

Season's Greetings

AFL-CIO MILWAUKEE

LABOR PRESS

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Holiday Edition



Back in 1990, Greg Gracz, now Milwaukee County's labor negotiator, was the last fire fighter to serve on the Milwaukee labor council board. Dec. 4 at AFSCME 48's holiday party, he coincidentally ran into an old colleague now the new president of Local 215, Bobbie Webber (right), who had just announced a re-affiliation. **See story on Page 15. More guests at the party on Pages 22-23.**



With Milwaukee Rep. Barbara Toles smoothing the way, Janesville's Mike Sheridan (right), a former UAW leader now speaker-elect of the Assembly, has been touring Milwaukee and speaking to leaders here to understand the city's legislative needs. **See Page 12**



Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran was among the workforce leaders addressing a roomful of business and labor people at the HIRE Center open house. **See story on Page 14.**

Growing into green

There was green in the brochures - and we're not talking about the ink. There were green discussions even around the self-defense workshops being taken by women who feel threatened on the job.

There were, in fact, green discussions before and during almost every session, conference talk and lunch break when COSH - the network of volunteers and grant experts on occupational safety and health - held its yearly national conference Nov. 12-15 at Milwaukee's Wyndham Hotel.

There may be snow in D.C., but two weeks after the inauguration the entire city will turn green. That's for a major conference of public officials, businesses and union leaders setting out practical steps and inspiring visions about how to protect the globe with green and lift our economy out of its horrible grays and red ink.

Circle the country with us on this green explosion.

• At the COSH meeting in

Future's true color emerges from COSH here and Obama D.C.

Milwaukee, there was a new awareness and fresh information on green chemistry, green jobs and the need for green-conscious communities.

But it was not just the warning alerts about the 287 chemicals that bad processes are dumping in your baby's body (outlined by a California COSH). It was not just the environmental hazards ignored by too many health providers (from the New Jersey environmental council).

It was not just, as WisCOSH leader Jim Schultz reported to the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, how impressed the visitors were with all the work on safety and health that unions in Milwaukee are doing.

It was also about the jobs available right now, and the funding sources that need to be tapped, to make for a safer world and actually make or save busi-

nesses money.

If green talk seems everywhere, so do the skeptics of green. If COSH revealed anything, several speakers noted, it was how short-sighted businesses and governments could be about dismissing steps toward green as "spending" when they were really about "investing" in the future.

• But the D.C. conference Feb. 4-6 intends to demand context - and recognizes that the United States has to do the investment now.

This is the central national forum that cuts through pie-in-the-sky and outlines just where green can be salvation for jobs, the economy and perhaps the planet - and just where it is a door-opener to other needs and initiatives.

This gathering, which deliberately occurs just after the new president takes office, has drawn a celebrity lineup of public speakers. Also intentionally, the Good Jobs, Green Jobs National Conference - centered at the

Green continued Page 9

Bashing UAW before saving it - Why?

By Dominique Paul Noth
Labor Press Editor

Tula Connell, a noted editor with the AFL-CIO, posed the question in a column: "Why is handing out billions of dollars in taxpayer funds OK if the recipients are Wall Street corporations but not OK if they are Midwest automakers?"

And then she provided the answer - because these "automakers are unionized."

She's hardly alone in that view.

Rep. Barney Frank, chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, which is shepherding the rescue plans, is known for an acid wit as well as economic insight ("Obama says we can only have one president at a time; I fear he overstates the number of presidents we have"). But he is flat scornful of his GOP colleagues and accuses them of engaging in class warfare and union animus when it comes to Detroit.

"It's very troubling, this

white collar blue collar double standard," Frank said, recalling how quickly Congress gave four times the money sought to one insurance company, AIG. "They want bankruptcy only to bust the union."

Sen. Sherrod Brown of Ohio senses the same amid the worst economic meltdown since the Great Depression. He sees federal money available quickly for "workers who shower before they go to work, but not for workers who have to shower after work."

Washington Post columnist E. J. Dionne sees this "paradox" at the heart of Congress' response to a bridge loan for the Big Three, while wondering why we expected anything else from the administration and old Senate

that brought us this mess.

On the one hand, Dionne says, the bridge loan "would have no chance of passing without the muscle of the Big Three's unionized work force. Yet you can't turn around without hearing someone trash autoworkers for the terrible crime of trying to earn a decent living."

John Nichols, the Capital Times associate editor and Nation columnist, has a long accurate memory: "It was the UAW that, three decades ago, upbraided Detroit for failing to design and produce small fuel-efficient vehicles as a response to rising oil prices and mounting foreign competition."

Added Nichols, "To a far

UAW continued Page 18

Milwaukee makes United Way look good

The politicians sure lined up the platitudes this year and how we wanted to believe it about America:

When times are tough, people pull together.

In America, you can count on the community to rise up and help fellow citizens.

The harder the moment, the more we get going.

People reach down and find a way to help even when they are deeply troubled.

This belief in American has been sorely tested over the last few months - and tested hour by hour since.

The worst financial crisis since the Great Depression.

Half a million jobs gone in a month.

Multiple credit cards but no credit and higher fees for the families.

Bigger injuries on the horizon. Help slow in coming, maybe a bit better than Katrina but still too darn slow.

Children hungry. The elderly left without care - and who cares?

Last September, when United Way said it was raising its community campaign to \$44 million, unions gathered for a launch party to push their own important role at the Center of Excellence. They

did galvanize their own workplaces and treasury giving and they listened to range of speakers and pleas to fight skepticism, which was thick in the air -- and certainly thicker than the safety nets that government was snipping large holes in because it didn't have the money to do anything else.

Is this really the time to raise the goal to meet the larger needs? Really the time to count on good neighbors?

It was particularly a concern for United Way because, while the big donors are gratefully welcome and get the headlines, it has always been the little folks, the people who don't bring enough home for their own families yet find a way to squeeze out dollars for their even more desperate neighbors, who have driven the quality and fund-raising of Milwaukee's successful United Way. They are the bulk and the heart of the givers.

Could they really do it again?

They did. December 4, United Way announced it had even topped its \$44 million goal by \$213,310, a remarkable two-thirds increase in community support over the last decade.

Tim Sullivan, CEO of Bucyrus International and a leader in the United Way cam-

paign, had actually predicted this, that Milwaukeeans had always showed "this ability to step up when the needs are greatest." Sullivan's steelworkers also brought the message home. The now 1,500 workers in all departments of Bucyrus doubled their contributions in two years.

Northwestern Mutual, the newspapers reported - a company whose clerical work contracts are negotiated by OPEIU on the behalf of both union and predominantly non-union workers - generated more than \$3 million this year, the only company in that category thanks to both workers and executive gifts.

City of Milwaukee employees upped their giving by 9% even as the workforce took a cut.

Harley-Davidson had its largest dollar increase in any campaign, a half million in new money thanks to both museum specials and a motorcycle give-away promotion.

The worksite giving efforts, many aided by the AFL-CIO Community Services staff -- which held rallies and parties throughout the campaign and offered shrewd ideas about how to make the human case for United Way -- were tremendous at both union and non-union companies, and



Just before the United Way community campaign came to a successful close, the AFL-CIO Community Services staff served cake (left), food, DJ dance music (below) and thank-you to the LEs. These are the Loaned Executives companies give to United Way to talk to workforces and raise the much needed money. It was a success made more notable by the hard times Milwaukee has been enduring.



union treasury gifts surpassed last year, with final results still coming in.

From the executives and managers put on loan to United Way from various companies to the individual workers who give

a little - and this year gave a little more - out of each paycheck, the community stood up and was counted.

They didn't intend to reward platitudes, but they sure proved all those politicians right.



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Kingly timing surrounds a unique people's inaugural

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
Labor Press Editor

The date is built around the US Constitution. But this year, in a remarkable circumstance of great timing, it is also built on the nation's celebration of the goals and inspiration of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

January 17 leads things off in Milwaukee with a special free event organized by unions at Washington Park.

But it is Tuesday, January 20, as most people now know, that marks the inauguration of the 44th president of the United States, Barack Obama, also the first person of color to be elected to our highest office, an event that wouldn't have happened without the actions and example of Dr. King.

So how fitting that Obama's swearing-in takes place a day after Martin Luther King Day, the national holiday originally timed to King's birthday (Jan. 15) but moved to the third Monday of the first month.

It is on the weekend of that holiday that "A Testament of Hope" -- including major speeches and free entertainment and refreshments - will be sponsored by United Auto Workers Local 469's Human and Civil Rights Committee, the Milwaukee Area

Labor Council, the UAW Southeastern Wisconsin CAP Council and the Milwaukee chapters of CBTU (Coalition of Black Trade Unionists) and the APRI (A Philip Randolph Institute).

That event will take place from 5 to 7 p.m. Saturday, January 17, at the Washington Park Senior Center, 4420 W. Vliet St.

But think a bit about what this confluence of celebratory moments means in American history and in terms of human endurance. Let's take the last and most original event first - Obama.

His inauguration may serve as the largest in American history - and something of an economic stimulus all by itself given what is anticipated in terms of travel and shopping dollars.

Washington, D.C., expects more than a million persons to descend on the nation's capital -- and that's the conservative estimate. Others estimate two or three million and up, depending on weather and how far-flung travel arrangements can be made.

Millions if not billions more are expected to watch on TV and computer screens around the globe.

African American communities in America are already inun-



D.C. becoming Obama-town dated with offers to make both the inauguration and the preceding King weekend a major travel event.

A special law has been passed to allow D.C. clubs and bars to stay open 24 hours from Jan. 17-21, an expectation of parties that you have to go all the way back to Andrew Jackson's "common people" festivities to duplicate.

The Lincoln Memorial will serve as a backdrop for Obama events before the eight or so inaugural balls, much as the memorial served as a backdrop for the 1963 march on Washington that produced one of King's most famous speeches and made him a household name.

That march was brought back to our minds Dec. 2 by the passing of Odetta, the singer whose interpretation of slave songs and spirituals framed the Washington march and the entire civil right movement. Had she lived, she was anticipated as a performer at Obama's inauguration.

The King holiday was immediately called for after the assassination of the civil rights leader in 1968. One of the leading advocates for the nationwide remembrance is still serving in Congress, Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), who introduced his demand for a holiday four days after King was shot and at every congressional session for the next 15 years. Finally passed by Congress and approved by President Reagan, the MLK Day became an official federal holiday in 1986.

Yet even then it was deeply opposed - for instance, not only by a new senator in Arizona named John McCain but by that state's governor, who refused to recognize it and held to that view until the NFL boycotted the state for the Super Bowl in 1991.

States slowly accepted the holiday, though often under such names as Human Rights Day or Civil Rights Day. In fact, various names were used to recog-

nize the holiday as recently as 1993, when the University of Chicago Law School had a new junior lecturer on constitutional law named Obama. It was not until 2000 that all 50 states took both the holiday and the Rev. Martin Luther King's name, a history that in many quarters makes Obama's election as president even more remarkable.

Moore signs of change:

Milwaukee's representative to Congress, Gwen Moore, now has an obviously more influential role speaking for legislation that empowers women. She has been elevated to vice chairwoman of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues, which speaks for all the women in the House on issues of concern.

Another Midwest name is the caucus chair, Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.).

Moore outlined a larger role for the caucus, formed more than 30 years ago to speak for elected female members of both parties. Its agenda includes support for women in the military, reducing deaths in childbirth, improving recognition of cardiovascular disease and confronting sexual and domestic violence.



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*Happy
Holidays*

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Local 75*

In Memoriam

With Frank's passing, labor loses a great team

When you think of devotion to Milwaukee union and political campaigns and causes, only a handful of couples rise to the top. If awards were given for lifelong devotion and unflagging volunteerism over these decades, prominent among the winners would be Frank and Delores Bauza.

They always could be found as long as health permitted carrying banners in union rallies, organizing phone banks, welcoming candidates into the meetings of the Committee on Political Education, participating in member to member walks, and quietly setting the standards of volunteerism that other union members envied.

But it was more than that. As his health faded, Frank was still there as an anchor for Delores, who with his support and comfort capably took charge of phone campaigns and other efforts for candidates.

On Thanksgiving Day morning, Delores discovered that Frank had passed away quietly in his sleep.

He was 81 and had just retired earlier this year as mem-

AFL-CIO ready for choice fight

The AFL-CIO is urging all its federations and labor councils, which include both the Wisconsin AFL-CIO and the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, to use part of their January delegate meetings or assemblies to mobilize for a major advance in American labor law: the Employee Free Choice Act.

The national federation has created a special DVD to explain the act and is encouraging open discussions by an expanded membership. It has invited unions and labor councils to sign up online for software tools and further insight at www.aflcio.org or by faxing 202-637-5012.

Noted AFL-CIO President John Sweeney: "Working families are losing ground as never before -- health care coverage, retirement security and jobs. It is time for our new president to lead an unprecedented effort to restore the middle class, return the promise of the American Dream and build an economy that works for all of us. The unions of the AFL-CIO will be a strong partner in helping to lead this effort."

"Passing the Employee Free Choice Act is a crucial first step. The level of grassroots legislative activity needed to win this battle will be a huge challenge," he warned labor unions. "We must act quickly."



Frank Bauza at a machinists' event in the late 1980s

ber and president of Local Lodge 510, automotive mechanics. He had been part of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, and the lodge, for 43 years, the last 29 as a worker for UPS.

Brother Bauza as the union always called him "was a pillar of the fighting machinists." He always could be counted on to help organize the campaigns and strikes of other lodges as well as the general union movement. He served as lodge president from 1991 to 2008 and before that as recording secretary (1978 on). He was also an officer and member of the executive board of IAMAW District 10, a delegate to the Wisconsin AFL-CIO and to the state council of the machinists.

A World War II Army veteran and a member of American Legion Post Harold A. Todd and of the Moose Lodge, Bauza was known for his community service. Phil, one of his two sons (he was also a grandfather and great-grandfather), is also president of a machinist local.

Over four decades (since 1969) Frank Bauza became not just one of the longest-term delegates but also one of the best known and most admired on the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, which took time out at its December meeting to thank him, pray for him and send the union community's best wishes and moral support to Delores.

His funeral and services were held Saturday, December 6.

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Stop thief! Oh, it's your boss

It has been the "crime wave no one talks about," but now Kim Bobo is talking. She has written an important new book detailing not just with devastating statistics but with maddening personal stories how widespread this crime wave has become for the American worker and American economy.

Bobo is no stranger to the topic. In July, she testified before Congress and her new book, published in November, is urging the president-elect to take specific action, including strengthening the long-neglected and ineffective hour and wage division of the Department of Labor.

The crime wave is the outright theft of wages from millions upon millions of workers. Even a business-funded think tank, Economic Policy Foundation, estimates that companies annually steal \$19 billion in unpaid overtime.

Included within that and expanding beyond that are more than three million workers deliberately classified by their employers as independent contractors, a way for companies to shirk their share of payroll taxes and illegally deny overtime pay.

In her new book, "Wage Theft in America," subtitled "Why Millions of Americans Are Not Getting Paid -- and What We Can Do About It," she also points out that two to three million workers are being paid less than minimum wage, many not realizing they are victimized.

For Bobo, this is also an issue of social justice, which emerged from her many encounters with workers enduring the exploitation. She leads a number



Author Kim Bobo leading a poverty wage protest.

of worker centers across the nation and cooperates with many church and faith groups.

She is executive director of Interfaith Worker Justice, one of whose partners in the Milwaukee Area Labor Council's Faith Community for Worker Justice.

Bill Fletcher, a noted labor activist who has been as guest speaker for the MALC, calls her new book "a passionate critique of . . . the reality of unbridled capitalism" but also praises her suggested solutions, several of which do reflect the thinking of Obama's advisers.

Among Bobo's suggestions to Congress are strengthening the DOL and making it a core mission to stop such theft.

Bobo wants a "community policing model" to work against wage theft and for the DOL to devote more staff, attorneys and specific targeted information to the problem. This would include developing meaningful punishments for businesses that cheat both workers and taxpayers by their practices and force legitimate caring businesses to operate at a disadvantage.

Fletcher says Bobo has created an invaluable resource and solutions relying on a "combination of (unions and worker centers), litigation, state-level enforcement and a dramatically reformed, energized and sincerely pro-worker US Department of Labor."

MILWAUKEE TEACHERS' EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

mttea

The holidays are a time to give thanks. . .

This holiday season, the **Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association** gives thanks for the individuals and communities who are working together to make Milwaukee's public schools great and create a brighter future for us all:

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- ✓ Our students and their families
- ✓ The labor, activist, and education communities
- ✓ Elected leaders

Great schools are the result of smart investments and teamwork.

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Enter at risk this 'friendly' internet Chamber of horrors

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
Labor Press Editor

Stung by the double whammy of their own ideological failures within the economy and the half-billion that Force Obama raised on the Internet to win the presidency, American business groups are attempting to fight back. It's not with new ideas but with stealth in modifying old rhetoric.

To a casual listener, the sudden concern of corporate spokesmen seems to emulate the progressive ideals that beat them.

Now, finally, they talk about the economy needing to be balanced, about supporting small businesses, about freeing credit for families to own homes or send children to college

Much the same emphasis is newly apparent in their sophisticated websites and fresh emails blandishments. They've actually stolen a page from such Republican escapees as Wisconsin Rep. Paul Ryan (see our story at milwaukeeelabor.org) and other candidates who ran from the GOP brand in the 2008 election.

Until you looked carefully behind their ads and statements, they seemed to be embracing principles established by organized labor - stop outsourcing jobs, protect American commu-

nities, fight for fairer trade and even for government rescue of high-flying CEOs and failing Wall Street companies. (They don't even mind redistribute, if the recipients are the suffering bankers of the upper classes.)

Organized labor has supported the basics of large government bailouts for the financial sector - and more sympathetically for Detroit automakers -- out of some genuine concerns for the impact on communities and working families.

But it's for "profit reasons" of their own that so many business groups are also supporting financial government ownership of banks and bridge loans for the Big Three.

The big wrinkle behind their new attitude might escape a casual clicker. Their emails don't just tell Congress to do a good thing for the economy -- almost inadvertently you have signed a petition with a more sweeping agenda: stopping the Employee Free Choice Act.

The site is www.friendsofthechamber.com - yes, that translates into Friends of the US Chamber of Commerce, an organization that apparently makes you a member by signing the petition to Congress, or responding to an email. Something as

Comment

simple as telling the website how the economy has changed your living plans opens you up to embracing Chamber ideology.

In graphics that flash across your screen plus video and news, the site acts remarkable like all those Obama for Change domains.

See how many twists of the facts you can find in this email from the website:

Big Labor clout trumps democracy.

Not factual.

Under the current secret ballot process, union organizers at a facility ask workers to sign cards indicating an interest in an election. Once 30% have signed cards, the union can petition the Federal National Labor Relations Board to hold a secret ballot election.

True enough.

The card check bill would essentially abolish secret ballot elections and replace them with a process that requires only signature cards.

Not true, secret ballots are neither abolished nor replaced.

Under card check, if union organizers can persuade more than 50% of workers at a facility to sign cards, they win and it

would be illegal to hold a secret ballot election no matter how many workers wanted one.

Also not true

People who sign this email pledge for "economic responsibility" are really asking the president and Congress to oppose the Free Choice bill. Labor's principle issue is upgrading by law the availability of "card check" and emphasize anew the power of simple majority voice in a workplace (50% plus one of employees gets you a union, just like that gets you a new president).

The email from the Chamber may not reveal that, but the group has to be a tad more careful within their website (developed with the "K Street" legal firm of Kenyon and Kenyon and the brand protecting internationalists Mark Monitor). Their own video contradicts their own email and concedes that the act does not take away the secret ballot but allows, without barriers, the alternative of "card check": majority vote to unionize.

The chamber website, however, doesn't bother to point out that these methods existed side by side when the act was created in the 1930s and that it was only two decades later that businesses saw such a keen advantage in insisting on the letter of the law, a supervised secret ballots whenever more than 30% of a workplace wanted a union.

Seminars held for businesses around the country and even in exotic resorts explain the process in detail for companies - how it takes time for the government to set up a supervised federal elections, and that gives companies breathing room to hire union busting lawyers and to start a campaign to harass, intimidate and threaten to close the plant if a union comes in.

Even federal judges have been roped in to attend these lavish retreats, complains Lawrence Velvel, dean of the Massachusetts School of Law, who says the conferences at posh watering holes are "paid for by rich right wing foundations and by wealthy, powerful companies involved regularly in litigation." After attending these sessions, noted Velvel, who once worked for the Department of Justice's antitrust diversion, judges "have been known to go back home and alter rulings on the issues discussed."

That's "one of the reasons

antitrust is now of such little value in the US," he suggests. "The judiciary has adopted views taught at the right wing conferences."

These deeply documented seminars and the tactics they produce unhinge any sense of equality between labor and management, the intended purpose of the original National Labor Relations Act.

A new Congress is open to restoring that balance, yet still the Chamber vehemently opposes majority choice and is trying to turn the public into its lobbyists against the new law. Most Americans, looking at how badly the economy has sagged and how many jobs have been outsourced never to return, have weighed the unbalanced ride management is getting at the expense of workers and wouldn't mind at all to see some major teeth in the labor law.

Yet here comes the Chamber, blitzing workers' email boxes with its website promotions, warped statistics about unions, and even sponsoring the Facebook video of an unnamed and unidentified "Bill the Union Boss." It is an ironic reversal - union strong-arm attitudes are largely a thing of the past. Corporate strong-arms are very much part of the present, and it is the Chamber that is trying to disguise that on the web.

Transition team adds economist

Jared Bernstein, senior economist for the Economic Policy Institute whose talks in Milwaukee have been covered in the Labor Press and whose analysis influences progressive policy groups in Wisconsin, will occupy and create a new role for the Obama-Biden team when it takes over the executive branch.

Bernstein, Joseph Biden announced Dec. 5, has been tapped for a newly created position of Chief Economist and Economic Policy Advisor to the vice-president.



Jared Bernstein

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Unions deep in alliances

The D.C. conference may have a wish list but it also can boast results. There are several major effective programs that should be further galvanized by the conference. And some of them already have ample union involvement, including participants from the Milwaukee labor community and its council. Among them:

- The Apollo Alliance, which has created a comprehensive investment and training strategy to build America's 21st century clean energy economy and dramatically cut energy bills for families and businesses. The New Apollo Program would generate \$500 billion over the next ten years through its investment plan and create five million high quality green-collar jobs, making the United States a global leader of the new economy.

- The Blue Green Alliance, with close support and leadership from the Steelworkers and other unions, has combined with the Renewable Energy Policy Project to document a national Renewable Electricity Standard to create thousands of jobs making parts for wind turbines, solar panels and other clean energy technologies.

Major reports and studies, already available, also will be shared, discussed and fine-tuned at the D.C. conference (details at www.greenjobsconference.org).

The main argument among them is how many jobs all this will create and how quickly. They start on the low end with Obama's benchmark of 2.5 million jobs created or saved in a few years. But, depending on which plans are proven and followed, some groups project upward over the next decade from 4.2 million jobs to 10 million. Among the in-depth studies:

The US Conference of Mayors has funded a Mayors Climate Protection Center that projects more than 750,000 green jobs now and says these will increase five-fold over the next decade as cities upgrade, retrofit, capture rainwater, reduce chemicals and solve both cost dilemmas for businesses and environmental hazards for citizens.

"Green Recovery: A Program to Create Good Jobs and Start Building a Low-Carbon Economy" has been created by the Center for American Progress and the cutting edge PERI group at the University of Massachusetts. That report shows how investing \$100 billion in energy efficiency and renewable energy will create 2 million jobs in two years.

(Doubters may wish to note that the US economic stimulus and rescue packages now in the works have already targeted a trillion dollars for fewer jobs than that.)



Laughter was no barrier to chemical learning at the COSH workshops and educational sessions during the national conference in Milwaukee.

Growing Into Green

First, expect a fight among technologies

Some possibilities from green initiatives may seem obvious, but many are not as simple as supporters of green are suggesting, the D.C. conference planners are warning.

For instance, spending on the infrastructure involves green in some key aspects -- how we upgrade what exists, how we build for the future -- but it could also focus on old technologies or needs that might be disappearing. Who decides what society should be pushed toward in choices of modernized electrical grids, high speed optics, and better handheld devices?

Right out of the gate, technologists expect a clash between mass and individual travel. Many are concerned that highways and bridges become updated even as investments in different kinds of vehicles require modernized ways for individual drivers to get around. If we're going electric, how will motorists plug in? What sorts of electric service stations should power our highways?

And that conflicts immediately with the virtues of mass transit. Both systems will be expensive and

often fighting for the same dollars. (Wisconsin knows all about that.)

And what about our virtual travel, the technology that lets us get around without moving?

These innovations and others we can barely envision may have to fight for money and time with older and even vanishing technologies and energy sources. American society, from unions to businesses to governments, also has to get its arms around what we need from education and what is changing in demographics and geography -- where factories and services are positioned in the future. That interlocks with what cities and rural areas do about transit and networking.

It might seem obvious that how people get around will influence what new manufacturing will look like, but these are not easy problems to discuss because every segment of society has a piece of property to push or a constituency to protect. Behind every earmark is a politician and behind every politician is a constituency.

Soon, we're all in for special schooling

Some truths are emerging and may surprise the champions of higher education. The bulk of the new green jobs will not require master's degrees or years of college study.

Some of that will be needed - new research, new projects and products coming down through higher education. There are intersections of green jobs with bio research, engineering and similar advance developments. On the other hand, medical technology, service skills and other career roles are either in demand now or will be soon.

In fact, looking at green agendas, technicians, folks with practical skills, craftsmen, alert and interested individuals even more than educational levels will be the bulk of the need.

Let's say that again. Most green jobs need high school degrees or a few special technical classes. These will be the people we need. Years of added schooling are not required.

But the basic schooling of today isn't preparing us and it has to get better fast. Educators will have to offer guidance far more reaching than what schools are now advising. They may, in fact, be discouraging the very people society needs for success.

We can overthink green, it seems. Even making wooden buildings in Milwaukee more energy efficient, as one union leader noted, "may require smart use of a caulk gun." Some unions may actually be

ahead in this green curve, since several have already established apprentice training classes to introduce workers to how they can "use green" or incorporate new building processes.

Schools - not just universities -- will have to seize on modern technology, not just the computers and cell phones young people are comfortable with. They may have to re-introduce the way environment and skills are taught from elementary school on up to prepare children for the future. Their bigger job may have to help these youngsters believe a valuable career awaits them without a university education. Well-paying and satisfying careers are unfolding in front of their eyes.

While Obama has already pledged a major effort to make schools more energy efficient, society must pledge to make them more education efficient as well.

These are enormous challenges. They will not be solved by the simplistic political attitudes of today - people who believe too much that a new president automatically can accomplish things (though it will be nice to have one who thinks).

And it is equally simplistic to scoff that investments by government with the private sector can do little to elevate our economy.

These investments can do a lot. They already have.

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Green From Page 1

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The organizers want to put pragmatic shape to Barack Obama's pledge - which is built on many of these sponsors' own

studies -- to cap carbon dioxide emissions and reduce them 80% by 2050 and have 25% of US energy come from renewable sources by 2025.

More immediately the new president wants partnerships that invest \$150 billion in clean energy in the next decade, raise fuel economy standards and aggressively pursue energy efficiency retooling of buildings, and cities, cleaning up our cities and rural communities and creating or saving 2.5 million jobs in the first wave.

Wind farms, solar panels, fuel-efficient cars and efficient alternative energy are all in the works.

This is not just a move from



Some notable Wisconsin union names enlivened the COSH conference days at Milwaukee's Wyndham Hotel. Sharing their art were (at left) folk legend Larry Penn and (bearded at right) Mike Konopacki, whose political cartoons frequently appear in the Labor Press (see Pages 17 and 19).

Why Doyle and Obama share energy connection

Why did the president-elect single out Wisconsin's governor when he spoke of states taking leadership in energy independence? To cynical Republicans in Wisconsin, it seemed a payoff for Doyle's early support of Barack Obama. But for unions and environmentalists it reflected the reality, with a governor they don't always agree with.

Doyle was not only early to Obama's side, he was early to put into motion for Wisconsin the commitments to renewable energy, new jobs and the realities of climate change.

Despite all the demands on state governance, in 2007 he put in play an Office of Energy Independence to look into what the state could do in a global crisis. He committed to reducing dependence on foreign oil, advancing renewable energy sources and initiatives and working for Wisconsin to get "25% of its electrical power and 25% of its transportation fuel from renewable resources by 2025."

Even more immediately Wisconsin will mandate 10 percent renewable energy by 2015, lead in clean energy efforts and capture 10% of "the market share for renewable energy and byproducts."

Doyle has also worked with the Midwest Governor's Association on clean energy and greenhouse gas reduction, as well as establishing international partnerships with countries such as Germany and the United Kingdom to develop shared solutions and climate stewardship.



Green may have held the limelight in several COSH workshops, such as the hot discussion at top left. But even green has to give way to black and blue at times. Here attendees at the national conference in Milwaukee are given instructions in the art of self-defense, a skill unfortunately still needed at some workplaces.

a green grinch president to a jolly green giant one. There is certainly a danger of expecting too much from a (finally!) sympathetic and listening thinker in the White House. The public may believe he can to do it all by himself. If only it were that easy.

But the opportunities are actually here now. That's why unions as well as businesses and governments are flocking to the conference (a full brochure is online in the Take Action section of our website, www.milwaukee-labor.org).

Just look at some of the committed speakers:

Leo Gerard, president, United Steelworkers; Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm; David Foster, head of the Blue Green Alliance; John Podesta, Obama's transition chief and CEO of the Center for American Progress; Van Jones, founder of Green for All; Larry Cohen, CWA president; Andy Stern, SEIU president; Minnesota Rep. Keith Ellison; Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid; Ohio Sen. Sherrod Brown; Carl Pope, president, Sierra Club.

Part of the power of this event is the number of alliances that labor groups are partnered with and that are already creating jobs. Wisconsin is further along than several states, both with its governor's interest and new laws that are in place to help modernize energy use around the state.

To underscore that this is also a global concern, the conference will also take up the United Nations Environment Program in-depth study of how "Green Economy" could create tens of millions of "green jobs" in both developed and developing countries.

The UN study describes efforts to reduce climate change that will generate new jobs and set the pathway for millions of more workers in new production as well as rescue countries from

current nature or man-made dilemmas.

Much of this conference will be centered not on global warming but on job creation, on "reinvigorating disadvantaged communities." The sponsors are calling for "buildups rather than bailouts," clean energy at the service of the people and the planet.

Have you noticed how the concept of "green to the rescue" is both comforting and befuddling? In some ways it is a vision of life-threatening danger if we don't act quickly. At the same time it suggests a return to a lifestyle as simple as breathing.

Both views are too facile. The hard work ahead includes staying away from dead ends and newly appreciating the impor-

Green stories by Dominique Paul Noth. COSH photos by Sue Ruggles. Related story Page 16.

tance of smart planning and coordinating. As the COSH conference in Milwaukee demonstrated, even understanding the chemical connections requires expertise before we can hope to regenerate our economy and our planet. Yet the COSH conference also demonstrated that ordinary workers can take the initiative and develop expertise in green well worth listening to.

Kermit, that old puppet frog, had it right. It isn't easy being green. But it is vital - and it needs unions at the cutting edge.

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Zeidler '09 honors on track

The organizers of the second annual Frank P. Zeidler Memorial Lecture are still working out details but have set up the status for tax-exempt charitable donations right now for supporters.

The lecture, speaker and details are still being arranged, but are expected to be take place during National Library Week (mid-April, 2009) at the Milwaukee Public Library's Downtown Centennial Hall, reports the founding chairman of the organizing committee, Philip Blank, former delegate to the Milwaukee labor council and retired past president of Local 212, AFT.

The first Zeidler lecture was telecast, largely thanks to Ellis



Zeidler in 2003, speaking as he regularly did at the Bay View Massacre anniversary.

Bromberg, general manager of MPTV (Channels 10/36) who is a member of the Zeidler organizing committee and facilitated the taping and televising. That first Zeidler lecture featured author Jeremy Scahill, who exposed the Blackwater mercenary scandal in Iraq.

Zeidler, Milwaukee's great Socialist major who died a few years ago at age 93, was not only a champion of local labor and organizations promoting world peace, he was also instrumental in the creation of the Milwaukee Area Technical College and the public broadcasting housed in the MATC building and operating in service of both students and the general community.

In fact, in something of an irony, the erroneous criticism of the purpose of socialism in the recent election for the presidency has brought a resurgence of interest and research into careers such as Zeidler's. His efforts were particularly notable because he remained a public influence and noted teacher for 45 years after leaving office.

For Bromberg, Blank noted, the involvement in the Zeidler cause is something of a full circle. He works for TV stations Zeidler helped create. His mother, Edith, who recently passed away and his father had both escaped the Nazi holocaust and met sometime later in the US.

Supporters of the Zeidler lecture who wish to make tax-exempt charitable donations (if they itemize deductions) can

send checks to the International Institute noting Zeidler Committee in the check's memo field. If they wish to make donations in the name of Edith Bromberg, make the notation: "Zeidler Committee, Memorial for Edith Bromberg."

The address:
International Institute of Wisconsin
1110 North Old Third Street,
Suite 420
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
53203

Not over – the war to end war



Sue Ruggles addressing her fellow delegates at the December monthly meeting. Ruggles is a member of Local 212, American Federation of Teachers.

Tom Gogan, the national organizer for USLAW, exchanged ideas with labor activists at the Milwaukee Area Labor Council offices on December 8 to reinforce the pressure to bring American troops back home in a way that



Tom Gogan (left), national organizer for USLAW, met December 8 with Milwaukee activists to discuss future efforts to bring the military home from Iraq.

protects them and Iraq's future.

Gogan and the union leaders said they would step up pressure on the new president to keep his word. Barack Obama has agreed to move the troops out of Iraq in the most orderly efficient manner possible, but is clearly relying on familiar names from the previous administrations and policies to oversee the way forward.

Gogan's visit was also a reminder. The inroads made in the last four years by the peace movement within the labor movement have been extraordinary, particularly when you consider that the majority of America's unions are led by veterans usually disposed to accept unquestionably where our military is sent and why.

Labor began to move against the rationales for the Iraqi involvement before the opinion polls showed a majority of the nation in agreement. Leading that effort was U.S. Labor Against the War (USLAW), which has won support from a majority of unions and labor councils.

A leading voice of reminder for the Milwaukee Area Labor Council has been Sue Ruggles, a



Gogan and other USLAW leaders are not hesitant to describe how they intend to keep the pressure on Obama.

delegate of Local 212, American Federation of Teachers (whose photography work is also well-known to readers of the Labor Press).

She received special thanks for her efforts at the December delegate meeting from MALC chief operations officer Sheila Cochran. Ruggles promptly took the mike not to bask in thank yous but to remind delegates of such upcoming anti-war events as Gogan's visit. -- D.P.N.

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Sheridan seeks to heal city's Assembly wounds

As Phil Neuenfeldt explained this month to the Labor Press, union members who become legislators are often "more sensitive" to the issues of working families - and that's whether you put "liberal" or "conservative" after their names.

The track record in Madison underscores his belief, that they "understand the values of bargaining and organizing," the human motors that make the economy work, and, as Neuenfeldt laughed, "Overall they are certainly more fun for me to work with."

As secretary-treasurer of the state AFL-CIO, Neuenfeldt is the lead horse driving organized labor's agenda to the legislative finish line.

He doesn't overestimate the union ties because he expects very soon and once again to be in big fights with everybody, former union or not. He expects that more this season than ever as the state tries to handle bad economic times and a \$5 billion deficit, often trying to build a way out on the backs of state workers.

He also understands that Milwaukeeans may be particularly disturbed that, even as the Democrats won both Wisconsin chambers, Milwaukee representatives demonstrated continued chaos and incoherence.

They were unable to work together or step out of each other's way, leaving Wisconsin's only Class A city without a top elected floor leader in either the Assembly or the Senate.

Given all that seemingly bad news, Neuenfeldt is still grinning

like the Cheshire Cat

He is, in fact, "overjoyed," he told reporters, that Wisconsin has former union leaders in control of both the Senate and the Assembly -- rare in the nation.

Some are longtime colleagues. And Neuenfeldt happily expects at least a real hearing on issues of crucial importance, such as wage lien laws, bargaining rights for University of Wisconsin employees, gains in minimum wage standards and indexing, green jobs legislation, and construction trades issues.

The Democrats have taken over the Assembly for the first time in 14 years. The Democrats retained their margin in the Senate. They also have Gov. Doyle. Except for the attorney general's office, factors in the same political party are in charge. These folks don't always agree but they know how to work with each other (they actually know how to work with the other party, something the GOP proved slow learners about), they know how to push each other's buttons and, more importantly to Neuenfeldt, they know they should listen to unions.

The new Janesville based speaker of the Assembly in not an unknown face to Milwaukee labor and is already taking big steps to understand Milwaukee's growing plight. In fact, Milwaukee labor absolutely expects him to be a sympathetic sounding board.

Mike Sheridan (District 44) is the former two-term president of the United Auto Workers local in Janesville. He was factory floor worker there And even as speaker-elect he moved quickly

to deal with and fight for the auto workers he once led.

When he stopped by the Milwaukee Area Labor Council Dec. 5 to learn more about Milwaukee issues, he had just come back from twisting General Motors and UAW arms on a national level.

He got GM to offer a sliver of hope. After talks with GM CEO Richard Wagoner, UAW President Ron Gettelfinger and Ken Cole, GM vice president of government relations (dancing around this group's testimony to the US Congress), Sheridan announced that the door had not been fully closed on the Janesville plant, which ends GM production work in January.

It's a thin reed right now, he emphasized, but concessions offered by the workers would save GM \$120 million and might prove a model of what the company needs to do around the country. At least now GM is willing to listen.

But Sheridan's need to fight for mere salvation for UAW in Janesville was not something he had anticipated.

"This is a day I never thought to see," he confessed to Milwaukee union leaders. When he led Local 95, he recalled, he could imagine cutbacks or revamping, but "I couldn't imagine that plant ever closing." It is one reason why he has special empathy for the hard times Milwaukee companies have been going through. And why he refused to submit to the defeatist attitude that good manufacturing jobs are gone forever.

Having tapped Milwaukee



Sheridan (center) and Toles meet with Milwaukee labor.

Rep. Barbara Toles to work closely with him on city concerns -- she now chairs the Assembly's workforce development committee and she has guided him through several Milwaukee meetings -- Sheridan warned that he could not overnight undo "14 years of bad legislation."

He remains particularly distressed and mentioned several times the plight of black working men in Milwaukee, 51% of whom are unemployed by some estimates.

The insensitivity of upstate legislators underlies the attitude in Milwaukee toward Assembly leadership -- and it was a concern he got an earful on. "There is one industry we do export to the rest of the state," noted Sheila Cochran, the chief operating officer of the MALC, with a cold sarcastic glint in her eyes. "That's prisons. They love that we help them fill their prisons."

There were so many issues on Milwaukee labor's agenda that the afternoon meeting could only touch on several elements.

But there was no pussyfooting about the destruction being visited on Milwaukee by one of the state's own minions, County Executive Scott Walker. And how Milwaukee's head may be hoisted on a political pike since Walker wants to run for governor and the governor may fear that Walker will use any rescue of Milwaukee to elevate himself and put down Doyle.

Sheridan learned where labor was in dispute with Mayor Tom Barrett and why. He was taken through the issues of what the state legislature could do to help pay levels and stop preempting efforts that improve the lot of workers.

The need for genuine support of public schools; the need for more intelligent education funding and revenue sharing -- most of all the need for jobs and the availability of a powerful workforce -- were all laid out for him by the like of Neuenfeldt, Cochran and the executive director of AFSCME District Council 48, Richard Abelson.

"I know we're burdening you while you have an overflowing plate," noted Cochran, her-

self a UAW member. "But know that we have special needs and that we stand ready to help in any way we can."

The labor leaders are also counting on Sheridan's proven skills as a negotiator. It may be the reason for a somewhat meteoric rise. Elected to the Assembly in 2004, he is now speaker, a rapid ascent earned (several colleagues say) by recognition of his backroom skills at getting agendas moving.

Over in the Senate, Russ Decker of Weston returns as majority leader for Democrats. He is a former business agent and still member of the Bricklayers union. Assistant majority leader Dave Hansen of Green Bay was a Teamster. Labor allies won close contests and also share key committees.

For instance, Sen. Mark Miller (who has also visited with Milwaukee labor this year) and Rep. Mark Pocan will co-chair the powerful Joint Finance Committee that writes the state's budget.

(Decker has also indicated that increasing the state minimum wage will be the first bill introduced in the 2009 Senate session.)

Former or current union members, or active labor-endorsed candidates, dominated as the Senate retained an 18-15 edge for Democrats, who also took Assembly control by a 52-46 margin.

The willingness of the legislature to listen to union voices is stronger than it has been in almost two decades.

Sheridan has also indicated that he wants to elevate concern about Milwaukee. He has already toured the MATC as well as visiting with labor leaders. He wants more hearings held here and even a full session of the legislature, and he is working on touring public schools, factories and community centers to learn more about what is "working in Milwaukee and what we have to educate our upstate colleagues about," he said.

He will also have to move fast to keep Neuenfeldt's grin from disappearing.

-- Dominique Paul Noth



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Buzz at LERA suggests profound changes for NLRB

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
Labor Press Editor

About 70 sets of slightly raised eyebrows greeted General Counsel Ronald Meisburg when he described how well the big dogs on the National Labor Relations Board were getting along -- moving hundreds of cases forward, he said, though limited largely to past practices in what they could really decide.

The eyebrows curled up Nov. 13 because the NLRB was then down to two members on its ruling board, commonly an invitation to deadlock.

The one in charge is Republican, the other a Democrat. The usual complement is five, with three from the political party in the White House and the remaining two from the other side.

Far-reaching the current board cannot be.

If there is, as Meisburg suggested, considerable courtesy between Chairman Peter C. Schaumber, the GOP member, and Wilma B. Liebman, a feisty veteran Democrat, it does not extend to ideology. Liebman has written some of the angriest and most penetrating dissents from the normal GOP majority on decisions that dumped "supervisors" out of unions or terminated workers on technicalities.

There is considerable congeniality from all sides in dealing with the NLRB, and respect for the methods, evidence-gathering capabilities and professionalism of the 50 or so regional offices, actually run by career civil servants.

But the original statute was designed to assure free choice and encourage collective bargaining.

To the nation's unions, that has not translated on the GOP dominated board to character independence capable of standing up to the big business that controls donations to GOP politicians.

The current NLRB and even its general counsel may claim that they heed the balanced intentions of the original law. But unions flat laugh when GOP board members say the US provides strong protections for its workers. Their common consensus is that the National Labor Relations Act has proved horribly weak and needs amendment.

That's why the shop talk among both conservatives and liberals listening to Meisburg's luncheon talk at the Hyatt Regency focused not just on the Employee Free Choice Act - an entire workshop was devoted to this central drive of the union movement - but on what would happen at the NLRB now.

Or more precisely, what will happen in the week after Barack Obama takes over as president January 20, 2009.

The lack of jobs is a focus



General Counsel Ronald Meisburg (center) with NLRB Region 30 Executive Director Irving Gottschalk (left) and the deputy director, Ben Mandelman at the LERA event.

of the new president - but so is the lack of middle class jobs that families can actually live on. That has become a priority, and Obama has recognized what the NLRB has not -- that union collective bargaining has created the best of those.

The Employee Free Choice Act -- with its elevation of majority choice (card check) and quicker first contracts -- will be a big fight and won't pass right away. The unions are actually gearing up for a long hard battle. See Page 5.

So the immediate issue is: How quickly will the new president set the NLRB's direction for the future, even before the new act is voted upon in the Senate?

The insider guess: Look to see if Obama moves at the end of January even with recess appointments to restore the three-two Democratic majority for the first time in eight years. And then look to see if this new board will, wherever it legally can, call for a do-over on particularly onerous decisions at the NLRB during the tenure of President George Bush.

The AFL-CIO's expert on organizing, Steward Acuff is one among many who has detailed with both logic and passion how the NLRB has not just moved away from the original intention but has accepted further restrictions imposed by Republican officials and courts.

Several essayists have also explored how myth has become reality in the blitz of conservative talk shows and GOP press releases. These have created a revisionist history that unions restrict worker freedom rather than creating collective advance - that if unions would just let CEOs alone, they would cheerfully protect every worker from toxic chemicals, hazardous working conditions and poor pay and health care.

None of these revisionist and even ridiculous attitudes reflect how today's unions operate or how often they have been an effective tool for business modernization, safety, financial success and quality advance-

ment.

It is, in fact, a belief in the gains of such cooperation that explains the very existence of LERA -- the national Labor and Employment Relations Association whose Wisconsin chapter brought Meisburg to Milwaukee for its second annual state gathering of information and speeches.

LERA carefully doesn't take sides, but its very existence values the power of collective bargaining, open compromise and mutual respect, as opposed to demonization, among labor and management.

Confided a corporation lawyer as we moved through the lunch line at the Meisburg talk, "It's really not been good for business that we've created such a gap in wealth between the executives and the workers."

No kidding. Lawyers and others who represent unions certainly agree with that sentiment but remain angry at how poorly worker rights have been treated by this current Department of Labor and NLRB, and by how regularly this administration has demeaned the reputation of unions in an effort to expand that mistreatment.

These critics frankly doubt that anything less than a change in the law will set things right. And that will require the president stepping in.

Traditionally, appointees to the NLRB are by the president, currently Bush, confirmed (or consented to) by the Senate. Or they are recess appointments (when Congress is not in session, to last until the end of the next congressional session) by the president if the Senate doesn't go along.

Not going along has grown into a cottage industry in D.C.

While personable and cautious in his speech, Meisburg revealed himself as a living example of this new industry. Engaged in private practice during President Clinton's years in office, he was a Bush recess appointment to the board for much of 2004. Then when he

The Wisconsin Chapter of LERA regularly invites special guests to luncheon exchanges with members and guests.

For information: LERA, 3477 N.Cramer St., Milwaukee, WI 53211

Web: uwm.edu/Org/LERA Phone: (414) 297-3883

Email: Suzanne.clement@nlrb.gov

couldn't stay there, Bush nominated him as general counsel where, after fits and starts, he became recess appointed in 2006 to a four year term.

As general counsel, scheduled into 2010 (well into an Obama administration), he is by statute independent of the board, prosecutes unfair labor practice cases and handles general supervision of the NLRB field offices.

All that, as he related in his talk, already put him in the unusual situation of being in the minority on a decision on the board and then having to defend the majority decision he disagreed with as general counsel.

What his career does suggest is how some conflicts of interest are built into the current legal language -- and yet the choices of the president sometimes couldn't get rammed through even when the GOP controlled the Senate. And they certainly became more difficult once the Democrats took control.

The current strange twosome atop the NLRB resulted after the Senate balked even more ferociously than normal and Bush in turn refused to move Democrats choices forward until his preferences were also met. While all this was going on, some GOP appointments simply bailed for better-paying jobs in the private sector.

The recent history of jump-around was pretty well known to this Milwaukee gathering of lawyers, union leaders, academics, businessmen and government officials. More than a hundred people moved through the day-long sessions about arbitration, generational issues, alternative dispute resolutions, discrimination law and future practices.

Meisburg's speech was a centerpiece not just because Region 30 of the NLRB was a co-sponsor of the event but because of the growing curiosity about what happens now. The conference took place a week after Obama was elected and when the final makeup of the Senate was still in doubt.


Despite Meisburg's efforts to suggest how smoothly the train was running, where it is running is a different matter. Progressives were chafing to pass the Employee Free Choice Act to get the right direction back. Conservatives were worried about moving too fast down the track. But all sides are deeply curious about how the new administration will toot its horn and ride the rails.

These are enormous challenges. The general expectation?

There are big changes in store for the NLRB and the labor law in any scenario. But some of those changes may not be quite what anyone anticipates.

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HIRE's open house underscores overflow plate

The grim and the festive exist side by side at Milwaukee's HIRE Center. The festive was on display at a November open house where dignitaries and staff shared great food, speeches, even dramatic skits outlining the functions of this house of worker-redemption on National Avenue.

It was an inside peek and a celebration of a facility always successful but too often ignored by its former masters. Milwaukee today concedes how much it relies on and values this premier rescue operation for workers dumped by failing businesses.

The grim is that the dumping is increasing in pace. It has not settled into a routine that HIRE staff can anticipate and handle. They are always fighting from behind.

HIRE people keep hoping -- futilely - their services will not be needed. Yet the need has grown almost impossibly in this economic crisis. No question, confessed director Alba Baltodano -- not only is there no slowdown but "we confront one of our busiest times."

A year ago that was not the expectation. HIRE relies on federal money, much of it siphoned through the state, much of it responding to grants the center itself helps write. In the Bush years that money started drying up even as the pain increased.

When Milwaukee took over the Workforce Investment Board, partly to elevate attention to the urgency of job projects such as HIRE, there was little money to be had and it was a real scramble



Dignitaries, workers and business and labor leaders crowd the HIRE Center for tours, dramatic skits and speeches of support including (from left below) Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, center leader Alba Baltodano, WIB's executive director, Donald Sykes, and Milwaukee Area Labor Council's Sheila Cochran. The afternoon festivities were a needed break from the dislocated workforces that have recently flooded the facilities on National Ave.



for WIB Director Donald Sykes to find funds to help.

Somehow more funds came in to keep the staff. While the community was hoping to concentrate on just developing fresh jobs and recruit new workers, the economy kept closing companies, throwing out of work the veteran workforces that HIRE is designed to help.

And help it has -- efficiently and quickly by all of the many

statistical measures that government oversight requires.

It's also there for the entire community, union and non, and it often contacts plants about closing notices before some of the workers know their jobs are gone.

The HIRE's union staff has created model rapid response teams to enter plants and outline the help available. At the center it has case officers, a learning lab, vocational tests and computer search engines plus regular meetings with companies forced to drop workers or those that have jobs available.

For instance, when Viasystems7, a non-union fabricator of metal equipment components, announced in late November that it was closing its Oak Creek plant in January, throwing 287 employees out of work, HIRE responded in days with a rapid response team welcomed to the plant. It set up assessment and training sessions in early December.

Its teachers and staff are deeply knowledgeable and certainly empathetic since many were once part of a dumped workforce.

The community, both the

Standing for "Help In Re-Employment," the HIRE Center is Milwaukee's major "Retraining and Re-Employment Services for Dislocated Workers in Milwaukee County," located on the second floor of 816 W. National Ave. The phone is 414-385-6920; FAX 414-385-6930

The consortium that runs it consists of these non-profit and government agencies: The Milwaukee Area Labor Council, Milwaukee Area Technical College, Wisconsin Job Service, United Way of Greater Milwaukee, AFL-CIO Labor Education and Training Center, and Milwaukee's WIB (Workforce Development Board).

HIRE workers and its controlling consortium say, would often be surprised at how many companies rush to its services - and how, despite the heavy involvement of unions in the support system, no difference is made between union and non-union companies.

All this was spelled out at the open house where the speakers included not only Baltodano and Sykes but Mayor Tom Barrett and MALC Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran.

But any hope that the economy would give Milwaukee and its HIRE Center some breathing room has pretty well evaporated since that festive occasion.

Lining up HIRE's rapid response one-step interventions of 2008 (some carryovers), you will find a devastating litany of famous brands and longtime manufacturers and retailers shedding jobs in Milwaukee:

Allen-Edmonds, Linens 'N Things, Target, ER Wagner, AT&T, Circuit City, Midwest Airlines, Southwest Metal Finishing, Stark Candy, Delphi, Heinemann's, Journal Sentinel and many more.

Some took HIRE's services, some strangely didn't, but hundreds of dislocated employees who were desperate this year are already back at work.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

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Milwaukee fire fighters rejoining labor council

Fresh from a meeting of his executive council, President Bobbie Webber of the Milwaukee fire fighters union stopped by AFSCME District 48's holiday party December 4 and confirmed to the Labor Press that his board had approved re-affiliation with the Milwaukee Area Labor Council AFL-CIO.

This is a big deal, not only given the size and importance of the Milwaukee Professional Fire Fighters, but also their long absence from the labor council. (The fire fighters left in 1990.)

To be sure, as both Webber and MALC Secretary-Treasurer Sheila D. Cochran pointed out Dec. 4, there are a few technical issues and questions to resolve before the alliance is completed.

The 950 members of

Webber's Local 215, International Association of Fire Fighters, AFL-CIO, will probably have to re-affiliate in chunks, given its range and size.

Both Webber and his board, and Cochran and her board agree that the time is right because "we have so many basic issues in common and solutions in common," noted Webber. "And there seem to be a lot of people who hoped small disputes would keep us apart and freeze advancement."

In discussions with other labor leaders, Webber has pointed to jobs, economic recovery, proper government resources, and respect for the worker as issues that have a chance given the imminent change in the presidency and Congress and also Wisconsin's



Local 215 President Webber

opportunity to drive in the same direction from the governor's mansion through both houses of the state legislature.

"Our agendas are in common even if in the distant past we were not politically on the

same page," he said, "but today we have a better vision of the nature of that. Today there's no other way for unions than working together and appreciating what each can bring."

Both he and Cochran expect to resolve the methodology issue quickly. MALC will be nominating new members for its executive council at a February meeting that requires recognized fully paid delegates for the open offices. The executive board has also expanded to represent affiliate groups such as CBTU, retirees and APRI plus two more Milwaukee area counties, Washington and Ozaukee. Final voting by unions in good standing will be held in March.

Milwaukee fire fighters also have influence and persuasive power with similar unions

around Wisconsin. The Milwaukee group also has elder status. It was established in 1875.

The Milwaukee Fire Department is one of the nation's highest regarded because of the training and quality of its workforce. Its motto is "Courage, Integrity and Honor" and it has been quick to answer the call of other fire fighting units. It bears the primary responsibility for fire suppression, prevention, rescue and emergency medical service (EMS) for the City of Milwaukee. Many of the local's members are crossed-trained in paramedic and advance life support.

Webber also serves on the board of the Milwaukee Area Technical College.

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Religious essays eloquently join fight to save Earth

By Carl Pope

Special to Labor Press

With the historic election of Barack Obama as president, and the looming challenges of our economic crisis, our quest for energy independence and the dire need to address global warming before it's too late, eyes around the world are focused on the United States.

We cannot follow our usual way of doing business on this planet. Together we watch with anxious or hopeful eyes: How will our country choose to meet the many crises facing it today?

By practice and by trade, pastors, priests, rabbis, and leaders of all traditions continuously urge a renewed way of seeing the world around us. Challenges like poverty, global warming and

economic injustice are problems to be addressed with the recognition that they are inextricably connected. And in an era overly focused on the wonders of technology, religious leaders bring us back to reflect on the human element, both good and bad.

In the newly released book, "Holy Ground: A Gathering of Voices on Caring for Creation" (Sierra Club Books, November 2008), Rabbi Zoe Klein offers a new take on the ancient story of God splitting the Sea of Reeds to bring the Israelites to safety, and wryly notes:

"You split the sea. Big deal... we, made in your divine image, have resurrected an explosion of primitive organisms in all seven seas, killing all sorts of larger species of fish. Because of us, 90 percent of the world stocks of cod, tuna, and other big

fish have vanished over the last fifty years."

Klein carries a sarcastic tone as she describes the collective power of humanity to wreak havoc across the Earth with pollution and over-consumption, altering the chemical makeup of the Earth's atmosphere and bringing about unprecedented global warming with our disregard for the planet and one another.

The essay discusses our collective destruction of the Earth, but around the globe, caring people of all faiths and beliefs are coming together to ask - what can we do constructively together for our planet?

Thanks to outspoken leaders like Klein, we can see more clearly than ever before that our decisions and actions today will impact the lives of our neighbors



Carl Pope

and children for generations to come - for better or worse.

From the placement of toxic waste facilities to the impacts of global warming, low-income communities and those of color - as well as vulnerable populations like children and the elderly - are hardest hit by environmental problems. Caring for the environment is about seeking justice. But how can we practice stewardship of God's creation? What does it mean to seek justice and care for "the least of these"?

Indeed, faith leaders are already working to engage their

Labor helps world climate conference

Nearly 100 union delegates from around the world, 20 alone from North America, are participating in the 12-day United Nations Climate Change Conference (UNCCC) in Poznan, Poland, which began with training sessions Dec. 3-4.

Much of the effort is detail heavy to produce targeted goals in studies from such organizations as the Electric Power Research Institute. Labor specialists are considered key to push for such things as clean coal development, renewables and conservation. Participants say they are producing action plans for achievable reductions in CO-2 and other ingredients harmful to the environment.

communities on environmental problems like global warming - their stories fill "Holy Ground," such as the Rev. Sally Bingham of the national Interfaith Power and Light Campaign, and Allen Johnson of Christians for the Mountains, who is working to stop the destructive mountaintop coal mining in Appalachia.

Our political leaders finally seem to be getting it, too.

President-Elect Barack Obama's speeches to the nation and the governors have attracted attention worldwide. He spoke not only about addressing global warming and about passing strong climate change legislation, but also highlighted the importance of investing in clean energy and creating new "green" jobs as a way to boost our struggling economy.

Obama extended an invitation to people of good will around the world to join us in seeking solutions to the economic, energy and climate crises. If this new administration means a change in how we all care for the planet, many of us are ready and willing to work together to get the job done.

I write with a mix of hope, concern, and gratitude for the promise of a new direction. Toward the end of Rabbi Klein's essay, she drops the sarcastic tone and expresses awe at God's self-imposed discipline and restraint at choosing to split only one sea for one people.

May we connect with the divine qualities of discipline and restraint as we move forward to protect our communities and our planet as common, holy ground.

The author is executive director of Sierra Club. For more information about the book, visit www.sierraclub.org **MinuteManMedia.org**

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Some old songs can depress the heck out of you

By Donald Kaul

Special to Labor Press

I don't know what kind of Thanksgiving you had, but things were pretty mellow at our house. We had family and friends over for dinner, then gathered around the fire and sang old songs.

"Brother, Can You Spare A Dime?" "Nobody Wants You When You're Down and Out," "Can I Sleep In Your Barn Tonight, Mister?"--- the golden oldies.

They don't write songs like that anymore. I suppose they haven't needed to, until now.

My wife cooked the meal. Turkey with all the fixings.

Technically speaking, I suppose, it wasn't a turkey -- more of a Cornish game hen -- but it was good, I'll tell you that. And we were grateful for it.

So OK, things were a little thin this year; I admit it. The past few weeks have taken a toll on my 401K. I'm considering giving it to my paperboy as a Christmas tip.

But you know, I've always thought that this country had become too materialistic, too interested in "things."

Well, George W. has taken care of that, hasn't he? And to be honest, it wasn't just George W. Bush. He had Dick Cheney to help him.

Humor

When they said they were going to undo the excesses of the Clinton years, they weren't kidding. I just didn't think they were talking about excess income.

Not that I'm complaining. There's still a lot to be thankful for.

Only last summer people were gnashing their teeth about \$4-a-gallon gasoline. They couldn't afford the gas to drive to their jobs, they said. You don't hear much of that anymore. Gas is about \$1.75-a-gallon and they've lost their jobs. Problem solved.

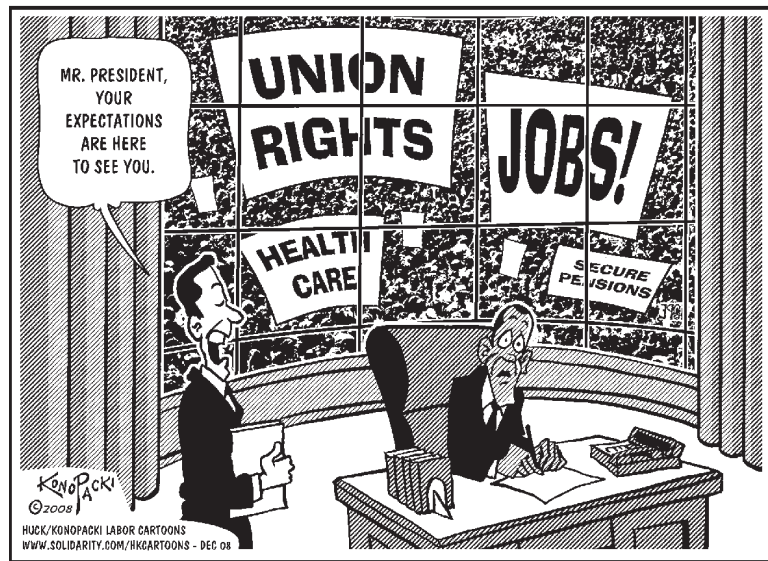
Same thing with the high cost of living. Prices are going down. You walk into a store this Christmas season and the sales people fall upon you like wolves on a stray sheep, touting sale items.

Wanna buy a car? Have we got a deal for you. Same with houses. (Although it helps if you can pay for them in cash, small bills preferred.)

The people I feel the most envious of are the young people who are inheriting the environment we've created. Two wars. Economic crisis. Galloping unemployment. A budget deficit that threatens to block out the sun. A planet drying up with increasing speed. Sarah Palin.

The so-called "Greatest Generation" was the greatest because of the challenges it met -- The Great Depression and World War II. The current generation of youngsters might face challenges that make those look like a victory lap.

Our youngsters have a real



chance at being "The Even Greaterest Generation."

I only wish I could live long enough to see it but I doubt I will. I'm afraid my health insurance will be cancelled when Medicare goes broke and I won't be able to get a replacement because of a pre-existing condition -- old age.

That's all right, though. Like the old blues song says: "I have had my fun, if I don't get well no more." (I understand that the blues is making a comeback. I wonder why.)

I'd like to clear up one more thing. A couple of columns ago, I wrote that the Republican Party had become the Party of Dumb. Many people objected to that. (Two-thirds of them Republican.)

Let me say right now that I

LEST WE FORGET. The price Sen. John McCain paid for stating last September that the "fundamentals of our economy are strong" are fairly obvious. But remember, he was just echoing the remarks a month earlier of President Bush who refused to admit that the United States was in a formal recession.

What opponents and economists were telling him -- turns out not only to be true but economists formally declared the US has been in a recession since December of 2007! Of course, the politicians could just have gone down to the corner and asked the struggling worker or the struggling shopper. They would have heard the truth.

never intended to imply that all Republicans are dumb. Some of my best friends are Republicans and I know of many, many others (in the low two figures) who are of average intelligence or better.

I merely meant that the Republican Party, over the years, has crafted its message to appeal mainly to the dumb, ignorant and uninformed.

If you are a smart Republican, you have a quarrel with your party, not me.

I hope that makes things better. Happy Holidays.

The author is a two-time Pulitzer Prize-losing Washington correspondent who, by his own account, is right more than he's wrong.

MinuteManMedia.org

Calendar

For updated master list of events, visit www.milwaukeeelabor.org

Friday, December 19

Holiday Open House

Milwaukee Area Labor Council

Noon-4 p.m., Yatchak Hall, 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Wednesday Dec. 24-Sunday, Jan. 4

Office Closed -- Happy Holidays

Thursday, January 8

MALC Executive Council

2 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Wednesday, January 14

Monthly Delegate Meeting

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

Monday Jan. 12-Wednesday, Jan. 14

2009 AFL-CIO Midwest Regional Conference

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UAW

From Page 1

greater extent than the auto companies, parts suppliers and distribution networks it has organized, the UAW has stood on the side of progress -- never perfectly, as union dissidents have noted over the years, but invariably with an eye to providing economic security for working families and a future for communities in every region of the country.

"Remarkably, however, it is the UAW that is under attack."

The media, sometimes deliberately, sometimes inadvertently, joined this parade of foolishness and bluntly confirmed to the public how entrenched have become so many of the myths about unions.

Newspapers did not challenge as they should have Republican Sen. Mitch McConnell's praise for the union-free Toyota plant in Kentucky, saying that this lack of union presence was why it was doing fine.

Those who were writing the financial pages should have read them - Toyota's American sales dropped more than GM or Ford. They are not doing fine. In their own countries, these foreign car makers have governments that pay health and retirement benefits. In Kentucky, the workers are relying on the middle class standards set by, among others, the United Auto Workers. Those are the laws they lean on in the dark hours.

"The reality," wrote one UAW retiree, "is that - unlike the domestics (with GM, for example, celebrating its 100th year) - the auto workers in the non-union plants are relatively new

Money for 'workers who shower before they go to work, but not for workers who have to shower after work.'

- Pointed comment by Ohio Sen. Sherrod Brown

and young. They don't have many retirees - at least not yet."

The advocates of pure capitalism like McConnell, the retiree says, hope all these non-union plant workers die in harness because retirees, in the free-marketers' eyes "no longer add value and therefore don't contribute to corporate profits."

UAW is to be hated for valuing the promises made to retirees. That seems the talking points.

Take GOP Congressman Zach Wamp (a likely candidate for governor in Tennessee) who told TV commentator Chris Mathews how Volkswagen "invested in a right-to-work state, at a low-cost, with less health care. Why should we prop others up ... It's time to let these people learn the lesson the hard way."

He did not offer to give back his own retirement benefits, perks and health care paid by US taxpayers.

Journalist Connell sees a strategy by GOP class-war hawks. "Some pundits are pitting the North against the South," she wrote, "in an attempt to stir up animosity between those in right-to-work-for-less states whose auto jobs do not offer health coverage or retirement security and the UAW members whose hard-fought contracts helped create the middle class."

But all this is angering Obama's union supporters. Some even wonder what they fought an election for. A prescient author, Robert Kuttner, wrote "Obama's

Challenge" before the election and laid out with surprising accuracy what Obama would inherit from the Bush years and how the Republicans would try to twist the results.

But Kuttner perhaps naively believed the old games wouldn't work anymore, that the public now understands "we've wasted 30 years of believing that government couldn't do anything right and markets couldn't do anything wrong."

Yet even today too much of the media is caught up in discredited economic views and the fables about the unions.

Brian Williams, respected anchor at "NBC Nightly News," waxed eloquent and erroneous about the "efficiency" of foreign automakers in the South because they "don't have to pay" health care or retirement for their workers.

Only a later report conceded that foreign car makers are in equal or greater sales trouble. No one stopped to ask what would happen to those workers' health and retirement woes.

The New York Times, usually the target of the right wing, had an auto columnist who fell into a GOP statistical triple whammy, claiming UAW was costing the Big Three \$78 an hour in wages and benefits. That laid every gain over every decade of every worker and all 400,000 current retirees onto the remaining active workers, a useless and ludicrous cost configuration.

Perhaps as the last stab of a

party that badly lost an election and had its economic ideas discounted by an angry citizenry, some in the GOP are stuck on the cruelty lever. "This mess is the fault of your middle class expectations and not anything we've done," say the free market mavens. That such a button still exists in the American psyche is amazing.

The drop in consumer confidence that has imperiled our economy is certainly not the fault of the UAW. The tendency to make union standards the fall guy led Nichols to an eloquent riff of remembrance in the Nation:

"It was the UAW that fought for national health care and pensions and, when those policy initiatives were blocked by reactionary Congresses, forced corporate America to create a social safety net for workers and retirees that would form the model for union and non-union workplaces across the country.

"It was the UAW that fought government- and corporate-sanctioned racial discrimination, integrating Southern factories, supporting the 1963 March on Washington, and bailing the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. out of jail in Alabama.

"It was the UAW that withdrew from the AFL-CIO in the 1960s and '70s rather than take labor's big right turn; opposed the Vietnam War; set up a research department that studied the cost of bloated military budgets to domestic progress; and opposed apartheid in South

Africa with such passion that when Nelson Mandela toured the United States after his release from prison, he insisted on celebrating with Michigan's UAW Local 600 in Dearborn."

Nichols' memory lane is vibrant, at least in veteran union circles. But not enough among the young, the new workers, the growing families of America and the old ingrained politicians. The reception to the Big Three's search for credit showed how many of today's media and citizens failed to know or grasp the lessons of the past. Which throws in doubt how smart they will be about shaping their own future.

Judge tells CNN to rehire 110

In an all-too-rare court victory for workers revealed in early December, CNN was ordered to rehire 110 workers fired for belonging to a union.

As one labor blog noted, citizens are unlikely to learn this by watching CNN's "Headline News," which would have to reveal the victory was five years in the making.

An administrative law judge ordered the network to rehire the 110 workers who were fired because they were union members. CNN also was ordered to recognize the workers' unions, National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians-CWA (NABET-CWA) Locals 31 and 11.

The president of Local 31, Carl Mayers, called the ruling, belated though it may be, "a great victory for all union workers" and noted that it "would not have been possible without the hard work and courage of the members that were terminated by CNN as well as those who remained and never gave up hope."

NLRB Administrative Law Judge Arthur Amchan issued the decision detailing how CNN violated the federally protected rights of more than 250 employees at the network's bureaus in Washington, D.C., and New York City. Amchan found that CNN engaged in "widespread and egregious misconduct, demonstrating a flagrant and general disregard" for employee rights. The judge found that CNN terminated a subcontracting relationship with Team Video Services (TVS) - whose employees were represented by NABET-CWA - and then discriminated against the TVS employees in a "blatant" attempt to avoid having to recognize and bargain."

James Parks, writer for AFL-CIO's Now Blog, noted that CNN has been ordered to recognize the unions in New York and D.C., reinstate more than 110 employees, pay them full back pay and "cease and desist" infringing on workers' rights under labor law in the future.

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Media both ignored Gettelfinger and attacked him and UAW

No one, especially not auto workers, are defending the mistakes of the Big Three CEOs, who confirmed the worst fears of indifference and greed on their first trek to Congress, flying in on corporate jets and expecting the same bailout that Wall Street got. Now the focus of the bridge loan is to protect the three million workers in the auto industry who will start falling like dominos without help.

But in the inevitable and justified media pounce on that first visit to congressional hearings, UAW was drawn into the derision because of old concepts about unions and legacy costs. And just bad reporting.

Guests on the usually balanced PBS "News Hour" and even liberal leaning MSNBC wondered aloud why UAW wasn't at the table justifying its pay and benefits - but UAW WAS there and totally ignored by the media until later visits.

So upset was Worker Independent News by the treatment of UAW President Ron Gettelfinger, who sat at the same tables as the CEO, that it put out full audio of his remarks and defense of workers, which members of Congress later conceded were enormous sacrifices in 2005 and 2007.

Noted Gettelfinger at the time, the media was "setting up my union as the bad guy."

"The misconceptions were

Midwest labor gathering here

In events scheduled at the Wyndham Hotel January 12-14, the Milwaukee Area Labor Council has been chosen by the AFL-CIO to host the gathering of Midwest state federations, central labor councils and regional and area labor organizations.

The 2009 AFL-CIO Midwest Regional Conference is an opportunity for invited labor leaders and officers to share plans and agendas for union campaigns. National labor leaders will also attend the conference to provide updates and solicit ideas.



'The misconceptions were unbelievable.'
— Union president Gettelfinger

unbelievable," he noted. Too many in Congress preferred the misconceptions.

Such as job banks. Created to protect workers on layoffs with nearly full pay so they could quickly come back, those were whittled to nearly nothing in 2007 contract renegotiations, as the Detroit News reported:

Ford has taken 40,000 workers out since 2005 and GM has removed about 47,000. Currently, Chrysler has 711 workers in the jobs bank, GM has 1,404 and Ford has 1,476.

"It's not gone yet but it's almost gone," Gettelfinger said - except in the minds of some GOP senators.

And there's more that has gone unreported, said Robert Scott in deep analysis for the respected Economic Policy Institute:

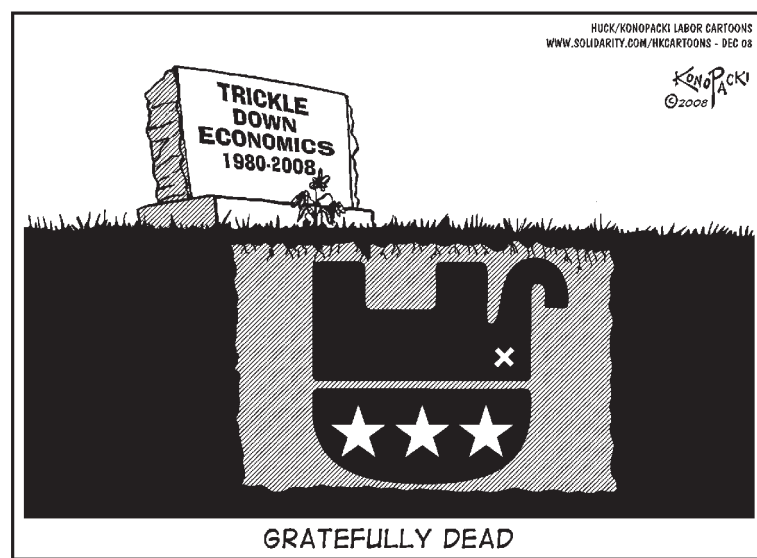
"Contracts negotiated in 2007 slashed wages for new workers by 50%. In addition, new workers will not be guaranteed any retiree health care benefits, and will not participate in the traditional defined-benefit

pension plan. On top of that, the UAW agreed that the responsibility for health care benefits for existing retirees would be transferred from the auto companies to an independent trust, called a Voluntary Employee Benefits Association.

"Analysts now believe that the labor cost gap between the Detroit-based auto companies and the foreign transplants will be largely or completely eliminated by the end of the current contracts."

And UAW just agreed to further concessions for Congress, even though, as Scott points out, "The top two most productive auto assembly plants in the US were UAW plants (in terms of hours per vehicle assembled). In fact, six of the top 10 plants (in 2006 surveys) were UAW shops."

Without excusing past strategic blunders in Detroit, Scott noted in his research, "The current industry collapse is a direct result of the financial crisis rather than past industry decisions."



A touch of Katrina heading for auto plants?

To more than the black community, there was a racial element in America's slowness to help New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. How many times did you hear some speculate that, had this been La Crosse, the response would have been nimble and the photos redeeming rather than sickening?

Is a similar element at play in America's slowness to help the domestic car industry? On not as grand a scale, perhaps, but the emerging statistics should give America pause.

The motor vehicle and parts industry has been "particularly welcoming to African Americans," notes the Economic Policy Institute. The industry's share of black workers even today is 14.2% -- much higher than the overall share of African Americans in the labor force (a little more than 11%). In November of this year, about 118,000 African Americans worked in the auto industry, a drop of about 20,000 workers since the recession formally began in December of 2007.

African Americans also earn higher wages in the auto industry compared to other sectors of the economy. Hourly wages (excluding fringe benefits) average \$17.08 an hour compared with the \$15.44 economy-wide averages for African Americans.

Meanwhile the current depression has hit blacks particularly hard - their official unemployment rate from government data stood at 11.2% in November, up by nearly three percentage points in a year. Blacks are also a higher percentage of the uncounted employed or underemployed - people who have stopped looking for work because of frustration or people working part-time when they want full-time.

In sum, the collapse of the auto industry would be devastating on all the American economy, since some three millions workers can trace their current jobs to this industry, but it would be disproportionately devastating to the African American community.

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Georgia on whose mind?

In 2002, Saxby Chambliss won his Senate seat from Max Cleland, incumbent Democrat and former Veterans Affairs chief, in one of the nastiest campaigns Georgia ever witnessed.

In the heated aftermath to 9/11 and as Karl Rove kicked up hatred to prepare for the invasion of Iraq, Cleland, a vet who left three limbs on the Vietnam battlefield, had his patriotism demeaned in Chambliss TV ads comparing him visually to Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden because he fought to protect unions at the US Department of Homeland Security.

Only much later did Georgia voters with a conscience understand and feel conned.

On December 2, 2008, in a special runoff election, Chambliss won again. Though this time the Georgia voters, some admittedly and relentlessly redneck, had not succumbed to nastiness. Just a rampant case of being conned again.

In November with a 65% voter turnout, Barack Obama came close but still couldn't carry a state that has remained Republican since before Mississippi Burning.

Still, Chambliss couldn't get to the 50% plus one required by Georgia law to make him a shoo-

Simplistic notions doom Democrats in uphill election

in. That forced a runoff with Democrat Jim Martin, who lingered some 6% behind because of a third-party candidate.

The GOP called in volunteers from 43 states to help Chambliss in the runoff and all the tattered names it had left to muster.

A number of Obama's top hires also went to Georgia to help Martin (full disclosure -- one was a relative) and try to recapture the enthusiasm of November.

Both sides found that hard to do. Turnout dropped for both to half what it was in November.

Low turnout may have been primary in Martin's loss, but what also hurt was the con. The GOP painted Chambliss as the remaining boulder needed in the Senate to block Obama from doing his will as president with a supposed "filibuster proof" majority.

Throughout his congressional career, no one in either party had ever thought of Chambliss as a boulder - more like a pebble easily kicked along in whatever direction the GOP wanted.

It has been by any measure an undistinguished public career.

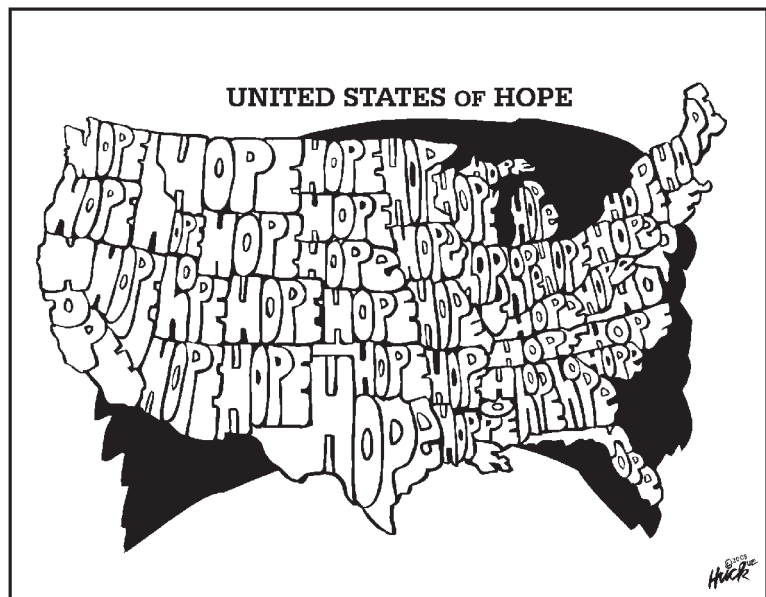
Former President Bill Clinton nailed the difference on a Georgia campaign stop: Martin, a successful manager for both parties' governors in Georgia and a longtime champion of a strong middle class, could serve as a bridge. But Chambliss was a firewall to progress. Georgia voted as if it had its back against the wall.

As Labor Press indicated last month, both Republicans and Democrats were oversimplifying the numbers game in the Senate. As nice as it would be for the Democrats to flirt with a 60-person majority, that wouldn't have been filibuster proof and Obama may have his votes without it. It is a dangerous misreading of the Republican and Democrat after a candidate's name to know where they will vote on important issues.

There are far more intelligent Republicans in Congress than Chambliss, capable of leaning in Obama's direction, and some Democrats that won't go along with him on key issues.

So what Georgia cost itself in this election was influence, effectively weakening the Peachtree state's role in the nation's future. It's the natural end of a con job.

-- Dominique Paul Noth



Sit-in by UE workers in Chicago leads to national protests

By Daniel Ginsberg-Jaeckle of the SDS
Special to Labor Press

Milwaukee Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) demonstrated outside a Bank of America office in Downtown Milwaukee on Dec. 9 in an afternoon show of support for the United Electrical Local 1110 Chicago workers.

The Chicago workers, largely Latino, were illegally laid off Dec. 4 by their company, Republic Window and Door, after Bank of America refused to continue credit to the company, despite having just received a \$25 billion taxpayer bailout. The workers then occupied their work site, earned international attention, and called for a national week of action.

Editor's Note: The strike was settled when the company and bank gave in Dec. 10, bowing to the determination expressed by Armando Robles, president of UE Local 1110: "We're not going to leave until we get every penny we deserve."

The workers retained that conviction though Dec. 9, though Bank of America announced a letter to Republic Windows and Doors offering "a limited amount of additional loans" to resolve its employee claims. About 200 of the 240 laid-off workers staged the sit-in, pledging to stay put until assurances they would get severance and accrued vacation pay.

The workers came to symbolize the plight of laid-off workers around the nation as the economy crumbles. They also gained sympathy in their plight from President-Elect Barack Obama.

SDS members at the Milwaukee rally had just visited the occupying workers at the company on Dec. 9 and heard a 20-year company employee state the place was his "home away from home" and that the fellow workers were "his family."

Family members also accompanied the occupying workers. The occupying workers, arriving in 30-person shifts, seemed very pleased and encouraged by the local and national support of their occupation.

The National Working Committee of SDS has endorsed the worker's militant occupation. Numerous student protests took place all over the country to support the sit-in.

Despite blizzard conditions and short notice, about 20 people attended the Milwaukee rally. SDS students who just got back from an overnight visit to the occupying workers in Chicago spoke over a loudspeaker.

The crowd also chanted "Bank of America: you got bailed out, we got sold out!"

Natasha Morgan an SDS organizer who visited the occupying workers and was attending the rally, said, "This is the end of the Bush era!"

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GUTTER RATS	51	33
ONE BOARD OVER	41	43
PIN PALS	38	46
SLAMMERS	37	47
8 BALLS	31	53

IND. HIGH GAME OVER 185

DAN LAACK	257
DEL GROSS	246
JOHN PADRON	222
BOB WAGNER	221
DON WIEDMANN	207
DAN KNIPPEL	201
GEORGE BARAK	193
GENE HERRICK	190

IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 500

DEL GROSS	657
DAN LAACK	652
BOB WAGNER	559
JOHN PADRON	557
EUGENE HERRICK	525
DON WIEDMANN	523
DAN KNIPPEL	505
GEORGE BARAK	505

IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 455

EILEEN WESTERFIELD	487
PHYLISS NAVARRETE	471
JOYCE KNIPPEL	469
RAE MATOWSKI	459

IND. HIGH GAME OVER 145

EILEEN WESTERFIELD	176
PHYLISS NAVARRETE	171
JOYCE KNIPPEL	168
RAE MATOWSKI	163
MARLENE CORTEZ	147



Every holiday season, the retirees of Local 577M throw a party in what is now known as Yatchak Hall, named after the retired leader of the local (who dropped by the fete to sample the food and greet old friends). The hall is in the building where the Milwaukee Area Labor Council and other labor organizations rent facilities. It's owned by Local 577M, now known as the Graphic Communications Conference of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. But the retirees have been getting together, some for decades, and let Labor Press join their annual photo shoot.

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The arm of the law, AFSCME party style

You could have stocked several seasons of "Law & Order" spinoffs with the guests who dropped by the holiday open house held by AFSCME District Council 48 December 4.

You had the Milwaukee police chief, Edward Flynn. You had the legal counselors from the Courthouse and City Hall, plus the lawyers working for diverse unions. (If any got too fired up, you also had the head of the fire fighters in the house -- See Page 15.)

And you had every announced candidate for Milwaukee circuit court seats in the spring election. In fact it's an unusually busy judicial election and they all had in hand or nearby the nomination papers seeking enough signatures to get on the Milwaukee County ballot by January 6.

Humorously these are known as the Brennan vacancies, though the Brennans in this case are no relation.

When Judge Kitty Brennan was elevated by Gov. Doyle to the 1st District Court of Appeals, that set off a clamor for Branch 6 of the Milwaukee Circuit Court. Emerging are two strong contenders - Ellen Brostrom, a presence at many labor events, and Christopher Lipscomb, the brother of a county

RIGHT: Judge Rebecca Dallett, who had labor backing when elected last April, understands firsthand what candidate Ellen Brostrom (right) was going through at the AFSCME event.

supervisor whose votes have earned considerable credit with organized labor.

Michael Brennan resigned from Branch 15 to enter more lucrative private practice, though apparently a judge's \$125,000 salary is enough to attract quite a field, a big enough one to force a Feb. 19 primary if all three succeed. In opposition are two assistant district attorneys. Daniel Gabler and Ron S. Dague, and a Fox Point municipal judge, J.D. Watts.

Milwaukee almost had a third contest, since Judge John Franke will reportedly join Michael Brennan at the law firm of Gass Weber Mullins. But Franke's resignation doesn't take effect until Jan. 1, which pushed Branch 25 into a later cycle.

The Milwaukee labor council's COPE is setting up January educational sessions and interviews for many of the non-partisan April races. Statewide there are two notable contests as well -- for the state's school superintendent and for Wisconsin Supreme Court, where labor groups are already backing the re-election of Shirley Abrahamson.



Other draws at the AFSCME fete were great appetizers and conversation. More photos on opposite page.

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SEASON'S GREETINGS
from
APWU
American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO

**Wishing Everyone a
Safe & Joyous Holiday!**

**From Area Local #003
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Representing Milwaukee
and our Associate Offices**

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★ This Holiday Season ★
★ Treat The Ones You ★
★ Love To Gifts That Are ★
★ **Genuine** ★
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Local 113**

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AFL-CIO

MILWAUKEE
BUILDING TRADES
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DROP-INS AT AFSCME PARTY:
Top left, staff rep Bill Mollenhour with Lisa Jo Marks, Milwaukee County's director of child support enforcement. **Above**, Milwaukee Police Chief Edward Flynn.
Top right, Ald. Joe Dudzik, a former AFSCME member, with current member and MALC vice-president Annie Wacker. At right is retired AFSCME local leader John Garland.



ABOVE: Union leader Marty Biehl blamed the women at his table for making him the AFSCME Santa from Madison.
BELOW: David Newby, state AFL-CIO president, found a table with school board members, retirees and state legislators to interrupt any thought of eating.



TOP: Sharing laughter were (from left) Rep. Fred Kessler, Sen. Tim Carpenter, Mayor Tom Barrett and Rep. Josh Zepnick.
LEFT: Rep. Polly Williams exchanged views with Milwaukee public schools board chairman Peter Blewett She just faced re-election and he will in April.



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