



Bobbie Webber (right) rushed from a board meeting to the Engine 39 fire house Feb. 8 for the retirement party of Oshiyemi Adelabu, who joined the fire department 31 years ago – a year before Webber – and also rose to captain. Asked if that meant he outranked the new president of the fire fighters local, Adelabu chuckled back: "No one outranks Bobbie Webber!"

First responder

Up the ranks to lead fire fighters union

Three decades ago, a friend suggested a UWM business student take the written firefighters exam for the city of Milwaukee. The student did – and he did well. As a result the retail world lost out to, literally, the bottom rung of the fire ladder.

Back when Gerald Ford was the US president, that new entry level fireman, Bobbie R. Webber, was among only a handful of black members of Local 215, International Association of Fire Fighters, AFL-CIO.

He was a Milwaukee native who had marched with Father Groppi in civil rights causes. He had a union heritage (his father was a member of the Laborers).

But he was, no pun intended, hardly a firebrand in manner or politics. Quiet and deliberate, old-timers recall, he spoke only when issues needed addressing. But when he spoke it was articulate, logical, practical and focused in ideas and passion.

All those qualities, plus his broad interest in community service, led him to become active early on in Local 215.

Over 30 years, Webber rose through the city ranks to supervisory captain and was simultaneously elected to various part-time Local 215 positions. He became a member of the controlling civic board at the Milwaukee Area Technical College (today he serves as chairman).

And on January 8, 2007, he was sworn in by his retiring predecessor, Gregory Gracz, to become the new president of the 1,000-member

Webber continued Page 6

Making this city work

Barrett, Doyle put teeth into job growth

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

Enough, said Mayor Tom Barrett on February 12 in his State of the City speech, pushing for his own cabinet-level office of Workforce Development to chop off cronyism and outdated funding mechanisms.

Enough, said Gov. Doyle in his State of the State and then in his Grow Milwaukee speech at Elm Creative Arts School -- and then again as he rolled out his actual budget proposals. He is urging a (finally!) more sympathetic legislature to start the ball rolling with \$80 million for Milwaukee education, health, safety, job development and other needs that have become staggering because they have been ignored or given lip service for decades.

Should the efforts of the mayor and governor succeed, it will be belated first class attention for workers in Wisconsin's only Class A city.

Both leaders emphasized the possibilities, not the negatives, in their presentations. Both offered crisp outlines for an array of detail-laden programs.

But both in their own fashion signaled that those decades of neglect have created a crisis in Milwaukee.

Barrett devoted only a few paragraphs to what may soon prove the most profound "change signal" in his speech, though the mainstream media didn't im-



Donald Sykes, a highly regarded veteran of community service, has been tapped to launch the mayor's new office for workforce development. – Photo by Sue Ruggles

diately notice.

"Historically," he reminded the community, "when it comes to workforce development, the city of Milwaukee has not been aggressive."

"Those times are gone."

He was addressing a growing exasperation among unions, businesses and community groups, even state and federal officials. It's an open if unreported secret that he and Doyle have been talking about changes for quite some time.

More subtly than many listeners realized, Barrett wrapped his arms around a concept that the previous mayor, John Norquist, ducked -- hands-on workforce development. Not cheerleading, not begging, but roll-up-your-sleeves action. Even heads-will-roll action.

Barrett didn't just announce a Mayor's Office for Workforce Development. He asked Doyle to switch control of the workforce investment board from the county to the city.

He reached back to a veteran sage of social development, and a Clinton administration leader of community services, Donald Sykes, to launch the effort and clear away the deadwood. He

has acquired a half million dollar grant from the Helen Bader Foundation to back these efforts.

Sykes has actually been at work for months, showing up at major workforce centers and meetings. He was building future steps around his intensive report to the mayor -- supported by state-federal analysis funds -- on what Milwaukee needs to do.

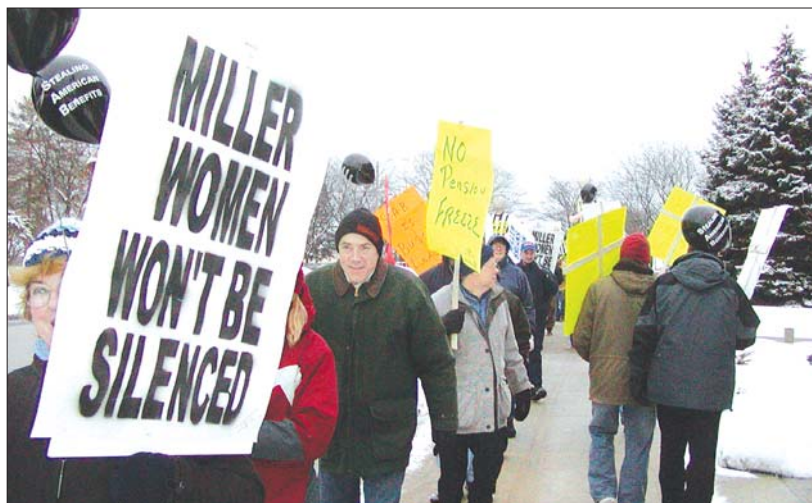
The early emphasis may be on "demand-driven" jobs, helping link workers to existing company needs. This is a peculiar failure in the city.

Unemployment hovers at 18% or more in several inner city areas -- and as much as 50% for African Americans in some neighborhoods, Barrett says -- yet a few miles away, companies are seeking hundreds of workers and are even willing to help train them.

That dovetails with one of Doyle's initiatives, a pledge of \$8 million to link the state technical colleges and area businesses to ready 36,000 workers -- only a portion of what the demand will be as baby boomers start retiring -- for manufacturing, health care, technology, biotechnology and the related

Workforce continued Page 8

Mockery greets Miller – See Page 11



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'Polluted election' leads to mobile pickets

Since mid-January, a mobile protest has been popping up from Fox Point to Wauwatosa, from city of Milwaukee to Wausau.

Wherever a worker from American State Equipment shows up to repair backhoes or other large machinery at private and public facilities, a cluster of union workers is likely to emerge within minutes, providing an informational picket in motion to call the community's attention to the thievery, as the union calls it, of worker rights on Jan. 12.

This pursuit is an opening salvo in union support of about 30 workers — the shop and field mechanics, techs and welders at American State Equipment, who seemed on Dec. 4 to overwhelmingly support unionizing.

But on Jan. 12, in an election conducted by the National Labor Relations Board, the unionizing effort failed by one vote.

The NLRB was apparently unaware of what had been happening behind the scenes, but now they know.

Local 139 of the International Union of Operating Engineers on Jan. 19, a week after the election, filed detailed and vivid objections with Region 30 of the NLRB. Simultaneously the union began its informational picketing, pressing awareness at union and non-union facilities.

The union is calling on the NLRB to throw out that election and either hold a new one or direct the company to start bargaining with Local 139.

The formal objections was followed swiftly by an unfair labor practices complaint, which the NLRB is combining into its ongoing investigation.

The union's legal charges record a pattern of job threats. It doesn't take much reading between the lines to point the NLRB to incidents that reek of management collusion with a handful of employees who were financially rewarded for bullying, poisoning the atmosphere or doing whatever they could get away with to keep the union out.

The circumstances, says Local 139, turned a workforce that strongly supported joining a union in December to a fearful workforce in January.



On this day, the informational pickets hit Fox Point. Second from left is Willie D. Ellis, president of the MCLC.

For years, employees at American State, who repair field equipment, have worked side by side with member of Local 139. In the process they learned a lot about the health and pension benefits, training advantages and representation the statewide union embodies.

Local 139 has 9,200 active and retired members operating and repairing heavy construction equipment.

It was this history that led the American State workers to express interest, and Local 139 helped inform them with the active work of its organizers. Local 139, insiders point out, is a savvy union that understands the legal tactics companies can employ in resistance, prepares workers for what they could face and looks for a strong majority before it enters into any NLRB secret election process.

In early December, says the local's business manager, Terrence McGowan, the local arranged an NLRB election because of "nearly unanimous support" among the company's full-time and part-time shop and field workers.

The objections filed with the NLRB after the election chronicle a disturbing pattern far beyond what even current (and to some dangerously weak) labor laws allow — job threats, hostile environment to union supporters, and

workers vocal and belligerent in their opposition to unionizing.

One of these workers, the objections point out, had close ties to the management. Another with a questionable record still got that remarkable raise. Another changed into a "Union Sucks" T-shirt to cast his vote.

One of these workers, the objections detail, twice defaced the NLRB election notices by checking the "No" box on the official postings.

The union believes that, once the NLRB gathers its own evidence of the close collusion between management and this

handful of anti-union intimidators, it will act to correct the circumstances. Said McGowan in support of the American State workers:

"All we are asking for is a fair vote based on what they believe is the best decision for them as employees of American State and not out of fear or pay-back for a bribe received from the employer."

In addition to the moving informational pickets, Local 139 is engaging in other lawful actions, including making its signatory contractors aware of the nature of the dispute.

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17 vie for 15 seats

With no opposing nominations, the officers of the Milwaukee County Labor Council were in effect elected by acclamation at the crowded delegates meeting February 7 at Serb Hall.

But with seventeen delegates nominated for 15 positions on the Executive Board -- after two of the current members declined to run again -- the council slate will be up for final election at what is likely to be an even more crowded meeting at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 7.

Deciding in advance not to run again were a veteran member of the board and its special committees, Douglas Drake, (USW, formerly United Steelworkers of America Local 1527), and a new member, Stanthia Grier, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 2150.

Current board members seeking another terms are Mary Jo Avery, Communications Workers of America Local 4603; Lyle Balistreri, Milwaukee Building & Construction Trades Council; Carolyn P. Castore, Office & Professional Employees International Union Local 9; William F. Christianson, International Association of Machinists Lodge 1845; Paula Dorsey, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 426;

Nacarci Feaster, Laborers Local 113; James K. Fields, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 33; Brandon W. Jensen, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 998;

Candice Owley, Wisconsin Federation of Nurses & Health Professionals Local 5001; Sam Purdy, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 494; Scott J. Redman, Plumbers and Gas Fitters Local 75; Patrick R. Weyer, Brewery Workers 9, United Auto Workers; Ross M. Winklbauer Sr. (USW, formerly PACE) Local 7-0232.

Nominated by delegates to seek positions on the board were, in alphabetical order, John Eiden, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1473; Kenneth Roberts, Graphics Communications Council/International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 577M; Michael Thomas, Service Employees International Union Local 150, and Andy Voelzke, USW Local 2-209.

New services add CWA jobs at AT&T

During 2007, AT&T will definitely add 150 union jobs to its Downtown offices, and that number could grow to 200 depending on the pace of acceptance of U-verse.

The expansion was announced by AT&T Wisconsin President Scott T. VanderSanden after negotiations with union leaders like Communications Workers of America (CWA) Regional Vice President Seth Rosen. The workers will be members of CWA Local 4603.

AT&T has already launched its new Internet Provider based video service in 11 markets across the nation and expects to have it available shortly in some areas of Milwaukee and its suburbs.

Details on wages and benefits are still being worked out with the CWA, given the complicated national contract CWA has with AT&T, covering Internet and video expansion. AT&T describes the jobs as family supporting with benefits.

The CWA contract explicitly pushes for more American jobs in any expanded service and will also mitigate against job losses incurred when SBC, Bell South, Cingular and AT&T went through a merger (with AT&T chosen as the best-known brand name to front the new company).

In the agreement, AT&T committed to returning thousands of outsourced jobs to the US with union oversight. Union leaders say the wording also encourages AT&T to fit jobs in new domestic services under the CWA umbrella.

The job growth here reflects AT&T's commitment to U-verse, a technology that will compete in cost and efficiency as the company bundles phone, Internet and video services. The local push

comes with some problems -- in Wisconsin there is a lawsuit against AT&T by Milwaukee and other communities, while behind the scenes all sides are trying to work out the dispute.

These communities decades ago worked out exclusive cable provider franchise deals, with payments to local governments. They want AT&T to be subject to cable franchises. AT&T argues otherwise.

In the years since those cable pacts, technology and competition have changed. Cable companies have been allowed to directly challenge phone companies, so it is no surprise the phone companies are pushing back.

Long distance has changed radically. Satellites, wires and wireless are all merging. Competition has grown fierce.

For unions, a major problem is that cable companies such as Time Warner have gone non-union or are even hostile to unions, providing lower pay and benefits or contracting out work

that doesn't help community economies grow.

AT&T argues that U-verse is not a cable provider, as it is an Internet based system.

But unquestionably the possibilities of U-verse put AT&T head-to-head with the largely non-union world of cable companies such as Time Warner.

Meanwhile, on a national level, AT&T has won support from free press advocates for its special letter to the Federal Communications Commission. To approve its merger, AT&T agreed to "net neutrality." That prevents different access and tier rates that would have benefited the largest media conglomerates and further squeezed out independent voices.

AT&T is confident that it can address all the challenges to U-verse. One of the signs of confidence was adding the new jobs at AT&T's Downtown facility on Milwaukee St. The workers will provide call center customer service and technical support for U-serve installation.



No opposition led to new terms for all the MCLC officers Feb. 7 -- from left, Annie Wacker as vice president, Willie D. Ellis as president and Sheila D. Cochran as full-time secretary-treasurer and chief operating officer. See story at left for the delegates' executive board choices on March 7.

Carpal Tunnel ?

Menomonee Falls, WI – A free report has just been released which reveals the hidden dangers of using prescription drugs, wrist splints, and even surgery to treat carpal tunnel symptoms. Did you know that splints may scar tissue to form in your wrist? For a free report that unleashes the shocking truth about carpal tunnel symptom treatment, call toll-free 1-888-251-9342. (24 hr. recorded message)

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Union sportsmen form club

Once again union members will get a real bargain — this one March 13 when the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Sports Show holds forth at the Wisconsin Exposition Center at State Fair Park in West Allis. Eight dollars will go twice as far.

On that Tuesday, every union member who simply presents his or her membership card at the ticket booth will get two tickets for the price of one.

But there's even bigger news from the arrangers of that bargain (a repeat of their effort last year). With AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka taking part at a January press conference in D.C., the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership announced the creation of the Union Sportsman's Alliance starting April 1.

It is a special club for some five million members of some 20 unions. They can join for a small annual fee, earn special rewards and mainly advocate for conservation issues and increased federal funding, with a special focus on preserving land and access for hunting and fishing.

The alliance, which has been in the thinking tank for several years, came to fruition from a variety of influences.

One is clearly the name of Teddy Roosevelt himself. A Republican president who fought for conversation and against monopolies, he seems to be enjoying a new appreciation in the country.

The November election, while regarded as highly partisan in some quarters, also reflected a new concern among supporters of both parties for finding a way to work together, as Republicans and Democrats once did — and the environment is one of those key changing areas.

So while the Theodore Roosevelt conservation group has long been regarded as Republican leaning, and while the unions involved have been dominantly Democratic, they are not the "strange bedfellows" described by the Wall Street Journal. On conservation this is a natural and long overdue combination — and other media outlets more astutely picked up on that.

Conservationists on all sides have been bothered by the current push for oil and drilling rights at the expense of hunting, fishing, land conservation and access. Concerns are growing that federal land has suffered in maintaining environment and balance, which is also essential for maintaining hunting and fishing opportunities.

Pushing the concept was deep interest in the issues and playing a positive role on America's future from union members and groups.

Independent surveys also revealed that, while 70% of the members of interested unions hunted or fished, only 29% belonged to any kind of "sportsmen's" or conservation organization.

Philip Brick, a professor of environmental politics at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Wash., pointed out to reporters that labor has been working with environmental groups through projects like the Apollo Alliance, a national partnership that brings unions together with environmental groups to promote job growth in clean-energy industries. (The MCLC is a strong supporter.)

But a Union Sportsmen's Alliance (using sportsmen as an identifiable generic term, since the club is keenly interested in adding both genders) could be the biggest such partnership ever. The historic political divide in the country, Brick suggests, can only be broken by mutual accord that can get things done.

Among the unions urging participating are the IMAW, the Plumbers and Pipefitters, the International Association of Fire Fighters and a range of trade

unions. Sponsors looking at the demographics joke that they don't expect a rush from "the Screen Actors Guild or teachers unions," but acknowledge that there may well be interested individuals within unions that the conservation partnership doesn't normally seek out.

The new alliance, abbreviated USA, will have a \$25 annual membership fee but offers free decals, opportunities for fishing trips, services and similar giveaways, deep discounts on services and outdoor gear from major manufacturers and retailers (just for union members) plus special interest access for searches, messages, tips and other services.

More information is available at www.trcp.org.

In Milwaukee, the two-for-one offer on March 13 provides a bargain entry for one of the most popular annual family events in Wisconsin (this is the 67th sports show).

Among the attractions: some 500 exhibitors, daily hunting and angling seminars, competitions in archery, shooting and fishing, wildlife art, a trout pond, plus family events and personalities at the Gander Mountain Hunting and Fishing Pavilion



UNIONS STUDY WAR NO MORE — Six busloads from Wisconsin contained Steelworkers, Teamsters, AFSCME, SEIU and AFT members, joining thousands more union activists in a crowd estimated at 400,000 Jan. 27 in D.C. The "Stop the War" rally, organized by United for Peace and Justice, was galvanized by participation from USLAW (US Labor Against the War), which today finds the majority of unions and 70% of the country supporting its call for an orderly withdrawal of US soldiers from the middle of the Iraq civil war. — Photo by Sue Ruggles

Back Pain?

Menomonee Falls, WI — According to a recently released back pain relief report, most back pain sufferers have no idea how to eliminate their pain. Some use heat, others ice. From sleeping on the floor, to pillows underneath the legs, back pain relief techniques vary. But thanks to a free report, local back pain sufferers finally know exactly what to do. To get a copy of the free "Back Pain Relief Report", call toll-free, 1-888-302-1889. (Toll-free, 24 hour recorded message)

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership have designated Tuesday, March 13, 2007 as Union Day at the 67th Annual Sports Show

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Union Day At The Sports Show is Co-Sponsored By The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP), working with America's Labor Unions To Guarantee Us All Places To Hunt and Fish

Milwaukee Union Family enjoying the 2006 Sports Show

Webber

From Page 1

strong Local 215.

He is the local's only full-time union employee, which chiefly "makes me the guy responsible," he noted, for the variety of issues the local faces.

The issues, like the firefighters, are all over the city map:

Building boom. Projects downtown and elsewhere continue the Milwaukee pattern of changing neighborhoods, new mixes of businesses, plants and homes. Over the years that's done more than close or shift fire stations. It's required fresh services, bigger and more sophisticated trucks, new routing patterns, different on and off hours, mastery of new equipment, coordination with other city and county personnel, modern issues of emergency response and homeland security, consolidated services — all of which require union flexibility, training and awareness.

The seemingly endless construction also clogs roads that fire trucks maneuver and demands attention by the city leaders and the union members of where the packed condos and apartments emerge yet how to keep serving the older neighborhoods.

"It just seems natural to me that I'm being called."

Webber now puts out figurative fires at the local's offices near Hawley Rd. and Wisconsin Ave.

From a firefighting perspective, "New buildings are better than old ones," Webber points out.

"There have been so many advances in construction, access and flame-retardant materials. But many of those units are attracting empty nesters," an older clientele that will pose challenges in an emergency.

Add to the mix chemical spills, traffic, power lines and gas pipes. Firefighters are expected to understand how to handle all of that.

Crime on the street and gawkers at shootings and fires. The fire department's emergency medical personnel are often on-site alone, seeking to stabilize and speed victims to the hospital.

"Again and again, we're there first and we save lives," Webber noted. But unruly or just gaping crowds raise constant issues of safety and saving lives for the paramedics.

New contract. The firefighters continue to work under an expired one and will be sitting down with the city over the next few months to thrash out a fresh

deal.

Threatened reduction of personnel. "Our local and I personally supported Tom Barrett," said Webber, "but we now have an issue."

The mayor wants to reduce some five-man truck teams to four, citing cost and efficiency. Webber's concern is not just numbers but safety, he said. "We'll be forceful but cooperative in exploring this, but the safety of our members is paramount," he said.

He points out that Milwaukee has a reputation worth maintaining — one of the most effective urban firefighting units in the nation.

An interview in his next office took place while Webber kept an eye on televised City Hall hearings. He had just handled a union discussion and was flying out after our talk to a gathering of IAFF national leaders.

Webber respected but didn't echo the view of many in the minority community that his election represents something of a breakthrough.



He is the first African American to serve as the local's president, but "I just distrust this talk about firsts — I think it's perfectly natural that I got elected, in terms of the ability I've demonstrated. I've proved myself to the firefighters," he said.

But he was eager to elaborate on how the profession, and the demands on the union, had changed and specialized since he first joined.

He has seen tragedies. He has felt the joy of personally rescuing children from a blaze. But he has changed, he said.

"The approach was different when I started," he recalled. "Back at the beginning, maybe for my first five years, it was more of a machismo mentality, an attitude of knock the fire down first no matter what." One of his firefighter friends, he recalled, died when he was thrown off a fire truck rushing to a blaze.

"Today the techniques have advanced, the technology and equipment are vastly different and better, and the primary concern is

safety. Yes, getting there fast — but are a national leader — but not risking lives unnecessarily."

The citizens read all the time about firefighters suffering "smoke inhalation," which sounds like a routine item, "but really costs in terms of health and length of life," Webber said. "This is no little thing."

It also disturbs him that firefighters tend to make headlines "when things go wrong."

It is the worst behavior, not the routine efficiency and applaudable response time, that makes headlines — until there's an event like the downtown explosion of the Falk plant. Then the community did take pride in how expertly and immediately the firefighters responded, secured and contained the scene.

Webber notes that women are now key parts of union membership and 15% or so of the firefighters are African American — not yet a demographic balance but far better than when he first joined.

Local 215 today involves far

Continued Next Page



Workers Comp Advice from Previant Goldberg

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From Page 6

more than bargaining for its members. The local is active in charities, in bailing out fellow units of firefighters in suburbs and throughout the state, in developing more expertise and knowledge for its members, in anticipating issues as well as responding to problems, in pushing for the best equipment and best specialty training.

It is a powerful political voice well beyond its actual membership and Webber has signaled interest in working on issues in common with other community and worker groups.

Administration of the firefighters is the responsibility of Chief William Wentlandt and other appointed (or elected) city leaders. Complaints and personnel issues are also handled by the Fire and Police Commission (though police issues tend to dominate public discussion), which also requires union involvement in ensuring worker rights.

Local 215, Webber emphasizes, cannot just take an observer role on emerging services, procedures and public issues, and he doesn't intend to. City Hall has already learned he is not shy about speaking up on all of this, and doesn't waste words.

Temperamentally, Webber is quite different than his predecessor, Gracz, who was often in the news for political and personal behavior. But Webber is committed to his members, and while the style is different he is known to be as focused across the table as he was knocking down fires in his early days.

As a member of the MATC board, he already is practiced in bringing together diverse groups and pushing community involvement and technical training. It's a curious role, since the board has some final say in the fate of other unions, those that work at the college and are currently in testy contractual negotia-



Webber chows down with the fire fighters who elected him during a party at Engine House 39 on Bradley Rd.

tions with the administration of President Darnell Cole.

The MATC board approves the final offers, but "I stay out of it, basically, while the unions and the administration are talking, and I think folks realize I understand these sort of issues intimately and I will be fair," Webber said.

Being the local's only full-time officer means lifestyle changes in 2007 for a captain who always juggled on-call duties with union service.

"Now I'm pretty much locked to this desk and to meetings," he said. As fit as he still looks, "I'm a little worried that I'm going to put on weight."

His three children are now grown and he admits his wife is probably more at ease knowing his new duties don't involve rushing toward physical danger.

Not that there isn't a stress cost in union affairs, he concedes. Though he doesn't seem to feel it.

"Yes, I know I'm going to miss the camaraderie and interaction of the firehouse, and it will be a slightly different life," he said.

"But I also know I can do the best things for all the firefighters right here, and I have to say, it just seems natural to me that I'm being called to do that."

-- Dominique Paul Noth

Bowling

MCLC MIXED SENIOR

JANUARY 2007 RESULTS

TEAM	WINS	LOSSES
GUTTER RATS	89	58
1 Board Over	781/2	681/2
CRAZY 8's	771/2	69 1/2
LABORERS 113	75	72
8 BALLS	69	78
SLAMMERS	52	88
IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 475		
BOB WAGNER		661
DAN LAACK		631
SAM SAMUELSON		583
ELMER HELM		545
WAYNE FRANZEN		544
TONY SANFELIPPO		520
WALLY GEISE		517
DELL GROSS		515
DON WIEDMANN		495
JOHN PADRON		482
IND. HIGH GAME OVER 185		
DAN LAACK		265
BOB WAGNER		245
ELMER HELM		222
SAM SAMUELSON		229
WALLY GEISE		214
WAYNE FRANZEN		211
TONY SANFELIPPO		201
DELL GROSS		200
DON WIEDMANN		194
JOHN PADRON		187
IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 395		
RAE MATOWSKI		481
PHYLLIS NAVARRETE		451
ELAINE KARIER		407
LAVERNE WERNER		407
MARLENE CRUZ		400
IND. HIGH GAME OVER 140		
RAE MATOWSKI		178
PHYLLIS NAVARRETE		160
ELAINE KARIER		158
LAVERNE WERNER		156
MARLENE CRUZ		143

Calendar

Saturday, February 24

ATU Black History Month Celebration

2-5 p.m. ATU Local 998 Hall, 734 N. 26th St. Poetry, music, dance sponsored by local's Women's Caucus with the theme "Empowering Our Youth"

Monday, February 26

New Alliance Listening Session

7-9 p.m. Yatchak Hall, 633 S. Hawley Rd. Big changes face Wisconsin's labor councils, but the planners need your feedback.

More information at www.milwaukeeelabor.org

Wednesday, February 28

MCLC Executive Board

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

Wednesday, March 7

Delegate Meeting

Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO 6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave. Election of Executive Council takes place at this meeting for locals and unions that are up to date on membership.

Wednesday, March 28

MCLC Executive Board

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

For updates visit www.milwaukeeelabor.org

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Workforce

From Page 1

skilled trades.

Even Doyle's grant proposals for university research initiatives are not just about hiring college graduates. Supportive skills from construction to laboratories will be foundations for biotech and other futures.

Doyle further recognized the importance by pledging \$2.2 million -- double the current budget -- to the Milwaukee Public Schools' youth apprentice programs.

Researchers suggest that putting to work those in the city who need jobs could add more than a billion dollars a year in wages. The cost of leaving them loose on the streets is incalculable.

The problem is beyond inviting the willing to available programs. It is returning a belief in

work and opportunity to the community.

Barrett was quick to point out Feb. 12 that the city has already taken strides. A federal Jobs Corps center will open next year. Summer youth employment has put 1,000 kids into work experience and will grow to 1,500 next summer.

But without coordination and nimble response, city leaders are reduced to drops in the bucket even as they seek to turn dislocated workers, youth dropouts, returning prisoners, older adults, the disabled and disadvantaged, displaced homemakers and many other categories of citizens to productive lives and wages.

Many seasoned figures in workforce development welcomed the idea of a central city role, but identified the most difficult tasks facing Barrett and Sykes.

A big one will be getting the



Mayor Barrett

major say in public monies, by making the city, which has the region's largest labor pool, central to regional workforce development.

The first resistance to Barrett's plan, not surprisingly, came from Scott Walker, the county executive in technical charge right now of the workforce investment board, currently headed by Gerard Randall, a fellow Republican. In comments to the press, Walker seemed ready to throw Randall to the wolves but wants to maintain a regional control, even though the county invests nothing right now.

Said one local official: "I don't think he (Barrett) and Sykes can do this without a megaphone voice in that funding."

The mayor "is up against some longtime political connections," said another official intimate with workforce funding groups. "But he'll have the governor on his side. Both want improvement to move faster."

Barrett noted that Milwaukee's history is at odds with many major cities that have successfully coordinated workforce initiatives.

About 22 of the top 25 cities put their mayors in the powerhouse of funding and strategy for workforce investment boards.

Not here. The official Workforce Investment Board for the region is actually Randall's nonprofit agency attached, at least on paper, to Milwaukee County.

It's commonly known as PIC, for the Private Industry Council, a name the public associates with private funding, but it's actually the conduit for federal funds from the US Department of Labor, principally created through the



Students from five area high schools got hands-on experience in product welding Feb. 8, along with cautions about the don'ts, from Ron Geiger, a veteran steamfitters welder turned MATC instructor. These are the sort of programs to ready a new workforce that Doyle wants the legislature to invest in.

Workforce Investment Act and related legislation.

The constant prominence of the PIC name on training programs mainly reflects its role as a pass-through for federal dollars, though PIC takes an administrative fee for every program, insiders say.

It will come as no surprise that such federal funds have shrunk mightily under the Bush administration.

Even back in 2003, UW researchers pointed out that federal labor funds for Wisconsin had dropped nearly 43% -- to \$70.9 million -- in a decade for key programs. This was the height of the manufacturing swoon, when Milwaukee lost nearly 12% of its production goods manufacturers, a third more than the US average.

What remains, though, while ever dwindling, is mandated millions -- and a new Congress may be more willing to help states reverse the downward slide.

For five fiscal years, 2002-2006, PIC received \$59.2 million in federal funds from the US Department of Labor, state records show.

Almost half of that -- 45% -- went to the HIRE Center and its applauded response to the needs of dislocated workers. *More about HIRE on opposite page.*

About \$12.67 million was in emergency grants written by HIRE experts and approved by the feds for devastating circumstances.

More is on the way -- \$740,000 being added as we went to press in a two-year grant written by HIRE to lessen the impact of closing the 440th Airwing at Mitchell Field.

(The community loses the spending of 1,300 reservists. There were 353 civilian Air Force employees and 53 contractors



Gov. Doyle

employed there. The grant brings professional service to the 200 employees and contractors who have sought HIRE's aid to stay in Milwaukee.)

All that, for now, reflects a built-in system that has bypassed the mayor.

But there are related problems that insiders and Barrett himself have identified:

- Redundant funding mechanisms and little dovetailing of good services.
- Wandering or power-grabbing leaders who hire people they know more than people who really know what to do.
- Programs that seem daring and worthy in pursuing at-risk youths but for which results and follow-up are crucial, expensive and neglected.
- Employers not putting their dollars where their complaints are.

Both Barrett and Doyle are realists as well as politicians. They can't make up in a fiscal year of two what has been lost over decades.

But some things have changed.

In particular: While the political majority is painfully thin, it exists in the state and in D.C. after the November elections.

And that is clearly enough for them to start yelling. "Enough!"

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Finding real gold not fool's gold in workforce training

As Tom Barrett and Donald Sykes, his leadership choice for a new Mayor's Office for Workforce Development, dig to improve the current situation, knowledgeable observers hope they will recognize, retain and maybe even clone some of the best programs.

The knowledgeable identify several such successes:

The HIRE Center, where a stubborn staff has created a national model in one-stop rapid response to bring dislocated workers new jobs and meaningful incomes.

HIRE, underfunded and overworked, has succeeded despite what several observers label bureaucratic neglect and resistance from the Private Industry Council (PIC), the non-profit agency currently operating as Milwaukee's recipient and dispenser of federal labor funds. *See main story.*

One sign of this dispute is that PIC's large board, which is

supposed to represent the community's movers and shakers, has lost its labor component. A half dozen union leaders have resigned from the board in the past few years over concerns about the treatment of HIRE -- and emerging issues about how PIC in general spends its public dollars.

While the dispute boils under the mayor's efforts to take over PIC's role, HIRE itself is doing the real shaking, serving thousands of Milwaukeeans every year and increasing its job placement rates by 40% in 2006.

The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP/BIG STEP), started by the state AFL-CIO in the 1990s, supported by state agencies for workforce development and transportation, bolstered by unions and contributions from businesses, contractors and foundations.

It has already placed nearly 3,000 residents -- 80% minorities



Receiving personalized help Feb. 8 in the HIRE Center's Learning Lab were workers who had lost long-term jobs in the closings of Red Star Yeast, St. Michael's Hospital and several other facilities.

from the inner city -- into family-sustaining jobs in the skilled trades. *See Page 10.*

BIG STEP is a key reason for some cheering statistics just reported by the Marquette Interchange project. While federal rules require that 8.9% of the

work hours go to minorities, minority workers actually filled more than 22% of the total work hours on the project for 2006, according to reports from Walsh Construction, Marquette Constructors and their subcontractors.

But these are just two notable (and union-partnered) efforts in a growingly complicated world of workforce funding.

There are other organizations linked - occasionally haphazardly, sometimes worthily - to larger institutions and sources of government funding. A partial list of the welter of concerned agencies, from religious to neighborhood groups to minority centers, would include UMOS, Riverworks and Word of Hope Ministries.

Workforce development is only a partial focus for some groups, since they want to seed small businesses or help in neigh-

borhood development. Some, such as faith initiatives, have actually won federal workforce money for their programs. Some deal with particular ages, ethnic backgrounds or physical problems.

What works? Which merely echo? Determining that and doing something about it could force the mayor's new office to confront a range of political and community players even as it works on embedded dysfunction.

Patronage, loss of focus, red tape, roadblocks in innovation and trivial partisan sideshows have kept Wisconsin's largest labor force from essential training and employment.

Poor management failed to anticipate both the loss of thousands of good jobs and the need to keep skilled training going for the optimistic rebound.

Thousands of soured workers won't go back to their old careers and many young people don't see a positive way up and out -- even as businesses clamor for more skilled employees.

Neglect has been endemic. "We saw the job loss and stopped the training," said one education dean. "Now we're trying to put people back in the pipeline in a far worse situation."

"Public money should follow outcomes," said one former PIC employee now employed at the federal level. "Programs like HIRE have the outcomes, but where are the resources?"

No wonder the mayor wants a loud voice in sending those resources and insisting on results.



Some 800 workers from 15 union apprentice programs, along with 50 teachers and contractors, crowded into Serb Hall Feb. 6 to enjoy a free box dinner, Building Advantage giveaways and a motivational speech on the high demands of union labeled construction. The speaker was the nationally known, bluntly funny Mark Breslin. RIGHT: Building Advantage and Operating Engineers Local 139 also manned booths at the major CONEX (construction equipment) show at State Fair Park, where the list of wages and benefits for union workers clearly blew away many non-union drop-bys.



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Graduation day

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It wasn't Miller Park, Cingular Arena or the other large venues where parents and students typically congregate to whoop, beam and even cry with graduation pride.

But at 38th & Wisconsin Ave., in the far smaller and still unfinished Center of Excellence, the same degree of enthusiasm was packed tight January 26. More than a hundred parents, children, trainers and business managers crowded every corner of the entry to applaud 18 graduates who had completed weeks of intense training to attain manufacturing certification.

A Republican legislator who began life as a welder, Rep. Mark Honadel, gave the keynote speech. The classes themselves picked valedictorians, as it were, to speak for them. Slaps and hugs were exchanged among the "graduates" -- virtually all minorities of both sexes from the inner city, ranging in age from the 20s to the 40s.

You might think this ceremonial hoopla is making too big a deal for 18 students. But Milwaukee has to rebuild itself one capable worker at a time. And several candidates openly

expressed the joy of leaving poverty and failure in the dust.

The afternoon ceremony celebrated just two of several training courses ongoing at the Center of Excellence, an old warehouse at 3841 W. Wisconsin Ave. converted by the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership and Big Step. Veteran union apprentice trainers and Waukesha County Technical College helped these courses.

Upon graduation, all 18 immediately have good-paying jobs in manufacturing, in several cases moving their spouses and families into real homes, not relatives' apartments. Most could now joke about the struggles along the way with math skills, mechanical adeptness and just plain getting up early in the morning to go to school.

There were seven graduates of the manufacturing welding class. There were 11 new masters of CNC. That stands for Computer Numerical Control, a skill of machining essential to operate a range of mechanical devices that fabricate metal components in a growing range of manufacturing shops and plants.

Both are portable trades that



can be adapted and carried on even beyond the jobs and pay levels the graduates will start with.


By imposing high standards of discipline and expectation at the start, and forcing the graduates to demonstrate advancement for several months, the program assures companies that these workers are motivated as well as adaptive, noted Rhandi Berth, the director of employment relations for WRTP.

The programs, beyond ties with unions and technical colleges, are funded in both employment and diversity efforts by the US Department of Labor, multiple state departments (Commerce, Workforce Development, and Transportation) and prominent foundations.

A special orientation is scheduled for Friday, March 23, to help move low-paid workers into boilermaker welding, with a tutor being flown in for the program.

For general information -- and orientation by appointment -- call (414) 342-9787.

Family, friends, trainers and employers packed the Center of Excellence as the graduates (below) soberly took in speeches that celebrated their new expertise and higher wages. The Jan. 26 ceremony was part of ongoing training in various skills at the center.

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Foaming mad, Miller union keeps Lite touch

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
 Editor, Labor Press
**TASTES GREAT!
 LESS WOMEN!**

Sorry about that, but like thousands of chortling Americans I've been running old Miller commercials through my head and twisting them to fit the brewery's latest fumble, which managed to conjure up sex discrimination and age discrimination in one blow.

The owners of SAB/Miller are not laughing. And stockholders will have to wonder about a management that is as heavy-footed as Clydesdales -- sorry, the other beer.

The board of South African Breweries, flown in for a Milwaukee meeting Feb. 12, got a great taste of why the national media and the bloggers are in gleeful frenzy over the whole shebang.

They were greeted by marchers from 20 unions, including all of their own, inflated "Miller Girls" dolls with their mouths taped shut, black balloons emblazoned "Stealing American Benefits" (200 more were floating around the ceilings inside the corporate offices), homemade signs that each had a laugh as well as a point -- and news cameras drinking it all in.

What started this hubbub was a bad offer, worse miscalculations and really lousy timing.

Around the US, Miller has negotiated successfully with primarily male and very large unions like the Teamsters and Machinists. Never has it tried -- or even brought up -- freezing their pensions.



But that's what it offered its 120 members of Local 35 of the Office and Professional Employees International. And the company wouldn't budge.

These office and clerical workers are mainly women. Their average length of service at Miller is 25 years, said OPEIU Local 35's business manager, Judy Burnick. Many are close to retirement, some could actually take retirement. Their pension plan was not even as good as what other Miller unions had. And 60% of what they had been promised -- or a late-life 401k -- was not even close to their legitimate expectations.

The workers didn't just overwhelmingly reject the offer. They launched a campaign of protest, quickly joined by a broader worker community. Union brothers aren't just marching alongside their sisters. At most events, they outnumber them.

Now, the bad offer part is obvious. The miscalculations are a shotgun pattern that speaks to corporate culture, marketing culture and human behavior.

"I think they thought we were old and would just tremble and go away." Several of the workers, some over a lunch, some as they marched on cold days in front of Miller, hold that view: The company stiffed them

because they didn't expect a "bunch of old ladies" to fight.

The workers also suspect that SAB, which bought Miller back in 2002, brings a foreign expectation about complacent, pliant women in its operations.

That one I'm not so sure of. Yes, SAB may have a lot to learn about employee relations and marketing in the US.

But using bikinis to sell beer? Acting like the only women you want around your corporate office are not those who do the work but those who simper, flirt and squeal, "Oh, Mr. Norman!"?

That strikes me as a domestic label, not a foreign import.

Except American beer makers might hide it better -- once they thought about how many women not only drink beer but also are the family shoppers.

There was a deeper miscalculation: Picking on mothers and grandmothers near retirement.

Maybe it's a knee-jerk chivalry heritage, but the public doesn't get as upset about retirement benefits taken away from grandfathers, though it probably should. Change the gender and we know immediately that management is showing insensitivity at best, age discrimination at worst.



Another miscalculation: The modern media may not do much anymore to cover even large workforces on strike, but when it's clearly a battle of the sexes, they jump.

The previous evidence was right here in Wisconsin, over the same sort of issue and with the same sort of inventive response.

When Aurora over the bargaining table suggested to the nurses and health professionals at a Burlington hospital that if they wanted a good pension, they should "marry well," the union nurses dressed up as brides and marched en masse to ask the pension-rich CEO to marry them. It was a black eye for the state's largest health provider that got nationwide TV coverage.

And now comes the lousy timing. Unions in the past have cut back on their benefits to keep

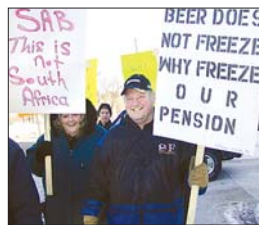
big companies afloat, but Miller? It had just reported revenues in excess of \$15.3 billion and profits in excess of \$2.9 billion.

Even lousier timing was putting its popular "Man Laws" commercials on hiatus just as Local 35 started leafleting sports events and other gatherings about the company's treatment of women.

More is awaiting the Miller board -- plans for a YouTube Internet video parody of the "Man Laws" commercials, with hundreds of wags offering ideas for the expected "Woman Laws," and more protests wherever the executives meet.

The women of OPEIU have also taken to wearing necklaces around their neck dangling large screws. The meaning is clear all the way to South Africa.

And it's delivered with a sense of humor.





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Union sportsmen form club

Once again union members will get a real bargain — this one March 13 when the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Sports Show holds forth at the Wisconsin Exposition Center at State Fair Park in West Allis. Eight dollars will go twice as far.

On that Tuesday, every union member who simply presents his or her membership card at the ticket booth will get two tickets for the price of one.

But there's even bigger news from the arrangers of that bargain (a repeat of their effort last year). With AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka taking part at a January press conference in D.C., the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership announced the creation of the Union Sportsman's Alliance starting April 1.

It is a special club for some five million members of some 20 unions. They can join for a small annual fee, earn special rewards and mainly advocate for conservation issues and increased federal funding, with a special focus on preserving land and access for hunting and fishing.

The alliance, which has been in the thinking tank for several years, came to fruition from a variety of influences.

One is clearly the name of Teddy Roosevelt himself. A Republican president who fought for conversation and against monopolies, he seems to be enjoying a new appreciation in the country.

The November election, while regarded as highly partisan in some quarters, also reflected a new concern among supporters of both parties for finding a way to work together, as Republicans and Democrats once did — and the environment is one of those key changing areas.

So while the Theodore Roosevelt conservation group has long been regarded as Republican leaning, and while the unions involved have been dominantly Democratic, they are not the "strange bedfellows" described by the Wall Street Journal. On conservation this is a natural and long overdue combination — and other media outlets more astutely picked up on that.

Conservationists on all sides have been bothered by the current push for oil and drilling rights at the expense of hunting, fishing, land conservation and access. Concerns are growing that federal land has suffered in maintaining environment and balance, which is also essential for maintaining hunting and fishing opportunities.

Pushing the concept was deep interest in the issues and playing a positive role on America's future from union members and groups.

Independent surveys also revealed that, while 70% of the members of interested unions hunted or fished, only 29% belonged to any kind of "sportsmen's" or conservation organization.

Philip Brick, a professor of environmental politics at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Wash., pointed out to reporters that labor has been working with environmental groups through projects like the Apollo Alliance, a national partnership that brings unions together with environmental groups to promote job growth in clean-energy industries. (The MCLC is a strong supporter.)

But a Union Sportsmen's Alliance (using sportsmen as an identifiable generic term, since the club is keenly interested in adding both genders) could be the biggest such partnership ever. The historic political divide in the country, Brick suggests, can only be broken by mutual accord that can get things done.

Among the unions urging participating are the IMAW, the Plumbers and Pipefitters, the International Association of Fire Fighters and a range of trade

unions. Sponsors looking at the demographics joke that they don't expect a rush from "the Screen Actors Guild or teachers unions," but acknowledge that there may well be interested individuals within unions that the conservation partnership doesn't normally seek out.

The new alliance, abbreviated USA, will have a \$25 annual membership fee but offers free decals, opportunities for fishing trips, services and similar giveaways, deep discounts on services and outdoor gear from major manufacturers and retailers (just for union members) plus special interest access for searches, messages, tips and other services.

More information is available at www.trcp.org.

In Milwaukee, the two-for-one offer on March 13 provides a bargain entry for one of the most popular annual family events in Wisconsin (this is the 67th sports show).

Among the attractions: some 500 exhibitors, daily hunting and angling seminars, competitions in archery, shooting and fishing, wildlife art, a trout pond, plus family events and personalities at the Gander Mountain Hunting and Fishing Pavilion



UNIONS STUDY WAR NO MORE — Six busloads from Wisconsin contained Steelworkers, Teamsters, AFSCME, SEIU and AFT members, joining thousands more union activists in a crowd estimated at 400,000 Jan. 27 in D.C. The "Stop the War" rally, organized by United for Peace and Justice, was galvanized by participation from USLAW (US Labor Against the War), which today finds the majority of unions and 70% of the country supporting its call for an orderly withdrawal of US soldiers from the middle of the Iraq civil war. — Photo by Sue Ruggles

Back Pain?

Menomonee Falls, WI — According to a recently released back pain relief report, most back pain sufferers have no idea how to eliminate their pain. Some use heat, others ice. From sleeping on the floor, to pillows underneath the legs, back pain relief techniques vary. But thanks to a free report, local back pain sufferers finally know exactly what to do. To get a copy of the free "Back Pain Relief Report", call toll-free, 1-888-302-1889. (Toll-free, 24 hour recorded message)

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership have designated Tuesday, March 13, 2007 as Union Day at the 67th Annual Sports Show

Sports Show

Celebrates Wisconsin's Unions

Tuesday, March 13, 2007

2 FOR 1 TICKET OFFER!

UNION MEMBERS:
Present your membership card at the Sports Show box office and get

2 Tickets For The Price of 1

That's just \$8 for two tickets!

Offer good only for tickets purchased at the box office

Nearly 500 outdoor exhibits and features

- Shop for your next hunting or fishing trip, outdoor gear, boats, ATVs and much more
- Competitions to include archery, shooting and fishing derby
- Trout pond
- Daily hunting and angling seminars
- Gander Mountain Hunting and Fishing Pavilion
- Wildlife art
- Family Adventure Pavilion with Dan Small
- Great Shows on the Chevy Trucks Main Stage

Union Day At The Sports Show is Co-Sponsored By The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP), working with America's Labor Unions To Guarantee Us All Places To Hunt and Fish

Milwaukee Union Family enjoying the 2006 Sports Show