

THE GUILD Reporter

October 19, 2007

A Publication of The Newspaper Guild and The Communications Workers of America • Volume 74, Number 10

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One big BANG: Picking up the MediaNews gauntlet

Encircled and pummeled by a media octopus attempting to bust their union, two northern California Guild locals have launched an unprecedented workplace and community outreach campaign to defend the employees of MediaNews Group. The campaign, "One Big BANG: One Guild Universe," includes a mobilization drive that is part of a CWA Strategic Industry Fund project, as well as a separately financed organizing effort.

BANG, the Bay Area News Group-East Bay, was created by MediaNews in mid-

August, when it merged the editorial operations of the unionized Alameda News Group with those of the non-unionized Contra Costa Times. Because the Times and some affiliated weeklies constituted a majority of the merged workforce, the company said it would no longer recognize the 20-year-old ANG bargaining unit.

"Our ANG members want to fight for their rights, and we hope the employees at the Contra Costa Times will be interested in joining them in an expanded bargaining unit with real power and an innovative vision,"

said Carl Hall, a reporter on leave from the San Francisco Chronicle who is coordinating the mobilization campaign.

"We're putting in motion some pretty innovative strategies," Hall added. "This gives us a chance to work in new ways with MediaNews, one of the more creative and successful operators in the news business. We just need to make them appreciate better the values and interests of journalists and the broader community."

Hall is one of several new employees fielded by the Guild in response to the

MediaNews assault, with support from both the San Jose and Northern California locals. Also joining the campaign are experienced organizer Pia Basudev and veteran Bay Area media activist Jeff Perlstein, who is serving as communications and community relations coordinator.

Basudev, who has been a workplace organizer since 1995, said she is encouraged by the prospects. More than 50 of 300 eligible BANG employees already are dues-paying members of the Northern California

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Guild members from across the Bay Area gather to strategize for the One Big BANG campaign.

ROSS D. CAMERON / NORTHERN CALIFORNIA MEDIA GUILD

Is Singleton's media empire a house of cards?

Bluff and self-assured, Dean Singleton projects an image of savvy competence that long ago banished his initial reputation as a brash know-it-all, as likely to kill a newspaper as save it. Over the past two decades his privately held company, MediaNews, has grown into one of the largest U.S. newspaper chains—including such well-known nameplates as the Denver Post, Detroit News and San Jose Mercury News—and now employs more Guild-represented workers than any other U.S. publisher.

Take a closer look, though, and what comes to mind is one of those circus performers who twirls plates on a series of poles, dashing madly from one to another to keep each spinning while he adds yet another plate, and then another. . . .

Battered by the same revenue and circulation drops that are hammering every other newspaper company, MediaNews keeps spinning by adroitly juggling debt, cutting costs, selling assets and squeezing revenue from its latest acquisitions. It also has developed an increased flair for slicing and dicing its various properties, selling off pieces to minority partners in exchange for much-needed cash to prop up another part of an increasingly rickety corporate superstructure.

Its most recent annual filing with the Securities and Exchange

Commission, for example, discloses that MediaNews has formed yet another partnership—it has at least half-a-dozen others with various partners—with the Stephens Media Group, with which it has other shared interests. MediaNews' contribution to the newest partnership is the Monterey County Herald; Stephens Media's is \$27.4 million, which buys it a 32.64% piece of the action. The only hitch? The Monterey paper is still technically owned by Hearst, as is the St. Paul Pioneer Press, both awaiting the day MediaNews comes up with the money to conclude a transaction most employees doubtless believe was consummated long ago.

(Until that day arrives, MediaNews and Hearst have agreed, MediaNews has "all of the economic risks and rewards associated with ownership" of the two papers and retains "all of the cash flows generated by them as a management fee.")

But coming up with the money to pay Hearst might be a tad difficult, given the company's extended financial exposure. Net income for the fiscal year that ended June 30, for example, was only \$35.6 million on total revenues of roughly \$1.33 billion, a 2.7% ratio that should make Singleton very happy he doesn't have to answer to shareholders. And, in fact, even \$35.6 million in net income is a bit of a

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Two more candidates declare

The preternaturally early Guild campaign season got another shot in the arm this month with the declaration of two more candidacies, one by an incumbent and one a fresh face. Both candidates aligned themselves with the "Stronger Guild" slate led by Bernie Lunzer, who is challenging Linda Foley for the union's presidency.



Donna Marks

Donna Marks, the incumbent vice president representing Region 1 (New England), announced she will seek reelection "because I want to continue to work for a stronger guild."

First seated on the Guild's executive council three years ago, Marks, who also serves as president of the Quincy Newspaper Guild, said she has seen enormous changes in the newspaper industry during that time. "We need to strengthen our locals by training members to be strong stewards and officers," she said, adding: "All this is possible not by one leader alone, but by working as a team and having a member-driven union where every voice has equal importance."

Throwing his hat into the ring as a first-time candidate for national Guild office, Tony Winton said he will seek the vice presidency of Region 2. That region's current incumbent, Connie Knox, has already declared her candidacy for TNG-CWA chairperson.

Winton is president of the News Media Guild, which represents employees of the Associated Press, UPI and the Spanish-language wire, EFE News Service. He describes himself as a union activist since he was 21 and has been a journalist at AP since 1981.

"My priority is new shop organizing, especially in this region, which is critical to our growth and building our power to negotiate good contracts everywhere," he said. In addition, Winton said he is concerned about the "huge institutional changes" facing the Guild. "I believe that working together, we can preserve our traditions while recognizing the need for intelligent change," he said, "but it will have to be an open process that involves our members as the driving force."

Both the Foley and Lunzer slates now have web sites detailing their platforms and qualifications. The slate led by Foley, which includes Scott Stephens as candidate for secretary-treasurer and Lois Kirkup as candidate for international chair, is at www.teamguild.org.

The web site of the Lunzer-led slate, which includes the candidacies of Carol Rothman for secretary-treasurer and Connie Knox for international chair, is online at www.strongerguild.org.

Nominations will be made at the sector conference in Providence, R.I. starting Feb. 27.



Tony Winton

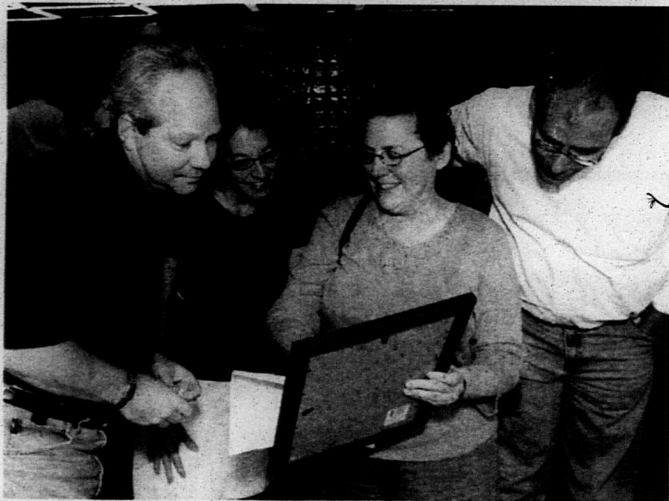
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'Next Generation' column debuts page 8



So long, Mike!

Mike Bucsko, at left, admires plaque presented at a going-away bash as he leaves the Pittsburgh Guild to become the new executive officer of the Minnesota Newspaper Guild Typographical Union. Looking on are exec board members Marianne Mizera, third vice president; Sally Kalson, second vice president; and R.J. Hufnagel, who was elected to succeed Bucsko as local president. Other top officers elected to one-year terms that begin Nov. 1 are Natalie Hill, first vice-president; Ken Fisher, treasurer; and Ed Blazina, secretary.

AP, News Media Guild settle quotas dispute

The Associated Press has settled an unfair labor practice charge filed by the News Media Guild over its imposition of quotas, agreeing to rescind disciplinary letters to four staffers at AP Images. The letters included final warnings for not meeting quotas that required the staffers to increase sales by 13% over last year's quarterly results.

In settling the complaint, AP agreed it may not unilaterally implement quotas that employees must meet or be subject to discipline. AP also agreed not to unilaterally implement a quota or ranking system whereby the salesperson with the lowest sales performance could be automatically disciplined for being the lowest performer.

The issue was part of a series of Images quotas challenged by the Guild this year. The mandatory monthly and quarterly quotas included revenue targets, outbound phone calls, client visits and new business growth. Photo

library staff also were handed mandatory targets. Indexers had to produce 775 images a day. One part-time indexer had to index 75 photos a day. Scanners had to produce 660 photos a day. Researchers had to produce 680 images a day.

AP resolved the issues by writing that the numbers were goals, not targets, and would not result in discipline if not met. Instead, the Guild and AP have negotiated a bonus program that rewards staffers who meet certain quarterly goals with payouts ranging from \$375 to \$833.

AP retains the right to discontinue the bonus program at the end of this year.

Staff changes in TNG office

Continuing a recent pattern of staff shuffles at TNG-CWA headquarters, Carrie Biggs-Adams has taken a year's leave of absence to work as a staff representative for NABET-CWA. Stepping into her position as the new Executive Secretary, Contract Committee is Melissa Nelson, who had been newly hired as a staff representative to replace retiring rep Bruce Meachum.

Biggs-Adams will continue shepherding several Guild projects despite her reassignment, including contract negotiations in York and ongoing developments in Puerto Rico. Meanwhile, one or more temporary employees will be hired to fill the vacant staff rep position until it's clear whether Biggs-Adams will return to the Guild after her leave of absence.

Nelson, a local representative for the Philadelphia Newspaper Guild the past eight years, previously spent 19 years as an advertising artist at the Times Union in Albany, NY and held numerous local positions, including six terms as president. She is married to Bruce Nelson, the Guild's membership coordinator.

Guild briefs . . .

Detroit papers to cut 110 . . .

Employees of the Detroit Free Press and Detroit News are being offered buyouts as the Detroit Media Partnership moves to eliminate 110 positions, or about 5% of the overall staff. Targeted departments include advertising and circulation, as well as 16 newsroom positions at the Free Press and six at the News. Employees who are 50 or older, with at least 10 years of credited service as of Oct. 12, may opt for two weeks' severance for every year of service up to a maximum of one year's pay. If there aren't enough takers, the company said, it will consider layoffs.

. . . as Milwaukee eyes 50

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel has announced a buy-out plan it hopes will entice 35 to 50 employees within three weeks, but which Guild leaders say is little better than the severance package already prescribed by the contract—and which requires 60 days' notice. Both the buyout package and the severance language call for two weeks' pay for every year of service; the only "sweetener" in management's proposal is two months of health coverage. The company warned that if it doesn't get enough takers it may resort to layoffs.

Portland talks grind to a halt

Contract negotiations between the Portland Guild and the Portland Press Herald have ground to a standstill, more than four months after the last agreement expired, following the company's unilateral decision to stop paying union members while they sit at the bargaining table during work hours. The local has filed an unfair labor practice with the National Labor Relations Board, with the TNG-CWA legal services program agreeing to pay its legal costs. Separately, CWA has approved a merger between the Guild and the Portland Typographical Union, whose members work in the newspaper's composing and information technology departments.

What were they smoking?

Management intrusion into the private lives of newspaper employees lurched another step forward this month, when Tribune Co. issued a chain-wide decree that it will levy a monthly \$100 "fee" against employees if they or their dependents smoke, ostensibly in an effort to reduce health care costs. Three unions at the Baltimore Sun, including the local unit of the Washington-Baltimore Guild, have responded with grievances.

P-I sued for refusing to talk

The Pacific Northwest Guild has filed a federal lawsuit to force arbitration over a new job position the Post-Intelligencer is calling "online reporter." The local first filed a grievance in the matter in July, following P-I claims that the online reporter's duties are different from those performed by Guild-represented employees and therefore not covered by the Guild contract; in August, following a grievance hearing, the union filed for arbitration but was told by management that it would not participate. "Our contract covers reporters and the work they presently perform at the P-I, whether that work appears in print or online," said Guild Administrative Officer Liz Brown. "We're willing to follow the contract and arbitrate this dispute, but the P-I's refusal to do so is so egregious we must seek redress in court."

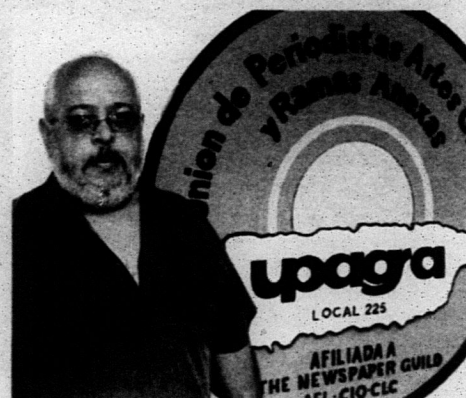
Missed train connection

Guild-represented employees at Reuters have long criticized the outsourcing of news jobs to India, warning of possible cultural gaffes and language blunders. Sure enough, the first news story out of the Bangalore newsroom about the massive recall of popular Thomas the Tank toys ran under a generic headline that completely missed their iconic status: "RC2 to recall wooden railway toys, cites lead poisoning hazard." Sitting thousands of miles away, the Indian staff had "no way of knowing they were underplaying a story that would draw attention from U.S. consumers, foreign trade policy-makers and China watchers," the New York

Guild's website pointed out.

Color wars rage in Dayton

Guild locals frequently call of their members to wear a particular color—usually red or black—on specific days to demonstrate union solidarity. So it's not unusual that the Dayton Guild has been promoting "red on Fridays"; what is unusual is management's response. It wants employees to wear green on Fridays, ostensibly to promote the company's commitment to environmentally correct policies. Why "ostensibly"? Because, as the local points out, this is the same management that remains committed to eliminating the editorial fleet, a move that ensures many editorial employees will have to use their own cars to do their jobs — meaning that the bus passes and car pooling management is promoting are out of the question.



Néstor Soto

Soto tapped for CWA slot

Néstor Soto, president of the Puerto Rico Guild, UPAGRA, has been seated as one of four new interim members of the CWA Executive Board. The new positions, authorized by delegates to the last CWA convention, were created to increase the board's diversity and will be filled on a permanent basis in next year's board elections. The other interim board members are Carolyn Wade, president of CWA Local 1040; Claude Cummings, president of CWA Local 6222; and Madelyn Elder, president of CWA Local 7901.

Leuchter seeks applicants

Applications are being accepted through Nov. 1 for the annual Irving Leuchter Memorial Scholarship, an \$11,000 award that pays for the six-week Harvard Trade Union program of labor studies; the next program will begin Jan. 7. Applicants need not be nominated by their locals but should be Guild members in good standing; first preference is given to full-time union staff of locals or of TNG-CWA. For more information and applications, see www.law.harvard.edu/programs/lwp.

Milwaukee elects officers

The Milwaukee Guild has elected Amy Rinard as its new president, succeeding Jennie Tunkielcz, who stepped down after three terms. Also elected were Greg Pearson as first vice president, in charge of contract enforcement; Sonya Jongsma-Knauss as second vice president; Sarah Carr as secretary; and Amy Hetzner as treasurer, for her second full term.

Really briefly . . .

Negotiators for the Guild and Pioneer Press management have agreed to expedite contract talks, with a goal of reaching a tentative agreement by the end of this month. . . . The National Labor Relations Board has set a trial date of Nov. 14, 2007 over unilateral changes in mileage rates at the Woonsocket Call and Pawtucket Times and over the cancellation of the pension plan at the Pawtucket Times. . . . The Fresno Bee has moved the work of seven ad production workers to Express KCS, which operates out of Gurgaon, India. . . . Minneapolis Star Tribune publisher Par Ridder was ordered by a county court judge to step down for a year, following complaints that he had taken sensitive corporate data from his previous employer, the rival St. Paul Pioneer Press.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

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

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

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

Canada: Publications mail agreement No. 40032108

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: P.O. Box 503, RPO West Beaver Creek, Richmond Hill, ON L4B 4R6

Subscribers: Address changes and delivery stops may be e-mailed to: duesinfo@cwa-union.org.

Subscription: \$20 a year in U.S. and Canada, \$30 a year overseas.

Send subscription orders to: Jay West, TNG-CWA, 501 Third Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001

Single copies: \$1.50

Ever wonder why we still need unions?

Afghanistan vet's choice: job or education

Newspaper turns screws when he seeks union help

By Hunter Bishop
Hawaii Newspaper Guild

A decorated veteran who served his country in Afghanistan has been forced to quit his part-time job at the Hawaii Tribune-Herald because his supervisor deliberately assigned him hours that interfered with his college classes.

Isaac Nahakuelua, 26, a native Hawaiian born and raised in Hilo, suffered combat-related leg injuries but can stay on his feet at work for up to seven-and-a-half hours straight, according to his doctor. That would allow him to work a normal four-to-six-hour night shift and attend classes during the day—but Nahakuelua's supervisor, circulation director Bill W. Crawford, claims that because Nahakuelua's doctor placed a restriction on how many hours Nahakuelua can work, he had no choice but to assign a three-hour day time schedule that directly conflicted with Nahakuelua's classes.

Forced to choose between his job or his education, Nahakuelua resigned from the newspaper Sept. 17 to look for other work.

Nahakuelua was a paratrooper in the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division when terrorists struck the World Trade Center in 2001. He later joined the 25th Light Infantry Brigade's elite "Wolfhound" Division, and fought in Afghanistan for 12 months in 2004-05.

Following his discharge last year, the six-year Army veteran enrolled at the University of Hawaii at Hilo under the GI Bill to study psychology. To support himself

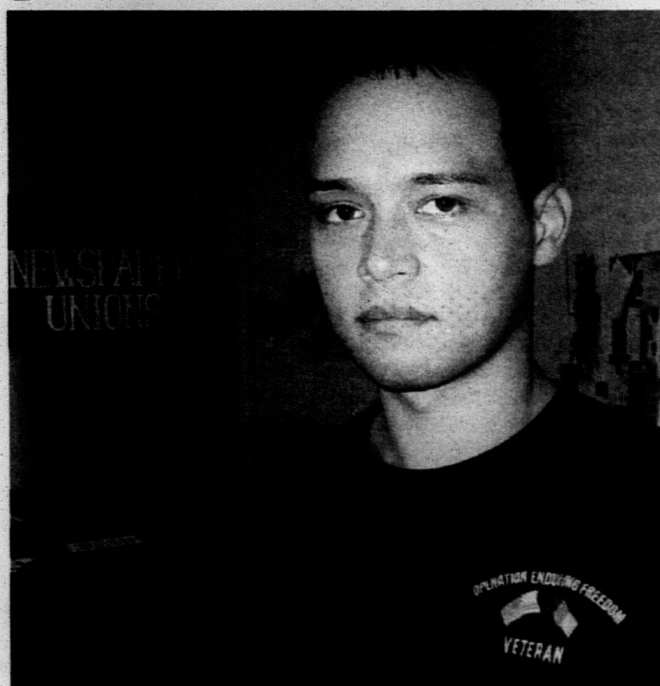
while going to college, Nahakuelua landed a part-time job at the Tribune-Herald that provided his schedule with a good fit: attending classes during the day while preparing and delivering bundles of newspapers to the newspaper's carriers at night.

But when an operational change started adding up to six hours of overtime each shift, Nahakuelua's war injuries flared up. Seeking help from the Newspaper Guild, he filed a workers compensation claim and eventually felt well enough to return to work in late August, albeit with a medical restriction that he not work longer than a seven-and-a-half hour shift. That apparently wasn't good enough for Crawford, who began assigning him to work Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to noon.

Why the change?

"It certainly wasn't for operational reasons," said Wayne Cahill, administrative officer of the Hawaii Newspaper Guild. The day work that Nahakuelua was assigned could have been done at any time, and previously had been done at night. But even when other employees said they'd be willing to switch shifts to free Nahakuelua to attend classes, Crawford would not allow it.

The Guild, which represents about 55 employees at the newspaper, sent a written request to publisher Ted Dixon on Aug. 20, asking that the newspaper assign Nahakuelua his part-time hours so that he could



Part-time worker Isaac Nahakuelua: healthy enough to work a full-time shift but punished for being unable to work even longer hours.

attend classes. Dixon did not reply, but Crawford did.

"Although I appreciate . . . efforts in trying to obtain a higher education," Crawford wrote in his Sept. 5 reply, "I do not have the luxury of guarantying (sic) . . . set hours or days off. Under Section 11 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, there is nothing that would require me to do so."

Although Nahakuelua was not on the work schedule posted for the week beginning Sept. 10, Crawford called him into his office for a meeting at 9 a.m. on Sept. 11. After refusing to allow a union representative to accompany Nahakuelua, Crawford immediately ordered him to clock in for work.

Nahakuelua asked Crawford what he

would be doing, why he was not on the written schedule for work that week, and why Crawford had not given him any notice that he would be working that day. Told again to clock in, he was suspended just 15 minutes later for being "argumentative" during the meeting. Called back from his suspension on Sept. 14, Nahakuelua again was placed on the "modified" day shift for the following week. As long as Nahakuelua's hours were "restricted" by the doctor, Crawford explained, he was required to assign him to work a "modified" shift during the day. And though it wasn't a company policy, there were "no exceptions."

"Here's a guy who is able to serve his country in the war in Afghanistan, but the Hawaii Tribune-Herald can't see fit to allow him to work part-time and attend college," said Cahill. "Crawford may be legally right, but morally he's very wrong. It seems as though Crawford went off his way to force Nahakuelua out because he asked his union for help."

"That's why I feel my rights are being violated," Nahakuelua added. "I went and fought for freedom, then I come back and get this kind of treatment by people who say they support education, but then act differently."

Stephens Media Group, owner of the Hawaii Tribune-Herald, and the Hawaii Newspaper Guild have been in bitter negotiations over a new contract for the newspaper's employees since 2004. The union has also filed numerous unfair labor practice charges against the newspaper, resulting in 13 complaints filed against the newspaper earlier this year by the National Labor Relations Board. A trial on those charges is set to begin in Hilo on Oct. 23.

With labor law broken, abuses go unchecked

The story of Isaac Nahakuelua, above, is much bigger than the punitive scheduling of a part-time employee. It speaks to the culture of abuse and managerial power plays that flourish when labor law is broken, giving free rein to anti-union impulses.

The Hawaii Tribune-Herald has poked a metaphorical finger in the Guild's eye for years, frustrating good faith efforts to negotiate a new contract since 2004, punishing Guild supporters and racking up a baker's dozen in federal charges of breaking labor law. Yet even a lengthy rap sheet won't deter calculated misbehavior when there are no consequences. And enforcement of labor law, as several current cases illustrate, has become all but non-existent.

One common thread to many ongoing newspaper labor cases is L. Michael Zinser, a Tennessee lawyer whose stock-in-trade is delay. While not especially clever in arguing the merits of his clients' positions—often an impossible task for even a sharp legal talent—Zinser is adept at exploiting the process itself, whether at the bargaining table or in a courtroom. His simple but effective premise: the longer it takes to bargain a new contract, the stronger management's hand in the talks; the longer it takes to bring justice to employ-

NEWS ANALYSIS

ees wronged in the workplace, the more discouraged they become.

So in Hawaii, for example, Zinser has successfully postponed since July a National Labor Relations Board trial into 13 charges, including charges related to the firing of two reporters and the suspension of a third—charges, in other words, of supreme individual importance. But even when the case finally is adjudicated, such a trial only sets the stage for a series of appeals that is each vulnerable to its own repeated postponements, creating a years-long ordeal. Back in the workplace, meanwhile, management is undeterred from running roughshod over its steadily more disillusioned employees.

The problem is not unique to Guild-represented newspapers. Zinser currently is representing management at the Santa Barbara News-Press, whose newsroom employees have quit and been fired in droves by an owner who has refused to recognize representation by the GCIU.

In Pittsburgh, Zinser has twice forced postponement of an NLRB trial into charges of unfair labor practices by the Beaver County Times. Approximately 40 Times distribution workers, represented

by the United Steel Workers, have been trying to negotiate an initial contract since April, 2005. The regional NLRB office has filed seven complaints against the Times, including an allegation that it unlawfully fired a worker because he supported the union and a charge that managers unlawfully prohibited employees from conducting informational leafleting.

Such tactics have increased union pressure for congressional

passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, which in addition to facilitating card-check representation—the bill's provision that tends to garner the most attention—provides a streamlined process for negotiating a first contract. Passage of the EFCA, said DeWitt Walton, USW's Beaver County Times contract campaign coordinator, would eliminate management's incentive to violate the law "because if no agreement were reached after 120

days of negotiations, federally-approved mediators and arbitrators would facilitate reaching a first union contract."

That would be a good first step. But as Isaac Nahakuelua's case illustrates, other remedies are needed to address management violations of labor law even after a first contract is negotiated. Justice delayed is indeed justice denied, mocking the very premise of labor law.

Help from an unexpected quarter

Anthropologists rarely get good press; indeed, since Margaret Mead's death they rarely get press at all. And apparently they're not happy about that.

Long viewed by the public as musty researchers of dead or dying civilizations, anthropologists nevertheless believe their insights can be applied to contemporary society. Now the American Anthropological Association has issued its very first "policy brief"—and the policy issue it addresses is the right of employees to organize unions.

Noting that that income inequality in the U.S. is at historic highs; that worker self-organization is at historic lows; and that anti-union consulting firms have become a multi-million dollar industry, the policy brief summarizes ethnographic fieldwork that examined management-labor practices in the American workplace to determine underlying dynamics. The findings probably won't surprise any union activist.

"This ethnographic research exposed a previously concealed dimension of management-worker

communication: actions of consultants that are often extreme and highly coercive," the brief observes. But, it adds, "Because ethnographic research makes visible such factors, it is necessary for making fully-informed policy decisions regarding labor organizing practices."

Translation: Let's stop being ivory-towered academics for a minute and verbalize the real-world implications of our research—which the AAA proceeds to do, in as comprehensive an endorsement of the Employee Free Choice Act that you'll find anywhere. To wit:

"Anthropology provides sound evidence for the premises of the Employee Free Choice Act, namely that current organizing processes do not allow employees to express their desire to join unions because: 1) there are insufficient disincentives to managerial lawbreaking in its resistance to unions; and 2) management uses tactics of intimidation and fear to coerce workers to vote against unions."

Wow.

Yielding to a request from state Sen. Gloria Romero, nearly 400 court interpreters in southern California who had staged a six-week walkout returned to their jobs Oct. 17. The return followed a day of public hearings, chaired by Romero, at which court officials maintained they were coping with the strike but others described case backlogs and a growing sense of chaos.

"The testimony was dramatic," said Silvia Barden, president of the TNG-CWA unit that represents the interpreters, with Romero and other legislators "calling the court to task for the way they have allowed the public to be so negatively impacted."

Banging on MediaNews

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local, and at least 50 more have expressed interest in joining a bargaining unit. "I've never come into a campaign that's had such an amazing group of dedicated members," she said. "These guys have no idea how much power they're sitting on."

Perlstein, meanwhile, recently wrapped up 5-1/2 years as executive director of Media Alliance, a long-running Bay Area media advocacy organization. Now he's generating new online strategies to complement the campaign's face-to-face organizing and mobilization within MediaNews, as part of an alliance-building effort that emphasizes journalism quality within a business better known for ruthless cost-cutting and cookie-cutter local papers.

Guild members at the Oakland Tribune and other ANG papers, which had 70% union membership despite years of hostile management treatment, have been meeting regularly to map out strategy. Among their accomplishments to date are a slick brochure extolling the benefits of union membership and a new website, www.onebigbang.org, to welcome newly affiliated colleagues from the Contra Costa paper and affiliated Hills weeklies.

Guild members also have been circulating a weekly in-house newsletter with the slogan, "We're still here! Don't believe the hype!" to link veteran Guild activists.

The East Bay news workers have been joined by Guild members from the San Francisco Chronicle, San Jose Mercury News and Monterey County Herald to form one of the largest rank-and-file union-defense teams in recent memory. CWA locals and Region 9 in Sacramento are assisting with office space and other support.

Veteran news talents and Pulitzer Prize winners, such as Deanne Fitzmaurice of the Chronicle and Rick Tulskey of the Mercury News, are pitching in with testimonials, backed by rising stars like Cecelia Vega and Marisa Lagos, who works on the Chronicle's *SFGate.com* website.

"I'm really concerned and fearful about

More than 53% of Los Angeles-area households don't use English as their primary language, according to the Census Bureau, making interpreters a key component of the judicial system. In their absence, court administrators were postponing some cases and certifying replacement interpreters for others, although the Guild maintained that most of the replacements were unqualified and that there aren't enough to go around, anyway.

Los Angeles City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo buttressed the Guild's claims by labeling the situation "a crisis" that "has led to a breakdown in the system." Among the cases he cited was that of a convicted child

molester whose hearing to compel registration as a sex offender was delayed for two months while he was free.

The lack of qualified interpreters, Delgadillo testified, was creating a potential loss of evidence and witnesses, hampering his department in its prosecution of cases and causing unacceptable delays in the imposition and enforcement of sentences.

Postponing cases or resorting to unqualified substitutes is "unacceptable," State Assembly Speaker Fabian Nuez, a Los Angeles Democrat, told a local reporter ahead of the hearing. "This ongoing dispute risks not only a fair and prompt administration of justice in individual cases, but also jeopardizes the effective working of our entire judicial system."

The striking interpreters, who are represented by a unit of the Northern California Media Guild, walked out Sept. 5 after months of contract negotiations in which court administrators refused to provide

scales that pay higher wages to more experienced interpreters. The region, covering Los Angeles, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties, is the only one of four unionized California court systems whose interpreters don't have graduated wage scales.

"The issue is a very simple one of equitable treatment for our members," Barden said. "We want the same pay structure as all other employees in the county. We have been frankly stunned at the lengths to which judges and administrators have been willing to go in refusing to bargain fairly with us, even at the expense of the communities the courts are charged with serving."

Although court administrators insisted they have implemented their "last, best and final offer," Barden said the fight isn't over. Romero plans to hold more hearings on the matter, she said, and the union is awaiting a ruling from the Public Employment Relations Board on an unfair labor practice charge it had filed against the courts.



San Jose Guild member Julie Patel at a recent meeting that laid plans for implementing One Big BANG.

what's happening and what it could mean for the rest of the Guild in the Bay Area and across the country," said Vega, the Chronicle's city hall reporter. "It's lit a spark to get us active. We're saying 'How can we help?'"

Perlstein and a team of web specialists plan to test new online tools in hopes of making the campaign's web site a showcase of interactive content. In addition, several live events are being planned to broaden discussions about the future of the media industry; a recent statewide survey of 62 community and business leaders showed that 89% are dissatisfied with daily news coverage and concerned about its impact on the well-being of their communities.

Bay Area members also are expanding their participation in the nationwide MediaNews Project, which includes key bargaining units in St. Paul and in Denver, where the company is based.

In a news release, Larry Cohen, president of the CWA, put it this way: "MediaNews has a clear game plan for the area that serves its corporate agenda. What we need is a community-first agenda that is built around adequate staffing and training. When union and non-union workers come together as one voice, we'll have the power to help create a healthier future for workers, their newspapers and their communities in California."

Singleton on thin ice?

Continued from page 1

mirage, since even that paltry amount disappears if you subtract out the \$37.4 million in pre-tax gains MediaNews realized by selling some office buildings in California.

Net income is elusive because Singleton has financed his empire building by leveraging assets—by borrowing his way to success. As recently reported by Jack Davis of the San Jose Guild, MediaNews is straining under debt that now exceeds \$1.12 billion. Interest coverage ate up 57% of operating cash flow last year, prompting the company in its SEC filing to list "substantial indebtedness" under the section on risk factors.

Lenders, as many credit card holders know, start getting antsy when debt loads get too high. So too with MediaNews, which had to renegotiate its loan agreements and, in the process, got its interest rate bumped a half a percentage point and was required to pay an additional "amendment fee" of 0.25%. To remain in compliance with loan terms, the company reported, it has to either "increase or maintain" its existing cash flow or reduce its overall debt—either of which is problematic. Standard & Poor's Rating Service, for example, placed MediaNews on credit watch immediately after it filed its annual report, citing "negative implications due to the deteriorating fundamentals" in the company's operations and investments.

Those fundamentals are by now well-known to most Guild members. For

MediaNews, looking only at the properties it has held for two or more years, the specifics for the last fiscal year included a 6.6% slide in advertising revenues and a 5.6% haircut in circulation revenues. The slide was even more steep at its Denver flagship, where revenues for its joint operating agreement with Scripps were off 7.8%, forcing layoffs and other cost reductions—and the promise of even more staff reductions in fiscal year 2008, once a new production facility comes on line.

While financial pressures are squeezing MediaNews, so are political and legal ones. The mandatory waiting period for the U.S. Justice Department to conduct its antitrust review of a Hearst investment linked to MediaNews' purchase of the Monterey County Herald, St. Paul Pioneer Press and Torrance Daily Breeze was set to expire Oct. 18, as the Guild Reporter was going to press, and could result in fresh obstacles for MediaNews to surmount. The Justice Dept. has filed a lawsuit against another MediaNews venture, in Charleston, WV, that has implications for its ownership interests at two Guild-represented newspapers in York, Penn. And on Oct. 16, Connecticut's attorney general disclosed that he's looking into the possible antitrust implications of reports that MediaNews might be interested in adding two more of the small state's newspapers to the two it already owns.

More plates and more spinning also means more friction that could bring it all down.

LOCAL UNION REPRESENTATIVE

The Newspaper Guild of Greater Philadelphia TNG-CWA 38010, a dynamic, fast-paced local of 800 members, is seeking an independent thinker with problem-solving and people skills to represent 200 suburban media members.

The candidate should have excellent communications skills, a working knowledge of labor law and a demonstrated ability to work with diverse groups, including community organizations and other labor unions.

A background in grievance handling and contract bargaining is required, and solid organizing experience and an eagerness to do more of it is a must. An understanding of the newspaper business is important, including editorial, advertising, circulation issues, and the changes occurring in New Media. Some experience in managing database and developing website helpful.

The Local Rep will report to the Administrative Officer and be part of a five-member staff at headquarters in Philadelphia; must be willing to drive to work sites in Pennsylvania and New Jersey to assist our members. Salary commensurate with experience. Generous benefits.

Applicants should fax, e-mail or send resume to:

Search Committee

The Newspaper Guild, TNG/CWA, Local 38010
1329 Buttonwood St., Philadelphia, PA 19123

Fax: 215-928-9177

e-mail Fsanfede@local-10.com

Deadline is November 15, 2007

TEMPORARY TNG-CWA STAFF REPRESENTATIVE

The Newspaper Guild-CWA is now accepting applications for a temporary TNG-CWA staff representative job in the United States. The duration of the job will be from 3 months to 1 year. The position will require travel, during the week and on weekends. Applicants must have experience in collective bargaining and mobilization.

TNG-CWA believes in equal employment opportunities and diversity. Women and people of color are encouraged to apply. Send resumes and letters of interest to:

Dominique Edmondson
dedmondson@cwa-union.org
501 Third St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001

IAPE, several other locals ratify contracts

Faced with the certainty that they are about to enter a new era, Guild-represented employees of Dow Jones decisively accepted a new contract by a margin of 9-to-1. Ratification was completed just ahead of a company-set deadline of Oct. 15 and a few weeks before company shareholders are expected to vote in favor of a News Corp. takeover valued at more than \$5 billion.

Also reaching contract agreements in recent weeks were Guild units at Time Inc. and in Denver and Chicago.

Although the three-year deal with Dow Jones was endorsed by the board of directors of IAPE, TNG-CWA Local 1096, many members voted for it only reluctantly and opposition reportedly was highest in the Wall Street Journal newsroom. The contract includes annual wage increases of 3%, but higher health care premiums—climbing to 24% at the highest salary levels—will negate whatever part of the increase isn't neutralized by inflation.

That apparent stinginess, at a time when the most senior Dow Jones managers are looking at hefty bonuses from the News Corp. acquisition, galled many employees. On the other hand, argued IAPE President Steve Yount, "this is the best package available." Left unspoken was the worry that the new regime, able to draw on much larger corporate resources, would be even more hard-nosed than the old.

Despite requiring employees to dig deeper into their own wallets for health care insurance, the new contract is kinder to lower-paid employees while making a few concessions to its higher-paid ones. Weekly increases for employees earning less than \$800, for example, will be \$24, which means an employee currently paid \$600 a week will actually get a 4% increase. And the insurance premium rates are progressive, based on four income groups, with the lowest (annual wages of less than \$50,000) paying 5% of the premium in 2008, 6% in 2009 and 7% in 2010; employees in the highest income group (more than \$125,000 annually), on the other hand, will see their share of the premium go to 22% next year, 23% in 2009 and 24% in 2010.

On the flip side, the company agreed to abolish a much detested "wage cap," which limited the amount of increase awarded to the highest-paid employees.

Most other contract changes, with one

significant exception—creation of a two-tier pension structure that treats new employees less favorably—are favorable to the union. Among them:

- Three weeks of vacation instead of two, four weeks after three years instead of after six, and five weeks after six years instead of after 15.

- Replacement of a set number of sick days per year with unlimited sick leave as needed.

- Annual physicals for all employees and family members, as well as immunizations at any age, and creation of a new wellness program to prevent serious illnesses.

- The addition of Martin Luther King's birthday as a holiday and an increase in paid personal days to six a year, from three.

- Increases in minimum scales of 1.5% a year, as well as higher shift differentials, stand-by pay and emergency child care. The retraining allowance, for employees displaced by automation or outsourcing, will be increased to a maximum of \$12,000 from \$10,000.

- Enhanced severance pay of an extra month's wages for employees discharged as a result of outsourcing.

Elsewhere, Time Inc. editorial employees ratified a new three-year contract, 105-14, that provides annual 3% wage increases. The agreement follows a 133-0 vote in March that rejected the company's "last, best and final" offer that among other objectionable provisions replaced across-the-board wage increases with so-called "merit" raises. As part of the agreement, the New York Guild withdrew its complaint to the National Labor Relations Board charging Time with bad-faith bargaining.

Guild members also voted 82% in favor of a two-year contract between the Denver Guild and the Denver Newspaper Agency, replacing an agreement that was set to expire Jan. 31. The new contract includes a 1% wage increase each year and increases health insurance co-pays and deductibles, with the employee share of premiums for family coverage increasing to 30% over the next three years. The local also agreed to lower top scales for a few positions in advertising, creating a two-tier system, and to a decrease in maximum severance pay to 26 weeks, from 44.

One uncertain note in the Denver agree-

ment, still being hammered out at press time, was a provision freezing the company's existing pension plan and adding the Guild's International Pension Fund as a supplemental benefit. But the Denver agreement calls for tiered payments to the Guild plan, in which company contributions are proportional to an employee's wages—as are the pension benefits themselves.

The Guild plan, however, is of the one-size-fits-all variety, with plan participants making the same contribution for all employees regardless of their pay scale. The plan's trustees were scheduled to meet as the Guild Reporter was going to press to discuss the Denver situation and determine if they were willing to accept a system of tiered contributions.

Finally, members of the Chicago Guild ratified new three-year contracts with the Chicago Sun-Times and with the Herald-

News in Joliet.

The Sun-Times agreement, approved on an 80-18 vote, calls for a 1.5% wage increase Oct. 1 and 2% raises in the second and third years; employees also are to receive a supplemental \$5 a week in the first two years and \$10 a week in the third to help offset higher health insurance costs. The supplements are in addition to a \$30-a-week supplement that was scheduled to end Sept. 30 but has been renewed for the life of the new contract.

The Herald-News agreement includes annual wage increases of 2.5%, retroactive to July 1, and provides for shared jurisdiction in the Sun-Times Media Group's venture into New Media, including training for Guild members. Although the agreement does not require any union concessions, the local was unable to win a "successors and assigns" clause, which had been a high priority.



Emmy winners all

Detroit Free Press staff members cluster around their Emmy for Outstanding Current News Coverage for Broadband, edging out competitors from Frontline, National Geographic, Newsweek.com and Washingtonpost.com. The winning team (l to r) includes photographers Hugh Granum and Stephen McGee, both Guild members; Nancy Andrews; reporter Joe Swickard and photographer David Gilkey, also Guild members; and Craig Porter and Kathy Kieliszewski. Also contributing to the award-winning effort but not pictured was Guild member Kathleen Galligan, a photographer.

Fewer, bigger media mean less news, diversity

The newspaper industry is in a world of hurt, but its principle market-driven coping mechanisms—convergence in all its many varieties, from mergers and acquisitions to repurposing of content—are accelerating its demise. And the problem isn't unique to the U.S.

When the Canadian Radio-Television Commission held another round of hearings last month on the subject of media consolidation, representatives of the Canadian Association of Journalists and the Canadian Media Guild pulled few punches: media consolidation, they declared, is forcing an inexorable decline in the quality of journalism.

The equation is pretty straightforward. Fewer journalists are working longer hours, but much of that work consists of reshaping the same few facts for a proliferating variety of news "platforms." The trendy catch-phrase is "repurposing content," but the reality is superficial and even stenographic reporting.

"Fewer people are working harder to produce and repurpose the same content for a variety of formats," CMG President Lise Lareau told the commission. "This has a real impact on journalism. It means that in many cases fewer people are out there on each story asking the hard questions, doing the background research and digging beyond the press

release or the sound bite from the scrum."

Repurposing becomes especially insidious, the CRTC was told, when one organization owns all or most of the media outlets in a particular market, resulting in a news monoculture. Moreover, claimed a document signed by 30 journalists and freelancers from the Vancouver area, where loss of media diversity has been especially acute, the decline in journalistic quality is forcing many of the industry's best talent to leave the profession.

Similar complaints are being voiced in the U.S. to the Federal Communications Commission, which in response to industry pressure continues flirting with the idea of relaxing media ownership restrictions. At a Sept. 20 hearing in Chicago—the fifth of six scheduled around the country—FCC commissioners got an earful about the negative repercussions of runaway media consolidation, as more than 800 people overflowed the hearing room and dozens of speakers held forth for more than seven hours. High on the list of complaints: the continuing erosion of media ownership by racial minorities, despite 15 years of FCC recommendations for enhancing diversity.

The basic statistics were laid out by Free Press, which noted that racial minorities comprise 33% of the U.S. population yet own only 7.2% of all full-power radio and TV sta-

tions. Women, meanwhile, comprise 51% of the population but own less than 6% of the same broadcast outlets. The disparities are so egregious that FCC Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein called for an independent, non-partisan task force to address the problem, although how the recommendations of such a task force will be treated differently from past reform efforts is unclear.

(Poetically, the hearing came just a month after Tribune shareholders formally approved a takeover of their Chicago-based company—which owns both newspapers and TV stations in numbers that exceed the FCC's existing limitations—by another white male, Sam Zell. The Tribune has skated by with a series of waivers while waiting for the FCC to relax its ownership limits, but FCC Commissioner Michael Copps said that game has to end. "I do not buy into this argument that you might be considering rule changes, ergo you can't apply the current rules to current pending applications," he told a handful of reporters a week after the Chicago hearing, according to a Dow Jones report.)

Often lost in the arguments about newspaper economics (latest forecasts call for continued erosion in print advertising revenues, following a 10.2% drop in the second quarter, prompting analyst downgrades of virtually all

publicly owned newspaper companies), ownership and staffing levels are the implications for society overall. Although advocates of greater media diversity frequently claim diversity is essential for a healthy democracy, the argument tends to be so abstract it's easily shrugged off.

But the Knight Foundation recently released the results of a survey, "Future of the First Amendment," that suggest the battle may be lost already. Timed to coincide with Constitution Day (Never heard of it? Congress mandated three years ago that the U.S. Constitution is to be taught in public schools every Sept. 17), the survey disclosed that nearly three-fourths of students "still don't know how they feel about the First Amendment, or take it for granted." But what they do "feel" isn't encouraging: 32% think the First Amendment "goes too far," while only 54% agree that newspapers should not require government approval to print what they want; the corresponding figures for their parents are 27% and 82%.

How much of a splash did those findings make in the newspapers that claim the First Amendment as their shield and sword? A Google news search turned up all of five stories nationwide, all in second or third tier newspapers.

News round-up

Big two-thumbs-up for shield law

A federal shield law was endorsed Oct. 16 by an overwhelming Congressional majority, with 176 Republicans joining virtually every Democrat in a 398-21 vote that stressed the importance of preserving a free flow of information. The measure has been pushed for several years by a broad coalition of press groups, including the Guild, with TNF-CWA President Linda Foley writing to Congress on its behalf as recently as Oct. 12 to assert that "wrongful prosecution of reporters must cease if we are to preserve the freedom of the press." But despite its strong bipartisan support in the House, the bill faces a promised veto from George Bush and has an uncertain future in the Senate, where a similar version cleared the Judiciary Committee but may not reach the floor before the end of the session.

Latino reporter remembered on stamp

Los Angeles Times reporter and columnist Ruben Salazar will be honored by the U.S. Postal Service next year, when it issues a first-class, 41-cent stamp with his image. Salazar, 42, was covering a riot in East Los Angeles on Aug. 29, 1970, when his head was shattered by a heavy, torpedo-shaped tear gas projectile fired by a sheriff's deputy. "Ruben Salazar put an indelible stamp on the profession of journalism in Los Angeles," said Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. "From the battlefields of Vietnam to the streets of East L.A., he reported the news with a rare combination of toughness and humanity."

Labor award honors slain journalists

Honoring the thousands of media workers who risk their lives to report the news around the world, the AFL-CIO and the Solidarity Center presented the 2006 George Meany-Lane Kirkland Human Rights Award to the International Federation of Journalists in a Sept. 20 ceremony. The list of journalists killed on the job includes Daniel Pearl of the Wall Street Journal, Russian investigative reporter Anna Politkovskaya, Mexican journalist Roberto Marcos Garcia, Colombian journalist Santiago Rodriguez Villalba, and the murdered Iraqi journalist and Associated Press cameraman Aswan Ahmed Lutfallah.

A truly gross murder rate for labor

A gross is 12 dozen, or 144—which just happens to be the number of trade unionists murdered for defending workers' rights in 2006, according to an annual survey published by the International Trade Union Confederation. The report, which can be read in several languages at <http://survey07.ituc-csi.org/>, also details more than 800 incidents of beatings or torture, nearly 5,000 arrests and more than 8,000 dismissals of workers due to their trade union activities, as well as 484 new cases of trade unionists held in government detention.

Health premiums top three grand

Workers with employer-paid health insurance and families to cover are now paying an average of \$3,281 a year toward their premiums, in addition to higher deductibles and rising co-payments, according to a recent survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Health Research Educational Trust. Although the 6.1% hike in health insurance premiums this year is lower than last year's increase and less than half the 13.9% increase in 2003, the survey showed that premiums overall have skyrocketed 78% since 2001, four times faster than wages or inflation.

'Electrosmog' new form of pollution

The German government is advising the public to avoid using Wi-Fi wherever possible because of potential health risks. Moreover, it is advising its citizens to use landlines instead of mobile phones, and warns of "electrosmog" from a wide range of other everyday products, from baby monitors to electric blankets. The warning coincides with publication of a study in the latest issue of a peer-reviewed journal, Occupational Environmental Medicine, that concludes using a mobile phone for more than 10 years increases the risk of getting brain cancer. The study found that people who have had the phones for a decade or more are twice as likely to get a malignant tumor on the side of the brain where they hold the handset. Using a mobile for just an hour every working day during that period is enough to increase the risk.

CWA offers newsletter resources

The Source, a one-stop shopping center for newsletter editors, webmasters, organizers and anyone else needing help communicating with members or the public, is now available from CWA at www.unionvoice.org/ct/Wpz_1m11c1p1. The new site provides news, photos, graphics, how-tos and other resources and is to be updated at least weekly. Users also can post "Ask the Expert" questions about any aspect of the process of putting out a newsletter, taking photos, creating a website or other communications-related issue.

For second time, NLRB goes after card check

By Mark Gruenberg
Editor, Press Associates Inc.

Ruling on a straight party-line vote, the National Labor Relations Board has made it easier for dissenting workers to file decertification petitions in cases where union representation was recognized via card check. In its Sept. 29 ruling involving two firms the UAW organized four years ago by card check, the GOP majority said it's making decertification petitions easier "in order to achieve a 'finer balance' of interests that better protects employees' free choice."

The decision comes less than two months after the same majority set aside 40 years of labor-law precedent in a different decertification case. In that instance, the NLRB allowed Shaw's Supermarkets to withdraw recognition of a union based on the results of a card-check decertification campaign, without requiring a decertification election and a full year before the collective bargaining agreement expired.

The board's two dissenting Democrats said the latest ruling "upsets a balance in labor relations." AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney called it "outrageous" and said it showed the Bush-named majority is following right wing dogma.

Prior to this case, known as *The Dana Corp.-Metaldyne Corp. vs. UAW*, unions achieving workplace recognition—whether through an election or by card check—had a long "recognition bar" before dissidents could attempt to oust the union. The recognition bar was instituted to give adequate time for a first contract to be negotiated; without it, employers opposed to the union could sabotage negotiations by covertly aiding anti-union employees in a decertification drive.

The new ruling, like the one in *Shaw Supermarkets*, takes direct aim at the card-check strategy many unions have adopted to counter the anti-union campaigns waged—often illegally—by employers. It doesn't apply to workplaces in which union recognition was established through an election, and the NLRB added that it would not apply to past or pending cases, including the case that actually prompted the ruling.

The majority said no decertification election bar after card-check recognition "will be imposed . . . unless (1) employees in the bargaining unit receive notice of recognition and of their right, within 45 days of the notice, to file a decertification petition or to support the filing of a petition by a rival union, and (2) 45

days pass from the date of notice without the filing of a valid petition. If a valid petition supported by 30 percent or more of unit employees is filed within 45 days of the notice," the board will process it.

Dissenters trying to oust the union can gather signatures for their decertification petition "before as well as after" the card-check recognition, the majority added. "These principles will govern regardless of whether a card-check and/or neutrality agreement preceded the union's recognition," the GOP majority ruled.

Dissenting NLRB members Wilma Liebman and Dennis Walsh said the majority upset a 45-year labor law balance between promoting employee free choice and promoting stable bargaining relationships. "The voluntary recognition bar, as consistently applied for the past four decades, promotes both interests," Liebman and Walsh said. "It honors the free choice already exercised by a majority of unit employees, while promoting stable bargaining relationships."

Congress challenges NLRB 'supervisors' rule

Despite courting an almost certain Bush veto, the Democratic-run House Education and Labor Committee has voted 26-20 to overturn the National Labor Relations Board's "workers are supervisors" decisions. If enacted, the legislation would bar companies from arbitrarily declaring workers are "supervisors" and therefore unprotected by labor law.

The Bush-named GOP majority on the NLRB, in the *Kentucky River* decisions—named for the nursing home that first claimed its nurses are supervisors—ruled early this year that workers could be classified as supervisors if they undertook such duties as little as 10%-15% of the time. "Supervisory" duties could include any one of 12 tasks, including assigning tasks to a lower-ranking staffer.

Analysis of federal occupational data by the Economic Policy Institute showed 8 million workers could be arbitrarily declared "supervisors," including construction workers, newspaper reporters and kindergarten teachers. The NLRB's dissenting Democrats said the *Kentucky River* rulings could sweep up to 34 million workers into the supervisor category.

The new bill, HR 1644, defines supervisory responsibilities more stringently and requires employees to exercise them for a majority of their working time before they can be classified as supervisors. —PAI

'Independent contractor' dodge targeted by new bill

In a move with implications for the newspaper industry, four influential senators have introduced a bill that would kill the "independent contractor" dodge used by unscrupulous companies to cheat workers out of benefits and governments out of taxes.

Senate Majority Whip Richard Durbin (D-Ill.), presidential hopeful Barack Obama (D-Ill.), Labor Committee Chairman Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) want to close a tax-code loophole that employers exploit to evade paying federal Medicare and Social Security taxes for the workers. Their effort is backed by the AFL-CIO, Change to Win, the Teamsters and the National Employment Law Project, among others.

The "independent contractor" dodge is rife within the construction industry but exists elsewhere in the workforce, too. Most newspaper companies, for example, designate district managers—employees who deliver the paper—as "independent contractors," claiming each worker and not the company controls equipment, schedules and other aspects of work life.

State appellate judges in Los Angeles recently threw out a FedEx claim that hundreds of its drivers were "independent contractors," even though FedEx supervisors made up the drivers' schedules, rode with them four times a year, required them to wear FedEx uniforms and fill out FedEx paperwork and penalized them for failings. FedEx had insisted that the drivers were self-employed because they were required to buy, equip and insure their own trucks.

Newspaper companies, FedEx and other employers who define employees as independent contractors avoid paying workers' comp, pensions and payroll taxes for Social Security and Medicare, as well as other benefits. Moreover, unions are legally barred from organizing independent contractors.

"The Independent Contractor Proper Classification Act of 2007 will close the Section 530 Safe Harbor loophole," explains the senators' fact sheet on the measure. "It will allow the government to collect the taxes employers owe and will address the need for more enforcement of federal tax and employment laws to identify employers in major industries who wrongly classify their workers as independent contractors and require greater cooperation between the IRS and the Department of Labor in enforcing the law."

The Democratic-run Illinois legislature has already taken the initiative on the issue, passing a law earlier this year that outlaws misclassification of workers as independent contractors. To be defined as independent, it said, workers must meet three criteria, including control of their own schedules and not providing a service that the employer routinely demands.

"Improperly labeling workers as independent contractors is cheating of the worst kind," Kennedy said, in explaining the bill. "Companies resorting to this dishonest practice avoid paying the taxes they owe and deny their employees their legal rights, including the right to a safe workplace, the right to the minimum wage, and the right to overtime pay." —PAI

It's 10 minutes to midnight: wake up!

By Mort Rosenblum

Plato, who was never much of a populist, believed most of his fellow humans were blind to reality. He imagined prisoners in a cave who could see events outside only as firelight reflections on a wall. These shadows, cropped by the cave's opening, were distorted in size, their details blurred. They loomed suddenly and then vanished. Twenty-three centuries later, these images appear on backlit screens with words like Sony or Dell stamped beneath them. Otherwise, Plato's simile still seems squarely on the mark.

Back then, musing over philosopher kings and a utopian Republic was an affordable luxury in a Mediterranean universe at one corner of the little-known world. Now, blindness to reality is killing us.

Today, a widening abyss between the rich and the desperate erupts regularly into violence. Our planet is dying around us. Lies carry the weight of truth, just as George Orwell and Aldous Huxley foresaw. In practice, we are neither as free nor as democratic as we proclaim. And the world no longer trusts the only superpower it has.

This book is a *cri de coeur* from an American foreign correspondent who spent 40 years in the wilderness watching solvable situations in remote backwaters escalate into world-class calamity. Unlike captives in a parable, we are not chained with our backs to reality. To save our world, we need only turn around, take notice, and do what matters.

In the 1960s, as a cub reporter wading into the blood-spattered intrigue of Mobutu's Congo, I was sure my intrepid colleagues and I could right what was wrong. We would report reality; my ennobled countrymen would inspire a "world community" to do the rest. Not exactly. You can almost bank on it: When a crisis looms, Americans somehow manage, with the best intentions, to make things worse. Challenges we face demand sustained deliberation. Yet we approach them with the attention of hummingbirds in heat.

Foreign correspondents who could help us do better are endangered as a species. For all the words and images we call "media," precious few trained eyes see distant reality up close, and these grow fewer by the year. When reporters do warn us of a crisis, we pay scant attention. We react to effect and ignore the causes. And then, overwhelmed, we cite that old saw as a path of least resistance: You can't worry about what you can't change. We must turn this around: You can't change what you don't worry about.

Not long after Plato, Christian prophets sized up their mysterious world. The Book

of Luke assures: "And when you hear of wars and revolts, do not be alarmed by it; such things must happen, but the end is not soon . . . Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes in this region or that, and plagues and famines; and sights of terror and great portents from heaven."

But back then plunder was limited to the speed that any particular horde could gallop. Plagues spread no faster than the patter of rat feet or the swarming of locusts. These days, a match lit in any corner of the world can set fires just about anywhere. Electronic-savvy zealots whip up deadly riots over no more than, say, a cartoonist's caricatures. Ignorance, whether in Arabia or America, is a weapon of mass destruction.

We are past blaming anyone for America's collective blindness to a world we cohabit with 6,700,000,000 others. We can no longer assume we automatically come first. Of course, we love our nation. Other people love theirs, too. At a recent conclave of thinkers, Eric Schmidt of Google noted a simple truth we often forget: nothing in the human genome says that Americans have a lock on brains. Charity or sympathy does not help "underdevelopment." People in trouble need help in confronting the causes of poverty.

Journalism frequently fails us. Yet it also offers clarity and wisdom we ignore. Now the stakes are too high for this hit-and-miss approach. It is up to us—citizens, not journalists—to take notice, and to take action.

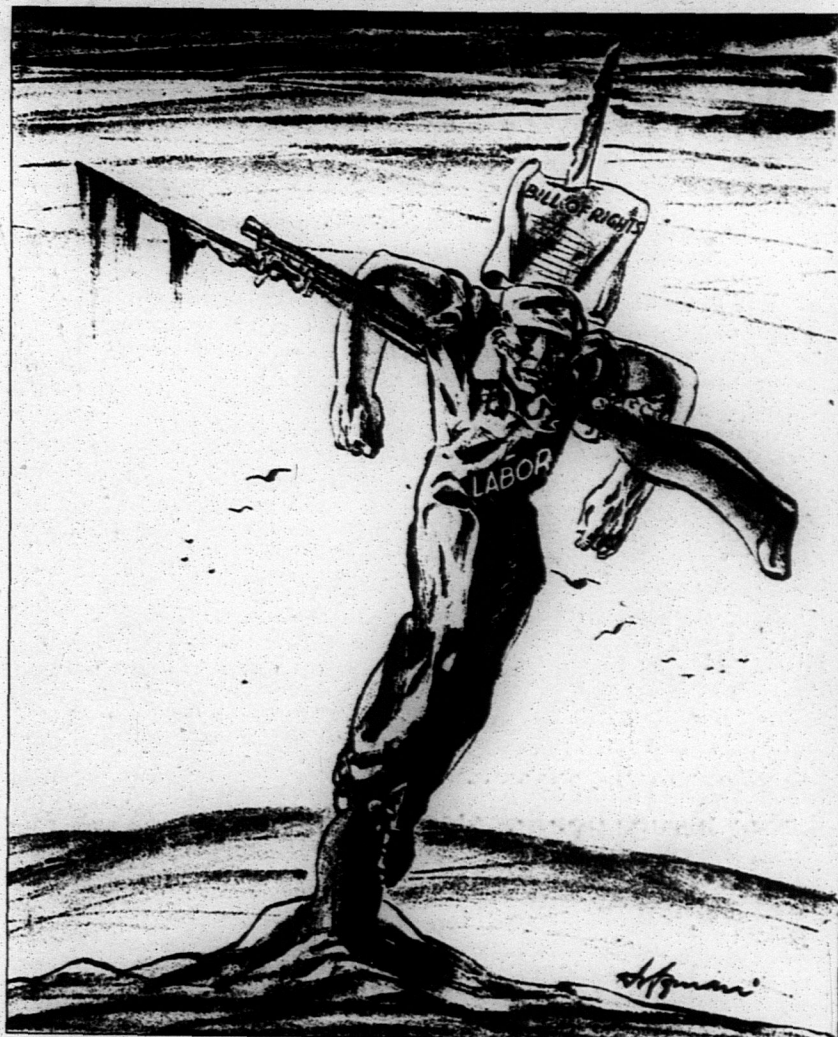
A nation of 300 million individuals with the right to vote, the freedom to direct their eyes and spend their paychecks however they choose, has ample means to do better. Big government and corporations we let shape our lives depend totally upon our collective free choices.

We can fit comfortably into a wider, safer world of allies who respect us and enemies who have fewer grounds to resent us. The crises we face are essentially manmade; we can undo much of the damage. First, however, we have to understand what is out there.

"You've got to scare people," a veteran editor I admire said recently, when we talked about public apathy. "Most people pay no attention until they see it is ten minutes to midnight. Then they panic and do something."

It is now ten minutes to midnight.

From chapter one of *"Escaping Plato's Cave: How America's Blindness to the Rest of the World Threatens Our Survival,"* released Oct. 10; Rosenblum retired in 2004 after 40 years as a reporter for the Associated Press.



As timely now as when it first ran, in the April 15, 1941 issue of *The Guild Reporter*, this cartoon was published under the headline "War's Meaning." It was submitted by Arthur Hoffman, a member of the Indianapolis Guild, in response to a *Guild Reporter* request for cartoon contributions. Contributions are still welcomed, on this or any other topic relevant to Guild members.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor,

As a retiree, I have no stake in the outcome of next year's Guild elections. But because the union still means a lot to me, I strongly urge you to elect Bernie Lunzer president. In my four years on what was then the International Executive Board, it was clear that Bernie was the brains of the outfit. And more important, he was the conscience.

Of course, Connie Knox as International Chairperson is a no-brainer. Both she and Bernie will be superb. We're lucky they stepped forward to serve.

—Jane Snow, former Region 3 Vice President, Local 1 retiree

To the Editor,

Bernie Lunzer and his "Stronger Guild" team will be exceptionally good leaders for the Guild and deserve support.

I saw Bernie's many strengths up close when I served with him on the International Executive Board's Finance Committee.

Bernie paid close attention both to the pennies and to the big picture. He combines an organizer's zeal with an accountant's precision.

His running mates, Carol Rothman and Connie Knox, are equally strong.

For strategic vision combined with attention to detail, Bernie, Carol and Connie are unmatched in the Guild.

—Jack Norman (retired), past president of the Milwaukee Newspaper Guild and former TNG Vice-President, Midwest Region

To the Editor,

With much appreciation to my dear friend and ex-colleague, Mike Burrell, for the article he wrote in the August *Guild Reporter* about my retirement, I must once again disagree with him: My liquor store did not fail. It actually did quite well before we sold it. Perhaps it was me you were thinking of, Mike.

—Bruce Meachum, retired staff rep.

It's your union — treat it like you own it

By Lisa Lareau

President, Canadian Media Guild

For gawd's sake, vote in the upcoming union elections. Better yet, run for office.

You are one among the lucky minority of workers in Canada to belong to a union. On average, you earn more than non-union colleagues doing the same job. You also proba-

bly have more holiday time. You likely even have a solid pension plan, or at least a fighting chance at getting one before you're doomed to continue working into your 70s to pay the rent. You also have real options to fight The Man if you lose your job, get harassed or abused, get screwed out of the pay you are entitled to, or if you experience any of the other irritants and transgressions most people just end up accepting on the job.

You've probably figured out that this stuff doesn't get delivered to your desk or equipment on a silver platter. Your colleagues, past and present, have wheedled, cajoled, sweated, shed some tears, and even scrapped a bit for it. Frankly, they could use your help.

So, if you're delighted with your union, there is a way to give back. Run for a position on your union executive.

If you're not that happy with what

you've seen from your union on a particular issue or even in general, don't walk the other way. You pay dues, you have to live with the collective agreement, and hopefully you give a fig about what happens to your colleagues. Dig in your elbows and fight for change. Otherwise, it ain't going to happen.

Adapted from *G-Force*, the Canadian Media Guild's web-based publication.

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: Nov. 9.)

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Minorities and labor: a case for diversity

By Randy Gilliam
New York Guild

From their earliest form as trade associations, in the early 1800s, labor unions have had a contentious relationship with minorities, particularly black Americans. The end of slavery meant increased competition for jobs between all-white trade associations and black Americans, exposing the former's racist attitudes for decades thereafter.

The acrimonious relations between the two groups—exacerbated by the corporate use of black Americans as strikebreakers, particularly in the coal and steel industries and by the railroads—are recounted by Paul Moreno in his book "Black Americans and Organized Labor." In late 19th century America, Moreno writes, racial inclusiveness took a back seat to the economic interests of labor unions, with union hostility directed not only at black Americans but at Chinese and European immigrants, too.

By the 20th century, the loss of manufacturing jobs led to the decline of trade unions' traditional industrial base. In its place, public-sector union membership, made up largely of government workers, increased substantially, particularly among black Americans, who accounted for a sizable portion of government employees. To counter discrimination by employers and unions, legislation such as the fair employment laws was enacted in the 1940s in several New England and western states. But it was the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that provided a national platform for addressing equal employment nationwide.

In some instances, unions used their political muscle to circumvent or dilute the impact of equal employment laws. But the prejudices of organized labor were soon eroded by a changing social climate, with the migration of southern black Americans to cities such as New York, Philadelphia and Chicago resulting in

more political clout for blacks, and for minorities in general. The endorsement of affirmative action to counterbalance racial preferences in seniority further pushed unions into moving away from their earlier discriminatory practices.

Today, market forces are driving the need for inclusiveness in the labor movement. Both employers and labor unions have come to recognize the value of a diverse workforce. As unions look to expand their membership base beyond the traditional industrial and service sectors, they are organizing groups such as flight attendants and casino workers that include large numbers of women and minorities. Within their own organizations, labor unions also are reaching out to women and minorities to increase their participation at all levels.

One example of this outreach is the appointment of four local presidents to at-large diversity seats on the CWA executive board, including Néstor Soto, president of the Guild local in Puerto Rico. These appointments were approved by the delegates to the 2007 CWA convention in Toronto as a way of making the CWA executive board more reflective of its membership.

The addition of at-large diversity seats is one initiative adopted by the CWA to foster diversity within its ranks. However, the membership must do its part to ensure that unions are addressing the needs and concerns of their entire membership. Guild members must step up and get involved at the local levels. Just as their ancestors rejected the limitations placed upon them in their search for equal employment upon gaining their freedom after slavery, minorities can assert their influence in a number of ways, such as running for office and networking with fellow union members and union officials at meetings and seminars.

Only through active participation can diversity become the norm, rather than a goal to be achieved.

THE NEXT GENERATION

Tackling ageism concerns

By Brendan Elliott

Chair, TNG-CWA Next Generation Committee

I fear a quiet controversy is brewing within the upper echelon of the union ranks. It revolves around the idea of what exactly this Next Generation committee is up to and what it hopes to achieve.

The whispers of discontent are getting louder, to the point where concerns are being raised informally with me by older members.

I understand the trepidation. After all, it's only natural to fear the unknown. This reactionary response reminds me of a recent episode of the situation comedy, *The Office*. The lead character, Michael, fears "new" ideas are being thrust upon him and he interprets the word "new" to mean his job is being threatened.

Michael pulls out the ageism card, and says he can't be discriminated against for being "old" and having "old" ideas.

It's that same "old" versus "new" argument that's being bandied about with the Next Generation Committee and the work we plan to execute.

The genesis of the Next Generation movement actually started in Canada four years ago, when the executive of the Canadian Media Guild recognized it didn't reflect the younger generation, either on its board or in its plans for the future.

The Canadian Media Guild planned a weekend conference for union members under the age of 35, called Not Born Yesterday. The announcement of this conference immediately started a controversy among more experienced union leaders.

E-mails flooded the Guild office, from those demanding to know why a conference was being planned for people under a specific age. Why should their union dues go toward funding something they considered would be a weekend party for kids?

Some of our union brothers and sisters even accused the Guild office of discrimination and referred to the Charter of Rights.

Guild president Lise Lareau stood strong. She even wrote a union-wide e-mail response addressing the criticism. She argued the union needed to hear from the next generation of union leaders in order to better reflect their needs.

And she was right. And the conference was an undeniable success.

The conference was attended by 65 curious union members from across Canada. I say curious because the majority of the participants hadn't been active within the union before they arrived in Toronto. But after that weekend, several—including myself—became quite active at both the local and national levels.

But now the push-back seen during the planning of the Not Born Yesterday conference has reared its ugly head again, following the formation of the TNG Next Generation committee.

I had just walked away from the microphone in Toronto after announcing the goals of our committee when I was approached by a long-time union activist. He challenged me to explain why there should be a special committee for us "young whippersnappers."

He went on to say he did not have a special interest group helping him out when he was younger. He just ran for office, and learned

through doing.

I tried to explain that our committee has nothing to do with trying to get an advantage. Quite simply, our mandate is to equip our newer/younger members with the tools of knowledge and much-needed self-confidence so when this generation of leaders is ready to retire, the next generation will be ready to take the torch.

The most telling comment I received after my speech in Toronto came from a woman in her mid to late 40s. She had an envious tone in her voice when she said, "I wish I could be part of your group. But I'm too old." To which I replied: "No one is too old. If you have a desire to be part of the next generation of leaders, you're more than welcome to join our team."

After all, unionism is about inclusion, not exclusion. And we're all here to insure the future of the union movement doesn't fade as the baby-boomers walk off into well-deserved retirement.

This is the first in a new series of columns planned for this space each month, featuring a different member of the TNG Next Generation exploring an issue particularly relevant to younger—or newer—union activists. For more information on the NextGen movement, e-mail Brendan Elliott at: jrn1st@gmail.com

THE NEWSPAPER GUILD TNG THE NEXT GENERATION

Among the ideas for a new logo
batted around by members of
The Next Generation.

THE GUILD Reporter

(See box on page 2 for address or other subscription changes or cancellations.)

Volume 74, Number 10

October 19, 2007

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DAYBOOK

Great Lakes, Midwest, and
Southern District Councils
Nov. 9-11, Chicago

New England District Council
Dec. 1, Manchester, NH

New Local Officers Seminar
Jan. 18-21, Silver Spring, MD

Broun Award entry deadline
Jan. 25 (postmark)

Guild Sector Conference
Feb. 27-March 2, Providence

CWA Legislative Conference
April 6-9, Washington DC

Freedom Award Banquet
May 21, Washington, DC

Nat'l Conference Media Reform
June 6-8, Minneapolis

CWA Annual Convention
June 23-25, Las Vegas

FROM THE MORGUE

Seventy years ago this month:

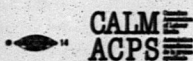
AF of L President William Green and publisher William Randolph Hearst team up to smash the Guild by creating a company union in Los Angeles, known as the American Federation of Newswriters and Reporters, Local 1. The Los Angeles Guild responds by filing charges of intimidation and coercion of workers with the National Labor Relations Board. . . . Eleanor Roosevelt announces at a press conference that she abides by the Guild's decision to affiliate with the CIO. . . . Editorial employees of United Press vote 277-84 for Guild representation.

Fifty years ago this month:

Only 60.58% of eligible Guild members vote in the union's biennial elections, the lowest turnout since 1943. . . . Some things never change: An Oct. 11, 1957 story in the Guild Reporter runs under the evergreen headline, "Social Security Fund Still Sound, Despite Scare Stories." . . . A column in trade magazine Editor & Publisher blames a 40% drop in journalism school enrollments on the industry's low wages.

Twenty-five years ago this month:

A joint one-day strike by Philadelphia's eight newspaper unions pushes the Inquirer and Daily News into wrapping up contract talks. . . . A proposed merger of the Guild and the International Typographers Union is approved unanimously by the Guild's executive board, which issues a call for a special convention to take up the proposal. . . . U.S. unemployment hits 10.1%, highest since 1940, prompting an anti-Reagonomics backlash.



Printed by Mount Vernon Printing Co.

Vol. 74

Iss. 11

NOV 16

2007