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Job cuts, bids roil news industry

Layoffs, buy-outs and loss of beats bleed newsrooms

In a Wall Street version of corporate whiplash, the newspaper industry was buffeted in the past month by still more high-dollar takeover bids (see story below)—and still more buyouts, layoffs, loss of beats and offshoring.

The Monterey County Herald, owned by MediaNews, cut seven full-time and one part-time position in various departments, for an overall 5% workforce reduction. The family-owned Toledo Blade, which has locked out more than 200 non-Guild employees for eight months in an ill-fated contract bargaining ploy, gave two-weeks' lay-off notice May 11 to 27 Guild-represented employees, including 19 in the newsroom.

The Denver Post, MediaNews' flagship paper, has extended voluntary buy-out offers to 90 or so newsroom workers—approximately a third of its newsroom staff—and is to accept as many as 37 by early June; a year earlier it cut newsroom staff by a dozen. The Post's cuts were announced a

month after the competing Scripps-owned Rocky Mountain News—with whom it has a joint operating agreement—offered buyout packages to 50 employees, with a final decision on who's leaving to be announced later this month. When the JOA was created, in 2001, MediaNews head Dean Singleton pledged to increase the Post's newsroom by 100 new employees.

The Baltimore Sun, still owned by Tribune Co., likewise said in late April that it wants to cut payroll—currently at about 1,250—by 50 employees. The newspaper's Guild unit has accepted a buyout plan for which approximately 85 of its 489 members qualify, although management reportedly will consider nonqualifying volunteers. The unit had 623 members just four years ago.

And in a move that portends more layoffs at the San Jose Mercury News, also owned by MediaNews, the company said it will begin outsourcing ad production July 1 to Express KCS, a U.S.

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Dow Jones and Reuters in play; Tribune eyed warily

Is the newspaper industry terminal? Apparently not, judging by the recent actions of Rupert Murdoch, Sam Zell and the Thomson family.

Murdoch, whose News Corp. already owns the New York Post, the Fox TV network, MySpace and a host of other media properties in the U.S. and abroad, has made a surprise bid to buy Dow Jones, publisher of The Wall Street Journal and Barron's, among other ventures. Precisely when Murdoch first made his offer is in some dispute, but just days after the May 1 disclosure of his interest, Toronto-based Thomson Corp. made an equally unexpected bid for Reuters Group PLC. The latter combination, approved by Reuters trustees May 15, creates the world's largest financial news and data company.

Meanwhile, real estate developer Sam Zell's apparently successful takeover bid for Tribune Co. is coming under increasing fire for shifting most risks to employees. Teamsters attending Tribune's

annual meeting May 9 questioned the company's board of directors about various aspects of the deal, noting that Zell's risk will be minimized by tax breaks and "phantom" stock ownership, while employees will be dragged along for the ride via an employee stock ownership plan that gives them no say in corporate governance.

"This plan is a perversion of what ESOPs were designed to do—namely, to empower workers as owners," charged Teamsters President Jim Hoffa. "This structure makes the employees shareholders in name only." The Teamsters represent approximately 2,000 Tribune workers.

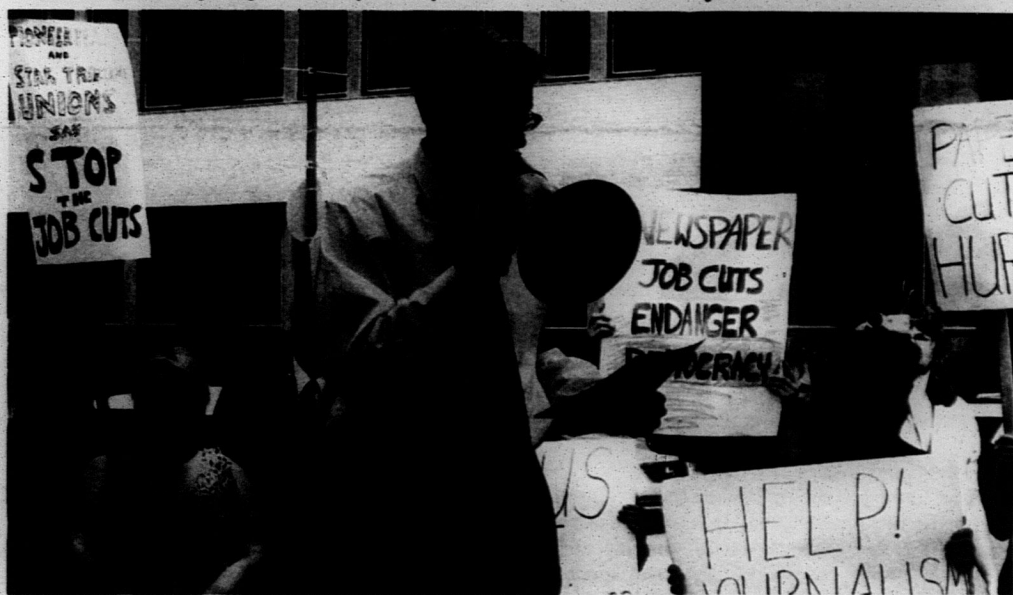
Also weighing in against the Tribune deal was consumer rights activist Ralph Nader, who accused Zell of "strip mining" the industry via "an exotically complex transaction." "How else could Sam Zell put only \$315 million of his own money into the pot—most of it a loan, no less—take control of this

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Scores of Guild members and supporters turn out for a 'Black Thursday' rally in Minneapolis to protest

recent job cuts and loss of beats. Below, long-time Guild activist Randy Furst exhorts the crowd.



Foley, Lunzer, Schick declare candidacies

By Connie Knox
TNG-CWA Vice President, Region 2

TNG-CWA's political season is off to an unusually early start with hats thrown into the ring nine months ahead of the Guild's nomination convention next February in Providence, R.I.

Both TNG-CWA President Linda Foley and Secretary-Treasurer Bernie Lunzer have announced they are running for president of TNG. Additionally, Tim Schick, administrative officer of the Providence Newspaper Guild, has announced his candidacy for TNG Secretary-Treasurer.

The announcements were made May 4 during a recess from a meeting of the Sector Executive Council gathered in Washington, D.C.

Foley later said in a statement that she will "encourage a proven Guild leader" to run on her ticket as a candidate for Secretary-Treasurer. Lunzer and Schick have said they are running independently.

Lunzer and Schick handed out flyers announcing

their candidacy to those at the SEC meeting. Lunzer's statement called for increased dialogue among publishers and locals, building the Guild's strength within CWA, strengthening locals "so they can achieve fair contracts" and revamping the union's organizing program.

Foley, noting that nine months remain until the election, said "it's important for all of us to remain focused on the real job at hand: building a stronger union and serving the members."

Schick's statement said his goal is "to increase member participation and input in the decisions affecting the Guild," adding, "A local should not be in crisis to hear from its leadership in Washington."

The formal election season will begin at the sector conference next February, at which nominations will be made from the floor for all officers on the Sector Executive Council including the sector chair and regional vice presidents. The election will be held prior to the 2008 CWA convention, which marks the start of three-year terms for all officers.

Inside this issue



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A union by any other name is still—the Guild

By Scott Edmonds
Canada West Vice President

Canadian members of CWA, who for more than a decade have operated under the TNG Canada-CWA banner, have approved a name change to better reflect their evolving relationship with the parent union. The new name, CWA/SCA Canada, "better describes who we are and our new status within the CWA," explained Canadian Director Arnold Amber.

The SCA in the new name, which stands for Syndicat des Communications d'Amérique, reflects the bilingual nature of the Canadian membership.

The Canadian region first changed its name several years ago, converting the TNG acronym from The Newspaper Guild to The National Guild of Canadian Media, Manufacturing, Professional and Service Workers, in recognition of its IUE locals and others outside traditional Guild jurisdiction. The latest change is more direct and streamlined.

"Our media members and those who work in other industries are equally represented under CWA/SCA Canada and we gain better understanding within the

CWA about what our national union is all about. Better clarity is a step forward," said Amber.

There are still numerous Guild locals in Canada. All remain part of the TNG/CWA family, with the same names they have always had, and will continue to take part in international Guild affairs as they have in the past. For example, the largest TNG local remains the Canadian Media Guild, TNG/CWA Local 30213, and the overall governing body within Canada remains the National Representative Council.

The new Canadian Region within CWA was created last year; changes needed to make it work efficiently are continuing. Administrative and financial control moved from Washington to Ottawa on Jan. 1. The Canadian union now collects members' dues directly and sends money to Washington, instead of the other way around.

The region also runs its own legal assistance program, but continues to participate in a number of CWA and TNG programs and projects, including the Members Relief Fund.

The next evolutionary step will be designing a new logo to go with the new name.

Hard times make for cranky workers

The newspaper industry's economic turbulence is creating our very own version of post-traumatic stress disorder. Delegates to the May multi-council meeting in Washington related these recent incidents:

- A St. Louis salesman whose car was stolen got his just deserts: he got fired. Apparently management at the Post Dispatch felt he raised his voice too sharply in

responding to two Lee Enterprise employees who were making fun of his misfortune. The St. Louis local took his case to arbitration in April and is awaiting a decision.

- In Milwaukee, an exempt manager threw not just a tantrum but food at staff members. A second tantrum ended with the near-publication of a reader "survey," asking subscribers to judge which was more stupid, Britney Spears or a particular newsroom department. The manager was suspended and sent to the employee assistance program.

More recently, another editor in the same department took offense at a group of employees calling themselves "the chimps," demanding that they remove chimp posters and sayings. The long-standing joke refers to the adoption of a new editing system several years ago that was described as "so easy, even a chimp could do it"—but having a sense of humor apparently requires a higher level of intelligence.

- At a Guild-represented paper on the East Coast, a retail ad sales rep was being reprimanded by her male manager for wearing tank tops he felt were cut too low. She responded by pulling down her top to bare her breasts, asking "Is this also too low cut?"

The rep was fired, ostensibly for tardiness and for "flashing" her manager. The Guild is grieving the dismissal.

Guild briefs . . .

Enroll now for computer class

With more than half-a-dozen online courses scheduled to start June 1 and June 11, MediaNews employees who are Guild members and want to beef up their computer skills are urged to submit their applications pronto. Full course descriptions, including digital photography, Photoshop, basic videography, digital video editing in Avid, web design, writing for print, copy editing and Flash 8, may be read at www.cwanett.org/certificate.aspx#. The program is supported by the CWA's Strategic Industry Fund, which is providing \$300 scholarships for up to 300 qualified students, with additional \$100 scholarships available for mobilizers.

BNA proposal wins, loses

A Guild-sponsored shareholder proposal that would have discontinued a pilot bonus program for top executives at the Bureau of National Affairs received more votes for than against—but because such proposals need a majority of all shareholders, not just of votes cast, still failed. The final count was 5,539, 140 in favor vs. 4,389,239 opposed, but nearly 6.3 million votes would have been needed for passage. Still, members of the Washington Baltimore Guild were heartened by their strong showing, noting that it was "a sign that people here care about what goes on in their company." BNA is an employee-owned company.

One step forward, two back

The New Hampshire Union Leader has recanted the threat it made last month to unlawfully terminate its Guild contract, but its hardball tactics continue. First it converted two full-time Guild jobs into part-time positions without benefits, a move the Manchester Guild characterized as retaliatory. Then it demanded that each employee give back a week's vacation in 2008 to stave off layoffs, a concession local members reluctantly approved in a 69-34 vote May 10—only to have their sacrifice voided when one of the newspaper's three other unions rejected the demand, triggering renewed promises of layoffs. At press time it appeared the dissenting union's member had reconsidered, apparently nullifying the threatened job cuts. The Guild has unanimously condemned the company's tactics, noting that such concessionary demands "properly belong at the negotiating table," where talks have dragged on for more than 18 months.

Blogging pay compromise

The Albany Guild reports it has reached an agreement with the Times Union on after-hours blogging, waiving the contractual minimum of four hours of overtime paid to employees who are called back to work after hours. Recognizing that some members enjoy blogging and that blogging does not require a physical return to the workplace, the agreement permits straight overtime solely for blogging. With some posts requiring as little as 15 minutes, Guild members had been reluctant to seek four hours of overtime.

TV workers extend contract

Canadian Media Guild members who work at TVOntario got a 2.5% bump in pay May 4, retroactive to last October, following ratification of a one-year extension of their contract. The extension, which gained 96% approval from the 115-member unit, also includes some improvements to benefit plans. Negotiations on the next collective agreement have already started.

Freep talks in crucial round

At press time, the Detroit Guild and other members of the Metropolitan Council of Newspaper Unions had entered a crucial round of negotiations with the Gannett-owned Free Press. Although a number of contractual issues have been resolved, management remained insistent on replacing across-the-board pay increases with a so-called merit pay system. The Guild, meanwhile, told the

company that its review of current pay scales shows men making an average of \$10,000 more per year than women. Men also receive 28 of the 40 top salaries, while 35 of the 50 people at the bottom of the pay scale are women.

UPAGRA nixes Univision bid

Although the Puerto Rican local, UPAGRA, has been in contract negotiations with Univision for four years, its members rejected the company's latest non-economic proposals by unanimously rejecting each article, one by one. "It was being said that the members at Univision were tired of the fight," local president Nestor Soto reported to a multi-council meeting in Washington May 6. "But they demonstrated that they continue to be standing and fighting and are not ready to relinquish their rights."

Hanging up on Classified Plus

Confirming once again that work quality suffers when it is outsourced, the Times Union in Albany has radically cut down its use of Classified Plus—albeit without admitting it had been violating its Guild contract. Originally represented as simply answering the phones on weekends and after hours, Classified Plus had been given an ever-larger share of calls during normal working hours—until Guild members documented the "huge number" of mistakes made by Classified Plus and the dozens of cases in which it simply didn't answer incoming calls—the reason it was hired in the first place. As a result, the Albany Guild has formally withdrawn its grievance and request for arbitration.

Leuchter fund in jeopardy

The Leuchter Scholarship Fund, which each year underwrites a six-week scholarship for a Guild activist to attend the Harvard Trade Union Program, is almost depleted and in danger of being terminated. TNG-CWA Secretary-Treasurer Bernie Lunzer told multi-council participants that the fund is down to less than \$2,000 and that appeals to locals for donations have met "with little success." "Continued lack of funding would mean the loss of this program," he warned.

Denver JOA wants early talks

The Denver local has received official notice from the Denver Newspaper Agency, operator of the MediaNews-owned Denver Post and Scripps Howard-owned Rocky Mountain News, that it wants to negotiate a new contract by July. The negotiations will be the first full-contract bargaining since the Denver joint operating agreement was established in 2001; the current contract, which covers non-editorial employees, expires the end of next January. Separate newsroom contracts at the two papers expire next March.

Change to Win staff joins TNG

The Washington Baltimore Guild reports it has submitted membership cards from a "substantial majority" of eligible employees of Change to Win, the coalition of unions that broke away from the AFL-CIO two years ago. The new unit means the local has wall-to-wall coverage of Washington-based labor federations, since AFL-CIO employees have been Guild members for many years.

New officer in Pacific NW

Darryl Sclater of the Seattle Times has been appointed vice-president of the Pacific Northwest Guild for the remainder of the 2007-2009 term previously held by James Geluso. Geluso resigned his position on leaving the Skagit Valley Herald, where he also had been serving as unit chair, for a new job in Bakersfield, Calif.

Times Colonist veteran dies

Clifton Heinrich Steele, an employee of the Times Colonist in Vancouver for more than 50 years, died April 3; he was 74. Steele advanced from paper boy to mailer before eventually becoming the local's secretary-treasurer, coming out of retirement in 2002 to walk a strike picket line.

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Union? Sorry, you can't rent

Sports-caster anxious about union torpedoes Guild lease

A Toronto landlord has denied a lease to the Canadian Media Guild, which represents employees at the Canadian Broadcasting Corp., Canadian Press and TVO, because of anti-union pressure from another tenant.

Westmont Hospitality Group (also known as King Street Enterprises) houses the Holiday Inn on King and other commercial tenants—including a sports broadcaster known as The Score—at 370 King Street West. Earlier this month, the landlord had signed, sealed and almost delivered a lease to the Guild when he realized he was dealing with a media union—and tried to extract a promise that the Guild wouldn't try to organize employees at The Score.

CMG President Lise Lareau and vice-president Scott Edmonds explained to the landlord that no union could sign away workers' rights in such a fashion, but they also made it clear that organizing The Score wasn't the reason they wanted to move into the building. The Guild leaders even offered to find ways to reassure the sports broadcaster that union staff would not be hanging around outside its doors, waiting to pounce.

But the landlord apparently decided it couldn't risk exposing another tenant's employees to the dangers of union membership, abruptly notifying the Guild that it wasn't welcome. "You have to wonder why the The Score is afraid of us," commented a bemused Lareau.

Lareau said she now plans to make sure employees at the broadcaster are aware that their managers used a commercial real estate transaction to exclude a union from the building. Local officials also are weighing whether to file a lawsuit seeking compensa-

tion for the three months spent on lease negotiations before the union issue was raised.

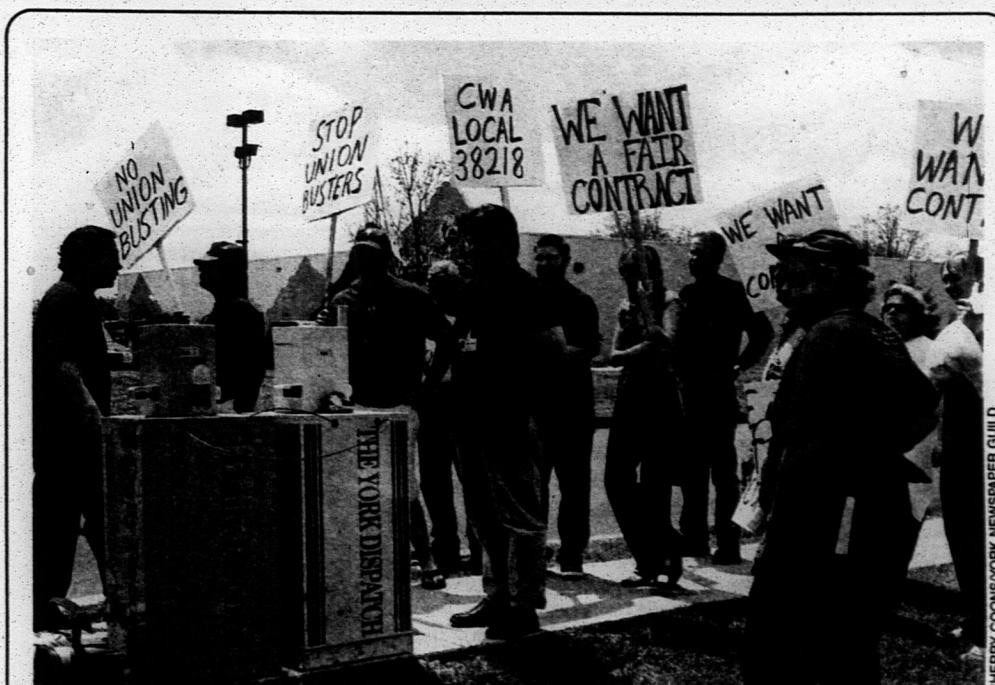
"This decision raises serious concerns for all unions and workers," she observed. "This landlord has decided it's okay to infringe on the constitutional rights of free association and the guarantees in the Canada Labour Code of the right for people to organize in order to appease another tenant."

Other Canadian labor leaders also expressed concern over the growth in anti-union animus. "This is another example of a business eroding the rights of workers and unions—without consequence," said Ken George, president of the Canadian Labour Congress.

Although Westmont Hospitality Group is now claiming that it simply had another tenant willing to take more space, Lareau labeled this an after-the-fact rationalization. Added Edmonds: "They were still expressing their eagerness to see us as tenants in the building in mid-April and the deal would have been done before any other tenant entered the picture, if only we would have promised to stop acting like a union."

"I have never seen an issue like this raised in a real estate transaction," said Edward Glavan of LNR Corporation, the Guild's broker. "The whole thing was a complete misuse of the real estate process we know."

CMG was seeking to lease a 5,000-square-foot chunk of the fifth floor. The landlord presented the waiver seeking assurances the Guild would not organize The Score within hours of the deal becoming unconditional. The Score is now on the fourth floor of the building and is about to move to the main floor.



York thumbs down

Members of the York Guild rally May 9, a day before decisively rejecting a MediaNews contract proposal, 32-3. Local leaders notified a

federal mediator of the outcome and expected contract negotiations to resume at press time, as previously scheduled.

Lawsuit challenging Hearst, MediaNews deal is dropped

Declaring victory, San Francisco businessman Clint Reilly has dropped a lawsuit alleging that MediaNews and Hearst were colluding illegally to monopolize the Bay Area newspaper market. The case was to have gone to trial April 30.

But while Reilly asserted that a settlement he had reached would accomplish most of what he had been seeking, a MediaNews spokesman told trade magazine Editor & Publisher that the company was "strongly considering" suing Reilly or his attorney, Joe Alioto, for allegedly breaching confidentiality terms. And there was a public dispute over some of the assurances Reilly said he had been given.

All parties apparently agree that Hearst and MediaNews will not consolidate their distribution and advertising operations, as outlined in a letter dated April 26, 2006 that the lawsuit forced into the open. And it appears that Hearst's hopes of eventually gaining a direct ownership stake in MediaNews' Bay Area operations also have been derailed.

But statements by Alioto that the settlement would preserve smaller MediaNews-owned dailies that were otherwise "headed for the graveyard" prompted strong denials. And the two sides had different interpretations of several settlement details, most of which will apply for the next three years:

- Reilly's camp says he now has the right to sit on the editorial board of any California Newspaper

Partnership newspaper—the group controlled by MediaNews—that he wants; MediaNews says he can sit on a board only if the editor agrees. The Reilly camp also says he can recommend private citizens to sit on the editorial boards of all the MediaNews newspapers.

- The Reilly camp says he has gained the right to place "personal copy" in any of the MediaNews newspapers; MediaNews retorts that Reilly will be buying the space and the only advantage he will get is preferential positioning. Reilly's side insists the space is free.

- The settlement requires MediaNews to provide Reilly with copies of the minutes of the partnership's management meetings, as well as notice of any planned discussions with Hearst about possible cooperative ventures. The MediaNews side insists, however, that the company won't be seeking Reilly's permission to undertake such ventures.

None of the publicly released settlement terms require any concessions from Hearst, although Reilly did say he would be reimbursed for his attorney's fees, to which Hearst might be contributing.

While the settlement creates a bit of a wall between the Hearst-owned San Francisco Chronicle and the MediaNews properties that otherwise dominate northern California, it does nothing to slow the latter's rapid consolidation. And it doesn't affect Hearst's investments in MediaNews operations outside the Bay Area.

Time turns to brass knuckles

Despite a four-day marathon of bargaining at Time Inc. ahead of the March 23 contract expiration, virtually no progress was reported by the New York Guild. Now negotiations have settled into what promises to be a long, tough slog.

Once viewed as a company that held onto employees with golden handcuffs, Time these days is accused by local leaders of resorting to brass knuckles. Months of contract talks have failed to make the publisher budge from a draconian package that includes a guaranteed raise of only 1% spread over more than four years; no severance pay for terminated employees; a 40% cut in holiday pay, with no day off; and language stating it will not be bound by past practices.

The company's outside attorney, Jonathan Sulds, "relentlessly harps on one theme," reports a bargaining update from the unit: "You people at the Guild have to get into the twenty-first century and get used to the new business model of the Internet age." Precisely what that means, however, had to wait for a little Guild number-crunching after Time Warner released its 2006 annual report.

Time Warner's publishing unit, which is mainly Time Inc. (the other units are AOL, cable, filmed entertainment and networks), had a 2.8% decline in operating income before depreciation and amortization—the company's preferred metric—for 2006 compared with 2005. That's still a profit of \$1.09 billion, but from Time Warner's point of view the momentum is going the wrong way, especially when contrasted with a 145% jump in net income for the company overall.

But here's the interesting note: while net income jumped nearly \$4 billion, revenues were up less than \$2 billion. "The Guild figures that that's where all the layoffs come in: A company can't force consumers to buy its products or advertise in its products, but it can force employees out of the company," the bargaining update observes.

One of those not being forced out is CEO Dick Parsons: his pay package shot up 41% from 2005 to 2006, to a princely \$22.5 million. That suggests the "new" internet business model looks an awful lot like the Gilded Age model of the late 19th century.

TNG-CWA Staff Rep.

The Newspaper Guild-CWA is now accepting applications for a TNG-CWA staff representative job in the United States. The position will require travel, during the week and on weekends. Applicants must have experience in collective bargaining (specific experience with TNG-CWA's collective bargaining program is desirable), and contract enforcement. Knowledge of labor law, as well as organizing experience, is also a plus. Applicant must be prepared to relocate, if necessary. TNG-CWA believes in equal employment opportunities and diversity. Women, people of color and other under-represented minorities are encouraged to apply.

Please send letter of interest and resume to:
Linda Foley, President
The Newspaper Guild-CWA
501 Third St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001.

Or e-mail to: dedmondson@cwa-union.org.

Applications will be accepted through June 8, 2007.

News round-up

Wal-Mart lumped in with North Korea

Just in time for May Day, Human Rights Watch—which usually monitors rights violations in countries like North Korea—reported that Wal-Mart's efforts to remain union-free have violated federal law as well as its employees' rights. Examples of such violations include eavesdropping on workers and spying on them with surveillance cameras, as well as firing those who express an interest in union representation. The April 30 report was the organization's first study of an American company's treatment of its workers; Wal-Mart has more than 1.3 million workers at approximately 4,000 U.S. stores, none of whom belong to a union.

Union contract derails newspaper sale

An arbitrator's ruling that Tribune Co. was violating a union contract provision in its proposed sale of The Advocate of Stamford, Conn. to Gannett Co. has cast doubt on whether the sale will go through. The contract with UAW Local 2110 requires any new owner of the newspaper to honor the newsroom employees' collective bargaining agreement, which Gannett has said would be a deal-breaker. Tribune announced two months ago that it would sell The Advocate and Greenwich Time newspapers, the smallest of Tribune's 11 daily newspapers, for \$73 million.

GateHouse rolling up properties

Elsewhere, Gannett announced the sale of four of its 90 U.S. dailies to New York-based GateHouse Media Inc. for \$410 million. GateHouse recently bought the Guild-represented Herald News in Fall River, Mass. from Journal Register Co. The four new acquisitions, including the Rockford (Illinois) Register Star, the Observer-Dispatch in Utica, N.Y., The Herald-Dispatch in Huntington, W.Va. and the Norwich (Conn.) Bulletin, become among the largest in the GateHouse chain, which includes 84 daily papers in 19 states. Meanwhile, GateHouse also closed on a \$380 million acquisition of nine newspapers from Copley Press Inc. that had a combined circulation of 241,000. None of the recent acquisitions, aside from the Herald News, have Guild representation.

EEOC starved of adequate funding

The Bush administration has cut funding for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission so drastically that the federal agency does not have enough money to do its job, according to two key senators. Since taking office in 2001, the Bush administration has closed eight of 23 EEOC district offices, opened a national call center staffed by private contractors, cut the agency's budget in real dollars and reduced staff, resulting in a backlog of 36,000 complaints of workplace discrimination. At a recent Senate hearing, EEOC Chairwoman Naomi Earp said her agency has lost 543 employees since 2001, 500 of them in enforcement. Moreover, Earp acknowledged she had been prohibited by the Office of Management and Budget from telling Congress she needs more staff.

Maryland adopts living wage bill

Gov. Martin O'Malley of Maryland has signed the nation's first statewide living wage bill, 23 years after Baltimore became the first city in the country to require a living wage for city contracts. Under the law, employers with state contracts will have to pay workers a minimum of \$11.30 an hour in the Baltimore-Washington corridor and \$8.50 an hour in the state's rural counties, where wages and prices are usually lower. The Maryland state minimum wage is \$6.15 an hour, one dollar above the federal minimum, which has been unchanged for more than a decade. Nationwide, 145 cities and counties have enacted living-wage bills.

9/11 worker comp deadline looms

Time is rapidly running out for anyone who worked at Ground Zero after Sept. 11, 2001, to apply for New York Workers' Compensation; the final registration deadline is August 14. Although at least 100,000 workers and volunteers worked in the vicinity of the World Trade Center, fewer than 12,000 have registered to date. Those who miss the deadline will become ineligible to file a claim even if they develop a 9/11-related physical or mental illness in the future. The law applies to most people who performed any rescue, recovery or cleanup work—possibly including news personnel—no matter how briefly, either paid or unpaid, in lower Manhattan south of Canal or Pike Streets between Sept. 11, 2001 and Sept. 12, 2002. More information is available at www.nycosh.org or by calling a toll-free, 24-hour hotline at 1-866-WTC-2556.

Progress on labor rights in trade deals

For the first time, the Bush administration has yielded to Congressional demands that free trade deals include strengthened labor standards. The concession, affecting pending agreements with Peru and Panama as well as future trade deals, require signatories to respect five basic international labor standards enshrined in the 1998 International Labor Organization Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The deal also calls for a new program to deal more effectively with the negative impact of trade on the livelihoods of Americans and their communities.

Congress gets earful on NLRB's 'supervisor' rule

By Mark Gruenberg
Editor, Press Associates Inc.

Cheered on by dozens of nurses in the audience, a nurse from Salt Lake City—who's been arbitrarily declared a "supervisor"—and a former National Labor Relations Board member told Congress it should change labor law to overturn the NLRB's "workers are supervisors" ruling.

The Bush-appointed majority on the board ruled last year that "charge nurses" are supervisors because they make assignments as infrequently as once a week, placing them outside the protection of labor law.

"As a charge nurse, I'm in charge of the pencil," retorted RN Lori Gay of the Salt Lake Regional Medical Center at a May 8 hearing of the House Education and Labor subcommittee. "Typically, I spend 10 minutes at the end of my shift filling out an assignment sheet for the oncoming shift, making sure every patient has a bed and a nurse. I record the traffic in and out. It's as simple as that. I don't have the authority to hire, fire, evaluate or promote other nurses" or discipline them.

All those factors, and more, are responsibilities of supervisors, but the NLRB majority said that engaging in any one of them for as little as 10%-15% of a worker's time qualifies him or her as a supervisor. The Economic Policy Institute and others have calculated that between 8 million and 34 million workers could meet the much looser definition, including construction workers who instruct apprentices, newspaper reporters who ask for items from editorial assistants, kindergarten teachers who have teachers' aides and nearly two-thirds of all physicians' assistants. One New York congresswoman said that in the Big Apple alone, 13,479 clerks have been reclassified as supervisors.

To overturn the NLRB's ruling, reached in what are called the Kentucky River cases, subcommittee chairman Rob Andrews (D-N.J.) has introduced legislation requiring an employee to be engaged in supervisory

duties more than half the time to be defined as a supervisor. The bill also modifies the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act's curtailment of workers' rights under the National Labor Relations Act, which specifically allowed supervisors to organize in separate bargaining units.

Gay's union, the United American Nurses, won a recognition election at Salt Lake in 2002, but the ballots—including hers—were impounded for five years, or long enough for the NLRB to change the rules with its Kentucky River decision. "Sixty-four out of 153 nurses . . . were supervisors, including myself," Gay told the subcommittee. "All the RNs in the neonatal intensive care unit were essentially 'supervising' each other on a rotating basis. In inpatient rehabilitation, 10 out of 12. . . In the newborn nursery, 10 out of 12. . . In the surgical unit, the ratio was 10 (supervisors) to 7" non-supervisory.

And even the non-supervisors would become supervisors after just a year on the job, whether they wanted to or not, because they would join the "charge nurse" rotation, Gay told lawmakers. She went to her real supervisor saying she did not want to be classified that way but was refused.

Countering Gay's testimony was Jones, Day lobbyist G. Roger King, representing the Chamber of Commerce and the so-called Society for Human Resource Management. King argued that since the Kentucky River rulings only four groups of workers had been reclassified as supervisors, including just 12 of the 168 nurses at the Oakwood Nursing Home, which produced the board's ruling. He argued also that charge nurses are uniquely qualified to be designated as supervisors because they make "life or death decisions" in assigning nurses to patients.

That drew a caustic response from Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-N.Y.), a nurse for 33 years before entering Congress. "You don't know anything about nurses or what goes on in a hospital," she told King. "Every one of us has to make life-or-death decisions. You have a complete misunderstanding of what we do."

Employee Free Choice Act would double union density

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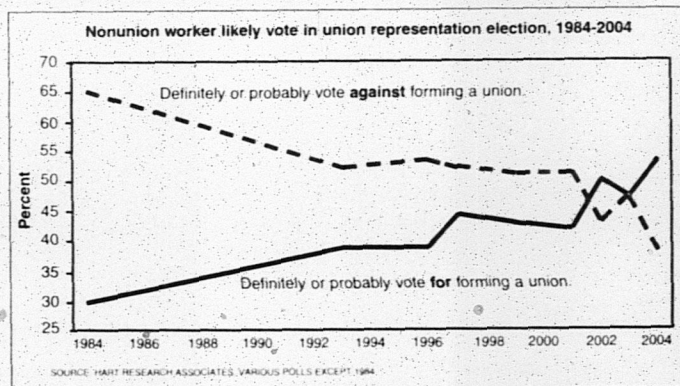
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Eisenbrey and Lotke explained there are several reasons the Employee Free Choice Act would lead to a 10 percentage-point increase in union density. Polls for the AFL-CIO have shown more than 60% of non-union, non-supervisory workers, given the chance to unionize free of employer coercion and intimidation, would opt to do so.

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The speakers said the report provides another piece of evidence for passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, which faces a planned GOP filibuster in the Senate. Democrats and their allies need 60 votes to stop such a talkathon. The law passed the House on March 1 by a wide margin, 241-185.—PAI

News round-up

Wal-Mart lumped in with North Korea

Just in time for May Day, Human Rights Watch—which usually monitors rights violations in countries like North Korea—reported that Wal-Mart's efforts to remain union-free have violated federal law as well as its employees' rights. Examples of such violations include eavesdropping on workers and spying on them with surveillance cameras, as well as firing those who express an interest in union representation. The April 30 report was the organization's first study of an American company's treatment of its workers; Wal-Mart has more than 1.3 million workers at approximately 4,000 U.S. stores, none of whom belong to a union.

Union contract derails newspaper sale

An arbitrator's ruling that Tribune Co. was violating a union contract provision in its proposed sale of The Advocate of Stamford, Conn. to Gannett Co. has cast doubt on whether the sale will go through. The contract with UAW Local 2110 requires any new owner of the newspaper to honor the newsroom employees' collective bargaining agreement, which Gannett has said would be a deal-breaker. Tribune announced two months ago that it would sell The Advocate and Greenwich Time newspapers, the smallest of Tribune's 11 daily newspapers, for \$73 million.

GateHouse rolling up properties

Elsewhere, Gannett announced the sale of four of its 90 U.S. dailies to New York-based GateHouse Media Inc. for \$410 million. GateHouse recently bought the Guild-represented Herald News in Fall River, Mass. from Journal Register Co. The four new acquisitions, including the Rockford (Illinois) Register Star, the Observer-Dispatch in Utica, N.Y., The Herald-Dispatch in Huntington, W.Va. and the Norwich (Conn.) Bulletin, become among the largest in the GateHouse chain, which includes 84 daily papers in 19 states. Meanwhile, GateHouse also closed on a \$380 million acquisition of nine newspapers from Copley Press Inc. that had a combined circulation of 241,000. None of the recent acquisitions, aside from the Herald News, have Guild representation.

EEOC starved of adequate funding

The Bush administration has cut funding for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission so drastically that the federal agency does not have enough money to do its job, according to two key senators. Since taking office in 2001, the Bush administration has closed eight of 23 EEOC district offices, opened a national call center staffed by private contractors, cut the agency's budget in real dollars and reduced staff, resulting in a backlog of 36,000 complaints of workplace discrimination. At a recent Senate hearing, EEOC Chairwoman Naomi Earp said her agency has lost 543 employees since 2001, 500 of them in enforcement. Moreover, Earp acknowledged she had been prohibited by the Office of Management and Budget from telling Congress she needs more staff.

Maryland adopts living wage bill

Gov. Martin O'Malley of Maryland has signed the nation's first statewide living wage bill, 23 years after Baltimore became the first city in the country to require a living wage for city contracts. Under the law, employers with state contracts will have to pay workers a minimum of \$11.30 an hour in the Baltimore-Washington corridor and \$8.50 an hour in the state's rural counties, where wages and prices are usually lower. The Maryland state minimum wage is \$6.15 an hour, one dollar above the federal minimum, which has been unchanged for more than a decade. Nationwide, 145 cities and counties have enacted living-wage bills.

9/11 worker comp deadline looms

Time is rapidly running out for anyone who worked at Ground Zero after Sept. 11, 2001, to apply for New York Workers' Compensation; the final registration deadline is August 14. Although at least 100,000 workers and volunteers worked in the vicinity of the World Trade Center, fewer than 12,000 have registered to date. Those who miss the deadline will become ineligible to file a claim even if they develop a 9/11-related physical or mental illness in the future. The law applies to most people who performed any rescue, recovery or cleanup work—possibly including news personnel—no matter how briefly, either paid or unpaid, in lower Manhattan south of Canal or Pike Streets between Sept. 11, 2001 and Sept. 12, 2002. More information is available at www.nycosh.org or by calling a toll-free, 24-hour hotline at 1-866-WTC-2556.

Progress on labor rights in trade deals

For the first time, the Bush administration has yielded to Congressional demands that free trade deals include strengthened labor standards. The concession, affecting pending agreements with Peru and Panama as well as future trade deals, requires signatories to respect five basic international labor standards enshrined in the 1998 International Labor Organization Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The deal also calls for a new program to deal more effectively with the negative impact of trade on the livelihoods of Americans and their communities.

Congress gets earful on NLRB's 'supervisor' rule

By Mark Gruenberg
Editor, Press Associates Inc.

Cheered on by dozens of nurses in the audience, a nurse from Salt Lake City—who's been arbitrarily declared a "supervisor"—and a former National Labor Relations Board member told Congress it should change labor law to overturn the NLRB's "workers are supervisors" ruling.

The Bush-appointed majority on the board ruled last year that "charge nurses" are supervisors because they make assignments as infrequently as once a week, placing them outside the protection of labor law.

"As a charge nurse, I'm in charge of the pencil," retorted RN Lori Gay of the Salt Lake Regional Medical Center at a May 8 hearing of the House Education and Labor subcommittee. "Typically, I spend 10 minutes at the end of my shift filling out an assignment sheet for the oncoming shift, making sure every patient has a bed and a nurse. I record the traffic in and out. It's as simple as that. I don't have the authority to hire, fire, evaluate or promote other nurses" or discipline them.

All those factors, and more, are responsibilities of supervisors, but the NLRB majority said that engaging in any one of them for as little as 10%-15% of a worker's time qualifies him or her as a supervisor. The Economic Policy Institute and others have calculated that between 8 million and 34 million workers could meet the much looser definition, including construction workers who instruct apprentices, newspaper reporters who ask for items from editorial assistants, kindergarten teachers who have teachers' aides and nearly two-thirds of all physicians' assistants. One New York congresswoman said that in the Big Apple alone, 13,479 clerks have been reclassified as supervisors.

To overturn the NLRB's ruling, reached in what are called the Kentucky River cases, subcommittee chairman Rob Andrews (D-N.J.) has introduced legislation requiring an employee to be engaged in supervisory

duties more than half the time to be defined as a supervisor. The bill also modifies the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act's curtailment of workers' rights under the National Labor Relations Act, which specifically allowed supervisors to organize in separate bargaining units.

Gay's union, the United American Nurses, won a recognition election at Salt Lake in 2002, but the ballots—including hers—were impounded for five years, or long enough for the NLRB to change the rules with its Kentucky River decision. "Sixty-four out of 153 nurses . . . were supervisors, including myself," Gay told the subcommittee. "All the RNs in the neonatal intensive care unit were essentially 'supervising' each other on a rotating basis. In inpatient rehabilitation, 10 out of 12. . . In the newborn nursery, 10 out of 12. . . In the surgical unit, the ratio was 10 (supervisors) to 7" non-supervisory.

And even the non-supervisors would become supervisors after just a year on the job, whether they wanted to or not, because they would join the "charge nurse" rotation, Gay told lawmakers. She went to her real supervisor saying she did not want to be classified that way but was refused.

Countering Gay's testimony was Jones, Day lobbyist G. Roger King, representing the Chamber of Commerce and the so-called Society for Human Resource Management. King argued that since the Kentucky River rulings only four groups of workers had been reclassified as supervisors, including just 12 of the 168 nurses at the Oakwood Nursing Home, which produced the board's ruling. He argued also that charge nurses are uniquely qualified to be designated as supervisors because they make "life or death decisions" in assigning nurses to patients.

That drew a caustic response from Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-N.Y.), a nurse for 33 years before entering Congress. "You don't know anything about nurses or what goes on in a hospital," she told King. "Every one of us has to make life-or-death decisions. You have a complete misunderstanding of what we do."

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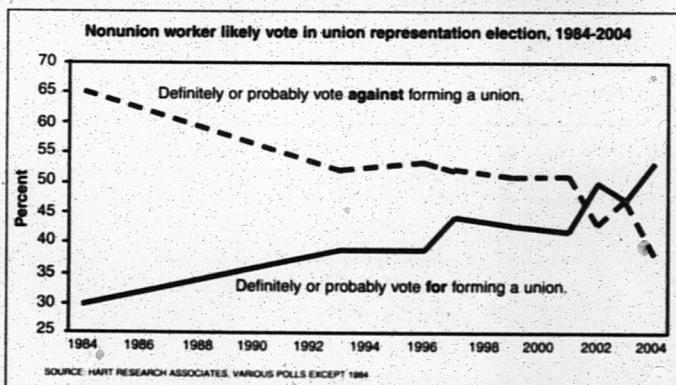
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'Wedge tornado' about to sweep Star Tribune

Continued from page 1

company with offices in Gurgaon, India. Although the announcement did not state how many U.S. workers will be affected by the shift, Express KCS reportedly will be adding approximately 18 employees to handle the new work.

But the most notable devastation of the past month occurred in Minneapolis, where Star Tribune employees—who less than a month ago honored 24 co-workers who had taken buyouts—were informed May 7 that another 145 jobs would be cut. That was followed by the news that as many as 100 newsroom staffers will be reassigned, with some beats eliminated altogether—including those of outdoor, travel and architecture writers—while others are consolidated or reduced, notably including those of several columnists. The Duluth bureau also will be closed.

The layoff announcement, on a day Guild members quickly dubbed "Black Monday," will reduce newsroom staffing—currently at around 340—to 290 or so. Although buyout terms were still being negotiated at press time, with the Guild expressing "serious concerns" about the package on the table, the company was offering one week's base pay for each six months of continuous service, with a minimum of four and a maximum of 52 weeks' pay. But not every buyout request was to be accepted, and employees would have only two weeks in which to request a buyout once the Guild and management agreed on the details.

"All day long, employees—young, middle-aged, a few oldsters—walked by the union officers' desks asking about the specifics of the buyouts," a local blog posting recounted. "Any one of those people

would be a great loss for the Strib. Taken together, some combination of them will soon be a shattering loss, as if a wedge tornado had swept through our newsroom."

Indeed, recent developments at a newspaper that less than six months ago was the McClatchy newspaper chain's flagship already have devastated employee morale. Sold without warning over the Christmas season to Avista Capital Partners, a group of investors with no prior newspaper history, the Star Tribune is now led by its former arch-rival, Par Ridder, erstwhile publisher of the St. Paul Pioneer Press. Both Ridder and Avista are being sued by MediaNews, new owner of the Pioneer Press, for alleged theft of proprietary information and an alleged violation of non-compete agreements.

The ownership changes have exacerbated tensions that would have arisen anyway

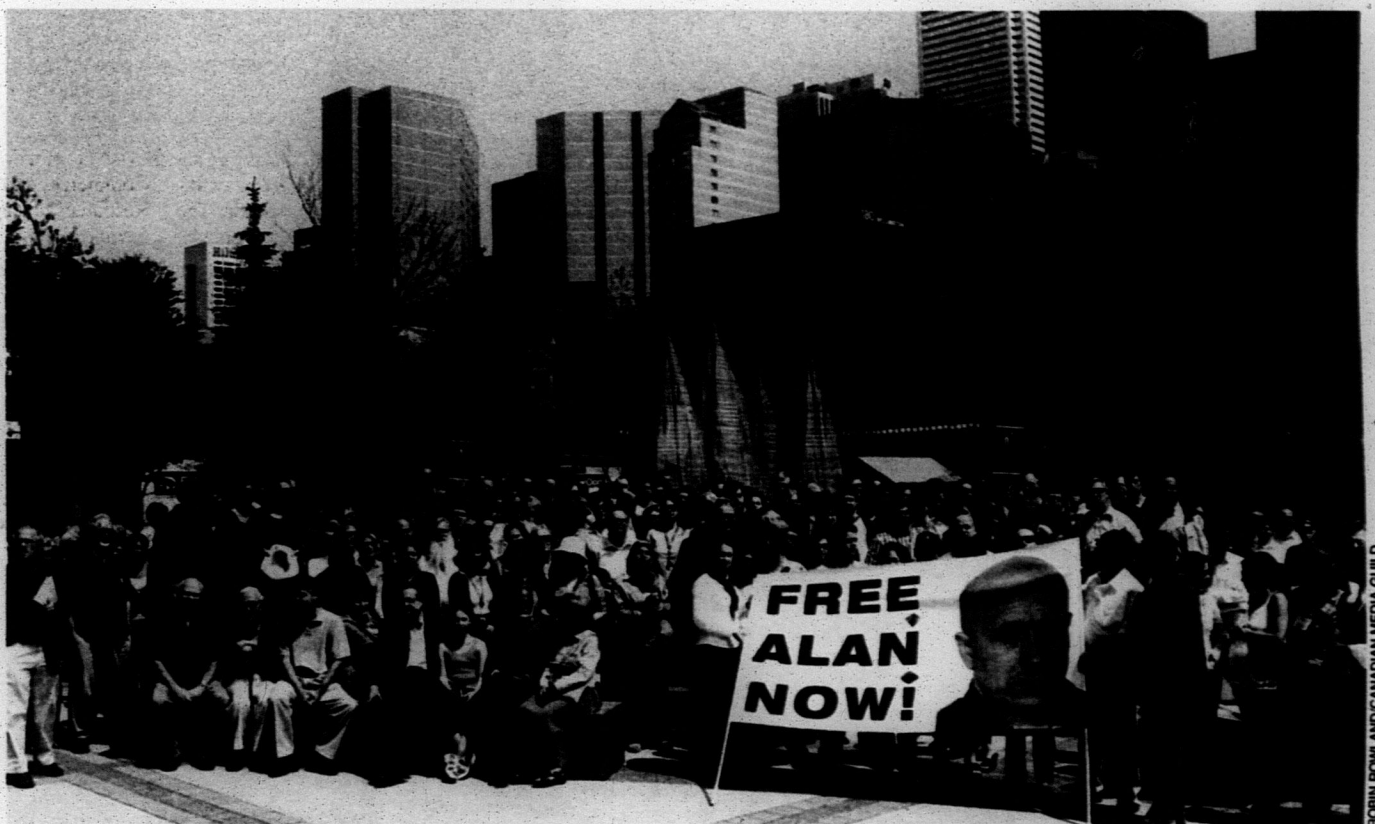
because of declining circulation and revenue. Reassignments have been meted out without regard for the individuals involved or their talents, Guild members complain, and members' requests to have union stewards sit in on meetings with editors—meetings that reduced several to tears—have been denied.

Ridder's stewardship, meanwhile, is being viewed with scorn and suspicion. "He comes in here under circumstances that we don't understand," Star Tribune columnist Doug Grow complained to Minnesota Monitor. "He's 38 years old. He has no reputation for building anything. And within a few weeks of his entrance into the door, he's slashing and burning."

"Trust is something that's earned," Grow added. "Leadership is something that's earned. He's the publisher; he's not the leader."

Show of support

Scores of protesters outside the CBC building in Toronto on May 10 mark the 60th day of captivity for BBC correspondent Alan Johnston. Johnston, 44, was kidnapped by gunmen near his office in Gaza, where he was the only Western reporter still living in the area to provide ongoing coverage; his reporting has been widely acclaimed as balanced, insightful and courageous. The BBC and media workers rights organizations around the world have been calling for Johnston's immediate and safe release, and his parents, both in their 70s, have appeared on international television and radio to appeal to his kidnappers for their son's freedom. Johnston's captors have not said why he is being held.



ROBIN ROWLAND/CANADIAN MEDIA GUILD

Business reporting brings a premium price

Continued from page 1

media conglomerate as chairman of the board and retain the right later to buy 40% of the stock for only \$500 million," he asked.

While the Tribune takeover may have been done on the cheap, there was nothing cheap at all about Murdoch's bid of \$60 a share for Dow Jones—at a time when the stock was trading in the mid-30s. The proffered premium was so rich that many observers viewed it as a preemptive strike to block other would-be bidders, yet it wasn't enough to sway the Bancroft family, which holds voting control and which rejected the offer—for now. At press time, some family members reportedly were pushing for a meeting with Murdoch, arguing that it wouldn't hurt to hear him out, and Murdoch was pressing his case with a letter to the Bancrofts assuring them of his good intentions—and offering them a seat on the board on which they already have several representatives.

News that their employer might become a press baron compared by many to Randolph Hearst inflamed the company's newsroom, with IAPE, TNG-CWA Local 1096, issuing a statement asserting that a News Corp. buyout "would be a direct threat to the prestige, independence and unquestioned integrity of Dow Jones." Noting the hefty size of Murdoch's

bid, the union added that there's "only one recourse to make acquisition profitable: gutting the enterprise and slashing the staff that make it the leading financial news organization."

But Murdoch may not be as interested in turning a profit as in gaining the luster of the Dow Jones brand for a cable financial network he plans to launch later this year. And even with the hefty premium, Dow Jones is being valued at only \$5 billion, an amount News Corp—a \$70 billion company—reportedly has lying around in retained profits.

Meanwhile, reports that Richard Zannino, Dow Jones' chief executive, had a breakfast meeting with Murdoch on March 29—nearly two weeks earlier than he had led observers to believe—have already overshadowed the proposed sale. The meeting suggests Dow Jones insiders—including board member David Li, who's based in Asia—knew about Murdoch's offer long before it became public, raising a question of whether that knowledge resulted in improper stock trading. The Securities and Exchange Commission has already frozen the accounts of a Hong Kong couple who turned a profit of more than \$8 million by flipping Dow Jones stock, and other trades are being investigated.

Less controversial but just as unsettling

for employees was Thomson's successful \$17.2 billion bid for Reuters, combining the world's third and second largest market data companies. The combined news operation—only a small part of the overall operation—is keeping the Reuters name but will be controlled by the Toronto-based Thomson family, which is claiming a 53% stake in the merged entity. Market consensus seemed to be that the combination would be a good fit, adding Reuters' strengths in sales and trading to Thomson's base with money managers and investment bankers.

Reuters employees, however, worried that the merger could violate the company's independence and journalistic integrity—a principle so basic to the company that its constitution bars any one party from holding more than 15% of its shares. Indeed, the Reuters Founders Share Co. holds a "golden share" with which to block anyone trying to obtain more than a 30% ownership stake, but apparently was persuaded that the Thomson acquisition does not violate this rule.

The RFSC's May 15 decision to accept the Thomson bid also ignored a May 14 letter from a transatlantic alliance of unions representing Reuters employees in the U.S., Canada and the United Kingdom, including the Guild. "If this takeover were to go ahead,"

the letter asked, "what guarantees are there that the Thomson family would not in turn sell its 53% stake in Reuters to another group at a future date? We note that Thomson sold The Times [of London] and the Sunday Times to Rupert Murdoch."

Yet while the Reuters acquisition raises obvious concerns, Peter Szekeley, who chairs its Guild unit, says the issues aren't as clear-cut as they are at Dow Jones. "It was easy for IAPE to say right away that they opposed the Dow Jones takeover," he said, "but Thomson isn't Murdoch and this deal needs a closer look from the standpoint of what it means for Reuters journalism, jobs and labor relations. Until we get that information, all we can do in the New York local is be wary, skeptical and vigilant."

At Dow Jones, meanwhile, it's not just IAPE that has challenged Murdoch's plans: newsroom employees have ignored management requests to stay out of the fray, sending individual letters to members of the Bancroft family encouraging them to stand firm "despite their opportunity to profit tremendously from accepting the offer." The letter-writing campaign was undertaken despite claims by management—which sat on the story for days, if not weeks—that efforts to influence the Bancrofts would create "the appearance of a conflict of interest."



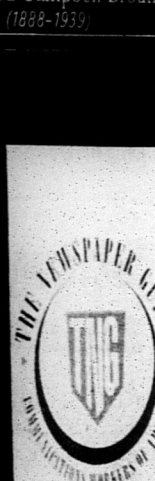
David S. Barr
(1936-1997)



Herbert Block



Heywood Campbell Broun
(1888-1939)

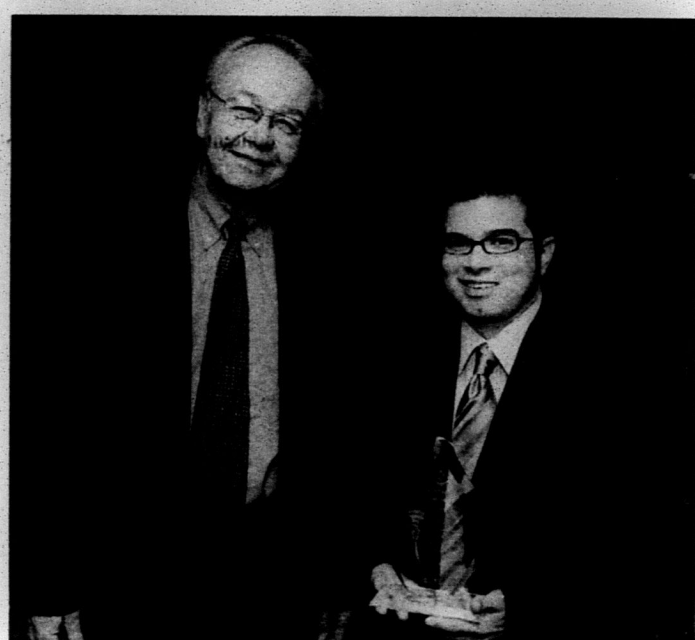


PHOTOS BY BILL BURKE/WASHINGTON-BALTIMORE GUILD

Guild celebrates the best of the best



TNG-CWA members and supporters from labor unions and the media celebrated the latest crop of journalistic award winners at the annual Freedom Award Fund Banquet, held May 3—World Press Freedom Day—in Washington, D.C. Among the honorees and their presenters were (clockwise from top left) Elizabeth Curry Andrews, high school winner of the David S. Barr Award; the judging panel for the Barr Awards, including (l to r) Howard Stanger, Erin Chan, Debbie Barr and Barbara Camens; Josh Wolf, winner of the Herbert Block Freedom Award, with presenter Frank Swoboda, president of the Herbert Block Foundation; Heywood Broun Award winners Lisa Chedekel and Matthew Kaufman, of the Hartford Courant; and Kendyl Salcito, college winner of the David S. Barr Award.



Postal increases jeopardize smaller publications

As though the printed word didn't have enough woes, now comes news of a postal rate increase so complicated it's taking months to calibrate and so onerous many small publications say they might not survive. The latter category could end up including The Guild Reporter, which already has had to contend with repeated late deliveries.

Although first-class rates nudged upward two cents May 14, the price of mailing periodicals won't go up until July 15—not because the U.S. Postal Service is giving magazines and newspapers a break, but because the new rate abandons a traditional one-size-fits-all approach in favor of a complex, multi-variable pricing system. Under the old system, the same price applied whether a piece was going cross-town or across the country; now the cost will depend, among other things, on how finely mailings are sorted, how many pieces are

bundled together, whether mailings are bulk-delivered to regional centers and how far each piece will travel to its destination.

The new corporate-inspired approach trashes the Postal Service's long-standing mission, set by federal law, to "bind the nation together through the personal, educational, literary, and business correspondence of the people." It also disproportionately benefits large publishers—no surprise, since the rate structure reportedly was devised by the biggest of them all—who have the economies of scale that allow them to take advantage of various discounts.

Smaller publications, on the other hand, are anticipating rate increases of as much as 30%, or more than triple the increase facing large circulation magazines. The Nation, one of the most vociferous critics of the new rate structure, says its mailing costs could jump by as much as \$500,000 a year.

Bob McChesney, founder of Free Press,

notes that the proposed change "goes directly against 215 years of postal policy" of skewing rates "to make it cheaper for smaller publications to get launched and survive"—not because the government wanted Time Warner to feel competitive pressure, but because it believed that democracy required the widespread dissemination of news and ideas. "It was postal policy that converted the free press clause in the First Amendment from an abstract principle into a living, breathing reality for Americans," he says.

The new rate structure, on the other hand, was created in virtual secrecy, raising howls of protest across the political spectrum. Although the Postal Service initially proposed a more even-handed set of increases, averaging 11.7%, its board of governors—appointed by President Bush—rejected that plan in favor of a Time Warner proposal that it modified slightly. There was no public involvement or congressional oversight

of the process, and a comment period of just eight days caught observers flat-footed.

While defenders of the new structure point to the internet as a cheap distribution alternative for publishers, a Boston Globe editorial opposing the new rates pointed out that mailed copies—for which subscribers pay, and which carry the great preponderance of any publication's advertising—is how small magazines and newspapers generate enough revenue to stay alive. "Web content is often an extra that doesn't generate income," the editorial observed. "Without income these publications can't survive, and the public loses when those voices are silenced."

TNG-CWA is participating in an effort to have the Postal Service review its proposal and has a link on its home page to a petition that individuals and editors can sign: visit the site at www.newsguild.org and click on the stamp-shaped button.



LOOKING AHEAD

Same wine, new bottle

By Linda Foley, President

This just in: "Murdoch Submits Premium Offer for Dow Jones" . . . "Thomson Rumored to Acquire Reuters" . . . "Gatehouse Media Buys Ohio, Illinois Copley Newspapers" . . . "Zell's Bid for Tribune Accepted"

These days, headlines screaming the news about the news come at us so fast and furious, it feels like we're watching the play-by-play of a big auction at Sotheby's. "Do I hear \$4 billion? . . . \$4 billion over here . . . how about \$4.5 billion? . . . \$5 billion over here. \$5 billion going once, going twice . . . SOLD! To the media mogul from Australia for \$5 billion and a hollow promise to maintain quality."

The news business, to put it mildly, is in a state of flux. Venerable newspaper companies Knight-Ridder and Tribune Co. already have gone to the highest bidder. An equity firm has purchased the Minneapolis Star-Tribune. Smaller papers in cities like Fall River, Mass., and Pawtucket, RI, also have changed hands. Now it looks like Dow Jones and Reuters could have new owners. There are even rumors that the New York Times could be in play. It's enough to make a news industry junkie falling-down dizzy.

It's also making Guild members—and indeed, all employees in this industry—nervous and concerned about their futures. Not to mention that each of these transactional bombshells is either preceded or followed by a round of layoffs and job cuts.

"The entire newspaper industry is in trouble," the owners cry. "Our circulation continues to fall and our revenues haven't recovered. We continue to be hurt by loss of advertising to the internet."

Then there are the prophets of doom sounding the death knell for professional journalism. "The demise of daily newspapers," they intone, "will lead to the demise of quality news reporting."

No one can deny there is reason to worry about the future of journalism.

But what's happening to newspapers isn't about changes in journalism. It's about changes in advertising. Not only are cars, groceries, homes, apparel and other newspaper advertising staples being hawked online by all kinds of stand-alone web sites, the sure bet that local newspapers had relied on for more than a century has become a losing proposition: the near monopoly local newspapers once had on classified advertising (remember 3 lines, 3 bucks, 3 days?) is gone. Gone to the internet, where customers can create their own ads with snazzy photos and videos at little or no cost. Newspapers (and our members) simply can't compete with that.

But if that's true, why do these newspaper ownership transactions still attract credible (and in some cases, incredible) bids? Because in today's digital age, credible and interesting content is valuable, and whoever produces that content is sitting on a veritable gold mine. So why are newspapers losing revenue instead of raking in the dough? Partly because they are giving their online content away for free.

The newspaper business grew into a multi-billion dollar industry by surrounding content with paid advertising and then charging a minimal subscription fee to deliver the paper to its customers' homes. For the customer, the minimal subscription fee paled in comparison to the valuable



news and information received. It was a great deal.

On the internet, delivery of information is essentially free; there are no direct delivery charges. By transferring their traditional business model to the web, newspapers are doing what they've always done: delivering news and information at little or no cost to the consumer. The difference is that advertising, which used to underwrite the cost of producing news, can't be sold or presented in the same way on the web as it is in print. Plus the competition for classified advertising dollars is much keener.

Therefore, the newspaper industry's continued success will depend on how it reinvents advertising for the internet so that ad revenue once again can robustly support a thriving, content-generating business. Newspapers must also discover a way to

bring extra value to their classified advertising to distinguish their product from the other "freebies" that populate the internet marketplace.

Providing customer service to advertising clients, for example, could be the key to a successful internet advertising strategy (but not if it is outsourced to India or the Philippines). Another key would be to generate demand for premium content and then translate that value into more money, much in the same way as the New York Times markets its popular columnists and in-depth stories online for an extra charge.

Speaking at his annual spring meeting in April, Microsoft founder Bill Gates announced, "We're saying newspapers will go online, and there will be innovation that comes out of that."

Let's hope he's right.

Handwriting was on the wall three decades ago

By Barry Lipton

It was the mid 1970s, and I was standing next to the highly-respected veteran reporter Peter Khiss in the New York Times newsroom, which recently had been renovated to accommodate the first generation of computers that replaced the venerable typewriter.

Peter, a staunch Guild supporter and activist, had earned after many years at the Times the distinction of being allowed to keep the last typewriter in the newsroom. As workmen snaked wires throughout the newsroom to hook up the new-fangled machines, Peter looked around and barked to no one in particular: "Look at all of this! They've turned this place into a damned insurance company."

He was correct. The newspaper and magazine publishing industry had begun to change. Owners who once cared about their employees and the product they put out began to hire and trust executives who knew nothing about the soul of the business, but were so cocksure with their MBAs in bean-counting that they knew all of the answers. In a great number of work places, management quickly became obsessed with the bottom line. Formerly paternalistic employers

began to turn on their staffs and the unions that represented them, blaming them for not making bigger profits. Instead of holding fast to their principles and reminding themselves of the unique qualities of their businesses, employers were seduced by the siren song of Wall Street and began to throw employees under the bus to enhance their bottom lines.

One of the first indicators of things to come occurred about a week after I took office at the New York local, at the end of March, 1982. Joseph Allbritton was attempting to buy the ailing Daily News from the Tribune Company. His representative at the table was a very young Dean Singleton, now a well-tailored publishing tycoon but in those days a media neophyte wearing polyester shirts and a cheap watch. Singleton told us that if Allbritton bought the News, he would need us to agree that he could slash the newsroom staff in half.

Rejecting Singleton's persistent efforts to get us to agree to this proposal, we walked away thinking that the Allbritton people were crazy. We just knew that no one could run a newspaper of that size with that small a staff. Instead, Allbritton's plan has become the business model for newspapers, magazines and news services across our industry.

When I first started, there were very few attorneys sitting across from us at the bargaining table. The senior vice president for labor relations at The Times was a former history professor at Brown University. For the most part, our adversaries came from non-legal backgrounds and understood the unique nature of our industry and how it was different from other businesses. Boy, has that changed! Now, with some exceptions, we find ourselves sitting across from hired-gun attorneys who dominate the labor relations field. Too often, we come away from negotiating with one of these "labor relations experts" feeling they must have a hunting license rather than a license to practice law.

Our challenges as a hunted union certainly have been enormously more complicated and serious in recent years, as we see publisher after publisher falling into trouble. And then, very often without a coherent business plan or with a seriously flawed one, these same publishers take it out on us by slashing staffs and attempting to dismantle our contracts.

In spite of these enormous challenges, the Guild remains—and in my opinion will continue as—the preeminent union in the media industry. I believe this is true for a number of reasons. We have smart members, who pull together in times of crisis. We have

intelligent bargainers, who come to the table with the support of the women and men they represent and with an understanding of the challenges the Guild is facing. And since our merger with the CWA, our employers know that we are part of a great, progressive union with vast resources that will be used to assist us in our struggles.

I am convinced the Guild faces a difficult future with the ability not only to survive, but to continue to lead the fight for decent working conditions in our industry. Our union belongs to you, its members. It's more important now than ever for everyone to get as involved in the union as possible. Such involvement is important to also tell management that we care about our union and that our union's leaders have our support in fighting for us.

You make our union great, and I am confident that your involvement and willingness to help your fellow members in their workplace will continue to sustain all of us as we go forward.

Lipton, who was elected secretary-treasurer of the Newspaper Guild of New York in 1982, is retiring next month after nearly 24 years as the local's president. He may be reached at Barryguild@aol.com.

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: June 8.)

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Reaching equity takes persistence

By Debbie Thomas
TNG-CWA Human Rights Director

The decades-old struggle for workplace equality and diversity can be traced back at least to 1963, when the American Newspaper Guild published "Careers for Negroes on Newspapers." The pamphlet spoke of the newspaper industry's hiring and promotional practices, gave detailed descriptions of job duties and qualifications and advised readers on how to land newspaper jobs.

An ANG human rights report provided context for the pamphlet, detailing a need "to improve the circumstances of an increasing number of minority group people, who are now turned aside as 'unqualified' for employment and promotion." What the Guild sought, the report added, was a "realistic, down-to-earth meaningful program, which will include not merely the hiring of those now qualified without discrimination as to race, age, sex, creed, color, national origin and ancestry, but also efforts through apprenticeship training and other means to improve and upgrade their qualifications."

Fast-forward more than 40 years and the struggle for equity is still ongoing. Two years ago, an AFL-CIO convention adopted a resolution promoting greater diversity within the union movement by declaring that "a diverse movement calls for diverse leadership." Noting that the federation had long taken the position that it would "not allow women, people of color, gay, lesbian workers or brothers and sisters with disabilities to be denied the fruits of their labor in the workplace," the resolution added: "We cannot be less vigilant and demand-

ing of ourselves. Building a stronger union movement to improve lives of working families will require all of us, working together. If we fail to hear every voice and to speak for every worker, we are all weakened."

While passage of such a resolution might suggest little has changed over the past four decades, in fact there are signs of progress. Roz Pelles, director of the AFL-CIO's Civil, Human and Women's Rights Department, told the recent multi-council meeting in Washington that as a direct result of the resolution two years ago, the federation will hold four regional discussions in June and July on "The Power of Diversity." The meetings will focus on full participation, diversity and best practices.

Meanwhile, the Guild last year formed the human rights and equity committee. One of our goals is to double convention attendance by TNG-CWA members from equity-seeking groups. And the CWA has announced its proposal to add four at-large members to its executive board, at least three of whom should be persons of color and at least two to be women.

I can hear the cynics back in 1963 and I can hear them now. They are either complaining that this is the wrong direction for labor to be taking, or that the steps that are being taken are not enough. I say keep on pushing, don't stop trying to make a difference and continue striving for diversity. If the next program only accomplishes half of what its goal is, that in my opinion is still a victory. After all, if someone hadn't come up with a program, a resolution, a committee or just decided that it was time to change, I might not be here today.



Guild members from the Memphis and Knoxville locals (with TNG-CWA rep Mike Burrell at extreme left) prepare to leaflet and address the Scripps shareholder meeting.

Tennessee locals confront E.W. Scripps shareholders

Representatives of Guild locals in Memphis and Knoxville, stymied by years of bargaining stalemate, traveled to Cincinnati for the E.W. Scripps annual shareholder meeting April 26.

As approximately 15 union members handed out leaflets outside the meeting hall, Marilyn Kennedy, a Commercial Appeal employee and vice president of the Memphis Guild, told shareholders inside that contract talks at her paper have dragged on since 2003. "All we are asking for is a fair and

honest contract at fair and honest wages," she emphasized, urging shareholders to push management toward a resolution.

Rebecca Ferrar, a reporter and president of the Guild local at the Knoxville News Sentinel, explained that the contract in her editorial department expired in November 2005 and that employees have not received raises since 2004.

TNG-CWA rep Mike Burrell, who traveled with the delegation, reported he received "an immediate response" from Knoxville

attorney John Fenix, in the form of a letter postmarked the next day. The latter, unfortunately, simply declared that the company "has no incentive to return to the table because we have not moved substantially towards their position," Burrell summarized.

Given the company's ongoing refusal to get serious about bargaining, Burrell added, Guild members are shrugging off management requests that they stop their mobilization campaign and are gearing up for more public actions.

Guild changes of the guard

Maybe it's something in the air, but several familiar Guild names are moving up or out or changing their job titles.

As reported last month, Barry Lipton, long-serving president of the New York Guild, will be retiring effective June 1. With no other nominations received, the local's secretary-treasurer, Bill O'Meara, is the new president by acclamation. Succeeding O'Meara in his former slot is Peter Szekely, unit chair at Reuters, who also was swept in by acclamation.

Szekely's new position means he must step down down as TNG-CWA vice president for region 5, under a constitutional provision that bars salaried officers or employees from serving on the TNG executive council. Nominations to fill the vacancy will be taken at the sector conference in Toronto this July.

Meanwhile, two long-time

TNG-CWA staffers have retired, administrative assistant Kathleen Price and staff representative Bruce Meachum. Malinka Franklin, formerly President Linda Foley's secretary, has been named Price's successor; Dominique Edmondson has succeeded Franklin. Separately, clerical staffer Tina Harrison has been promoted to financial secre-

tary to assist Secretary-Treasurer Bernie Lunzer.

TNG-CWA is recruiting candidates to fill the vacancy left by Meachum's retirement (see ad, p. 3.)

Finally, Eric Geist's job title has been changed, from a cumbersome "Director of Field Operations, Administrative Assistant" to the succinct "Administrative Director."

FROM THE MORGUE

Seventy years ago this month:

Barely 48 hours after ending a three-week strike by signing a Guild contract, the Long Island Press discharges 27 of the strikers, prompting an immediate walk-out amid charges of a double-cross. A six-day closure of the paper ends with full reinstatement. . . . Representatives of Hearst units in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles call for a nationally coordinated approach to negotiations with the publisher. . . . The Guild's executive board votes to boycott an AFL conference called to "take some action" regarding the Committee for Industrial Organization.

Fifty years ago this month:

Formal charges are filed against three locals—San Francisco-Oakland, Detroit and Madison—for signing contracts without prior approval of the Guild's executive board, as required by the constitution. . . . Guild members in the fifth week of a strike against the Lima News are joined by members of other locals. . . . Secretary of State John Foster Dulles justifies a ban on reporters traveling to China by declaring that the guarantee of a free press relates only to "publication" and not to the "gathering" of news.

Twenty-five years ago this month:

The Guild's executive board unveils an 11-year plan to gradually raise dues in an effort to achieve financial stability. . . . Less than a year after the Washington Star's demise, the Washington Times debuts amid a swirl of controversy over its funding by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon. . . . Responding to a study of media concentration in Canada, the Guild's board urges the breakup of large newspaper chains.

THE GUILD Reporter

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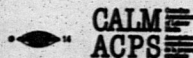
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DAYBOOK

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May 23, Chicago

CWA Minority Caucus Meeting
July 12-15, Toronto

TNG-CWA Sector Conference
July 13-14, Toronto

CWA Annual Convention,
July 16-17, Toronto

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