sept. 21. Moments later, Williams and fellow reporter Mark Fainaru-Wada were told by U.S. District Judge Jeffrey White that he will sentence them for up to 18 months in prison—

the maximum permitted by law—if they lose their appeal of his earlier order demanding that they disclose their source of leaked grand jury testimony in a baseball steroid case. The reporters have said they can't comply with the order because they've promised confidentiality to their sources, but the lack of a federal shield law has complicated their defense. Efforts to enact such a law this year have foundered over strong objections from the Justice Department.

NLRB moves against York

A second complaint by the National Labor Relations Board, charging the York Daily Record and the York Dispatch Sunday News with bad-faith bargaining and union busting, appears to have gotten the company's attention. Although a trial on the charges was scheduled for Oct. 24 in Baltimore, attorneys for MediaNews, which owns the newspapers, pushed for a postponement in hopes that a bargaining deadlock can be broken.

At presstime, the trial had been rescheduled for Oct. 31—Halloween—and two days of bargaining were set for Oct. 17 and 18.

The most recent NLRB complaint consolidates charges, filed by TNG-CWA in March and August,

that management failed to respond to numerous information requests crucial for bargaining, refused to arbitrate a grievance, refused to grant union leave to employees while they participated in contract negotiations and refused to bargain in good faith.

MediaNews also is demanding at the San Jose Mercury News that the Guild agree to eliminating the union-leave provision in its contract, in effect forcing bargaining committee members to burn up vacation time in contract negotiations. Once the vacation time is used up, as has occurred in at least once instance in York, that committee member is precluded from sitting at the bargaining table.]

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Joe Glazer, guitar in hand, leading union members in song at the annual Great Labor Arts Exchange.

Labor's troubadour reaches final verse

Joe Glazer, hailed by many as "labor's troubadour" and compared at times to Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger for his musical devotion to working class struggle, died Sept. 19 at his Maryland home at the age of 88.

A singer-songwriter with an indefatigable capacity for walking picket lines, Glazer remained an active cheerleader for union causes to the end of his life. He was 60, for example, when he began pulling together the first Great Labor Arts Exchange, an annual festival held at the George Meany Center that features artistic performances and workshops devoted to organizing. And his guitar was in demand right until the end of his life, according to labor folk singer Joe Uehlein.

Like other folk singers, Glazer frequently would adapt the words of existing songs to meet labor's needs, such as changing "Jesus is my captain, we shall not be moved" to "We're fighting for a contract, we shall not be moved." Some of his writing was especially poignant, such as the lyrics to "Too Old to Work," written to celebrate labor's long campaign for pension rights:

When you're too old to work,

*Too old to work,
Too old to work and you're too young to die,
Who will take care of you?
How'll you get by?
When you're too old to work and too young to die.*

Some of Glazer's work had a more knee-slapping quality, such as his mid-'Sixties celebration of religious tolerance by setting an Irish tune to his words about Dublin's new Lord Mayor, who was Jewish.

Glazer is survived by his wife, Mildred—who often accompanied him on the road and occasionally prompted him when he blanked out on a line—three children, four grandchildren and his songs. Two memorial ceremonies are being planned in his memory, one at the AFL-CIO on Friday, Dec. 8 and one the next afternoon at the Washington Ethical Society.

In addition, said Uehlein, the Labor Heritage Foundation—which Glazer helped found and which sponsors the annual arts exchange—will raise money for a "Joe Glazer songwriting contest" to encourage younger union members to write and perform labor songs.

Reported by Press Assoc. Inc.

Buffalo local activist dies

Richard Wright Christian, a Guild activist and retired reporter for The Buffalo News, died Sept. 27 at the age of 67.

A unit chair at the News prior to becoming president of the local in 1983, a post he held for three years, Christian was a frequent convention delegate and also edited the local's newsletter, the Frontier Reporter. At the Buffalo News he was longtime editor of NewsPower, a reader service column, and received several awards for his consumer coverage.

A memorial service Oct. 10 was attended by a number of current and former Buffalo Guild leaders.

Guild briefs . . .

Belt-tightening in Boston

Taking a cue from its larger competitor, the Boston Globe, management at the Boston Herald likewise is proposing a wage freeze for all unionized workers. Publisher Patrick Purcell said he wants to suspend the next scheduled wage increase for all 11 unions at the tabloid; non-unionized employees had their wages frozen in June. The Globe, meanwhile, said it will reduce page count to save money on newsprint.

Detroit strikers vindicated

The U.S. Supreme Court has sided with Detroit union members who were fired while picketing during the 18-month strike in the mid-'Nineties for alleged misconduct. The court declined to hear an appeal from the Detroit Newspaper Agency of an order by the National Labor Relations Board that it reinstate the employees, who at one time numbered more than 100. Most, however, agreed to settlements in recent years.

More job cuts in Akron

The other shoe has dropped at the Akron Beacon Journal, which after cutting 40 newsroom jobs announced Sept. 21 it will eliminate another 27 in other departments, including advertising, accounting, marketing and circulation. After the dust settles the Beacon Journal will have nearly 700 workers.

WashPost sticks it to mailers

CWA-represented mailers at the Washington Post have been in bitter contract negotiations for more than three years—and have gone without a raise for more than four. Now, after continuously demanding draconian concessions and give-backs while refusing to bargain over the union's issues, the Post has declared impasse and reduced pension contributions for the lowest paid workers by \$72.50 a week.

Times classifieds outsourced

Less than a year after it outsourced "overflow" calls made to the classified department, the New York Times has decided to subcontract all of the department's work to an outside vendor. This follows the newspaper's earlier assurances to the New York Guild that the outsourcing would have no impact on its members.

Hawaii paper gets the boot

The National Labor Relations Board has dismissed charges filed by the Hawaii Tribune-Herald against the Hawaii Newspaper Guild, which represents about 50 employees at the newspaper. In his Sept. 28 ruling, the NLRB's regional director said there was no evidence to support the newspaper's charges that the Guild had attempted "to avoid reaching an agreement on a collective bargaining agreement." The union and the newspaper have been bargaining over a new contract since 2002; the Guild currently has 10 grievances pending against the company.

Job cuts feared at Time Inc.

With the Guild contract at Time Inc. set to expire Feb. 1, unit members are fretting over rumors that more job cuts are on the way, particularly at Time magazine. Company officials insist nothing is on the table—for the rest of this year. Time has already downsized by approximately 500 people over the past year and plans to jettison another 500 or so when it finishes selling some of its other magazines.

Guild staff newest Guild unit

Staff employees of the Writers Guild of America East, previously represented by the Teamsters, have thrown in their lot with the New York Guild. The unit, which includes about 20 employees when at full strength, provides representation for news and entertainment writers in film, television and radio. Local president Barry Lipton said negotiations for an initial contract would begin soon.

Seattle okays wage freeze

Guild members at the Seattle Times have approved—despite a "nay" vote by more than a third of those casting ballots—a new two-year contract that freezes wages. The Guild's negotiating team reluctantly recommended approval because "the time is not right for a labor battle."

JRC to seek Michigan freeze

Guild-represented employees at the Royal Oak Tribune and at the Macomb Daily are waiting to see the full effects of an announcement by Journal Register Co. that it is cutting 82 jobs in Michigan and consolidating several back-office operations. The latter include relocating the IT department from the Oakland Press to the Macomb Daily. JRC also said it will seek a moratorium on wage increases for 2007 in upcoming union negotiations and has already announced a wage freeze for non-union and management workers.

Non-union editor protested

When the Minneapolis Star-Tribune assigned a non-union manager to edit a major investigative series, violating a Guild contract provision that permits non-union editors to make only minor changes to stories, the five reporters who had labored on the project pulled their bylines in protest. The newspaper, however, published their names anyway—in a box describing the project. The Guild has complained that this constituted a second contract violation and is reviewing its legal options.

Edicts instead of bargaining

The Knoxville Guild returned to the bargaining table with News Sentinel management in late September, hoping a six-month-long freeze in talks was about to thaw. Instead, the company persisted in its demand for replacing across-the-board wage increases with a so-called "merit" system; offered a 1% across-the-board increase retroactive to last November, when the contract expired; and proposed a potential 1.5% merit pay increase going forward. Oh—and it gave the Guild less than 24-hours to take it or leave it. As international rep Mike Burrell noted to a local reporter, "the company provided a one-way street that was not in the spirit of negotiation."

Consumers Union, indeed

Consumer Reports online, a more detailed version of the buying guide than the magazine, is now available at a discount to union members. The New York Guild, which represents approximately 300 Consumers Union employees, orchestrated the deal by putting the company together with Union Plus, which offers the discount—\$19 instead of the regular \$26—as a Union Privilege benefit. To learn more, see www.unionplus.com.

On-line paperwork bonanza

TNG Canada's website has collected, all on one page, 49 forms, documents or links that locals need to report various activities. Most of the links automatically download the most up-to-date forms available from CWA; an easy-to-read format includes directions on where each form is to be sent once filled out, to whom, and how (by mail, fax or as an attachment). The page may be found in the "For Members" section in the left-side menu of the home page, at www.tngcanada.org.

New officer in Milwaukee

Members of the Milwaukee Newspaper Guild have elected Jerry Ziegler as their first vice president, succeeding Greg Pearson; Mandy Jenkins was elected to replace him on the local's executive board. All other officers were reelected, including Jennie Tunkieicz as president; Amy Rinard as second vice president; Kawanza Newson as secretary; Amy Hetzner as treasurer; and board members Janine Ghelfi, Mark Johnson, Dave Kirner and Jan Uebelherr.

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'Forget the hearse, 'cause we never die'

Sept. 11 is freighted with significance for most Americans, but for members of the Dayton Newspaper Guild, Sept. 12 also looms large. That's the date, 20 years ago, that the formerly independent union affiliated with The Newspaper Guild—and the last time it ratified a contract at the Dayton Daily News.

So this year, to mark the anniversary, the local's leaders asked their 120 members to wear black. With fewer than 30 members voting in most local elections, the union's officers figured they'd have a roaring success if 40 heeded the sartorial call.

At least 67 did so.

The building's fifth floor, which houses the features, editorial page and business departments, as well as day-side copy editors, was a sea of black. Guild support was equally solid on the third floor. Indeed, one sports columnist, on arriving at work and realizing he'd forgotten about the mobilization, turned around and went home to change into a black shirt.

The Guild also drew strong support from outside the unit. Many custodians, members of a Teamsters unit that has fought for a contract for years, wore black in support of the Guild. Some managers did, too, although whether that was an accident wasn't clear. Hey! Black is slimming.

And some managers, clearly having advance notice of the action, made sure to show their disapproval. One manager who almost always wears black came into work decked out fully in tan. Another, long an

opponent of organized labor anywhere, arrived dressed all in white.

"This event gave a clear message to management," explained a Guild spokesman. "Most employees support the union. More importantly, the great silent majority isn't going to be silent any more. They're tired of merit pay raises that rarely keep pace with inflation, while health care costs go up. They're tired of watching the workforce shrink while the work increases and the number of managers rises. They don't trust discipline to be fair. They're disgusted by the company's treatment of part-time employees, who are paid much less for the same work, and are offered only the most expensive—actually cost prohibitive in most cases—health care plan, an HMO that many full-timers avoid."

The discontent has been building quietly for most of two decades. After the local ratified a three-year contract in 1986, a small group of dissidents protesting the affiliation vote gave the Cox-owned daily all the excuse it needed to play hardball. Announcing it no longer recognized the union, the company distributed the pay increases stipulated in the collective bargaining agreement but ignored its union security, dues checkoff and grievance provisions.

Unfair labor practice charges and a threat of a 10-J injunction from the National Labor Relations Board prompted management to recognize the grievance procedure. But three years later, with the unfair labor practice charge unresolved—thanks in part to an administrative law judge losing the tran-

scripts of a two-week hearing—the Guild opted for a new, NLRB-monitored election. The Guild won this vote, too, and an apparently chastened management agreed to settle a breach-of-contract lawsuit over the dues checkoff and union security clauses.

Among the settlement's provisions was a company commitment to recognize the grievance procedure, including arbitration, until either a new agreement was struck or impasse was declared. But negotiating a new contract apparently was not on management's agenda: after yet another two years, the NLRB charged the company with an unfair labor practice for withholding its agreement over union security and dues checkoff and cited its "animus" toward the Guild.

With strike preparations underway, the Daily News again seemed to relent, offering just hours before the strike deadline a first-year wage increase of \$50 a week for most members. Accepting the fig leaf, the Guild returned to the bargaining table—and, once again, the company's behavior proved dilatory. Following the board's settlement of the unfair labor practice charge, over the Guild's objections, negotiating sessions grew increasingly more sporadic. Management refused to consider anything but "merit" increases, blocking agreement on pay scales.

By the mid-1990s, the Daily News indicated it might withdraw a tentative agreement to accept binding arbitration. During an informal discussion after yet another unproductive meeting, it further indicated it would be satisfied if negotiations were broken off

and both sides lived under the 1986 agreement, including the binding arbitration letter. Having unilaterally raised base wages after averting the unfair labor strike in 1991, the company as unilaterally began paying annual merit increases that averaged about 3%.

Meanwhile, the Teamsters also were having a difficult time reaching agreement on a contract. In 1999, the drivers refused to report one night and were locked out the next day, prompting an unfair labor practice charge that was litigated for five years. Although the Teamsters won at every level, Cox carried the battle all the way to a federal appeals court before throwing in the towel, accepting an order to rehire the drivers and shell out hundreds of thousands of dollars in back-pay.

Throughout this tumultuous relationship, the Guild had taken only one grievance to arbitration, over a unilaterally imposed no-smoking policy. Nevertheless, during a grievance two years ago the company took a new position about the binding arbitration letter, indicating it would no longer recognize the agreement and inviting the Guild to seek court enforcement. The move reinvigorated the Guild's members and led to the mobilization efforts that started last year.

"Judging by its behavior, the Daily News has long hoped that if it stalled enough, the Guild would go away," the local spokesman observed. "That dream ended Sept. 12, 2006, the day the employees said the Guild was back in black. As the song goes: forget the hearse, 'cause we never die."

Half of Osprey's flock has roosted

Holding their noses, Guild members at the Kingston Whig-Standard voted 71% in favor of ratifying a three-year contract that grants management unfettered use of freelancers. The local, meanwhile, was unable to secure a provision to bar outsourcing of jobs, leaving the Osprey-owned newspaper free to move more circulation and classified jobs to the company's non-unionized call centers in Niagara Falls and Sarnia.

With the newsroom staff comprising just one of six Guild units at the paper, the freelancing issue wasn't enough to tip the balance against ratification. Moreover, publisher Fred Laflamme turned up the heat by calling a staff meeting to present the company's final offer three days before the union's membership meeting to do so.

The new contract includes annual pay increases of 2.25%, 2% and 2.25%.

With Kingston settled, Osprey now has settled contracts with four of its eight Guild-represented newspapers. Next on its list of unfinished business is the St. Catharines Standard, where the conciliation stage is over and mediation is scheduled to begin Oct. 19. If mediation fails, the two sides will be in a strike/lockout position Oct. 22.

Guild membership at the Standard has been decimated, reduced to just 21 after the company laid off 22 long-time employees and transferred the work of its circulation, classified and composing departments to its non-unionized call centers. A Guild grievance over the layoffs, which violated a contractual

prohibition on out-sourcing, was settled Sept. 20 when Osprey agreed to improve its severance packages. The increase in maximum pay to 36 weeks, from 26, resulted in the laid-off workers signing off on the agreement "quite willingly," according to TNG Canada staff rep David Esposti.

Meanwhile, conciliation was scheduled for Oct. 11 and 12—as the Guild Reporter was going to press—at the Sudbury Star, where two Guild contracts expired April 30. Contracting-out is the biggest concern in Sudbury, too, especially after Osprey laid off the paper's nine pressmen last year and began printing it at the North Bay Nugget.

Negotiations are just getting underway at the Sault Star, where three contracts with the Sault Ste Marie Typographical Union expired Aug. 31. With 135 members in advertising, circulation, the newsroom and mailroom, the local is among Osprey's largest and most militant and has strong community support, as evidenced during a five-city "Keep Our Newspapers Local" campaign last February.

Last up will be the North Bay Newspaper Guild, which is gearing up for negotiations to start when its contract with The Nugget expires at the end of the year. Local president Dan Seguin said he plans to launch a "Local Survivor" mobilization campaign before talks begin.

Contracts have been settled at the Cobourg Daily Star, the Port Hope Evening Guide and the Lindsay Daily Post—which actually won a no-layoff clause for the duration of its three-year pact.



Without Us,
It's Just An Empty Page



The Times Herald Employees and Members of The Newspaper Guild/Local 10

We Are Your Hometown Newspaper

Guild members at two newspapers in the Philadelphia suburbs, The Mercury in Pottstown and the Times Herald in Norristown, recently launched a billboard campaign to boost contract negotiations with Journal Register Company. Both units held contests for the best slogans, with the winning entries incorporated into designs scheduled to run at least three months.



EXPERIENCED
LABOR

DOESN'T IT MEAN ANYTHING?

THE MERCURY NEWSPAPER GUILD
EMPLOYEES UNITED FOR
A FAIR CONTRACT!

Celebrating 40 years



The Mercury
Can't Deliver
Without Its
Newspaper Guild
Workers

News round-up

AP protests photog's imprisonment

The U.S. military in Iraq has imprisoned an Associated Press photographer for five months, accusing him of being a security threat but never filing charges or permitting a public hearing. Bilal Hussein, a 35-year-old Iraqi citizen, began working for the AP two years ago in Fallujah and Ramadi until he was detained April 12. AP executives are insisting any evidence against him should be brought to the Iraqi criminal justice system. "We want the rule of law to prevail. He either needs to be charged or released. Indefinite detention is not acceptable," said Tom Curley, AP's president and chief executive officer. Hussein is one of an estimated 14,000 people imprisoned by the U.S. military worldwide, 13,000 of them in Iraq; only a relative handful have been charged with a specific crime.

Nine journos killed in Latin America

In a hemisphere where democracy and free elections have grown ever more widespread, the press increasingly is hampered in doing its job effectively, according to the Inter American Press Association. Wrapping up its 62nd General Assembly in Mexico City, the free-press advocacy group said physical, legal, and political attacks on journalists—including nine who have been murdered—have increased over the past six months. The deaths included three journalists who were murdered because of their work in Venezuela, three in Colombia, two in Mexico and one in Guatemala. One journalist disappeared in Mexico and is feared dead.

Middle class continues sinking

The typical double-income family is becoming financially worse off with each passing year, according to the Center for American Progress, a political think tank. The proportion of middle-class families that has saved three months' worth of income—generally regarded as a minimum "cushion" in case of illness, unexpected layoff or other income disruption—dropped to 18.3% from 28.8% between 2001 and 2004, according to a CAP study. Meanwhile, families have taken on a record amount of debt, equal to 126.4% of disposable income in the first quarter of 2006, in an attempt to maintain their living standards.

Tax dollars, union busting don't mix

By a 12-3 vote, the full 9th Circuit Court of Appeals has reinstated a landmark California law barring private firms from using state funds for or against union organizing. The ruling overturns a lower court decision that had been sought by the Chamber of Commerce and the Bush-named National Labor Relations Board. A Chamber spokesman told Press Associates Union News: Service that his group had yet to decide whether to take the California case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Need election info? AFL-CIO can help

With mid-term elections just around the corner, the AFL-CIO has created a virtual political action center (www.votenov7.org) that offers several voting resources. Among its features: online voter registration by state, at capwiz.com/aflcio/e4/; PDF fliers comparing candidates in key U.S. Senate, House and gubernatorial races, at www.aflcio.org/issues/politics/labor2006/takeaction.cfm; a state-by-state comparison of where members of Congress stand on important working family issues, which can be reviewed at www.aflcio.org/issues/politics/labor2006/whosonourside.cfm; and links to various surveys, polls and related websites.

Guide to anti-union forces goes online

Fighting fire with fire, American Rights at Work has launched a web-based resource to counter the lies and twisted information spewed out by Richard Berman, the National Association of Manufacturers and other anti-union groups. The Anti-Union Network (www.antiunionnetwork.org) features profiles of anti-union organizations that include details on their lobbying, litigation and media outreach, as well as their connections to each other. The site launches with a featured profile of Berman's egregiously misnamed Center for Union Facts and includes a diagram of Berman's extensive money trail.

Media reform confab seeks RSVPs

Registration for the 2007 National Conference for Media Reform is underway, with Bill Moyers, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Jane Fonda, Amy Goodman, Phil Donahue, Ben Bagdikian, Davey D and Federal Communications Commissioners Michael Copps and Jonathan Adelstein among those slated to participate. The conference will be held Jan. 12-14, 2007, at the Memphis Cook Convention Center and is to include "rousing speeches, provocative films, and dozens of interactive panels and hands-on workshops [that] will focus on media policy, media literacy and critique, independent and noncommercial media, media reform activism, and making the connection between civil rights, social justice and the media," according to its organizers. To learn more, see www.freepress.net/conference/; "early bird" savings are available for those who register prior to Oct. 31.

San Jose girds for battle

Continued from page 1

"The company says it needs 'flexibility,'" a Guild posting explains, detailing the desired concessions. "Translation: the company could lay off scores of us, fill the paper for a few months with content provided by non-Guild temporaries, managers and people at other MediaNews papers, and then hire permanent replacements at a lower scale. You might say, 'They'd never do that.' But the entire contract proposal is designed to allow them to do it, and to turn the Mercury News into another cookie-cutter MediaNews 'product,' no different than the Fremont Argus or San Mateo County Times."

Unlike some of those papers, however, the Mercury News can claim two distinct advantages. First, it was Knight Ridder's flagship and consistently ranked among the top 10 newspapers in the U.S. In 1999, for example, it came in eighth on a survey by Columbia Journalism Review, ahead of newspapers with more than twice its circulation, including the Philadelphia Inquirer, Newsday and the Minneapolis Star-Tribune. Quality—recent slash-and-burn trends in the industry notwithstanding—costs money: for decent salaries, for adequate benefits, for sufficient staffing.

Management's contract proposals, on the other hand, "would make it extremely difficult to attract and retain quality people," observes Luther Jackson, the local's executive officer. And despite a history of layoffs and other cost-cutting at most of his acquisitions, Singleton aspires to being regarded as a quality publisher, blowing up at a member of the Guild's bargaining team who implied that his newspapers are not consistently excellent.

Second, the San Jose Guild has cultivated passionate local support for the newspaper, as seen when it launched a "Save the Merc" petition drive earlier this year. Hundreds of readers wrote in, expressing concern about their hometown newspaper "becoming just another cookie-cutter" publication and warning against sacrificing "journalistic integrity for corporate greed." Now the dilution they feared is well underway. "Stuff we used to cover is covered by the weeklies and smaller dailies," Jackson says. Amazingly, the executive editor of the San Mateo Times participates in the Merc's daily news meeting, further blurring individual newspaper identities.

While most readers may be only marginally concerned about declining wages at their local newspaper, their reaction is quite different when they see the effect on news coverage. "If you tell me it's going to affect the quality of my paper, I care," Jackson says, summarizing the local's strategy for community mobilization.

While the San Jose Guild confronts MediaNews at the bargaining table and works on rallying community support away from it, the local also has filed several grievances challenging MediaNews' clustering strategy. An arbitration over the Guild's claim that the Mercury News violated the contract when it merged its Sacramento bureau with that of the Contra Costa Times has had one hearing to date and is to resume next year. The local also is arbitrating the paper's refusal to include MercuryNews.com and SiliconValley.com employees in the bargaining unit and is pursuing several other complaints of jurisdiction violations.

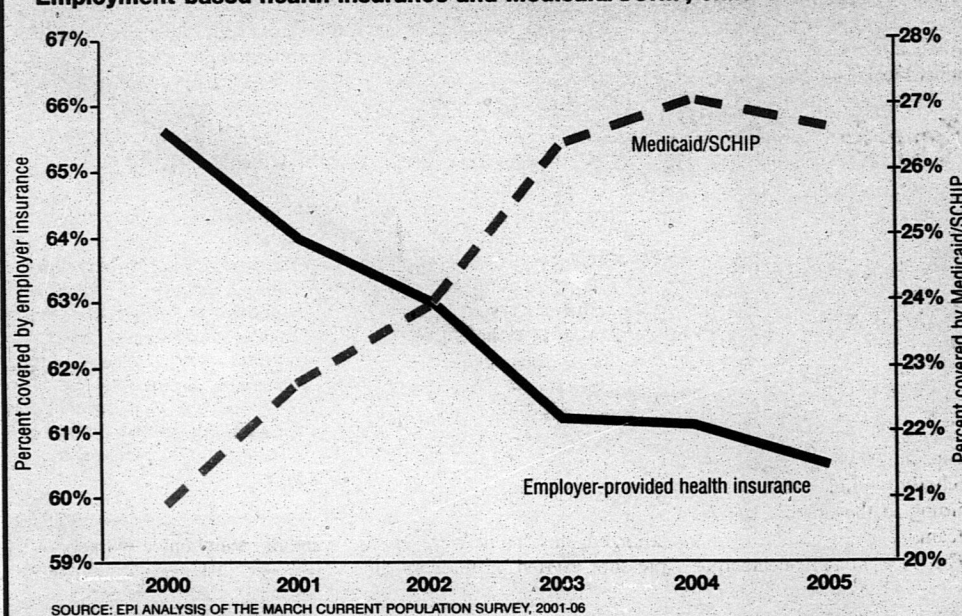
But ultimately, how well the local defends its contract will depend on membership support—and on that score, says Jackson, he's highly encouraged. A membership meeting Sept. 27 was the best he's ever seen, he says, with "tremendous" support expressed for preserving the Mercury News and its working conditions. "All of our challenges come down to organizing—it's all about getting with people one-on-one," he summarizes. "But when our members get engaged, we can't lose."

MediaNews documents under wraps

The most inscrutable wild card in MediaNews' recent acquisitions has become more so: a federal judge has sealed a large variety of documents in a lawsuit filed by San Francisco businessman Clint Reilly, who is seeking to block the purchase of the Contra Costa Times, San Jose Mercury News and Monterey News. One of Reilly's attorneys explained that he had to agree to the order to gain access to the documents while still keeping the case on a fast track.

Reilly is claiming the MediaNews acquisitions run afoul of antitrust law, not least because the company partly financed its purchase through a complex agreement with Hearst Corp. Hearst owns the San Francisco Chronicle, the only remaining newspaper of any size in northern California that Media News doesn't control. The suit is scheduled for trial Feb. 26.

Employment-based health insurance and Medicaid/SCHIP, children under 18



For sick kids, a tipping point

As employer-provided health insurance declines for a fifth consecutive year, the Economic Policy Institute reports that children are beginning to feel the repercussions.

The rate of uninsured children in the U.S. has increased for the first time in seven years, from 10.8% in 2004 to 11.2% in 2005; the number of uninsured children grew to 8.3 million. But while public health insurance programs—notably Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program—had offset such declines in the past, medical inflation and state budget constraints have started fraying the safety net.

On a broader scale, the number of all Americans without health insurance has grown significantly over the past five years, to 46.6 million, or 15.9% of the population. No demographic group—whether defined by age, gender, race, educational achievement or household income—was immune to the overall trend, according to EPI, although health coverage remains vastly unequal. For example, in 2005, 70.4% of whites had employer-provided coverage, vs. 50.8% of blacks and 41.6% of Hispanics.

Those most in need—the bottom quintile by household income—had the lowest rate of coverage.

Pittsburgh unfazed by 'threat' of sale

Continued from page 1

The threat made little impression on Mike Bucsko, president of the Pittsburgh Guild. "They're scare tactics," he said. "It's obviously geared to scare the employees—if they're going to sell, they're going to sell." Indeed, he added, that might be just as well, given the Block family's unenviable talent for losing money in cities where its newspapers either dominate or have a monopoly. Meanwhile, he added, the supposed threat may have backfired because it "stealed the resolve of our people."

There are indications the company may suspect as much and has started questioning the wisdom of fighting a war on two fronts. At the Blade, says Larry Vellequette, spokesman for the Toledo Council of Newspaper Unions, an office reserved for King and Ballow—the outside law firm that has been running the company's union-busting approach to negotiations—has been emptied. "We don't know if that's a signal of anything," he conceded, but it has raised questions.

The company also has relaxed its over-the-top security measures, returning its own security force to a pre-lockout schedule and sending "its paid goons back to Maryland," in Vellequette's words. The moves opened the possibility that talks might resume, with the Toledo Guild at press time awaiting a response to several proposed negotiating dates.

The possibility of a thaw marks a major turnaround from late September, when Blade management was publicly debating whether it would also lock out Guild members. Although the 350-member local is the Blade's largest

union, General Manager Joe Zerbry told Editor & Publisher that putting out a newspaper without its reporters and editors—by "borrowing" non-unionized employees from other newspapers—would be "a piece of cake." But using scab labor to replace the five locked-out unions has been less than the "slam dunk" Blade spokesmen had promised, resulting in blown deadlines and missed deliveries.

While the Blade is suffering economically, its 220 or so locked-out employees got a bit of financial good news Oct. 3 when they finally had their unemployment insurance hearing, an Ohio requirement. The Blade did not contest its employees' rights to claim unemployment, clearing the way for checks to start flowing.

In Pittsburgh, the Block family surprised financial analysts by announcing that the Post Gazette has lost \$23 million since 2003 and is facing a fourth consecutive year of red ink. The surprise was not only that a privately held company would disclose such data while supposedly seeking a buyer, but that it had lost so much money at a regionally dominant newspaper. "It's unusual for a paper with that much of the market to lose money," newspaper industry analyst John Morton told Associated Press.

Bucsko, while not denying the Post Gazette's difficulties, blames the ongoing losses on managerial incompetence that no amount of union concessions would alleviate. Union concessions in 2004 saved the company nearly \$6 million, he points out, and staffing levels remain below the industry average. "It boggles the mind," Bucsko said.

York charges filed

Continued from page 1

The NLRB's general counsel had already charged York Newspaper Co. in July with bargaining in bad faith, which is when the Oct. 24 trial date was set. But in subsequent weeks the company appeared intent on demonstrating its contempt for the board's intervention, with lead attorney Jim Thompson growing increasingly "combative and dismissive," according to the union's bargaining team.

The new complaint incorporates several additional claims of corporate misbehavior since the first complaint was issued. The NLRB concluded, for example, that to "discourage its employees from assisting the union or engaging in other concerted activities," the newspapers had introduced a dress code that banned printed messages and told employees "they cannot spend too much time discussing matters unrelated to work during working time." Management also declared it would withhold bylines and photo credits "until a collective bargaining agreement was approved."

Tom Joyce, the local's mobi-

lization director and winner of this year's Guild Service Award, said he was "very happy" with the latest board decision. "We've had a very difficult year," he said, recounting how he was verbally warned by management to limit his conversations with other union members. "It's nice to get some acknowledgment that what the company has been doing isn't right and isn't legal. I'm very proud of our membership—they've stood strong against some very strong pressure exerted by the company, and they've made clear they're not going to be bullied."

More than 55 workers at the York Daily Record are working under the terms of a contract that expired a year ago. But bargaining has proceeded fitfully, if at all, with the company represented for much of that time by King and Ballow, a Nashville law firm that cultivates a reputation for union-busting. Recently, however, MediaNews switched horses and is being represented by Marshall Anstandig. Anstandig was an in-house labor lawyer for Knight Ridder and also is leading MediaNews in contract talks in San Jose.



Union members march on the NLRB earlier this year in an ultimately unsuccessful effort to preserve the rights the board circumscribed in the Kentucky River cases.

'Ken. River' swamps more workers' rights

By Mark Gruenberg
Editor, Press Associates Inc.

By a 3-2 vote along party lines, the Bush-appointed majority on the National Labor Relations Board has expanded the definition of who is a "supervisor," potentially denying labor law coverage to millions of U.S. workers.

The rulings in the three so-called Kentucky River cases, announced Oct. 3, were widely awaited by unions and management. While two of the decisions are favorable to workers at two specific companies, the NLRB decision in the third case went against the United Auto Workers and—by creating a new category of management employees—has far-reaching implications.

AFL-CIO president John J. Sweeney and other union leaders blasted the ruling, while the California Nurses Association said 30,000 of its members had signed strike authorization cards should their hospitals try to impose the changed definition on them. TNG-CWA attorney Barbara Camens was conferring with Guild leaders at press time to assess how broadly the new definition might affect newspaper workers.

Quoting the two dissenting NLRB members, Sweeney said the expanded definition of supervisors threatens to create "a new class of workers under labor law: Workers who have neither the genuine prerogatives of management, nor the statutory rights of ordinary employees. In that category may fall most professionals—among many other workers—who by 2012 could number almost 34 million, accounting for 23.3% of the workforce."

David Cohen, an attorney for the AFL-CIO Department for Professional Employees who worked on the cases, pointed to that 34 million and told Press Associates: "Professionals usually vote. When they vote this November, they should remember who appointed the people who made this decision."

The pivotal case expanding the definition of supervisors grew out of a UAW organizing drive at Oakwood Heritage Hospital in Taylor, Mich. Hospital administrators argued that charge nurses, whose duties include overseeing patient care and directing orderlies, were ineligible for union membership because they are managers—and even though Oakwood had only 12 full-time charge nurses, the hospital insisted that most of its 181 registered nurses also

serve as charge nurses on occasion, and therefore also should be union-exempt.

In ruling on behalf of the hospital, the three-member Republican majority wrote new definitions for several terms that the National Labor Relations Act uses to determine who qualifies as a supervisor. For example, the supervisory responsibility to "assign" other workers to various tasks, the board majority concluded, has to be more than intermittent. But the two dissenting board members said the majority's new language is so broad that virtually any worker who gives an assignment to another at any time could be deemed a supervisor. This "threatens to sweep almost all staff nurses outside the (National Labor Relations) act's protection," the dissenters said.

Another expanded definition holds that workers who exercise "independent judgment" on the job are now supervisors, and thus outside labor law. That one change, concludes Paul Almeida, DPE president, opens the door for managers to challenge professionals' rights to claim union membership, continuing a trend that under the Bush administration already has revoked union rights for graduate teaching assistants, disabled workers and many Defense Department employees.

The board majority went to some lengths to rebut charges it is throwing millions of workers out from under labor law coverage, leaving them open to management whims. It said, for example, that nurses exercising "independent judgment" could be supervisors only if their decisions "were not of a routine nature." And it said workers who are supervisors "part of the time" would still be protected by labor law—but then noted past rulings that held a worker who manages others as little as 10% to 15% of the time is a

"supervisor" and not protected by labor law.

Several large unions, including CWA, represent nurses and all were unanimous in deploring the ruling. But leave it to Gerald McEntee, president of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, to be most scorching. "This shameful decision is a cheap, semantic trick by the NLRB, which we now know stands for the National League of Republican Businessmen," he fumed. "Clearly, the Bush administration and its cronies will stop at nothing to turn back the clock on America's workers until they are the modern-day equivalent of serfs in a feudal society with no rights and no respect."

After studying the Kentucky River decision, CWA President Larry Cohen wrote a letter to NLRB Chairman Robert Battista that called the ruling a "disgrace" and added:

"There has never been a Labor Board in the history of this country that has done more to destroy collective bargaining rights. There is nothing like it anywhere among democratic countries in our global economy."

While collective bargaining rights are expanding throughout the world, the letter added, "you and your colleagues on this NLRB do everything possible to eliminate collective bargaining in our nation." As a result, Cohen wrote, the CWA is urging its members "to dedicate 10 hours, not 10 minutes, talking to coworkers, friends and families about the November elections and rejecting your party."

Battista and a majority of the five-member board are Republicans.

Employees insist on being seen as assets

[Since Wall Street has had no trouble getting the ear of newspaper executives, two Guild locals recently decided they needed to be heard, too.]

Richard Zannino, CEO
Dow Jones & Company, Inc.
World Financial Center
200 Liberty Street
New York, NY 10281

September 22, 2006

Dear Rich,

The Dow Jones-IAPE contract expires at the end of January—less than five months away.

To maintain Dow Jones's unparalleled quality, employees need a quality contract, one that improves compensation, benefits and working conditions instead of eroding them.

Dow Jones is about its people. What sets us apart from our competitors is our storied name and our culture of quality, backed by several thousand of the best and brightest

men and women in their fields: reporters and people in ad sales, technology, finance, printing, administration, distribution, support and many other areas.

The quality of our products can't sustain more of the pay and benefit cuts that management has demanded in previous contract talks. Now is the time to build, not dismantle. As you have said, "the company can't expense its way to profitability."

Let's create a contract that can support the values and the quality that make Dow Jones such an outstanding company. We need to keep attracting and retaining the best employees in the business, by improving wages, benefits and working conditions. It's all about quality.

Sincerely,

(Signed by all 28 IAPE officers and board members—and more than a thousand Dow Jones employees.)

[Nearly 100 Baltimore Sun newsroom employees signed the next letter, which was given to Tribune CEO Dennis FitzSimons after he met with the Sun staff recently.]

Sept. 26, 2006

Dear Mr. FitzSimons,

Welcome to Baltimore!

This is a wonderful city with a rich history that includes The Sun, a newspaper that has been published since 1837 with a legacy of excellence that we hope to continue. To do that, we need your help.

We need you and your colleagues in Tribune management to understand that the way to provide a viable product in the information age that is the 21st century is not to cut back on the essential resources of this institution.

We stand with our colleagues at the Los Angeles Times, both management and workers, in saying to you that you cannot cut your way to prosperity, that sometimes you have to make the tough decisions and forgo short-term returns for long-term gains. You need to maintain and increase your investment in these newspapers if they are going to make a successful transition to the new age of journalism that is upon us.

We also ask that you respect those of us in Baltimore who have made this a success-

ful and profitable cornerstone of Baltimore life for these many decades. You did not do this in 2003 in the negotiations with the Guild for a new contract. You spent \$3 million of your shareholders' money to launch a blitzkrieg on your employees that included the disruptive presence of so-called "replacement workers" training in our building, as well as the demeaning comment at the bargaining table that the Pulitzer Prize-winning Sun does not have a "high performance culture."

A well-run company does not spend its money attacking its loyal employees. No one wants The Sun to be successful more than those of us who work here, who raise our families here, who have invested our careers in this institution. We ask that Tribune treat those of us who work here with the respect we deserve and make sure that The Sun has the resources it needs to maintain the quality that has allowed it to thrive.

Either that, or sell The Sun to someone who will.

Sincerely,

The Sun unit of the Newspaper Guild

'Clustering' another form of union busting

By Becky Bartindale
President, San Jose Newspaper Guild

Who are the people behind the bylines in the Mercury News? Increasingly, they are reporters from the San Mateo County Times, the Oakland Tribune, the Los Gatos Weekly Times and the dozens of other daily and weekly newspapers in the MediaNews empire. And they earn a lot less than we do.

This reliance on lower-wage workers is a trend that began under Knight Ridder and is accelerating under MediaNews. It is most visible in the editorial department, but has surfaced in advertising, too. If you keep your eyes open, you likely will see our work being exported all around you, perhaps even in your own department.

Combining operations among clustered properties is a key MediaNews strategy to reduce labor costs. And reducing labor costs means either lowering employees' net compensation or reducing the workforce, or both.

MediaNews has a long history of wage reductions and job loss. Here is how the company described its approach in a 2005 filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission:

"Clustering enables us to realize operating efficiencies and economic synergies, such as sharing of management, accounting, newsgathering, advertising and production facilities. In addition, we seek to increase operating cash flow at acquired newspapers by reducing labor costs, and implementing overall improvements in cost management."

Consolidation, and the possibility of resulting job loss, will be a subject of intense negotiations during contract talks with the Mercury News. At this point, we are concerned about consolidation's great potential to put the quality of the newspaper at risk. Some readers already see that happening.

One of the fundamental principles recognized at the beginning of our contract is that the core work of the newspaper—selling ads and reporting on local news—must be

assigned to Guild members. This jurisdiction language benefits Guild members, but it also benefits the newspaper, its readers and advertisers. Our members have the experience, commitment and sense of history required to consistently deliver a first-class product to the community.

We are all painfully aware of the pressures that have put the newspaper industry in a vise. We see Guild members playing a critical role in helping the Mercury News move into the future.

But unless the newspaper can continue to attract and retain a critical mass of workers who are among the best in their fields, we worry about a slide in quality that could cost us more readers and customers. We have seen this happen elsewhere when MediaNews pursues its strategy of using lower paid workers and reducing total compensation to boost profits.

That is the direction we're heading, and readers already are noticing the changes. Here's what one person said on the San Jose

Inside blog (www.sanjoinside.com) about the stories from the weekly Silicon Valley Community Newspapers group that are popping up more frequently in the Merc:

"It sounds like the Merc decided to leave a lot of the local coverage to the SVCNs. I find the writing in those papers to be sub-standard, with gaping holes in most stories. Unless the Merc puts qualified reporters on the various SVCN staffs I don't feel those fluff weeklies are an option for serious local coverage."—posted by Mark T on Friday, Sept. 15, at 8:24 a.m.

Of course that is a generalization, but the point is that most community weeklies do not provide the resources that foster the kind of sophisticated coverage readers expect from a metropolitan daily. Cutting corners in compensation and coverage will not help the Mercury News remain the "crown jewel" of MediaNews.

From a message to San Jose Guild members at the onset of contract talks.

Inequality has simple cause: loss of power

By Thomas I. Palley
Former Chief Economist, AFL-CIO

Recently, there has been growing recognition of the enormous increase in U.S. income inequality that has occurred over the last 25 years, bringing back inequality levels not seen since 1929. Paul Krugman has written of the danger of a new oligarchy, whose wealth is such that it may be able to control an economy and society even as large as the United States.

So real is growing inequality that even libertarian-minded Alan Greenspan has mused on its dangers to "democratic society"—though his fear is not the undemocratic character of oligarchy, but rather that too much inequality may promote economically disruptive political rebellion from below.

This expanding recognition of the income distribution problem by the prominent and powerful is extremely welcome. However, it raises the question "what is the cause?" One short answer is changed economic power between workers and corporations. This change has affected wage bargaining and whose interests get taken into account in business and economic policy decision-making.

The power explanation stands in sharp contrast to economists' stories about

increased income inequality being due to rising returns to skill and education. What is so important about the power story is that it topples the standard explanation of income distribution. And with it sinks much other economics about the adverse effects of trade unions, the idea of a natural rate of unemployment, and many claims about the benefits of globalization.

The economic data are becoming too clear to ignore. For example, a recent research paper by Ian Dew-Becker and Robert Gordon of Northwestern University, "Where Did the Productivity Growth Go?" reports that productivity growth has been largely captured by those in the top 1% of the income distribution, especially those in the top one-tenth of 1%. This squarely challenges the conventional wisdom that rising income inequality is due to increased economic premiums to skill and education.

This finding should come as no surprise. For the past two decades, the Economic Policy Institute has documented rising income inequality in its biennial publication, "The State of Working America." The 2004 edition reported that hourly wages of those with less than a college degree fell between 1979 and 2003; wages of college degree holders rose by less than 1% a year over that period; and those of advanced degree hold-

ers grew by less than 1.1% per year. Consequently, the notion of enormous returns to education is a myth.

But the education story remains popular because it serves the social and political purposes of the powerful and favored. First, it implicitly blames the victims for their plight. Workers are responsible for their condition, having been too stupid or lazy to finish high school and go to college. With glib ease, Washington "suits" can then dismiss amazingly skilled welders, mechanics, and blast furnace operators as unskilled.

Second, the education story allays fears about globalization and rising corporate power because these supposedly have little to do with rising inequality, which instead is attributed to skill-rewarding technological change. Third, investing in education provides a convenient solution for elite policy makers. Fourth, the education story is consistent with the dominant economic theory of income distribution, and therefore saves that theory.

That dominant theory (known as marginal productivity theory) claims that free markets ensure that workers are not exploited and are paid their contribution to production. The logic is that markets prevent exploitation, since a firm that won't pay a worker her contribution will find that worker poached away by another firm that is willing to pay slightly

more.

The education hypothesis fits neatly with this theory. The claim is that technology has increased the productivity of more educated workers, and firms operating in competitive markets have therefore increased wages of these workers. The only problem is, the facts don't fit the theory. Returns to education have not been stellar and cannot explain the pattern of wage and income change that has occurred.

The marginal product theory of economists nonetheless appeals to the elite, being a combination of explanation and justification of income distribution. Free markets pay workers what they are worth, justifying wages and explaining them. Furthermore, free markets prevent exploitation, making unions and minimum wages unnecessary. Indeed, the theory allows the rich and powerful to claim that these essential worker protections are bad and increase unemployment by pricing workers out of jobs.

But it now has become clear that the theory does not explain the worsening of income distribution. That means another theory is needed—one that admits the role of power, institutions, and socially created perceptions of who adds value. Rather than skilled welders and machinists needing retraining, it is economists who need retraining and re-education.



LOOKING AHEAD

If not us, who? If not now, when?

By Bernie Lunzer, Secretary-Treasurer

Should we care about the fate of newspapers? Should we be doing anything about it? If you look at some recent commentaries, the answer is no. We're told we're worrying too much and being negative. How dare we compare ourselves to the automotive and other industries that are really in serious crisis? We're reminded, in a scolding way, that we are still profitable. The future will solve itself—just trust the owners and managers.

Ouch. American capitalists don't have a resounding record these days of preserving—much less nurturing—industry. We saw American steel sell out, to the point that it virtually disappeared. We're watching car companies build products no one seems to want. We're seeing a "recovery" that is helping only those who already have cash. And instead of reinvestment, we're seeing continued disinvestment that moves jobs elsewhere.

Look at recent newspaper sales. In several locations we were told that the new owners had a different attitude, that they were "home-town" buyers who understood the importance of having a strong local paper. Yet in every single case we're seeing the same opportunistic approach to bargaining that the failed Knight-Ridder corporation pursued. There is no vision, other than to make money the old-fashioned way—by taking it from the workers.

We need reinvestment. We need everyone's participation. We need to plan for a future in which we inevitably move away from paper products toward digital ones. Has anyone figured out the exact approach that will work? Absolutely not—which is why we need everyone's thoughts and ideas if we're going to be successful.

Instead, we have this reaffirmation of an attitude that we are just another commodity, robbing the owners of their rightful 20% profit margin—people, paper and ink. In a time that demands we work together, we're getting more of the same old attitude. Papers like the Akron Beacon Journal are being stripped down for parts. Will people still buy a newspaper whose staff has been so reduced it's not much more than a shopper?

At a recent discussion on the future of newspapers sponsored by the Washington-Baltimore Guild (I commend them on doing this), a news executive explained that newspapers have never been stable, that we'd been spoiled by living through a period when you could screw up and still make money. A jour-

nalism dean explained helpfully that the 500-plus daily papers are "incubators for ideas" and all we need is for just one to "figure it out." Then the others can copy that success.

But we were also reminded, by the working journalist on the panel, that society still has nothing to replace the kind of news presented by print journalism. We are the ones who dig deep, reporting local and international news that the rest of the media rely on. The whole blogosphere feeds off the "hard" news we provide. Yes, we can go back to yellow journalism and the kind of ideological news that Fox News represents. But can democracy survive when there is no trustworthy source of unbiased information?

We know we work in an industry and that it has to make money; that's why we've been willing to agree to give-backs where necessary. All the unions in Toledo, for example, made it abundantly clear they would compromise on the economic details of a new collective bargaining agreement to restore the Blade's financial health—but that wasn't enough. Instead, Block Communications hired one of the most notorious union-busters in the industry and has insisted on settlements that would decimate its workers' contracts—most notably in areas that bring no savings whatsoever to the enterprise but would destroy the unions. Dean Singleton, who has become a major industry player and who claims he wants to be respected as a newsman, has used the same union-buster on a regular basis. We're told newspaper owners need to balance the books, but instead we get ideological warfare that helps no one. In a different era there would be shame, but not today.

So we are correct in worrying about the future of this industry, which is teetering even as it remains important to our society. Sadly, we also know that we care much more about it than many owners, who are willing to rip out its heart and soul to get their profit. In response, we need to build relationships with those who will work with us—but we shouldn't shy away from a fight with those who would annihilate us, even as they drive their newspapers into the ground.

The industry has survived for a long time on the good-will of its front-line workers. We need to continue to believe in the product and to build hope for the future. But we're not required to believe in owners who have written us off, and are squandering the future in doing so.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor,

In response to Debbie Thomas' column in the August issue: Gitta Laasby is right about the importance of publishing opinions from "people of diverse backgrounds." More importantly, we need diversity of opinion—period. Where is the male version of Ellen Goodman or Anna Quindlen?

I retired after 40 years in journalism and saved a lot of examples of men silenced in the gender war. Good Lord, how did the news media come to limit "choice" to one subject? I have a book coming out soon, titled "Philip's Code," that deals with a lot of

what could be seen as biased coverage. If I owned a newspaper I would name it "The Daily Double Standard."

I also agreed with Gil Bailey's column on page 6 of the same issue. But note the graph about reporters: "Almost all have college degrees. Many own their own homes and live in suburbia and far fewer drink to excess." Does that sound diverse? I wonder what their political and religious affiliations are. How many are veterans? I bet very few.

There is, and always has been, more to diversity than color or gender.

—Jim Clifford, Redwood City, CA

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."



TO SAVE ME FROM THE WAR MONGERS, PROFITEERS,
CONSTITUTION SHREDDERS AND UNION BUSTERS

NEAREST POLLING STATION

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Nov. 7: Judgment Day

By George J. Kourpias

I joined a union—the Machinists—in 1952. It was one of the best decisions I ever made. I've been fortunate to serve in a number of different positions in labor and government over the years, but there is no title that has ever meant more to me than being called "brother."

The labor movement built the middle class in this country. We have made great strides toward justice on the job and in our communities. We have much to be proud of—but the story hasn't been that good lately.

Union retirees are seeing what we built begin to crumble. Good jobs are sent overseas. Pensions and health care vanish in the blink of an eye. Big corporations walk away from their commitments to workers and retirees, knowing that the government won't stand in their way.

As retirees, we worry about what we are leaving behind for our children and grandchildren.

On November 7, we can begin to change this. The entire House of Representatives, one-third of the Senate and 36 of our governors must go before the voters.

November 7 shouldn't be just Election Day. It should be Judgment Day.

It was the politicians who got us into a lot of these messes, and now we need some new ones to get us out of them.

There are two reasons why every union retiree should vote on November 7.

First, we need to save Social Security. President Bush and Republicans in Congress say they want to "reform" Social Security next year. The problem? Their privatization scheme would gamble your Social Security on the whims of the stock market. For you, it would be big risk. For those on Wall Street, it would be big profit.

And second, we need to fix Medicare. Seven million seniors are falling into what is known as the "donut hole," where they pay full price for their prescriptions even as they continue paying full monthly premiums. Meanwhile, the big drug companies and insurers keep making record profits.

Congress created this Medicare mess, but it refuses to fix it. We need leaders in Washington who will fill in the "donut hole" and force Medicare to negotiate bulk discounts with the drug companies so your prescriptions cost less and we save taxpayer dollars.

I realize I've painted a pretty bleak picture of where we are today. But why do I have hope? What do I think we should do?

The answer, my brothers and sisters, is a four-letter word: VOTE.

On November 7, a retiree's place is in the voting booth.

Kourpias, a former president of the International Association of Machinists, is currently serving his second term as president of the Alliance for Retired Americans, an advocacy organization representing more than three million retirees.

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: November 3.)

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Fight's still on for voting rights

By Debbie Thomas
TNG-CWA Human Rights Director

Several months ago, many of us let out a collective sigh of relief when both the House and the Senate reauthorized the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The threat of a return to state-based literacy tests or other methods to disenfranchise citizens had been averted once again.

But here's a disturbing wrinkle. Although poll taxes were not specifically outlawed by the Voting Rights Act, the act directed the U.S. Attorney General to challenge them and subsequent litigation eliminated this backdoor form of voter discrimination. Now the Voting Rights Act has been renewed—but this time we're also looking at HR 4844, the so-called Federal Election and Integrity Act.

This nasty piece of legislation would require voters to present government-issued identification showing proof of citizenship before they could cast a ballot—and the only document that meets these criteria is a passport, which can cost up to \$100. Hmm—sure looks like a modern day poll tax to me. With voter apathy the way it is, who needs another reason not to vote?

Preventing voter fraud isn't the problem: the problem, as we've seen, is dimples, chads and Diebold machines that don't work, as well as gradual voter disillusionment with the whole voting process.

That's why, on Oct. 10, the AFL-CIO sponsored its biggest-ever one-day mobilization of women voters. Women got together in 48 states and the District of Columbia to "Stir the Pot," gathering around their kitchen tables and in restaurants to encourage other women to become politically active. Participants were provided with ice breakers, talking points, postcards and stamps, and a list of women who have not voted in recent elec-

tions, then wrote personal messages on the cards asking those women to reclaim their voting rights.

"Stir the Pot" grew out of the federation's recent "Ask a Working Woman" survey, in which 26,000 respondents expressed their concerns about economic issues—and many of whom made it clear they'd stopped voting because they felt their vote didn't make a difference. Unfortunately, those who stopped voting were the most likely to need a change in their economic and political circumstances.

"We know that the progressive drop-off voters are disproportionately women, young and lower income, so this project was designed to reach them," explained Denise Mitchell, the AFL-CIO's head of public affairs.

Although the 10th has come and gone, the mobilization continues until election day. If you are interested in contacting voter drop-outs or in stirring the pot with friends or co-workers, please contact Mitchell at 202-637-5340 or dmitchell@afl-cio.org. And if you hold or attended one of these functions, please e-mail me at dtthomas@cwa-union.org and let me know how it went.

Let's mix things up, so that we are all part of the process.

Finally, speaking of being a part of the process, my hope is that HR 5388, the Fair and Equal House Voting Rights Act, will pass. This long-overdue piece of legislation would give District of Columbia residents a single voting Congressional representative in exchange for adding a representative to the Utah delegation. Sounds strange, I know, but the rationale is that adding a seat to the traditionally Republican Utah delegation would offset the Democratic sensibilities of a new district representative, thereby maintaining the status quo.

Maybe some day we can change our license plates so they no longer read "Taxation without Representation."

FCC revisits deregulation

Several hundred people jammed a public hearing Oct. 4 in Los Angeles to oppose a renewed effort by the Federal Communications Commission to relax media ownership rules. The standing-room-only crowd hectored the full commission for seven hours, with all but one of 70 speakers decrying any move that would lead to still more media consolidation.

"Our members know what happens when one company owns more than one TV station or a major TV station and the monopoly newspaper in the same market," Jim Joyce, vice president of NABET-CWA, told the commissioners. "The owner merges operations, slashes jobs and reduces the quantity and quality of the news."

The hearing, one of six new FCC chairman Kevin Martin has said he will hold around the country, came three years after the Republican-dominated commission voted 3-2 to loosen numerous media ownership restrictions. The changes, which included allowing cross-ownership of newspapers and television stations in the same markets, were over-turned by a federal court, setting the stage for the latest attempt.

But the Oct. 4 hearing had a startling context, coming just two weeks after California Senator Barbara Boxer disclosed two FCC studies whose findings undermine the case for looser ownership

restrictions. Both studies had been shelved by the commission, and as reported by the Associated Press, an FCC lawyer—now no longer with the commission—ordered that "every last piece" of one of the reports be destroyed.

The first disclosed report, prepared in 2004, found that locally owned television stations air significantly more local news—five more minutes per half-hour newscast—than network owned-and-operated or non-locally owned stations. The second, which analyzed the effects of deregulation on the radio industry after the 1996 passage of the Telecommunications Act, found that the number of commercial radio stations increased 5.9% through March 2003, while the number of radio station owners fell 35%.

Martin, who said he was unaware of the studies, has asked the FCC inspector general to investigate their suppression.

To see the study that was to be destroyed, visit www.freepress.net/press/release.php?id=165.

Comments on the latest deregulatory bid are no longer being accepted by the FCC, but the deadline for replies to comments already filed is Nov. 21. Details about the proposed rule changes and comment procedure may be found at www.fcc.gov/ownership. Additional information is at www.stopbigmedia.com/lahearing.

NEWSDOKU

Newsdoku has been too easy, so starting this month we're tweaking the rules. As in the past, Newsdoku is played like Sudoku: just fill in the grid at right so that every horizontal row, every vertical column and every 3x3 box contains nine different letters.

But here's the twist: in addition to filling in the squares, the nine letters you use can spell out a word that answers or describes a clue. Some of the letters may have to be used more than once. For example, if the Newsdoku letters are A-C-E-F-H-L-R-T-Y and the clue is "Watered down the NLRA," the answer is TAFT-HARTLEY ACT.

The clue for this month's puzzle: Michael Zinser and Jim Thompson.

There is only one solution to the Newsdoku puzzle, based on reasoning and logic. We're pretty sure there's only one answer to the clue. You've got to get 'em both right to win the prize.

Entries postmarked no later than Nov. 14 may be mailed to: The Guild Reporter, 501 Third Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001. If there's more than one

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HARD

correct set of answers, the winner will be chosen at random from the correct entries. The answer to this puzzle will be published in the November issue; the winner will be named

in the December issue.

The winner of the August Newsdoku was Cal Butera of Clarks Summit, PA, who was sent a copy of "Self-Publishing for Dummies."

THE GUILD Reporter

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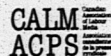
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DAYBOOK

Western District Council,
Oct. 20-22, Long Beach, CA

Tri-Council Meeting,
Oct. 27-29, CANCELED

Great Lakes District Council,
Nov. 3-5, Dayton, Ohio

Midwest District Council,
Nov. 11-12, Denver, CO

New England District Council,
Nov. 18-19, Portland, Maine

Media Reform Conference,
Jan. 12-14, Memphis, TN

K	W	O	Y	T	U	R	N	I
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SEPTEMBER NEWSDOKU SOLVED

FROM THE MORGUE

Seventy years ago this month:

A Guild request for chain-wide contract negotiations in three states is rebuffed by the Scripps-Howard chain, with Robert P. Scripps arguing that conditions at each newspaper are too "unique and peculiar" for such an approach. . . . The Seattle Guild issues souvenir stamps, costing 25 cents each and bearing the inscription "Unionism or Hearst?" to help finance its strike at the Post-Intelligencer. . . . Elisha Hanson, attorney for the American Newspaper Publishers' Association, advises members to "flatly refuse" to have anything to do with the National Labor Relations Board.

Fifty years ago this month:

The New York Guild begins planning to publish its own daily newspaper in anticipation of a concerted lockout by the city's six dailies. . . . The tenor of contract talks in New York is suggested by a Herald Tribune proposal to replace an existing maternity leave clause with a sentence that reads: "A maternity case shall be considered a voluntary resignation." . . . The Boston Post, New England's "only major Democratic newspaper voice," closes just ahead of the election because of tax delinquencies.

Twenty-five years ago this month:

Pope John Paul II issues an encyclical, "On Human Work," that declares unions are an "indispensable element" for white-collar workers. . . . Roy Wilkins, former executive director of the NAACP—and a Guild member from 1936 to 1947, when he edited the NAACP's magazine, Crisis—dies at the age of 80.

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