

Season's Greetings

AFL-CIO MILWAUKEE

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Thursday, December 20, 2007

(USPS 350-360)



Capt. Segundo Andrew speaks for the first organizers.

Midwest pilots take 10-year victory lap

To attend, some took vacation days. Others switched schedules so they could share in the champagne toast. Some captain for other airlines or hold executive positions.

A dozen were not pilots but office staff and communications specialists for the Airline Pilots Association (ALPA), AFL-CIO, and for the unit being honored, the Midwest Airlines Pilots. Several dozen were spouses who knew from the homefront what this celebration was all about.

All recognized the uniqueness and larger purpose Nov. 30

Midwest continued Page 4

Cash signals labor commitment to Taylor

As December approached, dozens of union members and leaders gathered at Yatchak Hall outside the labor council offices to lay over \$14,000 on state Sen. Lena Taylor and pledge much more to come in her race for Milwaukee county executive against Scott Walker.

Just as the endorsement of Taylor Oct. 31 was unprecedented -- way early for an April 1 election -- so was this gathering. The host, Sheila Cochran, secretary-treasurer of the Milwaukee County Labor Council, could not recall a previous case when "we held a reception and fund-raiser for a candidate even ahead of their nomination papers" -- and a smiling Taylor immediately pulled out the nomination forms and the rules to filling them in.

"This is not just another race," Cochran added. "We are going all out to save the county."

'What are we handling?'

Efforts intensify to unchain, uplift workers inside pharma firm

By Dominique Paul Noth
Labor Press Editor

In a city that needs jobs and environmentally conscious companies, Capital Returns received warm words from public administrators and officials in 2005.

They may need to take those words back.

In 2005 the company moved to the old Evinrude plant at 6101 N. 64th St., promising to add 150 jobs to its workforce of about 350. That brought forgivable government loans -- half a million from the city and a quarter of a million from the state.

A far colder reaction comes from the mostly young, mostly African American, mostly women, some pregnant, many single mothers and low-wage residents hired at \$9 an hour.

The workers don smocks over their clothes (actually jump suits without pockets), yet are searched by lots on every break.



Panelist Sheila Cochran confronts Capital Returns managers lurking in the back row, but they didn't answer her questions.

They are forced to stand at computers. They regularly stick their hands into clumsily packed boxes. Often they have to open the unscreened boxes on their own, not knowing what contents will spill or puff out.

For three shifts, they are locked down on the assembly line, coping with the fumes and feel of the discarded pills and medical wastes that are piled willy-nilly in the cartons.

"It seems more like a plantation of two centuries ago," said Desiree Ellison, a worker who quit last month. She was first suspended, apparently because of her union sympathies, and then

rehired when the company realized that was a blatant no-no even under today's weak NLRB rules.

She now is helping the United Steelworkers (USW) organize workers from the outside.

"My main concern is my health," said Kimberly Pendleton, a worker who did speak up at a Washington Park Senior Center forum and feels more deeply targeted because of her outspokenness.

Pendleton, who once had only slight asthma and now feels nauseated whenever she enters the plant workroom, has one nagging question:

"What are we handling?"

Not good stuff. In fact, that is Capital Returns' claim to fame. It is both "green" for the environment and "green" for making money.

It is in the "reverse distribution" business for manufacturers, pharmacies and hospitals. They send vans or trailers of discarded and expired drugs to the building, where workers unload and data entry specialists sort and separate the arrivals and record returns in computers.

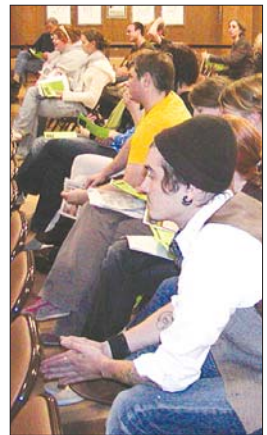
Then the company ships the waste out of state to be incinerated.

Profit-wise this is an appealing double-whammy.

Capital Returns is paid by companies for proving safe disposal of dangerous or discarded material, and the incineration produces energy that can be sold to electricity companies. The second stream is not much at present but growing. In 2006, the company reported collecting 6.5 million pounds of pills for incineration, enough to power 177 homes.

In trade publications, Capital

Waste continued Page 7



The panel, which dealt not only with Capital Returns but also the larger religious issues of justice, drew a largely young crowd to the Washington Park Senior Center.



AFSCME's Jim Fields jokes with the "future county executive."

"It won't hurt," Cochran added, "to remind politicians in a presidential election year that you can't win in Milwaukee

unless labor and its troops are out in full force and the candidate does the right work."

History has demonstrated the truth of that. But history also reveals why believers in Taylor have to take the campaign seriously and ferociously. Enthusiasm is a big part of labor's success.

There was, frankly, despite endorsements, not full labor enthusiasm in 2002 (a special election) and in 2004 about the county exec race, the two times Walker won. A lot of the community, including some in organized labor, didn't think it much

Taylor continued Page 16

Tom Barrett heard the Faith Community choir bouncing labor songs off the dome of the City Hall rotunda Dec. 10, so the mayor said he had to come down in person (far right) to welcome the bright sounds and brighter hopes of International Human Rights Day. Barrett was one of many speakers to connect human rights to the people down the street as well as to distant continents. Juan Stimson of Rep. Gwen Moore's staff read her statement of support and

The rights stuff

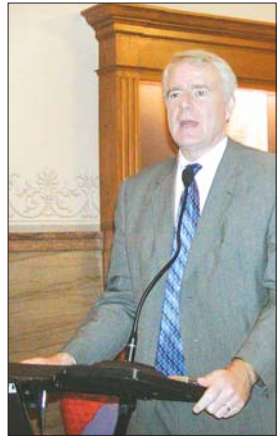
concern. Rose Daitzman (bottom far right), the tiny but tireless champion of the United Nations and the Greater Milwaukee Human Rights Council, urged recognition of current US failings. She brought a smile (center same photo) from Greenfield pastor Tim Berlew, who also saw a profound connection to issues facing workers at Capital

Returns (see Page 1). Sen. Lena Taylor (shown below right greeting emcee Annie Wacker, vice president of the labor council), did not mention her run for county executive. She spoke instead of the horrors at home as well as in Darfur and then urged a moment of prayer for her friend - a familiar moderator at labor events, and co-host with Joel McNally of the morning

show on WMCS 1290, where she had spent hours talking against street violence. Cassandra Cassandra's son, Christopher Roberson, had been found shot to death while getting gas for his wife's car.

The chamber front to back displayed the signs of the day's many sponsors (below) as music rung the length of the rotunda (bottom).

- Dec. 10 photos by Sue Ruggles and Dominique Paul Noth



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- Harold S. Vincent Scholarship Contest
- Community Volunteer Network
- Paulette Y. Copeland Crossroads Tutoring Center



Putting Children at the Center of Education

Dialogs for change



To resolve any tensions and solve logistics, activists in the Washington County labor council offered a working breakfast session Dec. 6 at the Milwaukee council's offices. Pictured from left are Harold (Red) Schladweiler, USW staff (retired); Jim Whitt, current council president, Local 145 USW, and John Krause, DALU Local 341.11. **BELOW:** The meeting included Diane Ebenreiter, AFL-CIO's assistant director of the Office of State & Local Affiliates (not pictured), and officers of the Milwaukee council: President Willie D. Ellis (left), Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran, and (shown from back) Vice President Annie Wacker. Later that day, Cochran drove out to Port Washington to meet with leaders of the Ozaukee County labor council, both councils expected to merge with Milwaukee at a convocation January 26.



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Midwest

From Page 1

in the downtown Hyatt's biggest ballroom, with a fancy dinner, a video history, guest speakers and a rock 'n' roll band with a pilot member.

Now this may not strike you as such a big deal. International unions and labor federations celebrate anniversaries. Locals stage retirement dinners and give out cups, trophies or pins for decades of service (though few pins are as nifty as the wings these 10-20-or-30 year pilots will wear on their uniforms for the next year).

What was unique was to recognize the team of novice organizers who won union recognition at Midwest on Dec. 2, 1997, to move the captains and first officers into ALPA.

To put it mildly that was an uphill campaign. Employees are most vulnerable before union protections come down. But there was a victory by one vote, and that vote was almost thrown out because the enthusiastic pilot didn't just write ALPA; he wrote ALPA ALPA!

And then this team working with ALPA bargained for a first contract despite disciplinary hoops for the union supporters and even planted media criticism of their professionalism.

"They put their careers and



Called to the Hyatt stage for a Labor Press photo were the 1996-'97 Midwest Express Airlines Pilot Organizing Committee. Left to right, captains all, they are Segundo Andrew, Scott Hegland, Brent Gabel, Jon Beard, Gary Busch, and Matt Klingsporn. Not present were Captains Bob Layman and Ron McBride (retired).

family life on the line for all of us" noted Jay Schnedorf, the emcee for the evening and current leader (officially chairman) of the Midwest pilots teams.

From the podium, and at the various dinner tables, the pilots laughed and shared war stories, exposing the great good humor that carried them through.

"The company didn't show much respect for us," recalled an amused bargaining leader.

He is Capt. Duane Woerth, former ALPA president and an ALPA leader for 30 years and a vice president and executive council member of the AFL-CIO.

"The only time Tim Hoeksema (Midwest's CEO) ever picked up the phone to talk to me was when he demanded that we take the billboard down."

The billboard was famous. It greeted Waukesha-Milwaukee commuters on I-94 with the legend: "MIDWEST SERVES COOKIES AND PAYS PEANUTS."

"I told him we couldn't take it down because we didn't put it up," said Woerth. "It was put up by the Iron Workers." For some reason Hoeksema didn't seem to want to deal with Local 8.

Harder to talk about was the ferocious side of their journey to unionization, how corporate tactics sought to damage their reputation.

Today, there may be some ongoing cases. Two Christmases ago, Labor Press revealed another that happened several years ago — a leader of the effort to unionize who suddenly was labeled as flunking the mandatory twice-a-year flight testing he had always aced. It required the new union to go to court and restore his rights to fly and restore his reputation.

The personal and professional humiliation of being put on the shelf for no good reason would sting, but one side effect may have been a remarkable unity whether the pilots came from Kimberly Clark's corporate aviation department (at the start), Midwest Express Airlines (the company's original name), Skyway Airlines or another carrier — small or large.

Support flipped from a win by one vote to every pilot but one supporting the union.

"I think the harsher the company got, the more we came

together," noted one captain.

Today, ALPA is the world's largest pilot union, 60,000 members.

The Midwest unit seems to wield influence in ALPA far beyond its numbers (400).

These pilots serve, ALPA leaders said, as a beacon of determination in wages and benefits and safety concepts.

They are well organized, innovative in tactics, they have stood firm on principles and they negotiated the aftermath of 9/11 better than any other airline group, the speakers said.

They, along with the flight attendants, are also the personable face of the airline, the faces the passengers know and trust.

But since they know their worth to the airline and insist upon it, they expect a fresh fight at the bargaining table.

The unionized flight attendants were so worried in private by the takeover maneuvers that they referred to their potential future as "joining Air Trash" (Labor Press readers can probably Trans-late that).

The language was nicer at the pilots event. A tour of the crowd made it clear that they were happy that Midwest has remained an independent Milwaukee airline for as long as it has and many would like to see that continue for years into the future.

But that hardly means the concerns about Midwest management have ended and that the sides will now sing Kumbaya in contract talks. In fact, one of the innovative tactics was this celebration, to remind today's Midwest employees — and today's management — that they know how to fight. The current contract expires in 2008.

That reality brought the evening's surprise when the highly admired lead organizer of 10 years ago and the group's first chairman, Capt. Segundo Andrew, spoke for his team.

After joking around at the podium, Andrew turned serious. "After what I had gone through, I had decided that was it; I had done my bit. I wouldn't get back (into union activism) again."

"I know now I was wrong. You can't rest. The world around us says we can't stop, that nothing happens unless we band together."

"So when the new negotiations start, look for me. Whatever is needed. I intend to be there."

-- Dominique Paul Noth



Seated at the front table, Captain Duane Woerth, an AFL-CIO executive council member and former ALPA president, enjoyed the war stories, and then added some good ones of his own from his days as bargainer for the Midwest pilots.

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Grant celebrates our parks

Calling attention to the value of our parks doesn't take a lot of money. It takes commitment, understanding and smart research.

The Wisconsin Humanities Council has awarded a \$9,987 grant to the Milwaukee County Historical Society to help fund a history exhibition called "Milwaukee Outdoors: A Century of the County Parks System."

Visitors to the Milwaukee County Historical Museum can view the exhibition from January 19 through June 15, 2008. There will also be an exhibition lecture series during the months of January, March, April, May, and June.

The exhibition, with the collaboration of the Wehr Nature Center and Milwaukee County Parks, will examine how county parks have helped build and shape the physical, mental, natural, and economic health of the community.

It will highlight Milwaukee's 150 parks and parkways where residents celebrated and despite some cutbacks can still celebrate by playing baseball, bocce, soccer, and golf, ride their bicycles on trails, attend concerts and smell the flowers at the Mitchell Park Domes.

Visitors will see and read about the distinctive past: women's swimsuits from the 1890s to the 1960s; 1900s ice skates and snow shoes; 1910s boxing gloves; 1915 lawn bowling equipment; 1930s Evinrude boat motors, and 1950s bicycles.

For more information on the exhibition, see the Milwaukee County Historical Society website at www.milwaukeecountyhistsoc.org. To learn more about the humanities council, visit www.wisconsinhumanities.org.

UNITE HERE, the hotel and restaurant workers union, launched a program last year called the Informed Meetings Exchange (INMEX) to help organizations get the initial information they need to make booking their meetings successful.

Subscribers pay nothing for the services of INMEX, but often can get better rates than they could on their own.

"We always try to meet the customers' needs, often comparing two, three, four or five hotels in their price range in their city of choice," said Kate Shaughnessy, INMEX spokesperson. "We try to use union properties, and we try to get clients in the right places to meet their needs."

"We can do research based on your budget and needs, and help plan a meeting that complements the work of your convention planners," Shaughnessy added. "Rather than displace them, it can really help them to focus on the content of their events. It can help them get

the best service and price."

With about a third of hotel industry revenues coming from meetings and conventions, convention dollars can have an economic impact across communities, and can be used as leverage to support workers.

"We measure hotels' records of labor standards and rights," Shaughnessy said. "When subscribers use INMEX, they are supporting socially responsible practices in the meeting industry."

INMEX also keeps track of when contracts expire, so meeting planners don't walk into the middle of a labor dispute. The group works not only with labor unions and progressive organizations, but also with academic associations, faith-based organizations, corporations, and a variety of other groups.

INMEX launched with 119 founding subscribers. The subscriber base has doubled in a year, amazing INMEX organizers with a variety of requests for information, services and guidance. INMEX also has formed relationships with a conference planning organization and a hotel chain to expand the services it offers, and plans to get into additional conference services, such as registration and logistics.

Provided by the International Labor Communications Association, which used INMEX to plan its recent New Orleans convention.

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Capital confrontation

As more and more stories emerged over the last eight months of the treatment of largely minority workers from the heart of Milwaukee – at a pharmaceutical returns plant in the heart of Milwaukee – labor unions and religious groups began to assemble the anecdotes and develop a campaign to help the workers speak up without intimidation and get the company to own up to its practices.

November 8 brought the campaign front and center with a notable panel on both the faith teachings of economic justice and pragmatic experience in plant safety, along with testimony from the workers themselves. Speaking out (left to right) were Father Michael McLernon, a guider of future priests who laid out in powerful fashion the inescapable realities of Catholic social teaching; Juan Ruis, a Racine spokesman for Voces de la Frontera; the labor council's chief operating officer, Sheila Cochran; Kimberly Pendleton, a Capital Returns worker, and Lois O'Keefe, a workforce veteran on the staff for Rep. Gwen Moore.

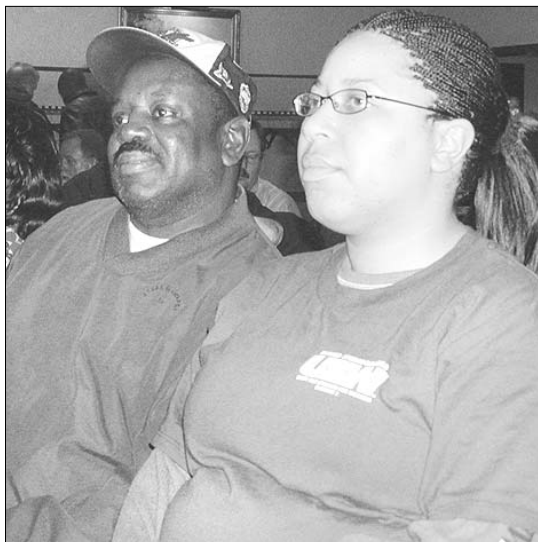
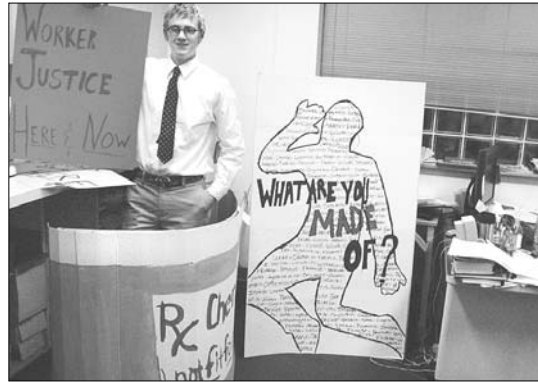
They had been told to attend and didn't reveal themselves. They sat silent in the back (below) and then left early, but Cochran addressed the managers of Capital Returns in her presentation.



RIGHT: A week after the panel, sympathizers doubled in number to show solidarity with the workers in front of the Capital Returns plant and to urge the management to tackle the issues. Jon Royal, the intern with the Faith Community for Worker Justice who organized the events, displayed some of the hand-made signs for the plant rally.



RIGHT BELOW: A dozen groups – see photo opposite page – parked outside Capital Returns on a chilly day to wave signs and yell encouragement for arriving and departing workers. The rally was timed to catch the change of shifts.



Capital Returns worker Desiree Ellison (right) joined United Steelworkers organizer Larry Goodman as guests at the December delegate meeting, of the labor council. The newly arrived Goodman spoke of the campaign and outlined for delegates the seriousness with which USW is taking the problems of the workers. Desiree warned supporters that they would find many of the employees fearful about talking out loud.

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Waste

From Page 1

Returns shared what it keeps out of lakes and landfills: "antibiotics, heart medication, anticonvulsives, drugs, endocrine disruptors, estrogen from birth-control pills and effluence from animal hormones produced by commercial livestock production" – to which workers would add loose liquids, inhalers, needles and strange puffs of powder when they open a box.

While keeping this stuff away from fish in Lake Michigan, the company apparently has feeble concern for the human fish flopping around the plant.

Workers, including pregnant women, report indifferent response to pains that have doubled them up. Smells that fill the workrooms are ignored. The workers also say:

Very few managers have medical training. But all wear white lab coats to separate them from the underlings.

Emergency leave for sick children has been denied. Some unloaded medicine has burned hands. The hired data entry specialists were forced to stand at their stations – and when the company realized this probably violated established rules and ergonomics, they simply changed the name of the job from "data entry" to "warehouse processor."

Workers have been told to lie on the floor affixing labels despite worries about what landed on the floor before they did.

What the company has reportedly landed is a quarter of the nation's lucrative pharma return business – not in small measure due to the treatment and pay of its workforce. (\$9 an hour at the start for data entry – excuse me! Warehouse processing!).

In its literature and on its website, none of Capital Returns' mission and values says anything about the treatment or safety of workers.

"Capital Returns – what a name that," said Rep. Gwen Moore last summer after privately hearing the workers' stories in a church basement. "None of its returns seem about human capital."

State elected officials have talked about the complaints with Larry Hruska, president of the Genco owned company, who blames previous management for many of the problems. But Hruska was hired 16 months ago, so the workers were clearly not a priority – until they started complaining to the USW and OSHA.

Hruska, a 28-year veteran of the pharmaceutical business (let go by Kmart in its 2003 bankruptcy), told one state representative that while he didn't see why the workers needed a union, he "would not prevent individuals from attempting to start one." That will come as a shock to workers who were told to take off union insignia or to the USW,



A remarkable array of unions and community groups joined the Nov. 15 protest outside Capital Returns plant, largely to assure the workers that there are folks on the outside who do care.

which can't get the company to just plain talk or consider neutrality.

Hruska also said one complaint was investigated and there was nothing to it. But who investigated? Apparently the company itself. It blamed the lockdown atmosphere and searches on a big drug theft, but there is no court report on record of any such event.

Except for Moore, "the elected officials is that they haven't worked a factory floor," said Sheila Cochran, the secretary-treasurer of Milwaukee's labor council after the public forum on the company.

"Do they give out hospital quality gloves? Are there any respirators in the building? Any trained personnel? Any established procedures for spills?"

"They (state elected officials) simply don't know how this game is played. They don't know what questions to ask. We do."

A member of the new city Workforce Investment Board, with which the company has pledged cooperation, Cochran would love the opportunity to tour the company, drill down to actual practices and find ways the labor council could help.

But she is disturbed that "the company thinks it can take advantage of the minority workforce because they are women desperate to support their children and don't have higher education. The company shouldn't presume. These are still smart people, deserving people, and they know when they are not respected."

At the forum two company managers were spying things out at the back and Cochran quickly brought them into the discussion, though they refused to respond.

Cochran recalled her years as a Delco-Delphi factory worker "where we had some of the most toxic chemicals you can imagine in the building."

But the managers there were glad for the UAW union rules about safety and protective gear "because it protected them as well."

"So understand," Cochran informed the silent managers. "You are under threat, too. The community cares about how these workers are treated. We are not

going away. We will be watching."

Also on the panel was a veteran of workforce development and an aide to Moore, Lois O'Keefe.

"I wasn't surprised but I was saddened that neither OSHA nor the FDA has any regulation or safety concern specifically addressing this sort of new pharmaceutical business," she said.

Noting that there are rules on the books that may apply, O'Keefe pointedly added, "I'm afraid that (modern rules) will have to wait for a new president."

O'Keefe also rolled her eyes when Capital Returns workers described what happened when OSHA answered their complaints

and came to the plant. Before the inspectors called, the workers, including those with concerns, were shuffled to an upper room "to check files," making them unavailable or invisible.

"That's one of the oldest tricks in the books," O'Keefe said.

The tricks and practices, which have been outlined in pamphlets by the Faith Community for Worker Justice, also resulted in an outpouring of participants a week later.

Unions, 9to5, Good Jobs and Livable Neighborhoods, UWM students and other faith and community groups rallied Nov. 15 as the workers changed shifts.

"We just want them to know

there's support," said Ross Winklebauer, a USW leader and member of the Milwaukee labor executive board. Unmindful of the wicked cold, he steered the biggest sign.

A few Capital Returns workers honked in appreciation and some lowered their windows to smile and wave as they drove out. But dozens drove grimly past.

This was no surprise to longtime worker

Kimberly Pendleton

"They're intimidated. I'm not a complainer, but I felt intimidated when I had a complaint. I was derided. I was told I was being insubordinate. No wonder workers are afraid."

"There's definitely a racial element to the (lack of) response," noted Jennifer Epps of Good Jobs at the rally.

"You can feel how scared they are to talk to us," said Jon Royal of the Faith Community, who helped organize both forum and rally.

All that has simply motivated the USW to work harder. In December it flew in to take up residence specifically for the Capital Returns campaign a veteran organizer, Larry Goodman. A large and friendly man with loads of experience, Goodman puts his job simply: "I'm here for as long as they need me."

Banking on AFSCME

For 76 years, employees at U.S. Bank - formerly Firststar and, before that, First Wisconsin National Bank - have been represented by the independent Bank Employees Union-Milwaukee (BEU).

Once known as the "Bank Employees Association," the union represents professional employees with a range of titles and responsibilities - bank tellers, branch-office personal bankers, mortgage division personnel, fraud-detection specialists.

"For a long time, the bank was run right here in Milwaukee - it was all local," says Hady Bricco, a fraud analyst and BEU's president. "And whatever gains we were able to make as a union, that's what they based increases for non-union employees."

When merger mania shook the financial world in the 1980s, First Wisconsin wasn't immune. The bank, which changed its name to the decidedly non-local Firststar in 1988, embarked on a series of mergers, culminating in the 2001 marriage with Minneapolis-based U.S. Bancorp that netted the bank its current name: U.S. Bank.

BEU, whose membership more than halved during the mega-merger period, "started feeling a little bit of pressure," Bricco says.

"As the bank has gotten larger, and as they've demonstrated less and less respect for us as employees, we felt that it was time to look at our options," she says. "We knew we didn't want to get swallowed up by another union, so we thought about affiliating."

But the union had to find the



AFSCME organizer Pete Swinford

right partner. Bricco and the other eight members of BEU's executive board believed they'd found a soulmate in AFSCME District Council 48, which also has deep roots in this community.

A majority of BEU's 500 members thought so, too. They recently voted overwhelmingly to affiliate with DC 48.

By linking with AFSCME, the 500 bank employees maintain their own local-union autonomy. They'd continue to elect officers, vote on contracts and chart the course of union business at U.S. Bank.

Their union would also have a meaningful new name: Local 777, in honor of the address of the 42-story headquarters facility on Wisconsin Ave.

"It's strength in numbers," says Bricco, now president of AFSCME Local 777. "We also look forward to having AFSCME with us at the bargaining table, to share their knowledge and know-how."

"Basically, it started with their executive board expressing a desire to affiliate with someone," recalls DC 48 Organizer

Pete Swinford. "Then they invited us, along with some other unions, to talk with them about who we are and what we do."

So why would AFSCME be a good fit?

DC 48's "very local," as Swinford puts it. "Our structure is such that they could retain their identity and fit in as a local union."

Then there was the resources and political clout that come with being part of AFSCME International, as well as the AFL-CIO.

Conversely, the bank employees represented a good fit with DC 48. If AFSCME's going to grow, it'll be via private-sector organizing efforts (think child-care providers).

"We also already have a lot of clerical employees represented, and some of them are private sector, too," Swinford adds.

DC 48's Calvin Lee was assigned to serve as the bank employees' staff representative.

"Our challenge will be to help them strengthen their union internally and helping them prepare for the next contract," Swinford says.

The current pact expires in November 2008. "Our last contract negotiation in 2006 was a turning point - they started talking about 'takeaways,' or taking away things that we'd worked for over the years," Bricco says.

"We could be facing a pretty big fight. I'm sure it's coming."

When it comes time to convene at the negotiating table, Bricco knows they've got AFSCME on their side.

Reprinted from AFSCME 48's newspaper.



The author, Steve Cagle, a member of Laborers Local 113, has been honored by WisCOSH for turning unsafe companies into safe ones.

Meaning of Christmas? How about the meaning of pickets?

Guest Comment by Steve Cagle for the Labor Press

One of the most serious problems in the Building Trades is the lack of support given to the honoring of picket lines. It's essential that the membership of all trades be educated about their role and responsibility when it comes to this issue. One doesn't have to look too far back in the history of the Buildings Trades to a time when "AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL" was not merely a sentiment but a time-honored moral imperative that was the backbone of solidarity and union strength. Sadly times have changed.

The majority of workers, when asked why they cross picket lines, will offer the excuse that they don't want to lose a day's pay. While this is understandable and often an immediate need on a personal level, what is being ignored is the big picture. A significant part of the big picture today shows that the union market share in most areas is on the decline. If that decline continues at its present pace, it will not be long before our union jobs are completely gone along with our wages, pension and health benefits that we have all come to rely on to support our families.

Part of the big picture, though, offers us some hope. That part of the picture shows how the power of solidarity can be harnessed to not only slow the decline in the market share but actually turn it around. Through the seemingly simple act of honoring picket lines, workers both union and non-union can restore balance to the labor-management dynamic. Labor solidarity at the jobsite translates into labor strength at the bargaining table. Imagine a future where our wage increases actually kept pace with inflation instead of remaining at levels two decades old.

At the "First Place" job site in the downtown area the Iron Workers picketed and the job turned around that morning.

We have the power; let's take back what was once ours and more!!



In a surprise visit, Laborfest's main speaker stopped back in Milwaukee, even into the headquarters of the labor council November 28. Mike Goodwin (left), president of OPEIU International, was consulting with Local 35 on a benefits package at Northwestern Mutual - only for the union members who do the bargaining for a broader field of employees.

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Privatizing MMSD like taking candy from a baby

By Dominique Paul Noth
Labor Press Editor

You know that Nigerian who sits in your email, promising that if you send him a few thousand dollars you can share in \$50 million hidden by a corrupt official?

Judging by recent events, he should ply his scam in the offices of the River Hills president.

And sellers of the Brooklyn Bridge? They should check out the leaders of Wauwatosa, West Milwaukee and even the non-elected Oak Creek appointee to the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District.

These suburban folks along with three of Mayor Tom Barrett's appointees believed the largest water service company in the world – with \$30 billion a year in revenues (billion!) – when it told them it would happily operate Milwaukee's wastewater treatment facilities for nothing.

These commissioners took the word of the new French company against the word of the old French company (which is puzzling, since the latter actually ran the system) and then doubted the analysis of workers who actually

Comment

handle things (which is probably just foolish).

The company that won the privatization contract is Veolia Water, with 270,000 employees in about 64 countries — or more specifically Veolia Water North America, which has 14 million water and wastewater customers, municipal and industrial, in about 600 communities.

Out of the goodness of its heart, it will stick these other clients with the lost profit instead of the MMSD's more than one million customers in 28 communities. Or so it said.

Can you hear the Nigerian salivating?

Oh, Veolia says it will make a profit eventually by learning as it goes along. That's interesting — a company this big doesn't already know what it's doing? It can't tell from the get-go about the efficiencies and new technology it will employ?

Nor is this a little expenditure. Veolia is being preferred for a 10-year \$400 million contract to operate the Milorganite (fertil-

izer) factory, sewage treatment plants, a deep-tunnel system and an entire region of sewers starting March 1.

Curiously, only by taking out the profit margin could they beat the closest competitor, the union that wants to return the service to public operation — and really for no profit.

The public in the form of the AFSCME union was aced out by Veolia's promise of \$35 million in savings over 10 years (\$3.5 million a year). Amazing that a company that says it doesn't know how it's going to make money five years from now can project 10 years ahead what it will save the taxpayers.

One lesson from all this is that once you privatize it's hard to go back.

After 10 years of farming this service out to another French company, United Water Services (UWS), MMSD would actually have had to change philosophies — or management. It would, for example, have to really trust itself to operate the system over the distant privateer.

UWS was out of the game early with a bid topping \$465 million for 10 years. But it was a



AFSCME Local 366 President Rick Stencel

bid, some say, based on ten years of actual operating experience and a true understanding of what it takes to run the system.

AFSCME Local 366 came up \$3.5 million a year short when the for-profit Veolia suddenly became non-profit Veolia, if you can believe that.

AFSCME District Council 48 staff member Bill Mollenhauer urged the commissioners to reject the troubling contract — after all, the local was within 10% of Veolia's questionable low bid.

As Labor Press wrote two months ago: "If commissioners only look at the promise of initial savings and not the long-term costs and consequences, the privateers usually win."

The way MMSD commissioners justified the numbers and gave the contract to Veolia troubles Rick Stencel, president of Local 366, which has more than 200 members, half working for the private operator and half for MMSD.

He says there is no \$35 mil-

lion savings in this contract, only increased operating figures tucked within the "low bid" budget. Comparing bids in this manner is "not just apples and oranges" he fumed, "but more like oranges and Milorganite."

Although his local may actually gain workers in the first years under the Veolia deal, Stencel is still upset. "This is about the responsibility of delivering this important public health service," he said

The local's recording secretary Mark Teske, simply urged an "independent audit of the numbers" at the hearing — and still can't believe the commissioners didn't see the simple need for that.

An audit would instantly reveal "the profit built into the costs they attach to various operations," Teske said. "All the commissioners had before them was one heavily biased report."

As monitor of public-private partnerships, Milwaukee's leaders don't exactly have an enviable track record. But there were commissioners who wondered aloud about the possible loopholes within \$400 million stretching over 10 years.

Such skepticism (or common sense) brought no votes from four commissioners out of 11: Ald. Ashanti Hamilton, Reps.

Pedro Colon and David Cullen, and Lyle Balistreri, president of the Milwaukee Building & Construction Trades Council, AFL-CIO.

Yes, they're union friendly, but they also ask hard questions.

So don't try to sell them a subprime mortgage.

A yearly best friend to apprentices

Given the skill demonstrated from intensive training and thousands of hours in class, given the diversity reflected on projects and for companies large and small, the entire community can echo the sentiments of Arthur McGlothlin who organized and moderated the traditional Excelsior Masonic Lodge tool grants program.

"We believe in the apprenticeship system."

So do the unions running 17 joint apprentice training programs (known as JATCs) whose teachers and leaders cooperated by providing nominations, sup-

port and presence as 27 first-year apprentices each received \$100 grants for excellence and perseverance Dec. 3 at the lodge, 1235 E. Howard Ave.

The tool grant award program (so named because the money helps apprentices get the tools needed in a trade) is also a reminder, as McGlothlin noted, that the apprentice program is "a lot older than many think!" The Masons, a fraternal organization devoted to mutual support and community good works, grew out of an apprentice system.

Bechtel Construction was the company employing the most

recipients of the grants: Craig Klotz, boilermaker, Brent Wolfe, carpenter, Joseph Barker, laborer, and Jeff Krause, operating engineer.

But a remarkable range of companies sponsoring and employing these apprentices were represented for 2007.

Other winners of the \$100 grants are Brian Phillips, bricklayer, David Sinkula, carpenter, Steve Metz and Hunter Schenk III, cement masons;

Paul J. Keller, construction sheet metal worker, Marcus Shepherd, drywall finisher, Michael Michalski, Eric Padgett and Laura Boese, electricians;

Damien S. Adams, elevator constructor, Chris Sberna, floor coverer, John Krueger, glazier, Robert Potter, heat & frost insulator, Dajuan Stewart, iron worker, Jason DeLeff, millwright, Greg Kveton, painter, Jeff Evans, plumber;

Vincent Lopez, refrigeration service fitter, Ben Barski, roofer, Ronald A. Driscoll Sr., environmental service technician, Greg Antonioni, sprinkler fitter, Kyle McCann, steamfitter, and Adam Brester, tile setter.

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DAN LAACK	242
DEL GROSS	223
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Time to focus on right tax villain

By **Gerry Broderick**
Special to Labor Press

Comment

It's time to set the record straight on tax collections in Wisconsin. Many people claim that our state is overtaxed. Most of the time, those individuals are referring to property taxes.

Granted, property and personal income taxes in Wisconsin appear to be above average. But the rest of the story is seldom told.

While many of us deal with

higher property taxes, large corporations that do business in Wisconsin are getting away with obscene tax exemptions that are unavailable to the average household.

In fact, a full two-thirds of Wisconsin corporate income tax filers pay NO income tax. That includes major employers in

Milwaukee County. How do they do it? They fly under the radar.

They use tax law loopholes to drastically lower their tax burden without breaking any laws. As a result, Wisconsin ranks 38th in corporate tax collections.

When corporations use loopholes to legally avoid paying their fair share of taxes, the burden is shifted to individual property tax payers. This is just plain wrong. Our hardworking residents should not be subsidizing corporations

that skirt the law.

Part of my job as Milwaukee County supervisor is to demand that the state funds the services that counties are mandated to perform. Wisconsin corporate tax collections only account for about 6% of the state's GPR (general purpose revenue). As a result legislators in Madison have had difficulty in fully funding those mandated services, causing Milwaukee County taxpayers to pick up the slack.

Wisconsin's business community has constantly reduced its level of public investments, so our residents increasingly pay more for schools, public safety, roads, quality-of-life programs, the UW system, public transportation and many other services that we have come to expect.

So, who ends up paying for those services in our state and county? Lower income married homeowners end up with the high-



Gerry Broderick

est burden of state and local taxes. And that's what fuels the desire to call Wisconsin a "tax hell."

But we can change that. By fairly taxing corporations doing business in Wisconsin we can make the entire system more equitable for taxpayers here in Milwaukee County.

The author, a Milwaukee County supervisor, included this article in his most recent 3rd District newsletter.

A recent study by Jack Norman from the Institute for Wisconsin's Future makes this case clearly. His study found Wisconsin's tax base has shifted over the years:

- While individual property tax payers provided 36% of state and local tax revenue in Wisconsin in 2004, corporate income taxes accounted for only 3% of the total.

- In 1970, manufacturing accounted for 18% of the property tax burden. It shifted drastically to 3.6% in 2005, according to the Legislative

Fiscal Bureau

- Residential property owners now provide 70% of state revenue, up from 50% thirty years ago.

- If Wisconsin businesses paid the same amount of state and local taxes as the national average, Wisconsin would see an additional \$1.3 billion in revenue each year! For more information on the study compiled by the Institute for Wisconsin's Future visit www.wisconsinfuture.org.

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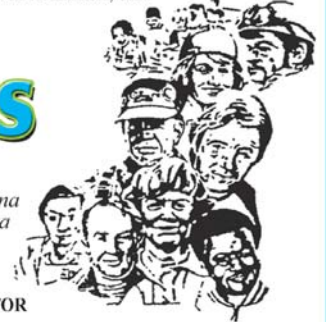
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FROM THE OFFICERS &
MEMBERS OF

PLUMBERS UNION LOCAL 75



The 13th district's Terry Witkowski was one of many aldermen seeking out AFSCME District Council 48's executive director, Richard Abelson (left). Right, MPS school board chairman Peter Blewett (at left) chats with labor lawyer Mark Sweet.

AFSCME party sets the tone of 12 days of politicking

A lot of union open houses are just about catching up with friends and officials. But traditionally, as one of the first out of the gate after budgets and fights are settled, AFSCME District Council 48's basement bash sets the tone. How heavy will this year be in election fever?

The answer is in. The tone this year is full-bore high-gear, and union parties are the place to solicit grassroots support.

So many candidates were circulating nomination papers that they blocked the doors into the sumptuous catering. And then they blocked the buffet line.

Even officials who aren't challenged were buttonholed for advice and attention. Plenty of horsetrading took place. And yes, some old friends did catch up.



As county supervisor Peggy West signed someone else's nomination papers, circuit court hopeful Jeffrey Norman at left accosted (but in a nice way) County Board Chairman Lee Holloway.

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The always natty Evan Zeppos found union activists in front of him, city aldermen to the right and left (including Bob Bauman), political noteworthies behind him (Vincent Bobot) – with so many choices, what's a busy lobbyist to do?

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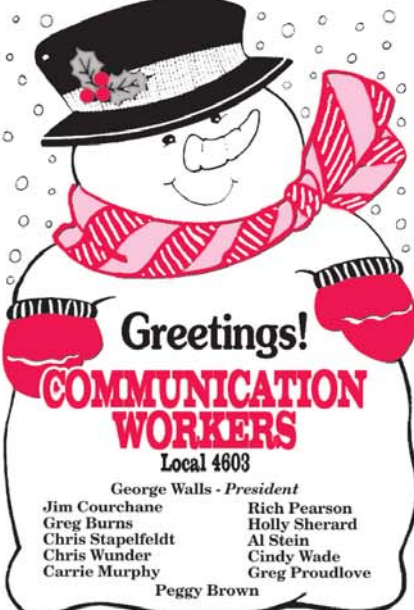


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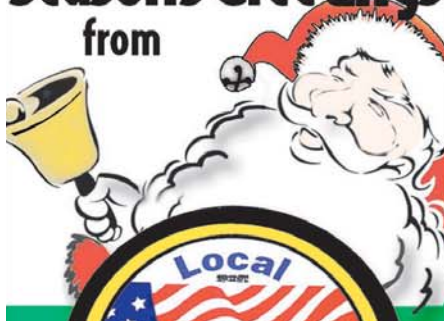
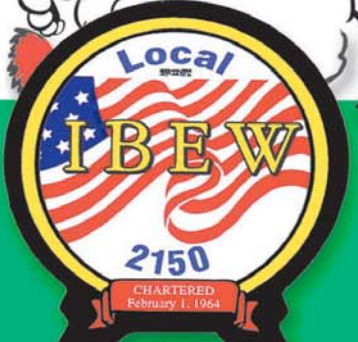
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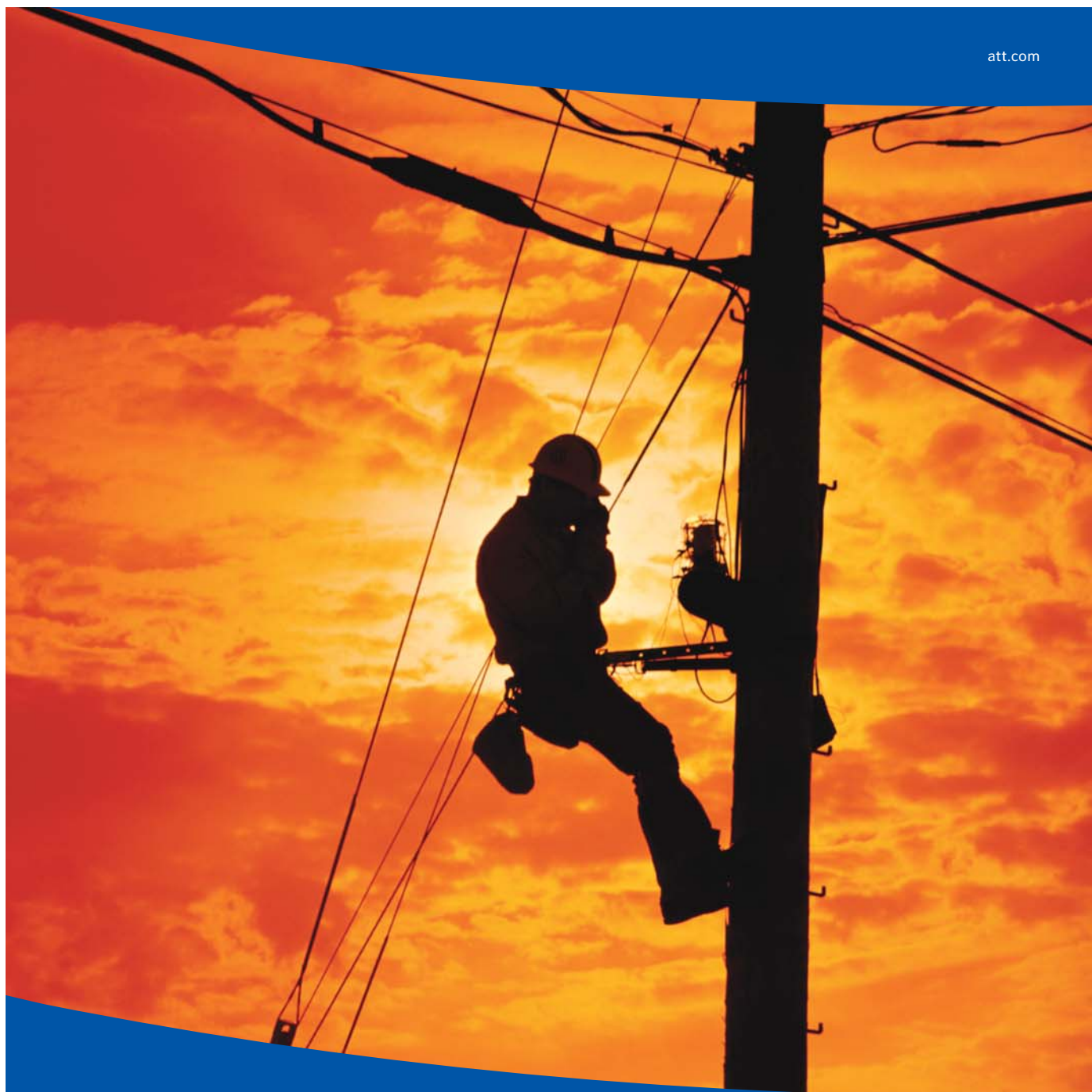
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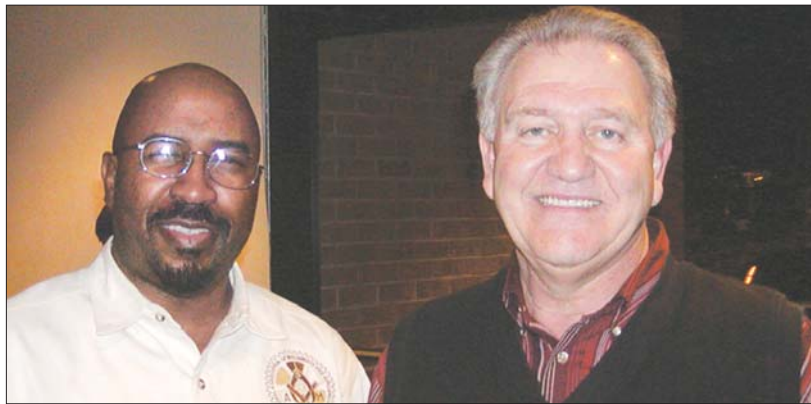
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Larry L. Nunley (left) and Sam Gallo emerged from the delegate balloting Dec. 6 as the newest members of the Milwaukee labor council's executive board.

A new board, plus a Packers fix

Four union activists had been nominated in November for the two positions on the executive board of the Milwaukee County Labor Council, AFL-CIO, so the task facing the delegates, meeting Dec. 6 at Serb Hall, was to shrink the decision down to two.

The nominees made their pitch at the door before the voting, which took place in the hallway during the meeting. The delegates decided resoundingly, casting votes representatively for 26,770 of the Milwaukee council's members.

Welcomed back to the board (after a departure two years ago, before Solidarity Charters handled the split in federations) was Salvadore W. Gallo, known to all as Sam, who never missed a beat of activism during his absence. Business manager of Local 122, he will be the lone board representative of UNITE HERE.

New to the board is one of the most politically knowledgeable members of the International Association of Machinists, Larry L. Nunley, president of Lodge 1916. He becomes the second IAMAW representative on the board.

Exactly two votes were required on every ballot. Gallo attracted 22,901 such votes and Nunley 20,897.

On a separate matter, at the meeting as well as by letter, the delegates were updated on transformation plans of the Wisconsin AFL-CIO.

The Milwaukee council is a big part of the New Alliance changes to be voted on and celebrated in January.

The program establishes six zones in the state, each to be staffed as a permanent field program to advance the concerns of working families. The new plan has been approved by AFL-CIO National President John Sweeney and a Convocation is required. The Convocation is an occasion to vote and implement the transformation's thrust for locals, internationals and federations receiving invitations.

But labor members are Packers fans, too - indeed often Packers fans first. With hope springing in their hearts, they decided the original Jan. 12 date for the Convocation had a potential conflict with Wisconsin foot-

ball fever.

So the date of the Convocation has been changed. It is now at 11 a.m. Saturday,

January 26, 2008 (the down weekend before the Super Bowl), at the Paper Valley Hotel in Appleton, Wisconsin.



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Taylor

From Page 1

mattered.

Turns out it mattered a lot. The pension scandal the unions never caused was blamed on them anyway as Walker eked out every bit of anger he could. In the process, he destroyed county safety nets and always offered some other entity than the county to raise the necessary taxes.

The result of this consistent evading of responsibility? The county deteriorated, facilities and working programs diminished or closed and every reputable service suffered to the point of becoming disreputable: transit, parks, courts, mental health, child services.

"We were not happy with Walker," recalled one SEIU member, "but we were not excited by the opponents. We are now."

It's more than unions sharing strong philosophical agreement with Taylor, such as frugality with tax dollars requiring good administration and clear evaluation. It's more than knowing she, unlike the incumbent, will listen if they cite concerns or offer solutions.

They are impressed by her proven track record and by a personality that will ignite the community.

And she will have to run flames on -- because raising money will dominate the first months of her campaign, making it easy for critics to carp about the lack of specifics in her proposals and to wonder aloud if she is progressive enough to bring about real change as well as real rescue.

But Taylor is kicking her



The view from the candidate's side as Taylor addresses a crowd of union leaders and activists crammed into Yatchak Hall.

campaign into high gear early.

A proven sparkplug in the Assembly and Senate, a Milwaukee native (Rufus King High School) with a law degree and service as a public defender before running her own law firm, she was visible south side, north side, west side, east side in November, speaking about the issues and raising money even ahead of Walker's formal announcement in December that he was running again (something he had originally pledged not to do).

Financial concerns come first, hard-nosed leaders in the unions agree and Taylor admits. Starting with nothing, "I need \$600,000 to be competitive," she said, though it

will probably take a million dollars. The last time around Walker spent \$600,000 and reportedly has that much on tap.

A fly on the wall at Yatchak Hall would have heard union leaders wonder if she would quickly bring in top money managers and campaign strategists, so they could demonstrate to the rank and file, as one put it, "that they had better get out on the streets and doors because this is no pie in the sky hope effort."

"She has a good chance of winning," said another, citing the example of Rep. Gwen Moore (whose state Senate seat Taylor took over when Moore went to D.C.). It was the same comparison made by Journal Sentinel columnist Eugene Kane.

There are limits to the analogy, said another union leader.

From this perspective, Taylor can expect big turnout in the African American community, but she will make notable inroads in the south, west and north suburbs, where you might think ethnic history is against her.

But retirees living on fixed incomes, students who take the bus, conservative Latinos who

Watch the election calendar!

There will be a Feb. 19 primary in the county executive race even if only three candidates run and so far five have expressed a desire.

The real race is between Taylor and Walker but fired Milwaukee County retirement manager Jack L. Hohrein, who had a major dispute with Walker and his bosses about continuing the pension investigations, is rumored to be taking out papers. Also announced are technology consultant Joe Klein and Greenfield's city engineer Curtis Bolton.

In all April 1 races, including county board, candidates have until Jan. 2 to complete nomination papers. Over five dozen candidates are filling out nomination papers at this writing.

This is one reason why the labor council is waiting until early January to conduct more interviews and take recommendations to the delegate meeting.

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suddenly feel targeted -- all know that Walker hasn't been good for them. They have also watched parks and health services slide downhill. "She's going to surprise Walker in the supposed areas of his strength," said the union leader.

She already has, noted one early supporter in a phone interview. Supervisor Marina

Dimitrijevic recalled a general community meeting in October in Bay View that drew 500 or so. When "Lena spoke on family values, she got a rousing ovation," said Dimitrijevic.

Taylor is already receiving attention from national, state and local interests. John Zapfel has resigned his position with Gov. Jim Doyle to run her campaign. A Milwaukee native who attended Vincent High School and UWM, Zapfel is a veteran campaign figure for Tom Barrett as well as Jim Doyle.

Seasoned veterans of Milwaukee politics have stepped forward to advise the Taylor campaign. She has cards and literature ready to give away plus a strategy for lawn signs and an established campaign headquarters at 3428 W. State St.

The campaign phone and email are 414-344-4529 and info@lena2008.com.

Her website: lena2008.com

All political commentary by Dominique Paul Noth, editor of the Labor Press



At back, Cochran shows Taylor the money as (at front) union leaders work to gather more contributors.

Some notable retirees will affect county exec race

Scott Walker may be pinning some hopes to fight back the Lena Taylor onslaught by working to weaken the County Board that has been aligned against him.

There are unexpected departures from the County Board, several in suburban districts, and then some strong challenges that make a fourth of the seats competitive. His campaign strategists hope these races will attract Walker friendly candidates.

But unions also see these emerging races as an opportunity to turn out their voters.

The strength of Taylor's race could galvanize progressive candidates to run.

Real progressives, that is. The unions backed Dan Devine, who is leaving the board



Roger Quindel

to run for West Allis mayor. Believing from interviews that he was a genuine progressive, labor leader only realized after his votes on the board that he was catering to the minority conservative element in his district.



Richard Nyklewicz

He was a major disappointment, all agree.

A different sort of reality has crept in about Richard Nyklewicz, who is retiring as both the longest serving and the youngest man ever elected to the

County Board. In all those years he was only an occasional recipient of broad multi-union backing.

The 14th District supervisor was elected at age 20 and showed an early devotion to the county safety net but also openness to privatization. One side the unions liked, the others they didn't but always they acknowledged his acumen with budgets.

Events, mainly the arrival of Walker, turned him literally into the county's fiscal savior. Other supervisors concede that whenever there has been a case of doing what they could to reverse the worst of Walker's proposals, Nyklewicz was the expert they turned to.

Deeply knowledgeable in the ways of government, head of the finance and audit committee, he showed a mastery of budgetary solutions and the trust that gathered a majority to his side.

Nor did he mince words. After the board overrode Walker's vetoes in November, he praised the members for showing "a measure of responsiveness to the needs of the community that the county executive did not."

His reward, of course, was being blasted by conservative talk radio - which in effect said good riddance to him despite his 32 years of credentials and key role in creating paramedic services and other admired county initiatives.

There's an irony here. It took the board's smartest budget man, Nyklewicz, to help put back into the budget \$9 million that Walker attempted to veto - and help override that veto.

Yet it was Nyklewicz who quickly pointed out why Walker did not even attempt to veto the board's restoration of his original cuts in bus routes.

He was one of the first to

credit a senator in Madison named Lena Taylor.

"I'd like to clearly indicate that was the result of the state aid that was sponsored by Sen. Lena Taylor (D-Milwaukee), which amounted to \$3.2 million that allowed us to maintain bus routes that County Executive Walker had targeted for cuts," said Nyklewicz.

Also announcing his retirement -- and his support for Taylor -- is a supervisor who has always enjoyed labor support, Roger Quindel. He's usually made headlines for his temper and blunt attacks on fellow supervisors and on Walker, but much of his most respected service has been his dedication to the children in the community, in nurturing proposals on welfare, mental health, juvenile justice and youth recreation.

Since elected in 1992, Quindel has served the 18th District unopposed. A Vietnam War veteran and former machinist, married to a noted attorney, Quindel is veteran of budgetary nuance and one of the few visitors who regularly visits such county facilities as children's court.

Both he and Nyklewicz concede that their retirements came with a certain frustration and disappointment about what has happened to the image of public service. "It's a nastier time," Quindel said, and in part he blames the pension scandal.

"It shook me badly that we let it through, but it is one thing to make a mistake, which we did, and another to be denigrated and have our devotion to public service demeaned and even smeared. I think it is harder now to get people to run - and I mean good people without any hidden motivations except to serve. I'm always delighted when they do."

Strategies unfolding in county exec race

The early advantage in the county exec race lies as usual with the incumbent. Scott Walker has the bully pulpit with regular TV and radio visits and money in the bank. He can hit the ground talking about issues while Lena Taylor pleads for funds - and he can avoid forums with her that would expose the failures of his administration and budgets.

It may not be such an advantage given how Walker's early press releases have misused this edge. In announcing his revitalized interest in county affairs, he is admitting he hasn't been paying attention and that the job was just a stepping stone to establishing conservative credentials for other offices.

His decision to run came when there was nothing left -- after an aborted run for governor, little interest from Rep. James Sensenbrenner in relinquishing his 5th Congressional District seat and a growing realization that the flailing Bush administration has little to offer him in terms of a position.

His fading hope is that the public will once again fall for his "property tax freeze pledge" while he lets the County Board do the heavy lifting to keep the county government going.

But that's wearing thin, as demonstrated by his campaign announcements of his future "visions" for the county - downtown parks littered with Starbucks paper coffee cups, prime county space and facilities handed over to developer buddies, paying church amateurs rather than professionals to help troubled youth, giving the sheriff freer rein and money to step on the toes of Milwaukee's new police chief.

Of course, that is not how Walker describes it. To him it is the advantages of privatization and private-public partnerships, which the county has a poor track record of understanding and cost-controlling.



After the December delegate meeting, Steve Kwatersi, the AFL-CIO political organizer for this region, chats with Lena Taylor

Taylor's early analysis of the county problems suggest how difficult it will be for another Walker campaign strategy -- to paint himself as the frugal conservative and Taylor as a high-spending liberal.

She has already pointed out that Walker has flimflammed on the pension issue, actually failing to solve it.

Taylor also intends to make fiscal responsibility a centerpiece of her government, not just a centerpiece of press releases.

She will continue the fight she waged in Madison to get Milwaukee its fair share of state

revenue, often opposed by the Republicans in the Assembly who once had Walker as a supportive colleague.

She can point to her reputation as a member of the senate's important finance committee. There she did what Walker failed to -- create budgets that maintain public service and are flexible enough to anticipate economic and pragmatic change.

She also is committed to close cooperation with the County Board, which for five years has found itself forced into stiff opposition to Walker and his concepts.

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Who's still fighting to keep America's clothes on?

Special to Labor Press

United States garment workers have been on the front lines for years, fighting to prevent their own extinction. With about 90% of domestic garment worker jobs already lost to plants in Mexico and overseas, holding on to a "USA Union-Made" concept is like holding onto an umbrella in a hurricane.

Carhartt workwear, a brand that's made its mark on the pants, jackets and overalls of blue collar workers for 118 years, has only partly succumbed. It continues to push its "USA Union-Made" promise, with roughly 850 union members working in their US plants and more to come -- if consumer demand can also push the envelope.

The company, which advertises now more heavily to union workers (in publications like Milwaukee's Labor Press), believes there is a market in not turning its backs on American workers.

Carhartt's exclusive USA Union-Made line currently produces about 10 items: three jeans, one canvas dungaree, two overalls and four coats and jackets. The USA Union-Made line will be explicitly marked in stores that sell the line.

(In Wisconsin it can be found in stores like Mills Fleet Farm.)

Gary Best, president of

United Food and Commercial Workers Local 227 in Louisville, Kentucky, hopes to wake up consumers and generate more union jobs at Carhartt's Kentucky plants by pointing consumers straight to the USA Union-Made Carhartt line - and Carhartt is supporting the effort.

"Carhartt makes more clothes in the US than any other company, but they don't make anywhere near what we would like to see," said Best, noting that even Carhartt has had its share of troubles.

"They got to survive as a company, and we understand that. But if everyone pulls together it will definitely save some jobs. If it catches fire, it may start waking people up"

Best said the union has a good working relationship with Carhartt, and the company tried for a while to hold its ground as a 100% US manufacturer.

But while it so far has held firm on this specific union line, the trend to outsourcing of textile and thread factories, and the competition by other manufacturers using cheap overseas and Mexican labor, has forced Carhartt in recent years to move about 80% of its work out of the country.

"They would love to bring everything back, but it's just economics. You can't pay \$18 an hour labor costs when all your

competitors are paying 25 cents an hour," Best said.

"George Bush and his cronies have allowed slave labor from China, Vietnam and Bangladesh to destroy the American garment industry," said Best, warning to the subject. "We're telling folks, 'Here is a guaranteed line of union made Carhartt clothes. If you believe in social justice, believe in America and union workers, buy these USA Union-Made clothes.'"

Local 227 has asked that all products that are union made use a product code that begins with the letter U so consumers and

suppliers can be assured that the products purchased and ordered are union made in the USA by members of UFCW Local 227 in Kentucky, UFCW Local 1999g in Tennessee or in Illinois by UNITE HERE Local 465c.

It hopes the times will add more locals and U's to the concept.

The local has also kicked off a campaign to promote retailers that will maintain or establish a USA Union-Made department within their stores and websites. Those who would like to order online can already visit gandl-clothing.com/unionmade.html.

"There are a couple of other outlets in the works, and we're hoping to get 50 or so retailers across the country who also have a brick and mortar store and a website to order from," Best said. "We're also working with the other unions to persuade them to buy their day-to-day work clothes from the Carhartt USA Union-Made division."

Mary Ann Holley, a staff writer for the St. Louis/Southern Illinois Labor Tribune, first offered her readers a version of this story last September. It is excerpted and adapted with permission.

Tomato workers face king-sized burger battle

By James Parks

Special to Labor Press

Religious, community, union and immigrant rights activists and working people converged on Miami Dec. 1-3 to let Burger King know that it is making a whopper of a mistake in continuing to exploit the workers who pick tomatoes for its products.

Marchers walked nine miles across Miami -- from the offices of Goldman Sachs, one of three multibillion-dollar private equity firms that own a substantial share of Burger King stock -- to Burger King headquarters. A rally there demanded the nation's second-largest hamburger chain join its competitors in paying

workers a better wage.

Speakers included the AFL-CIO's new executive vice president, Arlene Holt Baker, who related how her parents had grown up in poverty in west Texas without union activity to protect them. A concert for fair food was among the activities scheduled in support by faith communities.

Burger King is doing more than opposing better pay for tomato pickers. It is threatening to undo successes enjoyed by some of the most exploited workers in the country, not just in the fast-food industry.

They earn sub-poverty wages, have no health care coverage, no freedom to form unions and have not had a significant raise in nearly 30 years. In the most extreme cases, tomato farm workers, 80% immigrants, are held in modern-day slavery conditions and forced to work against their will.

Since 1997, federal civil rights officials have prosecuted five such operations run by Florida growers, involving more than 1,000 workers.

All this was conceded by the New York Times in an article by the author of *Fast Food Nation*, Eric Schlosser, who described the tomato pickers as among the most abused workers in the nation.

They typically work 10 to 12 hours to pick, carry and load approximately two tons of tomatoes a day. While Burger King has imposed new rules to protect the meat it slaughters for its products, he noted, it has simply told the farm workers they could have better jobs working at Burger King outlets.

Last April, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) won a groundbreaking agreement with McDonald's to improve wages and working conditions in the fields that supply the world's largest restaurant chain with its tomatoes.

McDonald's agreed to pay a penny more per pound to workers harvesting tomatoes, which means the workers, will move from 40 to 45 cents for every 32

pound bucket to 72 to 77 cents for each bucket in such back-breaking work.

The McDonald's agreement builds and expands upon an earlier agreement won by the CIW and its allies after a four-year boycott of Taco Bell, part of the giant restaurant company Yum! Brands Inc. The long boycott supported on many college campuses (including Milwaukee's MATC students) followed by the McDonald's deal set a clear path to real rights and decent pay.

But Burger King, the world's second-largest burger chain, has rejected working with the CIW to improve farm workers' wages and conditions.

Beyond that, Burger King has joined forces with the most conservative elements of the Florida tomato industry to launch an aggressive assault on the CIW's agreements with the other two chains, according to Associated Press (AP).

The Florida Tomato Growers Exchange, representing 90% of the state's growers, announced that it will not allow any of its members to collect the extra penny for farm workers.

Reggie Brown, the executive vice president of the group, dumfounded reporters when he described the surcharge for poor migrants as "pretty much near un-American." The organization claims that such a surcharge would violate "federal and state laws related to antitrust, labor and racketeering."

It has not explained, the New York Times noted, how that extra penny would break those laws; nor has it explained why other surcharges routinely imposed for things like higher fuel costs are perfectly legal.

The state's tomato lobby has threatened to levy fines of \$100,000 on any grower who tries to sell tomatoes to Taco Bell or McDonald's under the terms of the agreements, leading Schlosser to observe that Burger King's prominent role in trying to rescind the pay raise "offers a spectacle of yuletide greed worthy of Charles Dickens."



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Health games start with Medicare dis-Advantage

By Mike Hall, AFL-CIO
Special to Labor Press

The federal government is overpaying billions of dollars a year to the private insurance companies that operate Medicare Advantage plans.

Those private, for-profit plans currently account for about one in five of all Medicare participants, a number projected to grow in the wake of warmhearted ads and TV promotions that mislead seniors and the continuing push of the Bush administration to further privatize Medicare.

The real analysis of these programs is not in the TV ads but in the reports of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP).

To try and stop all this Medicare Advantage misinformation, members of consumer advocate groups, unions and the Alliance for Retired Americans delivered some 50,000 hand-signed petitions from seniors around the nation to members of Congress calling on them to eliminate or reduce the billions of dollars in overpayments and to strengthen Medicare.

Medicare Advantage is the successor name to the Medicare+Choice program created in 1997. Managed health care has been a Medicare option since 1976, but few plans participated

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until "managed care" proponents found new ways and new legislation to make money.

Still there was an exodus in 2001 by private companies from the system, stranding thousands of beneficiaries -- until Medicare Part D (prescription drugs) squeezed by in 2003.

That allowed managed care companies to fold in drugs and new delivery systems. The number of available plans doubled, though more than half are concentrated in four organizations: UnitedHealth Care, Blue Cross/Blue Shield affiliates, Human and Kaiser Permanent.

Statistics now prove that the Republican Congress in 2003

gave big insurance companies that provide Medicare insurance what amounts to a huge subsidy with the Medicare Advantage program.

These private insurers were supposed to introduce competition into the Medicare system and reduce costs. But as the CBPP and the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) reports, these private plans are paid an average of 12%, or \$1,000 per year higher than traditional Medicare to cover a Medicare beneficiary.

Private Medicare Advantage fee-for-service plans are paid on average 19% (!) more than the traditional Medicare fee-for-serv-

Health Care Reform. It will be a major, if not the preeminent issue for the 2008 elections, locally with the push for the Healthy Wisconsin health care plan, and nationally with the presidential campaign.

Accordingly, the AFL-CIO is mobilizing its affiliates on health care reform, and has postcards that can be distributed to the members of your local union. To order these postcards, which will continue the conversation with your members on health care reform, please contact the AFL-CIO's Steve Kwaterski at (414) 476-2896 or skwaters@labor2008.org.

"Let me know how many postcards you would like me to deliver to you in order to get these distributed and filled out by your membership," said Kwaterski, the region's Labor 2008 Political Coordinator.

ice program.

Studies also show that the private insurers target younger and healthier seniors whose health care costs are less, resulting in even larger profits.

There are some 35 million older and disabled Americans enrolled in regular Medicare and about 8 million in Medicare Advantage plans. Those overpayments to private firms - estimated to cost between \$150 billion and \$160 billion over the next 10 years - force participants in the normal Medicare program to pay higher premiums for their coverage.

Says CBPP: "Many elderly and disabled beneficiaries are being charged more so that private companies can make larger profits and a much smaller number of beneficiaries can get some added benefits."

Sadie Coleman, an Alliance for Retired Americans member and Medicare beneficiary, said: "There are people who can't afford it. It seems there are all these new private programs popping up and we're the ones paying for it."

Coleman is grandmother of 45 children. She asks, if the government continues to squander tax dollars on private insurance,

"What kind of Medicare coverage will be there for them? What are they going to be able to afford?"

Last June, AFSCME warned the US House Budget Committee:

"The financial security of Medicare is threatened by the drive to privatize the program. Overpayments to Medicare Advantage plans are causing a shift of beneficiaries out of the more efficient government-administered program into more costly private plans."

"Overpayments to these private plans may make them highly profitable, but they also have a deleterious impact on the federal budget, the Medicare program and the Medicare beneficiaries.

"Over the next 10 years, these overpayments to insurance companies will cost an additional \$160 billion."

The Senate Finance Committee is currently marking up legislation relating to Medicare, including Medicare Advantage overpayments.

For more information and special reports, visit the Association for Retired Americans online at www.retiredamericans.org or the CBPP at www.cbpp.org.

All those bashers of Canada's plan have a healthy reason to forget

You remember the carping and criticism. It dates back 20 years, and it kicked up when the Bill Clinton administration tackled health care reform in 1993.

Canada's national health care system-- which operates without a private insurance industry -- was held up as a model by progressives but a disaster by conservatives. And the private health industry and the conservatives had the money to beat Canada down. The United States rejected any positive lessons from the Canadian single-

payer model in 1993, and we are living with the results of that decision today.

The Economic Policy Institute decided to take a look today to see if the savings and efficiency of the Canadian model held up. The EPI's vice president, Ross Eisenbrey, a lawyer and former commissioner of the OSHA Review Commission, has put together the analysis that reveals we should have listened to the lessons from Canada.

The cost gap between the United States and Canada has only widened since 1993. Per

capita health care expenditures in the United States are now almost double those in Canada (\$6,401 vs. \$3,359). Canada's per capita health expenditures rose about 65% from 1993 to 2005, while costs in the United States rose by over 90%.

Yet infant mortality in the United States is higher than in Canada. Life expectancy at birth is less in the US than in Canada.

It is also noteworthy that despite Canada's much lower expenditures on health care, Canadians consult with physicians far more often than do Americans. The average number of physician consultations per capita was 6.0 in Canada, versus 3.8 in the United States.

Rumsfeld not available, so who's the newest Grinch?

The Grinch was back in town for the holidays and workers on the Internet took notice.

Once again, in a faceoff that ended Nov. 30 with winners to be announced over the holidays, the Grinch of the Year was nominated in a contest organized annually by Jobs With Justice.

The 7th Annual Grinch of the Year contest "awards" the national figure who does the most harm to working families. Nominators were given simple instructions at the Jobs With Justice website, www.jwj.org/grinchnominate.html. "Be sure to include a few sentences on why you think your nominee is deserving."

Last year's Grinch award went to the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company for demanding deeper concessions from workers and retirees, using scab labor, and forcing workers out on strike for months during 2006 negotiations. Other past nominees have also included infamous figures such as Wal-Mart, Smithfield Tar Heel Chairman Joseph Luter III, Donald Rumsfeld, Verizon Wireless, and Cintas. You can check back to the website by Christmas to see who won this time.

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Tongue firmly in cheek, let's talk minority 'values'

By Rhonda Soto

Special to Labor Press

African Americans have broken two new barriers, according to a Pew Charitable Trust report.

Almost half the children of middle-class blacks have fallen into the lowest income bracket in the last 30 years, the first generation in a century to lose so much economic ground.

And for the first time, a majority of African Americans polled say that blacks are responsible for their own economic situations, and that the values of poor and middle-class blacks have worsened over the last generation.

Yeah, right, it's the values. Those middle-class African Americans whose children are now in poverty had rotten parents, every one of them.

While going out to work every day, they were obviously telling their children not to do the same.

The black unemployment rate in October was double white unemployment, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Employers of all races, with their superior values, no doubt rejected those black pavement-pounders because they could see the poor work ethic a mile away.

The quarter million drop in the number of US jobs last October, and all the offshore outsourcing of the last decade, must be that "poor black values thing."

It was poor black values that led neighborhoods of color to be targeted by predatory lenders. It wasn't the secondary mortgage industry that started the current tsunami of foreclosures now evicting people, disproportionately black and Latino, it was the homeowners' bad values.

Opinion

Higher interest rates charged to borrowers of color with identical credit ratings as whites are obviously payback for their poor behavior. And the mostly white executives who made millions off discriminatory subprime lending, they deserved that reward for their exemplary moral character.

The drop in unionization from 20% to 12% in the last 25 years wouldn't have happened, and the American labor force would not have lost 265,000 black union workers, if those workers' values had been better.

The professional union-busting consulting firms, who advised companies how to illegally fire pro-union workers they're role models of the American work ethic.

Similarly, the mostly white

Congress members increased their own paychecks over \$50,000 with multiple raises since 1990 while blocking an increase in the minimum wage for a record-breaking decade. And the mostly all-white billionaires on the Forbes 400 list of richest Americans -- who are \$290 billion richer than last year -- they must have the finest values of all.

Prison sentences are longer for blacks and Latinos than whites convicted of the same crime because judges can just see the difference in moral fiber between defendants of different races. And of course employers and health insurance companies are not insuring 7.2 million black people -- because their moral failings have made them too sickly.

The re-segregation of schools, and the widening gap in class sizes and per-pupil spending between mostly white and mostly black schools? The roll-

back of affirmative action in higher education? It's all due to the character flaws of African American students.

Really now. Are "values" the explanation for the racial income gap? Or do we too often assume that the American dream of equal opportunity is a reality? Do we overlook growing structural obstacles that block the path of some more than others among us?

Employed African Americans on average work more hours per week than employed white people. Blacks are slightly less likely than whites to use illegal drugs. They are more likely to be affiliated with a religious congregation.

Poll after poll shows no difference between races in attitudes towards education, paid work, or expectations for children's advancement. Where are these famous bad values?

As a former teacher I know that some young people have

self-destructive attitudes and behaviors: some black and Latino youth, some white youth, and some youth of 30 years ago. Far more young people have talent, ambition, and a work ethic that go underutilized, especially working-class youth of color in this have and have-nots economy.

As people of color are used to noticing racism and putting it into words. We're less accustomed to naming classism but it's rampant among middle-class people of color.

Is this what racial progress has come to: more middle-class blacks taking up the previously white sport of blaming the victim?

Rhonda Soto is a project coordinator at Class Action, a national non-profit based in Hadley, Massachusetts -- www.classism.org

MinutemanMedia.org

Women get blueprint for union success

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) in December issued a report outlining strategies for unions to use in promoting women's voices and leadership.

"Unions are good for women workers, but they could be much better at promoting women into leadership positions," said Amy Caiazza, director of Democracy and Society Programs at IWPR and the report's author.

The strategies outlined in this report are designed to help women claim a voice of authority in an area that is traditionally dominated by men.

Women experience a wide range of obstacles to their union-

based activism, according to the report titled *I Knew I Could Do This Work*.

Among them are women's lack of visibility in leadership; the fear of retribution as a result of union activism; discomfort with conflict and public roles; neglected priorities of women workers; the time demands of union work; bias within unions; and lack of awareness of what unions do.

The report, which is based on interviews with women who are union activists, outlines seven strategies to promote leadership:

- **1. Address Women's True Priorities:** If unions more visibly address women's concerns, they are more likely to inspire their long-term, active involvement.
- **2. Create and Support Formal Mentoring Programs:** While a good deal of mentoring occurs informally, it could be more intentionally incorporated into union organizing as a source of ongoing support.
- **3. Provide Opportunities for Women to Strategize**

Together: Unions can cultivate women-specific training programs, conferences, women's committees, and networks at the local, regional, and national levels.

- **4. Put Women in Leadership:** Placing women in visible local and national leadership roles provides role models and articulates respect for their authority.

- **5. Highlight the Importance of Women's Contributions:** Unions can provide examples of current and past union leadership as models for what union women can accomplish.

- **6. Provide Flexible Options for Involvement:** To accommodate the conflicting demands of women's lives, unions can offer creative opportunities to get involved.

- **7. Provide Training on Mobilizing Women:** Unions can train their leaders and organizers on strategies that effectively inspire activism and promote leadership.

"In the end, the strategies in this report are all designed to empower women's activism in public life, within unions and beyond," said Caiazza. "By claiming leadership, women can transform their lives, their workplaces, and their communities."

I Knew I Could Do This Work was written and published with support from the Berger-Marks Foundation and the Ford Foundation. To obtain a copy contact Elisabeth Crum at 202-785-5100, ext. 24, or crum@iwpr.org.

The sponsoring groups are worth knowing more about:

- The Institute for Women's Policy Research (www.iwpr.org) conducts rigorous research and disseminates its findings to address the needs of women, promote public dialogue, and strengthen families, communities, and societies.

IWPR focuses on issues of poverty and welfare, employment and earnings, work and family, health and safety, and civic and political participation.

- The Berger Marks Foundation at www.bergermarks.org seeks to bring the benefits of unionization to working women and to assist organizations committed to those principles.

The goal is to provide financial assistance to women who are engaged in union organizing and to assist working women who want to organize other women into unions through training, research and other resources.

- The Ford Foundation (www.fordfound.org) seeks to strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, and promote international cooperation.

Official Notice

Local 8 of the Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers elected new officers Dec. 1. Among them: Brad Cyganek, president; William Fleming, vice president; Lawrence Gonzales, treasurer; Richard Hanson, recording secretary; Brent Emons, business manager and financial secretary; and three business representatives, Yancy Grawien, north, CJ Teska, south, and Timothy Roman, Upper Peninsula and Michigan.

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Some fantasy reading – the NLRB decisions

W as the AFL-CIO “overreacting with shrill rhetoric” when it blasted the escalation of anti-worker decisions by the National Labor Relations Board?

So said the NLRB’s departing Republican-elected chairman, Robert J. Battista, in reaction to what unions called the “September Steamroller” — 61 rulings that he left like coal in the stocking on his way out the door. The AFL-CIO led a major November protest by thousands of workers, charging the decisions violate the mission and intent of the labor laws.

Battista, who attended a Milwaukee conference in the early fall, offered what has become a familiar Bush era response: The unions “are free to challenge those decisions in court.”

In other words, forget about the board being judicious and go fish.

Still, surely these 61 decisions can’t be as bad as the AFL-CIO says. Can they?

OK, you sample and be the judge:

Toering Electric — The board made it harder for a job applicant refused work because of his union beliefs to show discrimination by the employer, ruling that the applicant has to show he or she had a real interest in the job and introducing the issue of whether the prospective employee would have accepted the job.

It is regarded as a significant policy change and an unveiled attack on the union practice of “salting,” where union members proclaiming their affiliation and beliefs apply for jobs at non-union companies.

The unions do so to reveal union animus and attitudes in a company, which violate the law, but the NLRB weakened the activity by saying the workers must prove to the union-hating bigots a genuine interest in obtaining the job.

Jones Plastic & Engineering — The Bush-majority said that “replacement workers can be treated as permanent and given preference over strikers” even if they were informed by the Camden (N.J.) firm when they were hired that they would be working at the employer’s discretion and could be let go for any reason - including taking returning strikers back.

The Dana and Metaldyne cases - Both involve the United Auto Workers and two firms that voluntarily agreed to recognize UAW at their plants after a majority of all workers signed union election authorization cards - the “majority choice” or “cardcheck” process.

Remember, these companies agreed to this process and traditionally the recognized unions have a year free from challenges by any dissenters, who would represent a minority. Such requests for a “decertification”

election have always required only 30% of a workplace to be scheduled.

The Bush board, in a party-line vote Sept. 29, obviously seeks to encourage more decertification efforts. It said that if the union wins recognition by cardcheck, the NLRB would send the firm a notice - which the company must post - telling dissenters that if they file a “decert” petition with enough signatures within 45 days of cardcheck recognition, it’s valid.

Then the board holds a decert election. In other words, the government holds the coat for a company trying to get rid of a new union.

Often, of course, bargaining hasn’t even started within 45 days of recognition, and workers are vulnerable to dissatisfaction as well as organized executive opposition. It gives a company that agrees to cardcheck a second free bite at the apple.

(In other rulings that same day, the Bush majority said that if an absolute majority of workers signed cards calling for a decertification election, the company could immediately dump the union, without any other vote.)

Internet Stevensville — In a Wisconsin case that overturns precedents — as so many of the decisions did — the board decided that a second election was enough to remedy outrageous harassment and intimidation.

There was no dispute with the finding that the employer had made “widespread statements about the futility of selecting” the United Auto Workers, threatened to close the plant, threatened to



USW emphasizes the power of a union voice in this sign Nov. 15 15 greEting workers at Capital Returns.

eliminate jobs, demoted and cut the pay of a pro-union worker, confiscated literature, removed bulletin boards and committed other violations.

But the Bush majority ordered that all this Wisconsin employer had to do to remedy its continuous and outrageous labor law-breaking was hold a second election. The normal remedy has been to order the firm to immediately recognize and bargain with the union, recognizing the long-term atmosphere of fear in the workplace and the inability to hold a fair election.

But now such behavior can be “corrected” by a simple rerun vote and no other consequences.

Suburban Electrical Contractors — In another Wisconsin case (Appleton), the board sure gave even more room for employers to threaten workers. The story involves IBEW supporter Randy Reinders at the company.

As two managers walked near Reinders, the testimony revealed, one asked “Well, Dave, did you ‘take care of’ our union problem yet?” The other, pointing to Reinders, replied: “What, you mean Randy?”

The board’s administrative law judge called the exchange “an unlawful threat of adverse consequences” for Reinders.

The Bush majority called it “ambiguous” and threw out the case.

The AFL-CIO was also angry at how many cases reflected delay after delay — 33 of the 61 decisions dated back more than four years. A case from Brooklyn, where 202 workers were illegally fired, stretched back to 1989 and none of the workers have yet received back pay.

But speaking of back pay, consider the **St. George Warehouse** case. It makes it harder for workers improperly fired for union activi-

ties to receive back pay — because they may have to prove they took serious steps to find another job after being fired. The burden shifted to the worker to prove a good-faith effort rather than the company offering proof of no such job-search effort.

US labor laws are at best incomplete, one reason why the AFL-CIO has pushed so hard for major changes through the passage of EFCA (The Employee Free Choice Act) supported by a bipartisan coalition in Congress.

EFCA would restore workers’ freedom to choose a union by establishing stronger penalties for violation of employee rights and during first-contract negotiations; providing mediation and arbitration for first-contract disputes, and allowing employees to form unions by signing cards authorizing union representation.

As the EFCA clock runs out on the Bush appointees, the September Steamroller is revealed as an effort to hold back time, or put decisions in place to make it difficult to level the playing field.

There will always be some resistance to the mission of the National Labor Relations Act, which from the start was to foster workplace democracy, correct economic inequality, protect worker safety and health and build up a regulatory process that solves problems and provides balance.

That’s clearly not the goal of this NLRB.

It is making it far easier to prevent a union than to welcome one, and far easier to eliminate a union than form one. Overreacting? Hardly.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

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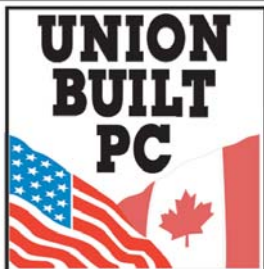
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Calendar

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Our offices closed through Jan. 1, 2008

Monday, January 7

Executive Board, 2 p.m.
Yatchak Hall, 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Wednesday, January 9

Delegate Meeting
Milwaukee Labor Council AFL-CIO
Induction of new board members
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

Saturday, January 26

Formal Convocation, Wisconsin State AFL-CIO
Reorganization of state into six regions,
Milwaukee, Ozaukee and Washington counties
merge into one labor council
11 a.m., Paper Valley Hotel
Appleton, Wisconsin

Wednesday, January 30

Executive Board, 2 p.m.
Yatchak Hall, 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Wednesday, February 6

Delegate Meeting
Milwaukee Labor Council AFL-CIO
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

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More mingling at AFSCME party

– story, photos on Page 12

TOP LEFT: A busy triumvirate (none seems to be facing opponents) catches up. From left, they are county supervisors Toni Clark and Marina Dimitrijevic and state Rep. Barbara Toles,

BOTTOM LEFT: Democratic Party leader Martha Love found former alderman Fred Gordon at her table. A good friend of Michael McGee's, he has caused considerable speculation by running for McGee's seat. "What does he know?" people kept wondering, but few asked him.

TOP RIGHT: Milwaukee and Madison union leaders shared a laugh as Milwaukee labor's Sheila Cochran joked with AFSCME's Marty Biehl.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Building & Construction Trades president, Lyle Balistreri (left), talked intently with the city's labor negotiator, Troy Hamlin.



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