

THE GUILD Reporter

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Subpoena wins a Pyrrhic victory?

Reporters withstand legal assaults in defense of an industry with shifting values

Federal subpoenas of four U.S. journalists in two separate cases were dropped abruptly, in recent weeks, averting courtroom confrontations over reporters' rights to maintain the confidentiality of their sources. But as a fifth journalist remained behind bars, setting a modern-day record for such incarcerations, the hollowing out of the news industry such actions are intended to protect continued without faltering.

Federal prosecutors sent a valentine to San Francisco Chronicle reporters Mark Fainaru-Wada and Lance Williams, announcing Feb. 14 that they had reached a plea agreement with the lawyer who had provided the duo with transcripts of grand jury proceedings. Fainaru-Wada and Williams, who had written extensively on a steroids scandal involving professional athletes, were courting prison sentences of up to 18 months for refusing to identify their source.

Earlier, on Jan. 29, the U.S. Army ended a similar effort to subpoena freelance reporter Sarah Olson and Honolulu Star Bulletin reporter Gregg Kakesako, a member of the Hawaii Newspaper Guild, in its court martial trial of Lt. Ehren Watada. Watada had refused an order to redeploy to Iraq because, he explained to the reporters in separate interviews, the war is "manifestly illegal" and obeying the orders would make him complicit in war crimes. Although Watada had explained his position publicly on many occasions, the Army felt it needed the reporters to substantiate his statements on a witness stand.

(Ironically, the court martial ended in a mistrial the following week, amid published speculation that Watada won't be retried because he now can avail himself of a double-jeopardy defense.)

But while the government dropped two of its assaults on reportorial privilege, a third—its imprisonment of freelancer Josh Wolf since Aug. 1 for refusing to hand over videotapes of a demonstration—broke all contemporary records. Meanwhile, the trial of a former White House aide on perjury charges has featured a stream of reporters testifying in often embarrassing detail about their methods.

Yet even as a handful of reporters risked imprisonment to stick to their principles, the industry whose interests they ostensibly were protecting gave every indication that its priorities lie elsewhere.

The Boston Globe marked the end of an era by announcing it was closing all three of its remaining overseas bureaus and bringing home its foreign reporters—while almost simultaneously confirming that more newspaper jobs will be flowing in the opposite direction. Both the Globe and its parent, the New York Times Co., said they are outsourcing more work to Bangalore, India, resulting in the loss of 55 jobs in Boston and at least 20 in New York.

Members of the Boston Newspaper Guild wore black armbands Feb. 8, when Janet Robinson, chief executive of the New York Times Co., swung into town for a meet and greet. And Guild negotiators in New York broke off talks with management about resuscitating the pension fund when they were told that the Times was going to have an outside firm explore outsourcing options—and then were handed a letter announcing that a decision had already been made to ship the work of the customer order fulfillment department to an overseas company.

Such protests, alas, have been



Sarah Olson speaks at a San Francisco rally on behalf of another freelance journalist, Josh Wolf.

less effective than King Canute in stopping the encroaching tide. Newsday employees were recently advised that their help desk calls will be handled by IBM—in India. Reuters increasingly is assigning reporting jobs to its India staff, which initially was recruited to process earnings announcements and other financial boilerplate but now employs 1,500 people, including database support. That includes

approximately 100 reporters and editors, up from only six when the wire service undertook what was then described as a trial run in 2004. "The newspaper industry has only taken tentative steps into outsourcing what was [sic] once-considered core competencies, such as editorial, advertising and circulation," observed the World Association of Newspapers late last year. "But the trend is gaining

momentum." It also is widening, as outsourcing doesn't just mean exporting jobs overseas. Dean Singleton is the acknowledged master of "outsourcing" internally, clustering the newspapers owned by Media News and having them share common functions, cutting jobs in the process. Although the strategy has raised antitrust concerns, Singleton

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Jeff Perlstein, executive director of Media Alliance, at rally for Josh Wolf.

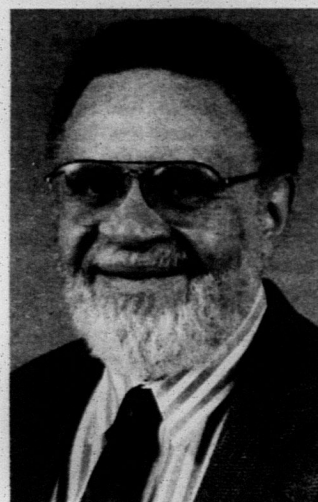
Peery chairs Broun Awards

Dick Peery, a long-time president of the Northeast Ohio Newspaper Guild who retired last October after 35 years at the Cleveland Plain Dealer, has agreed to chair the annual Heywood Broun Award jury. The competition, now in its 65th year, commemorates the Guild's founder and recognizes work that "helps right a wrong or correct an injustice."

As is traditional, entries are judged by a panel of distinguished industry peers chaired by a retired Guild activist, who has voice but no vote. Peery, in addition to leading his local, served on the TNG Executive Council and was for decades consistently outspoken on issues of diversity both in the Guild and the workplace.

Judging will be conducted March 6 at TNG-CWA headquarters. This year's competition attracted 81 entries, down from approximately 100 last year, continuing a downward trend that started several years ago. Guild officials are unsure why the drop-off has occurred, but speculate it reflects a broader decline of in-depth reporting, especially of the sort once known as "crusading journalism."

The award, to be judged this year by Deborah Howell, Tom



Dick Peery

Kunkel, Chris Lehmann and Jack Nelson, includes a plaque and \$5,000 cash prize and will be presented at an evening banquet May 3. Two awards of distinction, including cash prizes of \$1,000, also may be presented.

Howell, currently ombudsman for the Washington Post, was editor of the St. Paul Pioneer-Press during a period when it had seven Pulitzer Prize finalists and two Pulitzer winners. Prior to joining the Post, in 2005, she was the

Washington bureau chief and editor of Newhouse News.

Kunkel has been dean of the Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland since 2000 and is president-elect of the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication. Most of his journalistic career was spent in management, most recently as deputy managing editor of the San Jose Mercury News but also including stints at the Miami Herald, New York Times and Cincinnati Post.

Lehmann is a senior editor at CQ Weekly and Washington correspondent for the New York Observer. He's also worked as deputy editor of the Washington Post's book section, as Sunday op-ed editor for Newsday and as managing editor of In These Times.

Nelson, a newspaper journalist for more than 50 years when he retired in 2003, was for more than two decades the Washington bureau chief of the Los Angeles Times. Prior to his 38 years with the Times he put in 11 years at the Atlanta Constitution, where he won a Pulitzer Prize in 1960 for exposing mistreatment of patients and other wrongdoing at what was then the world's largest mental institution.

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PHOTOS BY CURT MILTON/PACIFIC NORTHWEST GUILD

Last hurrah

A wake for the King County Journal, a Guild-represented daily that published its last issue Jan. 21 (below), was attended by more than 200 past and present employees and their families Feb. 4. Among those marking the occasion, above, were Jane MacDonald, now at the Seattle Times; Art Thiel, now at the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, and Casey Corr, all of whom worked at was then the Journal American.



Deaths

Death claimed several Guild activists and luminaries in recent weeks, most notably **Harriett Woods**, a past lieutenant governor of Missouri and a former reporter who was married to Jim Woods, an early president and international chairman of The Newspaper Guild. She died Feb. 8 at the age of 79.

The first woman editor of the student-run newspaper at the University of Michigan, Woods went to work for the Chicago Herald-American in 1948 and later became one of the first women on the news staff at the St. Louis Globe Democrat. She left the news

business to raise a family, then returned to work in politics, starting with her election to the University City Council in 1967. In 1976 she was elected to the Missouri Senate, then twice lost races for the U.S. Senate—due, she said, in large part to the difficulty women faced in raising campaign contributions. Her 1982 failed campaign served as a catalyst for creation of Emily's List.

Woods' husband died in 2002; she is survived by a sister and three sons, all of St. Louis.

Stanley A. Bauman, a charter member of the Brockton Newspaper Guild and one of its first presidents, died Feb. 9 at the age of 93. For the past several decades, however, he was better known in Brockton for his freelance photography, which in addition to chronicling the career of boxer Rocky Marciano, a childhood friend, has served as a photographic encyclopedia of the city.

Finally, **Molly Ivins'** relatively short Guild tenure was remembered fondly by former co-workers at the New York Times, where she was a staunch union supporter. Ivins was Rocky Mountain bureau chief during one strike against the Times "and honored the strike straight through and lived on the strike benefits, which of course arrived very slowly by mail," one recalled. Ivins, who subsequently gained renown as a columnist, died Jan. 31 of breast cancer; she was 62.

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Guild briefs . . .

Pittsburgh bites the bullet

Guild-represented employees and members of 10 other unions at the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette were scheduled to vote at press time on a new three-year contract that union leaders described as demanding "enormous financial sacrifices." Details were not being made publicly available before the ratification vote. The Post-Gazette, which projected a \$20 million loss for last year and reported an 8.1% circulation decline between March and September, is owned by the Block family, which also owns the Toledo Blade. More than 200 unionized employees at the Blade—also not from the Guild—have been locked out over deadlocked negotiations there.

Three locals voting to merge

The executive boards of three Rhode Island TNG locals have negotiated a merger under which the Woonsocket and Pawtucket locals will become units of the Providence Guild. The merger agreement, which would increase Providence Guild membership by approximately 75, must be approved by membership votes in each of the participating locals. Providence was scheduled to vote first, Feb. 28 and March 1. The Call of Woonsocket and the Times of Pawtucket are among four dailies and five other newspapers in Rhode Island sold in late January by the Journal Register Co. to R.I.S.N. Operations, a newly incorporated company with ties to Horizon Publications in Illinois. Horizon, in turn, has links to Conrad Black.

Ottawa TV contract ratified

The 26 newsroom employees at CTV Ottawa have ratified a four-year contract that delivers across-the-board salary increases totalling 11%, plus increases in talent fees, merit pay and improvements in vacation and bereavement leave. Wage increases include 2.75% retroactive to Jan. 1, followed by annual raises of 2.5%, 2.75% and 3%; the merit pay formula in the third year amounts to an additional 5% salary boost for those who qualify. Employees can apply for merit increases based on 11 criteria that include core competency and technical knowledge, work performance, problem-solving skills and leadership. The vacation improvement bumps the entitlement by four days, to 29, for those with 28 years of service.

Sixth one-year extension

A tentative agreement on yet another one-year contract extension at the Pueblo Chieftain—for the sixth consecutive year—calls for a 3% wage increase and a modest improvement in tuition reimbursement. More significantly, it includes a clause giving employees an equal opportunity with other prospective buyers to bid on the newspaper when it is sold. The Colorado newspaper's owner, who is 83, has willed it to a trust under terms that dictate it be sold within five years.

Progress made in Maritimes

Progress, albeit at a snail's pace, was reported in contract bargaining on behalf of 14 pressroom workers at the Halifax Herald, with four days of conciliation scheduled in late February and early March. The pressroom employees have not had a salary increase in 13 years. Elsewhere in the Maritimes, the local at the Cape Breton Post in Nova Scotia concluded the smoothest contract talks it has ever experienced. "This is the first time we've been able to achieve an agreement without a lot of kicking and screaming," said Steve MacInnis, the local's president. Ratified by 91.6% of the approximately 70 members, the three-year pact includes a total 7% increase in wages and "the best pension increase we've ever had," MacInnis said.

The not-so-long-goodbye

Although the Guild contract at the St. Paul Pioneer Press has a formula that calculates severance pay based on how many 26-week periods or "major fraction" thereof an employee worked, the newspaper's labor relations department apparently

favors new math over the stodgy old kind. When it laid off Rose D'Acquisto in January, it paid her one week's severance less than she expected, prompting Guild inquiries. Nope, labor relations director Marc Chrismer responded: after the company had "carefully reviewed" D'Acquisto's work history, it concluded that the last 15-week portion of her tenure was not a "major fraction" of 26 weeks. The Minnesota Guild is pursuing the matter "through official channels."

More layoffs at two papers

Dow Jones, which is locked in contract bargaining with IAPE, TNG-CWA Local 1096, announced another round of layoffs tied to outsourcing, this time in circulation. The announcement came the same day the company, which publishes Barron's and The Wall Street Journal, announced fourth-quarter earnings that were up almost 15%, beating expectations. The latest layoffs bring to 45 the number of circulation jobs cut, including 32 represented by IAPE. Meanwhile, the Seattle Times has announced it will lay off four circulation field assistants next month—including a Guild member who's been laid off by the Times three times in the past eight years. Field assistants work in a relatively new—and apparently unstable—position responding to customer complaints of missed papers and the like.

As one Guild to another . . .

Staff employees of the Writers Guild of America East, represented by the New York Guild, distributed fliers at the 59th Annual Writers Guild Awards gala Feb. 11 asking Writers Guild members to support their contract bargaining. The staffers have been negotiating an initial contract with the WGAE, which represents writers and other creative professionals in news and entertainment, since October. Management has refused Guild proposals for arbitration rights, just cause for termination and a fair wage and insists on the unilateral right to subcontract any staff position.

AFL-CIO, Guild reach contract

The Washington-Baltimore Guild, which represents approximately 125 employees of the AFL-CIO, has reached tentative agreement on a 30-month contract to succeed the one that expired Sept. 30. Details include a retroactive wage increase of 2.75%, followed by increases of 2.85% Oct. 1 and 2.75% a year later; parity for PFTs (Part-time, "Fund," and "Temporary" employees), who now will be eligible for the same healthcare insurance as full-time Guild-covered employees; and automatic conversion of PFT employees to "regular" status after three years on the job.

Spoiled ballot becomes a 'no'

Just two weeks after rejecting a proposed contract on a 10-10 dead-locked vote with one spoiled ballot, Guild members at the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network rejected a slightly tweaked version of the same proposal Feb. 13 by a one-vote margin, 11-10. The Guild's bargaining committee said it would discuss next steps with federal conciliators as well as with the employer but was serving APTN with 72 hours' strike notice, as required by the Labour Code. "It is our belief the company can and should improve its wage offer to at least the rate of inflation and industry standards," the committee added, deploring the company's preferred raise of 2% a year for five years.

Contract extended 3 years

Guild-represented employees of the Santa Rosa Press Democrat have agreed, 64-10, to extend their existing contract—which was effective into 2008—by three years, to 2011. The extension adds company contributions to the 401(k) plan and sets the employer's share of health care premiums at 75% instead of a fixed dollar amount. Guild concessions include allowing use of freelancers throughout the newspaper and new layoff provisions that exempt a limited number of employees from seniority provisions.



Representatives of six TNG-CWA locals met for two days mid-February to create the MediaNews Council, which will explore coordinated responses to the chain's depredations.

Newspapers keep chipping away at basics

Continued from page 1

is pressing on: on Feb. 2 one of his partnerships announced it had purchased the Santa Cruz Sentinel, further consolidating his grip on northern California.

MediaNews picked up the Sentinel from Community Newspaper Holdings just four months after CNH bought it from Ottaway Newspapers, a subsidiary of Dow Jones. Singleton crowed that the acquisition would further "expand our reach in this very competitive region," failing to mention that MediaNews now owns every daily in the region except the San Francisco Chronicle—which as it happens is owned by Hearst, a MediaNews business partner. Sentinel editors, meanwhile, explained that the deal would improve "their" newspaper because it now will carry stories from the Mercury News, Contra Costa Times and other northern California papers.

Outsourcing also can mean publishing work from people who have no relationship with you. Enter the Associated Press, which announced Feb. 9 it had entered into a partnership with NowPublic.com that enables AP to use photographs, video and news from "citizen journalists." NowPublic.com is a two-year-old Canadian internet site that claims to have a registered base of 60,000 users who post blogs, news reports and pictures they've taken with cell-phones and digital cameras. AP stressed that its editors will not move such content without first editing it, but the potential for mistakes—or mischief—is obvious.

Apparently to make that very point, someone posted an AP-dated story on NowPublic.com under the headline: "West Virginia Law Bans Sex With Miners!" It

quoted West Virginia coal miner Smitty Culpepper, grousing that the law wasn't fair because "Miners need love just as much as anybody!" and featured a photo of a grizzled miner holding a picket sign proclaiming, "I need some poontang too!" The AP dateline survived just a few hours before someone realized it was a spoof and removed it.

The News Media Guild is sharply questioning AP's move and what it says about the increasingly slippery notion of what constitutes news. But Gannett already has reached a conclusion, and it isn't anything taught at most journalism schools. As reported in last month's Guild Reporter, the Indianapolis Guild expressed concern over the newspaper chain's plans to transform newsrooms into "information centers," with reporters writing advertorial copy in addition to their regular assignments. More recently, nearly half of the Guild-represented newsroom at the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle signed a letter claiming the newspaper has breached ethical barriers between the news and advertising departments, and between news and editorial.

Citing several incidents, including the byline of an editorial page editor on a news story and the blurring of news and editorial on the newspaper's political blog, the letter asserted that being "flexible and nimble as a newspaper and multimedia company should not mean our ethics are also flexible." Shortly after Editor & Publisher reported on the letter, the newspaper's publisher responded by declaring that "our underlying ethical principles are not shifting"—but then maintained that advertorial copy "is not ad copy" and could be assigned to newsroom employees. (See column, page 7.)

What a concept: spend money to make money

As newspaper publishers continue their slash-and-burn approach to higher profits despite all the evidence that the tactic isn't working, a new study out of the University of Missouri-Columbia lends academic credibility to the obvious: newspapers that spend more money on their newsrooms will make more money.

Led by Murali Mantrala—ironically, the university's Sam Walton professor of marketing in the College of Business—the study is based on 10 years of data provided by the Inland Press Association, a trade organization of more than 900 daily and weekly newspapers. The bottom line? "Better news quality drives circulation, and circulation drives advertising revenues," Mantrala said.

Esther Thorson, associate dean for graduate studies at the Missouri School of Journalism, noted that newspaper

belt-tightening in a fruitless search for higher profit margins is occurring in exactly the wrong places. "The most important finding is that newspapers are under-spending in the newsroom and over-spending in circulation and advertising," she explained.

"If you invest more in the newsroom, do you make more money? The answer is yes," she added. "If you lower the amount of money spent in the newsroom, then pretty soon the news product becomes so bad that you begin to lose money."

At the moment, unfortunately, readers have to wait to assess such conclusions for themselves. The study, "Uphill or Downhill? Locating Your Firm on a Profit Function" won't see print until the April issue of the *Journal of Marketing* comes out. Sounds dry, so don't expect your publisher to be waiting at the newsstand.

If such workplace "synergies" are insufficiently effective in goosing profit margins, there always remain the two classic remedies: sell something you haven't sold before, and cut even the most trivial costs. In the first category, there's MediaNews' acknowledgment that its northern California newspapers—including the San Jose Mercury News—probably will start running front page ads that are bigger than the one-inch strips some papers already have started selling.

"It is inevitable, something we need to learn to accept," Kevin Keane, ironically the vice president of news for MediaNews in the

region, told E&P.

Meanwhile, the Providence Journal, a newspaper that once prided itself on nurturing an in-house writing culture, has decided good writing is a frill it can no longer afford. The paper has cut out the pizzas it used to serve during monthly writing discussions, and has stopped paying cash prizes—totaling a grand \$400 a month—for top-notch writing.

Much more of this, and reporters once willing to court prison time to uphold professional ethics may begin wondering if they're on a fool's errand.

Time running out for 9/11 reporters to file

In the months following the collapse of the World Trade Center in New York City, more than 100,000 workers and volunteers from all over the country swarmed the area on various rescue, recovery and cleanup assignments. Many, if not the great majority, were inadequately protected from the toxic brew of dust they inhaled and swallowed. The National Council for Occupational Health and Safety estimates that 27,000 of them have subsequently developed serious physical or mental disorders, and with each passing month, hundreds more experience adverse health effects for the first time.

The good news is that all of them can register with the New York State Workers' Compensation Board, even if they have no complaints today, to preserve their eligibility to file disability claims for 9/11-related physical or mental illness that may surface

in the future. The bad news is that so far fewer than 7,000 have registered—and the deadline for registration is Aug. 14. Anyone not registered by then will be out of luck as far as New York State is concerned.

There is another piece of bad news: as amended, the law restricts such workers' compensation to those involved "in rescue, recovery and clean-up," creating a huge grey area for thousands of workers who had substantial exposure to the same poisonous air simply because that's where they worked or were assigned. That includes, for example, Dow Jones employees who worked across the street in the World Financial Center, as well as reporters, photographers and other employees of the New York Times and other media outlets providing news coverage from the disaster zone.

Although the law firm of Grey and Grey, which specializes in workers' compensation,

is circulating draft legislation to plug such gaps, Rob Grey says he has had "no indication that anyone is interested in moving or even sponsoring" it. As a result, he added, the law "does nothing for members of the media or others unless an argument can be made that an individual's activities were somehow related to rescue, recovery and clean-up. I rather doubt that the Workers' Compensation Board would accept such an argument for media members or reporters."

Grey's pessimism notwithstanding, CWA officials are encouraging all potentially affected union members to register just to preserve their rights. "Even if the New York State Workers' Compensation Board decides to reject the applications at this point, the more members we have who file who are part of a particular excluded sector, such as the media, the better it is for us in the political battle to expand the coverage," explained

Micki Siegel de Hernandez, CWA's director of health and safety in District 1, which is headquartered in Manhattan.

Still, Siegel de Hernandez added, it's important that CWA members "understand the limitations up front so that they have realistic expectations." Moreover, it's important that they fill out the applications in a way that won't hurt them. For example, keeping in mind how narrowly the law is written, Siegel de Hernandez suggests that media workers choose "recovery" from among the eligibility criteria, since media coverage was part of New York's recovery.

"At this point the board hasn't defined what the terms mean, so neither should we in the application," she noted, encouraging Guild members with questions to contact her directly at msiegel@cwa-union.org. The forms themselves can be downloaded online at www.wcb.state.ny.us or www.nycosh.org.

News round-up

Economic chill freezes Canada, too

It may be scant comfort for Americans, but the Canadian Labour Congress reports that working families on its side of the border are stuck in the same downward economic spiral. While more Canadians are working, the number working for poverty wages is also on the rise and the gap between the two ends of the earnings spectrum keeps growing. CLC President Ken Georgetti says the problem is poor job quality, not quantity, with 27% of adult workers forced to work part-time or temporary jobs or in some form of self-employment. Tracking U.S. trends, Canada has lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs over the past four years.

'Union talk' good, romancing bad

Employers may stop their workers from fraternizing if it's for fun but not if it's to discuss working conditions, a U.S. appeals court has ruled. A three-judge panel concluded that an anti-fraternization policy adopted by Guardsmark, a security-services firm, was overly broad because it encroached on federal labor law that gives workers the right to organize and to "engage in other concerted activities." The decision overrules the National Labor Relations Board, the U.S. agency charged with interpreting labor law; there is no law, alas, that protects workers who want to socialize off the job for purely personal reasons. A Guardsmark spokesman said the company is reviewing its options.

Labor Dept. a paragon of thriftiness

President George W. Bush's proposed budget for fiscal 2008, which starts Oct. 1, would cut \$1.25 billion in federal job training money—but Labor Secretary (and Bush appointee) Elaine Chao says that's not really a cut because there's almost that much in already allocated employment and training funds that she hasn't spent. Bush and Chao also want another big cut in the Bureau of International Labor Affairs, which handles—among other things—campaigns against exploitative child labor worldwide. Their proposal would slash bureau funding to \$14.1 million from \$72.5 million this year, eliminating 31 of its 58 employees in the process.

Global joblessness historically high

The number of people unemployed worldwide remained historically high in 2006 despite strong global economic growth, the International Labour Office said Jan. 25 in its annual global employment trends report. The ILO reported that even though more people are working globally than ever before, the number of unemployed remained at an all time high of 195.2 million in 2006, a 6.3% rate that was almost unchanged from the previous year. Meanwhile, the employment gap between women and men persists, with only 48.9% of women aged 15+ working in 2006, compared to 49.6% a decade earlier. The comparable male employment-to-population ratios were 75.7% in 1996 and 74% in 2006.

U.S. right up there with, um, Liberia

Just as Big Business is revving up to go after Americans' meager Family and Medical Leave benefits, a university study of 173 countries shows that the United States ranks as one of the worst for providing leave for illnesses, new babies and family emergencies. For example, the U.S. is one of only five countries that don't guarantee paid maternity leave, including Lesotho, Liberia, Swaziland and Papua New Guinea. The newly released research, from Harvard and McGill universities, comes as the U.S. Labor Department is wrapping up a comment period that could lead to devastating changes for workers in the 13-year-old Family and Medical Leave Act, the first bill signed by President Bill Clinton.

Unions wield pension fund power

Union-sponsored pension funds filed nearly 200 shareholder proposals this proxy season, most targeting executive pay and board accountability. In fact, union pension funds accounted for the largest number of shareholder proposals of any group, according to Institutional Shareholder Services Inc. Meanwhile, this is the first year in which companies in the S&P 500 will enter a new proxy season with a majority of companies having declassified boards—for which all directors are elected annually—according to ISS. An annual election cycle makes it easier for shareholders dissatisfied with corporate governance to change the board's composition, making it more responsive to shareholder demands.

Making 'flexibility' a union issue

Employers love to insist they must have workplace flexibility to cope with today's challenging business environment, but "flexibility" all too often is code for unilateral decision-making. Yet employees also want flexibility—to have more control over their work schedules without risking their wages, benefits or job security. How can unions make jobs more flexible? How easy is it to bargain for flex-time programs? And how can unions protect job security at the same time? A good source of answers is the Labor Project for Working Families, which recently released the Flex Pack, a toolkit on organizing, bargaining and legislating for worker-controlled flexibility. To learn more, go to www.working-families.org.

Partisan battle lines over Employee Free Choice Act

By Mark Gruenberg
Editor, Press Associates Inc.

As might be expected on a congressional committee that has been politically polarized for more than a dozen years, partisan battle lines were sharply drawn Feb. 8 in the first congressional hearing on the Employee Free Choice Act, then reinforced Feb. 14 when the House Education and Labor Committee moved the bill on a 26-19 party-line vote.

Vice President Dick Cheney, speaking the same day to the National Association of Manufacturers, promised a presidential veto should the bill make it through the Senate, where pro-labor legislators are unlikely to muster enough support to quash a GOP filibuster.

While that means the Free Choice Act is unlikely to become law for several more years, Democratic control of the House has provided a platform for publicizing the sham nature of representation elections overseen by a politicized National Labor Relations Board. The Free Choice Act, first proposed by unions a couple of years ago, would require employers to recognize a union when a majority of their workers sign cards authorizing that union to represent them. House leaders have promised to bring the act for a floor vote this spring.

Although current law allows card-check procedures, employers have the option of disregarding the results and demanding an election run by the NLRB. Moreover, Republicans pushed unsuccessfully last year to outlaw card-check altogether.

The Free Choice Act also would outlaw some of employers' worst abuses, such as mandatory closed-door meetings at which workers must listen silently to anti-union propaganda under threat of punishment if they don't. The act also would increase penalties for other violations of labor law, such as threats to close and move plants, illegal firings of pro-union workers, harassment and spying.

The Feb. 8 hearing by the Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Andrews (D-N.J.), focused on how workers currently are deprived of their right to organize. Pro-worker witnesses spoke passionately about the trials they face in trying to organize their colleagues. Research data show 31,000 workers were fired illegally last year for trying to organize unions—one every 23 seconds. But other abuses abound. When the United Food and Commercial Workers tried to organize the Smithfield

Company packing plant in Tar Heel, N.C., for example, "the plant manager had the local sheriff, and management was all the way up the stairs to the election area," plant worker Keith Ludlum told the subcommittee.

"They had deputies in battle gear with shotguns and all were wearing buttons saying 'No union, no union, no union,'" Ludlum said. "Now that's coercion."

CWA member Teresa Joyce of Lebanon, Va., a worker at a call center for unionized Cingular Wireless, provided lawmakers with a contrast between a virulently anti-union shop—AT&T Wireless, which previously owned her center—and Cingular, which bought the center and which allows card check. Through card check, CWA has signed up nearly 20,000 ex-AT&T workers.

"At AT&T Wireless, we had absolutely no say on workplace conditions, including wages and benefits," Joyce explained. "Our raises were determined by favoritism and seldom a reflection of our work. Some years we would receive as little as a 2-cent raise. On top of this, workers had no real means for reporting unfair treatment by supervisors. When we approached upper management... our requests fell on deaf ears."

When Joyce and her colleagues tried to organize the workers, AT&T threatened to close the center—a threat that, depending on how it's phrased, is legal under labor law—and told workers that "if we succeeded, dues would be so enormous we may actually need two jobs.... Deeper into our campaign, management began to drive out our most outspoken union supporters for so-called 'bad attitudes' and other flimsy charges," she added.

After Cingular bought the call center, "the harassment and intimidation stopped" when the CEO told employees in a conference call that each worker "would be free to choose union representation, free of employer interference." After being allowed to put up posters, distribute flyers and make phone calls, CWA achieved card-check recognition in Lebanon on Sept. 6, 2005. "Management even helped us with a cookout at the call center to celebrate," Joyce said.

"Today, supervisors treat us with respect. We've been able to bargain for fair wages and affordable health care benefits. Our wages are now determined by a scale, not favoritism. We have more vacation days and, more importantly, we have job security," she concluded.

Battling sham 'supervisors'

Starting what promises to be a complex, tough campaign of education, mass mobilizing and lobbying, a group of unionists met Feb. 7 at AFL-CIO headquarters to brainstorm how to combat the National Labor Relations Board's "workers are supervisors" decision. One thing they soon realized: union members—and the general public—have to be taught that the agency's ruling last year may affect them.

Organized by the AFL-CIO Department for Professional Employees, the gathering discussed the impact of last year's 3-2 decision in the so-called Kentucky River cases that expand the definition of "supervisor." Under the revised rule, workers are supervisors even if they spend as little as 10%-15% of their time in actual supervisory duties, and the rest as regular workers. The Economic Policy Institute has calculated that approximately 8 million workers could be swept up in the new decision; the two dissenting NLRB members—both Democrats—said the ruling could cover up to 34 million.

AFT official Phil Kugler contended the situation is so bad that "a school bus driver who can assign a school bus aide to a particular bus" could now be ruled a supervisor.

Labor law does not protect supervisors, who as a result can be fired, demoted, disciplined, forced to engage in anti-union campaigns or even ordered to break the law. Supervisors comprise 10%-12% of the workforce under the current definition, while adding 8 million more would increase their "density" to 19%-20%. In some occupations, EPI added, the impact would be much higher.

Among the various professions, EPI said 35% of registered nurses—843,000—would be redefined as

supervisors under NLRB's ruling, as would 123,800 (18%) of licensed practical nurses; almost half (46%, or 59,500) of airline pilots and navigators; and 24,100 (12%) of media editors and reporters. Even jobs not regarded as supervisory, such as kindergarten teachers and social workers, would see thousands of their members redefined as supervisors and stripped of their rights under labor law.

In response, session participants discussed contract language—first drafted by a New Jersey AFT nursing affiliate—that would bar firms from reclassifying workers as supervisors. Adding such language became a "strike issue" for 10 locals, said Jean Lucas, former president of AFT Local 5118 and a leader in bringing the issue to her union's attention several years ago. Participants also discussed possible legislative fixes, although speakers stressed it will take a lot of lobbying—and a change in the White House—to educate lawmakers about the NLRB ruling and then to reverse it.

But Kugler sounded an interim warning—echoed by others around the room—about employers using inventive methods to move workers into supervisory ranks on the flimsiest of pretexts. Other participants noted that union-busting law firms already are advertising on their websites that they can help companies convert workers into "supervisors."

"Alarm bells should be ringing for all of us," said DPE President Paul Almeida. "Kentucky River is another cancer on the National Labor Relations Act. It's like a hidden assassin waiting to strike." The NLRB's ruling, added AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney is "the zenith" of the board's decisions "to destroy the rights of union members." —PAI

University of Maryland may be calling you soon

Many Guild members can expect to be contacted over the next couple of months by people asking all kinds of questions about their jobs. And that's a good thing.

The questions are part of a three-pronged survey that's being conducted by the University of Maryland Phillip Merrill School of Journalism, in partnership with TNG-CWA, to learn how the news media are evolving—and how those changes are affecting the workplace. The survey is part of the Guild's first project underwritten by the Strategic Industry Fund, which was approved by CWA delegates at last year's convention to address critical organizing issues within the union's various sectors.

"As the landscape for journalism changes and the platforms for delivering journalism keep shifting, in the next 10 or 20 years, where will journalists be working?" asks an internal document describing the project. "What will their jobs entail? What kind of training will they need to keep up with a news industry in serious economic and technological transition? What will be expected of advertising sales personnel? How much advertising revenue will be necessary to support pro-

fessional journalism, and where will it come from?

"And, finally, how can technical professionals keep pace with the changing nature of digital transmission while maintaining high quality standards of work?"

Researchers will be surveying Guild and non-Guild members alike, in print and broadcast media, and also will conduct a second survey of news managers. Following a third series of more in-depth interviews with "some of the nation's most far-thinking journalists and managers," the findings will be published in *American Journalism Review* and other outlets in hopes of sparking a wider discussion.

The survey findings also will be the basis for a high-profile "jobs summit," tentatively set for this fall, at which media leaders and rank-and-file workers will be invited to discuss their implications. Plans are to webcast the summit and to use it as a springboard for an annual roundtable thereafter.

"The people who are doing the work are not being asked the implications of what they're being asked to do," Tom Kunkel, dean of the journalism college, said in explaining the unique nature of the survey package. "We're looking at an incredible untapped resource."

Tribune too ugly for suitors.

Suppose they held an auction and no one came? That's pretty much the situation at Tribune Co., which at press time was coming to grips with the notion that it's too ugly to be a desirable dance partner. Not one newspaper company made a bid for the media powerhouse, and the two bids that were made didn't offer a premium over the lackluster share price that prompted the auction in the first place.

But the lack of panting suitors doesn't mean the company is no longer under the gun from the Chandler family, which owns a substantial chunk of Tribune stock and which forced the attempted sale in the first place. And yet another source of pressure has emerged in the form of Chicago real estate magnate Sam Zell, who reportedly is pushing a complicated proposal that resembles one of the two spurned bids but which has the advantage of coming from a hometown investor.

Whether Zell prevails or the Tribune's board of directors decides to go it alone, financial observers are betting the company will try to make the Chandlers go away by loading up on debt to underwrite a special—and hefty—dividend. An alternative approach would involve spinning off Tribune's television stations to fund the dividend, with the Carlyle Group, a private-

equity firm in Washington, D.C., having already put in a bid of more than \$4 billion for just that part of the company.

Aside from 11 newspapers and nearly two-dozen television stations, Tribune also owns the Chicago Cubs and other media assets. Its board has said it will make a final decision on how to proceed before March 31. The company's stock price, which at one point last fall hit \$34 a share, has been trading for less than \$31 throughout February.

A flabby stock market performance and confusion at the highest levels were not enough, however, to deter Tribune's board from lavishing its executives with generous financial rewards—apparently more as inducements to stick around than as rewards for jobs well done. The company's top 10 employees were awarded \$12.4 million in restricted stock at a Feb. 13 board meeting.

Dennis FitzSimons, company chairman and chief executive, got the lion's share, 135,000 shares worth more than \$4 million at current prices. That's more than twice the 60,000 shares he received last year. The grants vest in one-third increments over three years, with no performance criteria attached, and—unlike stock options—have value whether stock prices rise or fall.



Zeroing in on the issues

Near-zero temperatures outdoors on Feb. 13 fail to stop Guild-represented employees of the Brockton Enterprise from demonstrating against zero percentage wage increases. The union has been in contract talks since May 1 with scant progress to show for the effort, as management also keeps pushing an inferior health care plan and persists in trying to outsource the work of three departments. Fortunately, says local president Betsy Regan, an evergreen clause has maintained working conditions and "there's no way we're giving up our jurisdiction language."



A diminished CBC absorbs still more cuts

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, suffering the death of a thousand cuts, absorbed two more blows in recent weeks. In a decision with far-reaching implications for its ability to produce its own programming, the CBC rejected a proposal by the Canadian Media Guild to maintain props, carpentry and painting in the Toronto Broadcast Centre. And it quietly—very quietly—cancelled the long-running program "On the Road Again" without announcing a replacement.

The decision to mothball the TV design department was announced last spring but was suspended to review a Guild proposal that it be made into an employee cooperative. Following the suspension, the Guild hired a consultant whose feasibility study concluded that such a cooperative would be viable if it were able to rent space in the broadcast center and if CBC guaranteed it the lion's share of its TV design work.

In rejecting those conditions, the CBC said the design department will be closed May 31 and its extensive props and costume stores dismantled. In addition to the 49 design department jobs this will eliminate, CBC announced a further 15 job cuts in other departments.

"We deeply regret that the CMG and the CBC were not able to reach an agreement on the idea of an employee co-operative as a way of preserving TV design in Toronto," said Marc Philippe Laurin, the president of the Guild's CBC branch. "The closure is another sad result of the fact that the CBC is coping with one-third less government support than it had in 1990."

Indeed, the abrupt cancellation of "On the Road Again," an award-winning show that for 20 years presented stories of Canadians from every part of the country, was interpreted as additional proof that Canadian programming is on a slow road to extinction that started more than a decade ago. The CBC then suffered the biggest budget cuts in its history, losing one-third of its government funding, and was forced to make major cuts in programming.

More recently, it seemed the network's fortunes might be reversing, following a \$60 million boost in federal funding for domestic programming in 2001. Although the \$60 million was never formally integrated into public broadcaster's parliamentary grant, the CBC continued to receive the supplement each year thereafter. But now the Conservative government is treating the \$60 million

as a request for new money in the upcoming federal budget, raising fears the supplement will disappear altogether.

Shuttering the TV design department contributes to such apprehensions because it essentially ends the CBC's ability to produce television in-house. Among the job categories affected by the closure—some to be eliminated altogether—are scenic artists, art directors, special effects technicians, scenic constructors, carpenters, designers, set decorators, make-up/hairdressers, costume designers and broadcast technicians, as well as senior radio and TV assistants.

"These people are the creators of the 'look' you see on CBC television," Laurin said. "Their skills will be lost to the public broadcaster forever."

The ongoing diminishment of Canada's public broadcaster comes in the context of a private media sector that is among the most concentrated in the world. That's why last month's announcement that CanWest Global and Goldman Sachs Capital were in a partnership to buy 13 specialty TV stations from Alliance Atlantis Communications, adding them to an already huge newspaper and television empire, also rang alarm bells at the Canadian Media Guild.

"Besides the obvious increase in concentration, and the possible impacts on advertisers, employees and the producers of content, there is an additional element of foreign ownership that would appear, at least on the surface, to violate current regulations," the Guild said in a statement. And while the deal requires federal approval, it acknowledged, "given the current government's record, that seems more likely than not."

Indeed, the Conservative administration currently in power has dismissed a Senate committee report—for which TNG Canada provided several witnesses—calling for significant regulatory and policy changes to protect the country's diversity of news. Instead, it has emulated its southern neighbor by embracing telecommunications deregulation, and some Members of Parliament have suggested relaxing rules that require private broadcasters to produce and air Canadian content.

Coupled with its neglect of the CBC, Canada may "end up pretty much where Conservative policy wonks have been hoping to steer the country for years," the Guild predicted: "Bigger corporate profits, fewer media watchdogs, less diversity of news and entertainment."

Do white-collar workers need a different kind of union?

Yes. New technologies and globalization require fresh strategies so both employees and employers can succeed.

By Jim Grossfeld
Editor, Union Democracy Review

You need to be bar mitzvahed!" my London-born, Orthodox grandfather bellowed. I was taken aback. After all, even though I was 13, I'd been raised a suburban, ham-eating Jew whose only religious instruction was watching the Ten Commandments on TV.

"But I don't understand Hebrew," I answered. "It doesn't matter," he shot back, "just go up and say the bloody words!"

When I think about the relationship between labor leaders and their young, more upscale Democratic brethren I'm often reminded of that encounter. Like my grandfather, many in the labor movement hold firm to their Orthodox trade unionism and expect younger Democrats to honor it regardless. And, like me at 13, many of those Democrats see it as an empty ritual; something you do to make the old guys happy. And that's a tragedy, because labor and Democrats could both gain if only more in the Party recognized that old time religion could speak to the needs of white-collar workers with uncertain careers. And it can.

This is the principal finding of a recent Center for American Progress study of mine, "White Collar Perspectives on Workplace Issues." The study, based on polling data and focus group research by Lake Research Partners, underscores the extent to which young technical and professional workers are as bewildered by the "new economy" as manufacturing workers have been for a generation. For them, Bill Clinton's 1993 prediction that they "will change jobs eight times in a lifetime" is an unquestioned fact of life.

Yet, as unstable and stressful as their jobs have become, few white collar workers will tell you that they're being ground down under the boot heel of capitalism. Instead, they will say that instability and turmoil are unavoidable in today's economy. Seymour Martin Lipset long ago described how white-collar workers see their interests as being the same as management's. Notwithstanding the challenges they face today, there's little reason to suggest that's changed.

This is especially so in the attitudes many voice about unions. "Certainly at one point when the unions were formed they were very important," remarked one worker in a focus group I ran. "I mean, workers were horribly treated and not paid, you know? Child labor and all sorts of things. I think at that point the unions were very, very important. I think there are other avenues that are available, now that workers in general have a better voice in most situations, to address those same problems that don't necessarily have to involve a union."

It's not that U.S. workers share a deep-seated animus toward unions. To the contrary, by some measures public approval of unions is as high today as it's been in 40 years. Few Americans doubt that unions improve wages and working conditions. Yet, according to one 2005 Harris poll, 55% also believe unions stifle individual initiative and 60% agree that unions are more concerned with resisting change than helping to bring it about.

Of course, the labor movement has a huge stake in turning these attitudes around,

and more than a few believe the way to do it is to present unions as a movement that fights for social justice. In fact, a search of the AFL-CIO's website finds that the words "fight" or "fighting" appear almost 2,900 times; that's more than twice as frequently as the words turn up on the website of The Boxing Times. Don't get me wrong: being seen as standing up for worker rights isn't a bad thing. Efforts to organize janitors, hotel employees, farm laborers and other poverty-wage workers routinely win the sympathy of many technical and professional workers.

But it hardly follows that those workers will then choose to unionize, too. Some white collar workers may want to join a struggle for justice on the job, but most just want to advance in their careers. Even if labor laws were made fair, many of these workers would still feel that unions have become eight-track tapes in an iPod economy.

Is all this to say that white-collar workers are ready to send unions to the Hefty bag of history?

Not necessarily. In truth, white-collar workers do see value in having some kind of workplace organization, just not the kind they think the labor movement is offering. When asked to describe the kind of group she would create for herself and her coworkers, one focus group member said it would promote "a safer workplace, better pay, opportunities for advancement, improving morale, bringing more revenue to our company, more training for the employees and more employee recognition." Another said his would focus on employee recognition to help retain workers. A third added that she would have her group create childcare options for workers and join with employers to lower health-care costs.

It should not come as any surprise, then, that they sat up and took notice when they were presented with examples of existing unions who seem to be doing just that. Focus group members who had rolled their eyes at the mention of past union achievements were intrigued by case studies of unions joining forces with management to train employees for new tech jobs, working with employers to develop telecommuting policies, and creating a multi-employer pension funds for freelancers. They especially liked hearing how one union worked closely with an employer to turn a failing company around and make it competitive. In fact, they gave a thumbs up to every example of unions and management working together to help companies succeed.

To some, this may seem like labor-lite—less John L. Lewis than Stephen Covey—but whoever becomes its champion stands to make inroads with a new generation of young, career-oriented workers. Democrats should take their cue from such observations and showcase new approaches to workplace organization—and the modern laws that make them possible—as part of a broader plan to help white-collar workers succeed in their careers. For their part, labor leaders need to recognize that few workers, particularly technical and professional employees, want to sign up to join a coalition of victims. Rather than insist that those workers conform to more orthodox approaches to unionism they need to

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No. Workplace changes notwithstanding, employers' and workers' interests remain different—and often adversarial.

By Andy Zisser
Editor, The Guild Reporter

The logo of the AFL-CIO features two clasped hands, one black, one white, one representing the old crafts-based American Federation of Labor, one the wall-to-wall and more racially inclusive Congress of Industrial Organizations.

But click on the AFL-CIO's web site, and of the logo there is no sign.

These days, when labor talks of "partnerships" it's much more likely to be referring to employers than to other workers. Thanks to the global economy, goes the argument, we no longer can afford to think in such parochial terms as workers vs. bosses or labor vs. capital; now it's "us vs. them," meaning the U.S. economy against the rest of the world. Our employers need our help to compete successfully against foreign competitors and their access to cheaper labor, looser environmental restraints, kinder regulatory frameworks and lower taxes. Confrontation is passé, constructive engagement all the rage, cooperation the goal.

Andy Stern, president of the Service Employees International Union and the Cardinal Richelieu of the Change to Win coalition, is the most vocal proponent of this more pragmatic philosophy. A year ago, in comments he has echoed in numerous forums, Stern told a group of corporate lawyers meeting in Puerto Vallarta that SEIU's goal for 2006 "is to bring unions and corporations together as partners, not enemies." On the one hand, he explained, employers "need to recognize that the world has changed and there are people who would like to help them provide solutions. . . . A partnership between labor and organizations would be a step towards the intended goal."

On the other hand, Stern added, "union members have to understand that companies are not their enemy, but must think about increasing shareholders' wealth. . . . Labor should ask itself, 'how can I contribute to meeting those expectations in a way that also meets mine?'"

This is akin to the battered wife arguing that the beatings will stop when her abusive husbands understands how much she contributes to his welfare—and, of course, as soon as she figures out how to better meet his needs. It's all the victim's fault.

A more fundamental flaw in Stern's analysis than his sheer pliancy—"Why can't we all just get along?" he seems to be pleading—is its mischaracterization of the relationship between shareholders and workers. Companies and employees aren't "enemies," in any conventional sense, nor are they capable of being "friends" or allies, any more than shareholders can be friends or enemies of inventory or machinery. From a corporate point of view, workers are simply tools, to be bought as cheaply as possible and to be replaced when a better or cheaper tool—human, mechanical or digital—becomes available.

The larger or more global a corporation becomes, the more prevalent this attitude. It's one thing, after all, for the owner of a small business to look an employee in the eye and tell him he's being laid off; it's another thing entirely to whack 80 or 100

jobs from a payroll 10 times larger. There's nothing personal or deliberately hurtful about it; it's just business. The bottom line has needs, too.

That Stern is hardly alone in his views may, unfortunately, say more about labor's weaknesses than mere statistics about declining union membership. One trendy variant, on display at left, is the argument that the old-fashioned kind of union—you know, the knuckle-dragging Neanderthals who ruled labor in its heyday—is all well and good for blue-collar types, but we white-collar types need something more appropriate. Something more refined, less confrontational, more intellectual—an organization, let's be brutally frank, that won't hamper our advancement into those management ranks ourselves. Indeed, an organization that will enhance our management prospects.

There undoubtedly is room and even a need for such organizations in today's corporate landscape: they're called professional associations. But those who declare that unions should get a makeover to look more like PAs are saying more about their own loss of vision, and lack of rigorous analysis, than about the labor movement overall.

Grossfeld is correct when he notes that labor "needs a better strategy for organizing younger, white-collar workers than hoping they become class-conscious"—but the key word in that phrase is not "class-conscious," it's "hoping." "Hoping" is even more useless than Andy Stern's pleading. A better strategy entails analysis and education, but both Stern and Grossfeld come up short in the analysis department; union education programs, meanwhile, have been among the first to feel the bite of budget cuts. The result is an intellectual void in which buzzwords and broad generalizations, supplemented by focus groups, substitute for clear thinking.

"Class" is an integral component of a capitalist economy and entirely the reason why unions were created in the first place, to maintain some kind of balance between capital and labor. But whereas capital's role is pervasively reinforced—as witness the size of our newspaper business sections, the abundance of MBA programs, the hagiography accorded to corporate leaders—labor's role is pushed to the periphery. More significantly, the very concept of class is marginalized, as something quaint or old-fashioned or perhaps vaguely threatening, summoning visions of bomb-throwing Bolsheviks.

The problem of white collar workers today, as always, is that they deny the existence of class—or if forced to acknowledge it, deny that it applies to them. Heywood Broun readily recognized this affliction when he announced he was going to create a union of newspaper workers, observing that reporters and editors fancied themselves superior to printers—even though the printers worked shorter hours for more pay. And even as Broun succeeded in rallying newsrooms to him, there was enough white-collar resistance to the idea of "organized labor" that the new organization called itself a guild rather than a union.

Stern, Grossfeld and the rest of that school—including such notables as Gene

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LOOKING AHEAD

A starvation diet will only kill us

By Bernie Lunzer, Secretary-Treasurer

We always knew we didn't need a rocket scientist to tell us that reducing newspaper quality reduces newspaper readership, but now we have the scientists, too. A new study from the University of Missouri journalism school, surveying 10 years of relentless newsroom cuts, has concluded that newspaper owners are starving us into oblivion.

Although the study demonstrates that spending money on news "product" actually benefits profitability, one of its authors said in a radio interview that she has little hope that owners will listen. As she related, news management culture is stubborn, used to easy money and unwilling to invest in research and development. I wish this were news.

What upsets me most is that no one's discussing any of this with us. No other industry has such a talented and loyal workforce as newspapers. Instead of getting laid off, we should have been the first invited into a dialogue on what comes next. We'd still be facing the huge challenge of the web, but we'd be much further along in the transition.

Gannett Corporation's embrace of its new "information center" approach is a case in point. Bold and "platform agnostic," the centers are to focus on new ways of organizing information and distributing it to "customers" any way they want to receive it. The approach recognizes that people will get their information in multiple ways throughout a day. Perhaps most importantly, implicit in the approach is a refreshing new willingness to listen to readers and customers, reflecting the interactive nature of digital media that everyone now expects.

Despite the digital gloss, some of what's being implemented looks disconcertingly familiar. Most notably, Gannett wants to link

editorial content to specific advertising products which are then targeted to identifiable audiences—and it apparently wants news writers to provide that content.

Special advertising sections are not new, even if Gannett is wrapping them in new packaging. In the late '70s and early '80s many Guild units bargained "advertorial" writers into existence, defined as advertising department employees whose job it was to generate news-like copy to go into special advertising sections. The specialized positions satisfied a corporate need for "product" without breaching the historic wall between news and commercial operations.

This time around, however, the information center idea is being implemented with little or no discussion with the workforce. When Guild leaders in Indianapolis expressed ethical concerns about the idea and asked to negotiate its details, they were told management would go ahead without them. And when our Rochester local recently expressed the same concerns, the publisher allayed most of its concerns but added that as far as newsroom staff writing ad copy is concerned, "if you're defining ad copy as articles coming from our custom content department, I would argue this is not ad copy." The "custom content department" is the one responsible for preparing advertorials and special sections that tie editorial content directly to its ads.

This leaves us in a tough spot. We shouldn't look askance at any new work, and the recommendation from TNG-CWA is for locals to take any and all work possible. We'd not only like to see the layoffs stop, we'd like to see real growth and new investment in newspapers, which is what the Missouri study underscores as essential for

Let's put aside shopworn talk of class struggle to face new economic realities

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create new structures (dare I say "products"?) to meet their needs. The CWA, SEIU and a few other unions get this. The rest need to.

What should Democrats and labor be saying to younger, white-collar workers? It would be the following:

- New technologies and globalization have changed how Americans work. What matters isn't what labor unions achieved in the past, it's how new unions can help employees—and employers—succeed now and in the future.

- That's why we are seeing the growth of new unions created by professionals who believe in being flexible and working together with management to make firms more competitive and profitable.

- These new unions provide a strong, respected voice so that employees can team up with management to solve tough problems, whether they're healthcare costs, overwhelming workloads, or the need for leading-edge training and opportunities for advancement.

- The new unions also understand that as

more Americans work from home or as contractors and part-time employees, it's important that they have the resources they need to be successful, such as networking opportunities, ideas for better telecommuting and access to portable health insurance and pension benefits.

Apostasy? No doubt to some it is. But at a time when union membership is in a freefall, labor needs a better strategy for organizing younger, white-collar workers than hoping they become class-conscious—and Democrats need to demonstrate that they care as much about helping them succeed in their careers as they do about stem cell research. It isn't enough to just go up and say the bloody words.

Adapted from an online article in the Democratic Strategist. A veteran of more than 25 years of union-organizing drives and contract campaigns, Grossfeld served in several federal government posts, currently works as a public affairs consultant for unions and non-profit groups and is a frequent contributor to American Prospect magazine.



AFTER JOURNALISM JOBS ARE CUT, WHAT'S LEFT?

strengthening the industry. But management must sit and work with us to understand the implications of such changes. Destroying the credibility of current news content won't move the ball forward. The credibility of print media is second to none, earned through decades of diligent hard work, and we the workers can't simply sit back and watch it destroyed in a thoughtless embrace of new technologies and an unseemly scramble to preserve unsustainable profit margins.

We know that blogs, citizen journalism and opinion-oriented "news" media like Fox News are radically shifting the landscape, as are all the new Web 2.0 ideas that continue shaping interactive digital information. We're not above writing advertising copy,

which is a craft unto itself, and we understand the need to be open to new ideas. But we cannot be passive bystanders as the very essence of our craft is drained of all meaning.

That's why TNG-CWA is currently working on a project with the University of Maryland to survey our members about the future of our work. The survey and its findings will be featured in a university-sponsored summit this fall that will include workers and managers in a discussion of what we're about and where we're headed. You'll soon be hearing much more about this.

The future is coming, like it or not, and if we don't take an active hand in shaping it, be assured someone else will. And that means we need we need everyone's input.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor,

I work at the Boston Globe as an editorial designer and belong to the BGEA. I get the Guild Reporter and just read your analysis on page 1.

This is just about the best writing on

what is wrong with reporting that I've seen in years. It is so on the point.

Thanks for this. I want to make copies and send it to everyone I know.

—Jane Simon,

Boston Newspaper Guild

White-collar workers have always thought they were too good for unions

Continued from page 6

Sperling—have thrown in the towel on the issue of class consciousness, choosing to focus instead on the mechanics of the marketplace rather than on its relationships. Of course, whether we develop class-consciousness or not is irrelevant to the class system itself, which blithely will ignore our ignorance even as income and wealth gaps continue to widen and the vast majority of all wage-earners—white collar, pink or blue—wonder why their standard of living has stagnated.

Speaking at a recent conference on the so-called Kentucky River decisions, in which the National Labor Relations Board rewrote the rules to exclude even more workers from union representation, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka explained the difference between the AFL-CIO and the Change to Win unions with a single phrase. "They think the key to success is to work within the box," he said. "We think the box has to be changed."

That pretty much sums it up—except that the split between those working within

the box and those seeking to change it isn't that straightforward. The AFL-CIO isn't of one mind on the subject, nor are the academics, Democratic strategists and other opinion-makers that work with its member unions. Nor will any union, whether part of the AFL-CIO or of the CTW, ever effectively grapple with these issues as long as its members keep hearing that their first priority is to help management make their companies more competitive and more profitable. No, it isn't.

One good place to assert labor's interests would be for the AFL-CIO to reclaim its logo—and then make clear that both clasp hands belong to the working class, not one to labor and one to capital.

The issues raised in these companion commentaries are critical to all union members, but perhaps even more so for the white-collar workers who make up the bulk of Guild membership. In order to expand the discussion, The Guild Reporter invites responses for publication in a future issue; send submissions to azipser@cwa-union.org.

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: March 16.)

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

May-October
Guild relations

By Debbie Thomas
TNG-CWA Human Rights Director

Someone asked me the other day why I hadn't written anything on age, which got me to thinking: is there more to say about the "baby boomers," those born during the post-WWII period of increased birth rates, or about the "gen-Xers," the generation that followed the boomers?

The demographic boundaries of these generations are not well defined, although there is agreement that the boomers started entering this world in 1946. People born between 1963 and 1978 are generally considered "Generation X," but some use the term to describe anyone who was in his or her twenties at some point during the 1990s. In any case, I thought it might be useful to take a quick look at both groups to see what we can learn from a human rights perspective—in which, so often, developments that even the field for some have a tendency to tip the scales in the opposite direction for others.

There seems to be this image of the Guild as being full of "old white guys." Women often feel that they don't fit in, while minorities of color feel minor in the scheme of things, further exacerbating the disconnect felt by women of color. Now we have a difference of ideologies between the young and the old as to what this organization should be about.

In 2004, Guild activists got together to grapple with this and other issues, coming up with very specific recommendations for improving the Guild's image. Among their conclusions: that the Guild should be

perceived as "caring about the career success of its members instead of just trying to get them out of trouble." But in discussing this goal, a generational difference became apparent.

For the gen-Xers, the hardened attitudes of many boomers were unfathomable. Those who weren't around for the strike of '95 or who never lived through management's sudden, nearly whimsical decision to lay-off 10% of the workforce can't rally comprehend how our attitudes have been shaped over the years.

On the other hand, we boomers have a few things to learn and perhaps (though I hate this term) should remember that we were "young once," too. Just because we've done something a certain way for years doesn't mean a new approach won't work or that a fresh perspective can't bring new insights. We live in a world in which change is the only constant. Strike papers are no longer printed on paper but online. The mobility achieved via cell phones, Blackberries, etc. influence us in ways we couldn't have imagined even a decade ago. And so on.

The truly important lesson we have to keep in mind is not to discriminate against each other on the basis of age or experience: we all have something to bring to the table. As with race, gender or any other equity disagreement, the key is communication. If we don't talk, we won't know. If we recognized that you are not just a "kid" and I'm not just an "old grouch" we can make things happen.

Few are too young, and none are too old to make the attempt to learn.—Booker T. Washington.

Injured? Here's some advice

By Michael Ian Rott and Judy Beal

Jake Metcalfe (not his real name) was a 350-pound AT&T employee and loyal member of CWA Local 9511. In 2004, he died on the job from heat exhaustion, leaving behind a wife and three children: a 4-year-old son in remission from cancer, an 8-year-old daughter with autism and a 17-year-old daughter on track to become the first in her family to attend college.

Jake's death could not have come at a worse time. A flood had just destroyed the family condominium, using up his daughter's college money. Jake's death also left the family without health insurance to cover his son's massive medical bills, and with Jake's wife forced to return to work, there was no one to care for their autistic daughter.

The good news is that, after a long, tough negotiation on behalf of CWA, we reached a settlement with AT&T that kept Jake's daughter in college, paid for his son's medical bills and allowed his wife to stop working and care for their autistic daughter.

The key to Jake's settlement was our use of a financial benefit the federal government created exclusively to help accident victims like Jake's family. It's called a structured settlement and it allowed us to guarantee income for the family's current and long-term needs in a way we could not have matched with a single lump-sum payment.

A structured settlement allows you or your family to put part or all of an injury or wrongful death award into a safe payment stream designed to meet your financial needs. Your payments are completely exempt from federal and state income taxes, which usually means you get a better total return. Payments

can be in regular installments or can factor in cost-of-living increases. Depending on future needs, you also can include occasional larger payments or guarantee your payments for life.

The possibilities are endless, which is why we always recommend working with an experienced structured settlement consultant. In Jake's case, our consultant designed a payment stream that recognized the family's changing needs, including occasional larger payments to meet future requirements.

As union members know, workers' compensation systems are not friendly to injured workers, no matter where they live. The small benefits mean that many end up selling their homes, losing health insurance and leading impoverished lives until their cases are resolved. Moreover, when a settlement is reached it often is resolved with a one-time payment, creating the risk of a second tragedy: Just a few bad investments can leave a person with no job, no money and expenses piling up.

Still not convinced? Then consider the saga of "Karen," a 39-year-old California Teamster we know who broke her back and pelvis in a driving accident. After years of treatment and surgeries, she got a lump-sum settlement of almost \$2,000,000. Within a few months, her husband had persuaded her to pay off all his personal debts, including an IRS lien. He also got her to buy him a new Cadillac Escalade, a prize shotgun and a house in Las Vegas—before running off with most of what was left, leaving her almost broke. Today, Karen works full-time at a restaurant because she has nothing left to fall back on.

Rott is General Counsel of CWA Local 9509. Beal was president of the same local from 1996-2002.

NEWSDOKU

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.

However, in addition to filling in the squares, the nine letters may be used to spell one or more words that answer or describe a clue. Some letters may 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.

This month's clue: *The only cartoonist ever to win the Heywood Brown Award, he was reviled by Richard Nixon, loved by his co-workers and was a card-carrying Guild member for 67 years.*

Entries postmarked no later than March 26 may be mailed to: The Guild Reporter, 501 Third Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001. If there's more than one correct set of answers, the winner will be chosen at random. The answer to this puzzle will be published in March; the winner will be named in April.

The winner of the December Newsdoku was Brannon Albright of New York City, who will receive a copy of "No Questions Asked: News Coverage Since 9/11," by Lisa Finnegan.

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MIDDLING DIFFICULTY

DAYBOOK

CWA Nat'l Women's Conference,
March 23-24, Washington, DC

CWA Legislative-Political Conf.
March 25-28, Washington, DC

TNG Canada Nat'l Rep Council
April 14-15, Toronto

Labor's Voices III Conference,
April 26-28, New York, NY

Freedom Award Fund Banquet
May 3, Washington

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S	T	H	R	E	O	I	N	A
A	I	O	H	S	N	T	E	R
N	E	R	A	I	T	S	O	H

JANUARY NEWSDOKU SOLVED

January's clue asked for the name of the first Guild-chartered local. It was: NORTHEAST OHIO

FROM THE MORGUE

Seventy years ago this month:

The New York Guild joins three other unions at the North Shore Daily in Flushing, New York, to wage a joint campaign against a newspaper publisher for the first time in industry history. . . . Chicago, "the World's Toughest Newspaper Town," becomes majority organized for the first time, with 458 of an estimated 900 editorial employees in the city's newsrooms signing on with the Guild. . . . The Arkansas legislature approves a shield law, protecting journalists from disclosing sources to a grand jury "or any other authority."

Fifty years ago this month:

The AFL-CIO bars union officials from taking the Fifth Amendment to avoid scrutiny by law enforcement agencies and legislative committees. . . . New York Times management volunteers to provide the Guild unit with quarterly reports on the progress of racial integration in its various departments. . . . The Guild's executive board files a formal protest with the State Department over its ban on U.S. journalists traveling in Communist China.

Twenty-five years ago this month:

Speaking at a media labor law seminar, John B. Jaske, Gannett's vice president for labor relations, asserts that management "in all but the largest markets" has gained the upper hand in bargaining strength. . . . Eric Geist, treasurer of the Washington-Baltimore Guild, is hired to fill a slot in TNG's collective bargaining department. . . . The Guild's executive board calls for support of the Equal Rights Amendment.

THE GUILD
Reporter

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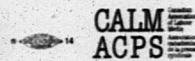
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