

Season's Greetings

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When shadows speak

By Dominique Paul Noth
Labor Press Editor

They appeared only as silhouettes with a microphone, protected behind a screen as they shared their stories before a packed auditorium at Serb Hall Dec. 7.

If that strikes you as overly dramatic -- to treat everyday workers attempting to organize their shops with the same caution as local TV news does with rape victims and government whistleblowers -- you don't understand the realities of today's America.

Most of the six workers who told their stories actually do face bullying, lost pay and even illegal firing if a newspaper like ours, or a TV news show, fully identified them and their place of work.

That -- as Stewart Acuff, the AFL-CIO's national director of organizing, who followed their tales with a fiery speech -- is the real shame of our nation, "that it takes heroic acts of courage" to protect your family income, even though all you're trying to do is fulfill a basic right enshrined in the law.

There was the asbestos worker who had to fight for minimal safety equipment and minimum wage.

There was the technical worker at a local hospital who had to survive one-on-one harangues and mandatory closed meetings simply to earn the same right to bargain collectively that the nurses at her workplace already enjoyed. "They told us all the union wanted was our dues," said the hospital employee. "But after six years with no



raise, the dues were quite a bargain."

There was the laborer whose boss knowingly denied the right to talk union before work and on lunch breaks, knowing that the worst the administrative judge could do to him for violating the law was a posted reprimand.

There was the industrial worker who would be fired if her union sympathies were exposed. There was the school bus driver whose successful unionization has not halted threats to close the plant or eliminate her job -- "but we're all still hanging together," she said.

There was the veteran airline pilot who for years had easily passed the mandatory twice-a-year evaluation -- until he led the

successful unionization of the pilots at Milwaukee's premiere airline company. Then suddenly he was flunked, and it took the new union to go to court to restore his rights, pay and flying status after suffering the personal and professional humiliation of being put on the shelf for no reason.

Credit all these workers with stepping out of the shadows to share the dark side of American working life. All, in their own ways and in their own words, are not cowed. For their families and their own future, they said, they have no choice but to keep fighting.

At the hospital, the newly organized workers did get a

Shadows continued Page 13

Local solidarity back in fashion

Organized labor gave itself a big Christmas present this year -- full unity and cooperation at the local and state level.

The AFL-CIO and the national unions that disaffiliated with it last summer may agree to still disagree at the national level -- but both sides are now encouraging a return to full delegate participation and social and political coordination for states, cities and regions.

Many locals forced by circumstances last summer to leave the Milwaukee County Labor Council hit the gas pedal of solidarity even as the light turned green and are flooding back in through Solidarity Charters. They are rejoining, nominating

new delegates and paying per-caps at least at the same level as when they left (one of the conditions of return).

Over the next months the MCLC will reseat these delegates with full rights, including the ability to serve leadership positions on the executive board, the charity division or the political action committee should such opportunities open up.

The same holds true for the state AFL-CIO and the various regional councils in Wisconsin.

The timing is welcome, because 2006 is shaping into an important year of issues and politics. Along with April and November elections, where now the

Charters continued Page 17

Moves at GM, Delphi rev up a national debate

North-South, left-right, conservative media and liberal newspapers, the news from Delphi and General Motors seemed to send blast waves across the country.

Why? Given that America has permanently lost hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs since 2000, the numbers at Delphi and GM alone don't explain the reaction and the intensity of the debates.

GM announced it would cut 30,000 hourly jobs over the next two years -- a decision that came just weeks after Delphi, a former GM subsidiary and still one of its gigantic auto parts suppliers, moved into bankruptcy and threatened to drag 24,000 union workers down to McDonald's wages.

(Of course, the numbers will quickly get worse because, in a "me too" moment, Ford will cut 30,000 hourly jobs, starting in 2007 at the end of its UAW contract. The rollbacks were announced by Ford after the UAW agreed to workers taking on more health costs.)

To be sure, the automobile is America's icon industry, but it has been in trouble for decades.

To be sure, the UAW is one of America's major unions, but it's long been battling -- and long been savaged by conservatives -- to protect the living standards of its workers and retirees.

So why now is the nation waking up to the pain? Why now are even conservative think tanks questioning the long-term consequence of these corporate decisions? See story on Page 4.

Assuredly, GM made the news worse by choosing the week before Thanksgiving to start dumping 22% of its union workforce (plus 2,500 salaried jobs). From a summer warning that sounded like another retooling in the auto industry, it upped the ante and the nationwide awareness. Ho-ho-ho for the holidays, American manufacturing faces a shriveled future. Look at GM, permanently reducing its North American production capacity by nearly a million

Delphi continued Page 5



Shifts of workers are providing informational picketing at Delphi in Oak Creek even as their UAW union weighs the strike option.



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Deck the hall with bow to Yatchak

Retiring local president (and union landlord) receives a stealth honor

The secret party for the retiring president of the Graphic Communication Local 577M didn't completely work. Not when people kept stopping by the office to tell Christopher Yatchak, "See you at your retirement party!"

But the planners still surprised Yatchak Dec. 9. There were endless platters and chafing dishes of home-made food as fancy as professional catering. There was a memory album of his childhood, family life and decades of union activity. And Yatchak never got a break all afternoon as hundreds of well-wishers flowed in and out.

The planners also absolutely shocked Yatchak when they unveiled their biggest surprise.

The busy assembly room at 633 S. Hawley Rd., which handles hundreds of union and community meetings each year and can be partitioned into West and East for smaller events, has always been generically known as the Assembly Hall (or as the Milwaukee County Labor Council meeting place).

From now on it will be Yatchak Hall. His co-workers sneaked in at night to create the signage and then hid it under Mylar wrap (which Yatchak probably thought was yet another clumsy holiday decorating attempt by one of those union room renters). When the wrap came off to reveal a big bold YATCHAK HALL, he was dumfounded.

It's hard to fool Yatchak in this building. The Graphic Communication local actually owns it and serves a landlord to a variety of union and educational tenants, including the MCLC. Yatchak can be found checking the smallest details late at night, "a landlord," he jokes, "who also cleans bathrooms."

Now its busiest nook has

been named in his honor. He intends to stay in Milwaukee when he retires at the end of the year, and no one expects his presence to diminish - just his officer duties. He has been active in union affairs since the 1980s and served 12 years as president of his local, which is also an active member of the Allied Printing Trades Council.

You'll still see hi on picket lines, at rallies, serving the homeless at St. Ben's, out front at the Wal-Mart campaign.

"It's easy to leave when you know the local is in good hands," said Yatchak.

Among the partners he's talking about is longtime fellow officer Michael Sippy, who is moving up to president, and Yatchak's wife, Cindy, who will continue to serve as office book-keeper.



Christopher Yatchak may have assumed he knew everything that was going on at 633 S. Hawley Rd., but was bowled over when colleagues renamed the busy Assembly Hall as a tribute.



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Even knee-jerk righties are left troubled by Delphi-GM

By Dominique Paul Noth
Labor Press Editor

The letter of sympathy for workers at General Motors and Delphi came from the state's Democratic Party and was also a political call to arms for voters.

"Many voices will try to blame unions such as the UAW for this event just as they attempted to blame the victims of Katrina for their suffering," the letter said. "They will say, in effect, you wanted too much. You should not have desired a decent standard of living, a home for your family, adequate health insurance. You should be willing to accept the sort of marginal living those countries that now have your jobs are willing to accept. Shame on you for wanting too much of the American dream."

The letter from the state party was actually in Oklahoma, where a GM plant of more than 2,000 UAW workers will be the first to close. In Wisconsin, the oldest plant in the GM family at Janesville was spared.

That Oklahoma letter was partisan, but it also was a springboard to look at that state's penchant for quick fixes that don't work to keep jobs or raise pay. That may sound like Wisconsin but Oklahoma has been an even hotter bed of anti-worker legislation, including a version of TABOR, the Taxpayer Bill of Rights, which opponents there label TABOG, for Taxpayer Bill of Goods.

Some on Wall Street -- the folks who raise a stock price higher the more workers are thrown out of jobs -- didn't feel GM cut deep enough.

But there was surprising unhappiness in the conservative big-business-friendly community and skepticism at the trend of dozens of US companies to give up their commitment to health and pension compensation.

In some cases these companies also are going the bankruptcy route. In others they are simply ending defined-pension benefits for new hires or renegeing with non-union workers. Verizon simply told 50,000 salaried employees that their pension plan is frozen and the switch is on to 401ks.

Comment

Among the skeptics was a Republican president, or at least his political advisers who know that this anger could stick to the wall in the 2006 elections.

Though little reported in the nation's media, George Bush in a Dec. 5 speech warned corporate America about abandoning pension promises. "When you say to a worker, 'This is what they're going to get when they retire,' you better put enough money in the account to make sure," Bush said, though he did not put regulatory teeth behind his warning.

Economic advisers inside and outside the administration are also wondering aloud how long the US economy can sustain itself as a credit broker. The inability to expand jobs and actually compete has re-emerged as a political issue, and Bush is not getting traction for the 4% expansion in the US economy because the average worker isn't seeing any of that.

One day, the economists say, echoing the unions, we will actually have to build things for the American consumer and for the world to maintain jobs and income.

They argue that manufacturing and other sectors have to find ways to hang on to workers in a high-demand world of skills and

productivity. See Page 14 for one notable development.

What these pundits have been seeing from too many corporations is short-term thinking -- the idea that the only way out is down, victimizing American families by reducing their incomes or throwing them out of work.

Economists have warned that "General Motors cannot shrink its way to prosperity" - which is exactly the same complaint made by UAW President Ron Gettelfinger.

"GM's return to prosperity depends on it offering products that consumers find attractive, exciting and want to buy," said Gettelfinger, in a strange echo of comments you would also find in the Wall Street Journal.. "Only then will revenues increase and only then will General Motors return to prosperity."

There are also hard truths in the news. Asian companies (as well as European) are expanding into hybrids, energy efficiency and smaller vehicles -- and doing it so well that they are selling their technology to companies that failed to lead, such as GM..

So cheap labor is not the only issue. Nor is it just trade deficit. The failure involves the innovation and anticipation that the US once prided itself on.

But if many of the problems facing the US auto industry are management related, there are also the legacy issues associated with keeping workers and high production -- and the failure of society and government to support promises companies made to their workers and retirees, something Republicans have now joined Democrats in worrying about.

Somehow, these contracts with workers are viewed of lesser ethical concern, items to be discarded when stock prices fall. It would be interesting to see what would happen if an automaker tried such legal amnesia with vehicle buyers or warranties. Imagine asking customers to pay more on their 2002 purchases because the company misjudged the consequences.

In some strange quarters the attacks on US workers were even being cheered. Economist Paul Krugman noted "commentary from some conservatives (that) has an unmistakable tone of satisfaction, a sense that uppity workers who joined a union and made demands are getting what they deserve."

(He should have listened to Milwaukee talk TV when even conservative guests were aghast as Mark Belling went on a tirade about how all trade unions were poison for American business. That will certainly come as a shock to notable Wisconsin companies that have pulled themselves up because the unions helped direct and focus the workers.) In reality, the anti-union



A UAW worker hands out signs at Delphi's plant in Oak Creek.

forces always have an easier fable to tell or simplicity to spin. It is much more complicated to understand history. From Teddy Roosevelt to FDR, the greedy tendencies of capitalism had to be checked by public awareness and government concern, by attention to worker rights and safety.

It was government backing of mortgages that spurred the home ownership that has kept our economy alive. It was injured citizens who forced government to address monopolies and impose the controls that allow "free market forces" to work rather than self-destruct.

For those who actually think about complicated issues, the GM-Delphi tale has aspects of that self-destruction across the political spectrum.

Even Krugman finds echoes of agreement from Republicans that "a dysfunctional health care system and an unsustainable trade deficit" have caused the problems.

Much has been made of the reality that \$1,500 of the cost of every GM vehicle covers health costs. Little has been made of the fact that for Toyota in Japan it's \$70. The US is the only major industrial country without national health coverage. No one wants the solution of shrinking ourselves into a non-major industrial country.

No wonder 20 state legislatures are looking at providing health coverage for all. More amazingly, there are even bipartisan efforts to explore what the Clintons attempted 12 years ago - a national health system.

You may recall how derided that effort was, though few Republicans today can explain why. They're embarrassed because the consortium of health business lobbyists that led the charge to bring the Clinton plan down has overseen an obscene escalation of costs and middle-man profits.

In a long-polarized America, there is suddenly bipartisan interest in universal health coverage, bipartisan concern about protecting worker pensions, bipartisan distress at lackluster innovation by major American corporations.

What's happening? Is it a sign that America is finally coming together? Is it a sign that we really are in trouble? Probably both.

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Delphi

From Page 1

vehicles a year. That will affect the income or employment of millions, radiating out to suppliers, sellers, transporters, communities, schools and families far beyond the shuttered plants in Oregon, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, Georgia, Michigan - the list goes on.

The timing of Delphi-GM added impetus to the national debate about misplaced ethics and priorities.

Citizens were already clobbered by deep worries about American's values and direction. (Is the best way to help hurricane communities actually to cut Medicaid, food stamps and student aid? Do tax cuts for the wealthy in any way address the soaring numbers of children and adults without health insurance? Is a war bleeding the nation of

lives and money really helping homeland security? That list also goes on and on.)

Delphi, in threatening to ask the bankruptcy court to void its union contracts, was sticking it to the taxpayers as well as its own workers, who face the crippling not just of their retirement but everything from the homes they can buy and the chance of college for their kids.

GM, stuck with some lingering pension obligations at Delphi and needing UAW's help to negotiate layoffs at its own plants in 2006, actually tried to slow Delphi down in its plunge toward union chaos.

GM in December gave the Delphi workers some breathing room for negotiations, by retaining prices on parts in exchange for Delphi delaying until Jan. 20 its threat to ask the court to suspend union contracts.



Key issues for all Americans' future are embodied in the UAW protests outside Delphi's Oak Creek plant.

The delay didn't lessen the fury of the Delphi workforce, which still believes there were better options than bankruptcy. Many are convinced that no matter what the union does, Delphi wants to peel away its health and pension obligations, and is threatening such deep wage cuts to force the workers to save their retirees.

Informational picketing brought 125 UAW workers in shifts to march outside Delphi's Oak Creek facilities November 29 (amid rumors that the sparkplug division was on the chopping block). Those workers we talked to on several visits sound determined to take whatever action the

UAW asks of them.

The union has been open to accommodations and economic realities. In fact, it agreed to take on more health costs just before GM dropped the ax (and ditto Ford) and it was negotiating that way when Delphi filed for bankruptcy. Such stiff-arms are one reason a nationwide strike is not out of the question at Delphi.

Delphi workers are girding for that possibility in 2006.

UAW President Ron Gettelfinger has pledged to negotiate but he is clearly angry about the attitude he's confronting in American business. At Delphi, he cites CEO Robert (Steve) Miller's constant blaming of the problem

on wages and benefits.

"While Miller is intent on kicking Delphi's hourly workers out of the middle class, he's just as intent on lavishly rewarding the people at the top for, well, presiding over things like accounting irregularities and Delphi stock plummeting to 33 cents a share," said Gettelfinger.

Nor have GM's comments made the union happy.

"It is workers, their families and our communities that are being forced to suffer because of the failures of others," Gettelfinger said, but "workers have no control over GM's capital investment, product development, design, marketing and advertising decisions."

"Being successful in this regard is the exclusive responsibility of management."

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Labor peace ordinance disintegrates in appeals court

Milwaukee County's labor peace ordinance was kicked to the curb Dec. 5 in a startling ruling by a three-judge panel of the Chicago-based US 7th Court of Appeals that may jeopardize other such ordinances around the country.

Reversing two previous rulings, the three judges, all Reagan era appointees, said they only needed to look at one of the grounds of attack by the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (MMAC) — whether the act preempted the National Labor Relations Act. They said it did.

There are opportunities for appeal to the full 14-member appeals court or to the Supreme Court, but as of this writing the odds of Milwaukee County doing that seemed slim unless the County Board steps in. The court decision, some observers suggest, actually

indicated ways to rewrite county rules to pass muster. At the time the labor peace ordinance passed in 2000 there were legal concerns — in some case whether it was strong enough, in others whether it would pass constitutional tests.

Initially it did. But the judge who wrote the Dec. 5 opinion, Richard Posner, also a prolific and noted author and hardly a down-the-right-side conservative on all issues, seems to love "what ifs" in the law. And his decision is full of "what ifs" that many practical observers of the labor situation found outer-space hypothetical.

"This is an ivory tower decision that ignores how smoothly the ordinance has worked for five years, outside of this lawsuit and its abstractions," said one legal commentator.

A little history is in order. The county peace

Analysis

By Dominique Paul Noth, Labor Press Editor

ordinance was passed in 2000 and supported by the state's labor unions more than the business community in an age of rampant use of taxpayer money by private companies bidding to serve the elderly and disabled in such areas as transportation and care.

The ordinance was an effort to create a playing field where unions seeking to organize such a company's workers agreed not to impose work stoppage and companies contracting with the county agreed to let the organizing effort proceed without the customary ferocious resistance and mandatory anti-union meetings used by many companies to avoid unionizing efforts.

The ordinance applied only to human service con-

tractors getting \$250,000 or more from the county in these fields.

Contracting companies that fit the description agreed to give unions reasonable access to the workplace, names and contacts for the employees, no coercion of employees in choice of bargaining representative, no required meetings to influence employee decision, and no "false or misleading information" to influence employee preference.

Unions agreed not to engage in strikes, picketing, misrepresentation or boycotting.

In upholding the legality of the ordinance in two challenges by the MMAC, Federal District Judge Lynn Adelman cited historical and other testimony at public hearings held by the county before passage of the ordinance.

He concluded that the county had a reasonable basis for deciding that a labor neutrality agreement would reduce the likelihood of service disruption for such at-risk populations as senior citizens and the disabled.

Adelman also pointed out that the ordinance was narrowly proscribed — not to all county contractors but to those involved in such programs as services to the eld-

erly or disabled, where there was a "specific need" for uninterrupted service.

In overturning Adelman, the appeals panel speculated on many sides of narrowness.

It did agree with past national rulings that a state and its entities, like a county government, could displace the National Labor Relations Act when addressing just the firms from which it buys services and when it aims to reduce the cost or increase the quality of those services. That was not interfering in the open marketplace, an area the NLRA controls.

The three judges, however, said the county ordinance had a "spillover" effect for companies that might work on non-government contracts. It said it was impractical for a company to separate its county-related workers and non-county work.

(To this point, the most notable organizing successes under the ordinance were by SEIU Local 150 in organizing thousands of home care workers at two companies that hold contracts with the county's Department on Aging, their primary work.)

The ordinance did not require union organizing for non-county contracts, but Posner said it was hard to separate county-related work and non-county related work within a company, yet all members of the company's workforce would be open to union organizing under the ordinance.

Though there are no existing examples of the ordinance affecting non-county contracts, the appeals court ruled this could happen and hence violated the controlling NLRA.

Threaded through this decision by the appeals panel is a clear belief that the

Milwaukee labor peace ordinance titled in favor of unions over contractors.

The decision speculated on cases where the ordinance would not prevent work stoppages and questioned whether labor peace ordinances were really a good-faith effort by the counties to get better services. It suggested there were other contractual remedies for government entities, such as pre-hire agreements.

County Executive Scott Walker, who will be deeply dependent on business contributions if he has any hopes in his campaign for the Republican spot in the 2006 governor's race, declared himself delighted with the decision.

Members of the County Board, not just those who voted for the ordinance back in 2000 but also newcomers who took to the ordinance as a done deal, expressed deep dismay.

One county official pointed out that companies that initially opposed being organized now work closely with their union to gain greater attention and better pay for their services and workers.

Others point out that union workforces in these services are easier to train using union support and suffer less turnover than non-union workers.

There is considerable irony in the conclusion, since federal courts have in other cases expressed displeasure at the tendencies at the National Labor Relations Board to tilt rulings too heavily in favor of corporate interests over the rights of workers and unions — in real-life cases.

With the labor peace ordinance, the appeals panel saw a tilt the other way around — in theory.

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The Alito row shaping up to be far more than Roe

When Sam (I Am) Alito jumps through the inquisition hurdles of the Senate Judiciary Committee in January, eager to replace Sandra Day O'Connor on the Supreme Court, much of the labored breathing will be directed to the abortion debate.

America should look deeper, and around the extreme positions on both sides. Alito's 15 years as an appellate judge, and previous work as a Reagan administration lawyer, reflect decisions and dissents that side with corporations over workers, with police power over civil rights, with property rights over environmental and community interests -- and, some would persuasively argue, with male imperatives over female empowerment.

Let's stipulate, as the lawyers say, that Alito has a quiet suburban manner. Let's also stipulate that half the country shares his personal religious opposition to abortion and that no one expected President Bush to appoint any other way.

But let's also stipulate that the Supreme Court is where all the country, not just folks who look and act like Alito, expects a thoughtful hearing and that the court is already balanced against accurate reflection of the country's diversity of gender, income and color. How Alito will behave as an arbitrator for the real America is very much in debate.

The emerging paper trail reveals that opposition to Roe vs. Wade was one of the few things Alito did get excited about. In fact, on his own he articulated precisely the tactic most used in attack.

The Reagan administration ignored Alito's suggestion that Roe should be defeated not by frontal assault but by chipping away piece by piece at its conclusions. For the last 20 years, the

abortion cases brought before the Supreme Court have done just what Alito recommended.

So, even as he speaks of his respect for precedent, he seems open to scraping and cutting at Roe, reducing its impact by partial judicial abortion. What some praise as judicial caution can be interpreted as stealth activism.

It is dangerous for both sides to read what Alito will do on the court based on his previous decisions as a judge, where he was often required to apply straightforward Supreme Court decisions and step out only when the law has ambiguities. Much of what the Supremes do is clarify such splits among various appellate courts, so in some decisions Alito comes across as an old-line conservative in the O'Connor mold.

But the right wing is clearly relying on his track record, and his greater freedom on the high court to question precedent. Meanwhile, as more history is revealed, folks in the middle and on the left are growing increasingly uneasy about Alito's tendency to challenge congressional laws and intent, and historic protections of everyday people.

Left to his own devices he has issued dissents that have upset colleagues on an appeals court whose appointments are evenly split between Republican and Democratic presidents.

There is in his history an unnatural deference to the White House he once served and the prosecutors from whence he came.

Add to that his bench skepticism over attacks on major corporations in such areas as discrimination and sex discrimination lawsuits, environmental regulation, even charges of securities fraud.

As a result, big business groups are lobbying en masse in

favor of Alito. Said Robin Conrad, senior vice president of the legal arm of the United States Chamber of Commerce. "This is not a guy who is going to go off the reservation."

If Alito's dissents became law, they would impose higher burdens for workers to successfully sue their employers for discrimination and restrict arbitration remedies available to plaintiffs. He also sought to overturn states having to abide by the Family and Medical Leave Act.

His arguments as a lawyer -- just as terrorism and torture cases head to the Supreme Court -- have been that foreigners and undocumented workers are not entitled to the constitutional rights that apply to Americans.

As a Reagan lawyer, he had no constitutional problem with a police officer shooting and killing an unarmed teenager who was fleeing after a \$10 home burglary.

Alito also advised the Reagan White House to "vigorously oppose" on federalism

grounds the efforts of the United Nations Human Rights agency to expand children's rights. One of his reasons was that several states allowed death sentences for those under 18, a policy the Supreme Court he hopes to join later outlawed.

Expect Roe passion to take center stage at the Senate hearings. But listen hard to see if senators grill Alito on what is historically a conservative concern -- individual liberty and rights.

-- Dominique Paul Nth

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Channels 10/36 chose a topic for its Nov. 10 Fourth Street Forum that required pull-no-punchers — “What Has Wisconsin Got Against Women?” Moderator Denise Calloway (left) herded the lively result at Turner’s Hall, taped for weekend showing. Discussing female brain drain, corporate attitudes and hidden barriers were (from left) Wisconsin Lieutenant Governor Barbara Lawton, MCLC Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran, Milwaukee magazine senior editor Mary Van de Kamp Nohl and (not pictured) 9to5 founder Ellen Bravo.

Done the United Way

This was not the Community Campaign That Cried Wolf. Until the last 20 days United Way of Greater Milwaukee had serious concerns about ending up with the leftovers after a year of heart-stopping global tragedies pressuring family coffers.

The leaders knew they had a deep and broad organization to help their umbrella of five dozen local services and partners - and they also knew that there were some strong workplace givers and corporate gifts that would unfold late in the fall campaign. But there were touches of panic. United Way had increased its target from last year by 6% to an unprecedented \$39 million, without anticipating that tsunami relief needs would be followed by hurricanes and earthquakes.

On Dec. 1, it turned out that people’s consciousness of a world of problems had raised awareness of the needs immediately around them. United Way beat the oddsmakers and actually raised \$314,956 beyond its \$39 million goal.

Labor unions were a huge part of it, as tributes from the stage confirmed at the closing celebration at the Kern Center of the Milwaukee School of Engineering. Union workers had stood up and stepped up and their leaders were asked to take a bow.

Of the seven companies honored for each surpassing \$1 million in combined workplace and corporate giving, five have union workforces: Northwestern (the first company ever to top \$3 million, with 75% of its 4,580 employees contributing), Johnson Controls (topping \$2 million), Harley Davidson, Rockwell and WE Energies.

The AFL-CIO Community Service field mobilizers, supervised by the Milwaukee County Labor Council and active in helping unions in all manner of endeavors, are also a key United Way component in organizing workplace giving. Their activities were prominently featured in United Way’s video thank-yous.

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FROM THE OFFICERS & MEMBERS OF

PLUMBERS UNION LOCAL 75

Texas unfortunately ideal for national COSH confab

By Sue Ruggles
Special to Labor Press

Houston, Tex. — According to a Wall Street Journal poll, 84% of citizens think worker health and safety are important. Yet 6,000 people are killed on the job every year, more than 50,000 die from occupational diseases, and millions more are injured. But you won't see it on TV, or read about it in the newspaper. It's a national tragedy — all the more so because these deaths are preventable.

That's where the National Council on Occupational Safety and Health (COSH) comes in. It's made up of COSH groups from all over the country, and includes representatives from labor, public health, and community organizations.

I attended the National COSH Conference. As it turned out, Houston was an appropriate location, given all that's happened on the Gulf Coast.

We heard first-hand reports about contractors who pick up day laborers, many of whom are immigrants who don't speak English, and ship them off to New Orleans for hurricane cleanup.

The workers have no safety training, and no protective equipment. They sleep in tents without electricity or water. They get sick from handling toxic waste. To add insult to injury, they don't even get paid. The worker who spoke to us kept repeating, "It's not right . . . it's not right."

We also took a bus tour of the BP refinery in Texas City where an explosion earlier this year killed 15 workers and injured 170. We found out that despite its clean image and slick ad campaign, BP has a terrible safety record. Its Texas City refinery, third-largest in the country, has a history of accidents and fires. It has eliminated bargaining unit positions and failed to do



Texas City has become notorious for refinery accidents and deaths. Below: After her brother's workplace death, Tammy Miser organized a national network for victim's families.



maintenance. It has disregarded OSHA citations, and failed to upgrade safety equipment.

BP blamed workers for the tragedy. But Steelworkers who guided the tour described it as a "perfect storm" of failure and neglect.

OSHA actually levied the largest fine in its history, more than \$21 million in penalties against BP for safety and health violations following an investigation of the fatal explosion.

New Orleans and Texas City have a lot in common. These are tragedies, but they're not accidents. Where are OSHA and the EPA? Why is the burden falling on residents, immigrants, and sanitation workers to clean up

urged the defeat of S1761, dubbed the Katrina Corporate Bailout Bill, which would relieve companies of liability.

We heard a personal account of tragedy from Tammy Miser, whose brother was killed in a workplace explosion. As a memorial to her brother, she is organizing victims' families into a national support and advocacy network. Her story is a powerful

reminder: *we mourn and then we organize.*

As labor comes under increasing attack, it's important for us to stay focused on worker health and safety. That's the only way to stop companies from getting away with murder.

The author is the WisCOSH board member for the American Federation of Teachers Local 212.

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Visitors to www.workingamerica.org/jobtracker can select by company name, geographic location (down to ZIP code) and other formats. The search is no longer limited to companies that outsourced jobs and to CEO compensation, though that hit parade remains.

In a unique one-stop boon to workers, companies and business reporters, the site returns the most recent available information on job safety records, violations of labor laws, even trade warning letters (which opens the road for job retraining when work goes out of country), stock symbols and shareholder info.

It's not all negative. For instance, companies that may have been dragged before the National Labor Relations Board or been penalized for labor law violations may also show up with good safety records or acceptable response procedures. You can instantly see where an employer falls — higher or lower — under the OSHA standard of 2.8 injuries per 100 workers.

More than 60,000 companies or company divisions are within the database. The information comes from confirmed sources and Freedom of Information Act requests. Among the sources are OSHA itself (the Occupational Safety and Health Administration) and labor law cases from the National Labor Relations Board. Information from the Security and Exchange Commission has also been melded with www.opensecrets.org, sponsored by The Center for Responsive Politics, a nonprofit, nonpartisan outfit that refuses contributions from either businesses or labor groups.

If you checked out Wisconsin in the database on Dec. 1, you would have discovered 68 companies have been reported as exporting jobs, 175 that reported laying off workers because of the impact of trade on their business, 1,264 that since 2000 have violated safety regulations or had workplace fatalities, and 107 companies with cases of violations of workers' rights under the NLRB since 2000.

This is not a site of GIGO (Garbage In, Garbage Out). By insisting on staying within database veracity, the site keeps most of its information objective. -- D.P.N.



IT WAS A BIG START — but only a start — in the holiday campaign to make Wal-Mart behave better. The week of Nov. 16, hundreds jammed the Oriental Theater (above) for the showing of "Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price," a scene duplicated at dozens of other Wisconsin locales and thousands of places around the nation. Wal-Mart fumed but even the nation's film critics called the movie thoughtful propaganda. Organizers followed Dec. 9 with candle vigils nationwide, including Milwaukee. Faith leaders for 1.3 million congregants supported the campaign and asked why a company making \$10 billion a year leaves half of its workers' children relying on public assistance or nothing at all for health care.

The company responded by chastizing the ministers for daring to question its moral compass. Meanwhile, more charges of the company using undocumented workers emerged. Child labor and discrimination lawsuits moved forward — and a memo from a top executive escaped suggesting Wal-Mart build manual labor into all its jobs to make sure its hires are fit enough not to worry about health insurance. Wal-Mart's counter-attack kept saying the poor needed its prices to buy food and foreign toys. Looks like Wal-Mart couldn't survive without the poor. It just needs more of us to join them.



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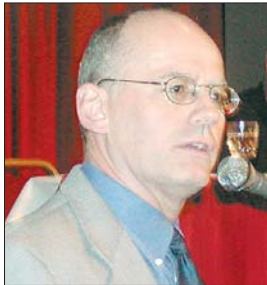
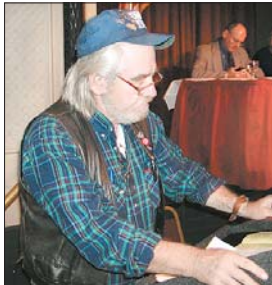




Scenes from the Symposium

See Pages 12-13 for stories and more photos

LEFT: Here's how the silhouette testimony looked to the crowd that filled Serb Hall's largest meeting room Dec. 7.
 MIDDLE ROW: Proudly wearing his union gear, and proudly recalling the history of labor's struggles in Wisconsin, retired AFT Local 212 leader Ernie Schnook set the stage for today's organizers. Following him was one of the most successful, Greg Junemann (middle), president of the professional and technical engineers. Awaiting the guests on their seats, to take back to their own locals and bulletin boards, were handsome posters signaling the campaign for worker rights.
 BOTTOM: Opening and closing the program with gusto singalongs was the Faith Community for Worker Justice Choir.



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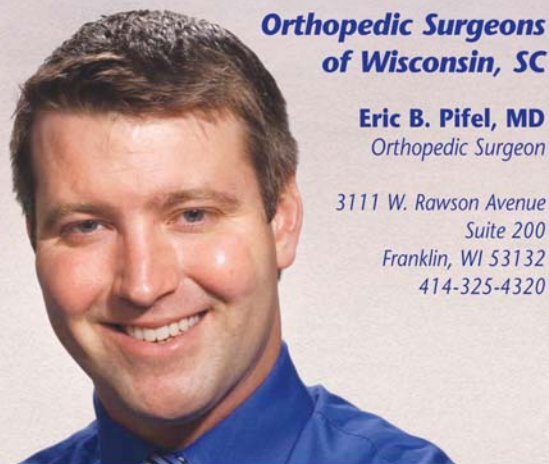
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LEFT: Willie D. Ellis addressed the delegates after being sworn in as the new president. RIGHT: The brain trust setting up the event included (from left) field mobilizer Annie Wacker, Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran, and key speakers Greg Junemann and Stewart Acuff, director of organizing for the national AFL-CIO. BELOW: Current board member Brandon Jensen of ATU congratulates new board member Carolyn Castore of OPEIU.



Delegate meeting does double duty

The audience for the Free Choice Symposium rose many times to cheer Dec. 7. That was loud indeed because the Serb Hall event was easily 450 strong -- union members, MCLC delegates, elected officials and just interested family members and friends at the open

free town hall sandwiched between some brief but important delegate business.

Among the business:

- The unopposed president was elected by acclamation and presented to the members by Greg Gorecki, electoral chief for this event and a retired member of the MCLC executive board.

That president, Willie D. Ellis, is a member of and an organizer for the Operating Engineers Local 139. He had served as vice president of the MCLC and will serve part-time as president in support of the full time operating executive of the MCLC, Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran.

Ellis was given the oath of office by Greg Junemann, whose official title is president of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IPFTE).

- During and after the symposium, delegates to the council went into a separate room set up with computer stations to select the top three of four nominees for the three open positions on the executive board.

The results were tabulated that night.

Elected to the executive board are Carolyn P. Castore, Office & Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) Local 9, Stanthia Grier, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 2150, and Sam Purdy, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 494.

- It was also announced that the next delegate meeting, because of the New Year's holiday, will take place on Wednesday, January 11, at 6:30 p.m. at Serb Hall. At that meeting, nominations will be offered to fill the role of vice president, now open because of Ellis' elevation. That's also when the new board members are sworn in.

The meeting opened and closed with American and labor songs as a special Seasons of Conscience event by the Faith Community for Worker Justice Choir. A Serb Hall buffet of appetizers awaited all the guests as the meeting concluded.

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Shadows

From Page 1

raise, and helped organize other units of workers.

In the laborers' cases, they advanced to good pay and even foreman status once they were allowed to organize the companies and demonstrate their value as hard workers.

At the airline, the pilot testified, both management and workers learned something important from the experience, that unionizing enhanced respect and honest dealings as well as slowing the reckless power game of management.

The symposium, organized by the Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO with deep involvement from a brainstorming committee and the



field mobilizers team, was part of a national effort to push Congress to adopt the Employee Free Choice Act.

Think of it as the way for American workers to step out of the shadows.

Looking at how polarized America is politically, you might doubt your fellow citizens can be shamed into doing the right thing and you may give the Free Choice bill scant chance of passing. But actually, refining existing labor laws is not out of reach.

It's not just that more than 80 US cities and 20 countries participated in the December push and more than 3,000 workers marched on the White House



that weekend.

It was announced at the symposium that Sen. Herb Kohl has joined his Wisconsin colleague Russ Feingold in supporting the act, and that in Pennsylvania and other states moderate Republicans have also signed up. In both houses of Congress, supporters are within a handful of having a majority and the pressure is on to make this bill a major campaign issue before the 2006 fall elections.

As part of the effort, eleven Nobel Peace prize winners, including former President Carter and South African bishop Desmond Tutu, signed a declaration in support of this bill and global efforts for worker rights, which are incorporated into the universal declaration of human rights.

Central to the bill is card-check voting, described simply by Gregory J. Junemann, a member of the AFL-CIO executive council who hails from Milwaukee and is president of an international union that has almost doubled membership in a decade through organizing.

"If 50% plus one of a workplace sign the cards, you have a union," said Junemann. It's the ultimate example of the up or down vote.

Until that happens, warned

Junemann, expect to be demeaned and derided, if not illegally fired -- a major reason why union membership today is only about 14% of the workforce though polls indicate that could easily double.

"In our organizing campaigns, as you'll hear from almost any organizer, we have been called the Mafia, or Democrats who are really Socialists, or even terrorists," Junemann said. "Which is pretty



funny. We are professional and technical engineers, hardly the linebackers on a football team."

Junemann also cited the Catch-22 that management attempts when faced with organizing or a new union.

It so resists organizing, and then double resists a first contract, that the union is forced to file unfair labor practices -- and then the company turns around and blames the union for using

the courts to delay the process. "We don't want to file unfair labor practices, we want a contract," said Junemann.

That's why there are other teeth in the Employee Free Choice Act -- to allow either side to take a first contract impasse after 90 days to mediation, and also to provide stiff penalties for illegal discharge or discrimination against an employee during organizing and first-contract drives.

Big business Republicans and politicians rail against trial lawyers who face off against them, but as Junemann pointed out the real money in lawyering these days



(with the costs passed on to the consumer) involves hiring union-busting companies to thwart a voice at work.

Three-quarters of the companies facing an organizing drive hire such firms to stop a union, though the right to join for collective bargaining is a cornerstone of labor law.

For Junemann it is not just about the questionable and threatening tactics of these firms, but about their very existence, making huge money off denial of basic worker rights. "I think it is union-busting firms that should be outlawed," said Junemann. Businesses, he suggested, don't realize how much these interlopers actually cost them and their clients.

Acuff expanded on the theme, pointing out that opposition to worker rights weakened

American democracy as a whole and has opened the door to intimidation as both a business and government policy. "I wish our leaders were as good as our people," he said.

An historical perspective on the fights workers won with blood -- and a reminder of how tough it will always be to keep those rights -- was provided by Ernie Schnook,



the retired president of American Federation of Teachers Local 212. Schnook, who began his union career as a carpenter, took the audience back in time to early union solidarity and defiance. The methods may have changed but the basic truths still exist, Schnook warned -- management will always fight for total control and workers will always have to fight for a fair shake.

Workers, he said, cannot rely on assurances of management benevolence and such statements as "trust us" or "we have your best interest at heart." Employees had better have it in writing and with collective force. There remains ample evidence, Schnook said, that the great 19th century fighter for racial justice, Frederick Douglass, was right when he warned, "Power concedes nothing without a demand."

Workers will have to demand to win, Schnook said, concluding with a rallying cry: "There is nothing too good for the working class."

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A dislocated worker at the HIRE Center and the president of the Harley-Davidson Motor Company are among those propelling a national passport for the manufacturing worker.

The Harley division executive, Jim McCaslin, has been leading the charge to create early adapters of this passport among the nation's manufacturing industries. It's already happening, as was announced in mid-November at a meeting in Michigan. This new certification will allow workers seeking a career in manufacturing to walk in any door, from San Diego to Boston, with proof of their skills and flexibility.

Providing real-life confirmation of the new procedure in a pilot program, veteran worker John Lampi sat down at a computer at the South Side HIRE Center, took the online test in four areas of competence and –

involved in developing and testing the certification — has used the results to pursue a university degree as a corporate trainer.

This certification as a "manufacturing production technician" has survived all the testing hoops and will be incorporated into high school and college training as well as serve as a stand-alone tool for incumbent and dislocated workers.

Not only was Wisconsin one of the test sites for pushing the project, MATC technology leaders have been keenly involved and are working the certification into core curriculum in 2006. Plans include teaching in both English and Spanish.

Joe Hurst, director of WisPASS (Wisconsin Performance and Assessment of Skill Standards), coordinator Herb Centeno, and Dale Dulberger, project manager for the 21st Century Urban Technical Education Project, all regard the creation of the certification as a milestone in elevating attention to the important skills required in manufacturing.

It is also a dynamic way to get industries on board in recognizing that American workers have the core knowledge and hands-on techniques to turn on a dime as the needs of manufacturers change.

Centeno points out that, till this point, the public and corporate image of the manufacturing worker, and the workers' own ability to understand their skills, "has not really moved forward since the 1950s."

Previously these workers could only point to their background or street smarts to sell their skills and flexibility. They now can have the same sort of objective national entry pass that

Continued Next Page

Bowling

MCLC MIXED SENIOR BOWLING NOVEMBER 2005

TEAM	WINS	LOSSES
8 BALLS	54	30
SLAMMERS	46	38
LABORERS 113	44	40
ONE BOARD OVER	43	41
CRAZY 8's	33	51
GUTTER RATS	32	52

IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 525

DAN LAACK	660
DON WIEDMANN	625
WAYNE FRANZEN	612
ELMER HELM	606
BOB WAGNER	603
WALLY GEISE	597
SAM SAMUELSON	591
DEL GROSS	533
GEORGE BARAK	530

IND. HIGH GAME OVER 180

DON WIEDMANN	265
ELMER HELM	265
WALLY GEISE	236
DAN LAACK	235
WAYNE FRANZEN	224
SAM SAMUELSON	224
GEORGE BARAK	223
BOB WAGNER	222
DON BOOTON	216
DEL GROSS	184

IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 415

PHYLLIS NAVARRETE	477
ELAINE KARIER	417

IND. HIGH GAME OVER 145

PHYLLIS NAVARRETE	170
LAVERNE WERNER	152
ELAINE KARIER	147



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manufacturers, new entry pass ready for US workers

From Page 14

auto mechanics, pharmacists and other professions point to.

"Incumbent workers sometimes don't see how many skills they have developed and students don't have a realistic view of what a manufacturing career requires," said Dulberger. He also discussed how manufacturing has turned into a volatile world where jobs disappear in one industry only to pop up in another, and the certification will assure hiring companies that this worker has the competence to succeed.

This dovetails with the vision of McCaslin. "In my experience at Harley-Davidson we get our best results when management and union leadership work together to find solutions," he said. "I think the same thing has happened with creating the MSSC standards." (The major union at Harley, formerly a PACE local until that union merged with the Steelworkers into the USW, is now called Local 2-209.)

Preparing students for certification will require building specific knowledge and skills into existing courses. Simultaneously, the strong showing on the test by Lampi and other experienced manufacturing workers has raised awareness that manufacturing needs are hardly fulfilled by seeking cheap labor.

It's something managers as well as workers need to realize, say the creators of the standards. Yes, the changes in manufacturing seem confounding. Old processes migrate and new technologies move in, from micromechanics to bioengineering.

But who can best be trained for such specialties? Certified technicians are a big answer.

The online testing tool requires both ability and nimbleness. Completing the program demonstrates both what the worker can do and the ability to learn and even retrain.

Said Harley's McCaslin: "You always hear about those companies who don't want to train their people beyond what's actually needed for their specific assignment. The reason stated is that if they were trained better, the employee would leave for a higher paying job."

"This is short-sighted. It seems to me that better trained people increase productivity and decrease costs. It would seem to me that some of that savings should be put back into the business in the form of better wages for the better trained people who



Gathering at MATC to congratulate John Lampi (third from left) on his highest score in the nation on the manufacturing skills test are (from left) MATC's Herb Centeno, industrial dean John Stilper and WisPASS director Joe Hurst.

will then perform better, etcetera, etcetera."

Much emphasis is being put on building certification into technical training — even starting in high schools like Bradley Tech — but the certification process is also proving a confidence booster for veteran workers.

Lampi, the highest scorer thus far in the nation in the online evaluation tool, points out that the test is a combination of multiple choice and simulation of real situations. It covers four areas of competence — processes, safety, quality and maintenance.

Lampi, now in his fifties, has a varied manufacturing work career, to put it mildly.

He was a member of the boilermakers union when he worked in Wisconsin shipyards. He helped train inmates at Waupun in machinery repair. He was a training and safety specialist at Internet in Sturtevant, which had a UAW workforce making cast products for the motor industry when it filed for bankruptcy and closed two Wisconsin plants in 2004. That brought Lampi and others to the HIRE Center, which helps test, retrain and steer job opportunities for dislocated workers.

"I may have been a bit of anomaly," said Lampi about his high test scores, "because I've taught a lot of classes in manufacturing during my career. But the test was very comprehensive and helped verify how much I do know in a way that hadn't happened before."

Lampi thinks many veteran workers in manufacturing will discover from the certification

how much more they know than they think

Says McCaslin, "I believe that many workers have the knowledge that's depicted in the standards. But they may still need to be trained before taking the tests" because the certification may not use the same terms and definitions that exist in their shop.

He envisions several uses at Harley for the MSSC standards: "It will measure where gaps exist

in the skills of our workforce.

Then we'll encourage training to close those gaps. We'll want to do the training through e-learning. Down the road I can see us using it as one of the acceptance criteria for new employees."

"These standards will also shorten the training time for new processes," said coordinator Centeno. Workers and students who demonstrate through MSSC certification that they have the

foundation are likely to fill a wide variety of technical occupations over their work career.

Trades unions are also big boosters. They have been arguing for years of the need to elevate recognition of manufacturing workers. Among the groups participating in the program are the AFL-CIO Industrial Union Council and the AFL-CIO Working for America Institute, which has held conferences in Milwaukee.

For more information, contact MATC at (414) 297-6664 or Dulberger at (414) 297-7296.

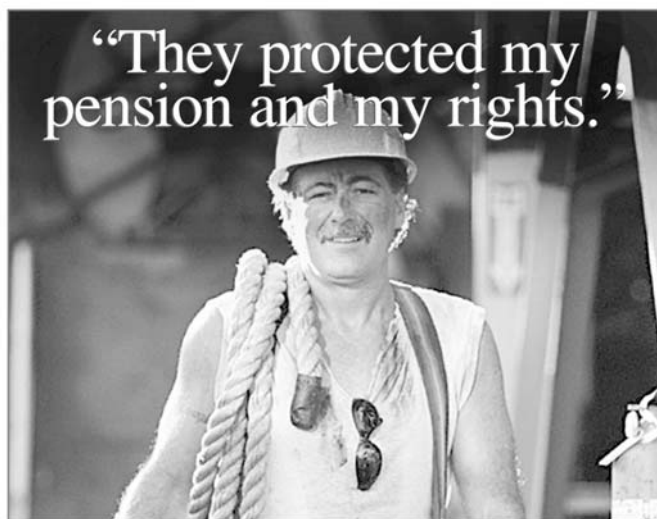
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Zeidler's look at his Milwaukee opens insight to ours

By Dominique Paul Noth
Labor Press Editor

Leaving City Hall in 1960 after three terms as mayor, Frank Zeidler took two years off to record his experience, then put the results aside to continue public service as a private citizen.

The account has now been published — 43 years later! — by a new company, Milwaukee Publishers, that will release the later chapters depending on the reception to the first.

Frankly, I can't wait. Workmanlike, warts-and-all honest about issues, sprinkled with insightful asides on the people and the times, the result is not just rewarding to those fascinated by Milwaukee history and the

hard daily slog of local governance. It takes us back to point the way forward.

It does not smack of the self-protecting tendency of modern political memoirs. In fact, by not focusing on the private Zeidler but on how he met problems and personal attacks head on, it reveals more about the man and his times (and probably why he is regarded today as Milwaukee's best mayor, even by those who once railed against him).

I suspect the choice of title is more modern — and a quiet necessary corrective for our times: **"A Liberal in City Government: My Experiences as Mayor of Milwaukee."**

Note that it's not "A

Socialist in Government," though Zeidler is often pointed to as the last in Milwaukee's long line of Socialist mayors (and a devout believer in the role of government in social progress).

But when he came along, there was no Socialist Party political machine. Partly because of a shift in union activism, the remnants had been conceded after World War II to Democrats (many of whom were as conservative as the GOP of today). To get elected, Zeidler had to form a coalition of real small businesses and shopkeepers, unions and community champions — and even beat some noted liberal forces (including his opponent,

Henry Reuss, later a congressman, friend and ally). He also had to survive invective of still startling bile from bankers, utility lobbyists and both major newspapers of the time (the Sentinel and Journal).

Zeidler is reclaiming liberalism's place of honor as a philosophy of government, not just a choice of City Hall housekeepers. Then as now, he defined liberalism as a "willingness to accept new ideas" and a "sympathy with the many rather than the special interests."

Zeidler won because the public didn't buy into the grossest attacks. Among the book's photos and maps is a famous one of Frank, Agnes and their six children taking a chilly spring walk, a reminder to voters that the so-called subversive was a pretty regular guy.

Name recognition helped, since his older and far more moderate brother Carl had served briefly as mayor in 1940 and then resigned for military service, dying in combat.

But Zeidler, the chronicle of his first mayoral campaign in 1948 reveals, was accessible, responsive and people oriented, a relentless proponent of clean government and frugality. (He wanted Milwaukee to stay debt free, to "pay as you go" while the financial community and the newspapers were pushing and succeeding to mount public debt.)

Some will take from the book how different Milwaukee was then. Zeidler's 12 years included massive demographic and age shifts, huge industrial

employers, the first major steps toward public housing and auto mass transit, a model of graft-free government, and notable forward motion in civil defense (today it's terrorism but then it was a constant drumbeat about nuclear attack) and neighborly civics. Quite different than tactics today, Zeidler never played to people's fears but to steady preparation and future hope.

Under Zeidler, the city of Milwaukee doubled its geographic size through annexations and contained 250,000 more citizens than it does today.

Yet what ought to strike the reader is how many problems remain the same. There was an "iron ring" of suburbs that wanted Milwaukee's water without underwriting its urban engine. There was a state legislature both hostile and indifferent to the special needs of urban poverty, housing and schools.

There was a slow disintegration of Milwaukee's historic openness to new ethnic arrivals (even Zeidler couldn't break the trend at the end of his tenure when it came to new arrivals of color). There was a media that too easily echoed the schemes of the rich and there was a public clamoring for better services against a chorus of complaints about the costs.

There is in Zeidler's defense of city policy an ominous forecast that urban sprawl and unwise land use could cripple service and that suburban excess would leave in its wake pockets of forgotten and discarded citizens.

Zeidler in his book always finds a nice word for his opponents and critics, or credits them with an interesting (if flawed) idea. The only exception may involve his successor as mayor, Henry Maier, who always attacked Zeidler and then tried to lay the city's problems at Zeidler's door.

But the inherent niceness as well as stubbornness of Zeidler shine through, as does his native humbleness,

respect for others and humor. While the media attacked him, Zeidler always kept his door open to reporters and always responded.

He confronted suburbs and Madison by tough rhetoric, but in personal encounters deflected their animosity and stuck with the city's issues, sometimes shrewdly exposing their motivations.

He states flatly that in Milwaukee's form of government, a progressive Common Council is even more important than a progressive mayor. He suggests that choosing a staff well, and then giving them authority, was a key to any successes credited to his time.

But don't discount the demeanor of the man and his commitment to thinking problems through and finding ways forward against all odds.

From how he successfully annexed and then serviced new communities to how he rallied moral persuasion around ideas, Zeidler set a tone of progress, a firmness of resolve and an operative philosophy that carried him through successes and defeats.

The book also rectified some of my thinking about those times and Zeidler. At 93 he remains so intellectually nimble and involved that it is startling to realize how his health was not robust from the start. The pressures of his first campaign led to fatigue and nervous strain. He survived illnesses and operations in office.

He says openly that the biggest threat to his survival was the imposed sedentary effect of endless meetings, social dinners and sit-down events. Weight gain almost did him in.

It was health apparently even more than the desire for City Hall change and new personal challenges that took him out of a fourth term race he was likely to win.

How different Milwaukee might have been!

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Charters

From Page 1

full weight of MCLC membership will be brought to bear with coordinated member lists and campaign strategies, the economic concerns are bubbling harder than ever.

Legally and pragmatically, that workers' voice was put in jeopardy by the disaffiliation, which was also an occasion for the media to write endlessly about the death of organized labor.

To be blunt about it, most rank-and-file members never understood what the big boys were squabbling about. It came as a surprise when there were suddenly two federations where there had been one, the AFL-CIO and the Change to Win. Most vaguely knew it was something about leadership and money, but this was not a breakup that bubbled up from the grassroots.

In Milwaukee, the rules forced out of the MCLC the locals of the formally disaffiliated unions (SEIU, the Teamsters, UFCW, UNITE HERE) and threatened the continuing participation of unions that wanted a foot in both camps (such as the Laborers). But national campaigns and political efforts by such labor councils as the MCLC are coordinated to some degree with the national AFL-CIO — and the national also provides money

and staff for local efforts. It was unfair to paying AFL-CIO affiliates to give a free ride to locals that were pulling their money, their cooperation and their member names from joint efforts.

Frankly, most locals hereabouts tried to ignore the problem and retain solidarity, respecting each other's picket lines, supporting such campaigns as making Wal-Mart behave and recognizing, in such areas as the construction trades, that mutual support was not only natural but required in many successful labor agreements. Wisconsin largely didn't fall prey to the acrimony among splitting unions that popped up in other states. Nor was Wisconsin hit as hard in membership terms as some other states.

Still, it was awkward and confusing. And it was going to grow more awkward as federal and state regulations came into play that would prevent mutual political campaigning by unions divorced from each other's councils and counsel.

Both federations at the top heard hard words about all this from their locals. There was a genuine effort here to retain brotherhood and sisterhood — sometimes in spite of the rules.

Curiously, California -- which faced some of the biggest member losses -- decided to pull together despite disaffiliation. That united front in November

defeated every one of Gov. Schwarzenegger's referendums attacking workers. It reminded the nation, as well as union leadership, that pushing together is a powerful force for change, even if too many of their candidates didn't win back in 2004.

The AFL-CIO in August had raised the concept of Solidarity Charters to allow locals of disaffiliated unions to return, but there remained understandable issues, confusion and wariness around the fine print of how to pay for the national AFL-CIO support of local councils. At one point, returning locals were going to face a 10% surcharge to help cover that. Most didn't like it, and many couldn't afford it without knowing how disaffiliation would affect the dues to their own nationals.

In November, a way was found that all sides could agree on.

It would be up to the national unions that had disaffiliated to work out individually with the national AFL-CIO how to pay for their involvement in local, regional and state AFL-CIO councils.

All the locals that had been forced to disaffiliate needed to do was apply for a Solidarity Charter, bring into per-cap payment at least the same numbers they had before for each council they had belonged to, and let their national folks worry about any extra payments.

Applying for a Solidarity Charter was a simpler procedure of getting the form from (for instance) the MCLC, resubmitting it through the state AFL-CIO and having it recorded and approved by the AFL-CIO.

For the Milwaukee Labor Press there are also some technical adjustments, which in this case coordinate with the year-end urging of every local to update its names and home addresses.

Many of the locals that disaffiliated last summer did not want their members to stop receiving at home the newspaper voice of working families. Thousands of union members continued to receive the newspaper after disaffiliation because their unions decided to pay separately for subscriptions.

The Labor Press — aside from being exposed to 100,000 sets of eyeballs in union households every month — is also shared with the political and community leadership of the Milwaukee area, has had it articles reprinted nationally and is also accessible to college students and displaced workers. Several unions that never joined the AFL-CIO also pay for their members to receive copies.

Now the mailing list must be re-adjusted while some subscribers return to per-cap status. There will inevitably be some glitches.

To receive Solidarity Charter

forms and make sure your database and delegate membership are updated, contact the MCLC's secretary and bookkeeper, Robin Lundgren, (414) 771-7070, or afl-ciorl@ameritech.net.

To update the home delivery database of paying members, something that should be done at least every year for the Labor Press, contact Lynnda Guyton at the same phone number or at lbr-prslg@execpc.com

In addition to working through the MCLC, local unions can obtain a Solidarity Charter application form from the AFL-CIO's website, [www.aflcio.org/about-us/upload/solidarity charter_application.pdf](http://www.aflcio.org/about-us/upload/solidarity%20charter_application.pdf) or e-mailing a request for an application form to solidaritycharter@aflcio.org. There is even a form available on the Change to Win website.

If you want an O. Henry sort of short-story surprise in this Christmas giving, membership in the MCLC may actually wind up larger than it was before the disaffiliation.

Aside from departed unions returning, there are now some unions, such as the Carpenters, which disaffiliated years ago, also open to return. In addition, locals of unions that never affiliated with the AFL-CIO, and don't have the structure to, can now petition directly to state and local labor councils for membership.

-- Dominique Paul North



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SEASON'S GREETINGS




OPEIU Local 9

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Calendar

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 Wednesday, January 4
 MCLC Executive Board

3 p.m., MBCT,
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Wednesday, January 11
 Milwaukee County Labor
 Council Delegate Meeting,
 6:30 p.m., Serb Hall,
 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

Apollo Alliance's sun is rising

Keep your eyes on the Apollo Alliance, a national movement for energy savings and "new energy" jobs. Organized labor here has already joined forces with the alliance and will unveil legislative initiatives in the spring.

But Apollo is already at work. It partnered in a new report on how campuses can improve energy efficiency and save taxpayer money. It is supporting Mayor Tom Barrett's green initiatives. For a sneak peek at Apollo's larger plans for Wisconsin, visit www.apolloalliance.org

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Appetizing AFSCME

District Council 48 got off to an early start on holiday partying Dec. 8, as usual drawing a range of other unions, political figures and government officials to its basement bash. As much as camaraderie and clout play a part, so does AFSCME's reputation for a delicious spread of food (at right).

LEFT: Mayor Tom Barrett took a moment to welcome back to the comforts of Milwaukee two state legislators who had just endured some unproductive marathon sessions in Madison, Rep. Tamara Grigsby (left) and Barbara Toles.

LEFT: 48'S president, Paula Dorsey, shown with County Supervisor Michael Mayo. BELOW: AFSCME activist Annie Wacker, with former AFSCME member and current supervisor, Willie Johnson Jr.





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All Labor Press photos by Dominique Paul Noth. Photos from Texas COSH conference on Page 9 provided by AFT's Sue Ruggles.

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS

FROM
**THE FIELD REPRESENTATIVES, EXECUTIVE BOARD
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Through Christmas Eve, a temporary Fair Trade store offering gifts from union companies and global artisans will attract walk-in business at the corner of 52nd St. and North Avenue. The sponsors are so encouraged that they hope to open a year-round Milwaukee outlet in 2006.

Several locations are under consideration and the target date is spring. But for right now, warm union-made jackets and other apparel, plus a table of information on the Clean Clothes Campaign, plus hand-made goods from around the world remain available through Dec. 24 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mondays to Fridays and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 5201 W. North Ave.

Fair Trade store seeks permanent outlet here

The store is an enterprise of the Southeastern Wisconsin Initiative for Fair Trade and is part of the growing Ten Thousand Villages network to promote individual handicrafts as well as union goods.

The diversity is a gentle reminder that there are people and families behind these products, workers who directly benefit from the sales of china sets from Vietnam, decorations from Latin America, toys and musical instruments.


Store organizer Alice Foley points out that behind the raffia and banana leaf baskets from Africa are Dorothy Nabakiibi and her four children, who rely on basic income from the weaving for food and shelter.

Along with traditional artifacts from developing countries, there is modern "no sweat" clothing for sale. Ten Thousand Villages has been creating fair trade possibilities for six decades. In Milwaukee it has joined with the Clean Clothes Campaign, headed by Michael Howden, and with other anti-sweatshop forces to push awareness of fair trade.

To learn more, and to help establish a permanent Milwaukee store, call Howden at (414) 342-5284 or Foley at (414) 871-4081.




Volunteer Martha Swigart helps prepare the temporary Fair Trade store on North Ave. for holiday shoppers. The outlet for union and independent world goods is seeking a permanent Milwaukee home.




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