

THE GUILD Reporter

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No relief for newspapers

Against a backdrop of more layoffs, strike threat in Hawaii

The new year has brought no relief to a beleaguered newspaper industry, which continues to shudder under a series of blows that include strike threats, credit-rating downgrades and layoffs.

Although payroll cuts traditionally reach a crescendo in late fall and early winter, as publishers try to put their houses in order for a new fiscal year, layoffs and buyouts are becoming a year-round phenomenon. In recent weeks, the New York Times has said it will eliminate 100 newsroom jobs; Tribune Co. said it will cut 400 to 500 jobs nationwide, including 45 or so at the Guild-represented Baltimore Sun; and the Star Tribune in Minneapolis said it will lay-off 58 and impose an indefinite wage freeze on its non-unionized employees. The Washington Post, meanwhile, will be offering another round of buy-outs next month.

Elsewhere, the Monterey County Herald, which in recent months began combining some sections and dropping others (including its daily features section and Monday business news), fired eight employees while citing declining profits. And no sooner had CanWest Global acquired

Alliance Atlantis Communications then layoff notices started flying, starting with the imminent mid-April elimination of four jobs represented by the Canadian Media Guild.

The bloodletting has been so extensive that Advertising Age reported that U.S. media employment has fallen to a 15-year low, "slammed by the slumping newspaper industry." Newspapers, by the trade magazine's calculations, account for half of all media jobs lost—82,800, of 167,600 total—in just the past seven years. One in four newspaper jobs has disappeared since 1990; or, to put it another way, an industry that in 1990 accounted for 50% of all media jobs now accounts for only 38%.

Given such grim statistics, it may seem counterintuitive for unions to overwhelmingly endorse a newspaper strike. Yet that's precisely what six unions, including the Hawaii Guild, did Feb. 17, their members voting 358-17 to authorize a walkout at the Honolulu Advertiser. "They were outraged at what the company had on the table and they vowed to fight to get a fair contract," the Guild's administrative officer, Wayne Cahill, told a Hawaiian television reporter.

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Meggen Lindsay Berlute of the St. Paul Pioneer Press, above, recounts her experiences with MediaNews as (l to r) Julie Forster, Carl Hall and Clarissa Aljentera listen. Below, TNG-CWA staffer Eric Geist leads a discussion that includes Michael Manekin and Michelle Louie, unit chair at the San Francisco Chronicle.



Lighting the fuse for one big BANG

By Carl Hall
Northern California Media Guild

Working members from Guild units in Denver, St. Paul, Monterey, San Jose and San Francisco converged on Oakland, Cal. in late January, injecting fresh energy and insight into an organizing drive at the MediaNews Group's Bay Area newspaper cluster.

The Guild activists joined local union staff working on the organizing and mobilization campaign known as "One Big BANG: One Guild Universe" for four days of learning the latest techniques of union-building. The East Bay organizing project is a collaborative effort by the Northern California Media Workers and San Jose Newspaper Guild.

Backed by CWA, the locals hope to win expanded bargaining rights after MediaNews yanked recognition of a long-time Guild unit at the Oakland

Continued on page 3

Broun judges named; Percy Hatfield to chair

A panel of five distinguished journalists, to be chaired by former TNG-CWA vice president Percy Hatfield, has agreed to judge this year's Heywood Broun Award entries. Approximately 120 entries were received and will be judged in a day-long session March 4 at TNG-CWA headquarters in Washington, D.C.

The winner, to be announced in the March issue of The Guild Reporter, will receive a plaque and \$5,000 award at an evening banquet May 21. Two awards of "substantial merit," carrying cash prizes of \$1,000, also will be presented.

Judging the award will be Karen Heller, Sacha Pfeiffer, Robert E. Pierre, James Steele and Martin Tolchin.

Hatfield, who in time-honored fashion will have voice but not vote in the committee's deliberations, served 10 years on TNG-CWA's international executive board while working as a reporter for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. He also served more than 10 years on the national executive council of the Canadian Media Guild and its forerunner, the Canadian Wire Service Guild, and is a past recipient of CMG's Meritorious Service Award.

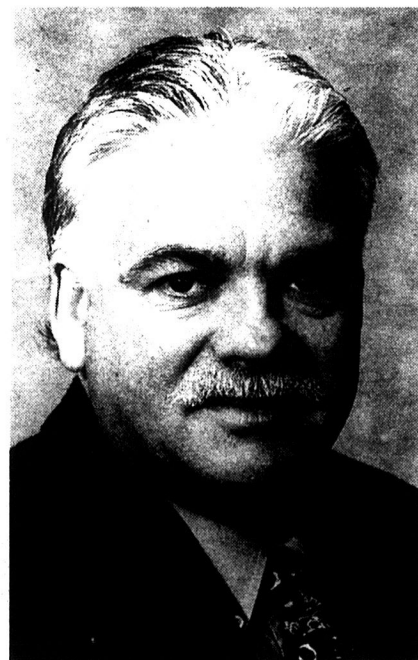
Hatfield retired from the CBC in 2006 after more than 30 years and currently is into his second year of a four-year term as a city councillor in Windsor, Ontario.

Karen Heller is a columnist and feature writer at the Philadelphia Inquirer, where she has been on

staff since 1986. A finalist for the 2001 Pulitzer in commentary, she has won numerous awards for investigative reporting, feature writing and criticism from the Associated Press, National Education Writers Association and Keystone Press awards. Prior to the Inquirer, Heller worked at USA Today, the Rochester Democrat & Chronicle, the Washington Star and Chicago magazine.

Sacha Pfeiffer, previously a five-year member of the Boston Globe's investigative team that won the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for public service, currently covers legal affairs, philanthropy and non-profits—beats that focus on the intersection of law and business, as well as on the broad topics of wealth and giving. Prior to joining the Globe, in 1995, she was a reporter for the Dedham Times, a weekly south of Boston.

A staff writer for the Washington Post since 1993, Robert Pierre currently covers issues related to troubled youth and adult incarceration, including their impact on families and neighborhood. He



Percy Hatfield

also has taught journalism at Dillard University, studied and traveled in South Africa, was based in Chicago for three years as the Post's Midwest correspondent and is on the board of directors of the Washington Center for Politics and Journalism.

James Steele has teamed up with Donald L. Barlett for more

than three decades to create one of the best-known investigative reporting teams in American journalism. Working first at the Philadelphia Inquirer, then at Time magazine and now at Vanity Fair, the duo has won virtually every national journalism award, including two Pulitzers, two National Magazine awards—and two Heywood Broun awards. The two also have written seven books exploring a wide range of topics, from health care to the influence of money in politics.

A New York Times reporter since 1954—and a member of its Washington bureau starting in 1973—Martin Tolchin departed to found the Hill in 1994, where he served for nine years as publisher and editor-in-chief. He currently is founding editor and publisher of Politico.com, a newspaper and website that reports and analyzes Congress. Together with his wife, Susan, he has written seven books and is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Everett M. Dirksen Award for Distinguished Reporting on Congress.

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Sun workers win lower health care premiums

More than 200 Washington-Baltimore Guild members will see their monthly health care premiums cut by as much as \$18.22—and get refunds of up to about \$150—as a result of a grievance brought by the local.

In a case that hinged on contract interpretation, an arbitrator ruled that The Sun violated the contract when it increased the share of dental and vision premiums paid by employees hired after June 23, 1996. The higher premiums were imposed last June.

Under language which has been in effect since 1996, Article 11 in the contract limited increases in premium shares to 4 percentage points a year. (For example, employees paying 25% of premiums one year can have their share increased to 29% the following year.) But Appendix D of the contract allowed for higher rates for

“newly hired” employees.

The Guild said Appendix D applied only to employees at the time they were hired. The Sun, on the other hand, contended that it applied to everyone hired after June 23, 1996, when that language came into the contract. Arbitrator Richard I. Bloch concluded, late last month, that the Guild interpretation was “more persuasive, and ultimately compelling.”

How much in premium savings and refunds each Guild member receives will depend on his or her particular enrollment choices—whether individual or family coverage, and dental PPO or dental HMO.

The savings created by the ruling do more than restore past improper increases, pointed out Bill Salganick, president of the Washington-Baltimore Guild and a Sun reporter—they also extend

into the future. “If the case had gone the other way, the Sun could have imposed larger increases in future years, and could have applied its logic to medical premiums as well as dental and vision,” he said.

“The case is a reminder of the value of a union contract,” Salganick added. “It’s a limit on Tribune’s worst instincts to reach into employees’ pockets to pay more and more of health costs. And it provides for a binding decision from a neutral third party to judge disagreements when they arise.”

A second Guild complaint about health charges—the so-called “fees” for smokers and for coverage of spouses—also is moving to arbitration, although it likely will be several months before the case is heard. Teamster locals at the Sun and other Tribune properties also are moving to arbitration on the fees.

At New York Times, health insurance is on life support

The New York Guild continues to wrestle with underfunding of its jointly administered benefits fund at the New York Times, which provides medical insurance for Guild-covered employees at the Times, New York Times Digital and WQXR Radio.

Although fund administrators have known for quite some time that reserves will soon be exhausted, management had refused since last summer to meet with the union after the local rebuffed its demands for significant contract concessions as the price of additional funding. When such a meeting finally did take place, Feb. 13, Guild representatives characterized the company’s movement as “minor.”

“We made it clear that we were willing to negotiate a fair agreement that met the needs of our members, and of The Times,” explained Bill O’Meara, the local’s president, before this month’s

meeting. “But we also made it clear that we would not agree to onerous company demands, nor would we give up the Guild’s role overseeing the Benefits Fund and the Pension Fund.”

The self-funded plan’s reserves had dwindled to \$4.5 million at the end of last year, down from \$5.3 million in January of 2007, but that was actually better than expected because of a switch in network providers to Empire Blue Cross/Blue Shield. The change resulted in many more doctors being considered “in-network,” reducing expenses and pushing back projections for when the fund will be exhausted by three months. Still, say union officials, without significant changes the reserves will be depleted by March, 2009.

Meanwhile, a Guild proposal to strengthen the Times’ pension plan has been rejected by management, despite projections by the Guild’s consultants that the proposal would save the company as much as \$30 million to \$40 million in contributions.

As developed by the local and AON Consultants, the proposal would have entailed adding another Guild shop as a participating employer to qualify the fund as a multi-employer plan. The Pension Protection Act that took effect January 1 requires single-employer plans to increase their funding levels, but has less rigorous standards for multi-employer plans.

According to O’Meara, AON’s consultants project that management’s decision to go it alone—assuming it makes the newly necessary contributions—will most likely result in overfunding of the pension plan but without the company having the flexibility to get the money back. Moreover, the company will lose the ability to earn greater returns through investment over the longer time periods allowed multi-employer plans.

Times officials said Feb. 13 that funding of the pension plan, in the company’s view, has no bearing on discussions regarding the health plan—a position that was guardedly received. “As long as the Times puts the required amounts in, and does not then come back to the bargaining table seeking ‘relief’ in the health talks, that’s fine with us,” said O’Meara.

The two sides have agreed to a series of weekly meetings, starting in March, to continue discussing the health fund.

Corrections

The wage scale published on page 3 of the January Guild Reporter provided outdated information for Canadian Press. Top of scale for reporter/editors is \$1353.03, rising to \$1366.56 on July 1.

A Guild brief in the January Guild Reporter, “New officers at Star-Trib unit,” inexplicably failed to mention the two top slots. The unit’s new co-chairs are David Chanen and Graydon Royce.

Guild briefs . . .

AP grievance nets thousands for 4

Four Washington-based broadcast engineers working for the Associated Press are to receive back pay ranging from \$6,164.05 to \$16,516.32, with three of the four receiving more than \$10,000, in settlement of a long-standing grievance filed by the News Media Guild. Brought into the bargaining unit during its last contract talks, the four continued working 40-hour weeks despite a contractual workweek of 37.5 hours. AP had maintained there was no clear understanding that the engineers’ workweeks would be reduced, despite explicit contract terms to the contrary.

IAPE marks win on premium pay

IAPE, TNG-CWA Local 1096, reports that an arbitrator had upheld its long-standing position that Dow Jones employees are entitled to premium pay for working on their days off—regardless of whether that work is done at home or in the office. Premium pay under the IAPE contract is time-and-a-half with a 5-hour minimum (3.5-hour minimum at Factiva).

No fix for ‘broken’ system in Hawaii

A federal district court judge has dismissed a lawsuit filed by the Hawaii Newspaper Guild that sought to resolve the “broken” arbitration process at the Hawaii Tribune-Herald. Although the two sides can’t agree on a replacement arbitrator to fill a vacancy, the judge ruled he does not have the legal authority to appoint one. Meanwhile, a National Labor Relations Board trial consolidating 13 complaints against the newspaper was held in October and a decision is expected within a few weeks, and a second NLRB trial is expected in March.

Fleeing North Bay for Caribbean

Saying that he is “retiring from the labor movement,” Dan D. Seguin has resigned as president of the CWA/SCA local in North Bay, which represents about 80 employees of the Nugget. Seguin, a press operator who was president for 11 years, booked a holiday in the Caribbean for the week in which a general membership meeting was to choose a successor.

P-I to arbitrate online position

A federal judge has ordered the Seattle Post-Intelligencer to arbitrate its dispute with the Pacific Northwest Guild over an online reporter position. The dispute arose after the P-I hired a nonunion reporter to work for its web site, insisting that the

position did not fall within Guild jurisdiction and that it did not have to submit the union grievance to arbitration. The court was not asked to rule on whether the union could claim jurisdiction, only on the question of whether the dispute would have to go to arbitration. The P-I said it is considering an appeal.

Reuters workers press for talks

The Reuters-Thomson Alliance, made up of union leaders from the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, have asked management at both companies for substantive consultation before the two entities merge, adding that they’re willing to sign confidentiality agreements if that’s what the regulations require. Those signing on included Jeremy Dear, head of the National Union of Journalists in the United Kingdom and Ireland; TNG-CWA President Linda Foley; Alan Burn, London-based senior workplace representative at UNITE in Reuters; Kathy Viner, staff representative of the Canadian Media Guild; and Bill O’Meara, Peter Szekely and Deborah Zabarenko of The Newspaper Guild of New York.

Fund-raising wins big in Pittsburgh

The Pittsburgh Guild’s annual “Off the Record” show, held at the Byham Theater, raised more than \$8,000 in net proceeds from ticket sales and many thousands more from sponsors and advertisers. Of that, \$3,500 has gone into the Guild’s annual scholarship fund and \$23,500 was donated to the Greater Pittsburgh Area Food Bank.

Norristown unit gets ‘best’ offer

Presented with a “last, best offer” by the Norristown Times Herald, the Philadelphia Guild unit’s bargaining team has submitted the contract package to its members without a recommendation. The two-year proposal, to be voted on within the next few weeks, offers a \$350 signing bonus in lieu of a first-year wage increase, a 1% increase in wages (but not in the wage scale) in October and a subsequent 0.5% increase in wages next April.

Would you prefer a virtual GR?

The Guild Reporter is still trying to find out if a significant number of members would prefer to get their union news electronically rather than via the U.S. mail. If you have an opinion on this issue, one way or the other, please visit our web site (www.newsguild.org) and click on the box with the headline “Guild Reporter Survey.” There are only four questions, and your answers will be appreciated.

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The Newspaper Guild International

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Layoffs, a strike threat and downgrades, oh my!

Continued from page 1

That company is Gannett Corp., which refused to meet with the unions last year between June—when a five-year contract expired—and November. And none of the five bargaining sessions in November and December lasted more than an hour, followed by a Jan. 25 meeting in which Gannett presented its “final” offer and threatened to unilaterally change its employees’ health plan if its proposal is not ratified within 30 days. That ultimatum, as much as the details of the proposal itself, went a long way toward stoking strike fever.

Gannett’s proposed health-plan changes would result in sharply higher premium payments for employees, with Cahill estimating that Guild members would have to shell out \$395 a month for family coverage. Add that to the company’s stingy wage package—a wage freeze the first year, a 1% pay raise this coming June, and a one-time 1.5% bonus—and employees would see a significant lowering of their living standards.

The last strike at the Advertiser was in 1963 and lasted around two months, but whether there’s a walkout in 2008 will depend on whether Gannett returns to the table, said Guild representatives.

Given the increasingly grim outlook for newspapers, it’s not surprising that Fitch Ratings further downgraded McClatchy Co.’s overall debt rating to an even lower junk-bond rating—BB, down from BB+—and said further downgrades are possible because of the company’s negative prospects. Ironically, the man who enabled McClatchy to become the second-largest newspaper company in the U.S. by putting Knight Ridder into play almost simultaneously disclosed in regulatory filings that he’s abandoned the entire newspaper sector.

Bruce Sherman reported that his investment firm, Private Capital Management, no longer owns any stock in the New York Times, Lee Enterprises or Belo. PCM had substantial positions in all three companies, as well as a sizeable stake in Gannett, when Sherman forced Knight Ridder in late 2005 to put itself on the block, triggering a series of sales in which McClatchy emerged with

the lion’s share of former Knight Ridder properties—and the outsized debt that is now clouding its creditworthiness.

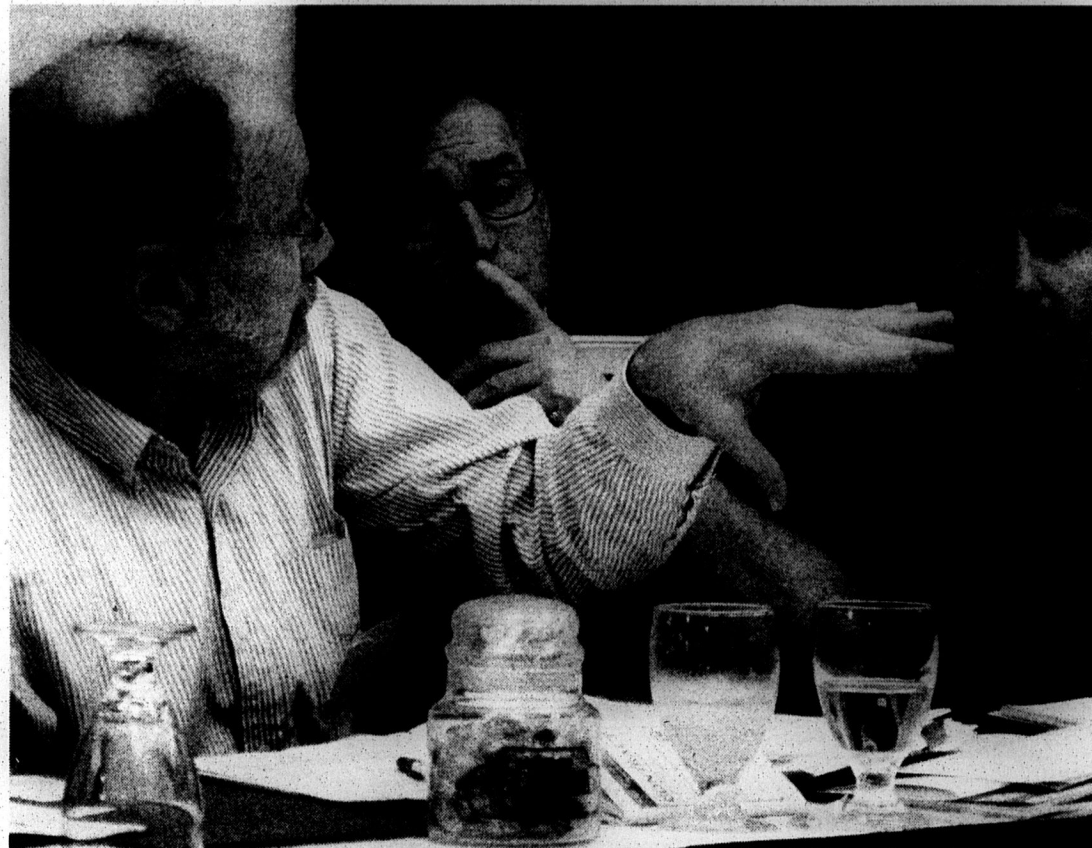
(More irony, if any were needed, was offered in recent weeks by the belligerently named Firebrand Partners, a self-described “operational activist investment firm,” and its hedge fund ally, Harbinger Capital Partners. The two companies have bought up nearly 12% of the publicly traded stock in New York Times, which has a dual-class stock structure, and are seeking to have four of their nominees elected to the company’s 13-member board of directors at the annual meeting April 22.)

Meanwhile, back in the trenches, at least Guild members at belt-tightening newspapers will in most cases be offered buyouts. The Sun, for example, plans to offer separation packages valued at one week’s base pay for every six months of service, to a maximum of one year’s pay, plus an extra 3% to help take the sting out of the resulting tax hit. But the Sun also opened its window for employees to opt for the buyout for a mere two weeks, ending Feb. 29, prompting the Guild to push for more time so members can adequately assess their options.

The New York Times said it hopes to achieve its payroll cuts through attrition and buyouts, but acknowledged it may resort to layoffs. At press time, New York Guild officers were meeting with members to explain buyout provisions. Buyout details also were being awaited by Washington Post employees, who already saw buyouts in 2003 and 2006 that reduced newsroom headcount by approximately 120.

Late-breaking

As the Guild Reporter was going to press, word was received that MediaNews was seeking non-specific but “significant” staff reductions in the Bay Area and at the San Jose Mercury News. The company was offering two weeks of pay for every year of service, to a maximum of 26 weeks, and had set a Feb. 29 deadline for takers. If layoffs are required because not enough buyouts are taken, severance reportedly will be half that amount.



Jeff Leib, from the Denver Post, relates the problems confronting newspaper workers.

Lighting the BANG fuse

Continued from page 1

Tribune and affiliates in August, 2007.

Editorial staff at the Tribune and five other dailies formed the core of the Guild’s ANG Newspapers Unit. But when MediaNews combined ANG editorial staff with that of the previously non-union Contra Costa Times and its affiliates, forming BANG-East Bay, the company claimed it could cease recognizing the ANG unit.

Guild members replied with unfair labor practice charges, which are pending, and the organizing drive, which could render much of the controversy moot by forming an expanded 300-member Guild cluster matching the company’s newly proclaimed network.

Organizers have been gaining support—and made more headway during the January gathering.

“People seemed to welcome a chance to meet somebody from another paper with experience bargaining a contract with MediaNews,” said Meggen Lindsay, a 30-year-old team leader from the St. Paul Pioneer Press newsroom.

She and her St. Paul colleague, business writer Julie Forster, joined Jeff Leib, a transportation writer from the Denver Post and longtime Guild leader, for a panel in Walnut Creek and other talks with East Bay news workers.

Michael Manekin of the BANG-EB’s West Bay outpost in San Mateo, who is one of the rank-and-file leaders of the organizing, helped guide the discussions. Other participants included Clarissa Aljentera of the Monterey Herald, Jack Davis and Sylvia Ulloa of the San Jose Mercury News, and Michael Cabanatuan and Michelle Louie of the San Francisco Chronicle.

“I’m really glad I came here and met so many people,” Lindsay said. “We want to help you guys because everybody will benefit when you succeed. And if you stick together, I have no doubt you will succeed.”

But she did admit to becoming a little tired of all the rain and cold weather. Her umbrella—even though battle-tested in Minnesota’s winters—snapped in half within minutes of stepping off the plane in California.

‘Somebody has to stand up for what’s right’

[Mere days before the BANG-EB conference, a poverty and social services reporter at the Contra Costa Times stepped forward to co-chair the organizing committee. Her initial e-mail to her co-workers is as eloquent a summation of what’s at stake as you’ll ever read.]

By Sara Steffens
Contra Costa Times Reporter

I wanted to introduce myself to those of you who don’t know me, and add an official announcement for those who do: I’m Sara Steffens, a metro reporter in Walnut Creek, and as of the past few weeks the co-chair of our very own Guild organizing committee.

Juggling an 18-month-old daughter, a busy work life and my usual motley array of side projects, I had precisely no time for this new responsibility. Even now I write this with one ear to the baby monitor, and another to the clothes dryer, where I’m trying to finish a three-week-old pile of laundry.

I won’t lie: organizing the Bay Area News Group will be hard work. It already is. Starting a union from scratch is a huge job.

But it’s also making me unexpectedly happy. I no longer feel like I’m in extended mourning, watching my newsroom die by

degrees, wondering what bright and talented person will leave this week.

Instead I’m choosing to be part of the solution. I’m standing up for the newspaper I have come to love, and for all of us who have made it a place worth being.

We have a tradition at the Times of being proud of what we do, of knowing that our work exceeds expectations for a paper of our size and resources. We have always been scrappy and hard-working, and we’ve often been told that a non-union environment is part of what makes us special. That may have been true. Or maybe it never was, we just believed it.

This much is clear: Times have changed. Our business has changed, and we will have to adapt to survive. We have a new kind of owner, and we need a new way of responding. This is a significant struggle at an important time in our industry, and we have a chance to have a say in our future.

I believe the best and the brightest of the Bay Area News Group will come together in this response. Our union will be a new union, made up of the smart and savvy people who always have made our paper a cut above. And I firmly believe such a union is our only hope to maintain reasonable work-

ing conditions here, so that we can continue to attract and retain talented journalists and do the work we love to do.

I believe our union will become a platform to promote the values we share as journalists, the ones that don’t always come to the forefront for profit-seeking owners. We need to be the voice for quality, for putting journalism first. We need to be the ones to point out that in the long run, good journalism is good business, be it online or in print. (Many of our editors believe this too, but they have little more power in the system).

I started this journey pretty worried about what signing up as a union organizer might mean for my career. Funny how I don’t feel scared at all anymore. Beginning this week—with this very note—my name, face and words will be out in public more and more. It will be interesting to see what happens to me.

Here’s what I predict: nothing.

I won’t be demoted, or reprimanded, or reassigned to the Hayward night desk. Those things are against the law, and our company is too smart for that. Nor do I believe I will be victim to more subtle forms of retribution, like a stern talking-to from the higher ups.

Our managers know the law. They are

decent people. And they know such tactics will likely backfire. Their war, instead, will be one of words. They will simply try, vigorously and repeatedly, to convince us that organizing is unnecessary. They will point to our close personal ties, remind us of the good times under Knight Ridder, when we generally earned more than our ANG counterparts. They may even try to bump up our pay, or add things back into our sad, sad medical plan (free preventive screening, anyone?).

And if that doesn’t work, they will try to scare us with talk of unnecessary bureaucracy, hefty dues, archaic points of union law no longer enforced. They may even invoke our fear of layoffs, of becoming obsolete, of losing the camaraderie that makes the newsroom a fun place to be.

But here’s the thing: without the union, we have nothing. Together, we have a voice.

We can sit around and mourn the demise of our industry. Or we can stand up and fight for our little corner of the world, for ourselves and our co-workers and the communities that depend on what we do.

Somebody has to stand up for what’s right.

Let’s stand together.

News round-up

Union membership blips upward

More Americans joined labor unions in 2007 than in any year since 1983, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, increasing organized labor's ranks by 311,000, to 15.7 million. As a result, union membership as a share of the total work force rose last year for the first time in a quarter-century, if only fractionally, to 12.1% up from 12% in 2006. Moreover, western states for the first time had a higher unionization rate than the historically industrialized Midwest, 14.7% compared with 13.8%.

Economists project downturn effect

Even a mild recession this year would add 3.2 million workers to national unemployment by 2010, according to the Center for Economic and Policy Research while a severe recession could make 5.8 million more workers unemployed by 2011. The center's analysis, "What We're In For: Projected Economic Impacts of the Next Recession," can be read online at www.cepr.net/documents/publications/JSDB_08recession.pdf. Report authors John Schmitt and Dean Baker also conclude that a 2008 recession could eventually result in at least 4.2 million people losing health-insurance coverage and a drop in the inflation-adjusted median family income of between \$2,000 and \$3,700 per year.

Getting ready for the recession?

Although the official White House line is that the U.S. economy has slowed down but is not in a recession, George W. Bush's proposed federal budget for the year that starts Oct. 1 contains billions of more dollars for unemployment benefits. The fiscal 2009 spending plan for the Labor Department calls for \$2.71 billion in federal advances to the unemployment trust fund—no money was sent to the fund in the current fiscal year—and a \$2.53 billion increase in the unemployment trust fund base. The proposed budget also includes a 30% increase—\$13 million, increasing the total to \$58 million—for the Office of Labor-Management Standards, the Labor Department's union watchdog.

Battista re-nomination is 'poisonous'

AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney blasted President George W. Bush for re-nominating labor lawyer Robert J. Battista to a new 5-year term as National Labor Relations Board chairman, calling it "poisonous." Noting that Battista has been the NLRB's point man in a series of 3-2 anti-labor rulings, Sweeney charged that the renomination "is a clear effort to stack the deck in favor of Big Business over working people." The International Labour Organization is investigating a formal AFL-CIO complaint that the NLRB under Battista has violated international rules.

You can't make this stuff up . . .

Even as the National Labor Relations Board has issued a blizzard of rulings reflecting its pro-corporate leanings, someone on the board must have been fretting that such anti-worker sentiments might be seen as . . . well, un-American. So on Feb. 13 the NLRB attended to its image by announcing that henceforth the American flag will be displayed at all union representation elections. In announcing the new policy, NLRB General Counsel Ronald Meisburg said the display will "lend dignity to the election process and communicate to all participants that they are involved in an official activity of the Government of the United States."

Canadians tighten media rules

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission has tightened its media ownership rules to ensure that one person or company doesn't own more than two of the three main media outlets—radio, television or newspapers—in a single market. The rules also prohibit control of more than 45% of total television audience share and effectively prohibit a merger of BellExpressVu and Star Choice, Canada's two main satellite TV services providers. But the new rules do not apply retroactively to existing media conglomerates, nor do they change the maximum number of newspapers and radio and TV stations that may be owned.

A leaner Sun Times put up for sale

Less than a month after cutting dozens of employees and trimming \$50 million in annual costs, Sun-Times Media Group has put itself up for sale.

Bahr scholarships being offered

Empire State College of the State University of New York is accepting applications for the Morton Bahr Distance Learning Scholarship, named after CWA President Emeritus Morton Bahr, for the 2008-2009 academic year. Two new scholarships will be awarded this year, for students working toward associate's, bachelor's or master's degrees. The deadline for applications is June 1, 2008. To apply online or to download an application, visit www.unionvoice.org/ct/N7z_1m110Po4/. For a mailed application, e-mail special.programs@esc.edu or call (800) 867-5941.

Forget the Beltway spin, it's belt-tightening time

While some pundits and politicians continue grasping for any indicator that the U.S. is not yet in a recession, a growing body of data suggests that a) yes, we are; and b) for most people the question is rather academic—for them, the recession arrived some while ago.

Even as the housing and credit crunch get most of the headlines, economist Christian Weller at the Center for American Progress points out that the country's economic weakness is much more broad-based and cannot be remedied without the kind of large-scale reform of U.S. economic policy that hasn't been discussed yet. Among the red flags he cites:

- **Slow wage growth.** Factoring in inflation, hourly wages were 2.5% higher and weekly wages were 1.6% higher in December 2007 than in March 2001. Over the past 12 months, real hourly earnings have fallen by 0.7% and weekly wages by 0.9%.

- **Anemic job growth.** Monthly job growth since March 2001 has averaged an annualized 0.6%. Over the past 12 months, the average monthly job growth was 82,800 jobs, compared to 166,100 in the previous 12 months, and 219,900 in the 12 months before that.

- **Disappearing benefits.** The share of private sector workers with a pension dropped from 50.3% in 2000 to 43.2% in 2006, the last year for which data are available; the share of people with employer-provided health insurance dropped from 64.2% to 59.7%.

- **Rising family debt.** In the third quarter of 2007, household debt averaged a record 133.0% of disposable income. In the second quarter of 2007, families spent 14.3% of their disposable income to service their debt, up from 13.0% in the first quarter of 2001.

- **Loss of equity.** For the great majority of families, their home is their single largest asset—but its value is rapidly shrinking. The

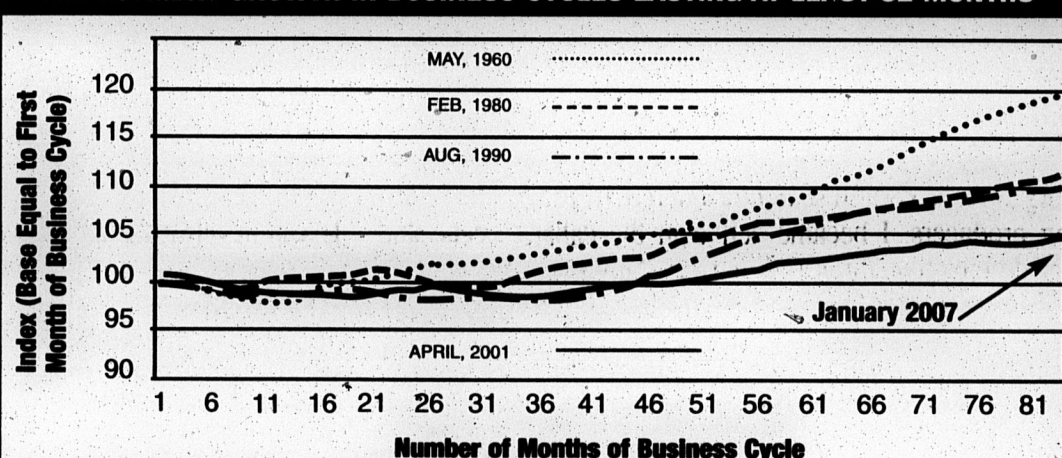
share of mortgages entering foreclosure was 0.8% in the third quarter of 2007, reflecting the sixth increase in a row, to the highest level on record since 1979. The share of all mortgages in foreclosure also reached a record, at 1.7%. But those who try to forestall foreclosure by selling may find it impossible to do so: existing home sales in December 2007 were 22.0% lower than a year earlier, while the median sales price was 6.0% lower. Home equity dropped by 2.5 percentage points relative to disposable income in the third quarter of 2007, the seventh decline in a row, ending also the largest year-over-year drop since June 1992.

- **Intractable poverty.** The poverty rate fell slightly to 12.3% in 2006, down from 12.6% in 2005, but was still substantially higher than the last low point in 2000, when it was 11.3%.

- **Low business investment and slowing productivity growth.** Business investment averaged 10.4% of GDP between March 2001 and December 2007, the lowest share since the 1960s. Net investment, after accounting for depreciation of capital goods, averaged 1.9% of GDP at the same time, the lowest share of any business cycle. And labor productivity growth fell below 2% in 2005, 2006, and 2007, for the first time since 1997.

- **A resumption in deficit growth.** In January 2008, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the deficit for 2008 will amount to \$219 billion, \$56 billion more than in 2007—not including the cost of an economic stimulus or additional appropriations for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

EMPLOYMENT GROWTH IN BUSINESS CYCLES LASTING AT LEAST 82 MONTHS



SOURCE: CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS, U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

Plans laid for 2009 passage of Employee Free Choice Act

A strongly pro-worker senator from one of the nation's most-unionized states has predicted that the Employee Free Choice Act—one of organized labor's highest legislative priorities—will not surface this year but will be resurrected by Congress in 2009. Replying to questions after a speech to the Economic Policy Institute on Feb. 13, Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) said "one of our top two or three priorities is the Employee Free Choice Act, once a new president comes in, in 2009."

Although the act passed the House during its last session, it foundered on a GOP-led filibuster in the Senate. Both Democratic presidential hopefuls, Sens. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) and Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.), voted to halt the talkathon; presumed GOP presidential nominee Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) voted for the filibuster.

Separately, CWA leadership is proposing a new Strategic Industry Fund to help promote the EFCA. "We must stop responding in only a defensive manner" to attacks on working people, explains the CWA's draft proposal. "The Employee Free Choice Act gives us the ability to mount an offensive fight. Fighting for passage of this law enables us to describe the assault on collective bargaining, to talk about corporate greed, to document the decline in the middle class, to hold elected leaders accountable, and to put our employers on the defensive when they come to the bargaining table."

Besides writing card-check recognition into law, the act also would make it easier to get court orders against labor law-breakers and would increase fines for labor law-breaking. The EFCA—sponsored by Senate Labor Committee Chair Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) and

House Education and Labor Committee Chair George Miller (D-Calif.)—also would outlaw employer-run "captivity audience" meetings, in which workers are forced to listen to anti-union diatribes under threat of punishment for staying away, and mandate binding arbitration when workers and bosses cannot agree on a first contract.

EFCA is based on legislation written by the late Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.).

As currently envisioned, the new CWA initiative would train the union's "Stewards Army" about the act's provisions and importance, produce literature for CWA members, expand e-mail communications about the EFCA and "move to mass membership action" to support its passage. Initiative milestones include getting 15% of CWA members in every district, sector, local and state to sign a petition by Nov. 30 supporting passage of the act.

Other targets include meetings with key senators and senatorial candidates; getting "at least three additional governors and several mayors of major cities" to publicly support passage; working with other unions and American Rights at Work to build additional support for the EFCA; and reaching out to all CWA sectors, like the Newspaper Guild, "for full involvement in this fight."

EFCA supporters, noting that the U.S. now has a smaller proportion of unionized workers than in 1935, when the National Labor Relations Board was established, say a major overhaul of U.S. labor law is long overdue. "The U.S. lags behind every other industrialized democracy in the world and many new, emerging economies in terms of collective bargaining coverage," observes the CWA's draft proposal.

A little music, maestro!

Sometimes there's more to Guild members than meets the eye — or ear

By Edwin Anthony Lugo
Newspaper Guild of New York

Early morning. Time for yet another brilliant performance. "Buenos dias, good morning" trips from my lips as if from a well-worn script.

I am the receptionist and switchboard operator at El Diario La Prensa, but like many a receptionist before me—Rosa Parks, Diana Ross, Naomi Judd—I also have a dream. I am an entertainer.

I began working at the age of three, singing in my father's storefront church. As I got older I'd help sweep up, and in the summer helped distribute lunches in my South Bronx community. My mother's first cousin, American baseball legend and philanthropist Roberto Clemente Walker, passed down to us the lesson that hard work and proper ethics will always be synonymous with a good life and what's right in our family and lives.

I began my artistic career in earnest in the drama department of the Performing Arts High School, of "Fame" fame. Oscar nominee Amy Ryan was the first person to speak to me, before the first-period bell that would knell the rest of my life. Young and awkward and in my Michael Jackson phase (yes, I had one glove), I'd dance the moonwalk to "Billie Jean" and anything else played at one party after another, including Chastity Bono's sweet sixteen, where I met Andy Warhol. His two-tone wig was scary.

I still carry the scars from when Jennifer Aniston ripped into my junior-year acting scene, but that same year I scored a role in an ABC-TV movie of the week with Howard Rollins. I also landed a merit scholarship from the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts to study at the University of Texas at Austin. I remember New Year's Eve, 1997, as we sat in the dorm watching Dick Clark, and the first commercial after the ball dropped was one I had done for MacDonald's. The room erupted into cries of "Oh, my God, that's you!" Priceless.

I recorded my first records in Austin and brought them home to New York in search of interest from Grammy-winning producers. I became active in the cabaret scene and played clubs like Tatou NY and LA, Nuyorican Poets Café, Nells, Sob's and, finally, the big one—"Showtime at the Apollo"—where to this day I am undefeated.

In 1995 I met Paul Simon. Two years earlier, I had auditioned for his mystery project but heard nothing back. A year-and-a-half later I auditioned again, and again nothing. Six months passed and a cattle call was posted, so I audi-

tioned once more—but this time a documentary camera crew from the UK asked if they could tape my audition, so I created an outlandish exaggeration of a Puerto Rican gangster—and got the part.

Two years of rehearsals later we finally made it to Broadway, where "The Capeman" ran for an all-too-brief but glorious two months. Stars Rubén Blades, Ednita Nazario and Marc Anthony, along with everyone else in the show, were devastated when we closed. Quincy Jones, Tito Puente and Stevie Wonder were just some of the delighted audience members who loved what we were doing, but the critics were merciless in panning the production.

The summer before "Capeman," I had received a letter from Robert Redford inviting me to participate in the Sundance Theatre Lab in Utah, along with Glenn Close, Tyne Daly and Carol Burnett. One night, while "Capeman" was still running, Close came backstage and said to me, "You were great." "No, no, I could have done better..." I started to argue, when she cut me off. "Just say 'thank you,'" she rebuked, teaching me a valuable lesson in self-esteem.

After "Capeman" I continued recording and toured London with an acid-jazz band called The Holland Tunnel Project. I also released a solo album in the UK, "Good to go," and 24 others on my own label, Love Kiss Music (cdbaby.com/all/lugo). Around 1999, Grammy-winning producer Bob Brockman asked me to play percussion for Christina Aguilera at Radio City Music Hall, but

even with that I had to find a steady gig, this time at El Diario. I became a Guild member a year later, in 2000.

The publisher of El Diario (a hub for everything Latin) was a huge fan of "Capeman," which she'd seen 10 times. A cast-signed poster hanged in her office, and when I pointed out my signature she was delighted to hire me for a position that puts me in front of a steady stream of Latino celebrities and public figures. In 2002, when I was awarded a Grammy certificate for vocalist and songwriter on Norman Brown's "Just Chillin'," El Diario supportively ran feature stories in the paper.

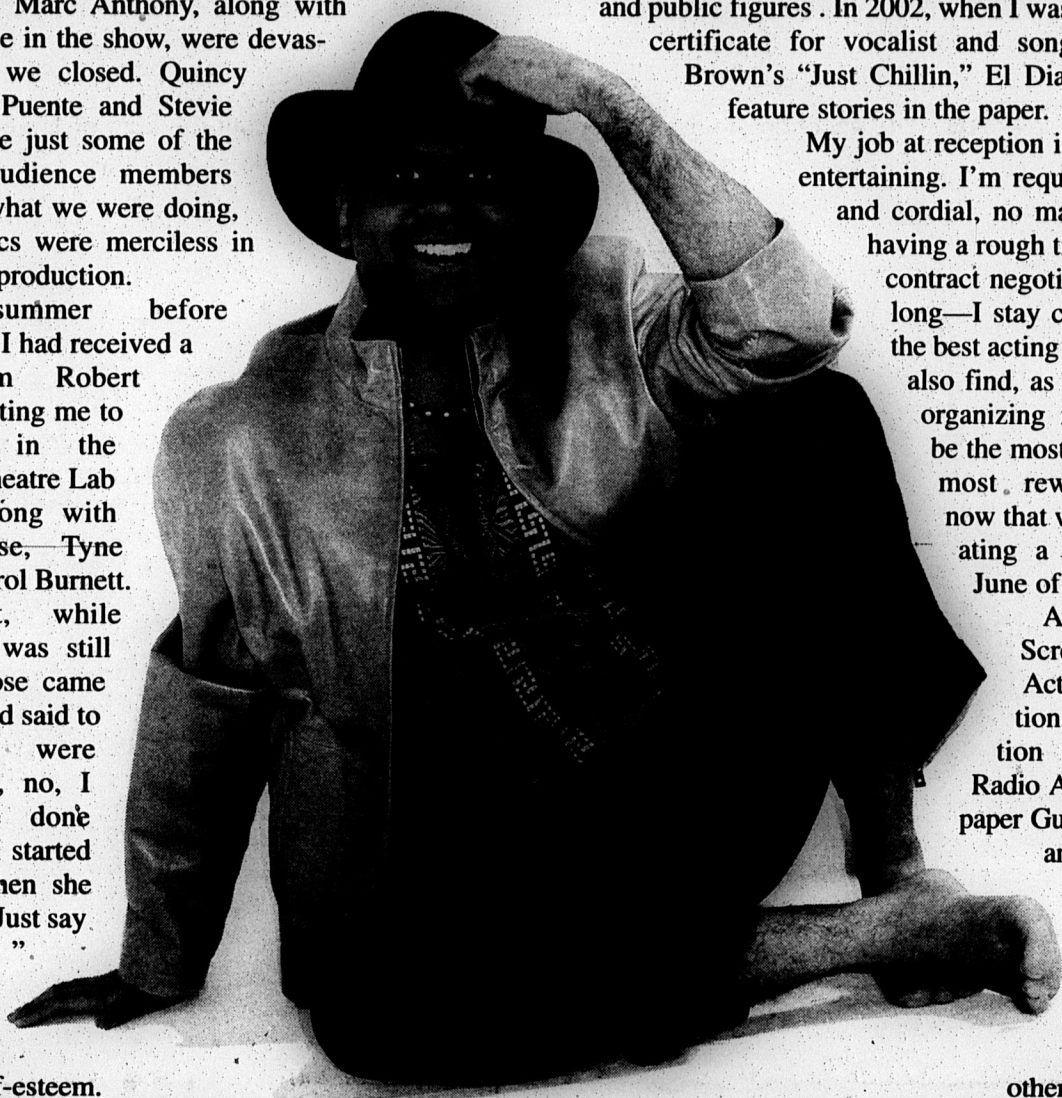
My job at reception is basically a form of entertaining. I'm required to be courteous and cordial, no matter what, so if I'm having a rough time—for example, if contract negotiations are taking too long—I stay calm. That's some of the best acting I've ever done. But I also find, as a shop steward, that organizing new employees can be the most challenging and the most rewarding, especially now that we have been negotiating a new contract since June of 2006.

As a member of the Screen Actors Guild, Actors Equity Association, American Federation of Television and Radio Artists and the Newspaper Guild, I am proud to be an AFL-CIO member four times over and an active voting member of the Recording Academy (Grammys).

On my vacations and other time off from El

Diario, my band—Lugo Latin Soul—and I hit the road and play live music with the Armed Forces Entertainment for service men and women stationed all over the world.

Music performed, produced and remixed by Lugo can be found at www.lovekissmusic.com, the Jay-Z film "State Property," on MTV's "MADE" and the BBC show "Bens Zoo."



Small raises, new media characterize contracts

Although every local has its own issues to address in contract bargaining, two outcomes appear common to many: modest wage increases, and much more attention paid to "new media." Herewith a quick round-up of several recent agreements:

Denver: A Denver Guild bargaining team and MediaNews management at the Denver Post reached tentative agreement on a two-year contract after only seven negotiating sessions. Still awaiting a membership vote at press time, the agreement increases wages by 1% each year and includes numerous changes in contract language "that reflect the extraordinary transformations in our industry," according to a Guild statement.

Notably, the new language includes "an expectation" that employees will gather information for "multiple media platforms using a variety of tools." Post management, meanwhile, is supposed to provide the training needed for such multi-platform expertise.

Washington-Baltimore: Guild members have voted 44-10 to ratify a two-year contract at Radio Free Asia that provides a 4% wage increase this year and a \$500 one-time cash award July 1. Increases in January 2009 and 2010 will be equivalent to the federal government's cost-of-living-adjustment plus 1%; in addition, 1% of total Guild payroll (currently about \$7 million) will be divided in each of those years, based on performance, as cash bonuses.

Other gains at RFA include two "float-

ing" holidays and an increase in any layoff notice to 60 days, from 30. A major give-back, however, was a reduction in the maximum employer retirement contribution to 9.25% from 10.5%.

Pottstown: Guild members at the Pottstown Mercury voted overwhelmingly to ratify a new, two-year contract that runs through Sept. 11, 2009. The economic package provides a \$350 signing bonus (pro-rated for part-timers), a 1% wage increase for current employees Sept. 12, 2008 and a 0.5% wage increase for current employees a year later; neither increase will change existing wage scales.

Several new contract provisions address new media, including higher classification pay for employees who fill in for the new, exempt on-line editor; expanded online and new media responsibilities in the editorial and advertising departments; and disciplinary protection for employees who make a "fair effort" to master new tasks related to online and new media work. The two sides also agreed to create a joint labor-management committee for an ongoing discussion of new media issues.

Kenosha: Guild-represented members at the Kenosha News have ratified, 23-4, a two-year contract that will run through Jan. 31, 2010. Key to the settlement was an effort by management and the editorial-only unit to agree on language that would "address the changing environment in today's print industry," summarized a member of the

local's negotiating team.

As a result, the parties agreed to combine the previously separate job classifications of copy editor and reporter/photographer into one single "journalist" classification. The change includes a provision that journalists be given proper training before receiving assignments that fall outside of their current duties, and additional language protects against discipline of any employee hired before Feb. 1, 2008 as long as a "fair effort" is made in learning new duties.

Moreover, the new contract establishes the bargaining unit's claim to jurisdiction over work on the web, as well as some jurisdictional claims over any new, non-daily print products that the company may pursue in the future.

The consolidation of job classifications means a similar merging of wage scales, with changes phased in over the two-year period. But all employees will receive a minimum 1% wage increase immediately, with additional increases ranging up to 8% for clerk/typists who are being reclassified as editorial assistants. Moreover, a \$14,000 lump-sum bonus was to be distributed at signing among all 33 members of the bargaining unit.

Puerto Rico: A five-year fight for a contract at Univision came to an end Jan. 27, when Guild members represented by UPA-GRA ratified an agreement "by an ample majority," according to a negotiating team member. Among the economic improve-

ments: employees with five or more years of service get a wage increase of \$140 a week, in the first year, while those lower in the scales get proportionately smaller increases, down to \$70 a week for first-year employees. Lump-sum payments to offset the years of no wage increases also will be made, starting at \$1,500 for first-year employees up to \$18,300 for those with five or more years. The wage scales also will be adjusted, increasing 15% to 30% a week.

Brockton: After more than 40 bargaining sessions over 18 months, Guild-represented employees of the Brockton Enterprise ratified a contract that "yielded precious little in the way of salary raises, but improved many benefits," according to a member of the bargaining team.

Raises for 2008 and 2009 are conditional on at least a 3% increase in revenues in preceding years, which is unlikely; instead, the company agreed to a \$600 signing bonus for full-timers and a \$400 bonus next year if the revenue trigger isn't met; part-timers get half as much each year. On the plus side, the company agreed to a 401(k) match of 50% of an employee's contribution, up to 6% (or a 3% match); and agreed to increase its contribution to the TNG Pension Plan by 56 cents per shift, to \$4.81, and tie future increases to the top reporter scale.

Guild members also will be switched to the company's self-insured health plan, which has higher co-pays but lower monthly employee premiums.

To the Editor:

I have never written a letter to the editor before. But I am so outraged at a headline in the News Roundup of the Guild Reporter January 25 issue that I am compelled to write.

Whoever thought they were being cute with the headline "For journalists, 2007 was to die for," needs to rethink their copy editing skills.

Such a headline on a brief describing increasing violence against journalists, with 171 confirmed deaths of journalists in 2007, trivializes these deaths and our profession.

Since this is a newsletter for union members in our profession, it is especially appalling.

—Therese Poletti,
IAPE/TNG-CWA Local 1096

To the Editor:

Anyone has a right to run for union office, and I will be the first to defend that right. However, the quotes and allegations attributed to Bernie Lunzer in the January Guild Reporter about the leadership of the CWA tear at the very fabric of our unity and threaten to undermine our mission.

Lunzer is quoted as saying that CWA leadership wanted to eliminate the membership referendum vote on officers, which is absolutely untrue. I challenge Lunzer to provide a single bit of information to support this or else retract the statement. Nothing could be further from the truth; I helped write the Guild-CWA merger agreement that preserves those important aspects of the Guild and I signed it. I am proud of the Guild's referendum vote and have boasted about it everywhere.

I would hope that someone who aspires to be president of The Newspaper Guild, a union that has stood for solidarity, truth and justice throughout its long and proud history, would at least get the facts before he made such an allegation. All CWAers know that our unity, TNG with CWA, is critical to the future of the Guild in this time of news industry crisis.

—Larry Cohen
president, CWA

Bernie Lunzer responds:

I'm pleased to respond to the Guild Reporter article that Larry Cohen references, because it didn't reflect the full scope of my comments.

Those at the meeting will recall me praising Larry for his leadership on such things as health care, and stating that the Guild needs to be more active in CWA.

I believe Larry when he says he likes our direct elections. I've heard from others in CWA that wouldn't use it. I did comment that the Guild must change (putting more effort into organizing, for instance) and how we need a stronger media sector. But I also said it is vital that the Guild maintain important aspects of our identity in the larger union.

There is a larger discussion still to be had in CWA over the structure of this union we are so proud of. That discussion needs to be honest and open, and this election is an important part of that dialogue. I hope to serve as Guild President, and work with everyone in CWA on building a diverse, unified union, with mutual respect for all its workers.

I was glad I was able to discuss these issues directly with Larry by phone.

To the Editor:

As members of the finance committee of the Sector Executive Council, we have worked closely with Bernie Lunzer for several years.

He has been open, direct and willing to provide all information the committee needs to do its work: preparing budgets, discussing requests from locals seeking defense and mobilization money and deciding where best to invest our funds.

We know the loss of money from the Defense-Mobilization Fund investments in 2004 has been raised in this campaign. We can tell you that Bernie and the committee—and the entire SEC—faced this issue when it first came to light and quickly did what was necessary to set things right, including

changing investment managers. We can tell you that every member of the finance committee—and the entire SEC—had numerous opportunities to raise questions and voice concerns. In the end, we all expressed satisfaction with the way we handled things.

Besides being easy to work with, Bernie has a vision for the future of the Guild that will make us stronger, more inclusive and better prepared to have a say in the future of our industry. That's why we support his candidacy for president of The Newspaper Guild.

—Connie Knox,
TNG vice president, Region 2
Lucy Witeck,
TNG vice president, Region 4

To the Editor:

For 25 years, I've had the opportunity to work with and write about the labor movement. It's given me the chance to witness some thrilling successes, but lately most of what I've seen are heartbreaking failures.

Corporate lawlessness has had a devastating impact on America's unions. Clearly, we all share a stake in strengthening workers' rights. However, too many union leaders have refused to consider their own role in weakening the labor movement. Rather than craft creative responses to new challenges, they've offered obsolete strategies wrapped in outdated rhetoric. Instead of leading unions through a process of change, they're leading them into oblivion.

Linda Foley is a different kind of leader: one who refuses to accept conventional wisdom or the status quo. I saw that first-hand when we worked together to reach out to young freelancers who would otherwise have no contact with our union. Based on that experience and others, I know that Linda doesn't react to the problems facing our union—she anticipates them and works to keep the Guild ahead of the curve. We can only imagine how much stronger the labor movement would be if more union presidents did the same.

—Jim Grossfeld, member,
Executive Council
Washington-Baltimore Guild

To the Editor:

The Boston Newspaper Guild's executive committee and governing board support A Stronger Guild. Bernie Lunzer, Carol Rothman, and Connie Knox have been and will continue to be inclusive leaders who care deeply about and communicate with locals and their members on a consistent basis.

Bernie Lunzer's background as an international leader for 12 years as TNG Secretary-Treasurer, along with his extensive experience on both sides of the "house" at the local level in his home state of Minnesota, will serve us all well as we strive to remain a pivotal force in a changing industry.

The upcoming TNG election is about having your voice heard and respected. With Lunzer, Rothman and Knox leading the way, every member of TNG will have a voice in changing and strengthening our Guild for the future. The coming TNG officer elections are about change that will invigorate and renew our hope and future while improving the process that fosters positive change.

Bottom-up leadership has been a buzz phrase throughout this campaign. Bernie Lunzer and his team embody inclusion of TNG members, each and every one. They care deeply about and are committed to the democratic process, communication and strengthening our union nationally as well as at the local level.

—The Boston Newspaper Guild
Executive Committee:
Daniel B. Totten, President
Scott Steeves, Vice President
Patrice Sneyd, Treasurer
Kathy McCabe, Recording Secretary
Kathie Dalton, At-Large
Jim Herndon, At-Large
Carl Younger, At-Large

To the Editor:

The success of any union is based on the level of involvement of its members. That's why "A Stronger Guild" is more than just the name of a Guild ticket for the election of top officers—it's a philosophy shared by Bernie

Lunzer, Carol Rothman, Connie Knox and their many supporters from east to west, north to south, including me.

Bernie Lunzer is a union leader from common roots, a background he brings to every issue he tackles in the Guild. He's accessible and creative, as most any member or Guild activist who has called TNG for help knows. To Bernie, there's always a new way to tackle an issue.

Bernie, Carol and Connie will bring this philosophy to the Guild leadership and continue to solidify our foundation so we can fight the titanic battles we face from a position of strength. I support A Stronger Guild ticket because I want to be assured of strength in the trenches and at the top when the fights come.

—Mike Bucsko, executive officer,
CWA Local 37002, Minneapolis-St. Paul

To the Editor:

I have known Linda for 25 years and I've come to deeply appreciate her expertise and her unquestioned commitment to the Guild.

Linda has always been there for the Northern California local, ready to provide the advice, the staff support and money that we've needed to fight for our members. She has done everything I would expect a Guild president to do. She's conducted herself with integrity and has always placed the interests of the membership before any personal or political advantage.



In short, there's no reason not to reelect Linda. I, for one, value her experience, dedication and loyalty and believe those qualities need to be rewarded. Please join me in supporting Linda Foley for reelection as president of The Newspaper Guild.

—Doug Cuthbertson,
executive officer, Northern California

To the Editor:

At first, the choice between Bernie Lunzer and Linda Foley for Guild president seems difficult. Both are smart, experienced, hard-working union activists. On closer examination, the choice becomes clear: A true leader draws together the kind of team that inspires hope and faith, and Bernie Lunzer has done that.

When I look at the other supporters of A Stronger Guild, I feel that I am walking among giants. In all of our locals, these are the names I think of when I ask myself, "Who is the Guild?"

These are the veterans who have spent tremendous amounts of time and energy guiding members in tough battles throughout Canada, Puerto Rico, and the U.S.

These are the voices of energy and enthusiasm who will lead us through the difficult times that lie ahead, who will rebuild the labor movement and revitalize the news industry.

And these are the leaders who I am incredibly proud and honored to be able to stand with in asking each of you to cast a

ballot for Bernie Lunzer and all of the candidates of A Stronger Guild.

—Yoko Kuramoto-Eidsmoe, president,
Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild

To the Editor:

As a long-time newspaper reporter and Guild supporter, I am grateful for TNG-CWA President Linda Foley's forceful and effective leadership.

At the Nov. 28 rally at McClatchy's Lexington Herald-Leader, Foley's forthright presentation of issues drew widespread support. (Some passerby drivers even lingered at stoplights to listen and cheer!)

Some years ago, at what was then Knight Ridder's Lexington Herald-Leader, Foley impressed people not long after she arrived: Here she was, a woman! A woman asking management to act sensibly!

Now, more than ever, the nation needs newspapers to act wisely. Not just McClatchy's papers but all newspapers.

From this one-time reporter and all-time reader, thank you, Linda, and to the Guild for what you do. Our country needs you.

—Betty Lee Mastin, Lexington
Herald-Leader employee, 1950-2000

To the Editor:

Choosing candidates may be difficult for Sector Conference delegates. Picking one means rejecting another. One might feel guilt over hurting feelings or even fear retribution, but it's the job of the delegates to make a

choice to recommend to the members.

We've watched, listened to, dined with and even danced with the candidates. They all work hard, care deeply about the Guild and want to win. Which one gets my pick for last dance?

I recently found myself a member of The Last Generation. The Next Generation told me I know some stuff and should share my wisdom. Here's why this geezer supports the A Stronger Guild slate.

The grave challenges that face the Guild aren't a result of the style or alleged mistakes of the candidates. Today's rapidly changing economy, technology and culture are reshaping our union and industry. We're on rough seas taking on water. It's critical that we have an energized team of leaders who are not invested in the status quo.

I absolutely believe that Bernie, Carol and Connie are the candidates for this time. Moving on isn't easy, but if you want to get old and be wise, you've got to do it.

—Tom Hiltz, administrative officer,
Newspaper Guild of Greater Boston

To the Editor:

During 35 years as a Guild activist, I always looked for a commitment to diversity as a standard for leadership. The union cannot have a future without it. When the executive council tried to pare mandatory bargaining demands by making fair employment an optional issue, I argued at a district council meeting that it must always be a bedrock matter. It was restored to the list of

mandatory demands and Linda Foley said she agreed with me. Bernie Lunzer said he only went along with the restoration to avoid a fight at the convention. That may be a small basis for making an overall judgement, but to me it spoke volumes.

—Dick Peery (retired)

Northeast Ohio Newspaper Guild

Bernie Lunzer responds:

I'm happy to talk about my commitment to diversity, and how strongly I feel about it. I don't recall the conversation Dick speaks of, but I remember that the issues around the changing of the collective bargaining program were intense.

I had issues with the way these proposed changes were being made, but I don't think I would have been cavalier about the union's responsibility with regards to diversity.

This is our only future: a union that represents all of its members, and an industry that represents the communities served.

We must do more than just talk about this issue. Locals also need to find specific things to bargain that make a real difference, such as the scholarships I bargained for in both the Pioneer Press and Star Tribune contracts in Minnesota that were designed for local, minority candidates who might come into our industry.

We can put on paper all the bargaining rules we want, but that alone won't improve our industry. We need real actions, and the support of all of our members.

To the Editor:

With union density under constant attack from down-sizing, outsourcing and new technology, there has never been more need for a stronger union. Strong unions need strong leaders, willing to both lead and listen to the needs of our members.

Bernie Lunzer has proved time and time again that he is that leader by always being there, working tirelessly when he is needed.

I welcomed Bernie's commitment to

diversity as he unwaveringly supported programs and projects I have been working on, as the human rights representative for my local, with both timely advice and actions.

Because of this and many other qualities I feel he will give us the change we need to lead us into a brighter future.

—Carl Younger,

Boston Newspaper Guild

To the Editor:

On Guild election day this spring, I'm going to cast my ballot for Bernie Lunzer and the rest of the Stronger Guild ticket. I'll cast my ballot for this immensely talented team of leaders for a lot of reasons, but mostly because I want change.

As a journalist, I strongly believe that conflict is the crucible from which all truth emerges. We grow stronger as a union when elections are not only contested, but candidates offer us vastly different paths to follow. We have that choice in this election, and I'm quite certain I want my union to move down a different path.

Over the last two years, I watched as Bernie quietly helped guide our local through hell and back. We fought a war in Toledo against formidable union-busters, and Bernie helped us every step of the way in every way he could.

While others gave orders, Bernie offered direction. While others got distracted, Bernie paid attention. And when some said, "Cut a deal," Bernie urged, "Stick together, and win."

I believe Bernie can be the best Guild president since Heywood Broun, if only we have the good sense to give him the job.

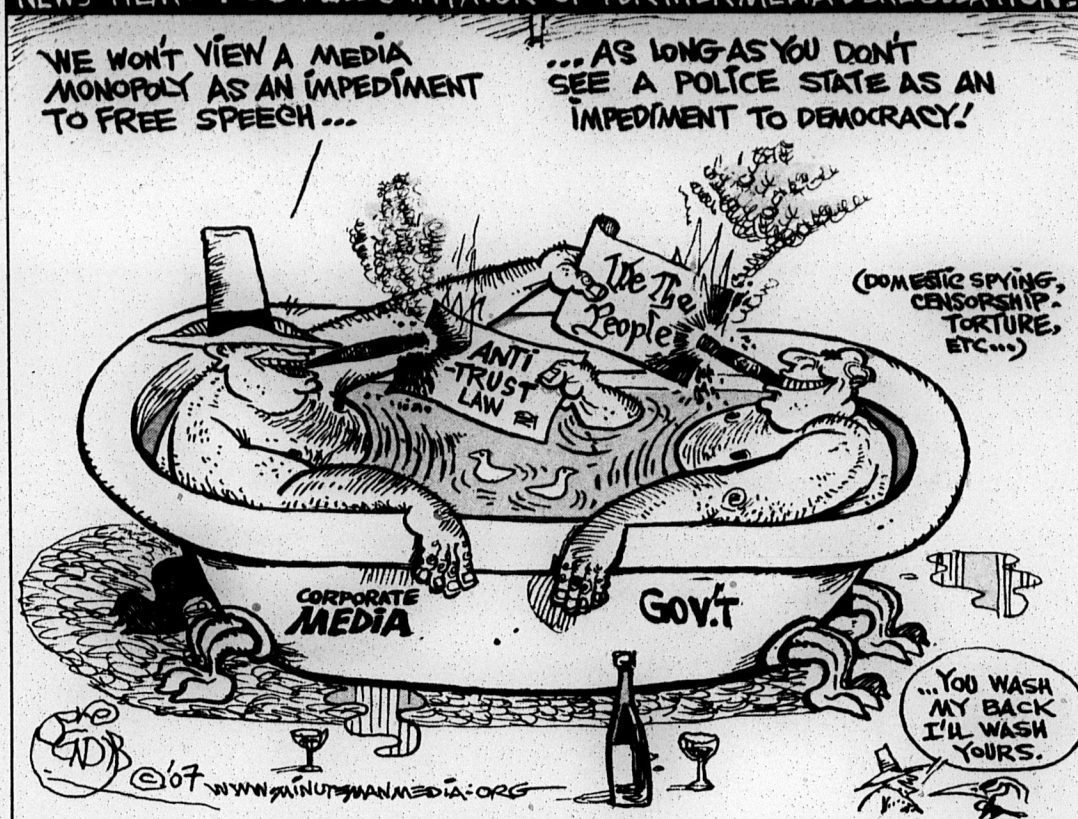
—Larry Vellequette,

Toledo Newspaper Guild

To the Editor:

I was a new Guild member who knew almost nothing about being a union activist when I first met Bernie Lunzer, more than 20 years ago. He was the administrative offi-

NEWS ITEM: FCC RULES IN FAVOR OF FURTHER MEDIA DEREGULATION:



cer of the Twin Cities Newspaper Guild and I was a new union steward.

Bernie was a patient mentor to me and continues with this tradition of supporting new Guild activists. He has always been available to anyone who has asked for his help. For the past six years I also have served on the sector executive board with not only Bernie but also Carol Rothman and Connie Knox. Their dedication to the members and efforts on their behalf remain as intrinsic to the work they do today as it has since they first began.

Through all these years, Bernie, Carol and Connie have maintained their integrity, faith in the union and unfailing support of all members. These are the leaders who have remained true to us and will continue to do so as we move forward. For these reasons and so many more, I ask you to join me in supporting and voting for a Stronger Guild by casting your votes for Bernie Lunzer, Carol Rothman and Connie Knox.

—Karolynn De Lucca,

Region 6 vice president, TNG-CWA

To the Editor:

A little more than a year ago, as Local 10 (Philadelphia Daily News & Inquirer) was in a chilling showdown with our new owner, we were stabbed in the back by our own union.

I was the Local 10 spokesman, and the lack of support from my own union was deafening. I telephoned Ms. Foley to ask when we could expect the cavalry. She didn't have the grit to return my call.

Rabbits belong in a stew, not running unions. (No insult intended to vegetarian brothers and sisters.) I wouldn't vote for Foley if my life depended on it, and the life of my local just might.

Vote for Lunzer/Rothman/Knox. TNG/CWA needs a backbone.

—Stu Bykofsky,

Philadelphia Newspaper Guild

Linda Foley responds:

Passions run high in contract bargaining—and in the debate over the end result of all the "blood, sweat and tears" expended by those involved in bargaining and mobilization. I understand that. It's one of the fundamental lessons of bargaining: no matter what the package you produce at the table, there are going to be those who aren't satisfied. There will always be some who need to find someone to blame.

Without getting involved in the internal politics of Philadelphia and the local's approach to both its colleagues in the other unions at the Daily News & Inquirer and the

incoming ownership, I—and everyone at the Guild—responded to every Philadelphia request for advice and assistance.

I can understand Stu's frustration, but I cannot accept his characterization of my response. I did everything I could to provide the local with an effective strategy for responding to the outrageous demands of the new ownership and offered solid, real-world suggestions on how to maximize contract gains for the rank-and-file: the very people we're elected to protect.

To the Editor:

The executive board of the Providence Newspaper Guild, Local 31041, has voted unanimously to enthusiastically support Bernie Lunzer and his A Stronger Guild slate for leadership of The Newspaper Guild.

Bernie has steadfastly and consistently demonstrated his belief that a consultative democracy is the fundamental principle on which our union is based and which gives it strength. He has always asked us for our opinions on the issues facing our union and our industry and has always listened to us when we spoke.

We feel that change is needed in our union's leadership, a change that will lead to a greater participation by and a strengthening of our membership. We need to ensure that the lines of communication, and authority, flow upward from the members to the leaders. We firmly believe that Bernie has shown that this is how he operates: he asks, he listens and he leads.

This is what we want in a president. That is why we support Bernie Lunzer and his running mates, Carol Rothman for secretary treasurer and Connie Knox for international chair.

—John Hill, Jeff Andrade,
Thom Cahir, Greg Smith,
Jon Baker, Lisa Buben,
Elaine Boyd, Felice Freyer,
Kerry Kohring, Del St. Jean,
Karen Ziner

Next-Gen

Continued from page 8

article on your Guild bulletin board.

After all, what's a call for action if no one acts?

Each month, a different Next Generation member explores an issue relevant to union activists of that generation. For more information, e-mail committee chair Brendan Elliott at: jrn1st@gmail.com.

Point of View

By Hal Kallenburg
Albany Guild, 1958

REPORTER: Copyreader's version

He's a dubious wit
Whose infinitives split
And he's shunned by the civilized world.
Whether sober or drunk,
He is full of the bunk,
He's a banner that's seldom unfurled.

Though his grammar is bad
And his syntax is sad,
His poor spelling is often much worse.
While his simile clicks,
His lame metaphors mix
And it seems that his typewriter's cursed.

His "reliable source,"
As a matter of course,
Is a janitor, bar-fly or crook.
And he's often resolved
That where libel's involved
He'll dismiss every law in the book.

For with booze on his breath
He can write to the death,
Though an obit is more in his line,
And whatever is best
Said in ten words or less,
He can say in a hundred and nine.

COPYREADER: Reporter's version

He can look down his nose
At the journalist's prose,
But his burning ambition's to write.
He's his own paramour
And his hobby, I'm sure,
Is dissecting the classics at night.

He is quick to berate
What he didn't create
And, with errors his reason for rage,
There's a smirk on his lips
As he catches your slips
And condenses your "book" to a page.

Your selection of words
He consigns to the birds,
For he figures the hair must be split.
Though his headlines conceal
What the stories reveal,
He gets cocky whenever they fit.

He's a frustrated man
And he'll do what he can
To make sure that a story sounds dead.
Like a French guillotine,
If you know what I mean,
He'll do anything just for a head.

The mission of The Guild Reporter, approved May, 2004 by the TNG-CWA Executive Council, is as follows:

"As stated in the TNG-CWA Constitution, 'It shall be the duty of The Guild Reporter to promote in every legitimate way the policies of TNG-CWA.' The Guild Reporter belongs to the rank-and-file membership of TNG-CWA.

"Guild Reporter content will be of interest to the members,

and its first priority will be current news affecting the locals. The members of this union expect The Guild Reporter to inform, motivate and challenge its readers.

"To maintain its journalistic integrity and traditions, The Guild Reporter must never become a personal political platform or be misused for internal political purposes by the elected leadership of TNG-CWA."

By TNG Convention action, letters to the editor shall be limited to 200 words and shall avoid libel and subjects detrimental to the Guild. Members subjected to personal attack shall be given opportunity to reply in the same issue, but publication of either attack or reply shall not be delayed longer than one issue.

Deadline for letters and articles: Friday before publication. (Next deadline: March 14.)

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

It's time we stopped being CWA's wallflowers

By Yoko Kuramoto-Eidsmoe
President, Pacific Northwest Guild

I'm writing to urge you to attend the CWA Committee on Equity's Civil Rights Conference, April 9-12, in Washington, D.C.

That's just around the corner, and I'm sorry about the relatively late notice, but I'd like to make the case for why you should try to get there if you can.

You may not have known that CWA holds this conference every other year, and that it has a women's conference in the alternating years. I hadn't really heard about it until I was put on the Committee on Equity, where I helped organize the one in Philadelphia two years ago.

It's not that your local leaders are holding out on you: There are an awful lot of conferences throughout the year and those travel expenses do add up.

And at budget time, maybe equity seemed kind of . . . secondary?

But in the vision that a lot of us have of the labor movement, equity and rights are the whole reason we're here. All of the things we fight for in contracts—better pay and working conditions, job security, safety—are elements of a big-picture movement to ensure that we are treated fairly and equitably by our employers.

This year's theme is "A Movement . . . Not a Moment," and it's a good way to think about both labor and civil rights. Both are living things that require ongoing education, work and commitment to remain vital, and they each are parts of what essentially is a singular thing.

The bad guys—anti-union employers and their hired-gun "consultants"—will tell you that unions are about pitting one group of workers' interests against another's. In truth, sadly, that's how it sometimes has

been. But it doesn't have to be that way, and we can all work together to ensure that we get a fair shake regardless of race, creed, color, sexual orientation, national origin, gender or disability.

So that's why it's important to get together with other union activists to discuss and begin work on the kinds of topics we have planned for this year's workshop: voter empowerment, heroes of the civil-rights movement, the Disability Discrimination Act, minority images in the media, discussions with the CWA Diversity Committee, reaching out to young leaders, transgender issues, immigration and the Employment Non-Discrimination Act.

These are important topics to us as members and leaders, because these are things we might need to know in order to help our co-workers. That's what a union is about: We are stronger together.

And speaking of stronger together, it's a

chance for us to meet and build bridges to people in other CWA locals. How many of us in Guild locals don't even know the members of CWA locals who live and work in our own towns?

Isn't it time that we change that?

It's great that our top officers work in that big CWA building in Washington, D.C., and that they have working relationships with CWA's officers, but those ties between our sector and the larger union need to be deeper and broader.

We can extend our reach and make a real difference in our communities if we share networks and resources. And we can bring to the table our unique perspective as Guild members.

The Guild has been a part of CWA for more than a decade, and yet in some ways we act like we just got to the party, hanging out next to the walls staring at our feet.

It's time we get out there and dance.

THE NEXT GENERATION

Reminding ourselves of our responsibilities

By Mike Larsen
President, Kenosha Newspaper Guild

Those with the capability to act have a responsibility to act. This message has been strewn throughout American culture since . . . well, since the beginning of American culture. It's this tugging of duty that led to almost every advancement in our culture, demonstrating repeatedly what a determined individual (or a determined group of like-minded individuals) can accomplish.

So while some may view the following as common sense, this is a call for action.

Before you throw down your Guild Reporter and say, "Who is this Mike Larsen and why should I care about his opinion?" I'll give you some background.

I'm a 30-year-old, full-time sports reporter/sports page designer at the Kenosha (Wis.) News, a daily with circulation of around 25,000. I've been working in journalism since 1996, been a member of my Guild local since 1999 and have been an active member since 2001. Our membership of 40 newsroom employees tabbed me as president in 2003, and I was just elected to my fifth consecutive term.

So while my birth certificate shows I'm 30, if you take my Guild experience and throw in being a father of two (including a teenage daughter), it feels more like I'm 50. That's the "who."

As for the why, it's because we're at a crossroads in the industry—and not because of TNG elections. We're at a crossroads because of a generational disconnect over volunteerism and the union. A chasm exists because most locals, all the way up to the international, don't have a specific plan or guidelines in place for involving new members in the life of the union.

Years of attending international and regional meetings have reaffirmed my opinion that every local is in a different situation, but the following three guidelines can be applied to locals of any size or composition:

1. Roll out the welcome mat early. I could spend 20-plus inches on the disappointment I felt when it was revealed at the last multicouncil meeting that there is a mechanism for establishing a Guild student membership wing—but it hasn't been utilized. This is borderline negligence.

An employee's first union experience should not be a request to sign a membership card. Once a month, locals could invite all

prospective members (open shop) or all new members (closed shop) to a lunch so they can ask questions of a steward or executive board member in a more comfortable environment than a general membership meeting. Those who decline the invitation should be kept on a list to ask the following month.

2. Be active, but don't overwhelm. There are plenty of jobs in every local that can be delegated, from operational work (stock the refrigerator, clean the place, take out the garbage, etc.), to maintaining the local's web site, preparing the local newsletter or serving on a sub-committee (health and safety, human relations, action/mobilization, etc.). There are plenty of entry-level tasks to get members started and used to their voices being heard.

Any member looking for more involvement should be encouraged. However, be careful not to lay too much on new members too soon.

Take advantage of the Guild's new officer training by sending one (or two, if you're subsidized) prospective officer(s) each year. My time in D.C. (aside from the 24 inches of snow) was wonderful, and there are still lessons learned there that I apply on a daily basis.

3. Keep their confidence. This may be a no-brainer, but don't air the local's dirty laundry on company phone lines, e-mail, etc. Develop a home e-mail/home-phone tree for important general communications, but individual complaints or queries brought directly to the executive board or officers should be handled with great care.

Nothing will turn off new members like hearing an issue they're having and not even looking into it.

Close the circle. Keep what is said at general membership meetings and executive board meetings in confidence. General membership meetings need to be a safe haven to complain about the company. It's not a problem at our local, but keep a watchful eye for company moles and handle that situation as your bylaws/executive board dictate. Remind your membership from time-to-time that such meetings are a safe haven and confidential.

If these guidelines seem to be directed at the previous generation, it's because they are more likely to currently hold positions of power within respective locals. If you consider yourself a next generation member and see many of these guidelines not being followed at your local, I suggest posting this

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DAYBOOK

Coalition of Labor Union Women,
March 13-15, Jacksonville, FL

CWA Legislative Conference
April 6-9, Washington DC

CWA Civil Rights & Equity Conf.
April 9-12, Washington DC

CWA/SCA Nat'l Rep. Meeting,
April 26-27, Vancouver, BC

AFL-CIO Union Industries Show,
May 16-18, Detroit

Freedom Award Banquet
May 21, Washington, DC

International CBTU Convention
May 21-26, St. Louis, MO

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

CWA Nat'l Minority Caucus,
June 19-22, Las Vegas

CWA Annual Convention
June 23-25, Las Vegas

FROM THE MORGUE

Seventy years ago this month:

Guild members at the Seattle Star win a seven-month strike; a Guild strike at the Bayonne Times enters its fourth month; and Guild members at the Superior, Wis. Telegram take to the streets after fruitless negotiations. . . . Spurred by the Guild's strike preparations, the Boston Herald-Traveler agrees to a new contract that includes "the highest standards and most advanced working conditions" of any New England newspaper. . . . Medill creates its first five-year master of science in journalism program, modeling it on professional studies in law and medicine.

Fifty years ago this month:

"Negro newspapers" report a combined circulation of 1.7 million copies per issue, a drop of almost 250,000 in two years for the 172 publications. . . . The Washington Guild protests the firing of five Guild-represented employees by the AFL-CIO without regard for seniority and without providing the required two weeks' notice. . . . Management at the Albany Times-Union has agreed to card-check for its circulation employees "in lieu of the time-consuming election procedure" of the NLRB.

Twenty-five years ago this month:

The Canadian government finally unveils its version of the U.S. Freedom of Information Act, to be implemented April 1. . . . Guild locals contribute nearly \$5,000 to the Solidarity-affiliated Polish journalists' union, eliciting "heartfelt thanks and prayers that the lady of Jasna Góra keeps you all in her loving care."