



### Touched by farewell

Her giggle may be famous but Pat Salmon was clearly moved when co-workers at the state AFL-CIO threw her a retirement party. Story on Page 7.

### A call to help children of prisoners

Guest speaker Anita Johnson lay that challenge before union members at the January delegate meeting. Story on Page 9



### A night for King

MCLC leader Sheila Cochran with keynote speaker Pedro Colon. See Page 5



# AFL-CIO MILWAUKEE LABOR PRESS

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Thursday, January 26, 2006

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## Longtime leader draws long goodbye

Tom Parker once explained to his son Michael that he never negotiated a contract during his unprecedented 21 years as president of the Milwaukee County Labor Council.

“What he did was create the atmosphere and the comfort so different sides could get together,” Michael recalled.

It was a geniality combined with a little tough pushing that came naturally to a man who loved people, politics and family parties – and viewed the entire labor community as his extended family.

Parker, whose health issues led to his retirement in 1999, died New Year’s Day at age 65 of the complications of diabetes and surgery. The affection he engendered brought a five-hour stream of mourners to the Max A. Sass & Sons Funeral Home, 4747 S. 60th St., and hundreds more the next day (Saturday, January 7) to a funeral mass and then a special luncheon of reminiscences and hugs at Serb Hall.

More tributes filled the delegate meeting in the same Serb Hall space January 11 when the MCLC donated \$1,000 to Parker’s favorite charity, the United Way, which he also served as a campaign chairman.

It was a spontaneous outpouring of memory and respect for a labor leader re-elected 10 times for two-year terms, mainly without opposition.

Parker toiled around the city in a car bearing AFL-CIO as his license plate, served on 40 boards at one time in his devotion to the larger community, was chosen for major city and state commissions and pushed his fellow labor leaders into embracing computers and Internet technology as another way to chat up people and further

**Parker** continued Page 8



Tom Parker at a national AFL-CIO gathering in the early 1990s (top left), addressing MCLC delegates last April (bottom left) and giving blood as part of a union health campaign in the 1980s.

## Security in later years slips away across America

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

At 18, Lyle Conner joined thousands of Smith Steel Workers on the assembly lines at a vast north side plant employing eight unions and nearly 9,000 workers.

That was the 1970s, when about 62% of all active US workers had their retirement covered by defined-benefit pension plans.

Milwaukee’s historic manufacturing power was constricting, but the large industrial corporations still preached growth, enterprise, optimism and even the hope of a 35-hour work-week, pledging these would be family-supporting jobs into the

21<sup>st</sup> century. Expend your youthful energy and physical health for us, the workers were told, and

we will be there with health care and monthly pension income throughout retirement.

Now in his early 50s and secretary-treasurer of the local, Conner faces not just a dimmer personal future but a larger, grimmer, sadder task.

He, President Donald Schrauth and the other officers are shutting the local down.

The leaders of the directly affiliated AFL-CIO Local 19806 are selling the venerable union hall on 27<sup>th</sup> St., seeking archival space for truckloads of records

and photos, and working with the AFL-CIO and international steelworkers to create a temporary office and the legal clout to keep the fight going. They know the legal maneuvers of Tower Automotive, which took over the plant from A.O. Smith less than a decade ago, make it likely that all they can save is pennies on the dollar, but even if America seems to have given up on its

**Pensions** continued Page 4



The Smith Steel Workers and Lyle Conner are packing it in at the venerable union hall – a sign of the unsettling times.

# Please! Let's not have a year like that again!

By **Kenneth Germanson**  
Special to the Labor Press

It's probably too much to hope for, but in a New Year can we begin discussing the really serious issues that affect the lives and deaths of people, that involve the chances for children to grow up healthy and strong and wise, that involve helping all families to gain some decent standard of life?

Or will it be more of the same?

The year 2005 became a disgusting array of "Big Issues," such as whether the brain-dead Terry Schaivo should continue to live under artificial means. With all the problems in the world, can you imagine why Congress would go into a special weekend session to force this issue? President Bush even came back from Crawford, Texas, to sign the measure into law.

This was presented as a "life" issue at the same time that the death toll of US servicemen and women was nearing 2,000, at the time when the deaths of Africans due to AIDS and HIV were reaching epidemic proportions and at a time when the infant mortality rate in the US continues to be among the worst

of industrialized nations.

To our media, of course, the Terry Schaivo case became a "good story," and media flocked to the homes of her husband and parents and to the hospital to get this human story.

Then, of course, we have the concern over gay marriages. Whole elections are threatened to be determined on this so-called "family values" issue. In Wisconsin, the Republican-controlled legislature is scheduling a vote on a constitutional amendment requiring marriages to be between a man and woman only, and threatening many other living arrangements.

Sad to say, this mean-spirited piece of legislation is not only unneeded (same sex marriages are not legal in Wisconsin), but it would destroy many families with children who currently have compatible living arrangements.

The real purpose of this measure is to beat Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle, a Democrat, in the 2006 elections to pave the way for the Republicans to carry the state (always a swing state in presidential elections) in 2008. GOP leaders in the state have said this proposal would be bound to bring out the

## Comment

Republican base vote, with that turnout spreading over into other elections.

It's a sad cynical ploy, done by scheming politicians to win elections.

Also, in Wisconsin, we have a concealed carry law that will be a tight squeeze for Doyle to veto. It allows persons to carry hand-



The author, a veteran journalist and labor leader, is also president of the Wisconsin Labor History Society.

guns. It's a dangerous bit of legislation, bound to result in more gun deaths, but likely not to foil a single street robbery, as its opponents say it will. This, too, is being promoted by the gun lobby, and in a state where hunting is popular it's bound to find political favor among many persons in the rural and northern

parts of the state.

There were other distractions, such as the debate over whether to equate the teaching of evolution with so-called intelligent design, and forcing such a debate into the public schools.

It is, however, an issue that again will appeal to the base of voters the Republicans hope to stir up.

What a sad, sickening bunch of opportunists!

Can they really believe this stuff is vital and important to our future? Many of these "know-nothings" have been to college, have been exposed to education that is supposed to expand the mind. Certainly, the designers of this strategy, such as the talented schemer in the White House, Karl Rove, must know better.

Yet, they know how to raise issues that tug at the heartstrings of so many caring Americans. In a crafty way, they have gotten many ordinary Americans to support candidates and policies that are not in their best interests, that don't truly benefit economic living standard and actually may drive standards lower.

How often have you seen bumper stickers on older cars, driven by persons who are obviously living on the edge of economic subsistence, proclaiming "Bush/Cheney," "Guns Don't Kill ..." or "Man + Woman = Marriage"? We must not belittle their feelings about these issues, but we should ask them to reconsider their priorities.

These same politicians who are championing these policies as representing "family values" are indeed also taking earnings out of the pockets of these ordinary Americans. They are denying them decent and affordable health care. They are sending their children off to an unnes-

sary war in Iraq. Oh, it's a sweet game these charlatans are playing: Keep people's minds on gun-carry laws and gay marriage and they won't listen to the debate on the important, vital issues of the day.

Perhaps in 2006 — an important election year — it is time to change the debate.

Let's concentrate on the key issues that truly affect our lives, and the lives of our children and grandchildren: ending the war in Iraq, a national health plan, a return to an environmental policy that protects the future, decent labor laws that return rights to working people, economic policies that reduce the gap between rich and poor, and social policies that will return us to the road to a just society serving ALL of our peoples, not merely the favored few.

These are the issues we need to begin bringing to the forefront.

Can it happen in 2006? Not easily. We need to somehow overcome the tendency of our media to play up the "sexy issues" and begin to concentrate on the more complex but important concerns.

Right now the media, contrary to the claims it is "liberal," is the handmaiden of the conservative movement and finds it easy to play up these hot-button controversies.

Our job as thinking and caring Americans — and, yes, we are patriotic, regardless of what the other side says — is to begin to use every opportunity to speak up, to write letters and to be heard about those issues that are critical to building a good future and to saving the United States of America as the most democratic society that was ever created.

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# MCLC welcomes new officers and returning unions

An election by acclamation, several quiet moments of mourning, the swearing in of new officers, a welcome back to old union friends and (See Page 9) a moving plea to help the troubled youth of a troubled city.

It was certainly a busy meeting January 11 for the Milwaukee County Labor Council delegates at Serb Hall.

The elevation to president of Willie D. Ellis, a business representative and organizer for Operating Engineers Local 139, had opened up his part-time position of MCLC vice-president, so nominations from the floor were in order.

There was only one -- a name put forward by Lyle Balistreri, an MCLC board member and president of the Milwaukee Building & Construction Trades Council, AFL-CIO.

He nominated Annie Wacker, whose activism and personality are well known to the labor community. Wacker is a current board member (AFSCME Local 1954) and an AFL-CIO field mobilizer who has organized many community service events and campaigns. She has also served as an election specialist for the labor council and ran for public office herself (Milwaukee School Board).

## Official notice

AFSCME Local 80 (made up of West Allis public workers) has changed the regular location and date of its monthly union meetings.

The meetings are now held the second Thursday of each month (none in July and August) at the H.A. Todd VFW Post, 9159 W. Beloit Rd.

Randy A. Weishar, president Diane Malinger, recording secretary.



State Rep. Barbara Toles administers the oath of office to new board member Carolyn Castore (left) and new Vice-President Annie Wacker, at the January delegate meeting.

When there was no other recommendation, Balistreri suggested Wacker be elected on the spot by acclamation. And she was.

Wacker, somewhat to her surprise, found herself being sworn in for office alongside new board member Carolyn Castore, a member of Local 9 of OPEIU (Office and Professional Employees International).

Two other new board members, like Castore elected in December, could not attend because of union business. Both are members of IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers) though from different locals. They are Stanthia Grier of Local 2150 and Sam Purdy of Local 494.

The oath of office was administered by State Rep. Barbara Toles (D-Milwaukee), herself a former MCLC delegate (American Federation of Teachers Local 212).

The Feb. 1 delegate meeting will open the nomination process

for the seat on the executive board Wacker is leaving. After that one is done, joked Secretary-Treasurer Sheila D. Cochran, "we can finally print a new letterhead."

Cochran also told the delegates the council would be welcoming back with enthusiasm the members forced by circumstances last summer to depart.

This is the result of the new Solidarity Charter congeniality between the AFL-CIO and the

Change to Win federation (unions that disaffiliated from the national AFL-CIO). Solidarity Charters, proposed by the AFL-CIO in the wake of the unhappiness over the unions' national divide, allow locals to return to full participation under the same per-capita rules as before to local, state and regional AFL-CIO labor councils.

Each international union will work out how to reimburse the national AFL-CIO's extensive support of local councils.

Paperwork, Cochran said, has already been completed for SEIU District 1199, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1444 and one of several Teamsters units in the council, Local 23. Cochran expects everyone to be back in a few weeks - and there are inquiries as well from unions and locals that had not been affiliated for a long time, if ever.

That means Milwaukee unions are on a path to a more massive united front than before last summer, just in time for Labor 2006, which is shaping up into a vigorous election effort.

The delegates also observed several moments of silence, remembrance and sympathy. One was for Tom Parker, the former MCLC president who died New Year's Day (See Page 1). Another was for the death in an auto accident of one daughter of a noted retired MCLC activist, Mary Hawkins.

And prayers were said silently for the 12 West Virginia coal miners who died of carbon monoxide fumes after an explosion at the Sago Mine. The cause of that explosion is still under investigation, but the mine was cited more than 200 times in the last year by regulators for minor, major and "negligence" violations.

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# Pensions

From Page 1

workers, the Smith Steel Workers don't intend to. "We're going to fight for everything we can," said Conner.

He and his fellow Tower orphans are, in reality, barely a ripple in an ocean of American workers who can no longer expect health care and economic security in their golden years.

*Defined-benefit pension plans provide a guaranteed retirement income usually based on years of service or earnings. They're evaporating just as the legions of Baby Boomers approach retirement.*

This sea of despair is climbing the economic scale into the upper middle class and is poised to drown everyone but the top 1% receiving lush tax cuts from the current administration.

The situation has raised bipartisan cries of alarm. Troubled companies such as Tower have flooded to bankruptcy courts to break their promises to workers while successful companies have simply announced to their non-union and salaried employees that traditional pension plans are being frozen in favor of 401(k)s.

Tower filed for bankruptcy reorganization in 2005 to protect its considerable assets (it's still the global leader in auto frame assembly, though much is now done in Mexico and Asia). This month it asked the bankruptcy judge in New York for permission to dump its union contracts and its defined-benefit pensions for retirees.

So it is not just closing the Milwaukee factory (the last 80 workers are finishing up in the next months). It is also abandoning the compensation promises it made or willingly inherited. It is seeking to throw aside the monthly expectations of some 2,000 Milwaukee-factory retirees.

*Today, less than 13% of US workers are covered solely by a defined-benefit pension plan as their retirement*

It would also load responsibility onto the US taxpayers through the PBGC, the federal Pension Benefit Guarantee Corp. But the PBGC only insures a fraction of the pension commitments and already is swamped by previously dumped plans.



Once politicians could line up at the A.O. Smith gate to lure thousands of votes. In 1960 that brought in Rep. Clement Zablocki (far left), Sen. Bill Proxmire (center) and presidential hopeful John F. Kennedy, a portrait now departing the closing union hall.

The harsh games in bankruptcy court have already decimated steelworkers across the US. It is also a dagger pointed at UAW's Delphi workers. It has savaged the airline industry.

But it is not a slam dunk. While bankruptcy courts have not spoken out about the moral deficit this practice reflects, they are keenly aware of the gigantic federal deficit involved. Should they support these companies' escape hatch, they will add billions of tax dollars beyond what the PBGC expected to spend. Many observers expect the courts to start balking.

Unions, despite the negative headlines, have actually raised effective arguments to slow the dumping or force companies to provide other compensation or protection in bankruptcy court.

*A decade ago there were 59,000 defined-pension benefit plans at US companies. Today there are less than half that.*

Congress has stalled for years in writing laws to make companies put aside enough money to cover defined-benefit promises, but now it may be too late. Well-heeled corporations are simply abandoning the traditional pension approach. Where there's not a union it's easier to do. They just spread the news on the corporate website:

Your defined pension plan freezes on such-and-such a date; you'll get what's in there but no more, and we're switching everyone to a 401(k).

*401(k)s are defined contribution plans. Employers withhold a certain percentage of salary and employees decide how to invest it.*

At first quietly and now

accelerating at warp speed. Verizon, IBM, Lockheed Martin, Motorola – all companies once pointed out as model places to work whether unionized or not – have frozen or soon will their defined-benefit pension plans.

The trend to 401(k)s as the only option for retirees (besides Social Security) has confounded economic think tanks that know the concept of 401(k)s was intended as a "supplement" to – not a replacement for – other pension plans.

Along with the corporate image of renegeing on promises, the freezing of pension plans in favor of less rewarding and more risky 401(k)s is likely to throw the growing elderly population into deep financial hardship. While the decision harms all workers it is particularly hard on older ones since traditional pension plans build up their biggest reserves in the final years before retirement.

Karen Friedman, policy director for the Pension Rights Center, an advocacy group for workers and retirees, calls the trend a betrayal and sarcastically notes that it seldom affects the posh benefits and retirement perks of top executives.

It's also like piling on a fall-en runner. Companies are simultaneously asking active workers to pay more for health care and even to absorb retiree health costs. At non-union companies, where workers don't have the voice to negotiate change, executives are simply ditching retiree health care coverage for new hires or demanding radical cutbacks in current retiree health coverage. Yet health care costs have doubled in the last decade. In 2004 alone, health care costs grew at twice the rate of inflation, and that was a slow year.

More pile-on: IBM and other-once admired companies are actually abandoning commitments to good pensions that in the past led workers to accept stagnant wages and even cutbacks.

Notes Friedman in interviews: "We are asking people to save more for their retirement, for their education. We are asking them to save for health care. How much can individuals save?"

The move to even the best-run 401(k)s, she points out, still

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means that a worker is "going to end up losing thousands and thousands of dollars of expected benefits."

*Some companies match employee contributions to the 401(k). Others add a percentage. Some add nothing. None of this 401(k) money is protected by the government.*

Tower and other companies in the troubled auto parts business can point to global economic pressure, but the loss of traditional pension plans is sweeping through companies that can well afford to continue them.

The CEOs blame Congress, the cheaper costs facing foreign competitors or the American economy. They say they don't know what to set aside to pay for pension plans in the current uncertainty. Do they expect an individual worker to know better?

The facts say differently. Traditional pension plans, run by professional managers and scrutinized by union leaders and human resources watchdogs, perform infinitely better than 401(k) investments the worker chooses on his or her own.

*The median account balance of 401(k) plans in this country is \$15,000.*

Workers left with 401(k)s as their only avenue are tempted not to invest for an old-age future, given all the other pressures on their wages.

Conner and many other American workers now looking for new jobs have no illusion that large manufacturing plants will ever come back in the US.

But they see a greater loss, the breaking of a social contract.

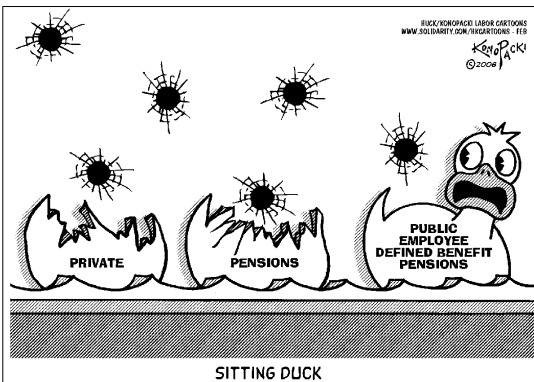
The Smith Steel Workers Conner joined more than three decades ago built on previous generations and values, on a belief and a pride in both company and union.

These were the people who kept hundreds of Milwaukee stores in business, home purchase active and higher education possible for all their children. It was a community attitude that filled Milwaukee's churches as well as its taverns.

The pension deals reassured the community at large. They represented a future after decades of labor – difficult intense work on factory floors, requiring skill with machinery and physical hardship. But after those sacrifices of body, mind and money, workers could enter old age without imposing a burden on their children or on the taxpayers or on the charities.

It is that vision of a rewording America that has broken, replaced by an Ownership Society in which everyone mainly owes debt and scrambles for themselves.

*The average total size of a 401(k) upon retirement today is about \$50,000.*



SITTING DUCK

# UAW event celebrates the kinship of Dr. King

AN EMOTIONAL SHEILA COCHRAN (left) presented the UAW's civil rights excellence award – a first for a Wisconsinite – to her longtime friend, Janie Jackson (center), chairperson of the Milwaukee Metro Area UAW Civil Rights Council, as vice-chairperson Fred Royal Jr. applauded.

THE MOMENT WAS PART of the 11th UAW celebration in honor of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, who would have been 77 this year had he not been assassinated 38 years ago.

THE AWARDS AND THE EVENING January 7 were a striking combination of a generation inspired by Dr. King and the active new generations embracing that torch.

A SURPRISE GUEST SPEAKER, Mayor Tom Barrett (below right), spoke about the legacy of the late Rosa Parks, a Dr. King compatriot, while young people spoke and sang in her honor. KEYNOTE SPEAKER STATE REP PEDRO COLON pointed out how Dr. King's human rights consciousness incorporated all families of all races, faiths and sexual identities under attack in the modern world.

LATINO RHYTHMS WERE ADDED by the Aurora Weir Education Center drummers and dancers, brought to the event by one of last year's keynoters, County Supervisor Peggy West.

AND COCHRAN, THE CURRENT SECRETARY-TREASURER of the MCLC and still a UAW member, brought the entire civil rights organizing council to the front of the hall at Washington Park Senior Center as a reminder of lessons learned and mountains still to climb.



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In order to qualify you need to have earnings from a job or self-employment. The largest amounts are paid to workers raising children. The top income for a single parent raising two or more children is \$35,263 for the 2005 tax year. For married parents raising more than one child that limit is \$37,263.

For parents raising one child, the limits on taxable income are \$31,030 (single) and \$33,030 (married). The child you are raising can be your own

child, grandchild, sister or brother, niece or nephew, or foster child placed with you by an authorized agency.

Children must be under 19 or under 24 if fulltime students and any age if totally disabled. Children must live with the family over half the year and have valid social security numbers.

Even people without children may receive a credit if they worked in 2005 and have taxable income under \$13,750 (married filing jointly) or \$11,750 (single or head of household).

EIC can be a valuable wage supplement for hard working people. Both the federal and state credit can give you a refund even if you do not owe tax or maybe do not even need to file.

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) programs provide free help for families. These programs provide both federal and

state tax preparation free of charge for people with limited incomes, disabilities, or limited English proficiency.

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**FAR LEFT:** Hundreds of guests had no trouble all afternoon Dec. 15 finding the sumptuous buffet laid out at the annual holiday party of the Milwaukee Building & Construction Trades Council – it was right inside the door of Plumbers Hall.

**ABOVE AND LEFT:** Kept busy greeting guests were the building council's president, Lyle Balistreri (above right), and his assistant, Regina Tesnow (at left), also keeper of the raffle tickets.

**FAR LEFT:** Public officials, many facing re-election campaigns in the fall, were also busy table-hopping. Here Wisconsin Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager chats with MCLC Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran.

**BELOW:** The following day brought a new array of food and union, political and community leaders to the open house of the MCLC at the newly named Yatchak Hall at 633 S. Hawley Rd. Legal brainpower was abundantly in evidence, including Milwaukee County Circuit Court Chief Judge Kitty K. Brennan, who had just survived some contentious budget battles with the wrong-headed sheriff and county executive, and the Wisconsin Supreme Court's newest justice, Louis Butler, still battling some thorny constitutional issues. Labor leaders visible in the background are Cochran (far left) and Wisconsin AFL-CIO President David Newby (far right).

# Party hearty



It started out at the building-trades party as just a portrait of one of the newest board members, Sam Purdy of IBEW Local 494, being congratulated by a veteran board member, AFSCME District Council 48's Annie Wacker, after his December election. Within weeks, though, Wacker was elevated out of her board seat into the role of vice-president for the Milwaukee County Labor Council.



At the MCLC open house, Secretary Robin Lundgren catches up with retired Secretary-Treasurer Earl Lepp, while (below) Neighborhood House's Marge Beil cracks up State. Rep. Jon Richards.



# Affection outweighs even laughter as Pat Salmon retires

“We’re sure going to miss that giggle.” That was the consensus, and the joke on several banners that dotted the walls of Dery Hegarty’s Irish Pub on Bluemound Rd., as labor friends packed the retirement party Dec. 15 for the secretary to the president who for decades has been the cheerful, upbeat (and occasionally giggly) voice of the state AFL-CIO.

Pat Salmon was ribbed about her love of “wiener dogs” (dachshunds). She was brought to tears by the affectionate tributes from past and current bosses and co-workers. And sure enough, a series of joke gifts and running gags led her to erupt into that infectious giggle.

A member of Local 9 of OPEIU (Office and Professional Employees International), Salmon for 32 years has been the friendly face as well as the warmth-filled voice that hundreds associate with the Wisconsin AFL-CIO, headquar-

tered in Milwaukee at 6333 W. Bluemound Rd. Current President David Newby was echoed in his tribute — and his teasing — by former bosses Jack Reihl (a past president) and Joe Gruber (a past VP), who made the trek to Milwaukee to be part of the farewells.

All the assembled pointed out that Salmon brought more than positive spirit to the job. She was the efficient steel that held together countless conventions and conferences of AFL-CIO delegates and affiliates — and anyone who attended these large events knows how much planning pressure and how many long hours they impose on the organizers.

She was the person who fielded inquiries and complaints, handling the everyday worker and the highest public officials with equal skill and attention. Her artistic talents were on often anonymous display in the convention booklets emanating from

the state AFL-CIO office and even now on its website. She was the acknowledged self-taught wizard of all things computer, communications and software-related. In fact, she was way ahead of her bosses in technological finesse. Co-workers recall how in the early days she had to put up with bosses belittling her across three rooms because they couldn’t figure out how to work the intercom.

“Was she a machinist in a past life?” laughs Linda Sadowski, a co-worker for 10 years who has taken over the presidential secretary duties. “Everyone called on Pat when they had a problem with their computer, software, or office machine of any kind — copiers, fax machine, postage machine.”

Sadowski sheepishly confesses that she’s still calling Pat at home when trying to figure out some of the balkiest equipment. She knows it’s safe to be a bother. “I don’t ever remember her being cross or short tempered with anyone,” said Sadowski who with Joanne Ricca arranged the farewell party. Also helping out were other longtime colleagues such as Nancy Emons and Jose Bucio.

During and after the party, many labor people embarrassed Salmon by talking about what they’d miss — her high spirits, puns, mimicry and encyclopedic knowledge of popular music.

And the cookies, said Emons. “Pat baked Christmas cookies every year for the staff — trays of cookies, diminutive, perfect



Pat Salmon was overwhelmed by photographic displays of her career and gifts from the labor community.

cookies artfully arranged.” It was another example of a giving heart, because “what amazes me is that Pat does not eat sweets — cookies or otherwise!” said Emons.

Salmon’s husband, John, has

been a letter carrier for 27 years. They intend to stay put in Milwaukee until he retires and then they’ll indulge their love of travel. And maybe, Salmon giggled, get a real wiener dog.

-- Dominique Paul Noth



Salmon’s very first boss at the state AFL-CIO, Joe Gruber, returned to Milwaukee to take part in the teasing and tributes. Behind him is her current boss, President David Newby, who called her “energetic, committed and unflappable.” Added Newby, “Her many skills were both remarkable and widely appreciated. We’ll miss her terribly.”

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## Parker

From Page 1

labor's power in the political arena.

His prominence for more than two decades as the head of the council was largely unplanned.

Parker, who attended Marquette High before graduation from St. Pius XI, followed the trade and union activism of his father, Bernard, also a machinist frequently tapped for union duties by IAMAW District 10.

With a break to serve in the military, Tom worked at Miller Brewery and then was elected Secretary-Treasurer of Lodge 66. He ran that lodge's affairs and also was tapped by the International Association of the Machinists for other major duties.

He served as an MCLC delegate to the machinists and worked on the council's education committee as well as in the state AFL-CIO's community service efforts. So his financial diligence and friendly manner were known to other unions'

leaders. But he had never run for MCLC-wide office until January of 1978.

He was one of two names thrust into nomination after the unexpected death of the young president of the MCLC, Leo Winingar.

This was an era when the council had nearly 100,000 members, delegates met biweekly and the Labor Press was published weekly. So campaigning was not only faster back then but quite different.

Julie, one of Parker's six daughters, recalls distributing cards saying "Vote for My Dad, Tom Parker" at her elementary school, since so many of her classmates had union parents.

This is probably not a campaign tactic that would work today, but it helped back then.

Parker won — and after that won easily and mostly by acclamation. He made one try for statewide union office in the 1980s — secretary-treasurer of the state AFL-CIO.

"It was easy to underestimate him because he was so genial and such an everyday family guy," said one veteran labor leader. "But he was tough when he needed to be, and he was always a straight-shooter."

"There were a lot of internal labor disputes he stopped in their tracks just by his open manner and ability to bring people together," said another long-timer. "He served with a remarkable number of labor leaders and public officials. He was a sweet-heart."

Many also commented that he had a secret weapon and balancing wheel — his wife, Marie.

A paternalistic role in the labor movement came easily to Parker — not just because of his



seven children and the dozen of children of his two brothers (Bernard and Edward) but because he seemed to always embrace more families and children into his circle and his neighborhood.

Current Milwaukee Ald. Joe Dudzik, a former AFSCME member, recalls as a child hanging out with all the Parkers for pool parties and family gatherings.

While he loved getting involved in political campaigns, Parker was even better known for nonstop community service, volunteering his financial and organizing skills for everything from the Red Cross to the Aurora Health board to the construction board of the Bradley Center. The United Way and its workplace giving program always drew his prime civic devotion.

He also had a fascination with gadgets and technology. MCLC staff members point out that in the earliest days of computerized offices and Internet technology, Parker personally bought and was the only one willing to install software programs — everyone else was scared to death of the newfangled ideas.

The Labor Press files also reveal that he was prescient. His very first column as president in 1978 warned workers of a rising right-wing tide using social issues to disguise "an attack on unions."

Parker's health problems in the late 1990s robbed him of the tireless energy he brought to all these causes, so he retired in 1999 not just from the president's office but from the many boards he served.

He turned much of his skill closer to home, organizing family get-togethers for an ever-expanding clan. That's not just



Marie Parker (center) was surrounded at Serb Hall by her and Tom's children — top row from left, Patty, Julie, Michael, Jean and Susan, bottom row Peggy and Amy. The hall was loaded with grandchildren (left), in-laws and other young Parker kin, along with labor leaders and politicians who had long known Parker, including (below) Vince Bobot, the former judge now running for sheriff, and Ald. Joe Dudzik (right) who grew up with the Parker clan.



his grown children — Jean, Susan, Peggy, Julie, Patty, Amy and Michael — but young grandchildren and grand nephews and nieces who were still talking at his funeral about the parties he threw in his new garage.

Last April, at the induction of new officers, he showed up at the delegate meeting at Serb Hall and gave an impromptu speech full of his affection for Milwaukee's labor community.

And he always had his own

spot at the Labor Day Parade. At the last one, he proudly showed off his new electric scooter, which gave him mobility in his illness.

In fact, recorded in a Labor Press front-page photo, he drove it right into the street to wave up close to the vehicles and marchers flowing by on Milwaukee St.

They knew him and saluted right back.

In memory, they still will.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

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# Calendar

**Wednesday, January 25**

Executive Board Meeting

Milwaukee County Labor Council

3 p.m., MBCT, 5941 W. Bluemound Rd.

**Wednesday, February 1**

Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO Delegates

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

**Saturday, February 4**

**RICH WOMEN, POOR WOMEN: STRATEGIES TO BRIDGE THE GAP**

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**Monday, February 20**

Faith Community for Worker Justice

5 p.m. Yatchak Hall (formerly Assembly Hall)

633 S. Hawley Rd.

**Wednesday, February 22**

Executive Board Meeting

Milwaukee County Labor Council

3 p.m., MBCT, 5941 W. Bluemound Rd.

# Bowling

## MCLC MIXED SENIOR BOWLING

### DECEMBER 2005 RESULTS

TEAM	WINS	LOSSES
LABORERS 113	66	46
8 BALLS	65	47
SLAMMERS	60.5	51.5
ONE BOARD OVER	61.5	50.5
GUTTER RATS	46	66
CRAZY 8's	37	75

### IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 500

DAN LAACK	648
ELMER HELM	618
BOB WAGNER	611
SAM SAMUELSON	592
DEL GROSS	563
DON WIEDMANN	556
WAYNE FRANZEN	546
JOHN PADRON	514
DON BOOTON	503

### IND. HIGH GAME OVER 200

WAYNE FRANZEN	232
GEORGE BARAK	224
ELMER HELM	224
BOB WAGNER	223
DON WIEDMANN	215
DEL GROSS	214
HANK ZEISSE	212
JOHN PADRON	209
SAM SAMUELSON	205
JOE MISHICH	201

### IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 375

PHYLLIS NAVARRETE	465
LAVERNE WERNER	455
ELAINE KARIER	400

### IND. HIGH GAME OVER 150

PHYLLIS NAVARRETE	176
LAVERNE WERNER	163
ELAINE KARIER	157

# Vulnerable kids are in your hands

On January 11 at the MCLC delegate meeting, labor members were challenged to give an hour or two a week to break the cycle of disenfranchised youth, violence and prison that has staggered the Milwaukee community. The challenge was issued by guest speaker Anita Johnson, well known to the MCLC as a partner in election education and as a member of the Black Coalition of Trade Unionists (CBTU).

Johnson hushed the audience with some realities about a neglected truth in American social policy. On any given day, there are nearly seven and a half million children with a parent in prison or under state or federal penal supervision. These children are unquestionably the most at-

risk population in our society.

"Seven out of 10 of these children will be imprisoned themselves if there is no intervention in their young lives," said Johnson, citing national studies. Yet there are proven ways to break a system that in some cases put four generations of the same family in prison, because studies also reveal that personal contact with strong, positive adult role models -- even briefly -- can turn children around.

When a gang beating or shooting breaks out, Johnson reminded the delegates, there is community outrage, finger-pointing or throwing up of the hands. "If you look behind these stories, you'd be amazed how many are children with a parent in prison,"

Johnson said. The circumstance of their upbringing, the pressure on their remaining family, and the indifference of government institutions help create a pattern where these are the children who have trouble getting along in society and in the workplace or succeeding in school.

A growing effort to change that is the Amachi program, run in Milwaukee and other communities by the Big Brothers Big Sisters but also emerging nationwide as a mentoring approach operated by churches and community groups. It seeks to expose children of prisoners to adults in the community who show an interest in their homework, their hobbies, their dreams, their future -- "and it doesn't take more than an hour or two to make a difference," Johnson pointed out.

Amachi is a West African word meaning "Who knows but what God has brought us through this child?" The program represents a partnership of secular and faith-based organizations working together to provide mentoring to children of incarcerated parents.

Anyone willing to learn more about Amachi or sign up should call (414) 258-4778.



A call to help the needy before Christmas produced instant results from the business managers and agents of the Milwaukee Building & Construction Trades Council, who meet weekly. James Jorgensen, business manager of Iron Workers Local 8, told the group of the needs and they quickly put together and delivered 10 baskets of food, each holding \$100 of supplies plus a 20-pound turkey.

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# Wal-Mart hypes, gripes but mainly bumbles

Whistling past the graveyard and then slipping on a banana peel. That was the ungainly posture the world's largest retailer found itself in after the crucial holiday buying season.

In a massive multi-million blitz to counter the awareness campaign against Wal-Mart's practices (led by community, union and environmental groups), the company kept making claims that its own behavior and the emerging facts instantly deflated. As one result, even Wal-Mart shareholders now know that the WakeUpWalMart campaign is hitting the company right in the profit margin.

Stung by a Zogby poll that showed most Americans (53%)

agree that Wal-Mart was bad for America, the company commissioned its own poll to reverse those respected results, suggesting that even the majority of union households thought Wal-Mart was good for America. (Keep reading to find out how the poll finagled that.)

It released that poll with a major press release trumpeting that the anti-Wal-Mart campaign had absolutely no impact on the nation's shoppers.

Problem is, that statement came out a few days before the actual holiday sales numbers became available. And they showed Wal-Mart dragging the bottom of a mixed buying season. While prime competitor Target posted a 4.7% same-store

sales gain in December over the same month a year earlier, Wal-Mart did only 2.2%, less than half its own internal estimates and well below Wall Street expectations.

Wal-Mart looked foolish for insisting the union campaign had no effect while its rivals were doing twice as well (or better than that; Costco, which pays its workers good wages, posted a 7% gain in same-store sales that month).

None of the competitors had spent nearly as much in actual money or advertising percentage as Wal-Mart did. The company created its own war-room to counter the WakeUpWalMart campaign. In an exercise in email and right-wing special pleading before Christmas, it caused virtually every national and local conservative talk radio show to devote hours to defending Wal-Mart.

This was hardly spontaneous broadcast combustion. Wal-Mart flooded these radio outlet hosts with talking points and even with studies it had commissioned detailing that the poor should love Wal-Mart for driving down food prices. One study even said without blushing that "Wal-Mart

## Cochran an honoree

MCLC Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran will be among those honored when the Black Women's Network salutes "Phenomenal Women" at its 26th annual dinner February 10. The network honors notable achievements in the arts, health, business, law, labor, religion and community service.

For more information on the \$40 a ticket Pfister Hotel event, contact Emma Butts at (414) 445-4000 or (414) 447-7262.

## And keeps getting sued

The lawsuits just keeping coming and, unfortunately for Wal-Mart, the courts keep listening.

In Philadelphia Jan. 10, a judge approved a class-action lawsuit for employees claiming that Wal-Mart pressured them to work off the clock. The Pennsylvania suit -- with a lead plaintiff saying she was forced to work through breaks and after quitting time 8 to 12 unpaid hours a month -- could cover nearly 150,000 current and former employees at Wal-Marts and Sam's Clubs since March 19, 1998.

The case echoes other suits around the country. Last month, in fact, a California jury awarded Wal-Mart workers illegally denied lunch breaks some \$172 million. In Colorado, Wal-Mart settled a similar case for \$50 million.

All the cases accuse the company of a pattern of off-the-clock hours to goose its profitability.

has done as much as anyone, perhaps even more than the federal government, to help poor people during the last 25 years." Unmentioned were the decent-paying jobs Wal-Mart drove out of the marketplace to create even more poor people it could help.

Since so many of the lawsuits it faces deal with discrimination (along with breaking environmental, immigration and child labor laws), Wal-Mart dug hard to keep its black consumers. It was a corporate sponsor for the NAACP. It underwrites Tavis Smiley on public TV and it hired Queen Latifah for holiday promotions.

And then it was forced to apologize profusely for racial insensitivity (and lousy computer linking) on its website. To push DVD sales, it created an invitation for visitors to pick DVDs with "African American themes." But it employed what looks like a word filter program full of improprieties rather than a human being making real selections. Thus visitors who pursued "African American themes" were offered such DVD choices as "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," "Planet of the Apes" and "Powder Puff Girls."

Simultaneously, even as the

conservative talk show hosts were praising its pricing policy, customer brawls were visible on network and cable TV over its massive come-ons and then limited availability for computer laptops and Microsoft's Xbox 360.

Oh, and about that Wal-Mart poll, a sample of 1,000 households (including 330 "union households") conducted by RT Interactive that found responders saying Wal-Mart was good for consumers.

The results were so diametrically opposite to the Zogby poll that journalists went back to look at RT Interactive's methodology. Turns out, before the questions were asked, they were prefaced with a litany of job losses at large union companies such as General Motors and by Wal-Mart's pat on its own back that it was adding 100,000 jobs a year to the American economy.

Only then were the respondents asked to judge whether the company was good for consumers. And even then, 57% of union-household respondents found the Wal-Mart campaign a good use of their union dues.

In fact, it's looking better and better.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

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# A healthy win in fight for corporate fairness

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

There's a shock surrounding the latest legislative push by organized labor in the United States.

It's working.  
It's now the law in

Maryland and it's getting a big push in Wisconsin, where the legislation received the biggest ovation in Gov. Jim Doyle's State of the State speech Jan. 17.

Fair Share Health Care has an immediate social resonance among average citizens and frugal legislators. The pundits who thought it wasn't going anywhere, given the dominance of Big Business lobbyists, are being proved wrong right out of the gate.

In fact, on Jan. 12, the Maryland legislature overrode a veto by the state's Republican governor to pioneer the bill, and they had to fight off heavy threats and lobbying barrages from Wal-Mart.

The AFL-CIO, which has been exploring and promoting the legislative details since last summer, is building on that Maryland success to go full bore in 32 other states. In Wisconsin, an early version of the bill had its first hearing Jan. 18.

Fair Share Health Care was galvanized by revelations across the nation of how many large and successful corporations are making taxpayers pick up the cost of health care for their workers and their children, because the pay they offer is so low and the company's own health plans are so expensive.

Not surprisingly — because of its size, poverty-level wages and attitude — Wal-Mart was at the top of the abuse list when states looked at how many working poor were forced to use Medicaid or other government-funded safety nets.

There was further outrage when Citizen Action of Wisconsin's in-depth report in October revealed Wisconsin's Medicaid program was spending \$46 million a year to provide health care coverage to workers at some of the state's largest employers.

When Wisconsin created BadgerCare to help the working poor, the public expectation was

this would be a bridge for small businesses and other employers that could not fund care in an inflationary health market. It turned out that some of the most profitable and least threatened companies were shuffling their workers onto the safety net.

Wal-Mart, with about 27,000 workers in Wisconsin, led the way. It was followed by Aurora Health Care.

In Wisconsin, Wal-Mart employs about 27,000 persons and Aurora about 25,000.

Citizen Action revealed that Wal-Mart cost Wisconsin nearly \$14 million to cover 6,600 individuals. Aurora had 1,660 employees and dependents receiving help through state health care.

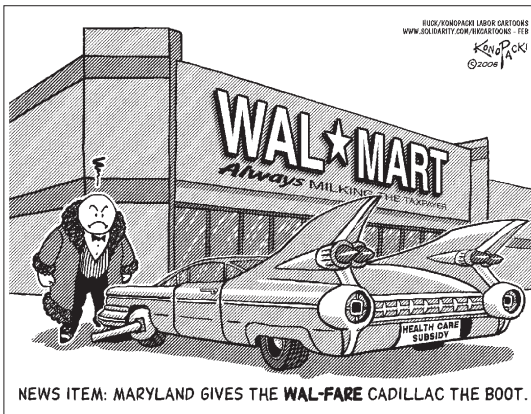
Around the nation, states that started looking at their figures again found Wal-Mart, with its \$10 billion in yearly profits, had the most workers and dependents relying on taxpayer-funded health care.

In response, the Maryland legislature created a Fair Share bill that insisted that any company with 10,000 Maryland employees must spend at least 8% of its payroll on employee health care or pay the difference into the state's Medicaid fund.

In Maryland, there was only one company that fit the criteria: Wal-Mart. Three other employers with more than 10,000 workers already put more than 8% of payrolls toward health benefits.

Wal-Mart hired four lobbying firms and contributed thousands in campaign money to kill the bill. It still threatens to attack it in court or pull some of its stores out of Maryland, a tactic that rival retailers would love.

Its major political ally, Republican Gov. Robert Ehrlich, vetoed the bill, but both Maryland houses mustered the three-fifths majorities to override



the veto.

To the legislators the reason was simple: Why should the state pay a health-care subsidy to the largest retailer on earth?

"Don't dump employees you refuse to insure into our Medicaid system," said Maryland State Senator Gloria Lawlaw who spearheaded the bill. She scoffs at Wal-Mart's claims that the bill singles out that company, saying it is not the legislature's fault that it is the only company that fails to meet the modest 8% criteria.

"This is a Medicaid bill, not a Wal-Mart bill," said Lawlaw.

Wal-Mart employs 1.3 million in the US. In Maryland its stores and Sam's Clubs employ 17,000 persons.

In January, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney called on all unions to push similar legislation in their states, many of which have far more corporate offenders than Wal-Mart.

"The bottom line is that our health care system is broken — but it didn't just split open," Sweeney said. "Big companies like Wal-Mart are pulling it apart and profiting at taxpayers' expense."

The statistics back Sweeney up:

- Since President Bush took office, the number of uninsured people in the US rose by more than 5 million. Nearly all the increase was a result of a decline in employer-sponsored health insurance coverage.

- About 46 million Americans, most in working families, live without health insurance. Only emergency government-paid safety nets can pick them up.

- The Commonwealth Fund reports that more than a fourth of workers in companies with 500 or more employees do not receive employer-based coverage.

- Businesses that play fair are forced to shell out over \$30 billion to cover the workers at businesses that don't play fair.

Since the federal government seems unable to act on such problems, Sweeney promises that unions will fight for the Fair Share Health Care model piece by piece as well as state by state.

The unions will have allies, since national polls indicate more than 80% of citizens agree that successful corporations shouldn't be foisting health care costs back on the taxpayers.

Generally, the legislation sets a minimum standard for health care; it requires large employers to pay their fair share (defined as a percentage of total wages) or pay into a state fund that provides or subsidizes health care for uninsured workers.

In its initial form, the Wisconsin version addresses the even deeper impact on the taxpayer.

Assembly Bill 860 aims at employers of 10,000 or more full or part time workers that do not underwrite their own health care plans paying 80% of the cost (excluding deductibles and copays).

Such employers would not only be assessed the cost on Medicaid (and BadgerCare), they would be assessed the cost absorbed by other companies in higher premiums because they're not picking up their fair share.

Several state senators have joined Green Bay's Dave Hansen in backing the bill and in the Assembly the backers extend to rural as well as urban areas.

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