



Laborfest No longer Milwaukee's best-kept free family secret

Free parking all day in lots directly outside Summerfest. Gate admission to enter Summerfest also free. Two normally \$10 costs just vanished

Inside are clowns, face painting, jugglers, magic and playlands awaiting children of all families on a professionally supervised stage just inside the walkway along the Lake Michigan shore. For older kids and adults, there is a exhibition of pro wrestling slightly to the south, all day live dance music at the Miller Stage, exhibition areas and tents around the grounds (and you might even find a partisan papier-mache piñata game if you look hard enough).

Free raffles (boxes to drop names into) are spotted around the grounds -- culminating at afternoon's end with the one raffle requiring a ticket purchase for cash prizes and the grand prize -- a 2012 Street Glide, the handsome new Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

Add in Bingo, corporate mascots, a display of vintage American automobiles at the north end of the grounds and many of Summerfest's traditional and popular vendors offering food and drinks.

All this on a national day off - the Labor Day holiday Monday, September 5, that honors America's workers, so it's quite fitting that this free for all festival known as Laborfest is underwritten by unions, aided by a few corporate sponsors.

While run by volunteers - as are many ethnic festivals in Milwaukee's flag unfurling summer fun - this one is open to all families, children and adults for free, from noon to 5 p.m. at

Summerfest.

That's unique, as is how Laborfest starts out. The City of Festivals Parade only exists in memory. The Laborfest parade remains and has expanded. It is now doubly unique, actually two combined parades, all featuring volunteers. They go through Downtown (Wisconsin Ave. east, then south on Milwaukee St., then Chicago Ave. into Summerfest) starting 11 a.m. at Zeidler Union Square Park, with free shuttles for people who park at Summerfest and want to watch as well as for the thousands of participants.

For union families, affiliates, invited guests such as Voces de la Frontera and the hundreds of volunteers in the People's Parade, all are part of a special community outpouring. Zeidler Park from 8 a.m. on has become something of an advance Laborfest party for participants as they not only get ready but meet, share food and laughs, line up their mechanical behemoths and organize under watchful marshals. Meanwhile, hundreds of motorcycles and vintage cars and even boats along with trucks put on their best outfits and gear up for the big 11 a.m. march.

Yet for years, all of this was such a home-grown family affair for working neighbors that Laborfest grew accustomed to maximum advance preparation and minimal advance media publicity - compared to the ethnic festivals. (Except for politicians who know it is a good place to meet and greet future voters, though none can march in the parade unless invited to join a union's contingent)

So many families in the communities, particularly those without members in a union, are

every summer newly shocked to learn that all these free goodies exist at our great place on a great lake, and that it's all part of the giving side of organized labor, without lectures, lures or preaching.

That sometimes makes Laborfest one of the best-kept open secrets of Milwaukee's summer - but some of that is self-inflicted because unions never sought the media publicity others pursue, and simply pay the way and control the pro-

Laborfest continued Page 13

LABORFEST becomes a hot property as the fist poster goes into extra printing and the Grand Avenue mall turns into People's Parade workshop (below) drawing young artists, musicians and community groups to prepare surprises for the big Labor Day.

LABORFEST.11

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 5TH

Downtown Parade 11 a.m.

Free Admission • Noon-5 p.m. • Summerfest Grounds



STAND WITH WISCONSIN



The elusive lessons of Aug. 9

By Dominique Paul Noth, Editor, Labor Press

My news lede kept changing Aug. 9 as I pursued the election returns. It started out suggesting the progressive forces were being "dinged a bit" as they clearly lost as expected two out of six recalls. That lead-in turned into "hanging by a thread" when they lost the Fred Clark-Luther Olsen contest (in a district that has breathed GOP and seemed poised to change).

Then the lede became "no flip" as the Democrats had to absorb the pain that the senate would stay at least one vote in GOP hands. And the paragraph could have concluded with Rep. Sandy Pasch's quiet concession statement late in the night after having clearly lost to incumbent Alberta Darling in Senate District 8 that whatever the victory

Comment

for the voices of the people "we fell short of our desired result."

Sure 'nuff.

Oh yes, the pundits say that both sides came away with something but what the progressives really wanted was to turn the Senate blue and on Aug. 9 they didn't.

It was no surprise that GOP incumbent Rob Cowles won over Nancy Nusbaum in a strong GOP district and that Sheila Harsdorf could beat back political novice Shelly Moore (a teacher who may have set a powerful ground game for a 2012 come-

Special Labor Day Edition

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Unions invade White House on deficit deal

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
Editor, Labor Press

"The resolution to the manufactured debt-ceiling crisis does nothing to address the heart of America's long-term economic problem -- job creation," noted David Foster in a statement immediately after the signing of the deficit deal Aug. 2.

"Slashing spending will not create jobs, it will not spur economic growth; it will only make it more difficult to solve America's jobs crisis," noted the executive director of the BlueGreen Alliance, a national partnership since 2006 of labor unions and environmental organizations dedicated to expanding quality jobs in the green economy.

Though more balanced approaches including revenue raising were beaten down by Tea Party hostility during the lengthy and ugly negotiations -- during which GOP leaders walked out because, it turns out, they couldn't deliver the Tea Party votes -- the final legislation from the House and Senate, signed by the White House, raised the debt ceiling necessary to pay bills Congress has already accumulated. The deal ignored tax loopholes and cut as much as \$2.4 trillion in domestic spending over the next decade.

But, Foster emphasized, "With more than 14 million Americans out of work, and with sluggish job growth over the last few months, immediate action is needed to put people to work and to ensure that the US stays competitive in the 21st century."

"Congress must now turn to solving America's jobs deficit" when it returns in September.

The theme was emphasized when leaders from the AFL-CIO general board, the executive council and selected guests met the president for more than an hour on Aug. 2, criticizing the debt deal and urging him to focus directly on job creation.

The president in private comments apparently lamented the resistance he has faced at every turn and defended his concern for workers given the political hand he's been dealt (no compromise from the Republican side). He had a big victory in the deal -- extending the debt ceiling through 2013, removing it as a campaign football. Obama at one point thought he had \$800 billion in revenue increases to go along with the domestic cuts, but House Majority leader John Boehner reneged.

Bluntly Obama told the union group the debt-deal was not what he wanted, but "the



AFT teachers' leader Randi Weingarten was among the White House visitors Aug. 2 and then on Aug. 8 was in Milwaukee to rally volunteers in the recall elections.

rich and wealthy know how to deal with default, but your members aren't able to do so," said Fire Fighters President Harold Schaitberger relating the conversation. So the government had to avoid default, he quoted Obama.

"He emphasized to us that he is the workers' president,"

Schaitberger said. "And if we don't think so, our enemies on the other side certainly are convinced" that Obama is pro-worker. He said Obama agreed "to push reluctant Democrats to defend workers and unions as strongly as the right-wing business machine attacks them."

But he also told the group that while he can use the bully pulpit to defend workers, unions and collective bargaining, "He also said he can do only so much - he can't run every level of government."

Union leaders were blunt in their disappointment.

AFT President Randi Weingarten indicated the fight for job creation would resume, despite the "reckless and irresponsible people" Obama now

faces in the ruling House GOP.

"My (teachers) union understands there had to be a debt deal, but there are other economic issues and it doesn't mean we should stop fighting" for them, she added. In fact, she traveled to the Midwest after the White House and visited the Milwaukee Area Labor Council Aug. 8 to rouse volunteers with an off the cuff dynamic speech.

Unions detested the deal even where they understood it, so the meeting was characterized as polite with palpable anger. But the unhappiness was clearly not erased by the president's words. One invitee -- Rose Ann DeMoro, National Nurses Union executive director -- deliberately boycotted.

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Voces aide tapped to run Benedict Center

Well known to the Latino and administrative communities, Jeanne Geraci has been named to replace the influential veteran director of the Benedict Center, Kit McNally, whose advocacy for victims and community justice has deeply influenced the view of justice and incarceration in the community.

These are big shoes to fill, noted Geraci, but she has the credentials as well as the experience, which was clear when Benedict board president

Maricolette Walsh made the announcement in July.

Geraci has worked for five years as the associate director of Voces de la Frontera, which has grown into the largest force for Latino workers in the state. Before then she worked for Esperanza Unida and the Mental Health Association.

Geraci, who had long admired McNally's work, applied when she heard of the retirement. She took over Aug. 1 at the nonprofit center, which has a nation-

al reputation for its innovative work with women and restoring offenders and victims' lives.

Voces' executive director, Christine Neumann-Ortiz, has named Tammy L. Rivera, a Milwaukee native and veteran of two decades of service, to become the interim associate director at the workers rights center. Rivera will serve for the next six months as chief financial and development officer.

Kit and her husband, writer Joel McNally, both longtime influential figures in Milwaukee's civic life, have announced plans to move to Virginia.



Jeanne Geraci has departed Voces de Frontera to take the reins at the nonprofit innovator for community justice, the Benedict Center.



An amazing collection of judges, attorneys and elected officials paid tribute at a May dinner for Kit McNally, shown with husband Joel, for 23 years of innovation heading the Benedict Center.

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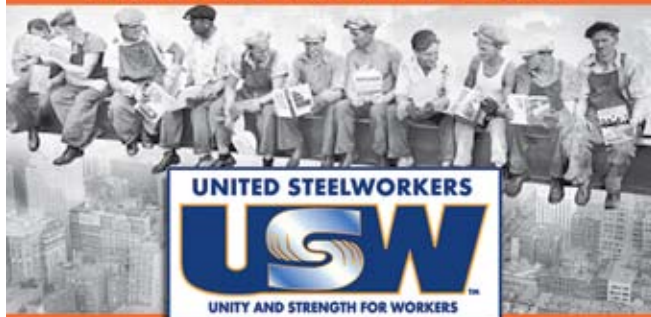
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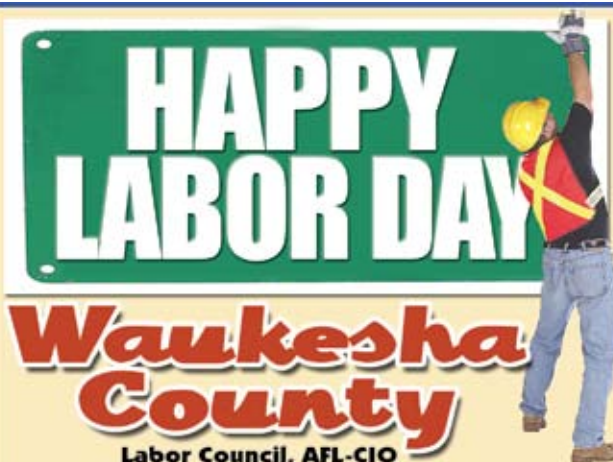
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“Without struggle,



there can be no progress”

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SC Johnson exposed as serial tax avoider

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
Editor, Labor Press

In its second informative "Who Does Not Pay Taxes?" newsletter, the Institute for Wisconsin's Future strolls through Wisconsin's wealthiest clan, the SC Johnson family, inheritors of the Johnson name, Racine company and a fortune that makes each of the four richest members worth \$2 billion each, according to Forbes.

Since it's a private company, no outside data reveals how much in profits SC Johnson really makes, but the odds are good they aren't producing the likes of Windex, Ziploc, Off, Pledge, Raid, Drano and Saran Wrap just for their health or to pass the time.

Yet, IWF reveals in its newsletter, SC Johnson didn't pay a penny in Wisconsin income tax for 2000 to 2008 (the last years for which corporate income tax data is available).

It is a curious revelation for a company that regular appears on lists of best places to work and "most ethical companies." Even more interesting is how good at tax avoidance are other Racine area firms the same family controls, many of whose extensive profits can be revealed.

Diversey's pre-tax profits during 2000-2009 totaled \$360



"WHO DOES NOT PAY TAXES?" – the monthly newsletter from the Institute for Wisconsin's Future that researches and exposes, among other items, the corporations that have managed to escape paying Wisconsin income tax – is largely the brainchild of Jack Norman (far right above), the research director who once won awards as a business reporter and is also a much sought speaker on Wisconsin fiscal policy. At one recent Milwaukee Area Labor Council town hall, Norman joined other participants such as Lyle Balistreri, president of the Milwaukee Building & Trades Council, and Rep. Barbara Toles, who all discussed the flaws in Walker's budget approach. This newspaper is helping spread the word about the revelations in this newsletter, which can be downloaded at our website from the Take Action menu. Simply visit www.milwaukeeelabor.org

million. The company is currently being sold for \$4.3 billion. Its state income tax for those years is zero.

Johnson Outdoor's pre-tax profits in 2000-2008 (latest data)

totalled \$42 million. State income tax: also zero.

But fear not, according to the IWF research revelations. There is one tax-paying family owned member. It is Johnson

Bank, whose pretax profits during 2000-2009 of \$219 million yielded a total state income tax of \$3 million. Now that's an effective tax rate of 1.4% while the actual state tax rate is 7.9%,

so even Johnson Bank seems wrapped in economic Saran Wrap.

This is one of the highlights of the new IWF newsletter, which can be downloaded from milwaukeeelabor.org's Take Action section. It also explores how SC Johnson's tax avoidance policy has landed it in court.

At issue, in state court in Racine and federal court in Chicago, is the company's treatment of a whistle-blowing former tax manager, Michael Beguile, a 12-year veteran in SC Johnson's tax office who was fired after telling federal agencies he'd witnessed illegal tax practices.

Why, the IWF's research director Jack Norman asks, should the rest of Wisconsin pay taxes for billionaire - and how do these Johnson companies pull in such profits without having to pay a penny in Wisconsin on taxable income?

The newsletter -- and its tax data, which the Milwaukee Labor Press is a partner in releasing and publicizing -- wants the state legislature to act to stop such loophole abuse by so many highly compensated and profitable Wisconsin companies that are skating unharmed through Wisconsin's questionable tax practices.

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RECALLS

From Page 1

back). And it was a big deal to put popular Rep. Jennifer Shilling in the Senate rather than Dan Kapanke, but that was a race the Democrats expected to win. It was certainly a success that Jessica King, though underperforming given the circumstances, still comfortably beat the self-impaling Randy Hopper, he of the domestic revelations and blatant favoritism to special interests.

But the crown jewel of these expensive contests, Darling in Milwaukee area District 8, eluded the Democrats even when, against the odds, the energy looked in their favor.

On late-night TV Alberta was determined to rub salt into the wounds with constant crowing and cackling -- not just a victory lap but a vulture-like circling of the TV cameras.

The reason for the results was not, as she and Republican talk radio kept bloviating, that the "silent majority" had spoken up. They should just boast that the secret third-party money and constant chest-pounding had paid off. Checks, ground game and distortion had been given time to stir up the conservative voters and the unsuspecting fundamentalists

The successful GOP strategy had its roots in July 16. But more of that in a moment. First, let's be honest about what the results show. Hardly a runaway endorsement for Gov. Walker, but clearly not a victory for the Democrats and unions, whatever the spin.

The new GOP talking points myth on FOX and wherever they've paid to appear is that these far-flung district elections (about a sixth of the state senate) proves that most of the state stands behind Walker.

Yet simple numbers say otherwise. In the six recalls Aug. 9, about 347,457 votes were cast - in a state with an election age population of more than 4 million. We are talking about less than one-seventh of the 2.2 million who voted in 2010 for governor.

And when you clear away the smoke, the split was 165, 129 for Democrat candidates and 184,328 for Republicans, less than a 20,000 vote difference -- on Republican turf!

Granted, the Democrats won in a district that seems to be trending Democrat (Shilling) -- and what that does tell you about the electorate mood? Ditto, they also won one that is swingy (King), but this is still evidence of a remarkable balance in the state that any number of events can tilt in either direction.

Even the appalling contorted redistricting for 2012 the GOP has pushed forward in the face of federal court chal-

lenges may not make as much of a difference as events and economic fortunes will.

So Walker is definitely not out of the recall woods, though that becomes an issue of timing, strategy and his ongoing behavior. Will he try to pound through bills some well-heeled supporters want, such as the death penalty, abstinence-only laws or expanded vouchers? Any such steps could ignite new flames.

Robert Kraig of Citizen Action of Wisconsin may have had it right when he said election night that these recalls may simply be the opening skirmish in a long battle. While many Democrats hoped to gulp victory in one drink, the financial power and political "anything to win" strategy on the other side beat them back this time around. Yet anyone who expects progressives to scurry into a corner and lick their wounds doesn't understand unions -- even when or especially when their very existence is threatened. "We know how to lose and come back stronger," said Sheila Cochran, secretary-treasurer of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council. Agreed another union member: "The ruling class has forced us to do that again and again."

Still, all the power and energy didn't pull off a miracle Aug. 9. Why? In my analysis, it was the desperate, canny but ugly trick the Republicans pulled when they turned all six contests scheduled for July 16 into Democrat primaries, fielding "fake Dems" not to win but to simply stall the final showdown.

Even Senate majority leader, Scott Fitzgerald, admitted Aug. 9 that he had "heartburn" agreeing to the idea and encouraging Republicans to lie that they were Democrats and cross over to vote. (Anything that gives Fitzgerald heartburn has to be darn acid stuff.)

Most people, like the media, found the concept more amusing than outrageous, even though deliberate lying under oath cost the taxpayers about \$500,000 in useless elections. Some Democrats actually thought a month delay would give them more time to make their case about the dangers in Gov. Walker's bull rush budget. So genuine outrage never materialized.

In truth, the GOP had been caught flat-footed and the extra month allowed the full weight of the power games their side commanded.

Game One: Money. Those who just listen to the media reports might think the unions had as much third-party money to play with as the GOP side. No, they had enough to compete well, combining union and progressive forces in We Are Wisconsin and other players, but the maybe \$12 million - virtually all disclosed - obviously pales compared to the undisclosed advertising dollars that third-party right-wing networks flooded in - some \$20 million (according to independent watchdogs) from outfits like Club for Growth, Americans for Prosperity, Crossroads, American Federation of Children and others. Since the Republicans could pay for TV and also pay for grassroots, it was clobber time not possible in July.

Game Two: Fiscal Pretense. Only the gullible would believe that a budget passed in June would really have any job benefits or fiscal impact by August 9, but the GOP pounded this in media and ads and the public bought it. Could we be real for a second? All these figures are projections, estimates. That much condemned \$3.6 billion state deficit, half the size of past deficits and in the middle of the pack among states, may have already shrunk half a million from new revenue. Or it could rise if the economy swoons. Revenues change state deficits, and Walker's much talked-about tools and fixes are limited and doubly short-sighted since he sits on increasing revenue even through such means as combined reporting or sensible collection of delinquent debts. But if the media doesn't pound on this, the

GOP ads that are helping the media profit can fabricate the other way. And they did without correction.

Game Two and Half: We Balanced the Budget. Darling was big on this fiscal pretense. Pasch didn't score points with a bottom-line public by pointing out the obvious: Anyone can balance a budget if you don't care who you hurt.

Use your family as an example. Take any child at age 18 and don't help with a car, tuition, health care, and you would be amazed what you can legally save. Send granny packing, stop giving to the United Way, put to one side the debtors who won't sue and presto, you can still go out and party and say you balanced your budget.

The progressives argued that this is what Walker and Darling were doing. The voters, blinded by the thought of being in the black not the red or perhaps angry that the choices they agreed to in regular 2010 elections were being questioned, never understood. The interviews suggest that there were Republicans who could no longer vote for Darling but they were replaced by Republicans who assumed that a "balanced budget" reflected moral tough love, neglecting how many breaks to the rich, the lobbyists and the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) were snuck into the budget bill. Ignorant they may be, but they still voted.

Game Three: Keep Saying It's Working. That extra month allowed municipalities and school districts controlled by Republicans to come in with reports impossible to swallow in July, of how much Walker's attack on bargaining rights would benefit communities. That's only the stuff the unions had readily agreed to (higher payments in health premiums, direct 5.5% to pensions). The other factors are just punishment of unions to make them spend money defending their very existence instead of fighting right-wing non-union policies. These are factors that could well cost taxpayers more money rather than save any.

Pro-life right-wingers were accepting figures that in most cases were an abortion. This two-year budget, many economists agree, will leave most school districts and municipalities bailing out from enormous debt by 2013. Yet most of the "it's working" figures are projections based on 2011-2012 school year. The gestation period has been cut in half. And all these baby figures could die by mid-2012.

These are games the GOP could not have played without that extra month. I'm not alone in the suspicion that if the final races had been held in July, the Republicans would have lost four of six races rather than keeping four of six.

Let's concede what is in front of us, that however nasty and heartburn inducing the road to Aug. 9 was, the Republicans proved they will do anything to win. If they had lost, we would still be facing demands for recounts and scrambles to pass bills before the Democrats gain power.

Of course, money remains a key to the future on both sides. But I think the Democrats will now be forced to change their ground game, which has largely been stirring up the forces on their own side and bolstering the wobbly. The ground troops will have to learn to talk to the people who dislike them or even distrust them, to look like them, speak their language and couch their ideas in basic terms that disinterested citizens, fierce independents and even traditional Republicans can understand.

Looking at what happened, it's fine to preach to the choir, but it's also time to expand the ministry. "If we have good arguments and we do," one union leader told me, "we now have to learn how to talk intelligently to the people who start out hating us."



New Senator Jessica King



New Senator Jennifer Shilling

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Wal-Mart leaves unions miffed at the Obamas

Washington, D.C. - Barack Obama clearly sees his role as president to talk to all corners, and Michelle Obama has taken the role of First Lady to encourage good nutrition. But good intentions didn't prevent sharp criticism from the heads of the nation's two largest labor federations, plus Teamsters President James Hoffa this summer. They went after the Obama White House's alliance with Wal-Mart, due to the lousy jobs and anti-worker stance of the nation's retail monster, not to mention the recent Supreme Court ruling that will make female employees work harder for justice.

The nutrition alliance, in a ceremony that included other retailers, highlighted those stores' commitment to bringing fresh groceries to under-served urban and rural areas. It's part of the fresh food/healthy eating campaign run by Michelle Obama. Wal-Mart pledged to erect 275 new stores, especially in low-income urban communities that lack grocery chain stores.

But AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka and Change To Win Chair Joe Hansen - who also heads the leading union for food store workers, UFCW - responded that the administration is ignoring Wal-Mart's virtual poverty wages and expensive or non-existent benefits. Wal-Mart's wages are so low, Hoffa added, that the retailer workers' kids run the risk of malnutrition because their parents lack cash to buy healthy food.

"Working families urgently need leadership that will get



Americans back to good jobs, paying taxes, spending in their communities and saving for retirement. The White House event, which highlights Wal-Mart's expansion in urban areas, undercuts the message of the need for good jobs that can rebuild our middle class," Trumka and Hansen said. Hansen's union has been trying to organize Wal-Mart for years.

"When Wal-Mart opens, it displaces existing jobs with poverty-level jobs," the leaders said. Tens of thousands of Wal-Mart workers "qualify for and utilize food stamps, Medicare and Medicaid ... Wal-Mart's business model is subsidized on the backs of taxpayers."

"There is no economic justification for our nation's largest private employer to pay wages so low that any of its employees qualify for public assistance. And there is no justification for highlighting a private employer with a business model based on suppressing wages for its 1.4 million hourly workers."

If you're going to create jobs, make sure they're "good jobs on the scale that is needed," when unemployment is above 9%, Hansen said. "We ask the administration to stand with communities that have called on Wal-Mart to strengthen the communities it enters rather than drive standards and wages down."

But no one has ever accused Wal-Mart or the Obamas of being dumb. In poor areas, Wal-Mart skillfully plays upon local leaders and residents who say "We want jobs - any jobs." And why not? The jobless rate among African-Americans - and Wal-Mart specifically wants to put stores in African-American areas - is

16.2%. It's 17% for black men.

And Obama knows that by supporting a Wal-Mart, with its promise of jobs, however terrible, he gains credit with those areas' residents - even some union members concede that political reality. It becomes difficult, the union leaders agree, when communities are pleading for "any jobs!" How do you tell them that a Wal-Mart job is worse than none at all? That Wal-Mart costs more jobs than it creates, by running local Mom-and-Pop stores out of business? That's a hard case to make in economically depressed districts.

But the unions are still making it, and Hoffa is pushing the profound link between Wal-Mart's low wages and kids' bad nutrition. "Companies like Wal-Mart, which don't pay their workers a decent wage, condemn children to poverty, poor nutrition and shrinking prospects for their futures," said Hoffa. Its "CEO recently commented company shoppers are 'running out of money.' That's a big clue the problem with our economy is lack of good jobs. I urge the White House to reconsider its involvement with Wal-Mart unless Wal-Mart agrees to create the kind of good jobs that can provide its employees with a

decent standard of living."

Wal-Mart uses "jobs" to woo very-low-income areas. It recently won a store in the Pullman area of Obama's hometown, Chicago. Ironically, Pullman is a symbol of prior corporate greed, when owners forced the 1893 railroad workers' strike.

Wal-Mart is also campaigning for stores in the poorest areas of D.C. and New York. A UFCW-backed group, Respect DC, staged a peaceful protest - accompanied by a chorus and brass band - on July 21 at a D.C. suburban Wal-Mart. It demanded a living wage for the four proposed Wal-Marts in the city.

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Big push for jobs to greet returning vets

Our foreign wars are winding down - the US has made that commitment. It is removing combat forces and more from Iraq and phasing out (too slow for many American but the trend is assuredly that way) the war in Afghanistan.

In August President Obama also moved to prepare America for a massive return and assimilation of the volunteer army.

"We have an obligation to make sure our veterans are able to navigate this difficult labor market and succeed in the civilian workforce," he noted August 5 in a visit to the Washington Navy Yard to outline the effort.

Obama has stories to relate about the unconscionable plight facing veterans. "For every success story, there are also stories of veterans who come home and struggle to find a job worthy of their experience and worthy of their talent," he prefaced.

"Veterans like Nick Colgin. When Nick was in Afghanistan, he served as a combat medic with the 82nd Airborne. Over the course of his deployment, Nick saved the life of a French soldier who was shot in the head and helped 42 people escape from a flooding river. He earned a Bronze Star for his actions. But when Nick got back home to Wyoming, he couldn't get a job as a first responder. So he ended up having to take classes through the Post-9/11 GI Bill, classes he easily could have taught, just so he could qualify for the same duties at home that he was doing every single day in Afghanistan.

"They're veterans like Maria Canales. She was a financial specialist in the Army, helping provide financial support for her unit in Iraq. And when she got home, she finished earning her degree in business management. But even with her education and her experience in the Army, Maria still couldn't find a steady, working job in accounting or finance. That isn't right, and it doesn't make any sense -- not for our veterans, not for the strength of our country."

In his public appearances with military leaders, federal agencies and dozens of private businesses and nonprofits committed to help, Obama, laid out the enormous nature of the challenge.

As of June, one million veterans were unemployed and the jobless rate for post-9/11 veterans was 13.3%.

As the war in Iraq ends and the war in Afghanistan declines, more than one million more are projected to leave the military between 2011 and 2016.

These veterans tend to be young and many worked in sectors that were among the hardest hit by the recession. Post-9/11 veterans were more likely to be employed in mining, construction, manufacturing, transportation and utilities -- all industries that experienced significant drops in employment during his first years in office and George Bush's final years because of that deep recession.

Veterans disabled permanently or temporarily for protecting our country will also need special government assistance in making the transition to civilian employment or higher education.

The multi-pronged effort for veterans that Obama announced includes new tax credits or revival of expired efforts. For instance, under the Recovery Act, employers who hired certain unemployed veterans were eligible for a tax credit of up to 40% of the first \$6,000 of wages, for a maximum credit of \$2,400. But this credit expired at the end of 2010.

Obama has announced two new tax initiatives. A Returning Heroes Tax Credit for firms that hire unemployed veterans (maximum credit of \$2,400 for every short-term unemployed hire and \$4,800 for every long-term unemployed hire) and a Wounded Warriors Tax Credit that will increase the existing tax credit for firms that hire veterans with service-connected disabilities who have been unemployed long-term (maximum credit of \$9,600 per veteran) and continue the existing credit for all other veterans with a service-connected disability (maximum credit of

\$4,800).

A challenge has been issued and in many cases accepted by America's businesses to commit to hire or provide training to unemployed veterans and military spouses. Microsoft, Lockheed Martin, Accenture, JP Morgan, AT&T and many other companies and non-profits have already risen to the challenge and announced new commitments to training or employing veterans.

A "Reverse Boot Camp" -- which will extend the transition period to give service members more counseling and guidance and leave them career-ready - is being created by the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, working closely with other agencies and the White House economic and domestic policy teams.

The Department of Labor will establish a new initiative to deliver an enhanced career development and job search service package to transitioning veterans at their local one-stop career centers.

The Office of Personnel Management will create a "Best Practices" Manual for the private sector to help businesses identify and hire veterans. Task forces will also examine other ongoing initiatives in training and counseling.

Military also moves to reduce combat tours

In action this August, somewhat related though separately announced, the Pentagon with White House prodding has acted to fulfill another Obama commitment -- moving to reduce duty tours in an era where the need for troops has forced many to re-up for three or more tours of duty in foreign wars.

The Army said that combat troops will soon deploy for nine months, rather than a year.

The new policy takes effect on January 1, 2012, and applies to most active-duty, National Guard, and Army Reserve troops deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Egypt.



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POTUS candid on difficulty of compromise

The president's bargaining skills are being savaged by progressives. His liberal policies are seen as in conflict with his measured and even moderate approach. The passionate Obama that many associate with his elevation has been kept under cool wraps and people always ask him to explain.

Actually he has. Agree or not, the president has been honest about what is blocking the tried and true American method

of compromise, and by implication why he won't abandon it. This is an excerpt from what he discussed at a July town hall appearance in response to a question from the audience.

"The culture is now pushing against compromise, and here are a couple of reasons. I mean, one reason is the nature of congressional districts. They've gotten drawn in such a way where some of these districts are so solidly Republican or so solidly

Democrat, that a lot of Republicans in the House of Representatives, they're not worried about losing to a Democrat, they're worried about somebody on the right running against them because they compromise.

"So even if their instinct is to compromise, their instinct of self-preservation is stronger, and they say to themselves, I don't want a primary challenge. So that leads them to dig in.

"You've got a media that has become much more splintered. So those of you who are of a Democratic persuasion are only reading the New York Times and watching MSNBC -- (Laughter) -- and if you are on the right, then you're only reading the Wall Street Journal editorial page and watching FOX News. (Laughter.) And if that's where you get your information, just from one side, if you never even have to hear another argument, then over time you start getting more dug in.

"They've actually done studies -- this is interesting -- that if you put people in a room who agree with each other basically, if you just put a group of very liberal folks together and they're only talking to each other for long periods of time, then they start becoming -- they kind of gin each other up and they

become more and more and more liberal. And the same thing happens on the conservative side; they become more and more and more conservative.

"And pretty soon you've got what you have now, which is everybody is demonizing the

other side; everybody considers the other side completely extremist, completely unscrupulous, completely untrustworthy. Well, in that kind of atmosphere it's pretty hard to compromise.

"So we have to wind back from that kind of political culture."



A different Obama at last year's Laborfest

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Quite a parade inside Laborfest parade

The All-City People's Parade throughout the summer will show off portions of its "Metamorphosis" theatrical floats, masks, skits and community comments on issues of similar import as the concerns of organized labor.

But it is saving its biggest presence and push to be a comprehensive unit in the Laborfest parade Monday, Sept. 5.

Hundreds of artists, youth and families from throughout Milwaukee have been getting ready for just this Labor Day event, and much of the work is taking place in a 35,000 square

foot space in the former Linen & Things shop in the Grand Avenue mall. There volunteers transform cardboard, bits of found fabric, paper bags and plastic into giant puppets, masks and floats for the parade and pageant. The home base for these creations and performance training has been changed from a forgotten deserted cavern into a lively warren of organized chaos as dozens of individual pieces take shape.

This is a unique process of public art that organized labor is happy to be a part of, and free workshops, building and training continue through Sept. 2

(Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 9 p.m.; Fridays, noon to 5 p.m., and Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., at 161 W. Wisconsin Ave.) Individuals and groups are also needed to march, dance, wear masks and handle floats.

For details, contact Milwaukee Public Theatre at 414-347-1685. It and Milwaukee Mask and Puppet Theatre are spearheading the third annual parade project, partially funded by the Milwaukee Arts Board, the Wisconsin Arts Board and National Endowment for the Arts, Milwaukee County CAMPAC, United Performing

Arts Fund,

And also the Greater Milwaukee Foundation/Abert Fund and Mary Nohl Fund, Helen Bader Foundation, Max Fund, Gardner Foundation, Greater Milwaukee Realtors Youth Foundation, Merrill Lynch, Ritz Holman LLP, Mt. Mary College, Greater Milwaukee Committee, La Lune Collection, WE Energies, MPS Partnership for the Arts, Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board, Shops at Grand Avenue, ACLU of Wisconsin, Elizabeth Brinn Foundation, Koessler Family Foundation, MPS Arts

Internships. Omaha Community Foundation, Jewish Community Foundation, and many other individuals and community organizations.

Barbara Leigh is both co-founder and artistic/producing director for the Milwaukee Public Theater and Max Samson is artistic director of the puppet/mask theater.

Podcasts, videos, photos and details of the Free Make-A-Parade Workshops (expanded through Sept. 2) and the volunteer needs required during Laborfest on September 5 are available at www.milwaukeepublictheatre.org

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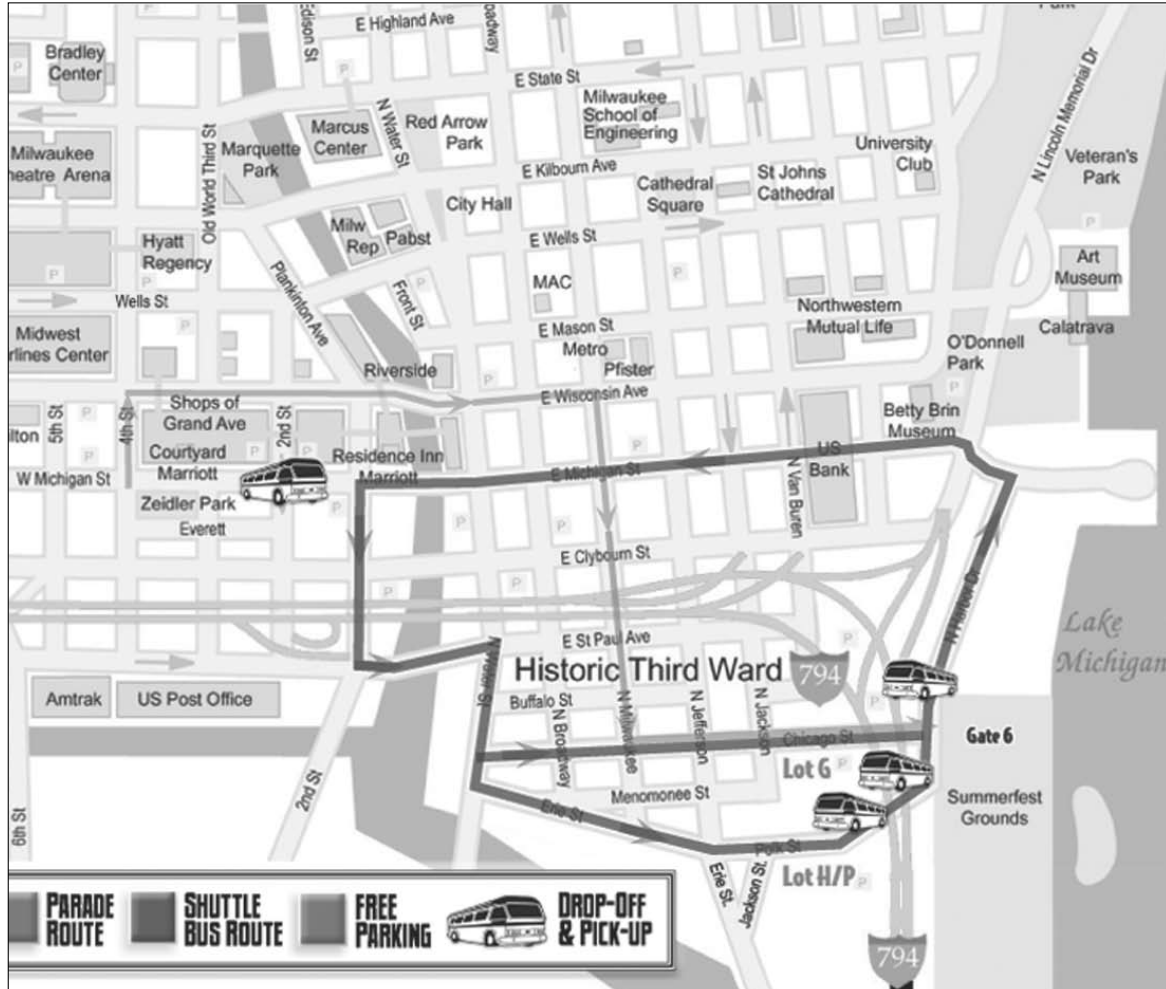
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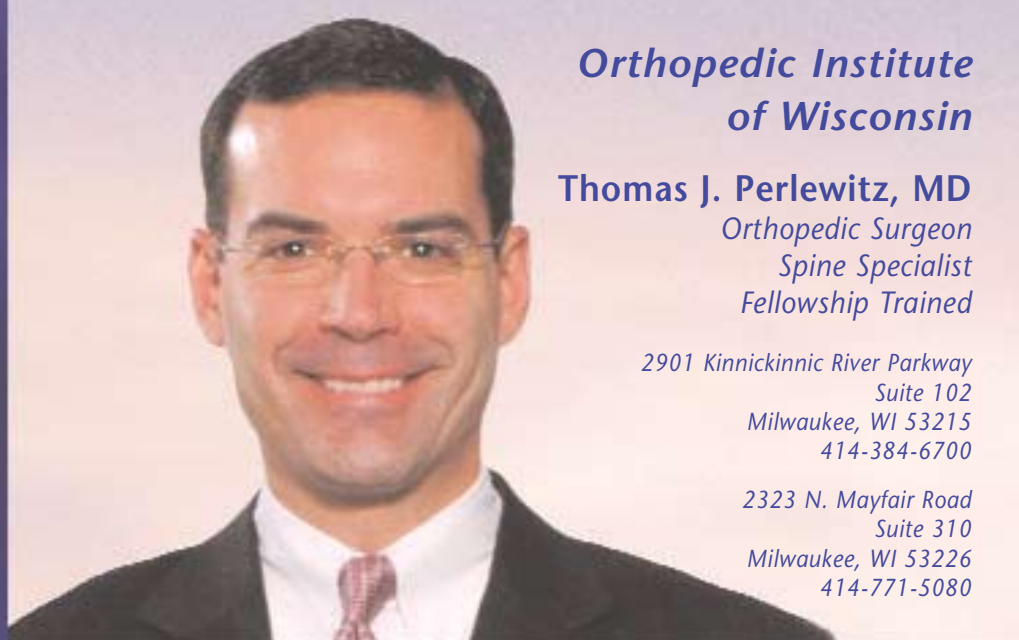
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Barbara Leigh (left), the tireless creative leader of the Milwaukee Public Theatre, leaves her wheelchair to help prepare the People's Parade contingent of the Laborfest Labor Day parade (above, and story at left). Above right, her hands-on co-conspirator from the Milwaukee Mask and Puppet Theatre, Max Samson, demonstrates how to create animal figures of wire, paste and paper. Hundreds of volunteers have poured through the Grand Avenue doors at 161 W. Wisconsin Ave, taking over a vast space for workshops, training and building near the food court. What has been missing is union volunteers -- at least before Aug. 9 when they were tirelessly engaged in electioneering. Now they have a chance to show their creative side.

Sugar workers locked out in protest
 Less than a month after Minnesota's state government shutdown ended, another group of Minnesota workers is locked out. American Crystal Sugar - the nation's largest beet-sugar producer - locked out 1,300 union workers in Minnesota, North Dakota and Iowa on Aug. 1. The lockout came after 96% of the workers rejected the company's take-it-or-leave-it contract offer, which workers say allows the company to subcontract their jobs.
 The lockout affects members of the Bakery, Confectionary, Tobacco and Grain Millers Union in five locals in Minnesota, North Dakota and Iowa. American Crystal Sugar, which is a farmer-owned cooperative, is using "transient workers" and private security to enforce the lockout.
 The Minnesota AFL-CIO has an online petition at http://act.afl-cio.org/c/174/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=2567 opposing the lockout.



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PRESIDENT'S VIST TURNED 2010 LABORFEST TOPSY-TURVY

It was a great event, drew national publicity and a massive crowd as Obama spoke and greeted union leaders and rank and file, but it also changed a lot of the low-key crowd flow and entertainment in efforts to ensure security. Below, in advance of the president's visit, staff such as Mike Balistreri at left and chief officer Sheila Cochran at right rehearsed the volunteers. But other aspects of Laborfest, such as the motorcycles and the Operating Engineers Local 139 flatbeds went off as planned.



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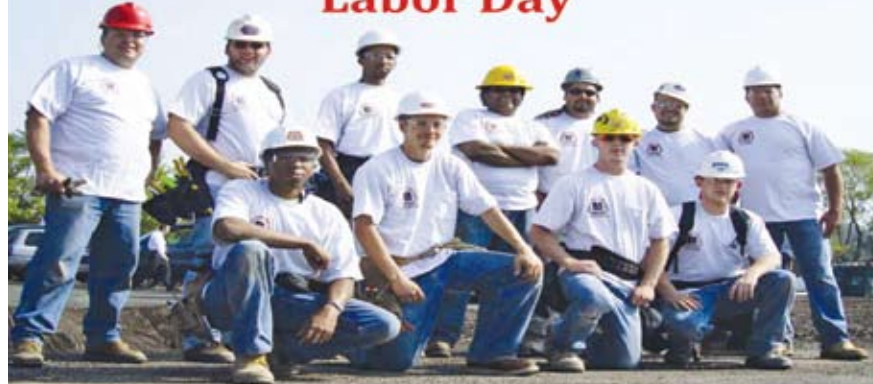
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Laborfest

From Page 1

ceedings, They do worry about their members first while opening it all up to the community at large. Part of the problem is that the events really please everyone but Laborfest has always focused on being a gathering of unionized working people.

Among the things that have changed the emphasis -- without unions even trying -- is the political equation that has taken even union issues out of the hands of unions themselves.

What a political year this has been! Unions seemed forced to justify their mere existence. It's one thing to argue about what public workers are paid, but quite another when the legislature does something no one expected -- that is, passing laws that threaten the basic rights of workers to collectively speak to their bosses and take remedial action against the deliberately obtuse.

Many in the GOP thought (hoped?) unions would get ornery and destructive about all this. Instead they and their allies got busy in angry but civil fashion. Loud, yes. Chant-happy, definitely. But what evaporated was all that GOP hoopla about thuggery. In fact, their harping about the big bad unions made the conservatives look wimpy and made a lot of folks long for one of those boisterous family gatherings with music and laughter they enjoy at tailgates and in the parks.

Enter Laborfest, that long-standing reminder that unions cooperate, are caring members of community and church -- and also know how to eat, drink and party.

Visibility for Laborest was heightened last year by the visit and speech from President Obama. In truth, the security and strictures required by that visit may have drawn more people than normal, but it also interfered with the typical flow of people and events. No such discombobulating is expected this year. In fact, the organizers have been meeting all summer to make sure.

The combination of all these movements, from the presence of unions joining nonunion folks in rallies in Madison, around the state and in recall activities, from national attention in the media, to recall elections that remind people that the state is pretty even in its philosophical splits, brings to the forefront a festival that has actually been part of the community for decades. It's surprising how many people not in unions have asked their union friends, "Say, can anyone go?"

A big proof of that interest occurred through August 14 at the Wisconsin State Fair. Let's be honest, the biggest attraction at the Union Label Booth in the cavernous Exhibition Hall was the chance to see and buy tickets



The Street Glide bike and union memorabilia below -- big attractions at State Fair -- are a big part of Laborfest as well.



for the Street Glide motorcycle being raffled off at Laborfest - and you don't have to be there to win. But hundreds of fairgoers were also snatching up the big blue fist LABORFEST.11 poster on a red field with all the details of the festival.

With higher interest, let's expand some of the details so readers of the newspaper can help spread the news around.

THE 11 A.M. PARADE

Shuttle Free. Park your car or motorcycle at one of three marked lots across the street from Summerfest gates and grab the ATU operated county busses arranged by the union to carry people back and forth to the parade assembly area from 8 a.m. onward.

Assembly. Most unions

will search out placards and identify their gathering spot for the parade at Zeidler Park, between 3rd and 4th just south of Michigan St.

But the Laborfest Cruise & Car Show will assemble for the parade on 4th St. between Wisconsin and Wells. So that's a special pre-parade display of Harleys and vintage (pre-1991) American-made automobiles for passersby. The first 100 to register will sport special dash plaques and also be displayed throughout Laborfest in the north area of Maier Festival Park (Summerfest).

Big Blue Fist. It's become a famous symbol of "Stand With Wisconsin" and has been adopted as the motto for Laborfest. A hug papier-mache version is expected to help lead off the parade and then be parked on the Summerfest grounds.

The Parade Within the Parade. See details on Page 10.

Stuff to Wear or Carry.

Many will have been ordered by unions in advance but look on the grounds for sales of any remaining We Are Wisconsin shirts and the Laborfest T-Shirt with "We Are One" on the back and the "We Are Wisconsin Blue Fist" on the front. You can also pick up raffle tickets to win the 2012 Harley Davidson Street Glide. Raffle tickets are \$6 each or 2 for \$10. That raffle also includes a number of cash prizes.

Around the Grounds. In the children's area, look for the regular stage shows with jugglers and magical revues. Check out the face painting, stories and games with the Pocket Lady, clowns, and other entertainment, with trained volunteers supervising the children.

Elsewhere, the offerings are

constant. The popular band, Spider George and the Web, will rock the place with its big brass assortment of oldies and arrangements at the Miller Stage.

Reynaldo and his trained crew are sketch artistes who will capture your personality in a few strokes and present them to you as a gift.

The Midwest Association of pro wrestlers will offer matches at a ring in the sports area. The Union Exhibition Tent will feature displays and demonstrations, while volunteers will oper-

ate a nearby labor table.

At 5 p.m., after the Harley raffle, there is an event that is not on the schedule and is accidentally quite entertaining. It's called "Clean-up!" when union volunteers take down Laborfest, rushing with surprising organization to fold up chairs, take down banners and put Summerfest back into normal order.

And in between checking out the classic cars, the vendors, the fountains, the roaming mascots, there are always devotees playing Bingo!

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Calendar

Visit www.milwaukeeelabor.org for updated events

Wednesday, August 31

Executive Council Meeting
2 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Monday, September 5

Labor Day and Laborfest!
11 a.m. parade, noon to 5 p.m. Summerfest,
see stories Pages 1, 10-13

Wednesday, September 7

Delegate Meeting
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

Wednesday, September 28

Executive Council Meeting
2 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Wednesday, October 5

Delegate Meeting
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.



He's drawn to politics and now teaches you

An innovative two-day workshop September 14-15, designed by internationally renowned labor cartoonist Mike Konopacki who is also the featured instructor, will help labor leaders and other activists understand how art can become an important tool in mobilization. And the great thing, Konopacki emphasizes, is that the hands-on training isn't just for the artistically inclined. It's really for any committed labor person who wants to explore new avenues of communication.

That's obviously a Konopacki cartoon above.

The course - "Membership Mobilization Through Art" -- will address such issues as how to tap the artistic talent of members, how to use art to parody opponents and how to use art to utilize rank and file involvement.

For registration information, visit solidarity.com/hkcartoons/Artmobilization.html or check out the University of Wisconsin Extension School For Workers, phone (608) 262-2112, Fax (608) 265-2391 or write 610 Langdon St., Rm. 422. Madison, WI 53703 or email schoolforworkers@uwex.edu.

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More data reveals real price of budget

According to the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, taxpayer-funded spending increased by 7.6% and total spending increased by 3.5% in the 2011-13 state budget bullied through the joint finance committee, both GOP controlled chambers and Gov. Walker.

"Throughout the budget process the governor and his Republican allies in the legislature claimed that their budget cut spending and did not raise taxes," said Rep. Donna Seidel (D-Wausau). "Now the conservative-leaning Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance is contradicting the Republican talking points about frugality and moderation. Their analysis also makes clear that contrary to Walker's rhetoric, the budget was balanced on the backs of middle-class families rather than through shared sacrifice."

The Taxpayers Alliance in its analysis has now joined many citizens, legislators, media outlets, government watchdog groups and the non-partisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau in presenting ample evidence contrary to the Republican spin.

It notes that the budget included two tax increases on lower income families: the Earned Income Tax Credit, which affects working families; and the Homestead Tax Credit, which largely affects seniors.

Conversely, the Taxpayers Alliance highlights tax cuts that primarily benefit the rich with new capital gains exclusions as well as large, multi-state corporations by reopening several tax loopholes. A new, \$128.7 million tax cut for businesses would "erase much of the income tax liability for affected firms."

"It's time for Governor Walker and the Republicans to be honest with Wisconsin citizens," insisted Seidel.

"What's even more disappointing is that when the Republicans chose to increase spending, it was not to fund Wisconsin priorities like public education and job training. Instead, Walker and the legislators who have rubberstamped his agenda spent nearly \$2.3 billion so far this session on tax breaks for corporations and the super-rich."

As much as the related loss of public worker bargaining rights, these cumulative fiscal analyses of the budget impact underlie the drive to recall Walker and change the tone of state government.

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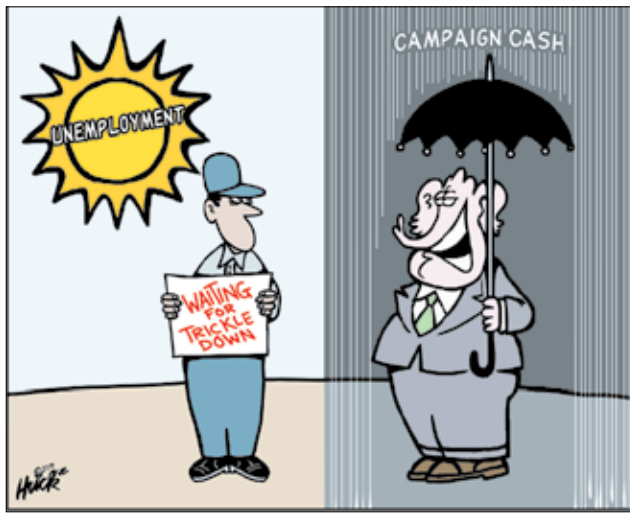
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Postal workers told of dire slash proposal

Crushing postal workers and slashing service will not solve the US Postal Service's financial crisis, postal workers president Cliff Guffey said Aug. 12 in an instant response to a self-described extraordinary effort by the Postal Service to seek congressional support to cut 120,000 jobs, break its labor contract signed just earlier this year -- and withdraw from the federal health and retirement plans.

"Congress created this mess and Congress can fix it," said Guffey, the president of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU, AFL-CIO).

The USPS economic crisis is the result of a provision of the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006 that requires the Postal Service to pre-fund the health care benefits of future retirees - a burden no other government agency or private company bears.

The legislation requires the USPS to fund a 75-year liability over a 10-year period, and that requirement costs the USPS more than \$5.5 billion per year.

Congress must address the cause of the Postal Service's financial crisis so that postal workers can continue to serve the American people and the USPS can continue to act as an important engine of the US economy, he said, adding that APWU "will not allow the hard-working men and women of the US Postal Service to be made the scapegoats for the outrageously poor judgment of Congress."

The postal service revealed its plan in a notice informing Congress of its proposals - with the headline "Financial crisis calls for significant actions." Newspapers immediately picked

Laborers press for highway bill

As the US House and Senate enjoyed its August recess, hundreds of thousands of LUNA members are out in their districts, too, stumping for them to restore our economy.

The Laborers' International Union of North America - half a million members - has agreed to deliver a message to members of Congress. It's time to pass a new Highway Bill and to discard a House GOP plan that would destroy 630,000 good jobs.

Congress left town without completing a Highway Bill. While the Senate is working on a bipartisan plan that would protect jobs and prevent roads and bridges from falling further behind needs, House Republican leaders have offered a proposal that undermines job creation and America's competitiveness, locking in failure for six years.

Said LIUNA President Terry O'Sullivan. "We need to show America faces its challenges and doesn't run away from them."

"Congress created this mess and Congress can fix it"

-- APWU President Guffey

up on the "White Paper" draft, reached in private management discussions without input from the workers. The draft claimed the postal service will be "insolvent next month due to significant declines in mail volume and retiree health benefit pre-funding costs imposed by Congress."

During the past four years, the service lost \$20 billion, including \$8.5 billion in fiscal 2010. Over that period, mail vol-

ume dropped by 20%, though many specialists have laid out plans to Congress how the postal service could improve the volume.

The Washington Post and other newspapers discovered the "Workforce Optimization" paper, in which management acknowledges its "extraordinary request" to break its labor contracts.

"However, exceptional cir-

cumstances require exceptional remedies," the document said.

"The Postal Service is facing dire economic challenges that threaten its very existence. . . . If the Postal Service was a private-sector business, it would have filed for bankruptcy and utilized the reorganization process to restructure its labor agreements to reflect the new financial reality."

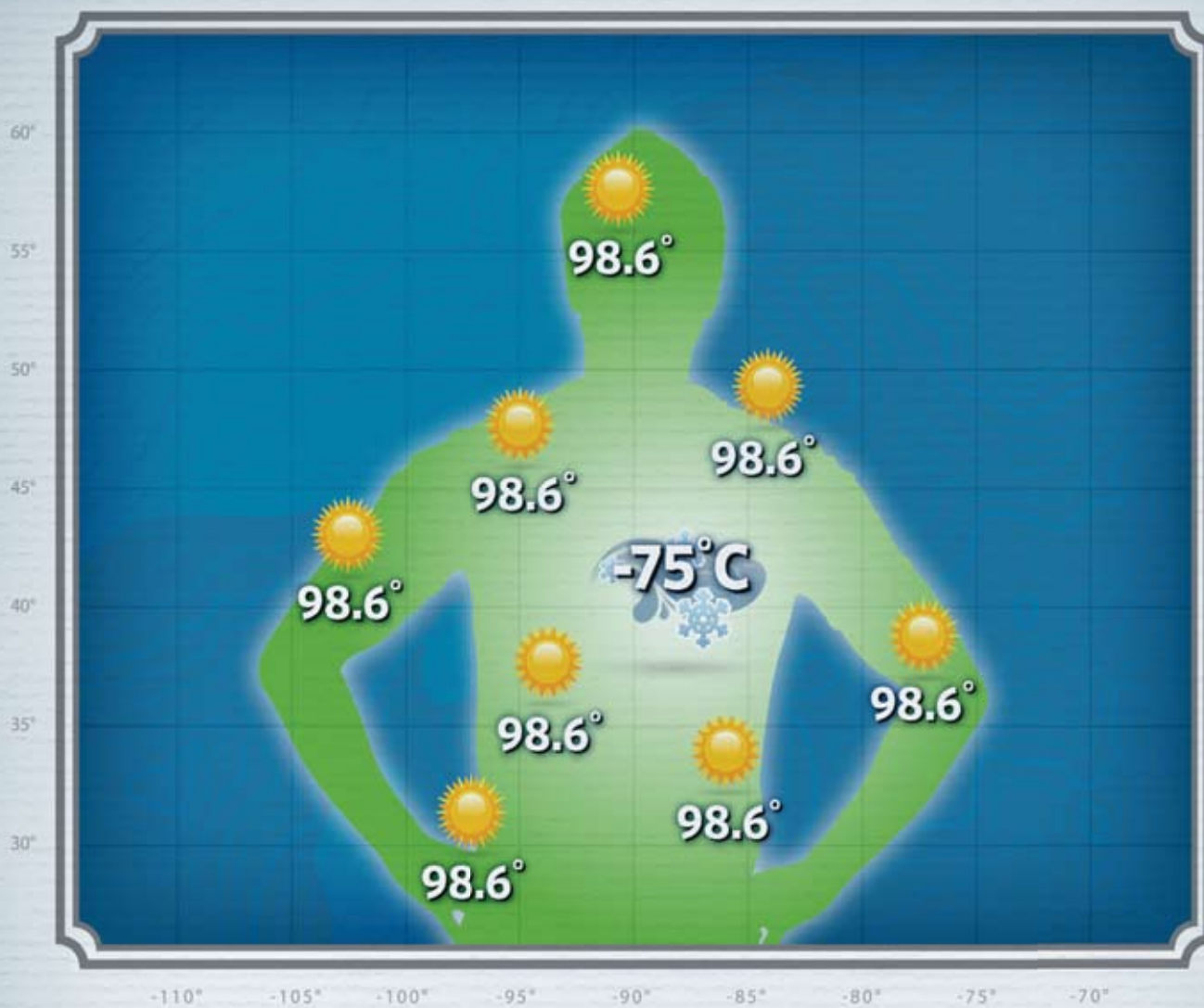
Problem is, as Guffey points out, the service operates under rules set by Congress unlike what the private sector faces and Congress can fix it.

For instance, Guffey noted in a statement, "The federal government is holding billions of

dollars in postal overpayments to its pension accounts."

In a white paper on health and retirement benefits, the postal managers also say it is "imperative" to rein in health benefit and pension costs, which are a third of its labor expenses.

So the service wants to withdraw its 480,000 pensioners and 600,000 active employees from the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program "and place them in a new, Postal Service administered" program. Many observers call this a draconian solution that immediately casts doubt on a program that benefits many federal workers.



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The real stories of the Wisconsin State Fair

Fistfights and brief street violence preoccupied talk radio and media coverage. The one-day storm may have blacked the state's eye with national coverage – to the point that even local media under-reported how the fair set record attendance in its 14-day run. Inside the exhibition hall, the Union Label Booth staffed by volunteers did a brisk passersby look-see, especially for the Harley motorcycle and the Laborfest posters. A few aisles away, the state Democratic Party – bottom photo at right – seemed flooded with attention to its insignias, banners, funny signs (several of them from unions) and partisan good cheer. Several politicians also stopped by to check out such booths.



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This ad paid for by the members of Local 18

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RESULTS FROM AUG. 16

Incumbent Democrat senators easily won despite big GOP money against them. District 12 Bob Wirth swept away conservative lawyer Jonathan Sietz, 58%-42%. District 22 Jim Holperin beat back Tea Party Kim Simac with 55%. That leaves the GOP in control of the state senate by a mere vote.

It was the Hawley Road office building where the Milwaukee Area Labor Council is located. In hallways, meeting rooms, kitchen and makeshift dining halls, thousands of citizens -- many but not all union members -- came in to work the phones in all the recall campaigns and knock on the doors in Senate District 8. Stirring up this constant flow of volunteers were parades of union and political dignitaries to thank them for their efforts and charge them up with personal details and new insights. This was the grassroots ground game on steroids as supportive citizens flocked to the cause -- and the organizers always made sure they had plenty to eat before and after they did the doors.

Day after day, week after week, trained volunteers (photos below) instructed participants -- including caravans from nearby states -- on what to ask, how to record their contacts and why they needed to honestly engage voters.

Among the notables who strolled in for breakfast and to provide inspiration (photo at left) was US Rep. Gwen Moore, catching up on local news as Sheila Cochran (right) chief operating officer of the MALC, chatted with Moore aide Lois O'Keefe (back to camera). Far left below, the parade of dignitaries brought out the ever-present camera of AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer Stephanie Bloomingdale.



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Splash of cold facts helps explain growing female power of Emerge America

Some facts driving the new attention for Emerge America and Emerge Wisconsin

As late as the 1960s - an era that the right-wing still demeans because of the advance of civil rights, peace movements and, gasp, feminism -- classified ads even in major liberal newspapers like the New York Times were still categorizing careers by gender. That was also an era when only 38% of women attended college and only 11% earned Ph Ds.

Today 57% of US college graduates are women. More than half of Ph Ds go to women. According to US Dept. of Labor, of the 122 million US women age 16 years and over, 72 million, or 59.2%, were labor force participants-working or looking for work. Women comprise 46.8% of the total US labor force. And nearly half of union membership is female.

Now look at public office - minimal representation for the maximum gender.

Currently of 100 US senators, 17 are women. But women did lose seats in the House. And only three states - Maine, Connecticut and Hawaii - can boast gender parity in their US House representatives.

In Wisconsin, 23% of the Wisconsin Legislature are women. 15% of City Councils have no women and of the 12,935 town and village board seats, only 2,646 are held by women.

Now consider some of the gains made by Emerge Wisconsin, which has trained more than 50 women and is holding classes for dozens more. The chapter can point to two members of the state Assembly (Appleton's Penny Bernard Schaber and Milwaukee's JoCasta Zamarrilla, the lone Latina in the chamber), three members of school boards (including MPS' Megan Holmon), thirteen scattered municipal and county council leaders and one of the two brand new state senators, Oshkosh's Jessica King. -- *D.P.N.*



Emerge America's persuasive leader Karen Middleton (photo left and center above) met with union leaders from all public and private categories (firefighters, plumbers, laborers, building trades and county workers) to drive attention to the need to find and elect progressive Democrat women. At left in top photo is Emerge Wisconsin's director, Wendy Strout. In forefront at right is Annie Wacker, the vice president of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council and also an AFSCME member and AFL-CIO community liaison working with United Way. Next to Strout is Lyle Balistrieri, president of the Milwaukee Building & Trades Council. Fourth from back is Rich Abelson, executive director of AFSCME District 48. Also in the photo at right is Scott Redman, MALC board member from Plumbers and Gas Fitters Local 75.

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See Why It Pays to Belong to the IAM

Helping progressive women Emerge America

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
Editor, Labor Press

In the winter months before Scott Walker really got rumbolling with his extremist agenda -- destroying bargaining rights, public education and stripping communities of their power to fix things -- leaders of the progressive and union communities held several meetings with the articulate Karen Middleton, a multi-term elected official in Colorado with a national reputation who was seeking support and money for Emerge America.

That is the national program she heads to find, train, prepare and put committed progressive Democrat women into public office.

It would be fair to say the Wisconsin leaders asked her hard questions about why she wanted their money as well as their influence. Why, they probed, of all the fine causes dunning them, should they help her -- and Wendy Strout, the organizer who left an AFSCME job to serve as executive director of Emerge Wisconsin, one of the group's successful state chapters. Why should unions help Emerge with money and by identifying or encouraging women to go through the program?

Obviously, organized labor has some emerging women leaders who would be great for this cause, but shouldn't they be encouraged never to abandon their roles inside unions?

Yet still you can find Strout all over the state wherever there are rallies, forums or speakers out of the crowd no one previously heard of. All her scouting and cajoling happens in between running advance classes in how to build a campaign, build money and build on the issues.

Middleton meanwhile is running all over the nation. Her energy could be the main reason Gov. Walker worked so hard to oppose the bullet train -- but any attempt to slow down her travels is obviously in vain. She drops in on training classes, talks on TV and radio, gets profiled in the New Yorker, pushes new attention for Emerge America, even setting up a national awards luncheon in San Francisco with former Michigan governor Jennifer Granholm.

Why is Middleton promoting this acknowledged "state of the art" effort? She offered Milwaukee leaders some powerful answers along with convincing statistics (see some examples on opposite page). She slyly mentioned that even union women should be mentoring those coming up behind them -- and one of the best ways to make room for them is advancing to service on school boards, municipal boards or the legislature.

While all these leaders were impressed and pledged support, right-wing pressures such



In a roundtable with leaders, Karen Middleton (left) drew deep attention from Wacker, Abelson and others.

as Walker had given them immediate fish to fry, not necessarily gender specific fish. (Some of this is now sizzling as unions lay off staff in the face of union-busting tactics). And there was always a lingering concern -- particularly among men -- about whether more women in public office was really a primary solution to what ails America.

It's only taken a few months of gains on the street to vanish such doubts. In August, Wisconsin progressives looked at which gender was driving increases in resistance to extremist policies. The national press looked at the recall election results and now talks about parity between conservative and liberal outlooks. Women, unheralded and often unknown women, have been a key to this social advancement.

There is also growing recognition that the chauvinist extremism paralyzing the nation - and we are not just talking about men but about the ugliest side of partisanship -- might not have happened except for the paucity of women in public office. That may well be holding the nation back from new ways of looking at issues and talking about them.

Barbara Lawton, the former Wisconsin lieutenant governor, takes both political parties to task for making cuts in women's reproductive health the first item in balancing budgets at both the state and federal level.

US Rep. Barbara Lee and other members of Progressive Congress touring America in June lamented our historic dependence on war and physical conflict to solve political disputes and spoke of how women felt helpless in the face of this tendency toward violence that destroyed their families.

Men as well as women complain aloud that the dead hands and old habits of power, control and philosophy dominate the national debate.

The tea party may have even set the cause of women back in

2010, though the media continues to be fascinated by the Tweeter women at the top of the pile. All the coverage makes it seem that women are more prominent in public office. The facts reveal that a lot of women, established and forward-moving public servants, were displaced in 2010 - in fact, there are fewer women in influential policy positions than before.

Women may have voted less for Democrats in 2010 but they hardly replaced them with women. In fact, despite the toxicity of how females view the current Congress, their votes actually increased the number of men -- many political veterans, many insiders eager to play the old games both in D.C. and in statehouses.

A situation that was hardly great before has actually gotten worse. If the public listened more closely to the stuff being spouted at tea party rallies, it would also realize this is a crab movement speeding backwards on equality of the sexes.

YouTube video is having a lot of fun with Wisconsin Sen. Glenn Grothman's rally remarks claiming women are the corporate male's enemy, that women are conducting a war on men and that men deserve the prominent role because women leave work to do things like having babies (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BincmtWINMs>). It's become a thinly disguised part of the tea party mantra that women should stick to traditional roles because their presence at work or in public office upsets the "natural" male order of things.

"We help women get into office, stay in office and like it," Middleton is fond of saying - but it is determined work, she concedes, because women are different. They are not drawn to open domination as men are. They have to be coaxed into recognizing they can make crucial differences. They actually have to believe they can make that

difference - and deal with some scorn and doubts not just from men but other women.

Middleton related an experience that union leaders could relate to - that in a roomful of both sexes it was the men who tended to volunteer for leadership and elected office while the women held back. Much of this is heritage and expectation, the historical role of women, but as Middleton pointed out it is also a matter of a different view of the nature of leadership.

Many of the women Emerge America is finding are not focused on public office and public speaking. Events led them to those roles. These women are often the quiet leaders in a neighborhood, a school, a committee, who don't thrust themselves forward to get votes until circumstances force their natural initiative out into the open. In other words, they don't know their own power.

What is going on around the nation has awakened interest in women who never seriously contemplated a public career to recognize that they had better get in there and change things for the better. And the attacks on families and education have driven more forward than ever before.

Emerge's approach puts potential candidates through their

paces and preparation in how to understand issues, talk about issues, network with men and women, raise money and dig deep into the grassroots. It works, which may be why the national media is paying attention and why Emerge Wisconsin has been singled out by state Democrats and moved up its planned training classes and publicity efforts.

Emerge in Wisconsin spends \$2,500 on each recruit (after a rigorous vetting process) but only requires each woman to contribute \$350, which explains the pressure to find funding. To learn more about the program and its stepped up classes, visit www.emergewi.org or contact wendy@emergewi.org

Emerge America also has chapters in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Massachusetts, Maine, Nevada, Oregon and (get ready Rand Paul) now Kentucky.

Some progressive leaders may have once regarded the training for public elected office of committed females with a capital D for Democrat as a "niche movement" - but events are making them see how niche may mean "future." Emerge America is an acknowledged game changer, a model of how women can move into a very necessary but elusive balance in public life and policy.

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The snake oil that Walker's good for schools

By Dominique Paul Noth, Editor, Labor Press

It reared its cobra head during the recall elections and is swaying hard now, preparing to mesmerize and strike the public with venom through ever busier press releases. It is the claim - fostered by many conservative local officials at municipalities and school boards - that if they use the new liberties Gov. Walker has given them by removing bargaining rights from public workers, they stand to save taxpayers a lot of money.

Such claims are partly true because of aspects the unions readily if reluctantly agreed to - to cut their own pay by covering more of the health premiums and by directly providing a fixed percentage of wages to pensions (and since state pensions are apparently in great shape and unions long ago traded less costly good benefits for reduced wages, this insistence by Walker is both renegeing on past deals and forcing unions to grovel).

What Walker and his followers don't tell the public is how much in his bargaining rights emasculation has nothing to do with savings now or later, and probably create later costs for the taxpayers. Things like forcing recertification of unions or eliminating the convenience of paycheck dues. Things like cutting back at many governmental units how many union workers help manage budgets, a move likely to raise human resource costs for taxpayers as time goes by.

There are probably members of the public who believe that public unions pad their numbers and think from all the talk radio folderol that this is appropriate payback. Except stories of featherbedding usually involve the private sector, where workers have long not shared in corporate profits. Public workers do a lot of things citizens don't like, such as collect taxes and regulate behavior. They also do things people like, like plow roads and care for the elderly. Yet still the myth continues that public work is less than private work and that taxpayers should behave like rulers. Many do seem awfully eager to turn into the meanest boss they ever had.

They don't yet realize that for every justifiable belt-tightening there are going to be hidden long-term consequences - and burgeoning costs for the taxpayer. That was hidden in the recent announcement by WEAC, the Wisconsin Education Association Council, that it will be cutting 40% of its staff, some 42 employees who represented and protected the rights of teachers.

Comment

Once again, Walker's promised job growth is invisible, but his actions are destroying jobs. And these cuts mean the teachers' union doesn't think it will have enough work for a regular staff, at least temporarily, and will have to wait a year or two until the other side recognizes the value of staff in smoothing out problems, interpreting work rules and guiding poorer workers out the door (something union staffers are actually quite good at, avoiding lawsuits the public pays for). Put simply, the taxpayers will pay more later because they think they're saving a thimble drop today.

But temporary savings have to be balanced against waste and inefficiency. There are genuine cost cuttings, but many of the staff members WEAC must dump helped teachers just teach, not deal with management wrinkles. And don't expect a 40% cut on the management side.

Reports indicate that 275 school districts don't have union contracts and intend to take advantage of the new Walker emasculation - but 175 school districts do have contracts. or humane feelings. So where there are no union contracts to control the pace of the slicing, mandating higher pension contributions and health premium payments will obviously reduce some local costs - and where it doesn't make much difference, you can be sure the Republicans won't discuss the moral bind that many communities are being placed in. After all, it is their citizens and their tax base that the GOP majority so blithely slashes.

Yet many in the GOP are shocked at how many elected officials in local communities resist these vaunted tools (apparently a torn Band-Aid is now a tool). Brace for deeper shock and yelling when citizens also start crunching these numbers and look deeper under the hood as the smartest local officials have already done.

Research exposes all these supposed savings are financial flummery, premature as well as deliberately aborted projections. The full term of Walker's budget is two years. These announcements are based on the first year of a two year budget that back-ends the economic suffering facing all the state's schools and communities. His minions in municipal office are not just optimistically guessing, there are cutting in half the gestation period he created. WEAC and other unions probably believe, in the face of such half-baked thinking, they have no choice but to cut back in response, though they think everyone will suffer buyer's remorse a year down the road.

It's not unions saying this aloud, however, though they'll be happy to hear what even local Republican officials and data-mavens exposed. School administrators and municipal analysts across the political spectrum say it's the second year that will really put these local budgets underwater -- and they complain that only lazy journalists would not do the full math and look down the road.

These local officials - and many hardly love public unions - suggest that all this political pie-in-the-sky doesn't touch the real danger facing local government in the future.

The loss of equal power bargaining assumes a unity on the local conservative side that doesn't exist, they point out, as any school board meeting or squabbling among conservative city officials would tell you. And they can cite chapter and verse of the dysfunction and power-grabbing that keeps even conservative boards from balancing the needs of children, educators and taxpayers.

The focus of union bargainers at least kept the opposition on track. Off the record, conservative officials tell me they fear the extremists will now go off the rails without another side to balance them. The behavior of many in the GOP majority, who are clearly bending to political pressure, does not reassure them.

That was underscored July 21 when a diverse collection of administrators accused Walker of misrepresentation when he said his budget would put schools in a "good financial position." Their educated view was quickly attacked by uneducated party loyalists. But from Racine to Eau Claire, from the right and the left, those experts debunked the idea that forcing larger class sizes, lower quality and less services and narrower instruction was any way forward. They described Walker's tools as ways to dismantle not build education.

Similar games are being played by GOP defenders about health insurance. The right-wing McIver Foundation screams about how dropping the teacher-supported WEA Trust saved the Hartford schools \$800,000, neglecting news stories about how switching to the WEA Trust was saving the Marshfield schools even more money, while many other school districts (Kenosha, Turtle Lake, Marinette, La Crosse) opted to stay with WEA as cost-saving measures.

It's actually too soon to pass judgment on unfolding consequences. The public might like simple fast answers, but they usually don't exist in the real world. Yet, my, how the GOP lives on creating stampedes! It takes pretty cool heads to tell the difference between a garden variety snake and a cobra.

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IAM is doing the Continental

Fleet service workers at United Continental Holdings completed voting August 11 for representation by the International Association of Machinists (IAM). It was a five-week-long election. Some 97% of the workers who cast ballots supported union representation. Of those, 51.4%, or 5,572 employees, voted for IAM, while 48.5%, or 5,257 employees, chose the Teamsters, and a handful of workers supported other unions and individuals.

United and Continental merged Oct. 1, 2010, to form Chicago-based United Continental Holdings, but the two airlines continue to operate as separate operating subsidiaries. Prior to the vote, IAM represented United employees and the Teamsters represented the ramp, cargo, and operations workers at Continental and Continental Micronesia.

Noted IAM District 141 President Rich Delaney after the vote: "This election was contested by two unions that have rich histories and deeply rooted belief in the trade union movement. It was conducted with a minimum amount of animosity between us."

Fighting fire with fire

AFL-CIO reveals SuperPAC as equalizer weapon against right-wing

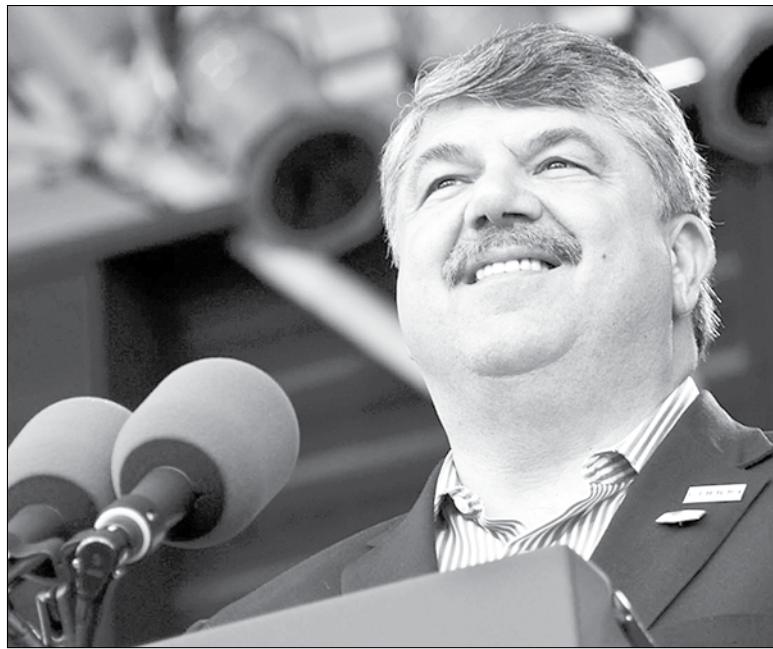
The AFL-CIO will create a "SuperPAC," a separate campaign finance committee that can communicate with the general public - and raise money without any contribution limits - as part of an overall revamp of its political operation, the federation's new political director, Michael Podhorzer, revealed to Press Associates in August at the AFL-CIO executive council meeting in Silver Spring, Md.

Details of the SuperPAC remain to be fleshed out, though national AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka has openly discussed the possibility. Podhorzer said the point is to expand the federation's reach beyond its own members. "It's the legal vehicle to talk to the general public in campaigns," using paid media and other communication methods, he said.

SuperPACs sprang up - almost all on the right - after the US Supreme Court's 2010 Citizens United decision, allowing corporations, individuals and unions virtually unlimited giving to campaign organizations, but not candidates. Regular campaign finance committees, or PACs, have contribution limits.

Regular PACs also must disclose their donors. Union ones follow other rules, since any union member who disagrees with the political philosophy can ask that his or her dues not be used for political purpose.

But a SuperPAC would reflect a considerable change for unions, which have always been open about their donors. SuperPACs do not have to be open because of the Citizens United ruling that equated money and free speech. The monster SuperPAC of the 2010 cycle, American



As much as unions dislike the now legal tactic, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka is pushing through a long-standing warning that the federation will create a SuperPAC to raise money. But the SuperPAC is only one promised change as the executive council upgrades, revamps and gets more aggressive in its political program. For one thing, it's putting money behind its distancing from Democratic 'Blue Dogs'.

Crossroads, run by George W. Bush's political guru, Karl Rove, did not disclose the names of its corporate backers.

The AFL-CIO is clearly responding on the same playing field to the secret corporate money that helped radical right candidates hide their agenda as they swamped labor-backed candidates in the 2010 election, giving that cabal control of the US House and many governorships and legislatures. They've used that control ever since to attack workers, unions and the middle class in the states and on Capitol Hill.

The SuperPAC was just one feature the executive council approved for the revamped political program. Other decisions include "a greater independence and investment in labor

such pledges in the past, but never put money behind them. The council promised to do so now, but has yet to set figures or percentages - or seek a new dedicated money source.

"Given the dire economic times, our money would be better invested in building worker political power...and only supporting those candidates who support workers," he explained. That means so-called "Blue Dog" Democrats will not get backing, and that labor will actively hunt out pro-worker hopefuls for open seats.


The changes would "Continue to turn labor's political operation into a year-round structure, focused on issues - especially jobs - and not just on officeholders."

The AFL-CIO revamp, beyond Wisconsin, where unions have mobilized tens of thousands of people for key state senate recall races, means labor will concentrate its next efforts

in Ohio. That will be followed by "hard choices about people and resources" in other states the 21-member executive committee will select.

"Endorsements in political races," except for the US presidency "will still be by state federations, but the executive committee will try to get everybody together on a relatively small set of priority" endorsements in US House, Senate and state legislature races. There will also be "a higher standard" for endorsements, Podhorzer promised.

Labor will shoot for a minimum of 11 contacts with each member in each race it is interested in, a standard Podhorzer previously announced. "But there will be different numbers of contacts for different races," he said. "We'll also be looking very carefully at how contacts through social media affect a race - and which members are the most important to contact."




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Where are the jobs?

William Lucy (shown on a recent Milwaukee visit) wrote this opinion piece. He is the founder of CBTU and former secretary-treasurer of AFSCME.

We worked our way up. The bustling factories not only produced quality American goods, but good jobs that created a black middle class. These were jobs that workers fought to organize and unionize. Because of their struggle, they attained living wages and benefits so that the workers who followed would be able to provide a decent living for their families.

Now, merely decades later, the Great Recession and continuing jobs crisis have pulled many working families back into the struggle against poverty.

Unemployment is an epidemic in the black community. At 9.2%, the national unemployment rate is already too high, but when you focus in on black workers, joblessness jumps up to 16.2% nationwide. Focus the lens even tighter on the cities hit the hardest by the recession, and you will find unemployment numbers almost reaching Great Depression-era heights: 18% in Cleveland, 19% in Charlotte, 25% in Detroit, 22% in Milwaukee. And it's not a coincidence that many of the areas with high unemployment among blacks are areas where there was once a thriving manufacturing industry.


There are some politicians who would have us believe that the proposed free trade agreements with South Korea, Columbia and Panama will heal the jobs crisis and restore the manufacturing jobs lost. Those politicians have historical amnesia.

Since the North American Free Trade Act was signed in 1994, more than 682,900 jobs in America have been displaced to Mexico. The bulk were in manufacturing, the very jobs that helped to create a black middle class. The South Korean FTA is estimated to cost the United States another 159,000 jobs. During a time when so many are struggling to find jobs or straining to hold onto the jobs that they have, how could anyone think that more free trade agreements are what our communities need?

Maybe they can't see the effects of an auto factory or textile factory shutting down. Maybe they can't fathom the devastation that happens when a company relocates an entire electronics assembly line to another country. Maybe they don't understand that for all the hundreds of thousands of jobs lost, those are communities devastated, workers who can't provide for their families, an entire segment of the population struggling to maintain the economic gains they've made.

It's the only reason I can think of for the complete disconnect between what matters to the politicians in Washington and what matters to the people at home. But if any of those elected leaders had walked into our communities to ask what was most important to the recently laid-off woman who's worried about losing her home, to the unemployed man whose lost manufacturing job provided for his family, to the student who needs a summer job in order to continue to afford her education, they would find that the most pressing thing on their minds isn't the debt ceiling or free trade agreements. They would find that the one thing that matters the most to us is simple: good jobs.

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Even richest tell the rich to pay fairer taxes

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
Editor, Labor Press

It's common sense, of course, but it was the source that got the nation's attention in August.

When a guy whose ability to make money makes the Koch brothers holdings look like pygmy wealth, when the master brain of the free market system says flatly, "My friends and I have been coddled long enough by a billionaire-friendly Congress," not only the media wakes up but so probably do a lot of citizens.

The comments reveal that acquisitive greed is not the way to earn on investment - and that from the acknowledged expert on taking risk and thriving.

Billionaire Warren Edward Buffett is part of a very wealthy class that knows how much of their fortunes stem from a free society and a government responsibly taking care of its citizens. He is, of course, one of the world's shrewdest investors as well as one of its richest despite giving to charitable causes so much of his fortune.

It turns out he knows how to write. Of course, he's rich enough to hire Aaron Sorkin as his ghost writer if he wanted, but he draws from his own tax forms to make his point.

Buffett reveals that the income tax he paid last year, "as well as payroll taxes paid by me and on my behalf," were \$6,938,744. "That sounds like a lot of money," he writes, "but what I paid was only 17.4% of my taxable income - and that's actually a lower percentage than was paid by any of the other 20 people in our office. Their tax burdens ranged from 33% to 41% and averaged 36%."

The entire piece proves how well Buffett knows his numbers, no surprise there, but he well understands that in terms of tax burden he's better off than many Americans.

"While the poor and middle class fight for us in Afghanistan, and while most Americans struggle to make ends meet, we mega-rich continue to get our extraordinary tax breaks. Some of us are investment managers who earn billions from our daily labors but



Warren Buffett

are allowed to classify our income as 'carried interest,' thereby getting a bargain 15% tax rate. Others own stock index futures for 10 minutes and have 60% of their gain taxed at 15%, as if they'd been long-term investors."

Added Buffett, "The mega-rich pay income taxes at a rate of 15% on most of their earnings but pay practically nothing in payroll taxes. It's a different story for the middle class: typically, they fall into the 15% and 25% income tax brackets, and then are hit with heavy payroll taxes to boot."

He hastens to say nice things about his fellow mega-rich: "By and large, they are very decent people. They love America and appreciate the opportunity this country has given them. Many have joined the Giving Pledge, promising to give most of their wealth to philanthropy. Most wouldn't mind being told to pay more in taxes as well, particularly when so many of their fellow citizens are truly suffering."

Buffett also scorns the idea that paying more in taxes would slow the market - quite the opposite, he suggests: "I have worked with investors for 60 years and I have yet to see anyone - not even when capital gains rates were 39.9% in 1976-77 - shy away from a sensible investment because of the tax rate on the

potential gain.

"People invest to make money, and potential taxes have never scared them off. And to those who argue that higher rates hurt job creation, I would note that a net of nearly 40 million jobs were added between 1980 and 2000. You know what's happened since then: lower tax rates and far lower job creation."

Buffett bluntly proposes that as Congress works to cut the deficit, the lawmakers should "leave rates for 99.7% of taxpayers unchanged and continue the current 2-percentage-point reduction in the employee contribution to the payroll tax. This cut helps the poor and the middle class, who need every break they can get.

"But for those making more than \$1 million - there were 236,883 such households in 2009 - I would raise rates immediately on taxable income in excess of \$1 million, including, of course, dividends and capital gains. And for those who make \$10 million or more - there were 8,274 in 2009 - I would suggest an additional increase in rate."

He concluded: "It's time for our government to get serious about shared sacrifice."

Now if you want to argue that just because someone is rich doesn't mean he knows what he's talking about - well, heaven knows we can point to any number of rich people that seems to be true of. We've elected several to public office. But what Buffett thinks and writes also matches what most of the economic analysts say.

In fact, his op-ed came on the heels of a fascinating new report from the Economic Policy Institute, which Murdoch newspapers like to describe as a "left-leaning nonprofit" but few people have ever presumed to ques-

Comment

tion its research.

The new EPI report is devastatingly called "The Facts Support Raising Revenues from Highest-Income Households." And the facts as well as Buffett do indeed.

EPI analysts note that the Bush-era tax cuts shifted the burden of funding vital government services like food inspection and air traffic control onto the already struggling middle class.

It also explores how between 1979 and 2007 the share of after-tax national income going to the top 1% of households more than doubled, jumping from 7.5% to 17.1%. During this time, the middle 20% of households - not the bottom, the middle -- saw their share of total national income slide from 16.5% 14.1%.

The report's authors conclude: "The nation has the resources to support public investments and economic security programs that are currently in danger of being cut by the ongoing budget negotiations. Better budgeting would ask the highest-income households to contribute more in taxes, because their total tax obligations have fallen and their after-tax income has risen over the past 30 years."

Delving more deeply into the report reveals some general and specific conclusions:

- It was meager revenues and Bush-era tax cuts that contributed greatly to the deficit.
- The top one percent of

households benefited disproportionately from the Bush-era tax cuts.

• Recent income gains for the highest-income one percent have far exceeded gains for everyone else, leading to dramatic income concentration at the top of the scale. Now, more than ever, the highest-income households are in a better position to pay taxes.

• Wealth is even more concentrated at the top than income, and the main wealth tax -- the estate tax -- has been sharply reduced in recent years.

• Reasonable proposals for taxing the highest-income households can raise significant amounts of revenue.

• By not taxing the highest-income households, deficit reduction relies too heavily on spending cuts that harm low- and middle-income Americans.

• Raising taxes on the highest-income households reduces the deficit without having much impact on the economic recovery or job growth.

• Few small business owners have exceptionally high incomes, and thus few would be affected by these tax increases on the highest-income households.

• Even if taxes on those with the highest incomes are substantially increased, income gains at the top over time would still dramatically outpace gains among the rest of the population.

• The progressivity of the federal income-tax system offsets the regressive nature of federal payroll taxes and state and local tax systems.

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Shock to FOX viewers: In many campaigns around the US a number of unions are now winning!

Whenever you get depressed by the right-wing attacks on unions, whenever you start thinking that unions have lost ground because of the obvious anti-union animus of the House GOP and the small margin of voters who have gone the other way at the ballot box, look at what is happening across the US despite the attacks.

A surprising number of unions -- about a dozen internationals -- are either recording victories or are so notably engaged in new organizing and lively fights that they have changed expectations, the culture, the nature of the political game despite the attempts of some big bucks lobbyists and corporations to proclaim death throes for organized labor.

Several news sources other than labor publications have slowly been forced to record these stories though they still seldom make national headlines. Under the radar they reflect a change in tempo in organized labor's favor.

Take what's happening above you in the nation's air service. It was not just the choice of AFGE as the union to represent Transportation Security Administration workers (TSAs) despite their limited bargaining rights under security rules. There is a trend for organized labor in the entire industry.

And that's quite a change since the attitudes of 9/11. Despite the efforts of a few politicians to fly commercial, the image of air travel plunged, armed national guards showed

up at airports, President Bush would not allow minimal union protections. Staggered by passenger drop-off, the airlines folded, merged, retrenched and pulled back on commitment to union employees, even seeking ways to add non-union workers.

Ten years later, air travel is booming and so are unions. The right-wing and big companies are clearly angry about what is happening, but now they know they look petty and foolish. For instance, the recent shutdown of the FAA over allowing union rights cost \$200 million a day in tax revenues, stalling major private industry construction and squashing flights at more than a dozen regional airports. Only a temporary deal kept the FAA going, but the fight resumes in late September. And organized labor expects to win because the objections are patently not about money but about revenge for union popularity.

Unionizing has been winning in the rail and air industries, which are controlled not by the National Labor Relations Act but by the separate Railway Act of the 1930s and the National Mediation Board. Once the playing field was leveled, the trend became clear. Earlier this year, a basic tenet of democracy -- count the ballots -- was restored, where previously the NMB counted as a "no" any lack of vote (those members who did not participate in a workplace election).

Actually that's what the House GOP wants to go back to, with a bill that would require the nondemocratic rules to return --

particularly now that unions are winning elections and decisions when actual votes cast are measured.

The push reflects the GOP fear of how many workers want the power to unionize. The old rules are doubly laughable since if congressional elections proceeded under the proposed rules for NMB elections, in which non-participants were counted as votes for the opponent, then none of the current members of Congress would have won election in 2010, as the Communications Workers of America has pointed out.

Beyond this issue, a healthier airline industry has also allowed restored rights and more wins among mechanics, pilots and flight attendants at the large airlines resulting from merger and the smaller airlines that have resisted better treatment and rules for their workforce.

One example? Look at the recent success record of the Association of Flight Attendants, the world's largest union for flight attendants, now merged with the CWA and representing some 60,000 flight attendants at 23 airlines. Almost every week brings news of a new contract, a powerful new protest or an awareness of how putting safety first has won public support for the actions of the AFA.

Public support is indeed a big part of the change.

In late July at the Ikea furniture factory in Danville, Virginia, workers voted overwhelmingly to join IAM, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers.

This is particularly notable given how many furniture and European furniture related companies have been moving factories to anti-union and relatively

Related stories facing page

low-wage states in the American South. Ikea found its anti-union efforts hamstrung by its own image as a company whose products appeal to political progressives.

Several observers have noted that employing the more draconian anti-union tactics threatened to undermine the brand.

Ikea's marketing scheme appeals to the urban consumer, often politically liberal, who sees Sweden as a democratic-socialist model. So Ikea, as one writer noted, was pained when the public learned how hard it was fighting against unions and how awful it had treated these Virginia workers with low wages, mandatory overtime, long hours and alleged racism. The pressure to join a union was great among the workers, and Ikea's market image worked in the union's favor even as its management tried to prevent unionism. Could this be a wedge in a traditionally anti-union South?

Similarly, sales clerks in New York branches of the Swedish clothing chain H&M joined UFCW, the United Food & Commercial Workers. H&M actually backed its own progressive image by refusing to force an election after a majority of workers signed union cards. Management determined it was a bad marketing strategy to alienate many of their customers.

An affiliate union, the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Workers, just succeeded in organizing 1,400 workers at Filene's Basement stores and a distribution center in New York, suggesting a longer trend of success.

In May, workers at Rite-Aid's Southwest Distribution

Center in Lancaster, California, successfully organized under leadership from the longshoremen's union (ILWU).

Over 500 workers became union members with a remarkable contract for these times, ensuring annual wage increases for the three-year deal.

Rite Aid engaged in classic union-busting strategies, including asking for a long delay before the union election to give the company more time to intimidate workers, a tactic recently banned by the Obama administration's NLRB, which is also changing other rules to provide more balance. (The president in power controls the majority appointments on the 3-2 board). Under Bush no movement was possible. It took Rite Aid workers five years to get a union contract.

More union power. The "wobblies" are back and swinging gains. The historical union force that many thought was dormant is the Industrial Workers of the World, enjoying a renaissance in organizing restaurant chain workers.

The IWW was famous for its radical unionism in the early 20th century, organizing workers the American Federation of Labor would not (back then that meant women, immigrants, industrial labor, African Americans and children). The right-wing is trying now to weaken the child labor laws and unions have clearly changed since women, immigrants, blacks, and industrial workers have emerged as the backbone of today's union movement.

But the IWW was crushed during World War I and for most of the 20th century barely survived.

It's now the 21st century, and IWW has not only pursued Starbucks but unionization of the sandwich chain Jimmy John's. Although the IWW narrowly lost a recent election to unionize Minneapolis Jimmy John's workers, the NLRB threw out the results after finding intense corporate intimidation.

Just this August, the Writers' Guild of America scored significant victories. Writers at the Onion News Network television show on the Independent Film Channel successfully negotiated a collective bargaining agreement that provides retroactive pay increases, as well as pension and health insurance, to workers.

The guild has also worked for other cable television writers in recent campaigns, winning victories to represent workers at Animal Planet, Food Network, National Geographic, and Travel Channel. These are remarkable victories since so much work in basic cable has been nonunion with poor working conditions, as anyone involved in the surge of TV writing, directing, animation and similar fields will tell you.

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Expert explores why unions win around the US

Why the new successes and new attention to organizing workers? Erik Loomis, a professor of labor and environmental history and a veteran blogger, had a column at AlterNet that speculated on the reasons, aside from the defiance demonstrated by unions in Wisconsin fighting fiercely back against corporate over-reach in attacking bargaining rights.

"The terrible economy," Loomis suggests, "may have convinced more workers that standing together with their fellow employees is the best chance they have to hold on to middle-class dreams. The less-negative media climate surrounding unions after the draconian anti-union bills in Wisconsin and Ohio may have helped."

"Some of this success may also come from the structural changes within the National Labor Relations Board that have helped level the playing field for workers," Loomis added

"President Obama has disappointed many unionists in his administration. He did not push very hard for the Employee Free Choice Act, and AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka has expressed frustration with the Democratic Party for its continued rightward tilt. But behind the scenes, Obama's appointees to the NLRB, Craig Becker and Mark Pearce, have re-energized the board, and the recent NLRB decision to expedite union elections, undermining employer attempts to intimidate workers, brought howls of protest from corporations."

Loomis also points out that media's coverage of unions probably inadvertently - given how much of the media is controlled by right-wing money and thinking -- worked in unions' favor.

"Workers have historically joined unions when the media reports positively about them and when the government plays a neutral role in union elections rather than openly supporting employers," he speculates. "The Republican overreach in Wisconsin, Ohio and other traditionally pro-union states led to a great deal of attention for unions."

From Hyatt to Verizon, fight goes on

Readers will note that even when unions have not completely succeeded, the nature of the game and the potential of success represent quite a sea change.

Consider the positive publicity surrounding the campaigns involving Hyatt hotels, owned in part by Penny Pritzker, a close friend of President Obama. Jurisdictional issues mean many unions are engaged in bargaining and protests at different Hyatt outlets - and the company's strident anti-union tactics have actually gained sympathy for workers such as housekeepers - and may be costing the hotels convention business.

Some losses contain the seeds of future gains. One such came when Honeywell locked out workers at its Illinois uranium processing plant in order to keep out the union. After over a year, the company came to terms with its workers. The new contract forced workers to accept many concessions and Honeywell convinced the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to allow it - for the first time in this industry -- to hire what the union correctly called "scabs." But the contract actually increased job numbers at the plant and the resistance gained international attention and questioning of Honeywell in a worldwide industry concerned about good regulation and skilled workers.

Just this month, with resolution unsettled as we went to press, the CWA and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) called a strike against Verizon. With the call for 45,000 workers to go out, this is the largest strike in the country in several years.

It's possible that the issues will be settled by the time you read this, but the boldness of the tactics and the larger issues and how they have gained resonance with the public and the media carry lessons into the future.

During August, demonstrations and other actions were held around the nation at Verizon work-sites and Verizon Wireless stores -- as part of the

Related story facing page

growing support for the 45,000 Communications Workers of America and Electrical Workers members, who say they were forced to strike for their rights by Verizon Aug. 6.

The company, with \$32.5 billion in revenue in the past three years, is demanding \$1 billion in concessions from workers, which amounts to \$20,000 per Verizon worker per year.

Said CWA Communications Director Candice Johnson, noting that the unions are still talking to management, "If wealthy companies like Verizon can continue to cut working families' pay and benefits, we will never have an economic recovery in this country. This is a fight for all middle-class working families."

Verizon's demands include outsourcing jobs overseas, gutting pension security, eliminating benefits for workers injured on the job, eliminating job security, slashing paid sick leave and raising health care costs.

CWA filed unfair labor practice charges against Verizon Aug. 12 with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), charging the company with refusal to bargain in good faith.

Barbara Smith of CWA Local 1109 In Brooklyn, N.Y., told reporters that, at Verizon Wireless pickets, pedestrians stop and "thank us because they understand that this fight is about more than Verizon."

While Verizon demands that workers take home less, it paid its top five executives more than \$258 million over the past four years, including \$80.8 million for its former CEO Ivan Seidenberg, whose home was picketed by IBEW in a candlelight vigil in West Nyack, N.Y.

Through this strike, the unions are demonstrating they are unafraid of Verizon's size and media power and clearly want national attention to spring-board organizing other parts of Verizon's communications empire. --- D.P.N.

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International Longshoremen's Association

"The subversive thing about labor is not the strike but the idea of solidarity."

— Thomas Geoghegan



Photo by: Joseph J. Smith

International Longshoremen's Association Local 815 stands with labor in celebration of Labor Day 2011.

President: Phil Smith **Vice President:** Frank Perea
Rec. Sec.: Lee Schlund **Trustees:** Tom Schwark & Wesley Miller
Business Agent, Financial Sec., Treasurer: Tom Reitzner



The fingers of work in Managua textile mills

They are now unionized and much better off, but 800 workers packed into an export clothing factory still struggle for basic goods (both photos at left). Fair trade operations have created improvements over a decade and wages are better, though demand still too light at a co-op venture (below) known as Nueva Vida, where one worker displayed some of the items being sent to the United States. See story on opposite page.



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Protests defend Social Security

Members of the Alliance for Retired Americans sponsored events nationwide to let lawmakers know the money working people depend on in Medicare and Social Security belongs to those who contributed to the programs, not to politicians in Washington who want to use it as a piggy bank. The events followed Social Security's August 14 celebration of its 76th anniversary.

Alliance members scheduled 27 events in the week after to protect Social Security and Medicare, including visits to congressional district offices, rallies and celebrations. More such events are being planned. In July, the alliance held some three dozen events around the nation on the 46th anniversary of Medicare.

"Social Security did not cause our budget deficits, and we cannot allow anyone to use our national debt as a political cover for cutting Social Security for current or future retirees," said one ARA leader. More information is on the alliance website at www.retiredamericans.org.

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"Freedom is never given; it is won."

Sweatshops no more

Yet living wages elude even union textile workers in Nicaragua

By Steve Watrous

Special to Labor Press

Managua, Nicaragua -- As I walked through the big room of a clothing factory in Managua's free trade zone, where about 800 workers were busy sewing and ironing black Wrangler jeans, the heat was horrible for a visitor from the north. I saw the notices that the employees were supposed to wear dust masks, but they mostly weren't, and neither was I until a kind woman offered me one.

The dilemma is that once you put on the mask, those ceiling fans no longer cool half your face, and that factory seems ten degrees hotter. Fortunately, the dust was light enough that I could clearly see the far corner of the room, maybe 300 feet away.

This building used to contain Chentex, a viciously anti-union company that made clothing for Kohl's Department Stores and other US vendors. About 11 years ago fair traders in Milwaukee and many other cities made a fuss about Kohl's Nicaraguan sweatshops. When I last visited Nicaragua, 10 years ago, Chentex had defeated the unionizing effort.

But Chentex and some of the worst exploiters left the country when Daniel Ortega, the leftist leader of the 1979 Sandinista revolution, regained the presidency in 2007. Most of those abandoned factories have new businesses, wages have gone up 36 % since 2008, and workers get somewhat more respect now, said Pedro Ortega (not related to Daniel), head of the FESITEX textile workers union.

President Ortega, a socialist, didn't confiscate any factories but his government stepped up enforcement of the labor laws. Despite rhetoric against the US, the Sandinistas have an uneasy peace with foreign investors.

So now 60% of the workers in the largest free trade zone are unionized, according to Pedro Ortega. That means they have a contract, rights and representation, and the union can arrange



for a gringo visitor to tour a factory. The minimum wage law calls for a tri-partite commission (government, labor, owners) to adjust factory salaries every six months, and wages went up 15% last year. That's the good news.

The bad news is that textile work in Nicaragua pays about \$130 per month, according to Pedro Ortega. That's the lowest in Central America, where Nicaragua is the poorest country. Ortega noted that the *canasta basica*, or market basket of goods for a family of six, costs \$450 per month.

I talked to one woman worker with 17 years seniority making about \$200 per month. As one US labor activist in Nicaragua noted, no employer there pays a living wage. And the harsh conditions in non-union plants make them sweatshops.

Yet foreign investment, exports and factory employment are up. Poverty is down. The Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) with the US started in 2005 and has worked well for Nicaragua's garment industry, according to both Ortegas and several economic analysts.

What's really new is "Better Work," a program of the International Labor Organization, supported by the government, unions, the US Department of Labor, the AFL-

SEE PHOTOS ON OPPOSITE PAGE

The author and photographer recently returned from a fair trade fact-finding mission in Nicaragua and related his experiences to fellow delegates of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council (at left during the August delegate meeting at Serb Hall). He teaches sociology at MATC and is a member of the American Federation of Teachers' Local 212, as well as a delegate to the MALC. He will soon give a talk on the Central American fair trade issue.

Mart and VF signed on, said Pedro Ortega, but Kohl's refused. (Efforts to contact Kohl's executives to explain failed.) Some 50,000 textile workers could benefit from this program, which got rolling in 2010. Nicaragua is the first Better Work project in Latin America, but Haiti was first in the Americas.

On the other side of Managua, the capital, is the anti-sweatshop Nueva Vida. Started in 1998 partly by women workers from the garment industry, this co-op factory is a more pleasant place to work and it tries to pay better. Wages are

\$290 per month when the work is good, according to Maria Elena Medina Vallejos, the marketing director. They got official "free trade zone" status to help with import and export rules.

Alas, their T-shirts, camisoles and baby clothes are only being produced at 30% of capacity, so the small plant was pretty quiet when I strolled through in June. They sell organic cotton shirts to the U.S. through the Presbyterian Church and would like to sell a lot more. The co-op members, mostly women, consider it the only free trade zone in the world owned by workers.

CIO Solidarity Center, and by some US companies. It's supposed to improve productivity and conditions of work.

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CLUW applauds women's health gains

The Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) has long campaigned for a greater emphasis on women's health, so it had reason to cheer a federal report recommending key women's health services - such as testing for cervical cancer and providing contraceptive services - be part of the new health care law's basic package (health care for which people would not have to shell out co-pays).

"CLUW is thrilled," said Carolyn Jacobson, who runs the organization's campaign to raise HPV testing awareness to combat cervical cancer.

An expert committee, convened by the National Institute of Medicine, identified medical areas where payments for preventive services specific to all women could both improve health and cut US medical costs. Unless it gets a lot of flak - which is likely given Republican resistance to anything coming out of the Obama administration -- HHS will implement the recommendations.

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